TOWARDS AN
ARCHITECTURE ACTIVIST PRACTICE

A Position of Design in the Climate Catastrophe

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1 INTRODUCTION

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THE ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS
AND THE SIXTH EXTINCTION EVENT

Scientists concerned with the strata of the earth are registering a change of trajectory in the deep history of our earth. Geologists start to observe layers of our earth that show sediments of 'non-earthbound' materials like plastics, radioactive material, and concrete never seen before. Stratigraphers observe a trajectory of rising CO_2 levels in the atmospheres and higher methane concentrations. Oceanographer's, register a higher ph-value in the oceans, an increase in micro-plastics and a change in the network of currency flows. [1]All these changes are unfolding slowly if they are witnessed from a human perception, but they unfold rapidly if we put them in the context of the history of the planet. If we would consider them individually, they might not be causing any big impact, but collectively these changes indicate that we are on a path to climate catastrophe. The registering of these rapid changes has caused the consideration in the scientific community that we are on the trajectory of leaving the current era of the Holocene, that started 11.000 years ago after the last ice age – and that we are about to enter what is called the Anthropocene.[2] The etymology of Anthropocene consisting of the Greek Anthropos, 'man' and Cene for 'new'[3] makes evident that the scientist see the human impact on the

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1 IPCC, *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*, 2021 (New York, Cambridge University Press).

2 Paul J. Crutzen and Eugen Stromer, "The 'Anthropocene'" *Global Change Newsletter*, no. 41 (May 2000).

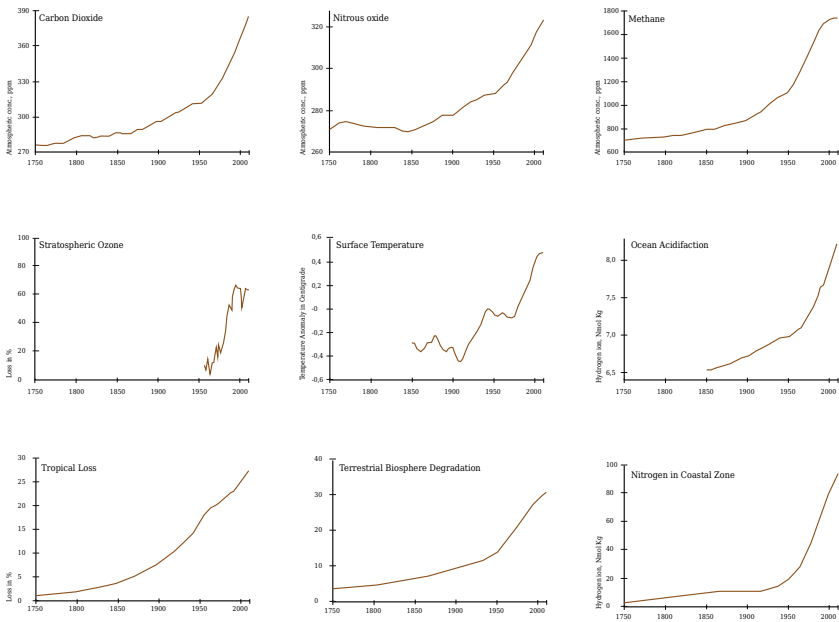3 „Anthropocene," National Geographic Society, June 7, 2019, https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/anthropocene/.

Fig.2
Earth System Trends
Will Steffen,"The trajectory of the Anthropo-
cene: The Great Acceleration," *The Anthropo-
cene Review*, no. 2 (April 2015): 81-95.

earth's strata as the root for this epochal change.

This human made change itself would not be a problem for the earth, epochs have changed continuously since the genesis of the planet. The earth is not in crisis – but what they cause are environmental phenomenon, which we started to perceive more frequently in the last decades. These phenomenon like exceptionally strong storms, extreme hot summers and floodings of unseen extent destroy interwoven networks of life. Hundreds of species a day fall victim to the proliferation of environmental changes and are driven into extinction.[4] With these extinctions all modes of existence are lost, languages, ways of thought, stories and interrelations disappear. Therefore, life and the interwoven environments are at crisis.

By a being part in the interwoven networks of life, humans are hit hard. Especially in a global south, where the protection against the environmental disasters is not as developed as in the north, the increase in human suffering can be observed. Hot summers are causing a rise in heat deaths, dry seasons causing crop failures leading to starvation and a proliferation of hurricanes is taking a bigger amount of lives every year.[5] Guattari warns us that the continuation of that trajectory "*will ultimately threaten the continuation of life on the planet's surface*".[6] – If the human species does not make the necessary decisions in this crisis, we are ultimately at risk driving not only non-humans towards extinction but produce inconceivable suffering to the human species. This trajectory towards a massive

4 "UN News," United Nations, May 6, 2019, https://news.un.org/en/story/2019/05/1037941
5 "Climate Change and Health," World Health Organization, October 30, 2021, https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/climate-change-and-health.
6 Felix Guattari , *The Three Ecologies* (London: The Athlone Press, 2000) 27.

Fig.3
Destroyed livelihood
after an environmental catastrophe
Photograph: Brett Deering/Getty Image

extinction of life is what climate scholars talk about when they warn us that we are entering a 'sixth extinction event'[7]

If the human set the trajectory for this crisis, we need to identify and challenge the paradigms and the related process which have led us to this point, so we might be able to divert from the trajectory we are currently on. If we observe the changes in the strata of the earth on a chronological axis, we can see that the impact of the human seems to be rising with the industrial revolution, picking up speed in the great acceleration in the decades after the second world war and has broken all records in the last three decades.[8] Jason Moore argues, that the relation between the simultaneous

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7 Andreas Malm, *How to Blow up a Pipeline* (London: Verso, 2021)2.
8 Steffen Will, "The trajectory of the Anthropocene: The Great Acceleration," *The Anthropocene Review*, no. 2 (April 2015): 81-95.

change of the recorded indicators and the industrial revolution, and the related change in the mode of production during the time – is one of the main drivers for the crisis at hand. [9]Let's therefore have a look on how this mode of production, the dominant economic paradigm is driving the climate catastrophe.

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9 Jason Moore, „The Capitalocene, Part I: on the nature and origins of our ecological crisis" *The Journal of Peasant Studies,* (March 2017).

Fig.4
Saida Mousseh Mohammed Hassan and her
dead goats near the village of Uusgure in the
north-east of Somalia on 22 February 2017
Photo: Anna Mayumi Kerber/dpa

THE DOMINANT MODE OF PRODUCTION
A DRIVER FOR EXTINCTION

The dominant mode of production has the accumulation of wealth as the highest goal.[10] For this accumulation of wealth, it is extracting value out of existing networks of life, by reducing them to a universal exchange value.

This process is what Guattari calls 'homogenization' of values is taking inherent values of life that are put on *"the same plane of equivalence"[11]* – relating them only to the one value of money, disregarding other modes of valorisation. Anna Tsing refers to the process of reducing and extracting of value out of existing network as 'salvaging'. *"In capitalist farms, living things made with ecological processes are coopted for the concentration of wealth. This is what I call 'salvage', that is taking advantage of value produced without capitalist control."[12]*

This homogenization can be observed in all scales and ecologies. It is visible in industrial extraction landscapes, where highly complex environmental ecologies consisting of meadows, forests villages and their interrelations, are reduced to coal that is laying underneath its soil. Extracting the coal as a resource and salvage its value for wealth accumulation. We can observe farming landscapes where the soil is evaluated solely by the number of crops it can produce disregarding the web-

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10 Christian Felber, *Gemeinwohlökonomie,* (Wien: Deuticke im Paul Zsolnay Verlag), 2014, 39.

11 Felix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* (London: The Athlone Press, 2000) 29.

12 Anna L. Tsing, *Mushroom at the end of the world: Living in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 63.

Fig.6
An open pit lignite mine in
the Rheinische Revier, where the value of an
ecossytem is reduced to the exchange value of
the coal undernath its ground
Photograph: Federico Gambarini/dpa

of-life that is interwoven with it. We can see it in the social ecology, where the networks between individuals, are reduced for value extraction. We can observe this processin the making of the urban fabric where the inhabitants of whole districts are driven out of their dwellings to make room for new financially driven developments that uni-dimensionalize the city from a heterogenous network to homogenised parcels of air that allow for the most efficient extraction of exchange value.

In the ecologies that fall victim to this homogenization, the existing complexities are disregarded and consequently destroyed. Through these destructions the earth-human systems are becoming increasingly unstable. In the extraction landscapes, forest and meadows that are necessary for the balancing of the atmosphere are destroyed, in the farming industry glyphosate is used to boost the profits killing the insects that are necessary for a balance web-of-life in the process, and the reduction of a city to a speculation object is reducing the human bonds that might form a resistance against this homogenization. If you add up these processes, it is a logical conclusion that the current economic paradigm is a driver for the changes in the earth-system, and with it a driver for extinction.
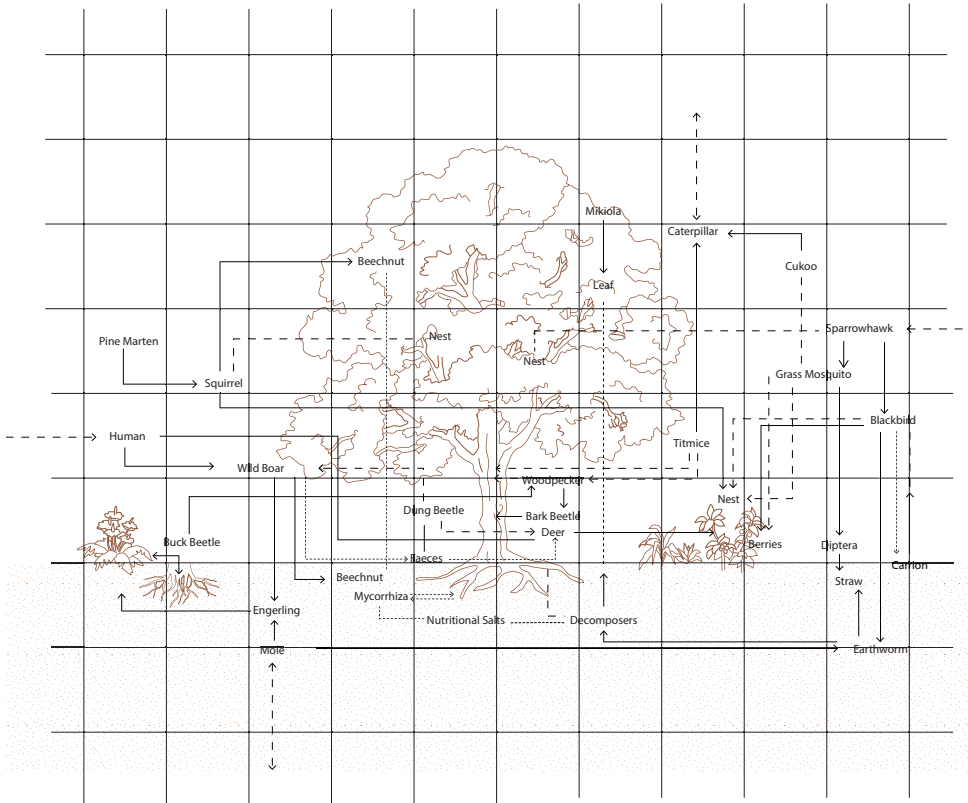
Fig.6
Gridding of am complex web-of-life
for the extraction of exchange value.

THE ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE IN THE DOMINANT ECONOMIC PARADIGM

We are taught in our education that the architecture practice, works at the intersection of the complex networks of the environment, social and the psyche. We learn to analyse how the change of material conditions affects social networks, we are educated about historical context of a site, the relations between material and the senses. We are trained to see values in all these things and try to weight them in their relevance, debating on how a building could materialize in these networks. I don't want to claim that the architecture education is flawless, but I am convinced that cliché of the reductionist modernist designing utopias is indeed become less prominent, and the image of the architect is the shifting towards the recognition of a multiplicity of values in the realm of the three ecologies.[13]

Even though the architect is trained to recognize and balance these intricate conditions, upon entering the work field, the profession is subjected to the forces of the dominant modes of production. *"I quickly discovered that economic needs render the architect a largely powerless figure. Saying no or questioning a client's directiveness is at best a matter of gentle persuasiveness"*[14] This is how Reiner de Graaf describes his first impression upon entering the working world of architecture. The asymmetrical power relation that de Graaf describes, is reflect-

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13 Helene Frichot, *Creative Ecologies: Theorizing the Practice of Architectu*re (New York: Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2018).
14 Reinier De Graaf, *Four Walls and a Roof: The Complex Nature of a Simple Profession* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2017) 4.

Fig.7
Buildling demolishion representing the entan-
glement of the Architecture pratice with pro-
cesses of homogenization

ing the position of the architect in the current economy. We are able analyse complex networks of life, but we are instrumentalized to subjugate all the values we can observe to the one of the exchange-value of money. Architects deal with this frustrating premise in different ways, many work in a schizophrenic way, participating in projects to 'make money' e.g., big housing complexes for investment companies, to finance 'good architecture' free from the force of the modes of production, in which they can appreciate and evaluated a condition to their full potential. Others 'make the best out of the situation' by finding justification in their work through incorporating as much 'valuable' architecture in forms of minor decisions, like brick placement, orientation of bathrooms or plant growing wires on the façade, while submitting the main decisions to the demand of wealth accumulation. Lastly there is a selection of architecture practices deliberately obfuscating the processes of homogenization by pretending to put other values in the foreground to disguise the underlying destruction of networks. A perfect example of this being greenwashing which gives the impression of sustainability as a value but in the last consequence is destructive for the complexity of life. This last example of the architecture practice is not only instrumentalized but is becoming an accomplice to this reduction of values and accomplice to extinction.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Regardless on how the architect deals with this instrumental-ization the current practice is inherently connected with the economic paradigm. If we conclude that this reduction of complexity in the bond between architecture and the modes production is inherently destructive, we must try to find other way in which the architecture practice can break free from this instrumentalization (Potestas) and find new ways to gain power (Potentia) to fight for a re-heterogenization of values.

CLIMATE MOVEMENT AGAINST HOMOGENIZATION

Becoming aware that the practice of architecture is part of a network that drives the sixth extinction event, is deeply unsettling and makes it clear that we must break with this instrumentalization, re-positioning the practice of architecture in a productive way. We must take our eyes elsewhere to other social assemblages that struggle against this uni-dimensionalization of the interwoven worlds we live in.

