



FERTILE ARCHITECTURE

An architectural practice closer
to the circle of Nature:
drawing on **eco-places**

Adélie Barbotin

Chalmers School of Architecture

Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering

Master's Thesis in Architecture | Spring 2024

Supervisors | Shea Hagy & Marco Adelfio

Examinor | Liane Thuvander



CHALMERS
UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

FERTILE ARCHITECTURE

An architectural practice closer to the circle of
Nature: drawing on *eco*-places

Master's Thesis 2024

Chalmers School of Architecture

Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering

Author: Adélie Barbotin

Examiner: Liane Thuvander

Supervisors: Shea Hagy & Marco Adelfio

ABSTRACT

This research explores an alternative architectural practice within the context of pressing environmental and social challenges exacerbated by capitalist systems. Focused on reimagining the architectural process through the lens of a permaculture philosophy, the study centres on the transformative potential of an immersive study in an eco-place: Chenèvre. Nature, and humans understood as a part of the natural realm, forms the foundation for sustainable ways of life. Thus, the primary objective is to critically reflect on a more fertile practice of architecture. The research adopts a multidimensional methodology encompassing inductive immersion, deductive analyses, and abductive methods. Through direct engagement and immersion within an eco-place, this study explores the interrelations among individuals, the collective, and the specific site—understood not only as physical spaces but also as living beings inhabiting them. It offers insights into alternative living arrangements that challenge traditional norms. Moreover, societal, activist, and architectural literature were reviewed to deconstruct learned architectural norms to make space for a new fertile architectural ethos. Results from the two methods facilitate experimentation with new architectural processes and design methodologies, revealing the potential of immersive studies to reshape architectural practices and foster inclusive design processes that prioritise individual and collective wants and needs, ultimately interconnecting them with the well-being of the site. The research advocates

for a paradigm shift towards architecture rooted in deep immersion, emergent alternative narratives, and collaborative design with Nature. By envisioning architecture as a dynamic force for social and environmental change, the study proposes speculative designs through collages to transform architectural practices towards collaboration, informality, and inclusivity. This research underscores the significance of engaging future users and collectives in shaping their own way of dwelling for more responsive and equitable built environments. Finally, it highlights the potential of immersive work, co-designing, and co-working at every stage to advance towards a more fertile practice of architecture.

Key words: Alternative practice, Fertile, Dwelling, Nature

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

THANK YOU

to Marco for helping me set the groundwork for this thesis by sharing your knowledge and references, to Shea for great discussions and inputs that pushed my reflections further, to Liane for your guidance. I want to thank all living beings at Chenèvre for the warm welcome and shared moments. Finally, I thank all the people with whom I shared thoughts, discussions, and debates during this process.

FORWORDS

In this thesis, the term ‘we’ is used at different levels. Sometimes, it expresses humankind as a whole or society, while at other times it refers to me as the author and all the people who helped me develop my thoughts and reflections through debates and discussions.

GLOSSARY

The reflection of this thesis draws on core concepts and words that are defined in this glossary.

ARCHITECTURE

Process of thinking, shaping, imagining dwelling spaces for specific individualities and collectives.

ALTERNATIVE PLACE

Setting that deviates from mainstream norms and embraces unconventional methods or lifestyles. Overall, alternative places challenge established norms and offer unique perspectives on living, working, and interacting with the environment and society.

ANTHROPOCENTRISM

Anthropocentrism is a viewpoint that prioritises human desires and interests over those of other beings and the natural world, placing people at the centre of everything. Neglecting non-human life or ecological balance, this worldview favours human well-being and extractive uses of nature.

COLLECTIVE

Group of individuals working together towards shared goals. It involves collaboration and pooling of resources to achieve common objectives or address collective challenges.

DWELLING

‘Dwelling can be understood as the act of inhabiting fully. This presupposes an active interaction, a deep relationship between the inhabitant and the inhabited. Today’s space in which people live is only a container, a garage for people to spend the time in which they are

not productive in a capitalistic sense. The idea of dwelling goes against the idea of a finished building. It considers any inhabitable space as an entity in perpetual evolution. Any space should be created and taken care of by its own inhabitants. Dwelling lies beyond the reach of an architect.’ (Illich, 1984, p1).

ECO-PLACES

Place where individuals come together based on shared values and a vision of life that diverges from modern economic and social models. These collectives prioritise establishing a symbiotic relationship with the local environment, aiming to create mutual benefits and sustainability through their projects.

ETHOS

Refers to the core principles, values, and traits that characterise a group of people, a culture, or an individual. It represents the moral compass and ideology that shape interactions and behaviour.

FERTILE PRACTICE OF ARCHITECTURE

(see fig. 1)

A practice respecting the balance between human wants and needs and non-human beings, in order for both to thrive.

INTERDEPENDANCE

Interdependence involves the combined potential of individual components to develop together through mutual dependence. Nature is based on interdependent relationships, where living beings

and ecosystem elements are closely connected and interact to support life.

LIVING

The Living encompasses every beings living on Earth and their associated ecosystem.

SYMBIOCENE

The Symbiocene, in contrast to the Anthropocene, is an era in which humans and other living species coexist in symbiosis (Attias, 2021, p. 129).



Fig. 1: Quest towards a fertile society

TABLE OF CONTENTS



INTRODUCTION 1

1. Project Background 3

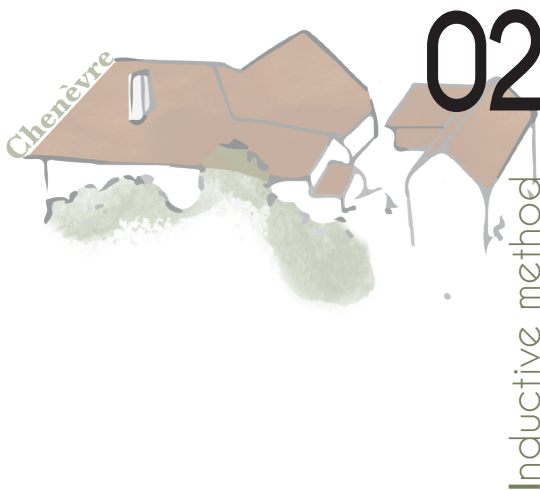
- Student background
- Towards a more fertile practice
- Permaculture's vision: an alternative philosophy
- Learning from eco-places

2. Purpose 6

- Relevance to Design Activism Beyond Borders
- Aim & objectives
- Delimitations
- Address a challenge
- Research question

3. Methods 13

- Inductive method
- Deductive method
- Abductive method
- Speculative design
- Reading guide



FIELDSTUDY: Deconstructing the notion of inhabiting in an ecoplace: Chenèvre 15

1. Selection of the place 19

- Criteria
- Research
- The choice

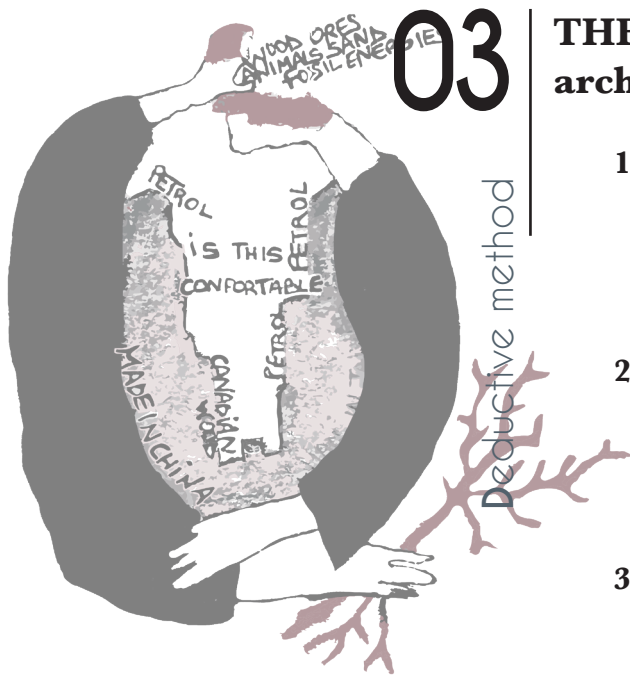
2. Living at Chenèvre, as a wooper 25

- Presentation of Chenèvre
- Working methods
- Daily life and documentation

3. Deconstructing how to inhabit and consume architecture as a dweller 33

- Learning collectivity
- Unlearning norms
- Relearning nature
- Mutual teaching: knowledge Café

4. Results 43



03 THEORY: Deconstructing the architectural and societal background 45

1. Learning new imaginaries 48

- Activism towards a collective chosen freedom
- Fertile growth: a new economical narrative
- Ecofeminism: a new societal narrative

2. Unlearning the imposed capitalist vision 51

- Patriarchy, leader of greenwashing
- Society's blinkers facing human belonging on earth
- Architecture's schizophrenia at the service of capitalism

3. Relearning new values & ways of thinking 55

- Reference: Movement Colibris & Cooperative Oasis
- Dwelling as being a part of Nature: permaculture vision
- Designing in a fertile way: based on degrowth & ecofeminism

4. THE FERTILE ARCHITECTURE'S CLOVER.. 60



04 RECONSTRUCTING the architectural practice for the Living 61

1. Cultivate knowledge from others 65

- References
- Fertile design criteria

2. Understand wants & needs: Workshop 71

- Purpose & expected outcomes
- The workshop
- Results & outputs
- Reflections

3. Speculative design: interconnecting humans with the place 81

FINAL REFLECTIONS 85

BIBLIOGRAPHY 89

APPENDIX 92



INTRODUCTION



PROJECT BACKGROUND



STUDENT BACKGROUND

My name is Adélie, and I am a 25-year-old architecture student. I started studying architecture at the age of 20 out of a fascination for historical buildings and what they convey in terms of knowledge and emotions. They represent the product of collaborative efforts working closely with raw materials, often returning to the earth gradually as ruins. How long can modern architecture endure? Often just a few decades, sometimes even less.

During my academic career in France, we designed many fictional buildings based solely on a list of required services within a certain square meterage on a given plot of land. This is how I learned architecture during my bachelor's degree: translating fictional needs into square metres, working with form, light, and aesthetics. After three years of this approach, I decided to participate in an Erasmus program in Sweden to broaden my architectural perspective.

There, I chose a studio called Social Inclusion. Our project involved finding solutions to facilitate

dialogue between residents of Gothenburg suburbs and the municipal housing companies, aiming to reach compromises and lower-cost renovation methods for apartments. Throughout the semester, we spent most of our time on-site, engaging with the agency and organising workshops with residents to fully understand both sides' needs. We quickly noticed a lack of communication not only between residents and the agency but also among the residents themselves.

During this semester, I realised the critical importance of communication at the beginning of any architectural project. Architects design spaces where people can feel safe and be themselves. Places become intertwined with individual identities, evoking emotions and memories. During my internships, I did not find these essential connections in the work I was assigned. It was mainly about budgets, deadlines, and aesthetics to meet capitalist principles: quest for profit, increase of productivity for more efficiency. For the first time, I saw architecture as a consumer product.

All of these experiences have driven me to seek an alternative approach to the architectural process, one that integrates social and environmental considerations. I aim to define my practice as a quest to explore various forms of dwelling that foster symbiotic relationships among individuals, collectives, and places. For my final student project, I aim to develop a practice of Architecture for the Living.

TOWARDS A MORE FERTILE PRACTICE

Today, life on Earth, encompassing all living beings, confronts escalating global warming leading to ‘natural’ disasters and ecosystem destruction, primarily caused by human activities, which disproportionately affect certain regions of the globe.

‘The U.N. acknowledged that some regions are facing the consequences of climate change faster and more severely than other countries; in turn, developed nations agreed to pay damages and reparations.’ (Rao, 2023, p. 1).

Thus, urgent action is needed in developed countries to significantly reduce emissions and pollution.

As part of the current generation, we confront existential questions about our future in the middle of constant media and political messages filled with fear. It is essential for our mental well-being to seek clarity amidst this uncertain future. Reflecting on alternative futures and exploring ways to transcend capitalism is central to my quest for clarity as a future architect. I aim to embrace a **FERTILE PRACTICE** that respects

the balance between wants, needs, and nature’s components, fostering the flourishing of both. I seek to challenge the prevailing capitalist paradigm, where the pursuit of wealth by the powerful often disregards the wants and needs of others.

Thus, this thesis is addressed to all architects wishing to reinvent their practice to align with current challenges and embrace a more respectful approach to our dwelling places.



Fig. 2: Graphical manifesto

PERMACULTURE VISION as an alternative philosophy

The journey to find this more fertile practice of architecture started with research on what other practices already exist that place Nature, and thus humans as part of it, at the centre of their reflection. The philosophical approach of **PERMACULTURE** (see fig. 3) is a perfect example. It emphasises the interrelation between all components of the living world and seeks to balance all needs (Alonso et al., 2020). This approach contrasts with the current architectural practice, which often operates with a top-down approach focused on profit and recognition.

LEARNING FROM ECO-PLACES

The permaculture vision, being a philosophical approach, inspired me to seek physical places aligned with this concept. In this pursuit, **ECO-PLACES** emerged as ideal case studies. An eco-place gathers people around common values and a vision of life that diverges from modern economic and social models.

To learn as much as possible from one of these places, I decided to conduct an **IMMERSIVE STUDY** for a few weeks as the starting point. The objective is to immerse myself in the daily life of someone living in an eco-place.

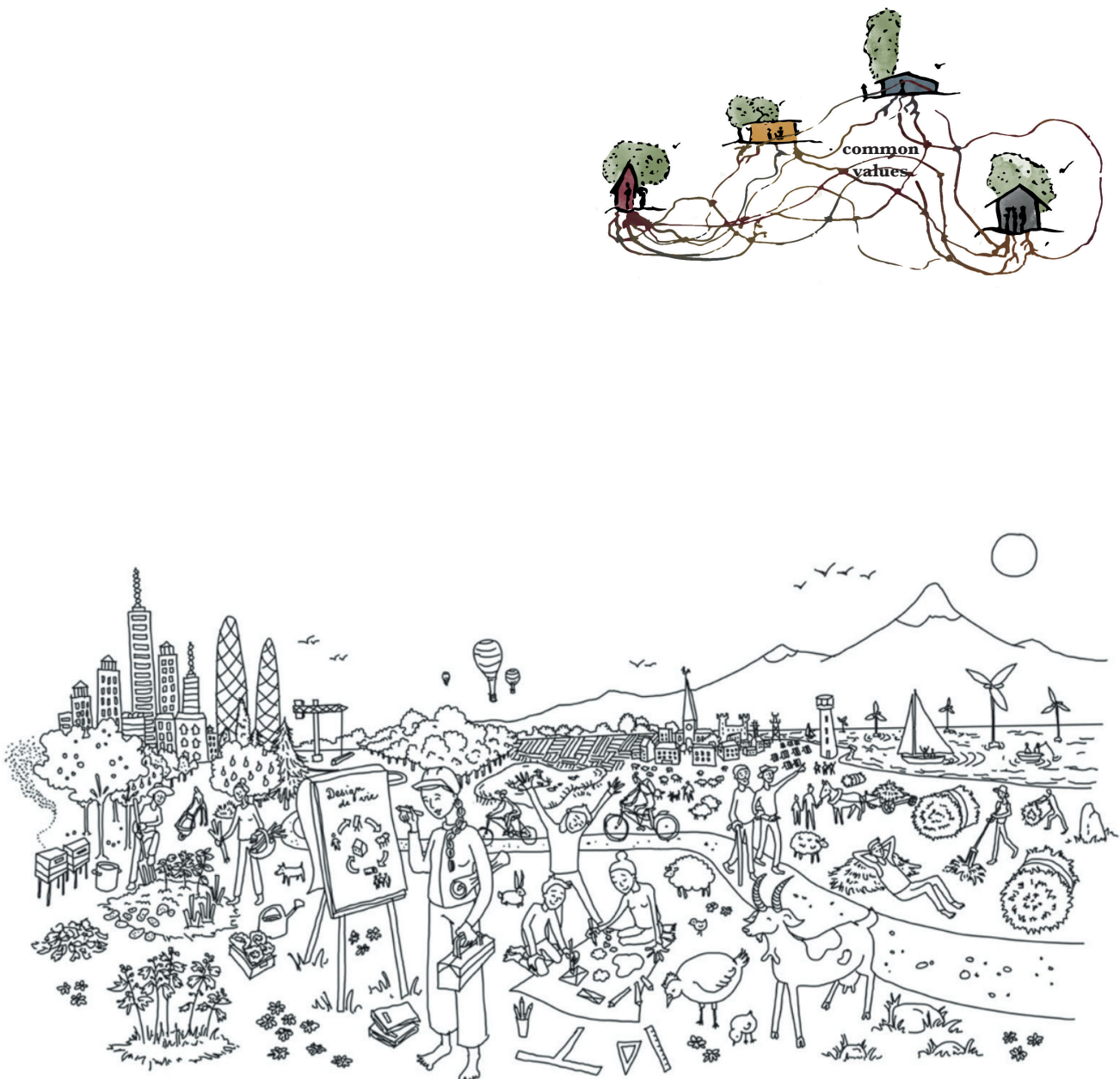


Fig. 3: Guilvin, M. (2016). Permaculture humaine.

PURPOSE

RELEVANCE TO DESIGN ACTIVISM BEYOND BORDERS

With this fieldwork and research, I aim to reconsider the architectural process and practice in a new light. Nature forms the foundation of human subsistence, and to ensure its continuity, a balance must be struck between human needs and natural components (see Fig. 2).

Architecture, viewed as a practice shaping ways of dwelling, is essential to fulfilling human needs. Therefore, in its integration into the balance of subsistence, it must align and symbiotically coexist with Nature. This thesis focuses on the social and ethical aspects of architecture, considering them as the roots of fertile projects unique to each one, individual, and collective. Currently, the majority of architectural offices are aligned with capitalist values rather than those of Nature. Therefore, this thesis critiques the architectural field's alignment with capitalism for profit and invites reflection on a new approach by challenging norms and standards. **As the world rapidly evolves, so too must the field of architecture.**

**ENVIRONMENTAL
ISSUES** ARE NOT FOR

THE NEXT GENERATION TO
SOLVE, IT IS OUR REALITY.

TIME TO GROW! **EMANCIPATE
YOURSELF** FROM **CAPITALISM.**

YOU CAN CHOOSE THE WAY
YOU WANT TO **DWELL.** ACT!

DARE TO BE **CIVICALLY
DISOBEDIENT.** EMPOWER

ACTIVISM. YOU

CAN BUILD YOUR LIFE IN SELF-
RESPECT WITH **NATURE,**

BE **ALTERNATIVE.**

TIME TO GO BACK TO **STRONG COLLECTIVES,** SHARING KNOWLEDGE,

TIME AND SKILLS. **RESILIENCE,** A SKILL TO HAVE TO FACE THE

COLLAPSE OF SOCIETY. INFORMAL CAN BE THE NEW FORMAL.

ARCHITECTURAL ACTIVISM, THE FUTURE OF

ARCHITECTURE?

Fig. 4: Written manifesto

AIM AND OBJECTIVES

The purpose of this thesis is to develop an alternative architectural process that seeks symbiosis between human activities and other living beings.

Considering humans as part of nature in a fertile project means naturally working for the well-being of other beings, even though they may not necessarily be the main characters in the physical design. The aim is to empower diversity, locality, and to redefine the role of the architect to integrate it into the fight against climate change and capitalism.

Throughout this thesis, I aim to empower those who have chosen to step aside from capitalist society with their approach to dwelling on the earth. I want to highlight this form of pacific activism that challenges the concept of freedom promoted by capitalism.

The objective is to reintegrate architecture into the circle of nature through a more inclusive and collective practice, moving away from its current egocentric and anthropocentric approach. With this thesis, I aim to advance architectural discourse towards a transition from Anthropocentrism to the Symbiocene: shifting from the notion of humans being superior to other living beings to embracing symbiosis among all living organisms.

DELIMITATIONS

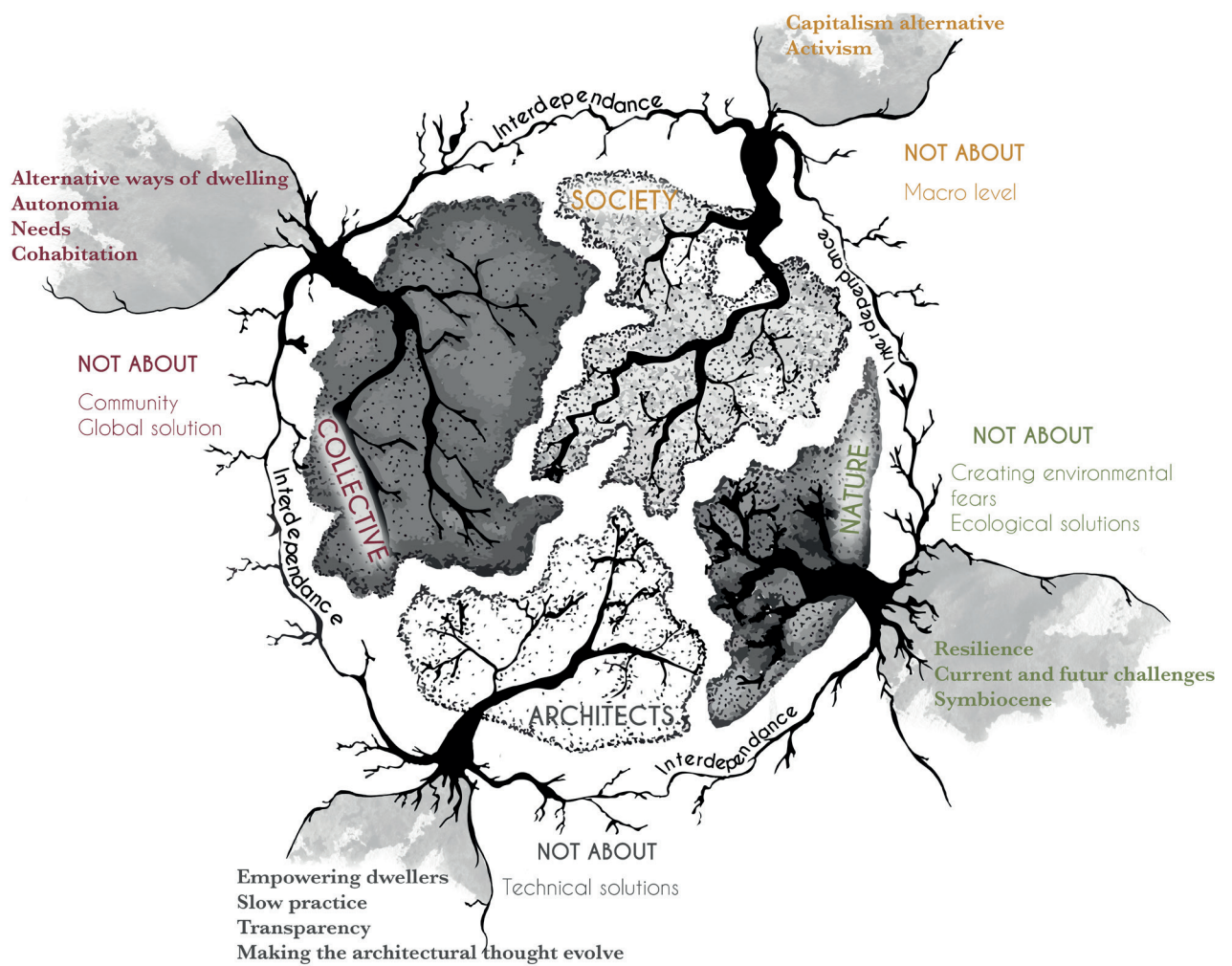
This thesis addresses four interconnected fields: society, nature, architects, and collectives, linked together through interdependent relationships (see fig. 5). It reflects on the role and responsibility of architects and users within nature and in projects that integrate with it. Rather than proposing global or technical solutions, it focuses on flexible processes that architects can adopt to practise in a more fertile manner.

This thesis contributes to the quest to confront current and future challenges by seeking resilience in architectural practice. It involves understanding the current societal context and exploring existing alternatives that align more closely with a biocentric vision.

This thesis is about a **collective quest** for autonomy through alternative ways of dwelling and a definition of individual and collective needs. It is not about providing a global solution to living autonomously.

It is about redefining the role of the architect in envisioning a truly fertile profession. This thesis does not address technical solutions for more sustainable buildings.

In a fertile practice, Nature is the primary user. It is thus about having the resilience to use current and future challenges to create, in our ways of dwelling, a symbiosis between human activities and other living beings. It is not about ecological solutions nor about creating environmental fears. Finally, it is a quest towards new societal narratives through activism and a departure from capitalism.



Connected while affording the space to grow individually

Fig. 5: Delimitation diagram

ADDRESS A CHALLENGE

Environmental crisis, global warming, rising sea levels, and increasing ‘natural’ disasters—these are just some of the consequences of the industrial era and the development of capitalism (Munshi, 2000). The American biologist Eugene F. Stoermer speaks of this period for the first time in 2000 as the «Anthropocene» (via-publique.fr, 2021). This one elevates the human species above others (Bon et al. 2022). Nowadays, it is clear that providing evidence to demonstrate the impact of this societal model is unnecessary; the changes are visible to the naked eye. It is also evident that this system is unsustainable and therefore infertile. Paolo Servigne and Raphaël Stevens (2015) explain that there are limits and boundaries to this system; pushing beyond them will ultimately bring down this society. So why do we continue to push our limits and those of the ecosystems? Bon et al. evoke the matter by illustrating that ‘*our unrestrained pursuit for growth is first a method of social organisation benefiting the few and assigning all others*’. (Bon et al., 2022, p. 13) [author’s translation]

The roots of this system are deeply ingrained in our lives and habits. Capitalism is based on three deeply entrenched pillars, which are the primary causes of its collapse (see fig.6).

First, the **economic system** is built on resource extraction and destruction. The more we have, the more we want, and even if some resources are renewable, our consumption does not align with natural cycles. In this regard, we are approaching and overshooting certain limits or boundaries depending on the resource. This is not fertile.

Then, society is ruled and constructed by **patriarchy**, which excludes a significant portion of the population. Indeed, capitalist structures reinforce traditional gender roles, often excluding women and non-binary individuals from decision-making processes and societal opportunities, thereby creating systemic discrimination (Bon et al., 2022).

Finally, the third pillar is the **environmental issues** that are addressed by politics through greenwashing. This phenomenon can be described as ‘the practice of making unwarranted or overblown claims of sustainability or

environmental friendliness in an attempt to gain market share’ (Dahl, 2010, p. 1). Within this system, the architectural profession is deeply entrenched. First, architects work for capital; then they adopt a top-down approach, positioning themselves as the central element of the project. Lastly, architecture plays a significant role in contributing to global warming through reliance on technical solutions and capitalism.

‘[...] *architecture intimately tied both to commercialism and to the power relations of an industrial society* [...]’

(Scott, 2002, p. 46)

Searching for alternatives to each pillar is a necessity for the future of humankind. The first alternative is to explore **different models of consumption** to reduce dependence on global institutions and achieve collective autonomy.

The second alternative is to **change organisational models** away from anthropocentrism and explore alternative collective ways of living. Finally, it is a matter of truly addressing environmental issues by leaving the anthropocentric way of thinking to enter the Symbiocene: an era in which humans and other species live in symbiosis (Attias, 2021).

Integrating these alternatives aligns with the ethos of places that strive for symbiosis with other living beings with whom they share the same site. These places, known as eco-places, prioritise the natural world as much as human well-being because of their interconnectedness. In these places, architectural practice can find inspiration to transform the profession towards greater respect for the natural world. To discover this inspiration, I spent three weeks at an eco-place: Chenèvre, in the French Jura.

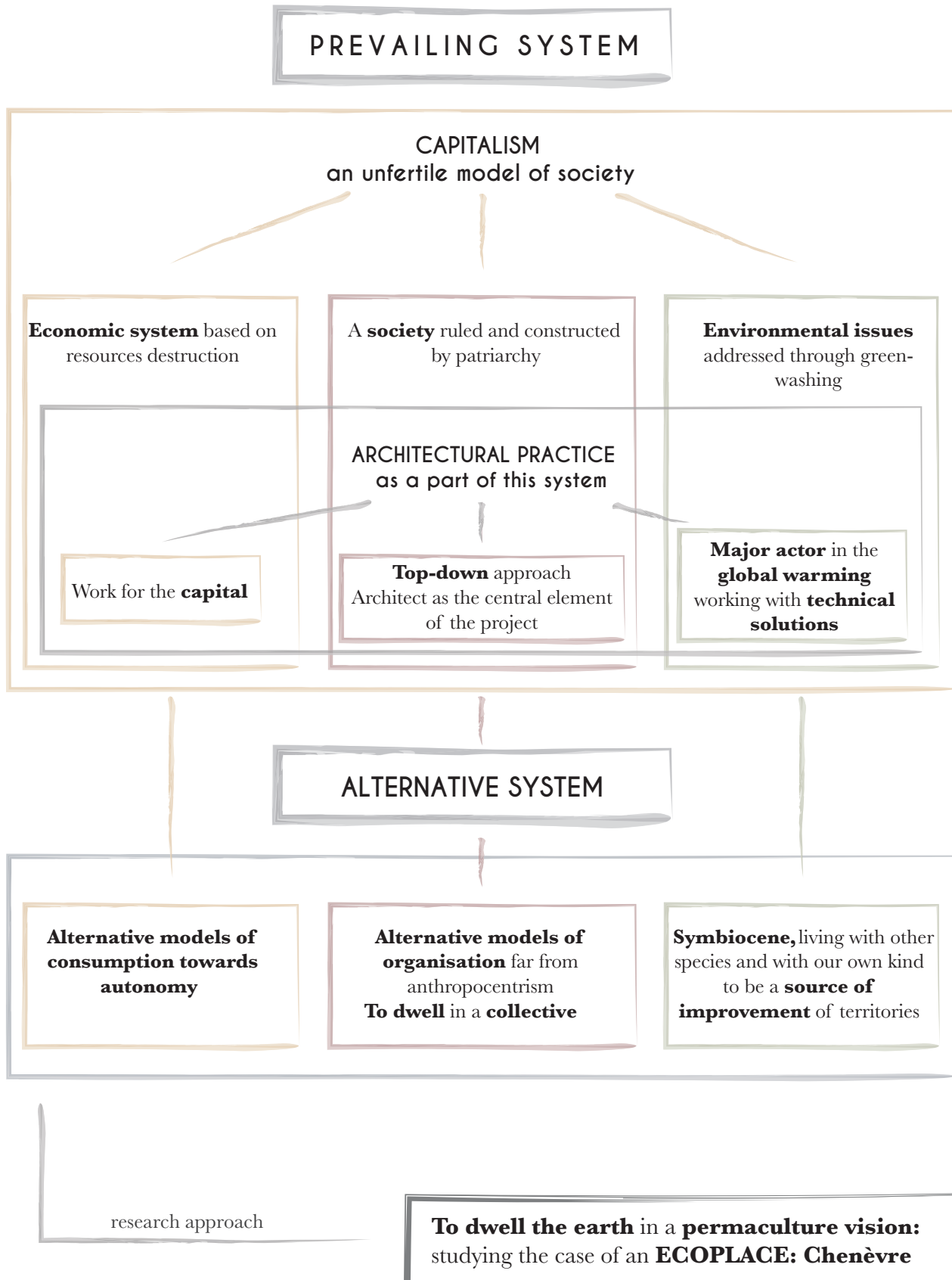
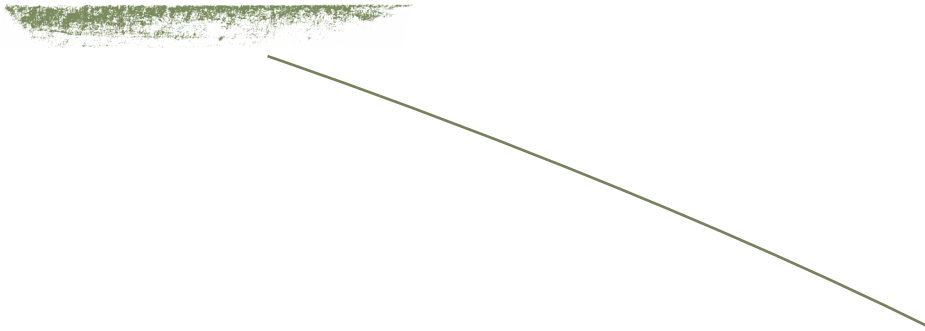


Fig. 6: The challenge

Note. This diagram illustrates the challenge addressed by this thesis and the approach taken to tackle it.

