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# INTERSPACE – A SPACE BETWEEN THE DISCIPLINES

Every year, the School of Architecture in the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Environment, with its Master's degree course in Architecture & Environmental Design at the Bremen University of Applied Sciences, and the Systems and Structures Studio for the degree course in Integrated Design at the University of the Arts in Bremen organise an interdisciplinary, project-based course. The second-semester master's degree students from each university come together in Bremen's 'Centre for Building Culture' to address current issues concerning the designing of our environment.

## EXPLORATORY LEARNING BASED ON CURRENT ISSUES

Each of the questions addressed relates to a key topic and its relevance for society. The focus of the first cycle, for example, was on the 'city' and its public spaces, and asked 'Whose city is it?' The second time around, the students concentrated on 'parkland', meaning open public spaces designed as green landscapes, and again asking 'Whose parkland is it?' Their attention was focused on the 'Wallanlagen' around Bremen's city centre. Many different proposals were generated for reinterpreting and using what used to be the fortifications around the town. The projects are now proving their worth in the current debates over redesigning the road 'Am Wall' and its relationship with the Wallanlagen.

This year's project focuses on the question 'Whose water is it?' and thus on the public accessibility and usability of our long riverbanks in Bremen and Bremen Nord. The question is quickly asked, and the range of answers is concomitantly wide. The issue is not just to clarify legal 'ownership', but rather the spatial, social and cultural framework that makes the resource in question, in this case 'water', accessible to people.

## INTERSPACE AS A FIELD LABORATORY FOR URBAN PLANNING

Exploring and investigating these conditions and characteristics is a key analytical tool used by the students. The projects centre on and deal intensively with the people who are involved in designing and perceiving 'spaces'. These are the users of such spaces, on the one hand, and the stakeholders who bear responsibility in design processes, on the other.

The Interspace projects thus offer all those involved in the planning process an opportunity to describe projects and to bring them into public debate, projects that are normally beyond reach, embedded in policymaking and urban planning frameworks, yet involving pressing issues and concerns. What this means for interdisciplinary teamwork is that the same people are available as contacts as were present during the increasingly participatory planning processes. That is an ideal starting point when preparing for a professional field that can no longer be associated with just one occupational profile, and which demands far more competencies than a command of the design process as such.

## INTERSPACE – FREE SPACE, OPEN-ENDED

A heterogeneous student body, lecturers from different disciplines, sparring partners from real life and a focal question that is not aimed per se at producing designed objects - these all benefit an open-ended process in which every individual must look for his or her place as part of a team, in order to learn about their own capabilities and skills, or also the lack of them. For example, we see students' personal positioning within an interdisciplinary team as playing a significant biographical role, and we see ourselves not as teachers who give answers, but as the ones who ask the questions.

The answers are provided by a generation of students that is learning to take wide-ranging interests into consideration during the planning process, interests that go far beyond the parameters of space, form and function. They learn to sort and evaluate them to develop solutions that are without programmatic bias or design prejudices. The openness and freedom expressed in the results give both urban planners and policymakers the opportunity to see public spaces from the perspective of those who will be making the most of them.

## FOUR METRES PLUS X



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The mean tidal range of the River Weser in Bremen, with an amplitude of four metres between high and low tide, is the greatest along the German North Sea coast. Over a period of 12.25 hours, the water recedes to uncover land before flooding it again. This play of the tides is not perceived as strongly in Bremen as elsewhere at the North Sea, because there is little access to the River Weser within the city itself, which means that the tides cannot be experienced haptically. This is made worse by the fact that the tidal range can generally only be seen where the water's edge is steep, for example along quay walls and bridge pillars. As a result, changes in water level due to climatic and astronomical influences are difficult to recognise.

The '4 plus X' project creates new land and open up places at and in the water that change with the tides. Twice a day, the waters of the river expose areas and twice a day they spill over them again, thus producing small islands just off the banks. Stairs and steps for sitting on invite passers-by to stop a while, and provide, depending on height, a different view of the water and its surroundings. From mid-day onwards, the south side facing away from Schlachte boulevard is bathed in sunlight and forms an urban resting place from which people can enjoy the view across to the green bank of the River Weser. On the other side, one can observe the colourful comings and goings along the Schlachte.

