

The following research looks at the inhabitation of the public sphere to expand on the notion of being-at-home. It departs from the interest in people practicing home-making outside the built and questions the boundaries in which buildings tend to divide between private and public spaces. By looking at examples of academic research, documentaries but foremost fiction, the home is explored as a fluid space, drawn around memories and habits, that can transverse material boundaries. The research then goes into applying the observed narratives to a specific site in Zurich. The groundfloor of an office building is rethought in a space where different modes of inhabitation can happen at the same time.

The work is an attempt to question the sensibility in which the state of “home-less”-ness is perceived. Instead of mending it as a problem it uses it as an inspiration to think about what it means to be-at-home.

Home-less or
just less at home

a focus work with the Department of the Ongoing by Sophia Trumpp

CONTENT

I

<i>Home-less</i> or just less at home	2
Honey, I'm Home!	14
Why mistakes matter?	16

II

Löwenstrasse 56, Zürich	26
Words and people	29
Reading List	31

The work is structured in two parts:

The first part constitutes of three articles. The leading article *home-less or just less at home* is a general reflection on themes around making home(s) in displacement. With *honey, I'm home!* the immaterial component of being at home is explored around works of fiction and personal memories. *Why mistakes matter* offers a personal standing and reflection on homemaking and brings it into the physical architectural world.

The second part looks at Löwenstrasse 56 in Zurich as a possible place of new forms of dwelling within the city and plays with multiple forms of privacy and living together.

The work ends with a collection of the many words of people that accompanied the research.

Home-less or just less at home

„this is still a microcosm to the outside society, it doesn't really have any different answers. This is freedom in the same way. You have the freedom to collect all the chunk, put a fence up, protect aggressively what you have, or you have the freedom to share or you have the freedom to absolutely nothing.”

(1) from a conversation with an inhabitant of Slab City in LA Times Documentary *On the Streets*



(2) Salvation Mountain, a hillside Christian monument in Slab City created by late resident Leonard Knight. Los Angeles Times from 2021

In 2016 the LA Times releases a series called “On The Streets”. Within twelve episodes the journalist and filmmaker Lisa Biagiotti looks at the complex situations in which people tackle their daily life without being secured fixed housing. Recent scholarship calls this making home(s) in displacement.¹ Whereas displacement means a dislocation from something rooted, making a home tries to bring stability and comfort to the uprooted. The seaming contradiction within this is uplifted by the complex realities of people practicing homemaking outside of conventional homemaking.²

Although human displacement is as old as the existence of the homo sapiens, displaced people are still treated to a large degree with caution and suspicion. Their agency is often lost in the management of ephemeral housing and affiliates them in terms of a notional right to space³. The following article reflects on different realities of home making in displacement as a spatial practice and looks at dimensions in sustaining a sense of self, agency and belonging.

Home in the right to space

In one of the episodes of „On the Streets“ Lisa Biagiotti travels to Slab City, in the Sonoran desert 190 miles southeast of Los Angeles, to discover the *last free place*⁴ in America. The city was born in 1956 when the US Marine Corps abandoned a military installation near the town of Niland. They had dismantled the buildings, leaving the concrete slabs that served as foundations behind. It was too remote and inhospitable for the state of California to invest in its development and became desolate.

Shortly after, a group of workers, who started their employment at a chemical company nearby, found the place most suitable to commute from on a daily basis. Over the next decades the trailer community evolved into an improvised city, that attracts people with little income or that want to live off the grid.

In the course of a conversation between Biagiotti and one of the inhabitants, it becomes clear that the sensation of owning a house that you can call your home and the feeling of being at home are two very fragile conceptions in a place like Slab City. Here no one lawfully owns the right to their home, and still no one is home-less. As Two Horses puts it: „I tell my friends I live in the only town in America where there are no homeless.“

The construction of the city is built upon one fundamental principle:

You find a place next to a tree, then you find some rocks, some bottles, some old cans, some tires, whatever is on the ground and you build your border. Now once you put down your border, slab city recognises that as your own personal property.

“Where silence is
not threatening
we are certainly at
home”

(3) in *Where are we at home?*
by Agnes Heller



(4) *If you lived here...* by Martha Rosler from 1989

Around the slabs of concrete that form some sort of orientation within the city, people inhabit the area using odd materials - in the words of Stickmann - to build mostly open structures. The slabs become part of it but are not the defining elements for the placemaking. Depending on the time, the residents intend to spend here, their constructions become more elaborate and ornamented in personal fashion. Others remain in trailers and continue to travel. In one of the first houses Two Horses built, the wall separating the veranda from the outside, is made of the springs of a mattress he found on the ground and the colours of the facade in pink, blue and yellow, with stones found on the ground, imitate the feeling of being by the sea.

Living off the grid, as the inhabitants call it, takes into account composting toilets and knowing how to run on solar energy. The grid is still referring to the energy grid and the rules that come with it, where the physical dependency provokes a metaphor for life.

Phil Long is a snowbird in Slab City. Inhabitant like him come here over winter and drive back north once it gets hotter again. He lives in his purple van that he places on one of the slabs and is accompanied by his dog Jim. He is asked where he sees himself within the broader concept of society. To which he declares quite clearly: „Well, technically by law I’m a homeless person. Which is fine by me. I don’t mind the term. but I’d say I’m just home less. Less often than some people.”

In Slab City, the ability to bring comfort to your daily life is nestled within the liberty to form life outside and to be given a right to use space as a resource for home-making regardless of personal achievements. With this comes the privilege of not being refused from a place. Something most people living in insecure conditions fear to happen. In her text on “Where are we at home?”, Agnes Heller writes “Where silence is not threatening we are certainly at home.” The notion to feel safe, and not in a constant state of jeopardy is an underlying principle for the feeling to be at home somewhere.

Home as a “warehouse” of emotions and habits

By the end of the 1980s the artist and academic researcher Martha Rosler realized a three-part exhibition called *If you lived here...* She questioned the (in)visibility of socially underprivileged people and looked at the properties of urban spaces that they inhabit.⁵ Her extended definition of homelessness to people who have no private living space - in other words no sphere of privacy, such that they are in a constant state of jeopardy - deserves to be looked through the living conditions of migrant workers in Hong Kong.

Jane was 36 years old when she came to live with my parents in 2009. She is from the Philippines and has been working as a foreign domestic worker in Hong Kong for over nine years. Her husband and extended family live in Manila. Their livelihood depends on the money she sends home every month.*



(5) Snapshot from *Lumapit Sa Akin, Paraiso* by Stephanie Comilang



(6) Drawing explaining the placemaking of domestic foreign workers in Central, Hong Kong

Foreign domestic workers is the name given to people that come to the city to provide care for families, individuals or couples. Their work includes anything from childcare to cleaning, over cooking to keeping the household. The live-in law states that they must be living with their employee and are not allowed to rent their own place. What this means is that even though many remain in Hong Kong for over decades, they are not considered residents of the city, but fleeting workers. People that are not supposed to become attached or integrated to society. The live-in law is a remainder of when Hong Kong (until 1997) was a British colony and up to this date has not been revised.