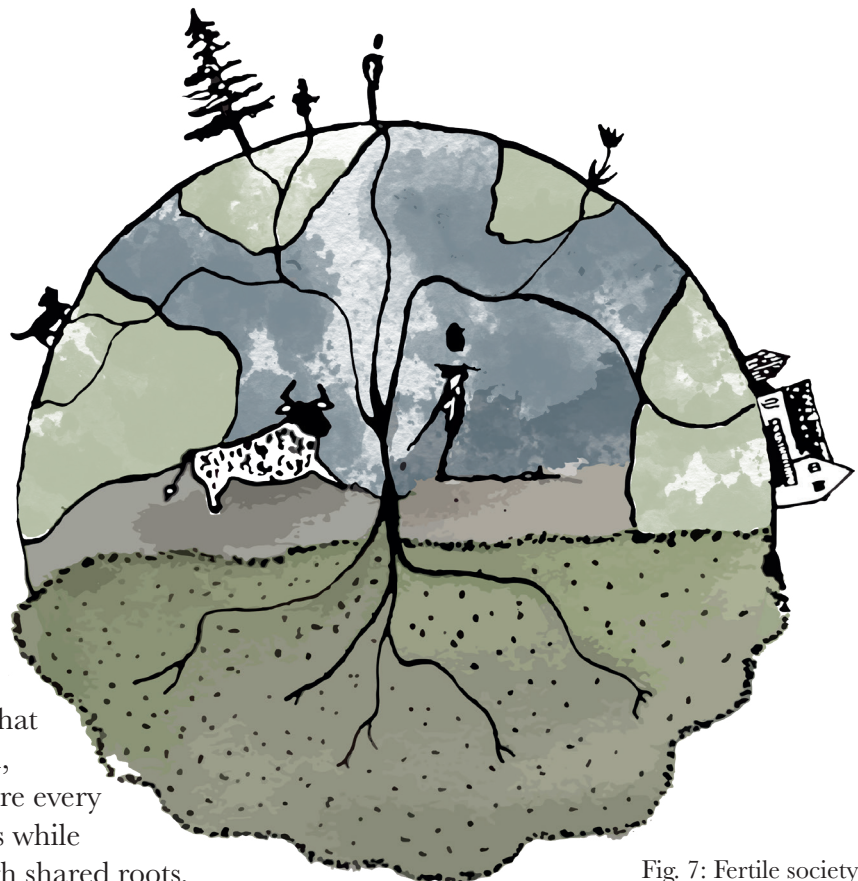
RESEARCH QUESTION

IN WHAT WAYS MAY THE **IMMERSIVE STUDY** OF **ECO-PLACES**, SUCH AS CHENÈVRE, CONTRIBUTE TO THE **CRITICAL REFLECTION** OF THE **ARCHITECTURAL FIELD** AND TO A QUEST FOR A MORE **FERTILE PRACTICE**?



Sub questions:

- What aspects of eco-places enable a symbiosis between natural elements and the built environment?
- What aspects of the capitalist system inhibit this symbiosis? What are existing alternatives that a more fertile practice could be a part of?
- How might the practice of architecture be rethought using the in-depth investigation of an eco-place, the analysis of the current system, and existing alternatives?



A practice that respects the balance between wants, needs, and natural elements, allowing them to thrive. This approach integrates an alternative society that dwells in harmony with the earth, sowing the seeds for a future where every living being can grow as it desires while remaining interconnected through shared roots.

Fig. 7: Fertile society

METHODS

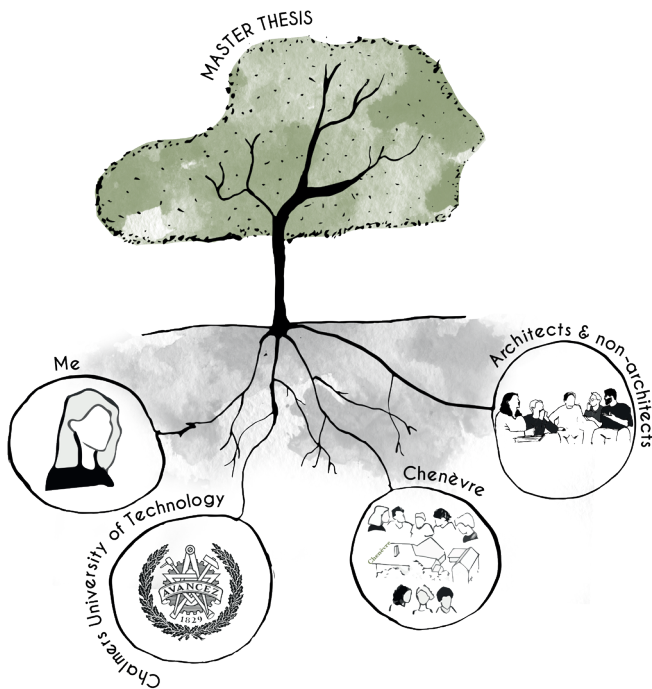


Fig. 8: Involved beings mapping

This master's thesis combines various approaches to address the research question on multiple levels. It blends inductive, deductive, and abductive methods (see fig. 9).

INDUCTIVE METHOD

First, the **inductive method** was used during the immersive field studies at the ecoplace Chenèvre for three weeks. This method extrapolates broad conclusions from a collection of data (Pauwels et al., 2013). The documentation resulted from unstructured and participant observation on-site. The purpose was to observe and understand how dwellers built the collective, based on what values, and how they continued to develop the project of the eco-place while keeping their values and intentions at the centre. Understanding and experiencing an alternative way of dwelling and carrying out a project, far from the capitalist vision, was the objective. To do so, I volunteered to help them with their current projects (construction site, renovation, market gardening, etc.) in exchange for food and a place to sleep.

The development of this thesis has been possible thanks to the participation of numerous actors such as Chalmers University of Technology, members of Chenèvre, architects and non-architects who participated at the workshops (see fig. 8).

With their approval, I filmed daily life activities, took notes of informal conversations, and participated in collective reflections. Using this method during the immersive study showed me an alternative way to dwell, close to permaculture, within the Living, and far from what our capitalist society offers us. Indeed, layouts of contemporary apartments or houses push us towards standardised forms of dwelling decided by architectural norms. We are all aware of the current global challenges, and yet our political systems don't push us towards ways of dwelling such as Chenèvre. This reflection highlighted the necessity to understand the current system in depth and to search for new narratives through a deductive method. The purpose was to explore what kind of new narrative a more fertile practice of architecture could be a part of.

DEDUCTIVE METHOD

In parallel of the inductive method, a **deductive approach** was used to understand existing theories on alternative narratives to capitalism. Moreover, this enabled the deconstruction of my

architectural and societal background to make room for new ways of thinking and imaginaries for a more fertile practice. This approach encompasses the theoretical aspect of the thesis (Pauwels et al., 2013). Combining criteria from existing approaches of alternative narratives to capitalism with the results of the field study, new ethos for a more fertile practice of architecture were explored.

ABDUCTIVE METHOD

To further advance the reflection, especially given the focus on alternative and new narratives, an **abductive method** was employed. This method is a procedure for formulating and selecting hypotheses throughout an investigation. The findings are conjectures rather than hard-

and-fast facts (Pauwels et al., 2013). This method was used to experiment with how the results from the inductive and deductive methods could be implemented in a new architectural process. Consequently, fertile design criteria were developed and tested during a workshop that brought together architects and non-architects. The workshop concept serves as a prototype for the initial phase of a fertile architectural process.

Based on the workshop results, the next step was to stimulate critical reflection on the concepts of commons, collective living, and dwelling within a specific place, using **speculative design**.

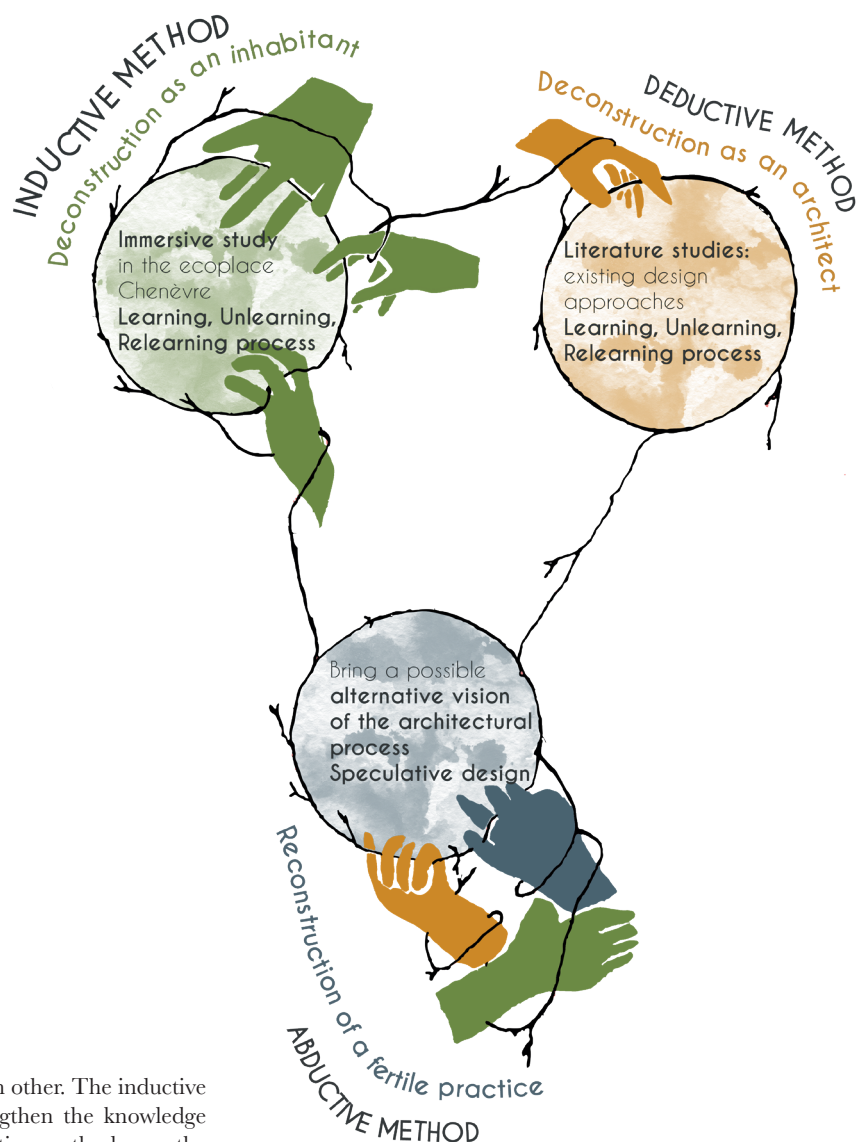


Fig. 9: Working method

Note. The three methods complement each other. The inductive method highlighted the necessity to strengthen the knowledge through a deductive method. The abductive method uses the results to test an alternative practice of architecture.



FIELD STUDY:

DECONSTRUCTING THE
NOTION OF INHABITING IN
AN ECOPLACE: CHENÈVRE



INTRODUCTION

As a future architect, contributing to increasing climate change by investing time and energy in technological solutions does not inspire me. What does inspire me is nature and the relationships humans could have within it.

As a student in architecture seeking a more fertile practice, ecoplaces are a source of reassessment. Indeed, their priority is to establish a symbiotic relationship with the local environment, aiming to create mutual benefits and sustainability through their life projects. The architectural object and its practice must find its place in the cycle of nature rather than positioning itself as superior to it.

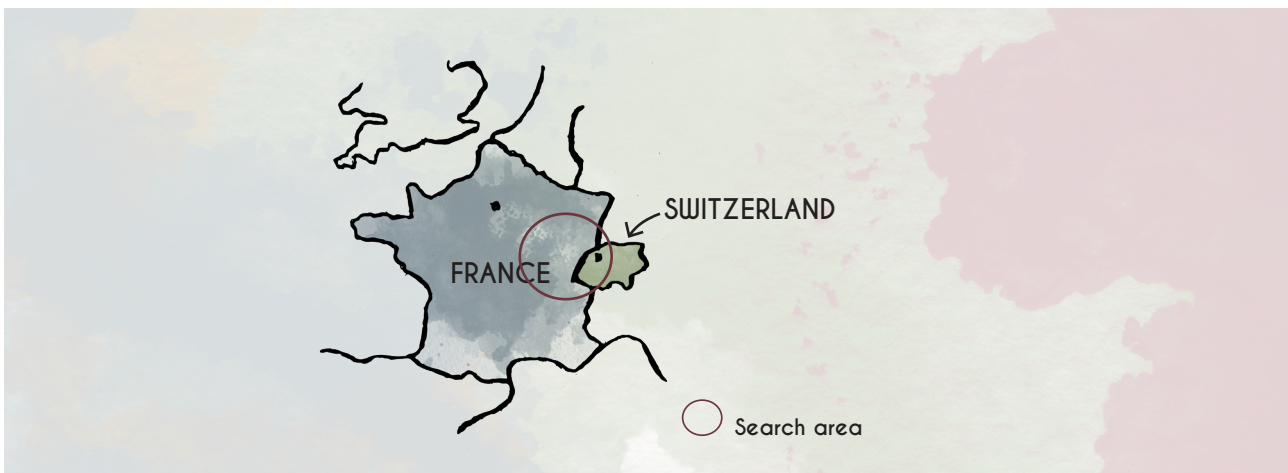
In order to deconstruct my current way of inhabiting and to finally learn how to dwell taking the definition of Illich (see glossary), I decided to spend three weeks in one of those places: Chenèvre.





Fig. 10: Watering the plants
This photograph showcases an activity at the eco-place where humans and non-humans collaborate to enhance the well-being of their shared living environment.
Photographs captured by the author

SELECTION OF THE PLACE



In France, strong community movements took place fifty years ago deeply intertwined with the awareness of the impact of modern lifestyles on our environment (LDV Studio Urbain, 2023). A study carried by Cooperative Oasis in 2023 shows a number of 1200 ecoplaces in France gathering more than 15,000 people (Vialan, 2023). The COVID-19 crisis highlighted the significance of these alternative places. People recognised the potential of being closer to nature in such settings, observing how little they were affected by the crisis (M, M, 2021).

Ecoplaces can take many names, many forms, each one growing independently. Participative habitats, collective farms, third places... Living in such places may be due to different reasons. It can be the desire to live in accordance with ecological and ethical values, or it can also be an act of activism by ceasing contributions to global institutions (Vialan, 2023). Those reasons are truly inspiring in the quest for a more fertile practice. To help me choose the location for my studies, I developed criteria ranging from general to more specific aspects that I was searching for.

GENERAL CRITERIA - COUNTRIES -

- **ACCESSIBILITY** via **LOW-CARBON** transportation

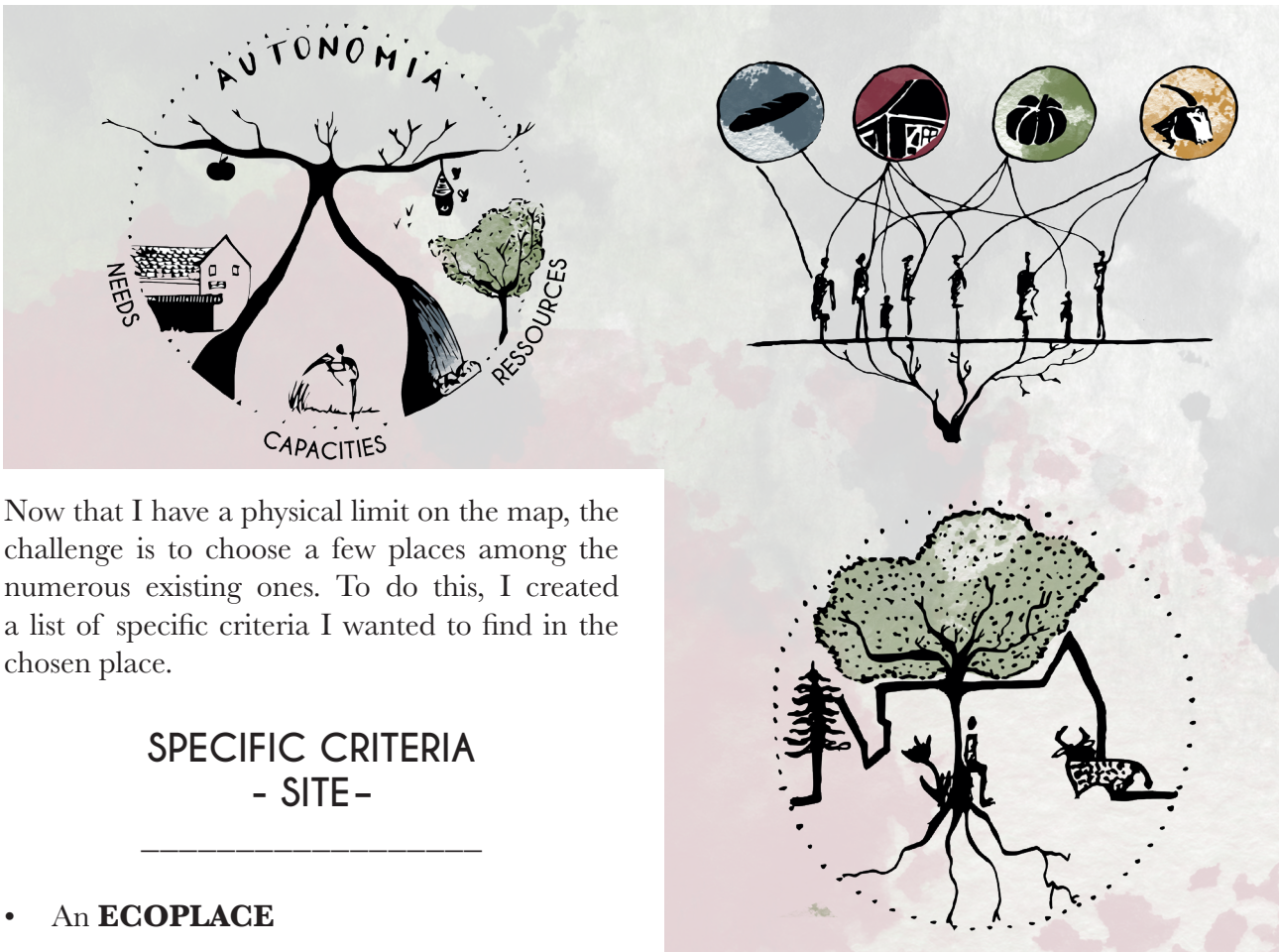
Being already on the European territory it appeared evident to me to start looking for an eco-place that was accessible by train from my living place: south of France.

- Being able to **CATCH** the **SENSITIVE LAYER** of people

A lot of emotions and sensitivity are perceived through language. Fully understanding those intimate layers within each dweller of the place was important for me.

- Using **FRENCH**

Since my native tongue is French, France and the French-speaking part of Switzerland were chosen as physical limits.



Now that I have a physical limit on the map, the challenge is to choose a few places among the numerous existing ones. To do this, I created a list of specific criteria I wanted to find in the chosen place.

SPECIFIC CRITERIA - SITE -

- An **ECOPLACE**

The place must have strong ecological values, living closer to the natural world with the notion of 'living together'.

- A **COLLECTIVE** and **INCLUSIVE** place

Humans are not solitary animals. Tending towards autonomy means working as a group, as a collective. Being able to count on others and have a deep knowledge on your living environment (plants, earth, animals even neighbours) is essential in this vision. In that sense, the **SIZE** of the collective is important (several people, intergenerational and from different backgrounds) and should stay **LOCAL** as much as possible in terms of economic activities.

- A **DWELLING** place

A place that lives through its occupants, humans and non-humans. A place where the definition of dwelling goes beyond having a roof over the head. Inhabitants and their dwelling place are connected in harmony with the surroundings.

- A place in **SELF-CONSTRUCTION**

Dwellers manage their construction projects through co-design and participatory construction site. Self-construction builds a strong relationship between the dweller and the used material. This brings a certain freedom throughout the rejection of the deliverance proposed by capitalism.

- A place tending towards **AUTONOMIA**

Berlan explains that being autonomous is first being able to satisfy what we feel like our needs are in a sustainable way (Berlan, 2021, p. 176).

This implies a balance between what feels as needs and what is at our disposal in terms of capacities and resources.

RESEARCH FOR THE PLACE

The search for the field study began by selecting places on woofing websites such as wwoof.net. Woofing involves going somewhere to provide various types of voluntary help in exchange for food and a place to sleep. Several places listed on the website are eco-places, farms, or collective spaces seeking assistance with daily or occasional tasks.

The goal was to identify several places that aligned with my criteria, where I could contribute and become part of the life of the location for a short period of time.

I discovered that there is no perfect place, just as there is no perfect example of an eco-place. This was a lesson I learned during September while visiting three different places.

I selected four places before making my final decision. Each visit varied in terms of the duration of my stay and the activities I participated in.



<p>PLACES</p>	<p>LA POINTERIE, Côte d'Or, FRANCE</p>  <p>Date of visit: 22 and 23 August 2023</p>	<p>FERME MAMAJAH, Switzerland</p>  <p>Date of visit: 28 August 2023</p>
<p>SHORT DESCRIPTION</p>	<p>La Pointerie is a unique community space that combines housing with various activities. Several families and individuals own parts of the existing buildings, where they currently reside or plan to live after renovations.</p> <p>I was warmly welcomed by Charlotte, who manages the horticulture business at La Pointerie, for a two-day stay. During my visit, I explored mostly on my own and engaged in conversations with people during meals. The sense of collectivity was palpable.</p> <p>There is a genuine desire to breathe new life into the place, especially the piece of land that has been significantly degraded by human activity. During my time there, I reflected on the concept of temporality. Living conditions shift our perception of time, making it less constrained by societal demands, which allows for greater ease.</p>	<p>Ferme Mamajah is an eco-farm that promotes eco-solidarity and aims to raise awareness about biodiversity and our interdependence with the Living.</p> <p>I spent a few hours there, exploring the land on my own and speaking with the market gardeners.</p> <p>Although the ethos of the place and their life vision aligned with what I was seeking, it was not a dwelling place.</p>
<p>PRESENT CRITERIAS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-renovation with a reflection about ecological buildings and passive housing. • Collective project for electric self-sufficiency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self-sufficiency in terms of food: permaculture principles and ethos.

Table 1: Visited Locations for Final Study Site Selection.



LA LEYDERRY, Switzerland



Date of visit: 23 and 24 September 2023

La Leyderry is a one-year-old eco-place project located in the foothills of the Swiss canton of Valais. The collective owns the place, but currently, no one is living there full-time.

I spent two days there. One of the project members, Loïc, had organised a participatory weekend with volunteers to gather dead wood in the forest for firewood. I participated in this activity and helped prepare the collective meal for the evening.

Conversations with Loïc helped me understand the challenges of their project and why no one has settled in the place permanently yet. Since it's still early in the project, it could be interesting to follow the challenges and steps involved in creating such places. However, the initial stages can be time-consuming when ten people are working together to create something. Spending just one month on-site, where no one is currently living full-time, may not provide a comprehensive view.

- **Ecoplace** in process
- Futur **collective** and **dwelling** place

CHENÈVRE, Jura, FRANCE

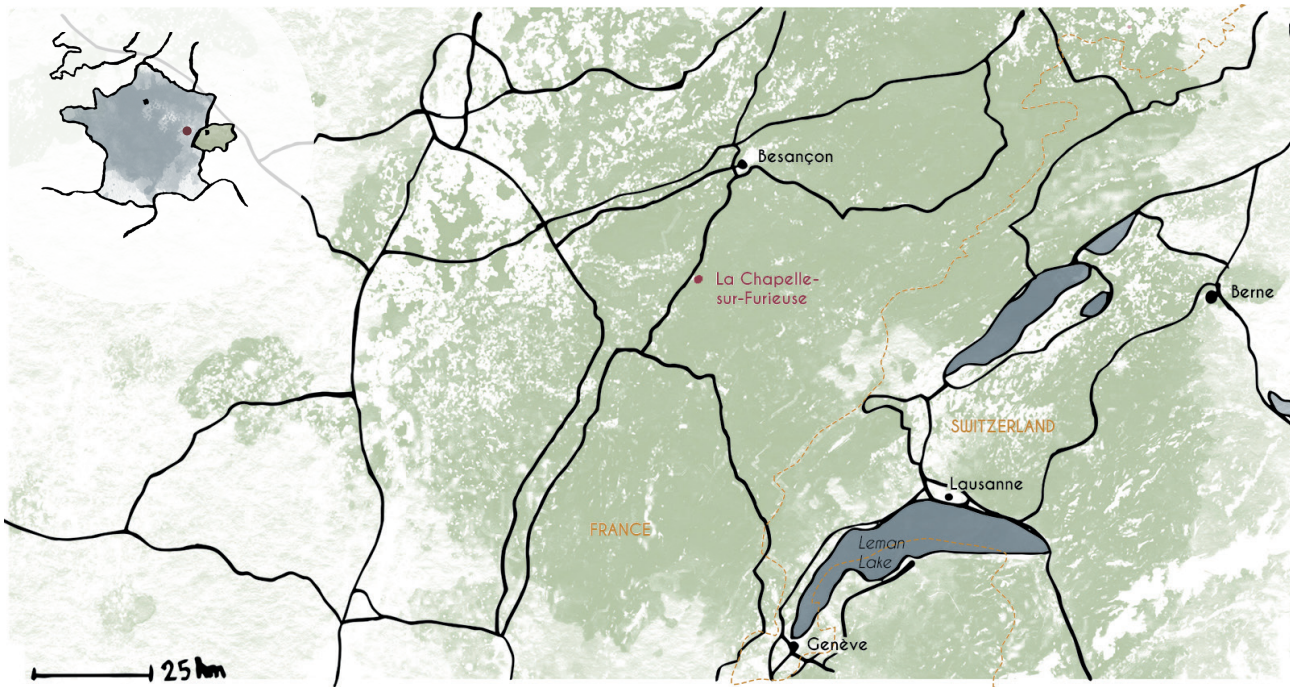


Date of phone call: 27 September 2023

Chenèvre is an ecoplace established since 2017, thriving through several income-generating activities. I discovered it on a French woofing website where they were seeking woofers primarily to assist in completing the construction of a new barn for storing market gardening produce and relocating the living space for the goats.

I was particularly drawn to this project due to its diverse activities, multigenerational aspect, well-established collective, and self-construction approach. Without having visited the site beforehand, I spoke with one of the dwellers of Chenèvre over the phone to discuss and ask questions about the place. This conversation convinced me to conduct my fieldwork there.

- **Eco-place**
- **Dwelling place**
- **Collective** and inclusive place
- **Self-construction**
- Tending towards **autonomy** through subsistence activities



THE CHOICE

After one month of reflection and visits to possible field study locations, I finally decided to conduct the immersive study at Chenèvre. During the first three visits, something always felt missing, and it was likely something very personal. I needed to feel a connection with either the place or the people. In this vision of a more fertile practice, working with emotions and feelings is absolutely necessary.

On September 27th, I received a phone call from one of the members of Chenèvre. I had selected this place weeks before and had sent emails without receiving any responses until that date. On their website, a lot of information matched my criteria more than other places. Over the phone, the member explained to me life at Chenèvre, the ongoing projects, and why they were interested in my visit. I immediately felt the potential of conducting the immersive study there, where there would be mutual aid, teaching, and understanding.

Thus, I did not visit Chenèvre before the immersion. A choice needed to be made, and I decided to follow my desires and emotions.

The trip to the French Jura began (see fig. 11 & 12).

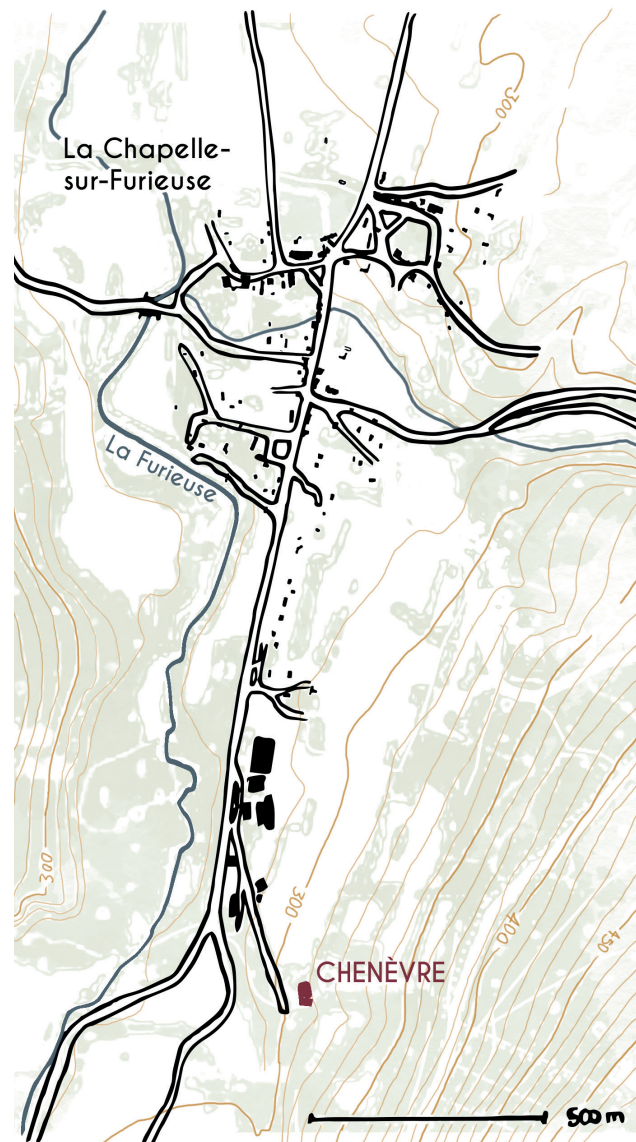


Fig. 11 & 12: Site plans

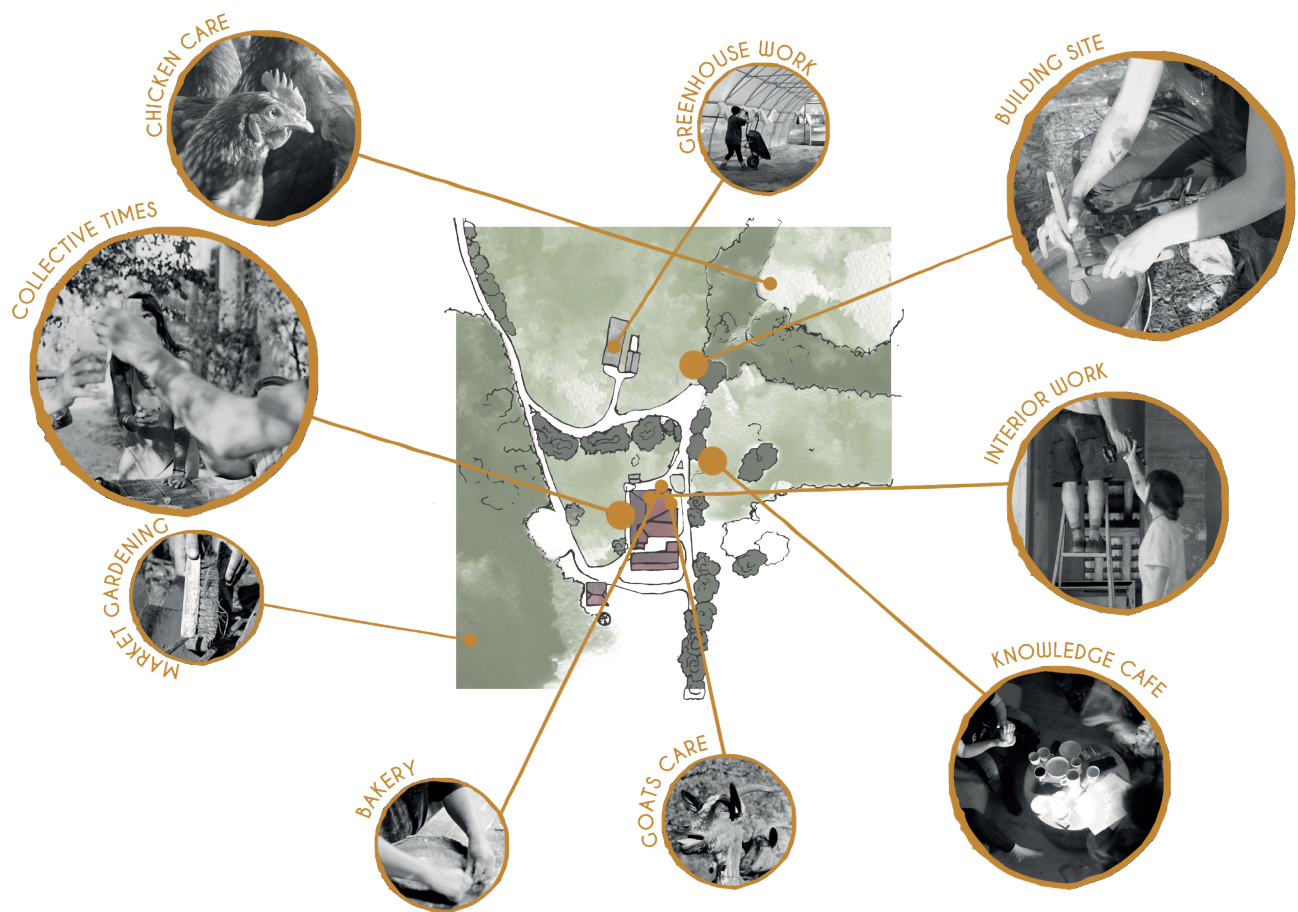
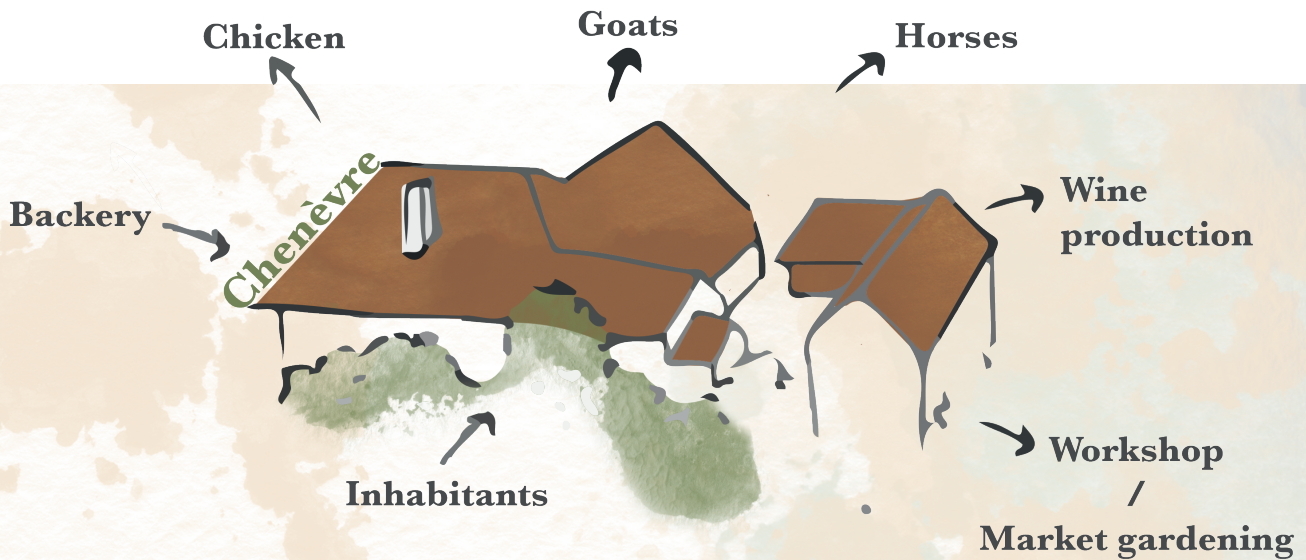


Fig. 13: Map of Chenèvre showing the activities

LIVING AT CHENÈVRE, AS A WOOFER

The immersion consisted into integrating myself in the place by spending time there as a **woofer**. A woofer offers a couple of hours a day, working where its needing, in return of a place to sleep and food.



