

Mediation and Duration, Two Strategies to Re-Articulate Urban Relationships

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In many European 18 sites, urban quality already exists, but it is fragmented or discontinuous: infrastructures interrupt natural and social continuities; buildings remain present, yet disconnected from their surroundings; landscapes operate alongside the city rather than with it; and everyday life unfolds across spaces that do not communicate with one another. The challenge addressed by this category is to **re-articulate relationships between existing heterogeneous elements**.

The projects discussed here reveal two complementary approaches. Some operate primarily through **spatial mediation**, negotiating between conflicting systems and transforming friction points into inhabitable interfaces. Others construct relationships through **time and process**, where reuse, sequencing, memory and care allow urbanity to emerge gradually, without final resolution. Together, these approaches suggest that creating new urban relationships is as much about how connections are made in space as about how they are sustained over time.

MEDIATION: SPATIAL INTERFACES AND RELATIONAL FRAMEWORKS

The following six projects approach urban design as a mediation practice. Whether working through architectural language, ground formation, spatial morphology, geometric networks, shared green structures or infrastructural frameworks, they construct new urban relationships by making connections visible and inhabitable. Urbanity here emerges from the way different systems are brought into relation and held in a productive balance.

How to Change the Language of an Existing Building

In Amersfoort-Amicitia (NL), winning project *Capriccio: Beyond the Analogue* (fig. 1) addresses a building whose problem is relational isolation. The existing Amicitia complex built in 2001 is physically present, yet culturally disconnected: it turns its back on the city, fails to activate its edges, and lacks a shared narrative that could anchor it within the urban fabric. Rather than proposing demolition or a purely technical retrofit, the project introduces a different architectural language as a mediating layer between the building, the city, and contemporary expectations.



Fig. 1 – Amersfoort-Amicitia (NL)
Winner
Capriccio: Beyond the Analogue
→ See more p.346

Fig. 2 – Madrid (ES)
Winner
Alleyways
→ See more p.300





Fig. 4 – Zagreb (HR)
Winner
The Common Green
→ See more p.400



Fig. 3 – Luzern (CH)
Winner
ZÄME
→ See more p.378

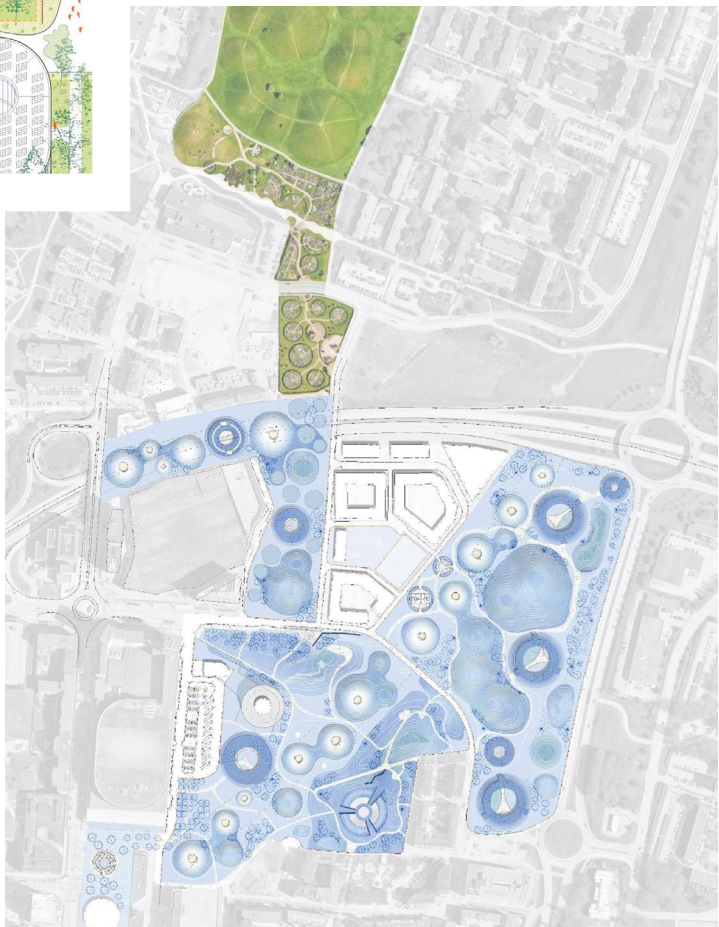


Fig. 5 – Malmö (SE)
Special mention
Hyllie Hills 21532
→ See more p.387

This intervention is not conceived as a façade treatment, but as a thickened layer with depth, programme and spatial consequence. By adding volumes within the first meters above ground, the project reshapes corners, defines forecourts, and re-establishes continuity between streets, squares, park and courtyards.