Jane lived in a room in our house which was pointed out by realtor as a possible location for the maid quarter. It had its own entrance - the backdoor - a separate toilet and shower, no windows, a niche for a bed, a cupboard and a small corridor.

Within the guide of the employment regulations it is stated, that within the house of the employee there must be “suitable accommodation with reasonable privacy, however a separate room is not required”.⁶ In reality many sleep on kitchen floors, on the sofa in the living room, window-less storage spaces, with minimum if no privacy. The live-in law assures that such bodies have no form of expressing personal relations or intimacies where they sleep every night. It blurs the line between work and private space and diminishes any possibility of constructing a clear sense of self and agency.

In an article on *the Architecture of Movement*, Iris Katz investigates the temporality of homemaking expressed by refugees, irregular migrants and other people on the move. She questions why people still invest so much in places they are aiming to leave.⁷ Every Sunday in Hong Kong thousands of women set up temporary dwellings with cardboard and string in the middle of Central. The lack of privacy within their place of residence - work - pushes them to re-create their own space in public. They congregate to create spaces of female care-giving, bringing commonly indoor private rituals to the public spaces. It is paradoxical that the appropriation of the public represent the most privacy they could obtain.

The Berlin based artist Stephanie Comilang explores this happening in her science fiction film *Lumapit Sa Akin, Paraiso* (Come to me Paradise). In the film a ghost in form of a drone metaphorically symbolises the precarious situation of the Filipina migrant workers in Hong Kong during they week, which they uplifted from on Sundays as they connect with each other and feel a sense of purpose. The material elusiveness of this habit is not in question to these women, as they are “lifelines, that I feel we would all seek in the same way.” The artist declares in an interview with Menna Agha explaining the necessity of it.⁸

Over decades, these women have reinvented the city to substitute their home and have established a spatial network to foster their practical, emotional and cultural needs. As the city renders them invisible in their right to a private space, the impressive scale of this event and its visibility within the city, offers them a sense of self and agency. The streets are

Aras Ören: „Die Fremde ist auch ein Haus“ / „Gurbet değil artik“

*Kopie eines von Emine geschriebenen Briefes
an den türkischen Generalkonsul in Berlin
und an den Berliner Innensenator:*

Sehr geehrte Herren,
wenn ich etwas Falsches schreibe, verzeihen Sie mir
dieses Falsche, aber nehmen Sie mein Schreiben trotzdem an.
Weil ich im Pass meines Vaters stehe,
passiert mir alles, was meinem Vater passiert,
von der Steppe angefangen, die er hinter sich herschleift,
seit nämlich (wie ein Mann im Flugzeug erzählte)
zu Ende der fünfziger Jahre ein Bagger in die Steppe
kam und anfang, den Boden aufzuwühlen.

Hinter dem Bagger erschien eine Straße, die Fremde begann.
Die Fremde begann schon in der Heimat, aber mein Vater
nannte sie „Deutschland“.
Ich nenne sie jetzt „Türkei“.

Als ich herkam, war ich fünf Jahre alt.
Seit zehn Jahren bin ich hier, meine Brüder
sind in Berlin geboren.
Wo ist jetzt meine Fremde, wo meine Heimat?
Die Fremde meines Vaters ist meine Heimat geworden.
Meine Heimat ist die Fremde meines Vaters.
Streichen Sie bitte meinen Namen
im Pass meines Vaters.
Ich möchte einen eigenen Pass in der Tasche haben.

Wer mich danach fragt, dem will ich
ehrfach sagen, wer ich bin,
ohne Scham, ohne Furcht
und fast noch ein bisschen stolz darauf.
Das Jahrhundert, in dem ich lebe,
hat mich so gemacht:
geboren 1963 in Kayseri,
Wohnort: Berlin-Kreuzberg.
Emine

(7) Aras Ören translated by Gisela Kraft, 1980

filled with dancing, catwalks, organized beauty pageants, sharing meals, exchanging lifelines, doing each others make-up. There is a hidden network of infrastructures that come to light on this one day and inform on the precarious situation they are left with during the week. A sense of homeliness is expressed in this ritual, in which they have the ability to express their emotions, share their goods and perform care to themselves.

Every Sunday morning around seven o'clock, Jane would leave our apartment with a bag of packed food and necessities. She prepares the food on Saturday nights. Every week, she tells me: I make sure I bake something to bring to our gatherings. She meets with her girlfriends in Victoria Park to spend the day there. They sit around tupperware on blankets and cardboard, shielding themselves from the others with their belongings and knee-high cardboard walls. In the mornings she goes to mass in a Catholic church in Causeway Bay. Sometimes they also meet outside to pray together or sing songs in communion. She would come back to our apartment late at night and start her day of work the next morning around 9 when my parents went to work.

Home as a fluid space

The Turkish writer, actor and journalist Aras Ören came to Berlin in 1969. He fled Istanbul due to censorship and suppression through changing military regimes. In his work Ören addresses people from his country of birth that have come to Germany for work - as so called *Gastarbeiter* during the 1960s - and tries to give sense to the diffused identity that these people are dealing with since their displacement.

With his writing “Die Fremde ist auch ein Haus” (the strange is also a house) he depicts the reality of many that are inflicted with giving their individual story sense within a wider concept of world. The architect Luis Alexandre Casanovas calls this a crisis of belonging. As the global circulation of people, information and goods has decentralized, what we understand by residence, spatial permanence, property and identity has changed.⁹

A fifteen year old girl writes a letter to the Turkish consulate in Berlin. She is requesting to own her own identity documents, as for now her name is written in the passport of her father. *Everything that happens to my father happens to me.* Her relationship to her father's home has become strange and what is strange to her father has become her home. Home as a fluid place - a place that can change with changing environments - is no longer pure by some idea of fixed and impermeable boundaries but is fundamental to the way we interact with the world and other people. At the end of her request she writes: the century, in which I live has made me this way: born 1963 in Kayseri, place of residence: Berlin-Kreuzberg.

To perceive home as a fluid space, outside of its conception as a static place, deserves to acknowledge forms of homemaking, that happen on a daily basis when defining personal identity and finding oneself agency. Belonging as in to the familiar, to the father in the case of Emine, can be unfastened from its static condition.

Closing thoughts

Looking at the immaterial components of homemaking in displacement has posed the question if the way in which buildings tend to divide between public and private spaces still reflects these forms of living. It realises that there is always a gap between the real sense of home - the one formed for example by people making homes in displacement - and the desired. It not only challenges everyday practices, norms and ideals of homemaking but the inhabitation of the public sphere is loosened from its strict perception of *homelessness*.

The filmmaker and author Alexander Kluge discusses term oppositional public sphere¹⁰. He calls it the type of public space that is changing and expanding. A kind of space that increases the possibilities for a public articulation of experience. The right to intimacy and private ownership of experience is part of this space. When looking at the mentioned realities it becomes clear that the public sphere we are talking about in architecture must be expanded to include these realities.