PRESENTATION OF CHENÈVRE

I arrived at Chenèvre, as a woofer, the 3rd of October 2023. The place is located in the French Jura. The collective at Chenèvre exists since 2017. The place is composed of fortified farmhouses from the fifteenth century, twenty hectares of natural and farming areas, horses, goats, chickens and about ten or more participants in the project (see fig. 13). When I was there, seven adults and two children were living in the place.

Five craft and farm businesses are established on the site. The woofers mostly worked with the market gardening business called GAEC (in French it means: Groupement agricole d'exploitation en commun, which is a farming association.). This one is run by three members.

Chenèvre is:

- **an ecoplace** with different agro-ecological activities making them well locally settled. Dwellers are gathering around the idea of a life turned towards sobriety and sharing.
- **tending towards autonomy** through mutual aid and share reducing their dependence on global supermarket. Members of Chenèvre are producing their own

Sobriety, in terms of material possessions and energy consumption, represents a way of life translated through habits and actions at their living place, Chenèvre. Step by step, dwellers are integrating this as a core principle through manual tools for agriculture, animal traction (see fig. 10), and self-built structures. They aim to create a sustainable place in symbiosis with local living beings. However, the journey towards autonomy has just begun, and dwellers are well aware that they are building a living place for future generations.

- **a dwelling place:** in the old building (several apartments and others to come after the restoration of one part of the building), a few yurts and domes on the land. Dwellers decided to keep only one bathroom and one kitchen in the building to continue crossing each other on a daily basis.



From left to right:
 Accompany the goats in the barn
 Construction site of the new barn
 Horse ride to water the plants

Photographs captured by the author

vegetables, wine, bread, goat cheese and eggs. Mutual aid is a strong value by welcoming woofers and engaging local workforce. Thus, there is a strong interdependence relationship within Chenèvre (Dwellers and the Living, members of GAEC between them, dwellers between them ... to move each projects even further) and interdependence between Chenèvre and the local. With their production of wine, cheese, vegetables, and bread, they are participating in the local economy and becoming less dependent on global supermarkets. The next step of their project is to renovate and create new dwelling spaces in the main building. This requires money, knowledge, and time to accomplish. Therefore, the quest towards autonomy still necessitates remaining partially integrated into the existing system to slowly begin the process of emancipation.

- a **collective and inclusive** place counting a dozen people sharing several professional activities on-site. Their common goal is to regenerate local biodiversity and strive towards autonomy. Chenèvre serves as a physical bond among its dwellers, where no one is excluded from decision-making

processes. They deeply understand that their well-being is interconnected with the health of ecosystems and living beings at Chenèvre. Making decisions that prioritise the welfare of the residents involves considering the welfare of the animals, buildings, and lands. Everyone has a voice in discussions, and governance is structured horizontally.

The collective is reunited around a common project that is constantly evolving and changing direction depending on the people that hold the project.

‘A project that doesn’t evolve, or that stays on the first idea is a dead project.’

Patricia, Chenèvre
 [author’s translation]

As humans are evolving mentally and physically, a place soak up the energy of the living. Working and living at Chenèvre helped me to develop another vision of dwelling, closer to the circle of nature. Every component meets its needs without impeding the needs of others in a circular and sustainable manner.

WORKING METHODS

The first introduction of my thesis subject to members of Chenèvre was via email. I explained in writing the purpose of my stay at the ecoplace and mentioned that I would likely take pictures and videos during my visit. Additionally, I clarified that I would not photograph people without obtaining their consent. Upon arrival at the place, I took the opportunity during a meal to explain in more detail the purpose of my visit. Over the course of three weeks, several research methods were employed (see Fig. 14).

The first method used was **participant observation**. This research methodology involves the researcher immersing themselves in the day-to-day activities of the participants (Claude, 2019). As a woofers, I was part of the context and daily life at Chenèvre. This method enabled me to deeply understand their life concept by experiencing it firsthand. Through this method, I actively observed daily routines such as construction site activities, goat milking, and shared meals. This observation method

included interactions with people and the environment.

The second method employed was **unstructured observation**. I did not plan anything before arriving at Chenèvre. The main focus was to be present in the moment without any predetermined expectations. This method yields narrative results (Claude, 2019).

The last step was a workshop: a Knowledge Café. This concept involves a conversational process in which participants discuss around a given question (The Knowledge Café Concept – Knowledge Café, n.d.). During the workshop, woofers and members of Chenèvre shared thoughts and opinions on global subjects. The purpose was to learn from each other, challenge personal beliefs, and open new perspectives on different topics.

Throughout the workshop, I took factual and reflective notes, as well as documented the proceedings through filming and photographing.

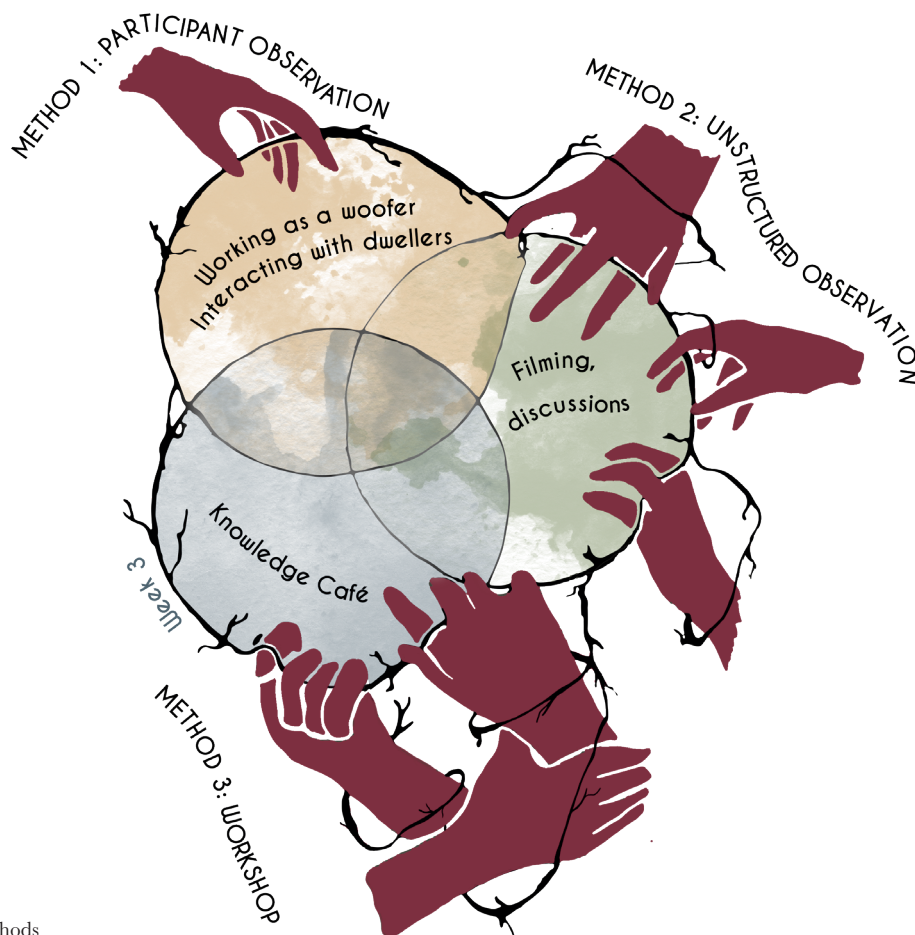


Fig. 14: Working methods

DAILY LIFE AND DOCUMENTATION

The two types of observation methods were employed during daily activities, with woofers assisting where hands were needed most. Including myself, there were six woofers living at Chenèvre for three weeks, engaging in a variety of activities (see fig. 15) that allowed me to observe different aspects of daily life at Chenèvre.

Participant observation during physical activities revealed the **importance of physical engagement**. I witnessed and experienced the unique connection between people and the place as they collaborated and cared for one another.

Unstructured observation brought daily

surprises. Each activity involved working with different members who shared interesting perspectives on various subjects—from their life experiences here to global issues (see fig. 16). This type of observation influenced my decision to choose the Knowledge Café as the most suitable workshop for this fieldwork and engagement with the dwellers.

These two observation methods highlighted two essential approaches in the quest for a more fertile practice of architecture:

- **Observing the mesh of the place**
- **Integrating oneself into the collective**

The results are an analysis of raw data coupled with personal feelings as a participant.

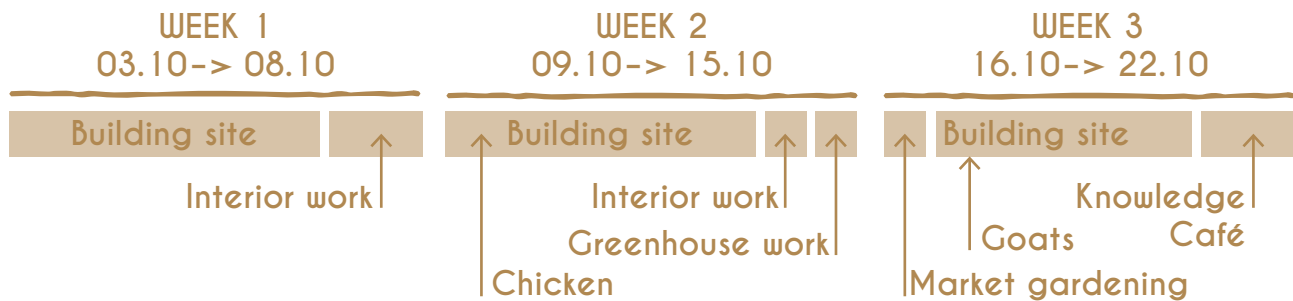


Fig. 15: Timeline of activities



Fig. 16: Notes, drawings from the Field study

OBSERVE THE MESH OF THE PLACE

Each place has a unique and intricate organisation, with each person and being connected to the place in a distinct way. This diversity is what makes each place special. As an observer and participant for a short period, it became important to untangle this mesh to grasp their definition of collectivity (Fig. 17). Spending time at Chenèvre with the dwellers allowed me to understand the sense of belonging that each individual has with the place. The collective ethos is centred around the physical location. Each dweller has their own approach to

dwelling and co-creating with the environment, gradually forming their own secure space over time. For instance, one of the families decided to build their own yurt, situated not far from the main building but with enough distance to create their own private outdoor space with a table, a hammock, and other amenities. This space allows them to temporarily retreat from collective life. Dwellers respect each other's wants and needs by forging interrelations to advance the project collaboratively.



Fig. 17: Observe the mesh of the place



Rush shots: Construction of the barn

For me, observing was most of the time through my camera. From the working time on the construction site, on the field to simple moments of life, I had it with me most of the time.

Filming and taking photos was the occasion for me to take a step back from what became my daily life.



Rush shots: Working on the fields



Rush shots: Daily life
Photographs captured by the author

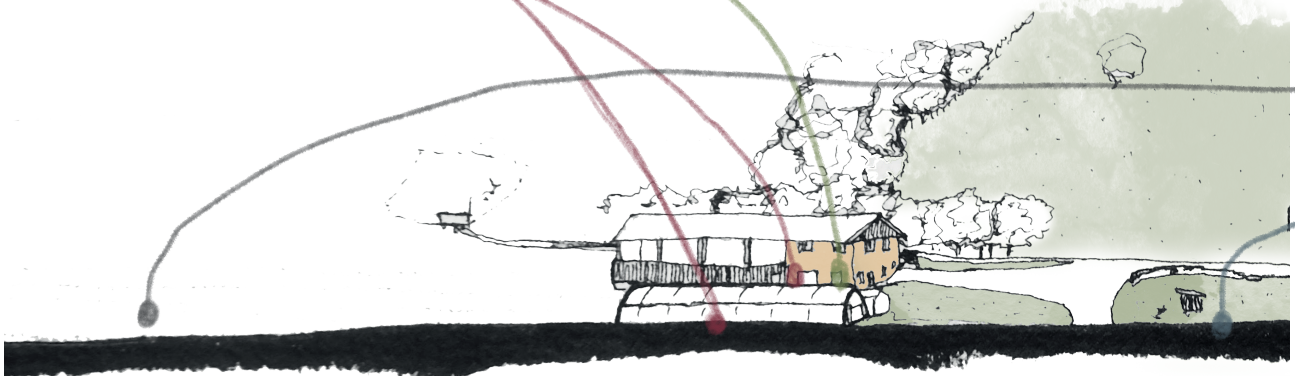
WORKING TIMES



LEARNING WORKING METHODS



COLLECTIVE TIMES



INTEGRATE YOURSELF

Understanding relationships by creating relationships through physical work. Give time for the commons, put emotions in the collective.

SPACE SHARING



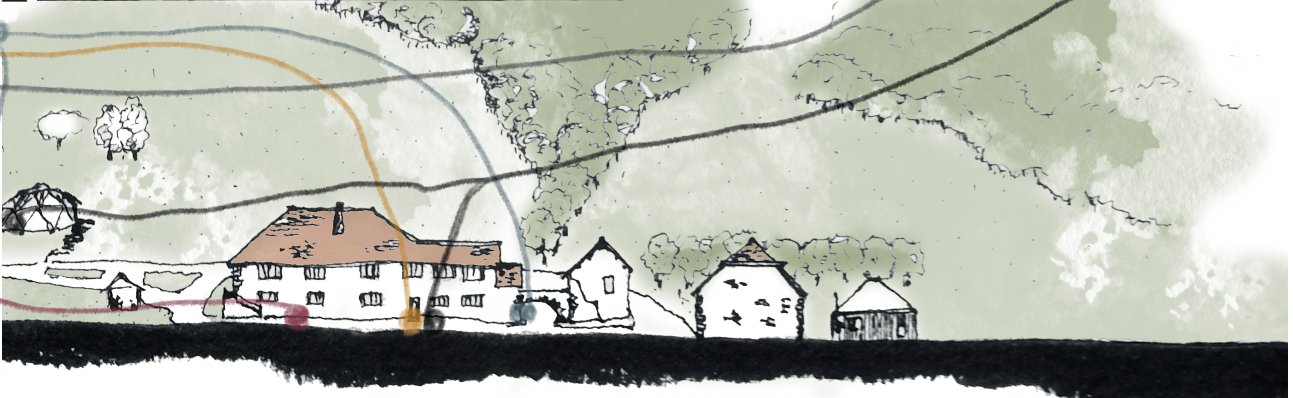
DISCUSSIONS



PERSONAL TIMES



MUTUAL AID IN DAILY TASKS



DECONSTRUCTING HOW TO DWELL AND CONSUME ARCHITECTURE AS A DWELLER

During these three weeks at Chenèvre I unconsciously had a process of Learning, Unlearning and Relearning as a dweller (see fig. 18 & 19).

This process involves individuals re-evaluate and updating their understanding of information as new knowledge emerges, often requiring them to discard beliefs and adapt their mental frameworks (2U Wordpress, 2023).

Since the beginning of my life, the way I inhabit has been unconsciously dictated by the family structure, the standardised spaces of apartments I lived in and by the cultural and societal background of the cities. I always consumed

dwelling architecture as a necessity and not as a way of life and even less as something being a part of my individuality. The immersive study at Chenèvre completely changed my vision of dwelling little by little through processes of Learning, Unlearning and Relearning that were complemented by mutual teaching along the way.

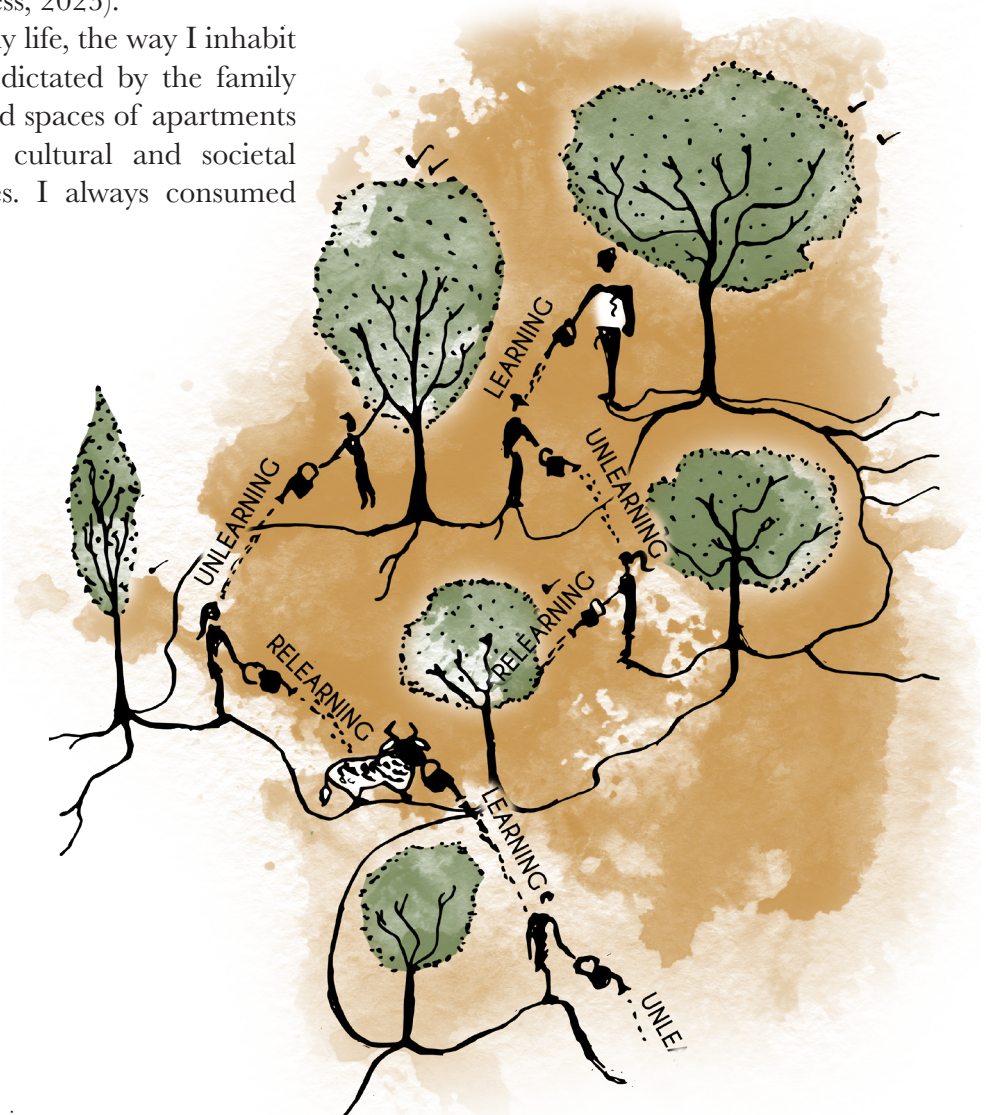


Fig. 18: Learning, Unlearning, Relearning process

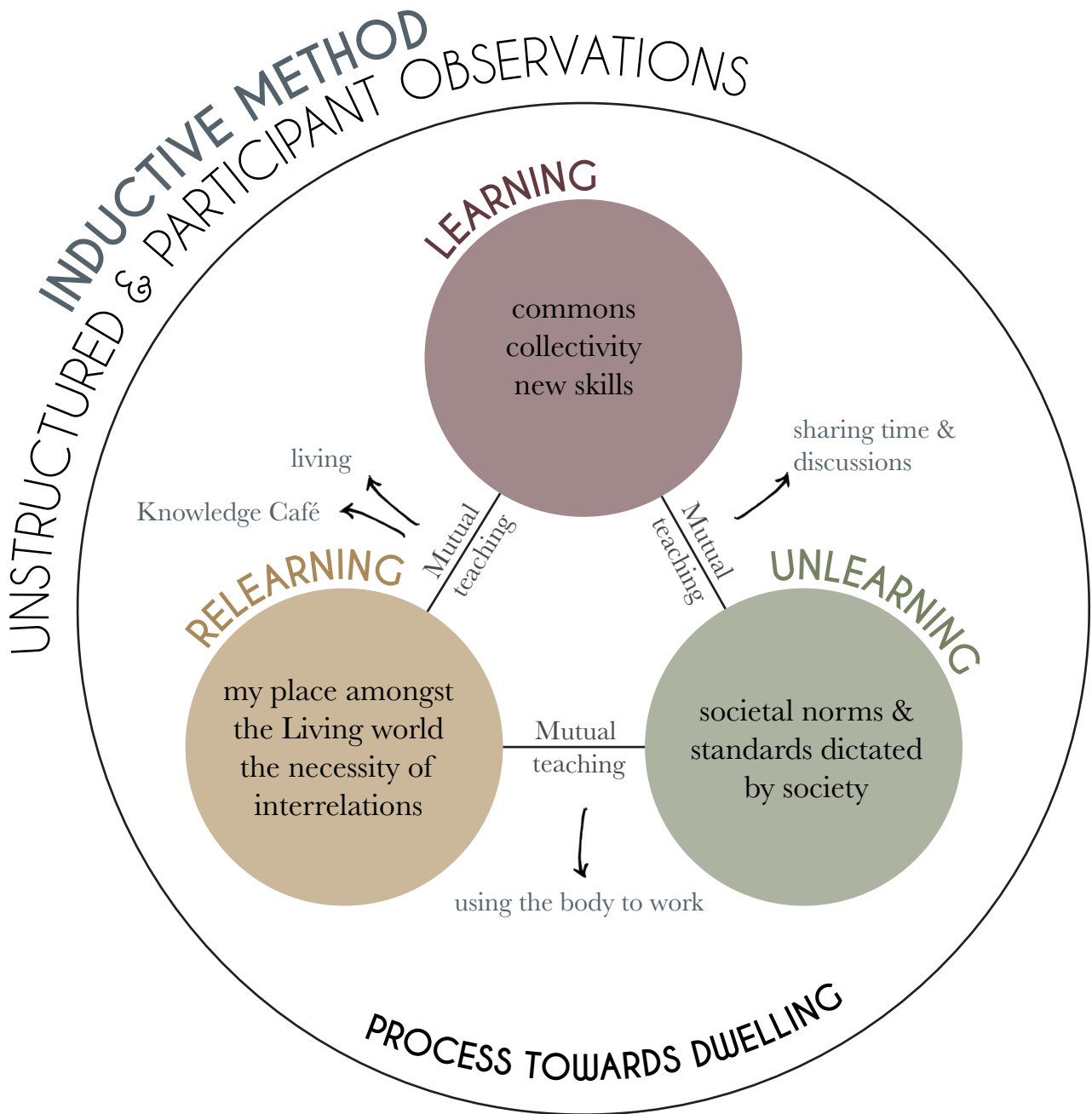


Fig. 19: Inductive method

LEARNING COLLECTIVITY

One of the first things that caught my eye when I first arrived at Chenèvre was this invisible connection between people and the place. I could not quite explain it initially, but when one of the members showed us around, it was as if he introduced us to a member of the group. There was no possessive language in his explanations. Each member of Chenèvre seemed to find their place within the community as much as within Chenèvre itself. To fully comprehend the sense of belonging that seemed to exist between the dwellers and Chenèvre, it was necessary to observe and attempt to understand the mesh of Chenèvre.

The daily routine as a woofers was relatively simple. We worked five hours a day assisting with various tasks, with most of our time dedicated to constructing a barn for GAEC, the market gardening firm of Chenèvre. The members of GAEC were all involved in the construction site for economic reasons, but also because they valued the act of using their own hands and

bodies to build something they needed. To assist them and provide instruction, they hired two local masons. Before the woofers arrived, the masons began the finishing work. They taught the GAEC members the necessary gestures, the use of different tools, and all the technical aspects so that when we arrived, the GAEC could then teach us (see fig. 20). After work, we shared lunch with other members of Chenèvre.

Observing the daily life made me see the notion of time differently. We were in a rush to finish the exposed facades because winter and bad weather were coming. The building has been thought and discussed among all members of Chenèvre and placed where it does not affect the daily life of others nor the life of the Living in the place. **Fulfilling their needs means adapting them to the needs of the place for it to thrive with them. And this induces a certain design, more respectful and fertile.**

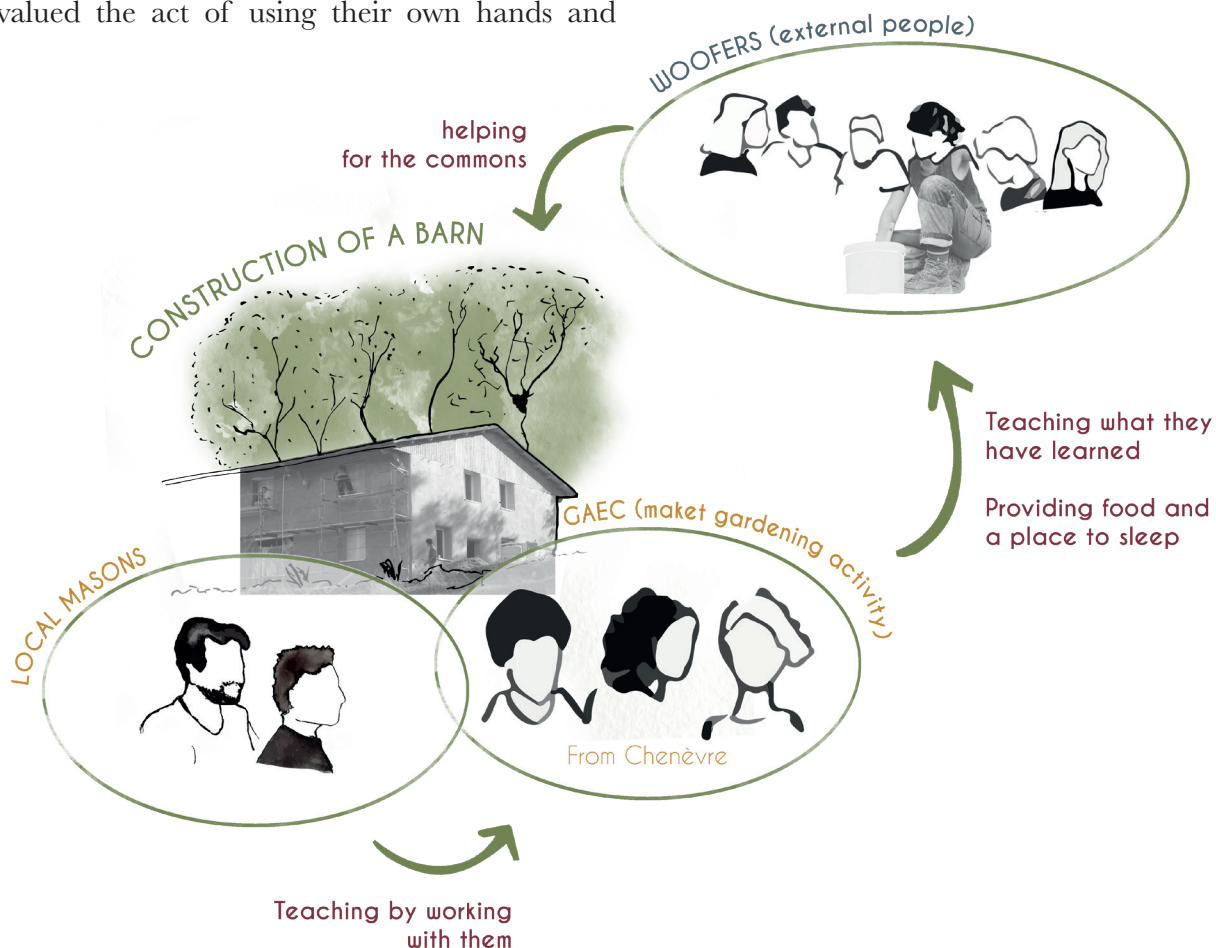


Fig. 20: Working organisation on the construction site: a space of sharing knowledge, time, joy and a project

Learning new skills and a new vision of constructing with emotions being fully conscious of what you are doing and why.

From left to right:

Finishing work
Whitewash layer
First coating layer

Photographs: taken by me



From this experience as a wooper, I take away **two important lessons.**

The **first lesson** involves the value of **learning by doing**, which fosters a reconnection with the body (see Fig. 21). This approach to learning also engages muscle memory through the repetition of movements.

In my experience working in an architectural office, the architect's only interaction with the construction of their design is occasionally visiting the building site to check on each step of the construction process. Drawing construction details did not provide me with a true understanding of how materials work, react to their environment and weather, or interact with living beings. Therefore, in envisioning a vision of a more fertile practice of architecture, **physical work is as important as the design in itself.**

PUT YOUR BODY AT WORK



Fig. 21: Working in the greenhouse

The **second learning** is to **embody a user** by becoming one. Living at Chenèvre for a few weeks highlighted the importance of good communication and understanding every dweller's wants and needs (see fig. 22). It took me at least one and a half weeks to feel at home in this new ecosystem and start understanding and discussing more in depth with the dwellers. I finally comprehended the diversity of spaces that shape the dwelling place. Each corner reflects individual wants and needs entering into relation with each other and creating a collective place.

This experience highlighted that spaces, interactions, and chosen rules facilitate the collective pursuit of chosen freedoms among residents. Chosen freedom means that the collective, dwellers, and individuals establish rules in symbiosis with the local ecosystems. In this sense, a fertile architect learns and **co-creates new collective imaginaries tailored to each community**.

UNDERSTAND INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE WANTS AND NEEDS TO SHAPE SPECIFIC SPACES.

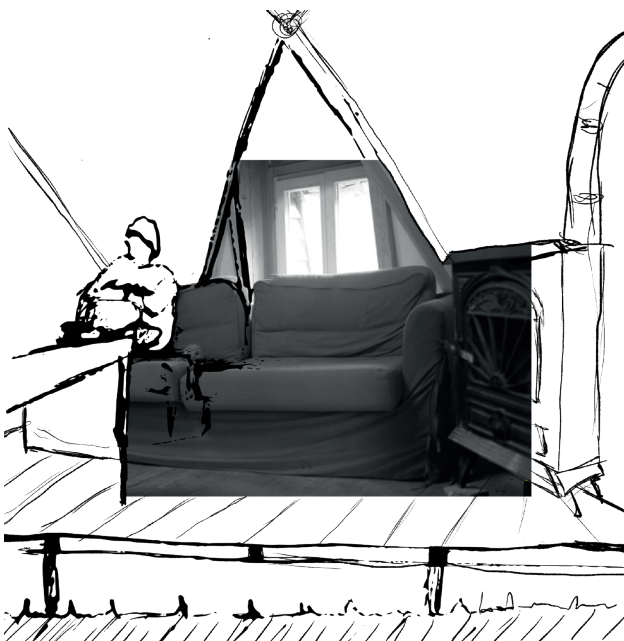


Fig. 22: Engaging in dialogue with the space to understand it for constant evolution.

