

Project: 'The Dutch West Caribbean Company - *A global company*'

Studio: Design as Politics

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[The relationship between the research and the design](#)

The project, 'The Dutch West Caribbean Company - *A global company*', suggests a political-spatial observation of the deregulated offshore world (by using physical mapping and architectural analysis of the tax haven islands and freeports parallel to analysing their political reality based on literature and local policies) as a main driving force and point of reference for the design process. Rather than a research that results a design example, the project aims to fade the clear distinction between research and design and create one storyline that follows the story of the offshore world as a new political and spatial frontier. As a result, the project offers a theoretical and speculative - yet feasible architectural response, to this ongoing geopolitical and geoeconomic contemporary process (the development of the offshore economy). A process, whereby in certain specific places (Tax havens and Freeports) not only unusual goods such as artworks, battles of wine and stolen antiquities (that were in times past, part of inalienable collective goods) are turning into commodities, but also basic human rights such as the right to asylum, freedom of speech, right to health and more are turning into commodities.

[The relationship between the methodological line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework](#)

The studio, Design as politics, is looking at the realm of politics and ideology (not only in the big symbolic field of elaborated theory, but also the one that penetrates and structures our everyday life) as means that can enrich the toolset of the designer and provide a better and larger understanding of the built environment. The methodology that the project uses - A political-spatial observation of the deregulated offshore world (by physical architectural and spatial mapping of the tax haven islands and freeports parallel to analysing their political reality and policies) as a driving force for the design process, follows the graduation lab's main approach and displays how architectural design and urban planning operate as a political activity or how, on the other hand, political, economical and ideological process can formulate space and new aesthetic pleasures - Involving the power relations between public and private, between companies and states, and between the privileged and the excluded.

The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject chosen by the student within this framework

This year's Design as Politics theme is *A City of Comings and Goings – Designing for migration and mobility* - how cities and landscapes are being increasingly defined by the dynamics of temporary inhabitants. One of the crucial new migratory patterns that is redefining the political and economical path of nations today is tax exiles. Today, the global rich are on the move. Whether it's wealthy French or Americans fleeing the prospect of higher taxes or wealthy Russians and Chinese trying to escape political uncertainty, millionaires and billionaires around the world are migrating to the deregulated offshore world like never before. The impacts and effects of all these new migratory patterns and tax exiles on infrastructures, urban planning and architecture are still emerging. The rootless habits of the rich are rapidly changing the socio-political reality of countries and communities, since the wealthy won't be bound to a specific political system or territory anymore: influencing already traditional state institutions (for example national museums), investments in the built environment, workers and businesses. On the other hand, this phenomena creates an ongoing tournament. A tournament among governments and regimes, that are unable or unwilling to enforce taxation of capital or civil laws in general, and as a result developing new forms of tax havens, which manifesting themselves as monocultural states dedicated almost ultimately to tax avoidance and deregulation. Offering generous income-tax and capital-gains rates to attract wealthy spenders and taxpayers with a cozy and comfortable basis for fraudulence, money laundering, drug trafficking, terrorism and other tactics that these new migrants would not be allowed to do at their home ports.

The relationship between the project and the the wider global context

The offshore world, has been gaining enormous popularity since the 1980's and despite increasingly defining the operations of the globalized economy and the spaces it generates, it is a spatial phenomenon that is mostly ignored by the architectural and urban discourse. Manifested by the forms of tax havens, freeports and special economic zones, the offshore world offers an exterritorial space where people, objects, and capital can operate beyond the burdens of national sovereignty, and remain in an unregulated limbo, in theory, forever. The project is located on this political and economical loophole and aims to expand and question its exterritorial qualities. Rather than the ideological logic (and moral arguments) of the nation state institutions which include, exclude or provide people with basic human rights based upon a common cultural or ethnic identity - the project (which is located on micro state tax haven) offers a different deal . An ex-territorial autonomy that disobeys the good old spatial cliches of the nation-state representative democracy apparatus - openness, transparency and accessibility. One that suggests to combine the freedom and isolation of the offshore world with the security and confidentiality of the freeport into a political device, which will convert the notorious deregulated nature of the tax haven into a local symbol of humanitarian pride and a new form of civil institution.