



**BUT
HOW?**

vienna & isfahan [are]

**staying
home**

The exhibition “Staying Home, But How?” will travel from Vienna to Isfahan.

curated by

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Can Covid-19 be considered a chance to globally promote developments and strategies to counteract an architectural crisis that has been around for a long time? How helpful and important would it be to have a global exchange to find innovative solutions to a worldwide problem at this very particular time?

NEGAR HAKIM

Staying Home, BUT HOW?

Vienna & Isfahan

TEXT NEGAR HAKIM

In the context of the COVID-19 virus, numerous measures have been implemented worldwide to prevent the further spread of the virus. It is a far-reaching crisis which also heavily impacts our living spaces and, as a consequence, alters our perception of or rather our needs and requirements from what we consider “home”. There is a sudden change in significance and value of space and its qualities. The function of spatial mobility, natural daylight, tranquillity, a balcony or a terrace, a kitchen, but also the layout of (outdoor) spaces all acquire a new meaning. How are we going to approach it?

The project “Staying home, but how?” addresses the question of what or rather how we can learn from the COVID-19 crisis, especially in terms of architecture. A glance at architectural history shows that epidemics, crises and catastrophes have had an impact on urban planning and architecture time and time again. Is this to be expected from the Covid-19 pandemic as well? How helpful or important would a global exchange to find innovative solutions to a worldwide problem be at this very specific time? In light of recent experiences, what does the world’s population wish for the architectural future?

Since the beginning of the spread of the Corona virus towards the end of 2019, national and international magazines, specialist journals, documentaries, etc., have reported on the responsibilities of architecture after the crisis. Of course, opinions are divided. Whereas some see mainly a weighty responsibility, others focus on what they see as a very real chance to finally reflect on architecture in a calm and reasoned manner. Aspects that have been neglected in the past are now acquiring a new dimension.

What for some feels like “prison”, with people being trapped in their tiny apartments with little room to move about and no access to outdoor spaces, for others almost feels like a “holiday”, with people spending lock-

down in their spacious single-family house or outside in their large garden. It is precisely the lack of indoor and outdoor space in the apartments, and likewise no room for a separate home-office or private areas where one can withdraw temporarily, that led and still lead to an increase in the divorce rates. Simultaneously, investors refer to the crisis as a catastrophe of the new millennium. However, the building industry has little interest in exploring the possibilities inherent in historical buildings to provide a possible solution to enable an 80-year-old to remain at home with their family and not have to move to a retirement home.

Should or rather will the COVID-19 pandemic change the architecture of our cities at all? Do we have to redefine “building” to include and establish new forms and patterns of living? In all these complex decisions, the question that must be asked is what role politics, architects and occupants have to assume. Although creative solutions in various fields are being discussed and researched globally, sound and practicable solutions have yet to be found.

We shine the spotlight on two cities, Vienna and Isfahan – one in the centre of Europe, the other in the centre of the Orient, and both cities’ historical city centres inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List – as representative places for research and exchange for this project. Articles of renowned authors, interviews with different experts such as editors of specialist journals, researchers, investors, and above all, architects from both countries – Austria and Iran – provide a thorough overview on this topic. Although opinions and proposed solutions differ, the evident optimism from both sides is to be admired. Covid-19 is often considered a chance for architecture to globally promote timely developments and strategies to counteract a crisis that has been around for a long time – much longer than Covid-19 – and which lies much deeper.

Nachher wird nicht(s) wie vorher sein

(Trans.: Afterwards nothing will be as it was)

TEXT IDA PIRSTINGER

The beginning

In Spring 2020, shortly after the first pandemic-related lockdown had been imposed, a discussion started on the open mailing list of the “IG Architektur”¹ about living conditions in times of quarantine. At that time, the home space became the focal point of life for the majority of the population. Home became school/kindergarten/workplace/recreation space – all in one. Public life beyond the virtual space stood still.

The few who went out during the first phase of *Ausgangsbeschränkungen* (restrictions on out-of-doors activities) experienced a city they had never seen before. The streets were deserted and almost car-free. The sound environment was dominated by birds twittering, the air was purer and the sky bluer. Rather than walking along narrow sidewalks, (clinging closely to the buildings’ façades), one could take a leisurely stroll along the street. What a sight, what a revelation! From a primary transit area, the street was suddenly transformed into an almost free, unobstructed space, with its pace being greatly reduced. People – in a polite or anxious way – avoided each other and kept their distance.

It was the same scenario, only more so, with the entertainment areas and shopping streets. Yawning emptiness prevailed. After a few days without activity, the shop windows were already dusty. Is this what a “dying city” looks like?

On the open mailing list, speculation had centred on how unfortunate people were who lived in particularly cramped situations without individual outside areas such as balconies, terraces or a garden. The importance of green and open spaces in the home environment was emphasized. In recent years, masses of overpriced micro-flats, built by profit-oriented investment funds with

little concern for a good standard living or the quality of the living environment, had been built. These small living spaces, with the window as the only connection to the outside world, became the prime target of discussion on the open mailing list. “Balconia”, that fictional staycation land, where you could spend your vacation on your balcony, should be an option available to everybody. In other words, the balcony should be a minimum requirement for every dwelling constructed in the future.

Learning from Corona?

Stimulated by this online email-format debate, the IG Architektur, by means of eleven interdisciplinary online discussion panels and complementary interviews, addressed the question of if and how the Covid-19-measures would change or sharpen our view of city and architecture.² In a programme broadcast by the “Norddeutscher Rundfunk” (a German broadcasting station), the architectural journalist Niklas Maak called Corona a “field test for the city of the future”³, thus addressing realistic possible emerging urban development scenarios. A broad base of urban planners and activists have long been calling for car-free cities, now made visible during the first lockdown. At the opposite pole we got a glimpse of the deserted city centre if big shopping malls are continued to be built in the outskirts. Overnight, the long-heralded workplace of the future, the home-office became a reality of life for the masses. Distance learning and online classes likewise. Issues related technical infrastructure and spatial conditions were passed on, to become matters of personal responsibility. Life goes on, just at home.

In line with the “Learning from Corona” motto, we attributed to the virus the positive qualities of an eye-opener and game changer which would lead to the necessary political and social development. With regards to life

in the dense city, the public space and living and working, we asked ourselves: “Where is the need for improvement? What contributions can be made through architecture?”. The spectrum of discussions went far beyond the pandemic-related questions and topics. In the sense of an ongoing process with an uncertain outcome, I will now present some selected content, personal impressions and substantiated facts.

Living and Working

The initial romanticism of a seemingly decelerated, pared-down-to-the-essentials life and the allegedly strengthened societal cohesion, quickly gave way to an overload generated by the temporal, spatial and personal overlay of child care, school lessons and professional obligations. Those who had the possibility fled to their second homes in the country, pitying the people remaining in the city. (The everyday life of the rural population in the time of Corona would be a topic of its own.)

In the architectural scene, issues such as spatial aspects, demands for larger dwellings, more privacy and improved open spaces in housing associations became the subjects of discussion. The housing sector of the future must take into account times of crisis such as the current one. However, where the direct spheres of influence of architects end, developers and politics must take over. In particular, Vienna, with a reputation of hundreds of years of affordable, healthy living space for all, should not submit to the dictates of the market. Stricter quality criteria for housing should prevent “concrete gold” – speculative housing as form of investment. However, whether this will resolve fundamental social issues remains doubtful.

In a more differentiated form, the debate is valuable and is to be continued in any case. As a wealthy welfare state, Austria has no excuse for substandard dwellings and a housing shortage. At the same time, dwindling resources call for a more responsible use, in particular with regards to the resource that is land. That is no obstacle to the provision of good-quality housing.

Individually and institutionally, Corona has brought with it progress in terms of digitalization. Retrofitting of infrastructure and expansion of broadband coverage to include remote regions has finally been accelerated. There is greater demand for properties in rural areas since the outbreak of the pandemic, and the properties have increased in value as a result. However, the housing market in the cities has not slowed down: prices continue to rise.⁴

Pandemic-oriented urban planning?

The epidemic-oriented city is not a new idea. The development of the middle-European city has been spurred on throughout centuries by pandemics such as the plague and cholera.⁵

Up to the beginning of the 20th century, urban development textbooks contain instructions for the technical design of hygiene measures. In New York’s Central Park, sanitary green, referring to the sanitary function of green spaces, was implemented in the most extensive manner. Straight, clean streets, elevated pavements, canalization and elevated ground floors have become so typical that we have forgotten why these measures were implemented in the first place.

To date, in Europe, there has hardly been any discussion of the connection between the health of space and the spread of the pandemic. In Cape Town, a new study of cases at various sites is being conducted, and it shows that poor neighbourhoods with poor urban infrastructure and fewer open spaces report higher rates of infection.

In our latitudes, it has been clearly proven that people in low-paid jobs, such as those working as carers, or in the food industry or dispatch logistics, who cannot work from home, are at a higher risk of infection. Corona definitely has a social component. As yet, however, there are no substantial conclusions that a healthy environment in the dense city would make the people more resistant to Covid-19.⁶

The Use of the Public Space

Urban life takes place on the streets. The public open spaces define the character of the city and its liveliness. These spaces are to be understood in two ways: as publicly-accessible areas and as liberties that we as city dwellers have in our dealings with one another. Both of these have become severely restricted because of measures introduced to deal with Covid-19. We were asked to stay home to protect ourselves and others. Certainly necessary to show solidarity, but nonetheless a heavy constraint on everyday life and on social fabric in perpetuity.

The second phase of lockdown highlighted the enormous necessity of public space. Public space was celebrated.⁷ The renaissance of city parks was unmistakable. Quite naturally, young people used even lush ornamental gardens such as those between the two big museums of Vienna to have a picnic. Informally negotiated, consumption-free acquisitions, such as the “Kar-

Isplatz” as a nocturnal “hangout”, established themselves. When we have to keep our distance, a lack of urban green and open spaces is noticeable even in cities that are not densely populated and are comparatively well-endowed with urban green and open spaces.

The pandemic has altered the significance of public space, so that our current understanding thereof is subject to debate. We are reminded that the original DNA of the urban road is multifunctional, optimized for low speed and movement alongside static functions. It was only the advent of the modernist city that brought with it the prioritization of motorized traffic and hence, the transformation into the accelerated transit space that we know today.

In Vienna, 25 % of all journeys are made by car, with the street space consisting of 67% driveways and a mere 30% walkways. In that connection, it’s worth noting that, even though 100% of the population travel on foot, only 30% own a car.⁸

There was a proportional reduction in traffic activity due to the involuntary, temporary real-life experiment that is Corona. Public transportation initially decreased by 80% and now fluctuates at around minus 40%. Simultaneously, private car usage with “a low risk of infection” has increased. The boom of the bicycle as an individual means of transport is a hopefully lasting and positive effect.⁹ The demand for fair distribution of space and a genuine Verkehrswende (radical change in road traffic policy), however, remain unresolved.

A Right to Space

Habitation is a human right. Privacy, family life and private property are in principle protected against Government intervention. Public space, however, does not come under this protection. Nonetheless, based on the principle of equality, every individual has the right to access these spaces, move around freely and has the right to meet other people. Excluding individuals requires reasonable justifications, just as favouring individuals proves problematic. The right to the use of public property is based on the allocation of particular purposes to spaces through usage restrictions.¹⁰ Traffic regulations, for example, state that pavements are transit zones for movement and are not intended for standstill.¹¹

Although there is no “right to space”, under a democratic understanding of the concept, it stands for spaces where people meet,¹² exchange opinions and goods, just like the ancient agora or medieval market places. Such rules

affect the shape and use of a city.

The Corona regulations introduced meant that some access and uses were restricted, even if not completely curtailed – such as, for example, the closing of Vienna’s “*Bundesgärten*” (federal gardens). Despite the population being asked to stay home, going outside for recreational purposes was allowed at all times. Some restrictions and recommendations were portrayed to the public as if they were orders and prohibitions, which resulted in a misinterpretation of the legal position and the right of use. This subsequently led to great legal uncertainty. To act overcautiously rather than freely results in a lack of freedom, which is problematic in a democratic society.¹³

The fair use of public space is not only a legal issue; rather, it is more a social, philosophical, urban and planning issue.¹⁴ Who has access to public space and how is it used? How can different mobility requirements and needs and the presence of different population groups be satisfied at the same time? Who does classic planning leave behind? How can the rights of vulnerable and disadvantaged minority groups (the elderly, women, children, etc.) be safeguarded? These are questions which city activists have long been asking and ones we must begin to answer. Non-violence and safety are decisive factors for democratic appropriation of space. These factors could be maintained by monitoring measures (e.g. video monitoring, police presence, etc.), which, however, contravene the principles of democracy and freedom.

The space of the city is a sphere — a political space, for democracy and balance of power, an open space for thinking and acting for society and for the individual¹⁵, and a combination of regulative, conditioning and symbolism for our society.

Real-Life “City Lab”

The street manifests itself as a perfect master of metamorphosis and the last remaining reserve of the city. As part of a continuing network, the street is ubiquitous, and thus, present and easily accessible from virtually everywhere. In the rapidly densifying city, many residents are dependent on public space as open space, and this now predominantly consists of roads. What levers must be set in motion in order to provide a democratic public street space? How can space for movement be transformed into space for encounter? How can more green space and forms of soft mobility promote a breakthrough? The key to this is parked cars: reducing their number frees up space.¹⁶

Felix Weisbrich, head of the road and environmental department of Berlin, Friedrichshain-Kreuzberg, who facilitated the fast-track establishment of 20 km of new cycle paths in his district during lockdown – speaks of “resetting the public space to zero”. He talks about the opportunity to renegotiate the rules of appropriation.¹⁷

The involuntary, temporary real-life laboratory called “City”, caused by Corona, has allowed for faster approval of temporary encounter zones, meeting places and “pocket parks”. In Vienna, 2.5 km of new cycle paths were constructed, and 50 km in Paris, or 120 km in Bogota. The entire inner city of Brussels has been traffic-calmed. What has been established provisionally, has, in fact, the opportunity to prove lasting.¹⁸

Policy is responsible for long-term change and legislation and the sovereign task of the administration is to enforce the law.¹⁹ A broad acceptance of sustainable change in the public space must be achieved. Therefore, it is necessary to produce new, clear, visible images and symbols, create actualities (if only temporary) and provoke debates, as policy can only make decisions if the population is willing. Trial interventions provide a wealth of experience, enabling good decisions that allow for empathy to be created. With the risk of failure and hence the possibility of being voted out, the experiment is mostly incompatible with a politician’s mindset. At the same time, the current pandemic has shown that policy is certainly capable of resolute action without fear of public opposition, however, only when argumentation is reasonable and transparent.

Conclusion and Outlook

The title of the discussion series of the IG Architektur „Nachher wird nicht(s) wie vorher sein“ (Trans.: Afterwards nothing will be as it was), is both provocative and naive. Before and after can never be the same, as it would imply standstill. Simultaneously, it would be presumptuous to expect major changes within a short time. What we do have are contemporary documents in the form of a snapshot in time, fragments of individual perception that lightly scratch the surface of complex issues that have been preoccupying experts for a long time already, and for which solutions have yet to be found. We are far from being in a position to assess what conclusions we can draw from Corona. While the pandemic is still going on, the scientific research of the real impact on aspects of daily life and urban matters still lags behind the efforts of the medical sector.

Aside from the risk of infection, disease and death, Co-

rona is a period of time characterized by bipolar perspectives. Every positive perception can be set against a negative image and vice versa. Under the slogan of a careful, sound interaction with each other, a new selfishness emerged, resulting in the distancing of people, regions and countries from each other. Borders were shut down, relations and exchange were interrupted. This is a matter of concern and will hopefully be only an episode. Even with all the disadvantages of globalization, the merging of people across national boundaries makes us bigger, better and unifies us through all our differences. And we should not throw this potential away: we’re going to need it to stand up to future global crises and challenges. Before Corona, global warming was the dominant issue of our thoughts. That is where we need to go back to. Corona has shown us that rapid, targeted actions in crisis situations are possible – worldwide. If we act in a similarly focussed way to deal with climate change, then we can start something today which will enable those of Greta Thunberg’s generation to one day stroll happily around liveable, green cities, side by side with their grandchildren.²⁰

(Ida Pirstinger is an architect, urban researcher and consultant for urban studies. Her work focusses on urban density and the search for an answer to what makes the dense city liveable. She is the volunteer chairperson of “IG Architektur”).

1 Austria-wide architect-interest group. The „open mailing list“ is a written discussion platform (in email format) on which approximately 3000 people exchange their views on architectural topics and issues. <http://www.ig-architektur.at>.

2 <http://www.ig-architektur.at/architektur-und-corona-diskussionen.html>.

3 <https://www.ndr.de/fernsehen/After-Corona-Club-mit-Niklas-Maak,-sendung1038242.html>.

4 <https://kurier.at/wirtschaft/immobiz/ein-blick-auf-den-immobilienmarkt-wie-gehts-weiter/401095524>.