The architectural vocabulary proposed is itself part of a wider debate, drawing on a lineage repeatedly mobilised for exclusionary political agendas, recalling figures such as Tessenow and the Heimatschutz culture. Such language is also at the forefront in more recent calls for prescriptive notions of beauty, legibility and identity.

How to Use Geometry to Build Connections across Scales

In Madrid (ES), winning project *Alleyways* (fig. 2) uses geometry as a tool to establish new urban relationships at multiple scales. Starting from the scale of the housing block, a network of pedestrian paths is traced through inner courtyards and between buildings, transforming residual spaces dominated by parking into shared gardens and meeting places. These local geometries redefine proximity, enabling everyday encounters and reactivating the social life of the blocks.

At a larger scale, the same geometric logic extends beyond the neighbourhood, stitching together fragmented public spaces and reconnecting Colonia Casa de Campo with the Casa de Campo park, adjacent districts and metropolitan infrastructures. The alleyways operate as a continuous spatial system, capable of linking schools, cultural facilities, transport nodes and landscape elements through a sequence of shaded paths, plazas and activity hotspots.

How to Use Morphology to Articulate Coexistence

In Luzern (CH), winning project *ZÄME* (fig. 3) approaches urban relationships through morphology. Situated in an in-between territory where urban fabric, agricultural land and infrastructural fragments coexist without clear hierarchy, the proposal treats form as a way to negotiate different ways of living and producing. Rather than separating city and countryside, the project constructs a continuous morphological system capable of accommodating urban life, agricultural activity and a less domesticated landscape within a single articulated framework.

The spatial structure is organised around a sequence of belts and axes that recombine existing farms, productive landscapes and new neighbourhoods. Built volumes, open spaces and productive fields are shaped to interlock rather than exclude one another, allowing everyday life, work and cultivation to overlap. Agriculture is not confined to a residual edge, but becomes an active component of urban form.

How to Use Green Infrastructure as the Primary Urban Structure

In Zagreb (HR), winning project *The Common Green* (fig. 4) treats green infrastructure not as an addition to urban development, but as its foundational structure. Rather than organising the neighbourhood around streets, plots or buildings, the proposal begins with a continuous system of open spaces that connects ecological processes, mobility and everyday life. This green framework operates as the basic infrastructure upon which housing, services and circulation are arranged.

The landscape is conceived as a shared system, articulated through gardens with varying degrees of access and stewardship. From peripheral green buffers to interior commons and a central linear park, open space structures daily life and movement. Streets are subordinated to this logic, adapting in scale and character to support slow mobility and everyday interaction rather than vehicular flow.

How to Turn an Infrastructural Rupture into a Shared Ground

In special mention project *Hyllie Hills 21532* (fig. 5) in Malmö (SE), urban relationships are constructed through the careful calibration of continuity across a fragmented urban ground. The project operates in a context shaped by large-scale infrastructure, logistics and recent development, where public space has been ruptured and urban elements remain disconnected. Rather than introducing a singular architectural figure, the proposal stitches together existing and emerging parts through a strong, readable and continuous topographic framework.

Mediation here occurs at the level of the ground and its gradients. Slopes, paths and planted surfaces, organised as a collection of circular hills, negotiate differences between infrastructure, housing and public space, allowing movement, visibility and use to overlap. Thresholds are thus softened, transforming infrastructural edges into shared spatial conditions. Urban relationships are established through continuity rather than contrast, enabling everyday use to emerge from a landscape that mediates between systems without fixing their hierarchy.

How to Turn Infrastructure into a Relational Framework

In Vitoria-Gasteiz (ES), runner-up project *Landscape of Possibilities* (fig. 6) approaches urban relationships through infrastructure, understood not as a hidden technical system but as a visible and inhabitable framework. Starting from the rehabilitation of an existing housing complex, the proposal reframes uncertainty about users, budgets and timeframes, as a condition to be worked with.

At the domestic and building scale, new infrastructural elements such as the vascular core, the inhabited skin and the gallery, redefine the relationship between private life and collective space. Technical systems for circulation, energy, water and climate become spatial interfaces: places to pass through, meet, cultivate plants or extend domestic activities. These intermediate zones blur the boundaries between dwelling and neighbourhood,

allowing different ways of living to coexist without being hierarchised. By making infrastructure accessible and understandable, the proposal grounds new urban relationships in shared care, collective responsibility and appropriation.

