

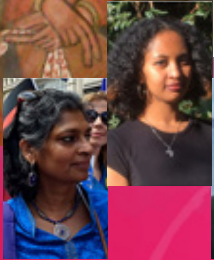
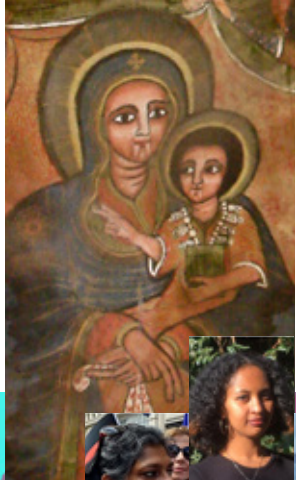
(UN)



ARCHITECTURE
FRINGE

.Learn
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Land &
Community



OCCUPY! OCCUPY! OCCUPY!



Provocation: (Un)Learning

The majority of systems and structures that we have built to bring order to our lives are destroying us and life on Earth.

Architecture is uncritically complicit in its reliance on these systems and structures for its very creation, with little resistance or defiance in its making or deployment. We have arrived at the intersection of a climate emergency, global pandemic and racialised capitalist economy and the ground on which we stand is shifting at speed. We are in transition, from one world to another. Things are changing, and in order to make that change positive and transformative we need to engage in a process of unlearning and learning anew. To (un)learn. There is hope.

‘Another world is not only possible, she is on her way. On a quiet day, I can hear her breathing.’ **Arundhati Roy**

In a complex and interconnected world, with systems large and small, fast and slow, how can architecture as a process, as a way of thinking, help us (un)learn in order to firstly navigate this complexity to then reimagine a much better way of doing things? How can we radically rethink architecture’s environmental impact on the Earth? How can we refocus architectural education away from a whitewashed Western lens? How can we redefine our relationship to the land, from ownership to stewardship? How can our neighbourhoods and cities achieve greater equality for those who live there, realigning architecture as a progressive force for a wider common good? The Architecture Fringe 2021 invites you to (un)learn with us, to interrogate your own behaviours, beliefs and biases in order to acknowledge how the world really is, to reimagine how it could be.



The Architecture Fringe is a non-profit, volunteer-led organisation based in Scotland which explores architecture and its impact within our social, political, cultural, and environmental contexts.

We seek to critically pluralise and expand architectural culture. It is a platform that encourages and supports both ideas and agency. We believe in thinking, testing, prototyping and taking risks. We believe that is our actions in response to our discourse that ultimately sets the tone for the culture that we create.

Since the inaugural Architecture Fringe Festival in 2016 we have inspired, commissioned or platformed over 300 projects, exhibitions events and happenings across Scotland and further afield.

Our aims are:

- to support emerging practice in architecture by commissioning new voices, new ideas, and new work
- to offer platforms and opportunities which encourage a wider conversation about architecture and design in our contemporary social, political, cultural, and environmental contexts
- to develop a friendly but critical community of voices to connect, support, and challenge each other
- to engage internationally with other people and organisations for the wider common good

Join others in helping us reach our ongoing aims by supporting us on Patreon; patreon.com/ArchitectureFringe – Thank you!

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(Un)Learning Land & Community

Introduction

Land has been a recurring area of concern for the Architecture Fringe since inception. Previous work has focussed on aspects of land dynamics such as the creeping privatisation of public space, the adequate resourcing of a planning infrastructure orientated towards the common public good, and the cultural connections between land and humans principally in Scotland.

Drawing on inspiring international examples of historic and contemporary land movements and occupations, we have sought to (un)learn our relationship to land in context to intersectional power dynamics, cultural importance, social occupation, stewardship, value systems, and environmental management. Organised in two parts, the work here brought together people and organisations from around the world in solidarity to share their experiences and learning on land to help inform the worldwide work at hand.

Part 1: Homelands, brought together lived experience and perspectives on land from different parts of the world which shared commonalities relating to imbalanced power dynamics and inequalities in personal and collective agency. The cultural kinship to lands were at the forefront, with these cast directly against contemporary factors such as internationalised financial markets, government legislation, and forced resettlement.

In Part 2: Common Ground / Common Good, we sought to learn from collective organising and community activism at a more local neighbourhood level in three different cities located in the United States of America, Scotland, and India respectively. Sharing experiences in organising, tested tactics, and the navigating of vested interests the inspiring and generous work speaks to the passing on of knowledge and insight between people without which progressive change is rarely possible.



Part 1: Homelands

(Un)Learning from Indigenous Worldviews

For millennia indigenous worldviews have nurtured symbiotic relationships between people, the land, and earth's non-human life. Since the commencement of European expansion in the 15th Century, Western colonial approaches to land have been disastrous for the world's ecosystems.

By (un)learning from indigenous land stewardship - in this case in Scotland, India and Palestine - the work explored ecological principles of interconnectedness and how we might develop holistic strategies for land use and care in the 21st Century.

Scotland has the most inequitable and concentrated pattern of land ownership in the developed world, with more than half the country owned by less than 500 people. The land market in Scotland is an internationalised one, too, bound to worldwide capital, the super-rich, and offshore tax havens. Magnus Davidson explored this pattern of ownership whilst looking towards a more ecologically sustainable and revitalised human future for the land in question.

With India as a focus, Indrani Sigamany explored the evolving legislative context and how the sometimes competing issues of indigenous rights and ecological conservation can work in harmony to ensure both forests and their inhabitants are appropriately protected.

Finally, Vivien Sansour discussed the enforced disconnection between people and land in Palestine, and how this degradation affects a community's relationships to its own culture, landscape, history, and contemporary existence.



Magnus Davidson

Provocation

In his provocation Magnus Davidson focused on land ownership. He opened by reminding us that whilst Scotland has two indigenous languages which are closely aligned to the land - Gaelic and Scots - the country has no recognised indigenous peoples adding that in some quarters 'indigenous knowledge' is used as a synonym for traditional knowledge.

Magnus reminded us that events of 200 years ago still shaped the landscape we see today. Citing the Highland Clearances and the historic displacement which occurred in the far north of Scotland, he discussed the Peatlands of Caithness and how this landscape is commonly seen today as an empty landscape but is in fact an *emptied* landscape that was home to residual farming communities right up until the 1960s. With the local population cleared out, it is now a landscape that has no people in it but which instead is managed for conservation and exclusionary sporting use.

Magnus posited that ecological knowledge is woven into language and language into the land. His provocation ended by sharing a vision for the Peatlands which sought to reveal the nuance and character of the land through reconnecting it to the Gaelic language. In tandem he proposed that social, economic, and environmental issues were better managed by anchoring the landscape and its assets in a more democratic model of ownership, and that a holistic, sustainable and diverse future for the Peatlands was possible through the re-introduction of people, culture, and technology.

In summary, Magnus stated that landscapes need to be socially and environmentally just, and that actively considering people, language, and ownership structures were crucial in order to partially achieve this.

Magnus Davidson

To answer the land question is to answer how the land is managed.

Many people see this as an empty landscape, however it's an emptied landscape.



Watch Magnus' provocation here

This landscape has a huge amount of potential – socially, economically, culturally, environmentally. However it lacks culture, it lacks people, it lacks society. We need to have people back into this landscape.

Ecological knowledge is woven into language and culture and passed from generation to generation. If language, such as Gaelic is lost, ecological knowledge is lost. Do we need to focus on language to save the environment?

I will propose the creation of a more socially and environmentally just landscape, by taking inspiration from pre-clearance themes via

- Repeopling the lands
- Protecting and promoting the Gaelic language
- Supporting community ownership of land

I'm 5 or 6 generations removed from my ancestors who were cleared from our land and I don't feel any affinity to the land I know they were cleared from. But I feel affinity to other parts of the land, where I live now. There needs to be space for both.



Image: 1981 Stamp, Conservation of Forests,
Post Office of India, Creative Commons

Indrani Sigamany

Provocation

In her provocation, Indrani Sigamany spoke of indigenous peoples in India, including the Adivasi, who have historically been displaced from their ancestral lands and dispossessed of customary land rights. While their displacement originates in colonial exploitation of the land, today their displacement also carries on under a form of ecological imperialism.

The majority of indigenous peoples in India live in forest lands, but their displacement began in the 1700s in then-colonial India as forest lands were identified as being resource rich and were subsequently exploited for imperial trade.

Since independence from British rule in 1947 the Indian government has continued with policies which displace indigenous forest peoples. The displacement has occurred not only for large-scale industrial extraction but also in the name of conservation with modern legislation reflecting this. For example, the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 and the Forest Conservation Act of 1980 are examples of legislation produced under the Indian government which relied on the exclusion of communities, undermining ancestral land rights, and perpetuating what is known as ecological imperialism.

However, to try and address this ongoing injustice, in 2006 the Forest Rights Act was enacted. It is a landmark social justice law addressing displacement and through it the law recognises the land rights of indigenous forest peoples in India for the first time. Beyond restoring customary land rights, the Forest Rights Act contributes to a more structured conservation approach that is meant to increase tribal and gender participation in the management of forest lands, recognising community forest rights framed in progressive rights-based language.

Indrani Sigamany

When lands are lost women lose their self-reliance in food production, they also lose their knowledge in natural resource management, biodiversity, medicinal plants, which is not only a loss to women and the women's roles in the community but also a loss to the whole community because women transfer this indigenous knowledge of biodiversity to the next generation.

Loss of land leaves women particularly vulnerable. It's what we call feminisation of poverty, which is about widening the gender gap in poverty.

We have our concepts and priorities, but they are not shared, they are absolutely not shared. There is a people here and they might be impoverished by governance or poor governance or lack of governance and they might be starving, but they have a wealth that we don't understand. We don't even see the wealth that surrounds them, that's part of the forest, that's part of their subsistence, their economy, that they are very committed to, the whole biodiversity. And that's an (un)learning I had to go through. But that's something very valuable that we don't value.



Watch Indrani's provocation here

The classic paradigm argues that [indigenous forest] people caused destruction of biodiversity and that they degrade the forest environment. This argument is what established the wildlife parks, natural reserves, and game reserves. The new paradigm, however, views people as central to the protection of nature and points to the importance of human participation in conservation practices to achieve sustainability.

"Where there are forests, there are tribals and where there are tribals there are forests in India" (quote from indigenous man living in forest village in Rajasthan).

Looking at the issue of displacement of Adivasis from the perspective of indigenous land rights the questions to be asked are:

- How the competing issues of indigenous rights and of ecological conservation work in harmony to ensure both forests and their inhabitants are protected.
- Also from a gender perspective, how does being displaced from their land affect women differently especially given that indigenous women are the knowledge holders of natural resource management, food and medicinal plants for example and women are the traditional custodians of forest biodiversity.



Vivien Sansour

Provocation

Vivien Sansour manages the Palestinian Heirloom Seed Library. She began her provocation by reminding us that humans have been killing one another as a species since the beginning of time, asking how can we break this human ancestral pattern of needing to eliminate in order to exist and design anew the way we think about our space, lands and cohabitation?

Vivien explained that Palestine had formerly been a majority agrarian culture but that since the expulsions of 1948 and 1967 and the ongoing colonial occupation of remaining Palestinian land, the Palestinian people had lost their relationship to the land. With many villages destroyed by the Israeli military, Palestinians born since 1967 had instead grown up in concentrated areas surrounded by walls. This estrangement from the land is also compounded by today's hyper neoliberal world which severs us all from nature and our past relationship with land and nature.

Vivien continued her provocation by focussing on one village, Imwas (عمواس), destroyed in 1967. It is now a forest park of non-native pine trees planted by the Jewish National Fund through international donations. However, in the forest are not only a few remnants of Palestinian homes but also the occasional native almond tree or other plant. Vivien discussed how nature and trees are both “a criminal and a victim” – and how “conservation” itself can be used as a tool of occupation, oppression, and displacement.

In the midst of this violence, Vivien works to salvage the cultural heritage of the Palestinian people through the careful excavation and cataloguing of seeds, to unlearn, and to maintain active connections to a past, a present, and a future beyond the oppression of a colonial-nationalism.

Vivien Sansour

A few more months from now the rain will come, the cistern will fill up, the plants will drink, we will drink and I will baptise my skin in it's very waters. And we will survive. They way we have before. Another summer, another unjust war, another cruel reality.

How are we going to break this human ancestral pattern of just feeling like in order to exist we have to eliminate.

We have many villages, which have been completely eliminated in the name of conservation.

It's important to understand that a future for the world and a future where we end colonialism is going to require (un)learning of all the lies we have been told by colonial powers. And hopefully with the connections made through that knowledge and through expanding awareness - like us sitting together on zoom – we can use that knowledge and these connections to create and design a new world that we can share together beyond concepts of nationalism but also with respect to how we have had a relationship to land and indigenous peoples.

Where can we find our power? Where can we find the ability to create tender spaces in our harsh realities in order for us to survive.

You see a hundred million years ago we were ocean. And a hundred million years later we are fighting not to become a desert. A hundred million tries and hundred million defiant acts, a hundred million seeds and a hundred million plants and a hundred million trees and a hundred million of us. And we will survive.

A few years ago I was able to go to one of these destroyed villages, the village of Bayt Naqquba. I was smuggled in a car to get to this village because as Palestinians there are many roads we are not allowed to use and many cities and villages we are not allowed to enter.

As Palestinians we grew up with our Elders learning about these stories, but we can't imagine the village that they left because we live in concentrated areas completely surrounded by

Vivien Sansour

I think about these pine trees that the British and Europeans brought in order to hide the evidence that people lived there and how trees are used as weapons of war. And how conservation becomes a nasty word as governments take over lands and displace people.

Talking about this is impossible without talking about neoliberalism, capitalism and of course colonialism.



Watch Vivien's provocation here

Our cuisine was very much based on foraging, which is impossible now, as we can't access these lands. The act of foraging now has become a very dangerous act itself. You might basically risk your life. [Image where forager is threaded by soldier with machine gun]

I'm not interested in reality. I can recognise it, but I am really not interested in it. For me, that is driving my work, my desire to create and be part of another world. It's not the way of the settler and it's also not the way of acceptance of a reality I don't want to live in.

Often a watercourse runs through the village, yet they are not allowed to use it. The villages are disappearing because there is no access to water. They are being severed from their water source, they have to buy water from the Israeli water company and so it becomes impossible to farm in these circumstances.

In the midst of all of this, what we are trying to do is to salvage the knowledge and tell these stories but also try to save whatever space we can in order to keep our seed heritage alive and to enable us to pass down these tender spaces to the next generation. But also to dispel the lies that we have been told by colonial powers that who we are was worthless, meant nothing and to reclaim that; to pass down to a new generation that we have something very precious, which is also worth sharing with the rest of the world.

