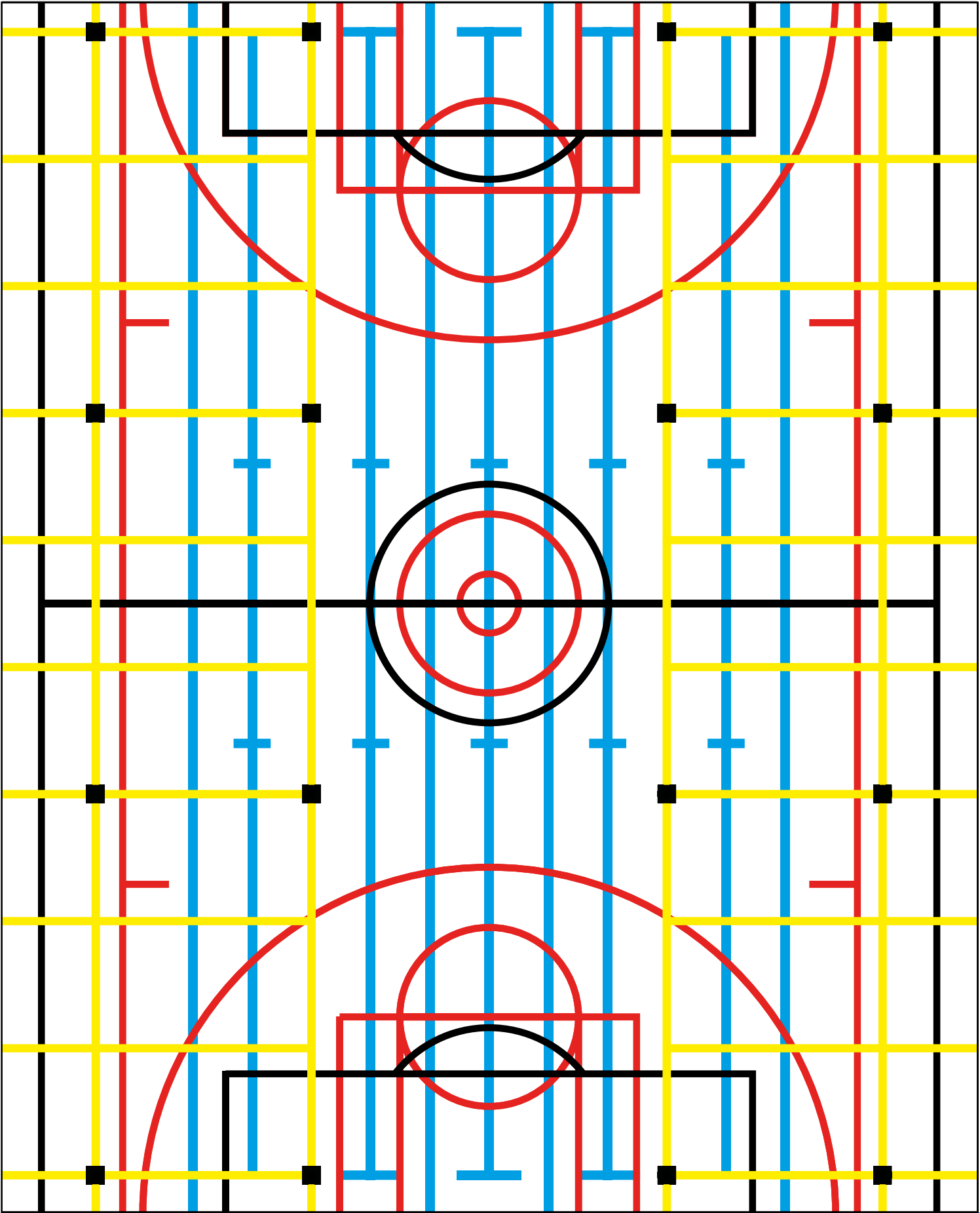




“Take pleasure in the context.”

