

SPACE FOR DISORIENTATION

finding, creating and allowing other urban directions

ACT III

TOWARDS DIALOGUES



PART OF GRADUATION COMPENDIUM

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4

AUTHOR'S NOTE

*Architecture is a verb. Architecture is not reserved to buildings.
To architecture means to create conditions of space that shift its orientations.*

5

This goes beyond the practice of the Architect.

Everyone could be a spatial practitioner.

VOICES

<i>the soul</i>	the broken individual
the academic	the ones piecing it together (and breaking it again)
<i>the inspiration</i>	the imparaphrasable outing

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

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p. 8 SCENE ONE: LET'S GET DISORIENTED gives an overview of reference projects that could be interpreted as embodying an disorientational approach.

p. 28 SCENE TWO: DIALOGUES OF DISORIENTATION gives an insight into the explorative process and pitfalls that emerge in exploring spatially designing disorientation in specific contexts.

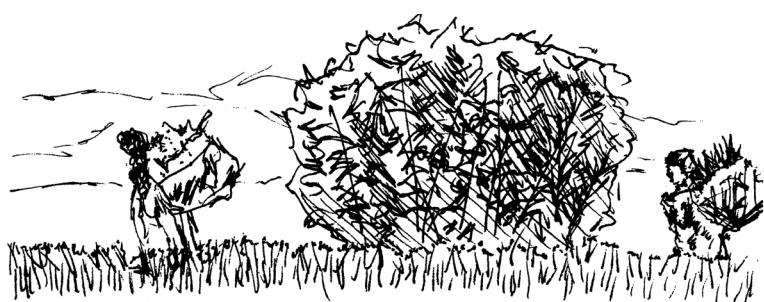
p. 62 SCENE THREE: RADICAL culminates as a diagrammatic language and interpretable qualities of disorientation as a spatial phenomenon, including an outline of a design brief.

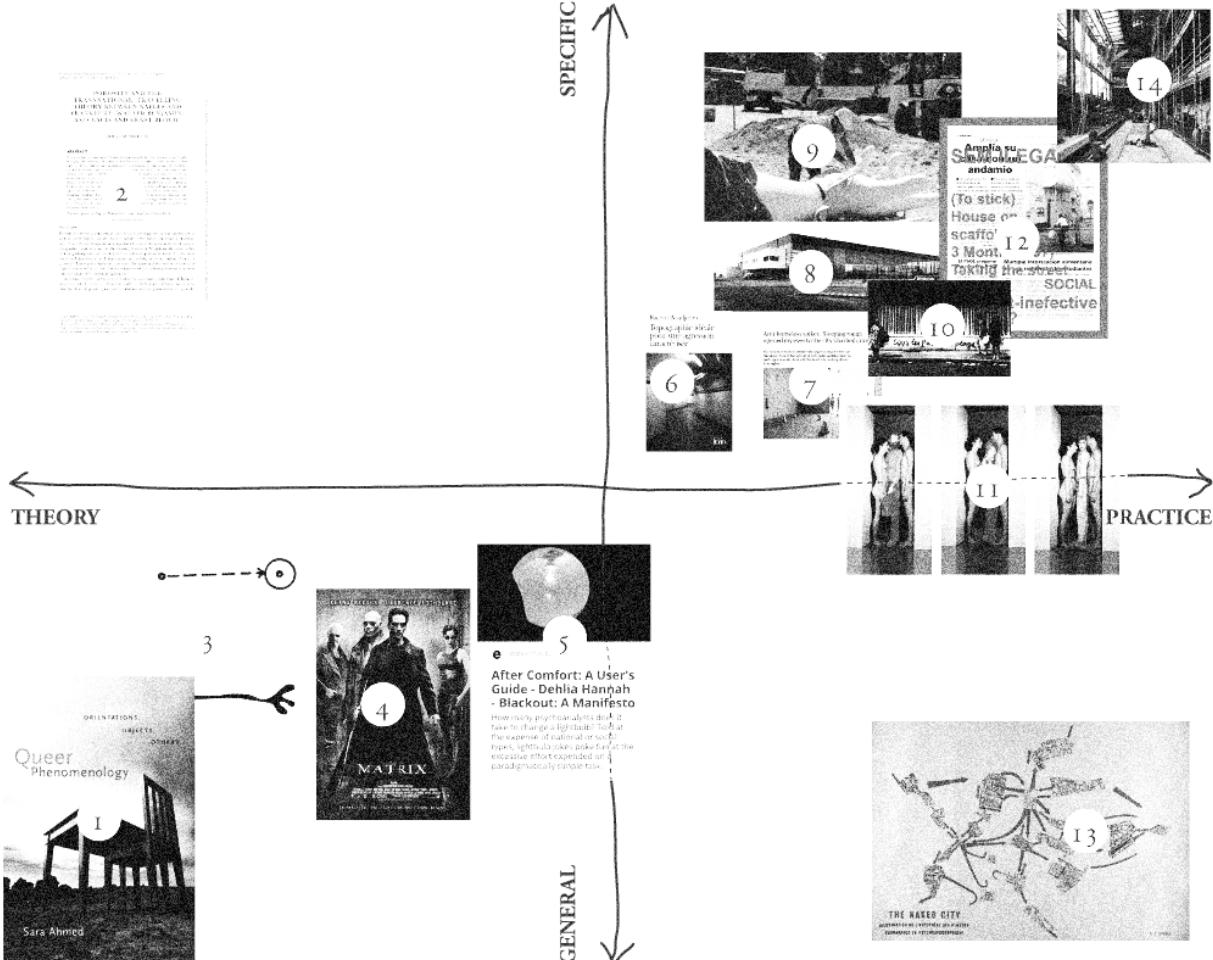
SCENE ONE: LET'S GET DISORIENTED!

*growing grain with green stalks blooms
with yellow kernels that eyes pursue
against heavy hills bold and brown
a bluish glow may let me drown*

*the land behind the house is not fertile
for these seeds to be planted
to grow,
grow,
grow (grow)
yet, every once in a while, it is full of corn,
towering high above the head*

*run through it,
run,
run (run),
until the leaves cut,
until it, the supple greenery,
scratch the body
and, bloodstained,
let it leave the field.*

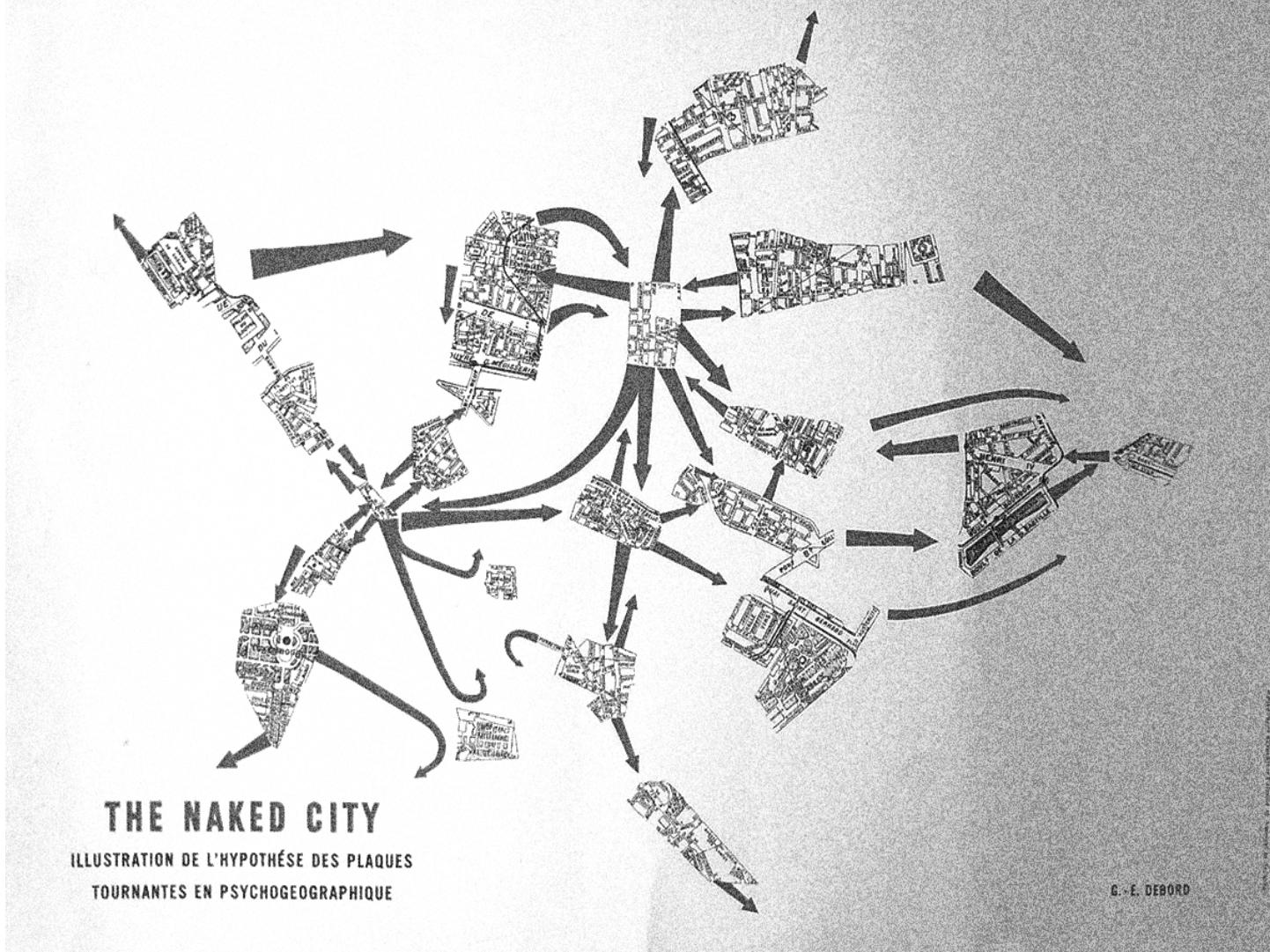




Disorientation is a hard-to-grasp phenomenon, which makes it equally challenging to carefully apply it to design practices. The ambition of spatialising disorientation led me to multiple reference projects which seemed to have an intuition rooted in disorientation, either consciously or unconsciously. Fourteen projects are shown in the overview above, alongside two axes of practicality and contextual specificity. For the sake of the brevity of this report, this scene discusses six diverse and relatively practical examples; 13) Situationist International 'dérive', 11) *Imponderabilia*, 9) *Sic Transit Gloria Mundi*, 8) De Meerpaal, 14) Teatro Oficina and 10) "sous les pavés la plage". The aim is to try and find moments of spatial disorientation that nestle within an urban fabric, and preferably public space.

The projects that are not discussed in this Act are still very relevant for exploration (or critique) of what it means to (be) disorient(ed). Some are discussed in another Act of this compendium. The authors and titles are the following:

1) *Queer Phenomenology* by Sara Ahmed, theoretical foundation of (dis)orientation.
 2) *Porosity and the Transnational* by Douglas Smith, interpretation of Westernised disorientation.
 3) *Disorienting Phenomenology* by Brian E. Norwoord, critical phenomenological theory.
 4) *The Matrix* by the Wachowski sisters, cult classic movie bearing disorientational effects.
 5) *Blackout: A Manifesto* by Deliah Hannah, essay on importance and potential of disorientational modes.
 6) *Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée* by Rachid Boudjedra, novel on migrant disorientation.
 7) *Anti-homeless spikes* by Alex Andreou, lived experience of hostile architecture.
 12) *Taking the street*, by Santiago Cirugeda, guerilla practice of urban loopholes.



PRACTISING GETTING LOST

As discussed in many tutoring sessions, this research project closely resembles the approaches of the Situationist International movement. Their desire for a serious reflection on the existing order was expressed in several projects in the public realm. SI frontrunner Guy Debord distilled the artistic movement's ideas into a manifesto titled *Report on the Construction of Situations*, in which they vouched for a 'psychogeographical approach'.¹ This mode of exploring the urban environment from an experiential, individual point of view gave birth to the 'dérive', which literally required a letting-go of the usual motives for action and movement.²

"Naked City" - a
Psychogeographical map
of Paris,
Debord, 1957

The concept of dérive stems from an opposition against the *flâneur*, which tries to wander the city in a way that does not conflict with any of the city's movements, so to be a fly on the wall and take in everything around them, figuratively speaking; walking at the speed of your pet turtle. While Debord saw the dérive as the initiator for chance encounters or an invitation to break taboos, it seems that the aimless wandering generally did not constitute a large-scale disorientation and remained at the level of an individual, or that of a small collective.

RITE OF PASSAGE

Elaborating on this, we can find performance art as a vessel that has also considered the use of the body as a site or tool for spatial disorientation. A clear depiction of this intention can be derived from *Imponderabilia*, a travelling performance art piece by Marina Abramović and Ulay. The project involved a man and a woman, originally Abramović and Ulay themselves, standing naked in front of one another in a narrow doorway. Visitors of the exhibition were urged to enter by passing the naked bodies.³



Imponderabilia
Abramović and Ulay, 1977

Disorientation is experienced as immediate, intimate and, more generally, as affecting the body. At first, visitors often struggled with the idea of passing the naked bodies, the possible touches involved, after which many decided to break through the awkwardness anyway. To break away from an internalised idea of possibility demands a shift; embodied disruptions of the norms imposed on oneself.

Moreover, a retrospective exhibition performed by two different actors had allowed for a seeming transgression of sexual norms as the performers noted incidents of sexual assault during the performance.⁴ This disruption, when certain visitors deem it possible for groping or even raping to happen in a public space performance, has happened before in Abramović's work, in *Rhythm 0*. As the audience was allowed to do anything with her body for six hours, she explored how her body got pushed to its limits; she was held at gunpoint and left the performance feeling violated.⁵

Her performance art can be seen as exemplary of a disorientational mode as it allows for extreme transgressions, or estrangement, of the norms and values by which we live outside of the performance art space. The effects on bodies or ideologies can endure for minutes or years, especially considering aforementioned traumatic experiences.