Essay



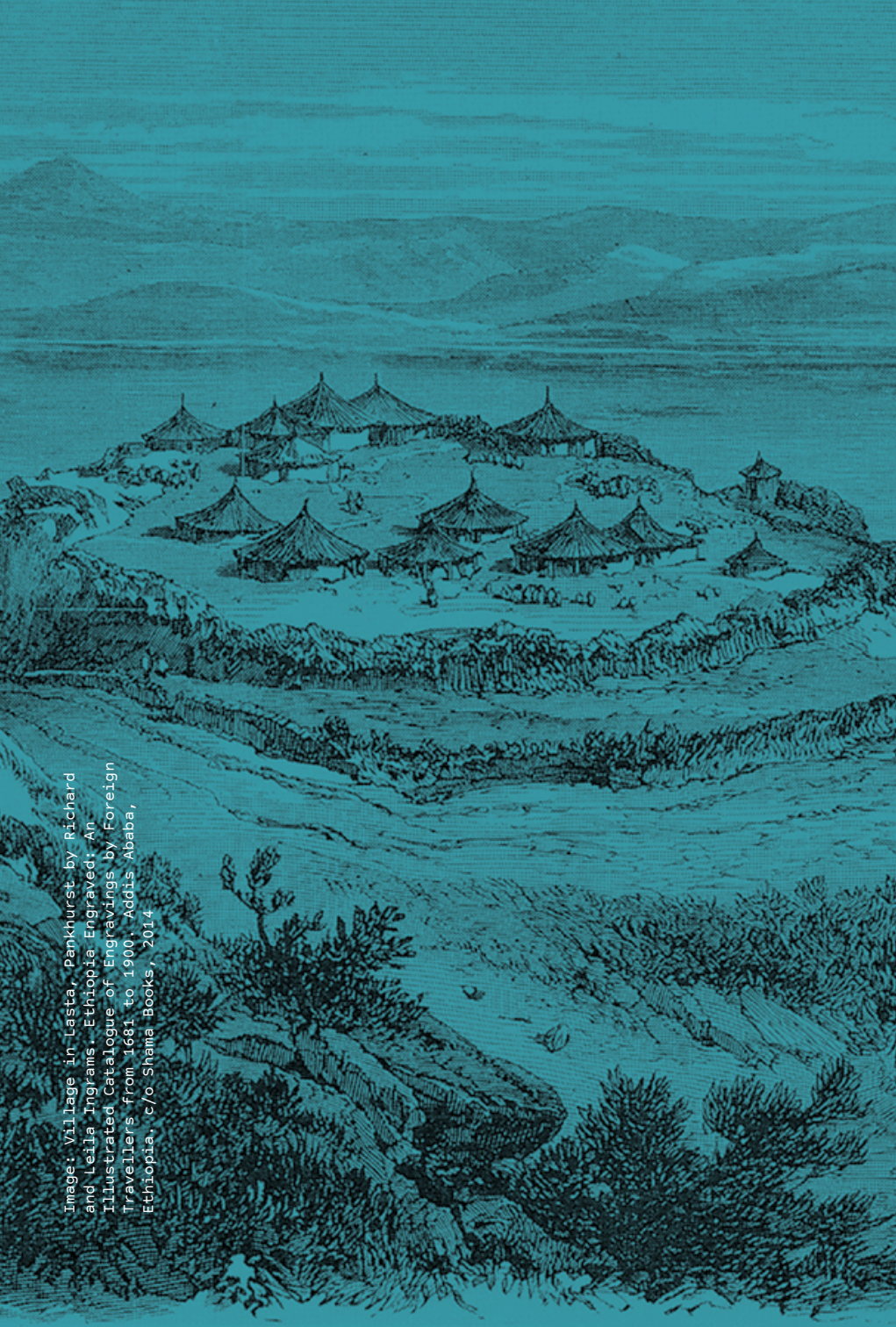


Image: Village in Lasta, Pankhurst by Richard and Leila Ingrams. Ethiopia Engraved: An Illustrated Catalogue of Engravings by Foreign Travellers from 1681 to 1900. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, c/o Shama Books, 2014

Mythic Lands

Miriam Hillawi Abraham

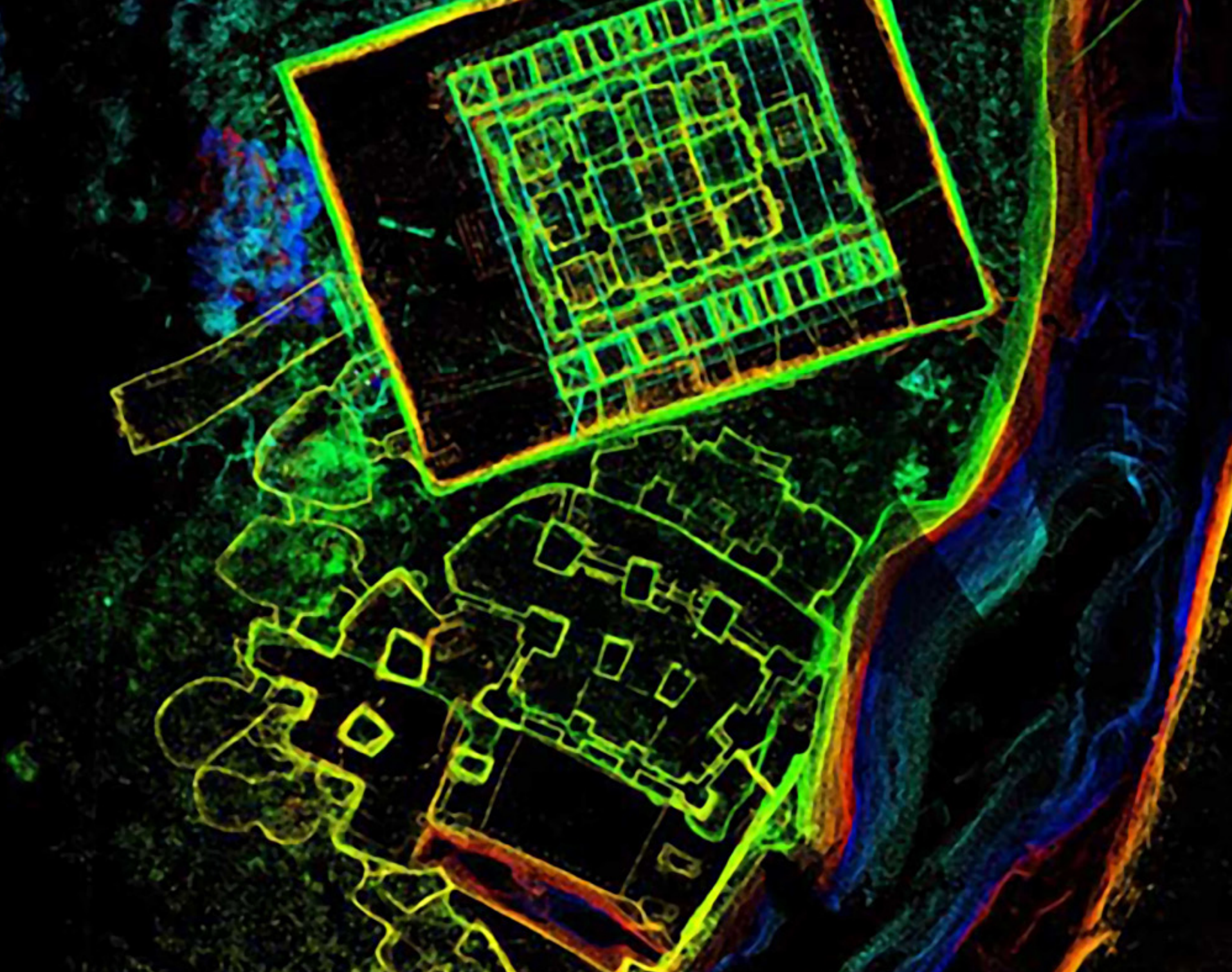
Time-old Highland of highlands
Ancient
Where all history ends
Where all rainbows meet.
Deep-throated giant
In whom
Forever is buried¹

Communities have devised, shared and preserved myths time immemorial. Myths and legends allowed us to comprehend phenomena, mitigate between what is sacred and profane and position ourselves within this world and all its vastness.

As a story passes from one hand to another, from one generation to the next, it can morph, erode, disappear and resurface. Its place of origin, be it a house, a cave or a country, is also transformed and instilled with meaning. Myths travel beyond these fixed points of origin, sometimes moving far enough to detach from the reality of the original context altogether. Although the myth of a place may not ever align with its physical reality, it remains present in the site, haunting its people and luring in others.

Lalibela is such a place. Located 645 km north of the Ethiopian capital, Addis Ababa, the town sits on an elevated plateau in the Lasta district in the mountainous Amhara region. Historically known as Roha, the town was the royal capital of the Zagwe Dynasty (900 - 1270AD), when power shifted away from the city of Aksum in the Tigray region following the decline of the Aksumite Empire (100 - 1100AD). It is home to

Image: Biete Amanuel (House of Emmanuel) and Biete Qeddus Mercoreus (House of St Mark), Lalibela, Ethiopia c/o Zamani Project



eleven extraordinary medieval rock hewn churches.

The complex of churches, ceremonial passages, trenches and courtyards were carved from a basalt massif, a single “living rock”. Nestled in the hard earth, the entire complex disappears below the horizon and gradually reveals itself upon approach.

The place of course has a spectre, the attendant spirit of the legendary Zagwe monarch, King Gebre Mesqel Lalibela (1162 – 1221AD).

According to the accounts of the Ethiopian Tewahedo Orthodox church, King Lalibela (Lalibela meaning "the bees recognise his sovereignty" in the Ethiopian dialect, Agaw) was swarmed by bees during his birth, prophesying his ascent to the throne. His brother, King Kidus Harbe considered the young monarch a threat to his reign and drove him into exile. Lalibela was then visited by the angel Gebriel in a vision, in which he was transported to the holy city of Jerusalem. Upon his return, he was tasked with constructing an Abyssinian Jerusalem, where his subjects would visit safely without having to travel through the surrounding territories of adversaries and make the treacherous journey across the Red Sea. The myth is evident in the biblical names of certain features of the site including “The River Jordan”, which separates the two main groups of churches as well as “The Hill of Bethlehem” and “The Tomb of Adam”.

In the *Gadl Lalibela* (the hagiography of King Lalibela), Lalibela enlisted the help of hundreds of workers to complete the churches’ construction in just twenty four years. For each cubit of bedrock a worker dug by day, an angel would descend to dig three cubits by night.

King Lalibela, for whom the town was renamed, is venerated as a saint by the Tewahedo Orthodox church, further sedimenting the Abyssinian imperial claim to divine sovereignty and transforming the mortal monarch into a



Image: Lalibela church painting

mythic figure. The king's remains are said to be buried in the crypt below the church, Biete Golgotha Mikael, his flesh and spirit co-mingling with the land over centuries. Members of the church have been known to use the holy soil from the land to heal the faithful.

Farther away in distant lands, whispers of a fabled king circulated around Medieval Europe between the 12th and 17th century. Prester John was said to be the ruler of a Christian kingdom lost amid pagan lands.

Travelers claimed he dwelled in India and was a descendent of one of the Three Magi. However, the India often mentioned in antiquity does not always relate to the present day nation of India, but rather Central Asia in general and even parts of the African continent in proximity to the Indian Ocean. After searching for Prester John across the world, medieval Europeans eventually came to the conclusion that he may in fact be the emperor of Ethiopia, which at the time was a Christian empire surrounded by Muslim occupied territories. Ethiopia existed as an isolationist, and almost impenetrable, empire from the Zagwe Dynasty up until the 19th century, thereby remaining a mystery to the Western World.

Yet, the lure of Prester John was impossible to resist. In 1487 the Portuguese sent their first mission to Ethiopia to investigate the fabled king and his riches. Following the failure of this mission, another embassy was sent over in 1515, accompanied by the chaplain Father Francisco Álvares, who would come to write the earliest known European account of the Lalibela churches. Álvares was besotted with the incredible monoliths and dedicated six years to studying the architecture of Lalibela and the surrounding regions, documenting his findings in a book entitled *Verdadeira Informação das Terras do Preste João das Índias* ("A True Relation of the Lands of Prester John of the Indies"). Later historians would come to rely on Álvares' book as they investigate the past of the

mysterious monoliths.

The text unequivocally placed Prester John in Ethiopia. Albeit not an indigenous honorific, the name, Prester John, became synonymous with the Abyssinian monarchy, and as such enfolded the Abyssinian Kingdom into the imagination of European Christendom. Abyssinia appeared as one of the only African nations labelled on the Hereford Mappa Mundi (1300 AD), the largest extant medieval map of the known world.

The placement of Ethiopia in the mythos of the Occident led to a reviving intrigue in the Lalibela churches as a portal to the ancient world and the realm of spirituality.

The Lalibela churches became the first landmark project of the World Monuments Fund after the organization's foundation in 1965. Since then, they have worked to document features of the structures and begin stabilization efforts, raising international awareness around the heritage site.

"I weary of writing more about these buildings, because it seems to me that I shall not be believed if I write more-"²

Today, the churches are still tended to by the priests of the Orthodox church, who continue to maintain them as an active site of worship and pilgrimage since the reign of King Lalibela.

However, after being officially designated a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1978, the authority over the churches tilted away from the Orthodox church for the first time. UNESCO partnered with the World Monument fund in 2007 and along with Ethiopian authorities (ecclestial and tourism) worked with international conservationists, to find institutional solutions for preservation and generating revenue through tourism. As the Hegelian myths that treated Africa as ahistorical and external to modernity informed



Image: Lalibela 3D scan c/o Zamani Project

Western worldviews, conservationists presumed authority over African cultural production. Africans were not believed to be capable of correctly preserving their heritage.

As these competing myths unfolded over the land, the lives of the residents and stewards of the churches were also being shaped by this tension over the past few decades.

A design for temporary shelters to prevent further rainwater damage to five of the churches was determined through an International Architecture Competition led by the European Union in 1999.

"The construction elements of the shelters will be manufactured in Italy, in the first half of 2007 and shipped to Lalibela via Djibouti." The mounting of the modular metallic structures for only four of the churches (Biete Medhane Alem, Beite Mariam, Beite Abba Libanos and Beite Mercurius) was completed by 2008 and was intended as a temporary solution for only four years.

Yet, thirteen years on, tattered canvases supported by massive steel frames still remain looming over the site.