NOTES

1. In the book Making home(s) in displacement, Luce Beekmans, Ashika Singh and Alessandra Gola rethink the intersection of home and displacement from a spatial perspective.

2. The conventional speaks of homemaking within the framework of housing. People that perform homemaking within the secure facilities of the housing market.

3. "These are dispossessed people whose dispossession is at once marked and obscured by their categorization as "refugees" or victims of forced migration—which is to say as people taking refuge and assigned "notional" rights as such. To categorize the dispossessed as refugees, that is, is to gesture toward forms of refuge indistinguishable from indefinite interment and to do so while there are increasingly fewer instances when states provide the dispossessed any refuge at all." from There Has Always Been a Better Shelter by Daniel Bertrand Monk and Andrew Herscher

4. Slab City was called the last free place in America by an article in Fisheyemagazine that featured a portray on the city.

5. in Nina mörtmann's article Nina Möntmann "(Under) Privileged Spaces: On Martha Rosler's "If you Lived Here..."

6. for further details on the Live-in Law see <https://www.helperchoice.com/c/domestic-helper/domestic-helper-living-out-hong-kong>

7. in Iris Katz article in Inhabiting Displacement (Shahd Seethaler-Wari, Somayeh Chitchian, Maja Momić (eds.))

8. for the full interview see <https://www.e-flux.com/video/360979/lumapit-sa-akin-paraiso/>

9. From the foreword of the exhibition book „After Belonging" published with the After Belonging: A Triennale In Residence, On Residence and the Ways We Stay in Transit by Nina Berre.

10. Alexander Kluge in an interview by Klaus Eder, published in New German Critique, 24/25 found in Martha Rosler's book "If you lived here".

HONEY, I'M HOME!

“A nest is a fragile structure that is nevertheless supposed to signify stability.”

(8) in *Real Estate* by Deborah Levy citing Gaston Bachelard

As a hand softly grabbed my shoulder - I was advised to open the window clap. My eyes, hardly awake sharpen the senses. Water droplets running down the translucent plastic paper separating myself and the other 200 people cramped into this metal capsule from the outside. I see the city, nestled in between the lush green, the deep blue hugging the pixelled ocean line. It moves slowly. I have time to see it all at once.

„Repair for landing“ - I was ten when we left. And as I got older, so did the memories. They started to loosen their grip on me. But what never slipped my mind or body, was that sensation of a landing. The humidity on the window of the airplan. The stickyness. The wooden perls covering the black leather seat of the taxi driver. In my memory it was always autumn, always the end of summer holidays and always just before Typhoon season. Maybe this is because it's the first homecoming I can recall. The “honey, I'm home” I grew up with.

I read a text on real estate. I feel there is something romantic to it. In the text a woman collects unreal real estates. She draws them out in her mind. Visions of a pomegranate tree, friends around a table, a garden in the mediterranean air. I start wondering how much home is connected to the homecoming. Arriving somewhere all of the sudden becomes as important as the being, the static place itself. But within the arrival there must have been a departure - a state of mind where you leave a place behind.

Homecoming - what I immediately see are young kids in ballroom dresses in front of limousines, a wooden planked house painted in white with green shutters. The honey, I'm home happens in that same house. In the kitchen, when the partner returns from their departure and spells out those words, that have become self-evident.

I go online to look up the etymological origin of real estate. real derived from latin, meaning existing, actual, genuine. Estate, as the english translation of the old french word “Estat” meaning status. The real refers to the immovable portions of your estate. The houses and land as opposed to the other possessions, say your dog.

As the text goes on, the interioris of Deborah Levy's long row of houses become eptier, more silent by the page, her aspirations to actually own one, diminish. Levy's homecoming is correlated with her actions as a writer. As her selfconsciousness grows, the images of her unreal real estate vanish. As finally her honey, that she comes home to are the words written in her books. I wonder who is my honey? Is it that first memory?

Why mistakes matter

“If I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace.”

Bachelard Gaston in *The Poetics of Space* (1964)



(9) Scenes of a different kind of Home from Ursula Meier's film *Home*, released in 2008.

In her film *Home*, Ursula Meier depicts an image of a home that offers a childhood fantasy of daily life. A family lives in a house along an abandoned highway. It is summer and the furniture is scattered on the hot asphalt. The highway serves as an extension to their home. The vast space dwells on an imaginary freedom of use that Meier's images make real. The asphalt strip becomes a hockey field, a parking space, the living room, where they watch TV at night, it becomes the place devoid of walls and endless bicycle rides. It becomes every child's dream, freed of the rules of social conduct - a place where everything goes.

The highway demonstrates a mistake in the built environment. It was built with a very specific intention, which didn't turn out to complete. Its obsolete state makes it a playground. A mistake happened, and now the space can become anything. Meier uses this image to evoke an unbound conception of homeliness.

I start thinking about mistakes. When I make a mistake, I immediately feel humbled. I am dwarfed to being wrong about something. I sometimes even feel liberated after conferring to the mistake. When someone else makes a mistake, I'm triggered in empathy. All of the sudden their person becomes a lot more tangible to me. The mistake seems to have opened up a space, where we become vulnerable and moves us closer to each other.

In architecture mistakes happen all the time. Buildings are mostly constructed for a specific function. They are used with intention, money is lost in maintainance and they sustain a mode of living, as far as they are managed. Sometimes buildings are left to themselves. Within their lonely state of abandonment, they start to decay. In terms of the continuous development and productive use of space, abandonment is still seen as a mistake in the system. A system, where the allocation of space has become so valuable, emptiness is no longer appreciated. Nevertheless the mistake in the system, offers space empty enough to be inhabited, squatted, used, productive space for people.

So how does it make us feel - a place that is left to itself? Does it scream: Is it left for us?

When Jack Halberstam transported the photographs of Alvin Baltrop of the Piers of New York to the entrance hall wall of the architecture department of the ETH and started speaking about the Aesthetics of Collapse, I could not stop but wonder about its comfort. Did the collapse of the buildings, its abandonment - something others carelessly shifted away from their attention - make such bodies, such young people devoid of acceptance in society, feel safe, freed of judgement and feel a sense of home?



(10) Alvin Baltrop the Piers in Jack Halberstam's Aesthetics of Collapse talk at the ETH Spring

Is it possible that spatial mistakes in cities - the rubble, the damaged, the left, the weird buildings and the strange details - provide for a gap that is missing from our perception of what makes us comfortable? And then Jack's question makes sense: *Why are we always reproducing what we already know makes us feel good?* He points our attention to the brokenness and how instead of mending it, we could just let it be. Let it fall apart or even tear it down. Learn how to deal with collapse.

