# URBAN ARCHITECTURE BLACKHILL CITY

They tell how it was, and how time, came along, and how it happened, again and again. They tell the slant life takes when it turns and slashes your face as a friend. Any wound is real. In church, a woman lets the sun find, her cheek, and MINING sson: there are years in that book; there are a when they sing. Rows of children

Femke Vink Alice Chau Thijs Reitsma Daan Kok Teun van Dillen Zuzanna Murzyn



promise, places where the scars will be.



On the cover Scars by William Stafford

Fig. 1 Facade details (own photograph, 2022)

INITIAL RESEARCH	Introduction Site observations Stories The mining history	2 4 8 10
UNIDENTIFIABLE POTENTIALLY INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX (UPIC)	Concept Formation Current distribution Examples	12 14 18 20
MATERIALITY	Urban mining Potentials Large scale mining Material flow	22 26 30 38
EXHIBITION OBJECT	Explanation	40
CONCLUSION	Reflection	42
IMAGE CREDITS & BIBLIOGRAPHY		43























# **INTRODUCTION**



To perceive the landscape is to carry out an act of remembrance, and remembering is not so much a matter of calling up an internal image, as of engaging perceptually with an environment that is itself pregnant with the past.

(Ingold, 1993)

Mining & Making; those two intertwined and consecutive actions became the subject matter of our group research. Positioning it in the context of the post-industrial city of Liège has revealed to us the multiplicity of readings of those themes.

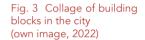
At first, both topics seemed conspicuous due to the industrial history of the city. The consequences of the mining activities and steel-making industries were visible everywhere. In the landscape that has been exploited and altered to meet human needs; In the architecture of the neighbourhoods, built to house the workers of those factories.





# SITE OBSERVATIONS

URBAN CONTRAST The striking differences in the fabric of the city made the city feel very fragmented. From a 'medieval-looking' Prussian walls we swiftly move to the 19th-century tenement houses standing right next to much taller, concrete modernistic blocks of flats.





CONTRASTS

THE LANDMARK Looking down on Droixhe and Bressoux is the Atlas building. Visible almost from every corner of the neighbourhood. As the last pillar of the modernistic neighbourhood it became a type of unexpected landmark that is towering over the city.





Fig. 5 Collage of vacant and industrial building, Liège (own image, 2022)



INDUSTRIAL SPACES The last markers of the industrial activity in and around the city of Liège. Even though the factories stopped working over 50 years ago, the giants, abandoned buildings remained where they were. Closed off and not accessible, slowly decaying behind the barbed wire.

Fig. 6 Collage of closed facade, Droixhe (own image, 2022)

**IMPENETRABLE FACADE** thev were probably the most puzzling element. of what has observed. A clear lack of visible identity of the inhabitants was shown through empty, bare streets and through ever-existing shutters on every door and every window. Whatever life happening was there, it was happening behind the curtains, remained to be unseen by the passer-by.



# **STORIES**



Trying to discover what was happening 'behind the façades' people from the community that lived or commuted to work in the neighbourhood were asked about their experiences, opinions and stories, to understand the inner workings of the life in Bressoux.



Conversation with people working and living in Droixhe illustrated in scene drawing (own illustration, 2022)

Fig. 6





The discoveries caused us to reconsider our approach to reading the site. We experienced how impermeable







the garage doors and closed shutters were, therefore hiding the making industries and entreprises behind them. When asked, people disagreed with the concept of Liege being a post-industrial city. This aspect was only visible in the surrounding architecture, the passive spectator to the









dynamic demographic changes in the neighbourhood. The industrial Liège was long gone, as new generations came to live in Droixhe and Bressoux, making it their own.





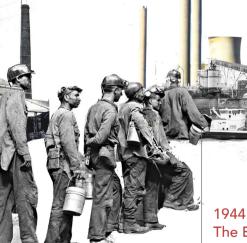
# THE MINING HISTORY

# 1923 Arrival of the Flemish Work Force

With the Flemish work force, Liege mines had to rely on foreigners from further abroad to cover the shortages in local mining companies, mainly Poles (33%) and Italians (31%).