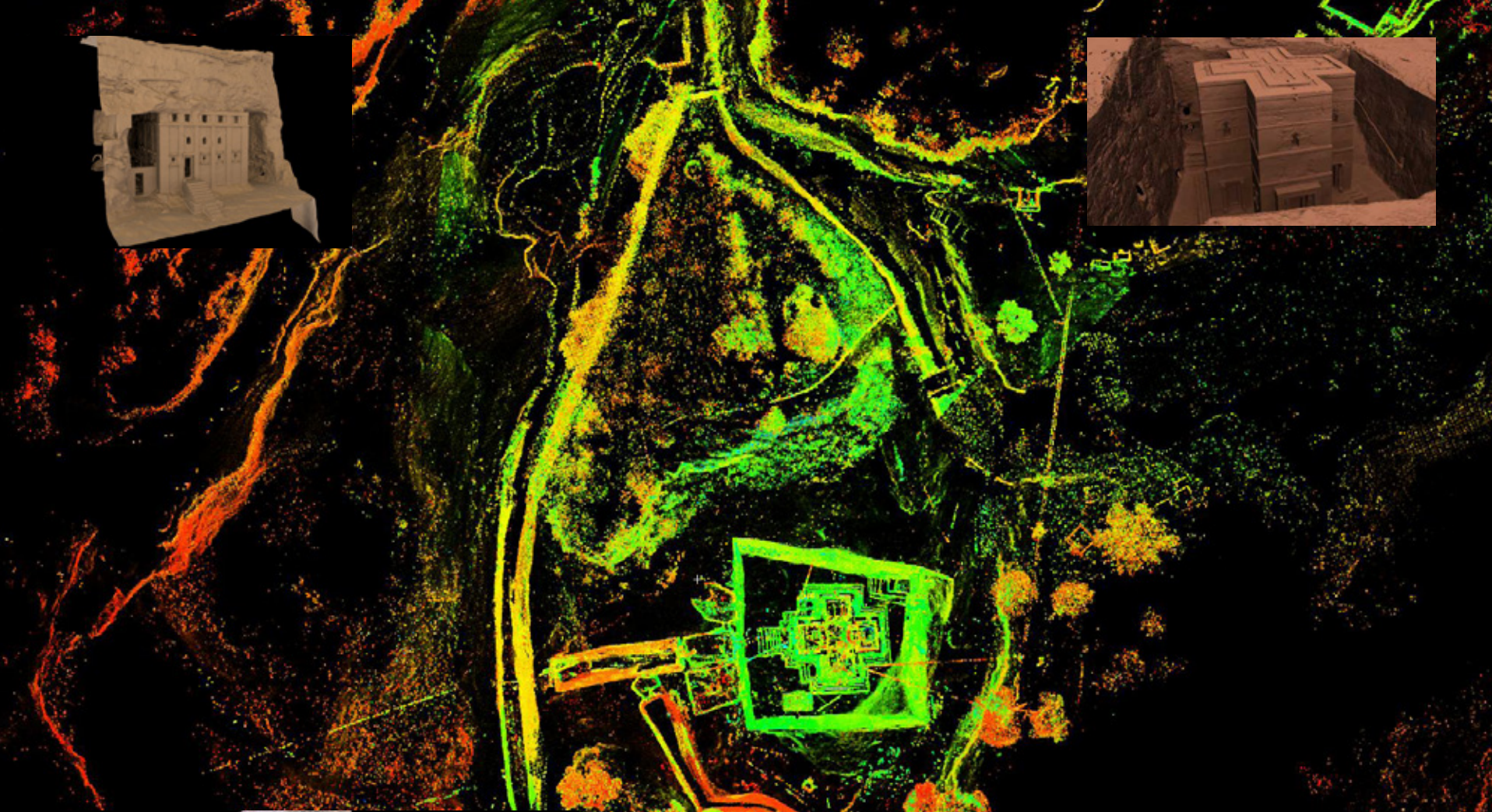
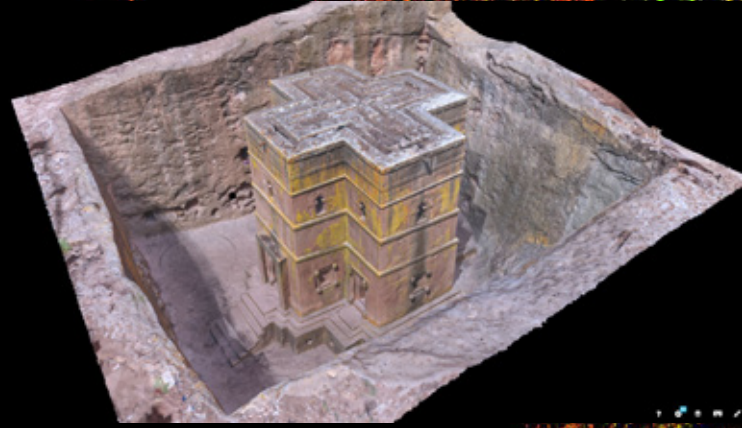
Conservation authorities have failed to replace or improve the hideous temporary shelters. This has led to organized protests (2018) by residents who have been forced to work around these structures and fear that they may collapse under strong winds. Furthermore, with increased foot traffic from tourism and the economic opportunities this offered, the traditional cultural landscape of Lalibela, primarily a rural community dependent on agriculture and ecclesial activities, has also mutated over time. Merchants sell counterfeit artifacts from the church including healing scrolls and ceremonial bells, which are typically considered sacred objects rather than commercial souvenirs. Ecclesial members now commonly serve as tour guides or intermediaries between visitors and the church, often embellishing the lore of the site to seem more fantastical, continually investing their own belief and reviving the myth.

Archeological activities are still ongoing as so much of Ethiopia's history can be unlocked and understood through this site. Experts studying construction anomalies such as blind windows and staircases leading into walls, have speculated that the churches may have been completed through a phased construction over centuries, potentially dating back to a pre-Christian era. The concealment and fortification of the complex also suggests that the churches may have originally been intended for royal residence.

"Do they belong to one grand ceremonial monastic plan, or a long-lived ritual centre, continually refashioned over time?"³

However, while these necessary investigations offer us portals into the elusive past and ignite Black/African imagination for the future and beyond, they are often

Image: Bi'ete Ghiorgis (House of St. George), Lalibela, Ethiopia
c/o Zemahni Project



impeded by the cultural influence of the Tewahedo Church and Ethiopian nationalism. The legacy of the Church is entangled with Ethiopian exceptionalism and empire. As the only African nation to have never been officially colonized, the image of Ethiopia has crystallized into a symbol of Black anti-colonial sovereignty for members of the Black diaspora. The dominant cultural landscape of Ethiopia is still gripped with a nostalgia for the grandeurs of the past, when rulers descended from a divine and holy lineage. However, this exceptionalist and nationalistic approach to the country's history, disregards the context in which the empire existed, the rich and ancient tapestry of competing indigenous cosmologies and culturally diverse peoples. Instead, it upholds the singularity of specific Northern ethnic groups and Orthodox Christianity as the sole reference points for "Ethiopianness," a homogenized national identity. And the empire maintains its relevance over time through the evocation of its myth.

'Every empire, however, tells itself and the world that it is unlike all other empires, that its mission is not to plunder and control but to educate and liberate'."⁴

Lalibela continues to attract thousands of Ethiopian pilgrims every year. Many of whom walk on foot for days, even weeks, a testament to the enduring myth of the sanctity of the famed churches, "heavenly Jerusalem on Earth".

These myths are embedded in this place, keeping residents and visitors in their thrall.

Unlearning the hegemonic myths of Western hierarchy, divine sovereignty and monotheistic hegemony becomes an increasingly difficult and complicated endeavour.

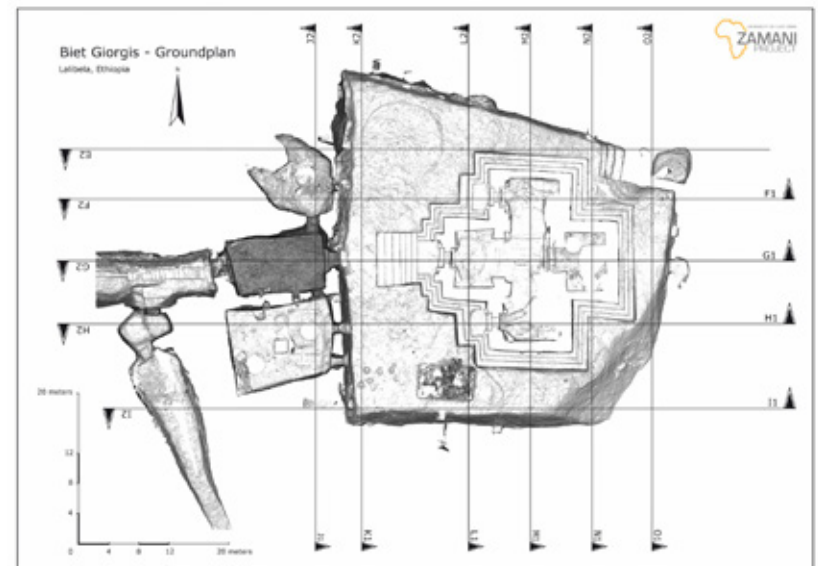
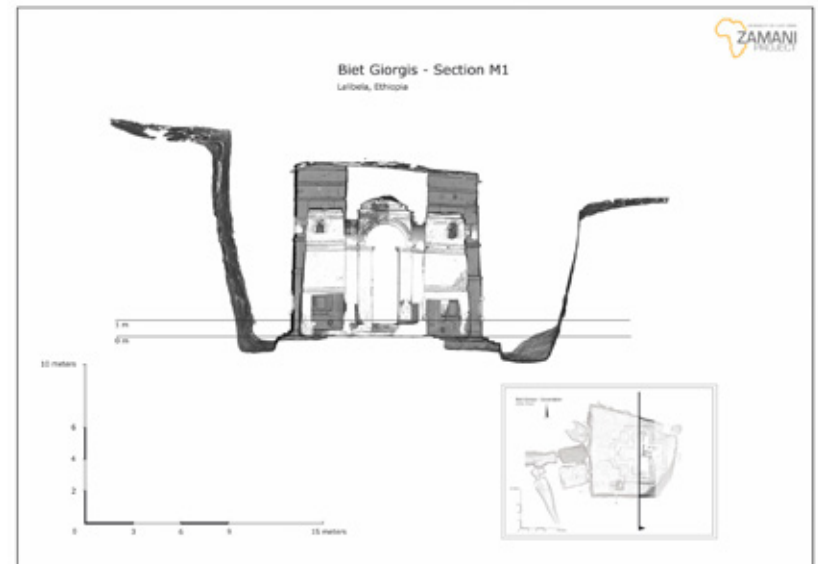


Image: Plan and section of Biete Ghiorgis (House of St. George), Lalibela, Ethiopia c/o Zamani Project

Yet we cannot allow the persistence of the past to hold us in place and obstruct our imagination of alternative ways of being and futures rich with potential.

The popular sanctity of the churches and the promises of tourism economies continue to underpin the administration of the site and its conservation. There appears to be a desire to maintain it in its current condition as a relic of divine sovereignty, ignoring its history of alterations and the multiplicity of truths it may represent. Although recent initiatives have led to promising results such as the establishment of an international field school and conservation efforts that employ traditional craftsmen and local materials, questions or discoveries that may destabilize the myth are still widely condemned as blasphemous. Therefore, in order to capture the imagination of the curious traveller or the faithful worshipper, the site and its custodians are restricted to the past, to mystique and secrecy. What could happen to radically change the future trajectory of the churches and the town of Lalibela?

As the ongoing conflict between Ethiopia's National Defense Force (ENDF) and the Tigray People's Liberation Forces (TPLF) rages on, spilling out of the Tigray Region and devastating more communities along the way, TPLF rebel forces have now taken control of the sacred city of Lalibela. This casts yet another mist of uncertainty for the future of Lalibela and its people.

Lalibela is a place that has maintained its traditions and its connections to the past in the face of constant change.

In our effort to preserve history we must contend with what version of truths we seek to protect, what is valued and by whom.

Image: Worshipers congregating for morning service under at Biete Medhane Alem church c/o James Jeffrey/Al Jazeera



Image: Pilgrims surrounding Biete Ghiorgis during Ethiopian Christmas. c/o Tariq Zaidi



Part 2: Common Ground / Common Good

(Un)Learning from Community Activism

Connecting voices in Detroit, Glasgow, and Kolkata, Common Ground / Common Good explored relationships to land through community activism, strategic neighbourhood development, and cultural sustainability via local community groups and non-governmental organisations working in each of the three cities.

The cities were chosen for their commonalities as well as their points of difference. Detroit and Glasgow were two of the greatest industrialised cities of the 20th Century but both have subsequently suffered from abrupt industrial decline and a severe decrease in their urban populations. Glasgow and Kolkata are linked through colonialism and the British Empire, with many Scots instrumental in the development of Kolkata's administrative and civic infrastructure. Glasgow's historic urban environment in turn is a prime example of how colonial wealth extracted from the Empire shaped the design and development of Britain's towns and cities.

Common Ground / Common Good sought to create connections to people working at neighbourhood level in different parts of world to share their experiences and to learn from one another. We were interested in listening to and understanding the communities' stories, their views on (their) land, their hinterland, what land is, what it means, and how they engaged with it on their own terms or otherwise. How the different communities organise and what strategies are deployed in support of the commons was also of critical interest.