5 cf. Angelika Psenner, researcher of urban structure, TU Wien.

6 cf. Regine Keller, landscape architect, TU Munich.

7 cf. *ibid.*

8 cf. Eva Kail, gender planning expert, Building Authority Vienna. Further sources: STEP 2025, Wiener Linien Modal Split 2019, wien.gv.at.

9 cf. Martin Berger, transport systems planner, TU Wien.

10 cf. Stefan Storr, jurist, WU Wien.

11 cf. Angelika Psenner.

12 cf. Stefan Storr.

13 cf. *ibid.*

14 cf. Martin Coy, human geographer, University of Innsbruck.

15 cf. Johanna Rolshoven, cultural anthropologist, University of Graz; Heidrun Primas, Forum Stadtpark Graz.

16 cf. Eva Kail.

17 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rXWkV_6dzWg.

18 cf. Wolfgang Gerlich, landscape ecologist, Plansinn, Vienna.

19 cf. Anne Weider, Office for Urban Development Innsbruck.

20 cf. Regine Keller.

The current crisis has changed the whole world drastically. Have the demands and requirements for architecture changed likewise?

Andrea Rieger-Jandl, Architectural Researcher, TU Wien

The utilization structure of buildings has changed fundamentally with the crisis. Whereas the everyday use of space before the crisis ranged between home space/work space/home space, the spatial configuration of where people spend their time is now (largely) limited to home space. Thus, many people have been forced to look at their current housing situation a different perspective. This has certainly led to a general reconsidering of whether having separate spaces for working and living is reasonable and/or necessary, or if the future calls for new, creative concepts.

Armin Daneshgar, Daneshgar Architects

For me there is no doubt that the demands and requirements for architecture and architects have changed enormously.

How we live, whether we have only one small room or a spacious live-in kitchen, became clearly noticeable for each of us.

Many of us did not have a separate room to use as an office and had to master balancing home-office and childcare. The kitchen worktops or the living and dining table were transformed into working areas. My three-year old son has understood this changeability, and my adolescent daughter too. The bedroom and the living room turned into classrooms – this applied to both the kindergartner and the high school

senior. These changes were strongly felt in my family – as presumably they were in most other families – and led to an in-depth evaluation and examination of one's own living space.

Matthias Boeckl, Editor-in-Chief, architektur aktuell

No, if we are talking about sustainable architecture, that still needs to be socially, technically and aesthetically innovative, as its all-round resilience (with regard to pandemics, too) is achieved specifically through fulfilling these key criteria.

Superblock

The aim of architects is to anticipate social development and propose future-oriented approaches. This is definitely more complicated now, however, the necessity of greening of architecture and urban planning certainly remains.

Maik Novotny, Architecture journalist

Not likewise, since architecture per se is more long-term and its processes are slower than in many other professions. Compared to the entertainment industry, restaurants, hotels and healthcare, architecture has so far come through the crisis rather well. Of course, architectural practices have had to resort to working in a home-office context and made adaptations which will perhaps outlive the pandemic, and like many others, architects have struggled with mental health issues and unemployment. But the basic demands have not changed.

Markus Zilker, einszueins architektur

In my opinion the basic requirements for architecture, (residential) housing in our case, have not changed. It is still – or rather, more than ever – a matter of creating spaces that allow for retreat and tranquillity whilst si-

multaneously encouraging encounters and exchange.

querkraft architekten

More than ever the function of living and working will merge together.

This is a chance.

p.good ARCHITEKTEN

The demands have not changed, but the priorities have, for sure. Topics such as private and public open spaces, temporary use of multifunctional indoor and outdoor spaces and creating spaces to cater to the needs of introverted and extroverted people and a social network of benefits.

We need more architectural concepts for smaller communities in urban and rural areas.

Etemad Moghaddam, Architect & Designer

For architecture yes, but I believe that for many architects and investors that is still not the case.

First Design

The current crisis has definitely changed the whole world, but this is not the first time something like this has happened. Architects should act more effectively and futuristically.

Ian Banerjee, Senior Researcher at Future Lab TU Wien

Yes. For sure. a) In a more general way, architecture will have to consider the interconnectedness of the world more seriously, and b) in

a more specific way, it will have to anticipate the potentials of disruption of everyday life in times of crisis in more nuanced and locally specific ways.

Ali Sheikholeslam, Cama Circle

Architecture has never offered an immediate reaction to crises.

Critical, sudden outbreaks might reshape architecture for a short time. However, as crises change people's behaviour, this shift will have an indirect impact on architecture as well. To be more specific, COVID-19 pandemic and "stay-at-home" lockdowns reveal that houses with open and flexible spaces are more appropriate places for healthy living than small apartments. Accordingly, this crisis has made both architects and clients realize that houses have to be designed with sufficient open spaces.

Amirhossein Taheri, Metamorphosis Method

Since the crisis has changed the entire world, architecture consequently has been affected and modified accordingly.

CAUD Group

Yes. The demand for spaces such as commercial spaces and offices has clearly decreased, while on the other hand, the demand for repurposing existing buildings or designing a new category of buildings such as home-offices has increased in this situation.

The key is to use the existing zones in different ways, creating more open spaces, switching between different performances, functions; planning for options enable us to switch between our needs.

P.GOOD ARCHITEKTEN

Nature: For or Against Civilization

Learning from the Health Crisis Toward a Change

TEXT MOHAMAD MOHAMADZADEH

Our global civilization has to wake up and learn from both the threats and the benefits of nature, appearing this time in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic.

From one point of view, the history of civilization is the story of an endless, controversial dialogue between humankind and nature. Early civilizations emerged when humans learned to coexist with nature on the basis of agriculture. The first caves and shelters were safe places, protecting humans from natural hazards, including wild animals. City and architecture alike originated by harnessing nature and protecting us from its difficulties. Skipping over a long period of civilization history to focus on our time, we could say that cities have been abstractly defined as the aggregation of spaces for living, working, recreation and transportation. Though this definition is perhaps not so valid from today's point of view and renders a naive scheme of the highly complex phenomenon that is the city, it does offer a clear, succinct image, interpreting the main foundation or core layers of our cities today. After the COVID-19 pandemic, all four of the above aspects of cities have unexpectedly and radically been challenged over the past few months. This time, nature (in the form of a viral pandemic) came onto the scene to influence humankind, its lifestyles, activities and contemporary modern civilization seriously in the form of a more or less full-scale recession. None of us who faced the crisis will easily forget the abrupt stoppage or temporary breakdown of our civil activities at the beginning of the 21st century. Once again, nature has given us an opportunity to learn from it.

The pandemic is a major hint to rethink the way we have built our contemporary civilization, its tangible elements and intangible concepts. This might be the starting point for a vast change or—who knows? —we might forget everything and revert to our former habits as soon as

the crisis recedes. It is up to us to create a vision out of this natural threat and hear its messages, or to ignore it. Now it seems so important, and we necessarily have to understand the impacts of this situation on our lives and major aspects of our future, as well as that of our cities, architecture and the discipline as a whole. Who could have imagined this global breakdown in our mechanical and physical activities for a three-month period, this stagnancy in our businesses, this stoppage of transport systems, these apocalyptic scenes in public spaces, recreation areas and touristic places on the one hand, and the revival of private home spaces on the other, and this brilliant response of virtual facilities e.g. in education and teleworking?

This undesired happening created a new balance between the basic functions of the city after the decline of public space and activities (working, recreation, transportation) and the rise of private space and activities (living). Houses recovered their primitive role as safe places, protecting us from new kinds of natural risk, and also acquired a new accessibility of domestic space to make up for the absence of public and social interactions. Houses that had gradually become dormitories between two work shifts regained their identity as homes. Interiors started to generate public qualities, and in-between spaces now present a range of new skills. Windows, living rooms, kitchens, balconies, roofs and other domestic elements and spaces activated an unknown potential during lockdown. At the same time, urban life began to lose its stressful speed as automobiles, buses, trains, airplanes stopped moving, and pedestrian mobility in neighborhoods replaced mechanical mobility. Smart virtual interactions of all kinds stepped up their efficiency, and environmental pollution suddenly decreased, letting the earth breathe deeply, albeit briefly, during the crisis. Many existing structures were recycled to

house new programs as sports clubs, for example, were converted into temporary hospitals to extend limited healthcare facilities. Many examples come to mind that crystalize the sudden changes in former functions and concepts—some in keeping with current paradigms and others completely different—that could lead to changes in paradigms to plan for the new situation.

This undesired happening created a new balance between the basic functions of the city after the decline of public space and the rise of private space.

With recent events, speculation emerged as to theories about plots to control societies or the impact of international economic and political debates for more dominance, and the new situation triggered anxiety, depression, insecurity and violence, sowing pessimism. Nonetheless, we have to remain positive and even optimistic, highlighting the benefits and learning the lessons of the pandemic as opportunities for our future. By way of conclusion, I would like to highlight some of the dualities in forms of exchange and balance that emerged during the health crisis, suggesting guidelines to follow or promote. The post-crisis world could be the scene of greater interrelation and collectivity as opposed to competitiveness and individuality. The world needs to be somehow more social than liberal. For the world, it is more vital than ever before to be more sustainable and less consumerist (of unreliable technologies and resources). Our cities should be much smarter and less physical, more digital and less mechanical. Our traffic concepts should encourage pedestrian mobility and be less machine-based. Proximity (districts and neighborhoods) seems to be more efficient than distance, for the future of city planning, placing the human scale before a lifestyle governed by machines. Private spaces and interiors would become more important, and temporary qualities of publicness and exteriority should be affordable by means of natural ventilation, green in-between space, transparency, and so on. And, as a final consideration, the recyclability of structures, spaces and programs is more important than ever.

The post-crisis world could be the scene of greater interrelation and collectivity as opposed to competitiveness and individuality. The world needs to be somehow more social than liberal.

Now, our global civilization has to wake up and learn from both the threats and the benefits of nature, appearing this time in the form of the COVID-19 pandemic.

(Mohamad Mohamadzadeh has been practicing architecture and planning since 1999 and is the founder of the MOM design office. He has won several design awards and honours. Mohamad Mohamadzadeh has published over fifty articles on theory and criticism and has also been a guest lecturer at a number of universities. In addition, he has been guest editor of several issues of MEMAR magazine in Iran.)

caud group nexa #34 residential building

The main idea of this proposal is based on open spaces – a challenging aspect of designing multi-storey residential complexes. The quality of open-air spaces in apartments depends on many parameters.

The first one is the area and dimensions of the terrace and the second one is the greenness of open space. In this design proposal, every apartment has at least one square-shaped terrace which can accommodate a table that seats four and a stabilized flower box with enough depth.

The third parameter which distinguishes courtyards from terrace is the height of the open space. Generally, courtyards have no roofs and terraces have a roof just three metres above them. To increase the quality of open spaces, more than half the terraces in this proposal have no roof or have roof height of more than six metres.

The fourth parameter is the ability of air to circulate across the open space. Generally, terraces have no two opposite open sides, but in this proposal, about one third of the apartments have courtyards with two opposite open sides which helps wind flow perpendicular to the direction of the façade.

Locating many courtyards beside the lateral façade and designing a special brick construction system helps to achieve a different third façade which can enable sun light to penetrate into the upper lateral courtyards while protecting them from view.

© caud group | right: section, scaleless







In what way will/could home-office change our lives? As an architect, do you have ideas and suggestions for how architecture can/could respond to this new situation?

Ian Banerjee, Senior Researcher at Future Lab TU Wien

Conceptions of office-spaces and home-spaces will become more fluid. Architects can create scenarios of how converging spaces of work and leisure can be imagined in creative ways.

I think “flexibility” will become a key concept.

We don't know what kind of crisis will hit us again. It may be another pandemic or the effects of climate change next time. Standards for redundant spaces for flexible use will have to be thought out.

Matthias Boeckl, Editor-in-Chief, architektur aktuell

While home office offers opportunities for more work efficiency with less environmental impact, it also brings with it the risk of social isolation. As with all new technologies, it must be embedded into everyday life in a moderate and responsible manner.

Etemad Moghaddam, Architect & Designer

The fundamental aspect of modernisms (separation of activities for 8 hours) which follow and form our life even in the 21st Century is rapidly being influenced by working at home. I believe that architecture must be confronted more creatively with two contextual parameters concerning the design of small flats for this new situation: a) new spatial and functional programmes (for e.g. living room, balcony and green areas), b) new furnishing, fixtures and facilities.

Amirhossein Taheri, Metamorphosis Method

Working includes activities that are

connected to the world outside of people's private habitat. Some parts of this privacy, however, could be extended into the outside world.

querkraft architekten

Living must be more appreciated. Housing must be as important and valuable to society as cultural and administrative buildings.

Ali Sheikholeslam, Cama Circle

Home-office is certainly not a new phenomenon generated by the Covid-19 situation. It resulted from globalization. As a historical example, even before the advent of office space (as a function) traditional Iranian houses encompassed multiple 'courts' – each dedicated to a specific use. The 'outer court' (closest to public access) was used for administrative tasks (similar to home-office today) and the 'inner court' (further into the building) was the private part of the house.

Maik Novotny, Architecture journalist

It has certainly forced us to re-think the layout of our interiors, our requirements of space and privacy, our room for movement, our love of the exterior.

I think of all these, the last may prove the most enduring, both in terms of private exterior spaces like balconies

and terraces, and in public spaces like parks, streets, and squares. There will be a much stronger focus on their usability rather than on their mere existence (balconies as a real-estate commodity) or their design (parks as decoration).

Andrea Rieger-Jandi, Architectural Researcher, TU Wien

Different people react differently to home office, depending on their work style or rather their work psychology.

Some people cope really well with home office and enjoy the possibility of retreat, whilst others struggle to organize themselves and feel isolated. Hence, there is no single answer to how architecture can react to the home-office situation. As the way people work differs from person to person, the future will need both – the possibility of a communicative work place, as well as the possibility to work from home at times. The magic word would be “flexibility”. Co-working spaces have a high potential, as they can be utilized more efficiently than fixed work places, which are often unoccupied for much of the time.

Armin Daneshgar, Daneshgar Architects

Home office has already changed our lives. Open-plan offices, accommodating many people from surrounding areas, are a thing of the past. Many companies have understood that home office cuts down

on costs, while at the same time, the employees are happy not having to commute five days a week. At least 30% of office premises will be vacant in the future. Thus, workplaces must react with flexibility to new requirements. Co-working structures with more space for communication and team stations instead of fixed work places could be one approach. Several years ago, when Google introduced that type of office structure in their company's headquarters, it became apparent that their planning was ahead of its time. About 6 years ago Daneshgar Architects also had an office in London. I observed that because of the high rents, there was already a market in London for "pool-workplaces" and many were already working from home.

First Design

Home offices can be effective for 'one-person shows' such as painters, graphic designers, and small private ateliers; but for architecture, it is unlikely to be effective or a facilitator as it needs atelier group work, and different teams with different areas of specialization are involved.

CAUD Group

Although home-office is a new category of building type, it is a well-known concept in architecture. We used this kind of "space" in our normal lives long before the pandemic.

Now is the time to organize this method of life and redefine known residential programmes.

As an architect and also as someone who worked from home for a long period of time even before Covid-19,

I think we need a work unit in our houses. This unit should not only be a desk in a bedroom but it could be an enclosed space between entrance, kitchen and living rooms. This space should have natural light and could be appropriate for one or two official guests when necessary.

Superblock

Apart from additional spatial offers such as small work niches or decentralised co-working spaces and a supposed better balance between work and family life, home office has the disadvantage of reducing opportunities for social contact. Given decreasing societal solidarity and a lack of empathy for one another, that is an undesirable development.

**Instead of being
responsive,
architecture
should have the
ability to foresee.**

AMIRHOSSEIN TAHERI

Reframing NORMAL

TEXT BARBARA HOLUB | PAUL RAJAKOVICS

When looking at the consequences the COVID-19 situation might have on architecture, we would like to expand the discussion beyond obvious spatial requirements like the need for different and more spaces for coping with simultaneous activities of home-schooling, home-office, spaces for privacy, and at the same time being able to accommodate the usual household activities. These would of course need a new funding scheme for providing and enabling greater flexibility, especially in social housing.

However, we consider the current issues at stake a chance to review the role of architects and urbanists, to reconsider their role beyond responding to obvious needs (often limited to mere function and restrictions due to funding systems). We would rather like to put at the forefront of the discussion, how architects and urbanists can address larger societal issues and contribute to a “society of care”. This can only be achieved by expanding the job profile beyond that of planning.

Caring has been reframed in the pandemic, focusing attention onto people in professions that are caring professions in a very direct sense, whose roles are traditionally underestimated and still undervalued. However, we consider it indispensable to expand the notion of care to humanistic and cultural values – to qualities of enhancing social cohesion, communal living, sharing moments beyond the merely functional and to promote poetics and pleasure in everyday life. This is crucial in the current debates, after having been exposed to news during the pandemic reduced down to two main topics: health and the economy.