# 1946 Mass Migration of Italian Workers

Fédéchar had reached an agreement with the Italian authorities of a mass migration of Italian workers, in exchange for the delivery of Belgian coal, necessary for the recovery of the Italian economy after WWII.



The Employment of German Prisoners

Because of the growing international pressure, German prisoners of war had to be discharged in 1947, which lead to a new substitude labour force mainly found abroad.

# 1952 Fluctuations on the Number of Foreigners

The fluctuations from 1952 to 1958 correlated with the yearly coal stocks of the mines. In the fifties as increase in the coal stocks seerned to be accompanied by a decline in the recritment of foreign workers.

# 1956 Mining Disaster in Marcinelle

After the mining disaster of Bois-du-Cazier in Marcinelle (close to Charleroi) in 1956, the Italian government put the official migration towards the Belgian mines to stop.

Timeline of the mining history in relation to the foreign work forces. Own illustration.

# 1969 Recruitment Agreement with Tunisa & Algeria

In 1969 a recruitment agreement was reached with Tunisia; a year later a similar deal with Algeria was made. These countries delivered the last batch for the foreign legion, which kept the mining industry in Liege alive until 1980.



Turks and Moroccans were now systematically recruited. The Turks even took up the second place after the Italians.

## CONCEPT OF THE U.P.I.C.

While looking into the building blocks of Bressoux, we stumbled upon a variety of structures nestled into the urban blocks. Due to their frequent use of garage doors and atypical morphology, we asked ourselves: could these buildings be a form of (making) industry, integrated into the building block, like the structure on the historical photo of Liège (fig. 8)? Extensive research on maps lead us to believe there were a lot of these buildings, but on our site visits we found that most of them are tucked away behind unsuspecting facades or closed garage doors. Sadly, we couldn't enter most of the buildings as they were closed and we were sent away multiple times, hence the Possibly acronym: Unidentifiable Industrial Complexes (U.P.I.C.).

Fig. 8 AJAX-factory embedded in the building block, photo (author & year unknown)

(from the left)

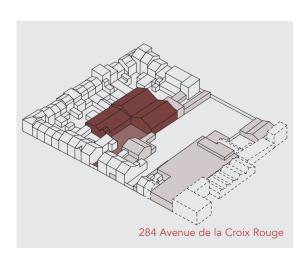
Fig. 9 Implantation diagram (own image, 2022)

Fig. 10 Implantation diagram (own image, 2022)

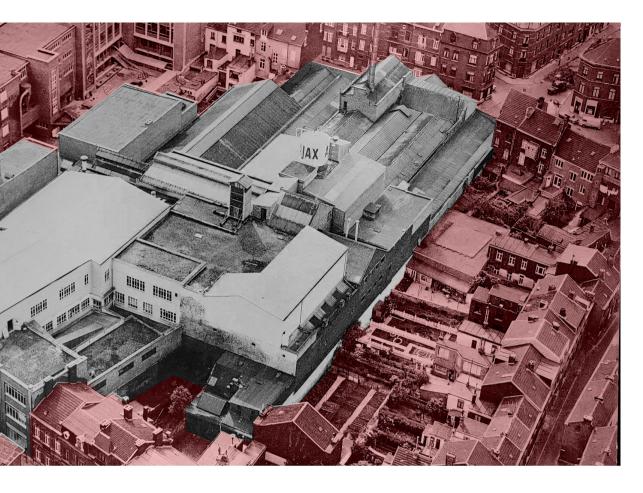
Fig. 11 Implantation diagram (own image, 2022)

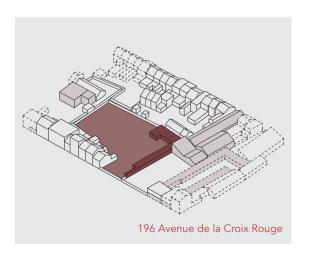
Fig. 12 Implantation diagram (own image, 2022)

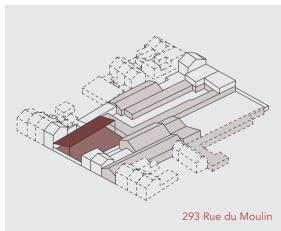












## FORMATION OF THE URBAN BLOCKS

After our discovery of the UPIC in the urban blocks, we were curious when these structures appeared here. Were these structures already intertwined in the building blocks since the beginning? Or did they form gradually? To research the development of the urban blocks, we approached different archives. Especially Département de l'Urbanisme of Liège provided us with many maps of Bressoux and Droixhe. When we visited them, they also taught us a few important things about urban planning in Liège that we didn't realise before.

