

Studio Jan De Vylder
universum carrousel journey

RE-NOW-RE

Preparation Phase

ETH Zürich

D-ARCH IEA

In order to follow its «Nachhaltige Immobilienstrategie» and provide more affordable apartments, the Baugenossenschaft Linth-Escher (BGLE) has decided in 2015 a Renewal planning for settlement Birchstrasse in Seebach, which will cause densification of the previous area. To ensure that the new project must be "particularly well-designed", a mockup is required as part of the building permit application.

In most cases, the mockup, as a straightforward expression of a project, is placed out of public view, which occasionally causes the problem, that citizens can't accurately understand the intention of the architect. For instance, the rejection of the aquarium Basel in 2019 is probably due to a misunderstanding of some voters. On the other hand, even though a mockup is accessible to the public, it's just a private immovable object belonging to the client. However, what does the mockup mean to the inhabitants in its surrounding?

Due to the coexisting of the housing from the 1950s and the mockup of its inheritor in this settlement as well as the constant occupancy of this area during the whole transformation period, this residential section provides a perfect condition for the research, in which I suppose to figure out the potential of the mockup through bottom-up observations.

The mockup, completed 5 months ago, is located on the northern border of the settlement Birchstrasse, in the north of which situated a communal settlement of city Zurich. Both

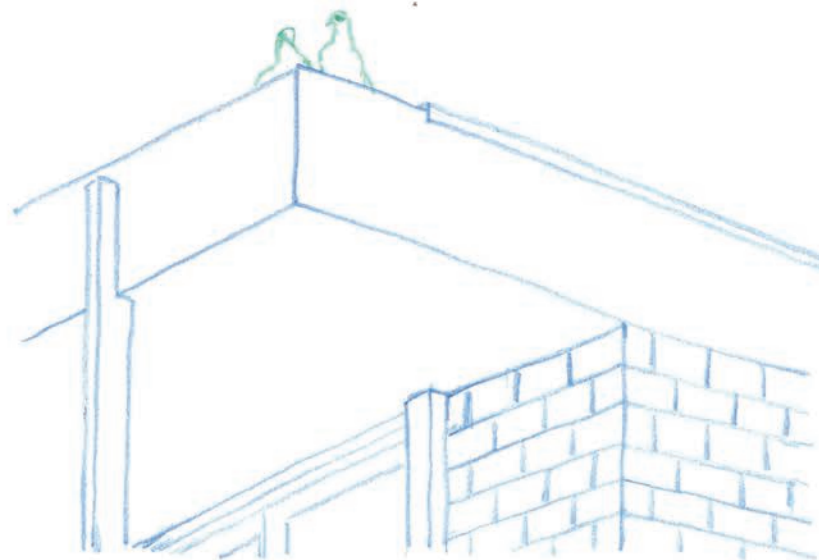
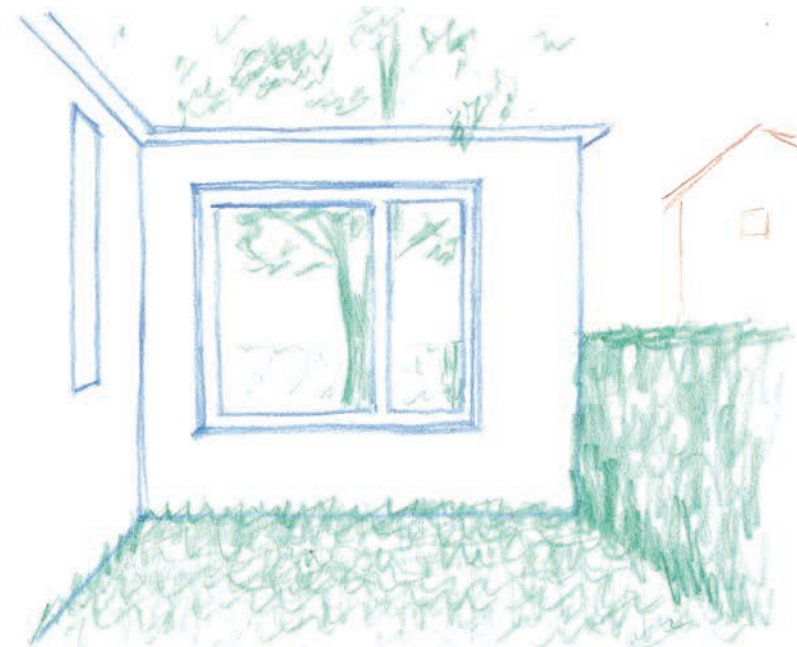
settlements consist of simple gabled houses, which are connected with neighborhood streets and surrounded by comfortable green space. Additionally, the communal settlement in the north has a more balanced population structure, the kindergarten there and a variety of leisure spaces build up several activity centers.

Through observations in the above-mentioned area, the characteristic, representation as well as the impact of the mockup are recognized successively.

Imitation
Similar to a parrot kept by an inhabitant, which attracts other birds with its imitative birdsong, the mockup succeeds its imitation as a playground. Children from the neighbor settlement expand their range of activities to its surroundings and occasionally come around.

Provisionality
Due to the forthcoming demolition, the previous leisure places in the settlement Birchstrasse haven't been updated for a period of time. The completion of the mockup instructs this provisional status explicitly. At the same time, inhabitants start to think for themselves and come up with various ideas of reusing the open space. For instance, the grass in front of the mockup is occupied by one child and his father for playing football, which is forbidden ordinarily.

Reaction
As a representative object of the future life, the mockup helps the inhabitants visualize it in advance. Meanwhile, the issues are exposed to the public. The balcony indicates its lack of privacy. The balustrade perturbs the residents that they will feel dangerous on upper floors. However, irrational rejections also exist.



Three sketches represent my first impression of the mockup in the settlement Birchstrasse.

The upper sketch portarys a pleasure scenario, that a chlid is playing football with his fater in front of the mockup.

The middle one reveals a natural space on the backside, which enclosed by the mockup and hedgerows.

The bottem image explains the moment, that two pigeons take a short rest on top of the mockup.



Source: iglehm.ch

On 29.04.2019, ARCHITEKTURBASEL interviewed Roger Boltshauser, in which Roger explained his innovative intention with the help of the mockup:

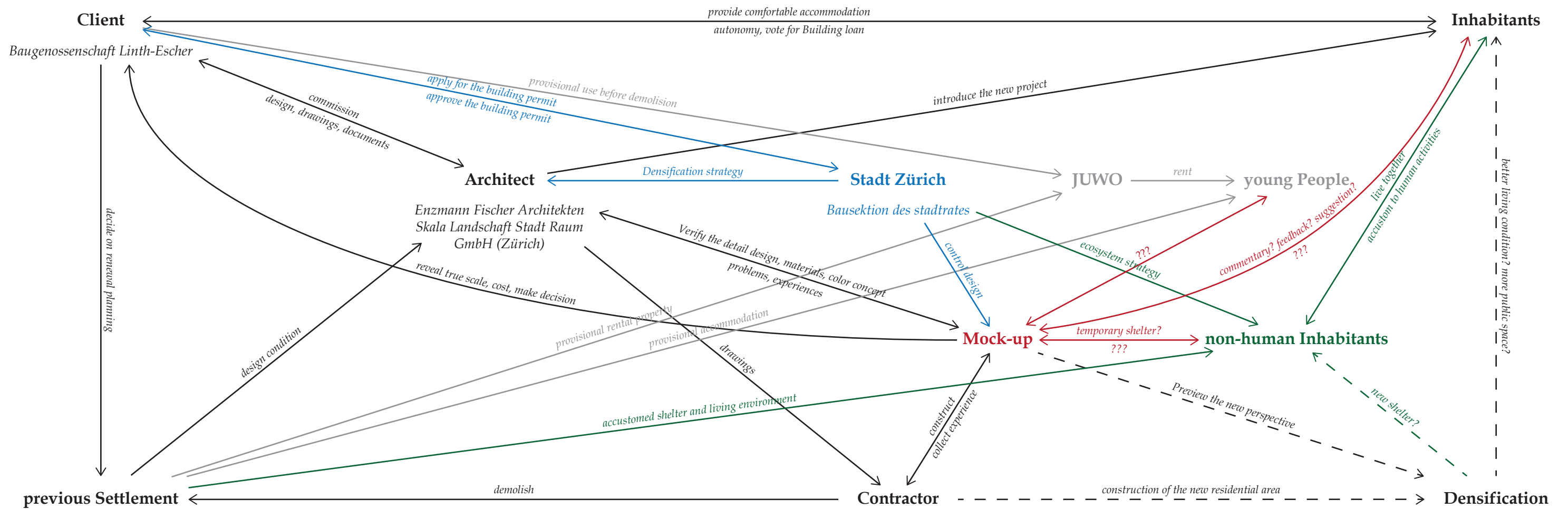
Around three years ago, a three-meter-high mock-up was created in the Zolli Basel, where the new free cooling system is being successfully tested in a clay wall. The aforementioned innovation of the Free Cooling System uses the enormous storage potential of the earth's material to generate sustainable energy for heating and cooling the ocean from the outside air temperature. Inlaid pipe registers in the clay facade make cold and heat recovery possible, which is used by a circulation system to regulate the water temperature in the aquariums. The fish are in direct contact with the outer shell via the cooling energy provided by the facade, which for us is an extremely exciting and meaningful idea and at the same time a world first on the subject of sustainability.