As children, we don't seem to care too much about the mending. Aldo Van Eyck once said: *A city without the particular movement of a child is a paradox. Because the child discovers its identity against all odds, damaged and damaging, in perpetual danger and incidental sunshine.* It only happens later, when we adapt to adult life and the norms around us, that it becomes more difficult to see the damaged as a starting point. Instead we start to fill the gaps with what we learnt was right. Somewhere in between Aldo Van Eyck and Jack Halberstam I start to find comfort in mistakes and sense a point of departure. For the home of Ursula Meier's fictional family, the mistake in the system was crucial to their feeling of being at home.

Why mistakes matter? Because they offer a different outcome than what we intended to see. They reveal a story that was neither written or told, but is there to be read or listened to. They provide us with a new starting point.

PEOPLE STORIES



(11) Photographs from the work of Ulrike Myrzik and Manfred Jarisch: *Architektur der Obdachlosigkeit*. With a scholarship of Philip Morris they travelled to Asia in 2003, to document the architecture of people living on the streets. They asked themselves the question: how to create privacy in the public sphere and by what means is it implemented?



(12) Outtake from the documentary film *Homo Urbanus: Episode on Shanghai* by the film duo Beka Lemoine. The film depicts daily life in a district in Shanghai where people still share amenities, such as washing clothes, bathrooms, toilets. Their living spaces are often



(13) Outtakes from Jun Li's film *Drifting*. Jun Li, also a journalist and former student on gender studies, had written an article on the clearance of a community of home-less people in Sham Shui Po in 2012, listed as the poorest and recently most developed district of the Territories. His film *Drifting* is based on this experience.



(14) Outtake from Thomas Ostermeier's in-scenation of *Virgine Despentès: The life of Vernon Subutex*.

In the last chapters of *Virgine Despentès* fiction on Vernon Subutex, she describes the brutal interference of her protagonist with liminal space - the physical but also social space people exist in after having transgressed to the outdoors. Liminality is a term that is originally coined in connection to the anthropology of religion and describes a state of threshold, where individuals or groups find themselves after they have ritually detached from the prevailing social order. In the meaning of liminal space lies a more precise interpretation of the threshold, that permits to understand also a social dimension next to the physical.

After being physically dispossessed by the public authorities, Vernon moves in between friends and acquaintances and finally ends up sleeping on the streets of Paris. During his first nights, he finds shelter from the cold in the entrances and corridors of houses, the rooms of cash dispensers or metro stations. The capability to penetrate the depth of the facade becomes the most real interface for Vernon to find shelter. His daily form of shelter is described by the character of the space and its composition becomes crucial for his perseverance from the cold.

IMAGE SOURCES



(15) Photograph by Ahlam Shibli, untitled (Market no.6), Torino, Italy, 2005 taken from e-flux Architecture. Life, Without buildings. In September 2021, Adam Szymczyk held a seminar at the architecture department of the ETH. The students discussed about the possibilities of life beyond the architectural and infrastructural confinement of the built environment. In the exhibition catalogue that followed in spring, he writes a living freed from design - where architecture is conceived through the lens of contemporary conditions involving issues of labor, displacement and homelessness. The series of photographs by Ahlam Shibli entitled Market (2005) show scenes of an improvised market where belongings are scattered around on the pavement, in between buildings, cardboards and hung on window gutters. On the website the artist statement reveals: This work deals with the Immigrant Saturday Market in Torino. It explores the living conditions of people who left their homes to arrive at a foreign place. The photographs do not portray a specific event. They act as snippets of human interactions.

(1) <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-05-10/no-escaping-covid-19-even-at-california-remote-slab-city>, 23.09.2022

(2) "On the streets" a feature documentary on homelessness in the LA Times from 18.02.2016. <https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-biagiotti-onthestreets-20151118-htmistory.html>, 23.09.2022

(4) from article (Under)Privileged Spaces: On Martha Rosler's "If You Lived Here..." by Nina Möntmann. <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/09/61370/under-privileged-spaces-on-martha-rosler-s-if-you-lived-here-8230/>, 23.09.2022

(5) Snapshot from film *Lumapit Sa Akin, Paraiso* by Stephanie Comilang.

(7) from Aras Ören translated by Gisela Kraft, 1980 in <https://www.faz.net/aktuell/feuilleton/buecher/frankfurter-anthologie/frankfurter-anthologie-die-fremde-ist-auch-ein-haus-von-aras-oeren-17136133.html>, 23.09.2002

(8) <https://ofhouses.com/post/151919236998/359-heinz-bienefeld-josef-stein-house>

(9) snapshot from film bought on vimeo 6.04.2022

(10) <https://ocula.com/art-galleries/galerie-buchholz/artworks/alvin-baltrop/the-piers-body-under-cloth/>

(11) <https://www.myrzikundjarisch.com/stories/architektur-der-obdachlosigkeit/>

(12) *snapshots from film* bought on vimeo 6.04.2022

(13) <https://www.hkff.uk/programme/driftng>

(14) https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mdJ_VUfDvk&ab_channel=Schaub%C3%BChneBerlin

(15) <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/454970/life-without-buildings/>



Löwenstrasse 56 Zurich

Löwenstrasse 56 is a building in the centre of Zurich. It is flanked with wooden panels, and black paint. The building is set along a busy street in the city centre, but opens up to a quiet hidden courtyard with a fountain in the middle - the Linthescher Hof.

The courtyard is semi hidden from the public. Not everyone knows of this place and you seldomly see people surprisingly enter. The restaurants, offices and retail stores on the groundfloor share the courtyard as a place of retreat. The kitchens of the restaurants face the courtyard. A table and chairs are outside. People are sitting on benches around the fountain. A couple of colleagues are leaning against the car railings having a cigarette. A woman opens her office window on the groundfloor and puts a plant on the windowseal. The windowseal seams awfully low, the office floor must be set below the ground.

