

The Book of Exploration

AFFECTIVE CONSTELLATIONS

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Explore Lab 31

Book II - Affective Constellations of Bodies

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On the Singularity of Value

Book II

The Book of Exploration

Affective Constellations of Bodies

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INTRODUCTION

A CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE EVALUATION

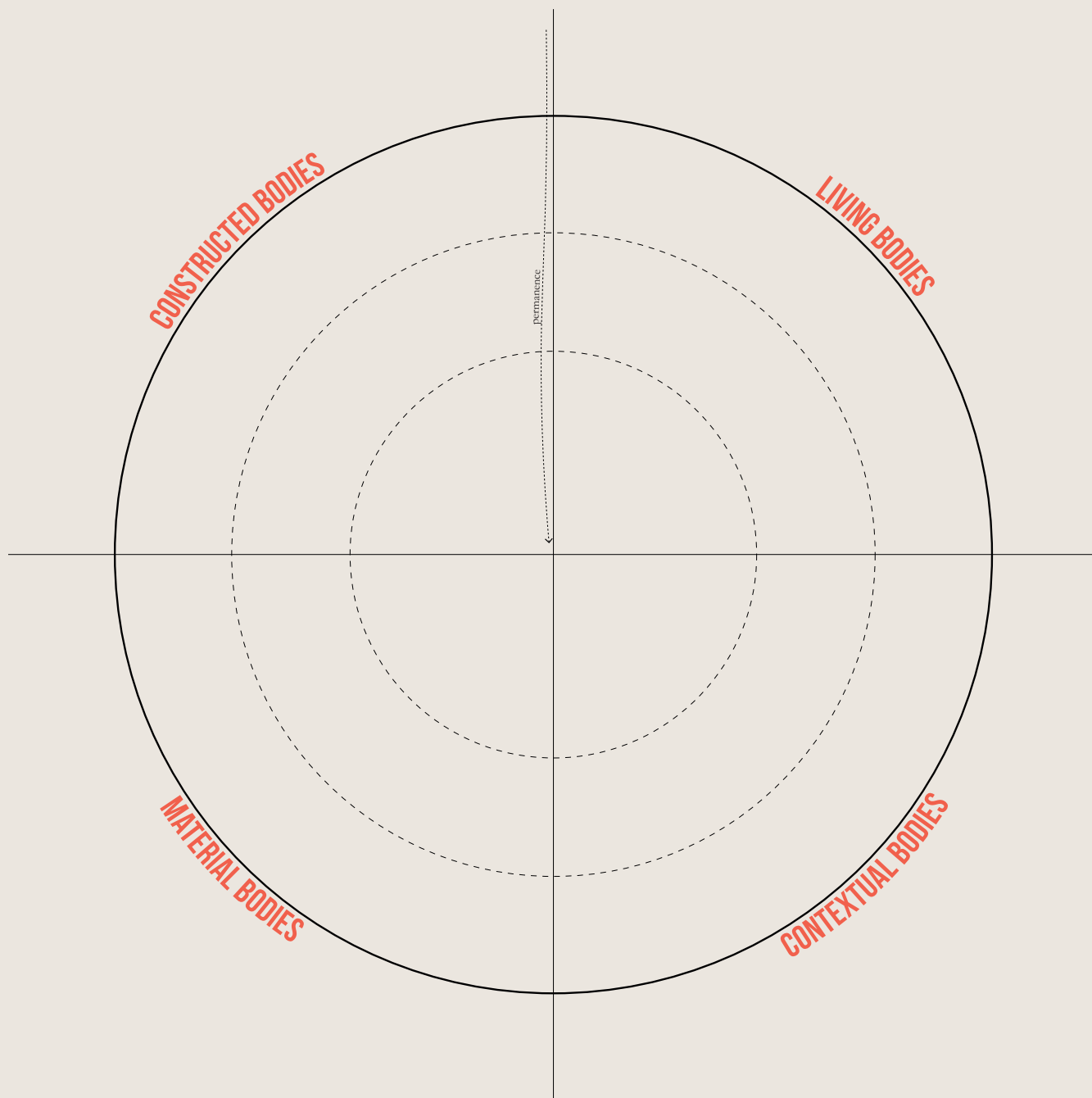
The following collection of case studies is attempting to exemplify a certain mode of evaluation, as a method to grasp the value of architectural interventions in a more complex, as well as context and situation-based manner. This compilation is focusing on the expression of singular value in a form which is bespoke and tailored to its unique context and situation. It is an attempt to understand the affective role of different bodies at play, from the material-processes to real-life interactions. The case studies are structured in their degree of being tailored to condition-specific actions, to their degree of being tailored to condition-specific material processes and availabilities.

The quite diverse selection of projects did not derive from the wish to choose only beautiful or well-known works; some may be 'just' student projects or not created by architects at all. It is an arbitrary and subjective selection of works that have been found original in their unique way of what certain bodies as part of a singular constellation of bodies - embedded in the architectural process - *can do*. After all, it could be almost any object or project in time and space which might be evaluated here.

