

architecten de vylder vinck taillieu

Unless Ever People - La Biennale di Venezia 2018

Unless, the experiment. Merely from the perspective of what is there, and looking for what is still possible. Without defining the programme or expectation as such. Except for the expectation that the usual ideas might take a turn – might result in a Wendung.

The book presents 96 illustrations, planmateriaal, detailtekeningen, 10 essays and 13 interviews.



This book is published on the occasion of the 'UNLESS EVER PEOPLE / CARITAS FOR FREESPACE' exhibition in the Central Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2018 in Venice, Italy. The exhibition was commissioned by curators Yvonne Farrell and Shelley McNamara as part of the general theme 'FREESPACE', for which they invited architecten de vylder vinck taillieu to present the project CARITAS. This project was realized in a remarkable collaboration with commissioner KARUS, who was heavily involved in the process, and with the guidance of BAVO, an independent research office focused on the political and socio-economic aspects of art, architecture and spatial planning. Participation was the key to this project, in which everyone involved became a co-creator. This publication is a production of the Flanders Architecture Institute and forms a next step for the project, which is continuously looking for new insights in the use of space for care – whichever way it goes.

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EVERYBODY ARCHITECT A NOTE ON THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE SQUARE

GIDEON BOIE

The belief that 'Everything is architecture' recurs at different moments in architectural history. I remember the 'helmet of Holleïn' as a fundamental lesson by Lieven De Cauter in an article on the expanded field of architecture. It has become a commonplace by now. Recently our dear compatriots at OfficeKGDVS claimed 'Everything Architecture' as the title for a retrospective exhibition of their oeuvre. It puzzled me, because how can you claim that everything is architecture while placing it under one name?

How can we deal with this paradox? How can we ensure that the expanding field of architecture also allows for other architectural subjectivities? The 'Kan. Triest Plein' ('Canon Triest Square') offers a line of flight.

The user-architects: the work groups made up of psychiatrists, managers, staff and patients were brought together around the design table to imagine the spatial qualities necessary in the psychiatric centre.

In the Caritas project, we always started from the premise that everything is architecture. In mental healthcare everything is part of the therapeutic setting, from the location (the asylum tucked away from the city) to the building typology (the pavilions scattered across the green) via the different elements of architecture (walls, doors, balconies, etc.), the materials used (brick walls can tumble upon you) and the interior design (from washable chairs to the different shades of white on the wall).

Logically this absolute character of architecture in the psychiatric centre forced us to make architecture a topic of universal concern. Architecture is not just a technical affair to be discussed in a boardroom, but neither is it an aesthetic issue in the hands

of someone's higher sense at the design table. We created an architecture culture as an equal playing field that reached out to all, giving everybody the possibility to engage in the design dialogue regarding the psychiatric centre of the future.

The book you hold in your hands testifies to the joy and pleasure that were released in the moment of aesthetic emancipation. The brief was expanded, impossible desires demanded, the unexpected realized, so many dreams unleashed — we will not repeat ourselves here. Allow me to shortly note how the classic choreography of architectural production accordingly melted into thin air, giving way to emergent architectural subjectivities. Again, here is a preliminary list:

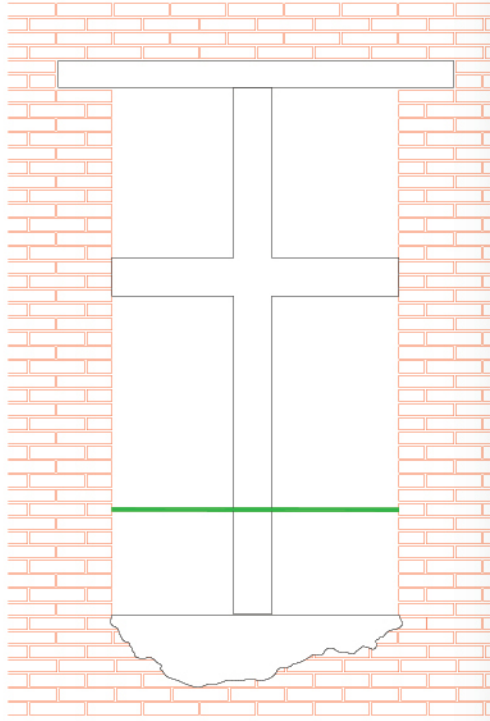
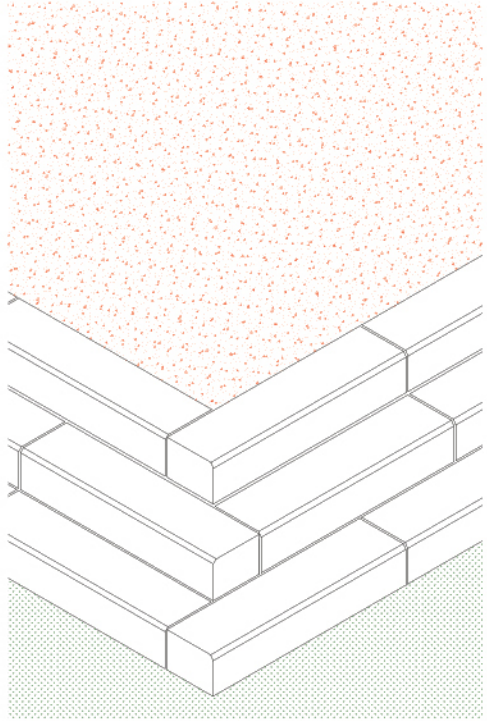
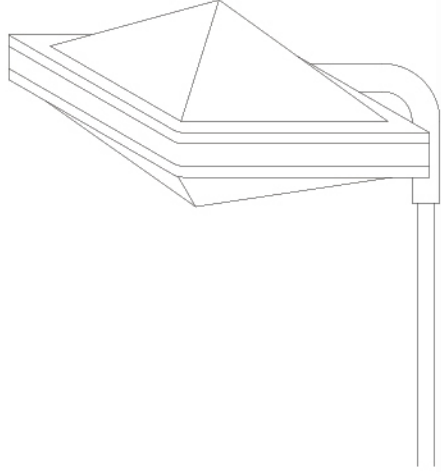
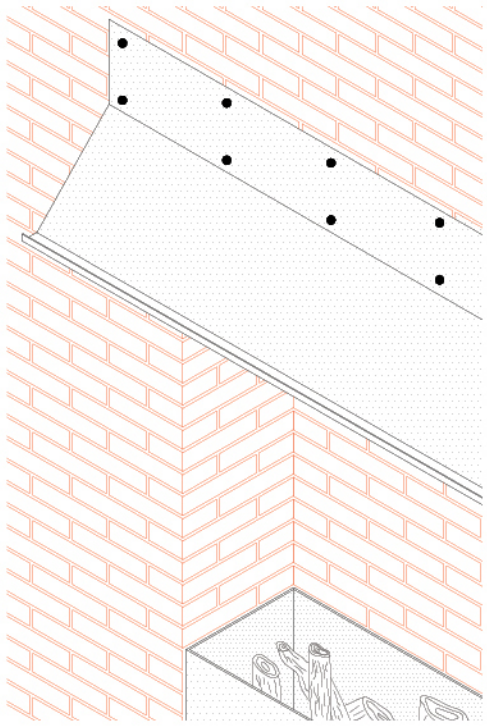
Their knowledge provided the building stones for the psychiatric centre of the future. As the 'user-architects' took their role more than seriously, we saw how they became the 'user-principals' of the Kan. Triest

Gideon Boie

EVERYBODY ARCHITECT

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DETAILS

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LOGGIAS

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AWAKENING CURIOSITY

SIEN VANDERMARLIERE

THERAPIST AT DAGERAAD, THE DEPARTMENT FOR PSYCHOSIS CARE

Very often, but mostly in summer, we give therapy sessions in the Kan. Triest Plein. In our target group, we work a lot around perception. We try to shift attention from the inside to the outside world. This is something we can do quite literally here by asking questions such as: what do you see here from the inside? What do you see outside? We can then start to compare. They hear other things inside and outside. You can literally perceive this here because this is an open building. That's interesting for us. The greenhouses are quieter spaces and this is also very relevant for therapy. In the future, we will certainly use it more frequently for perception therapy and other therapies.

We often see how our people come here to sniff around or wander around. I think the Kan. Triest Plein does create a

familiar feeling thanks to, on the one hand, the openness that we can find also in our Dageraad department — the light flowing in, the open therapy rooms, the open offices allowing people to come in and out — and on the other, the many nooks and crannies where you can hide if necessary. The interesting elements for them are the openness — people can simply come in — and the curiosity — asking, 'What can we find or do here?' Especially our youngsters come here to hang out. More than us, they are curious to explore the building on the inside. But for staff it's nice to discover the building too and to dream up all the things that we could do here. It is a unique building, people often talk about it. Again, in terms of what could be done with it. They can always go in and out, you are always welcome there, and this is what people appreciate. It is certainly an added value for the campus.