Luckily, we are not the only one with that need. A collection of social movements has been emerging under the overarching term of climate movements. These climate movements, with its many facets, has been denouncing the process of homogenization and the related human impact on the earth-human networks. While some are only treating the symptoms, a significant part of the movement actively makes the dominant modes of production responsible for these destructions. Especially specific agents in this economy, that disregard their impact, like the fossil fuel industries are targeted massively and the slogan "system change not climate change" is resonating in the cities when climate movements take their demands to the streets.

The struggle against the destruction of networks has been gaining power in the last decades. Andreas Malm states that *"The climate movement of the global north has several cycles of intense activity, each on a larger scale then before".[15]* In 2009 at COP15 100.000 people marched through the streets.

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15 Andreas Malm, *How to Blow up a Pipeline* (London: Verso, 2018).

Fig.8
Protest march of Extinction Rebellion
on the 19 th of May 2022
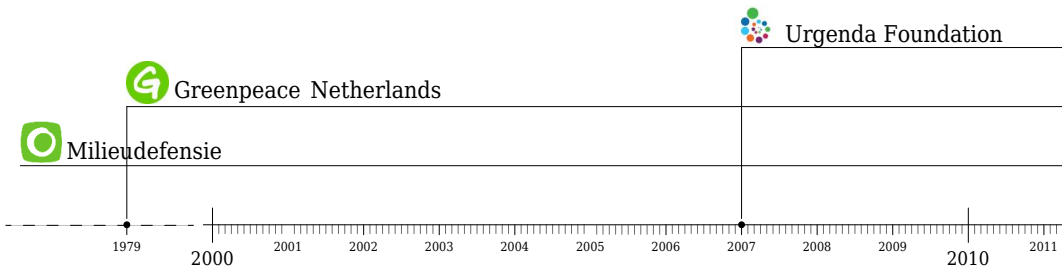in the harbour of Rotterdam

In New York after the disaster of hurricane sandy in 2014, it was 400.000 people protesting and in September 2019 more than four million people marched with the Friday for Future movement at more than 4.500 locations on all continents of the world.

In a trajectory of precarity that is resulting out of the climate catastrophe, one can speculate that the powers of the climate movement, will continue to gain energy. In this the architecture practice might be able to position themselves, engaging in a movement that is urging for changes instead of enforcing and reproducing the economic paradigm. With the ability of the educated architect, to understand and analyse the networks of value, and the proliferating power the climate movement. the two can form a coalition to challenge the homogenization of value and embrace the heterogeneous networks of life.

Fig.9
A banner drop in front of the
Rotterdam City Hall on the 19th of May 2022

Urgenda Foundation

Greenpeace Netherlands

Milieudefensie

1979   2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009   2011
  2000   2010

FossilVrijNL

Code Rood

Fridays for Future NL

Extinction Rebellion NL

Red Het Sterrebos

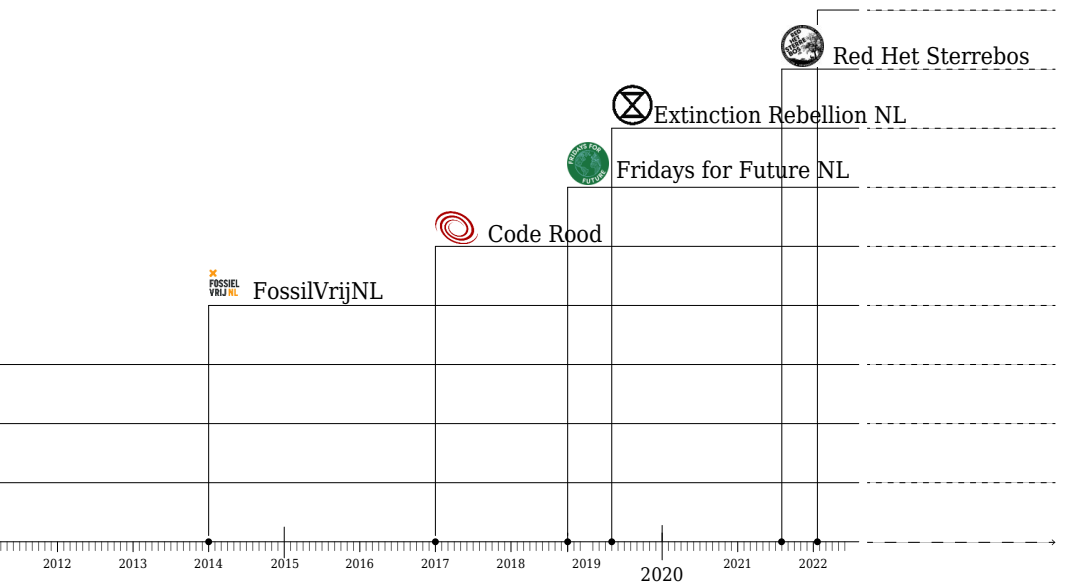2012 2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022

Fig.10
Timeline of emerging climate
movements in the Netherlands.

HYPOTHESIS

How can the architecture practice learn from a environmental activist practice to free itself from the instrumentalization of the economic paradigm of homogenization and gain power to embrace heterogenous networks of life?

2 The Assemblage of Extinction Rebellion

"WE
UNSTOP
ANOTHER
IS POS

ARE
PPABLE
R WORLD
SIBLE”

Fig.11
Chant during the protest action

Fig.12
An activist of Extinction Rebellion after pouring
fake blood in front of the Shell headquaters at
the Weena in Rotterdam

THE METHOD OF ACTIVIST RESEARCH

My research question necessitates the analysis of a climate activist practice - that challenges the paradigm of homogenization so I can conclude on a condition in which the architecture practice can position itself. To learn from and understand the activist practice and translate/relate the gained knowledge to my 'home' practice of architecture, I engaged directly with the activist movements as a participant. For this reason, I decided to use 'activist research' as my method. Activist Research - indicates the direct involvement in the field of research - not observing it as an outsider but joining as a member of a group, studying it, influencing it, and being influenced by it. [16] I did so by joining and actively participating in two climate activist groups. I was active in the campaign 'Rebellion against the Fossil Fuel Industry' by Extinction Rebellion (XR) from November 2021 until May 2022. Regular activities included: participating in organization meetings, establishing communication between local groups, and participating in protest actions like a march on the 19th of May or the mass-disruptive action at the Shell headquarters in Rotterdam on the 24th of May.

In this time, I produced cartographies mappings of the XR assemblage.

I was also active in the movement 'lützerath lebt'[17] an occupa-

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16 Alexandra Zavos and Barbara Bigila, "Embodying Feminist Research: Learning from Action Research, Political Practices, Diffractions, and Collective Knowledge" *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* no.6 (2009):153-172.
17 "Über Lützerath entscheiden wir!", Lützerath Lebt, Accessed December 3, 2022. https://luetzerathlebt.info/.

Fig.13
Me and my AG in a car lock-on during a civil disobe-
dient action in the city centre of Rotterdam.

tion at the edge of a lignite mine in Germany where I lived for a
total of two week in the summer of 2022. Here I participated in
the 'everyday struggle' - helping with nightshifts, cooking, ple-
nary meetings etc. In this time, me and two friend Irene Feria
Prados and Rik de Brouwer produced the short movie 'Archi-
tecture of Everyday Activism' for the International Architecture
Biennale in Rotterdam. [18]

18 Architecture of Everyday Activism IABR, directed by Rik de Brouwer,
Irene Feria Parados, Frieder Vogler (2022).

Fig.2

Fig.14
The arrest after the civil disobedient action

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ASSEMBLAGE THEORY

The engagement in a climate movement made it clear that the climate struggles are themselves an intricate network of life – heterogenous, complex, difficult to categorize. A set of manifold relations spanning cities and countries, humans, and non-humans' places, objects, and architectures. An overwhelming number of different actors that are in constant flux – playing string figures with each other pulling and pushing, shifting, and twisting.

Attempting an analysis of this movement necessitates a theory which does not reduce this multiplicity into a framework of, for example hierarchy, but instead embraces the complexity of this condition. A theory which lends itself to this is *Assemblage theory* - which originated in the works of Guattari and Deleuze[19] and was further developed by Manuel DeLanda[20]. The theory gives guidance on how to navigate through this complexity without reducing/homogenizing it. It gives tools and terms which allows the observation of the components of the climate struggle from different perspectives to hopefully glance through the complexity and conclude on what properties emerge from their interrelation.

Instead of focusing on the whole of the climate movement of the Netherlands – I looked at a specific movement at a temporal

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19 Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, *A thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press), 1987.
20 Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University),2016)

interval – Extinction Rebellion – during the organization and execution of the rebellion against the fossil fuel industry - observed as an assemblage.

To get a hold of the multiplicity of actors, I collected everything interesting that crossed my path - stories, myths, stickers, speeches, documents, discussions, and data. Educated as an architect with a strong focus on visualizing networks – it was intuitive to, in a second step, relate the observed and collected parts to each other in a cartography of the XR assemblage. In the cartography, the components are aligned radially on a line from expressive components in the centre, to material components at the periphery of the drawing. In between the components lines represent the relation the components have with each other with the width of the line defining the intensity of the relation.

In the following part I want to underline some of the components that I think have the most potentia as they have many, or high intensity relations to other parts of the assemblage. I highlight these – because I think that if we want to learn from the activist practice – we must observe these components in detail and relate them to the architecture practice – which is the goal of this investigation.
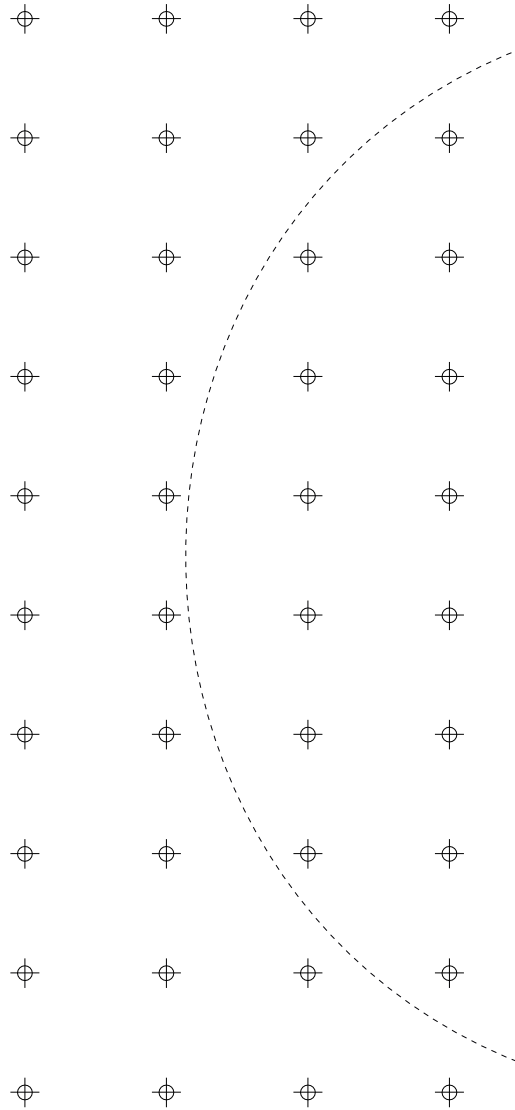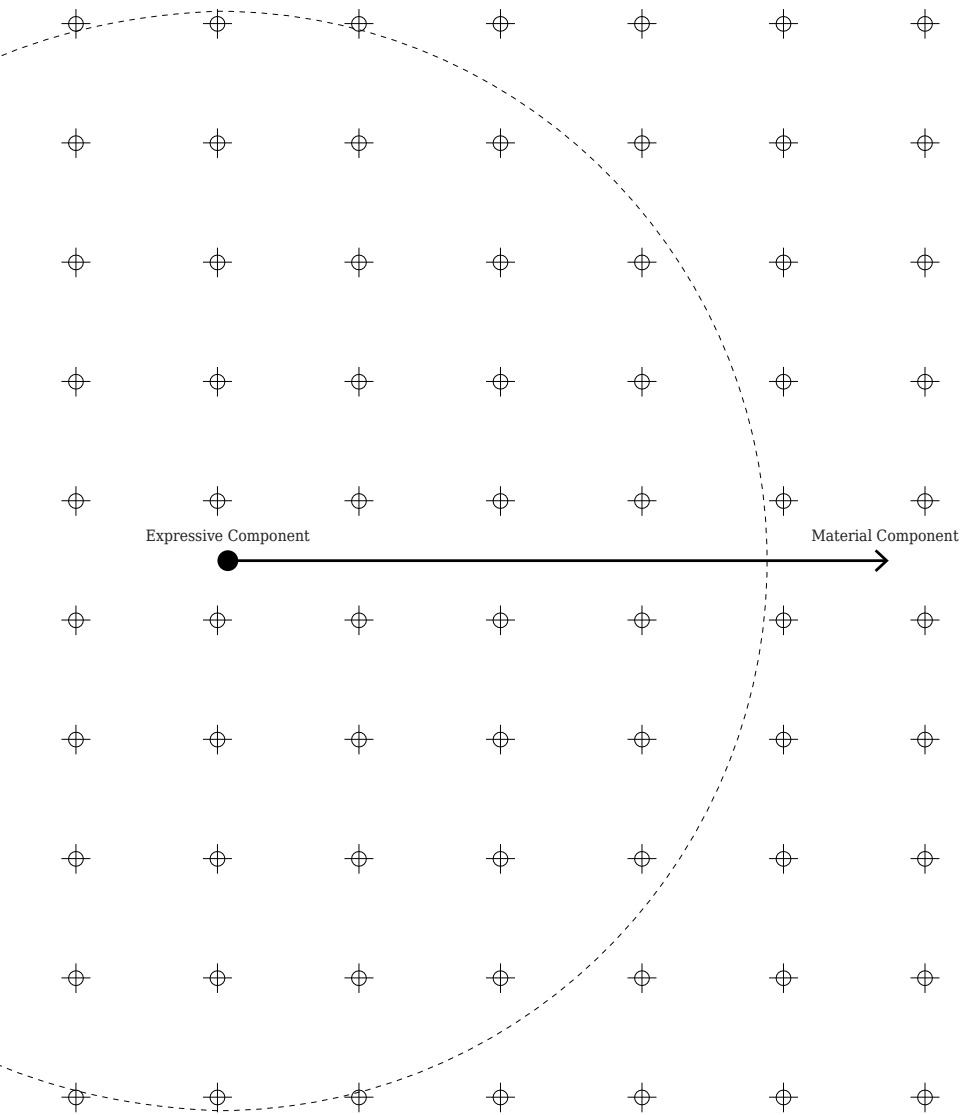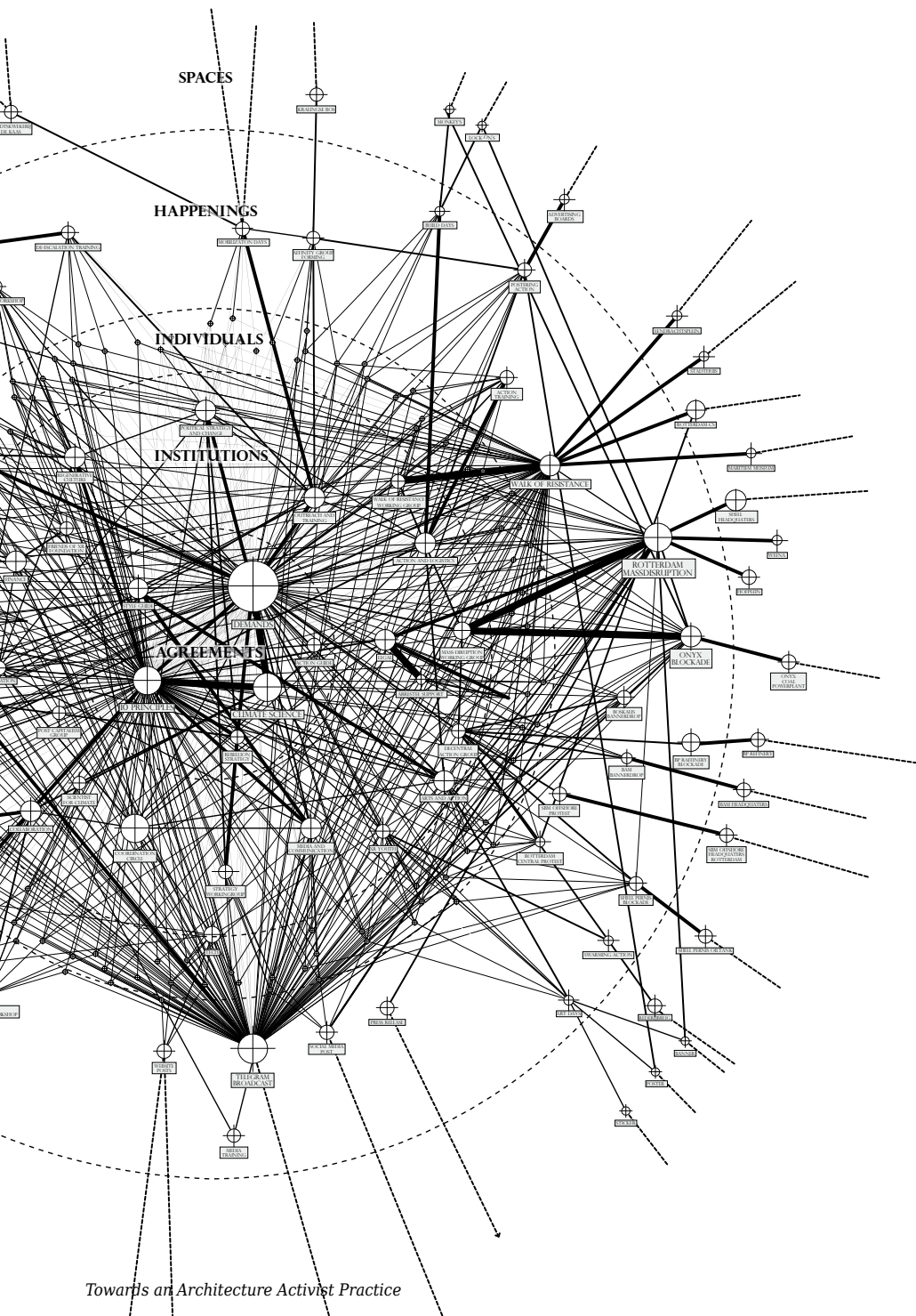
Fig.14
Organization of the XR cartography.