Should we really consider that reductive perspective on the qualities of our lives as the “new normal”? What can architecture, art and urbanism contribute to enhancing

these qualities and values that have been silenced for some time now?

In 2019 we started working on NORMAL – direct urbanism x 4 (a project for the Graz Culture Year 2020), in which we address the rapid process of transformation in four peri-urban districts in Graz, and the resulting disappearance of (public) spaces for informal gathering and meeting, through urban interventions together with orizzontale (I), public works (GB) and Georg Winter (D), aiming at establishing new models for creating a community in a collaborative process. Direct urbanism is a method transparadiso has developed for addressing social and communal aspects of urban development, which are not considered in conventional urban planning methods. Direct urbanism employs artistic-urbanistic strategies and urban interventions as direct action on site as part of a longer term, socially engaged planning strategy counteracting neo-liberal urban planning. NORMAL wants to provide a starting point for further discussions on socially engaged urban development in Graz and beyond.

What is normal?

When we decided to call this project NORMAL, we wanted to question what is considered “normal” – in a broader sense, beyond the concrete case of Graz as a growing city. The term “normal” is usually based on the assumption of a common understanding, according to a specific cultural context. At the same time, it also defines what is left out, what is “not normal” – what is pushed to the fringes of society.

Normality from the perspective of artists and urban practitioners can mean something quite different from what it means for those sections of the population which are characterized by an increasing fear of being disad-

vantaged in their career due to not behaving according to the “norm”, or simply resentment or envy from their neighbours. Since artists engaged in urban issues often work with the unexpected, allowing for contradictions and ambiguity, as well as for small poetic moments, they rupture the routine of our lives based on the quest of functioning and functionality. By offering special artistic-urban settings, this routine can be left behind, the different normalities can collide and be considered as productive force for questioning dominant understandings of normality.

What is normal is particularly defined by the feedback of our fellow human beings. Who do we ask for an assessment? Whose opinion do we find relevant? What is perceived as normal is in flux; it changes over time according to the evolution of society.

transparadiso will provide a forum for discussing these issues in the form of The Third World Congress of the Missing Things – a model of an inclusive, non-hierarchical congress in public urban space, in the district of Waltendorf in Graz. This congress and its topics will be governed by the participants, creating a space for debate, for active engagement, and for taking responsibility.

Contributions to The Third World Congress of the Missing Things: NORMAL

Since the topic “normal” has gained a new dimension due to the arrival of the pandemic, we decided to also invite international contributions to the congress – to expand this now even more timely discussion beyond the specific context of Graz or the district of Waltendorf:

_What do you envision as a future „normal“ in society, in your neighbourhood, your district, in Europe, in the world?

_Which values for an inclusive society would you like to put forward as a new “normal”?

_How can we reintroduce poetic moments in our lives, in our communal living, in our cities – a quest for “un-functionalizing” our lives, which have been increasingly driven by efficiency and functioning according to expectations?

If the whole of society is confronted with the unplanned, not in the realm of reconsidering (urban) planning but rather being forced to submit to constant changes in the situation on a daily basis, with unpredictable economical, emotional and psychological consequences, we must no longer whitewash this with the tired old trope of a “chance for change” – as many of us critically engaged thinkers might have hoped for in the beginning of the pandemic. Meanwhile these conditions determine our new everyday life.

So what can we as architects and artists do – not only in situations of crisis?

We can provide spaces for public debate, counteracting demagoguery, standing up against fear (which has been fuelled by right-wing parties for many years now), and take action also in situations impacted by restrictions. At the same time, we need to reflect carefully as to what a “state of emergency” (in which, by the way, we have been living for quite a while – how else would you call the inhuman and contemptuous approach to the situation of refugees?) might hold in terms of dangers for democracy, and to insist that fear is not a good companion.

We/transparadiso consider all these aspects to be a crucial part of our work and the responsibility of architects – we must not continue to reduce the “job” of an architect to merely responding to spatial needs. Rather, we need to understand urbanism in a comprehensive sense and act accordingly, so that participation truly includes the engagement of residents/citizens.

If we finally reconsider “spatial needs” as encompassing human, social and humanistic values for living together – then this will actually be a chance to reconsider the profile of our profession.

(transparadiso is a transdisciplinary practice founded by Barbara Holub and Paul Rajakovics in 1999. They have developed direct urbanism as socially engaged urbanistic practice, involving artistic strategies for addressing current societal issues in urban planning.)

www.transparadiso.com

¹ This topic is the focus of the NEMOSKVA project, which aims at envisioning a „Cultural (anti-)institution of the future“, both in a broader sense, but also specifically for the cities of Irkutsk and Ulan Ude. Since the workshops on-site had to be rescheduled to 2021, NEMOSKVA decided to organize the second curatorial school, entitled “REANIMATION. PRACTICES OF CARE AND CRITICAL THINKING IN CURATORIAL WORK” online, with 20 curators from different regions of Russia and senior curators and researchers Daniel Blanga-Gubbai, Daria Bocharnikova, Iara Boubnova, Barbara Holub, Ilya Kalinin, Elke Krasny, Yulia Krivtsova, Daria Malikova, Serguei Oushakine, and Mikhail Rozhansky. For more information see: http://nemoskva.art/about_eng (accessed Dec.18, 2020)

² for more information on NORMAL see: <http://www.transparadiso.com/de/projects/normal-direkter-urbanismus-x-4>

Responding to current social challenges in urban development, transparadiso developed the method of direct urbanism to facilitate socially-engaged urban planning by combining direct action and planning.

For more information see: [transparadiso](http://www.transparadiso.com). Direct Urbanism, Verlag für moderne Kunst Nürnberg, 2013; <https://www.barbaraholub.com/direct-urbanism.html>

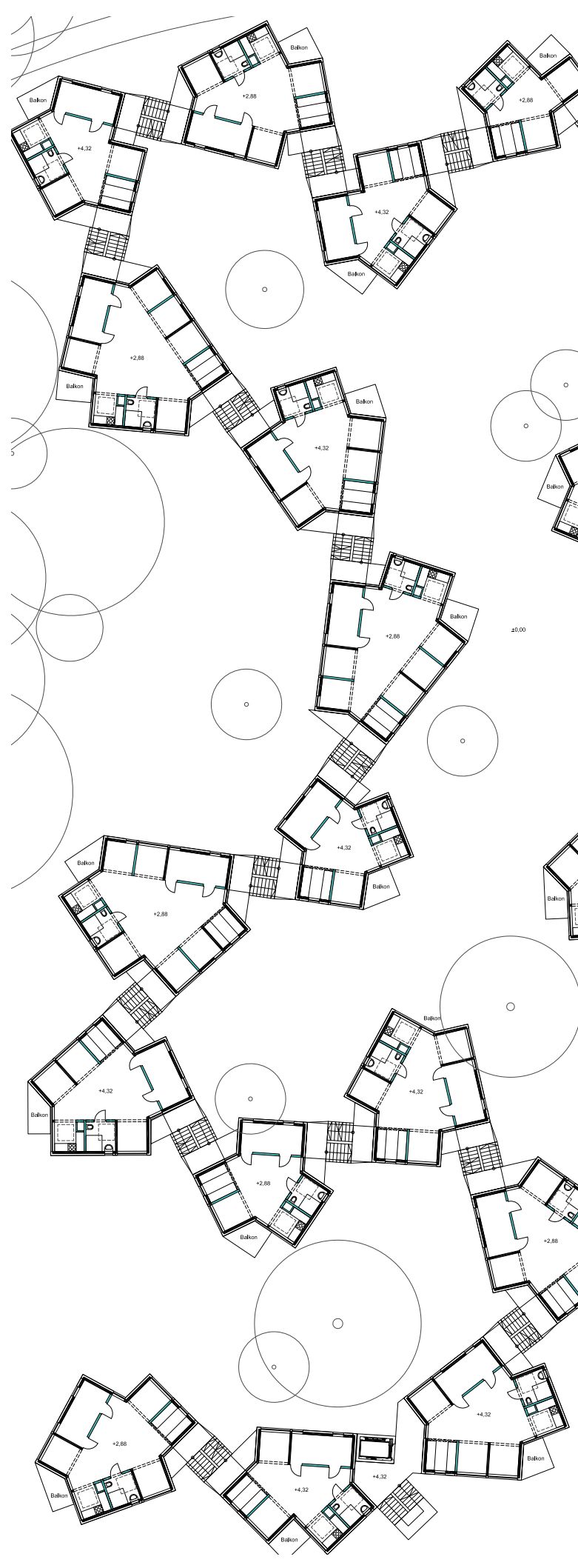
³ This was the topic of Barbara Holub’s artistic research project „Planning Unplanned. Can Art Have a Function. Towards a New Function of Art in Society“, for which she outlined artistic-urbanistic strategies for how action and planning can be connected in order to address changing and unpredictable parameters and conditions. For more information see the publication: <https://www.barbaraholub.com/planning-unplanned.html>

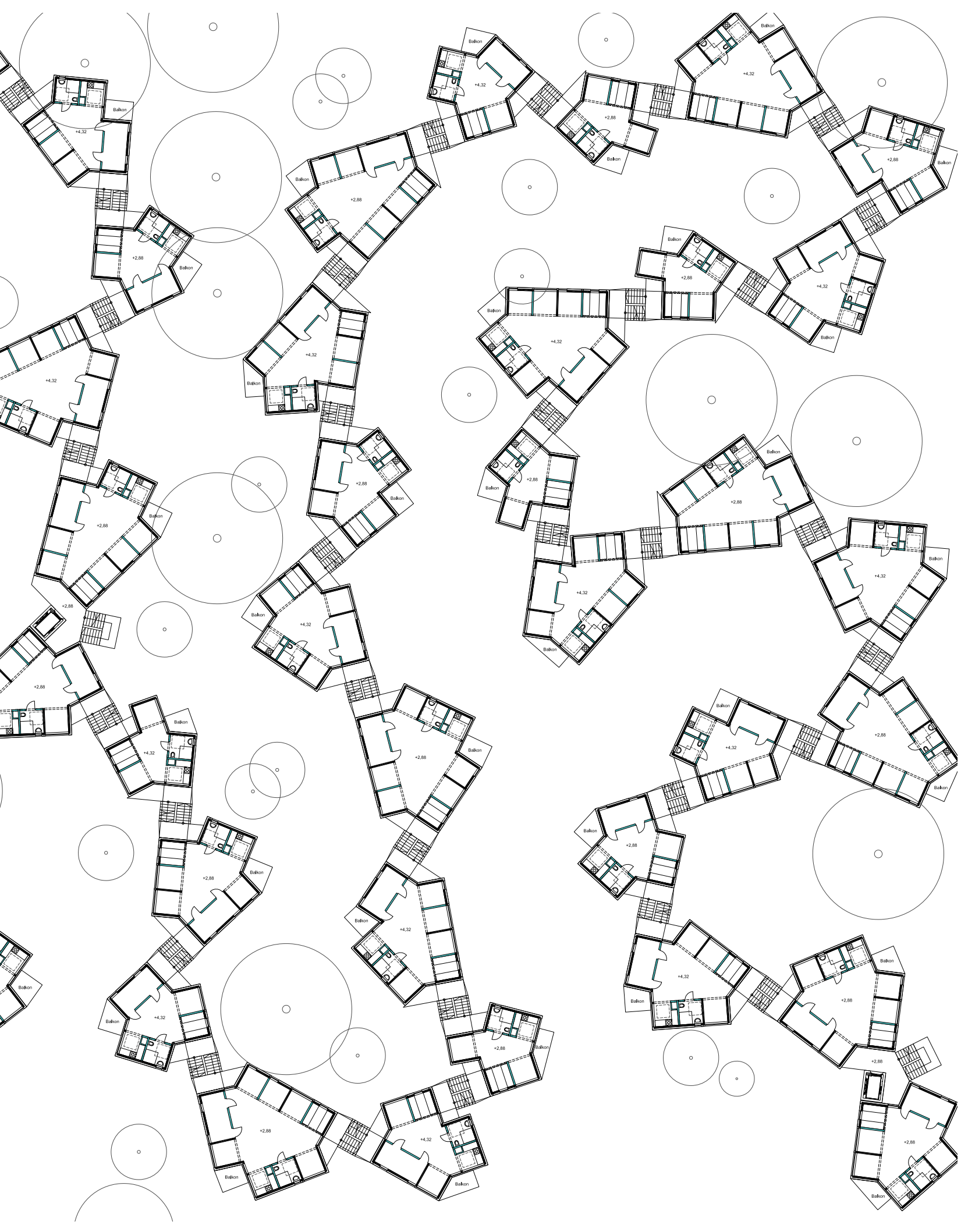
ppag architects the elastic apartment

The elastic apartment is a plea for progress in architecture, housing and urban design. Our way of living is an acquired behavior that has been passed on over generations, and any further development is prevented by the durability of the houses in which we live. Essentially, we are all human beings with special needs. We all need space to live in that meets our specific needs, that inspires and challenges us. We need variety on the housing market and in the city, a variety in which we can find what suits us.

The elastic apartment, initially developed for the housing project Berlin Wiesenschlag in 2015, consists of eight small rooms arranged around a large living room. Three of these are occupied: kitchen, bathroom, storeroom. The other five can be used as an extension niche of the living space, as a separate room or combined as a larger room. A married couple lives in the same type of apartment as a family of five. If the son moves out, his room can be used as a work niche. An apartment is therefore no longer designed for a specific number of residents, but can be used efficiently to full or less-than-full capacity.

© ppag architects | right: first floor, scaleless









A Plea for Progress in Architecture, Housing and Urban Design

TEXT ANNA POPELKA

Architecture is constantly evolving alongside societal changes. It reflects power dynamics and not necessarily the needs of the general public. Living in a democracy does not come hand in hand with access to a nurturing environment that empowers us to flourish. Nor does it mean that our representatives always stand up for our needs and interests. That is our job, the civil society's job.

We have reached the end of a decade long all around capitalization of all areas of our lives, with all the implications that entails. The pandemic has only highlighted preexisting shortfalls, particularly considering how the already underprivileged have been affected by it. When all the time is being spent at home, unwillingly at that, a light is being shed on limited and poor ground plans. From an individualistic cartesian paradigm, the essential meaning of a nurturing living environment as foundation to a fulfilling life becomes apparent. The general public has come to confront the question more consciously, which can only mean progress for future approaches to questions around housing.

We live in an open, pluralistic society in which there are as many aspirations and ways of living as there are people. We actually possess the tools and the knowledge to tackle the requirements and needs of a built environment in the 21st century, it is just not being done. Throughout Europe, the same highly regulated 1-, 2-, 3-, 4- bedroom apartments aimed at the conventional nuclear family structure, are still being implemented as the default, even though they are being taken over by alternative ways of collective living. New apartments need to meet the needs of single parents, patchwork families, chosen families, cooperative housing communities, and need to become modular and convertible spaces fit for working, schooling and living. That is not news, the pan-

demic has only highlighted this issue as a pressing one.

The elastic apartment goes beyond the "1 person – 1 bedroom" model and allows for fluidity between evolving living scenarios over time. A new kind of apartment requires a new kind of urban design : open, passable, just like the forest we are supposed to inhabit. And that is just one out of countless ways of imagining housing in the 21st century.

Planning implies anticipating and predicting future living and that is what we architects do on a daily basis. With each requirement comes a new chance and potential.

The Elastic Apartment

The elastic apartment is a plea for progress in architecture, housing and urban design. Our way of living is an acquired behavior that has been passed on over generations, and any further development is prevented by the durability of the houses in which we live. Essentially, we are all human beings with special needs. We all need space to live in that meets our specific needs, that inspires and challenges us. We need variety on the housing market and in the city, a variety in which we can find what suits us, and in which we can find ourselves.

If one asks housing developers about their ideas and goals, the same basic answer is repeated throughout Europe: one-room flats, two-room flats, three-room flats, four-room flats – only the proportions vary. Visionary ideas for cohabitation are not part of the equation. The apartment itself has largely been standardized in Europe since modern times, in terms of both the size and floor plan of the various types.

But what can the apartment dwelling contribute to the further development of our society? Every dwelling is a

propaganda machine for a way of life. Are we really so equal that we want to live in the same flats? Or are we so equal because we live in the same flats? Is this what we want? Is there another way? What does the city look like? Do we want to be content with typologies established at the end of the 19th century? The concept of the elastic apartment presents a model of the idea for an adjustable space configuration within a 54 square meters apartment. It does not claim to solve the housing question, but poses one of many possibilities for a truly heterogeneous housing market.

The elastic apartment, developed for the housing project Berlin Wiesenschlag in 2015, consists of eight small rooms arranged around a large living room. Three of these are occupied: kitchen, bathroom, storeroom. The other five can be used as an extension niche of the living

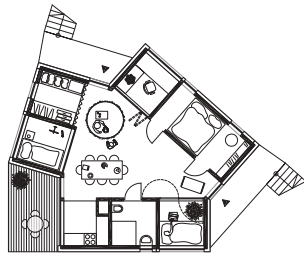
space, as a separate room or combined as a larger room. A married couple lives in the same type of apartment as a family of five. If the son moves out, his room can be used as a work niche. An apartment is therefore no longer designed for a specific number of residents, but can be used efficiently to full or less-than-full capacity.