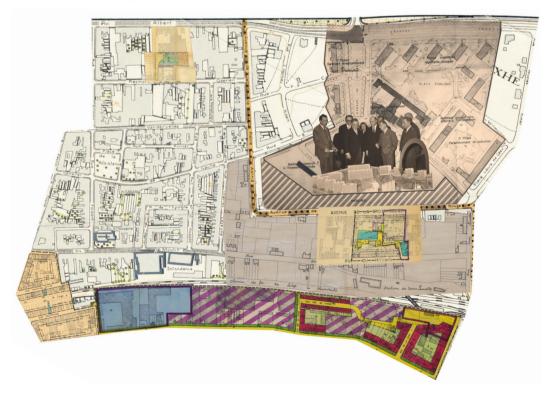
Bressoux was first an independant municipality, and in 1977 they became part of Liège. Therefore, according to the archivists, a number of maps might have gotten lost during the 'transfer', although there is also a possibility that there were simply no more developed plans than these. According to Jean-Pierre Ers, one of the employees at the archive, collective vision is also harder to accomplish in Belgium than in the Netherlands. Especially in Bressoux, developments in the neighbourhood have mostly covered the scale of a few plots.

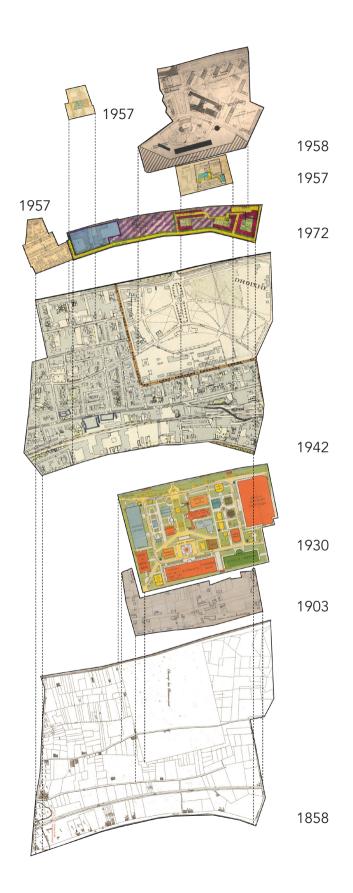
Fig. 13 (right)

Axonometric view of 3D thick mapping (own image,2022)

Fig. 14 (below)

2D-stacked thick map of Bressoux and Droixhe (own image, 2022)



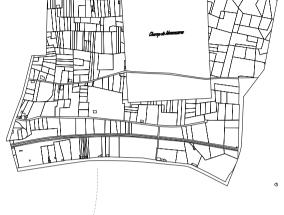


To make the information on the historical maps more readable, we distilled the important ones into line drawings. The following timeline is composed of all the historical maps of of our site or its parts available. The maps show the gradual growth of the Bressoux a neighbourhood and the development of Droixhe, which have had different destinations in the past. From manoeuvre field into an exhibition area, and finally, whatever has left today of the former modernistic towers compex.

#### 1858

Land parcellation plan that presents largely uninhabited area as of yet. The army's Manoevres Field is implemented regardless of existing parcellation.

11. Bressoux parcellation plan - 1858



#### 1903-1930

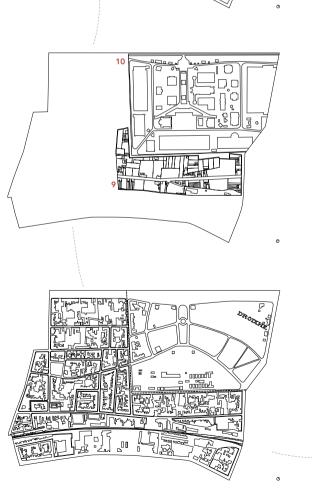
The number of houses in Bressoux increases, including incipient ribbon development along Rue du Moulin. In 1930, the Manouvres Field was replaced by pavilions of L'Exposition Internationale de Liège.