UNCONVENTIONAL SPECTACLE

Others have attempted to curate and embed moments of disorientation in a publicly accessible urban space. Artist Dries Verhoeven aimed to unexpectedly rupture an orientation for passers-by by conceiving and executing a huge construction site on the otherwise popular market square Neude in Utrecht. Verhoeven's vision of a grand monument, *Sic Transit Gloria Mundi*, denounced the fall of Western hegemony.



'Sic Transit Gloria Mundi'
construction worker acting.
Verhoeven, 2018

The construction site included wooden fences all around with project banners in Arabic, Russian and Chinese and a construction booth from which passers-by can peek at the construction work. The booth also contained renderings, models and even souvenirs of the monument-to-be-built.⁶ What passers-by did not know was that the construction site had been designed as a theatrical act; the monument would never actually be built, and the construction workers active in the pit were secretly paid actors.

Contrasting the critical perspective of the monument, passers-by were mainly discussing the financial costs of the project, the disadvantages for the local hospitality industry and the terrace hours that regulars would have to miss out on because of it. Only for a handful of individuals would the project's disorientation strike a less superficial chord.⁷ What is perhaps more interesting is not the project itself, the architecture and its design, as it seemingly did not raise many concerns about the content. Rather, the process of organising and developing it together with a municipal authority would certainly take tremendous effort and conviction. It relates to ideologies of economic growth and the extent to which confusion can be beneficial, or at least argumentatively supporting, for such developments.

Once the site was cleared, business went on as usual.

AN UNCOMFORTABLE GATHERING

A similar desire to break with the constituted order urged Dutch architect Frank van Klingerden to design a public building in Dronten, in the Netherlands. Through programmatic gestures, van Klingerden aimed to use the community space of 'De Meerpaal' as a way of 'decluttering' a segregated society through functional 'hindrance'.



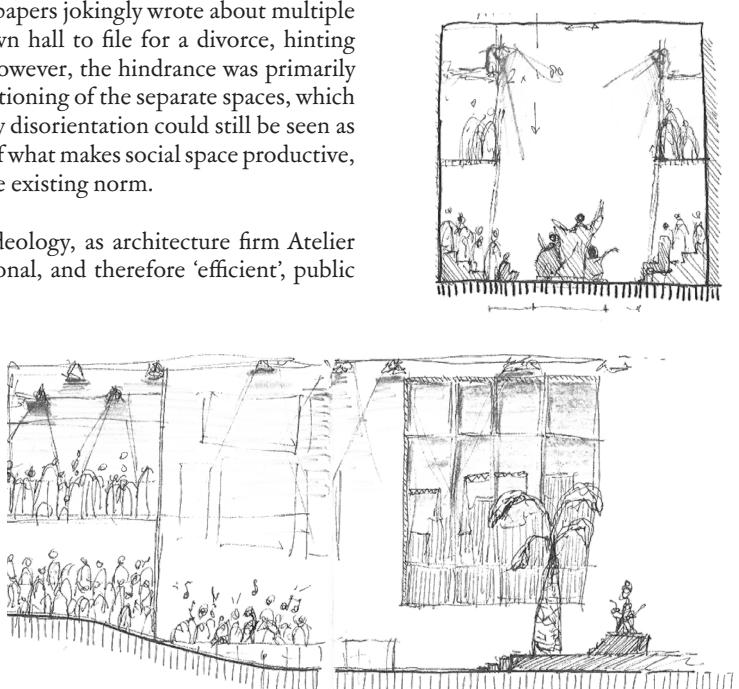
Photo taken inside de Meerpaal, Van den Berg en Vollard, 2003.

The open-spaced, box-like building was characterised by abnormal programmatic juxtapositions: a theatre hall next to a volleyball field or a brown café that doubled as a doctor's waiting room. Van Klingerden aimed to provide a milieu which let users come into contact with different individuals to widen their perspective on others.⁸ There were some signs of the disorientation of social structures, as newspapers jokingly wrote about multiple buses of wedded couples making their way to the town hall to file for a divorce, hinting at becomings of new love interests at De Meerpaal. However, the hindrance was primarily experienced as too chaotic, so that it disrupted the functioning of the separate spaces, which led to a total renovation of the building. The temporary disorientation could still be seen as successful, as it actively challenged the existing notion of what makes social space productive, although it eventually resulted in a reinforcement of the existing norm.

Again, not much is left of the building's original ideology, as architecture firm Atelier Pro transformed the building into a more conventional, and therefore 'efficient', public condenser.

REST = RESISTANCE

Architecture could therefore also be considered potentially disorientational in the things it does not align with or confine to, as a non-moving alternative to the development of orientation. Take Lina Bo Bardi's Teatro Oficina: firstly, the conventional theatrical arrangement is queered into a linear layout in which the spectators are seated directly next to a runway, which is considered the 'stage'. It blurs the relationship, or divide, between spectator and actor.





Teatro Oficina inside.
Kon, 2019

Moreover, the question of 'what is theatre' practically becomes a protest through the manifestation of the building. The renovated theatre building is found next to several lots of barren ground on which planned neo-liberal development will take place. Since the moment the organisation got the permission for the construction on these lots, the entire crew of the Teatro Oficina has taken to the streets to make sure the bulldozers do not do so much as touch the Teatro, as the intent of the municipal authorities for these lots is not transparent at all. In one of these rallies, not only actors and writers, but even (left-leaning) politicians locked arms around Oficina to form a human barricade.⁹

Teatro is a testament to the continuous effort and energy that is needed to uphold the possibility for spaces of disorientation, especially in contexts with a tenacious tendency for smooth violence. Disorientation requires an act of maintenance in itself to endure such violence.

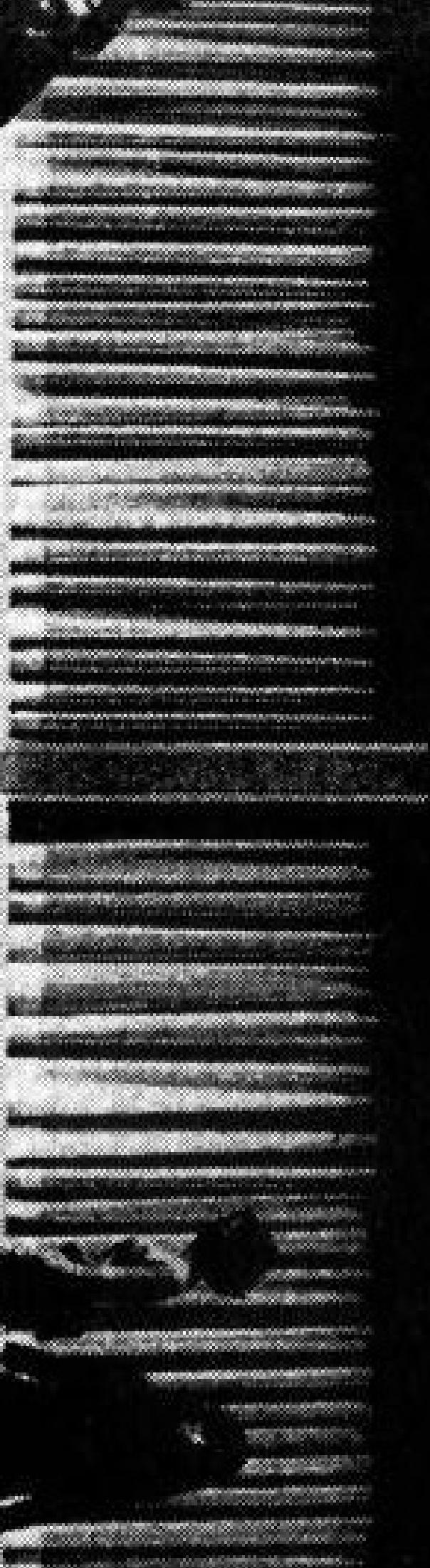
HACKING THE SYSTEM

Thus, disorientation can influence participatory potential. In this case, we consider the potential of disorientation to estrange democratic space, or opening up potential for enacting democracy within a space. While democracy is generally enacted through representation and participation, we should also underline the importance of agonistic conflict as a generative force of democracy. Democracy needs to recognise 'difference' first before democratic consensus can be achieved. The precursor to consensus is dissensus¹⁰, a situatedness¹¹ that relates to the embedded and embodied social position of difference. Therefore, to embrace agonistic conflict is to quite literally make space for dissensus, both literally and figuratively.¹²

We can find such moments in acts of protest, where this research takes three examples.

'Sous les pavés la plage'
graffiti on a wall in Paris.
Unknown author, 1968

Sous les Paix, la plage





Firstly, the literal and figurative overturning of urban surfaces was indicative of the riots in Paris in May 1968. *Sous les pavés la plage* could be read on several structures in the city, as protestors took to the streets to use pavement tiles as barricades, using the space to claim their democratic right, while simultaneously revealing the layers of the city.

A similar act was seen in a protest in Los Angeles, the United States, this year. During one of the protests, public space furniture was reassembled to form a barricade, a defensive structure, against the police force.

Thirdly and lastly, we find the protests organised by Extinction Rebellion in the Netherlands, during which they regularly block the A12 highway by way of a stationary manifestation of people.

Not only the acts themselves, but also the backlash of discussion and aversion to such protests that subsequently erupted, clearly show the ambiguity that exists around 'acceptable forms of protest' nowadays. It apparently struck such a sensitive chord of neo-liberal goals of productivity that additional laws are being written and implemented to prevent specific forms of protest, to the extent that it presumably undermines the right of democracy.

*underneath the Surface
we find a Sea*

Protesters take cover
behind public furniture in
downtown Los Angeles.
The Associated Press, 2023

DESIGNING DISORIENTATION

In conclusion, we can find various aspects that differ greatly between the projects, but still indicate a disorientational mode that influences the (lasting) impact. Certain intents and energies produce a project, intervention or action of which the goal is not always clearly defined, aside from expected consequences. For example, there is usually a direct position taken against a certain aspect of an orientation, which could be seen in the same light as a 'disorientation device'.

*underneath the surface
we find the sand*



Seated protesters on A12.
ANP/Het Parool, 2024

SCENE

Moreover, catalysts of disorientation are fueled by various positionalities, ranging from intrinsic desires to foster (internal) change of norms or beliefs, to acts of resistance which are deemed necessary for the sake of human rights. These efforts are all materialised in a wide variety of actions and objects: wandering, standing still, building, blocking, locking arms, leaving, entering, overturning, undressing, faking, meeting, changing, nearing, following, and so on. In other words, there is not a singular materiality of spatial disorientation.

The impacts of these various actions are always experienced by objects or actors, where we can distinguish two aspects that are interwoven: experience and enactment. Relating this to Act II: Scene Five, which states that marginalised communities are often at the receiving end of disorientation, this chapter alludes to the possibility of privileged bodies choosing to be disoriented because of so-called *zones of exception*.

At last, the physical and mental impact that such disorientating moments generate should not be dismissed. On the contrary, the effects that get written on the body and the marks that are left in on spaces are perhaps the most indicative of and related to the potential of spatial disorientation; while some projects clearly intent to more radically disorient, others only 'dabble' in disorientation.

1	Debord, 1957	6	Verhoeven, 2018	10	Guattari, 1989/2000
2	Wollen, 2001	7	van den Broek, 2018	11	Braidotti, 2014
3	Abramović & Ulay, 1977	8	van den Bergen & Vollaard, 2003	12	Davis, 2024
4	Sutton, 2024	9	Martí, 2018		
5	Abramović, 1975				

SCENE TWO: DIALOGUES OF DISORIENTATION

Case studies are chosen to iterate different sketch designs to see the role disorientation could have in the design process within urban public spaces.

All interventions are designed with Paris, Nanterre, La Défense or adjacent locations as a backdrop. These locations emerged from conversations with my tutors as well as points of attachments that were found in previous research projects of mine. During two visits of Paris in February and April 2025, I wandered Paris in an attempt to ground the theoretical framework of spatial (dis)orientation, so that I could start this research-by-design process. During my field trips, I had meetings with a few individuals who all possess different sets of knowledge on Paris, Nanterre, colonial history, migration or other relevant expertises.

For example, in conversation with Léopold Lambert, Paris-based researcher, writer and architectural activist, I discussed the possibility of cultivating friction in the current socio-political context of the French capital.¹ In this discussion, topics such as colonial history, immigration struggles and internalised racism were regularly named, alongside the importance of carefully handling room for this struggle, in particular on the outskirts of Paris. Other equally insightful conversations were had with eco-activist Roger des Prés, architectural history researcher Stéphanie Dadour and Algerian historian Chérif Cherfi.

Additionally, I embarked on individual excursions through Paris and Nanterre, during which I tried to get a feel for the various spaces, their (intended) users and uses, atmosphere and other spatial qualities. This mostly resulted in photographic documentation, but ultimately made me realise the knowledge gap that exists between theorising spatial disorientation and applying it to a socio-political context. It quickly became clear that many design iterations would be needed to explore what methods or architectural language could serve the purpose of generating spatial disorientation.

This part of the research-by-design process features eight dialogues of disorientation, which are different quick design sketches. They vary in the design methods used: model-making, poetic production, collaging, architectural sketches. This is done with the intent of identifying important challenges and pathways for designing spaces of disorientation in different situations and through different pathways. This also meant that design iterations might have to go beyond the ways of designing that were taught as part of the architectural canon at TU Delft, including radical spatial imagination, geopoetical approaches and queering designs. Although most of the dialogues still majorly resemble sketches indicative of a conventional design approach, they still provide generous insights on the challenges that are ubiquitous within the application of spatial disorientation to a specific context.

These explorations are called 'dialogues' here as they never are a superficial manifestation of disorientation, but are always related to the context, regardless of whether the intervention can be considered 'successful' in the disorientation it aims to cause. Furthermore, they are found to be conversations in themselves; they do not provide a singular conclusion to what spatial disorientation is or should look like in various context and with various intentions. Rather, they are created as catalysts for discussion to potentially find, create and understand ways of designing disorientation in different settings so that they e.g. do not reinforce existing struggles of marginalised communities or individuals.