Kolkata, West Bengal, India

Coordinates: 22.5726723°N
88.3638815°E

Founded: 1686

Population: 4,496,694 (2021)

Population high: 4,572,876 (2001)

Area: 79 sq mi (206 km²)

Density: 57,000 people/sq mi
(22,000 people/km²)

Glasgow, Scotland, United Kingdom

Coordinates: 55°51'40"N
04°15'00"W

Founded: 1170

Population: 612,040 (2020)

Population high: 1,127,825 (1938)

Area: 68 sq mi (175 km²)

Density: 9,210 people/sq mi
(3,555 people/km²)

Detroit, Michigan, United States of America

Coordinates: 42°19'53"N 8
3°02'45"W

Founded: 1701

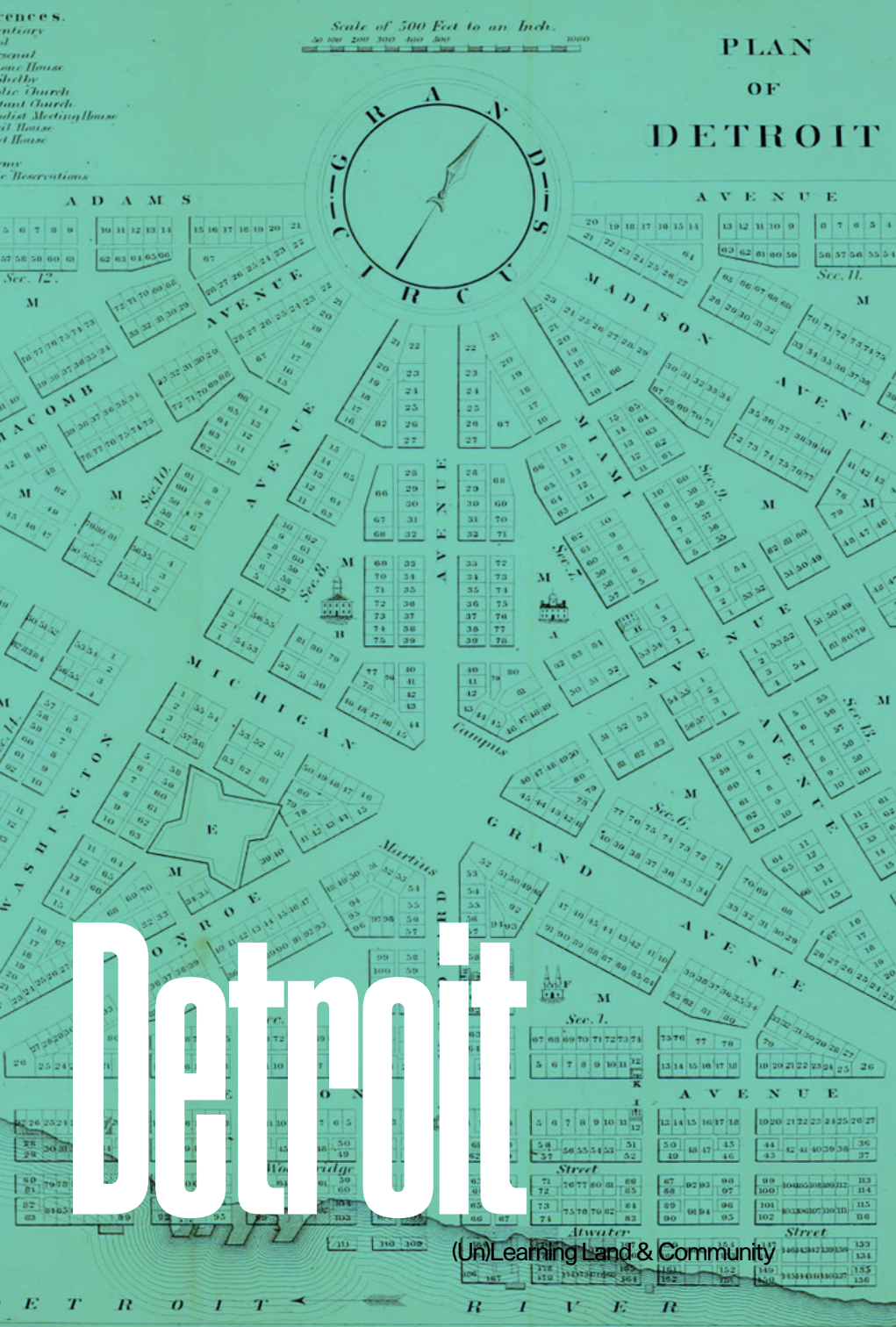
Population: 639,111 (2020)

Population high: 1,800,000 (1950)

Area: 143 sq mi (370 km²)

Density: 4,606 people/sq mi
(1,778 people/km²)

City Data




Detroit

Detroit and the Eastside Community Network
The recent story of Detroit's decline is generally well known through the contemporary consumption of ruin-porn photography and voyeuristic news stories which respectively centre the formerly lush interiors of the city's heyday together with the gradual disappearance and replacement of whole neighbourhoods with self-seeded vegetation.

Based in Detroit's Eastside, the Eastside Community Network (ECN) spearheads initiatives that promote social cohesion, neighbourhood sustainability, community participation, and resident empowerment.

The ECN's team implements and facilitates programs and projects to support the local community, with a specific focus on climate equity, community organising & planning, business & economic development, youth development, and wellness & resilience hubs.

The ECN's own podcast Authentically Detroit, hosted by Donna Givens Davidson and Orlando Bailey, takes a comprehensive look at contemporary issues such as housing, spatial racism, economic development, neighbourhood planning, self-care, and community trauma and how they impact the city of Detroit.

 Watch Donna's talk here



The Dismantling of Black Detroit

Donna Givens Davidson

In 2021, Mayor Michael Duggan won his third term in office despite a well-publicized affair leading to divorce and remarriage that never materialized into scandal; findings of fraud and malfeasance in his handling of mass demolitions; the bribery convictions of two city council persons who were his staunchest allies and investigations into another two other member allies on city council; by escalating crime and the retirement of a police chief who came out as a Trump-loving Republican; a continued drop in population; over-taxation of over \$600 million in property tax assessments; and a failure to address a growing crisis of housing quality and affordability.

Duggan's win followed voter approval for his signature bond bill, Proposal N, defeat of plans to revise the city charter known as Proposal P, and was accompanied by another defeat on a single charter amendment – Proposal S. Duggan's power seemed invincible, his reelection inevitable. Like Ronald Reagan as President, Duggan is the Teflon Mayor untouched by scandal, vitriol, and attempts to unseat him. He was elected the first white Mayor in over 40 years of the Blackest large city in America – a city with Black pride and freedom roots that reach across centuries. The question is how did this happen and how will it end?

Detroit was established as an industrial behemoth in the 19th century, as factories were built along our waterway - a strait that translates to Detroit in French – commonly known as the Detroit River. Following World War I, Henry Ford replaced immigrant labor with Black labor with the singular goal of importing from the south, a labor force he

could control, one that was demonized by white autoworkers and subject to harassment, abuse, discrimination and exclusion from emerging unions. The emergence of Black Detroit was accompanied by white resistance from police and Ku Klux Klan forces – sometimes one-in-the-same – a complicit media, a racist housing sector, and a deferential political establishment that built racial exclusion into the very structures of our municipality.

Following the race riot of 1943, the destruction of Black Bottom and Paradise Valley in the late 1950s onwards, unceasing police abuse, housing and job discrimination, and poverty, this repression exploded into a rebellion in 1967 that destroyed large swaths of property, accelerated white flight to burgeoning whites-only suburbs, and facilitated the rise of Black power. Black Detroit was home to the largest Black middle class in the United States, with the highest number of Black professionals and business owners, the highest rate of home ownership, and the greatest upward mobility of Black people in the history of the US.

Black Detroit was also assailed from every level of government, private industry, and metropolitan politics. Revenue sharing was continuously threatened and then reduced, our school system was systematically dismantled by school choice policies and a revised allocation formula, our local power was undermined by state laws that outlawed residency requirements for municipal employees, by revised tax policy that starved the municipal coffers, and by incentives to engage in high-risk financing to fill budgetary gaps, such that Detroit was brought to the brink of crisis. Instead of bailing our city out, the state imposed emergency management and then bankruptcy – stripping voters of our constitutional right to elect our own political representation. Through subsequent loss and austerity, many Black residents moved out, including many with political and economic clout.

Against this feeling of political desperation, Michael Duggan promised one thing in 2013: “I can get the city out of emergency management and restore its power. I can end the dark days and reopen Detroit to opportunity.” Since his first election, every challenge to his authority has been framed in this manner – a fear of return to bankruptcy and the cycle of loss, whose trauma is ever-present in the hearts of most people who still vote. Others have lost faith in electoral politics and disengaged even from protest, believing they are powerless to make change.

In order to restore power, we must restore hope and faith in our own capacity to govern. We must reject narratives that hold Black people and our fleeting control of municipal governance accountable for the messes made by federal and state policy, as well as private sector malfeasance. In 2021, Detroit also transformed our city council, electing 6 new members – 5 of whom are known to be politically progressive and unaffiliated with the Mayor and his confederates. Change will come in one of two ways: 1. An investigation of corruption that ties back to Mayor Duggan or 2. A strong city council that pushes back against monopolistic power and exposes the underbelly of our corrupt city.



Watch the Proposal P
film here



Image: Watercolour
c/o Sally Deng

Designs for a More Just Future in New Orleans & Detroit

Chris Daemmrich

Racial and economic inequities create real imbalances of political possibility. In late August, Hurricane Ida battered much of the Louisiana coast. Nearly 1 million people in the state were still without power days after the storm first made landfall, with loss of life and damage to property yet unknown. The storm's rapid intensification complicated evacuation plans for many. This is the new climate reality that our country is facing—and one that disproportionately affects communities of color, especially in places like south Louisiana.

While New Orleans' levees held, demonstrating the benefits of \$14 billion in post-Katrina upgrades to the city's flood protection system, neighboring unprotected communities were hit hard. Subdivisions in LaPlace, La., home to many Black and Latinx families priced out of the city, flooded with several feet of water. By failing to challenge inequities built into present practices, architects will only contribute to the creation of what U.N. special rapporteur Philip Alston, in a 2019 report, called “climate apartheid.”

“When you read histories of the Home Owners' Loan Corporation and the Federal Housing Administration from the New Deal,” says Darien Alexander Williams, planner and disaster researcher at MIT's Department of Urban Studies and Planning (DUSP) in Boston, “these projects were started with ‘good intentions,’ and they ended up creating segregation where there hadn't been segregation before.”

In the summer of 2020, white-led U.S. architectural firms,

schools, and institutions committed themselves in written statements to “listen, learn, and change” in response to demands for racial justice by Black Americans. By recognizing that without racial justice, there is no climate justice, practitioners—particularly the 85% who are white—can take these commitments seriously.

Maddison Wells is an architectural designer in New Orleans and a 2021 Tulane School of Architecture graduate with a master’s in real estate development. She studies Black New Orleanians’ experiences with home-elevation programs funded by FEMA that raise houses above increasingly flooded ground.

“Who is this program accessible to?” Wells asks. “Not the elderly Black people who’ve lived here their whole lives. [Studying home elevation programs] has taught me a lot about inaccessible, inconsiderate, and simply ignorant policy and planning.”

In early 2020, Wells organized Living Without Water, an interactive exhibit and resource fair, at the House on Claiborne. Located in Uptown New Orleans on former swampland, in a neighborhood whose original racist covenants prohibited Black property ownership, the ranch-style house is the only Black-owned property on its block today. Developer Brittany Lindsey, an educator and social worker, invited Wells to engage communities of friends, colleagues, and neighbors around the challenges of adaptation.

Through her organization, the HUEman Development Project, Lindsey has developed the House on Claiborne as a “safehouse” offering culturally competent education and supportive housing to communities often denied both. “This is a place to create moments of reprieve for Black kids and Black people,” Lindsey says. “It’s a community space [with] access that flows through human networks and connections.”

The completion of a 30-by-10-foot underground canal

by the Army Corps of Engineers in 2016 left Lindsey looking up at the pavement of South Claiborne Avenue from her living-room window. After years of worsening floods, an early-morning rainstorm in July 2019 flooded the house with 8 inches of dirty, brown water.

The morning after, Lindsey woke up to a call from FEMA. An application she’d put in months earlier for a Repetitive Loss Hazard Mitigation Assistance home elevation grant had been approved.

“The flood traumatized us,” Lindsey says. “I never had time to grieve [what we lost]. The grant process was a challenge. I spent so much time in fluorescent conference rooms, interviewing contractors, meeting with FEMA and the City [of New Orleans, which administers the federal grant money]. Many times, I was disrespected as a Black woman.

“This process is not accessible to, or set up for, people without professional jobs. Most people can’t take hours off work for all these meetings.”

Lindsey says all six elevation contracting teams she interviewed as prospects for her project were white. The architect and landscape architect hired by the contractor she selected were white and primarily experienced with affluent white clients. In a 2% Black and 0.3% Black female profession, in a nation that is 14.1% Black and 6.2% Black women, the design challenges of home elevation, like any other project, are rarely handled by professionals with competency in the needs of Black communities.

Wells sees much work to be done. “People associate sustainability and response to climate change with building performance, but it should go beyond that,” she says. “Sustainability is not just about the building but about people and existing infrastructure that supports those people. Both design and policy should frame sustainability as creating self-sufficient communities that are resilient over time.

“Justice has become a buzzword. Justice for whom, by whom? The only true justice would be reparations.”

A Green New Deal, on Whose Terms?

Federal investment is no silver bullet. Racial inequities in Road Home, the federally funded, state of Louisiana– administered rebuilding program for homeowners created after Katrina and the floods of 2005, have been well-documented for more than a decade. This year, NPR’s reporting has demonstrated how FEMA responses to disasters systematically privilege wealthy and white communities and withhold needed investment from Black and poor communities. Disparities in COVID-19 response by states further demonstrate how politics impact disaster management. D. Williams explains how these realities complicate Green New Deal advocates’ hopes.

“I’ve been thinking a lot about federalism, as many people have since the pandemic,” Alexander Williams says. “Even if resources become available at the federal level, a handful of people at the state and local levels can refuse. People who’ve never lived in or grown up in a state with a tyrannical conservative governor or legislature think that federal legislative or administrative action is enough to effect progressive proposals. “Even if the most crystallized form of various Green New Deal ideations was passed tomorrow, they could easily be compromised and sabotaged by people who profit from [the status quo].”

In New Orleans, urban designer and landscape architect Aron Chang works on projects associated with the Gentilly Resilience District (GRD). The result of New Orleans’ victory in an Obama-era HUD-funded competition, the GRD is a \$141 million prototype urban stormwater infrastructure and community adaptation project in a levee-protected neighborhood 4 to 6 feet below sea level.

“Neoliberalism thoroughly structures these projects,”

Chang says. “The government doesn’t build capacity [because] every project is farmed out to a contractor. [National design and planning firms] do their work, but the city departments who have to implement it don’t know what’s going on because the effort is never put in to co-create interventions.

“There’s no actual democratic process and the unspoken argument is you can’t afford to go public about this. Plans and designs [are] produced in hyperrational and technocratic modes. [Representation] issues endemic to architecture and planning play a role. These firms are lily-white in their staffing and strategy.”

Perspective and Power

Chang praises the work of contracted engagement practitioners, like New Orleans–based Water Block, which surfaces Native, Maroon and Black histories within the landscape. “For a virtual event about plantings and signage at the Dillard Wetland, Atianna [Cordova, principal of Water Block] invited [Black New Orleans historian] Leon Waters to speak about wetlands in the context of Black liberation. Things like this make white climate planners uncomfortable. And these perspectives aren’t centered in the process, because [white project leads] determine how the story is told.”

Design for a just future requires understanding our racist past and racial capitalist inequity in the present. Architects, designers, and planners must educate themselves about these conditions, remembering that racial and economic inequities create real imbalances of political possibility.

“There’s an awkward, very white acknowledgment,” Alexander Williams says, “within Green New Deal spaces, that certain policies of the New Deal exacerbated racial inequality. So people promise to ‘center equity’ within the Green New Deal, but what does that mean? [Especially] without the power to enforce it?”

The Bottom

Ujiji Davis Williams, an urban designer and landscape architect originally from Brooklyn and recipient of the 2019 American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA) Bradford Williams Medal of Excellence, sees the crisis facing Black New Orleans as deeply historical and broadly shared across Black American geographies. In her essay “The Bottom: The Emergence and Erasure of Black American Urban Landscapes,” Davis Williams describes an urban typology that “possesses a distinct vulnerability when confronted with American planning protocols and inequitable power structures that deprioritize—and destroy—the presence and importance of these communities.”

