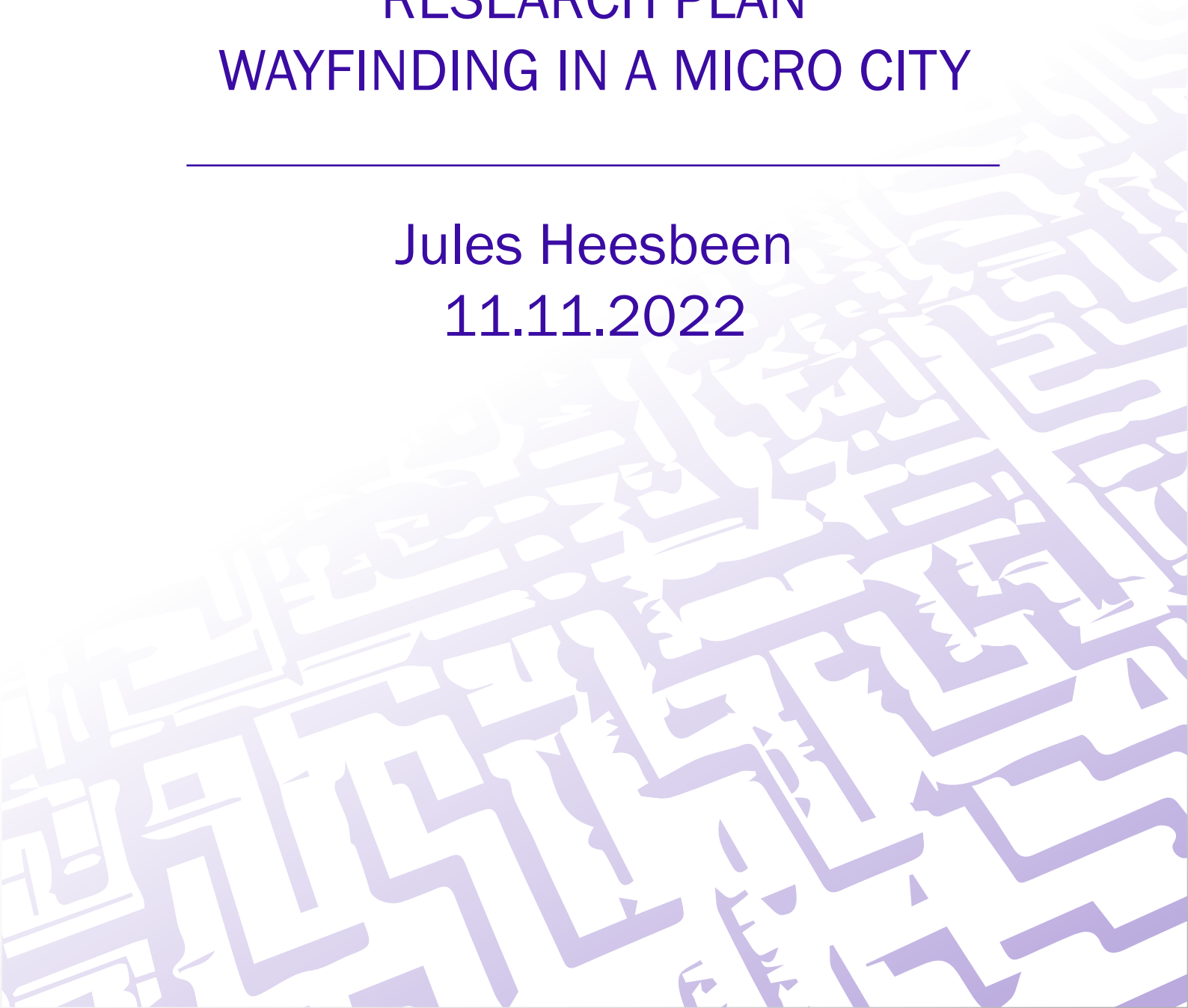# RESEARCH PLAN
WAYFINDING IN A MICRO CITY

Jules Heesbeen
11.11.2022

How do you experience a city? According to Lynch there is more than the eye can see, at every instant. More than the ear can hear, a setting or a view waiting to be explored. Nothing is experienced by itself, but always in relation to its surroundings, the sequences of events leading up to it, the memory of past experiences (Lynch, 1960).

While walking through Liège the combination of all these experiences make me feel lost, there is no structure or logic in it. I walk around a corner in one of the many street of downtown Bressoux and feel lost the moment I take a few steps in the street. When walking to the end I find myself in a completely different environment. Through the big apartment flats of Droixhe, I cant find any view and I feel overwhelmed by the concrete giants hiding behind a green roof. Crossing the railway I arrive in the uptown part of Bressoux. Giant lines of similar houses appear in front of me. Missing any point of orientation I can't find where I came from or where I have to go.