In a couple of the dialogues, I used literature on the history of the bidonvilles of Nanterre², as well as images, films and documentaries on the lives lived in Parisian *banlieues*³, to make room for their conflictive pasts, presents and projections. For example, learning from Lambert, a key aspect that is missing for Nanterre specifically is a monument of commemoration for the demolished bidonvilles. These dialogues are careful attempts at creating architectures that open conversations on the violence of contextual orientations, and the openings that emerge in moments of disorientation.



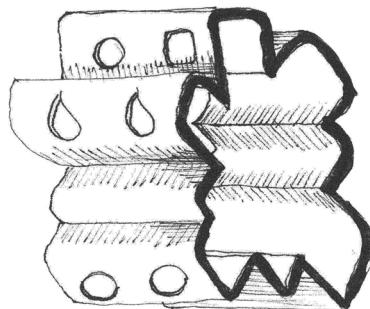
DIALOGUE 1: ARE THESE WALLS FOR DWELLING?

Borrowing from the construction approach of the bidonvilles themselves, this intervention could be built solely from the scraps of the urban developments that it neighbours. In this case, we find the Tours Aillaud, a high-rise project located at the periphery of La Défense, consisting of eighteen towers through which a serpentine parking garage fills up the public space. The area surrounding them has seen many conflicts, as protesters often take to the street, e.g. after the death of 17-year old Nahel Merzouk in 2023. In a way, the towers have become synonymous with the struggle of generations of migrants in the banlieue, as has also been materialised in the theatrical diptych 'La Tête dans les Nuages'.⁴

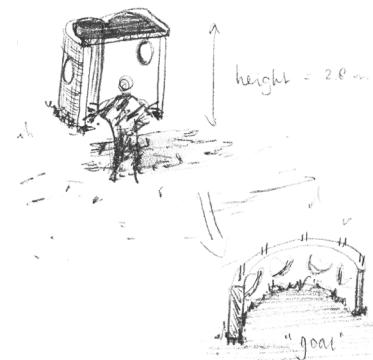
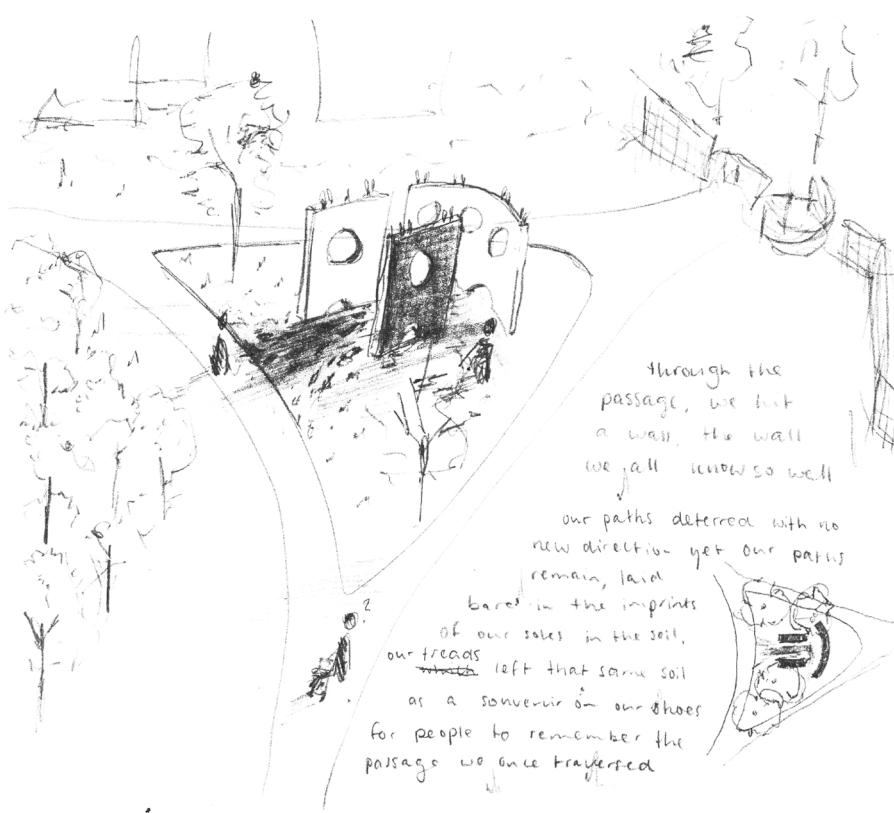
Considering this, architectural elements were aimed to be merged through various interventions. Each uses the planned demolition of a tower as building blocks, with a focus on a public space setting, to reply to the aforementioned situations, to make room for struggles of the past and new directions.

In one of the design iterations, I saw the opportunity to use a composition of fragments to resemble a monumental and sculptural garden, where the creation of repetitive footsteps and the presence of a water tap would serve as a critique of the poor infrastructural quality of the shantytown.

In another, the curved wall fragments could serve as football goals in the Parc-André Malraux where repetitive playing would erode the grass and reveal the ground underneath, perhaps as a callback to the barren mudfields of the bidonville.



1



*through the
passage, we hit
a wall, the wall
we all know so well.*

*our paths deterred with no
new direction yet our paths
remain, laid
bare in the imprints
of our soles in the soil,
our treads left that same soil
as a souvenir on our shoes
for people to remember the
passage we once traversed*



Larger wall fragments could even be used to create hideouts on the hills of the park, where camera surveillance aimed to mitigate 'unwanted behaviours', although these undesired acts are not explicit.

But, what kind of change would such spatial interventions bring about? The football players are already using the grass field by bringing their own portable goals and the hill would probably still only be used the joggers frequenting its altitude as they are still doing now daily. On another note, the creation of an abstract monument, although visibly reflecting the Tours Nuages, could be seen as an intrinsically Western approach to memorialisation. A symbolic materiality does not reflect a radical shift in the relationship between bodies, objects and space.⁵ It is incredibly difficult to monumentalise a historical fact and its ties to colonial affects, especially since there is no personal connection to the struggle of the people, as the park already manifested a physical erasure of the place's history.

While a spatial disorientation is not thoroughly achieved, these sketches do reveal interesting learning moments for designing from a position of disorientation. There is a clear intent of positive change for, or at least recognition of, a marginalised demographic. One could imagine the tribulations that are bound to happen when collaborating with the company renovating the towers, and asking to re-use, and therefore re-value, the very objects that they want to cover up with shiny stainless steel sheets. Additionally, the quality of use over time that is found through the wear-and-tear of the surfaces in these sketches propose an interesting opposition to the passionate maintenance of the grass that the French are often known for. Lastly, this projects finds itself walking on a tightrope, as poetry and abstraction can easily be read as the mystification of real-life struggles. To what extent do these designs actually smooth over the situation and thereby fail to do justice to the physical and mental consequences that generations of migrants have to endure? To what extent is the intervention able to embody weight that is attached to addressing struggles?



DIALOGUE 2: CECI N'EST PAS UN LIT.

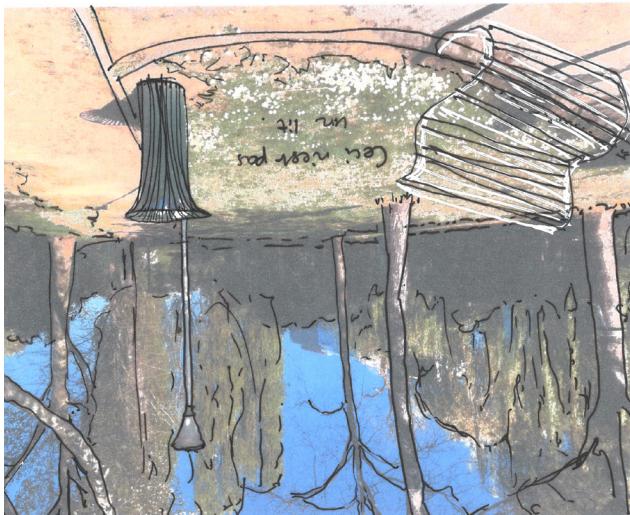
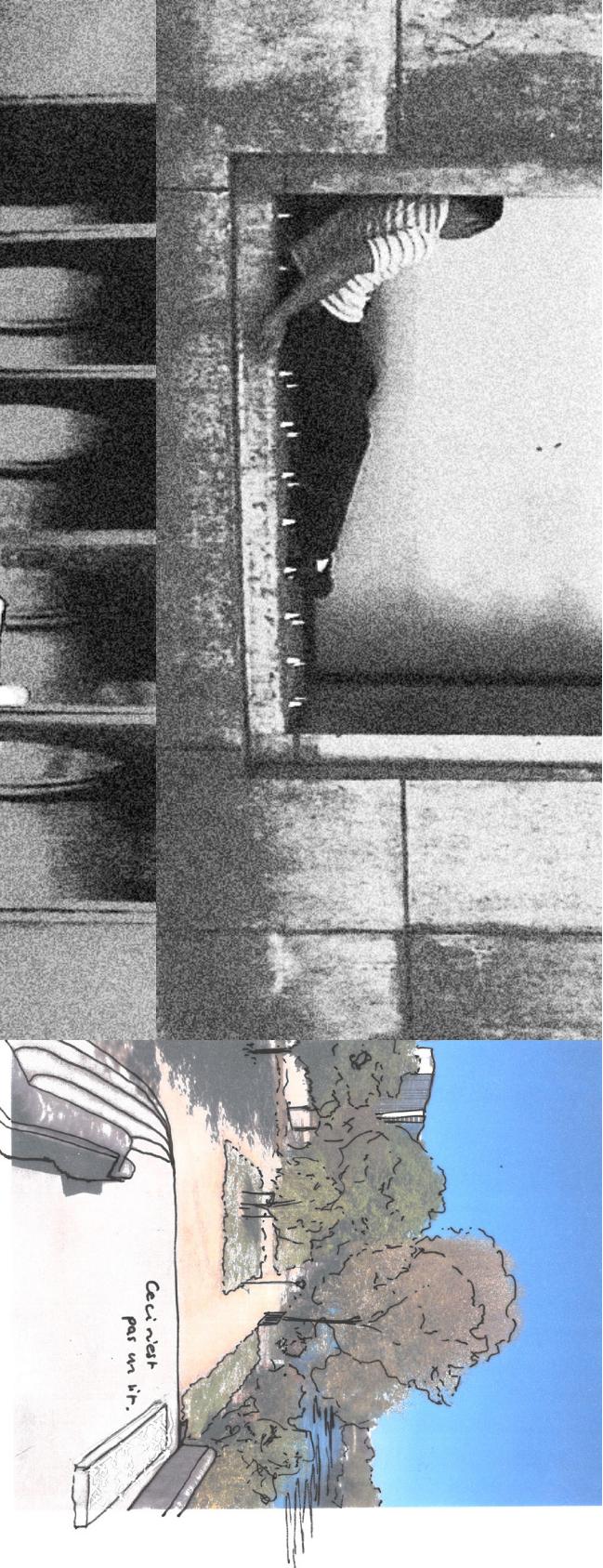
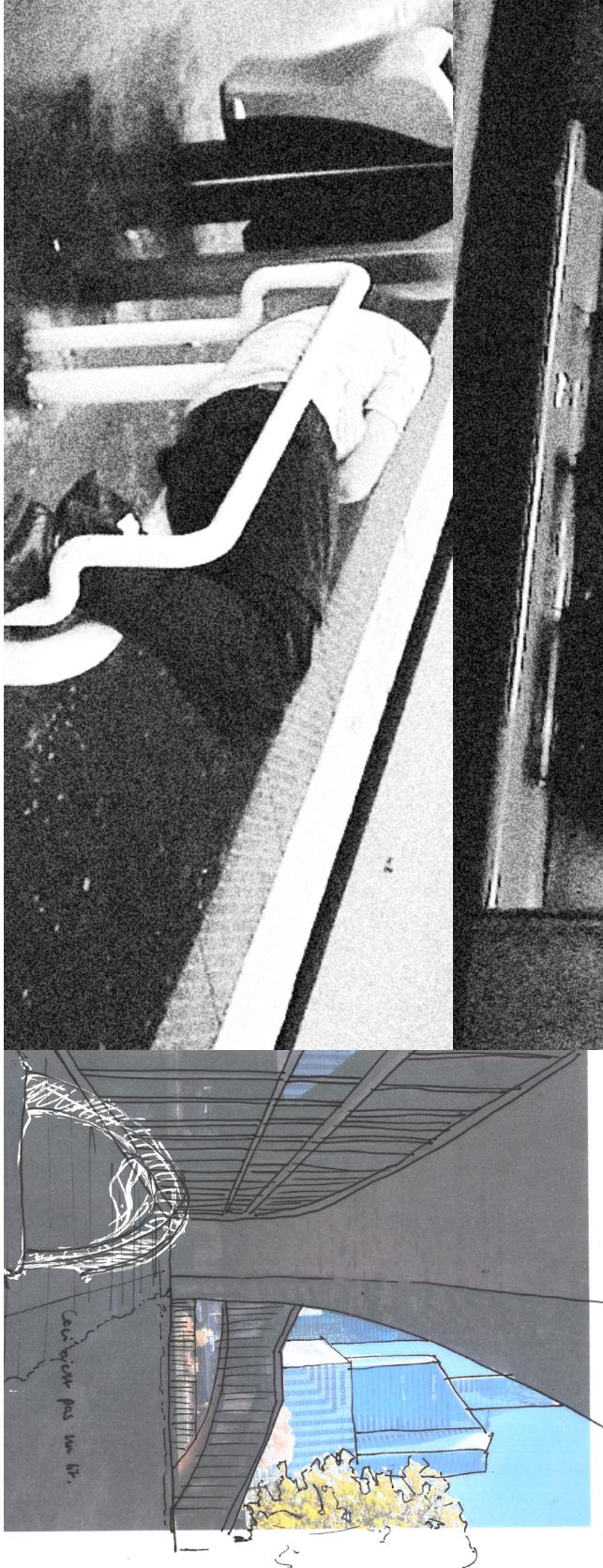
In another conversation, the goal would be to consider the ambiguous position towards the struggle of homeless people. Parisian authorities have an undisputed aversion to homelessness in public space, especially in commercial districts or the wealthier *arrondissements*, resulting in various instances of hostile architecture.⁶ Homeless people also move to less conventional sleeping locations such as the verges in between motorways. An inquiry for questioning anti-homeless architecture in public space was further motivated by the artistic critique of *The fakir's rest*, where multiple seating arrangements, which are deliberately designed in a way to complicate sleeping positions, are challenged by finding a sleeping position anyway. Why can or cannot we envision the possibility of sleeping in public spaces?