(Anna Popelka and Georg Poduschka established PPAG architects in Vienna, Austria in 1995. They have since spear headed many housing and contemporary educational architecture projects. Their passion for research and progress in architecture permeates everything they undertake. All projects get developed from scratch in close cooperation with their clients. PPAG architects work in all disciplines of architecture and all dimensions, from furniture design to urban planning.)

THE ELASTIC APARTMENT

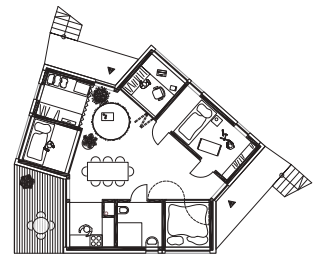
PARENTS
DAUGHTER 13
SON 4

TODAY



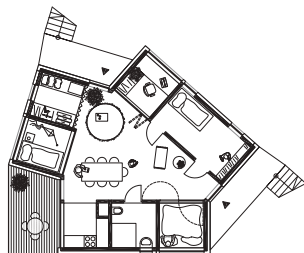
PARENTS
DAUGHTER (GUESTROOM) 17
SON 8

5 YEARS LATER



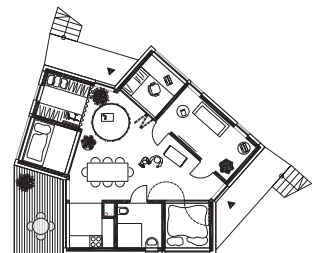
PARENTS
DAUGHTER 17
SON 8

4 YEARS LATER



PARENTS

11 YEARS LATER



What does the pandemic, with its lockdowns, mean for your current projects? Are these projects being analysed or reviewed through the lens of the crisis? Are clients changing their demands and requirements for the projects as a result of the pandemic?

CAUD Group

As a result of the pandemic, every part of the architectural design process began to change its assumptions. Clients were pushed to rethink their demands and economic decisions. Architects encountered different requirements and health regulations. Builders proposed new ideas regarding automation and prefabrication in the construction process.

Markus Zilker, einzueins architektur

The two key areas of our work are the social area (participation) and the ecological field (timber construction). I sense that, with the Covid-19 pandemic, all project participants become even more aware of the significance and also urgency of these social and ecological aspects.

Ali Sheikholeslam, Cama Circle

I believe we all needed this lockdown.

Not only the architects, but also other fields as well. In my personal experience, I've been able to more easily convince my clients to let me design yards and balconies for their houses or apartments, to consider multifunctional spaces, and to add more human-centred quality to the spaces. Before the pandemic, these qualities were not given the importance they deserved by the clients or investors where only real estate and financial benefits counted above everything else.

Maik Novotny, Architecture journalist

As I am not a practicing architect but rather a writer and teacher, the changes have been comparatively small. In journalism, there was a flood of think pieces with titles like "How ci-

ties have to change" and "How architecture has to react", so I had to decide if I should add another one to the pile. In teaching, the lockdown has been more severe, with distance teaching by Zoom.

First Design

The recent pandemic has definitely made us more determined to create collective residential spaces and semi-open spaces with greenery, although we already had this vision in our previous projects and we do not regret that. In our one or two recent residential projects, clients insisted on us designing more open and green spaces.

Amirhossein Taheri, Metamorphosis Method

I do not really believe that the pandemic has had any fundamental impact on architecture and architectural projects, except to increase our sensitivities. Indeed, the essentials of confrontation with the current pandemic or any similar situations are not very much different from the essentials of good architecture.

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Clients think and act more slowly than architects. We envision liveable, vivid hybrid projects and are still looking for suitable clients.

Andrea Rieger-Jandl, Architectural Researcher, TU Wien

The projects have not changed.

They continue as they were, except for the big difference of no direct contact and all forms of communication being digitalized. This newfound uncertainty calls for flexibility; long-term planning has lost in importance. Projects are examined to see whether in the future a mixture

of face-to-face and direct contact combined with online communication is the more useful and efficient option. Moreover, I have not seen any change in project requirements.

Matthias Boeckl, Editor-in-Chief, architektur aktuell

I am not an architect, so I cannot answer the question as intended. However, I am rethinking all of my projects through the "Corona-lens", which, in reality, is more an anticipated view into the future. There's no getting around the need for more resilience and use of technology, and both these aspects should be incorporated into the future anyhow, regardless of the pandemic.

Armin Daneshgar, Daneshgar Architects

Last year, our firm won a competition to build a large event hall. In the short time before the lockdown, the submission entered the critical phase, with final submission scheduled for one week later. Naturally, this affected us, as it is a large project for our office. Through the pandemic, the meaningfulness of an event hall was called into question, resulting in us rethinking the complete planning concept. Distance between seats and improved ventilation were an absolute necessity. We had online-meetings with the developers and engineers, and the previous plans were discarded completely. Also, the new, more stringent requirements led to a delay of several months. For our housing projects, providing enough open space, preferably green space, has always been an important aspect. In doing so, the greening of space was meant to go right through from the ground to the top of the building. Also, the possibility of washing one's hands immediately after entering the living space had been an important planning criterium even before the pandemic, and now increased its importance. Additionally, we try to create

living spaces that are as convertible as possible for future residents. For that, we work on new concepts and ideas, including bringing in experts in that field where necessary.

Superblock

Projects are extended due to tremendous friction losses. This is of particular concerns for urban development, with its many voting meetings involving many protagonists.

Corona has made it clear that, especially in conurbations, sufficient open space must be available (possibly to be ensured through a legal framework).

Moreover, at a time of recession, it's possible for a re-urbanisation to take place, with people seeking employment moving to conurbations. This presents a factor to be considered in regional and urban planning.

The architects must act more effectively and responsibly in their relationships with the community.

FIRST DESIGN

daneshgar architects

leaf of life

In the summer of 2019 an architectural competition for a new event hall in Seestadt Aspern was held.

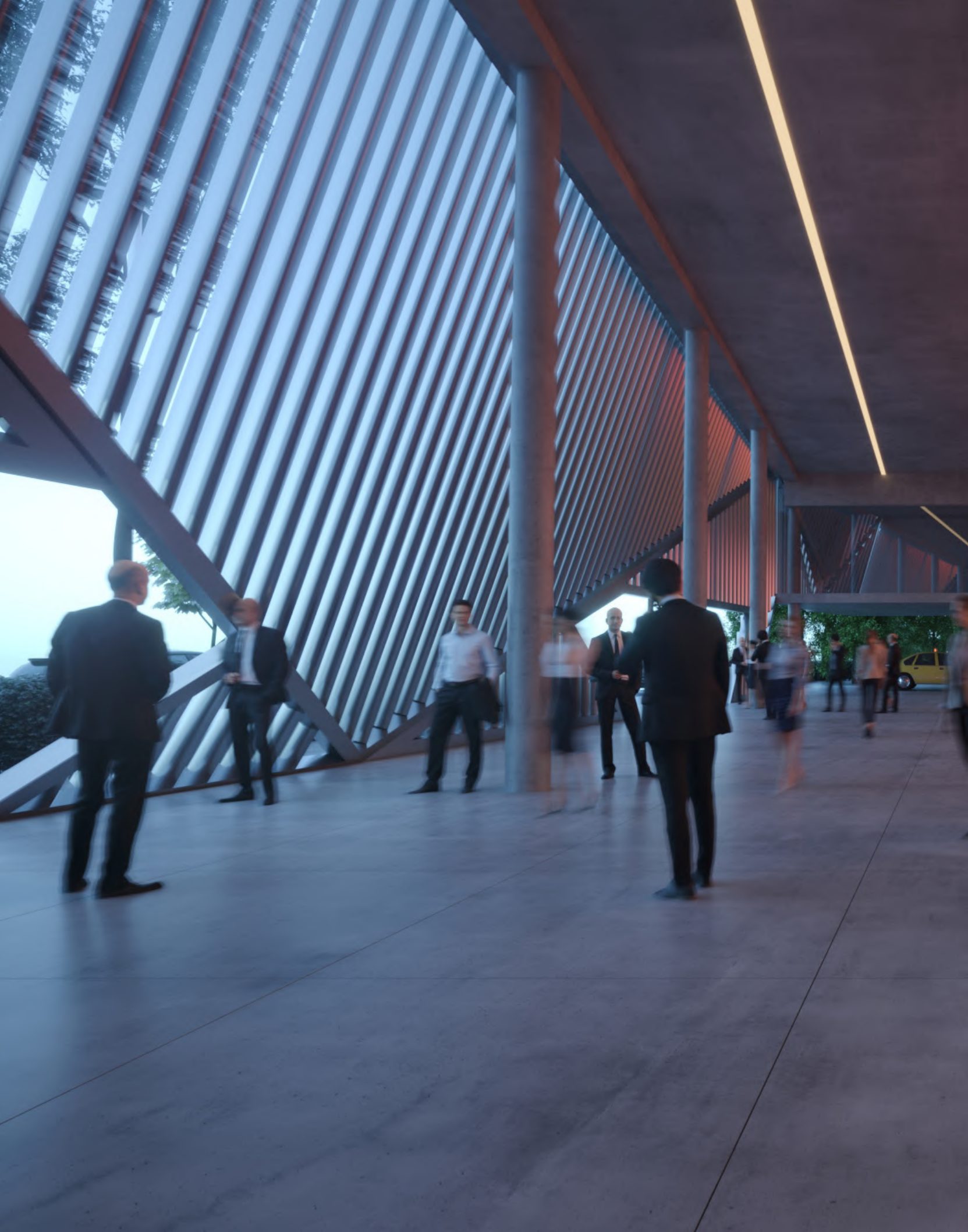
The winning project is characterised by a complex façade structure covering the entrance area like a leaf of life. The experience of the fourth dimension should be visible, inspiration was found in nature – the façade element will cover the building and remind the beholder of the veins of a leaf with the emerging, angled supporting structure. The leaf becomes a shell that covers a generous threshold area between the interior and exterior space, which is also created by deliberately moving the façade back. The result is an intermingling between the residents of Seestadt Aspern and the visitors to the event hall. The outdoor and lobby floors also branch out, like the veins of a leaf, making paths and processes visible and guiding visitors into the lobby. The slits between the plates will be illuminated at night to further enhance this effect.

A dividing curtain was added to the event area – this allows for subdivisions and, as a result, multiple parallel events with a smaller number of visitors. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the planned ventilation system was greatly enhanced.

© daneshgar architects









challenge studio phoenix residential building

The design concentrates on the neighbourhood's configuration in order to provide an appropriate solution for the urban appearance of the Nexa 34 residential project. Also, the spaces between neighbouring structures – such as neighbouring courtyards to the northwest and northeast – were important elements in this design.

Based on these parameters, the chosen design method was based on ancient Iranian 9-square geometric architecture. The 4 corner-squares in the lower portion of the design are filled to the height of the neighbouring structures. In so doing, the scale of the neighbourhood's physical proportions was preserved. The middle squares, in the east and west, are left empty, so as to expand the neighbouring courtyards. Additionally, the north and south central squares were left empty to provide access to the street.

The upper half of the design follows a reverse pattern, whereby the 4 middle squares are filled. This approach increased surfaces for natural light to permeate while creating more views and generating variety in spaces within the design. In addition, horizontally shifting of floors made it possible to provide large terraces and increased area for residential units, thus creating 360-degree façades in the upper portions of the design, with a substantial impact on urban aesthetics.

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For the majority of the population, their current housing condition does not comply with the requirements for life at the present time, given that home-office and/or home-schooling must often co-function with the living aspects of the home space. Should (or must) this be seen as a wake-up call? In particular, how must architecture be rethought for it to be able to react faster to similar, unexpected situations and crises in the future?

Markus Zilker, einzueins architektur

Although there have always been and still are artistic and architectural strategies that react quickly to new situations, architects generally produce “Immobilien” (“properties”). And as the word “Immobilie” (from the word meaning “immobile”) implies, these buildings and spaces generally cannot easily be altered quickly.

Our architects should create spaces that meet people’s basic needs in a good and inclusive way, with or without the Corona pandemic as a context.

Andrea Rieger-Jandl, Architectural Researcher, TU Wien

A pandemic is a temporary extreme event, one which will not turn all our architectural concepts upside down. However, with some problems that have developed through or in connection with the pandemic, we can definitely draw conclusions which are relevant for architecture. In particular, the increasing digitalization of the working world as a result of the pandemic will remain with us. Digitalization reduces the need for a constant presence in the workplace, as work can be done from other places. Given the current pricing trends on the housing market, there will presumably be only limited opportunities for working from home in the future. Therefore, shared work spaces – whether in the form of group

housing projects with integrated work spaces, co-sharing centres or “work cells” integrated into the home – will become increasingly important.

Matthias Boeckl, Editor-in-Chief, architektur aktuell

The reaction should be that with means of ecological motives more than just the unsatisfactory minimum standards are being built. The descriptive factors to be considered are: crisis-resistant, more spacious, functionally mixed, yet affordable as well as sustainabled. This is not so much the problem of architects, who would certainly consider these factors, but rather of the (consumer-driven) mentality of society as a whole and, subsequently, also of the investment habits of the building industry. In short: a societal problem in need of a political solution.

Armin Daneshgar, Daneshgar Architects

Generally speaking, architecture should provide people with “packages” that allow people to develop themselves. As previously mentioned, convertible living space and green open spaces are key topics here.

querkraft architekten

The living space of the future is a vibrant city, a vibrant neighbourhood, a vibrant house. In addition to compact housing units, there have recently been diverse offers for the planning and organization of the day and places to withdraw so as to be able to focus efficiently.

Amirhossein Taheri, Metamorphosis Method

This is a multilateral question that cannot be answered solely through the lens of architects. Prior to this, I think there should be a thorough revision of the capital distribution. In

fact, I honestly doubt that the majority of the population’s housing were in line with their demands and requirements even before the pandemic.

p.good ARCHITEKTEN

Home office and home-schooling cannot be a general future goal for a socialized community. Indeed it’s necessary to create enough space to achieve architectural flexibility for our different needs. Architecture is a lively process of ideas improving in form: sketches, open discussions, etc. It is a dynamic interaction. We need physical presence for discussions in architecture, especially in the design phase of a project. The key is to use the existing zones in different ways, creating more open co-working spaces than the traditional office spaces, switching between different performances, functions, in the same area, planning for the options to switch between our needs.

Ian Banerjee, Senior Researcher at Future Lab TU Wien

Digitalization is changing the nature of work dramatically (along with all other aspects of life). Architecture has no influence on that change. It is always responding to it.

Public or private incentives for architects to experiment with fluid forms of “live, work and learn” will

be necessary to create innovation in the field. Modern urbanism was born out of crises. Fires, floods, epidemics etc. created the first regulations in the cities transformed by early industrialization. Something similar is happening today. In the digital age, besides flexible layouts and other physical design elements, it is advisable that architects think about scenarios that integrate physical spaces with digital spaces. In the age of connectivity, new digital public spaces may be helpful to create more resilient societies. However, digital social spaces have the potential to be both: divisive or inclusive.

CAUD Group

The most important lesson to be learned from this problem is that the architecture of our houses should be more flexible and should be able to change during its lifetime.

Maik Novotny, Architecture journalist

On the one hand, there certainly are many aspects of housing which can be improved easily, such as partitioning the living space into several rooms for more privacy for home-schooling/working/zoom conferences. On the other hand, what this crisis has shown is that it is difficult to plan for events like these, and to know beforehand which spatial frameworks unexpected situations in the future will require.

There is a tendency in architecture to see any problem as an architectural problem which can be solved

with an architectural solution, when more often than not, it is a political problem which most of all requires a political solution.

Superblock

In conurbations and within social classes of limited ecological means, housing conditions increasingly move towards affordability and away from the needs of the inhabitants. The potential for compromise has always been enormous, with Corona increasing its visibility. The challenge lies in providing flexible, affordable structures which can be used for a multitude of different purposes.

First Design

Prevention is always more effective than cure.

Architects who claim to be futuristic must act more impressively by considering people's psychological and physical requirements.

Ali Sheikholeslam, Cama Circle

Crises have been a constant part of our lives and there have been successful architectural solutions to them such as temporary container homes or other easy-to-set up, lightweight structures when there is a natural disaster, but I don't believe architecture is always been able to provide immediate solutions to

each crisis. Take global warming as an example. That crisis has been around for a long time but it was not like architecture had a ready-made solution to tackle it from the beginning. It took decades before there were comprehensive improvements regarding how to make buildings more energy efficient and sustainable, which has even found its way to revising the building codes. As such, it will take time for architecture to adapt itself to the COVID-19 crisis.