However, around a month later, this project was rejected by the voters. According to the reporting by Daniel Gerny fom NZZ on 19.05.2019, the following content led to rejection:

The Greens and several environmental associations under the leadership of the Franz Weber Foundation vigorously fought the project. They criticized it as a backward-looking and purely commercially driven gigantomania that diametrically contradicts all principles of sustainability and animal welfare. The concept does not fit into today's times, but brings a lot of animal suffering, a weakening of the ecosystem and enormous energy consumption. In doing so, the opponents of the Ozeanium sometimes relied on sharply pointed (not to say false) claims, according to which a large proportion of the fish in the aquarium do not even survive a year.



Source: iglehm.ch



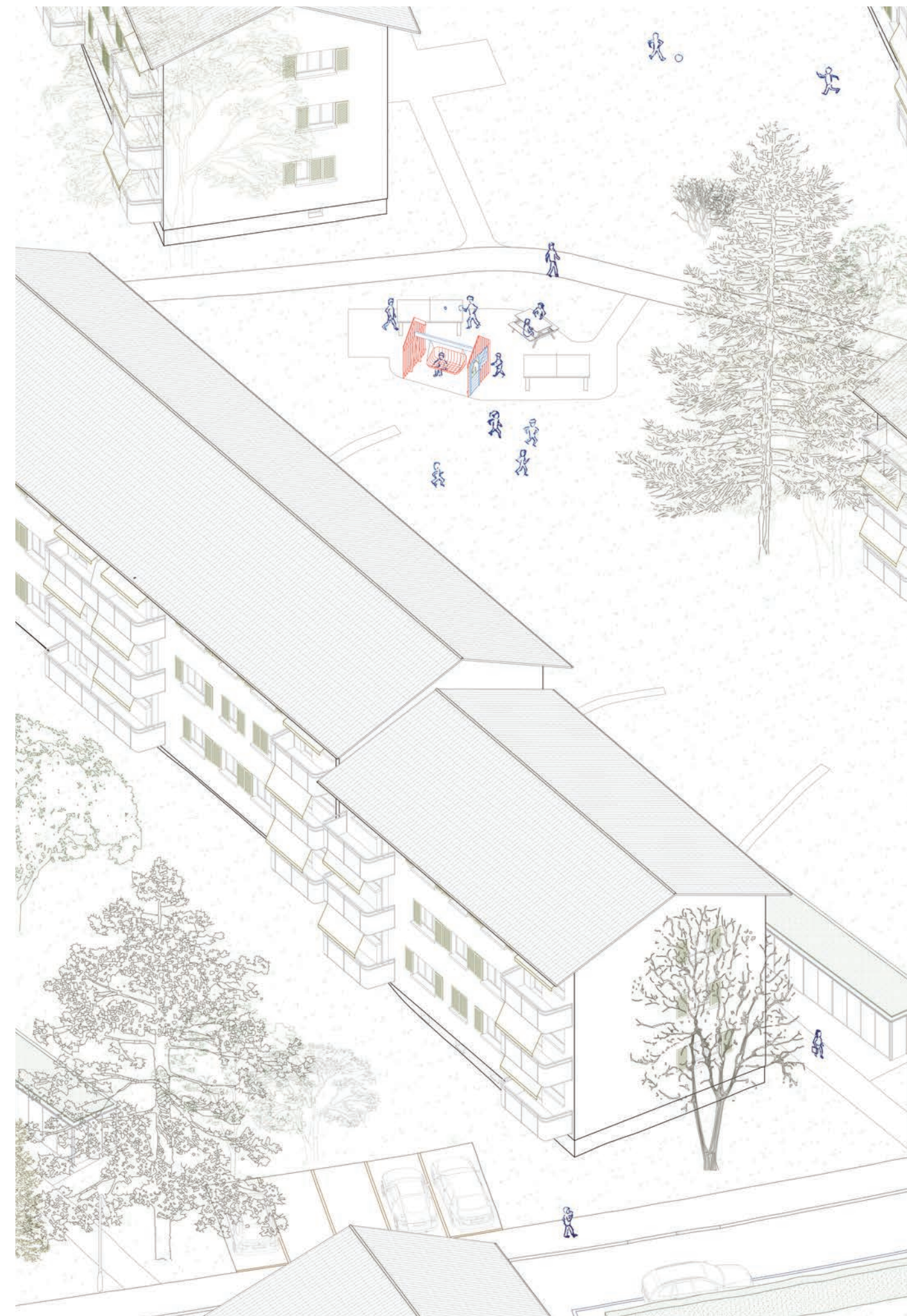
With the example of Settlement Birchstrasse, I draw this map to indicate the whole process of the executing a new project, as well as the stakeholders and their relationship with each other. The map also reveals what the stakeholders impact on the mockup and what does mockup bring to them. Seemingly, the perspective from inhabitants is missing,

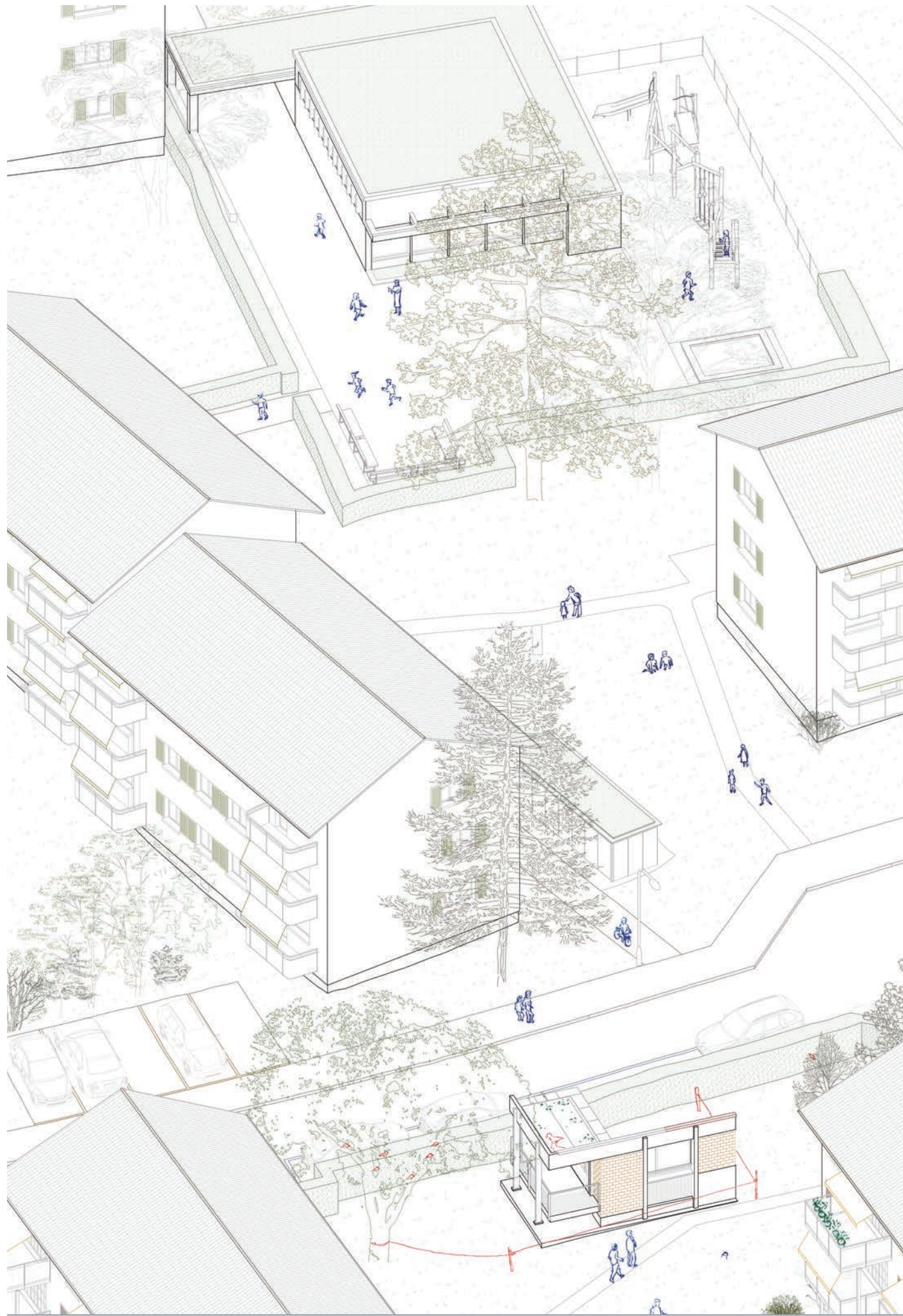
although the mockup has already existed in the settlement, which has not been demolished. As the mockup stands on the periphery of the city, the non-human inhabitants such as wild animals will also confront the same situation.