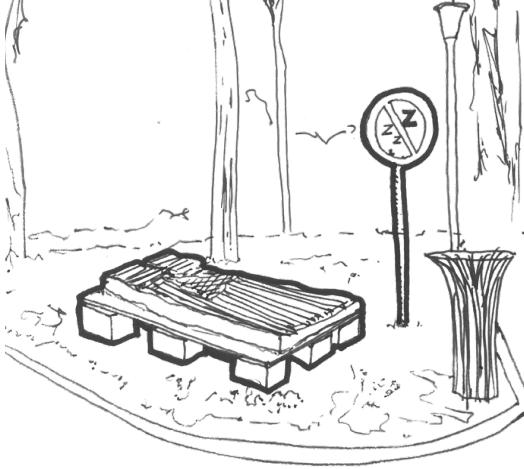
In this dialogue, the intention was to critique the marginalisation of homeless people in a similar way to the unintentional disruptive effect of the spikes in London. What kind of disorientation could various sights of sleeping structures in public space generate? By paraphrasing René Magritte's *ceci n'est pas une pipe*, the design iterations question what represents an object for sleeping and its justification. What is "supposed to be there" in a public space?

A fourfold of images is created on the park of the Île du Pont, located amidst the Seine between the city of Paris and La Défense. This capsule of an island could serve as a remarkable refuge for homeless people, although lacking warm shelter space. By adding 'conventional' resting materials for homeless people, based on personally experienced sightings in streets, we can envision how this would change the atmosphere or potential uses of the park.

Additionally, two interventions are proposed; one is a direct representation of a modular bed frame, including a mattress, pillows and a blanket, while the other is an ambiguous structure made up of two panels, one in wood below and a grated steel sheet above.

- see overleaf -
Still from 'The fakir's rest'.
Pati & Agillet, 2003.





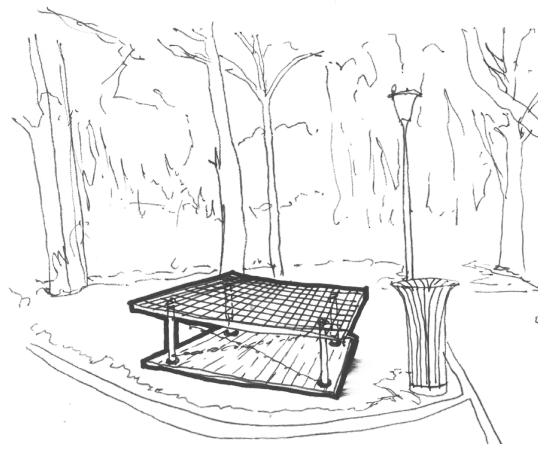
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When envisioning the first intervention, it calls to critique the idea of creating situations that further marginalise, or at least figuratively pour more salt in the wound of, the already disadvantaged individuals. One can imagine the confusion felt by passers-by. The latter intervention would draw less attention, perhaps, by being less 'direct'.

It begs the question to what extent an immanently critical situation can be created without being at the expense of homeless people. Moreover, these design iterations do not fully consider the lived experience of homeless people and the way they see certain locations and objects as fit for sleeping, but are created from an outsider perspective without a proper understanding of where such structures should be placed. Again, the contextuality should be carefully considered in the design process to judge its potential for disorientation and the consequences that might result from the design decisions.

DIALOGUE 3: *A NOSTALGIA FOR THE MUD*

The interesting wear-and-tear quality of the muddiness in DIALOGUE 1 could be turned into a conceptual intervention of its own. In this sketch design, situated on the bank of the Seine at the edge of the Parc du Chemin de l'Île, another historical location of a bidonville would be taken as a site for potential disorientation. More directly, the intention of creating a monument for the slums would be combined with historical accounts of protests and their relationship to the Seine.



ACT III TOWARDS DIALOGUES

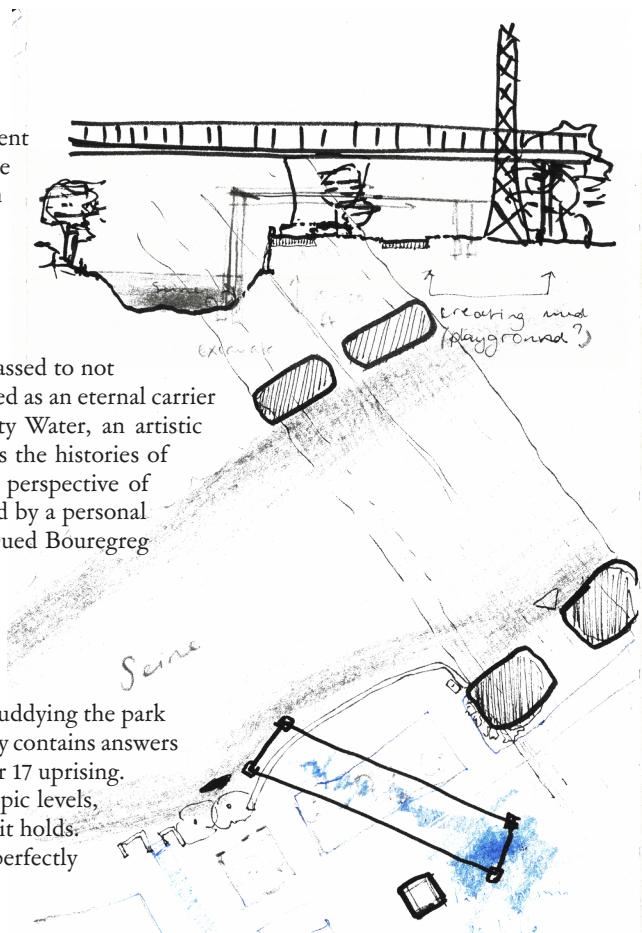
SCENE TWO: DIALOGUES OF DISORIENTATION

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In the dissection of the Algerian uprising and the subsequent massacre of hundreds of Algerian on October 17, 1961, we find the Seine as a place of murder and therefore suppression of marginalised voices.⁷ Many protesters have been found to be thrown off one of Paris's many bridges, after they would flow with the river's current until they subside and would presumably come to a rest within the river's bed.

As the saying 'water under the bridge' alludes to something passed to not speak of it again, the water passing the bridge here is considered as an eternal carrier of memory. The intervention's approach is inspired by Dirty Water, an artistic project in which the river Thames is given a voice and recalls the histories of the city and its dwellers as a way providing an alternative perspective of the body of water.⁸ Additionally, this experiment is inspired by a personal project undertaken together with fellow students on the Oued Bouregreg in Morocco, during which a journal was produced that not only sees the river as water, but also her banks that are considered as (im)material holders of memory.⁹

The architectural installation proposed in this dialogue is an excavative instrument that takes soil from the river's banks, muddying the park it is built on with the water and river mud. This mud potentially contains answers or clues, evidence, for the murdered protesters of the October 17 uprising. After excavation, the river mud could be studied on microscopic levels, to reveal hidden information on its composition and the data it holds. Simultaneously, it would drip, muddy and splash all over the perfectly maintained eco-park.



In a way, the installation could be experienced as a spatial theater play, where passers-by would look in awe at the slow movements of the odd machine. To what extent is it important for potentially uninformed bystanders to understand what this moving structure is making a statement about? Or is the disorientation embedded within the shift of perception of the river as a stream of water to a carrier of suppressed stories? Considering French authorities, the development of such a structure should expect many obstacles along the way.

In that case, the installation almost becomes a redundant entity as this perceptive shift could be achieved in many different ways, albeit non-architectural ones. We could therefore also consider the use of architectural representations of plans, sections and diagrams as a way of disorienting the way we view certain spaces, situations, objects. Drawing can then be seen as a way to not only simplify or represent space, but also as a powerful tool to realise and internalise (re-)orientations.¹⁰

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DIALOGUE 4: JUST-THE-WAY-IT-IS ISLAND?

After an insightful collaborative tutoring session with Irene Luque Martín and a meeting with Anna Kozera of Urbanistas Rotterdam, I considered an approach of radical spatial imagination. Through the drawing of these sections, but also through conversations with Irene and her students, the approach of disorientation is found to be tied with the idea of 'unlearning', which had found its way into architectural discourse in 1937 already.¹¹

Again, the Île du Pont in between Paris and La Defense serves as a case study, explored through 'extreme' design scenarios. The imaginaries are expressed as sections to allow for quick conception of alternatives while remaining comparable to one another. Eight different section-scenarios are drawn from the Neuilly Bridge to the fenced-off skate park. Now, do you draw documented uses, only the spatial structures, in what state do we find the vegetation, etc? The scale and perspective of the section only allow for a certain amount of detail.

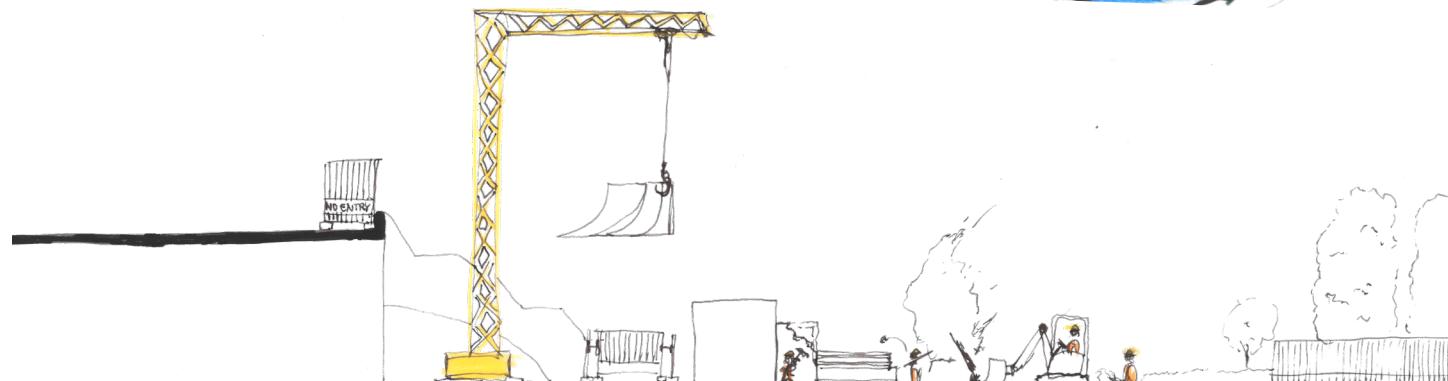
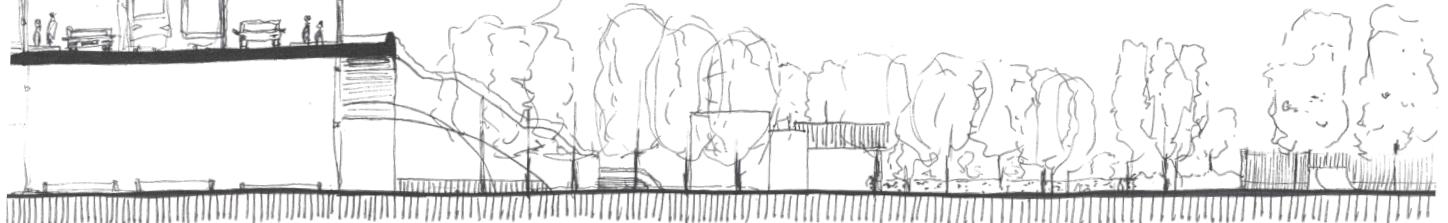
ACT III TOWARDS DIALOGUES

SCENE TWO: DIALOGUES OF DISORIENTATION

One of the sections is a drawing that is inspired by *Sic Transit Gloria Mundi* as it shows the island in a potentially permanent state of construction, including big yellow cranes and construction workers. Another opposes this by showing an artistically abstracted, yet expressive drawing of the island as a sort of dream state. Other sections stay closer to reality by imagining a commercialised version of the park; including a kiosk, an exclusive tennis club and several paywalls. Yet another queers the island in an effort to blur boundaries and intended uses through the addition of ambiguous, abstract structures, overgrowth and unprecedented uses of the park such as protest organisation and cruising. This queer imaginary is continued in another section which creates a nightlife scene, where the tennis courts underneath the bridge are replaced by a night club and the toilet building has been turned into a dark room with glory holes. Lastly, one section shows the island as a tidal landscape where the ecosystem redistributes the balance between human and non-human entities.

These spatial imaginaries consider various user groups and the programmatic implications that they would ensue; in other words, who are you aiming to disorient? Disorientation becomes a way for space and the design process to discard existing knowledge, or at least to more critically engage with it, to then generate alternatives that are not directly built upon existing precedents. For this to happen, it sometimes requires a non-thinking mode of drawing, in which you 'just do'. This could be seen in the same light as how taking a walk during a long study day can often generate new ideas as your unconscious mind stays productive, or is allowed to come up with ideas, without your consciousness interfering continuously. Nonetheless, most of the designs in these sections verge on being reproductions of stereotypes of what construction, void, queerness, ambiguity, etc. looks like.

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DIALOGUE 5: LET'S MAKE STRANGE ACTION

This part of the design phase aimed to explore this non-thinking mode further by starting to design from 'strange' actions, questioning what intended uses are within a certain space.