Expressive Component

Material Component

Fig.15
XR cartography showing the interrelation between different components of the assemablage

SPACES

HAPPENINGS

INDIVIDUALS

INSTITUTIONS

AGREEMENTS

KRALINGSE BOS

MONKEYS

LOCK-ONS

BUILD DAYS

ADVERTISING BOARDS

POSTERING ACTION

WALK OF RESISTANCE

ERASMUSBRUG

WALK OF RESISTANCE

ROTTERDAM MASSDISRUPTION

MARITIME MUSEUM

SHELL HEADQUATERS

ONYX BLOCKADE

ONYX COAL POWERPLANT

BP REFINERY BLOCKADE

BP REFINERY

RAM BANNERDROP

RAM HEADQUATERS

SHELL OFFSHORE HEADQUATERS ROTTERDAM

DECENTRAL

ROTTERDAM CENTRAL PROTEST

SHELL PERNIS BLOCKADE

SHELL PERNIS REFINERY

10 PRINCIPLES

CLIMATE SCIENCE

SWARMING ACTION

BANNER

PRESS RELEASE

POSTER

STICKER

WEBSITE POSTS

TELEGRAM BROADCAST

SOCIAL MEDIA POST

MEDIA TRAINING

AGREEMENTS, THE CODES OF THE ASSEMBLAGE

In the centre of the cartography, we can find the highly expressive component parts which I named agreements. Extinction Rebellion has a few agreements – that are at the core of the movement and define a big part of the decisions made and the action taken by the activists. The most important in these agreements are the four demands - the main code under which extinction rebellion subjugates its actions. They are synchronized through the movement, nationally and internationally, and only deviate slightly according to regional differences.

Demand 0 - Climate Justice for All, is a demand that states that the fight for life, entails a fight for justice - emphasising groups like indigenous inhabitants or inhabitants of the global south as the people that suffer the most from environmental disasters. It puts anti-capitalist, anti-colonial perspectives of the climate struggle at the forefront of the actions.

Demand 1 - Tell the Truth, demands for governments and institutions to acknowledge the scientific seriousness of the crisis and urges them to declare a state of climate emergency.

Demand 2 - Act Now, demands from governments to act according to the climate disasters that the world is facing. With radical systemic changes that will bring climate neutrality until 2025.

Demand 3 - Let the Citizen Decide, demands a change in the

Fig.15
The ten principles and values of
XR Netherlands

representative democratic structures by introducing a citizen's assemblage for the climate. In this citizen assembly citizens can, through a direct democratic process, take part in the decision-making processes needed for the transition to climate neutrality.[21]

If we observe the demands as a component of extinction rebellion – they are tightly knitted into the assemblage affecting a multiplicity of other parts inside and outside of XR. Symbolic displays of the movement, like stickers posters or banner often refer to the three demands, the chants on the street phrase them when they proclaim, *'what do we want – climate justice – when do we want it now'*, but also the working groups of extinction rebellion that get in contact with the regional governments use the demands as an basis for communication, potentially changing the position of politicians in city councils.

Additionally, to the four demands there is also the agreements of the '10 Principles'.[22] These principles – instead of 'looking outwards' at urging other people to act – coordinates and regulates the behaviour of activists inside the movement. The principles act as a guideline – and a handle for action and policing inside of XR. It includes for example the plead for non-violence, the importance of a regenerative culture within the movement or efforts for inclusivity in the movement no matter the gender, colour of their skin, heritage etc. [23] The expressive components, the agreements of XR are deeply intertwined with how the movement functions. In an introduction talk of extinction rebellion the speaker emphasized the relevance of these agree-

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21 "Our Demands," Extinction Rebellion, Accessed October 31, 2022. https://extinctionrebellion.nl/en/our-demands/.
22 "Extinction Rebellion Core Principles," Extinction Rebellion, Accessed October 31, https://www.xrguildford.org/xr-core-principals.
23 Idib

Fig.16
Extinction Rebellion exhibition at the IABR whe-
re the Talk of Pim de Vleeschhouwer took place
Photo: Phoebus Panigyrakis

ments by stating: *"If you agree with the four demands and act in within the ten principles – you can do you own action under the flag of XR"* [24]

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24   Pim de Vleeschhouwer, "Extinction Rebellion Lezing" (lecture, Extinction Rebellion, IABR, October 2,2022)

NON-HIERARCHICAL FORM OF GOVERNANCE

"We actively mitigate for power, breaking down hierarchies of power for more equitable participation" is the seventh principles defined in the ten principles of XR. This principle resulted in the implementation of a form of governance called 'Sociocracy'. The modern form of Sociocracy was developed in the 1970s by Gerard Endenburg with the goal to produce a harmonious organisation of his company. Due to its success and its flat organizations principles, it has since gained popularity in climate movements, eco-villages, and non-profit organization[25].

The flat organization is coming into being by the implementation of semi-autonomous 'circles', small groups of individuals that share a specific expertise. Focusing on this expertise the circles work alongside each other – avoiding a hierarchical 'chain of command'. There is no executive board that passes down decisions, instead each circle has a defined mandate in which they are autonomous to make the necessary decisions.

The media and communication team can therefore freely decide what form of content they produce. The legal team can make decisions which court cases need prioritization etc. Of course, the working groups need to be coordinated – hence the 'semi'. Which happens through representatives of each working group coming together in a coordination meeting every week. Here

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25   Wilder Hope. n.d. "Gerard Endenburg founder of Sociocratic Circle Method and trailblazer of self-management." Sociocracy For All. Accessed December 2, 2022 "https://www.sociocracyforall.org/gerard-endenburg-founder-of-sociocratic-circle-method-and-pioneer-of-self-management/

they make sure that mandates don't overlap, that conflicts between the circles are mediated, and that the communication to other local and national chapters of the movement is ensured. Adding, to the two already mentioned circle of 'Media and Communication' and 'Legal' XR Rotterdam is currently comprised of nine more which include: *Arts in Action, Outreach and Training, Finance, Integration, Political Strategy and Change, Inclusion and Power, Actions and Logistics.[26]*

In each circle additional to the individual participants, there are three roles which constitute the crucial components of the circle. The Integrator, who responds to requests of individuals who want to join the circle and explains the ins and out of the processes. The facilitator who moderates the meetings, facilitating the equal distribution of talking time in discussions and guides elections. The representative, who is the contact for people outside of the group, and who coordinates the decisions with other circles in the coordination circle. In the group meetings – the decision-making process is coded to be based on consent. Meaning that not only a majority is needed to make decisions, instead there cannot be any objection against a made proposal. This does not mean that everybody must agree with the proposal, but that nobody disagrees.

Additionally, to the circles that deal with the everyday organizational efforts, there is Affinity Groups (AGs), which are small groups that can form autonomously to the circles. These group constantly individuate inside of the movement – either consisting of new activists that form a social unit like a group of friends, or a group of people that want to organize around a specific topic or target. Out of this a multiplicity of autonomous

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26 "Structure," Extinction Rebellion, Accessed December 3, 2022, https://extinctionrebellion.nl/en/structure/

Fig.16
Activist during a organization meeting in the
rebelbase ‚Precious‘
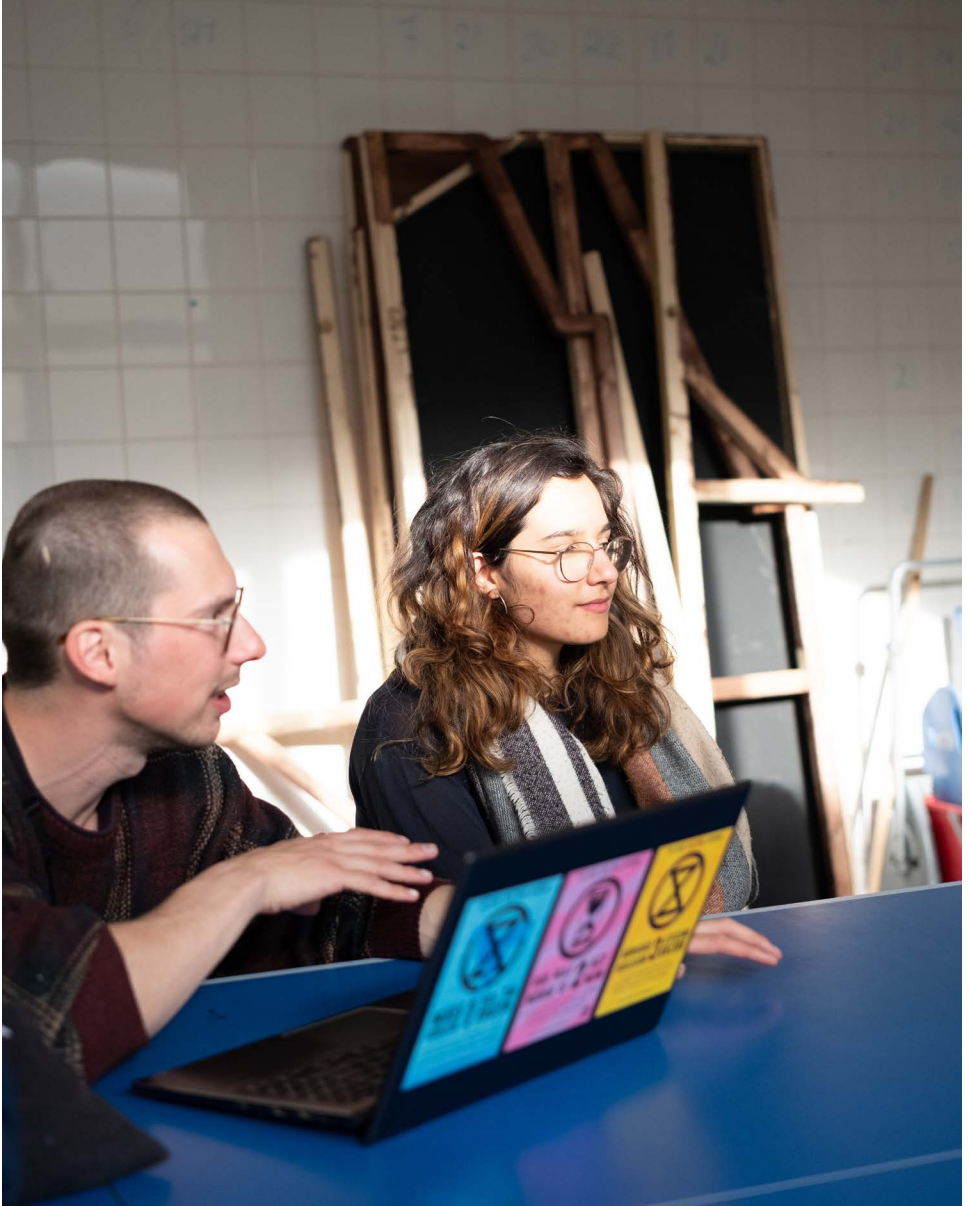
groups have formed in the Netherlands for example *Christian Rebellion*[27] – a group of Christian climate activists, *University Rebellion*[28] – that focuses on universities as a matter of concern, *Money Rebellion*[29] – focusing on banking, *Fashion Rebellion*[30] targeting fast fashion companies. *Animal Rebellion*[31] – focusing on the diary and meat industry and so on. With the approach of a flat hierarchy and the implementation of Affinity groups XR tries to constantly mitigate power and break with hierarchical systems. XR attempts to embraces other forms of governance and ways of institutionalizing. In this effort, they work with the aim to empower the individual activist and give them a voice in the organization.