THE VALUE OF A QUESTION MARK

NICK MARLEIN

CARE MANAGER AT KARUS

Throughout the whole process of Sint-Jozef, questions were raised. The staff was mostly concerned with practical issues. Others were asking: 'Why would you spend so much money on a building and let a tree grow through it?' Still others asked: 'Why is there no roof on top and why is it raining inside?' But actually, this is a discussion worth having. The fact that people ask these questions says something about them and the doubts they might have about the future, the organization or the care for the patients. And this is an interesting topic. Jozef is always a topic of conversation. If you walk around with an external visitor, they will always ask you the question: 'Are you redoing the building?' And then I have to tell them that this is not the case. It is what it is, this is what we have. It's a weird choice,

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AWAKENING CURIOSITY
THE VALUE OF A QUESTION MARK

Sien Vandermarliere
Nick Marlein



UNCANNY AND ATMOSPHERIC

LINE DE VRIENDT

PEDAGOGICAL MANAGER OF THE HOSPITAL SCHOOL AND FORMER COORDINATOR AT KAAP, THE DEPARTMENT FOR CHILD AND YOUTH PSYCHIATRY

I have known the Jozef building since the moment I started working here 20 years ago. It was an abandoned building, a little mysterious and always closed. It was used for a short period by the people at Tabor who organized their training centre there, but they soon moved out. After that, the building was used for the exhibition on Caritas through the centuries. Apart from that, it was always closed and left unused. Today, the Jozef building is drawing attention because it doesn't look the way you would expect it to. This is everybody's first impression. A lot of people say the building is under renovation or being demolished. So one really has to make a switch to accept that the intention really is that the building is the way it stands here now. The surprising and uncanny qualities of a building like this — is it being demolished, is it intended like this, is it a building or not a building? — make a lot of people reflect: what's the use? What is it? Children too have many questions: what is this thing?

The building really provokes many different reactions.

The uncanny atmosphere around the Kan. Triest Plein means that it is not sufficiently present in our reflections as a useful place for activities. We could use it more actively although I do think there is a safety issue involved — this is a point of concern, especially as we work with patients and children. The ground floor could be used, but going up one must consider the safety issues. For some children, the building is alienating and frightening and this, I'm sure, throws up a barrier for ourselves being responsible. For the staff, there have been general activities here, but not so many. Maybe we should include the Jozef building in the accommodation to organize activities. It happens now and then. The hospital school once organized a play on the steps of the Jozef building. The Red Noses Day was also organized here by the hospital in collaboration with the hospital school. Compositions were made from material found in nature. There was a reception, there was an open fire, and the building was filled with the beautiful sound of music. It was all very atmospheric, I must admit.

THE STEPS OF THE PLEIN

FERDY MARYSSE

PSYCHOLOGIST AT THE DEPARTMENT FOR ANXIETY AND MOOD DISORDERS

I think it is very symbolic that an empty building stands in the psychiatric centre. The emptiness of the Kan. Triest Plein has been emphasized by stripping the building bare.