The four locations of DIALOGUE 2 were used to show multiple actions, either conventional or non-conventional, ranging from walking or sitting, to overturning the stones and jumping off the bridge. Collages were made which started from photos out of two photo books, non-related to a site or this project's content at all, after which the collage could be poetically interpreted within the framework of spatial disorientation.

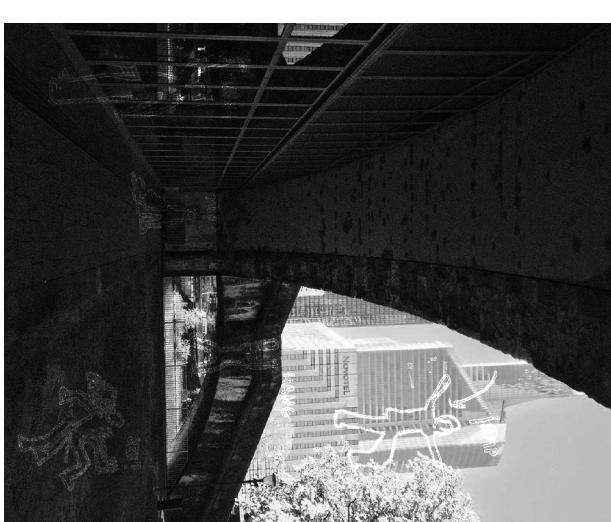
The collage shows a naked woman jumping off a stone suspended by a single rope into green, murky water, combined with a poem about the uncertainty and nerves related to jumping off the dangling stone.

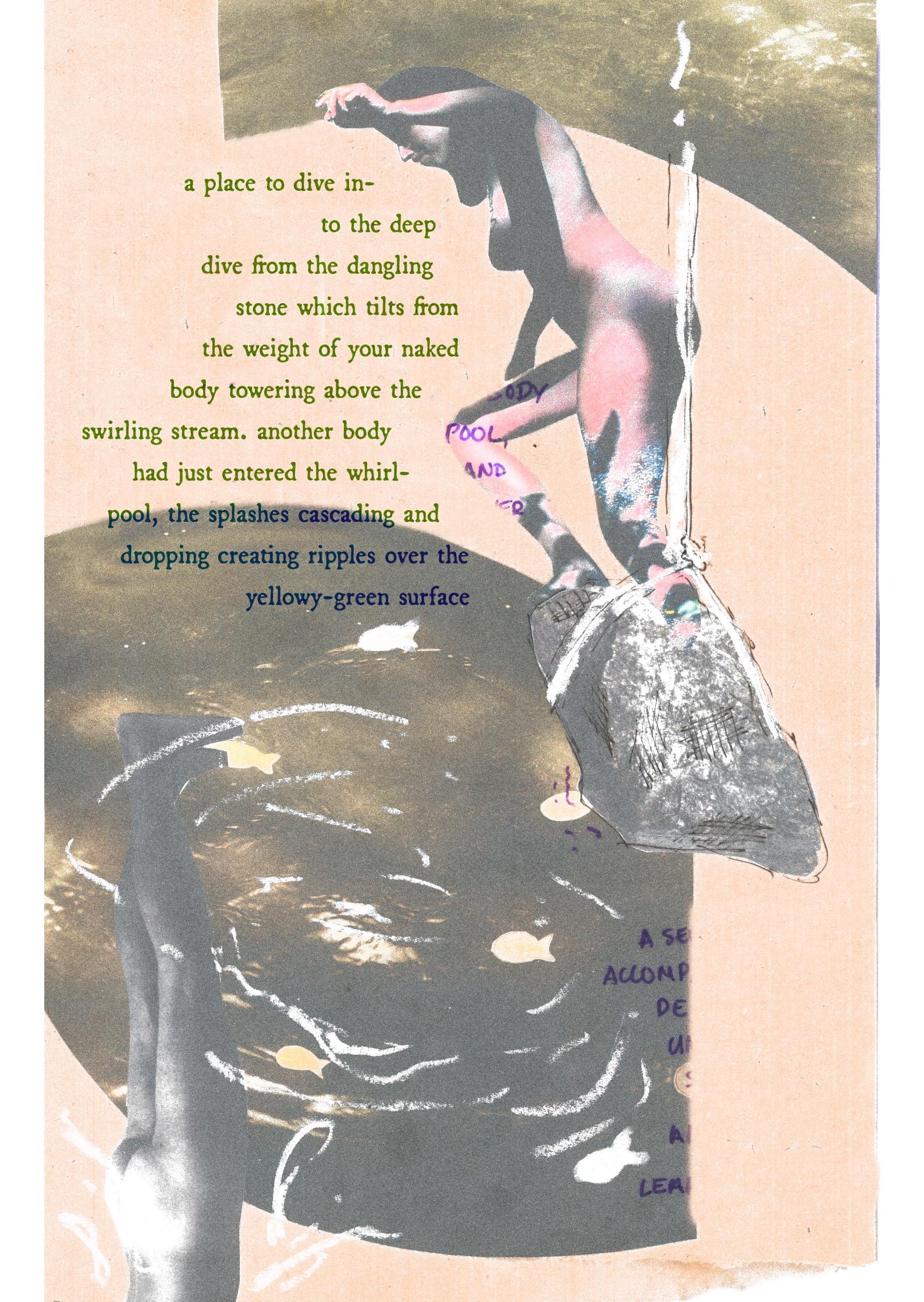
This way of design revealed the potential for play as a way of designing disorientation, or at least to break free from existing design patterns that are instructed by a conventional design approach that is taught in university. This approach did not lead to a situated architectural design, but it served as a base for further iterations, found in the next dialogue.

DIALOGUE 6: IT'S STONES UNDER THE BRIDGE. THAT'S IT.

Using the spatial ideas from the previous dialogue as a starting point, these sketches place the big boulders on the same island as the one in DIALOGUE 4.

The intent of this dialogue was to create unconventional, or simply 'strange', urban situations to explore what kind of unexpected uses would form from it.





a place to dive in-
to the deep
dive from the dangling
stone which tilts from
the weight of your naked
body towering above the
swirling stream. another body
had just entered the whirl-
pool, the splashes cascading and
dropping creating ripples over the
yellowy-green surface

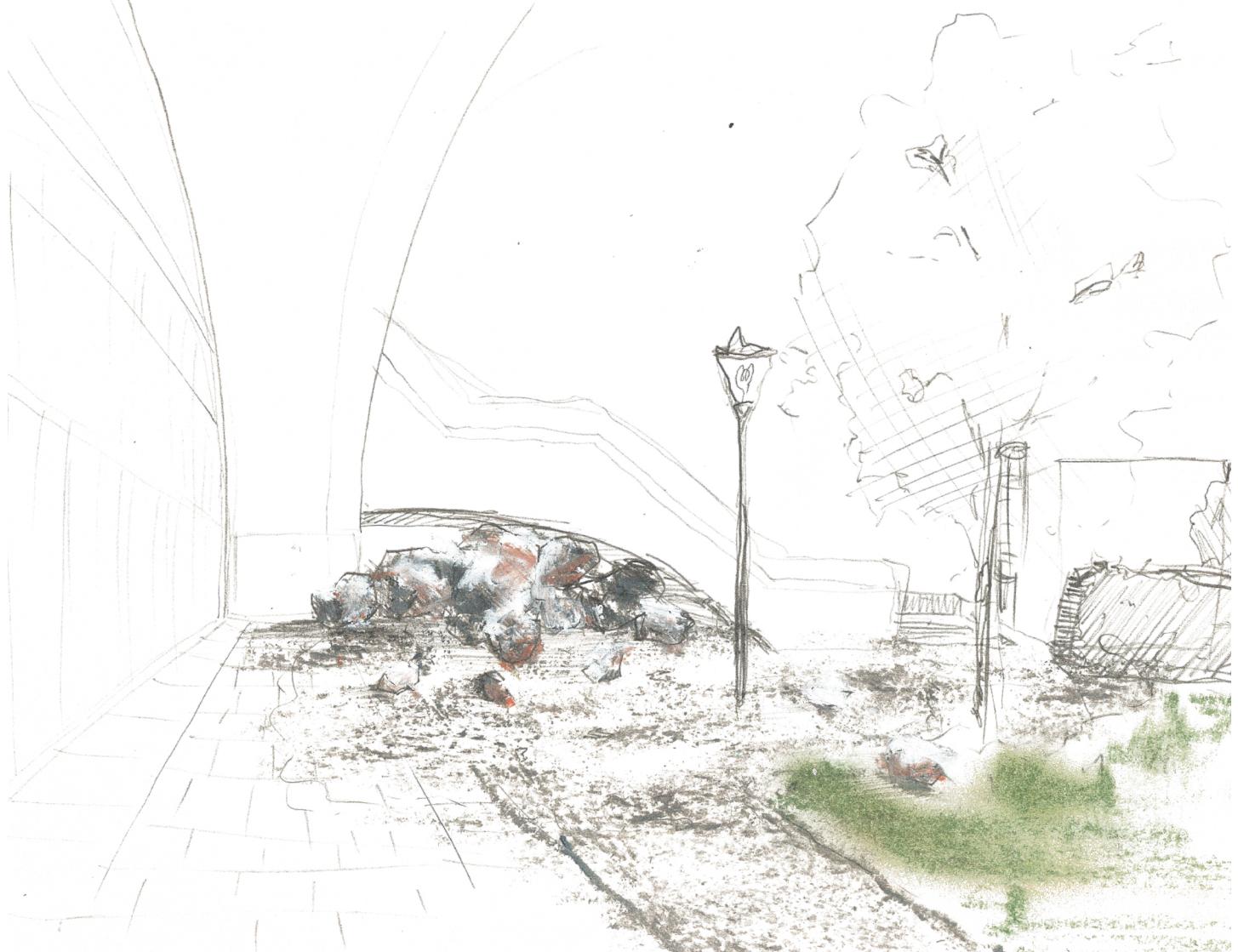
A SE
ACCOMP
DE
UN
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AI
LEAD

The first design combines the dangling stones, hanging from one of two staircases that stretch onto the island. Underneath the staircase, a tidal border is imagined that would result from the rising water levels of the river due to climate change. The second design shows the same context, where the boulders are assembled in an arbitrary fashion in front and underneath the same staircase.

The boulders hanging above this alternation between ebb and flow would create time-bound situations during which passers-by could e.g. swing from the boulders into the Seine (in a hypothetical scenario in which it is safe to swim in the Seine). When the water recedes, people can walk up closer to the boulders and experience the looming danger of walking underneath the rocks, touch them and experience them from up close. The second iteration

would presumably not only create an incentive to start climbing and playing on the structure, but also a hideaway spot behind the rocks and underneath the staircase.

Through designing these situations, it is not the aim to define the uses that could happen in such nooks, as it does not immediately become clear what kind of behaviours would emerge in this context. It is hard to design for unexpected uses, and therefore, the **effects turn hard to read**. Therefore, it could be interesting to twist existing, conventional architectural design methods and spatial configurations, to work from the known, perhaps otherwise undesired effects that architecture can bring about.





DIALOGUE 7: CAN WE CRUISE THE RIVER ISLAND?

This penultimate dialogue builds further from the queer island imagination of DIALOGUE 4. For example, we know that certain cramped liminal spaces are found to be uncomfortable for most, but interesting for those who like to operate on the margin. The almost two hundred meter long colonnade, a curious corridor found behind/in front of the Nieuwe Instituut building next to the Rochussenstraat, Rotterdam, ostensibly attracts hang youth, breakdancers and motorcycle users. There seems to be a demographic that was (unintentionally?) designed for.

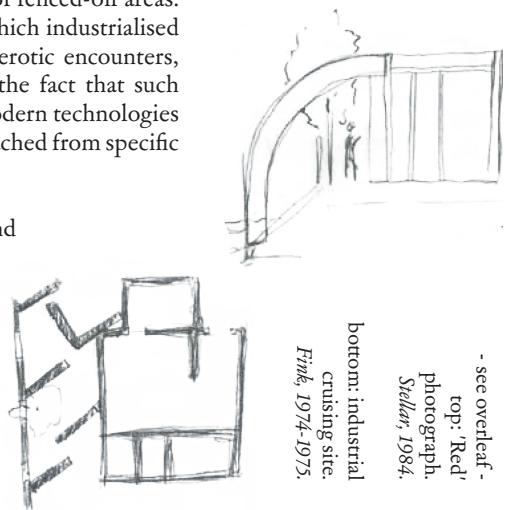
This dialogue looks at the opportunities of designing space for 'undesirable behaviours'. This includes but is not limited to: public sex, dealer activity, or accessibility of fenced-off areas. The act of public sex is majorly informed by literature on cruising, in which industrialised areas and distance from the civilisation become fetishised ideals for erotic encounters, especially for homosexual men.¹² The emerging design is aware of the fact that such behaviours might happen less or not at all due to the emergence of modern technologies such as the gay meeting app Grindr. Cruising becomes increasingly detached from specific architectures, aside from the glorification of certain marginal spaces.¹³