- Site Plan of the International Exhibition in Liège - 1930
- Plan of the urban block between Rue de Moulin and Avenue de Croix Rouge, Droixhe - 1903

#### 1942

The plan shows the differences in the results of planning approaches; Droixhe was a part of the city of Liège while Bressoux was outside the city's borders. The focus lies here on the enclosed residential urban blocks of Bressoux.

 Urban plan of Bressoux and Droixhe -1942

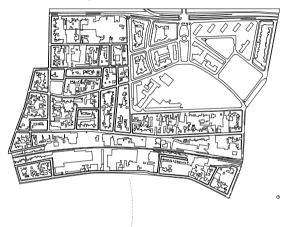




#### 2022

Exposure of the number of spaces and buildings embedded in, primarily residential, urban blocks qualified as potentially functioning as small-scale industries and making enterprises.

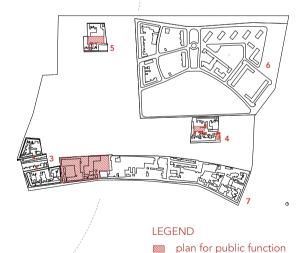
1. Plan of unidentifiable structures within the urban blocks - 2022



#### 2022

The current state of the district shows how the previously emptied spaces for public purposes have been housing unidentifiable structures

2. Map of Bressoux and Droixhe - 2022



## 1957-1972

Fragments of the neighbourhood urban plans that accounted for the creation of public space. Involving the expropriation of private land, plots embedded in the city blocks were created.

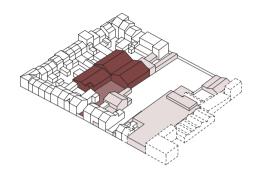
- 3. Plan particulier No. 8 Expropriations 1957
- 4. Plan particulier No. 9 Expropriations 1957
- The urban plan of land expropriation for a public playground: Cour Jacquet - 1957
- Exhibition on urbanism and housing Liège
   '58 1958
- 7. Destination alignment plan and town planning prescriptions 1972

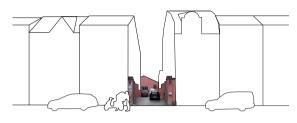
expropriation houses unidentifiable structures

## **DISTRIBUTION**

UPIS and started to understand to identify seemingly



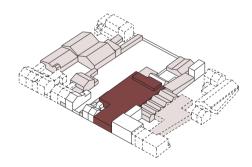


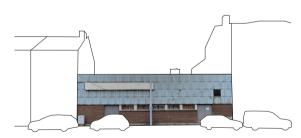


O1. Fig. 17 implantation diagram, own image, (2022)

Fig. 21 street view diagram, own image, (2022)

As can be seen on the diagram on the left, this example of a UPIC is formed by three relatively large linked buildings, directly adjacent to almost twenty backyards. Although it strongly influences these backyards, it is almost invisible from the street, being tucked away between houses.



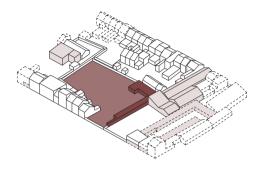


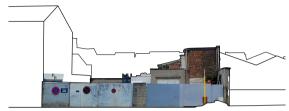
O2. Fig. 18 implantation diagram, own image, (2022)

Fig. 22 street view diagram, own image, (2022)

This closed facade defines the relation between the street and this building, which reaches 55 metres into the building block. It is adjacent to two backyards and a large open field on one side, while the other sides are completely enclosed, forming a cluster with neighbouring UPIC.

Map research, on-site observation and photography were combined to answer the question 'How are the UPIC integrated in the building block?'. These diagrams display four case studies.

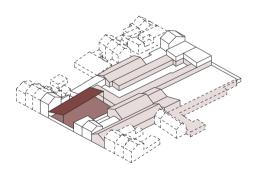




Pig. 19 implantation diagram, own image, (2022)

Fig. 23 street view diagram, own image, (2022)

The closed fences and small buildings don't give a clear view of what happens behind them, but research on maps reveal a large industrial terrain, currently used to park trucks. Its high walls obstruct views from the adjacent alleys, where its large surface occupies large parts of the block.