The settlement in the north belongs to the government, in which there is a kindergarten and a variety of public space. There is generosity in the outside space. The play areas are equipped with colorful play equipment. Benches and a meeting point for the elderly has commendable reachability.

Similar to the Leimgrübel settlement, this residential area is nestled between cooperative residential buildings, which are connected with neighborhood streets. Lots of green surrounds the rows of houses, and the magnificent trees in the open space have a relaxing and calming effect. The three-story gabled houses are simple but comfortable, perpendicular to the street.





activities around the kindergarten



kindergarten in settelment Leimgrübel

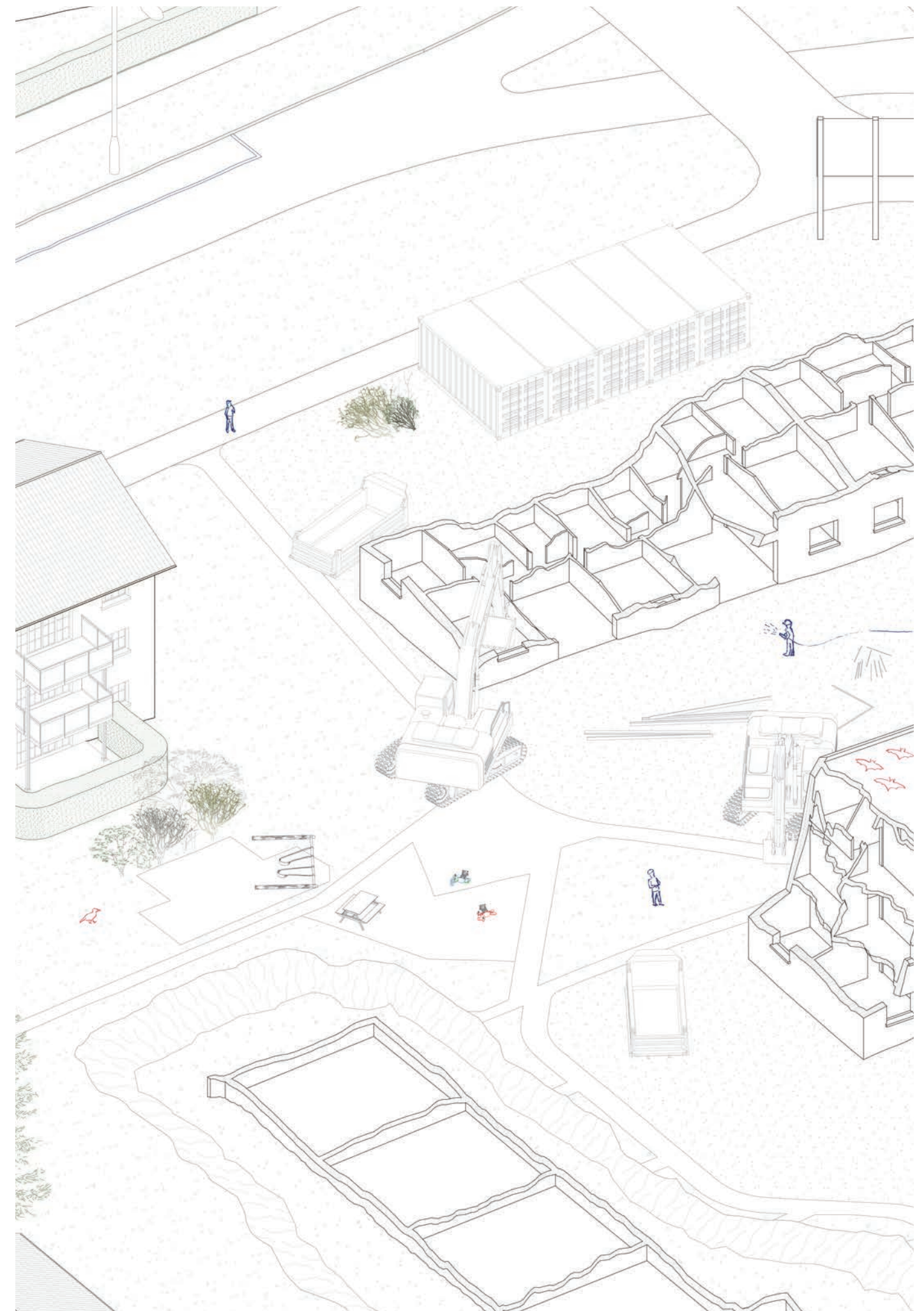


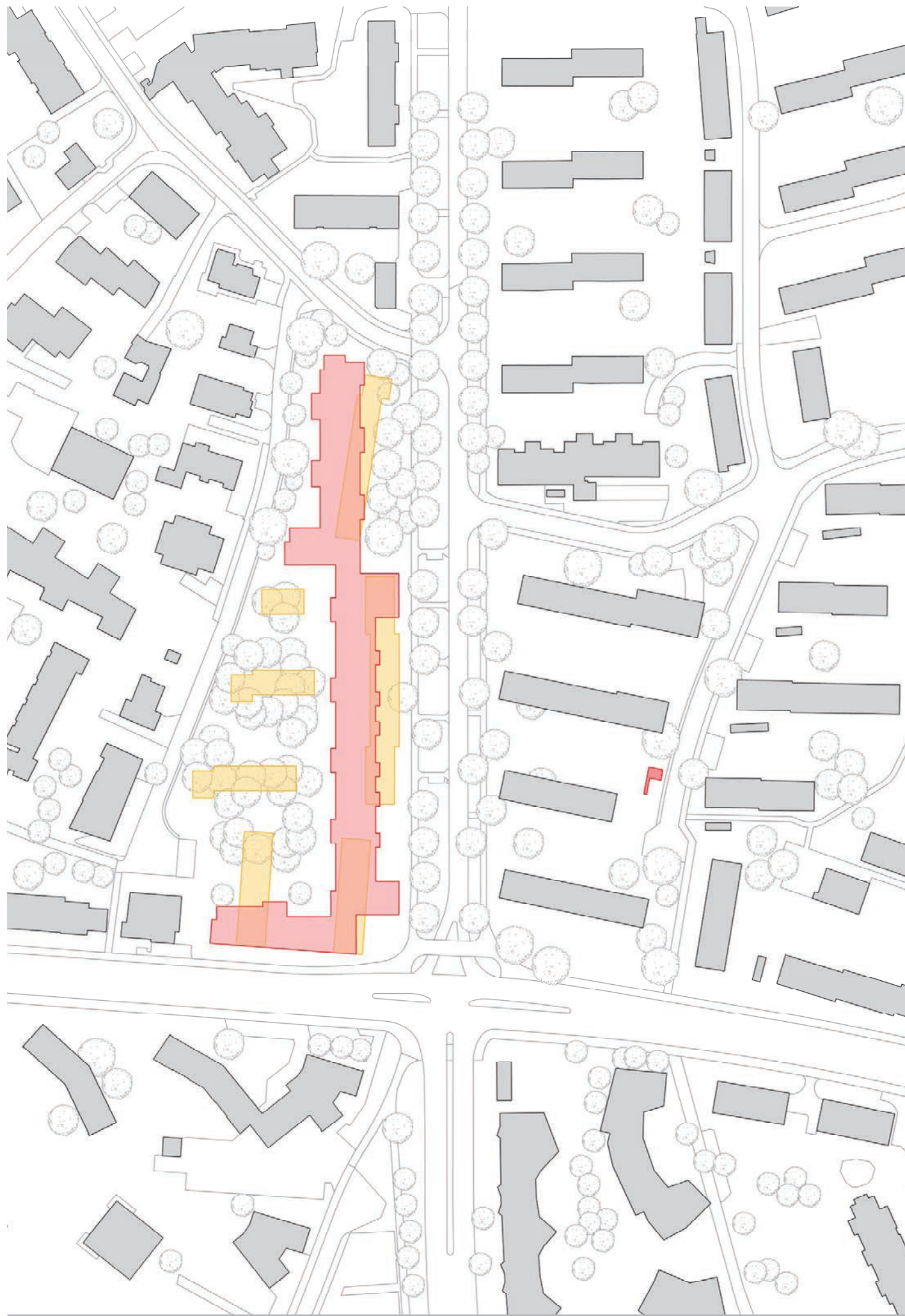
In the west part there are already several construction sites. The Baugenossenschaft in the east will be demolished in the near future. Actually, after five years, this area will get fully different characteristic.