“The Bottom is a place for Black people to live, based on where there were safe places to be,” Davis Williams says. “Runaways and maroons stayed [there] to avoid recapture. During the Great Migration, laws separated Black migrants from white ethnic immigrants moving across the country for industrial work. Oftentimes Bottoms were low-lying areas, along rivers, and coastal.”

An increase in economic valuation, as neighborhoods once dominated by docks become desirable for their proximity to new waterfront leisure and cultural facilities, threatens many Bottoms. Racist violence—physical and infrastructural—runs through these histories.

“There was a Black community [on the Chattahoochee River, northeast of] Atlanta. A Black person was accused of doing something to a white person,” Davis Williams says. “A white mob chased the residents away. Lake Lanier was built on the land [in 1956], a recreation area only open to white people. A whole community was sacrificed and enjoyment of the space became exclusive.”

In Detroit, the largest U.S. city with a majority-Black population, increasingly severe summer storms complicate

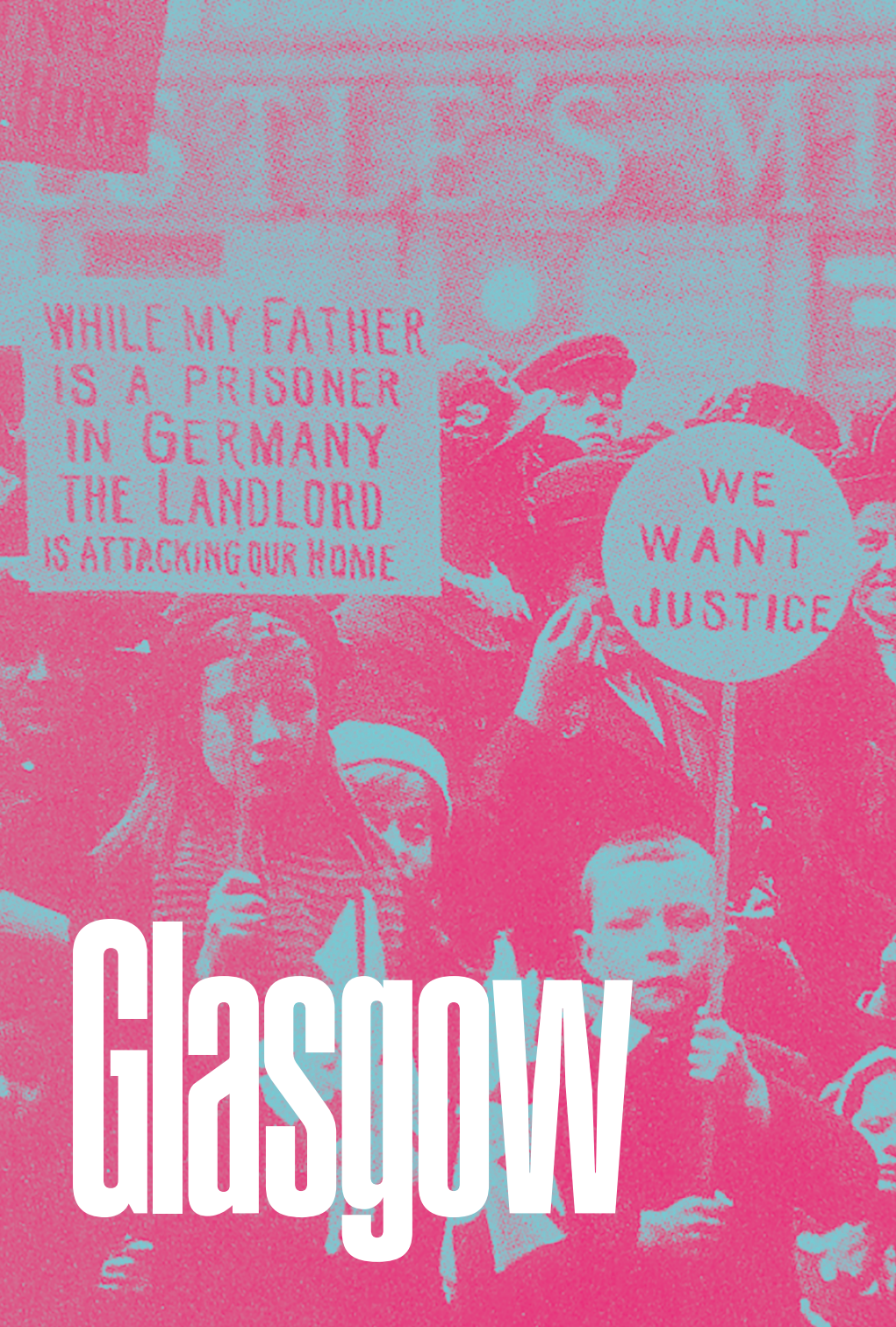
challenges facing residents. “We have 50- year rain events every couple of years,” says planner and landscape designer Matthew Williams, a native of the city’s West Side. “Highways [built in trenches below grade] are shut down, people lose cars and basements flood, particularly along the Detroit River and across the East Side.”

In his work for the city of Detroit’s Planning Department, Williams says, he frequently receives requests for homerepair grants. “Many [Detroiters] are below median income [\$28,000 a year]. People on limited incomes can’t waterproof their basement or replace their connections to city water mains.”

“It’s above a neighborhood’s ability to execute. The City is considering significant investments to improve sewerage infrastructure, but this has less to do with design than with infrastructural quality. Just throw enough money at it for better equipment. You don’t need a plan to tell you rusted pipes will leak.”

Davis Williams connects these issues to regional power structures. “Detroit’s sewer system is connected to the outflow of adjacent suburbs’ systems. So we’re handling Detroit’s water challenges and Southfield’s and Ferndale’s. It puts a lot of stress on a system that can barely handle what’s happening in Detroit. “From a budget standpoint, the city of Detroit is more strapped than surrounding areas that may experience flooding,” Davis Williams says. “Flooding is one of many outcomes related to larger cycles of disinvestment and misalignment between cities and counties. It’s not because the city [of Detroit] doesn’t care.”

This article was originally published in Architect magazine on 6th October 2021 and has been reproduced here with their kind permission.



Glasgow

Glasgow and the Govanhill Baths Community Trust
In the Southside of Glasgow the Govanhill Baths Community Trust has been at the forefront of organised collective community action for two decades, with 2021 being the 20th anniversary of the initial occupation and direct actions taken to save the Govanhill Baths from closure.

The ongoing story of the baths, from the initial coming together of people to create the community action group to the campaign work, occupation, forced removal, engagement and navigation of the civic and judicial systems, establishment of the trust, development plans, and fundraising.. ..holds a deep reserve of accumulated experience, collective insight, and community knowledge - with continuous endeavour, commitment, physical and emotional labour required to fight for the survival of the baths.

With anniversary work led by the Trust's archivist Paula Larkin, the following pages host a variety of commissioned community-centred and reflective work. Artist Amelia Rowe has produced a new map of Govanhill which seeks to chart the Trust's own infrastructure as well as its social and cultural ecology. Artist Mandy McIntosh mined archival footage and photographs to create a new handpainted screenprint celebrating the community occupation. Finally writer, editor, and critic Jonathan Charley talks about our right to the city, and explored international class struggle in a visual essay.



Watch Paula's
talk here

Mapping the ecology of Govanhill Baths *Amelia Rowe*



Mapping the ecology of Govanhill Baths *Amelia Rowe*

Govanhill Baths Community Trust has grown enormously over the last 10 years. We have a number of projects and venues which we run ourselves, listed below and on our map.

1 GOVANHILL BATHS
99 Calder St, Glasgow, G42 7RA
Currently being refurbished.
Due to open as a wellbeing centre in 2023

2
Govanhill Baths Community Trust
126 Calder St, Glasgow, G42 7PQ
Administrative base of GBCT and Govanhill Baths Community Benefit Trust and Govanhill Baths Building Preservation Trust. Offices of Romano Lav.
Tel: 0141 433 2999

3
The Deep End
21 Nithsdale St, Glasgow, G41 2PZ
Home to GBCT projects: Rags to Riches; Up Hub; Arts; Ceramics; Govanhill Baths Archive; Heritage Learning Programme and some Wellbeing Programmes.
Tel: 0141 423 3919

4
GBCT Community Wellbeing
192 Allison St, Glasgow G42 8RX
Also home to Unity Sisters and Milk
Tel: 0141 258 8268

5
The People's Pantry
488 Cathcart Road, Glasgow G42 7BX
Tel: 0141 433 2999

6
The Base
494 Cathcart Road, Glasgow, G42 7BX
Home to Govanhill Youth Club
Tel: 0141 387 1525

Wellbeing Programme

- Tai Chi** The Neighbourhood Centre 6 Daisy St Glasgow G42 8JL
The Larkfield Centre 39 Inglefield St Glasgow G42 7AY
- Queens Park Foraging**
- Fishing With Bob** Meet at The Neighbourhood Centre 6 Daisy St. G42 8JL
- The Neighbourhood Centre 6 Daisy St. G42 8JL Cast Offs (Knitting Group)**
- LGBTQI+ Gardening** The People's Pantry 488 Cathcart Rd. G42 7BX
The Bowling Green, 49 McCulloch St. G41 1SU **Growing Govanhill**
- Crosspoint (Peer Led Mental Health Group) Urban Roots Allotments**
- The Deep End 21 Nithsdale St. G41 2PZ Pottery for Beginners**
- Women On The Mend** The Deep End 22 Nithsdale St. G41 2PZ
- Meeting on Zoom Singing With Lorna**
- Walking Group** Meet at The People's Pantry 488 Cathcart Rd. G42 7BX
- The Neighbourhood Centre 6 Daisy St Glasgow G42 8JL Yoga for all**
- Craftivism** The Deep End 22 Nithsdale St. G41 2PZ
- Govanhill Doctors Surgery 233 Calder St. G42 7DR Social Prescribing**

Please contact joanne@govanhillbaths.com for more information

ARCHITECTURE FRINGE
Registered Scottish Charity No. SC036192
www.govanhillbaths.com

The festival began in 2016 as an antidote to racism towards migrant communities from Eastern Europe in Govanhill. It started as a carnival, parade and weekend of music, aiming to celebrate the diversity of the area and combat division and hate. It has since grown into a beautiful, flourishing arts and culture scene in Govanhill.

Govanhill International Festival & Carnival

Exploring GOVANHILL BATHS and Partners

We also support, collaborate and network with over 150 different groups and organisations on a local, national and international level including:

- Somali Association in Glasgow;
- Swap Market - Feminist Exchange Network;
- The Friends of Romano Lav;
- Unity Sisters, self-organised support group for asylum-seeking women, refugees and their children; Milk Café; The Hidden Gardens; Tramway; GAMIS (Glasgow Artists' Moving Image Studios); G42 Pop Ups; Glasgow Zine Library;
- Love Music Hate Racism; NHS Health Improvement Team; University of Glasgow; University of the West of Scotland;
- Repair Café Glasgow; Glasgow Stand Up to Racism; Glasgow Campaign Against Climate Change; Govanhill Community Development Trust; Hollybrook Academy; Holy Cross Primary; Annette St Primary; St Bride's Primary; Holyrood Secondary; Shawlands Academy; Cuthbertson Primary;
- The Pram Project; Urban Roots; ReMade Network; Positive Housing in Action; Category is ...

Occupy! Occupy! Occupy!

Mandy McIntosh

To celebrate the 20th anniversary of the community occupation of the Govanhill Baths, artist Mandy McIntosh was commissioned to produce a handcoloured limited edition screenprint from archival footage and images. The print was pasted up around Govanhill to acknowledge the longest occupation of a public building in British history, and the successful transition to community governance and development of the facility. The print was devised to show the interior and exterior of the building simultaneously, featuring the people who spent months inside the building, the picket and extended community outside who gathered to sing songs and show solidarity, and was completed with the arrival of mounted police in what was to become known as The Battle of Calder Street. The prints were produced in an edition of 100 at Glasgow Print Studio and were placed around Govanhill and central Glasgow.



Images: Mandy McIntosh's artwork in-situ in Govanhill c/o Mandy McIntosh

OCCUPY! OCCUPY! OCCUPY!





This Land Is Ours: The Right To The City

Jonathan Charley

In this talk writer, educator, and critic Jonathan Charley reflects on the origins and contemporary significance of the phrase 'the right to the city' - an idea first popularised by French philosopher Henri Lefebvre in his book *Le Droit à la Ville* of 1968. It refers to our democratic right to imagine and remake the city in a manner that challenges the priorities of capitalist urbanisation, and upon the horizon of possibility, a new type of city emerges, a city rooted in social and environmental justice.

The talk explores this theme, and sets the occupation of the Govanhill Baths in context to other historic social movements and points of collective action.

Jonathan Charley is a writer, editor and critic who writes mainly about the political, social and cultural history of architecture and cities. He is currently working on a new book *The Monologues of City X*, that explores the history of the capitalist city through three fictional narratives - Knowledge, Technology and Nature.

The talk was part of the 2021 Govanhill International Festival & Carnival's "Occupy! Occupy! Occupy!" events that celebrated 20 years since the occupation of Govanhill Baths, and was hosted in context to Common Ground / Common Good - (Un)Learning Land as part of the Architecture Fringe 2021.



Watch Jonathan's
talk here

The 20th Anniversary of the Govanhill Baths Occupation

Jonathan Charley

Occupy! Occupy! Occupy!

CLASS STRUGGLE WORKS

“...the Govanhill Baths Occupation offers a profoundly important lesson; it underlines the latent strength of communities when mobilised collectively around struggles over resources and local infrastructure.”



The famous Glasgow Rent Strike of 1915 that led directly to changes in the law regarding the actions of private landlords

A GLIMMER OF OTHER WORLDS

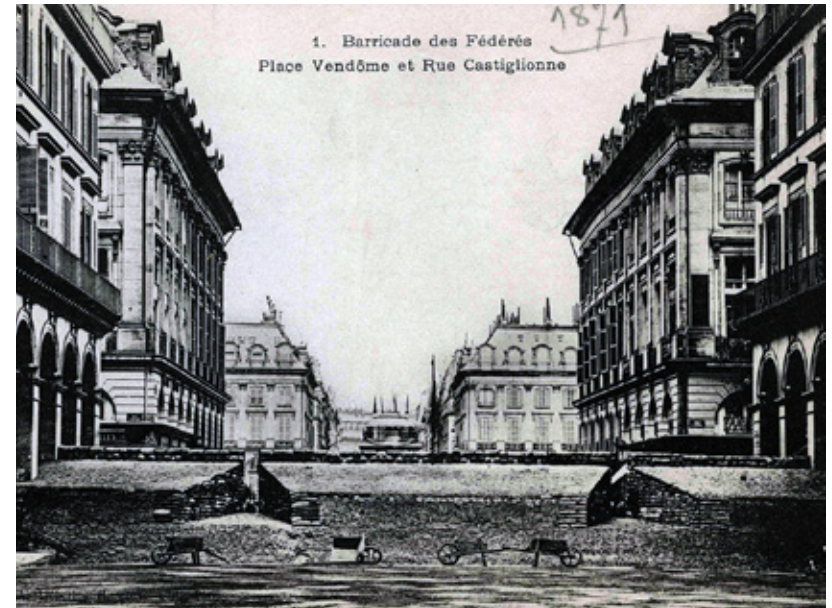
“...the Govanhill Baths Occupation, like all social movements, is explicitly spatial. It points to another way of ‘being in the city’ and engages with architecture in a way that directly challenges what we understand by the idea of ‘public’ or ‘socialised’ space.