UNLEARNING NORMS

Habitually sleeping in a warm bed, showering in a dedicated room, and having toilets near living areas... I never truly realised how much these space norms influence behaviour and predefine relationships. During the first two weeks at Chenèvre, I slept in a hammock between the greenhouse and the main building with other woofers who were in tents. We quickly improvised equipment that we felt was lacking over the days. The first was a piece of furniture to store our shoes and dirty clothes. For cleaning ourselves, we had a solar shower available not far from dry toilets outside (see fig. 23). The fact that daily-use spaces were located at different places on the land made every action taken in each place feel very special to me. The choreography that these different spots create at Chenèvre is unique to the place. Living there radically changed the habits I was accustomed to. I spent less time in the shower, becoming more efficient. Normally, I aim to spend as little time as possible in the kitchen, but at Chenèvre, it became a significant part of my day. The kitchen, being the only one in the building, was a place for encounters and enjoyable discussions.

In a fertile practice, architects must create new norms with future dwellers to align with their chosen way of dwelling and their needs.

QUESTION SOCIETAL NORMS AND STANDARDS DICTATED BY SOCIETY.



Fig. 23: Challenge norms

RELEARNING NATURE

Philippe Descola has a very interesting point of view on the concept of nature. According to him, the term 'nature' as commonly used creates a dualism between humans and other living beings, placing them within the framework of resources (Kempf, 2021). After spending time at Chenèvre, I understand Nature as encompassing all, including humans and non-humans, leaving behind an anthropocentric vision of the world for a more symbiotic one.

The daily life at Chenèvre was deeply shaped by nature and the existing interrelations. As it was the last few weeks of good and warm weather of the year, the priority for the woofers was to assist the GAEC in the construction site. Despite several other ongoing projects at Chenèvre led by other members, they understood the urgent need for our help to finish the facades of the

barn. I was impressed by the GAEC members' resilience in managing this significant project while continuing to run their business and care for the animals. The clock was ticking, but they did not rush anything or compromise the well-being of the goats and chickens. This new project entered the natural balance of the place, and they readjusted this balance with consciousness, humility, and adaptability.

'Symbolically and pedagogically, placing the rights of subjects other than human alongside the (specific) rights of the human person would mark humanity's reinsertion into the living world.'

Belaidi et al., 2023, p. 98

In a fertile practice, architects need to integrate themselves into the natural balance of the place with humility to collaboratively create a space of support and solidarity with users (see fig. 24).

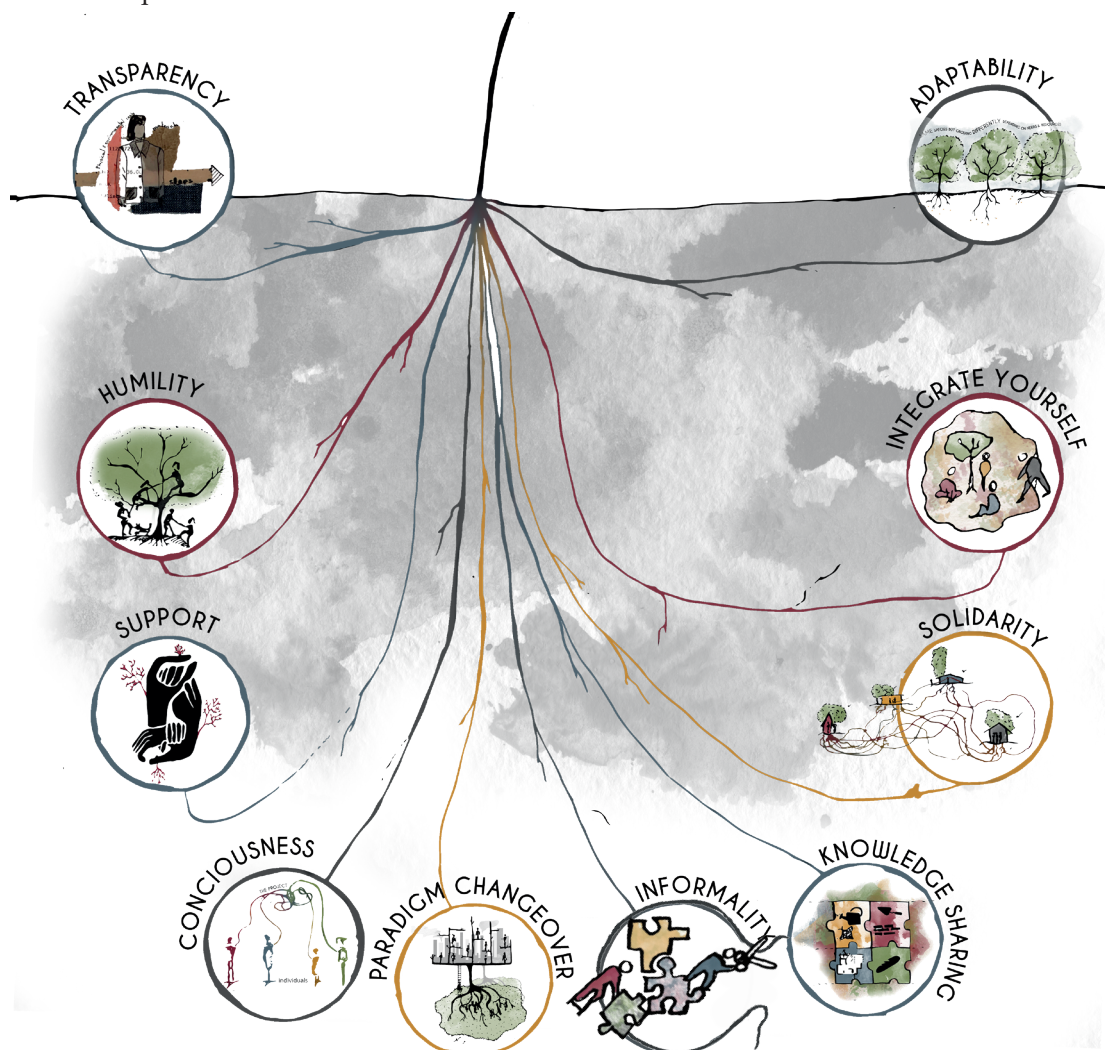


Fig. 24: Mentality to adopt to harmonise with the natural balance of the place

MUTUAL TEACHING: KNOWLEDGE CAFÉ

A workshop was held at the end of the stay at Chenèvre on **October 20th**. During this session, participants engaged in discussions to share experiences, exchange knowledge, and build relationships using the Knowledge Café format (The Knowledge Café Concept–Knowledge Café, n.d.). The concept is simple: small groups gather around a table to discuss a specific question for a set amount of time.

The purpose of conducting this workshop was to collectively **share knowledge and feelings** about the current state of the world and alternative approaches, such as living in an ecoplace like Chenèvre. I aimed to understand what binds people together in this type of dwelling project and how they collectively develop common values that form the foundation of Chenèvre, ensuring its sustainability over time. **Understanding how to initiate the development of these common values is a key component of a fertile architecture process.**

For this Knowledge Café, five woofers and six members of Chenèvre participated. Before the workshop, I prepared three questions designed to prompt discussions on global topics and relate them to the local context of Chenèvre:

- **What is your perspective on the current state of the world, and how do you see yourself in it now and in the future?**
- **What role can or should humanity play in its environment?**
- **What are you seeking by living or spending time at Chenèvre? Is there something missing?**

Participants were divided into three groups, with each group allotted twenty minutes per question. Every twenty minutes, I rotated the questions among the groups to facilitate varied discussions (see fig. 25). Each table also had four theme cards (see fig. 26) related to alternative dwelling and global reflections:

- **Anthropocentrism**
- **Relations**
- **Autonomy**
- **Togetherness**

Participants could use these themes to guide their responses to the questions.

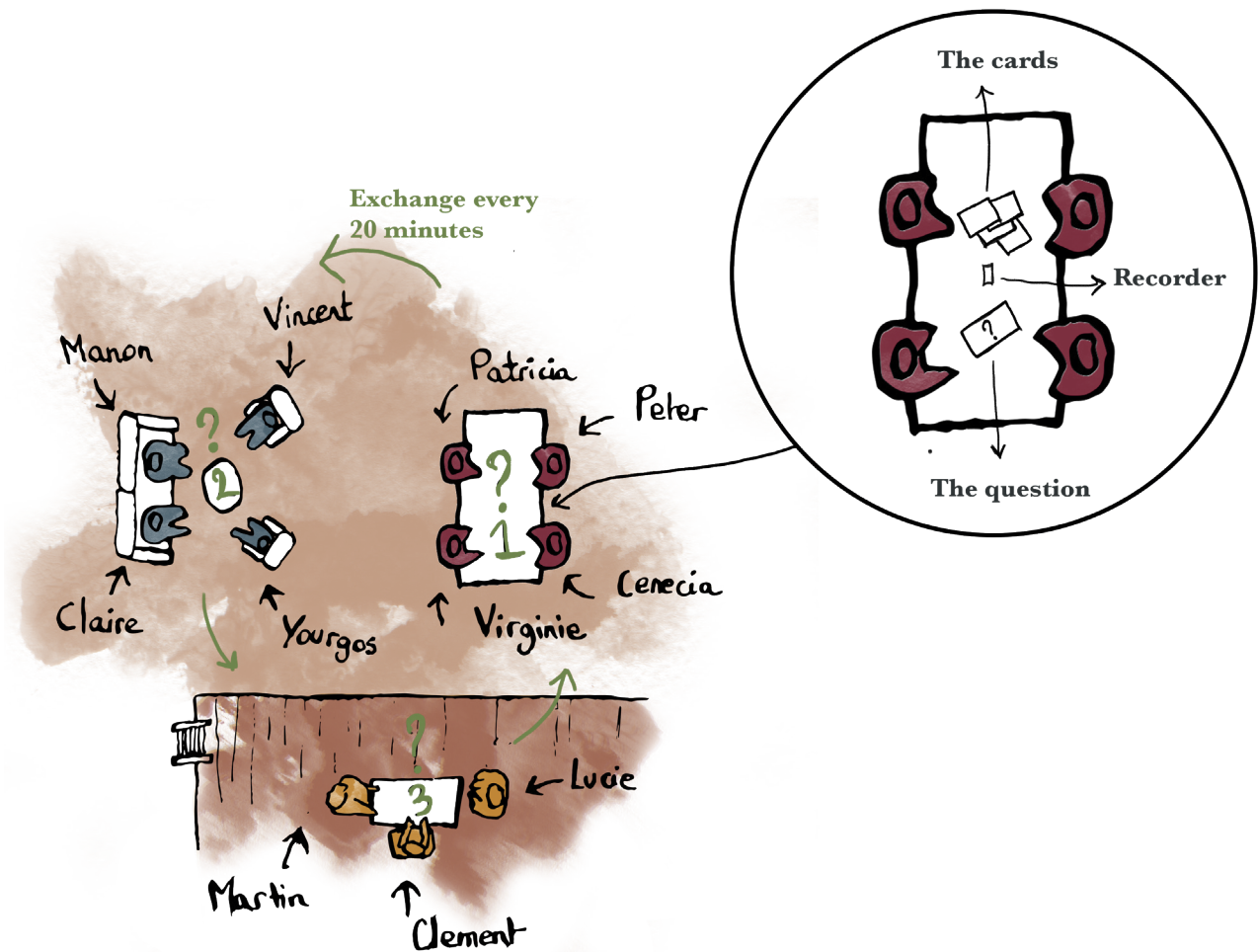


Fig. 25: Workshop configuration

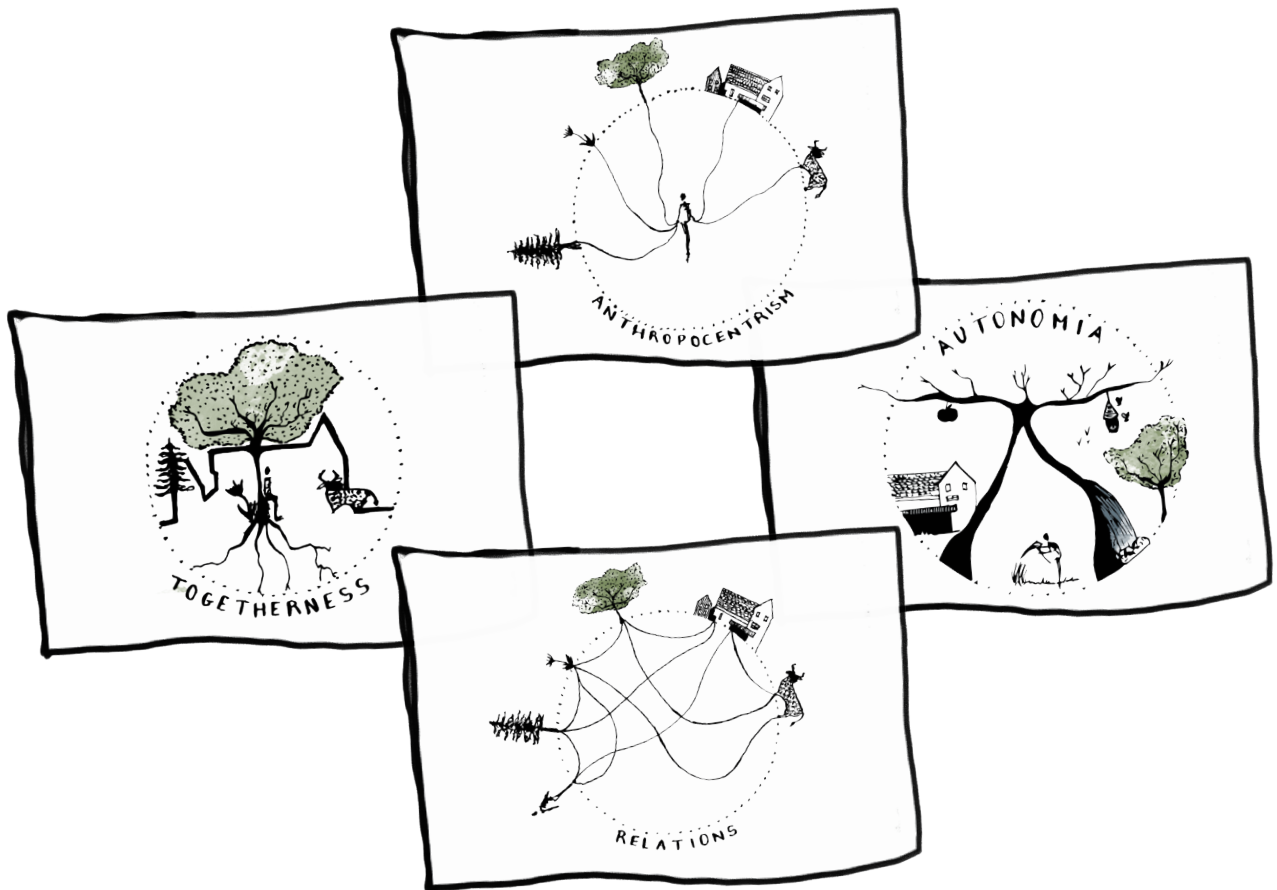


Fig. 26: Cards for the Knowledge Café developed by the author

The three groups discussed for one hour (see fig. 27). After the conversations, I concluded the workshop by asking participants to share their thoughts and takeaways.

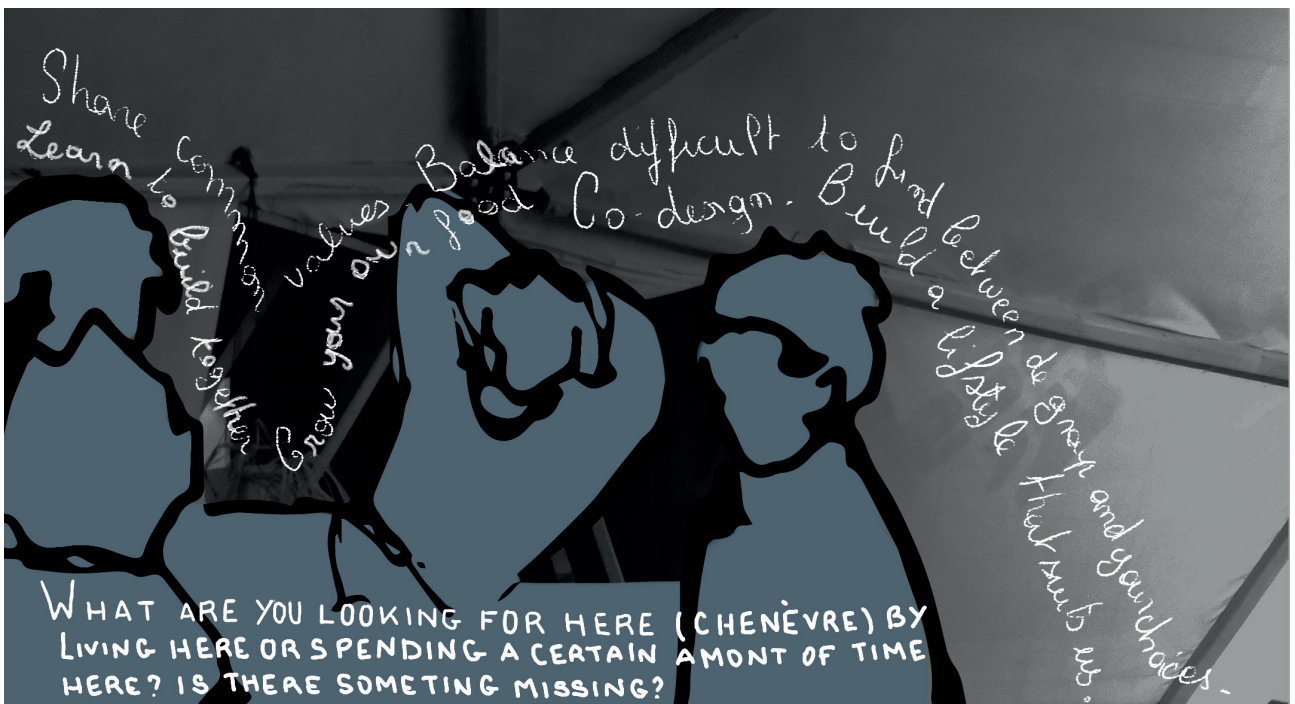
The outcome of a knowledge café is unique for each participant, as everyone takes away different insights. One Chenèvre member mentioned that it was valuable to discuss their values and reasons for being at Chenèvre, which they had not done since the project began. Woofers appreciated the opportunity to spend quality time with specific members in small groups, asking questions they couldn't during their everyday routines.

This workshop highlighted the importance of recognising individuality within a collective. When members acknowledge and respect each other's individuality, the collective becomes stronger and more sustainable, ensuring that no one is left behind, especially the place itself.

Notes from the recorded conversations are available in the appendix (see annexe 1).



Fig. 27: Insight of the group's conversations



RESULTS

Chenèvre is not aiming to be a model eco-place or an example for those seeking to create their own.

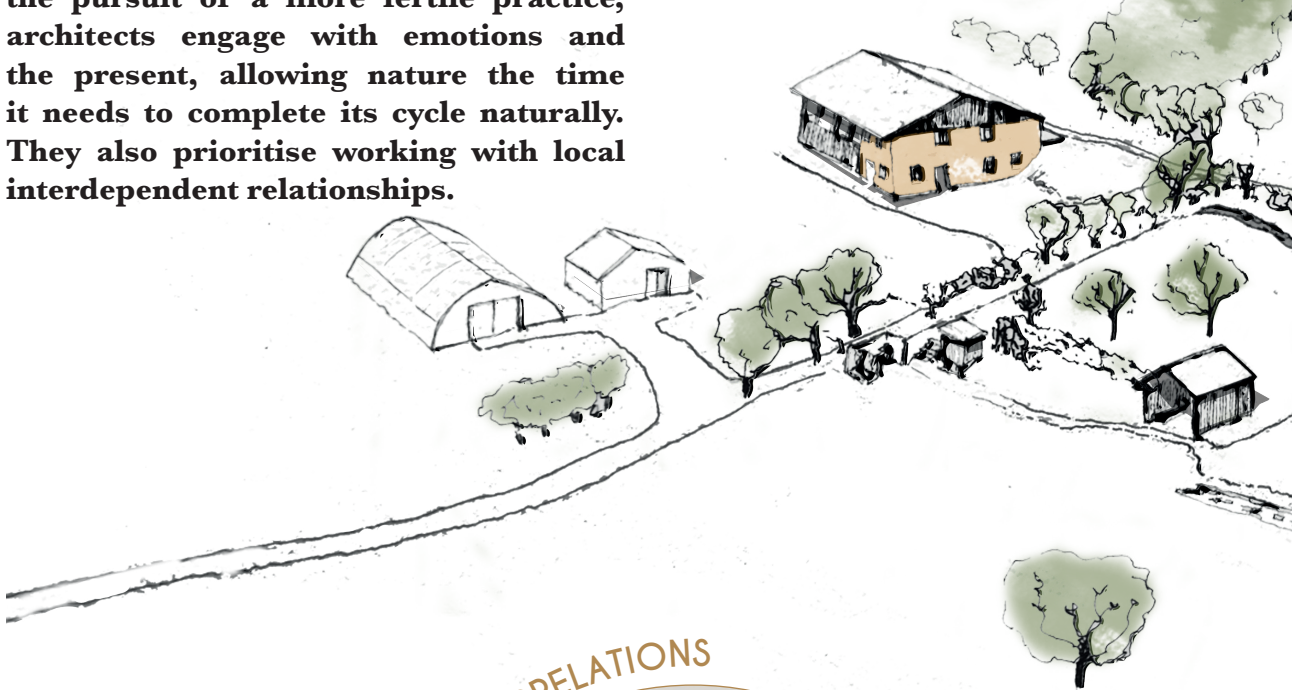
To truly transform a way of life, time must be taken to embed these changes naturally, ensuring its durability. Thus, Chenèvre is not a perfect eco-place, but it represents a lifelong quest for the dwellers, extending beyond their own lifespans.

After spending three weeks away from concrete, urban noise, and the bustle of cities, I am leaving Chenèvre with a new perspective. **In the pursuit of a more fertile practice, architects engage with emotions and the present, allowing nature the time it needs to complete its cycle naturally. They also prioritise working with local interdependent relationships.**

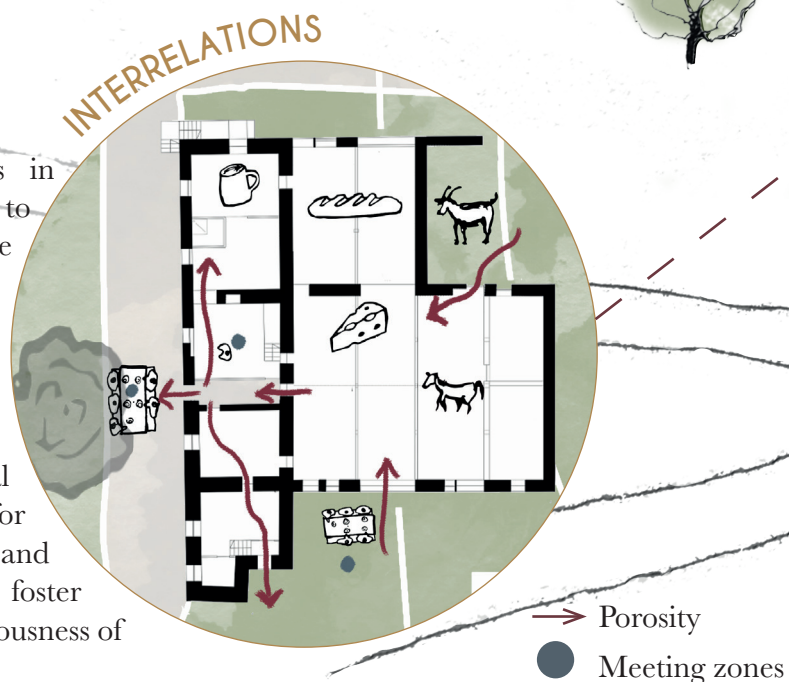
A **functional** and **sustainable place** is a place built on individual and collective wants and needs. **Interrelations** (profession, values, hobbies...) between dwellers (see fig. 28) build the place's identity which evolves with them over time.



Fig. 28: Place's interrelations



The place at Chenèvre is in constant evolution due to ongoing activities and future projects. **Interrelations**, both professional and personal, are crucial to sustain the project. Within the main building of Chenèvre, the coexistence of professional activities, dwelling spaces for humans and non-humans, and common areas naturally foster interrelations through the porousness of these spaces.



SHAPING



Implementing a **slow practice** facilitates the adaptation of the design to gradually formed habits. The first week, we started to lift joists to the first floor in anticipation of the future rehabilitation of the floor. We listened to our bodies and lifted just a few per day.



This field study helped me deconstruct my perception of dwelling and consuming architecture as a dweller. The next step in my quest towards a more fertile practice

of architecture involved deconstructing my architectural and societal background to make space for new imaginaries.



THEORY:

DECONSTRUCTING THE
ARCHITECTURAL AND SOCIETAL
BACKGROUND



This immersive study at Chenèvre revealed an alternative approach to dwelling, closely aligned with permaculture principles and starkly contrasting with what our capitalist society offers. Despite our awareness of global challenges, our political systems do not encourage dwelling practices like those at Chenèvre. This reflection underscored the necessity to **deeply understand the current system** and explore new narratives in response to it. The goal was to **envision new narratives that could accommodate a more fertile practice of architecture.**

Using a deductive method (see fig. 29), this chapter begins as a **learning process** about various forms of activism that open doors to alternative narratives beyond capitalism. It then progresses into an **unlearning process** to challenge the societal vision imposed by capitalism, ultimately aiming to **relearn** new values and modes of thinking. This chapter's process highlights interrelationships across different fields directly related to how we design, conceptualise, and consume architecture. Combined with the findings of the immersive study, this theoretical exploration ultimately establishes ethos and practical approaches for a more fertile architecture practice.

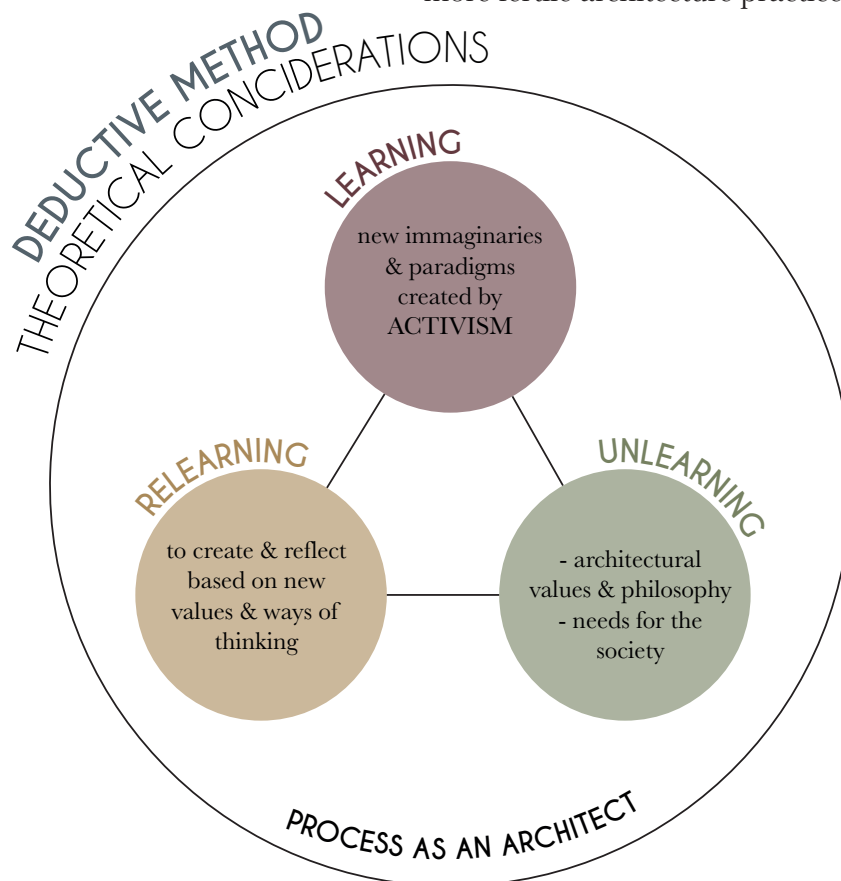


Fig. 29 : Deductive method

LEARNING NEW IMAGINARIES



ACTIVISM TOWARDS COLLECTIVE CHOSEN FREEDOMS

As we have seen in the previous part of this thesis, Nature is the base of human subsistence (Berlan, 2021). However, the condition of ecosystems is deteriorating steadily. Indeed, according to a WWF report, the Living Planet Index shows a decline of 68% since 1970 (France, 2020). Speaking out their voices, young ecological activists are major actors in trying to restore the life balance (Oltermann et al., 2021). Ecological activism is the practice of participating in political and social campaigns with the goal of halting environmental harm (Kraja, 2018). We live in a society where there is a clear lack of economic, environmental, and social justice. As we live in this unjust present and with a chaotic vision of the future, it is important for more and more people to stand up against old systems of power whose interests are not for the greater good but for growth (European Liberties Platform, 2023).

Activism can be defined as the practice of addressing an issue by challenging those in power (TEDxYouth, 2013). This can take many forms and occur at different levels. It is often driven by the fear of a future where human existence is threatened due to the way politics are conducted on both national and global scales, often based on patriarchal and growth-oriented frameworks. As individualism, fuelled by capitalism, reveals its inefficiency as a way of living, individuals come together to advocate for positive visions of the future. It is important here to differentiate between individualism and

individuals. Individualism can be understood as the belief that personal reflection and action are more significant in society than collective effort and power (Individualism, 2023). We are all different individuals with different needs, interests and values and that is what makes activist group strong. Indeed, the diversity of personalities within social or ecological protest, for instance, makes the one voice louder because it has a complex core and skeleton. Activism does not erase the individual for the cause on the contrary of capitalism that wipe out personalities to integrate pawns in the big system. Thus, working on our integrity and compassion for others or certain situations, means moving towards activism (TEDxYouth, 2013).

Even if activism can take many forms, the big purpose stays the same: working towards a more fertile society. Fertile comes from the Latin root: *fero* meaning ‘bear [fruits]’ (Fertilis–Wiktionnaire, Le Dictionnaire Libre, n.d.). The literal translation explains the word as a soil giving abundant harvest or a rich, inventive and fruitful mind (Larousse, n.d.). What I mean saying a fertile society is a society growing in harmony with the earth and sowing the seeds of a future where each component can grow the way it wants while being connected through the roots. Nowadays, activism plays a huge role in making this vision achievable in fighting against socio-ecological issues I view activism as actions taken in pursuit of collective chosen freedoms.

As Aurélien Berlan explain in his book *Terre et Liberté* (Berlan, 2021), social injustice and environmental disasters are indivisible. **Working towards a more fertile society thus, implies working on economical and societal roots of the society for them to finally interconnect in one narrative where our subsistence is satisfied through autonomy and in symbiosis with other living beings.**

FERTILE GROWTH: A NEW ECONOMICAL NARRATIVE

Environmental disasters are predominantly

caused by the eagerness for growth. To counter this problematic, the degrowth movement has risen (Cunico et al., 2022). In this work, I will use the term ‘fertile growth’ to discuss the degrowth movement. The etymological origin of the word ‘growth’ can be traced back to Old English ‘growan,’ meaning ‘to grow, flourish.’ The ancient root of ‘growth’ is associated with the development of living beings (Etymology of Growth by Etymonline, n.d.). Thus, it is associated with the word ‘economic’ that the term ‘growth’ refers to an individualistic need for profit.

At first, fertile growth was a criticism to economic growth and its ecological and cultural consequences. It has now evolved into a social movement ‘indicating the necessity of a rupture with the growth society’ (Latouche 2013:7) in order to put social justice and ecological sustainability forward.

Fertile growth participates in the reflection for alternative narrations to hegemony by questioning the nature of the links between sustainability, economy and society (Asara et al., 2015). Thinking of a fertile growth society means working towards alternative institutions (Cunico et al., 2022). It is about changing the way we work, starting by working less through sharing. It is a society that reinforces the local and questions the notion of property (Kallis et al., 2012). Van Griethuysen, PhD in political economy and specialist in sustainable development, explains the relation between the capitalisation of property and the resulting race for growth. Furthermore, to have access to property means being in possession of every



Fig. 30: Important ethos of degrowth (Cunico et al., 2022)

resource on the land involved. In this capitalist system, the logical path for each property owner is to reinforce its possessions and the privileges that go with it. However, alternative paths exist against globalisation. One of them consists in establishing, on a local scale, alternative dynamics on which ultimately will lead to a multi-scaled global social organisation. This position aims to empower, among others, local communities at the expense of global governance. Another one, more radical, consist in bringing to the forth what capitalism and industrialisation are putting in the shadows, meaning every action, individual and collective, tending more and more towards autonomy (van Griethuysen, 2012). Thus, fertile growth refuses greenwashed concepts such as green economy and green growth, both being part of the concept of growth (Cunico et al., 2022).