It is important to understand that this taxonomy is certainly not complete nor complex enough to give justice to the cause. It is not the goal of this compilation to represent affects sufficiently. What this collection is aiming for is to shine a light on evaluating bodies in space and time in a relational manner. Other than represented in this booklet, they are not one-directional, but literally affect into multiple directions and must be much more complexified than anything that could be shown here. Most often, one affective connection between two bodies is depending on other bodies at play, which makes the constellation truly singular. One must understand this taxonomy as an impulse to integrate the consideration of affects as a key to accompany designers during their work, not necessarily as a tool to design.

To use this taxonomy, one must pay attention to the less obvious in order to grasp not only the status quo of the built object, but especially how it is embedded in a singular context and situation. In this case, physical bodies at play have been categorized into living, contextual, material and constructed bodies. This way, both real-life interactions as well as material processes during the physical emergence of the object are taken into account. What action shall a certain architectural body provide in this specific situation to whom, and what material can provide an architectural body to provide such action?

It was important for this taxonomy to not contain any central points, for the constellation of bodies must be understood as a reticular system which is not necessarily hierarchic. Both architecture and humans are part of a broader context. Furthermore, it is not the bodies themselves, but their potential for affect and affordances that makes them valuable in their very specific and singular context.



● Bodies: *What is it?*

Affordances: What can it do?

● What Body ————— provides what action —————> ● for whom?