The occupation of Kenmore Street, 2021, in opposition to Home Office forced deportation

THE SPACES OF POLITICAL RESISTANCE

“...the Govanhill Baths Occupation takes its place in the long history of urban action - of marches, demonstrations, and strikes – that together form part of a parallel history of architecture and the city. On the horizon of this history lies the development of new building typologies and spatial practices that challenge the priorities of capitalist urbanisation.”



Barricade erected during the Paris Commune of 1871 with the demolished statue of Napoleon in the background

THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

“...the Govanhill Baths Occupation speaks loudly about our inalienable *right to the city*. This trans-historical battle over land and buildings, prioritises social value over profit, the interests of tenants over landowners, and articulates what for me is the most important question of all – what is the alternative to the capitalist city?”



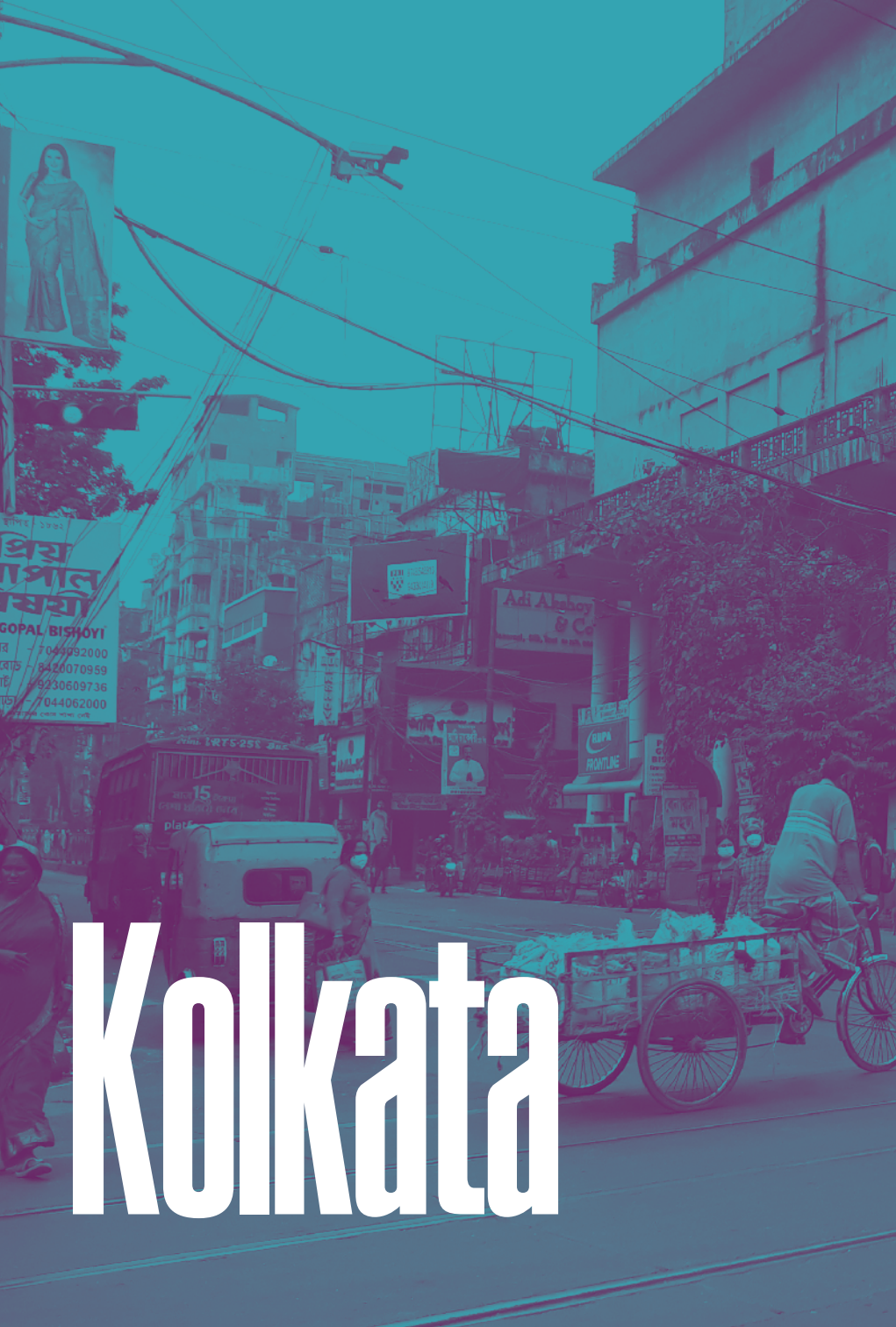
Building the Barricades, Barcelona Commune, 1936

THE LAND IS OURS

“...the Govanhill Baths Occupation, viewed as a ‘prototype urban commons’ for the 21st century, resonates globally in the struggles taking place from Brazil to Balornock over the democratic control of urban development.”



Movimento dos Trabalhadores Sem Tetos, (Homeless Workers' Movement) – Banner reads “Less Hate more Housing – People without Fear”, Brazil, 2019



Kolkata

Kolkata and Mansara NGO

A conversation on the social occupation of land started between architectural historian and conservation architect Neeta Das and landscape architect and Architecture Fringe co-director Liane Bauer in context to the restoration of the Scottish Cemetery on Karaya Road near Park Circus in Kolkata.

When evaluating the contemporary condition of the cemetery, Neeta began to explore the relationship between the historic space and its immediate local neighbourhood. This exploration has informed the work we present here.

Mansara is a non-government organisation (NGO) working in urbanism, conservation, and historic contexts. Led by Neeta Das, it's overall objective is to provide support to projects relating to education, research, planning, and the management of sustainable services and infrastructural development in both rural and urban locations. With a focus on the most vulnerable in society, the organisation has an emphasis on women, children, and the economically depressed.

Commencing with a challenge to the perceptions and gaze of the upper middle-class on the urban poor, the work continues with a provocation on urban aesthetics in India by Ishita Das before concluding with the speculative design work of students from the Architecture + Urban Design Academy at Jadavpur University who reimagined contemporary working and living conditions for the street vendors of the city.



Watch Neeta's
talk here

Kolkata



(Un)learning Urban Aesthetics

Neeta Das

Aesthetics is defined as a branch of philosophy dealing with the nature of beauty, art, and taste, and with the creation and appreciation of beauty; but also as a particular theory or conception of beauty or art, a particular taste for or approach to what is pleasing to the senses and especially sight.

In the natural world, for example, when we see a sunrise or sunset we are visibly moved by its beauty. The vastness of the ocean or the blue sky inspires in us a sense of awe and wonder. The ferocity of the waterfalls and magnitude of its depth fills us with feelings of frightful exuberance. In the human world, in art, a painting by Paul Gauguin or Claude Monet is now accepted as being beautiful, transporting us to distant lands, abundant meadows, and ephemeral moments. The creation of a conception of beauty, and the subsequent moving towards a particular taste, requires the guiding application of subjective human constructs such as societal conditioning, contextual perceptions, and localised judgements. These constructs also inform our emotional responses, however irrationally, where aesthetics can induce the full array of human feelings and sentiments, from happiness and elation, to ambivalence, distrust, and fear. In being created by humans and applied to people and things, aesthetics are inherently discriminatory. They sanction the division, appreciation, and merit of one thing over another and the consequences of this are rarely benign in any context - something is required to be negated. These conceptions are applied to almost everything, from landscapes and buildings, to arts, fashion, and objects. When applied to people, however, the inherent judgements are often weaponised

to cause harm. The lightness of ones' skin, for example, and the social, economic, and political ramifications of this is an illustration of how aesthetics are deployed in the name of prejudice. The 'black' man standing next to us in the museum as we appreciate the painting prompts us to step aside, in fear. A woman in a burqa (veil), passing us on the street, invites our pity and our scorn. A 'coloured' person is immediately judged as coming from a 'third world country' and thus, 'poor' and 'under-developed'. A 'brown' man with a beard is in today's world a 'terrorist', to be convicted at all cost. Yes, aesthetics matter. They bring out the best and worst emotions within us, often without much reason, yet we are compelled to respond to them instinctively.

Architecture, urban design, and all aspects of design are centred around the understanding of aesthetics which developed as a philosophy in tandem with rationalism from the 18th century onwards. It slowly became a part of the field of architecture and design and education of the same. Theories of aesthetics were developed and soon found expression in Modern art, architecture, and urbanism in the 19th and 20th Centuries. Utopian cities, glass houses, and 'ahistorical' design solutions became the trademark of this period. Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier, Walter Gropius, and Mies van der Rohe became the torch bearers of these aesthetics. Their aesthetics were widely circulated throughout the world and were studied and assimilated by students and teachers of architecture, including here in India. To be 'world class' meant to follow these aesthetics. No one stopped to question the rationality of the use of glass in a hot tropical country, or the design of new towns and cities which had no relevance to local issues of the local people and their lifestyles, that were churned out by designers, often remote, and lapped up by the clients. To be 'modern', 'developed', and 'affluent' meant a negation of the local traditions and acceptance of the

'aesthetics' of the 'developed world'. Dubai and Bangkok are a live example of the change.

The 21st Century is a witness to the follies of the 20th Century. In a rush to 'improve' and 'upgrade' towns and cities, large areas of traditional and historic fabric is being slowly replaced by 'new' concrete structures resulting in the loss of valuable heritage and a senseless demolition of sound buildings. Increased construction activity has increased the demand for cement, steel, and other construction materials, which in effect goes a long way in exploiting and depleting the natural resources and adding to the general air pollution. Large scale construction activities have also led to large scale deforestation further damaging the already impoverished natural resources. When large scale 'beautification' drives are held across the country, not only trees, forests, and the habitats of animals are destroyed, habitats of hundreds of people are bulldozed, too, almost always the poor and underprivileged, leaving them homeless and distraught. They and their homes were, after all, an eyesore within the overall aesthetics of the developing city, and had to be removed. Who are these people? What happens to them after they are driven away? Where do they go? The pandemic and the recurring cyclones have exposed their reality. Cities stopped when these 'unwanted' people started the march back 'home' to their villages and suburban towns. They formed nearly 60% of the city's floating population, 'illegal' and 'unidentified', not accounted for by the urban planners, yet the backbone of all Indian cities.

As the virus spread unchecked, it was the 'camps' and 'illegal' high density housings of these people, with no scope for social distancing, which formed the focus of government attention as it was certain that if these housings became infected, it would be impossible to control the outbreak. But lo and behold, it was the people living in high-end housings,

the rich and the affluent, who were the victims and worst hit! But with no house help, drivers, cleaners, grocery suppliers etc, they found themselves helpless. The poor on the other hand became poorer as their sources of income stopped. People did not trust neighbours, friends, or even family members. Death had become real. Borders closed. No country wanted tourists, travellers, or other foreigners who could bring new strains of the virus into their country. Yet the virus spread. Before we knew it, the local issue had become global. The pandemic was an issue that could only be handled globally. As the world stopped, the earth healed and rejuvenated. Sky, devoid of pollution, became blue; birds reclaimed the trees; vegetation took over the empty landscape. The earth was real. Nature was a force. In the past few years we have seen devastating floods and cyclones. Climate change become a reality. Local actions had global repercussions.

As architects and urban designers, we have to un-learn much of what we have learnt in school. We need to remember that our designs, actions, and intentions have a global impact. We need to study the local processes, traditions, climate, geography, and culture and revise our school curriculums. In a country which is heavily populated, many of whom live frugally, with insufficient infrastructure and civic amenities, a 'clean', 'ordered', and sparsely populated aesthetic is not only undesirable, it is a sacrilege. A busy bazaar street enfolds within it centuries of traditions, learnings, culture, livelihoods, and an identity unique to our country. It hides within it a lifestyle of sustainability, a tradition of humanity, and the spiritual wisdom of an ancient culture that teaches us to worship man and nature alike; considers poverty as a means to salvation; and most importantly, the fact that the spirit is all important, and matter transitory. First appearances, simply aesthetics, judgements and thereby decisions based on these are often hurtful, demeaning, and damaging for many. The

current program at SA(PARA) (para means neighbourhood in Bengali), so Southern Avenue (Neighbourhood)) attempts to learn from our mistakes and take a fresh look at the urban landscapes offered to us as a physical manifestation of a living culture; habitat for plants and animals; and most importantly its genesis as a place for people to dwell in and lead meaningful lives. These landscapes are much more than an expression of an outdated 18th Century aesthetic, and deserve to be treated better; to be 'developed' should mean to develop intelligently, sensitively, and holistically - keeping the wellbeing, material and spiritual, of the have and have-nots, plants and animals, man and nature alike, in mind.

(Un)Learning Indian Aesthetics – How to fit Indian aesthetics in a box

Ishita Das

Take a box big enough for 1.38 billion people
Pack in the largest chunk of democracy
Add seven major religious beliefs and a few handful others
Stuff some Metros, some cities, many villages, and a dash of towns

Add some slow city traffic, a few untamed settlements, and a lot of urban so-called poor
Pack in the farmer and his kin, building houses and moving in.
Keep the common bazaar street hustling with colour, robes, veggies and so much more!
Don't forget the overfed dogs, the sleepy cows, and the random pig pigging out.

Turn up the heat on account of global warming.
Add the seasonal floods and the lonely droughts.
Then pack the people
The beautiful
The old and the new.
Some that live in tall houses;
some that don't.

Wait! We're not ready to pack!
We must make space for the nuances
The gullys
The sarees
The train journeys and the morning walks
And here...we thought we could put all that in a box!
Embrace the chaos



Watch Ishita's film here



Re-Imagining The Vending Spaces In Kolkata

Debayan Chatterjee, Neeta Das, Sreyash Dasgupta

When one talks of Indian cities, images of myriad colors, smells, and sounds flood our imaginations. The busy market spaces, bazaars, hawkers, street players, informal shops, colorful clothes, local street food, across different regions of India, offer a variety of local handicrafts, household items, food, etc. These bazaars and street vendors are the very heart and soul of Indian identity, a major reason for its tourism, and the path and destination of urban and public life.