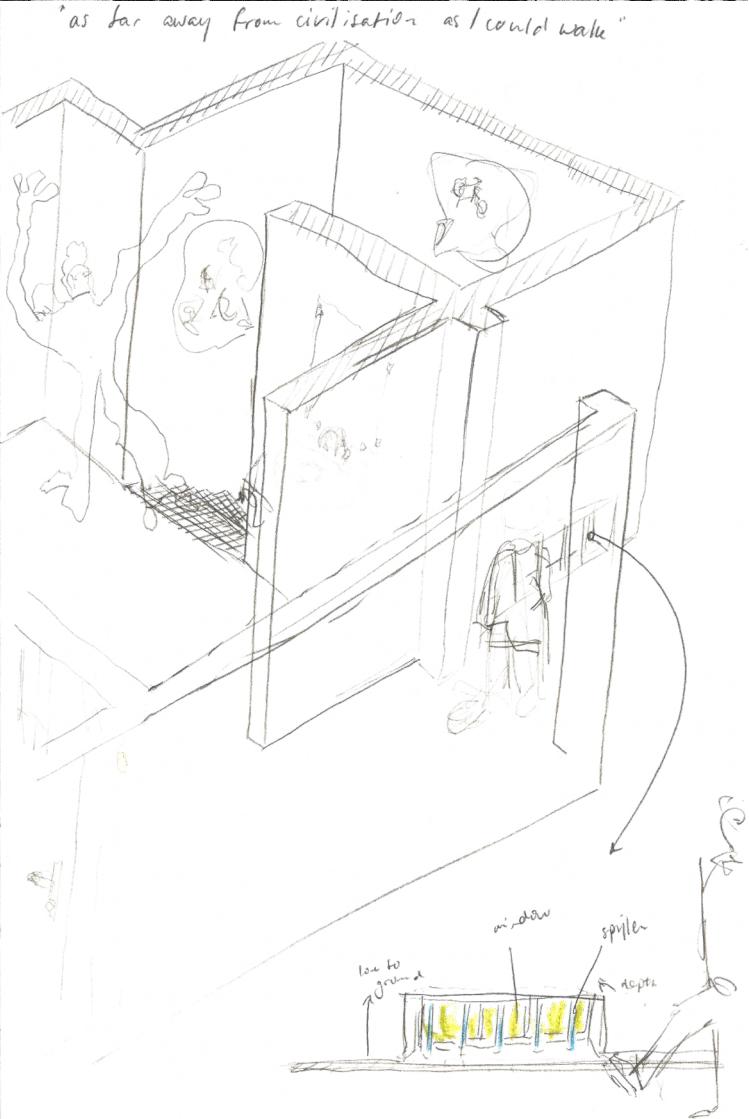
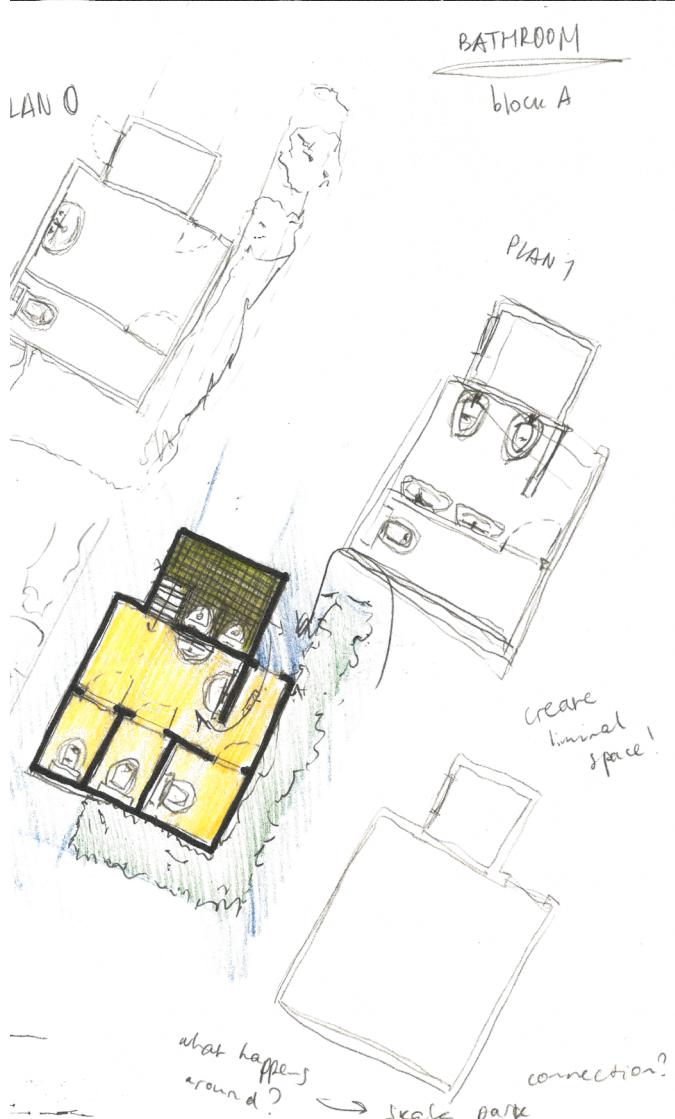
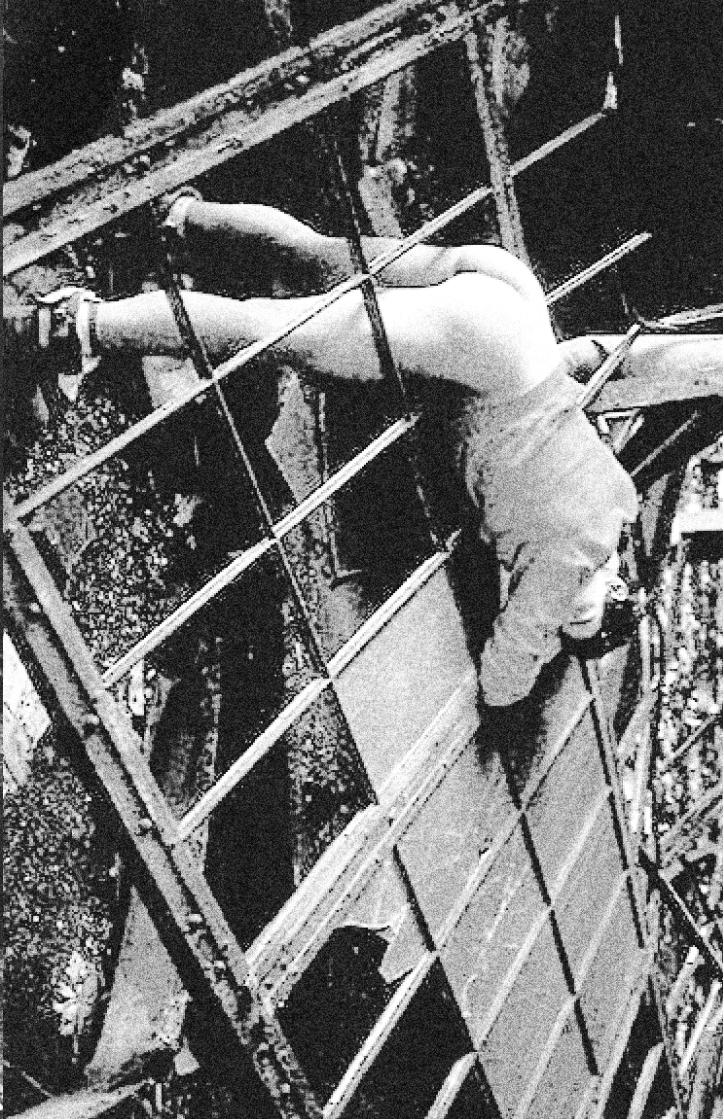
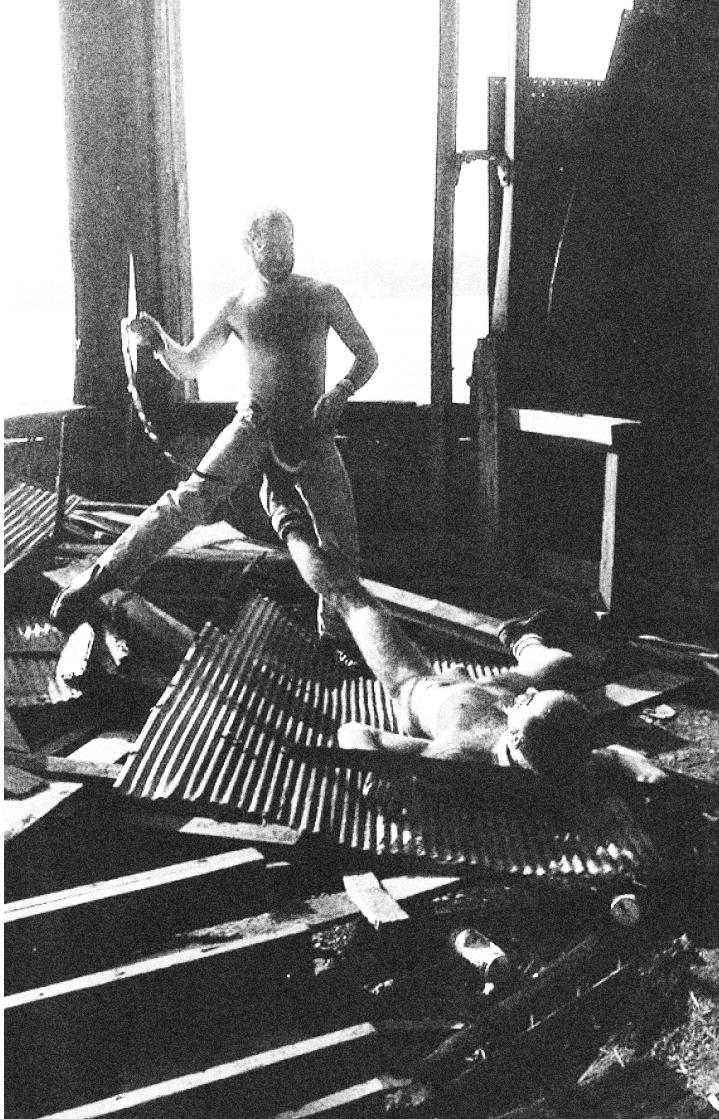
The designs that emerge from this intent take the toilet block on the island as the object to be alienated. Its regular configuration is transformed in a way to create nooks for cruising by mitigating the risk of being caught in the act, all while remaining a publicly accessible space. Additionally, the backside of the building, facing the Seine, is adorned with several geometrical walls that create cramped spaces, out of sight for passers-by. Both of the spaces are created as seemingly unpleasant for most, as one cannot easily see around the corners to gauge the potential danger around the corners.

Google Maps street view
image of the colonnade.
Damsra-Rouwenhorst, 2021.

- see overleaf.
top: 'Red'
photograph.
Stellor, 1984.

bottom: industrial
cruising site.
Fink, 1974-1975.



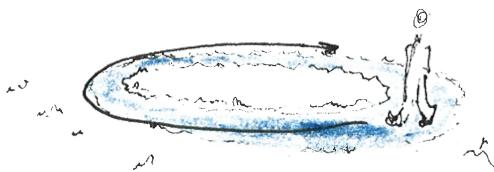


Learning from this small-scale architectural intervention, we can find potential in the play of conventional architectural elements. What could enrich this type of design is the introduction of playful design methods to stray further away from, e.g. what a toilet normally looks like. It also becomes clear that in designing such situations, the benchmark for what is considered a 'successful' design also needs to shift, because there is no such thing as an ideal solution. Especially considering the experimental research character of this project, the design iterations should focus on looking for the extremes to test the limits, and find adequate methods to translate the concept of spatial disorientation.

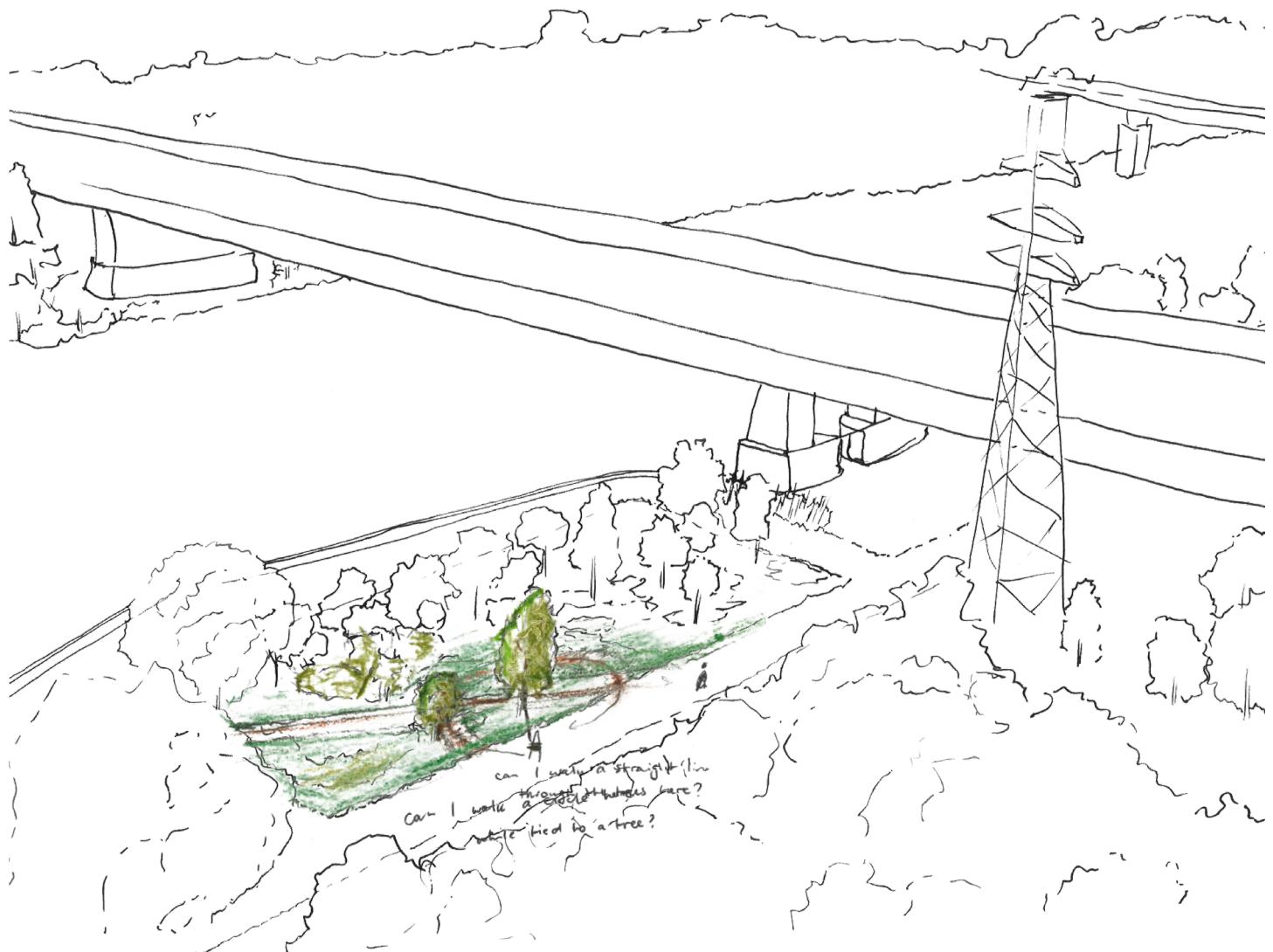
DIALOGUE 8: A WALK IN THE PARK

This last dialogue takes the idea of an architectural practitioner to the realm of guerrilla practices. In this case, the eroding act of walking a repetitive path becomes tied to a situation. This intervention is placed in the small plot of vegetation in the same location as DIALOGUE 3.