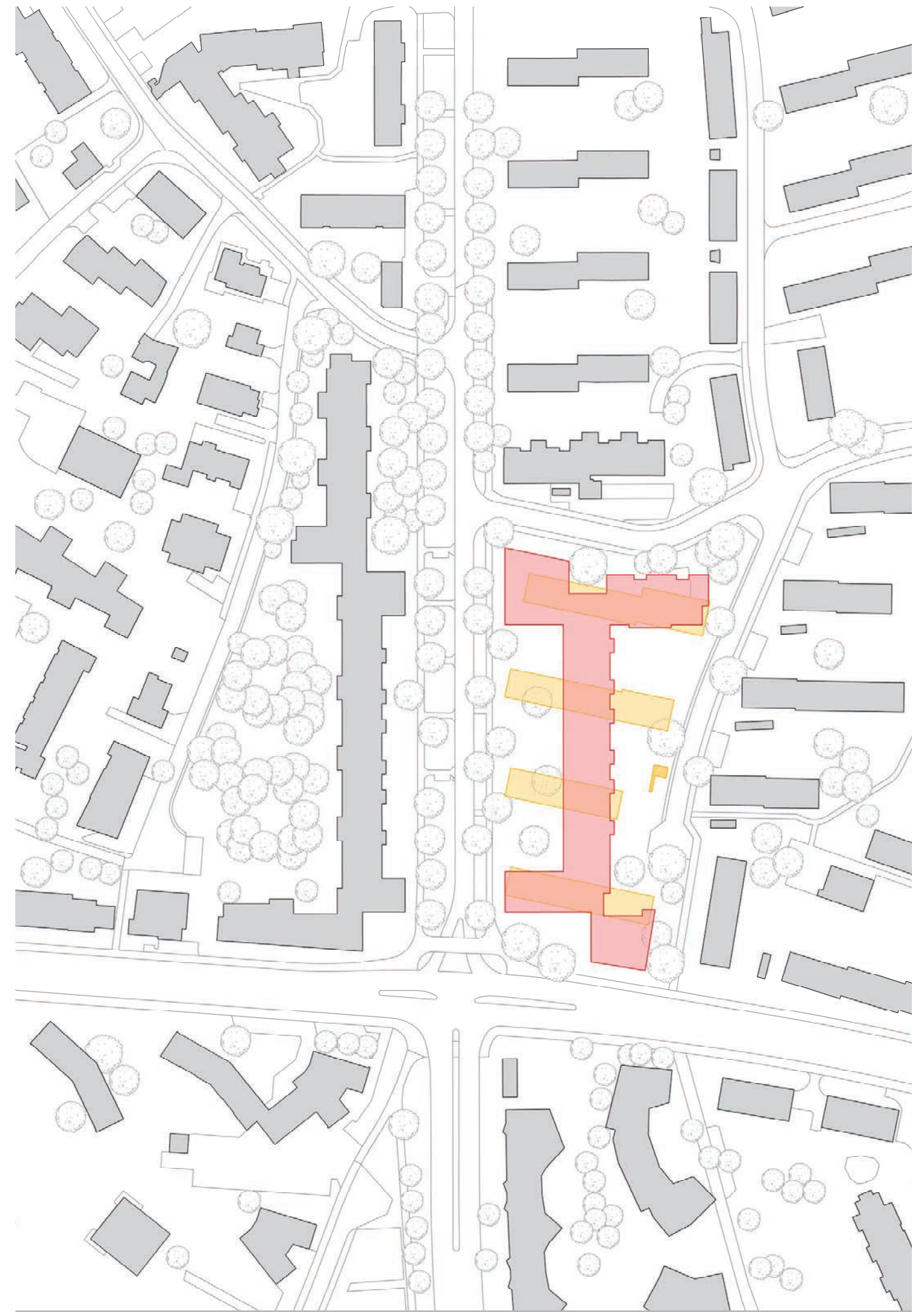


The new housing project called Tommy & Annika by Enzmann Fischer Partner AG will be divided into two phases. The first phase is the reconstruction of the houses on the south side of Birchstrasse, according to the schedule, the demolishing work is already starting, and the new apartments will be available from 2024. Due to the large number of Einfamilienhaus, the previous buildings on the south side have less adaptability, so that the Baugenossenschaft decided to provide free apartment in the north part to the people from south who want to temporarily dwell here, after the first phase is completed, they can move back directly. For now, the building on the south are all empty and waiting for demolition.





demolition plan 2021



demolition plan 2024



This notice goes to all tenants of the wfs wohnräume für studierende on Birchstrasse, Honigstrasse and Glattalstrasse, 8052 Zürich.

As you are aware about the move out by the end of September 2021.

The management of the building informed us, that unfortunately the rental period will be not extended and all tenants of the buildings Birchstrasse, Honigstrasse and Glattalstrasse have to move out by 30.09.2021 latest. The buildings will be renovated/replaced.

For Moving Out the following:

1. All the personal objects should be removed. The apartment must be tidy.
2. The refrigerator must be completely emptied, cleaned and switched off. The ice in the freezer must be thawed (attention: catch water!)
3. The oven, stove and bathroom should be cleaned
4. All apartment keys should be returned to us

May we ask you to please to let us know, when (which date) you will move out.

In case if you need an apartment after the 30.09.2021 (respectively as per 01.10.2021), please let us know. Currently we do not have any vacant apartments. In case if we have any, we will let you know.

We thank you for the good tenancy.

Should you have any questions, please let us know.