SKY GAZING TOWER

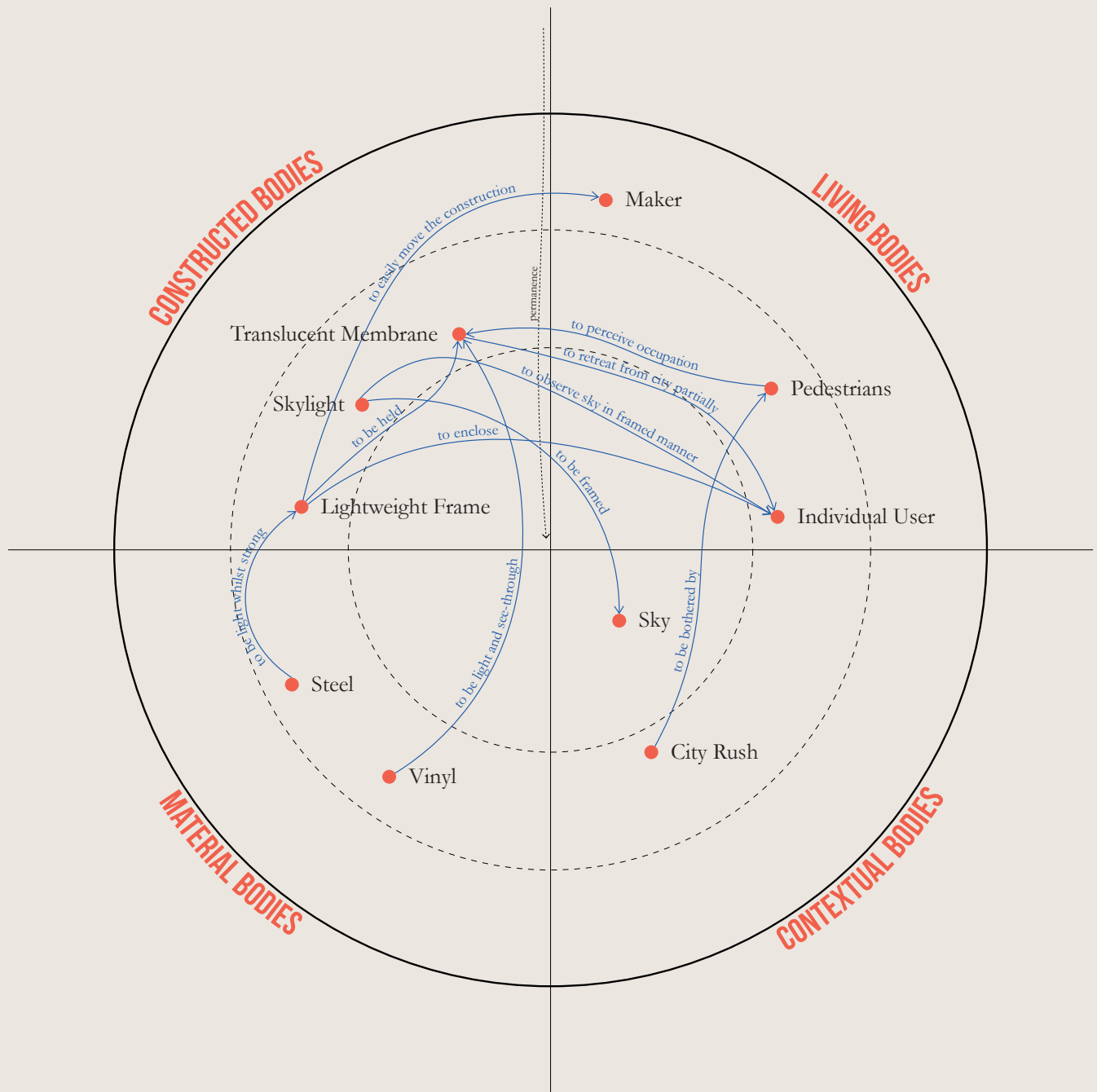
SOMEPEOPLE, LOS ANGELES

This temporary installation by Somepeople in Los Angeles is striving for an individual space in the dense urban fabric. The objective is to create an introverted object which allows for pedestrians to retreat from the ever-faster rush of the city and to decompress from that. A space where one can reconnect to oneself. The construct's orientation frames a view towards the sky, while only allowing a subtle visual connection to the city. This way, one still perceives oneself as being grounded in this context, while being able to take their mind of it. The installation has been carried out in a light-weight and low-cost manner, for the sake of its temporality. The orange vinyl membrane creates a change of perception while allowing for a degree of visual connection. Thanks to its shape, the legs of users stay visible - communicating to passing pedestrians that the object is occupied.¹

01 Object Occupied by Standing Person



02 Object Occupied by Sitting Children



● Bodies: *What is it?*

Affordances: *What can it do?*

● What Body ——— provides what action ———> ● for whom?

HORISMOS PLAYGROUND

STUDIO OSSIDIANA, VLEUTEN

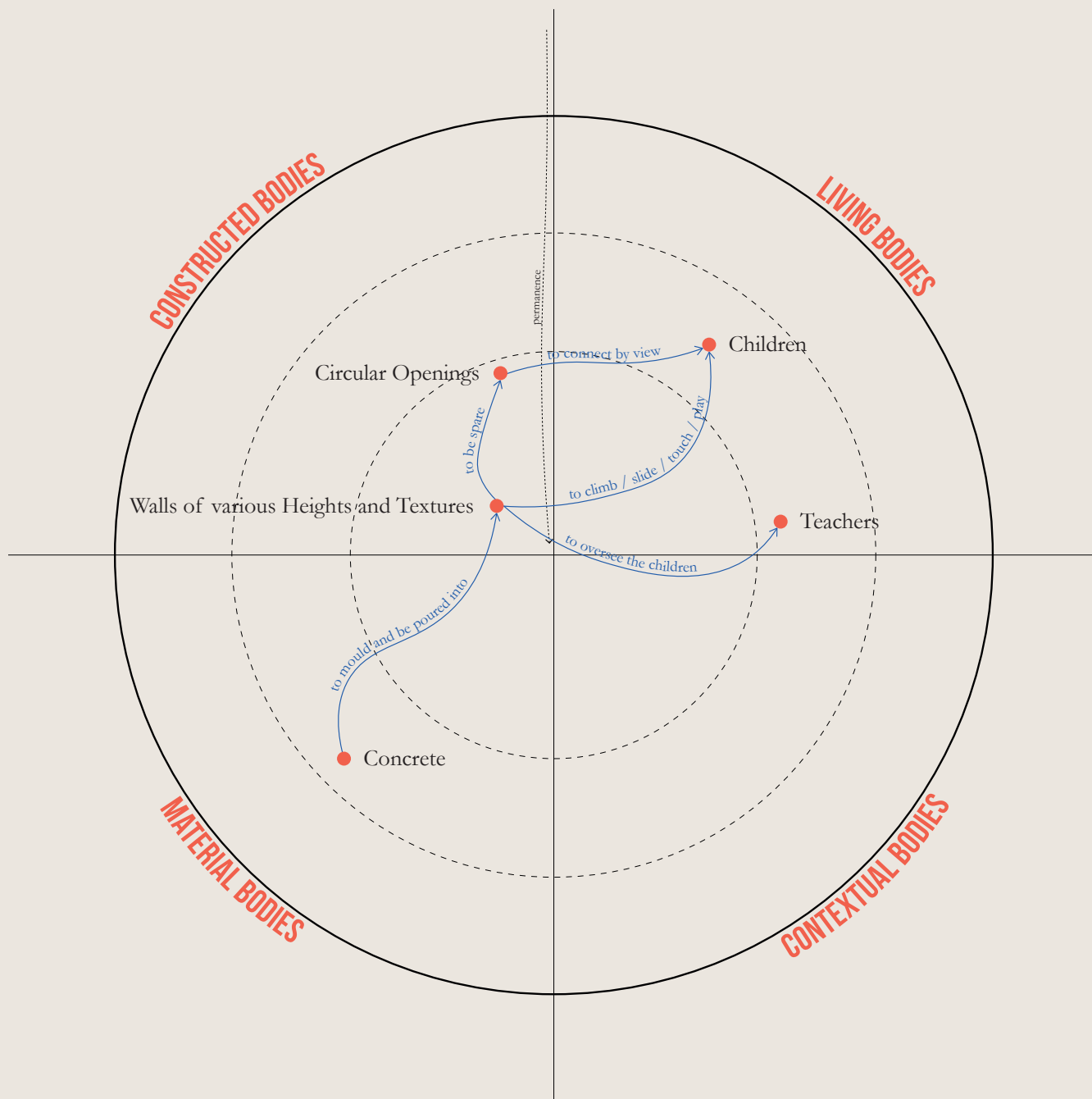
This playground design by Studio Ossidiana in Vleuten is located next to a new elementary school. It is working almost exclusively with a landscape of walls at fluid heights, materialized in coloured concrete with different finishes. Differently textured surfaces invite to be touched and the play of different view connections and separations invites to be explored. The wall's height allows for adults to oversee the situation and understand the construct rather as a passage, whereas for children it is much more a space. The constellation of fluid heights and separations/connections does not dictate or even indicate how to play here, but encourages children to discover all the affordances that are provided.²



04 Playground from Above



03 Playground in Action



● Bodies: *What is it?*

Affordances: What can it do?