O4. Fig. 20 implantation diagram, own image, (2022)

Fig. 24 street view diagram, own image, (2022)

This shed-like structure currently houses an enterprise that sells fuels. The open structure and fences provide an insight in the activities, but also increase noise pollution for direct neighbours, although most of them are closed-character UPIC that might experience less disturbance.

## URBAN MINING AND UPCYCLING

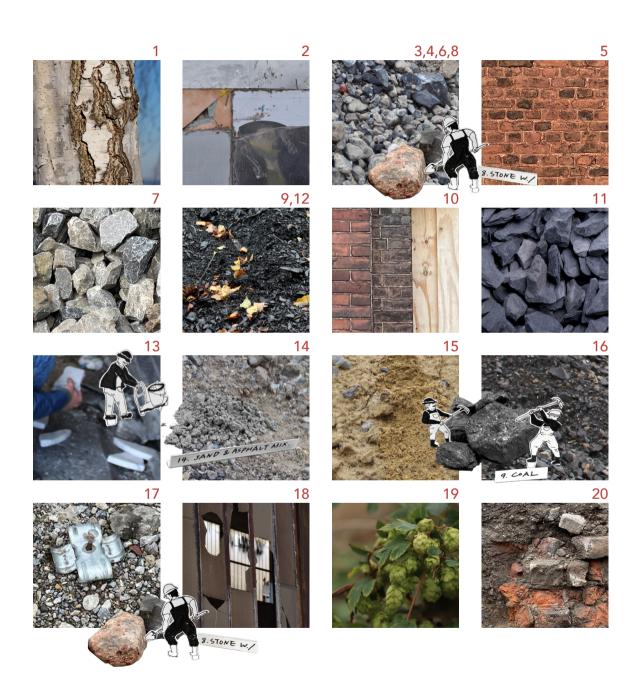
Mining generally refers to harvesting raw material, often coming from the ground. Shifting from the industrial aspect of the mining, we engaged in 'urban mining', meaning to reclaim waste, loose, leftover organic and inorganic materials from building sites, vacant and deconstructed buildings for the purpose of reusing. In the context of Liège, we conducted a twofold research: on one hand we regarded slag heaps and three types of vacant/abandoned buildings in Bressoux as a source, to answer the question "What materials can be mined directly from Bressoux and Droixhe?". These local resources are summarized into a catalogue and material flow chart at the end of this chapter.

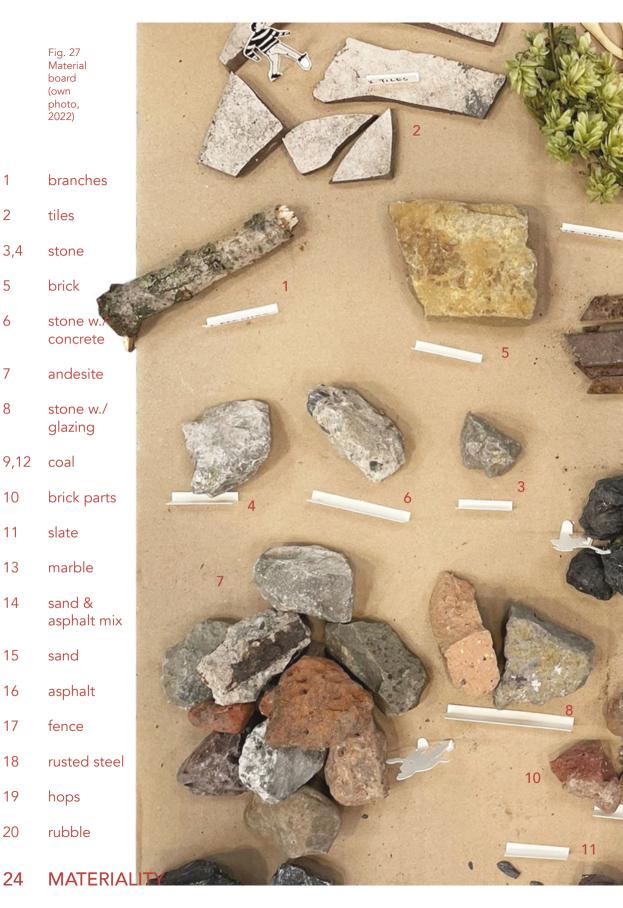
On the other hand, to answer the question "What can be made from raw materials that are mineable in Bressoux and Droixhe?", we gathered and catalogued sand, rubble, stones, parts of tiles and other left behind pieces of raw material that we upcycled into new building materials such as tiles and bricks.