Newly created pathways on either side of Teerhof island produce ideal connections to the existing network, while at the same time creating a circular route to follow.

## URBAN OASIS

Our everyday lives are designed for speed and efficiency. The primary focus is always on the fastest route and the maximum benefit. Both at work and in their private lives, people hurry from one commitment to the next. The desire to relax and enjoy nature becomes greater and greater. Wherever we go, we are confronted with the image of freedom and relaxation through exercise, but those aims involve a long route to get there. They are expensive, bad for the environment, time-consuming and require intensive planning.

How can this feeling of peace and solitude be conveyed without having to leave the city? A survey conducted at key points along the River Weser showed that most people, when they think of positive encounters with water, do not associate these with Bremen as a city. Many expressed a desire for greater proximity to water.

The 'Little Weser' between the Teerhof island and the Neustadt district seemed to us to be the perfect location for fulfilling that wish. The surface of the water glistens calmly there. Located amidst the hustle and bustle of the city centre, all one can hear is the rushing sound of the weir. The old trees on the one riverbank cast a pleasant shadow, while the other riverbank attracts with its sunny and windless conditions.

In the midst of the city, Urban Oasis is like a droplet that falls into placid water. The instalative timber construction adds to the many bridges that have been built for crossing the hindrance posed by the water. It is not a crossing over the water, but one through it. Wading through the refreshing wetness, small islands are quickly found on which to spend some time away from the daily humdrum and to find time for oneself, for dangling one's legs in the water and coming up with new thoughts and ideas.

## CROSSING BOUNDARIES

Vegesack, a district within Bremen, has an identity all of its own – its riverside location, strongly characterised by inland navigation, and the manufacturing companies along the water's edge, give this district both a maritime and an industrial character. The industries and the water are intimately linked and ever-present. The site of the former 'Vulkan' shipyard is now home to companies in the metalworking, mechanical engineering, plant construction, wind turbine and chemical fibre industries. This character, and the qualities that define this place, are kept hidden from people, however, because the industrial area is completely isolated from its surroundings and impervious to view. Without disrupting the production process, the project makes the industrial estate visible to local people by means of a raised cycle path that leads through the entire estate as far as the Bahrsplate park.



The route starts and ends at the train station in Vegesack, a busy place that already has a bicycle station where bikes can be borrowed and parked. From there, the route passes key locations, such as comprehensive schools, leisure centres, or Sedanplatz in the town centre, before gradually rising at the end of the 'maritime mile', entering the industrial estate and overcoming the boundaries with industry and the waters of the river.

## PANORAMIC ROUTE

Vegesack and Blumenthal, two districts in Bremen-Nord, are located along the River Weser and have deep roots in history. However, the river is barely accessible for local residents and visitors due to current zoning. The Panoramic Route takes one along the water's edge, thus offering intriguing views of the river, its two riverbanks and the surrounding shipyard. Cyclists and people out for walks can complete a round tour of this section of the River Weser, passing through Vegesack and Blumenthal on the Bremen side and Motzen, Bardenfleth and Lemwerder on the other, Lower Saxony, side. Ferry trips between the two shores provide a frame and give the whole excursion a maritime feel. The ferries are integrated as a floating continuation of the path from one bank to the other. The route has its own infrastructure, featuring picnic spots, access points and lifts. Its architectural elements are designed to resemble the superstructure of ships and continue the colours found on the two ferries crossing the River Weser. Various substructures support the path so that it can run alongside the river and provide views over the water.

Some parts of the route are on the riverbank itself, whereas others are raised on the sheet piling walls using a steel structure. Yet others are on bridges that span the industrial site. This spectacular routing is what makes it

such a special experience: breath-taking views are offered from unfamiliar angles and vantage points.

### FREE SPACE

‘Frei — Raum’ (lit. ‘Free Space’) is a place that can be reached directly yet is also a refuge from the hurly-burly and rhythm of the city. This is where all those things are made possible and nurtured that otherwise escape our minds because of established routines and mounting pressure to perform. Free Space serves the present and future needs of the people living in Bremen.