But who are these street vendors? They are most often migrants from neighboring towns and villages; bordering states, and refugees from neighboring countries. Some of them are also businessmen from far away states who have moved to big cities to further their businesses. One thing is common in all these people; they have all come to the city with dreams of a better life. However, these street vendors and their everyday vending spaces on the streets are often the most debated topic by the urban planners and designers and the residents who often view them as an embarrassment and an unpleasant view from their homes. Their views are often reinforced by some planners and designers who find it difficult to fit these impromptu and informal (often illegal) vending zones/ spaces/ markets within their structured and modular grids.

The two workshops that AUDA (Architecture + Urban Design Academy), Architecture Fringe, and Mansara hosted starting from July to September 2021, stressed on documenting how some of the mainstream planning/ design

THE STAKEHOLDERS



processes have often failed to address the varied needs of the street vendors in Kolkata. Further, it aimed to bring out complex relationships around the use, ownership, and dispute over land, through the voices of these street vendors, and its interpretation through a range of spatial and socio-economic interventions, and by sensitization of those that these street vendors serve. The project aimed to ‘unlearn’ architecture and urban design by drawing systems and frameworks using the stories of the vendors as starting points for further research and design thinking.

Students (in groups) were required to select a specific site in Kolkata (a stretch of pavement/ market area/ local neighborhood area/ railway or metro station area etc) where informal vendors are present. A total of nine such sites were selected within Kolkata. The groups were engaged in detailed physical and social surveys over a week, to document the vendors’ varied needs and to discuss a range of ideas to curate socially just environments for those vendors. This report is a compilation of the six best proposals which students submitted during the workshop.

As part of the group proposals, students were encouraged to develop their ideas around the following themes.

- Create a safe, clean and inclusive environment for all vendors, communities, and stakeholders (especially in the pandemic context)
- Create Housing (temporary/permanent) for vendors and allowing 24x7 access to amenities
- Support existing and promote new local businesses opportunities
- Promote conscious planning/designing for active travel
- Improve the quality of life of all citizens (served and service providers)

Understanding spaces available within/ around the site for insertion of proposals to support the everyday needs of the vendors was the common approach that the participants followed during the workshop. While studying and designing for their housing/ infrastructural needs, the groups laid stress on the current street sections including the negative areas to find solutions. Reusing/ reframing to tie into what the vendors already have, like plugins, instead of creating new systems/ frameworks were encouraged.

Re-Defining the Tales of Hatibagan

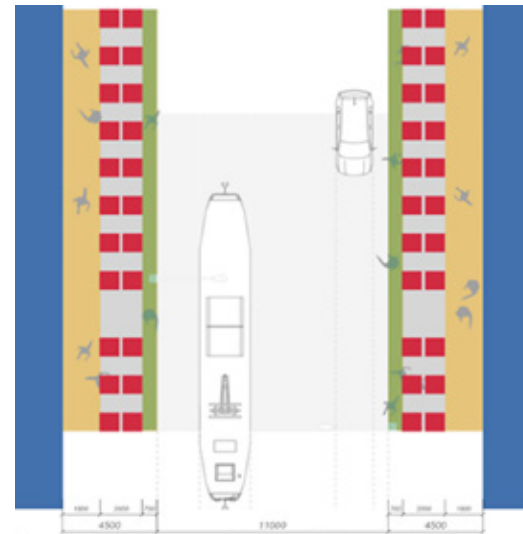
Hatibagan Market, Kolkata

Participants

Aishwarya Sinha, Herkiran Kaur, Pratyusha Chowdhury,
Satarupa Bardhan, Sayani Paul

Re-identifying. Re-envisioning. Reclaiming: This project is set in the street market of Hatibagan area in North Kolkata. It tries to perceive the ways and the difficulties experienced by the street vendors in such a site context, especially after the onset of Covid-19 pandemic. It not only deals with the predicaments of the street vendors but also of the other stakeholders present in the area. Therefore the purpose of this project is to understand the current situation and strike an attempt to redesign the existing space in such a manner that it primarily resolves their ongoing struggles with space and security, and is also inclusive to all.

PROPOSED SITUATION on site



In response to the various grounds of inconveniences experienced by the stakeholders, the project deals with the following strategies:

- Widening the pavements by 2m
- Segregation of pedestrian paths and stalls
- Rotation of stalls for smoother circulation
- Solving visibility issues of the storefronts
- Designing toolkit for the stalls of the vendors
- Traffic Re-routing to avoid commotion in rush hours

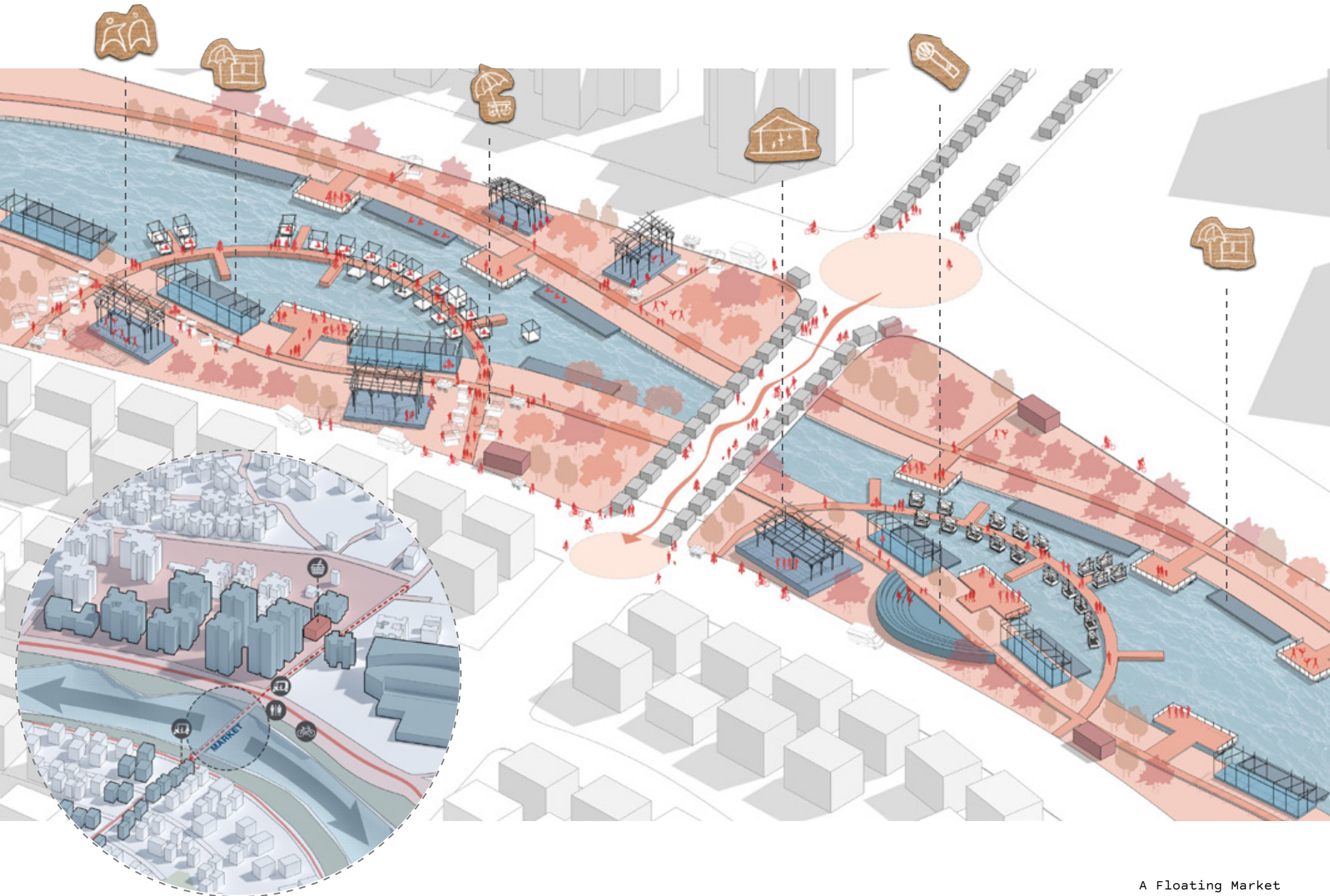
Plan of Road
● Path covered with tarpaulin/plastic sheet for the floating vendors to take shed during rains

STALL PROPOSITIONS

The design of the stalls for the floating vendors has been inspired from the hooded rickshaws of Kolkata where the retractable hood acts as the shading device. The roof of the stall and the bi-fold shutters further provide safety and security to the stored goods.

The other stalls have been modified implementing minimal changes, thereby keeping the existing structure intact. Materials like timber, high-density polyethylene shade cloth (HDPE), galvanized tin sheets can be used to erect such stalls.





A Floating Market

A Floating Market

Atharotola Market, New Town, Kolkata

Participants

Fida Hamid, Naman Shroff, Prasita Kundu, Sai Teja Kavuri, Shreya Jana

The intervention is done in a neighbourhood market of Newtown, Kolkata. The proposal by the group counteracts the issues of street vendors and other stakeholders by utilizing the existing natural resources. Pavilions on the land facilitate daily social activities of different user groups. The market exchange activities expand onto the canal, which promotes flexibility and modularity in vendors' lives. The proposal includes their safety and scope of opportunities through various docking platforms. Sustainable materials and methods were adapted to improve and maintain the micro-ecosystem. However, the implementation depends entirely on the participation of all the stakeholders from the neighbourhood.

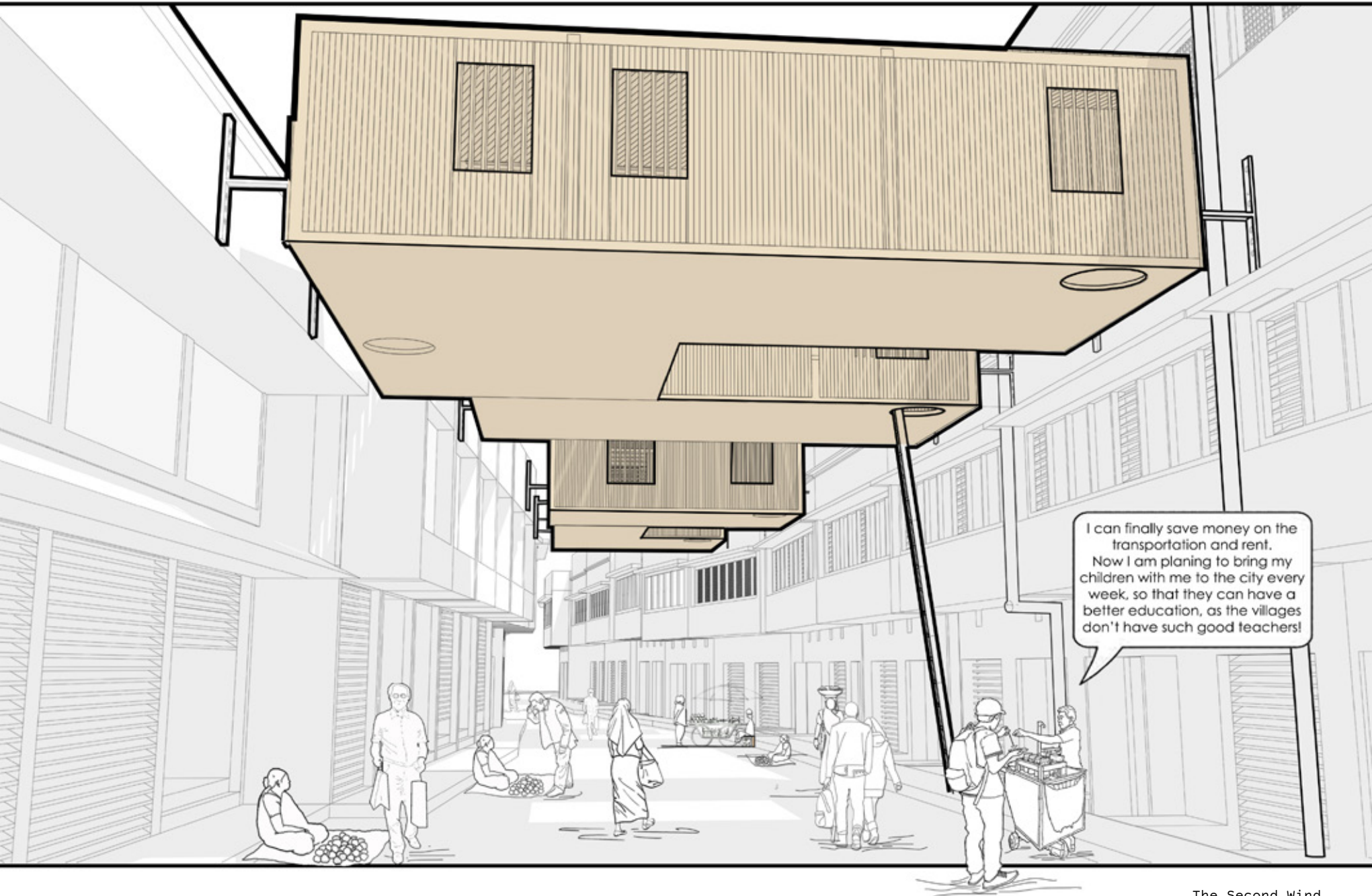
The Second Wind

Jadavpur Market Road, Kolkata

Participants

Anoushka Goswami, Mayank Jha, Shratika Tarsolia, Sreetama Pal

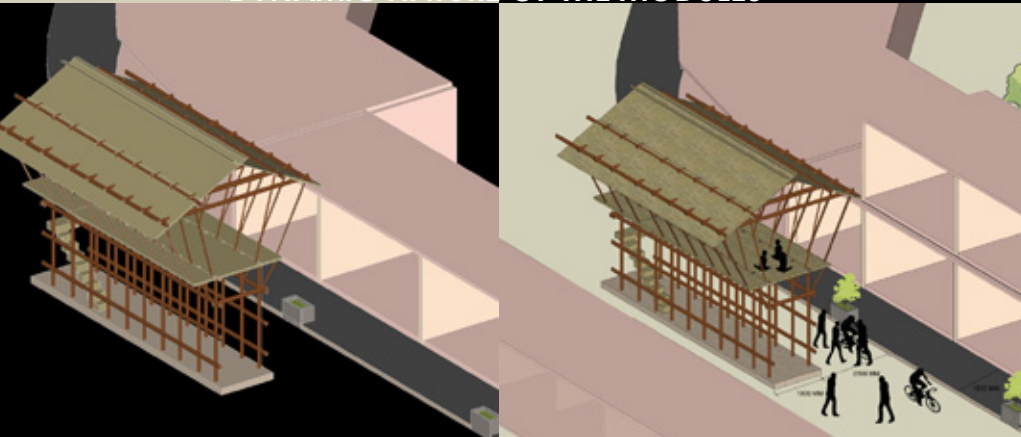
The Jadavpur Market Road is a market for people traveling from Garfa, a residential area to Jadavpur University and the Jadavpur Station Road in Kolkata. Street vendors have been setting up their shops at the market road for over two decades. However, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, some of the vendors were required to leave their homes in Kolkata and now travel close to 60 kms daily to set up their stalls. To help solve this problem, a housing module was conceptualised for these vendors. This module uses the existing buildings on the market road as host buildings and are attached to the host's facade using brackets. These lightweight modules have beds, storage space, a community space with kitchen, and toilet facilities. The vendors can climb into their modules at night with their products and need not travel daily a distance of 60 kms.