DURATION: TIME, PROCESS AND OPEN-ENDED TRANSFORMATION

If the first set of projects addressed *Creating New Urban Relationships* through mediation, this second group approaches the category through **time**. Here, urban relationships are not resolved through interfaces or formal articulation, but constructed gradually through **reuse, sequencing, memory, care and long-term processes**. Rather than producing immediate spatial coherence, these projects establish frameworks that allow relationships to evolve, accumulate and adapt. Urbanity emerges not from resolution, but from duration.

How to Use Time as Urban Material to Transform a Former Industrial Site

In Amersfoort-Kop van Isselt (NL), winning project *Re:Isselt – Growing by Reuse* (fig. 7) understands time as an operative device rather than a passive wait for a predefined outcome. Transformation is conceived as a long-term, open and negotiable process, in which social governance and material reuse form the core drivers of urban change. Urban relationships are built through incremental phases, where each intervention activates the next while remaining open to revision.

Existing structures are understood as available resources, capable of accommodating new uses without erasing their social or material memory. The progressive accumulation of biodiversity-oriented strategies constitutes a central layer of the urban project. Within this framework, adaptability, reversibility, and governance mechanisms over time become essential, allowing the site to grow through layers, learning, and continuous adjustment.



Fig. 6 – Vitoria-Gasteiz (ES)
Runner-up
Landscape of Possibilities
→ See more p.328



Fig. 7 – Amersfoort-Kop van Isselt (NL)
Winner
Re:Isselt – Growing by Reuse
→ See more p.352



Fig. 8 – Amersfoort-Stadhuisplein (NL)
Winner
Cultural Archipelago
→ See more p.358

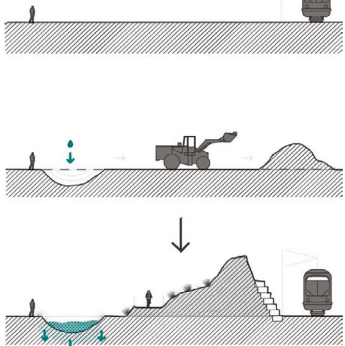


Fig. 9 – Navalmoral de la Mata (ES)
Runner-up
Suturing water, memory and biodiversity together
→ See more p.396

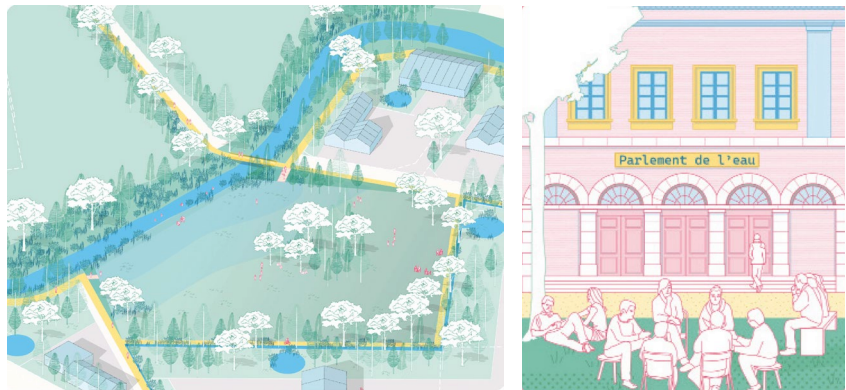
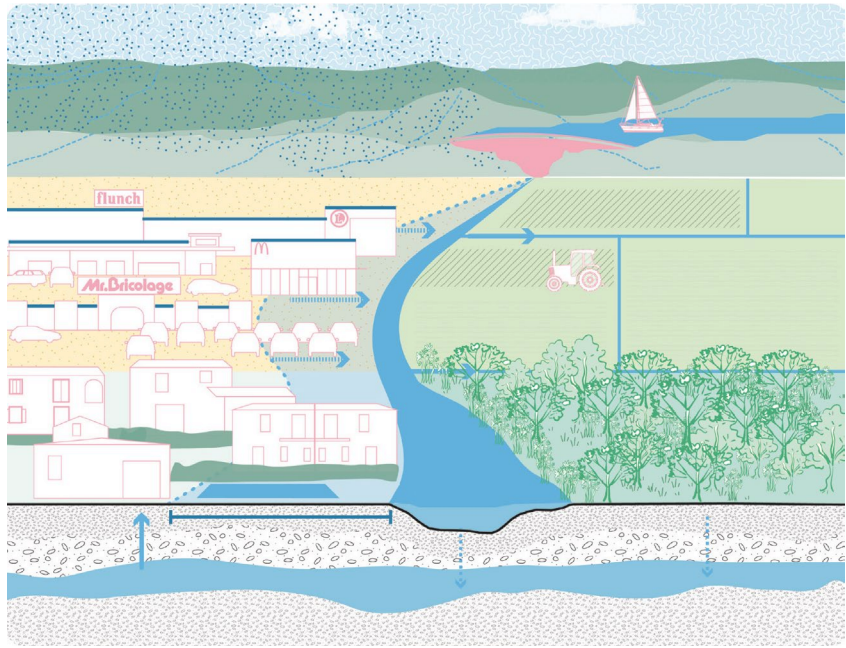


