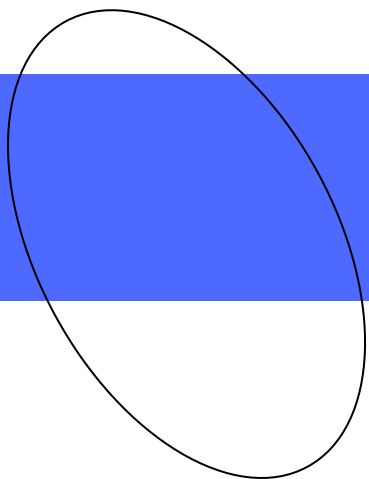
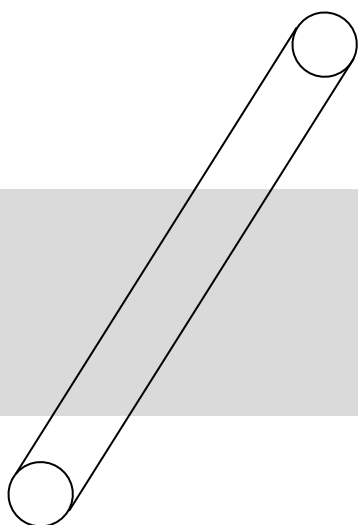
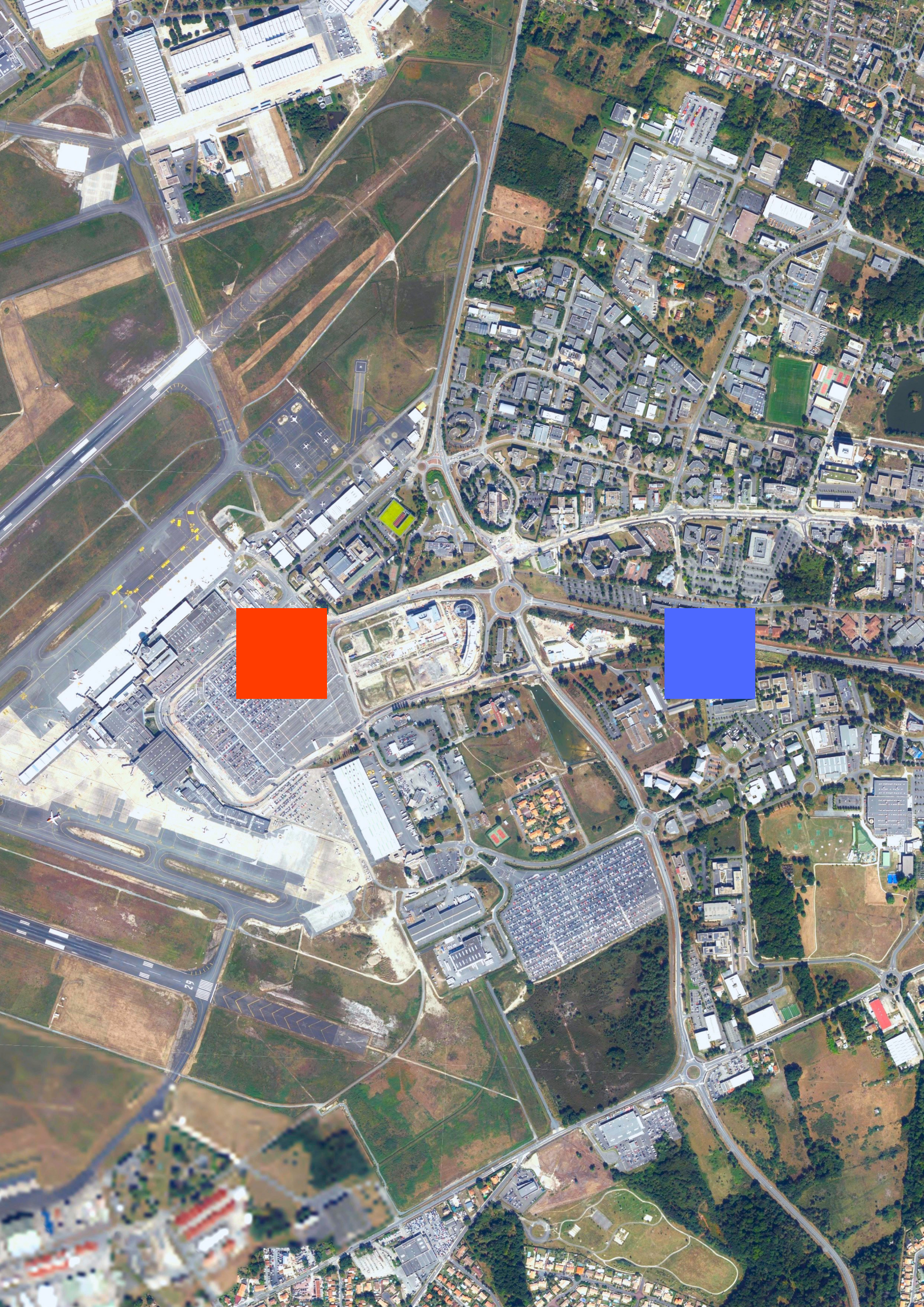