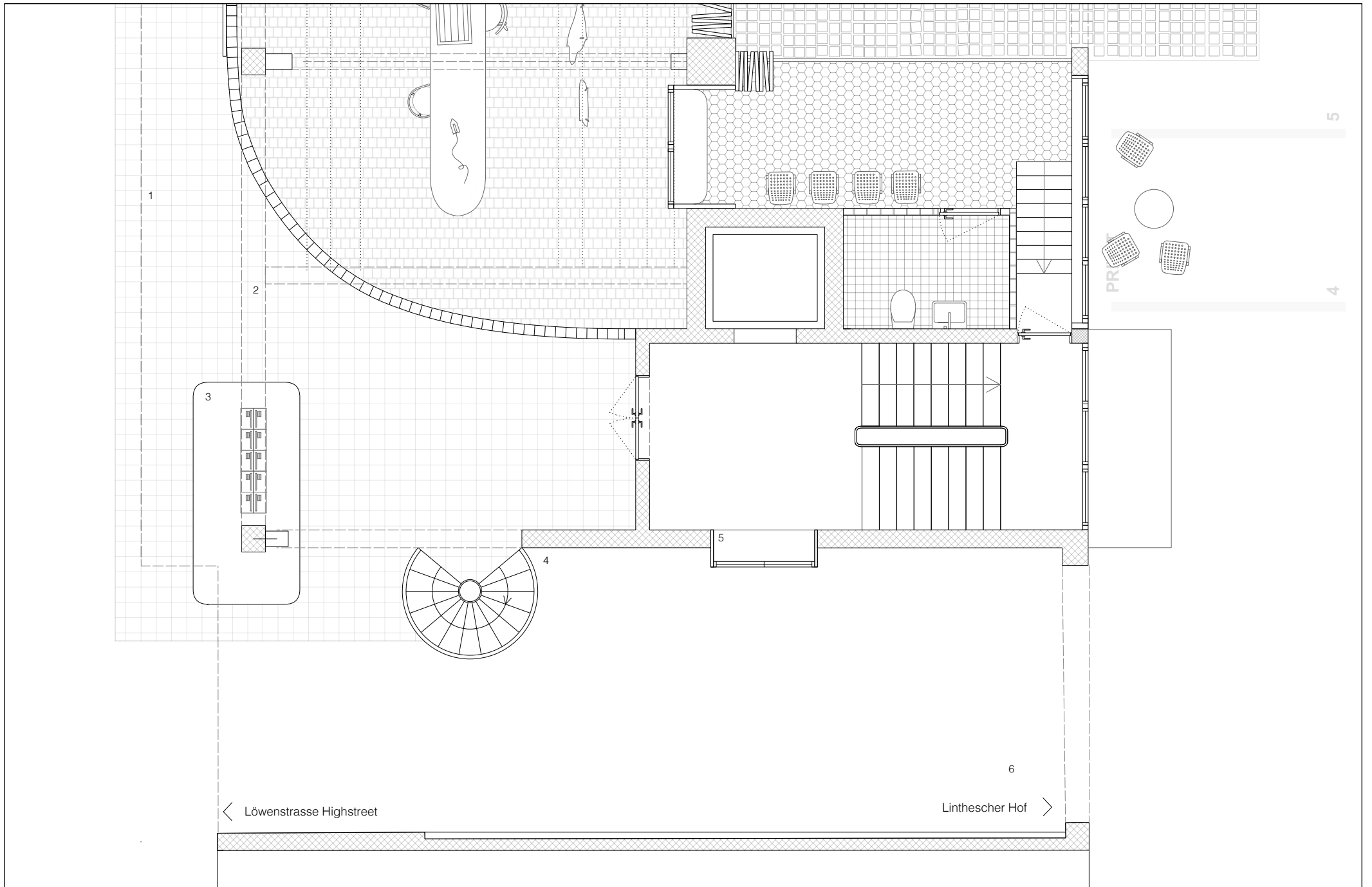
I go on google maps to find out what it used to look like. The street view image tells me that it's state of vacancy has been going on for a little over a year: 21 March 2021. This is unusual for Zurich's city centre, where the average price of a m2 apartment: CHF 17'037.

The address plates only show one Name: Veraison, Ripening of Investments.

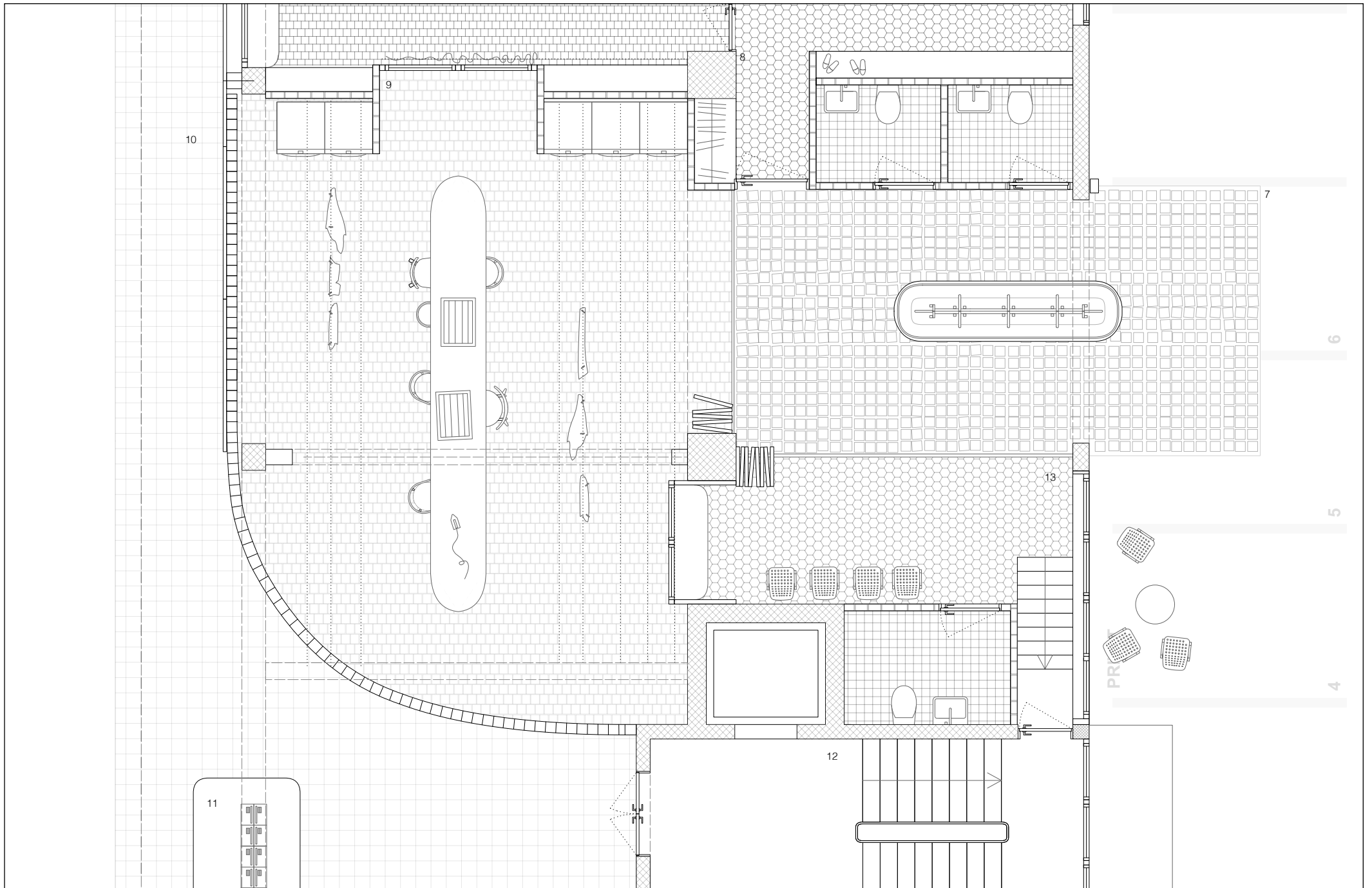
I find an article on the building in the NZZ from July 2018: *die Hängenden Gärten von Zürich*. Heredium Real Estate Group wants to baegreen the 180m2 facade and decrease the CO2 emissions in the city centre. Except for a couple of rectangular pieces of earth that are hung from one side of the facade, the experiment somehow seems to have failed.