27 "Over Ons," Christian Climate Action Netherlands, Accessed December 2, 2022, https://www.christianclimateaction.nl/about.
28 "We are University Rebellion," University Rebellion, Accessed December 2, 2022, http://universityrebellion.nl.
29 "Money Rebellion," Money Rebellion, Accessed December 2, 2022, https://www.extinctionrebellion.be/nl/money-rebellion.
30 "XRNL Fashion Action," Fashion Action, Accessed December 2, 2022, https://www.fashionaction.nl.
31 "Over," Animal Rebellion, Accessed December 2, 2022, https://nl.animalrebellion.org.

INDIVIDUALS, MOBILIZING TOWARDS A CRITICAL MASS

There are human individuals in the movement that have special roles. I mentioned some of them earlier in the sociocracy structure of the movement. (facilitators, integrators, representatives). But a great deal of people active in XR is not organized in the afore mentioned circles or affinity groups. Instead of acting in one of the structures they participate in XR as individual component part, that joins in events that have been called into being through the institutional structures that are in place. These number of individuals exceed the number of organizers by far. The XR Netherlands Broadcast currently includes 2200 members[32] that receive information and updates of events. While there are currently around 50 active organizers in XR Rotterdam.[33] Even though this is a problematic comparison as it compares a national broadcast with a regional chapter, it still shows the sheer number and the resulting relevance that human individuals have in the movement.

While active organizers are highly engaged in the movement, participating in weekly meetings, spending a lot of energy producing the networks of XR. Most individuals are not engaging in these processes and are instead mostly passive. They have less relations to other component parts of the movement and are in idle condition, awaiting a moment of activation where they can actualize their capacity to participate in an event of

32 Extinction Rebellion Telegram Broadcast, Accessed November 10, 2022.
33This number is originating from an informal conversation held with activists of Extinction Rebellion Rotterdam, and the direct engagement with the movement.

XR. This passiveness can have many different reasons, some participants I talked to are not able to spend much energy due to other obligations in other networks, like wage labour, or family care. Some feel a necessity to act facing the climate crisis but are not agreeing with the ways XR is organizing.

Engaging with these individual participants and trying to activate their virtual capacity is what organizers call mobilization. Mobilization in this context means to activate the potential forces that are available, real, but not actualized. DeLanda refers to this in the following way *"In addition to properties, assemblages also possess dispositions, tendencies and capacities that are virtual (real but not actual) when not being currently manifested ore exercised [...] When a given point in time the setting of a parameter happens to be a critical value and the assemblage undergoes a transition, the zone of intensity it finds itself in, and the crossing of the threshold, are actual states and events."[34]* This mobilization or the actualizing of the capacity of an individual human to turn into an activist protestors, takes place through digital technologies, like the afore mentioned telegram broadcast, social media services like Instagram, Facebook, recently also TikTok. Or through the mail-newsletter in which information is shared on a regular basis.

The mobilization of individuals, and the resulting number of participants, is synonymous with the growth of the movement. The more individuals can be mobilized, or in other worlds the intensity to components of XR can be increased , the higher the force with which the movement operates. Roger Hallam, a founder of XR and PHD candidate at Kings Collage London speculates on how many individuals must actualize their capacity to engage in civil disobedience to bring a systemic change

34 Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University),2016) 108-109.

to existing governance and economic systems. Referring to historical examples he concludes, that a 'critical mass' is reached a about three percent of the population of a nation state. This critical mass would incite a major shift in our dominant paradigm.[35]

35 Roger Hallam, "Why Disrupt the Public as we face the Final Death Project," filmed November 4, 2022. Video of lecture, 1:49:39, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kqIfhsxN2ls&t=8s

Fig.18
A ‚die-in' on the Eendrachtsplein

HAPPENINGS OF DISRUPTION AND COMMUNITY MAKING

Non-violent civil disobedient action is the predominant form of protest extinction rebellion engages in. The non-violent civil disobedient actions aim is to disobey hence break existing law in a non-violent manner, to challenge the fundamental processes which causes the inability of government institutions and economic actors to halt the destruction of networks of life.[36]

The actions are justified through the discrepancy between the scientific consensus for the urgent immediate actions needed to avoid the destruction of livelihoods, defined in for example the IPCC report[37], and the in-action of governments and companies to address this urgency accordingly. XR argues that in this in-action lies a deep injustice.[38] This affects especially the young generation which faces a world in suffering and despair, non-human life which in growing numbers goes extinct, and the inhabitants of the global south who did not cause the crisis but must deal with the most severe consequences. Challenging these processes of the dominant economic paradigm and pointing out its injustice, does not only allow to protest companies, institutions, and governments, but it necessitates it. To stand-up and use once energy against this

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36 Jürgen Habermaß, "Civil Disobedience: Litmus Test for the Democratic Constitutional State," *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, no. 30 (1985) 101.
37 IPCC, *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*, 2021 (New York, Cambridge University Press).
38 "Why we Rebel," Extinction Rebellion, Accessed December 2, 2022, https://rebellion.global/why-rebel/.

severe injustice, permits the breaking of laws to expose them to a public.

The non- violent civil disobedient actions of XR come into being through the intensification of interactions between circles, individual humans, material, and expressive components, that are arranged to disturb the flows of the dominant networks of power. In the spring rebellion of 2022, these arrangements consisted of blockades at the onyx coal power plant, the shell headquarters, and the BP-Plant, ING Headquarters, Eindhoven University and many more – causing irregularities in the flow of traffic, coal transports, education, and financial transactions. These disruptions of networks can – if we take assemblage theory – be referred to, as de-territorializing processes. They interrupt interrelations between component parts of for example the Shell B.V. Assemblage, or the Nation State assemblage of the Netherlands. With this disruption of interrelation, they reduce the power of the assemblages.

While the disruptive protests are widely perceived by the public and are part of a discourse, the process behind the protest is often overlooked. This process behind the protest, the events that form the movement, is the second type of happening that the assemblage of XR brings into existence. XR calls them Visioning meaning *"to demonstrate the future we want to see through beautiful creative collaborative action"*[39] These happenings have the goal to imagine a different future, and build a community, that allows for these new imaginary worlds to unfold.

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39 Extinction Rebellion, *This is not a drill: An Extinction Rebellion Handbook* (London: Penguin Books), 105.

Examples of these visioning events could be found in the community program of the spring rebellion. Workshops that looked at economies beyond capitalism, a lecture about reformation of democracy through a citizen's assembly or a podium discussion debating the strategies to grow XR emerged.

Again, these events actualize through the intensification of interaction between XR institutions, individual humans, codes, and material components to, not as previously disrupt existing networks, but to strengthen the connection between existing components of the movement. These territorializing processes create new knotting's in the assemblage, connecting human individuals, claiming territories, developing new collaborations with other movements and so on.

Of course, we cannot see the two forms of happenings, disrupting, and visioning, as independent of each other. Disruptive events can be organized to simultaneously communicate a new imaginary and visioning events, can mobilize individuals to join for civil-disobedient actions. They work intertwined, informing and shaping each other constantly. But, in their consequence, they do a double move. They De-territorialize networks of power through civil disobedience and territorializing power for new imaginaries and futures to unfold.
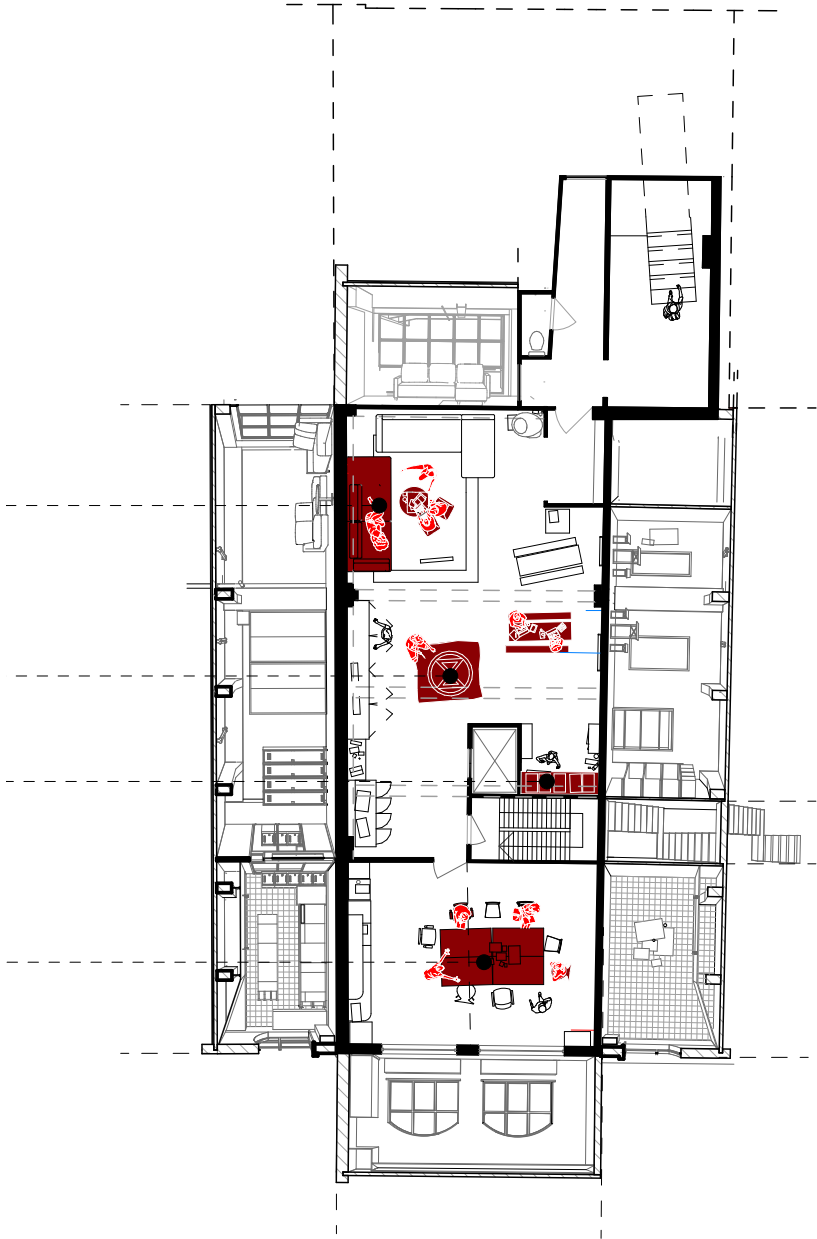
Fig.18
Drawing of the rebel base ‚Precious'

Fig.19
Community dinner at the ‚Oase', a meetingspa-
ce that was set up during the spring rebellion

Fig. 20
A workshop on making postering glue
out of wheat, lead by the activist Meta

SPACE, THE SPHERE OF DYNAMIC SIMULTANEITY

There is a hegemonic imagination of 'space', as a mere backdrop, a scenography in which the theatre of social interaction is taking place. In this perception, space is a collection of objects, architecture, material conditions – that have little to do with the processes that happen 'in them'. This seemingly closure of the spatial dimension, where space is reduced to a container of events is reflected in news articles that talk about activist practices with headlines like "activists protest *on* the street". - But is the street in this example really just a backdrop? In her book For Space, Doreen Massey takes a deep dive into different understandings of space and time and offers a view that might answer this question. She asks "W*hat if space is not a discrete multiplicity of things? […] What if instead it presents us with a heterogeneity of practices and processes? Then it will be not an already-interconnected whole but an ongoing product of interconnections and not. This is space as the sphere of dynamic simultaneity, constantly disconnected by new arrivals, constantly waiting to be determined by construction of new relations.* [40]

This different understanding might necessitate a switch of prepositions in the news article from on to with. "Activist protest with the street" instead of just on it. The street is determined by the activists, and the activists by the street with which they are protesting.

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40 Doreen Massey*, For Space* (New York: Sage), 105.

By changing the understanding of the space, from a mere multiplicity of things, static and irrelevant, to a sphere of dynamic simultaneity they can become part of the XR Assemblage.

In the city centre of Rotterdam, a multiplicity of interacting trajectories and processes make the space of the Weena. There are pedestrians on their way from the central station to the Coolsingel to fulfil their desire for new pair of sneakers, that exist simultaneously with companies like Shell that interweave the Weena in a global trade and extraction network. Trajectories of institutions like the city council intertwine with lobby groups to form new codes of law that make the space, whilst simultaneously a group of inhabitants of the Pompenburg building resist their eviction for a new high-rise tower development. While this space exists through a complex entanglement of different actors, I would argue that the actors that wield the most power in this sphere of simultaneity[41] are producing and reproducing processes of the dominant economic paradigm. Actors like Shell, Houthoff Lawyers, Hilton Hotel and the city council, interact to maintain a status-quo which, as argued earlier leads to changes in the registers of our earth – and to destruction of livelihoods and death.