1.06.26

— De Vylder (2018)

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LOOK BACK: FUTURE OF HEYVAERT LIES IN THE GARAGES

Overall, the project presents an approach to development that fully trusts and subordinates itself to the context across programmatic, spatial, and material dimensions. It addresses the central question of how future development in Heyvaert can respect industrial heritage by grounding the design in a careful reading of the site's past, present, and future identity.

The entire design process was led by the building and the site itself as the main protagonists and guides of the project. The architecture emerged through a continuous cycle of reflection and testing between fieldwork and design. The ramp promenade architecturale, which became the spine of the sports centre extension, is the result of this subordination to the existing site conditions and its use to serve a new public function, anticipated through the masterplan already in progress in the neighbourhood. In this way, the final project expresses an ongoing conversation between design and contextual analysis.

Treating the existing building as the main protagonist also revealed the agency of non human elements in shaping the urban environment. Working with the car garage highlighted how its architecture and urban organisation are defined by the dimensions of the car and the practices associated with it. In neighbourhoods such as Heyvaert, where urban development often follows an organic bottom up process, architecture becomes a strong expression of practice and of the invisible forces that shape place identity. Building materials and construction fabrics are the result of resource availability, economic conditions, and social networks. The exposed aggregate concrete panels used in the building's cladding were likely affordable and readily available materials for industrial buildings such as the IMS garage in the early 2000s, as also seen elsewhere in the neighbourhood. This demonstrates how practicality and economic constraints form the basis of architectural identity in this project.

In a similar way to how car trade practices overlapped with the meat industry within the industrial urban fabric of the neighbourhood, new public functions are also layered onto the existing grid. Just as sports hall markings suggest multiple uses within a single open space, swimming pool markings and basketball courts can be overlaid onto former parking layouts. While these new functions are imposed on existing structures, the inherited buildings resist and reshape them, producing atypical architectural conditions that are specific to place rather than generic typologies such as the swimming pool as an urban landmark.

Ultimately, the project argues that the future of the city lies in what already exists. Continuity, rather than replacement, becomes the guiding principle, ensuring that development emerges from within the logic of the neighbourhood rather than from an external viewpoint.



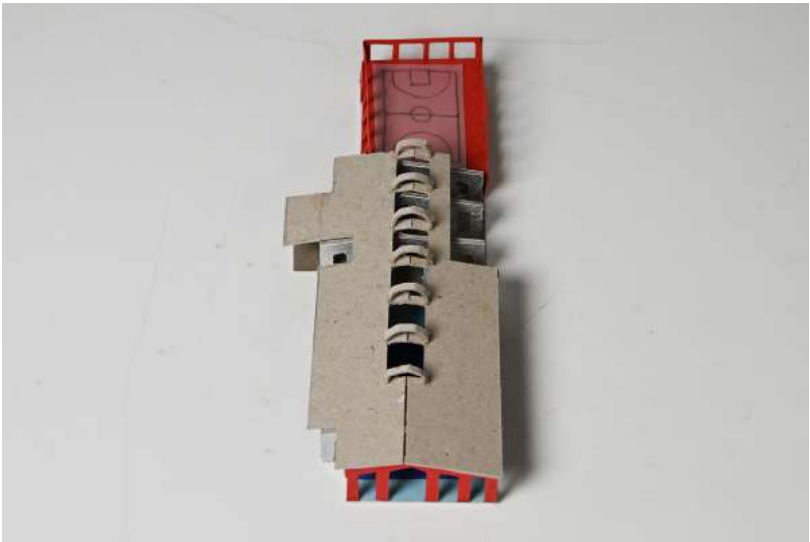
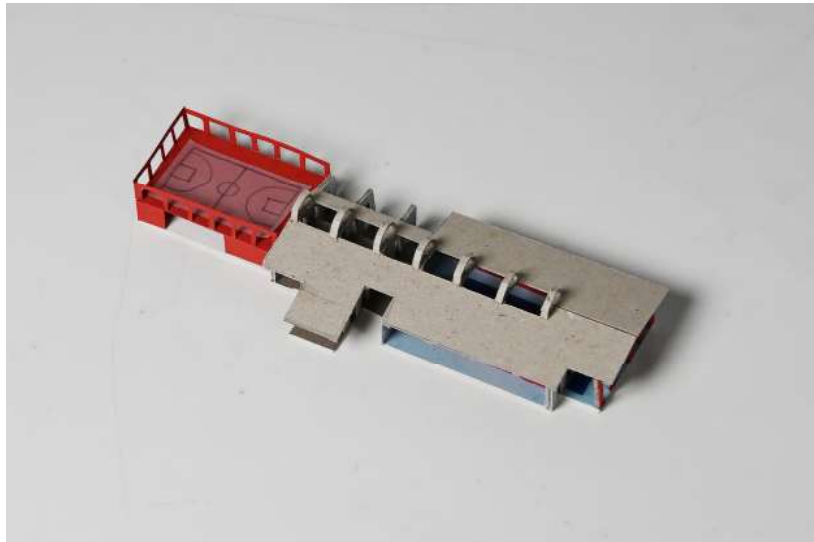
LOOK AHEAD: SKETCHBOOK OF A LAZY ARCHITECT