The Stadtwerder peninsula in the river is a unique place in Germany and predestined for this role: bounded on either side by the Werdersee lake and the River Weser, the Stadtwerder district in the city centre has undergone little development in recent decades and has become a remote place within the city. It is mainly used nowadays as a recreational and allotment area only.

In a joint effort with local residents, institutions and the municipality of Bremen, the characteristic features of the Stadtwerder are to be enlarged upon and made useful as part of an integrative process: with newly created structures and targeted communication, this Free

Space becomes an active part of the city and develops a magnetic attraction over and beyond the city limits, as a symbol of Bremen’s identity. The appeal of this place for potential uses by all walks of society and for all areas of life adds to Bremen’s strengths as a centre for business and innovation and enhances its quality of life.

#### How can we keep ourselves healthy?

A new jogging route provides a circular route all the way around the Werdersee lake.

#### How do we get to the water?

Access to the water is made easier with minimal changes to existing bathing areas. Walkways over the surface of the lake also provide new ways of reaching the water.

#### Where do we want to work?

Being a place for encounter, working and innovation, pavilions of different sizes and designs are erected.

#### How do we treat our environment?

The aims of urban agriculture are conscious consumption, sustainable production and wise handling of food produce from the immediate surroundings. The allotments on the Stadtwerder, which are mostly used for gardening anyhow, are to be opened to those who are interested.



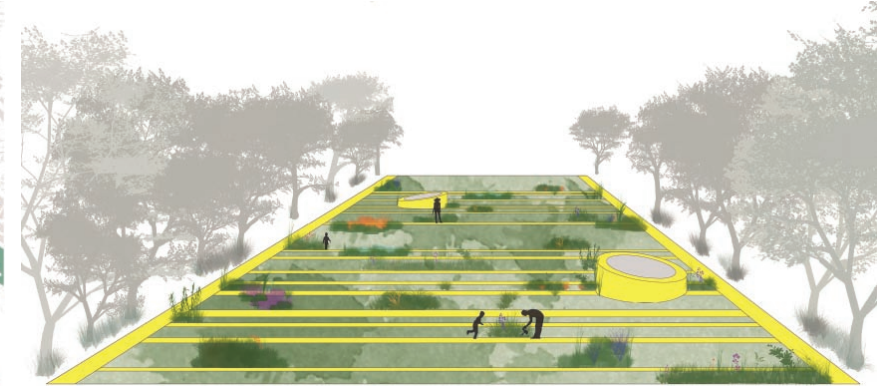
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### O THE TIME

The Bahrplate is currently a large parkland area subdivided into several different parts: a playground, a football pitch, a park for skaters, and a memorial devoid of explanatory information. These different sections lack interlinkage. Nor is there any connection to the water, to the River Weser. The Bahrplate used to be an island in the river and was later used by the Nazis as a camp for prisoners of war. ‘What happened there?’ -the aim of our concept is to make the location’s multifaceted past more tangible. Water is the key element in that regard, because it is something that survives the times. It has watched every change as it occurred.

‘Time flows like water’ Our concept, O the Time \_ Bahrplate, takes that sentence as its point of departure: in the O the Time \_ Bahrplate memorial park in Blumenthal, passing time is experienced through the medium of water. As in the past, a small river now flows around the Bahrplate, which is subdivided into several sections. In each section, one can sense the respective period. With O the Time \_ Bahrplate, one learns to perceive history as it proceeds through time.

#### ‘History must never be forgotten’

In 1903, the area was acquired by the city with the intention of laying out a park for its

citizens. This period is symbolised by an open river course. In the late 1920s, an urban park was laid out. The river flows between two timber walls representing such landscaping. From April 1943 onwards, the site was used to extend the prisoner-of-war camp. The water forces its way between two high walls of weathering steel, on the inner sides of which the history of the camp and its prisoners is engraved.