In this space so strongly determined through actors of the economic paradigm, extinction rebellion disrupts the trajectories that make the space, by positioning themselves at a strategic injunction of the different actors involved – which in the case of the mass-disruptive protest was the middle of the street – in front of the shell headquarters. The space gets redefined, by the arrival of these new actors. The street – formerly a space for traffic, deterined m cars and codes of traffic law, turns into a party full of dance, music, chants,
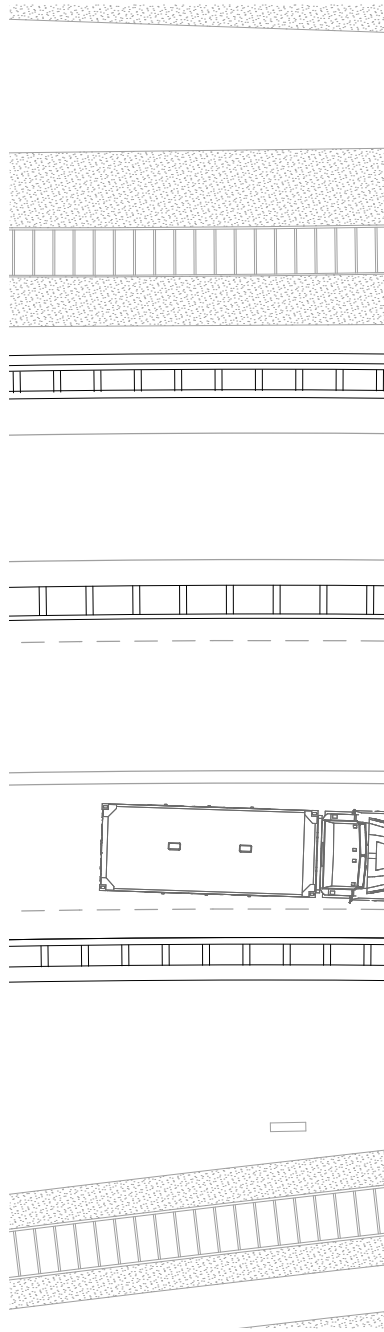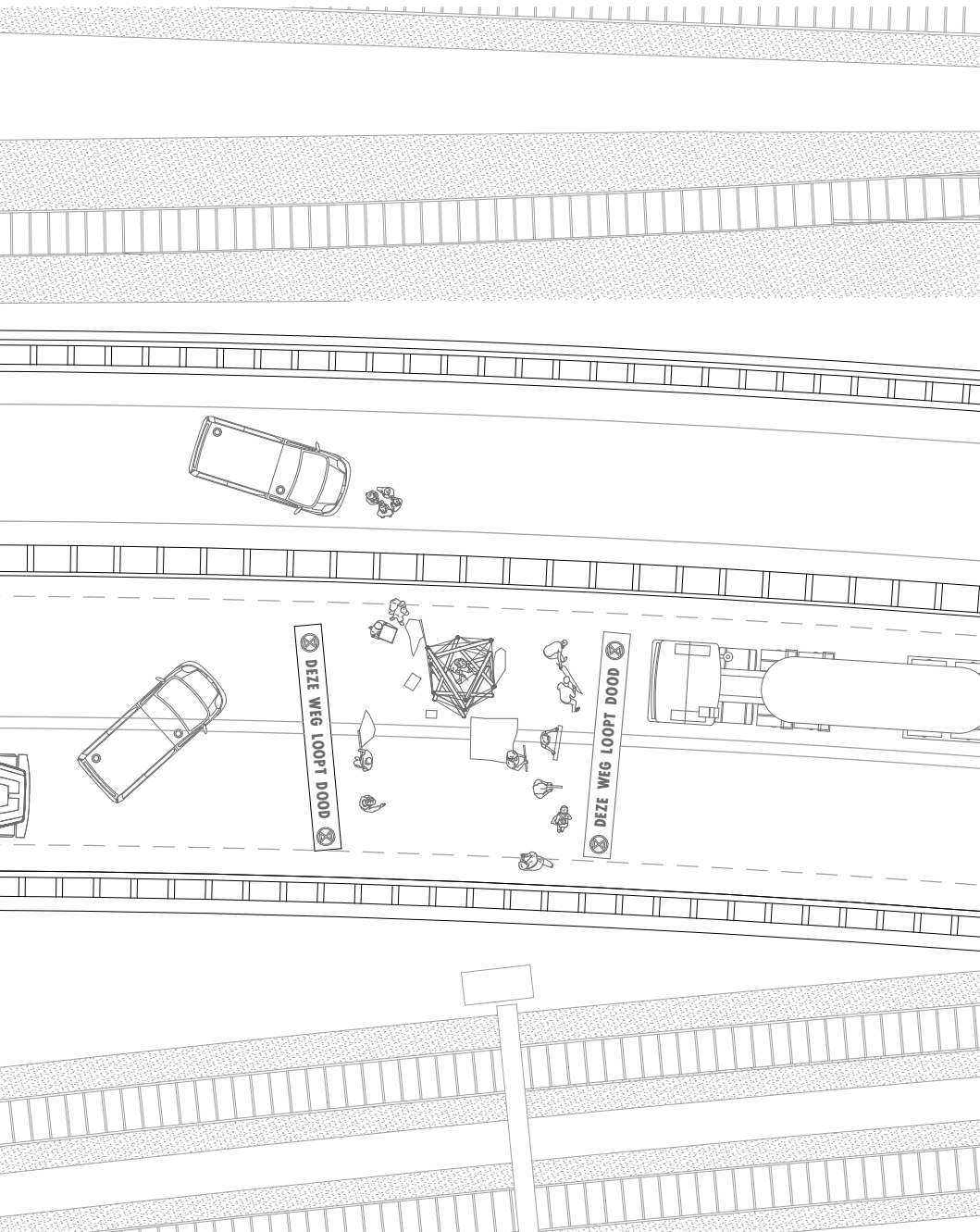
41

Fig.21
Floorplan drawing of a streetblockade, stopp-
ing oil trucks from entering Shell Pernis

DEZE WEG LOOPT DOOD

DEZE WEG LOOPT DOOD

and flags. Where crayons are used to write colourful slogans on the street and smoke bombs are bathing the buildings in a yellow haze. The façade of the shell headquarters, formerly a place for advertising the company – turns into a performance space – with which speeches are conducted and symbolic acts of throwing fake blood – are incensed. Through this disruption, XR is disconnecting trajectories that define the space – re-making the space of the Weena in the process. In an interview Doreen Massey refers to the occupy movement in the U.S. when stating: "They *created a space in which people did not just pass by each other, on the way to work, they talked, they conversed, they argued.*"[42] – in other words space was redefined by the shifting existing trajectories and knotting new interrelations.

Of course, this disruption and re-making of the spatial condition of the weena only occurs for a few hours, until the executive arm of the Dutch government, reinstates the 'order' by arresting 110 activists.[43] But even though the protest was a brief interruption of the flows, it has changed the network of power that determined the space of the Weena in the first instance. The governmental institutions might – due to public pressure - introduce new codes that make it harder for Petro-chemical companies like shell to exist with the space – pushing them out of the building structures. Individual humans might change their perception of urgency of the climate catastrophe, consuming less, altering their trajectories. It is not to disregard that the disruption can of course also 'backfire' and lead to stricter police laws like it can be seen in other countries like Britain

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42 Doreen Massey, "On Space," interview by Nigel Warburton, Social Science Bites, May 5, 2013.
43 Cara Räker, "175 arrests made during Extinction Rebellion protest in Rotterdam," *Dutch review,* May 25, 2022, https://dutchreview.com/news/175-arrests-extinction-rebellion-protest-rotterdam/

where the act of interfering with the dominant processes through protest are at verge of being illegalized.[44] Or that the street itself, might be altered adding more surveillance to gain greater control over a collective of people. And while it seems impossible to draw a straight line between the actions and their effect, it is clear – that extinction rebellion with their actions, become a part of the space–changing, challenging, de-territorializing the power relations that made the space before their arrival.

44 Matthew Taylor, "How will the police and crime bill limit the right to protest?," *The Guardian*, June 13, 2022, https://www.theguardian.com/law/2022/jan/13/how-will-the-police-and-bill-limit-the-right-to-protest

ARKOH TECHNOLOGIES

UNILEVER

BRASKEM

HOUTHOFF

SHELL TRADING
ROTTERDAM B.V.

KPMG

78
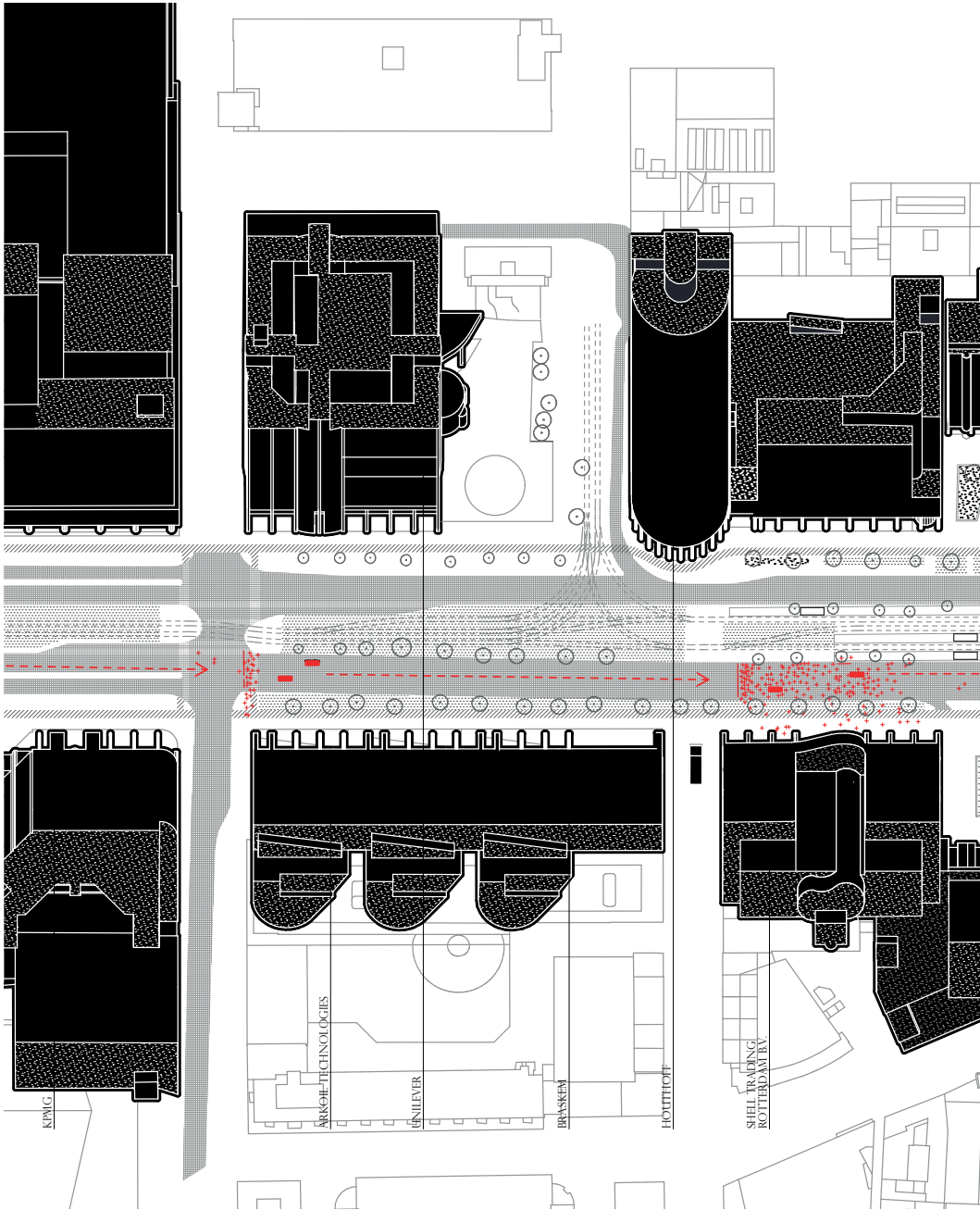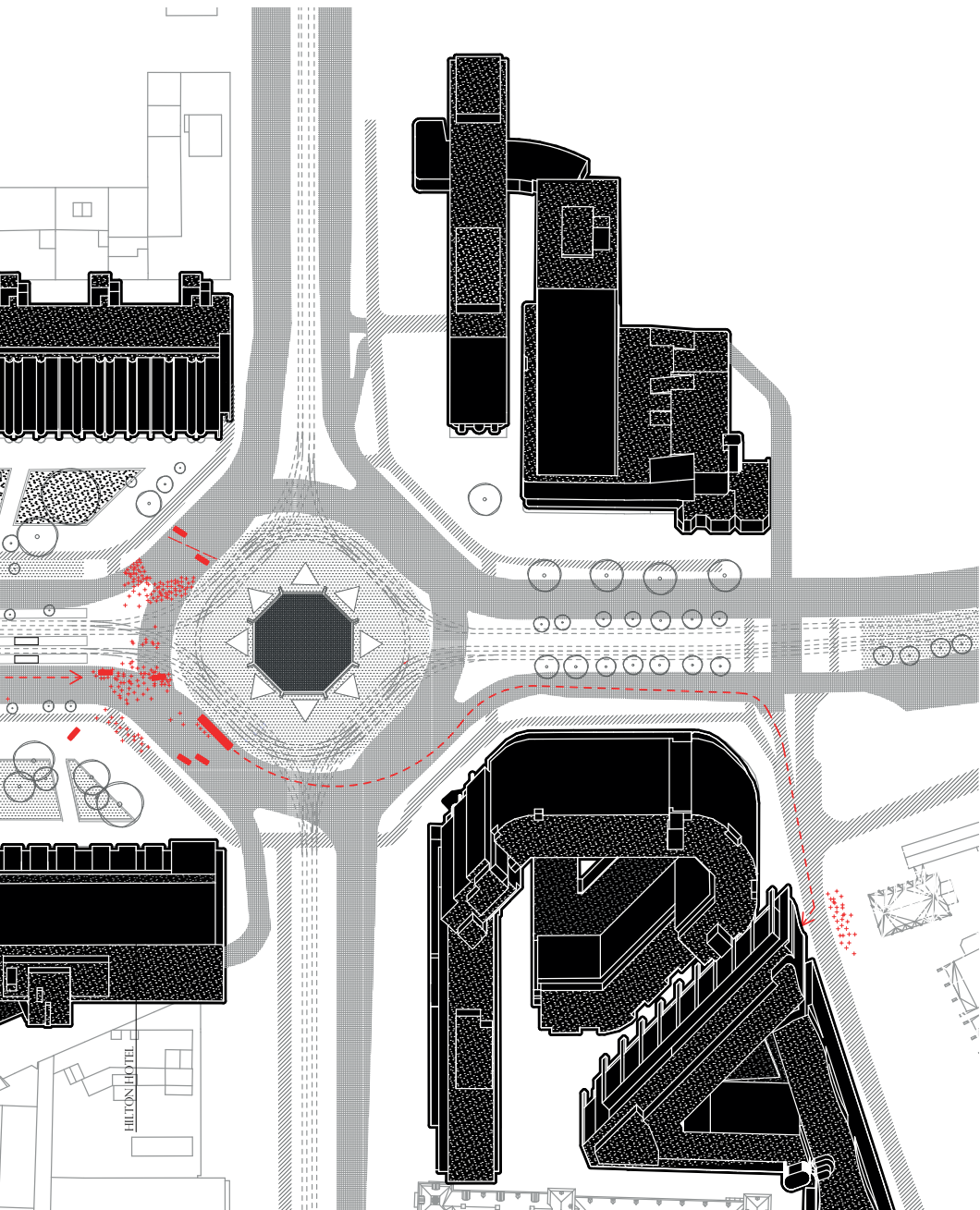
Fig. 20
Drawing showing the potest
route of the civil disobedient action at the
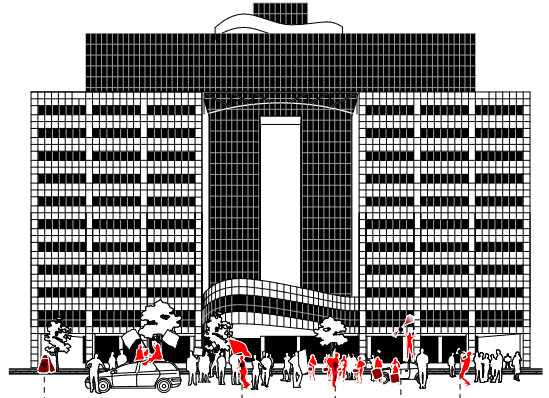Weena in Rotterdam