● What Body ——— provides what action ——— ● for whom?

MORNING CHAPEL

FLORES Y PRATS, VENICE

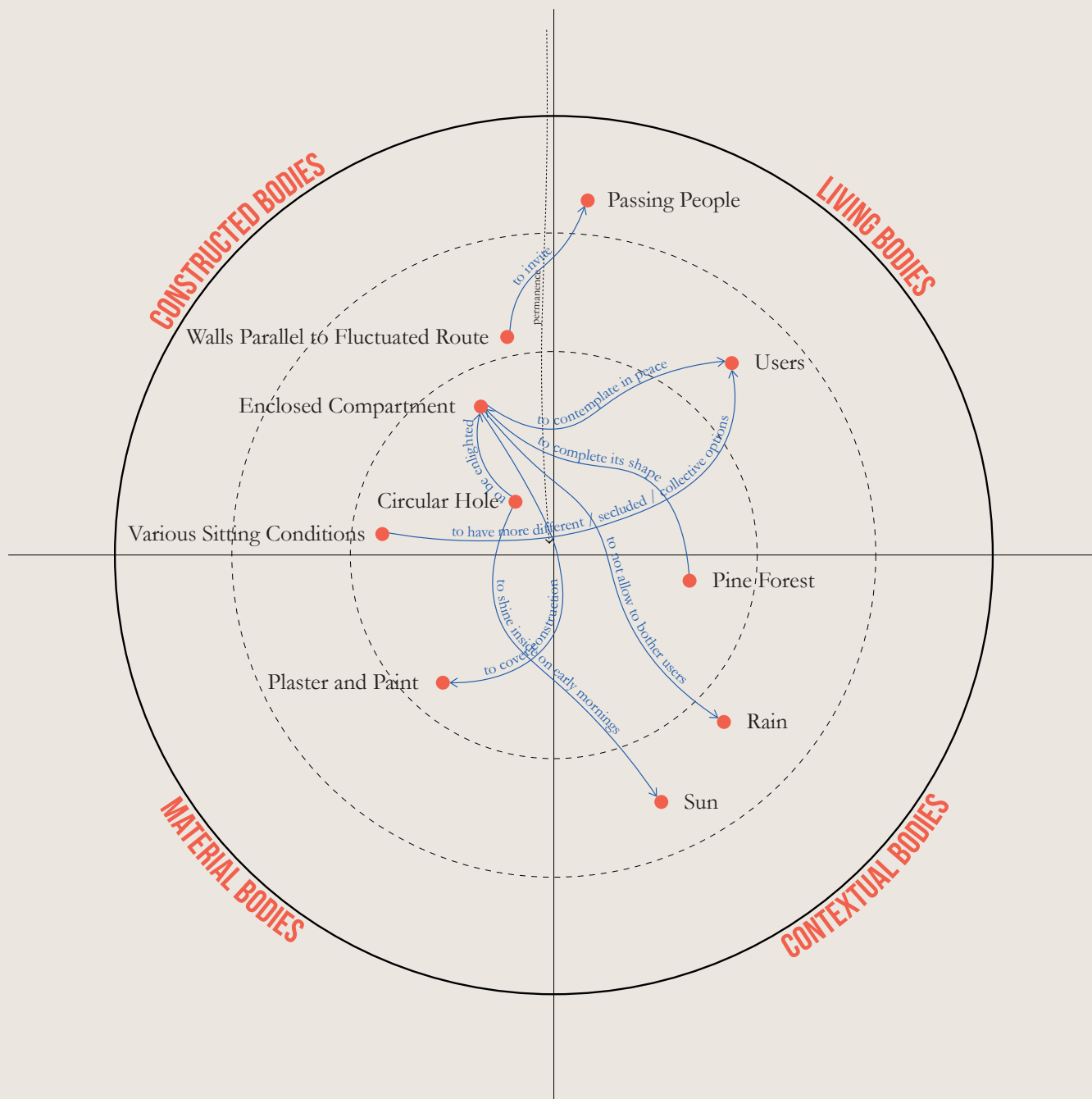
This pavilion on the island San Giorgio in Venice by the Spanish office Flores y Prats is intended as a peaceful place for reflection. It is located right next to the long path, just before the water. It provides the option to step aside the main traffic into the unknown. The shape of the chapel itself is rather fragmented, while it is being completed by the nearby pine forest. Its orientation is intending to emphasize the qualities of the forest, like smell and light. In early mornings, the first rays of the sun penetrate exactly the circular hole in the wall, which allows for this light to be caught on the opposing wall of the chapel. This constellation of dark and light, forest and sunshine is creating a peaceful and quiet place. Its many sitting opportunities allow to rest individually or in a group, protected from sun and rain, connected to the fluctuated path or towards the forest.³

05 Compartment that Catches Morning Light



06 Chapel Parallel to the Main Path





● Bodies: *What is it?*

Affordances: What can it do?