This dialogue proposes two different ways of eroding a path; one path is made by walking a straight line that can be found precisely between the bushes and trees, the other is made by tying oneself to a tree and walking circles while making sure the radius is consistent to effectively erode the grass.



How long would it take to erode, and would law enforcement officers step in? Moreover, the specificity of the device would also potentially evoke different reactions to the act. In this dialogue, it is less clear what the intention of the act might be, which is not a problem in itself, but merely a reflection on a potential quality of disorientation.



The production of these dialogues vividly show the trials and tribulations that generally accompanied the explorative and exhaustive process of finding ways to spatialise disorientation.

In the end, it can be concluded that there are various returning factors that could signify the potential for radical disorientation in a spatial context, albeit abstracted terms that need further investigation in a dedicated design project. These are preliminarily defined as **intent**, **energy**, **weight**, **temporality**, **magnitude** and **capsularity**. The final scene of this Act will give a final reflection on the qualities and provide a design statement.

1	<i>L. Lambert, personal communication, 12 February, 2025</i>	3	<i>Oberski, 2024</i>	9	<i>Kurkierewicz et al., 2024</i>
2	<i>Abdallah, 2018; Avermaete, 2024; Lambert, 2018, 2023; Lefort, 1980; Santelli & Herpin, 1968/2018; SHNI, 2021</i>	4	<i>Robin et al., 2025</i>	10	<i>Deutinger, 2023</i>
		5	<i>Halbwachs, 1950</i>	11	<i>Marriott, 1937</i>
		6	<i>S. Dadour, personal communication, 11 February 2025</i>	12	<i>Anderson, 2019; Muñoz, 2009</i>
		7	<i>Lambert, 2017</i>	13	<i>Kolb & Betsky, 2017</i>
		8	<i>Kovats, 2017</i>		

SCENE THREE: PATH-FINDING

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ACT III TOWARDS DIALOGUES



MAGNITUDE
extent to which
disorientation reaches the
enactment, understanding
and/or experience of
bodies and objects



CAPSULARITY
extent to which
disorientation can be
avoided in enacting,
understanding and/or
experiencing



TEMPORALITY
extent to which
disorientation is enacted,
understood and/or
experienced as a finite
moment



INTENT
extent to which
disorientation is intended
to be enacted, understood
and/or experienced



WEIGHT
extent to which
disorientation affects an
enactment, understanding
and/or experience

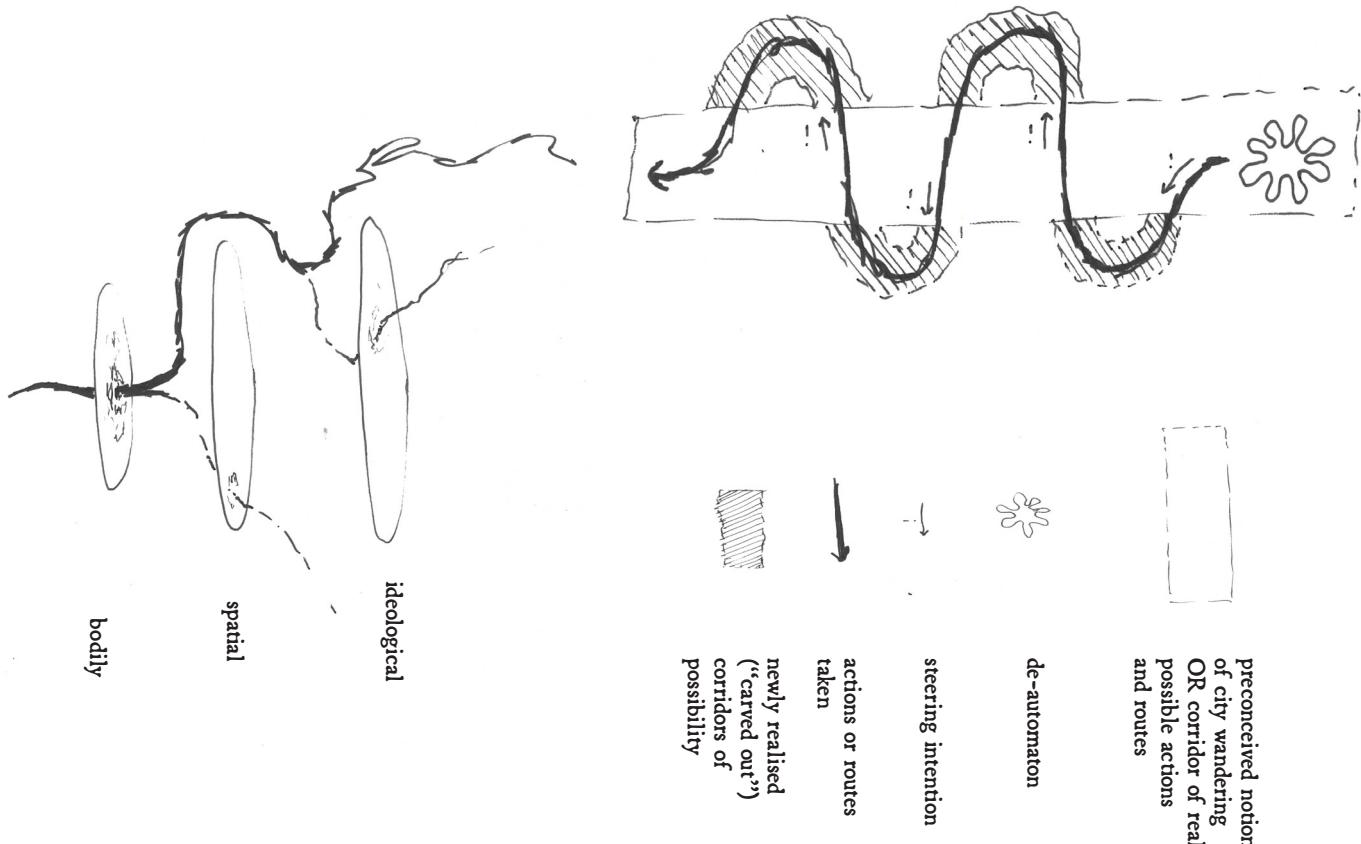


ENERGY
extent to which
disorientation requires
effort to be enacted,
understood and/or
experienced

The distilled qualities of disorientation are applied to three case studies as a foundation for the design project. The development of the design project will be introduced through a design brief outlining the aim of the design in light of the continuation of the research-by-design process. Each case study is deconstructed as an abstract spatial situation to be able to critically reflect on the specific situatedness in which we can find a spatially disorientational moment. Then, an explication is provided for each disorientational quality. In the writings and drawings, definitions and ways of displaying are most notably borrowed from Bernard Tschumi's notations from *The Manhattan Transcripts*.

In reflecting on these examples, disorientation takes place in carefully curated environments here. The ease of manoeuvring friction is here often determined by the privilege of being able to attend events and this is often influenced by social status, if not behind a paywall.

The making of exceptional bubbles reinforces the idea of escapism that is becoming internalised in the Smooth City. This escapism towards bubbles goes beyond spectacular events; we aim to find refuge in various zones of comfort, from toilet stalls and car seats to malls and gated communities. Smooth violence has produced a general sense of fear, exclusion and simulation that has led to the emergence of such capsules expressed as architectural cocoons. Although they could be seen as moments of disorientation from an individualistic point of view, they reproduce and extend existing orientations and create a homogenous urban environment on a collective and spatial level through the reinforcement of its borders. This should be reconsidered in further research, to make sure less capsular projects are analysed.



The Situationist *dérive* implies spontaneous encounters. Walking the city in an unconventional way could disorient the practitioner's preconceived notions of how a city can be wandered.

No 13
dérive

INTENT: *Dérive* practitioners can be steered by intentions that are given out of their control by themselves (e.g. following yellow objects, only taking left turns, etc.) While the intention is to be surprised by random encounters, the practitioner remains in control to some extent. The potential 'discomfort' is therefore guided and controlled.

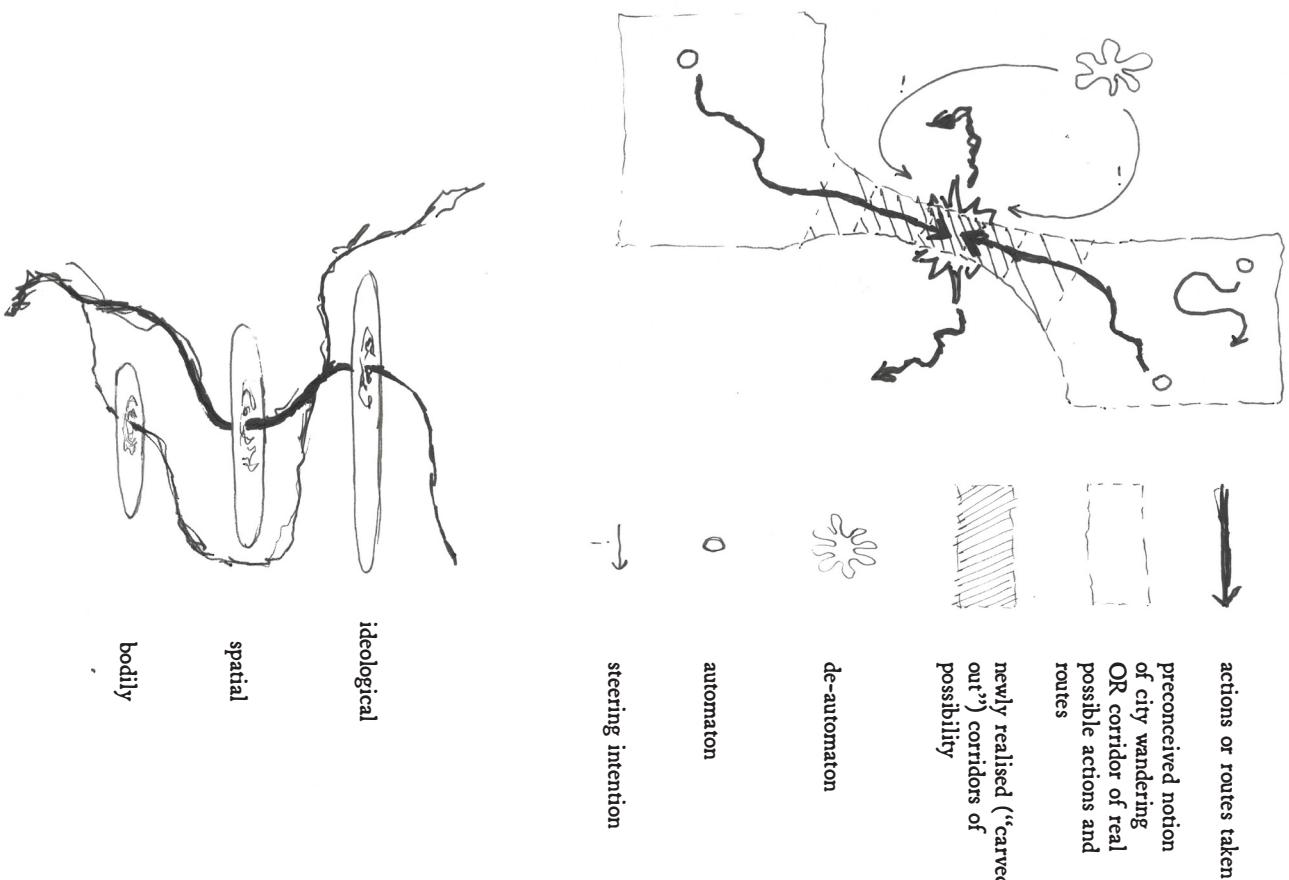
ENERGY: To start a *dérive*, the only necessary input is the willingness of the walker. One has to put aside their own belief of how to walk a city, or there has to be an external motivator (such as a workshop) that instigates this mode of action. Additionally, physical and mental energy might deplete during the walk, influencing its duration.

WEIGHT: Although encounters with the 'strange' may unfold in different intensities and quantities per practitioner, there will arguably be moments in which the potential for collective or ideological alternatives is questioned. Discomfort could at least be felt in the traditional notion of disorientation.

TEMPORALITY: At an individual scale, this new way of exploring could disorient the practitioner for a very long time, as with every stroll, there is now a choice to go from A to B or to take a *dérive*. However, other modes or intensities of disorientation will only occur during the active pursuit of the *dérive* itself.

MAGNITUDE: If the *dérive* is considered the opposite of the *flâneur*, there would be conflictual situations during the walk. Passers-by could be influenced by an alternative route taken or could be directly subject of a 'strange' encounter. Ultimately, the ripples primarily stay within the individual field, but could go beyond to an ideological realm in challenging conventional city-walking practices.

CAPSULARITY: The potential for disorientation is wielded by the practitioner(s) and therefore could be transferred to anyone or anything in their wake.



The architect Frank van Klingeren wanted to address the socio-cultural problem of 'cluttering', a phenomenon similar to homogenisation, through a building that creates moments of hindrance so that people interact in new ways.

No 8
De Meerveld

INTENT: He aimed to project the public building as a social condenser, promoting openness and connection by removing or unconventionally combining functions. The outcomes were expected to be unpredictable in both intensity and expression.

