



Invisible Contexts: Exercises in the Construction of Site-Specific Narratives

Jakob Travník

Wahlseminar ● 4 ECTS ● 253.E41 ● intro meeting
Wednesday, 04.11.2020 ● 17:00 - 18:00 ● Garage
Grande ● weekly meetings November - December
(hybrid) ● Wednesdays ● 17:00 - 21:00 ● course will
be held in English

Institut für
Architektur und Entwerfen
[Gebäudelehre und](#)
[Entwerfen](#)

“Our everyday life-world consists of concrete “phenomena.” It consists of people, of animals, of flowers, trees and forests, of stone, earth, wood and water, of towns, streets and houses, doors, windows and furniture. And it consists of sun, moon and stars, of drifting clouds, of night and day and changing seasons. But it also comprises more intangible phenomena such as feelings. This is what is “given,” this is the “content” of our existence.”

- Christian Norberg-Schulz,
The Phenomenon of Place, 1976

Every square-meter of the world is unique and hence each intervention, however big or small, has the responsibility to reflect, if not distill its unique characteristics. In an increasingly homogenised world, our experience of places has become subject to preconceptions and superficial understandings of the word ‘context’ - a word which describes a set of specific circumstances representative of a place and/or situation.

Given the contemporary urgencies of our time, the word context is gaining new meanings and levels of importance, particularly when it comes to the construction of the built environment. We must acknowledge that simply referencing visible and tangible aspects of a context is not enough. In order to establish more meaningful relationships with the places we encounter, we need to construct new methods, tools and narratives that help us identify and understand the often intangible and invisible aspects of a context and its spatio-temporal conditions.

Through a series of input lectures and systematic research exercises, the course will explore theoretical and practical tools for the understanding of three key components of a context: place, user and material. Taking Garage Grande, a newly established temporary-use initiative by Gebietsbetreuung Staderneuerung (West) in Vienna’s 16th district as a case study, we will aim to reveal and respond to the hidden characteristics of its 2500 m² area of empty parking lots in an effort to construct new site-specific narratives.

Based on a collective research of designated 1 m² micro-sites at Garage Grande, the course will culminate in the construction of 1:1 physical installations and written essays. These narratives will be presented as part of an open-air exhibition and discussed in a cross-disciplinary forum.