Working with fertile growth ideas means integrating a framework containing different ideas to change the anthropocentric vision of capitalism and growth (Cunico et al., 2022) (see fig. 30).

ECOFEMINISM: A NEW SOCIETAL NARRATIVE

Another counter-hegemonic approach is ecofeminism. Vandana Shiva, one of the major figures in the movement, draws strong links between climate change and the lack of indigenous knowledge, local communities and female images in contemporary societies. Starting with the base of our subsistence, nature, humans went as far as modifying crops to make more and more profit with dominant crops (Ellis-Petersen, 2023). It is clear now that the actions of genetically modified organism (GMO) conglomerates on biodiversity are disastrous. The purpose of these actions are clearly economic growth and profits. Ecofeminism challenges the western economic thinking in which individuals are perceived as an utmost entity (McMahon, 1996). In this view, emphasis is given on competition and economic freedom (Peyrard-Moulard, 2022). In this regard, ecofeminism argues that this type of economy cannot lead to social change (McMahon, 1996).

Indeed, the way economy works today reflect an image of globalised exchanges of wealth and human labour force, reducing living relationship to something material. In opposition to this image, ecofeminism advocates for an interconnection between humans and nature and humans among them (McMahon, 1996). For this to happen, we need to leave and move beyond this world built on the image in which the centre element is a white, powerful man (Mies and Shiva, 1993). For ecofeminists, both individuality of beings and their interconnection are essential. In the same way as interdependence and autonomy are strongly linked (McMahon, 1996).

Thus, the ecofeminist vision aims to break with the myth of deliverance proposed by capitalism to move towards freedom as an autonomous vision through subsistence activities (Berlan, 2021). Against the globalised supermarket, ecofeminists push for local production and revalorisation of growers satisfying their needs (Berlan, 2021). This represents a part of what claims the fight for the just cause of the peasants. The quest for our subsistence starts in the countryside where nature owns its place and not in urban spaces where cities own the nature.

Thus, searching for a new societal narrative in a fertile architectural practice means integrating the vision that **we affect ourselves in the same way that we damage nature**. In this sense, it involves integrating the notion of **‘transcorporeality,’** which ‘*means that all creatures, as embodied beings, are intermeshed with the dynamic, material world, which crosses through them, transforms them, and is transformed by them.*’ (Alaimo, 2008, p. 1).

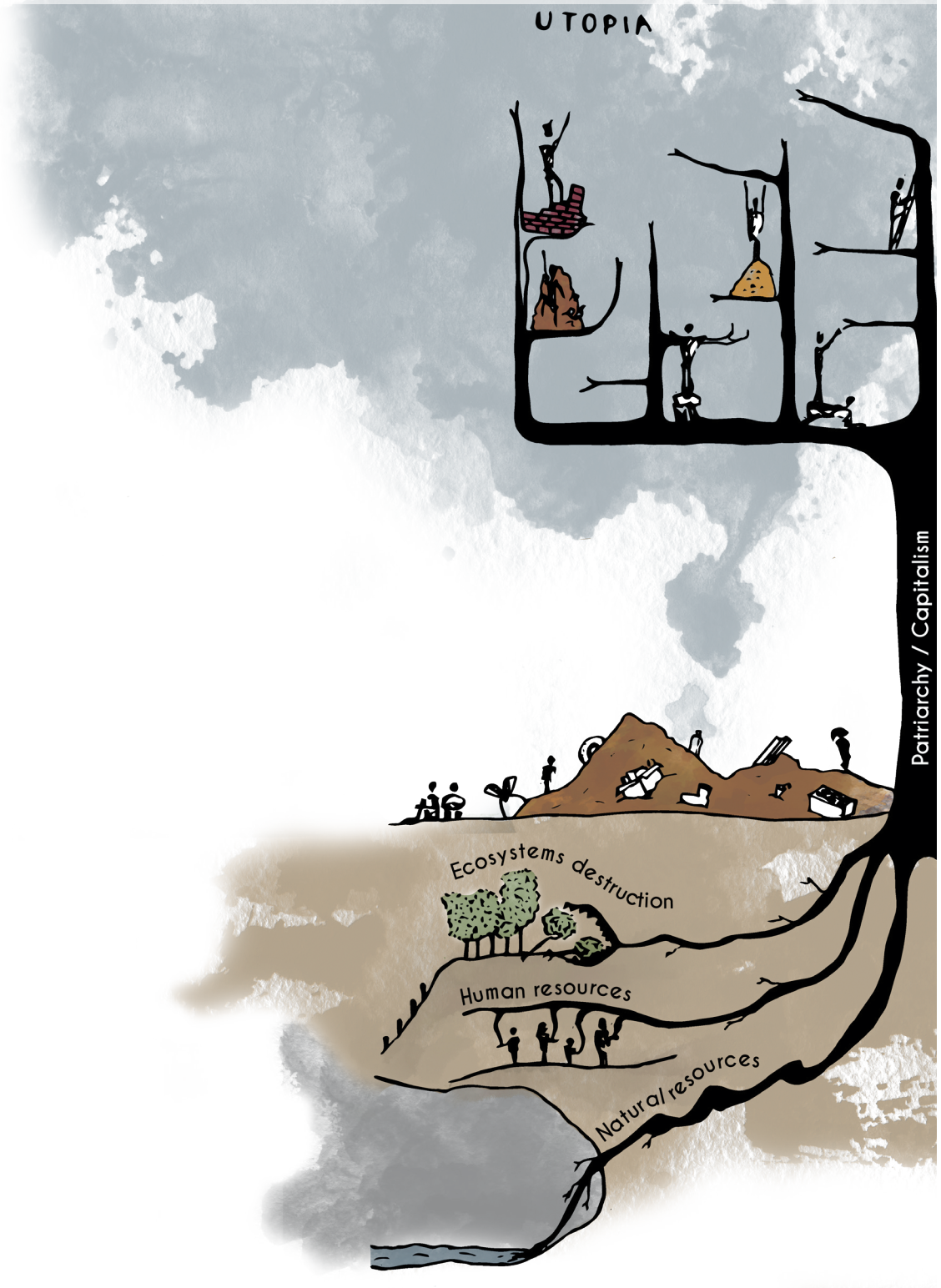
‘[...] the health of natural systems is directly connected to our own physical/psychic health as individuals and as a species. We must be constantly interconnecting our own worlds with other natural systems.’

Todd, 1994, p. 44

UNLEARNING THE IMPOSED CAPITALIST VISION

'Socialism failed because it couldn't tell the economic truth.
Capitalism may fail because it couldn't tell the ecological truth.'

(Lester R. Brown Quote, n.d.)



Learning new imaginaries pushed me to criticise constructively and deconstruct the capitalist system in which I lived my whole life. This step is important to make room for new values and ways of thinking for a more fertile practice of architecture.

PATRIARCHY, LEADER OF GREENWASHING

From a young age, we have been used to counting our pocket money and using it in different ways. Before even being aware of it, we owned stuff: toys, clothes, shoes... Comparing goods and attributes has profoundly shaped our way of thinking and evolution. The competition in the Capitalist society then started for us without any notice. This has widened even more the gap between classes of the population creating more inequalities.

These inequalities can be translated in one word: the Androcene deeply intertwined with the Anthropocene. Brought by Myriam Bahaffou and Julie Gorecki (Bon et al. 2022), the term Androcene draw roots from the ancient Greek Andro (άνδρός) which means 'men'. Coupled with the geological suffix -cene, the word literally means men era. Even if this term is to be qualified, we are talking about an era governed by a knob of oppressor putting at their service the majority of the population to satisfy their capitalist ambitions (Bon et al., 2022). **It is the start of a human world governed by patriarchy.**

Even if we cannot precisely date the beginning of the Anthropocene (Ruault et al., 2021/2), it is clear that it has a link with the start of the industrialism. Athropo – means human being (άνθρωπος) in Ancient Greek. Thus, we are here talking about the Human era. **The Anthropocene's roots are feeding on colonialism, extraction of natural resources, capitalism and thus, patriarchy.** It is quite clear that those roots will soon have nothing to feed on anymore. Servigne and Stevens (2015) articulate in their book the proximity of planetary limits,

the collapse of biodiversity, and the fragility of globally interconnected supply chains of systemic importance. For them, these three states combined can lead to the collapse of this system.

One of those roots exploits ecosystems in different ways to supply mass consumption and mass production. This serves a specific part of the global population in order to satisfy what is considered as needs. Here, we are not only talking about basic human needs, we are also talking about needs ideologically made by capitalism and not essential to human subsistence. Those 'fake' needs and the way the Anthropocene and Capitalism answer to it, clearly lead to environmental issues, ecosystem degradations, extinction of species, increase of natural disasters... The insatiable need for growth of powerful individuals, who aim to make profits over others and accumulate buying power, threatens our basic needs and subsistence on this earth.

Besides environmental issues, the fact that the capitalist model bases its growth on a very specific, minority but powerful, part of the population creates social issues without any surprise. For the ecofeminism movement, gender inequalities are the major cause of the current climate crisis. Patriarchy, as the head of Capitalism, freeze women and nature development (Hallen, 1995) leading to socio-ecological disaster. Today, politics are confronted with these issues that cannot be avoided anymore.

In 2015, the Paris Agreement was established, which aims to achieve a zero net GHG emission objective for most countries involved, by 2050. According to the International Energy Agency, achieving this perspective means multiplying photovoltaic power by three and increasing the number of electric vehicles sold by twenty-five (Thinkerview, 2023).

Our current thinking is focused on emission, but we fail to consider the life cycle of metals (Université de Lausanne, 2023), which is essential to consider to achieve a goal beyond reducing the global temperature. Being able to recycle what we produce should be a priority in the quest towards

a more sustainable development. Metals are everywhere in our daily lives, and it is proven that recycling them at 100% is impossible (Université de Lausanne, 2023). Thus we are extracting more and more materials to produce more and to achieve the 2050s objectives. Our recycling capacity did not increase as much as our waste production quantity (Université de Lausanne, 2023), leading to a significant Circularity Gap: ‘the globe almost exclusively relies on new (virgin) materials.’ (CGR 2023, n.d.)

Even if politics are talking about circular economy, waste management, sustainability and recycling, it is clear and evident that our development model is based on materiality (Université de Lausanne, 2023) and on producing new ‘green’ products and energies such as electric vehicles, solar panels, and so on. This strategy of replacing old, polluting products by new ‘green’ ones, leads to more waste, more consumption and more social gaps.

Indeed, this leads to a categorisation of the population into two groups. The first one is the dominant group, which is on a quest for power and wealth accumulation. The second one, the dominated one, is a component in the realisation of the dominant’s quest. This situation has created a myth of deliverance (Berlan, 2021) amongst society through abundance, leading to an amnesia of the nature of human belonging on earth.

SOCIETY’S BLINKERS FACING HUMAN BELONGING ON EARTH

Technological innovations brought by industrialisation and used by capitalism, have implanted this myth of deliverance in daily life (Berlan, 2021). Thus, it has also changed the ideology of the future, leading it towards this myth (Augé, 2022). This one can also be seen as a quest of freedom tending towards an illusion of happiness through the abolition of all constraints and needs (Berlan, 2021).

Indeed, by observing our traditional pattern in

life, we can easily realise a paradox between the fantasy of our society, which is having nothing to do and its production: an overactivity at work (Berlan, 2021). This situation created by capitalism, showcases a clear wealth inequality and priority on individual freedom. Only certain classes of the population have the opportunity to ‘free’ themselves from non-prestigious tasks through money. This conception of freedom leads people towards more consumption in terms of products and human services leading the society to a socio-ecological disaster and an industrial exploitation of nature (Berlan, 2021).

Without nature, we cannot produce anything, we cannot sustain ourselves, in fact, we basically cannot meet our basic needs. Seeing where this society is heading can be understood as a rejection of the human belonging on the earth (Berlan, 2021). Humans have their right place in the balance of the planet. However, we clearly abused our natural rights to put ourselves at the top of the pyramid.

Relationships, health, ecosystems, and biodiversity are declining, and the purpose now is to repair all of these. There is a narrative to be restored to leave this zombified society eating up everything in its wake and without any bond between each other (BLAST, Le souffle de l’info, 2022).

Otherwise, all these situations will lead us towards the collapse of our society and we are already witnessing the collapse of some ecosystems and biodiversity.

ARCHITECTURE’S SCHIZOPHRENIA AT THE SERVICE OF CAPITALISM

The architectural profession does not make an exception in this system. Indeed, 36% of GHG emissions in Europe are linked to housing (Alonso, 2021), which is the first factor of global warming. Additionally, according to the European Commission, more than a third of all waste in Europe comes from construction and demolition industries (Construction and

Demolition Waste, n.d.). Not only architecture is one of the major causes of global warming, but it is also a contributor in social exclusion. Indeed, one French over five is in a precarious situation due to his housing (Manifeste Pour L'Habitat Reversible — Groupe Habitat Réversible Autonome, n.d.).

Thus, architecture and the construction industry are simultaneously a mass consumer of resources and a housing inequality vector, making them participate in the socio-ecological disaster and the industrial exploitation of nature.

According to COP26, the building industry represents an average of 11% of global greenhouse gas emissions, making it one of the major contributors to global warming (Deschamps & Deschamps, 2021). Nowadays it is common to hear and read about mass deforestation in Amazonia for soya industry, which will feed our over-consumption of meat. We also know the impact of taking the plane for a two-week holiday. Most of us are now scandalised when reading about the French Republic President, Emmanuel Macron, taking the presidential plane to make a 110 km trip (Emmanuel Macron prend l'avion présidentiel pour 110 kilomètres, 2018). As citizens, we are pushed to be careful about our impact in the daily life. Consume less meat, reduce heating at home, use reusable or recyclable packaging, and so on. Individual efforts are good, of course, but seeing this graphic (see fig. 27) pushes the reflection forward. The impact of buildings on global warming is too huge not to be taken into account or worse hidden by media and politics. At the beginning of the production chain, there is the thinking head, the architect and the architectural profession. Here, we will define architecture as a process in which the architect designs and oversees the construction of what he created (Mangold, 2014).

Even though we hear and read about the construction industry as a resource consumer, architects think upstream about plans, material choices, and environmental impacts. He is thus the head of this industry. Furthermore, he provides a basic need for the population: a roof over its heads. Architecture has become an important bolt in the capitalist wheel, creating

profit through trade and value (Mangold, 2014).

It is now time for a paradigm shift (see fig. 32). Ideas and inspirations to guide architecture towards fertility are abundant. As a future architect, I want to reflect on my practice within the spectrum of nature, drawing inspiration from existing practices and ways of thinking.

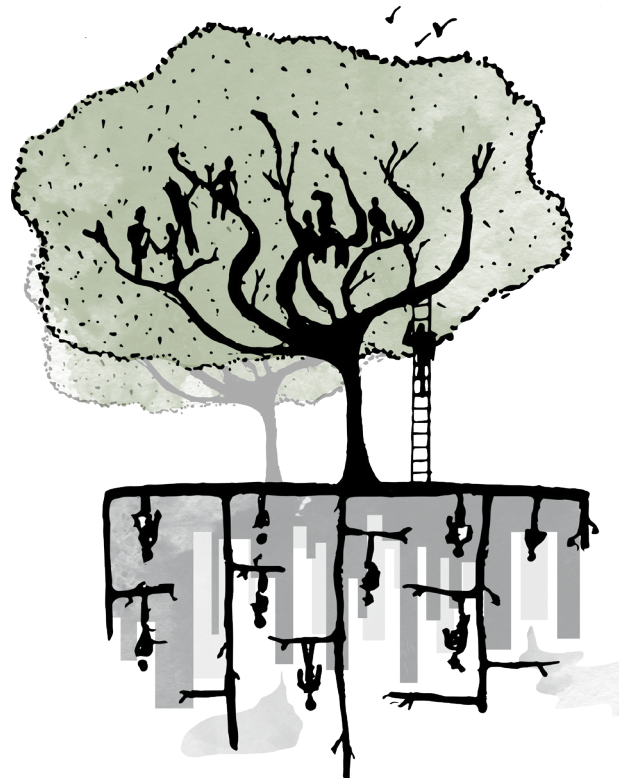


Fig. 32: Paradigm changeover

RELEARNING NEW VALUES & WAYS OF THINKING

This part of the chapter aims to create interrelations between the ecological activism's theory and the immersive study, with the philosophical approach of permaculture as a guidance. The purpose is to create the root system of a more fertile practice.

'Dwelling can be understood as the act of inhabiting fully. This presupposes an active interaction, a deep relationship between the inhabitant and the inhabited. Today's space in which people live is only a container, a garage for people to spend the time in which they are not productive in a capitalistic sense. The idea of dwelling goes against the idea of a finished building. It considers any inhabitable space as an entity in perpetual evolution. Any space should be created and taken care of by its own inhabitants. Dwelling lies beyond the reach of an architect.'

Illich, 1984

THE MOUVEMENT COLIBRIS & COOPERATIVE OASIS

To embrace new values and ways of thinking, I became interested in the Mouvement Colibris, of which Chenèvre is a part. This one is an example of clear actions taking place to move our society towards a liveable and sustainable planet, ecologically and socially, is the Mouvement Colibris (Hummingbird Movement in English). The name of the movement comes from the Amazonian legend of the hummingbird told by the founder of the movement, Pierre Rabhi.

'One day, a huge fire was raging through the forest. Terrified, the animals fled the disaster. Only the hummingbird, the smallest bird in the forest, flitted into action. Back and forth, back and forth it flew, darting between the pond and the blaze, carrying a few drops of water in its tiny beak with every trip. Bothered by this pitiful effort, the armadillo called out, "Hummingbird! How foolish you are! You can't possibly believe

you will extinguish the fire one drop at a time! Flee with us!"

The hummingbird replied, "I won't put the fire out all by myself, but I'm doing my part."

(Alonso et al., 2020, p. 24)

The Mouvement Colibris views the fire spreading faster and faster as being the overwhelming power of money over natural resources and humans. This fire is rapidly destroying all visions of life in the future (Notre Manifeste, 2023).

The association is created in 2007 and is a citizen movement creating and supporting actions to move towards a more ecological and interdependent society. On their website, a manifesto explains the engagement of the association. They deeply believe that the first step to achieve a change in society is to transform individual way of life and to break the illusion that economic and technological growth are the solutions to current issues. Solutions must be inspired by the Living which thrives thanks to interdependence links. In this way, meeting our needs does not endanger future generations.

Inspired by the hummingbird representation, they believe that local actions and scales will enable deep change to protect ecosystems and at larger scale, little by little, achieve a turn in the society. Finally, they work for diversity, inclusivity and collective bonds (Notre Manifeste, 2023).

Amongst its many actions, the Mouvement Colibris supports and work with Cooperative Oasis created in 2018 (Coopérative Oasis, 2023). This citizen collective gathers ecological and inclusive places, mostly in France, that they call Oasis. Oasis are participative habitats, collective farms, third places, eco-places, eco-villages ... many names to describe the diversity of the places but still meeting under the same ethos from the Mouvement Colibris. The interrelations between all the places from the movement make it even stronger.

DWELLING AS AN EXIT FROM THE CAPITALISTIC WORLD: permaculture vision

As we saw in the previous parts of this chapter, buildings and our ways of inhabiting in this capitalist society have destructive impacts on nature, social relationship and the future of humans on earth. Thus, questioning how we dwell and thinking of alternatives to traditional ways fall within activism acts in the quest for new narratives of the future. Putting the fear, brought by worst-case scenarios of the future, aside, alternative dwelling is a quest for autonomy through the process of subsistence. The challenge lies in the fact of being able to live and cohabit with our own kind but also with other living beings (Attias, 2021). To do so, work must be done individually to deconstruct principles the capitalist society taught us in our daily lives. In order to move towards subsistence and autonomy, individualism must be left behind to open space for a new conception of freedom, more social, collective and community-based (Piotr, 2023).

In opposition to the capitalistic lifestyle, the philosophical approach of permaculture offers strong principles taken from the observation of

nature's laws. Permaculture is a transdisciplinary approach taking nature and its foundations to create sustainable ecosystems. This approach is beyond agriculture and tackle social and economic dimensions (Alonso et al., 2020).

Nowadays, people are establishing themselves in a land where everything is their property. Permaculture principles and philosophy make us reflect on our role and presence on Earth rather than in the capitalist society. It is about finding a place in the web of the living and creating interrelations between its components to create viable ecosystems.

'Permaculture is a vision, a philosophy, an approach applied to living within an ecosystem – it is not a technique.'
Alonso et al., 2020, p. 20

To provoke a deep change in society and enable a healthy and sustainable relationship with other living beings and ecosystems, permaculture philosophy pushes us to start by changing ourselves (Alonso et al., 2020).

As Alonso et al. explain in their book, *Human permaculture*, the first thinkers of permaculture divided five zones starting from Zone 0: the personal habitat, to Zone 5: the wilderness. Those zones (see fig. 33) have been thought to reduce daily commute. The zone 00 represents the individuality of each inhabitant. Its presence showcases **the importance of taking into account the sensibility, the personality and the deep needs of each person cohabiting in a certain place.**

'finding and growing into one's specific identity requires that we break free from the mould that education has fit us into.'

Alonso et al., 2020, p. 36

Doing this preliminary work of finding our true and personal identity will benefit us to find our *niche*¹. In the construction of a collective project, knowing perfectly our own niche and the niche of others is essential for it to be efficient and sustainable (Alonso et al., 2020).

Permaculture principles and concepts (see fig. 34)

¹ 'the word "niche" is used to define the role of people or elements within their physical, professional, and social situation (their habitat!), emphasising the functions they may fulfil that enable them to be in harmony with their natural talents or traits'. Alonso et al., 2020, p. 36

provide us with keys to dwell in a specific place, embracing our unique personalities, talents, and close environment with all its complexity. The permaculture vision of dwelling opposes the capitalistic approach where individuals must conform to be productive and useful to society. Instead, human permaculture encourages individual fulfilment, fostering sustainable connections among living beings and promoting societal autonomy and subsistence.

DESIGNING FOR A HEGEMONY-

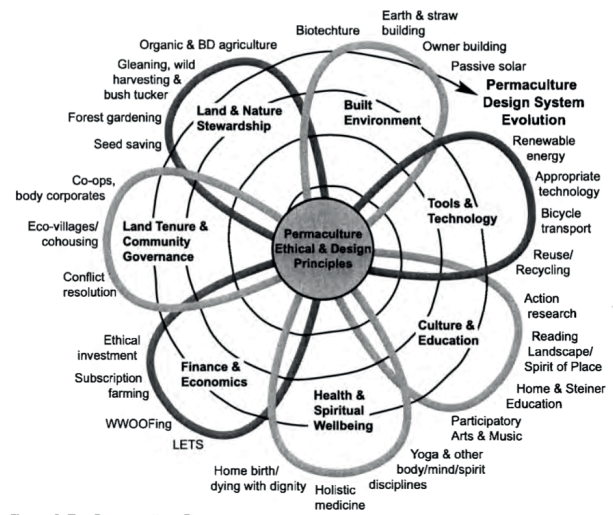


Fig. 34: Permaculture flower
Source: Holmgren, 2002

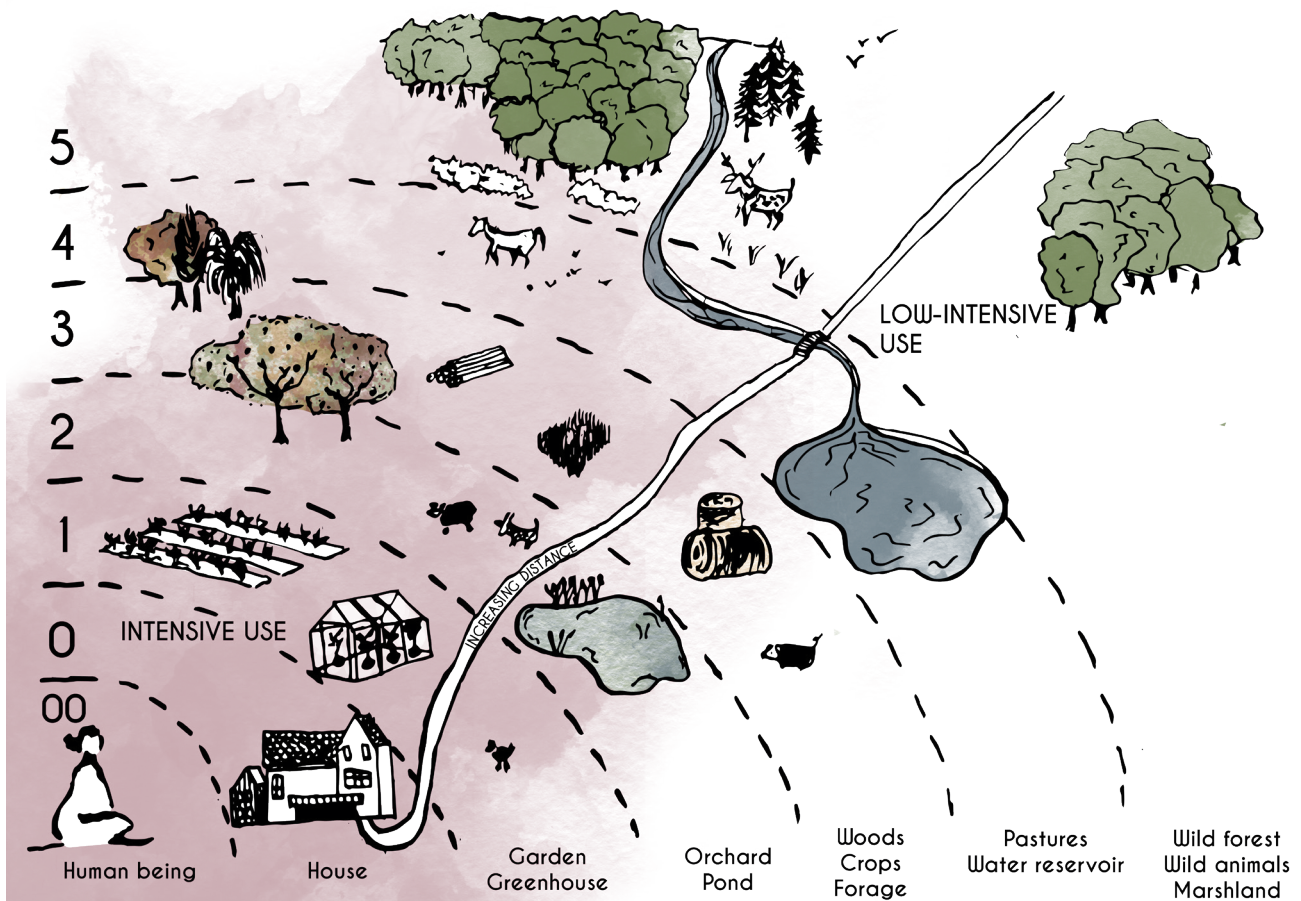


Fig. 33: Zones
Source: Alonso et al., 2020

TRANSCENDING VISION based on degrowth & eco- feminism

To broaden our reflection of alternative approaches of dwellings, as part of an activist act to leave the capitalist patterns behind, we will complement the design approach of permaculture with degrowth and eco-feminism design principles.

DEGROWTH DESIGN PRINCIPLES

In the paper *Design for Degrowth: Architecture against Climate Apartheid*, Sasha Plotnikova gives keys and paths for architects to prevent their work to be part of systemic injustices linked to the construction field. For her, a ‘healthy design ecology is a situation in which an act of design ensures the longevity of the existing community’. (Plotnikova, 2020, p. 29) To that definition, I will add the longevity of the environment in which the collective is considered as a component rather than at the centre of it.

Securing the durability of a certain collective cannot work without a healthy ecosystem.

From this reading we can come up with **four design principles for degrowth**:

- **Balance changeover**: no one is left behind by working towards a just interrelation between the architectural profession, existing communities and the biosphere.
- **Challenging the political economy** of the field by reconnecting the ecological aspect with the social one.
- **Empowering collectives** for their resilience, for them to thrive.
- Prioritise **slow practice** by switching the main character from the owner, buyer to dwellers, collectives and by letting them take charge of the project.

ECO-FEMINISM DESIGN PRINCIPLES

From the background research, here are some design principles for eco-feminism:

- **Preserve and protect the ability for subsistence** that nature provides for us (La REcyclerie, 2023).
- **Maintain the wellness** of our **transcorporeality** (Alaimo, 2008): by preserving nature, we are preserving ourselves (see fig. 35).

All these design principles are deeply interconnected through interdependent links. The next part of this chapter highlights them by organising them within four out of seven fields of the permaculture flower that this thesis addresses.

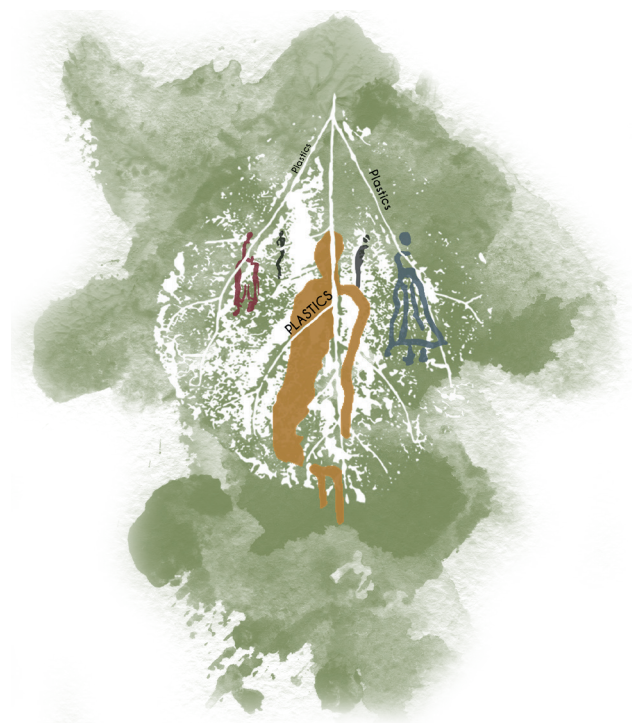


Fig. 35: Transcorporeality illustration

THE FERTILE ARCHITECTURE'S CLOVER

In this thesis, I concentrated myself on (see fig. 36):

- **The built environment:** as human footprint in a place.
- **The land and nature stewardship:** the statement taken in this work does not view humans as caretakers of nature. Humans are part of it.
- **The land tenure and community governance:** a part of nature is not something to own but something to work with to create together sustainable ecosystems for all.
- **The finance and economics:** both are one of the main fire starters of global warming and crisis, a change must be done.

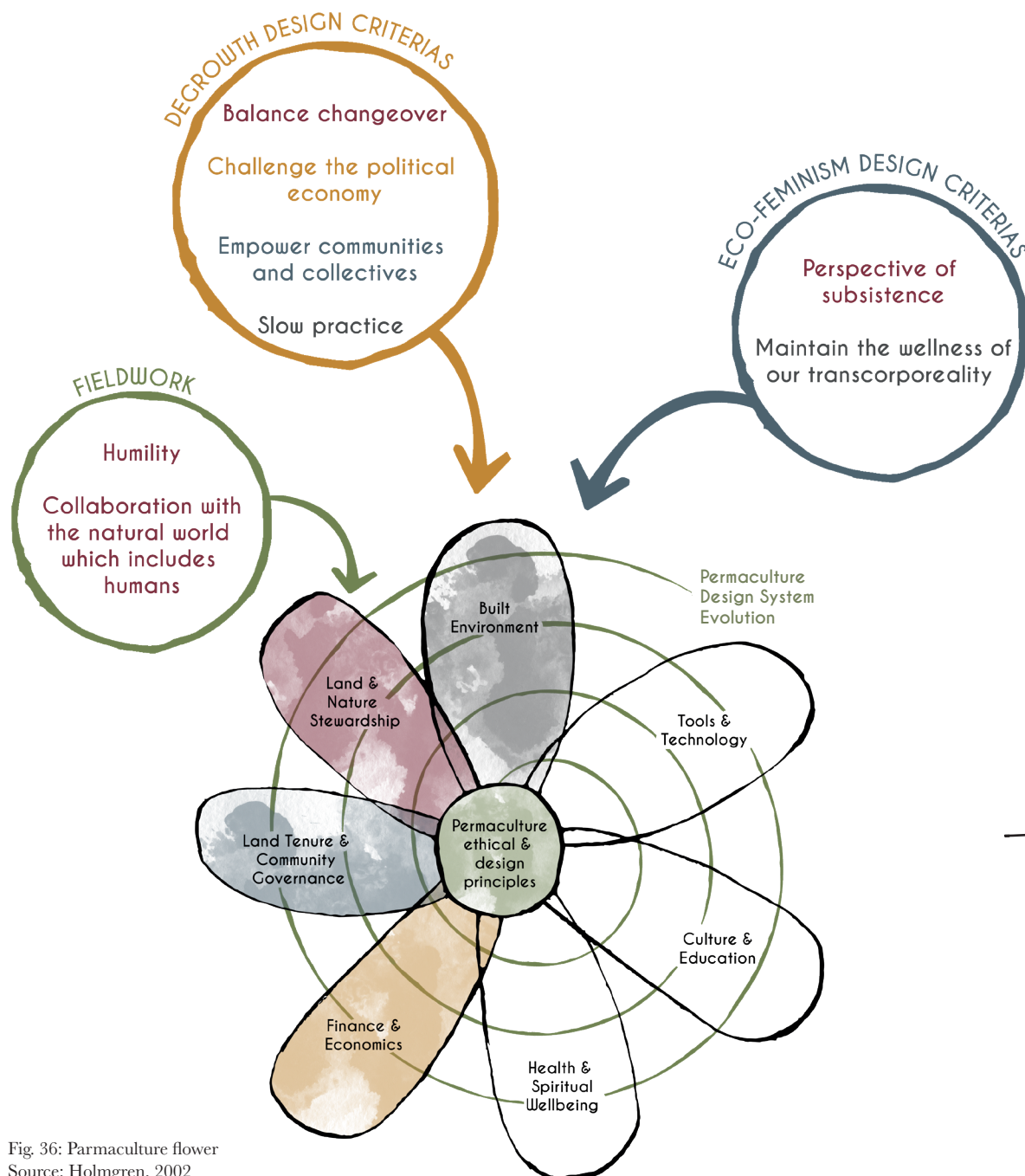


Fig. 36: Permaculture flower
Source: Holmgren, 2002

With the background research and four of the seven petals of the permaculture flower, a four-leaf clover has emerged decrypting **ethos from a fertile architecture practice**.