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UNCANNY AND ATMOSPHERIC
THE STEPS OF THE PLEIN

Line De Vriendt
Ferdie Marysse



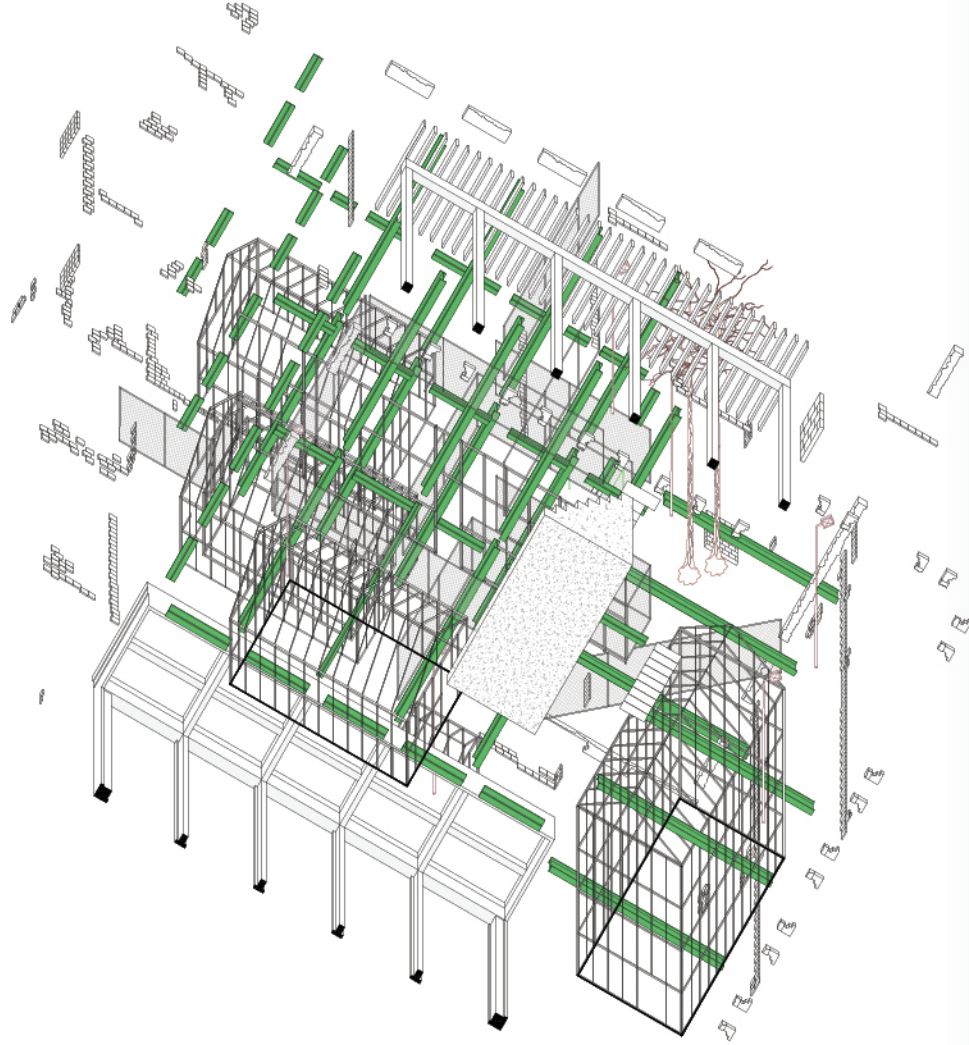
Moreover, with fewer means. With fewer means than the current principles would account for. Fewer than a new building would need. With such a difference that the government support was never jeopardized. And remained without deficit. And so Lente became the new 'Dageraad' ('Dawn').

Dageraad. An experiment as such. A different experiment. Where Jozef, or rather the Kanunnik Triest Plein, is an experiment that departs from its spatial context, Dageraad is an experiment that departs from its context of regulations and gives its economic

constraints a *Wendung*. Design as the critical measure in one, and the reflection on current interpretations of norms and financial constructions as the critical measure in the other.

Both experiments developed as good as simultaneously. And opened up ideas. Today, KARUS faces new challenges. A further development of the campus in light of the new ambitions in care today.

KARUS faces these head-on. With both experiments allowing for KARUS to face the future differently. New and different ideas will give this future its *Wendung*.