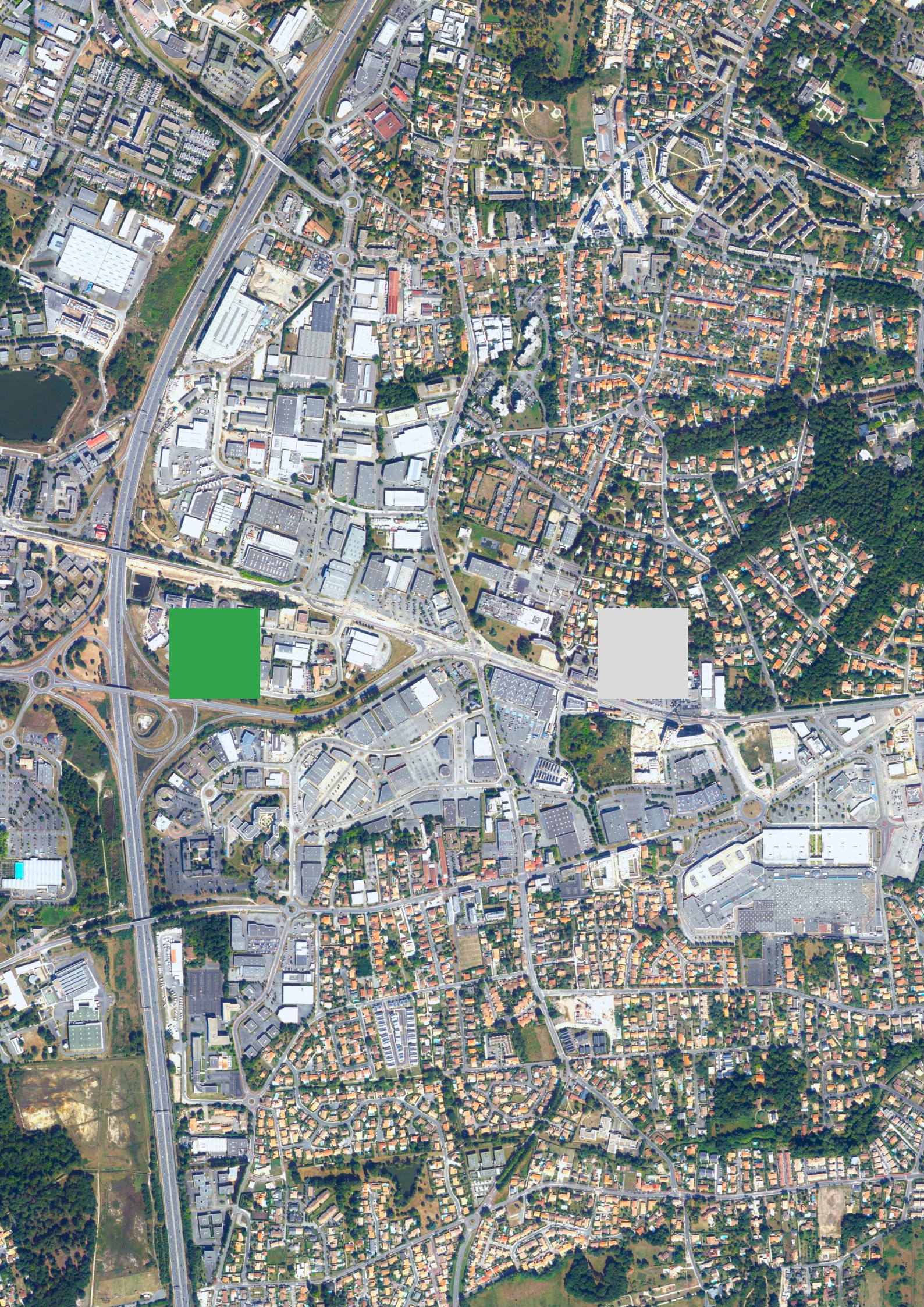
ACTION *on territory*



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Guest studio EPFL FS26

Prof. Susanne Eliasson

Ass. Federico Reichel



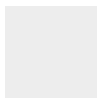
Housing



Economy



Nature



Rest

ACTION on territory

Overview

Since the beginning of urbanization, the city has been the place where people live together: for the opportunities and safety it provides, for economic reasons, to fulfill a need for social bonds, and for all the other reasons that bring us together as a society. Living together in a shared environment requires forms of collective organization that always manifest themselves physically. Our urban structures reflect both the values and the challenges faced by society.