“May doubt be your best companion” (Winhov, 2024). Doubt was present throughout every stage of the design process in this project. At times, it slowed decision making, but it also proved valuable, as it reflected a genuine care for the site and the project. It expressed a reluctance to impose a student architect’s ego onto Heyvaert, a place I feel connected to intellectually, yet still distant from in terms of lived experience and identity.

Alongside this, following the principle of the lazy architect, it turned out that “laziness” actually played a productive role in the design process. It encouraged decisions even when they felt uncertain or incomplete, allowing ideas to be tested in the design process and through fieldwork rather than becoming over refined in theory, produced in isolation from the site. This openness to action created the possibility to challenge assumptions and refine arguments through iteration and constant circulation between the studio space and the site.

Looking back, there are clearly aspects that could have been developed further: greater attention to materials, a deeper technological inquiry into the technical adaptations required for the swimming pool and the practicalities of the building process, as well as the sequence of construction and how it can either limit or create new potential for the emergence of a design dictated by context. In addition, a more detailed inventory of existing conditions, stronger consideration of human relationships, and a more participatory approach to programming could have improved the project if the language barrier had not been present.

Ultimately, the key lesson taken from the project was: trust the “inner lazy architect” and subordinate yourself fully to the context. For future work, keep a diary, maintain a sketchbook, remain engaged with the process, and record the doubts and worries, the invisible work that drives the design of architecture. Make this invisible thought process physical and embrace agility and improvisation. Most importantly, learn to progress with doubt and work with it rather than against it.



ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not have been possible without the many people, places, and conversations that shaped it along the way.