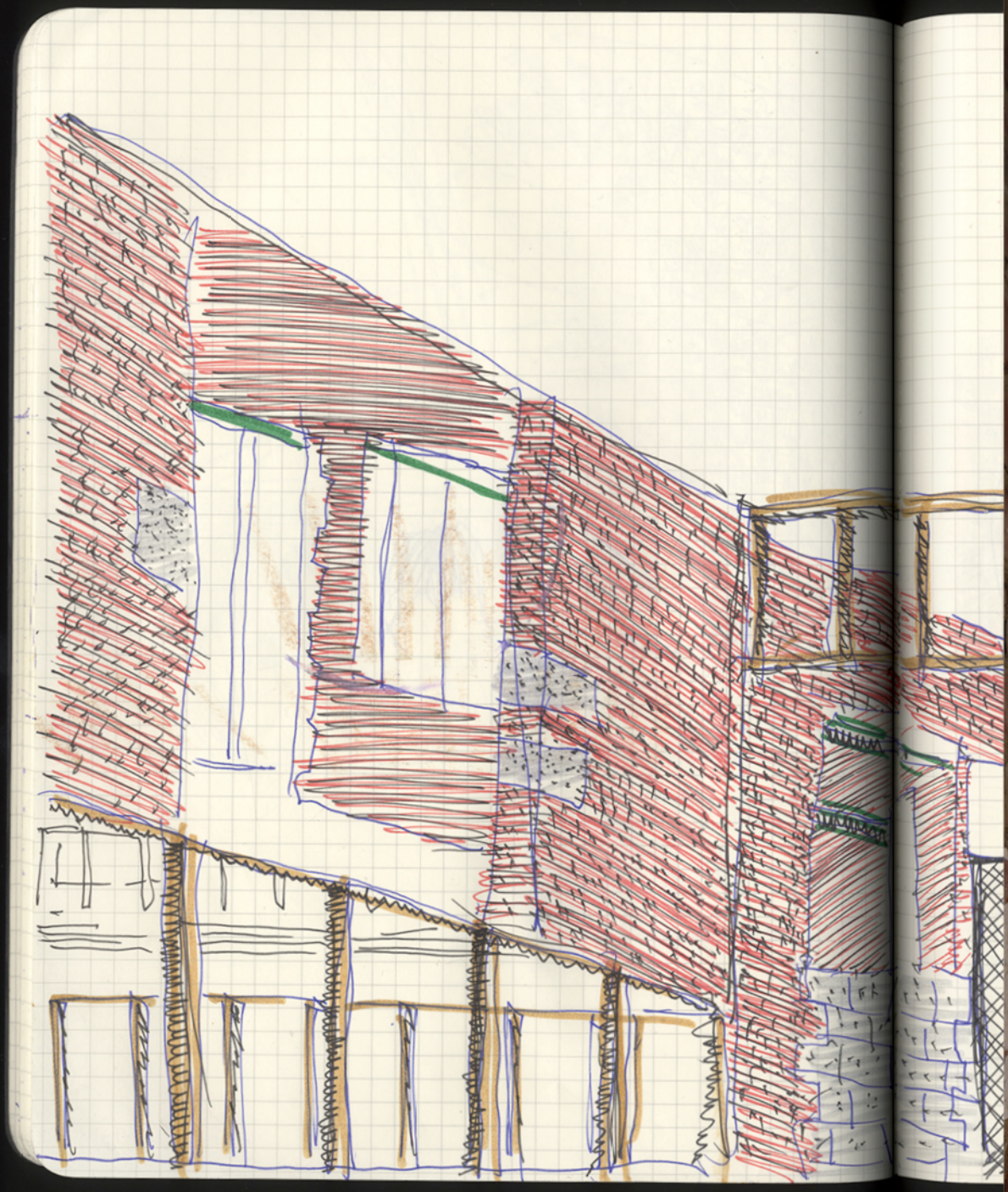


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JOZEF AND DAGERAAD

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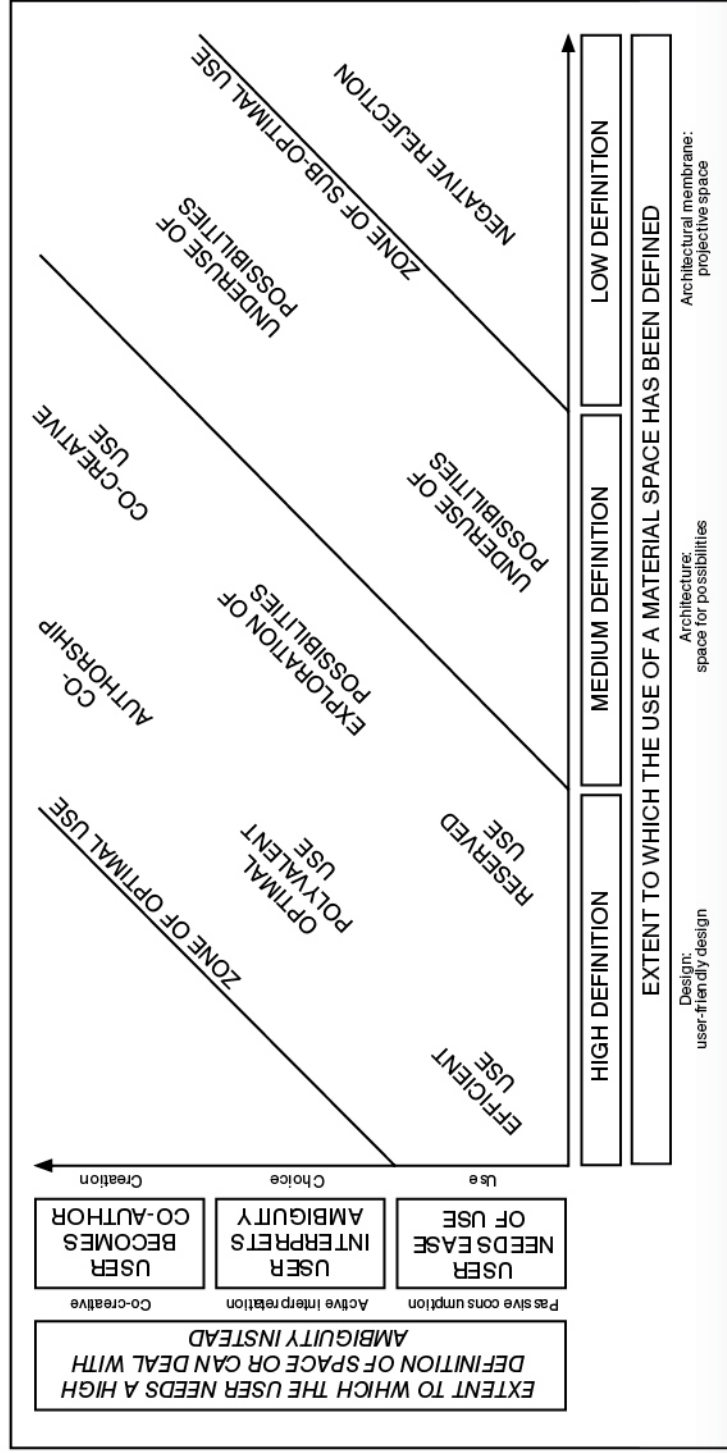