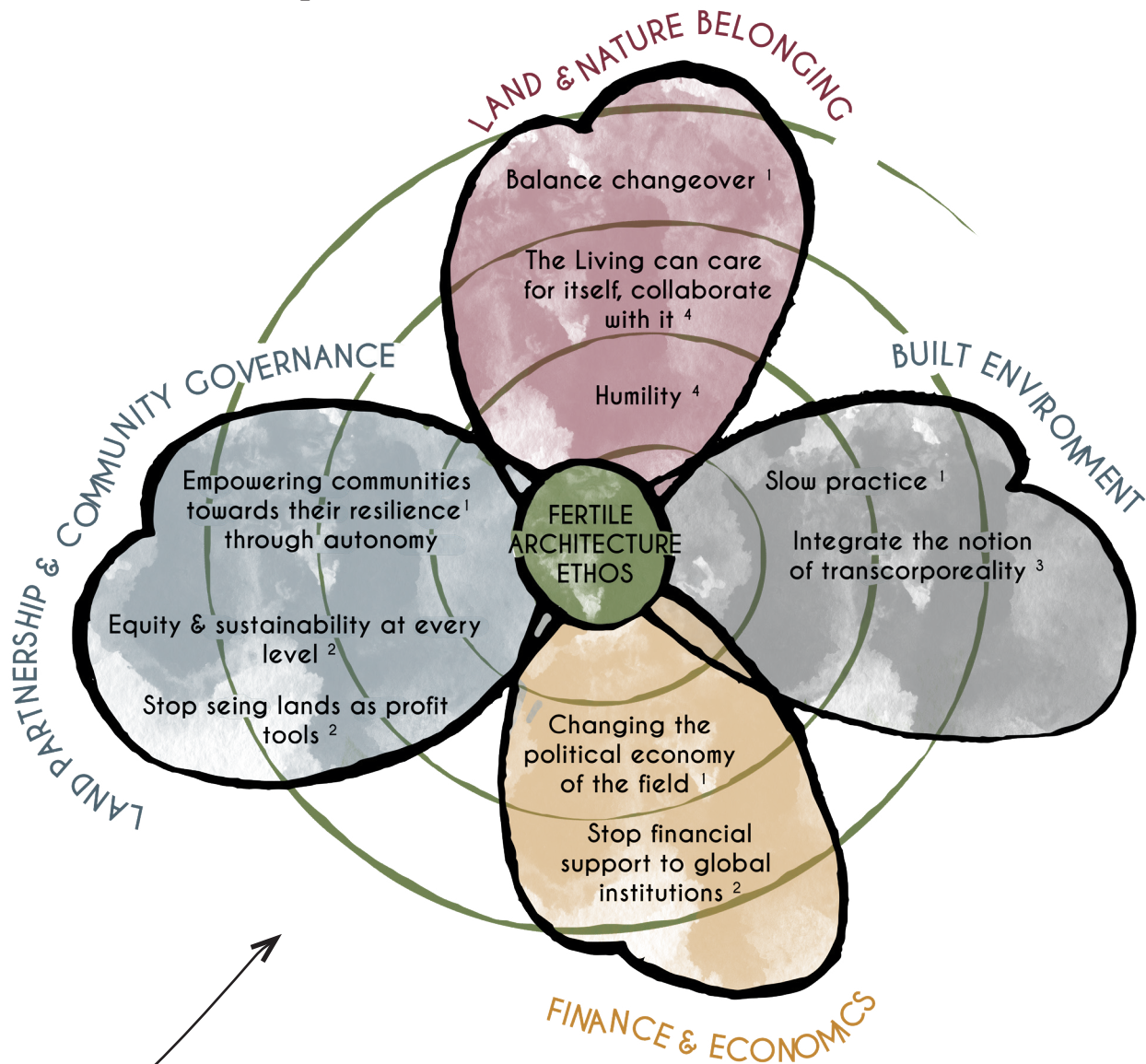


Fig. 37: **THE FERTILE ARCHITECTURE'S CLOVER**

This fertile architecture's clover (see fig. 37) depicts what needs to be changed and new visions within each of the four lines of attack for a more fertile practice.

These are a combination of the results of the fieldwork and the theoretical approach of fertile growth and eco-feminism. The four leaves are interconnected and can only work together. For example, empowering communities towards their resilience through autonomy can only work if the financial support to global institutions is stopped.

These ethos are general guides to push the architects to reflect on how they currently work and how they could rethink their practice by integrating these ethos in it.

The next chapter experiment this by creating new fertile design strategies and by implementing them in a fictional design for the Living.

¹ Plotnikova, 2020

³ Alaimo, 2008

² Gaard, 2015

⁴ From the field study



RECONSTRUCTING
THE **P**RACTICE FOR
THE **L**IVING



‘We tend to build, destroy, rebuild, destroy and rebuild again. Too often we lock ourselves into inflexible designs which inhibit maturation in a given society or community.’

Todd, 1994, p. 26

This chapter explores the experimental results from the immersive field study and the conclusions drawn from the theoretical approach aimed at transforming the architectural process towards a fertile practice (see fig. 38).

To reconstruct a practice that is aligned with living principles, it became crucial to **cultivate knowledge from others**. This chapter engages in ongoing activities to deepen collective reflection, ultimately focusing on architects. Drawing upon the knowledge and experiences described in previous chapters, **fertile design criteria** are established. As illustrated in previous chapters, the wants and needs of individuals, collectives, and places shape the built environment. With thoughtful guidance and a strong ethos aligned with Nature, a project can truly become sustainable.

As part of this **exploration**, a 'wants and needs' workshop was tested as a pre-project phase for creating a fictional collective. The outcomes serve as the basis for a speculative design exploring various typologies derived from the workshop results.

The design aims to illustrate that a fertile project is rooted in chosen bonds between the place and its users. Zask (2023) highlights the importance of cultivating personal relationships with a place. These bonds have a genuine impact on the relationships humans can develop with the world, fostering sensitivity and ethical considerations in harmony with nature.

These chosen bonds facilitate a relationship based on mutual understanding, where each component of the place understands the functioning, limits, and needs of others, fostering a fertile environment where interconnectedness allows for individual development.’

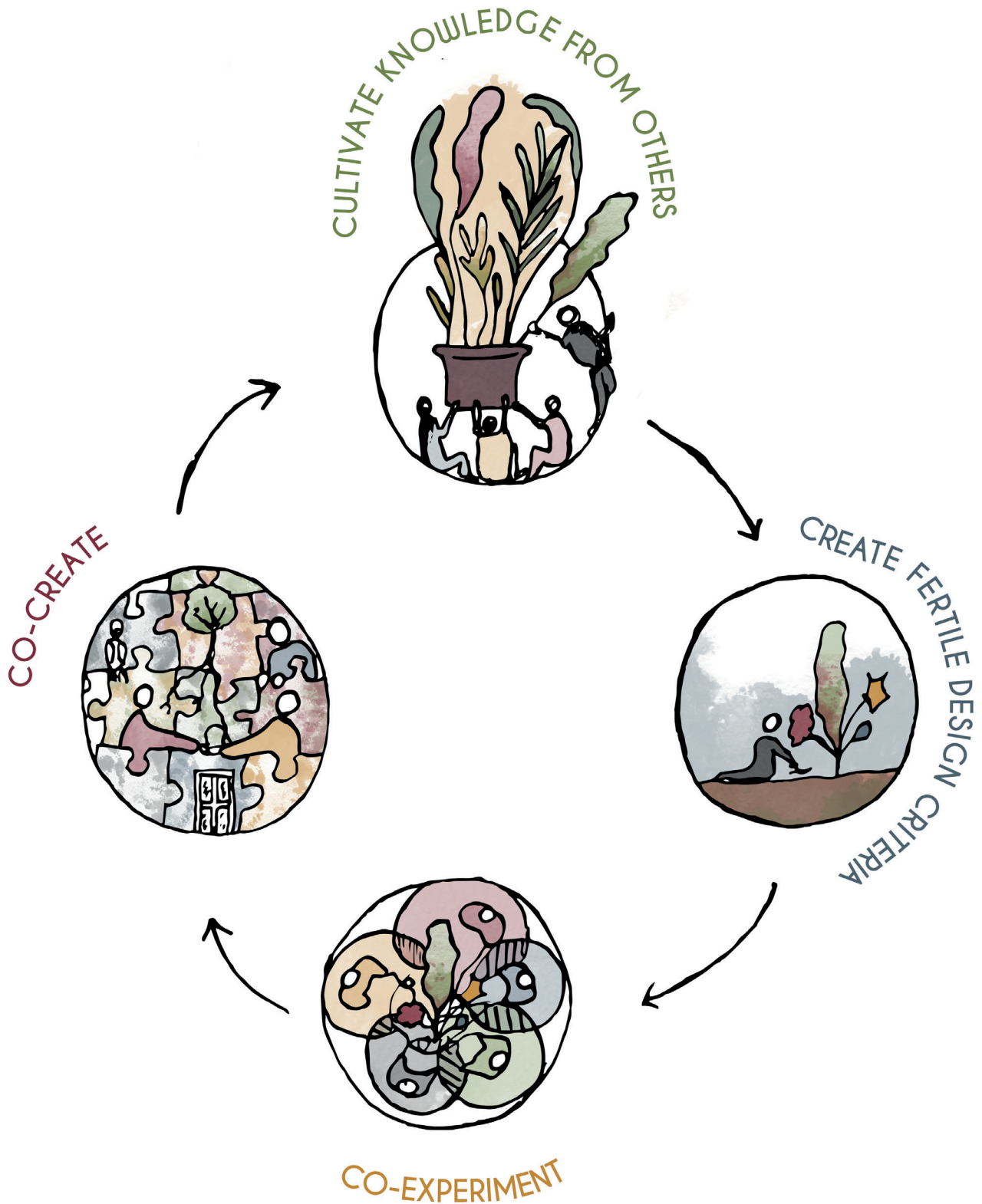


Fig. 38: Reconstruction process

Note. Scheme showing the cyclic steps of a fertile practice

CULTIVATE KNOWLEDGE FROM OTHERS

Stop thinking about the future before fully understanding the present and the past.

REFERENCES

Nowadays, the question of the Living is increasingly central in many fields. To answer to this necessity to reduce our carbon emissions and to truly create designs for specific individuals and the Living, new approaches of conceptualisation are developing more and more.

In that sense, it felt necessary to draw upon existing alternative processes to develop a new practice for the living. The purpose here is to contribute to a collective reflection. To achieve this, this section describes various approaches to the design process in different fields that inspire me.

ATELIER BIVOUAC: Landscapers collective

Atelier Bivouac specialises in the design and transformation of public spaces through an immersive approach deeply rooted in understanding the specific needs and desires of stakeholders. Their process is characterised by seven distinct steps (see fig. 39), culminating in a pivotal phase called ‘Passer le relais’ (**handing over the reins**). This final step emphasises **knowledge-sharing** to **empower local communities** and ensure the autonomy of both the users and the site.

The collective’s approach is centred around co-creation, where project development is collaborative at every stage—from writing and envisioning the project to on-site construction.

Atelier Bivouac maintains close partnerships with other collectives and local organisations, fostering **transparency** and **inclusivity** throughout their work.

Their projects exemplify a commitment to engaging with communities and landscapes in a **holistic and participatory manner**, resulting in site-specific designs that reflect the unique identity and aspirations of each place.

TATIANA BILBAO: Architect

Tatiana Bilbao’s design process stands out from the majority of architects. Working towards a collaborative approach in the design process, she uses collages (see fig. 40) to reinforce the creativity of her projects (Frearson, 2019). In an interview conducted by Amy Frearson for Dezeen magazine, Tatiana Bilbao described her process as a dialogue. She explained that she started using collages after realising that renders fix images in people’s minds. Bilbao expressed a concern about the potential limitations of renders in the creative process.

In this interview, she explains that all of her projects are tailored to individuals, allowing her to create unique living spaces and she says: *‘That is why every project is completely different to the next, and every project has its own very strange and different process. And we try to integrate those different ways into the results.’*

(Frearson, 2019, para.5).

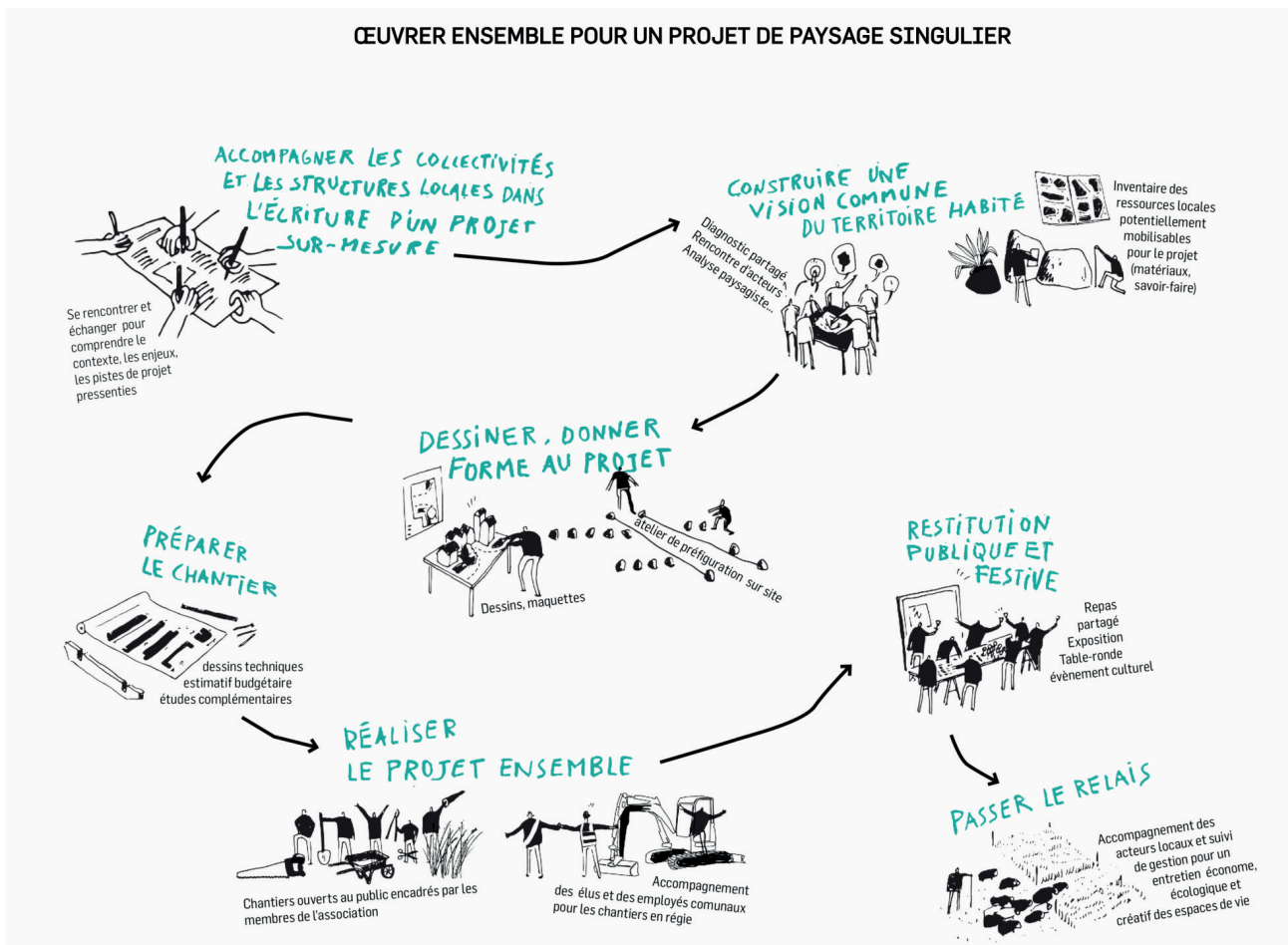


Fig. 39: Atelier Bivouac working approach

L'atelier — atelier bivouac. (n.d.). <https://www.atelierbivouac.com/latelier/>



Fig. 40: Tatiana Bilbao's project: Ways of Life

Tatiana Bilbao Estudio. (n.d.). Tatiana Bilbao Estudio | Ways of Life. Tatiana Bilbao Estudio | Ways of Life. <https://tatianabilbao.com/projects/ways-of-life>

FERTILE DESIGN CRITERIA

The immersion in Chenèvre helped deconstructing the notion of inhabiting to start dwelling as beings part of nature. It showed the importance of interdependence between living inhabitants in an ecosystem and in a given place. It highlighted the non-temporality of a project in order for it to continue to live. The architectural process can evolve by repeating a Learning, Unlearning, Relearning process for each new project. Each singular place has its own fruit to shell and to make it grow. To accompany this process, the analysis of references coupled with theory and the field study helped me understand the actions and behaviours that a fertile architect can adopt to align with the ethos of fertile architecture (see fig. 41). The following manifesto outlines the professional engagement of a fertile architect:

Manifesto for a More Fertile Architecture

01. Transparency

We commit to transparency at every stage of our projects, openly sharing information with all evolved persons. This includes disclosing the materials used and the physical and environmental costs involved.

02. Humility

We value collaboration over competition. We acknowledge our own limitations and seek to pool skills to create more sustainable built environments.

03. Support

We view each project as a collective effort serving living beings. Our role as architects is to empower collectives so they can sustain the project autonomously after our intervention.

04. Consciousness

We seek to understand the individuality of

architecture users and the collective dynamics they form. We acknowledge our transcorporeality and its impact on architectural design.

05. Paradigm Changeover

We adopt a new perspective by considering nature as the primary involved being, recognising that humans are integral to this ecosystem. We commit to challenging current economic models and exploring local alternatives.

06. Adaptability

We recognise that it is up to us to adjust to changing needs.

07. Solidarity

We promote solidarity among alternative places and communities, fostering connection and mutual support.

08. Integrate yourself

We pledge to integrate ourselves into existing environments rather than asking others to adapt to our designs.

09. Knowledge Sharing

Each project is an opportunity for personal and collective learning. We encourage open sharing of knowledge to facilitate mutual enrichment.

10. Informality

We make room for the unknown and improvisation in our practice. We acknowledge that each project is unique and cannot be fully planned from the outset.

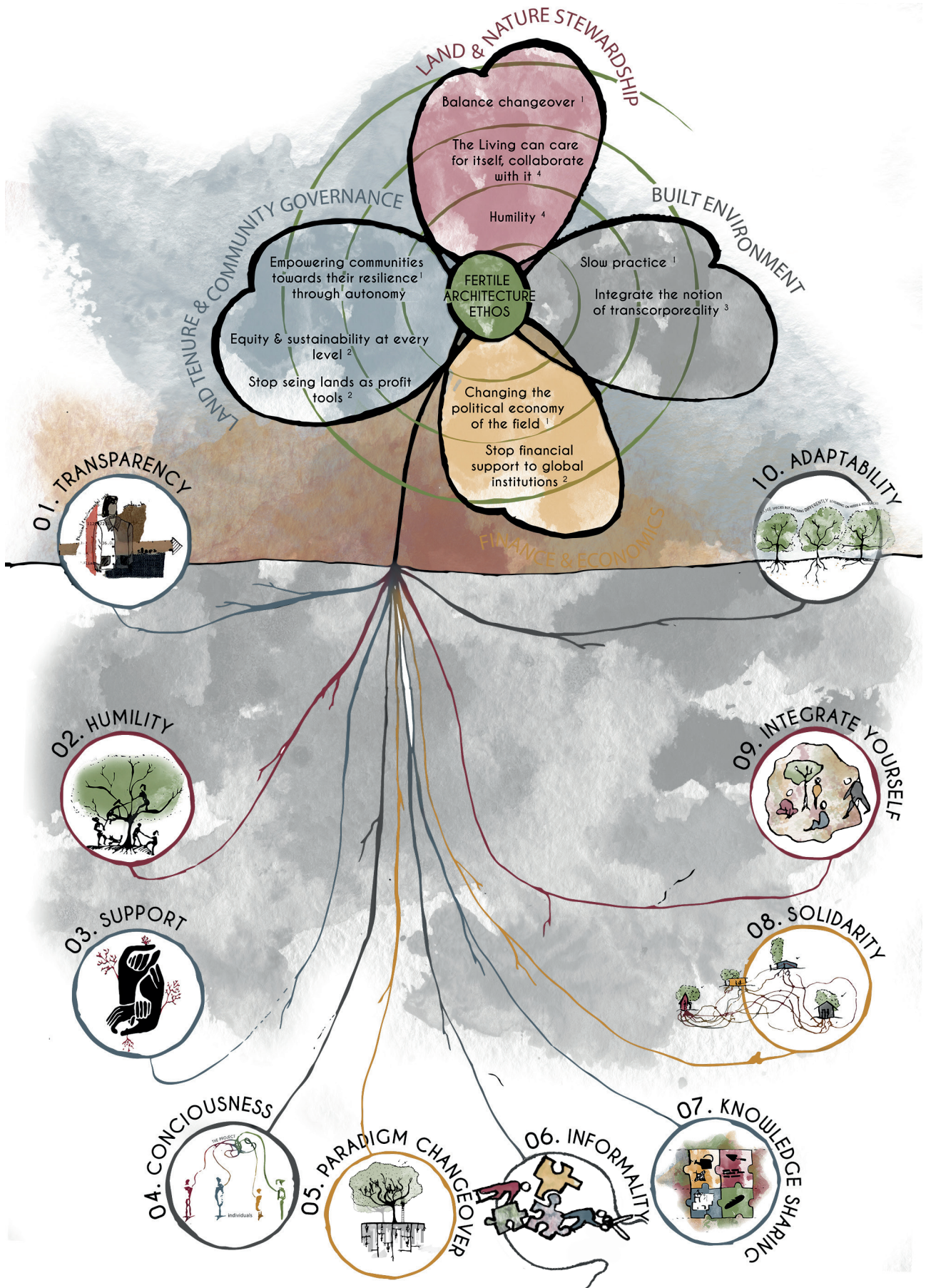


Fig. 41: The fertile architecture guideline

FERTILE DESIGN STRATEGIES

Having strong ethos and engagements is essential for a fertile practice. The pursuit of this is now at a stage of **experimentation** by conceiving fertile design strategies (see fig. 42) categorised into the four fields to transform and achieve greater fertility drawn from the permaculture flower. These fields of transformation are associated with architectural values clarified in the previous part of this work. To develop fertile design strategies, the process of Learning, Unlearning, and Relearning at the eco-place has been crucial for rethinking space and challenging previously learned strategies from school.

The design strategies are general and must take their true form in each specific project. Thus, they are **broad in purpose to allow fertile architects to interpret them differently each time.**

The strategies

1. Porosity: This refers to the interconnectedness and openness between indoor and outdoor spaces, rooms, and circulation areas within a built environment. It emphasises the harmonious flow and integration between different areas, allowing for a sense of continuity and connection.

2. Shaping for the Living: This strategy involves designing spaces that not only accommodate individual preferences and needs but also reflect the collective essence or identity of the collective dwelling them. It aims to create spaces that support and enhance living life and activities.

3. Use of Local Resources: This emphasises the utilisation of locally available resources, both human (local labour, expertise) and material (local materials, natural resources), to minimise environmental impact, support local economies, and foster sustainable practices.

4. Spatial Informality: This strategy advocates for designing spaces that allow flexibility and adaptability, leaving room for unexpected events or activities. It encourages a

more organic and responsive approach to space usage, accommodating changing needs and dynamics.

5. Natural Scale: Designing spaces at a scale that aligns with living wants and needs, rather than imposing standardised or oversized structures. This approach ensures that spaces feel comfortable, functional, and harmonious within their natural context.

6. Tailored Spaces: This involves questioning traditional usage and spatial norms to create environments that are specifically tailored to the needs, preferences, and activities of the living beings and collectives they dialogue with. It encourages customisation and personalisation in design.

7. Common & Sharing Spaces: Designating spaces with a natural flow that encourage meeting points, fostering interaction among individuals, nature, and the place itself. These spaces promote social engagement, collaboration, and a sense of collective belonging.

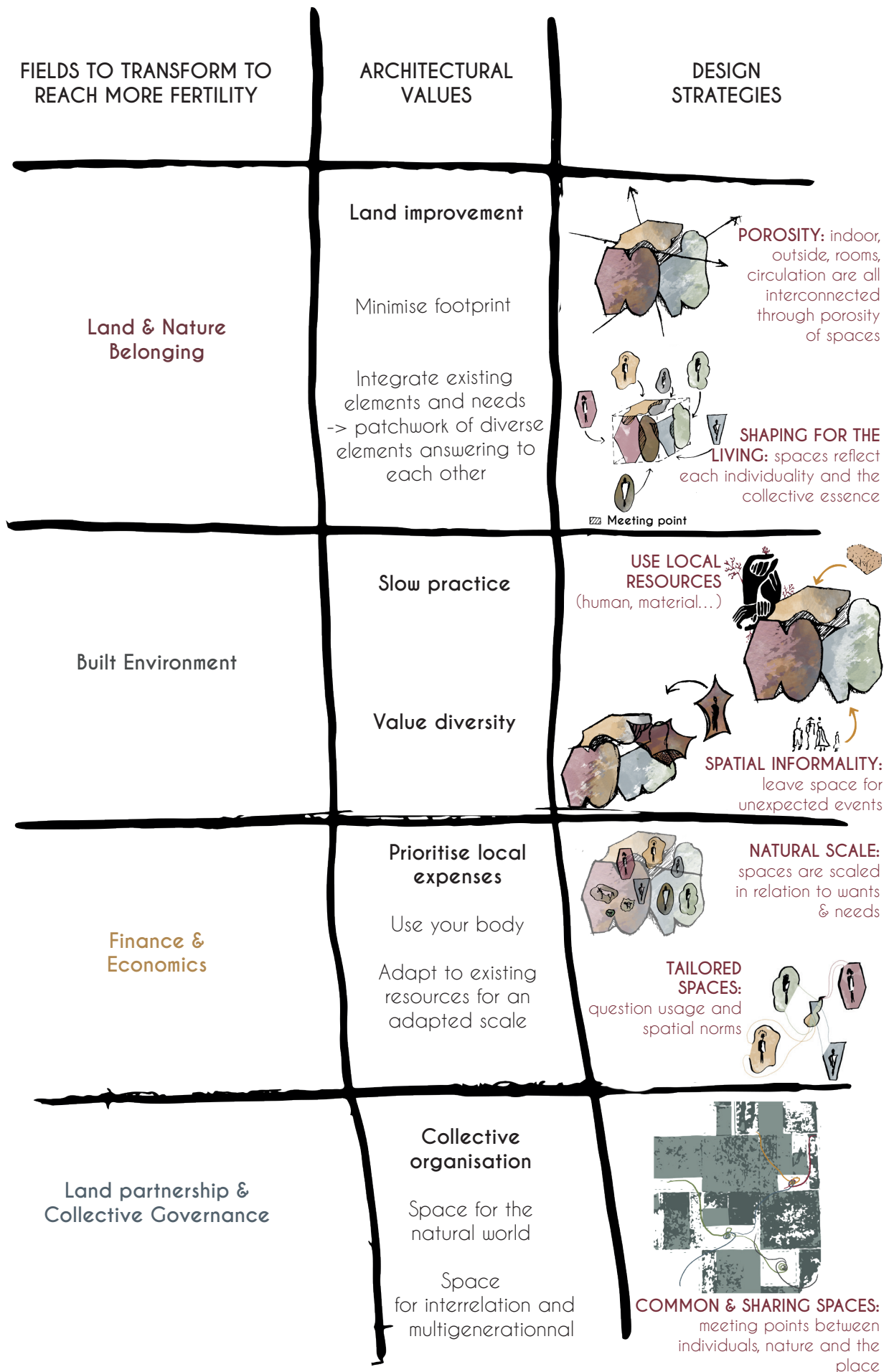


Fig. 42: FERTILE ARCHITECTURE DESIGN STRATEGIES

UNDERSTAND WANTS & NEEDS WORKSHOP

In this section, we will explore how reflecting on alternative ways of dwelling and engaging in the process of learning, unlearning, and relearning can contribute to changing the architectural practice. This includes an **experimental consideration** of how fertile design strategies can be implemented in the architectural process.

Reintegrating the architectural foundation of capitalism into the circle of nature can nourish society's subsistence over time fostering greater fertility.

To achieve this, this chapter serves as an experiment in redefining the architectural process. During the site selection process, I observed that in many instances, the collective formed before choosing a specific location. This approach allows individuals to establish chosen bonds among themselves and, most importantly, with the selected site. Chosen bonds involve fostering free relationships based on mutual understanding (Zask, 2023).

To create sustainable environments with chosen bonds, the initial step involves a profound understanding of individual and collective desires and requirements. The place then becomes an integral part of the collective. Both the architect and future users must share this understanding to collaboratively create a sustainable place. **As an initial effort to reconstruct an architectural practice for living systems, I initiated a workshop focused on identifying wants and needs.**



The workshop is the product of the field study's results combined with the theoretical results. It is an **EXPERIMENTATION** of a **pre-project phase** that falls within fertile architecture.

The workshop tests how architects could incorporate fertile architecture's design strategies into their practice.

PURPOSE & EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The purpose of the workshop is to bring architects and architecture's users around the table to discuss together about different ways of dwelling turned towards the commons.

The workshop is a new way **for architects** to approach the project by:

- Analysing and discussing wants and needs of architecture's users as the first step of the project.
- Co-designing fictional spaces with the users corresponding to their wants and needs and to fertile design strategies.

For non-architects, the workshop is a way to question together their wants and needs and their current way of consuming architecture.

The workshop is a way to discuss potential conflicts that could arise in the future such as expectations on what the daily life will be like. With the architects, future users have a clear reflection on the different spaces wanted and needed to prevent those conflicts in a constructive way. Trying to mediate conflicts also means thinking about the temporality of the project and the priorities. Thus, to allow the fulfilment of a collectively chosen freedom, the collective defines its own rules. With the architects, fictional spaces are designed to serve the rules of the

specific collective.

Outcomes:

The **architects** leave with:

- a set of 'Living Together' rules that are specific to the people they work with.
- Diagrams, graphics of fictional spaces specific to the rules of the collective, wants and needs of each individual and in reference to the fertile design strategies.

The **non-architects** leave with:

- a clearer vision of their personal and collective wants and needs with a reflection on their current ways of dwelling.

I leave with:

- a case study on how a collective can start
- a vision of a new approach of the architectural project that could give keys of reflection for the practice of tomorrow.

THE WORKSHOP

For this workshop, eight people were present. Four architects newly graduated and four people from different backgrounds. I asked three architects to play the role of the fertile architects and to the other to put themselves in the situation where they wanted to create a collective together, to build a common alternative dwelling place.

The steps (see fig. 43):

The future dwellers have all decided to transition towards a new way of living by joining a new collective, leaving behind individualistic schemes. While they haven't yet secured a location, the goal is to build a collective that meets both personal and collective wants and needs. To achieve this, they have mandated architects specialised in collective projects addressing current global challenges.