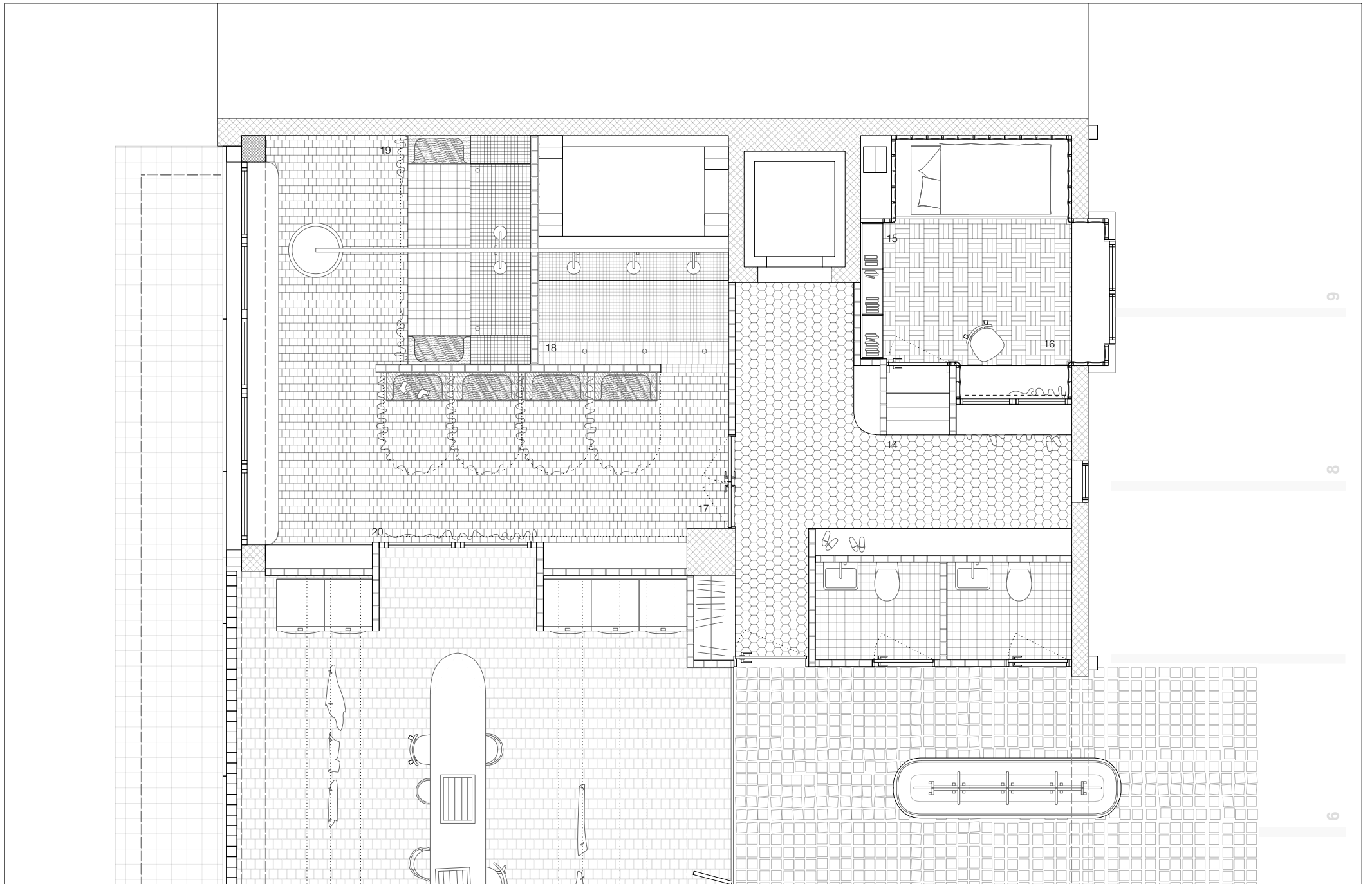
I wonder what could become of Löwenstrasse 56? Before it continues to incorporate itself into the long row of shops on the street and the groundfloor was haked and given into a shared system to not only servce the offices above, but the rest of the people working, living around Linthescherhof and beyond. On the following pages a possible alternative has been drawn out.



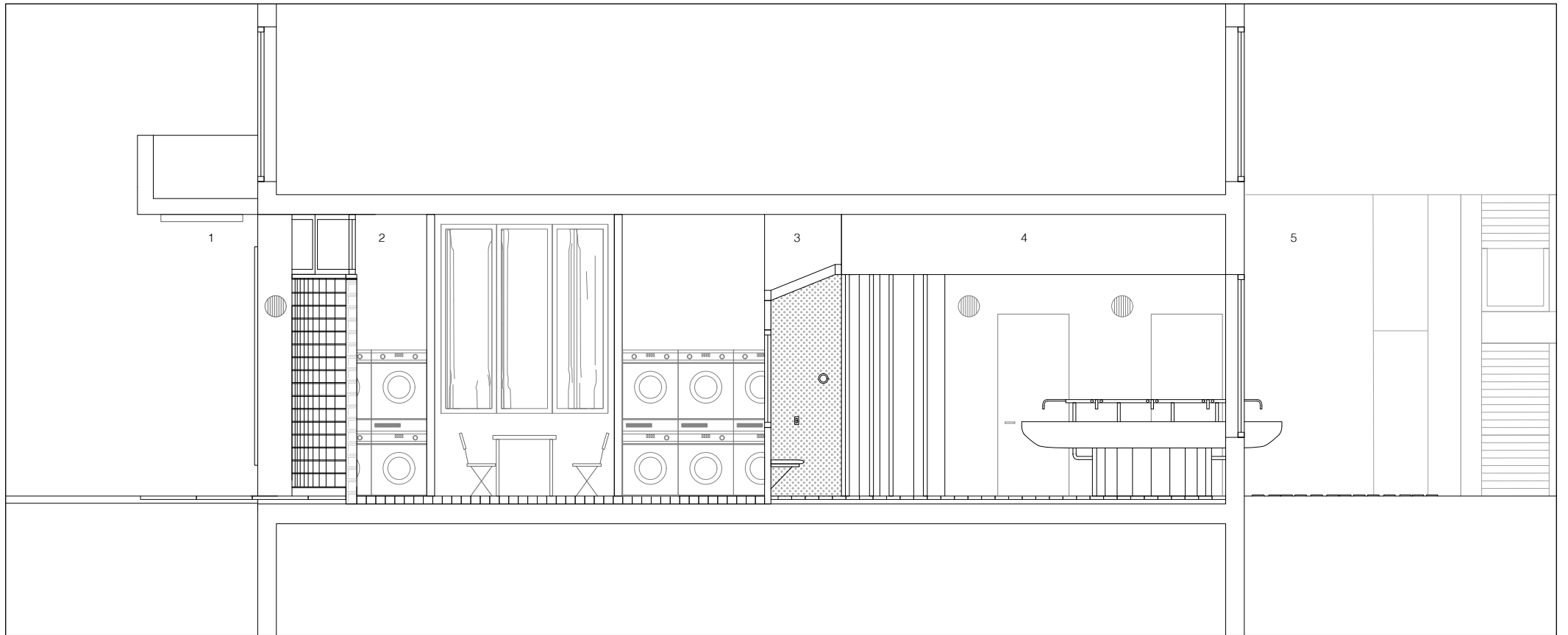
(1) a square carpet made of stone (2) behind the glass bricks shadows of people appear in soft light, when the windows are open you can hear them chatter (3) In letterbox one a key is stuck to the inside wall, it will open a room at the back of the house. (4) the spiral stairs lead to the covered terrace on the first floor, it has enough space to eat lunch on rainy days in summer (5) the opening reminds of the old front door to Veraison Partners, now its a window (6) cars can pass if they really want to