I can finally save money on the transportation and rent. Now I am planning to bring my children with me to the city every week, so that they can have a better education, as the villages don't have such good teachers!



DYNAMIC NATURE OF THE MODULES



'STEPPED' is the **STREET LEVEL INTERVENTION** to facilitate the vendors in carrying out their personal businesses by providing them a **BASIC FRAMEWORK IN THE FORM OF RAISED STEPPED-LIKE PLATFORM**, creating a network of **LINEAR PLAZA** adjacent to the walkway and in front of the permanent shops, which would enable them to add to the proposed structure **ACCORDING TO THEIR NEED** without interfering with the frontage of the existing shops, thus **CREATING FLEXIBLE VENDING SPACES** that can **ADAPT TO THE NEEDS OF THE PERSON** utilizing it.



Stepped Jadavpur Station Road, Kolkata

Participants

Debashrita Kundu, Ravi Bhushan, Zoya Ghayas

The busy market spaces, bazaars, hawkers, street players, and informal shops form the very heart and soul of Indian identity, and one of the principal markets stretches of the city happens to be Jadavpur Station Road, having evolved amidst vital transit and educational hubs. These vendors came as refugees during the partition and settled in Jadavpur and nearby squatter areas, looking for livelihood, thereby setting up the Jadavpur station road market in due course of time. These vendors travel via cycle or rickshaw or train to set up their temporary shops early in the morning. Some of the vendors frequent in between Jadavpur, Baghajatin and Gariahat markets throughout the week while some others have held a permanent position on the streets for the last 10 – 20 years.

A live survey was organized based on survey forms provided, where 20-25 people were surveyed on including the vendors, shopkeepers, residents, students and service providers among others.

Less is More Rasbehari Avenue, Kolkata

Participants

Devkanya Bose, Premantika Roy

Street vendors and service providers have always formed an integral part of Rasbehari Avenue, Kolkata and share a complex relationship with the other users of the area. Local residents receive water from service providers and meals from food vendors, and provide them with free electricity in return. Office commuters and tourists find a cheaper alternative for garments, toys and souvenirs from the vendors. However, the vendors occupy the entire footpath of the Rashbehari Avenue, which causes congestion and blocks the visibility of the permanent shops along the road. As a solution, the group changed the entry of the informal stalls, so that the customers can gather along the sides of the footpath, and do not obstruct the usual pedestrian movement. The rear wall of the stalls facing the road can be used to advertise the permanent shops. This simple approach respects the vendors' sentiments for the place and also brings harmony with the other users.



Rupantar (/ Transformations) Galiff Street Pet Market, Kolkata

Participants

Debasmita Bhowmik, Niranjana Sarkar, Raunaq Bhatta

Galiff Street is one of the largest Sunday pet markets(also known as Bagbazar Shokher Haat) in South Asia, shifted from Hatibagan to Galiff street due to its increasing congestion in 1996.

Galiff street is a 500m stretch of road, connecting the Baghbazaar bridge and the B.T. Road with mixed use buildings on one side and the slums, buildings for the EWS community on the other side facing the Circular canal. Another remarkable element of this street is the Tram depot. There are four main vending zones, keeping the canal on the right; Zones for dog vendors --- fish vendors --- bird vendors --- plant vendors. The main issues faced are improper sanitation, congestion, slum areas blocking the canal front.

Project aims:

- In-situ slum rehabilitation: Relocate the slum dwellers in units vertically above the government buildings beside the canal, thereby connecting the road to the canal front.
- Reorganise the market space and reuse the abandoned tram bogies: The road and the market system be slightly changed as it will be a 2-day pet/plant market, while the rest of the days will be a daily market. On weekends, from 4am to 3pm, the road will be completely pedestrianised and after 3pm, a 4m lane will be used by vehicles.
- Build a community space as a proper public realm: Amenities and community spaces like toilets, drinking water facilities, play areas, seating areas are also installed.



"The market is deteriorating. I don't think anything can be done to uplift the situation."

~S. MULICK
FISH VENDOR

"We solely rely on the Sunday market for income."

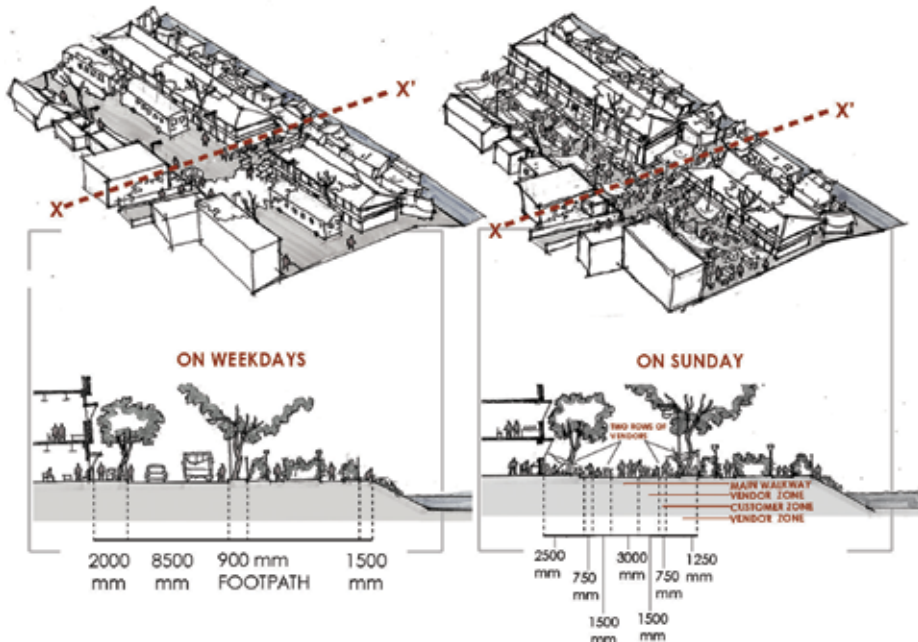
~ANITA GANDHI
BIRD VENDOR

"We had a permanent shop before but customers didn't enter the shop much thinking that if they enter, they will have to buy. So we shifted to the road where everyone can see whether they buy or not"

~ RAJU
PET VENDOR

"It would be better if it was an international market. I would also prefer installation of stalls and the vending spaces to be more organised."

~ SRIKANT
PLANT VENDOR





Outro

Andy Summers and Liane Bauer

Architects' and landscape architects' exposure to land is generally limited to when land is a vassal product, existant and subservient to being developed as efficiently and effectively as possible for their clients both within the public and private sectors where the root interest is money.

Beyond the often bystander-esque acknowledgements that there are ethical dilemmas inherent to how land is utilised within our development systems - such as the transferring of land from public ownership, land banking, habitat destruction, pollution, and the steady erosion of designated greenbelts when much brownfield land is available - there is little discussion on or involvement in finding alternative land management solutions.

Architects and landscape architects too often stand adjacent to these issues, denying or refusing to contemplate that we are an integral player within the capitalist profit-led approach to land that is, without question, killing people and destroying the planet through callous management, rampant consumption, and the degradation of entire ecosystems beyond nature's reach of repair.

Land, and the flora, fauna, and humanity that subsists upon it is the most important resource on Earth. We cannot survive without it. Our (un)learning here, then, is that as students, educators, activists, and qualified people we have far more agency than we realise. If we are interested in working towards a more holistic, sustainable, and just future we are in a prime position to help imagine and apply solutions for the better care and use of land: we must begin to take an active stand in reshaping this system.



Contributors

The following people have contributed to the work at hand and to this publication. A big thank you to everyone for their energies, ideas and collaboration.

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Magnus Davidson is a research associate with the University of the Highlands and Island's Environmental Research Institute, based in Thurso, Scotland. A native of the Highlands, Magnus' work focuses on setting out a new vision for 21st Century rural Scotland, which works for both people and nature, and reverses centuries of depopulation and ecological degradation.

Adopting an eclectic research portfolio across energy, climate, land use, development and conservation, he pulls together a range of often-conflicting views into a holistic vision for the Highlands and Islands, which is rooted in the unique social and cultural traditions of the region.

Magnus has also been involved with establishing a youth climate change charity in Scotland and sits on the boards of local organisations involved in community development and heritage. He also teaches across the university curriculum on climate, energy, geography and sustainability modules.

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Indrani Sigamany, is a researcher and senior international development consultant working with social justice, gender, and human rights based in Oxford, England. Indrani's research explores legal responses to the displacement of mobile indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands in India. Indrani has a PhD from the Centre for Applied Human Rights, York Law School, University of York in England.

Amongst others Indrani has authored the following chapters and articles:

- Development-induced Displacement and Resettlement
- Land rights and Neoliberalism: An Irreconcilable Conflict for Indigenous Peoples in India?
- A Critical Analysis of the Forest Rights Act 2006 of India and International Legal Mechanisms for Indigenous Land Rights
- Char Dwellers' Right to Development in Bangladesh

Vivien Sansour

Vivien Sansour is the founder of the Palestine Heirloom Seed Library. Trained in the field of Anthropology, Vivien worked with farmers worldwide on issues relating to agriculture and independence where she wrote about and photographed rural life and practice. She is working on bringing back threatened varieties

'back to the dinner table so we can eat our history to become part of our living culture rather than a relic of the past'.

A public speaker, Vivien has presented her work as an artist, independent scholar, and conservationist in several venues locally and globally including The Chicago Architecture Biennale, Victoria and Albert Museum, and The Venice Art Biennale. Vivien has worked with renowned chef Anthony Bourdain as a field producer for his Emmy award winning show, Anthony Bourdain: Parts Unknown. Vivien has been a contributing writer for several publications including The Forward Magazine where she is a food columnist.

She is a 2020-21 Religion, Conflict, and Peace Initiative Fellow at Harvard University where she is working on an autobiographical book documenting her work on seeds in Palestine and around the world.

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Donna Givens Davidson is the President and CEO of Eastside Community Network (ECN) in Detroit, Michigan. Based in Detroit's Eastside, the ECN spearheads initiatives that promote

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The ECN's own podcast Authentically Detroit, hosted by Donna Givens Davidson and Orlando Bailey, takes a comprehensive look at contemporary issues such as housing, spatial racism, economic development, neighbourhood planning, self-care, and community trauma, and how they impact Detroit.

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GLASGOW

Paula Larkin

Paula Larkin is the Archivist for the Govanhill Baths Archive & Heritage, part of the Govanhill Baths Community Trust. The Trust, located in the Govanhill area in the Southside of Glasgow, Scotland, is a grassroots activist-based organisation in the heart of the neighbourhood delivering wide-ranging health, wellbeing, arts, environmental and heritage projects.

Following 20 years of campaigning, their aim is to reopen the baths as a Wellbeing Centre, contributing to the regeneration of

the area and meeting the needs and aspirations of the local community. The Govanhill Baths building is now closed to the public for refurbishment, but services continue at a variety of venues in Govanhill.

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Mandy McIntosh

Mandy McIntosh is an artist from Glasgow who works across disciplines, often with communities, and has been making films, textiles, graphics, drawings, and community art for over 25 years.

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Jonathan Charley is an independent writer, editor and critic. He studied architecture in Portsmouth, London and Moscow, wrote his PhD on Soviet Architecture and worked in community architecture for seven years. He lives in Glasgow and for many years was the Director of Cultural Studies in the Department of Architecture at the University of Strathclyde.

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Neeta Das is an architectural historian and conservation architect based in Kolkata, India, and is a founder of the Mansara Centre for Study, Conservation, and Development of the Built Heritage - a non-government organisation based in Kolkata which seeks to draw out the complex relationship around the use, ownership, and dispute of land, both urban and rural, through engagement and amplification of people's voices. The overall objective of Mansara is to provide support to projects related to education, research, planning, and management of sustainable services and infrastructural development (both rural and urban) in the social sector, along with research, development, and conservation of historic sites, housing, and environment.

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Debayan Chatterjee is a Commonwealth Scholar from India, finished his MSc in Urban Development Planning at UCL with a distinction in 2020. He also earned a Master of Urban Design degree from SPA-Delhi and a B.Arch degree (honors) from Jadavpur University. Currently, he is working as an urban

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Sreyash Dasgupta

Sreyash Dasgupta is an architect and urban designer. He holds a Master of Science in Architecture and Urban Design degree from the Graduate School of Architecture, Planning and Preservation, Columbia University, New York, and a B.Arch degree (honors) from Jadavpur University, India. He is an associate architect and urban designer at Sukanya & Associates, a multi-disciplinary design firm.

Ishita Das

Ishita Das is an experienced Visual Communication Designer, Filmmaker and a Brand Consultant. She holds a Masters Degree in Communication, a Bachelors of Design, and a Certificate in Film Direction. Ishita majorly works with brands, governments and organizations dedicated to Climate Action for Socio-Economic Impact, to see what is possible through design and collaboration. She is best known for translating complex subject matters into a simplified visual narrative that evokes emotion.

ARCHITECTURE FRINGE

Raina Armstrong

Raina Armstrong is a Part 2 equivalent Architectural Assistant specialising in algorithmic processes and automation of architectural production. She has been engaged in architectural culture in Scotland through volunteer positions at various organisations, including Architecture Fringe and SEDA. Her interest in Design Justice Principles embedded in sustainable and healthy buildings is a key driver of the work she does.

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Liane Bauer

Liane Bauer is an award-winning Landscape Architect and co-founder and director at UrbanPioneers Landscape Architects – a practice, which was founded in reaction to the lack of opportunities for young mothers in architecture. The practice focuses on socio-political projects, meaningful stakeholder and user engagement and sustainable and highly contextual design. She is on the board of Play Scotland, an organisation promoting the right to play for children as recognised by UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and has been a co-producer of the Architecture since 2017.

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Andy Summers

Andy Summers is an architect, curator, and public programmer specialising in architecture and the built environment. He is interested in developing and contributing to a pluralised, progressive culture of architecture which seeks to support a just common good. His work questions and explores the conditions within which architectural cultures emerge, often challenging existing structures and cultural norms. He is a co-founder and co-director of the Architecture Fringe, and currently teaches architecture part-time at the Glasgow School of Art and the University of Edinburgh.

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Mythic Lands, Endnotes

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