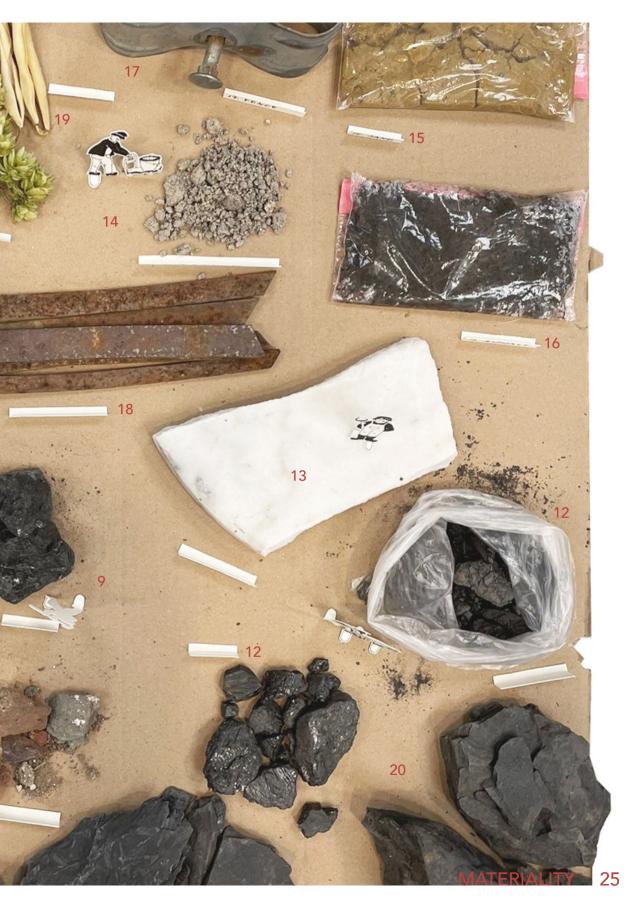


Fig. 25 Map of mined materials (own image, 2022)

> Fig. 26 Material photos (own image, 2022)







## MATERIAL POTENTIALS

The history of the city is embedded within the soil. Re-using the ingredients of what once was, was the aim for creating new materials. Elements like broken bricks and tiles as well as sand and soil were gathered from the site. Materials were collected from significant historical places such as the Terril

de Belle-Vue (a slag heap) and the remains of the demolished flats in Droixhe as well as from the rest of Bressoux. These new potential building materials, composed of soil and rubble, show not just the mining potential of Bressoux, but also how construction waste can be upcycled into pristine material.

# Milky rubble tile

Gypsum poured over broken tiles and rubble collected from demolished flats in Droixhe, Liège





# Tuile de Liège

A combination of 10:3 gypsum and coal dust from Terril de Belle-Vue. The aggregates consist of collected and broken up rubble from demolished flats in Droixhe,





## Brick waste tile

A combination of 2:1 gypsum and brick dust with aggregates collected from demolished flats in Droixhe, Liège





Fig. 37 Tile & rammed earth products front view (own image, 2022)

Fig. 38
Tile & rammed earth
products side view
(own image, 2022)





# Mining waste tile

Gypsum mixed with coal and slate gathered at Terril de Belle-Vue as aggregates





## Coal tile

A combination of 2:1 gypsum and coal dust from Terril de Belle-Vue. The aggregates consist of coal collected from the same slag heap





# Mining waste rammed earth

The soil - 5:1 dirt and clay - was collected at the terril de Belle-Vue and consists of dirt and mining waste. The soil is mixed with concrete (10:1) for strengthening





# Pure mining waste rammed earth

The soil was collected at the terril de Belle-Vue and consists of dirt and mining waste. The soil was filtered and sorted to establish a 7:2:1 dirt, silt and clay ratio to avoid the use of concrete

## RAMMED EARTH RECIPE

- 1. Place the dry soil on a clean work surface
- Add 1:10 concrete to the soil and mix thoroughly (this step can be skipped when the soil has a 7:2:1 dirt-silt-clay ratio)
- 3. Add 1:10 water to the mix, depending on the humidity of the air and soil, adjusting accordingly
- 4. Mix thoroughly until the earth resembles damp sand and holds its shape when squeezed
- 5. Place an exact amount of the earth in the mold
- 6. Ram the earth til a flat surface, sturdy surface is created
- 7. Continue this process till the top of the mold
- 8. Flatten top surface and let dry for at least 12 hours.

