● What Body ——— provides what action ———> ● for whom?

COCOON TREEHOUSE

AA STUDENT PROJECT, DORSET

This treehouse is a project which has been designed and carried out by students of the Architectural Association School in London. Its main objective is to be a shelter for forest hikers, which provides protection from rain and sun, as well as animals of prey. Its shape derives from the trees that surround and carry it and allows for a view direction towards the sunset. The main material in use is cedar wood, taken directly from the forest. It is installed in a minimally intrusive manner in-between three trees and can be demounted at any time.⁴



07 Treehouse Installed Between Trees



08 Looking from the Inside Out



● Bodies: *What is it?*

Affordances: What can it do?

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SITTING ABOVE WATER

UNKNOWN, DELFT ZUID

This idiosyncratic object has been discovered on a trip between the Dutch cities Delft and Rotterdam. It is located in a private garden and has with no doubt been crafted by its owner and user, who most likely is not participating in the architectural field. There has been no contact with the latter, for the object itself is so bespoke, that one can relate and understand its emergence. The way it is tailored to its context, combined with material and construction availabilities and the precise action it is providing, makes it a perfect case study for the topic of this graduation. It demonstrates how architectural qualities do not necessarily lie in expertise, but also in the sensitivity to pragmatism and the impromptu.



09 Object alongside the Canal

010 Close Up from the Field





● Bodies: *What is it?*

Affordances: What can it do?

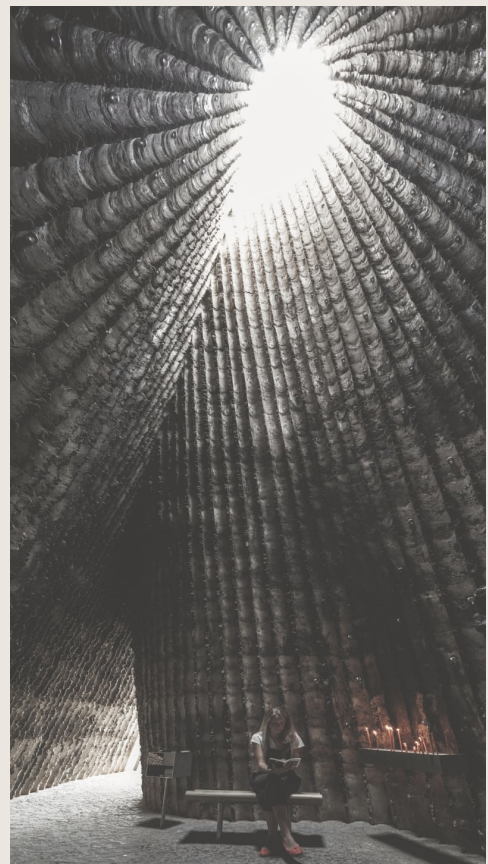
● What Body ———— provides what action ———— ● for whom?