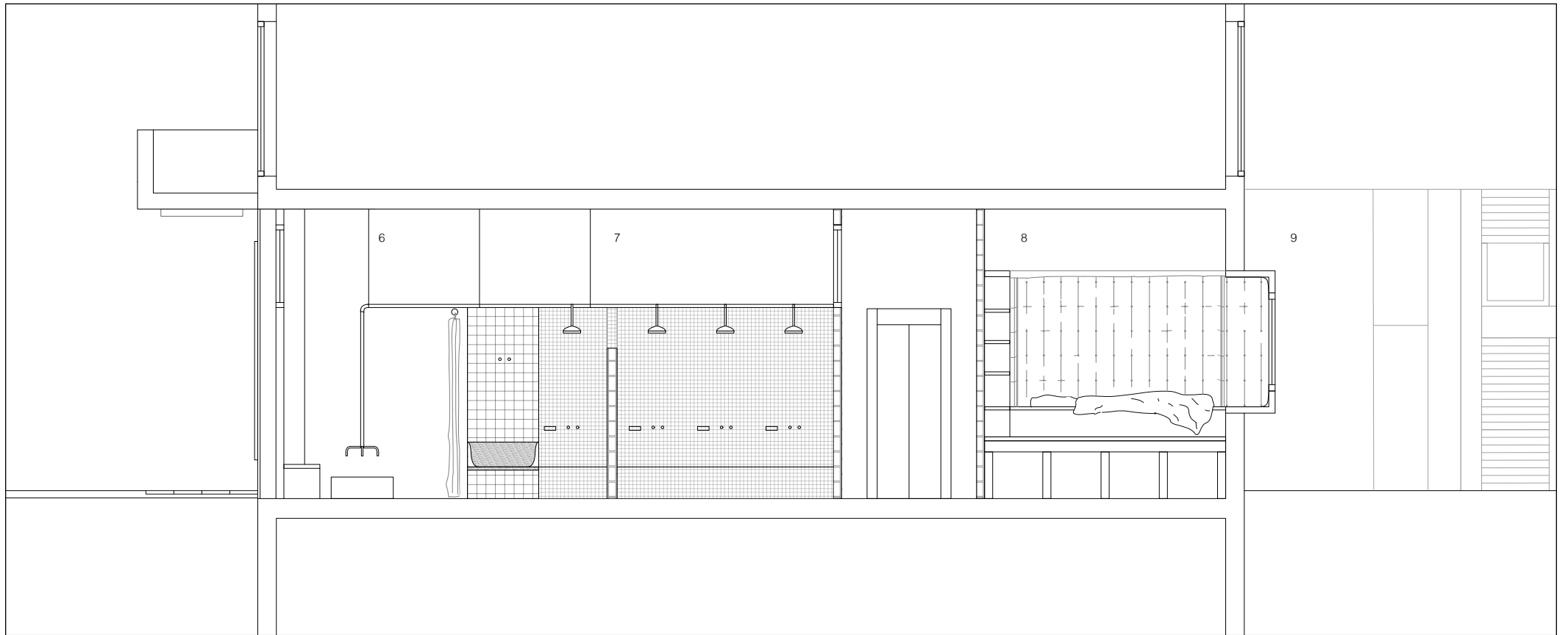
(7) Before entering everyone washes their hand (8) It's warm in here: you can take off your shoes (9) clothes are hung along the ceiling to dry (10) the building is wrapped in black painted mdf pannels from the construction site, now it serves as a graffiti wall (11) Opening letters with ease (12) entering the office building (13) the red tiles remind me of my first own apartment in Zurich.



(14) stairs lead up to a closed door - the key is always kept in Letterbox One (15) Sometimes I take a book and leave one for the next (16) the room is covered in colored textile (17) Its steamy in here - don't forget your slippers - the milk glass doors are always humid (18) for the more bare ones (19) for the more private ones (20) open the curtains for more natural light



(1) from the outside you only hear and see shimmers through the glass wall. the wooden pannels are to be beplayed (2) the window connects the showers to the laundryroom, sometimes when its open you see people rushing by, the dressers behind open and close. it reminds me of big department stores (3) in the cabin the light is on (4) this is the only cold place in the house, in winter I mind it a bit (5) sometimes the neighbours come sit out here and have their lunch closeby.



(6) the wooden bench is still warm from the last person that was sitting here washing their feet (7) someone reached over the brick wall and took my shampoo (8) Don't forget to put your sheets in the washing mashine after you left (9) Sitting against the window watching others have a cigarette break

PEOPLE WORDS

A

Arendt Hannah
in “we refugees”

„we lost our homes, which means the unfamiliarity of daily life“

Athanasiou Athena

in Dispossession: the Performative in the political (with Athena Athanasiou)

“In light of contemporary brutal contexts of displacement, homelessness, racism, and xenophobia, hospitality is a case in point. The ethics and politics of hospitality involve, or rather require, dispossession: the dispossession of the home (as a provisional sign of affective placeness) and the dispossession of the owner’s identity as master of the home. Becoming a host/ess requires giving away one’s own identity as master; it requires being dispossessed of everything that defines one as self-owning and self-owned master of the home. This “dispossession” of the identity of master is not disengaged from but rather inextricably linked to demanding the right of housing and other basic conditions of flourishing.”

B

Bachelard Gaston

in The Poetics of Space (1964)

“If I were asked to name the chief benefit of the house, I should say: the house shelters daydreaming, the house protects the dreamer, the house allows one to dream in peace.”

Berlant Laurent

in the Commons: Infrastructures for troubling times

“Infrastructure defined as the movement or patterning of social form. It is the living mediation of what organizes life - the lifeworld of structure.”