Fig. 10 – Brignoles (FR)
Runner-up
Lit mineur, lien majeur
→ See more p.366

How to Plan Permanence in a Context of Programmed Obsolescence

In Amersfoort-Stadhuisplein (NL), winning project *Cultural Archipelago* (fig. 8) approaches urbanity through a logic distinct from the process-driven transformation of *Re:Isselt – Growing by Reuse*. While in that project time acts as an accumulative element, here it operates as a strategy to confront urban obsolescence, aimed at sustaining the relevance of existing cultural buildings.

The project hacks the programmed obsolescence of the *Brickwall* (former town hall) and the Theatre through adaptive reuse and selective deconstruction, reversing the narrative of replacement into one of active continuity. Urban relationships are organised through a distributed constellation of cultural nodes, where centrality is not formal but temporal and programmatic, allowing buildings to remain relevant through successive recalibrations. The project also reclaims the memory of the city’s green belt, re-planning this green infrastructure as a continuous ecological support.

How to Prepare the Ground for a Connected Future

In Navalmoral de la Mata (ES), runner-up project *Suturing water, memory and biodiversity together* (fig. 9) constructs urban relationships by preparing the ground ecologically, spatially and socially, for long-term continuity rather than through immediate spatial resolution. It begins by re-reading the territory through the conflict between natural flows and infrastructural absolutism. The railway line conceived as a perfectly horizontal and continuous element interrupts watercourses descending from the surrounding landscape and imposes a rigid boundary between the historic urban centre and areas of future growth linked to new industrial activity.

Earthworks and water-related interventions constitute the initial actions, addressing urgent needs such as mobility across the railway line, flood management and safe crossings, without overriding deeper territorial continuities. These first steps operate as enabling conditions, including the creation of a linear

park along the railway and routes aligned with seasonal watercourses. On this basis, slower cycles of ecological regeneration, everyday use and intergenerational appropriation are allowed to unfold. Urban continuity is not imposed, but gradually assembled, as short-term interventions prepare the ground for durable relationships to emerge over time.

How to Act Precisely so Time Amplifies the Impact

In Brignoles (FR), runner-up project *Lit mineur, lien majeur* (fig. 10) addresses water first as a decision-making criterion, guiding where, how, and how much to intervene. Rather than acting through large-scale transformations, it prioritises the reintegration of living systems through selective reopening of minor watercourses, the punctual de-sealing of strategic soils, and the insertion of small, visible hydraulic devices. These actions establish a framework of minimal spatial adjustments, aiming to generate territorially disproportionate long-term effects.

From this logic, urban relationships are not directly designed but emerge through slow territorial transformation. Coming from the first interventions, the former railway strip is then transformed into a lagoon-based public space, while the Delpon stadium is reprogrammed as a productive landscape. These actions generate a redefinition of transitional spaces, contributing to an enhanced territorial legibility that will progressively intensify over time.

How to Build Urban Relationships through Everyday Stewardship

In Nailloux (FR), winning project *Re-garde l'eau* (fig. 11) understands water as a common good and as a resource that ‘struggles to exist in this dry territory with its omnipresent slopes’, in the words of the project’s authors. Water cannot be addressed through form alone and urban relationships here take shape through a temporal regime based on routines, observation and adaptation.

Transformation unfolds through everyday actions: managing runoff, experimenting with desilting methods, reworking embankments, inhabiting spaces of freshness, and treating and reusing grey water. The project operates as a living laboratory, shifting the focus from form to ongoing responsibility, and allowing urban life to develop gradually through lived experience. This approach produces a form of urbanity rooted in duration and care, demonstrating how long-term responsibility can become a powerful driver for meaningful and resilient urban relationships.

How to Reshape Urban Relationships through Latent Ecological Processes

In Grand Nancy (FR), runner-up project *Retour à la source* (fig. 12) reconfigures urban relationships by amplifying the spontaneity of ecological processes as hydrological cycles that extend beyond the scale of the intervention. Rejecting singular solutions, it embraces emergent diversity and the coexistence of multiple micro-narratives and sets the conditions for ecological self-restoration.