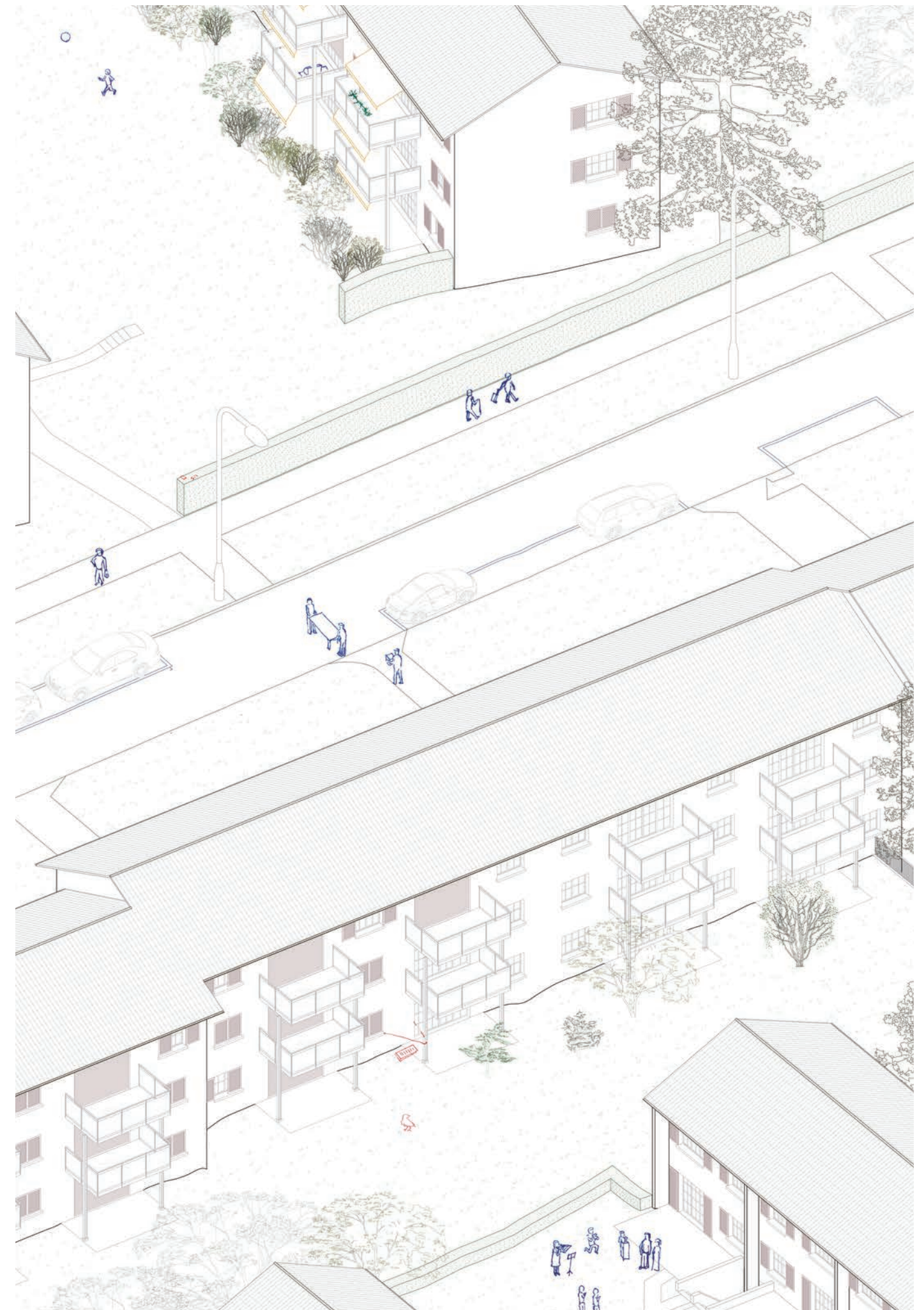
Kind regards
Andreas Sefere

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wfs-wohnräume für studierende
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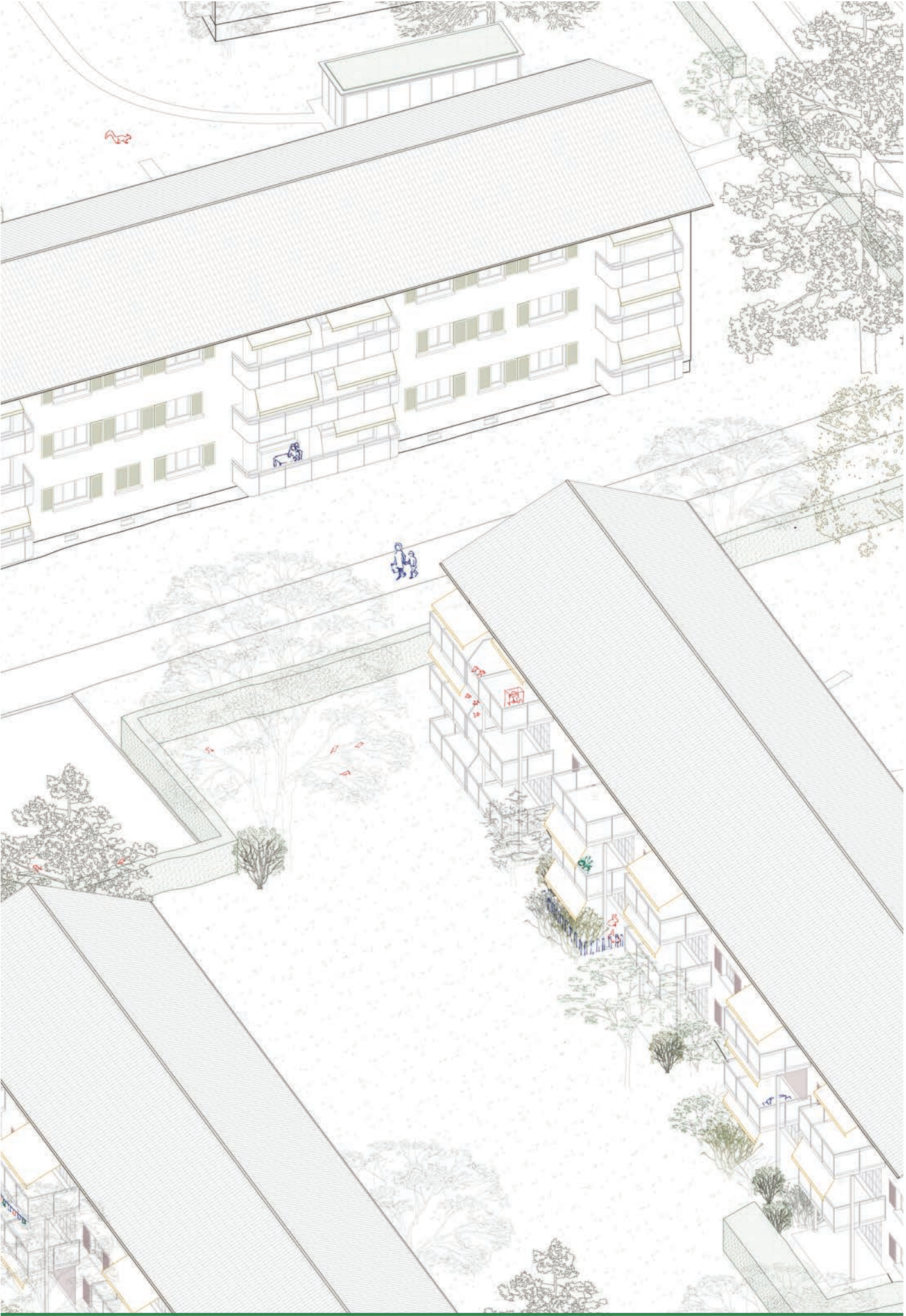
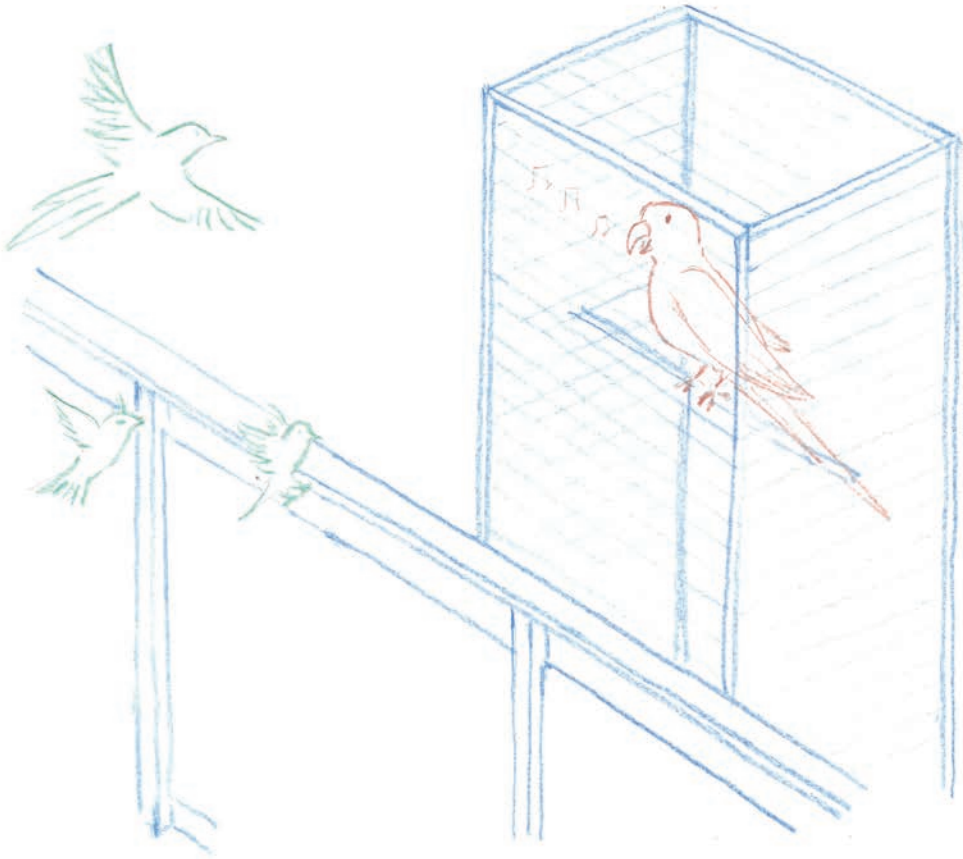




During my exploration, I found one paper, on which one of the inhabitant informed their neighbors his wedding and the possible noise from the event. Lucky, I got in touch with him. He is a student and the tenant from wfs. However, he just got the email about the move out, unfortunately he doesn't know the mockup, although it's just around 100 m far away from his home.