Each diverse and complex system results from flexibility in a synthesis of modular cells.

Speed, Digital Architecture and Trust

Learning from Taiwan

TEXT IAN BANERJEE

On the 22nd of December 2020, Tsai-Ing Wen, the president of Taiwan, tweeted that the country recorded its first domestic case of Covid-19 in 253 days. She wrote: „...this is a reminder to everyone in #Taiwan to remain vigilant“. On the following day, Bloomberg News came up with a detailed article on the case: „World’s Longest Virus-Free Streak Ends With New Taiwan Case“. The Taiwanese president’s tweet causes a wry smile in countries battling with thousands of new cases every day. With 842 cases and seven deaths, Taiwan has been one of the least affected countries in the world. This article takes a closer look at the key strategies underlying Taiwan’s response to the virus - a country which did not order a lock-down.



蔡英文 Tsai Ing-wen @iingwen · 22. Dez. 2020



Today we recorded our first domestic case of [#COVID19](#) in 253 days. This is a reminder to everyone in [#Taiwan](#) to stay vigilant. It shows that the pandemic is far from over, & that international cooperation is key, because we're all in this together.



346

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1. Introduction

Soon after the pandemic started to sweep across the world, data-websites and media channels began to compare country responses to the ravaging corona virus SARS-Cov-2. Beside the massive and successful clamp down in China (People's Republic of China), other East-Asian countries like Vietnam and Singapore seemed to fare well in containing its early outbreaks. Soon non-authoritarian countries appeared with success stories - like South Korea, New Zealand, Australia and Japan - all with different approaches. A democratically governed East Asian country (a functional democracy only since 1996) that began to receive particular attention by the Western press was Taiwan (Republic of China). The nation with 23.5 million inhabitants is officially a part of People's Republic of China, and is recognized by only 15 countries of the world.

WIRED Magazine, the Swiss NZZ and German ZEIT along with at least 100 other news outlets brought extensive coverage on Taiwan's success. It started to trickle through that Taiwan had no lockdown and that it put policy measures in place that involved civil society in a special way. This was an interesting piece of news for the citizens of countries who felt their democratic governments were turning into totalitarian regimes and robbing them of their hard earned right to privacy and individual freedom. Taiwan's international profile began to soar. One person often mentioned in these articles was Audrey Tang, the 35-year-old digital minister of the country. Upon questioning the former civic hacker about how Taiwan could contain the virus so quickly, she tweeted: "... with soap, hand sanitizers, civic tech and plenty of trust".

In this essay, I shall touch upon what Ms. Tang means by "civic-tech" and trust, and take a look at Taiwan's "digital architecture". With digital architecture I mean those structures and support systems of a country that enable the coordination of its physical and virtual interactions and the transactions that connect its people and resources. I argue, that understanding Taiwan's digital architecture is the key to understanding its response to the virus. With a broader brush, I sketch out my main message, that all forms of physical measures we conceptualize today as preparation for potential threats of epidemics or other calamities of the future, will have to be complemented with creative forms of digital architecture that inspires public engagement.

2. Civil society rings the alarm bells – December 2019

To understand the Taiwanese response to Covid -19, it is important to keep on mind, that the country had its civil society on board right from the beginning. On 31st of December 2019, after medical authorities of mainland China (PRC) had published the probable outbreak of a new type of pneumonia on their national medical information system, a Taiwanese civil society platform called PTT reposted it on its communication board. PTT is the Taiwanese version of "Reddit" - a not-for-profit communication platform created and run by students. It has been playing an important role in countering disinformation campaigns over the last years. The digital platform has more than 1.5 million registered users with the capacity to handle over 150,000 of them during peak hours. The Bulletin Board System (BBS) has over 20,000 boards covering a multitude of topics. Around 20,000 articles get 500,000 comments posted on it every day. PTT is a part of the much touted "civic-tech" ecosystem of the country.

„Civic Tech“

Civic-tech can be defined as digital tools (usually open source) adapted by civil society actors to work for a social purpose. It is mostly operated by local communities in conjunction with co-creative forms of governance. Civic-tech began to grow in Taiwan in the watershed year of 2014 when a group of tech savvy students "occupied" the parliament for 22 days as a protest against a proposed trade bill with the PRC. The protest became known as the "Sunflower Movement" (Cole 2015). In that crucial moment of Taiwanese political history, Audrey Tang had provided the technical support for the protesters. Soon after, Audrey, the protester, was asked by the digital minister of the party in power to coordinate a public deliberation process to find a popular consensus on how to regulate Uber. This complex participatory process triggered the civic-tech movement of the country. A new relationship began to evolve thereafter between government and the people. Two years later, in 2016, the new party in power appointed Ms. Tang as the digital minister of the country. She began to introduce new models of governance and expand the scope of existing platforms like vTaiwan, g0v, Pol.is, Join and others (WIRED 2020). Today, half of the country's population regularly takes part in the participatory processes via these platforms. Nick Monaco of the Institute for the Future (IFTF) believes Taiwan has the "most vibrant civic tech culture in the world" (WIRED 2020). The growing collaborative environment of the country, as Ms. Tang puts it,

taps into the “crowd intelligence of civil society” (WIRED 2020). Civic-tech is a constitutive pillar of the digital architecture of Taiwan, and the country’s growing culture of “digital democracy”.

3. Speed and coordinated action

The most remarkable feature of the Taiwanese response is speed. An official of the Taiwan Centers for Disease Control (CDC) was the first to display this feature. On New Year’s Day 2020, that is one day (!) after he had seen the posting about a possible case of pneumonia on PTT, government officials had already started on-board health inspection of flight passengers coming in from Wuhan. The response of other institutions started to kick in rapidly. On 20th January, the Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC), an organization established to battle SARS in 2003, was activated. This was done even before Taiwan had its first case of Covid-19. After a few confirmed cases at the end of January, the government had mobilized the nation into an “epidemic combat mode” and CECC started to roll out its plan against the virus. By February, as dozens of deaths were being reported in Wuhan every day, Taiwan was already prepared for the worst. On February 27th, the CECC was upgraded to the highest level of government agency - giving it the authority of commanding all other agencies of the country. This single-line of command proved to be highly efficient in coordinating and mobilizing all sectors of the government in a concerted way.

Institutional memory of SARS 2003

Few nations were mentally so well prepared for this pandemic as was Taiwan. The reason for this is to a great degree the bitter experience of the outbreak of SARS in 2003. The shock of SARS was alive not only in the memories of individuals but also in the memories of institutions of Taiwan - an experience shared by most other countries in East Asia.

Taiwan had decided never again to be caught unprepared against a new epidemic. The key measures the country had taken (see Chi 2020) after the end of SARS were: (1) developing new hospital-standards for dealing with contagious diseases; (2) expansive training for all hospital-based nurses on communicable diseases; (3) expanding the number of ICUs; (4) investing heavily in biomedical research; and (5) developing new standards and measures for quarantine, isolation, and community control of highly contagious epidemics.

4. Digital architecture, healthcare and the tactical responses of CECC

Digital Architecture

The digital architecture of the country is shaped by the country’s healthcare infrastructure, the civic-tech structures and the information and communication technologies (ICT) used during the crisis.

Healthcare infrastructure

Administered by the National Health Insurance Administration (NHIA), Taiwan had introduced a compulsory universal health care system called National Health Insurance (NHI) back in 1995. 13 years later, in 2018, the NHIA had installed MediCloud, a cloud-based infrastructure to store all citizens’ health data.

The four main tactical responses of CECC

The tactical responses of CECC that relied on these digital and social infrastructures (for more see Chi 2020) were fourfold. The first initiative of CECC was to incorporate the NHI and MediCloud into the pandemic control system. Subsequently, at the end of January 2019, NHIA decided to link MediCloud with Taiwan’s immigration data. This would allow CECC to both screen and track imported cases and to swiftly provide health care facilities all over the country with vital information regarding the affected person’s travel history, contact history, and potential presence at mass gatherings. This would enable an efficient triage (prioritizing the cases and the subsequent order of treatment) and faster diagnoses while keeping them safe.

Its second step was to create a combination of contact-tracing and quarantine monitoring method supported by a GPS-based information system called Intelligent Electronic Fences System (IEFS). The IEFS tracks and monitors people under quarantine, and also identifies the locations a confirmed case had visited by digitally triangulating the location of the individual’s mobile phone signals. It monitors the nation’s entire quarantined population and any potential persons they may have come into contact with. The tracking can take place in real time and retrospectively for up to a month. After a legally defined period of time all personal data is deleted.

This technology was first deployed to contain a major outbreak involving the 3000 passengers of the (in)famous Diamond Princess that visited multiple places in northern Taiwan. The IEFS tracked over 623 000 potential contacts (!) and advised them to quarantine at home,

and thereby, seems to have helped to prevent any serious community outbreaks. The IEFS can identify all the public places the patients had visited, and inform potential contacts in order to avert community outbreaks. By now, Taiwan has quarantined well over 150,000 people, prevented around 300 recorded cases from community spreading.

The third response was to initiate smart testing. Instead of mass testing Taiwan decided to test small but relevant numbers of people. For every confirmed case, the CECC zealously tracks the source of infection and the people and places the person may have come in touch with - and tests most of them. The smart testing strategy, of course, can only work with the strict isolation and quarantine strategy, coupled with the electronic fence. With so few active cases, Taiwan can afford to apply very strict criteria for testing: for a suspected case, one has to pass two consecutive negative test results to leave quarantine; for a confirmed case, one has to pass three consecutive negative test results before the person is declared cured (Chi 2020).

The fourth response of CECC was to complement Taiwan's pandemic control measures with social care. For example, the government offered free access to testing and financed the cost of 14-day quarantine with USD 35 per day. Local government staff would make daily phone calls to those under quarantine to offer assistance, and provide them with a care package that includes 14 surgical masks, detailed instructions on quarantine, free online access to exercise videos, and free online access to movies.

The “Mask App” - A showcase project where Civic-Tech meets with Gov-Tech

At the beginning of the pandemic, the need for a fair rationing and distribution of masks led to the inception of a show-case project for a collaborative effort of civil society and government (for more see WIRED 2020).

A vast majority of citizens in eastern Asian countries believe that masks can slow down the spread of contagious diseases. Scientific data and the experiences collected during epidemics in these regions have led to this widespread belief. Therefore, one of the first challenges identified by the Taiwanese was how to provide masks for all? An initiative to meet this challenge was led by a private person called Howard Wu. In early February, after seeing the tremendous rush on masks, the 35-year-old software engineer created a website to show the availability of masks in convenience stores. He aggregated crowdsourced information flowing in from Taiwan's

messaging app called LINE (WhatsApp of Taiwan), and inserted it into Google Maps. Stores with masks in stock showed up as green, out-of-stock stores turned red. The mask map was an instant hit. But there was a serious problem. Google Maps charges a few dollars for every 1000 times the map is accessed by users. On the first day Wu received a bill for \$2000, on the next day it went up to \$26 000. Alarmed, Wu asked “HackMD” for help - a community of hackers and computer-literate citizens dedicated to civic engagement (another nodal point in the civic-tech eco-system). He didn't have to wait long. A day after the mask map had gone viral, Audrey Tang jumped in. She convinced the Premier to improve the country's mask-rationing system using the mask app of Mr. Wu. However, instead of relying on crowdsourced reports, Tang asked NHI to make the mask-data open to the public as “open data”. Soon an improved open-sourced platform was created by the government - an example for “gov tech” - a term that points to technologies developed by the government to make interactions between government and citizens more effective. The hacker community was thereafter invited to improve the mask app. This initiative is an example of the many collaborative projects that take place between actors of civil society and government in Taiwan today (see also WIRED 2020).

While the mask-app was put in place, the government had started to build 60 new medical mask production lines. From 1.88 million N95 masks per day in March, production went up to 12 million per day in early April (later on to 20 million). From two free medical masks per person per week, distribution via the mask app went up to nine masks per person per 14 days in April (Chi 2020).

5. Public trust, transparency and leadership

Most citizen's concern with digital tracking and tracing is the loss of privacy. Despite the fact that Taiwanese citizens ardently defend their democratic rights, there have been minimal objections from the public on this issue. This is due to the very high level of trust existing between the government and the public. The 91% public approval rating (April 2020) for the „commander” of CECC, Dr. Chen Shih-chung, demonstrates this trust (Chin 2020). High level of transparency combined with unambiguous and well-timed communication played a critical role in building up this public confidence and calmness.

Leadership was undoubtedly another key factor for Taiwan's success. The country happened to have a “dre-

am team” to respond to the virus. This included the Vice President Dr. Chen Chien-jen, an accomplished epidemiologist who led a successful campaign in controlling the SARS epidemic in 2003; the energetic Vice-Premier Dr. Chen Chi-Mai, a physician, and of course, Audrey Tang - the passionate protagonist of digital democracy. Tang was instrumental in developing the digital fence for monitoring quarantine and potential contacts while keeping the danger of privacy infringement as low as possible.

The point of democracy, Audrey Tang often says in her interviews, is to „...make the state transparent to the citizen, not the citizen transparent to the state.“ While citizens in many countries have the feeling that the pandemic has led to the undermining of their democratic constitutions, Audrey Tang believes: „The pandemic in Taiwan actually strengthened our democracy“ (WIRED 2020).

6. “Fun” and the secret formula

Tang often subsumes Taiwan government’s response with a three-word formula: fast, fair and fun. We have heard about fast and fair, but what is meant by fun? „Comedians are our most cherished colleagues,“ says Tang (Business Insider 2020). A key element of Taiwan’s strategy was communicating with citizens through humorous stunts and digital campaigns (Business Insider 2020). Comedians helped to craft viral memes, invent animal mascots to inform the public about safety information – like teddy bears encouraging social distancing at restaurants etc. To deal with misinformation (and sometimes disinformation) Ms. Tang said she applied „humor over rumor“ (Quartz 2020). Every time a hoax would appear on social media, within a few hours, civic hackers and government officials would counter it by unleashing a clarifying joke about it (Quartz 2020). A patronizing or stern attitude is often perceived as deceptive, but humor seems to engage citizens in a more light-hearted way. In the age of social media and the enormous influence of the fun-industry, it is almost impossible to get people on board without some form of entertainment. Almost all national programs and responses to misinformation in Taiwan were conducted with messages that used narratives and memes that invoked humor. It is important to note that these responses were generated in coalition with civil society.

Example 1: The toilet paper joke

Here is an example for such a humorous response. As

soon as the virus appeared, a rumor was spread by a toilet paper company that the country was running low of toilet paper. The government responded with a cartoon that featured no one less than the Premier of the country Su Tseng-chang. The image showed him from the back, pointing his finger at numbers showing the real resources of the country. He is saying: „we only have one butt, don’t hoard, don’t trust rumors“ (Quartz 2020). The words „hoard“ and „butt“ sound the same in Mandarin. While the rest of the world amassed mountains of toilet paper, in Taiwan, panic-buying died down – simply because people found the meme hilarious.

Example 2: The pink mask dilemma

Another example illustrates the fast, fair and fun formula. As mentioned above, Taiwanese residents can obtain free masks through their health insurance. However, they have no control over the color. Reports appeared about boys were being bullied at school for wearing pink masks. One day, a boy called the grievances number to say he was terrified to go to school with a pink mask. Next day, a number of high ranking male health officials, including the minister of health, Chen Shih-chung, appeared at the regular press conference wearing pink masks. The photo went viral. „It’s fine for a man to wear pink,“ the minister said (Business Insider 2020). He set the color of fashion for the next mask season.

7. Conclusion

The pandemic: summary of measures

Responses to the pandemic of 2020 has been very different across the world. From heralding herd immunity to radical lockdowns, from living-with-the-virus, to sniffing it out completely. Taiwan’s approach has been about containing it before it spreads (as in other East Asian countries). From April 2020, its government was obsessively aiming at “zero new domestic cases” (Chi 2020). With less than 900 domestic cases and seven deaths, Taiwan is a country with one of the fewest cases as per now, and it is also one of the few nations which maintained relative normalcy during the crisis without ordering a lock-down. The case of Taiwan shows how robust social infrastructure, coherent government action, trust and a vibrant digital culture can mobilize collaborative energy in times of crisis. In this essay I outlined the “success” of Taiwan as a result of political action, structural elements and mental attitudes. I summarize its measures by connecting the following dots:

a) Speed: leadership and coordinated action

The government assigned a large number of veteran

professionals that were involved in fighting SARS in 2003 for the coordination of the epidemic response. The Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC), the main agency in charge, had the mandate to orchestrate the action of all sectors of the government in concerted way. Every sign of the new disease was taken with extreme seriousness – overreaction was valued over under-preparedness (Chi 2020). The remarkable speed with which CECC and the government responded is the key to understanding Taiwan’s success in containing the virus.

b) Digital architecture: public health infrastructure and civic-tech

The compulsory National Health Insurance (NHI) for everyone living in Taiwan and MediCloud, a cloud-based infrastructure that stores all citizens’ health data, forms the backbone of the country’s public health infrastructure. All actions taken during the pandemic were built on this existing system. After linking immigration data with the MediCloud, a combination of contact-tracing, strict quarantine monitoring and an Intelligent Electronic Fences System (IEFS) was introduced to pin down the virus down as soon as it seemed to appear somewhere. The strict quarantine measures were balanced with a “caring” attitude towards those affected by providing emotional support and services. All of these measures were embedded and facilitated by the country’s digital architecture comprised of its social infrastructure, civic tech, and ICT framework.

c) Trust: mind-set, solidarity and fun-factor

The bitter memories of SARS made the vast majority of Taiwanese very supportive of the government’s measures in fighting the pandemic. The rapid and unambiguous response of CECC strengthened the existing trust between the government and civil society. Without this spirit of solidarity, the strict policies and measures may not have been so readily accepted in Taiwan - a country which entertains a highly sensitive “protest culture”. A big part of the public communication was carried by a combination of extreme seriousness and humor. “Fun” became a serious tactical element in the country’s communication strategy.