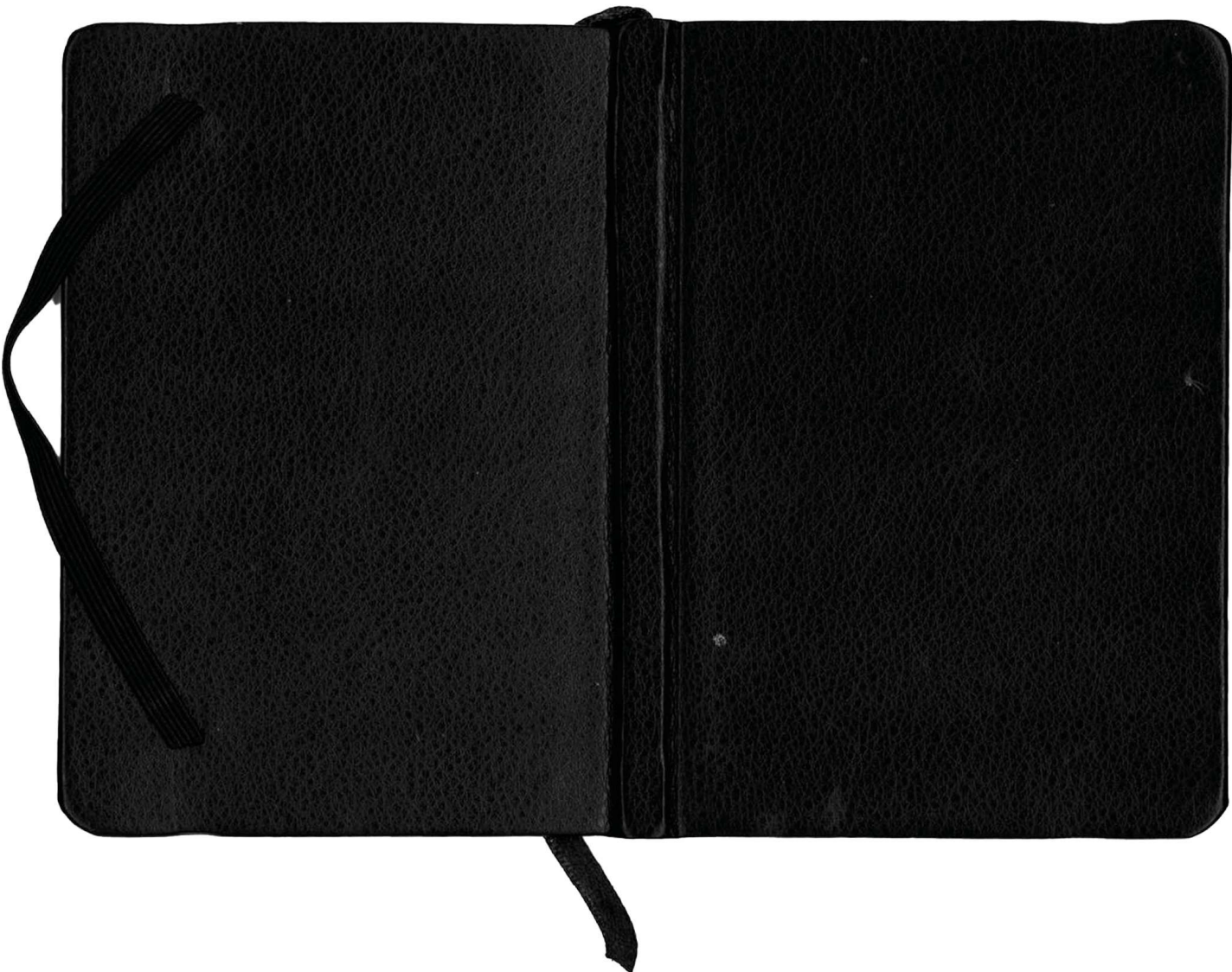
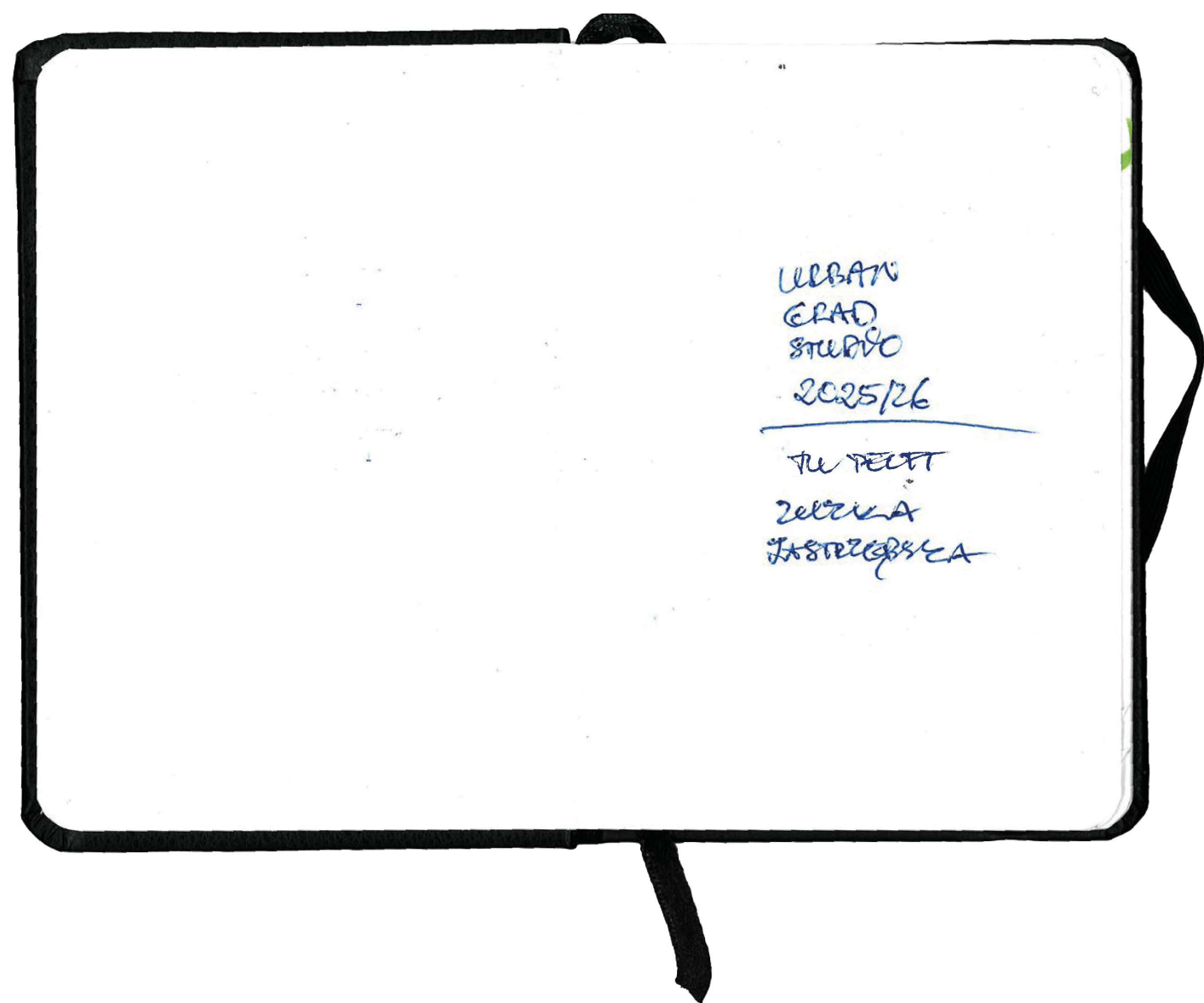
First, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisors, Eireen Schreurs and Sam Stalker. Eireen, thank you for constantly challenging me with critical questions that pushed me to look deeper, think harder, and sharpen my ideas. Sam, thank you for teaching me how to design through thinking, to trust the process of questioning, reflecting, and discovering through design.