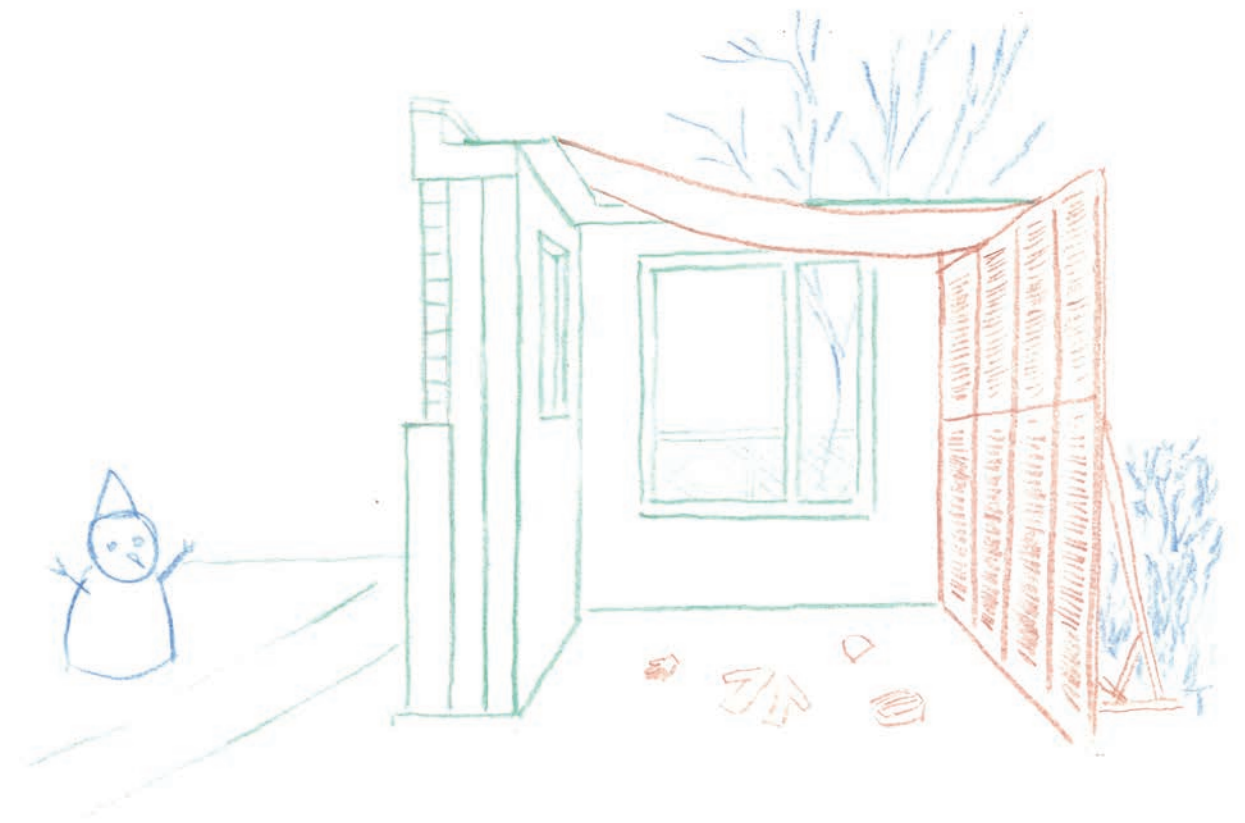
Imitation

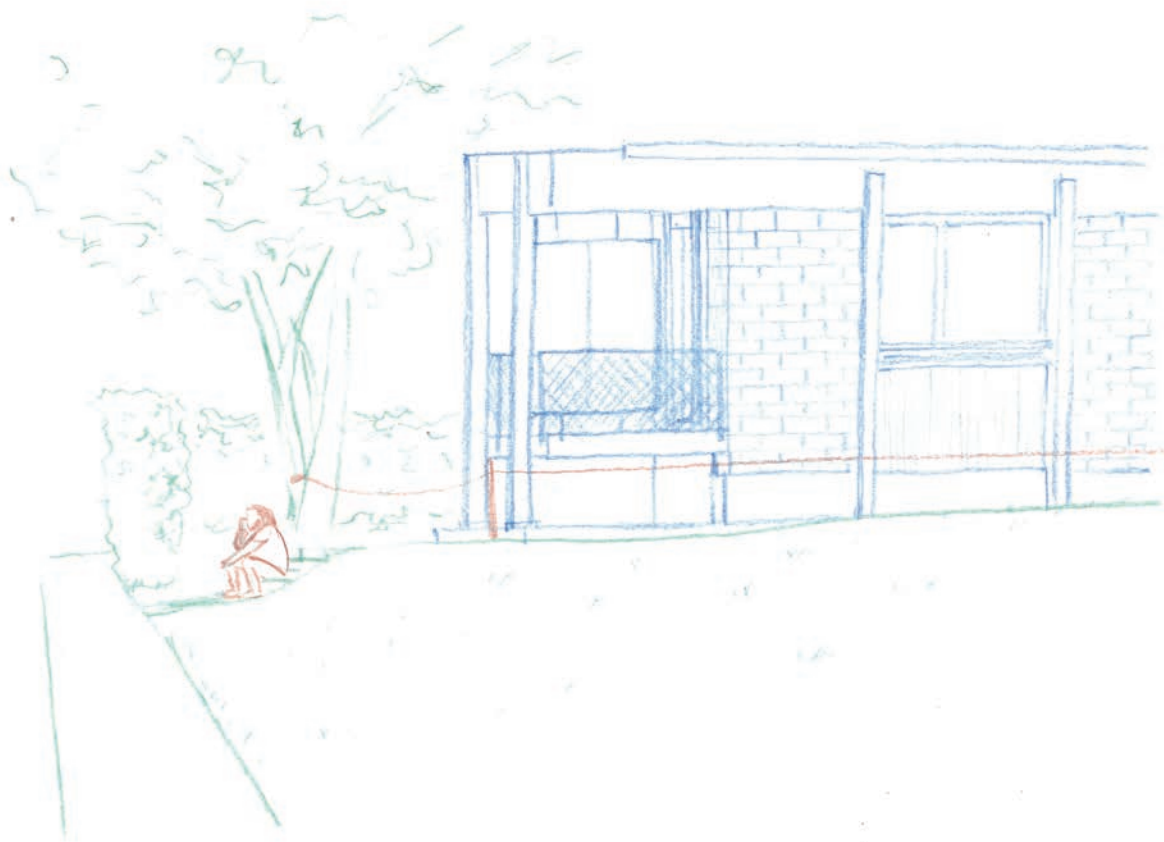




Upper photo: children playground
Middle photo: mockup
Bottom photo: bicycle shed

When I heard the birdsong of the parrot, I realized that the mockup is also a parrot. The sparrow and magpie haven't seen the parrot, they thought their companions are calling them. But when they fly close, they realize that it's just the imitation. Same for the children, they don't know what is this new structure. It stands in the center of two settlement, as a new play ground, however, when they see the backside, it's empty. They still like it, although it's rough and unusual, although it is surrounded by warning tape. Maybe they are looking forward to a unique playground in it, or just closing it with a roof and other two walls, so that they will get a comfortable gathering place in winter.





Due to the coming demolition, the Baugenossenschaft put gradually less effort on the maintenance of the leisure place. After the burning, all the broken equipment from the only playground in the north part were taken away. After most of the inhabitants moved out from the south part. There is actually no leisure place in this settlement.

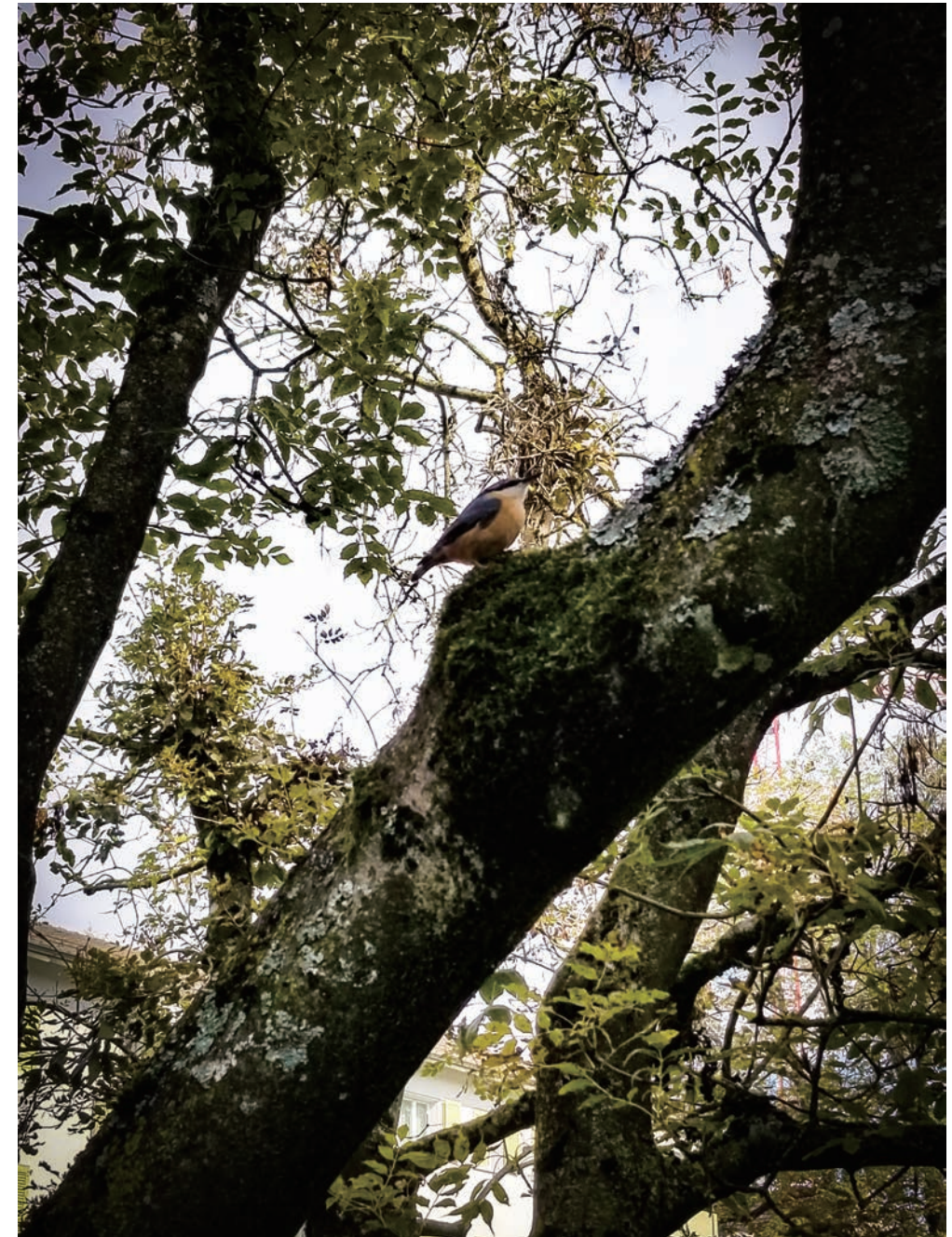




Although it's forbidden to play football on the grass in front of the yard, people don't take the rule seriously anymore as before. The grass in front of the mockup becomes the best place for football, the mockup itself seems like a goal, now the children know where to shoot.