Preparing for the future: Participatory digital culture

At this stage of digitalization, where conceptual distinctions between the “digital” and the “physical” have begun to collapse, we can assume that any built scenarios of the future, like those of architecture, urbanism, healthcare etc., will have to be conceptualized as hybrid landscapes of physical and digital spaces. Orchestrating the production of these spaces in an equitable and emo-

tionally meaningful way may well become the greatest challenge of the 21st century.

The experiments taking place in digital social innovation in Taiwan show interesting ways of how such hybrid spaces can be co-produced by civil society and government on a significant scale. Triggered by the watershed moment of the Sunflower Movement in 2014, a tech-savvy Taiwanese community began to intensely engage in practices of what is often called “digital democracy”. Through many of its interlinked and non-commercial online platforms, a locally specific culture of civic engagement began to evolve rapidly, displaying the possibilities and potentials for the convergence of digitalization and democratization.

It is important to view the country’s response to the pandemic against the background of this newly emerging digital culture. While the formula “fast, fair and fun” may subsume the principle of the Taiwanese approach to contain the virus, the cohesive force created by the country’s participatory digital culture forms the invisible background for its capacity for social innovation and cross-sectoral cooperation. Policy makers in Taiwan are encouraging this new culture to develop further in order to address the challenges of the 21st century in more collaborative ways – with the help of more crowd intelligence.

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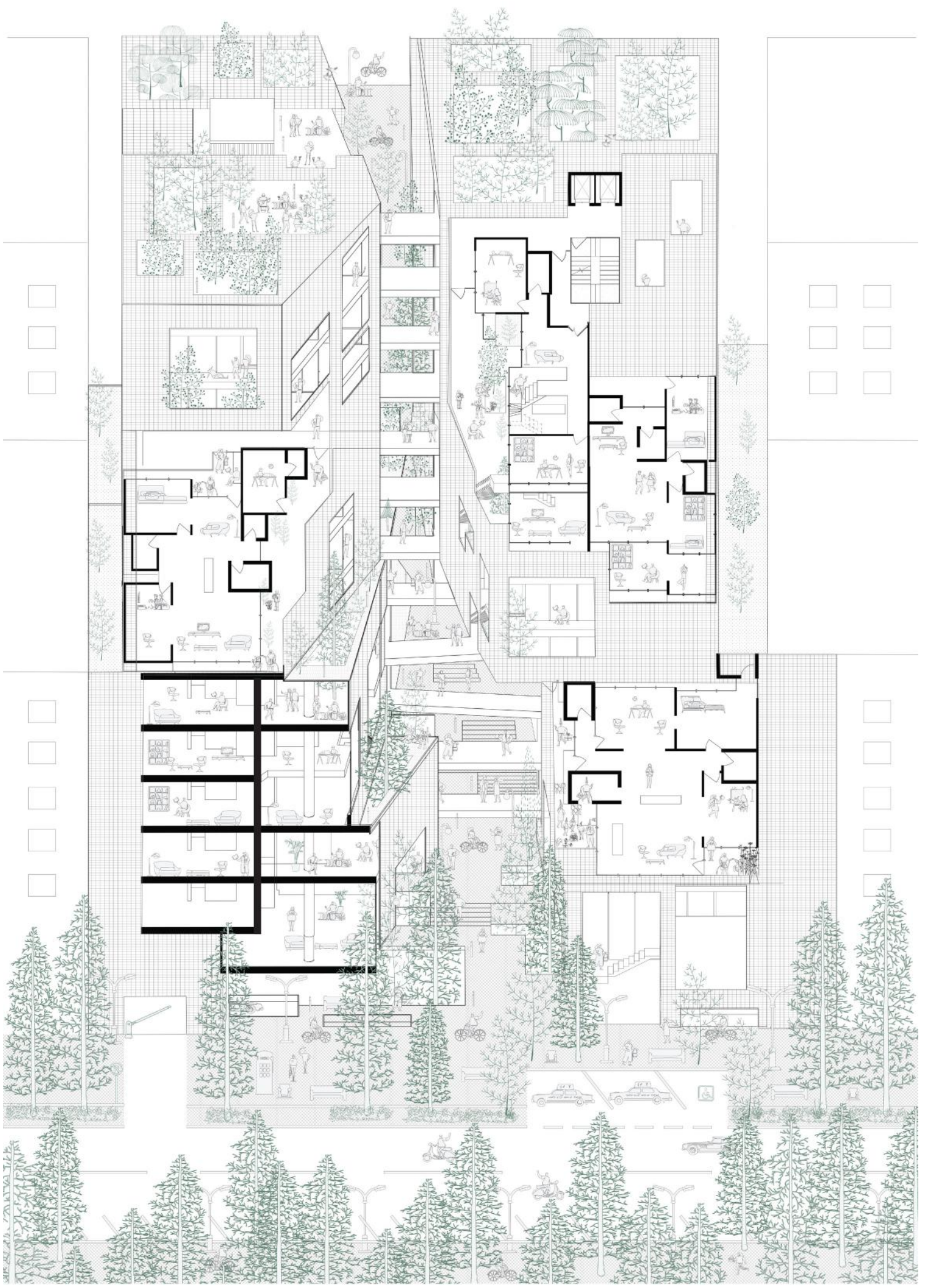
logical process in architectural design office **life line houses**

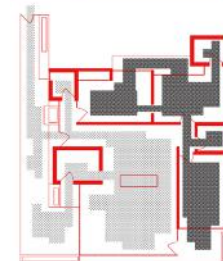
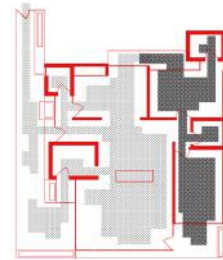
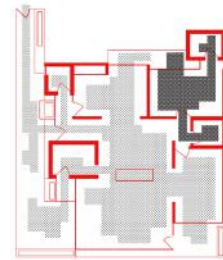
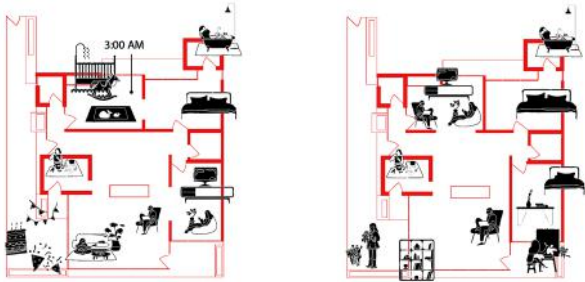
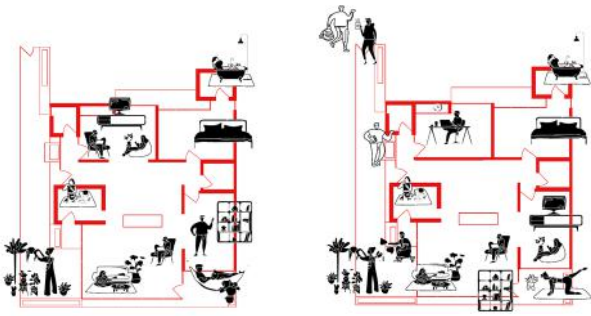
Today's houses are the sum of boxes defined to respond to the primary needs of human beings – sleeping: bedroom; cooking: kitchen; washing: bathroom; communication: living room... and the sum will be a home! Regardless of whether the needs are recognized properly or not, and the needs of 2021's humanity is the same as they were in the 1900s.

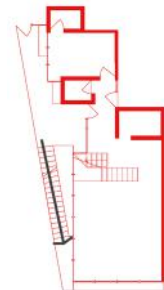
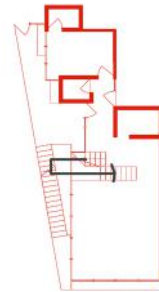
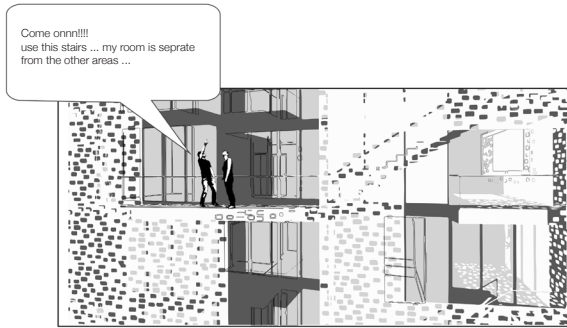
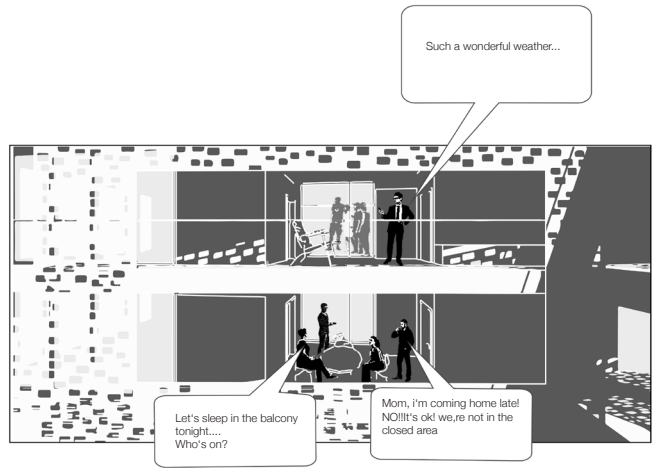
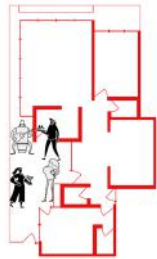
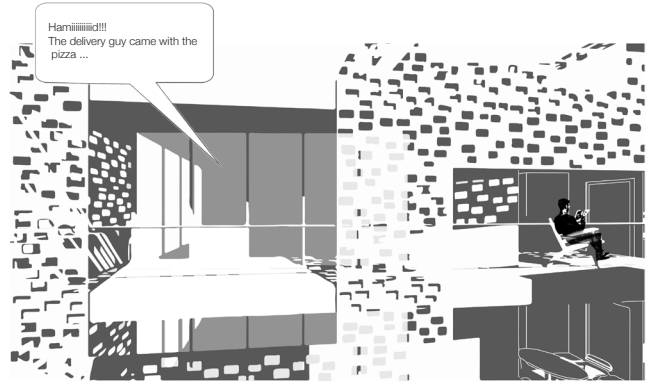
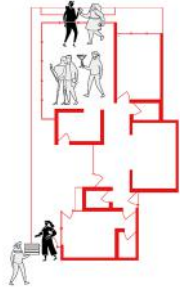
The way these boxes are arranged is a big question. The pandemic has increased the average usage of dwelling spaces during the past year and it became a challenge to review the common dwelling types, especially the prevalent type, which is the apartment. In addition, many activities which are usually undertaken outside the home because of lack of space ... had to be transferred indoors – a major challenge.

This project attempts to redefine the pattern of composing the individual elements in different scales; from rooms in an apartment to an entire city complex. Considering the parameters of time in this composition changes the identity of a dwelling unit from a box to a fluid, live context for a range of adaptive spaces. An intertwining of open, semi-open and closed, private, semiprivate and public space will be the result of this approach. Moving from a rigid frame to a range of visible or hidden potentials can lead us to an acceptable prototype for a home after the Covid-19 pandemic.

© logical process in architectural design process | right: section/floor plan, scaleless







It is a known fact that during quarantine or due to quarantine, conflicts have arisen between people living together, living in the same neighbourhood or housing development, etc. Moreover, the number of people suffering from depression has increased, especially within the older generation, but also in the group of people living alone. To what extent can architecture help to relativize or avoid these problems – for example, with new architectural solutions? Will your future projects take into account and comply with these aspects? If yes, in what way?

Amirhossein Taheri, Metamorphosis Method

Instead of trying to find solutions for the future, architecture should acknowledge that all the above-mentioned conflicts/conditions may take place.

Hence, it has to develop an estimation of the appropriate solutions. In other words, it has to be flexible and has to have a vision of the possible circumstances that the future will bring, so as to react from that perspective.

Maik Novotny, Architecture journalist

I don't think we have to invent new solutions for this. There is plenty of evidence on which housing developments foster good neighbourhoods, solidarity and community, and why they succeed in doing so: common spaces, good management and maintenance, good exterior spaces etc.

CAUD Group

The key solution for dealing with this problem is to provide more efficient open spaces in mid-rise and high-rise residential buildings because these types of problems occur when people live in enclosed spaces for a while. To emphasise this role of residential buildings, the main idea of this proposal is based on open spaces, which is a challenging point in

design multi-story residential complexes. The quality of open-air spaces in apartments depends on many parameters. The first one is the area and dimensions of a terrace and the second one is the greenness of open space. In this design proposal every apartment has at least one square-shaped terrace which permits the accommodation of a table that seats four and a built-in flower box of sufficient depth. The third parameter which distinguishes courtyards from the terrace is the height of the open space. Generally, courtyards have no roofs but terraces have a roof just three metres above them. To increase the quality of open spaces, more than half the terraces in this proposal have no roof or have a roof height of over six metres. The fourth parameter is the level of air circulation across the open space. Generally, terraces do not have two opposite open sides, but in this proposal, about a third of the apartments have courtyards with two opposite open sides which helps wind flow to cross perpendicular to the direction of the façade. Positioning many courtyards beside the lateral façade, a special brick and construction system helps to achieve a different third façade which allows sunlight to enter into the upper lateral courtyards while stopping people seeing into them.

querkraft architekten

It requires both: plenty of privacy and a lot of community.

Also, digitalization can contribute to solving the problem. Requests posted on neighbourhood-social-media-groups could possibly go something like this: „Who could babysit mit 4-year-old twins between 1 and 5 p.m. today? In return I offer to bake a delicious “Sachertorte” (a

traditional Austrian chocolate cake).

p.good ARCHITEKTEN

Some of our current projects focus on providing “accessible housing for disabled persons” or “inter-generational housing” . We believe our future projects will focus more on indoor and outdoor multifunctional spaces. On the one hand we have to develop spaces for more interaction and more socialization, and on the other, we need to create spaces for individual human needs. Another of our projects, which is still in the design phase, is about creating open co-working spaces in old municipal buildings in dense urban areas in Vienna. This is definitely a challenging project after all the experiences that we are having or have had during the pandemic.

Superblock

Unfortunately, architectural possibilities do not reach that far. The first lockdown, in particular, showed that these necessary expansion spaces (such as collective-use spaces, co-working spaces, meeting points outside one's own four walls, etc.) that offered at least some form of spatial alleviation were some of the first to close and access was restricted . This has led to people being forced to stay within their own four walls in their own four walls. The concept of small private homes with a diversity of collectively-used add-on rooms collapsed in view of the above. Moreover, there is an enormous urban-rural gap with regard to neighbourhood conflicts. If this potentially leads to an exodus from the city remains to be seen, as by experience, this is causally linked to the economical opportunities in rural regions.

Ali Sheikholeslam, Cama Circle

Perfect architecture gives a feeling of well-being . On the other hand, poorly-designed architecture has negative psychological impacts which are intensified at the time of crises such

as Covid-19. This pandemic may emphasize physical/social distancing but produces deeper emotional connections among people. For instance, before this outbreak, we rarely had time to visit the elderly, but during lockdown we made sure to make time to visit them, even remotely or in the face of difficult hygiene protocols. Accordingly, architectural spaces became more important:

for instance, home is not just a place to sleep anymore, but a place to work, study, do sport, have fun, etc.

Regarding the community living in a neighbourhood, I want to add that during the lockdown, those living in their penthouse on the 60th floor felt lonely in the sky, but those living in local neighbourhoods and areas designed based on contextual architecture were able to communicate more easily to counteract this loneliness. Therefore, new architectural solutions should consider a contextual approach, and add more flexibility to the spaces and eliminate single-use spaces.

Markus Zilker, einszueins architektur

Housing must allow movement to make it “more difficult” for people to be isolated. I am convinced that our collaborative building group projects that we manage will take on a leading role in this respect.