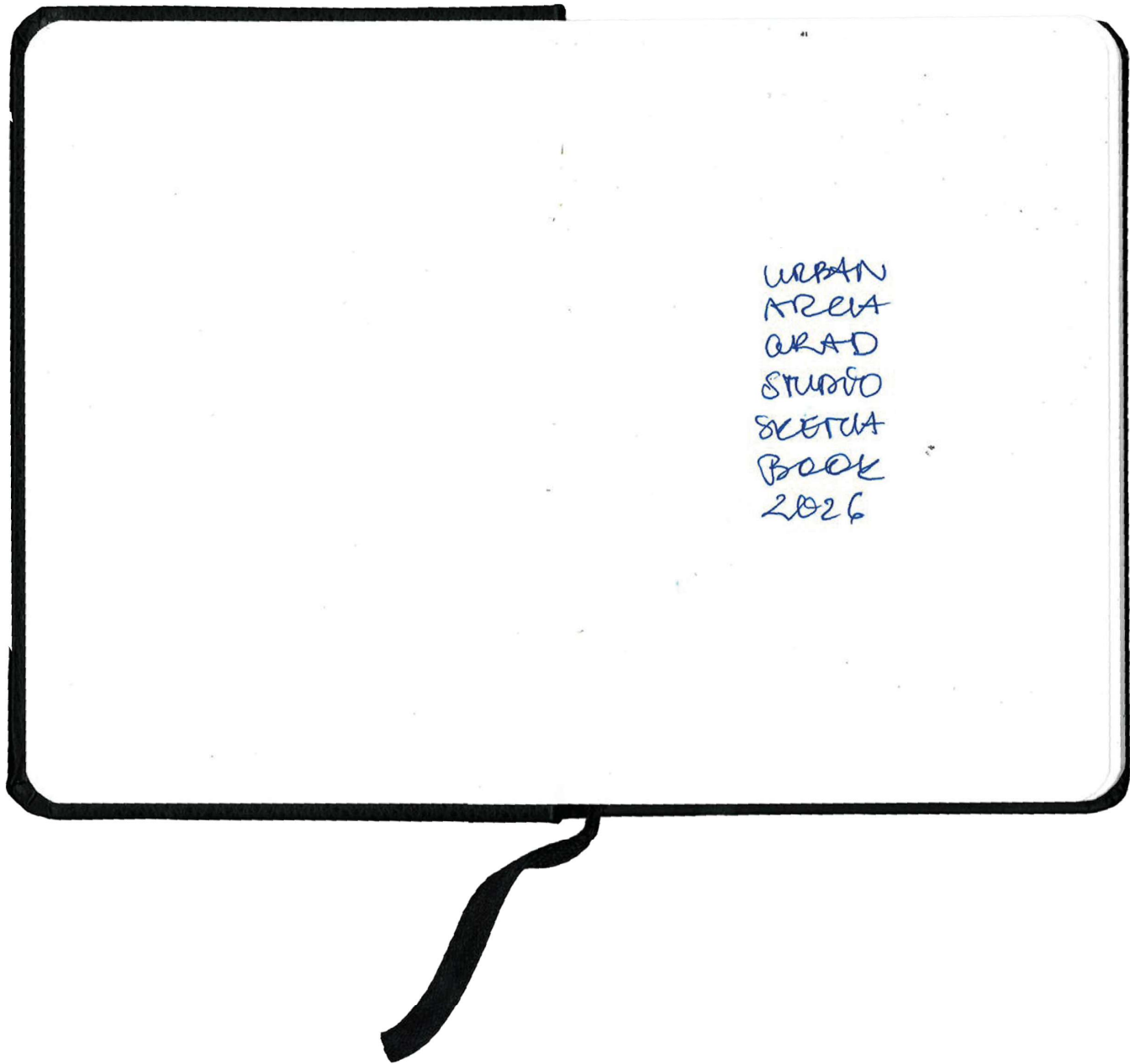
To my teammates, Tessa Zijl and Kei Ieng Ung, thank you for the creative collaboration, full of crazy ideas, discoveries, and unexpected turns. You made this process fun and enjoyable, and so much richer than it would have been without you.