These experiences are also part of the findings of our group research. After starting with a theme based on the connections and disconnections in the neighbourhood, we quickly found the appearance of vastly different districts in the area. These district all have a different urbanistic approach, from a top down strategy in the district of Droixhe, to an unplanned approach in downtown Bressoux. This resulted in vastly different urban cityscapes.

The lack of continuity and connections between these districts confuse me and all these different experiences make the city chaotic to me, unclear or as one can say unreadable. This term unreadable makes it interesting. When we take a look at this term we can almost describe the structure of a city as a language, it is organized into some sort of pattern. This term is also described in 'The image of the city' by Lynch. He states: "Just as this printed page, if it is legible, can be visually grasped as a related pattern of recognizable symbols, so a legible city would be one whose districts or landmarks or pathways are easily identifiable and are easily grouped into an over-all pattern."(Lynch, 1960).

The experience of a city is influenced by the readability of it. At this point the link between architecture and urbanism appears. This readability is known under a different name in architecture: wayfinding. "Wayfinding is described as the users experience and their perception within an environmental context and when mishandled lead to disorientation and confusion" (Passini, 1984). Elements from this urbanistic legibility are appearing in the architectonical scale. Wayfinding and Legibility have a certain overlap. In my point of view you can't separate these concepts from each other. The question rising, can you learn from the legibility of a cityscape, to implement these lessons in the architectural wayfinding. Following up to the question, can you interpret a building as a micro city?

When I establish an answer to these questions I can then use the findings in the design assignment. When you are able to control the directional feeling of a building, you can use this almost as a design tool. Sometimes you want people to feel lost in your building, strolling through a museum for example is one of the best moments to feel lost in a

building. Other times you want to feel a strong direction, a railway station is a great example for this type of building.

To be able to design this tool, first a few questions need to be answered. And to answer these questions, a few concepts need to be defined. Starting with defining a city, and defining a building. After defining these concepts, I have to look for similarity's and differences. Where do these terms overlap? With these findings I can answer the question: "can you see a building as a micro-city?"

Besides these definitions I also need to state what is wayfinding and legibility. What kind of strategy's already exist to analyse the legibility of a cityscape. And are there similarity's between these different approaches? Of course Lynch is a prime example of this kind of method, however to create a more substantiated argument I need to find more examples of analytic strategy's.

In the end this can result in the translation into the architectural scale. For this translation I need to compare the result of interpreting a building as a micro-city and the different examples of reading a cityscape. That way I know if and how the elements can be transferred into the architectural scale.

To transfer these elements I will need to design some sort of a language. This language can take many forms, differing from a movie, to drawings to pictures. By design this language I will be able to get more grip on the translation. In the end this language will become some sort of design manual, almost in the form of a atlas of some kind.

This language will be some sort of media to analyse case study's. These case study's will be performed in and out of Liège. With public buildings with different usages. In some buildings where the orientation will be absence, the language will be hard to find, or even completely absent. In other buildings where you want to find a strong directional character, the language will be more clearer and easier to find.

A few examples of buildings that will be analysed are, Bozar in Brussels and the new train station of Liège, designed by Calatrava. The building of Bozar is very interesting. It has both characters in it. In the many halls of the museum you want to stroll without a strong directional character. In other parts of the building you want to find your way as easy as possible, to get to the large concert hall for example. In Calatrava's train station you want to find your direction as easy as possible, you want to know where which train is going to arrive and depart and how to get there as quick as possible.

In the end this research will be all-encompassing. It will be focussed on designing a language with which you are able to translate the legibility of the urban cityscape into an architectural design. Starting with defining the different elements that make up this language. But also testing this language with case studies in and out of Liège, to create and prove the research.

Bibliography

Lynch, K. (1960). The image of the city. Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Passini, R. (1984). Wayfinding in Architecture [Digitaal]. Van Nostrand Reinhold.

Future Inspiration

Abu_Ghazzeh, T. M. (1996). Movement and wayfinding in the King Saud University Built Environment: A look at freshman orientation and environmental information. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 16(4), 303–318. https://doi.org/10.1006/ jevp.1996.0026

Gärling, T., Säisä, J., Book, A., & Lindberg, E. (1986). The spatiotemporal sequencing of everyday activities in the large-scale environment. Journal of Environmental Psychology, 6(4), 261–280. https://doi. org/10.1016/s0272-4944(86)80001-9

Maunier, R. (1910). The definition of the city. The american journal of sociology.