BRUDER KLAUS CHAPEL

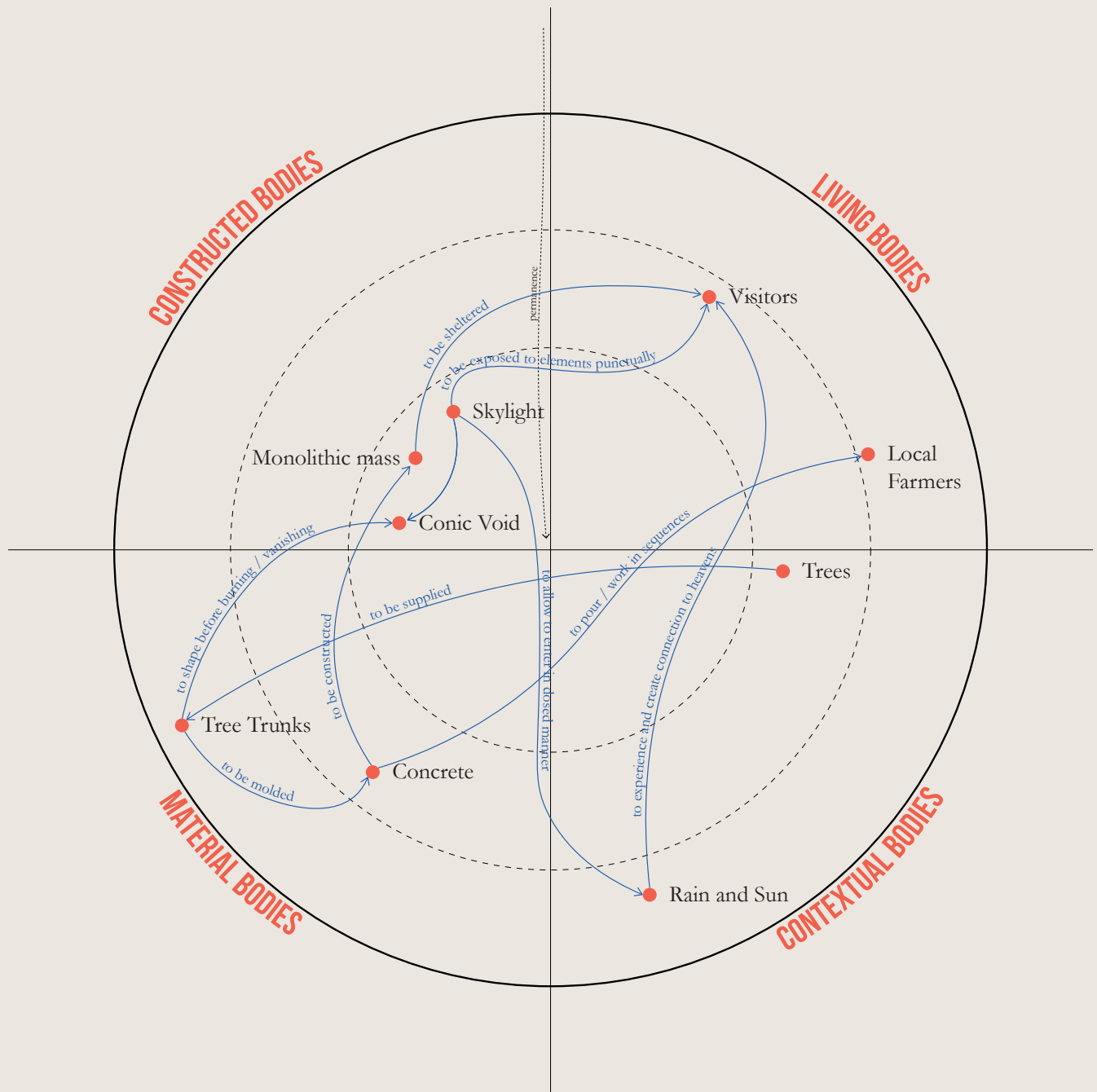
ZUMTHOR, PFALZ

This chapel in German Pfalz, by Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, has worked intensively with the constraints of what the rural environment was capable of constructing. The heavy concrete mass is carved out by a conic void which allows for a feeling of being sheltered and compressed, while connecting to the sky and the elements in a controlled and emphasised manner through a skylight. This project is especially interesting, due to the consideration of what actions certain material bodies could provide during the building process. This carved out structure was only possible because the tree trunks provide the action of being burned after having moulded the concrete from the inside, to not have to be uninstalled in a conventional manner. The concrete provides with the action of being poured in stages, which allowed the local farmers to construct according to their time availabilities.

011 Approaching the Chapel



012 The Chapel's Inside



● Bodies: *What is it?*

Affordances: *What can it do?*

● What Body ——— provides what action ———> ● for whom?

OTO PROJECTS

ASSEMBLE STUDIO, LONDON

This community space by Assemble Studio in London is exemplary in its usage of readily available material and how this creates exactly the space needed for its cause. The materiality of demolition rubble, which is an infinite resource at this disused site, allowed to be sieved, compressed and bagged into building blocks, which have in turn been finished with plaster made of the same rubble. These blocks tied together create a massive enclosure of the open communal space. A lightweight wooden roof on top allows for the space beneath to be protected from the elements, while staying an open and flexible space, perfect for workshops and performances to take place.⁵



