



ETH-Studio Jan De Vylder,
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Lukas Ryffel (eds.)

**Towards Transformation
The 33.3 % Attitude. Zurich**

Book design: Piet Bodyn, Mathieu Lauwers
English, 232 pages, ca. 310 images, 26,5 × 19,5 cm,
Softcover with open spine and jacket

Euro (D) 39.–, Euro (A) 40.10, CHF 39.–
ISBN 978-3-03863-085-2

Book launch

planned for the end of November in Zurich,
Details to follow → triest-verlag.ch/news

New Release October 2024

Strategies for alternative handling of existing building stock

→ Case studies of single-family home neighborhoods,
residential and office complexes as well as large-scale
structures such as parking garages

→ Perfect for architects, urban planners, students,
investors, and city dwellers

The city of Zurich is growing – like many metropolitan areas. As both the population and employment rates increase, there is a desire for inward densification and thus it is becoming necessary to question how to use the available ground suitable for building more economically. In the last 20 years, Zurich has managed this primarily by replacing buildings. But what alternatives are there to continue building the city and to incorporate existing buildings to a greater extent?

Over a period of three years, the 33.3% design studio of the chair of De Vylder created 22 projects that use specific case studies from the city of Zurich to develop an alternative approach to urban transformation. The design studio participants closely examined urban development practices of different actors, from institutional investors and the public sector to cooperatives and private owners.

The 33.3% in the title refers to more than just a numbers game – it is an approach to design that revolves around the economy of resources and considers the existing building as a resource to be used – continuing with what is already there instead of complete demolition and replacement. The publication outlines strategies for dealing with single-family residential areas as well as settlement structures in agglomerations and large-scale buildings.



Based on the specific objectives of owners and developers, the students developed strategies for dealing with the existing building stock. Thus, this publication offers insight into a way of working that does not strive for a 100 % solution in the design, but rather seeks gradual, fragmentary approaches between new and old.

In five chapters, the possibilities of partial preservation are outlined using Zurich-related case studies. The potential of this method is visualized in a photo series of realized buildings, while plans, interviews and essays make the design approach accessible for further practical implementation – both in Zurich and beyond.

About the editors

The **33.3% design studio** of the ETH Zurich Chair of De Vylder combines the work of Architecten Jan De Vylder Inge Vink with that of **8000.agency** – Jakob Junghanss, Lukas Ryffel, and Oliver Burch. Over three semesters, the studio worked with students to examine urban redevelopment in Zurich – a city that is constantly changing due to its urban planning strategy of replacement building. In the studio, plans for the replacement of buildings were super-imposed on the existing situations in order to develop proposals that productively weave a third of the qualities of the existing building stock into proposed new structures. The collective goal of the studio was to develop a critical and productive attitude that takes wishes for the future just as seriously as what exists on site to facilitate pinpoint architectural interventions.





interfidei

Public space experiments / Public domain

An issue of politics?

From a medieval town to the incorporation of today's territory, from post-war growth to today's inner densification

For a long time now, the urban development of Zurich has been shaped by cycles of growth. In the early 19th century, the city formed a dense medieval structure within a landscape of rural villages. Industrialisation brought immense growth to the economy and consequently to the physical appearance of the city. To accommodate this expansion, the baroque fortifications were razed and the city expanded towards the surrounding territories. In 1893, a first incorporation of close-by communities created space for horizontal expansion, built in a dense urban block structure. With industries flourishing, the quality of worker accommodation soon became a political matter. The result was the first city-built housing projects and the establishment of housing cooperatives in Zurich. These self-organised communities could provide themselves with qualitative and affordable homes, which shaped many newly built neighbourhoods of the 1920s. The former loose villages were gradually connected, sometimes as part of the urban block structure tissue, sometimes through a carpet of single-family houses. These small neighbourhoods were built by local developers, offering model family homes with self-sufficient gardens.

With persistent population growth, a second incorporation of communities in 1934 redefined the legal borders of the city, and thus the geographical territory of today's Zurich. After World War II, a new cycle of growth was directed towards the newly incorporated neighbourhoods of the city. To guide this development on mostly green fields, the city planning authorities drew up urban schemes that followed the principles of the Garden City movement. These rather loose housing schemes with a lot of green space in between were mainly realised with modest means by housing cooperatives.

Since the 1960s, as a reaction to this expansive use of land, growth policies have been geared towards a denser city once again. At the time, compact urban estates began to increasingly incorporate the social needs and new consumption behaviours of their inhabitants. The arrival of the car in the city further shaped its development. Soon after, public scepticism about



Zurich and the Alps, Postcard, approx. 1900



Garden City Plan of A.H. Steiner for Glattal, 1948



Cooperative housing developments in construction, Schönenmatten, 1948

the impacts of growth began to rise, leading to an urban exodus. The promise of more space, cleaner air, cheaper land, and easy access to the amenities of the city by car drew people outwards into the rural areas, quickly generating a sprawling suburbia that spanned almost the entire country. Zurich experienced this exodus as well, seeing its population decline from 440,000 to 360,000 people by 1990. At the same time, the squatter scene and a movement of committed young people involved in the "Openhauskrawalle" (Opera House riots) laid the foundations for many of the qualities of today's cultural scene. Even in the face of harsh opposition, they were able to make positive use of the empty spaces resulting from the exodus and build a cultural variety that soon attracted a young urban-minded generation once again.