Fig. 39 Rammed earth making process photograph (own image, 2022)

# TERRAZZO TILES RECIPE

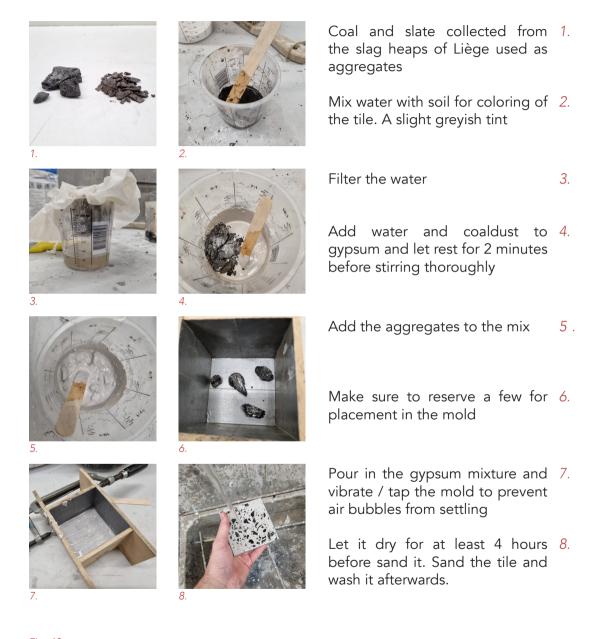
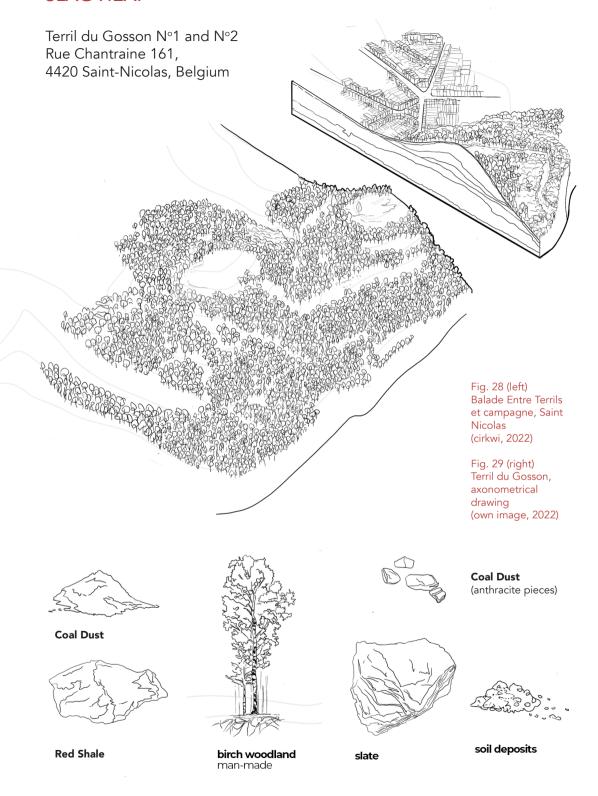


Fig. 40 Terrazzo tiles making process photograh (own image, 2022)



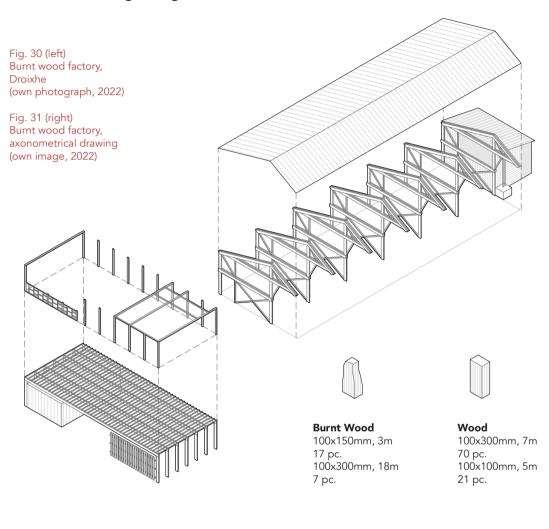
# **SLAG HEAP**





# **BURNT WOOD FACTORY**

Rue Raymond Geenen 70, Droixhe, 4020 Liège, Belgium





Plastic Pipes radius 355mm long 5m 2 pc.