Beside the Bahrplate camp, from September 1944 until the end of the war, there was an annex of the Neuengamme concentration camp. This bitter past is represented by an oversized concrete wall in this section. A memorial has been erected in memory of the Bahrplate concentration camp. The walls are followed by a small lake on which the existing memorial, the ‘Stone of Hope’ is given a worthy place. There are also 123 stone slabs on the lake. Each stone shows information about the past and the name of a victim. After World War Two, the remains of the camp were removed and the parkland redesigned. The end of the lake invitingly entices people to a walk, and relaxation is possible on the water playground. With O the Time \_ Bahrplate, one learns to perceive history as it proceeds through time. The last section, over the waters of the River Weser, is a place to reflect. May the history of this place never be forgotten.



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### WOW - WORKING ON WATER

Today's green dyke, stretching from the Stephani bridge to the Wilhelm Kaisen bridge, suggests its original rural nature. The aim of this design is to create a new urban dyke that replaces the industrial aspect of the left bank with a new, appealing view, while also producing a waterfront that is used not only as a link to Bremen's city centre and the Überseestadt, but which attracts many more people who want to stop and linger, thanks to the new layout.

Today's society is seeking a new way of working, a counter-concept to replace conventional corporate structures, a working environment that can be designed according to one's own needs. The office becomes home, and home becomes the office. Whether alone, in a group or in a room with many people working in different ways, everyone should have the chance to find his or her ideal workplace. For 'Generation Y - why', the young generation of digital natives who work creatively, working time means living time, for example, and that this time has to be used productively and with passion. Work and leisure are increasingly melded.

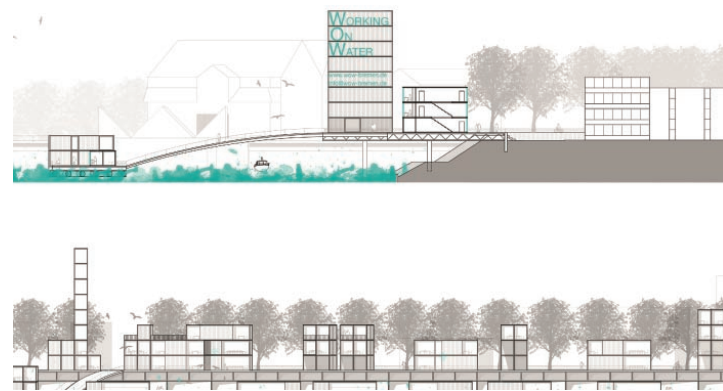
This project shows a temporary and stackable building-block system comprising 40-foot freight containers (High Cube), arranged at (and on) the water and containing rooms for

working in that are distinctly geared to the new forms of work done by the young members of 'Generation Y - why'. Designed as a standalone module, the container can be combined with others to form a flexible, multiroom system. Wall areas are replaced by large-format window elements, and the user has an unimpeded view over the water while working.

According to climate forecasts, extreme weather events (including storm floods) will increase in frequency. Bremen is preparing for a 50 cm rise in sea level in the course of this century. This means raising the dykes and making them stronger. Flood protection therefore plays a paramount role in this project. That task is achieved by a plateau projecting 12 metres out over the water, plus the required 50-cm increment to the dyke. In combination with floating pontoons on the water, it provides the foundation for this new architecture.

### CONCRETE CONTRASTS

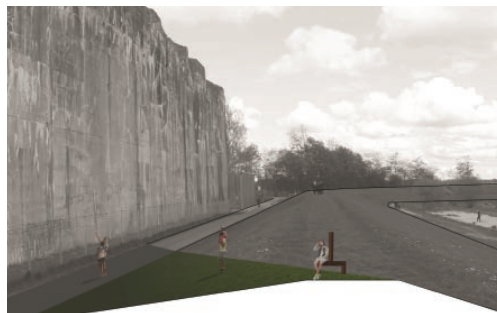
The public presence and impact of the recently opened 'Valentin Bunker Memorial' is extended by the concept devised here. The surroundings of the bunker are made visible by creative interventions. The latter highlight the contrasts that exist between the artificially created shelter and the living environment that has grown