LEAFLETING
activist handing out flyers on why the street is blocked

BANNERING
activists run on the street to blockade the Weena

PROCESSION
The activists walk in a procession towards the protests sight

SCOUTING
a activist that makes sure no police is stoping the action by scouting the site

CAMPING
tents are put to provide the protest with toilet and storage space.

FLAG WAVING
Flags of the movement get presented

LOUD NOISE MAKING
The Rythms of Resitance are druming to the chants of the protestors

SMOKE BOMBING
activists use smoke bombs to prooduce smoke flairs over the protest

SPEACHMAKING
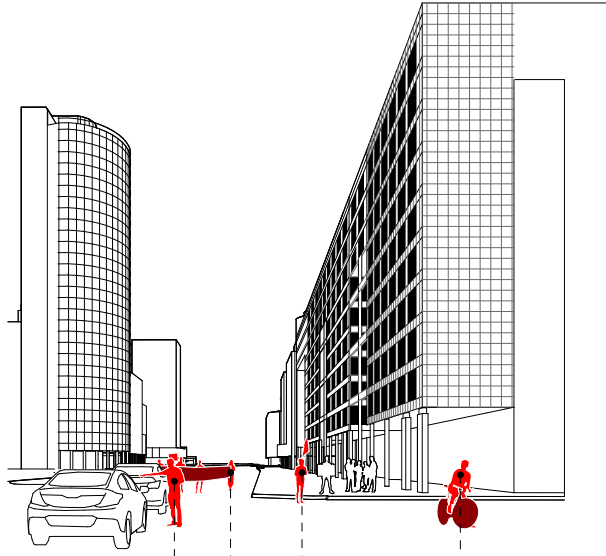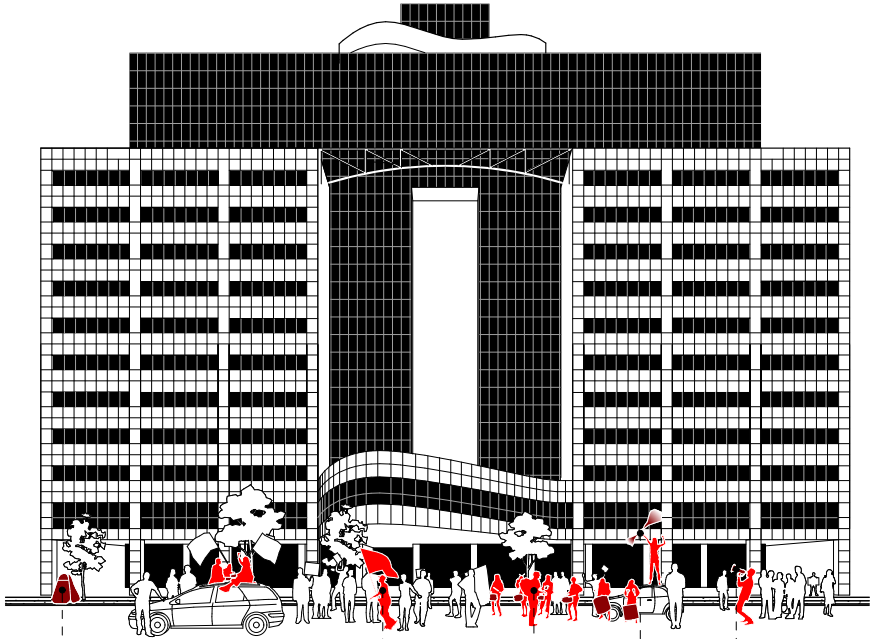*An activist is giving a speach to other activists and bystanders*

BLOCKADING
activists collectivley for a blockade

BARRICADING
Activists us Lock-On's as a barricade

PASSIVE RESISTENCE
Activists use tactics of passive resistance to prolong the arrest

PROVOKING ARREST
Activists provoke the arrest in big numbers to overload the police system

NON IDENTIFICATION
activists avoid identification through cutting and glueing of their finger tips

WHITHOLDING OBLIGATIONS
Activists avoid their picture to be taken by making a face

TESTIMONY REFUSAL
Activists refuse to testify in front of the prosecutor

Fig. 21
A drawing of tactics deployed during the civil
disobdient aciton

LEAFLETING
*activist handing out flyers on
why the street is blocked*

BANNERING
*activists run on the street to
blockade the Weena*

PROCESSION
*The activists walk in a procession
towards the protests sight*

SCOUTING
*a activist that makes sure no
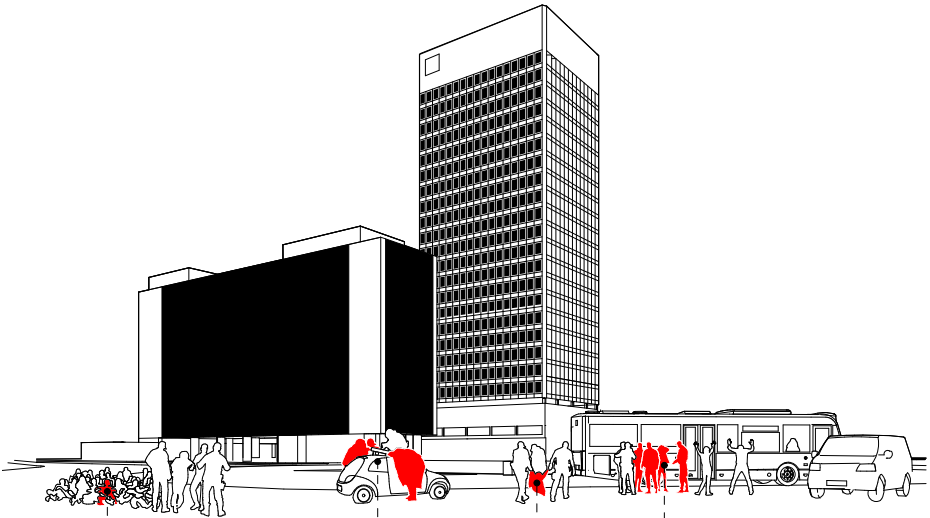police is stoping the action by
scouting the site*

CAMPING
*tents are put to provide the
protest with toilet and
storage space.*

FLAG WAVING
*Flags of the movement get
presented*

LOUD NOISE MAKING
*The Rythms of Resitance are
druming to the chants of the
protestors*

SMOKE BOMBING
*activists use smoke bombs to
prodduce smoke flairs over the
protest*
SPEACHMAKING
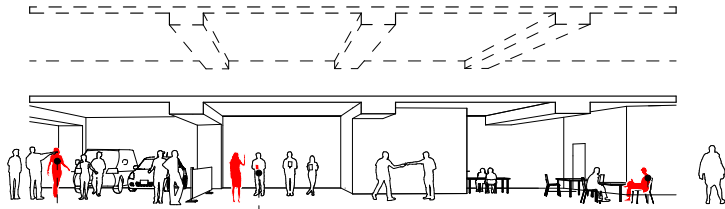*An activist is giving a speach to
other activists and bystanders*

BLOCKADING
*activists collectivley for a
blockade*

BARRICADING
*Activists us Lock-On's
as a barricade*

PASSIVE RESISTENCE
*Activists use tactics of passive
resistance to prolong the arrest*

PROVOKING ARREST
*Activists provoke the arrest in
big numbers to overload the
police system*

NON IDENTIFICATION
*activists avoid identification
through cutting and glueing of
their finger tips*

WHITHOLDING OBLIGATIONS
*Activists avoid their picture to
be taken by making a face*

TESTIMONY REFUSAL
*Activists refuse to testify in
front of the prosecutor*

Fig. 22
An activist gluing their hand to a car to prolong
the blockade

EMERGENT PROPERTIES OF THE EXTINCTION REBELLION ASSEMBLAGE

With the cartography, we can get a grasp of the different components that make extinction rebellion. It makes us acknowledge how demands, institutions, human individuals, events, and spaces are entangled in interaction with each other. But the exploration of the assemblage also allows for the recognition of novel properties that emerge out of the interaction of the parts that cannot be reduced to the parts itself. [45]

Each whole/component in the assemblage for itself has emergent properties. If we take for example the media circle – we can see that the interaction between the facilitator role, the representative, meeting participants, a graphic code, and a laptop – emerges the property to write, design and publish a social media post which reaches hundreds of people. Another example would be the interrelation between a megaphone, an activist, a podium creating a novel property to give a motivation speech to a crowd of individuals at the Weena protest.

The novel properties of the individual components are therefore innumerable. But I would argue that the totality of extinction rebellion, seen as an assemblage has an emergent property that can be described in the process of deterritorialization and territorialization. De-territorialization or challenge power relations that are producing and reproducing the dominant paradigm of homogenization, and the territorializing of assemblages that are producing a new form of existence.

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45   Manuel DeLanda, *Assemblage Theory,* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University),2016) 9.

The territories where this process takes place are numerous. The most obvious might be the claiming of a spatial territory, as described in the space paragraph – where the trajectories that make the Weena are de-territorialized, and the space gets re-territorialized by the movement. But I would argue that this process goes beyond the environmental and extends into the other domains. In the mental territory, it de-territorializes an understanding of ourselves. Forming new subjectivities, challenging grand narratives of globalization and modernity, while territorializing new heterogenous forms of thinking beyond these dominant narratives and stories of our time. In the social ecology, it challenges forms of governance, by questioning the functioning of the current representative democracy offering new direct democratic processes for decision making and in their own gatherings XR is experimenting with new forms of organization by acting in sociocracy principles.

While these attempts might currently be not more than an annoyance to the hegemonic power relations – there is hope that the climate movement might contribute to a greater shift leading to a moment of singularity, that can bring about a fundamental change, in the networks that make our lives. Steering us away from the trajectory of the Anthropocene to find new paradigms – that avoid the incommensurable suffering and injustice that is to be expected if we continue this path. Whilst this is no given scenario, I would argue that we should attempt – in all practices – not to obey or reproduce or even strengthen the processes of destruction but to de-territorialize the networks that lead us into despair and find productive ways to exercise our power

3 Design Transposition

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CONCLUSION FOR THE ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE

To conclude, the activist assemblage of extinction rebellion, is comprised of innumerable components with respective properties that are interwoven with each other. Demands affect circles that produce banners presented at non-violent civil disobedient actions which makes spaces which results in new codes, other forms of gatherings and so on. In this flat ontology, every component affects the other components constantly with evolving intensity. Through the affective relations new components individuate, and others dissolve. In this interrelation between components an architecture practice can position itself. Retracting from the dominant modes of production, where the architect is instrumentalized to serve the accumulation of capital, and instead engage in activist networks that attempt to bend the trajectories away from extinction. Some architects already made that fundamental change in the practice. Rebel Architect Sani Cirugeda is working on projects that disobey existing law to provide for a liveable environment in the city of Sevilla.[46] Climate activist collectives like 'Ende Gelande' Lützerath, Germany, are building structures, that prevent the expansion of a coal mine, proposing a spatial practice of disobedience. [47]The architecture office R aumlabor is building an open university on financially valueless poisoned soil – producing a space to educate about relation between the

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46 Al Jazeera English, "Rebel Architecture - Guerrilla architect," YouTube, August 8, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=674N2SnaAfs

47 Architecture of Everyday Activism IABR, directed bz Irene Feria Parados, Rik de Brouwer, Frieder Vogler (2022).

climate catastrophe and the architecture practice.[48]

In this line I want to position my design project asking the question: How can the architecture practice engage in a climate activist struggle in the city?

48 "Floating University Berlin," Raumlabor, Accessed December 3, 2022, https://raumlabor.net/floating-university-berlin-an-offshore-campus-for-cit-ies-in-transformation/ Raumlabor.