Ian Banerjee, Senior Researcher at Future Lab TU Wien

Privacy is a vital building block for modern societies. The possibility of

withdrawing into one’s own private space has become a vital psychological need for people (at least in the West). It can be an interesting exercise for architects to create flexible spaces for privacy. They don’t have to be within the same living unit. For example, there could be community-based “shared private spaces”. While privacy is a big issue, community is an equally big issue. Humans seem to need both: privacy and community. I think, in times of social media, balancing “private spaces” with new types of “public spaces” will be a very interesting design exercise for architects.

Armin Daneshgar, Daneshgar Architects

The topics of open spaces and encounter-spaces had already been essential issues for us prior to the pandemic, as in every neighbourhood, conflicts can arise that need space in which to resolve them. To foster harmony when living at close quarters, the private living space should be generously sized and, for example with the use of variable ceiling heights, provide room to breathe. Because of lockdown, we spend more time within our own four walls, which presumably makes people more aware of the necessity to have quality. Light is another important topic, especially in the winter months, to counteract depression, for example through private open spaces and large amounts of glass.

Etemad Moghaddam, Architect & Designer

A relevant task and responsibility of architects is the creation of appropriate spa-

ces for people to meet and interact within housing areas and neighbourhoods.

Two ways to achieve this would be a) through the creation of specific areas and adequate spaces between flats, blocks, housing states, quarters and even districts in the city, or b) through providing more green areas and access to nature.

Andrea Rieger-Jandl, Architectural Researcher, TU Wien

Increasing individualization and the steep rise in the number of single households are matters of fact. The silence of lockdown quiet certainly contributed to people living alone re-thinking their way of living, driven by the enforced isolation. Residential communities and housing group projects might be a solution. However, not every individual deals well with communal living. In the future, it would therefore be beneficial to work on solutions that allow for individualization and retreat, while also allowing and encouraging a voluntary integration into a community. Intensified incorporation of communal spaces in housing projects is certainly a step in the right direction. However, it has become apparent that spatial possibilities alone are not the only crucial element: rather, the social organization and a guided communication that must underpin it.

Architecture is the physical representation of our way of living. The conservation of its diversity requires knowledge, intuition, sensitivity and a questioning of our untiring pursuit.

einszueins architektur gleis 21

LIVED URBANITY

We bring the village to the city.

The Gleis 21 residential project aims at realizing the dream of a “different” type of living and is actively supported by all of the residents who contribute energy, commitment and input to the project.

The appreciation that the members experience in the residential community is the driving force behind giving other people the chance to participate in building a good life together. The group is supported by a building that promotes a sense of community and creates a new feeling of togetherness. The wood-concrete hybrid construction enables affordable and communal life in the city in a central location. Through shared infrastructure and shared space, we combine high efficiency with comfort for all the residents.

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**We bring the village
to the city.**



Declaration of Bankruptcy in Vienna & Isfahan

TEXT PETER REISCHER

The question of “staying home” (or rather, the request to do so) already stimulates fundamental contemplation. It concentrates on the term “home” – but what exactly is that? Do big (and small) architectural offices of our time think about the purpose of (their) architecture when they approach a new project? Why, what and whom do they build (for)? Do they want to implement change to fulfil the demands of designing? Or, do they build purely for the sake of money and image?

All of these many questions bring us directly to the heart of the matter: ever since the beginning, the purpose of architecture was to provide shelter. Nowadays, however, “shelter” for the resident is only the core content and function of the building in the rarest of cases. Although single-family homes are built for this purpose, every architect must question the project’s ecological compatibility. It is the architect’s responsibility to avoid urban sprawl and soil sealing to contribute to safeguarding the environment.

The Covid-19 crisis has made us aware that, over the past decades, we have qualitatively and quantitatively fallen far short of the requirements of building. All of the vacant glass palaces, hotel complexes, thermal facilities, and so forth are visualizations of the megalomania of the architecture of our age. Thus, the current crisis can be understood as an declaration of bankruptcy. It demonstrates how important – or rather unimportant – some things are, and how we can almost easily do without the standards of civilization and luxury that we have become accustomed to – if we have to. Why is home office so effective all of a sudden? Must there, in fact, be a situation of mystery, or a crisis, for us to be able to let go of our comforts and well-worn patterns? Does the building of a new record-height skyscraper have any impact on the Covid-19 crisis? And that brings

up the question of whether the money used for not strictly necessary large-scale projects would have been put to better use, for example, in improving infrastructure such as the fibre-optic network.

As such, the impact of the Covid-19 crisis is certainly here, or rather, it will become visible –whether immediately or only in the distant future is still too early to predict. This factor is heavily dependent on society’s capacity to learn. Learning capacity and adaptability are basic requirements for the survival of our species. All forms of life that were unable to adapt to altered environmental conditions became extinct. We already live in the Anthropocene era, the era in which homo sapiens has evolved to become one of the most significant influencing factors on the biological, geological and atmospheric processes of our planet, and therefore, of its future. To deny – as unteachable heads of states try to do – is not the answer. British researchers found that human encroachments on ecosystems (the bio-architecture of the earth) encourage the formation of zoonoses. In other words, most zoonoses (including Covid-19) are man-made. These interactions and disturbances between humans and bio-architecture (ecosystems), made visible by the pandemic, also exist in the relationship between humans and man-made architecture.

All of us, especially the societal system of the West, can learn a lesson or two from this crisis. Architecture, too, can learn and thereby change. The perception of transforming background noises in urban areas due to reduced traffic noise, or the return of animals into cities from which they have been chased away give rise to questions that are more interesting than the glass, steel and concrete palaces which seem to be inaugurated monthly. Is tranquillity, as yet a privilege of the rich and their country homes, returning to the city – for all of us to

enjoy? This “renaturalization” can be seen as a demonstration of nature’s resilience to architecture. Therefore, there is a justified hope that these processes can initiate a change in society.

As early as the 1970s, architects, writers and theorists such as Yona Friedmann, Hugo Kükelhaus, Paul Feyerabend, E.F. Schumacher, Ivan Illich, Paolo Freire to name but a few, formulated ideas and theses for this change towards re-thinking architecture and society. However, they also stated that it usually takes one to two generations for a shift, for revolutionary ideas to enter the consciousness of man and, as a consequence, change society. Almost 50 years have passed since then. Long enough for us to re-address these suggestions and to start implementing them.

(Peter Reischer studied architecture and writes for various magazines and daily newspapers in Austria and Europe. He lives and works in Vienna.)
www.architektur-text.at

Do you think that the architecture of our cities should/must change as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic? And in that connection, what are the tasks and responsibilities for leading architects and urban planners? What role do politics and investors play in this context?

CAUD Group

At first glance, new health regulations limit circulation in public spaces in, but after the crisis, architects and urban designers must think about reprogramming and regenerating the public spaces in accordance with the new conditions. For instance, cities must equip with new sanitary facilities and spaces.

Andrea Rieger-Jandl, Architectural Researcher, TU Wien

I do not think that a temporary pandemic will fundamentally change our urban design measures. It is more the ecological, climate-conscious measures that make a change in large-scale planning absolutely necessary and also which are proving to be the real challenge. If digitalization and home office are increasingly contributing to decreasing commuting traffic, street space could be used differently. Therefore, the pandemic may have indirectly contributed to the greening of cities. Politicians and investors are called upon to appropriately establish a connection between digitalization and greening.

p.good ARCHITEKTEN

The goal of architects to develop and create liveable areas and cities has not changed in its importance.

As before, it is a question of priorities.

As an architect and city planner, you obviously incline towards political views. To consider public needs as an important target during negotiations with the investors and politicians is essential.

Superblock

The quality of open space provision would have to massively increase. Analogous to an obligatory provision of parking spaces and/or heat sup-

ply, there would have to be an obligation to provide open spaces (e.g. no housing without exterior space). In addition, the concept of public spaces on an urban planning level must be rethought.

Is it still appropriate to subordinate everything to the automobile?

Could self-driving cars lead to a reduction in parking spaces in the public space? Is it not the function of politics to intervene and make future-oriented offers? And how should we interpret this newly-emerging open space? Who can partake of it? How sealed must a street be, how can the street store water? And ultimately, a new approach to architecture must be formed. For example, how can we encourage investors to act in a more ecologically sound way? Why do we also look at a building in terms of its construction costs, rather than its life-cycle costs? What incentives can be created so as to stimulate a change in thinking?

Ian Banerjee, Senior Researcher at Future Lab TU Wien

Countless papers are already being written about post-Covid urban design. One of the biggest impacts is surely the surge in interest for the "walkable city" and the bicycle-based city. New infrastructures for new mobility systems are already being put in place in many cities. I think COVID-19 has triggered a huge amount of creativity in rethinking the city. Its long-term effect is impossible to anticipate today.

First Design

Past experiences have shown that

these pandemics are temporary and transient despite their effects, and their consequences being controllable because of rapid scientific progress.

Amirhossein Taheri, Metamorphosis Method

Generally, I think it is very unlikely that cities will be planned using a top-down approach anymore. This may only be possible at local planning level. In this respect, it is clear that people would be the main stakeholders and leaders of any changes made to their settlements. Therefore, this is what the politicians and investors should consider

Etemad Moghaddam, Architect & Designer

The particular features of public spaces, meeting areas, green zones should be redesigned. Specific public hygienic stations should be created and integrated within existing urban spaces. (Regarding any pandemic in the future.)

Armin Daneshgar, Daneshgar Architects

Cities must and will change.

Open spaces and local recreation are key topics in urban districts. Empty offices will present urban planning with a new challenge. The difficult-to-stimulate ground-floor zone is an issue which is also yet to be resolved. Politicians and investors should not stick to rigid forms of urban planning, but rather involve people, who are the ones who best know what the city needs.

As of the 19th century, European cities built more and more housing. With the 20th century came equal emphasis being placed on planning and political guidelines. Sometimes greater participation would have

been better, as harmony can be found in every built structure. Strict regulations regarding urban planning take away the potential for any unplanned growth. In my opinion, the aim of planning is to offer people “packages” that serve as a basis. We must listen and develop systems that allow for adaption by the residents.

querkraft architekten

This is yet another reason to vehemently demand the abolishment of individual motorized vehicles. A more peaceful, greener city is a great place to comfortably ride out a pandemic. Incidentally, we should start today to prevent future vertical (drone) mobility. The noise from the air would wipe out all effects to free the city from traffic. All the above-mentioned professions should unite to fight.

Matthias Boeckl, Editor-in-Chief, architektur aktuell

Politics and investors play a key role.

Urban planning should have changed radically long ago, and it's more urgent than ever.

Ali Sheikholeslam, Cama Circle

Covid-19 is not going to be the last crisis. Rather than waiting for a crisis to strike and then find architectural solutions for it, a 'contextual architecture' which is based on human-centred and flexible spaces can respond to any future crisis. This requires that policymakers and investors align themselves with this multitask spatial approach. In pre-Covid-19 times, politicians and investors mostly focused on the economic aspects, which caused the human-centred concepts to be

neglected. Although this is still the case, as both groups are more biased and less flexible, it is a little less than before. More or less throughout the world, economic concerns create a huge gap between politicians/investors and people. In this regard, the Covid-19 situation bridges this gap to some extent and leads everybody's attention to the importance of well-being, which may be because in truth, both groups consist of people.

Maik Novotny, Architecture journalist

I think the architecture of our cities will have to change drastically as a result of the climate emergency and the risk of extinction. This is the overriding danger of our times, and in this context, the COVID-19 pandemic will, in retrospect, be seen as a minor episode. Our cities and societies have always suffered pandemics – one just has to look at Venice and its plethora of churches commemorating different outbreaks of the plague. In the end, they have always bounced back and recovered. The climate emergency is different, because there is no rebounding from this disaster if we do not act quickly.

Crises inflict a creative synergy on all disciplines, which leads to the birth of a new era.

ALI SHEIKHOESLAM

Build Always so as to Increase the Number of Choices

TEXT ROBERT TEMEL

The Covid-19 crisis will clearly leave its mark in the world of architecture and urban development. There has already been talk of a decline in demand for big office premises, as working from home during the various lockdowns has proven efficient and will presumably retain its importance. Naturally, this will have an impact on the layout of living spaces. In addition, there is a renewed interest in living in the countryside, along with the rediscovery of hygienic principles of urban planning. But has architecture changed fundamentally as a consequence? Probably not. The focus on building sharpened by Covid-19 is identical to the perspective that Classical Modernism represented: architecture must be seen as a tool to enhance everybody's lives. This understanding has been around for more than 100 years. However, the principles promoted by Classical Modernism, although widely implemented, are highly problematic, and today they limit rather than facilitate better living. Concepts such as the functionally divided city with its traffic dependency or the dispersedly arranged Garden City with its massive land consumption have proven to be unsustainable. Regardless of the implementation, the basic prospect has gained in significance, as building heavily impacts our CO2 emissions and therefore can act as an important instrument for counteracting climate change. Although this applies also to architecture built after Covid-19, it was valid long before now and will be so for a long time for architecture in the climate crisis.

Therefore, it is in this sense that Heinz von Foerster's interpretation of Kant's Categorical Imperative should be understood: that architecture can constrict or expand possibilities. The latter implies resilience, hence failure safety and greater latitude; alternative paths and potential for manifold usage. While the climate crisis has emphasized that the growth of living space should not be limitless, but rather sufficient, the Covid-19 crisis has

also shown us that there is a minimum volume of living space that is acceptable. Almost more important than the size of the space in times of crisis (whether Covid-19 or any other) is the access to open spaces, recreational areas or supply rooms, preferably not dependent on large technical infrastructure. A balcony or a bicycle might well help people to cope with everyday life in times of crisis much more effectively than, say, technical building equipment or mobility apps.

To conclude: yes, the architecture of our cities must change fundamentally. However, it had to do so long before Covid-19 because of the climate crisis. Nonetheless, the crisis in 2020 has highlighted once again that resilience, availability of social housing, adaptation to climate change, conservation, mixed-use, and, first and foremost, the right to the city are key elements for sustainable urban development. It is my fervent hope that the knowledge gleaned from the current situation will last beyond the crisis, and not be forgotten shortly after the crisis is over.

(Robert Temel is an independent architectural and urban researcher and consultant in Vienna. He studied architecture at the University of Applied Arts Vienna and sociology at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Vienna.)

Has architecture changed fundamentally as a consequence? Probably not.

ROBERT TEMEL

querkraft architekten ikea city center

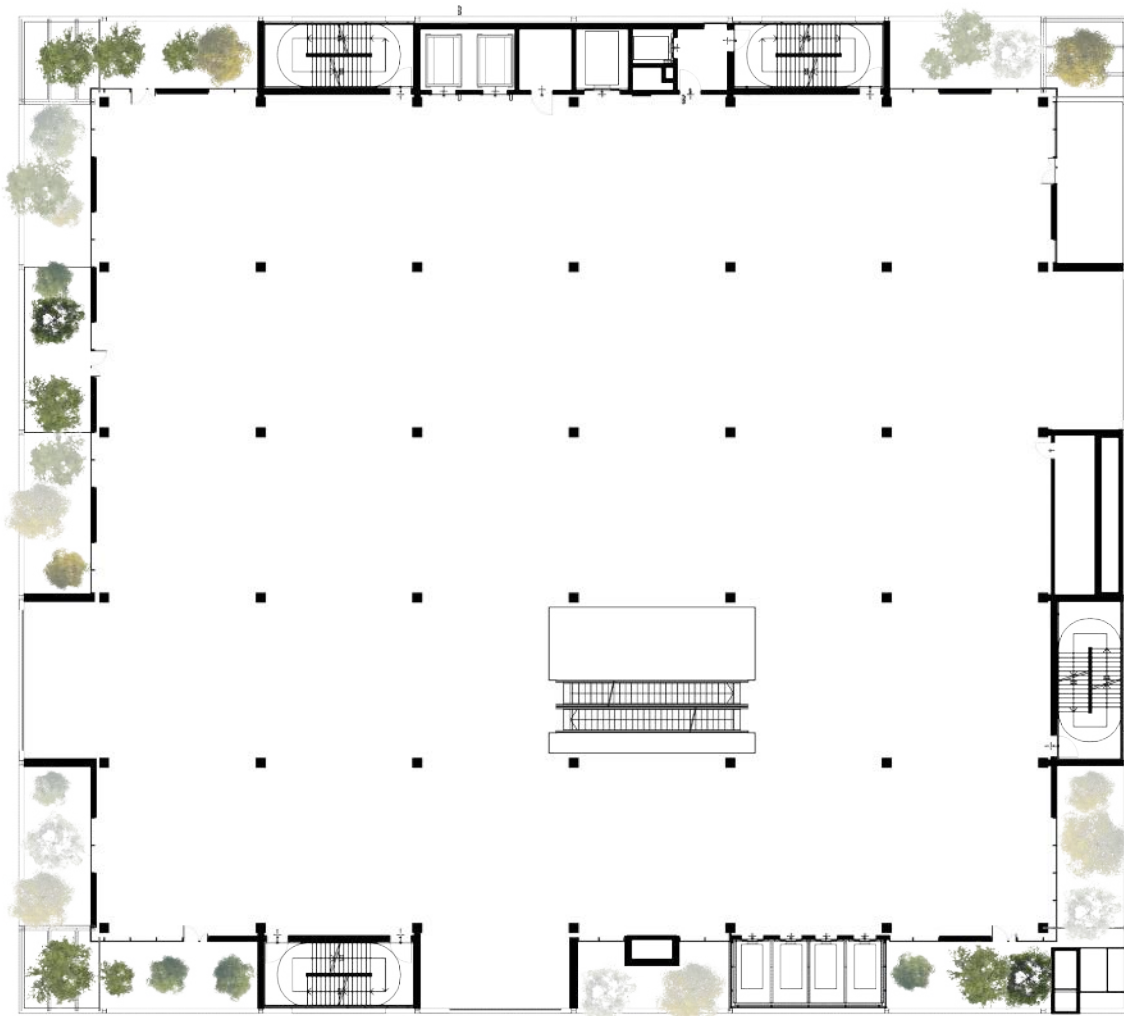
This is not a standard furniture store. The building will make an important contribution to the future of a living, ecological city and to retailing in general. It will be the first car-free, urban IKEA in the world.