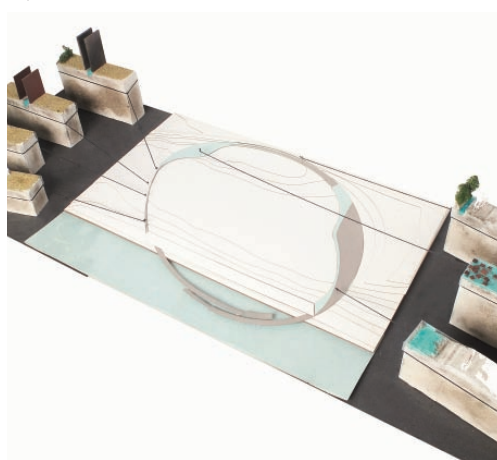
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organically around it, consisting of the village, woodlands and river. A breach cut through the dyke reconnects the submarine exit from the bunker to the River Weser, thus allowing a ferryboat from Bremen to dock inside the bunker. A ramp along the edifice enables visitors to walk the whole length and width of the bunker and to access the roof area that fauna and flora have regained as a habitat.

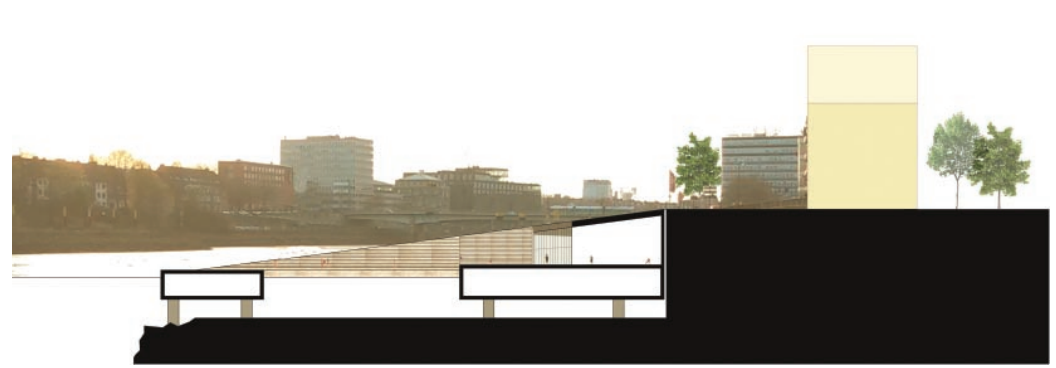
The woodland area to the south serves as a natural contrast to the bunker and is linked by a network of pathways with connecting walkways and viewing towers so that visitors can experience it close-up. On the northern side, nature yields to provide an impeded view of the bunker. The cleared area is covered with crushed rock, reinforcing the oppressive impact of this monstrous building. By adding a set of steps running parallel to the bunker, that particular area is made useful for gatherings, in order to lend a platform for discourse on the wars and conflicts of today.

### DYKE OASIS

The deichOase on Osterdeich is an urban oasis for the urban jungle. A tunnel is built under Osterdeich, or 'East Dyke', the road running parallel to the river. The surroundings are upgraded with flowers and shrubbery. This enlarges the parkland area existing hitherto and

there is no longer any barrier between the city and the park. The absence of traffic makes it quieter and improves the air quality. The steep slope from the road to the riverbank is made flatter, with the inclination beginning at the start of the deichOase and extending as far as the river's edge. The grassy area can then offer a much greater variety of potential uses. The deichOase opens onto the River Weser at three points. Cultural and leisure activities of various kinds are offered on floating wooden platforms which rise and fall with the tide on the Weser. Steps lead down to the platform, which also includes a café with a fantastic view over the river, even in winter.

More steps on the riverbank lead down to the river, which invites people to dip their legs in the water. This centrally located area motivates people in Bremen to get more exercise. The gigantic swimming pool is filled with fresh water from the River Weser. The large wooden platform around the pool offers plenty of space for other kinds of sports and for relaxation. The section to the east is the cultural centre of the deichOase, with rows of steps for sitting on rising like an amphitheatre in a semicircle from the stage in the middle. The river forms the backdrop for the stage. Open-air events, such as concerts, poetry readings, films and plays, are staged in summer when the weather is good.



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