A SITE UNDER THE THREAT OF HOMOGENIZATION

This question is researched through a design project in the city centre of Rotterdam - the Baan, in which a heterogenous urban context a complex ecology, is at threat through the development of a high-rise tower. The Architecture Office, Powerhouse company is, together with the developer REDC Company, planning on demolishing the existing network of life of the heterogenous urban milieu of the Baan. After demolition they plan to construct a 150-meter-high concrete high-rise tower. Following my argumentation of this text I would argue that the high-rise tower is reducing inherent values for the extraction of financial value on multiple levels. The most obvious being the demolition which directly destroys territorialized network of material components, history, people – short a neighbourhood, into pieces of rubble. But it also uni-dimensionalizes on other scales. The concrete that will be used for the new construction is disregarding the CO_2 produced in the curing process of the cement, which contributes to the proliferation of environmental disasters and the destruction of webs-of-life. And lastly maybe most abstract, it capitalizes on the air above the soil of the area, gridding it into sellable parcels disregarding other values like living quality, overshadowing of the surrounding buildings and the possibility for a just inhabitation of the city.
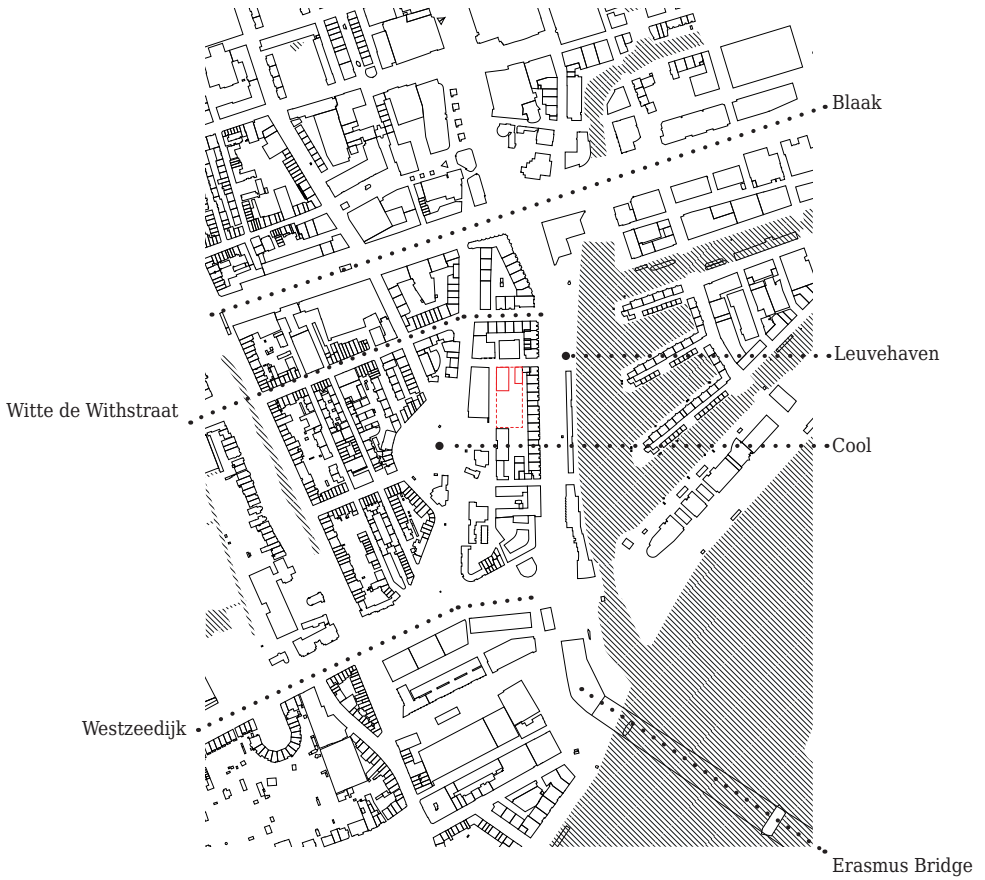
Blaak

Leuvehaven

Cool

Witte de Withstraat

Westzeedijk

Erasmus Bridge

Fig. 23
Siteplan of the Baan

Baan Tower

Remaining
Builldings
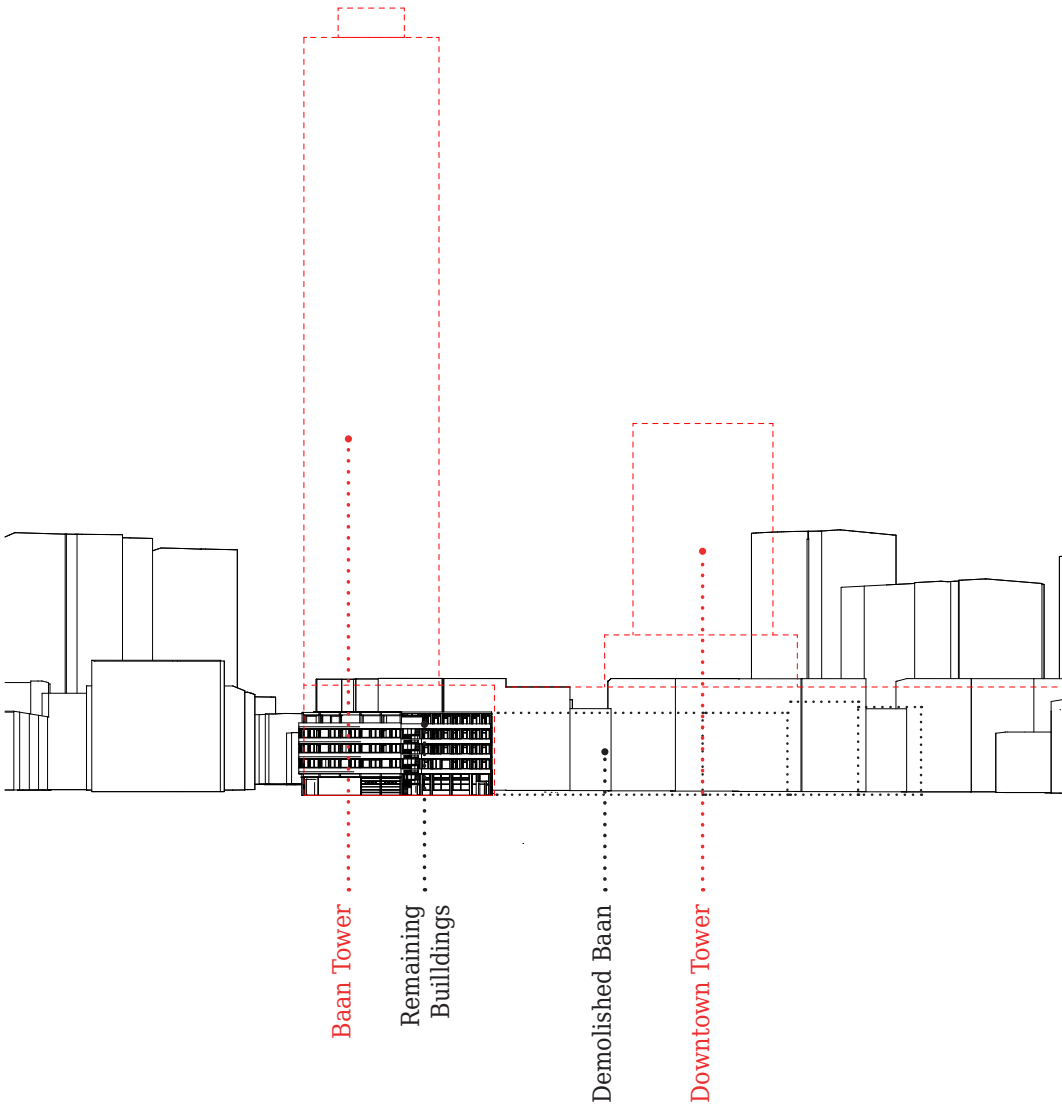
Demolished Baan

Downtown Tower

Fig. 24
Section of the Baan showing the developments
plans of the Baan, and Downtown Towers in red

Cool Tower
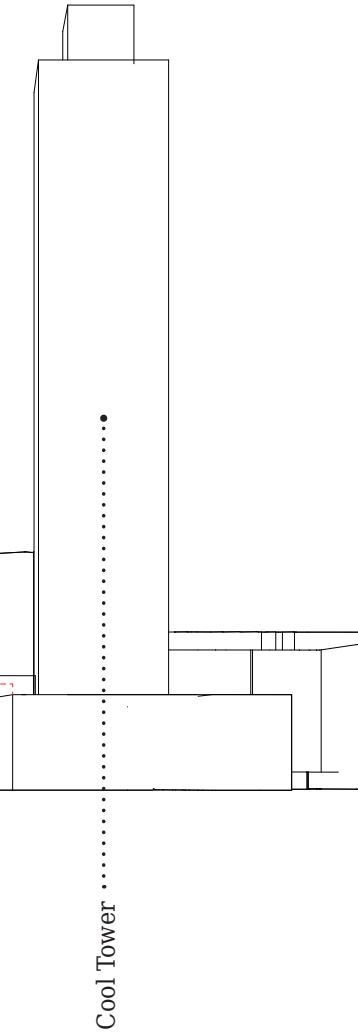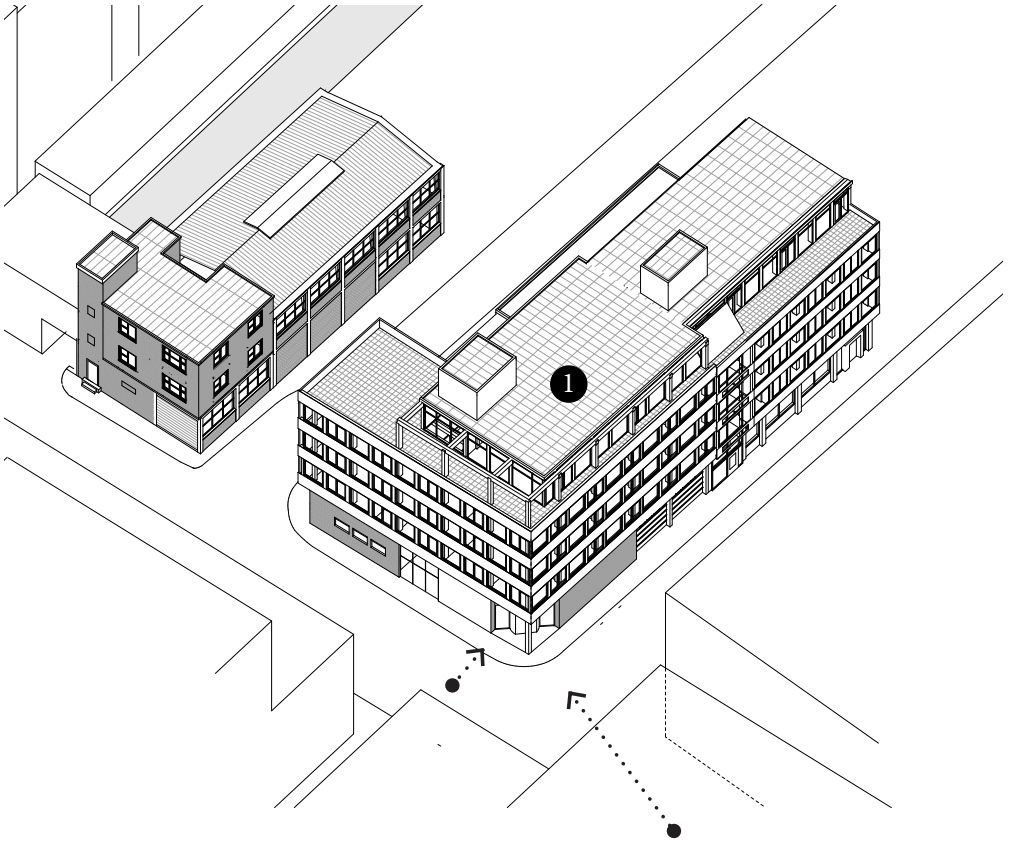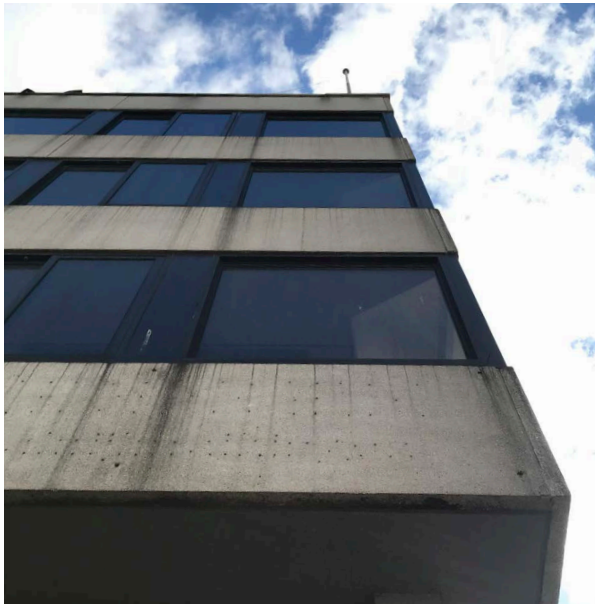

