

CONCRETE UTOPIA - RETHINKING THE BRUSSELIAN URAN BLOCK

Brusselian Urban blocks

Brussels is a city of courtyard blocks consisting of thin private houses. As a result of strict regulations the facades of these buildings are flat and therefore generate a strong public/private limit. Consequently the inside courtyards turn out to be fragmented spaces made out of private gardens and extensions. The most interesting part of the urban block is thus introverted and hidden from the public space.

Unadapted typology

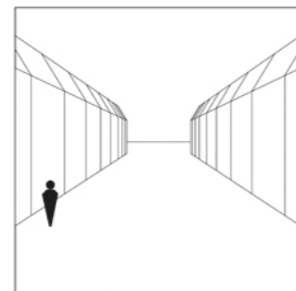
Simultaneously the Brusselian traditional housing system is not anymore adapted to the present demands. As there is an enormous need for apartments, houses are frequently divided into lower-standard dwellings. These renovations often imply an extension on the garden-side, which accentuates the complex inside-courtyard. The Brusselian urban block, which used to resemble Gouda slices, in creasingly becomes like an old Gruyere.

Proposal

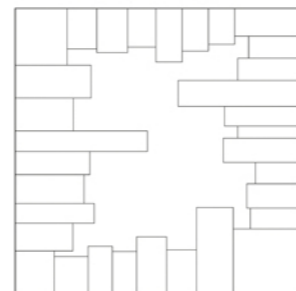
The main idea is to build an adapted new block that takes into account the footprint of the anterior building. This challenge could be met by taking advantage of the exceptional moulding characteristics of concrete. Remarkable examples of the latter are the historical footprints of dinosaurs in natural concrete.

Therefore, the proposition is to use the old urban block as a mould for a new building, in other words, to use versatility as a tool for creating a monolith. The new building will offer a strong identity, a smooth limit between the public and the private and a new typology in the Brusselian urban tissue.

flat outside facades



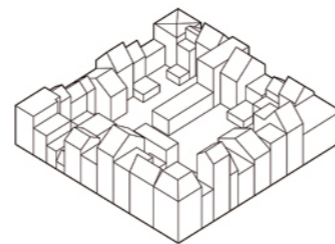
versatile inner courtyard



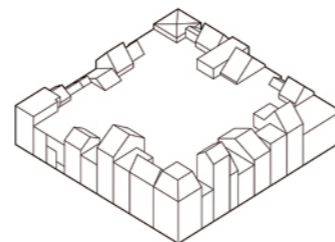
dinosaur's footprint



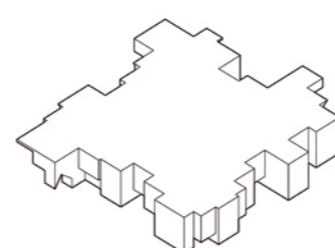
old situation



moulding



new situation



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