In this studio, we investigate the contemporary urban condition, which differs profoundly from the classic vision of the city that still shapes our collective imagination and continues to inform political discourse and real estate development. The contemporary city, built over the last 150 years, is mostly horizontal, dominated by space rather than structured by built form. It is a city in which functions (housing, production, commerce, nature) and infrastructures are clearly separated and where the conventional distinction between public and private has left little room for the commons.

We therefore ask the following question:

What is our collective perspective within a horizontal urban condition?

In the contemporary city, we can no longer rely on the public square or the ancient agora as our primary models of collective life, nor can we accept that the only spaces for collective action are those dedicated to consumption and leisure. We need places of **action**, in the sense articulated by Hannah Arendt in *The Human Condition*: spaces where we appear before one another and collectively shape the world.

The studio formulates the hypothesis that the **critical garden**, understood as a social and political space, can become a

structuring element that creates proximity between inhabitants and fosters new collective perspectives within the contemporary city. It can serve as the starting point for a renewed form of urbanity.

The studio has a dual ambition: first, to read the territory in order to reveal situations that already belong to the commons; second, to propose new collective perspectives where they are absent. It adopts a **research-by-design approach** that seeks both to produce knowledge about the territory and to transform it.

During the autumn semester, our field of exploration is a 2.5 × 2.5 km territory within the Bordeaux metropolitan area. Situated between the airport and the ring road, it brings together a diversity of conditions characteristic of contemporary metropolitan landscapes: road infrastructure, major industries (Dassault Aviation and Thales), business parks, a shopping centre, residential neighborhoods, a public park, a school, and Tram Line A. It is an ordinary territory with no obvious urban qualities, precisely what makes it a particularly relevant site of investigation. We will visit Bordeaux and the site of exploration in September.

The spring semester will address the same question in the urban territory of Greater Geneva, a cross-border metropolitan region of more than one million inhabitants, over 80% of whom live outside the City of Geneva.

ACTION on territory is a design studio that engages with the contemporary city by proposing concrete actions to transform it. Through design, we explore how architecture, landscape and urbanism can together create the conditions for collective action and enable us to shape the world.

Methodology

The studio is a space for reflection, experimentation and collective learning, in which the project is not only a product but also a method for understanding and transforming the world : it is research by design. We provide students with the tools needed to observe the world so that they can act within it with

full awareness and autonomy. The studio operates through a shared methodological framework: common drawing methods, collective schedules, regular group reviews, with drawing holding a central place as a tool for both thinking and negotiation.

A specific spatial device structures the discussion: a 1:1000 scale model (mobile and demountable) will be the central focus point, accompanied by a shelf holding books and individual models. Frames intended to house research complete the setup.

The studio is organized in three distinct phases :

Phase 1

Collective research and shared tools

- Production of a collective model
- Four thematic research themes (Housing / Economy / Nature / Rest)
- Personal critical garden case study

Group work for the research themes and the model; each student individually analyses one or two examples of critical gardens.

The collective investigations are led through visual research and a site visit end of September.

Four research themes are explored :

- Economy (blue): economic activities, types of employment, how people work...
- Housing (red) : different housing and domestic configurations, how people live...
- Nature (green): quality and role of existing green spaces and structures...
- The rest (grey): how and where people meet and interact, activators, unexpected things...

Phase 2

Projects : collective perspectives

In groups of two, students will then propose a new collective perspective within the study territory. In relationship with a critical garden proposal, projects can explore new living and working configurations within the territory

Phase 3

A shared vision

Drawing from the different projects produced, students will build a collective narrative on the potential of the commons in the decentralized city. Cross-studio work in the form of a collective workshop.

Practical information

Study trip to Bordeaux

The study trip to Bordeaux will take place in September (27/09-29/09). We will explore the site as well as specific projects within the metropolitan area, including a visit to arc en rêve center of architecture.

The personal budget required will be approximately 400-450 CHF (travel, accommodation and food) depending on accommodation arrangements.

Weekly rhythm

- Monday afternoon: collective reviews, all groups gathered
- Tuesday morning: collective exchanges around lectures and writings
- Remaining time: group work and individual exchanges

Expected Output

- One large collective model at 1:1000 (2.5 × 2.5 km territory)
- Four thematic research themes
- Group projects proposing new collective perspective
- One shared vision on the commons in the territory

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Studio *ACTION* on territory

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1. Factory Buildings Grimshaw, Vitra campus
2. Trix and Robert, Haussmann apartment
3. Sven Ingvar Anderson, Hengarden
4. Saul Steinberg, Blecker Street