Fig. 25
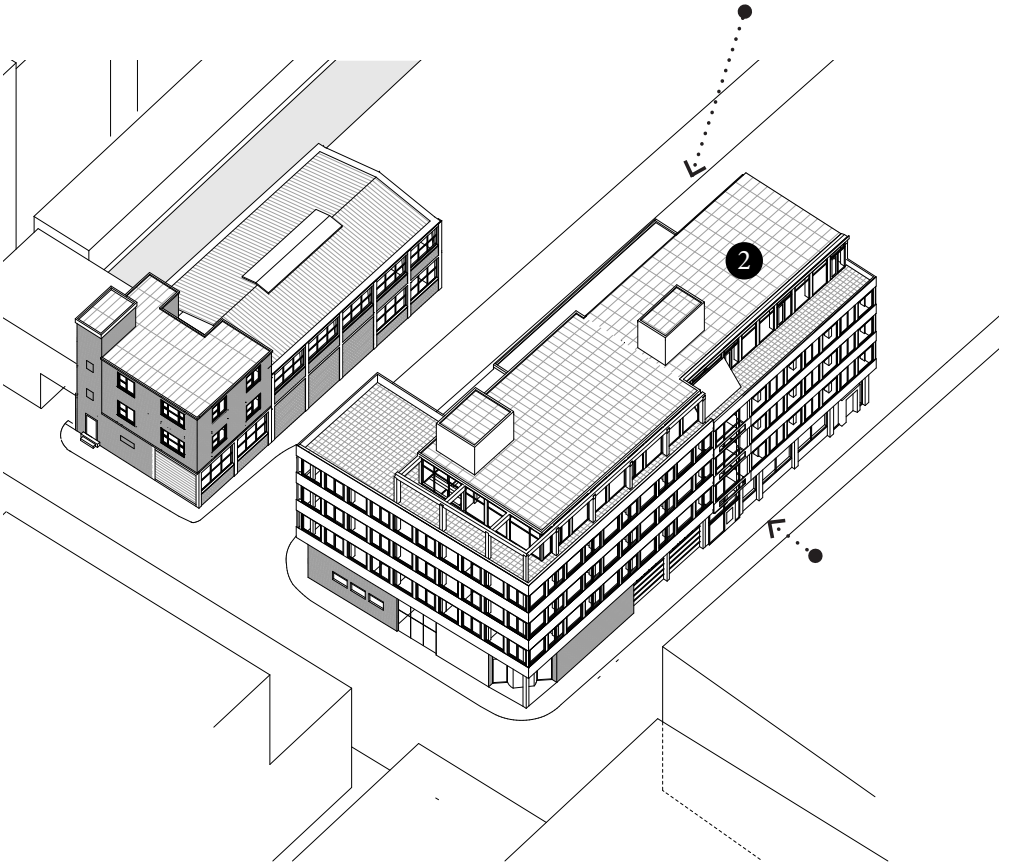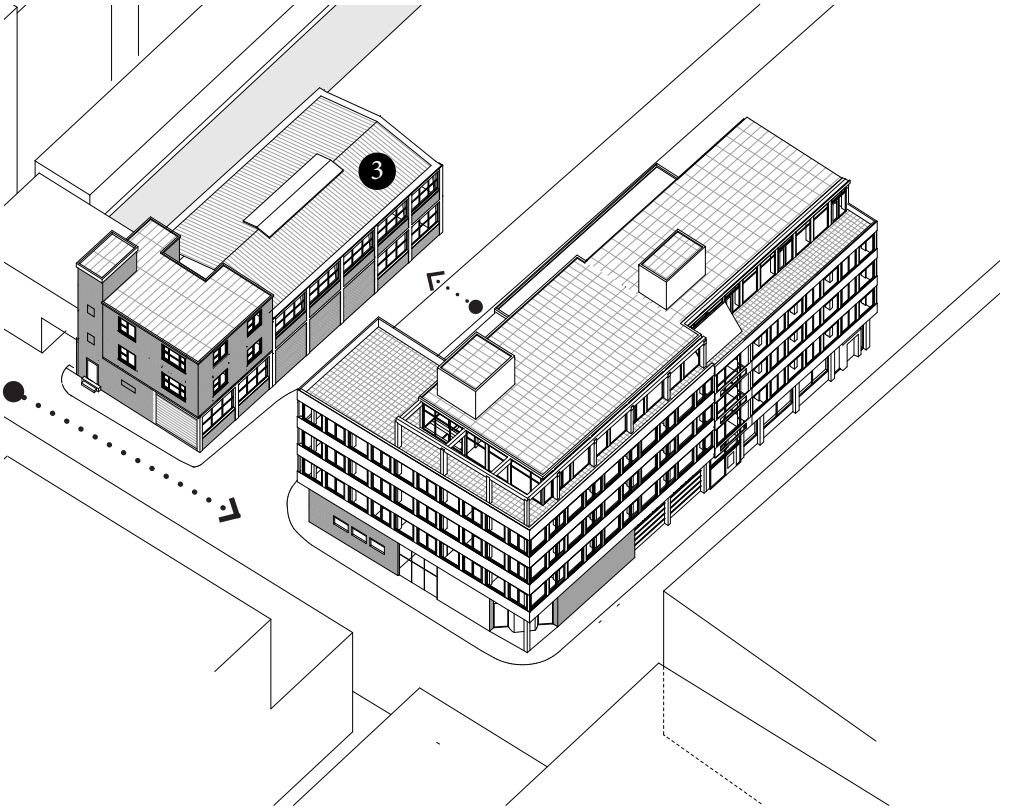Visuals of the Baan Tower Developement
Photo: REDC Company

Fig. 26
Axonometry of the three remaining buildings

*Towards an Architecture Activist Practice*

BUILDING A NARRATIVE OF AN EMERGING CLIMATE MOVEMENT

In my design project, I am investing through a speculative narrative – how a climate movement could emerge in the three-remaining building of the Baan, protecting the exiting web-of-life and territorializing new heterogenous ways of existing. Acknowledging the inherent use-value of the condition I transpose the knowledge of the cartography of XR into the context of a specific build environment. The project is centred around a diagrammatic drawing of this narrative in which components unfold on a temporal axis.

Transversal to the temporal axis the project picks up the same five categories of the XR Cartography, Agreements, Individuals, Institutions, Happenings and Spaces to show how material and expressive components individuate through their interrelation on the temporal axis. The project then, zooms into a few of the components of the speculation. Like into the demands the movement has, specific happenings that shape the movement, and drawing of spaces in the making. In the narrative, I try to show that the material components, or the 'architectures' are always a product of complex interrelations in an assemblage that are made and unmade in a constant flux. The project narrative is broadly divided into three acts.

Fig.27
Fragment of the narrative drawing

Demolshion of the Baan

Inhabitation

Break-In

Initiatic

Initiation Collective

Founders
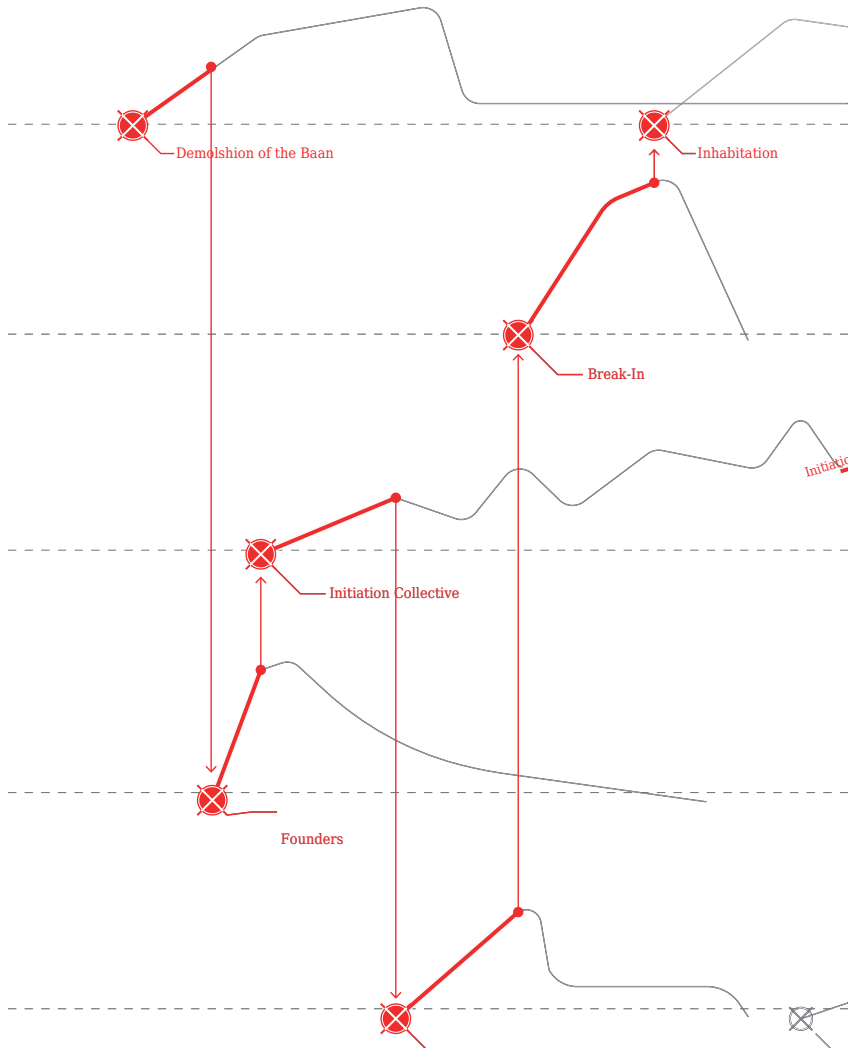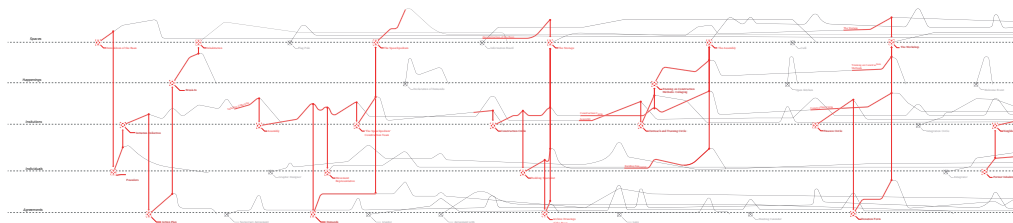
1. The initiation of the movement, showing how an initial movement emerges and claims the three remaining building structures of the Baan. In this first act the movement establishes an inhabitation in one of the buildings. It decides on the crucial forms of governance and organization and declares their demands.

2. Building Life, in which the movement territorializes other forms of life, knitting connections inside the existing building structure, neighbourhood organizations, venues and educational institutions.

3. Challenging Homogenization, in which the movement prepares for the possible eviction through architectures that are erected, press statements, new form of organization etc. with the aim to prolong or prevent the eviction through the executive arm of the Dutch state.
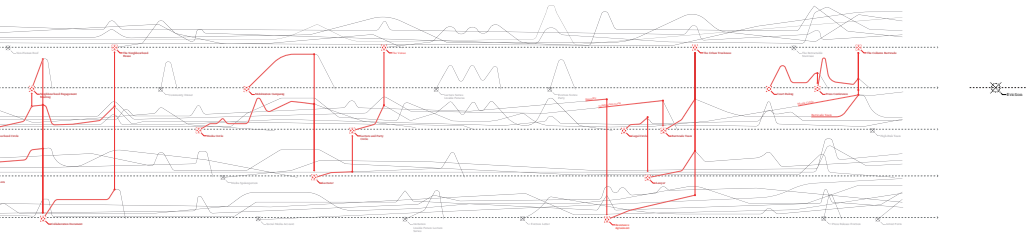
Fig.28
Narrative drawing

A NEW IMAGINARY OF THE ARCHITECTURE PRACTICE

With my project and with the speculation of a climate movement emerging in the remaining buildings of the Baan– I hope evoke a new imagination on how a spatial practice can exist in activist struggles, beyond the entrapment of economic needs. I hope to open new stories on how a design practice can engage in movements that shake up the status-quo and use design to form space as components in the web-of-life.

I touched upon a few notions that this entails. Questioning top-down design methods. Thinking of non-hierarchical forms of building, questioning material use, questioning the involvement of a designer, from a pure service provider for financial speculation to an involved integrated participant with agency. By questioning this, I want to challenge the way we think about the practice, and with that I hope to de-territorialize the networks that reproduce the paradigm also in this faculty of architecture. We cannot continue to just reproduce the existing – but we all must radically reimagine the way we make space.

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Fig.29
A visual of the ‚declaration of the demands'
after the occupation of the buildling by
the climate activist movement
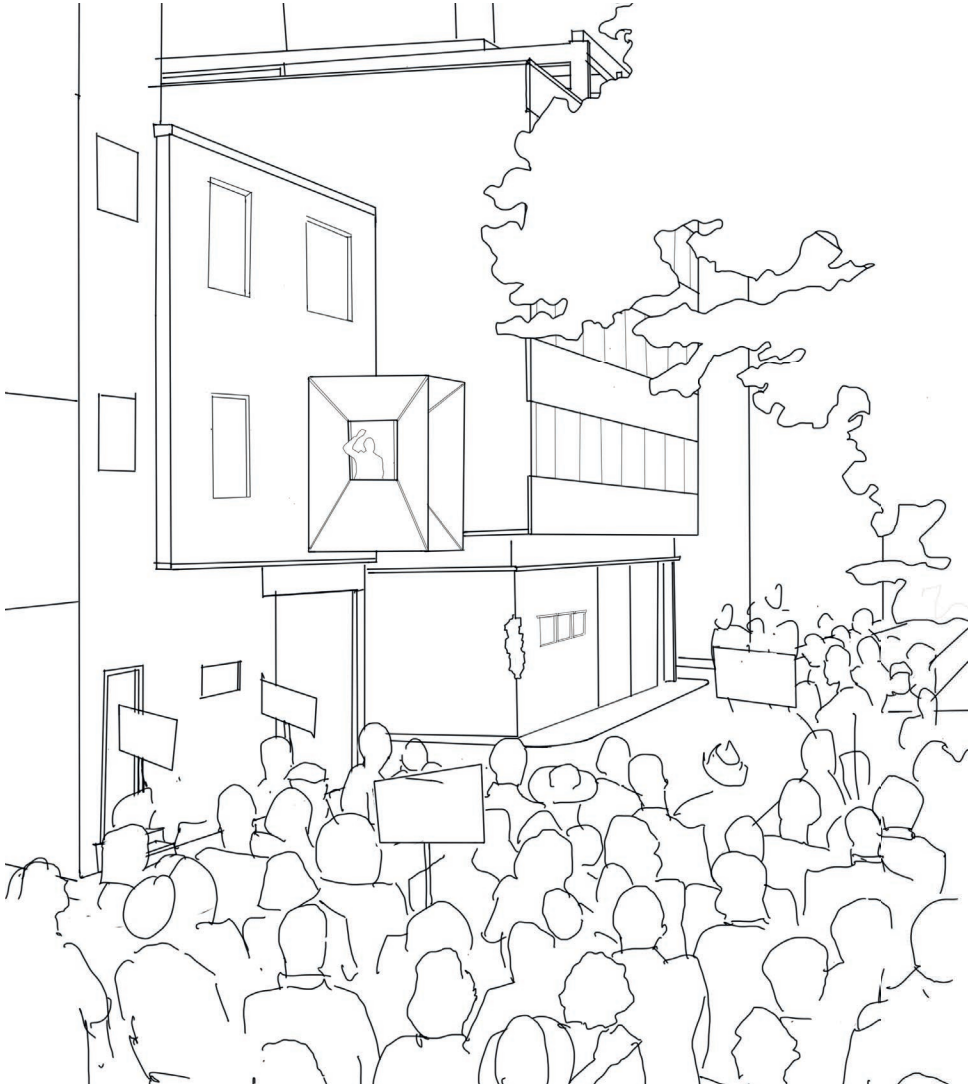
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