013 Project in its Context



014 Project in Use as Creative Hub

TRUFFLE HOUSE

STUDIO ENSEMBLE, CANDAMO

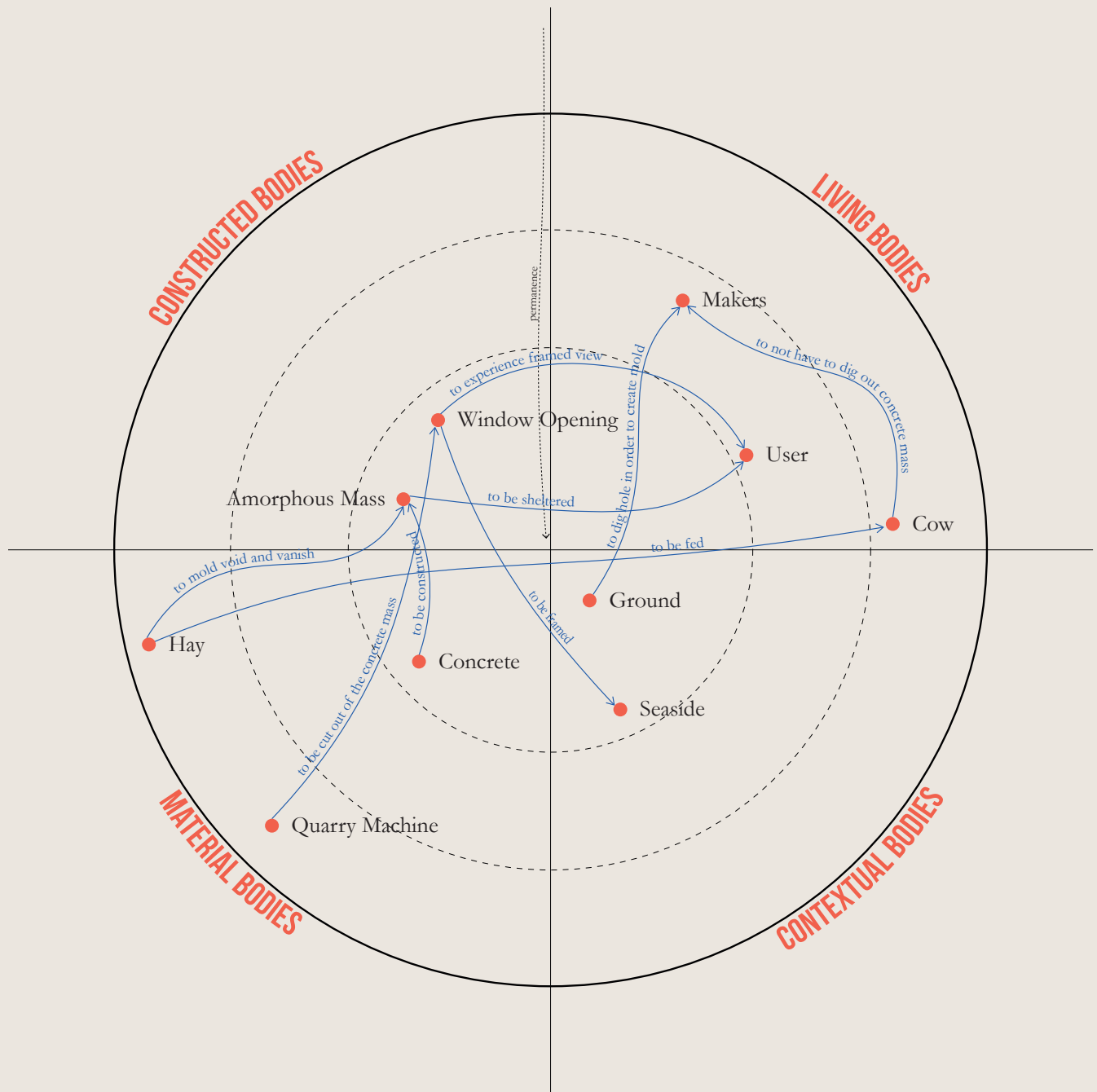
This project by Studio Ensemble in France is unique in its original way of emerging: Its concrete mass has been poured into the ground, excluding the through hay materialized void volume. The resulting amorphous mass, whose shape the designer had no control over, has been coloured and textured by the land. This allows for it to blend with the territory by appearing like a mineral formation. Heavy machinery lifted the object above the ground and made a precise cut for an opening. The internal mass of hay has been slowly eaten out by a cow throughout the course of many months, which revealed an interesting and similarly arbitrary inside space. Its precisely-cut opening towards the seaside allows for a beautiful view for whoever inhabits it.⁶