familiar. This also applies to space. Patients who experience such disruption cannot handle extra spatial ambiguity. Things need to be recognizable, accessible, friendly. A different group of patients or visitors likes the possibility of appropriation, and they manage to handle a certain amount of spatial ambiguity. We have noticed that most

youngsters belong to this group. They use the medium-defined spaces and objects at will, which are building blocks to arrange the space and life itself. Patients and staff who feel at ease with a high measure of material ambiguity and are able to appropriate this to their own needs are rather rare. Either way, there is an inverse relation

to the extent to which patients can deal with ambiguity and the extent to which the spatial environment needs to be defined.

The optimal use situates itself in a match between these two dimensions. We can schematize this as follows:



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A NOTE ON THE NAMES OF THE SQUARE

GIDEON BOIE

The 'Kan. Triest Plein' (Canon Triest Square) comes with a list of many names. The different authors in this book use various names to denote the very same building/idea/project, all depending on the phase they got involved at or simply due to a stubborn *idée fixe*. Keep in mind that the

project definition came about by surprise and got redefined along the way, which means that the name has constantly been changing.

In the editing of the book we did not want to wipe out the different naming uses. Hidden in the many names of the same

building/idea/project lies the short history of progressive insight which the people at the psychiatric centre were going through. Moreover, each name has a story to tell. Below is a non-exhaustive list.

1. Ever since we came together in workshops with psychiatrists, managers, staff and patients, in the late summer of 2014, the building was called by its original name. People talked about 'Sint-Jozef' (Saint Joseph) as they did with the other buildings. The personification shows how the buildings were something special for the people working or staying at the psychiatric centre.
2. In everyday language it was usual to drop the prefix and simply call the building by its first name: 'Jozef' (Joseph). The name unwittingly hints at the profanation of mental healthcare today, without erasing the Christian legacy that has been so important in the history of Belgian psychiatry and of the care provided to the weak more generally.
3. By the way: the profanation is also clear in the name-giving of the buildings constructed around the 1990s that refer to natural

and/or maritime metaphors: 'Klimop' ['lvy], 'Dageraad' ['Dawn'], 'Getijden' ['Tides'], 'Branding' ['Breaking Wave'], 'Meander', 'Kaap' ['Cape'], 'Schorre' ['Marsh'], and so on.) All of these names indicate that something is about to happen while staying in the building.

4. In the project definition (January 2015) presented to the Board of Directors, the building was called the 'Jozef Plein' — with a blank space (unnecessary in Dutch spelling) to stress that the monumental outdoor structure would somehow function as a public space in the psychiatric centre.

5. The same name was used in the tendering process launched in March 2015 (specification number: PCC/INFRA/2015/002) but now written without a space while retaining the capital 'P': 'JozefPlein'. The spelling is still incorrect, but the meaning remains the same.