Thank you also to the people of Heyvaert. To Sam, the car dealer, thank you for giving me an outlook on the world of car trading. Your blessing at the end of our conversation really worked, the project finished well! Thank you to the tire dealer and the GRC car dealer. You helped me rediscover Heyvaert and showed me another side of it: a side that is warm, supportive, and full of generosity.

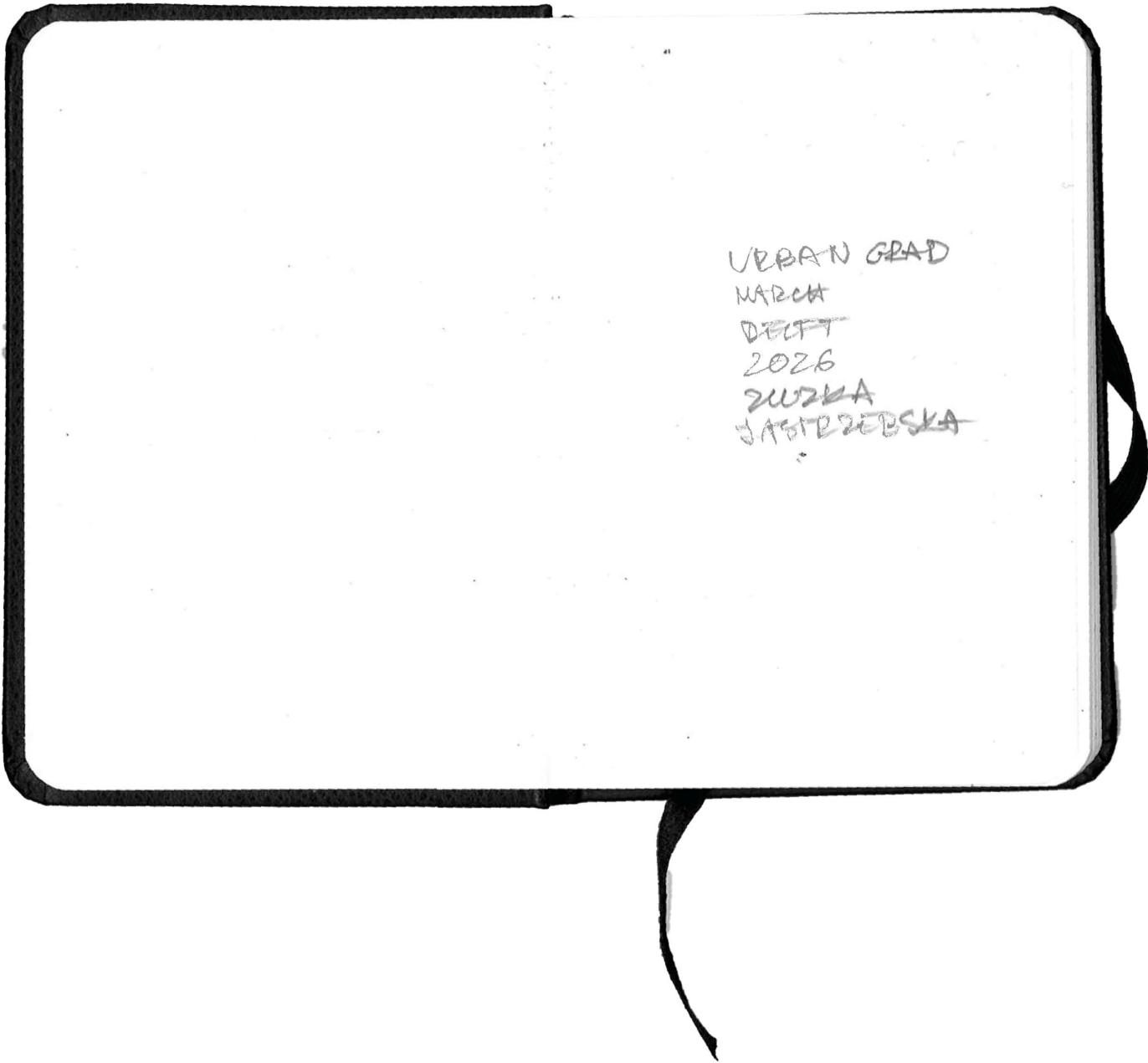
And thank you, Heyvaert, my project neighbourhood. Thank you for serving me with endless inspiration and for surprising me every time I walked through you. Thank you for teaching me how to find beauty in the awkward and the mundane, and how to listen to the city, because it already has all the answers.