Now, the focus is on getting to know each other better, understanding their wants and needs, and the reasons for their presence at this discussion:

1. Each future resident explains their motivation for joining a collective project (environmental, financial, age-related...), while architects take notes. **(10 minutes)**
2. I delve deeper into the role of the fertile architect: 'Our work aims to foster a fertile practice of architecture, aligning with the circle of nature of which humans are a part. Today, we are gathered to assist you in transitioning to collectivity by exploring the type of relationships and interactions you envision, both among yourselves and with the future space. We act as interpreters, combining your desires and needs with our professional values to design spaces. This session marks the project's first step, focusing on discussing and analysing your personal and collective wishes and needs, culminating in the creation of collective rules. We will then co-design fictional spaces together that respect these rules, enabling everyone to experience a collectively chosen freedom. In summary, we are focusing on four key areas of transformation to enhance the fertility of our practice: the built environment, land and nature stewardship, finance and economics, and land partnership and community governance. Our objective is to ensure that your project respects the balance between your wants and needs and the natural components, enabling both you and the place to thrive.' **(5 minutes)**
3. Future residents share their current lifestyles (daily routines, hobbies...) and articulate their needs (essentials in life) and desires. Architects take notes and begin sketching diagrams for each individual, translating this into terms of space, materials, light, and emotions. Asking the future dwellers about their concept of a 'safe space' can help visualise what they require in their own spaces. **(15 minutes)**
4. Open discussion on the above points, examining where wants and needs converge in the architects' diagrams. Are there disparities in wants and needs? What potential conflicts could arise? How might personal lives evolve in the future (partners, children, jobs)? The participants establish rules around these aspects and envisage collective routines considering daily activities. Both architects and future dwellers develop a charter, temporal priorities, and a collective diagram (space types, budget). **(30 minutes)**
5. Co-design of fictional spaces incorporating fertile design strategies, reflecting personal and collective wishes and needs, and adhering to collective rules. **(30 minutes)**

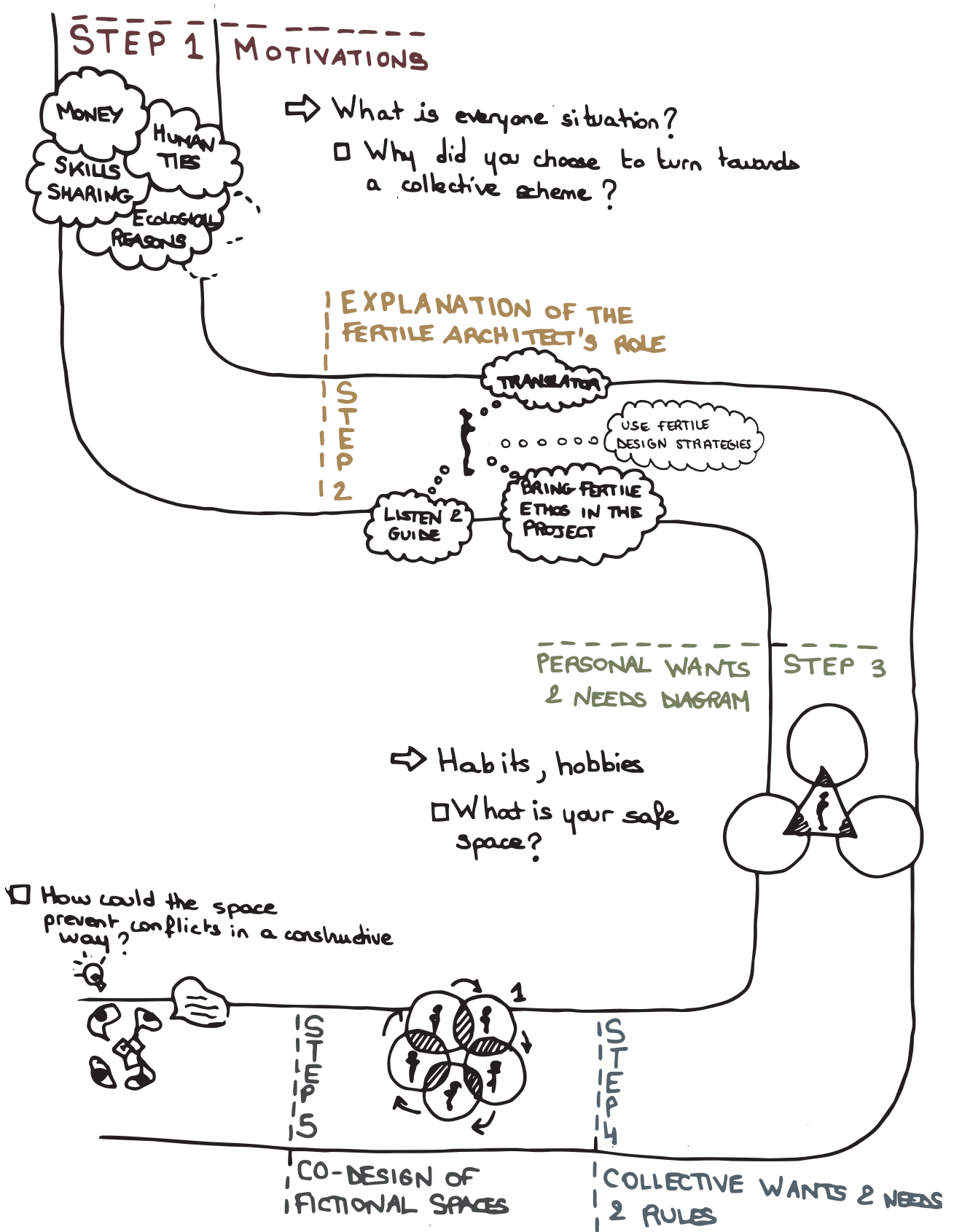


Fig. 43: The workshop's steps

RESULTS & OUTPUTS

During the workshop, architects created diagrams representing individual wants and needs (see fig. 40). Using these diagrams, architects and future dwellers discussed collective identity and shared desires (see fig. 44).

This discussion led to defining priorities and establishing rules to collectively enjoy life (see fig. 45).

In the final stage of the workshop, they collaborated to co-design a conceptual spatial layout that integrated wants, needs, and spatial considerations to prevent potential conflicts (see fig. 46 & 47).

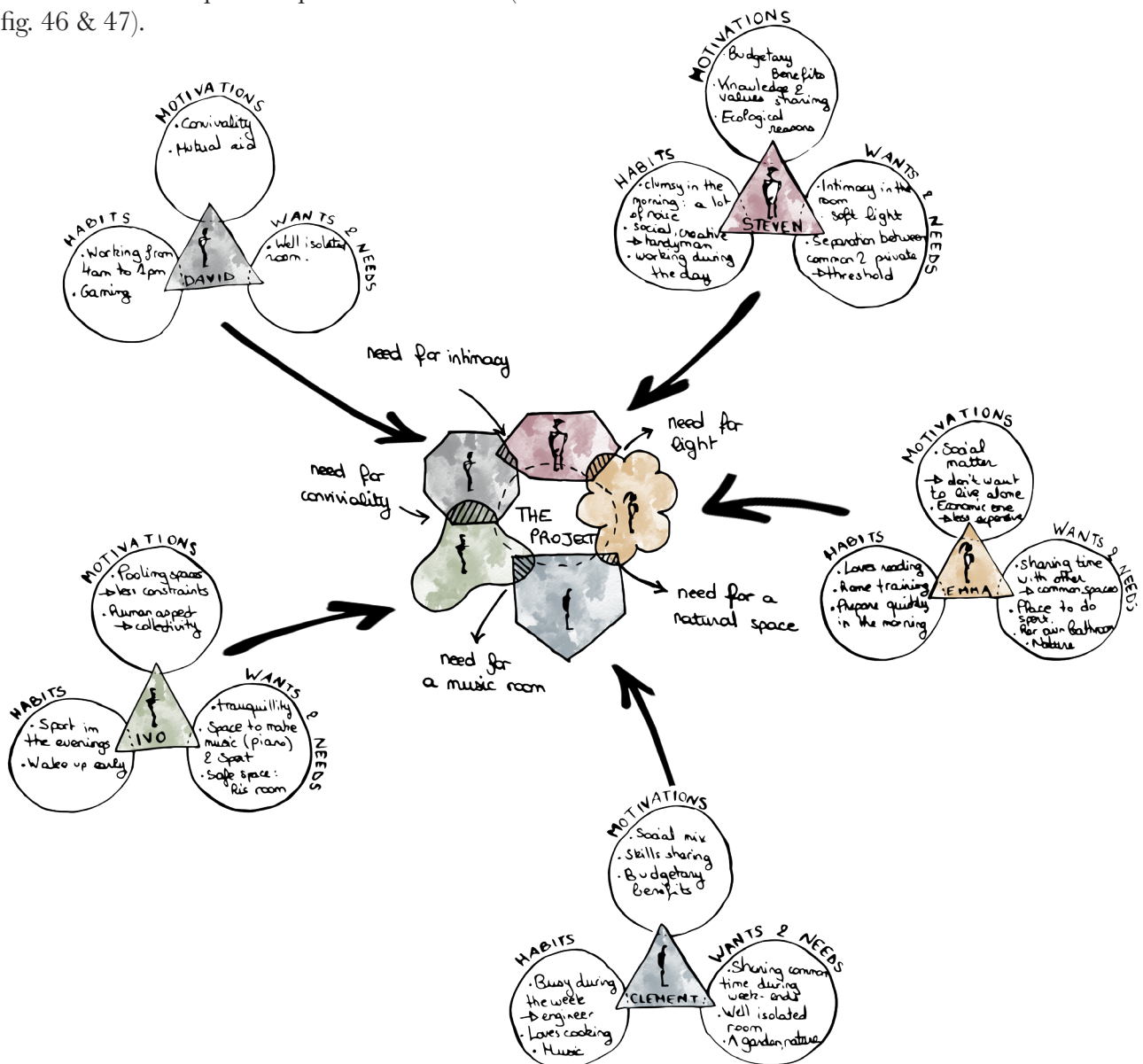


Fig. 44: Individual and collective wants & needs

PRIORITIES:

- Room's insulation & isolation from common spaces
- Bathrooms not directly linked to the kitchen
- Kitchen
- Furnishing rooms before common spaces
↳ safe space of dwellers.
- Multi purpose room.

RULES TO COLLECTIVELY ENJOY LIFE

- No smoking indoor
- No shoes in common spaces
- Respect intimacy of others
- Respect the schedule of everyone
 - noise in the mornings
 - music in the evenings

... To be continued

⇒ These are NOT FIXED rules

Fig. 45: Priorities and rules

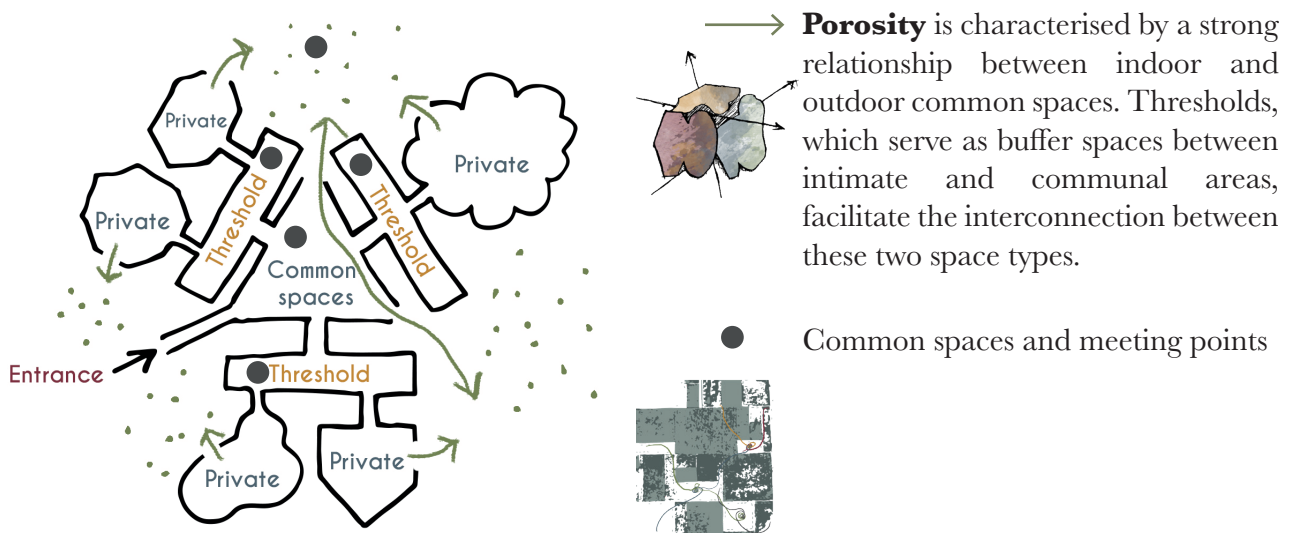
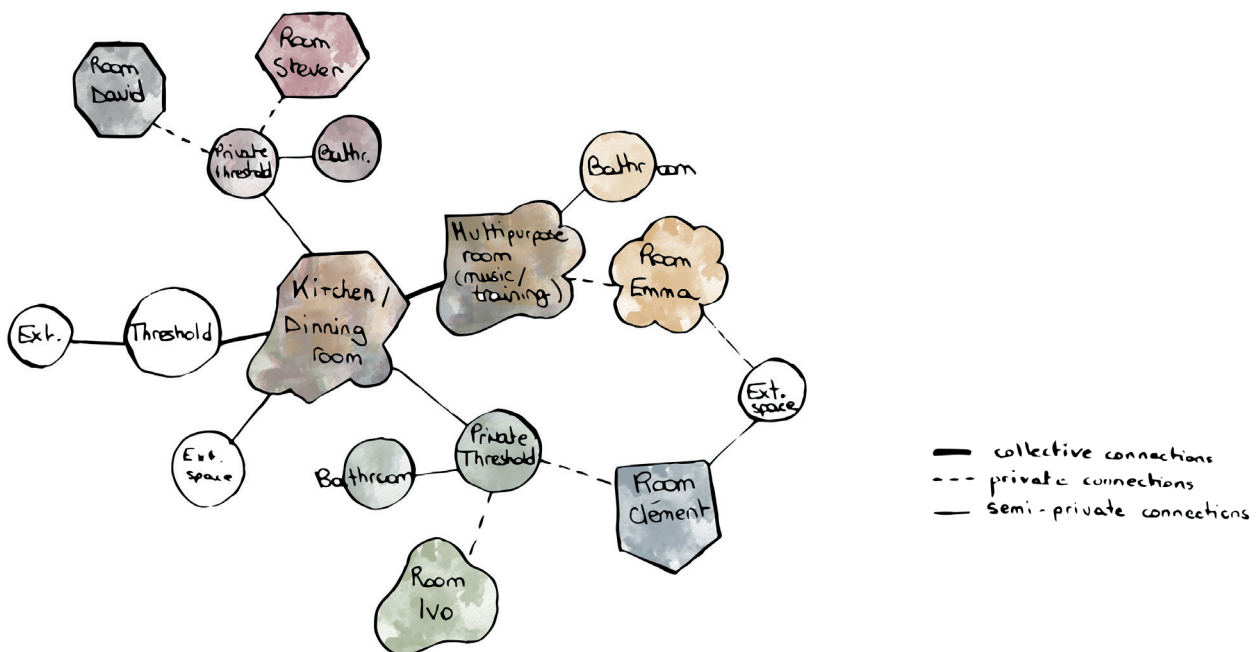


Fig. 46: Conceptual spatial designs

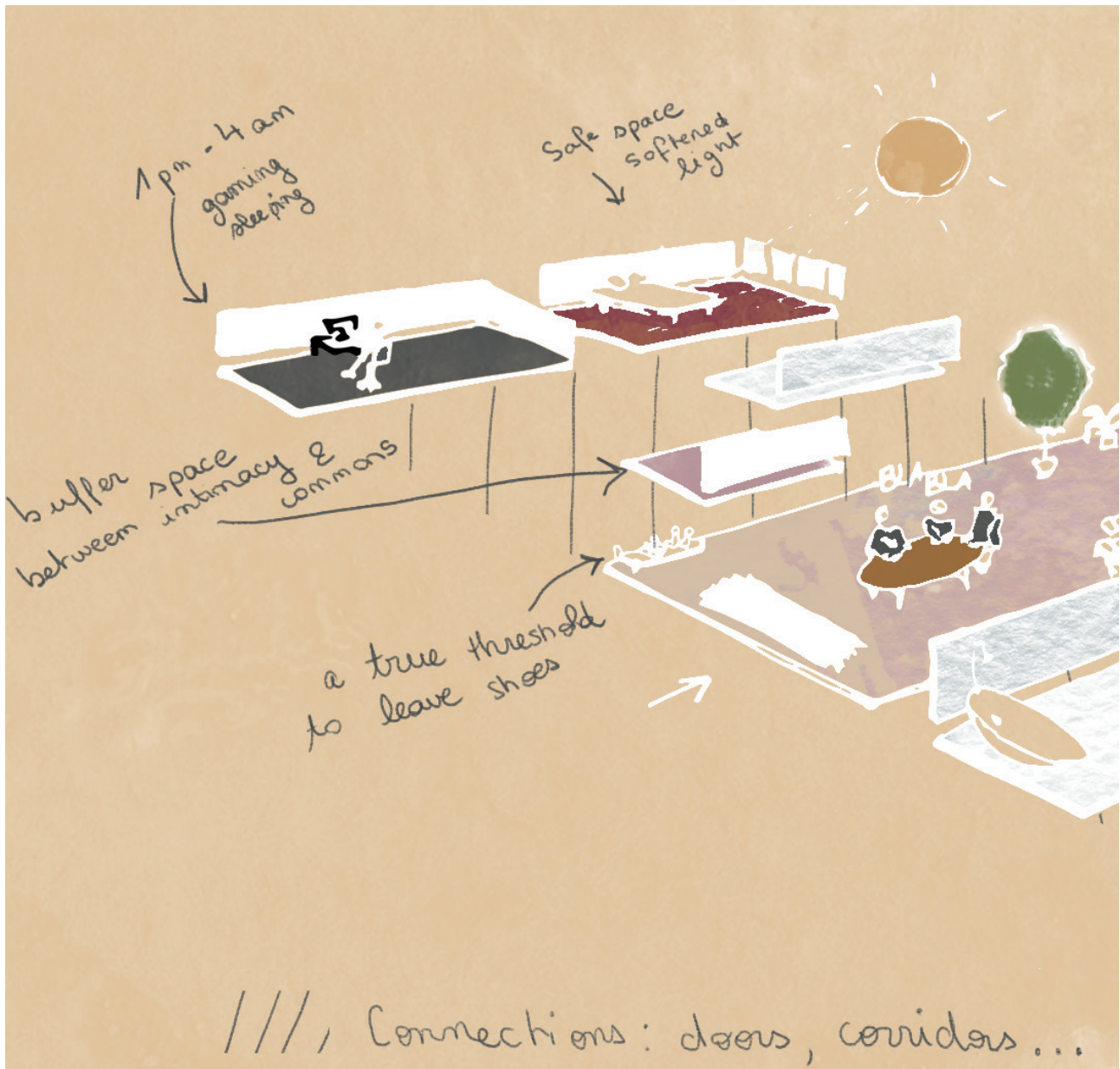


Fig. 47: Conceptual spatial design

REFLECTIONS

After the workshop, I circulated around the table to gather feedback. One suggestion that emerged was regarding steps 1 and 3: would it be beneficial to ask the questions individually, without the influence of others? The responses seemed to be influenced by the first person to speak.

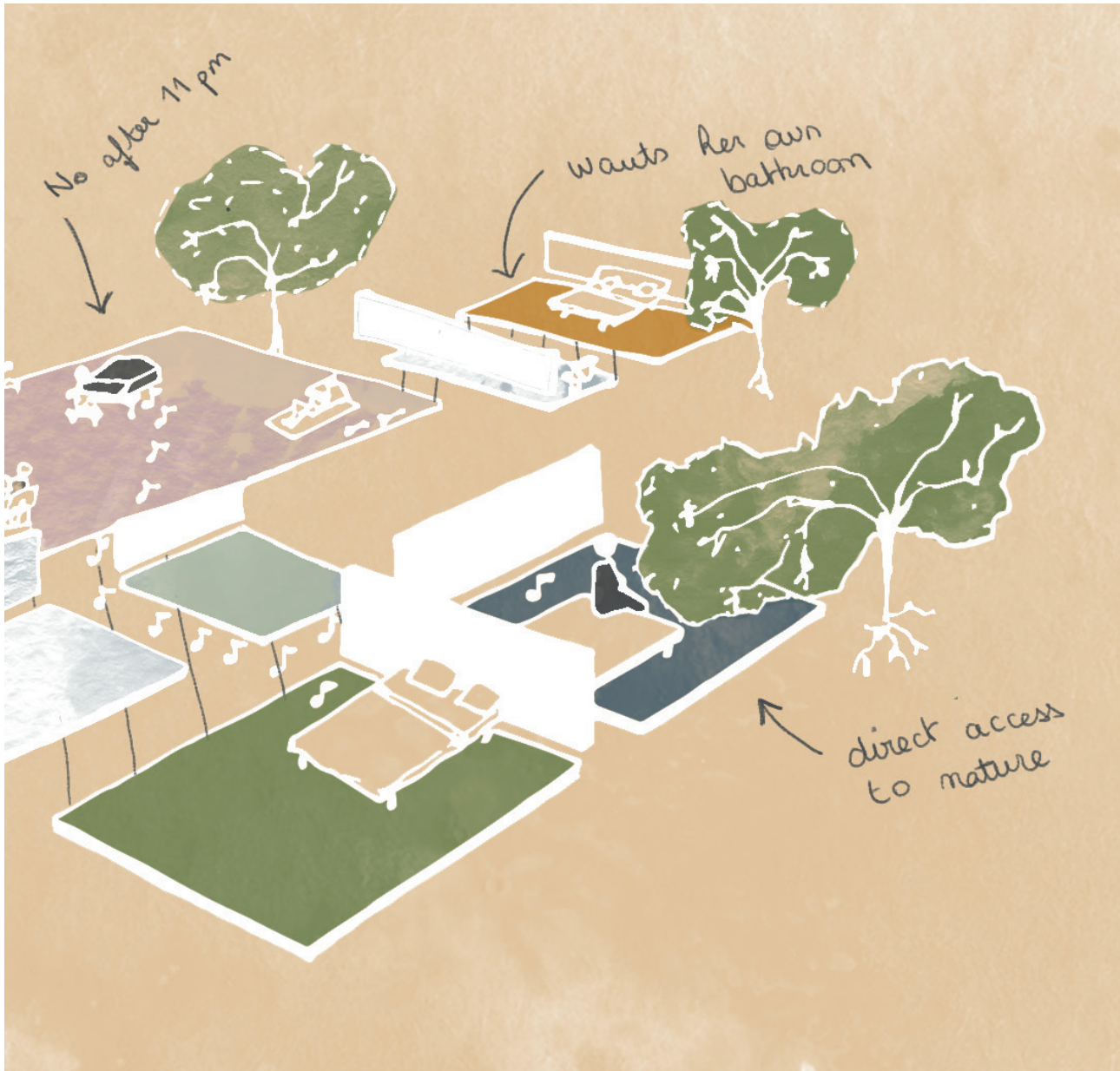
First Observation: The Architect's Implications

During the workshop, I observed that the architects did not employ fertile design strategies. Instead, they followed the conventional approach

we are taught in school and traditional offices: listening to the future dwellers' wants and needs and incorporating them as the program for the future place. A fertile architect remains aligned with their values and designs so that the user's wants and needs are translated in a fertile manner.

After discussions with individuals interested in this subject, it became evident that establishing fertile principles from the beginning of the workshop was crucial. Architects need to abandon certain practices to design in a fertile way. The concept emerged to introduce architects to a manifesto (see fig. 48) at the workshop's commencement, encouraging them to embrace a new vision of their profession. This one gather fertile values learned from the start of this thesis.

With this visionary approach, the fertile design



strategies become clearer and more accessible. However, to effectively implement these strategies, the critical shift must first occur in the mindset.

Second Observation: Future Dwellers' Understanding

The second observation I made was that future dwellers struggled to envision themselves within a collective. The concept seemed unclear to them. They were envisioning a shared apartment or house rather than a lifestyle where they work together towards common goals and pool resources to achieve mutual objectives. Additionally, the method used in the workshop to elicit everyone's wants and needs demands improvement. The rules created and individual

needs were conceived solely in the context of sharing physical spaces together.

Following discussions similar to those held for the first observation, it became apparent that wants and needs could be discussed in terms of functions rather than physical attributes. When someone expresses a physical need, it limits the design possibilities. However, if expressed as a functional need, the possibilities become more expensive. To help future dwellers to express themselves in these matters I created a poster (see fig. 49).

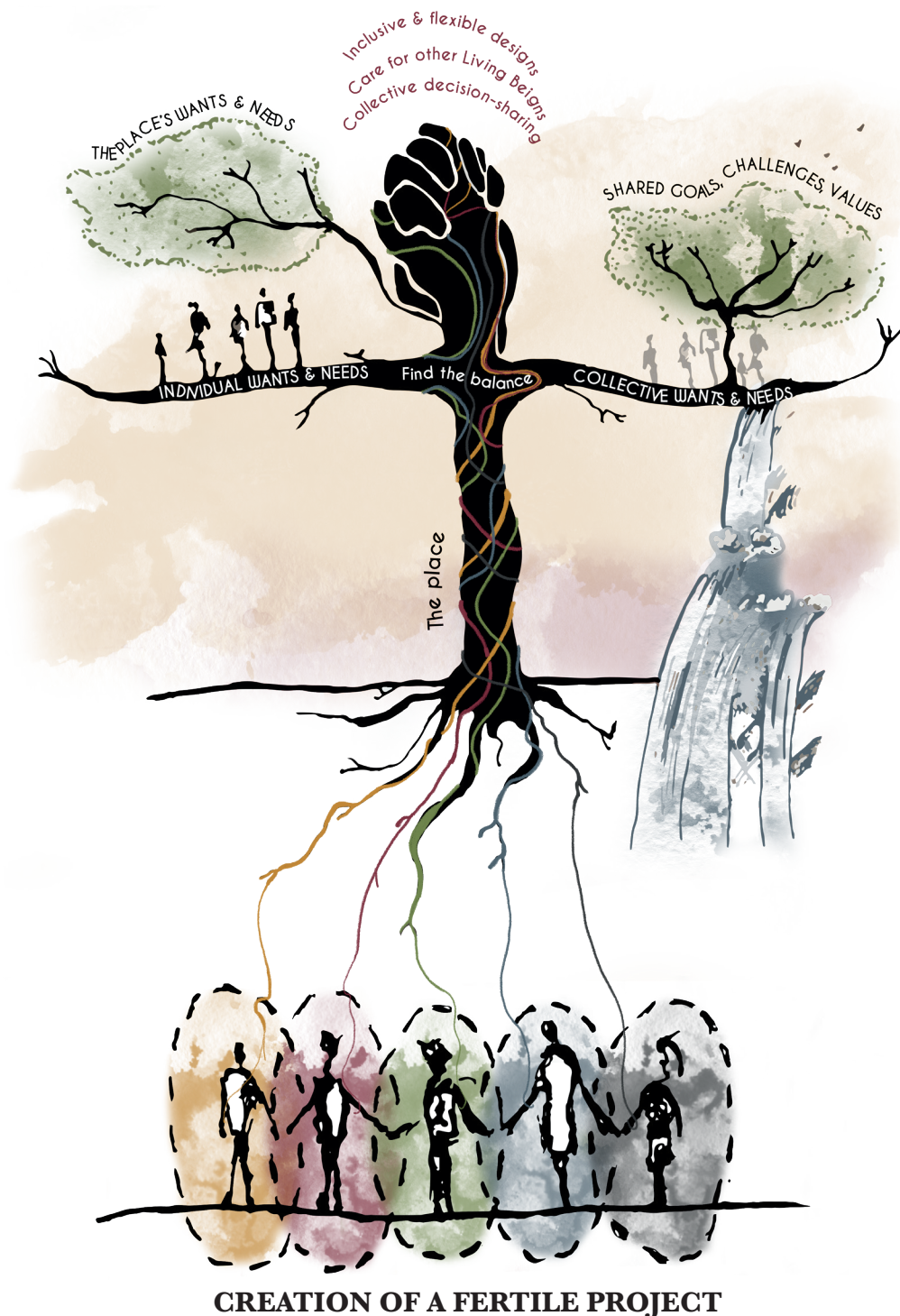
For example, instead of writing 'well-insulated room,' the architect should inquire about the reason behind that need. The response might be, 'I need to be able to sing loudly in my room without anyone hearing me.' This approach opens up more design possibilities.

FOR ARCHITECTS



Fig. 48: Manifesto for a New Fertile Architectural Vision

FOR ARCHITECTURE'S USERS



A fertile collective is the creation of a balance between individual and collective wants and needs. The interrelation between individual wants and needs form the core concept of the project. To achieve this balance, the unique characteristics of each individual must be taken into account.

How to express my wants and needs?

- What makes you feel good in your daily life, in your habits?
- Can you describe a specific situation that relates to each need? Can you delve deeper into the underlying reasons for each need?
- What kind of emotions are associated with each need?

Fig. 49: Expressing wants and needs in a collective project

SPECULATIVE DESIGN: INTERCONNECTING THE COLLECTIVE WITH THE PLACE

The next step of the project after the workshop is to incorporate the place into the discussions, fostering interconnections between the users and the site.

To experiment with the workshop's usefulness in aiding the design for a more fertile practice, a **fictional** place and site (see fig. 50) have been used.

The speculative design involves narrating a story **WITHOUT AN END**. A project continually evolves, especially after the architect's intervention.

At this stage of a fertile project, I envision the role of the architect as someone who creates the framework that allows for the emergence of new imaginaries, both individual and collective, on how to inhabit a specific place.

In line with Tatiana Bilbao's perspective on the limitations of renders that impose a fixed image in people's minds (Frearson, 2019), I employed the tool of collage. The first collage (see fig. 50) showcases the porosity of common spaces linking individual bubbles. This porosity establishes a relationship with the outside, aiming to mentally soften the physical barriers of the house. The choreography created by the multiplicity of common spaces at each level enables dwellers to express their collective identity derived from each individuality. Furthermore, it creates buffer spaces between intimate areas and the collective.

The second collage (see fig. 51) represents a section of the building where multiple activities are intertwined, fostering a dialogue between

spaces and gradually erasing traditional spatial usages to create a unique way of life tailored to the place and its dwellers.

Possibilities of collages are infinite such as ways of life. The result would have been something very different from those if made with the dwellers and one site. In a true process of fertile architecture, the architect is practically never working alone. He co-creates those speculative design with the living beings soon forming a new collective and modelling their own way of dwelling.

Using these two methods in its practices (the workshop and speculative design), the fertile architect initiate a fertile imaginary within each individuality and collective. The speculative design can be anything. It has to be determined with the futur dwellers depending on what inspire them to co-create.

Using the manifesto and the Fertile Design Criteria, fertile architects stay true to their commitments and create architecture designed for a specific place and specific dwellers (see fig. 52). The poster «Making Fertile Architecture» is intended for architects who wish to design for the Living in a fertile way.