This is how the aim was formulated at the briefing stage: “We want to be a good neighbour”. querkraft’s response to this objective is shown by a building that represents added value for its surroundings and the local residents. The roof terrace that is open to the public, the wealth of greenery on all parts of the façade, a café and an outdoor space with a friendly design – these are all amenities that contribute to being a “good neighbour” and even more. The building reflects values such as openness, friendliness, and being unconventional and relaxed.

The external envelope is reminiscent of a kind of shelving. This 4.5 metre deep zone runs around the building like a series of shelves that offer shade. It allows spaces to expand, offers room for terraces and planting and for servant elements such as lifts and building services. The entrance level is a lively place – a spatial continuum with a mezzanine level and retail areas at the front. The continuous void in the interior of the building allows visual contact between the different floors.

The rooftop will also be accessible to the public, and there will be a hostel on the upper two floors. Large trees in the façade and on the roof, about 160 trees in total, will have a perceptible influence on the microclimate. The three-dimensional use of trees provides a greater amount of planting than could be offered by using just the ground alone. The building’s trees and creepers will provide cooling and moisture – a natural kind of air conditioning. The air temperature at pedestrian level will also be improved by these measures.

© querkraft architektur | right: floor plan, scaleless







metamorphosis method hypertext design studio **six on four**

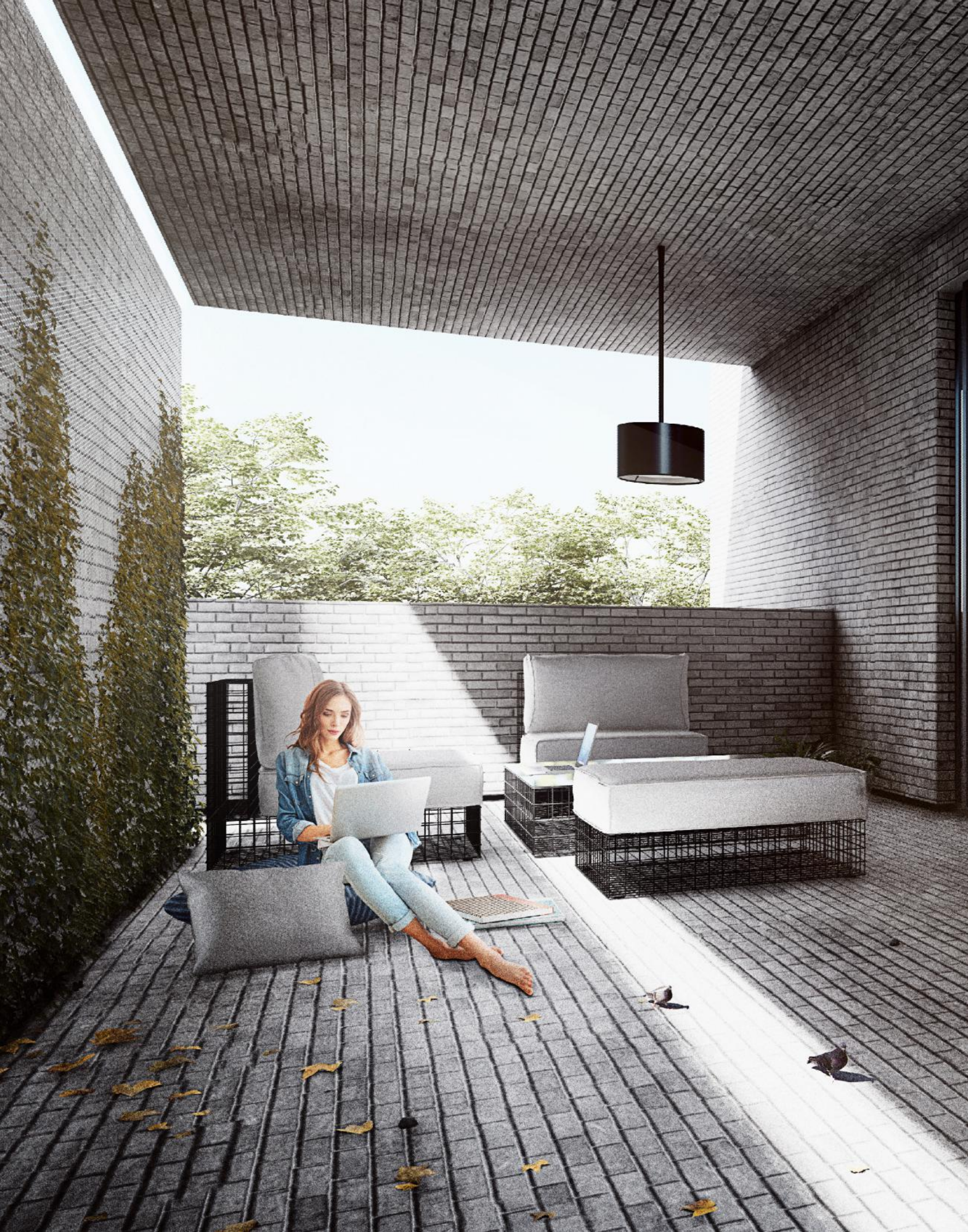
The context should be read in various directions which might even be perceived as contradictory. The result of reading them simultaneously is inevitably complex. The approach of „Six on Four“ to resolve this complex and comprehend it as a mere solid issue, is to adopt a methodology to directly respond to every single conflicting problem, compiling the answers and combining them by applying creative and effective solutions. In this way, it can serve the interests of a larger group of direct and indirect stakeholders. Hence, it stands in-between, as a mediator between design and diagram, strategy and development. This mediation is important in all aspects: duality of external user (city) and internal user (home) on the one hand and criticizing the hierarchical power of the issue of height in high-rise buildings on the other. Could the housing units in lower floors have distinguished spatial value?

Integrity is what has been sacrificed here. „Six on four“ reflects the existing dualities in the context with its self-sacrifice. The physical reason for such duality that is demonstrated in height, is the existing neighbourhood. The lower part faces inwards, dialoguing with the immediate adjacent texture, and is porous so as to harmonize with the urban landscape and mitigate noise pollution. In the upper part, the shape of this dialogue changes: similar to other high-rise apartment blocks, it is formed as an integrated mass which in addition to receiving great light and providing a great view, also goes beyond the definition of in-fill design and responds to multiple challenges in the design of apartments, such as side views.

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Do you consider the present process of change an opportunity, or rather a loss? And why?

Ali Sheikholeslam, Cama Circle

There is always an opportunity in a change, even if that change is forced upon us. The insatiable nature of human beings is only contained by an obligation which makes them reconsider values. We should not take the lessons of the current crisis for granted even if we learned them the hard way. Reconsideration of the materialistic values could help us place our focus more on flexible, multi-task spaces (as part of a broader 'contextual architecture') rather than the value of their materials. Seen through this lens, the Covid-19 crisis can enable contextual architecture regain its neglected importance.

Andrea Rieger-Jandl, Architectural Researcher, TU Wien

Every challenge is a chance for improvement.

Superblock

I see a great danger in subordinating everything to Corona and the economic consequences arising from combating the virus. The social discourse currently focusses solely on growth after the crisis, but what if we emerge from this crisis with the realization that less could be enough? The urgent ecological questions are still with us, but within this discourse, they recede into the background. From the point of view of economic policy this is a fallacy, as the discussion about ecological transformation must also be a discussion about just distribution.

Armin Daneshgar, Daneshgar Architects

I definitely see the change as a great chance – sustainable use is finally being taken seriously. The development of humanity has taken a big step forward, which will surely affect

architecture, as well as all other aspects of life.

Etemad Moghaddam, Architect & Designer

It is a chance but only if the politicians, investors, architects and urban planners take seriously that architecture and the creation of spaces for human life do not only revolve around money and profit.

Maik Novotny, Architecture journalist

Definitely a loss. A loss of loved ones, a loss of culture, a loss of situations which give us pleasure, a loss of community and connecting with each other. A loss of time which should be spent both for more urgent matters and for more pleasant matters.

Ian Banerjee, Senior Researcher at Future Lab TU Wien

I believe it is a huge opportunity. Climate change and digitalization, I think, are the biggest game-changers in our age. COVID-19 has simply made us aware of these already existing vectors of change. The challenge that still remains is how can we collaboratively come up with ideas about how we want to live in the 21st century? What kind of everyday lives do we want to lead? How do we want to work in the future? During early Modernism, architects were driven by the passion to actively shape social and everyday life. In the digital age, there may be a new potential for that. Architects could collaborate with software engineers and platform developers not only to construct buildings, but to conceptualize meaningful and emotionally-appealing design for everyday life. It could move towards something like "Digital Modernism of Architecture". I think, if they don't do this, software developers will imperceptibly take over the role of urban planning. "Platform Urbanism" is a term that is already pointing in this direction. It is

high time for schools of architecture to begin a broad discussion about the meaningful design of the emerging cyber-physical landscapes of the 21st century.

First Design

Basically, every change is a chance that can cause creativity to understand the change, to go with it or to confront it.

Amirhossein Taheri, Metamorphosis Method

I am actually sceptical about the perception of "opportunity". In my honest opinion, what we do is only striving to make some small changes based on our assumptions and judgments. It feels rather like throwing arrows of answers to the unknown questions of the future.

Matthias Boeckl, Editor-in-Chief, architektur aktuell

It is both – on the one hand, we lose valuable social interaction, while on the other hand we gain technological competence. The latter should, however, be used to regain the first and further strengthen it. Technologies and the economy are always the responsibility of the whole of society and must never become ends in themselves. We should not have to work to live, but rather live to make meaningful contributions which benefit society. Exclusively-individual increasing prosperity is all very well, but intellectually and socially, it represents rather a degenerate form of human capabilities.

CAUD Group

This is an opportunity for architects to predict new lifestyles and convince clients to think in a more futuristic way. Architects are usually inspired about new ideas and lifestyles.

NEXA Group

I think this is a new opportunity, Research for designing the cities and buildings can lead to a better lifestyle. Proper allocation of spaces to conform with specific Covid-19 conditions will enhance human interactions and communications in this difficult situation.

p.good ARCHITEKTEN

It is up to us to create the opportunities in order to minimize the loss.

querkraft architekten

We always see everything as a chance. It is up to us to create something positive and great out of it. Let us dream of a world with no stiff constraints on working hours and places; let us allow for an ocean of diversity and new opportunities.

Markus Zilker, einszueins architektur

I do see the current restrictions regarding Corona as being necessary, however, I see them primarily as a loss of opportunity of exchange and human closeness. Even though digital communication can enable and facilitate a lot, it can never replace personal and direct contact. A smile, a handshake, a hug – these are irreplaceable.

Martin Ortner, Chairman EBG

Fundamentally, the current crisis would represent an opportunity – one could reflect on which developments went wrong and have proven especially negative during the crisis. However, I consider the probability of that chance being seized as rather small.

Davood Doost Mohammadi, CEO,

I seriously believe, that change is always good – as it carries some form of liberation – even if it's for the worse.

ARMIN DANESHGAR

How will global crises such as COVID-19 affect investment in the architecture of the future – in the short and long term? Has the value of living space changed, and are new concepts for living and forms of living to be considered as a result?

Martin Ortner, Chairman EBG

As in other social fields, it is difficult to say how the pandemic and the economic crisis caused (or rather accelerated) and thereby will affect the direction of development. Will architecture place itself at the service of society or will it augment its role as a vicarious agent for profit interests? Will architects build investment products or living space for humans? The crisis certainly shows that rethinking is required.

Davood Doost Mohammadi, CEO, NEXA Group

In this new situation, it is necessary for people to change their lifestyles. The reality of life during the Covid-19 situation has proved that the solutions before Covid-19 will not work under the new conditions, at all. “Social distance” and “working from home” and “staying at home” are all concepts that have changed our needs, and as a result, designs need to be reviewed quickly and accurately.

How are you experiencing current tensions regarding investment in architecture (housing) worldwide?

Martin Ortner, Chairman EBG

In Vienna, we can clearly see how property prices have soared dramatically over the last couple of years (after the the financial crisis). The cause of this is the dominance of yield-based housing. For this reason, the building of social housing in Vienna has come to a virtual standstill.

Davood Doost Mohammadi, CEO, NEXA Group

In the future, the design and construction of projects should incorporate specific, new considerations related to crisis situations like the current one. Otherwise, people will be less interested in ordinary projects and the economic goals of the investors will be affected.

Have requirements for your projects altered due to the crisis? Moreover, have the expectations and demands for architects chosen for your projects changed? Do you specifically look for architects who have experience of building in crisis situations?

Martin Ortner, Chairman EBG

We do not actively look for architects with experience in crisis situations (who would have that in Central Europe?): however, we do give preference to planners (architectural, urban, and ecological) who put user needs as their top priority. In current planning we actively look for good solutions in terms of layout, open spaces, communal areas, etc.

Davood Doost Mohammadi, CEO, NEXA Group

Yes, the new lifestyle requires a lot of change in design. Long hours at home require many separate spaces for people during quarantines, such as a separate bathroom for each room. Also, open spaces are new essentials. We are identifying new needs, and we pass on information about these new needs to the architects we work with.

Construction will not be the same after the corona virus. Those who understand and act quicker on these changes will be the successful ones.

What does the pandemic, with its lockdowns, mean for your current projects? Are these projects being analysed or reviewed through the lens of the crisis? Do changes and modifications in concept and/or building usage need to be considered?

Martin Ortner, Chairman EBG

We almost exclusively build subsidized flats. That means that we work to a very tight, strict, financially predetermined schedule and are happy if we're able to get these projects implemented in the first place. There would be no room for major project modifications. However, we believe that with well-designed layouts, spacious open spaces, many common facilities and above all affordable housing costs, our projects can help our clients to better withstand the crisis.

Davood Doost Mohammadi, CEO, NEXA Group

This new feedback is a guide to designing new spaces for us. Life in lockdown is very different and the needs of everyday life and work must be met during those days. Dwellings must be designed so that those who are sick can be separated from the others, and facilities for working from home must be provided too. In addition, providing the possibility for family and friends to meet in an appropriate setting is one of the new essentials under Covid-19 conditions.

For the majority of the population, their current housing condition does not comply with the requirements for life at the present time, given that home-office and/or home-schooling must often co-function with the living aspects of the home space. What role do investors play in this context?

Martin Ortner, Chairman EBG

In this context, investors of housing in conurbations play an extremely negative role. In Vienna, approximately two-thirds of housing products are financed by commercial developers, with the profit interests of financial investors increasingly being at the forefront. The difference between the qualities of those products and the qualities of subsidized housing are easy to spot at a glance: the former consist almost exclusively of two- to three-room apartments, with "optimized" layouts, little open space and no communal areas. Moreover, these apartments are rented or sold at dramatically excessive prices.

Davood Doost Mohammadi, CEO, NEXA Group

Investors need to identify new needs as soon as possible and incorporate this information in projects.

Do you think that the architecture of our cities should/must change in response to the COVID-19 pandemic? And in that connection, what are the tasks and responsibilities of investors? What role do politics and architects play in this context?

Martin Ortner, Chairman EBG

I believe that the questions that have now been raised, had actually been raised long before the pandemic – however, the need for answers has increased. Obviously, there must be change. We need housing that is both affordable and resident-friendly at the same time. The aim of investors should be to prioritize the users' needs. Architects should match each project to the client's needs, and a policy must be put in place to reduce profit-oriented housing in favour of subsidized, social housing.

Davood Doost Mohammadi, CEO, NEXA Group

Here the situation is more complicated. The design of different types of public spaces should change. Restaurants, cinemas, parks, other public places, and almost everything else should be designed according to these new essential requirements. The community of architects has a very important role to play in effecting this change.