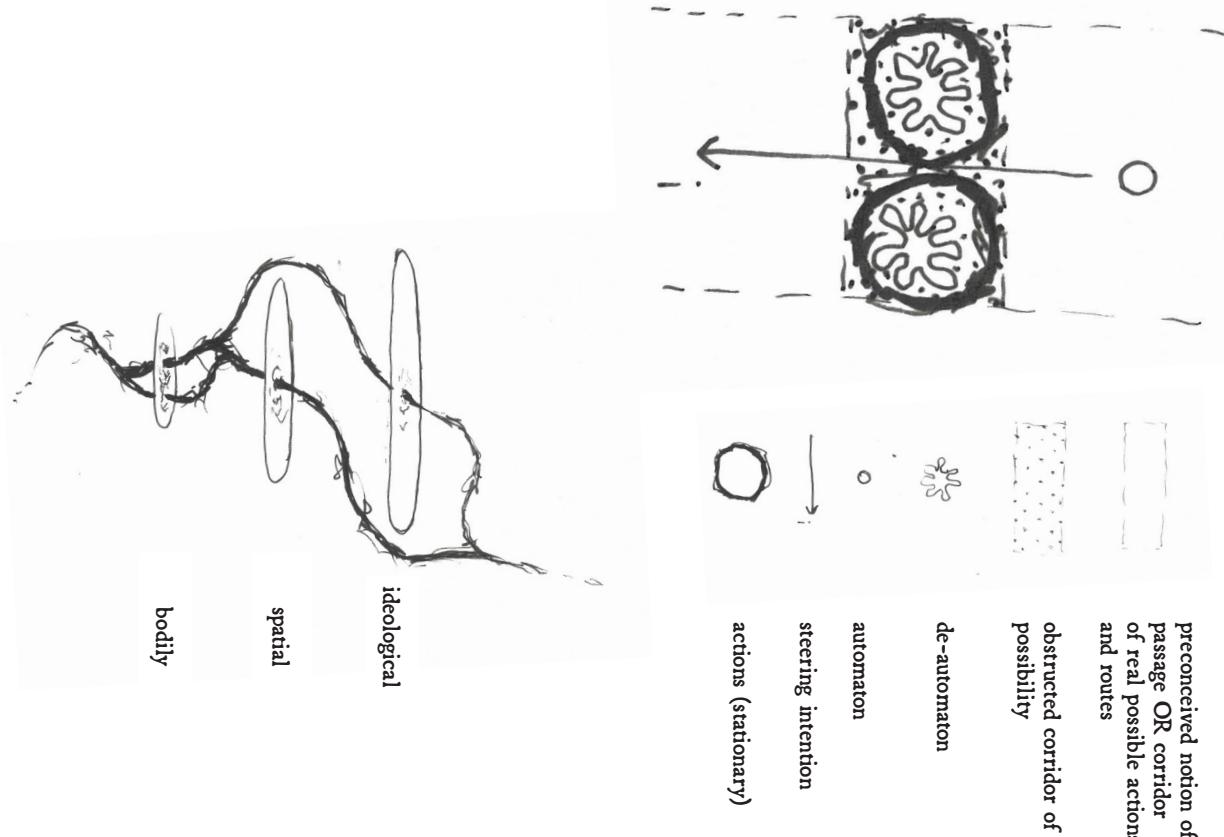
ENERGY: The intent materialised through the effort of the architect to develop the building (and the process that is needed for that). Additionally, the actors within the building had to endure the inherent friction.

WEIGHT: The unconventional juxtaposition of functions occasionally led to chaos; volley balls bouncing into the theater or people running into unexpected individuals at the pub-slash-doctor's waiting room. This led to irritation, impatience and dissent towards the building design. Moreover, some of the uses were not well-accommodated resulting in unpleasant feelings of insufficiency. There was, however, no direct 'harmful' effect.

TEMPORALITY: As long as spaces were simultaneously used, disorientation could occur. However, it all became temporal as the excess of disorientation led to the renovation of the building in to a more conventional setup. Users felt the need to resolve the discomfort.

MAGNITUDE: All users of the building were disoriented and this disorientation rippled throughout Dronten's community. The discomfort was primarily felt at individual, collective and, to a lesser extent, ideological scale.

CAPSULARITY: The public building served as a social condenser for the city of Dronten, and citizens who wanted to use the practical facilities of the building had to become subject to the building's unconventional setup. Users could therefore only avoid the discomfort by not going to the building.



No II
Imponderabilita

Abramović & Ulay stand in a doorway of the entrance into a museum exhibition naked. Visitors have to put aside or confront their discomforts of passing the two naked bodies.

INTENT: The artists intentionally guided users towards an uncomfortable situation, while willingly putting themselves at risk of harmful effects (inappropriate sexual behaviours). The intervention therefore effectively reaches its goal.

ENERGY: The effort needed to prolong this experiment is apparent in the physical and mental strain endured by the performers. Additionally, materialising the desire that guides actors through the opening takes mental effort to find and pass the opening.

WEIGHT: The discomfort for users is not necessarily harmful as they most probably already had the intent of going through by visiting the exhibition. It starts with suspense and hesitation before passing, then a moment of discomfort or adrenaline while passing, and a moment of disorientation after. One of the naked artists has expressed greater (practically traumatic) discomfort due to explicit behaviour of a passerby.

TEMPORALITY: The intervention has a climax of disorientation in the passing of the bodies for all involved. Before and after passing, users might feel suspense, exhilaration or discomfort, but this feeling can become more subdued with repetitive use. In that sense, users could 'get used' to the intervention.

MAGNITUDE: Most of the discomfort is felt at the individual level, of both artist and passer-by, but through its position within an exhibition, it helps question other notions of 'what is accessibility?' and 'what are the limits of performance art?' However, inappropriate sexual behaviours can lead to even bigger ripples at the individual scale, and have the potential to even create traumas.

CAPSULARITY: The intervention is confined by the exhibition and is therefore limitedly disorienting; only to those who are interested in being disoriented.

From these proof-of-concepts, a reiteration of the spatial disorientation framework is provided. These qualities could be referred to as a framework of 'radical spatial disorientation', as it has been conceived with the aim of relating to or affecting fundamental levels to bodily, spatial and ideological conditions. In any case, it is developed from a desire for socio-political change.

The different aspects are now defined as follows:

- intent can be understood as the positionality that one takes in pursuit of a disorientational mode, e.g. the extent to which one considers the effects on marginalised individuals and the presumed ' fleeting' factor that is envisioned as an outcome of the spatial disorientation.
- energy can be understood as the input necessary for the start and maintenance of generating spatial disorientation, which can relate to both the material state (e.g. architectural elements) and the emotional efforts made to direct oneself to create a disorientational situation, as is needed for e.g. participating in protests.
- weight can be understood as the emotional damage or turbulence that affects an individual or a collective on the one side and the extent to which it questions, and therefore potentially confuses, existing norms and beliefs that are embedded within a collective ideology or produced space.
- temporality can be understood as the duration of the disorientational mode on the one side but also the extent to which a spatial situation can (in)finitely evoke disorientation.
- magnitude can be understood as the bodies and objects that are affected by spatial disorientation, which could be translated as an amount of individuals, an area, a shared identity trait, etc.
- capsularity can be understood as the extent to which you can choose to be subject to the spatial disorientation, influenced by factors such as privilege, discrimination, queerness, etc.

'The what that fleets' is found within each one of the separate qualities; as changing norms and beliefs, desired effects, energy flow, spatial reconfigurations, etc. We can find several relations between the qualities that relate to some more conventional architectural qualities, such as material input and scale, but also less conventional architectural qualities, such as effective output and endurance. In any case, temporality is a core aspect of spatial disorientation.

In retrospect, these qualities interestingly have a significant overlap with neoliberal characteristics; material input is still material input, but then seen more specifically as the materialisation as (the manifestation of) a desire; the intervention endurance relates to 'shelf life'; effective output is the intensity of an experience and scale is simply understood as the reach/range of the intervention. Therefore, these four qualities should be further researched in the final design project as well, to consider the extent to which they are not reproducing the same architectural design goals that reinforce smoothification. The research project effectively concludes with two frameworks; one for analysing radical spatial disorientation and another for an approach of designing space for disorientation.

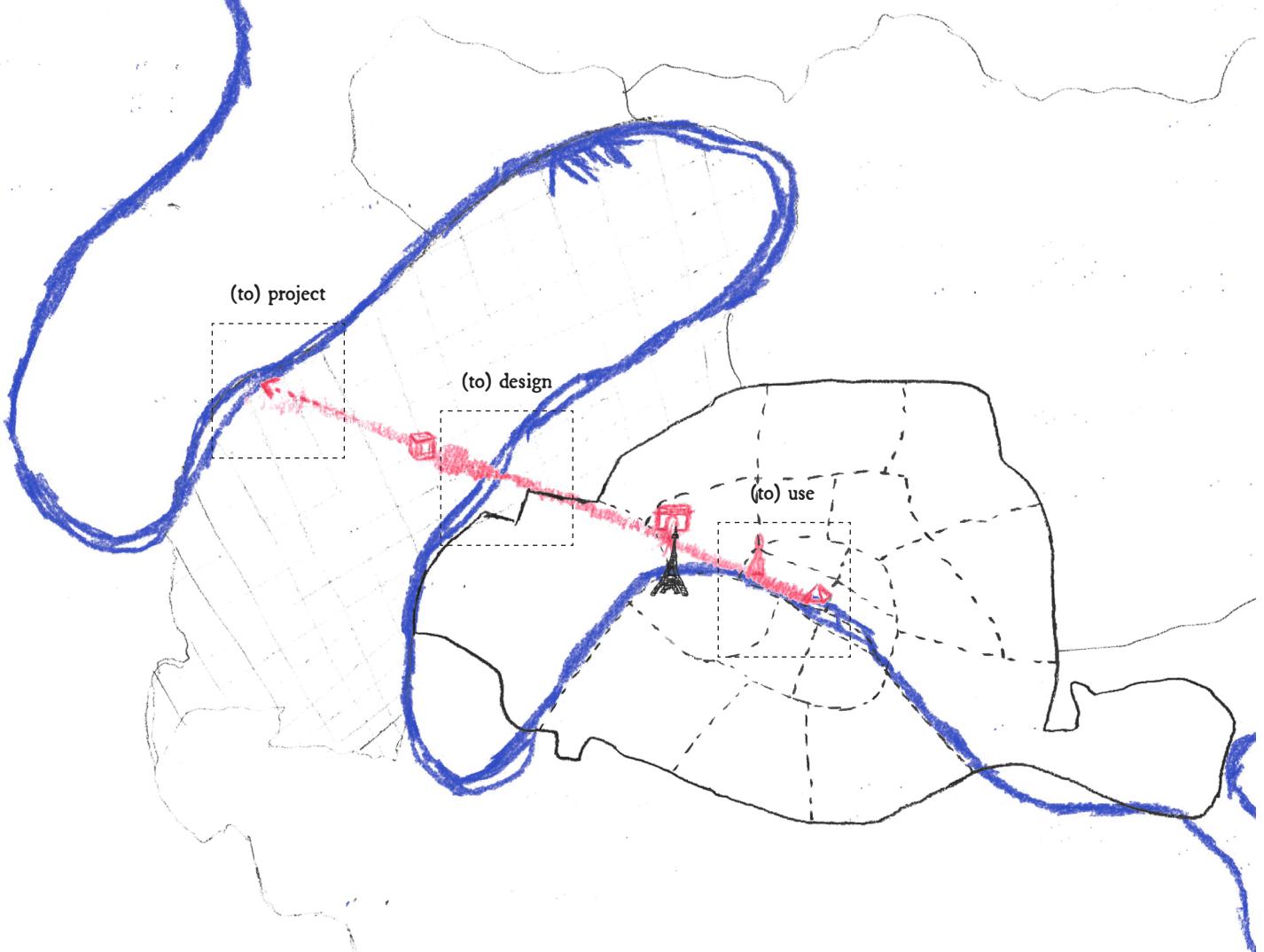
DESIGN BRIEF

As disorientation is understood as a possible approach, the diverse qualities of this approach should be evaluated through a research-by-design process in a specific socio-political context. Disorientation, as an approach, should ...

... aim to expose imposed systems of order that are embedded into space over time, acknowledging the inequitable dynamics that have historically been (re)produced.

... open up opportunities for new dynamics of living together with(in) our environment, including the more-than-human, to move towards an equitable living environment.

... re-evaluate our architectural design practice, and the role of the practitioner in general, to prevent the reproduction of the same beliefs that it aims to deconstruct.



Considering the explorative framework of the research, the design project considers three sites within which it can explore the possibility of three different approaches to the architectural profession; using, designing and projecting. In doing so, the design project not only mirrors the diversity of applications from the case studies and thereby reflects upon the research outcomes, but also testifies to the importance of this approach at large; it does not focus solely on an architectural product, but rather sees disorientation as an approach to be expanded upon, to be reinterpreted by practitioners at large and ultimately to be held onto as a manifestation of change.

The case studies for the explorative design process are 1) the Place de la Concorde/Jardin des Tuileries, 2) the Pont de Neuilly and l'Île du Pont from Dialogues 2, 4, 5, 6 and 7 and 3) the Parc du Chemin de l'Île from Dialogues 3 and 8. All three sites are connected in two ways. On the one hand, we find the Historical Axis of Paris, which starts at the Louvre and currently extends to the Grande Arche of La Défense, but is projected to expand towards the western border of Nanterre. Additionally, these three sites are connected by the Seine, which flows parallel to the first site, then intersects the Axis perpendicularly in the second site (while shaping the island in the middle of the river) and lastly flows further in the distance where it will await the extension of the Axis in the third site. The sites are summarised below.

Site 1: Place de la Concorde / Jardin des Tuileries

Method: (to) use - a practice of following scripts and going off-script

Site 2: Pont de Neuilly / l'Île du Pont

Method: (to) design - a practice of forgetting and finding passages

Site 3: Parc du Chemin de l'Île

Method: (to) project - a practice of veiling and unveiling possible realities

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