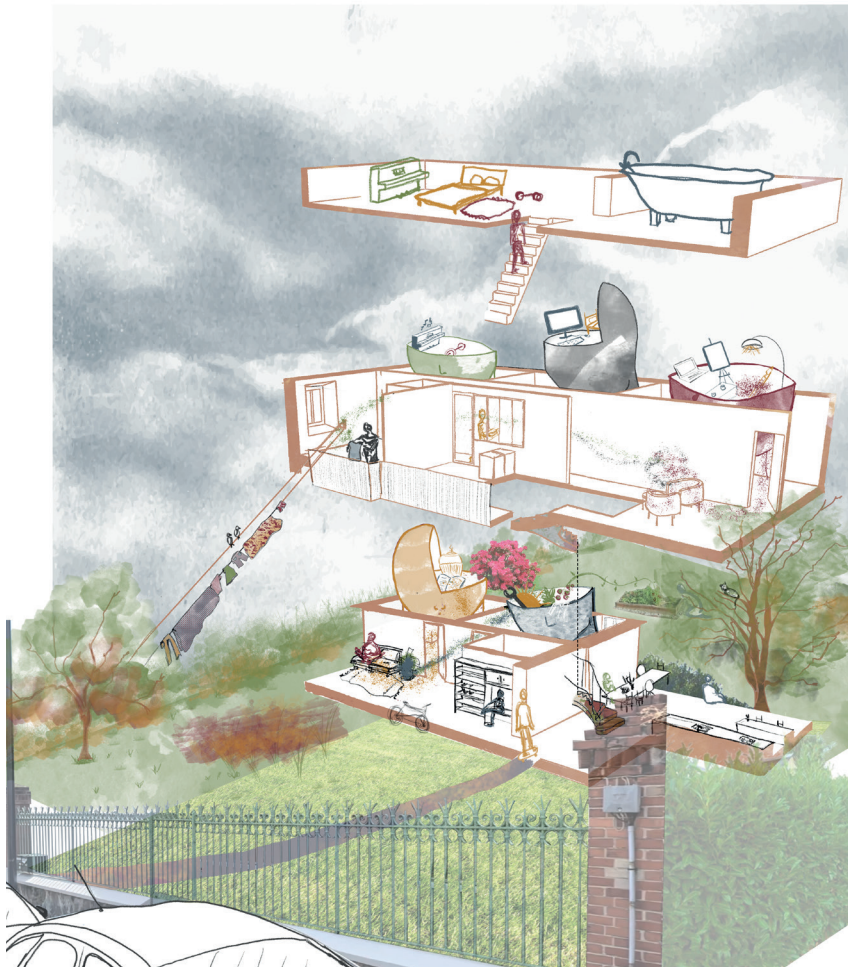


Fig. 50: Perspective collage



Fig. 51: Section collage

MAKING FERTILE ARCHITECTURE

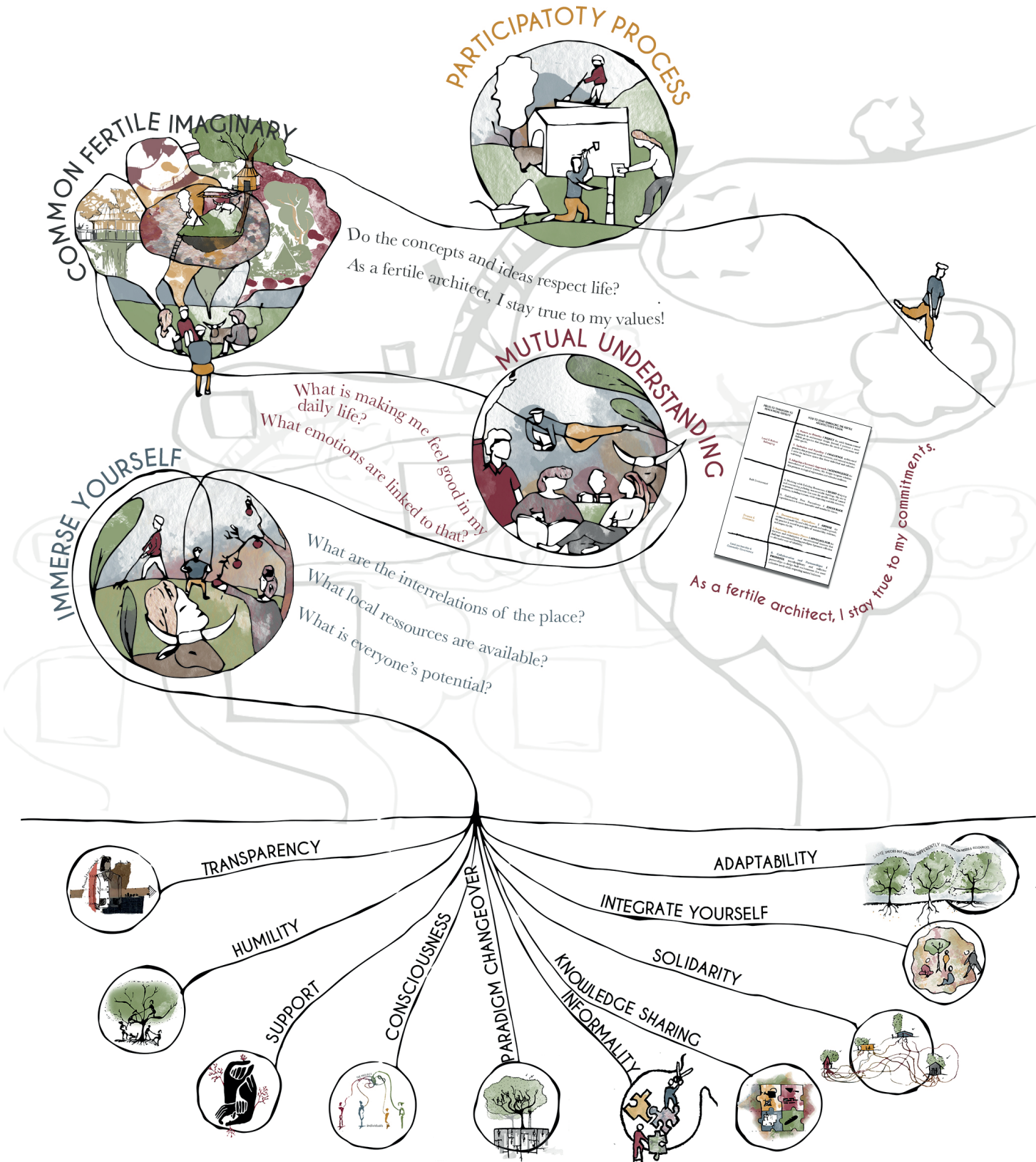
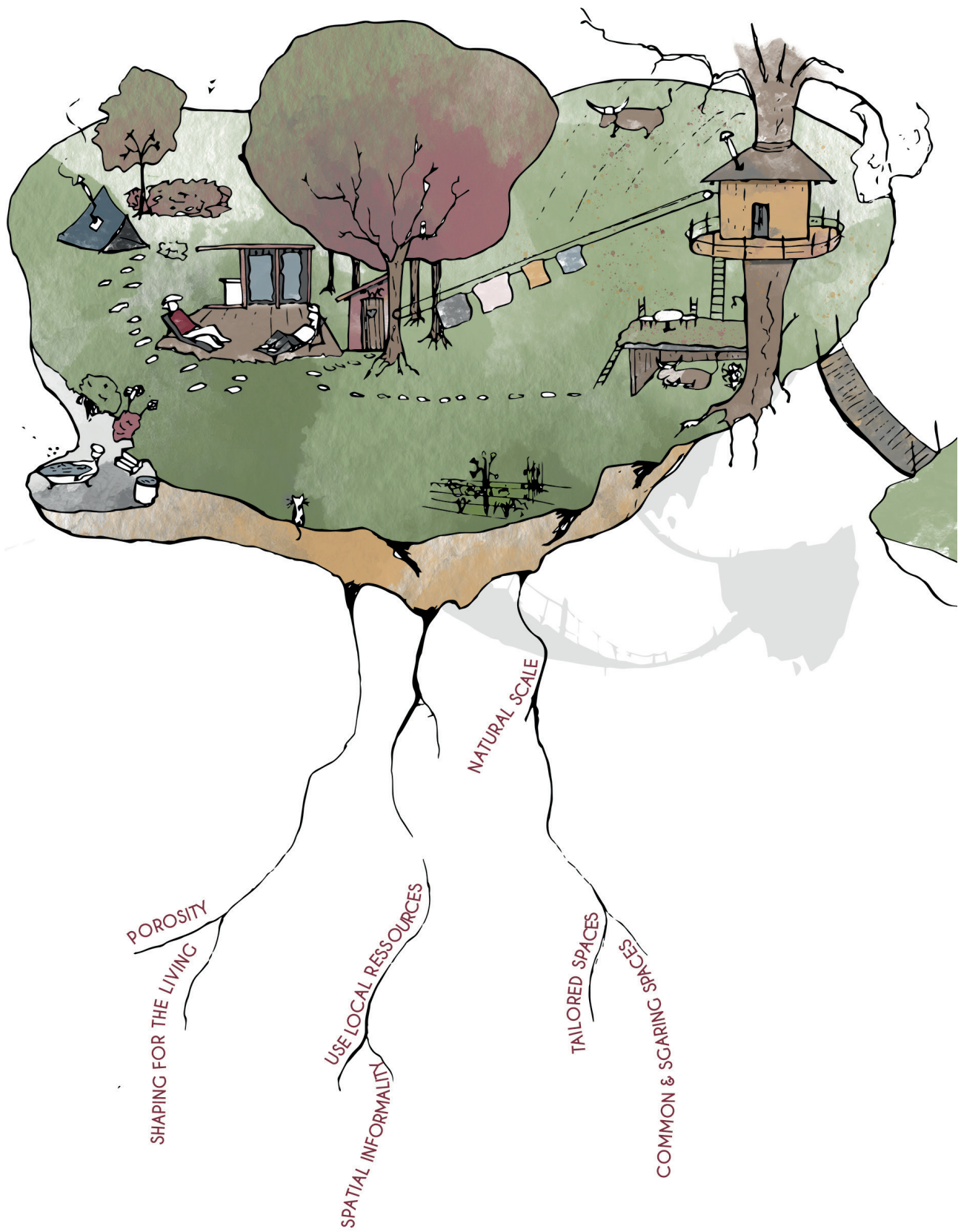


Fig. 52: Making Fertile Architecture





FINAL

REFLECTIONS



GENERAL REFLECTIONS

The immersive study at Chenèvre facilitated a mental deconstruction of my daily use of architecture. As a dweller and a student, I always viewed my apartment as a temporary product. Apart from my childhood home, I never felt a deep connection with my living spaces. It was always a one-way relationship: I used the place for my needs, and as soon as it could no longer meet those needs, I would move. This behaviour is actually encouraged by design; architecture and housing are crafted to address general human needs shaped by consumer society.

Architecture has morphed into a consumable product that evolves with trends, creating artificial needs that change based on these trends. Spending time at Chenèvre and witnessing how dwellers nurture their relationship with the place made me realise the importance of architecture reflecting the individuality of its users. When I say ‘users,’ I mean all living beings in these spaces. For architecture to become a natural component, to have a positive impact on the ecosystem of which it is a part, it must embody a blend of wants and needs of all the living beings locally.

To realise this vision for the architectural field, where architects support projects rather than making them, empowering collective resilience towards autonomy, the field must find its place within an alternative fertile system. Unlike the current model, this system values informality and recognises Nature as the primary user, with humans being an integral part of it.

As a future architect, the immersive study of the eco-place Chenèvre laid the foundation for my pursuit of a more fertile practice through the lens of architecture’s users.

This thesis contributes to a collective reevaluation and reinvention of the field in alignment with ecological and societal concerns. The design strategies outlined in the third chapter serve as nourishment for fertile practices to evolve and thrive. Each strategy can and should be adapted

to every specific project.

The wants and needs workshop can be a powerful tool for co-writing fertile narratives of dwelling and coexisting with buildings and other species. Implementing this approach at the outset of every project, not limited to collective dwellings, enables architecture to work with the Living.

A fertile architectural practice involves co-creating and developing multiple evolving narratives and imaginaries. Consequently, it also entails adapting the architect’s tools to nurture these imaginaries. A fertile approach to architecture embraces uncertainty and informality in its designs, drawings, and collages, fostering creativity and adaptation.

CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

After a year of working on this thesis, I have developed a more hopeful vision for my future practice. The quest to reinvent a practice for the Living has been a motivating force, leading me to embark on this journey with real case studies rather than mere experimentation. However, a pressing question remains: how can we truly impact those who are not questioning their way of inhabiting?

I recognise that my thoughts and reflections can influence architects and future architects who are already questioning their practices. I have engaged with some colleagues, shared my work with them, and witnessed their inspiration. Yet, as observed during the wants and needs workshop, architects present did not necessarily leave with a desire to radically transform their practice.

I believe the experimentation must continue. This involves testing the manifesto and collaborating with architecture’s users to empower them to express their genuine wants and needs, encouraging them to let go of norms and standards that may constrain their creativity and well-being.

During the Knowledge Café (see annexe 1) at

Chenèvre, one of the members mentioned being influenced by the trend of eco-places before arriving there. This illustrates how people are influenced by others, and if more individuals choose to live in interrelation with other living beings, architects will inevitably be compelled to change and reinvent their practice.

It is my aspiration that this thesis serves as a seed in people's minds, growing into numerous fertile architecture concepts that can flourish and meet the needs of our time.



BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 2U Wordpress. (2023, October 24). What is learning, unlearning, and relearning? | Maryville online. Maryville University Online. <https://online.maryville.edu/blog/learning-unlearning-relearning/>
- Alaimo, S. (2008). Trans-corporeal feminisms and the ethical space of nature. In S. Alaimo & S. Kehman (Eds.), *Material feminisms* (pp. 237–264). Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.
- Alonso, B., & Guiochon, C. (2020). *Human permaculture: Life Design for Resilient Living*. Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers.
- Alonso, A. S. (2021, July 23). Le bâtiment, secteur majeur pour permettre à l'UE d'atteindre la neutralité carbone. Euronews. <https://fr.euronews.com/my-europe/2021/07/23/le-batiment-secteur-majeur-pour-permettre-a-l-ue-d-atteindre-la-neutralite-carbone>
- Asara, V., Otero, L., Demaria, F., & Corbera, E. (2015). Socially sustainable degrowth as a social–ecological transformation: repoliticizing sustainability. *Sustainability Science*, 10, 375–384. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-015-0321-9>
- Attias, J. (2021). *La désobéissance fertile, pour une écologie offensive*. Paris : Payot & Rivages.
- Augé, M. (2022). Individual future and collective future. *The Future Issue*, #37. Retrieved from <https://purple.fr/magazine/the-future-issue-37-s-s-2022/individual-future-and-collective-future/>
- Belaidi, N., Chlous, F., Cormier-Salem, M.-C., David, B., de Perthuis, C., Deldève, V., Domenach, H., Guilyardi, E., Larrère, C., Lecoindre, G., Porcher, E. (2023). *Muséum Manifest. Environmental Justice. Reliefs*.
- Berlan, A. (2021). *Terre et liberté, la quête d'autonomie contre le fantasme de délivrance*. La Lenteur.
- BLAST, Le souffle de l'info. (2022, November 14). *EFFONDREMENT : EST-CE QUE TOUT EST VRAIMENT FOUTU ?* [Video]. YouTube. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hP_mZQy2djg
- Bon, A., Roudaut, S., & Rousseau, S. (2022). *Par delà l'androcène* (1st ed.). Paris : Seuil.
- CGR 2023. (n.d.). *Circularity Gap Report 2023*. Retrieved from <https://www.circularity-gap.world/2023>
- Claude, G. (2019, December 4). *La méthode de l'observation pour vos recherches : définition, types et exemple*. Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.fr/methodologie/observation/>
- Construction and demolition waste. (n.d.). *Environment*. https://environment.ec.europa.eu/topics/waste-and-recycling/construction-and-demolition-waste_en
- Coopérative Oasis. (2023, January 14). *Qui sommes-nous ?* — Coopérative Oasis. Retrieved from <https://cooperative-oasis.org/qui-sommes-nous/>
- Cunico, G., Deuten, S., & Huang, I.-C. (2022). Understanding the organisational dynamics and ethos of local degrowth cooperatives. *Climate Action*, 1, 11. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s44168-022-00010-9>
- Dahl, R. (2010). GREENWASHING: DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'RE BUYING? *Environmental Health Perspectives*, 118 (6). <https://www.jstor.org/stable/40661580>
- Deschamps, C., & Deschamps, C. (2021, November 10). *COP26 : quel est l'impact du secteur de la construction sur les émissions de gaz à effet de serre ?* RTBF. <https://www.rtbf.be/article/cop26-quel->

- est-l-impact-du-secteur-de-la-construction-sur-les-emissions-de-gaz-a-effet-de-serre-10868512
- Ellis-Petersen, H. (2023, May 2). Fighting giants: eco-activist Vandana Shiva on her battle against GM multinationals. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2023/apr/28/fighting-giants-eco-activist-vandana-shiva-on-her-battle-against-gm-multinationals>
- Emmanuel Macron prend l'avion présidentiel pour 110 kilomètres. (2018, June 15). *Ouest France*. <https://www.ouest-france.fr/politique/emmanuel-macron/emmanuel-macron-prend-l-avion-presidentiel-pour-110-kilometres-5825789>
- European Liberties Platform. (2023, August 15). What is Activism: Definition, Types, Role, Examples, Importance. *Liberties.eu*. <https://www.liberties.eu/en/stories/activism/44871>
- Frearson, A. (2019, December 10). 'We banned renders' from the design process says Tatiana Bilbao. *Dezeen*. <https://www.dezeen.com/2019/12/04/tatiana-bilbao-banned-renderings-architecture-interview/>
- France, W. (2020, September 10). Rapport Planète Vivante 2020 : Les activités humaines principales responsables du déclin de 68% des populations de vertébrés en moins d'un demi-siècle | WWF France. *WWF France*. <https://www.wwf.fr/vous-informer/actualites/rapport-planete-vivante-2020>
- Gaard, G. (2015). Ecofeminism and climate change. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 49, 20–33. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wsif.2015.02.004>
- growth | Etymology of growth by etymonline. (n.d.). *Etymonline*. <https://www.etymonline.com/word/growth>
- Hallen, P. (1995). Ecofeminism. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 18(3), 375–376. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395\(95\)80,081-y](https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(95)80,081-y)
- Holmgren, D. (2002). *Permaculture: Principles and Pathways Beyond Sustainability*.
- Illich, I. (1984, July). *Dwelling: Text of Address to the Royal Institute of British Architects*. *Mainstream*. Retrieved from <https://www.mainstreamweekly.net/article10682.html>
- Individualism. (2023). In *Cambridge Dictionary*. Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/individualism>
- Kallis, G., Kerschner, C., & Martinez-Alier, J. (2012). The economics of degrowth. *Ecological Economics*, 84, 172–180. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2012.08.017>
- Kempf, P. R. P. H. (2021, October 12). Philippe Descola : «La nature, ça n'existe pas». *Reporterre, Le Média De L'écologie — Indépendant Et En Accès Libre*. <https://reporterre.net/Philippe-Descola-La-nature-ca-n-existe-pas>
- Kraja, E. (2018, December 12). Eco-activism: What it is and why it is relevant. *WECF*. Retrieved from <https://www.wecf.org/eco-activism-what-it-is-and-why-it-is-relevant/>
- La REcyclerie. (2023, April 19). Qu'est-ce que le féminisme de subsistance ? Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, Geneviève Pruvost [Video]. *YouTube*. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=or4VPEdrpEA>
- Latouche, S. (2010). Degrowth. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 18(6), 519–522. <https://doi.org>
- Latouche, S. (2013). Prefazione. In M. Bonaiuti (Ed.), *La grande transizione: Dal declino alla società della decrescita*. Torino: Bollati Boringhieri.
- LDV Studio Urbain. (2023, April 3). Les écolieux, agir collectivement pour la durabilité. *Demain La Ville — Bouygues Immobilier*. <https://www.demainlaville.com/les-ecolieux-agir-collectivement-pour-la-durabilite/>
- Manifeste pour l'Habitat Réversible — Groupe Habitat Réversible Autonome. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://habitat-reversible.org/manifeste-pour-lhabitat-reversible/>
- Mangold, W. (2014). Architecture and the Vicissitudes of Capitalism. In *Routledge (Ed.), Architecture in an Age of Uncertainty* (pp. 15–24).
- McMahon, M. (1996). From the ground up: Ecofeminism and ecological economics. *Ecological Economics*, 20, 163–173. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0921-8009\(96\)00026-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0921-8009(96)00026-2)
- Mies, M., & Shiva, V. (1993). *Ecofeminism*. London: Zed Books.
- Munshi, I. (2000). 'Environment' in sociological theory. *Sociological Bulletin*, 49(2), 253–266. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23620117>

- M, M. (2021, January 18). Écolos, autonomes et communautaires, le gros boom des éco-lieux en France. 18h39. Retrieved from <https://www.18h39.fr/changer-de-vie/solidarite-logement/ecolos-autonomes-et-communautaires-le-gros-boom-des-eco-lieux-en-france.html>
- Notre manifeste. (2023, April 27). Mouvement Colibris. Retrieved from <https://www.colibris-lemouvement.org/lassociation/notre-manifeste>
- Oltermann, P., Kellaway, K., Lewis, T., Ratcliffe, R., Fisher, A., Collins, D., O’Kelly, L., Keneally, M., Fox, K., & Laing, O. (2021, October 18). Gen Z on how to save the world: young climate activists speak out. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/oct/17/gen-z-on-how-to-save-the-world-young-climate-activists-speak-out>
- Pauwels, P., De Meyer, R., & Van Campenhout, J. (2013). Design Thinking Support: Information Systems Versus Reasoning. *Design Issues*, 29(2), 42–59. https://doi.org/10.1162/DESI_a_00209
- Peyrard-Moulard, M. (2022, August 25). Néoclassiques [Courant de pensée économique] : définition d’économie. Pour L’Éco. Retrieved from <https://www.pourleco.com/le-dico-de-l-eco/neoclassiques-courant-de-pensee-economique>
- Piotr. (2023, September 13). 09.09.23 Rencontre avec Aurelien Berlan. Retrieved from <https://libradio.org/09-09-23-rencontre-avec-aurelien-berlan/>
- Plotnikova, S. (2020). Designing for Degrowth: Architecture Against Climate Apartheid. In P. Crisman & K. Konis (Eds.), *Designing for Climate Action* (pp. 26-33). <https://doi.org/10.35483/ACSA.AIA.Inter.20.3>
- Présentation détaillée de la Ferme Légère, écolieu en Béarn. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://fermelegere.greli.net/projet/details-du-projet>
- Rao, D. (2023, January 20). What is environmental justice? THE WEEK. <https://theweek.com/briefing/1020010/what-is-environmental-justice>
- Ruault, L., Hertz, E., Debergh, M., Martin, H., & Bechmann, L. (2021/2). Patriarcat, capitalisme et appropriation de la nature. *Nouvelles Questions Féministes*, 40, 6-16.
- Servigne, P., & Stevens, R. (2015). *Comment tout peut s’effondrer*. Editions du Seuil.
- TEDxYouth. (2013, May 25). What is activism? Anjali Appadurai at TEDxYouth@Biddeford [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zDVA7r7r0d0>
- The Knowledge Café concept—Knowledge Café. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://knowledge.cafe/knowledge-cafe-concept/>
- Thinkerview. (2022, January 25). L’effondrement : le point critique? Aurore Stéphant [EN DIRECT] [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xx3PsG2mr-Y>
- Thinkerview. (2023, February 26). Effondrement : notre civilisation au bord du gouffre? Aurore Stéphant [EN DIRECT] [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkiMqLD3_YQ
- Todd, NJ. (1994). *From eco-cities to living machines: Principles of ecological design*. Berkeley, Calif.: North Atlantic Books.
- Université de Lausanne. (2023, September 26). Aurore Stéphant | Réalités minières et limites matérielles | UNIL — Moins c’est Mieux #4 [Video]. YouTube. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LXuE0mg6NBQ>
- van Griethuysen, P. (2012). Bona diagnosis, bona curatio : How property economics clarifies the degrowth debate. *Ecological Economics*, 84, 262–269. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2012.02.018>
- Vialan, D. (2023, March 15). Les oasis font-elles de la politique ? 1/2 Vivre en écolieu, est-ce du greenwashing personnel ? Coopérative Oasis. <https://cooperative-oasis.org/articles/les-oasis-font-elles-de-la-politique-vivre-en-ecolieu-est-ce-du-greenwashing-personnel/>
- vie-publique.fr. (2021, November 23). Qu’est-ce que l’Anthropocène ? <https://www.vie-publique.fr/parole-dexpert/271086-terre-climat-quest-ce-que-lanthropocene-ere-geologique>
- Zask, J. (2023). *Se tenir quelque part sur la terre, Comment parler des lieux qu’on aime*. Premier Parallèle.

APPENDIX

Annexe 1: Knowledge Café retranscription in notes of the group's discussion (translated from French to English)

Group 1 (4 persons)

What kind of role the human kind can or should have in its environment?

Woofers 1: Humans must find a balance with the living beings around them.

Dweller 1: Says there are two areas: urban and rural must be dissociated. The impacts are not the same in both zones: there is an imbalance between the two territories: with density, infrastructure, modernity... 'What's interesting from an ecological and urban perspective is that it's compact, so we reduce infrastructure for a large population, unlike rural areas.' Living in a city can be defended ecologically: people are less spread out over the environment. But this depends on each person's lifestyle. 'The rural area is positive because you are more in contact with living beings.' **'Rural areas are interesting if we create collectives that gather what you can find in cities, creating small nuclei where you can find all services.'**

Woofers 2: Feels that in rural areas, one can promote more local production.

Dweller 1: 'There's an idea of repositioning one's place in the Living.'

Woofers 2: 'I don't feel like humans realise what

surrounds them.'

Dweller 1: 'There's control over vegetation, it has to be aesthetic.'

Dweller 2: 'It has to be to their (humans') taste with denaturalisation, modification of planted spaces.'

Dweller 1: 'Today, we have many **dormitory habitats** because societies are alienating in terms of work and materialism.' **'We should have composting houses.'**

What is your point of view on the current state of the world and how do you view yourself in it in the present and the future?

Woofers 2: 'My worldview is somewhat distorted by the media.'

Dweller 1: 'We cannot have a global view. What is offered to us is subjective.' **'It's the paradigm that needs to change, not the climate. We need to think differently and as long as we're in capitalism, it won't work.'**

Dweller 2: 'We live in such an individualistic society that it's hard to imagine the mutual aid that could be generated.'

Woofers 2: Says we need to return to simpler things, learn to cook for oneself and others, learn to repair.

What are you looking for here (Chenèvre) by living here or spending a certain

amount of time here? Is there something missing?

Dweller 1: ‘We need to understand again what our role in life is.’

Dweller 1: ‘Regarding the idea of living together: when you’re in a group, you’re obliged to resolve conflicts.’ She seeks to eat differently, to learn to do things together, to produce her own food.

Woofeur 2: There’s a notion of escape, of partial escape since we remain within the system.

Dweller 1: The idea of meeting people who want to share the same values.

Dweller 2: ‘More than escape, I would say struggle. But on our scale.’ She mentions that many people tell them they work more than for a company. Yes, but it’s their choice and it’s interesting for them to co-build.

Dweller 1: However, there’s a lack: it’s the individualism that is possible in the city: being able to make your own choices.

Dweller 2: ‘Balance is difficult, the collective can also stifle your own choices.’ She misses conviviality at Chenèvre. There isn’t always enough, but it depends on the moments and how numerous they are.

Dweller 1: ‘Living at home versus living in a collective is really different. We have difficulty maintaining our privacy. I know who showers when even though I don’t want to know.’ ‘For children, it’s great to meet people all the time.’

Group 2 (4 persons)

What is your point of view on the current state of the world and how do you view yourself in it in the present and the future?

Woofeur 3: ‘I have a somewhat pessimistic view of the world, where I feel like we’re heading

towards a wall. We’re pulling on the rope too much and few people realise it. We’re exceeding limits and destroying our environment, and little is being done to stop it.’ She has little hope for voluntary change; it will be forced. She believes that individual actions may not necessarily have an impact, but it reassures her to act according to her beliefs and values. There is an interest in promoting alternatives.

Dweller 3: What are your beliefs?

Woofeur 3: ‘Doing good goes hand in hand with my spirituality.’ She believes in something that connects us all, with a lot of love and compassion among all living beings.

Dweller 4: Thinks that we are trapped in a global colonialist mindset, which leads to imbalances: we are led to function in a way where we seize wealth that is not ours. For him, many things arise from colonial imbalances, the same for living beings by seizing land and exploiting it. In the present, he is one of those who perpetuate this, having learned to consume.

Dweller 5: Has a very pessimistic view of the world, ‘we are sad populations, sad societies’, and thinks that if we lose the comfort we have acquired, it may not be so bad after all. There is still joy in the struggle. ‘We appreciate comfort because there is discomfort.’

Dweller 3: ‘The current world is like a great anxiety’ that leads to withdrawal and individualism. Anxiety about losing, about not having a solution. She tries to counteract this anxiety to avoid being in it every day.

Dweller 4: ‘Living together is a conceptual notion used in local political discourse, it is not yet galvanized.’ He finds the concept positive, otherwise it’s evolving independently. But there may also be an aspect that separates from society, the ‘living together’.

What are you looking for here (Chenèvre) by living here or spending a certain amount of time here? Is there something missing?

Woofeur 3: Seeks to understand practically how collective living functions. Wants to see if it's feasible, desirable, and if it would appeal to me. What I miss is more calmness, places where one can reflect without being disturbed by passersby.

Dweller 4: Searches for conviviality, a spirit of mutual aid at different rates depending on the moment, and a desire to do original things. Seeing the building being constructed is truly a feeling of accomplishment.

Woofeur 3: 'We don't feel alone at Chenèvre.'

Dweller 5: Influenced by the trend of eco-places wasn't sure what to do. There's something related to their background (farming, non-neo-rural). 'It's not just about choice, there's also external influence.' Seeks collective work, collaborating together, welcoming woofers. Misses a bit of joy, being together like in the beginning: a somewhat old-couple side.

Woofeur 3: Appreciates that the place is open, making it very easy to invite people.

Dweller 4: Everything takes a lot of time, doesn't live passionately all the time because can't always give so much energy.

Dweller 3: Likes the idea of living in a collective also to not die alone. Loves the notion of fraternity.

What kind of role the human kind can or should have in its environment?

Woofeur 3: At the very least, limit the impact one has on the environment, and if possible, enhance the territory. Ensuring that living somewhere means participating in something, creating positive connections.

Dweller 3: We need to adapt to a world where human relationships are far from obvious.

Dweller 4: We are inhabitants, users of a territory. 'Inhabiting goes hand in hand with respect, also sharing with animals.'

Dweller 5: Planting trees. 'I don't plan to stay in one place for long, and I benefit from the fruit of what others have planted, so I think planting trees: there will always be someone who will be happy.'

Dweller 3: The place of humans cannot be central.

Woofeur 3: 'My ideal would be that we manage to live without too much extraction from our environment.' Simply living, without destroying and depleting. All our lifestyle choices are linked to this environmental destruction.

Group 3 (3 persons)

What are you looking for here (Chenèvre) by living here or spending a certain amount of time here? Is there something missing?

Woofeur 4: Searching for a collective experience, a life in community. The presence of woofers imposes a separate collective.

Woofeur 5: Seeking a life different from urban living. Curious about the origin of his food. Wants to learn and experience collective life, addressing the disconnection felt in urban settings. Finds it is unique not to have any alone time in daily life at Chenèvre.

Dweller 6: Notes that the collective dynamic changes without woofers. Residents no longer experience collective life daily. Rare communal meals become meetings. Each person has their own living space. Discussions revolve around project progress and objectives. **'In a collective, you don't need all skills in every domain. Others can assist you.'** Sharing reduces environmental impact for occasional uses like showers. Shared common values. At Chenèvre, he found some desired aspects, others not. Community life isn't as expected, but this lifestyle suits him. Finds similar dynamics within GAEC on a smaller scale. Enjoys more financial freedom and informality in the countryside.

What kind of role the human kind can or should have in its environment?

Woofers 4: ‘Does humans possess territory? What is ownership? What defines territory?’ She currently leads a nomadic lifestyle and therefore considers herself as not living anywhere. ‘My definition of dwelling is: you settle in a place and you stay there. Dwelling is closely related to sedentarism.’ It involves a long-term physical investment.

Dweller 6: ‘Even when we move, we occupy space. How do we occupy territory as humans?’

Woofers 5: ‘I like the idea of being involved in decisions concerning our territory. It forces us to consider how we occupy it rather than delegating it to the State.’

Dweller 6: Densify or spread out. It’s important to weave closer to the existing nature and integrate into the landscape. ‘Humans should dwell in a way that leaves space for other species to exist.’

Woofers 4: Dwelling ‘with respect for oneself but also for others’.

Dweller 6: ‘For me, one of the goals for humans to dwell differently would be to take more into account the other living species, what already exists before humans arrive. If we spread out, we risk encroaching on the habitats of animals. But if it’s more about integration, maybe it’s compatible.’

Woofers 4: ‘Do you think we cannot be integrated into our environment when human density is too high in this territory?’ ‘To ensure that the human species stops expanding into nature to the point of threatening itself.’ ‘**To what extent should we not go further than that and respect all forms of life on Earth?**’

What is your point of view on the current state of the world and how do you view yourself in it in the present and the future?

Woofers 5: says that capitalist society is based on wage labour, which obliges us to sell our time to others. ‘We cultivate a sort of individuality.’ ‘Since we are forced to build our individuality, we are somewhat thrown back on ourselves to construct our lives.’ Today, it’s necessary to give meaning to our lives, it’s a quest for purpose and choices that build our individuality.

Woofers 4: The current generation has a lot of choices. ‘We grow up in a situation where your goal is to be happy and for that, you need to work, have a roof over your head. How do you break out of this pattern and find your happiness?’ The idea of deconstructing to rebuild better.

Dweller 6: ‘I think it’s not possible to deconstruct, you have to work with both.’

MANIFESTO

FOR ARCHITECTS & FUTUR ARCHITECTS WHO WISH TO REINVENT THEIR PRACTICE -

Humans are just a part of Nature, think, transform, build architecture as part of it too...

01. TRANSPARENCY

- at every stage of the project
- on the physical & environmental costs

02. HUMILITY

- learn to collaborate
- interrogate your role as an architect

03. SUPPORT

- empower collective resilience
- rather than making

04. CONSCIOUSNESS

- understand our bond to Nature
- understand users individually & the collective they are forming

05. PARADIGM CHANGE OVER

- Think about local alternatives
- Nature is the only way, we are part of it.

10

PRECEPTS

FOR

A MORE

FERTILE

PRACTICE

OF

ARCHITECTURE

06. ADAPTABILITY

- reinvent, relearn the process each time
- there is no universal solution

07. INTEGRATE YOURSELF

- rather than integrating users
- take the time needed

08. SOLIDARITY

- seek for mutual aid
- stay connected

09. KNOWLEDGE SHARING

- the project is a personal and collective enrichment

10. INFORMALITY

- leave space to the unknown & improvisation