Once the commuter train system was established in the 1990s, the growing communities in the agglomeration area were re-connected to the city. At the same time, the government began to promote the benefits of city life, this time, however, with a slightly different focus: Considerable effort was made to attract international companies and researchers. Many headquarters were moved to the city, Zurich Tourism began marketing with the slogan "The Little Big City".³ Zurich found its neoliberal footing around the turn of the century and, as a result, the building sector started booming again, although little unoccupied space was left for big developments. The first strategic attempt at coping with that pressure was the redevelopment of former industrial areas such as Zurich West and Neu-Oerlikon, as industrial production within the city had decreased. These areas were quickly repurposed and industrial buildings replaced with new neighbourhoods that combined office spaces and housing projects. Towards the 2010s, when many of these industrial sites were already fully developed, the continuing population growth was redirected towards the less dense periphery of the city. At this moment, a new phase of transformation began: Loose fragments of mainly 1940–50s Garden City developments began to be replaced with denser redevelopment projects. Since then, densification efforts have resulted in large-scale replacement of existing housing stock from different building periods – all in all some 12,000 flats were demolished since 2010.⁴ The pressure on existing buildings has been increasing even more since a new national law came into force in 2014: The strategy of inner densification that set the trajectory for the allocation of Switzerland's population growth mainly within the building land already existing today. It aimed

Oliver Burch Jakob Junghans Lukas Ryffel



Estate of Brunnenpark, 1987



New developments in Zurich West after construction, 2018



within context

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Hardturm




I Real estate redevelopment

Now

In anticipation of a new football arena, Zurich's former stadium was torn down in 2008, with only a few outer walls remaining on site. They enclose a large, tarred square occasionally used by a circus, festivals or for spontaneous gatherings. Community gardens on the green fringes, graffiti walls, a skate park, a boulder, lush vegetation – the Hardturm area has turned into an interim microcosm established in the remnants of its former use. The brownfield plot is used by many citizens, a setting for a wide variety of informal activities and interventions. Still remaining from the past is a multi-storey car park, designed by Hubacher Isler Architekten in 1987, which has been kept in use. An elevated passage links the car park to the tram station, a reminder of how the infrastructure systems were once intricately connected.

Soon

A new football stadium seating 18,000 viewers will be built along with commercial uses in its peripheral layer. At the same time, two residential high-rises with 570 flats will be constructed on the site of the car park, and a big cooperative housing project with 174 flats will be built on the area where the community gardens are located. The site will be equipped with a one-storey underground car park connecting all new buildings underground. The future Hardturm area is designed by Pool Architekten in collaboration with Caruso St. John Architects and Boltshauser Architekten. The intention to build a new stadium has already passed four local votes and is generally agreed at this point. Due to various appeals, however, the building permit is still pending.








within context

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Dreispliz

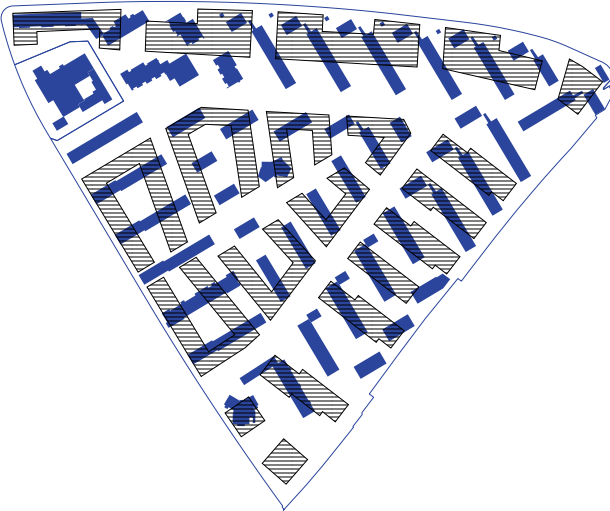
II Garden city densification


Now

Dreispliz is a characteristic and quite well-preserved garden city neighbourhood in Zurich built primarily in the 1940s and 1950s. It is the first residential project of the cooperative ASIG and today comprises around 450 flats, many of which are located in small, modest houses with private gardens. The quiet low-rise centre of the triangle-shaped area features a small square and a kindergarten, while mid- and high-rise slabs form the outer boundaries of the neighbourhood. The Dreispliz high-rise is one of the earliest of its kind in Zurich, marking the transition between Ueberlandstrasse and Saatlenstrasse. To this day, the properties belong to the cooperative ASIG and are partly in interim use.

Soon

Over the next couple of years, the entire neighbourhood will be replaced with new buildings housing 900 new flats, allowing for a doubling of inhabitants. This redevelopment will take place in four phases and is scheduled to be finished by 2035. Along Wallisellenstrasse, a new housing project by KilgaPopp Architekten, BS Architekten and Krebs und Herde Landschaftsarchitekten, and a high-rise by Studio DIA have already been decided while other projects are partly in the making. The character of the entire neighbourhood is under heritage protection – but not its physical structure. This means that, for example, a new high-rise will be placed on the same spots as an old high-rise, or that the lush greenery should be reestablished in the future project.



within context

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