Water, the original catalyst of the site’s industrial development, regains its margin of freedom, the hard boundaries once built to control it are broken and the underground channels are daylighted. In parallel, ecosystems are repaired through depaving, the reduction of road surfaces, and the restoration of ecological corridors for fauna and flora, reinforcing transversal ecological continuity across the site. Urbanity emerges through duration and adaptation, as time operates at a territorial scale rather than as a finite project horizon.

Taken together, these projects show that creating new urban relationships is not a matter of form, scale or theme, but of how systems are brought into relation across space and time. Some proposals operate through mediation, constructing interfaces where urban life can attach itself, between building and city, ground and movement, production and dwelling. Others work through duration, allowing relationships to emerge through reuse, sequencing, care and long-term ecological processes. Rather than resolving complexity, these projects make it operable, transforming fragmentation into a condition that can be inhabited, negotiated and sustained over time.

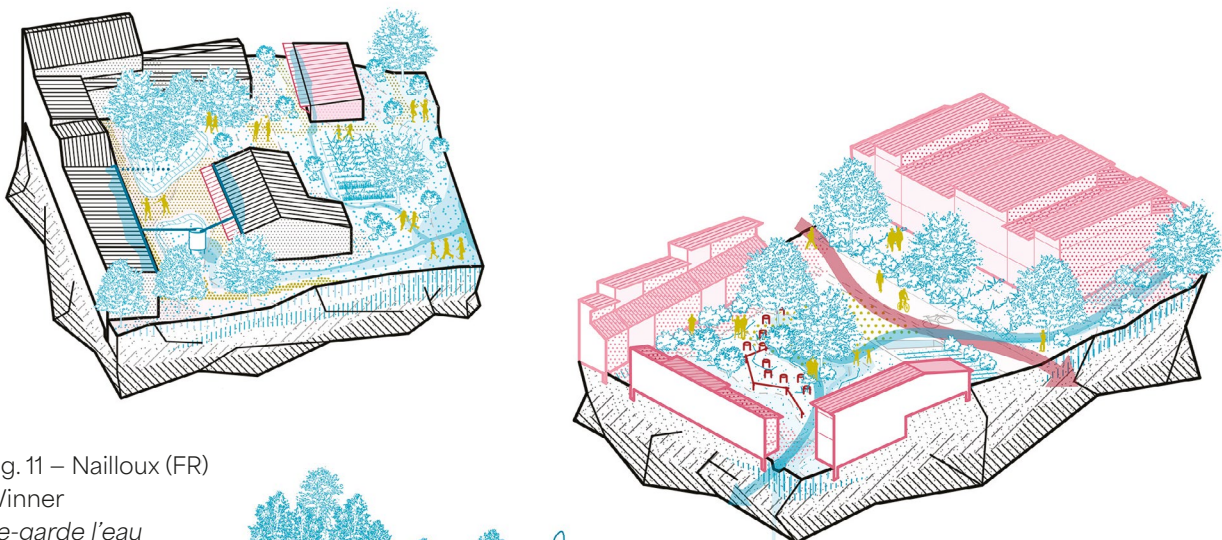


Fig. 11 – Nailloux (FR)
Winner
Re-garde l'eau
→ See more p.390

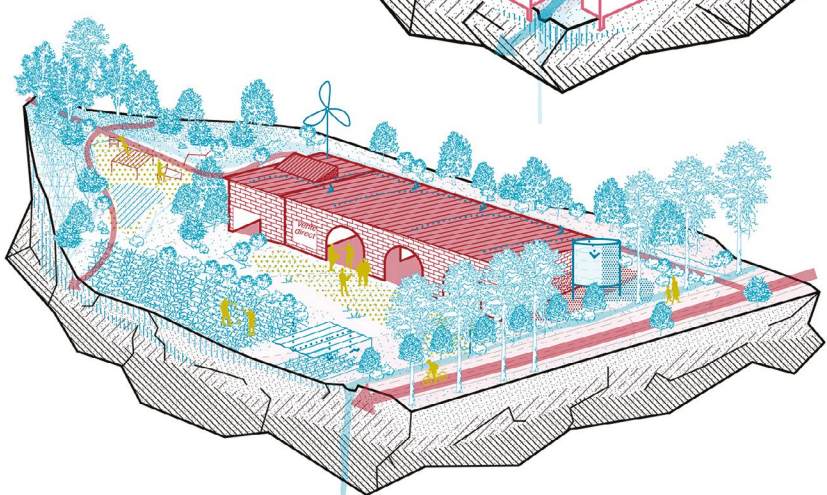


Fig. 12 – Grand Nancy (FR)
Runner-up
Retour à la source
→ See more p.370