However, not everyone likes to play football, most of the time, it's quiet around the mockup. In compare with the hectic construction site and the nosing kindergarten in the surrounding, this uncommon silence brings the birds a safety gathering place.

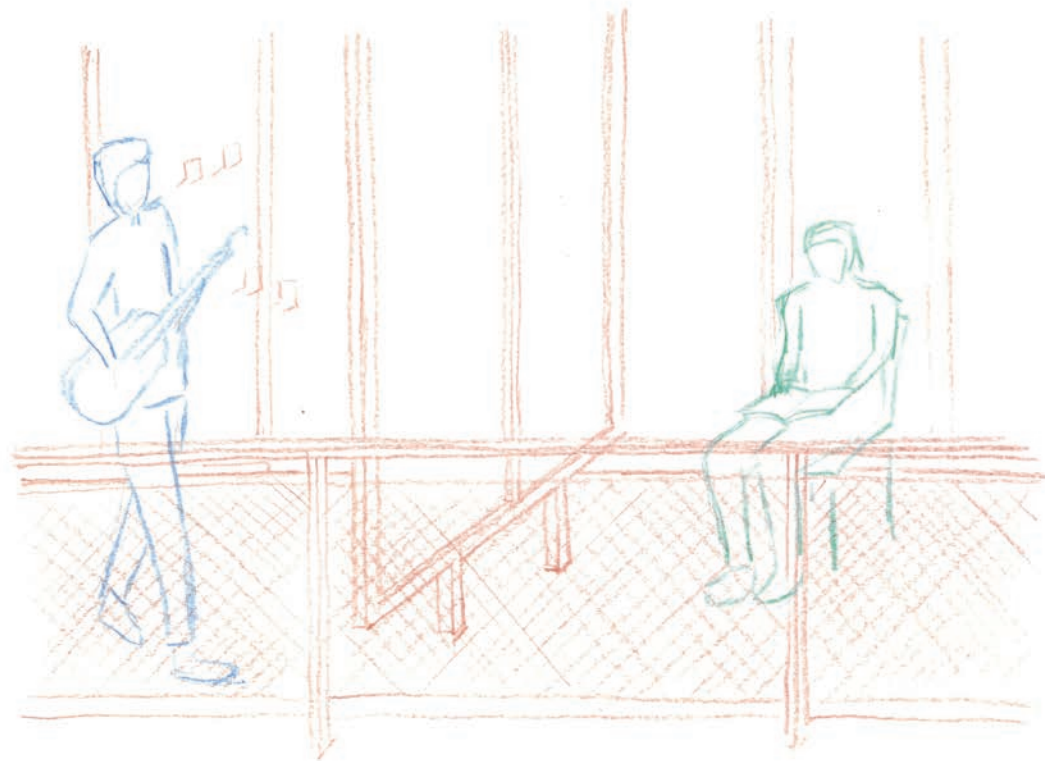




Das Provisorium erinnert uns daran, dass der Mensch eigenständig denken und jenseits von Standardlösungen handeln kann. Menschen, die mit Provisorien leben, sind nicht einfach bloss besonders erfinderisch. Sie sind in der Lage, sich mit Situationen zu arrangieren, die gemeinhin nicht als ideal gelten.

Danicke Sandra: Für immer : Leben mit Provisorien, 2021.

Reaction



Due to the upcoming demolition, all tenants have to make their own decision for the future. One tenant, who worked in the canteen of ETH 10 years before, told his story to me next to the mockup. Several months before, he was still struggling at his home in the south part, whether to step into the provisional apartment on the other side of the street or leave this place forever. Although he owns two restaurants in Kreis 4, it's still incapable for him to buy an old house in Bülach without hesitating, because the renovation will definitely cost a lot. However, when the mockup was finished, the modern and robust facade impressed him, he decided to stay here.





The mockup is surrounded by the warning tape, although there are trace of public activities outside the tape, when step closely to the forbidden area, some trash packing are also conspicuously scattered on the ground. Similarly, if investigate further, the discordant things become visible.

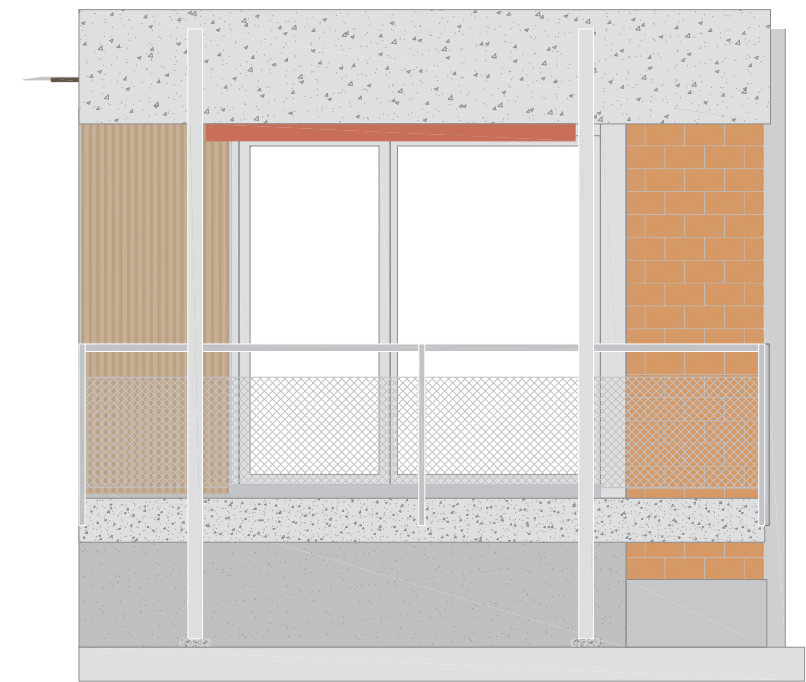
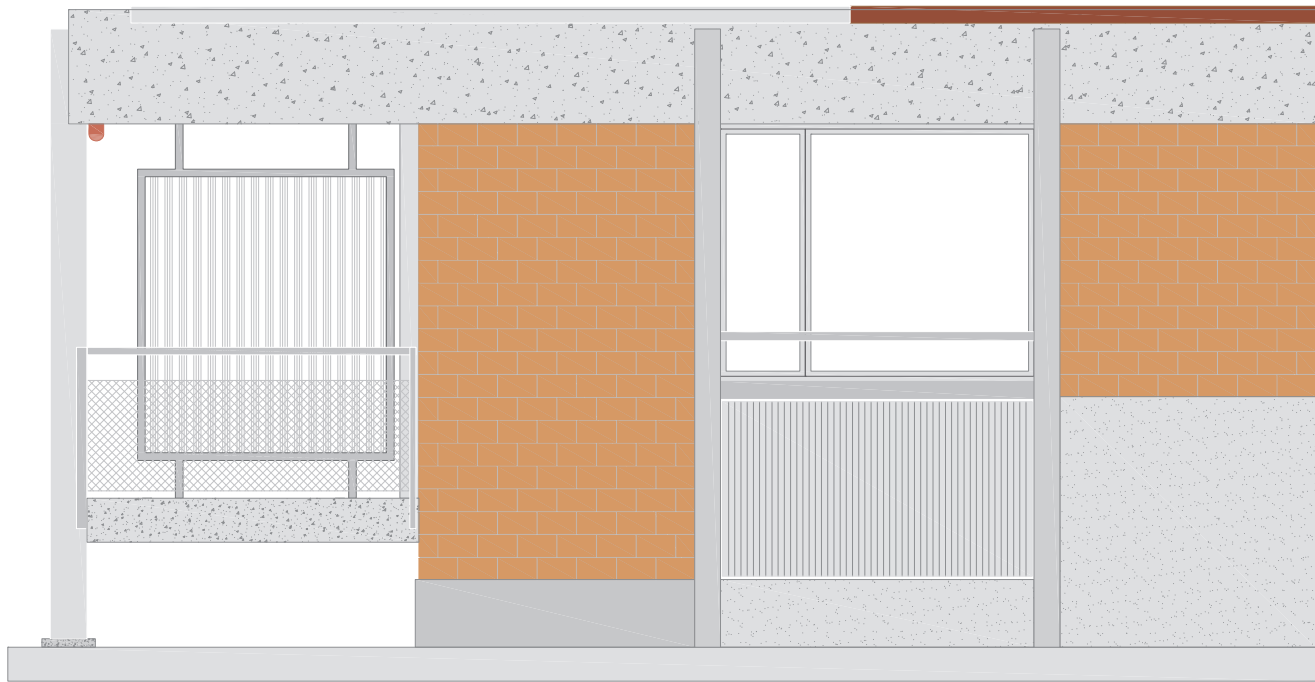


One inhabitant, who has lived here for 45 years, complained that the balcony is not acceptable. The glass partition wall is just a decoration, It can't isolate the sound and sight of neighbors. She doesn't want to hear the neighbor quarrel with his wife, or the noise of the party from the neighbors. The wire net balustrade let her feels dangerous, if she lives on an upper floor. The materials of the mockup are uncommon, it's a bit difficult for her to accept this modern facade. Due to the collective voting through of the project in 2018, it's not possible to reject if anymore. And she was surprised by the enormous difference between rendering and mockup.