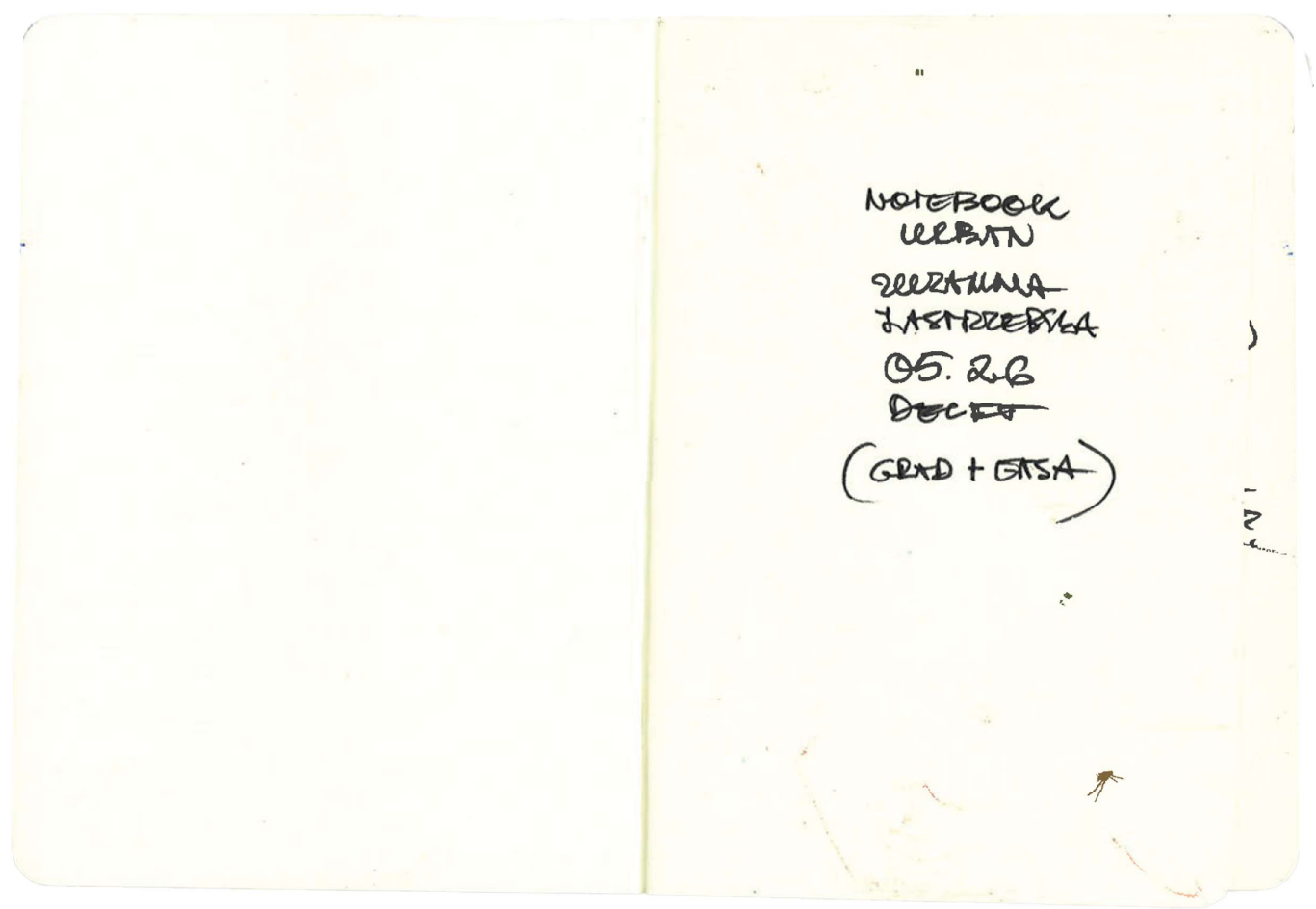
Finally, I want to thank myself and my intuition. Thank you for guiding me through moments of doubt and for giving me the motivation to keep going throughout this journey. Thank you for reminding me to trust the process, even when things felt uncertain. Through this project, I have come to know myself better as an architect.













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