

*The remaining four-fifths of the 21st century*

## **Facing Fear**

Only discomfort could bring about real change. Only when they had to leave their comfort zone did an active will for change emerge among people.

### **Paradigm shift**

The perception of a debris flow as a natural disaster changed to an understanding of the positive consequences of the incident. It brought the realisation that we are part of nature and cannot work against it. In a way, the word natural disaster prevented us from taking responsibility for our existence. It made these events seem sporadic, inevitable, as if we were being attacked by nature at random, rather than looking at our own role in things. "It had more of a celebration than a disaster. The floods transformed the everyday visuals without yet slipping into the fantastic; the objects were partly hidden but not disfigured: The spectacle was singular but reasonable," wrote Roland Barthes in 1957 in *Als Paris nicht unterging*.

### **Environment**

Global urbanization has not been given a negative connotation, it has not been about creating a sentimentality or nostalgia. Rather, a new way of thinking is now being articulated that redefines our sense of comfort. Our built objects are now no longer thought of in isolation from their environmental context. The new architecture has an exchange with natural phenomena. The debris flow was the radical version of this theory of the dissolution of conceptualizations such as inside and outside.

### **Underground**

Within the Swiss mentality, the underground has long been associated with the comfort of being safe. The desire for isolation and safety was materialized by endless systems of bunkers and tunnels. The neutral view was always underlined by the collective desire to be prepared for anything. But fear-drivenness could be challenged by recognizing the underground as a place full of ideas, beliefs, beings, energy and minerals that exist for themselves, beyond the potential benefit to human life.

### Case study substruction figure

The legal introduction of a substruction figure was promised in 2011 as a medium-term goal of the government but was not introduced by 2021. In view of the noticeable climate change, a timely adaptation of the law was urgently needed. A partial revision of the PBG entitled *Climate-Adapted Settlement Development*, in which the regulation of under-building was also to be introduced, was publicly announced on 17 May 2021 and signed three months later. Primarily, this enabled large-crowned trees to have sufficient soil for the formation of their root space. With the substruction figure, it was no longer possible for property owners to build underground right up to the edge of the plot.

A few years later, the subsoil belonged to itself. From a vertical point of view, land ownership in Switzerland previously extended into the sky and into the ground, insofar as there was an interest for its use (Art. 667 ZGB). The law thus understood the land not as a mere surface, but as a three-dimensional body bounded above and below. The extent of the vertical extension of the property could therefore not be determined in a generally valid manner but was determined on a case-by-case basis according to the concrete circumstances and the owner's interest worthy of protection to use or control this space himself and to ward off the intrusion of others.

### Case study Billionaires' Basements

*"The past five years have seen sprawling underground leisure lairs excavated across west London, from Knightsbridge to Belgravia, Fulham to Notting Hill. They contain playrooms and cinemas, bowling alleys and spas, wine cellars and gun rooms – and even a two-storey climbing wall. It is leading to a kind of iceberg architecture, a humble mansion on the surface just the visible peak of a gargantuan underworld, with subterranean possibilities only limited by the client's imagination."* wrote Oliver Wainwright in The Guardian in 2012.

### **Fortress**

The desire for defensiveness, recognizable in the form of fences or large cars, but also in the massively built architecture, turned into a desire for lightness. Only through the debris flow did it become clear that it is ineffective to adopt a defensive stance. Architecture is now more flexible and adaptable so that it can accommodate sudden changes. It was able to break free from the fetish of the object.

### **Urban sprawl**

The debris flow showed us that spatial sprawl must end. Our cities were increasingly spreading out, natural ecosystems were disappearing. For a long time, people took as much space as they needed. Then nature came back to the city through an abrupt event.

### **Property**

Humans had the need to dominate nature. Dominance was linked to the desire for property. Their houseplants were within the realm of controllable nature. The debris flow no longer fell within this realm. It allowed the concept of land ownership to be challenged and gradually abolished.

### Case study expropriation

According to Article 664 of the Swiss Civil Code, there is no private property in rocks, glaciers and rubble dumps, subject to reservation. A debris heap, also known as a scree heap or debris cone, is a fan-shaped body of rock debris at the foot of steep slopes. The depositional area of a debris flow is called a debris cone and is characterised by unsorted debris. The debris flow cone was recognised in court as a debris cone. Accordingly, the Triemli debris flow prompted an extensive transfer from private to public land, triggered by a non-human, unforeseen event. The City of Zurich then granted the affected landowners the option of ground leases, as buildings in the area of the debris cone remained in private ownership.

### **Unpredictability**

The future is unpredictable. It will continue to bring many surprises.