Butler Judith

in Dispossession: the Performative in the political (with Athena Athanasiou)

“Both of us found ourselves returning to the question, “What makes political responsiveness possible?” The predicament of being moved by what one sees, feels, and comes to know is always one in which one finds oneself transported elsewhere, into another scene, or into a social world in which one is not the center. And this form of dispossession is constituted as a form of responsiveness that gives rise to action and resistance, to appearing together with others, in an effort to demand the end of injustice. One form that injustice takes is the systematic dispossession of peoples through, for example, forced migration, unemployment, homelessness, occupation, and conquest. And so

we take up the question of how to become dispossessed of the sovereign self and enter into forms of collectivity that oppose forms of dispossession that systematically jettison populations from modes of collective belonging and justice.”

Luce Beeckmans, Ashika Singh and Alessandra Gola

in Making Home(s) in Displacement

“There is nothing intrinsically permanent about architecture as there is nothing intrinsically fluid about migration in spatial terms.”

“In making home(s), power relations, identities and memories, the associations of beauty and the sublime are transposed onto a space or, indeed, onto a number of spaces or moveable places, endeavouring to uphold a sense of security, freedom and control, and scope for creativity and regeneration. The making home(s) in this sense cannot be limited to the appropriation and transformation of domestic spaces; it is also entangled with establishing access to legal and political representation as well as to community, rural- or urban-based, and citizenship (cf. Akcan, 2018; Low, 2016; Yuval-Davis, 2011; Dadusc, Graziolo & Martinez, 2019).”

C

Casanovas Luis Alexandre

in After Belonging

“Being at home entails different definitions nowadays, both within domestic settings

and in the spaces defined by national boundaries under contemporary regimes of circulation: With a stranger sleeping on your couch; inside the boxes at the storage facility; surrounded by the information you share in the cloud; after clearing customs at the airport; where your passport allows you to reside.”

Comilang Stephanie

in interview with Shanon Moore

„how do you recreate a home, if that place isn’t your home.“

“My parents immigrated to Canada from the Philippines in the 1970s following political unrest caused by Ferdinand Marcos’ dictatorship. I grew up in an environment where the home meant one thing and the outside world meant another. These ideas kept shifting in my head, and the concept of “home” ended up being something that I was always thinking about as a kid, as a teenager, and now, as an artist. For me, art has to be really personal, and home is the only place I can start from as an artist. The things I naturally gravitate towards are ideas around diaspora and migration, and how immigrants and migrants create spaces for themselves.”

D

Virgine Desportes

in Vernon Subutex 2

“He doesn’t want to be heard, also in the morning he is hoping not to be noticed.”

E

Eyck Aldo van
in Lost identity

“A city without the particular movement of a child is a paradox. Because the child discovers its identity against all odds, damaged and damaging, in perpetual danger and incidental sunshine.”

Easthope Hazel
in A Place called Home

„It says home may for many typically invoke ideas of stability and comfort, a socio-spatial unit, a psycho-spatial condition / „warehouse“ of emotions and sentimental attachments”

Erikson Kai
in Symposium on homelessness

“To be without a home is to be cut off from the rest of the world. “A place to live” means exactly that - a place to be alive in, a place to be a real person in, a place to connect one to a larger human community.”

F

Ford Lauren
in Savage Messiah

“There are moments, caught between sequences, the paused video, the double exposed photograph, when a fragment of truth can be glimpsed, a hidden meaning

exposed. It is there in those threshold spaces where the codes of the city form constellations above the din of the street. In the bomb creators, construction sites and abandoned terraces, voices are channelled, forgotten histories exposed and trampled desires flare up in an uncanny rupturing.”

H

Halberstam Jack
in the aesthetics of collapse

“why are we always reproducing what feels good because it is what we already know?”

Heller Agnes
in Where are we at home?

“Familiarity is the most decisive constituent of the feeling of being-at-home. (...) Where silence is not threatening we are certainly at home.”

Hooks, Bell
in Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics

“It realises that there is always a gap between the real and the desired side of home, posing challenges to everyday practices, norms and ideals. Home - not as some space of belonging rendered “pure” by some idea of fixed and impermeable boundaries - is still something fundamental to the way we interact with the world and other people. (cf. hooks, 1991).”

L

Deborah Levy
in Real Estate

“I was superstitious about a home that lacked the most basic implements to gather new friends around the table.”

“As Bachelard points out, a nest is a fragile structure that is nevertheless supposed to signify stability.”

“In fact, is it domestic space, or is it just space for living? And if it is space for living, then no one’s life has more value than another, no one can take up most of that space or spray their moods in every room or intimidate anyone else. It seems to me that domestic space is gendered and a space for living is more fluid.”

Henri Lefebvre
in unknown

“The big social groups (consisting of classes, parts of classes, or institutions ...) act with and/or against each other. From their interactions, strategies, successes, and defeats grow the qualities and “properties” of urban space.”

M

Matthia Michel
in All About Space

“As soon as a certain amount of effort has been invested to make the house not only a place of shelter but also a “private” space of comfort and intimacy, it immediately prompts appropriate attitudes and behaviours. This appropriation is commonly associated with defensive measures and aggression against “outsider” and “intruders”, but it is also the origin of more subtle feelings that relate to the house as a “home”.

S

Sandra
in Sozialer Stadtrundgang

“Ich musste erst mal lernen im sitzen zu schlafen. Als Frau ist es wichtig einen privaten Ort zu haben. Ein Zimmer dass ich auch abschließen konnte.”

Adam Szymcyk
in Life without buildings

“a living freed from design - a generalised state of unhomeliness. The market in Turin -all the while its life flowing against the powerful structure of the existing streets, pavements and walls of buildings that provide little comfort to the “unrecognized” city dwellers.”

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Menna Agha "Liminal Publics, Marginal Resistance: Learning from Nubian Spaces" in *Idea Journal* (2017), p. 88-101

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Daniel Schreiber "Zuhause: die Suche nach dem Ort, an dem wir leben wollen" Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2018

Rainer Schützeichel "Leben ohne festes Obdach" in *espazium* 15.02.2022 in <https://www.espazium.ch/de/aktuelles/leben-ohne-festes-obdach>, last viewed 23.09.2022

Shahd Seethaler-Wari, Somayeh Chitchian, Maja Momić (eds.) "Inhabiting Displacement" Basel: Birkhäuser 2021

Adam Szymczyk "Life without Buildings" gta exhibition March 16 - May 20, 2022 ETH Zurich in www.e-flux.com/announcements/454970/life-without-buildings/, last viewed on 23.09.2022

Philip Ursprung "Der Wert der Oberfläche: Essays zu Architektur, Kunst und Ökonomie" Zürich: gta Verlag, 2017

It ends with love, exchange, fellowship. It ends as it begins, in motion, in between various modes of being and belonging, and on the way to new economies of giving, taking, being with and for and it ends with a ride in a Buick Skylark on the way to another place altogether. Surprising, perhaps, after we have engaged dispossession, debt, dislocation and violence. But not surprising when you have understood that the projects of “fugitive planning and black study” are mostly about reaching out to find connection; they are about making common cause with the brokenness of being, a brokenness, I would venture to say, that is also blackness, that remains blackness, and will, despite all, remain broken because this book is not a prescription for repair.