Another inhabitant is more radical, he thought the new project is all for money, the mockup is just like a suitcase, it's ugly and incomprehensible. There was no law allowing him to reject the facade. After the talking, he left with anger and disappointment.



Source: birchstrasse-seebach.ch



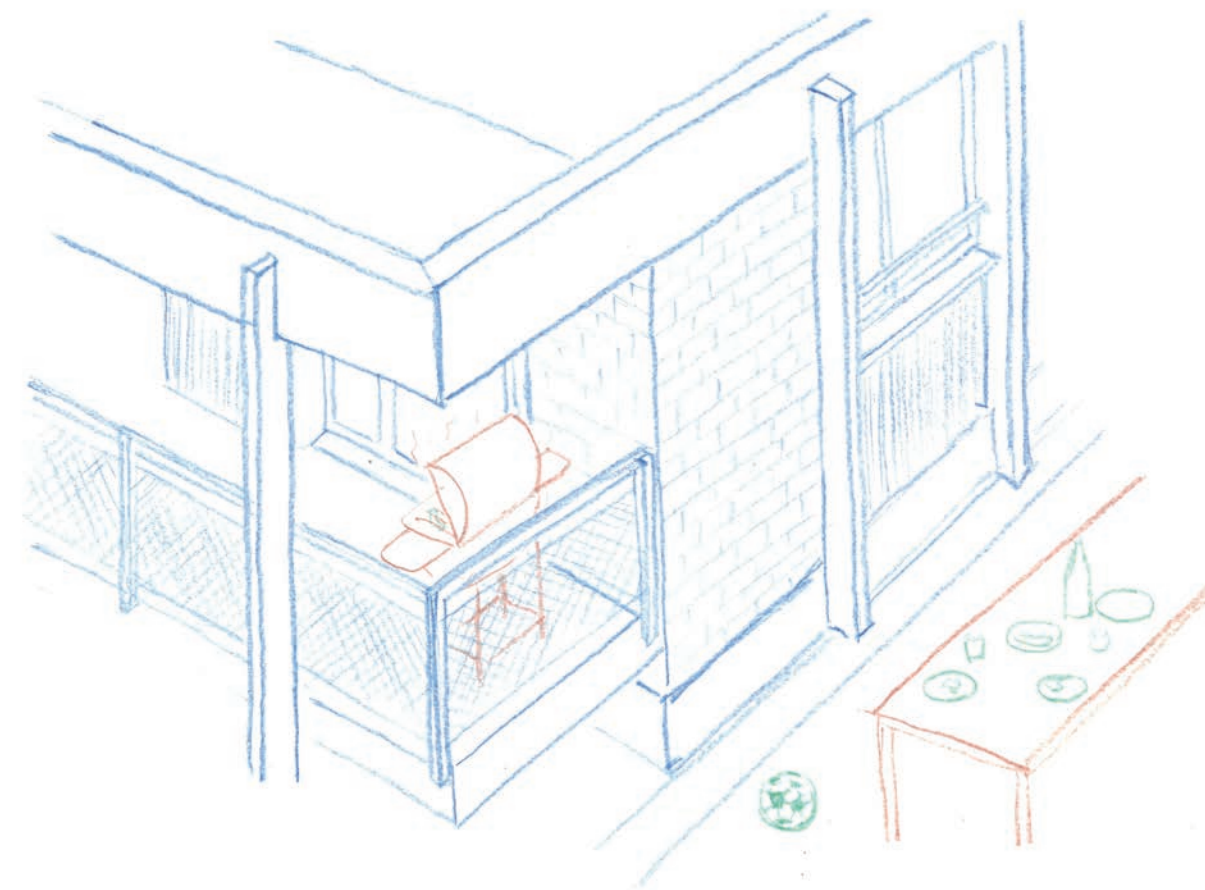
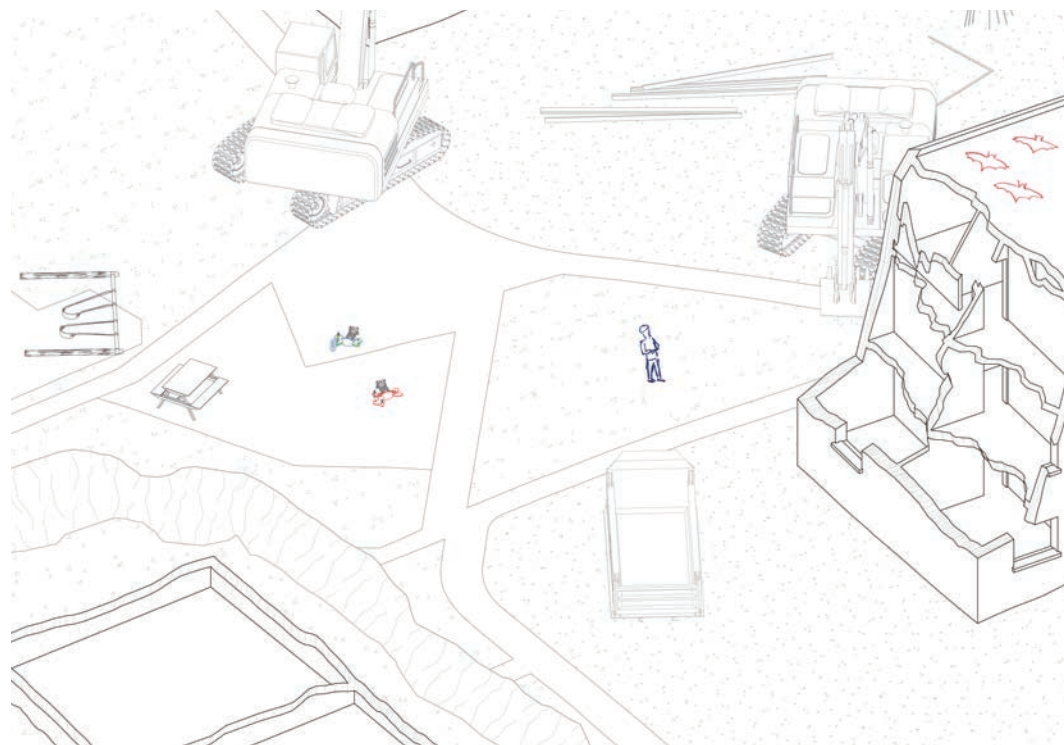
Sehr geehrter Herr Hou,

Kommentare von Bewohnern sind natürlich immer interessant. Ich hatte selber auch schon Kontakt mit einem Bewohner der bestehenden Siedlung. Für uns massgebend ist jedoch die Baukommission der Genossenschaft. Diese vertritt die Genossenschaft und ihre Interessen. Sie entscheidet, was schlussendlich wie gebaut wird. D.h. wenn ein Bewohner einen Input zum Neubau hat, muss er das intern mit den entsprechenden Personen koordinieren.

Gruss
M. Bucher

I was also informed by the first inhabitant that there are bats living under the roof of one of the building in the south. She always sees them flashing from the building before the evening, when she was sitting silently in her previous balcony. She also enjoys the landscape of the gabled house settlement. However, she is already 57 years old, when she gets older, elevator will be necessary in the rest of her life.





In the end, she told me her attitude to the upcoming transformation of this area:

Although the past is beautiful, people always need to say goodbye. Maybe everything here has changed in 5 years, but maybe it will get better. We should be optimistical to the future.

To conclude, the mockup represents the following brutal demolition of the memory of this area, the homeless predicament of wild animals as well as the separation of inhabitants with their familiar environment. Meanwhile, the coexisting of the mockup and old housings portrays a transient generous scenario, the overlap of the different layers of time opens up a window for residents to see the possibility of the future. What’s the possibility of the coexisting and the overlap of times to the whole densification process?