015 Project in its Context



016 View towards the Seaside



● Bodies: *What is it?*

Affordances: *What can it do?*

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SYNTHESIS

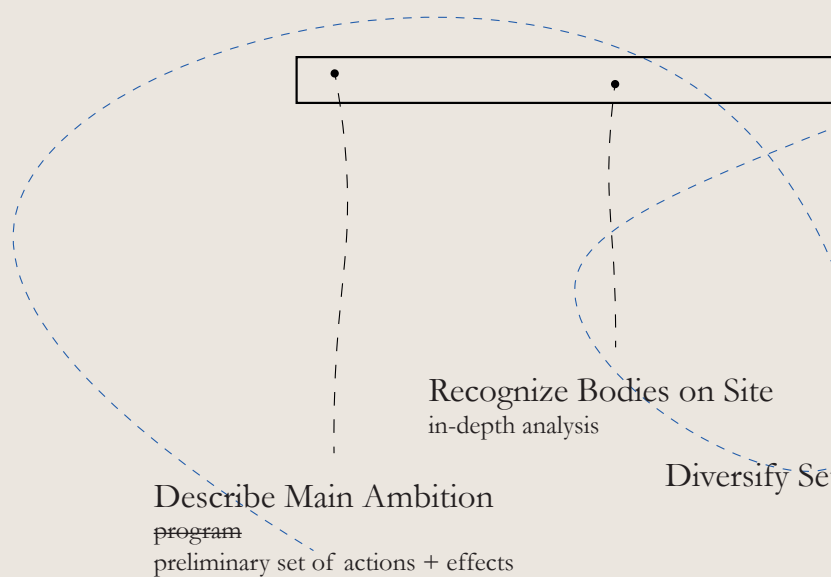
SEQUENCE OF CONSIDERATION

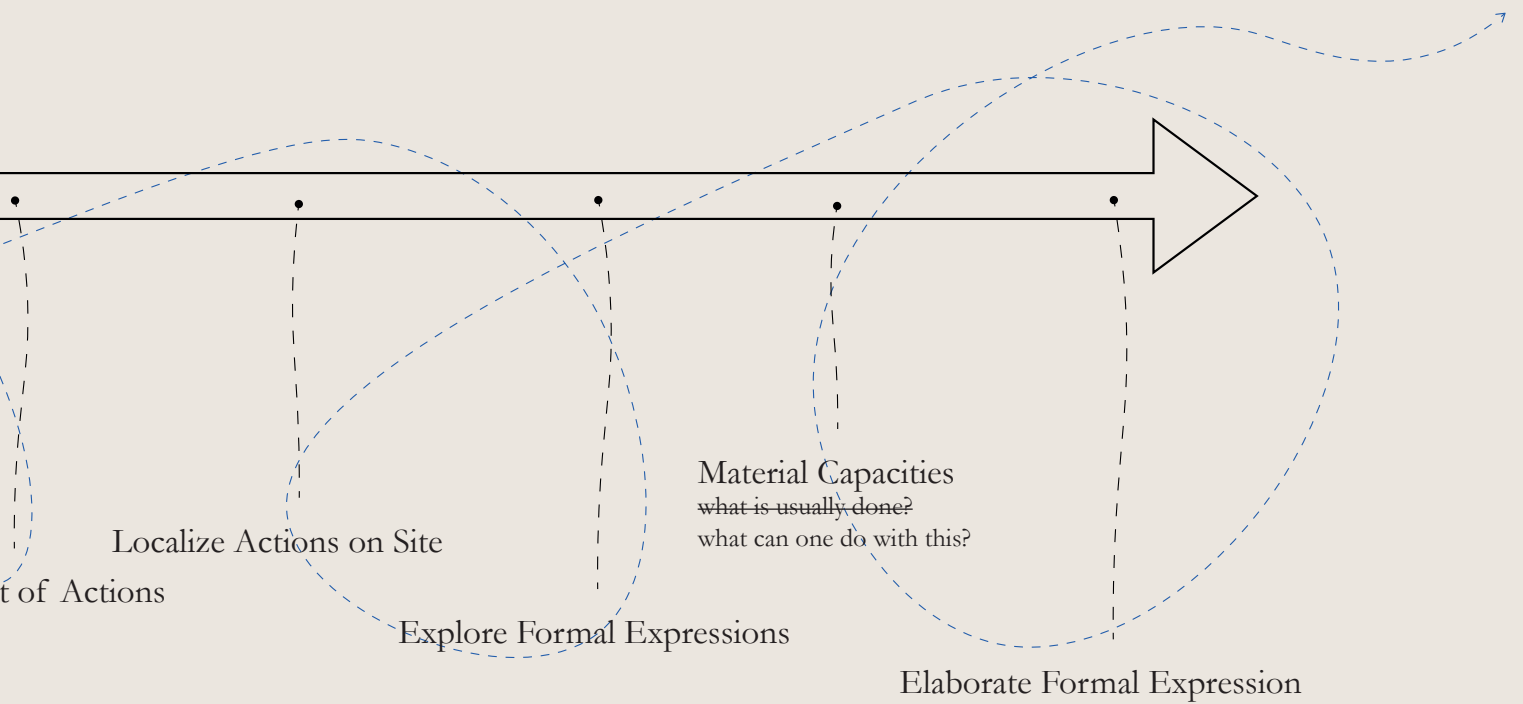
After having explored and been inspired by this set of case studies and their evaluation through the lens of affects, intentions for the creative process as such have been concluded. In the following graphic, a sequence of consideration is represented which portrays an ambition for any process of architectural design.

In order to really design with the affect in mind, it must be considered *before* any formal elaboration. After having described a main ambition for the project, it is important to analyse main actors and bodies of the context. Only subsequently one can localise complexified actions on the site, which the architectural construct is aiming to provide. Neither material availabilities nor their capacities shall be excluded from the sequence of consideration. An affective form cannot merely be shaped out of any material, but the material choice has direct implications for its formal elaborations. It must rather be the question, what material can provide for a form to provide certain complexified action.

It is out of question that a design process can never happen in such linear and straight-forward manner as represented in this graphic. This illustration is merely striving to define what considerations must happen before elaborating a formal expression.

017 Sequence of Consideration as Process Ambition





ENDNOTES

SOURCES

1. <https://somepeople.studio/SkyGazing-Tower>
2. <http://www.studio-ossidiana.com/horismos>
3. https://www.archdaily.com/896538/the-morning-chapel-flores-and-prats?ad_medium=office_landing&ad_name=article
4. <https://www.homecrux.com/the-cocoon-is-an-eco-friendly-tree-house-suspended-around-three-trees/7762/>
5. <https://assemblestudio.co.uk/projects/oto-projects>
6. <https://www.archdaily.com/57367/the-truffle-ensamble-estudio>

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