**Corrugated Panels** steel grey - white  $42m^2$ 



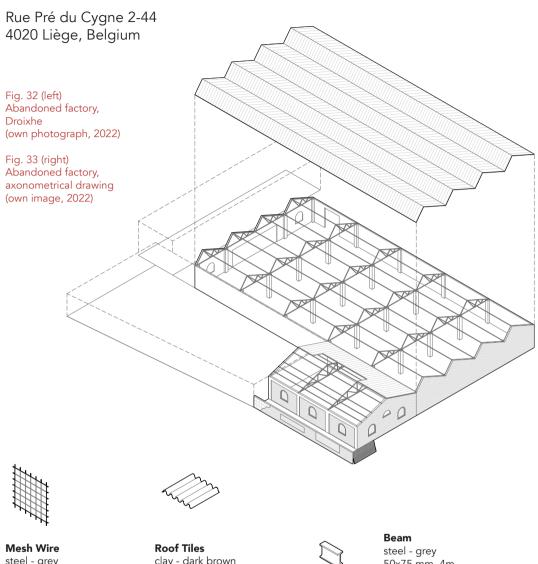
**Roof Tiles** clay 210m<sup>2</sup>



Wall Panels composited wood 119m<sup>2</sup> burnt wood 78m<sup>2</sup>



# ABANDONED FACTORY





clay - dark brown 216m<sup>2</sup>



50x75 mm, 4m 64 pc.



**Wall Panel** composited wood 30m<sup>2</sup>



**Corrugated Panels** steel - grey white 200x300x200mm 48m<sup>2</sup>



**Bricks Wall** brick - red 90x190x90mm 720m<sup>2</sup>



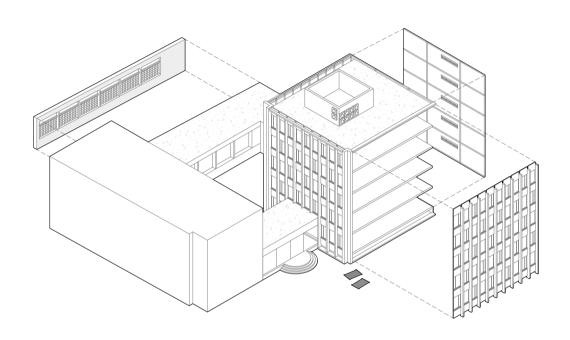
**Bricks Wall** stone - grey, white 200x300x200mm 85 pc.



# **OFFICE BUILDING**

Bressoux rue de la Plaine 4020 Liège, Belgium Fig. 34 (left) Office building, Bressoux (own photograph, 2022)

Fig. 35 (right)
Office building, axonometrical drawing
(own image, 2022)





# Curtain

aluminum - lightgrey 1.4x2.1m 141 pc.



#### **Window Frame**

aluminum - grey 1.4x2.1m 141 pc.



## **Window Glass**

double glazed transparent glass 0.9x2.1m 0,35x2.1m 141 pc.



## **Bricks Wall**

brick - red 90x190x90mm 265.2m²



## Insulation Panel

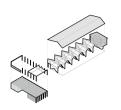
aluminum - grey mineral wool 141 pc.



#### **Steel Frame**

steel - grey 1.4x2.1m 4pc.

# **MATERIAL FLOW**





#### corrugated steel panels 42 m<sup>2</sup>



clay roof tiles 210 m<sup>2</sup>



composite wood wall panels



119 m<sup>2</sup>



plastic pipes radius 355mm, 5m, 2 pc.





**wood** 100x300mm, 7m, 70 pc. 100x100mm, 5m, 21 pc.



100x300mm, 18m, 7 pc. 100x150mm, 3m, 17 pc.



corrugated steel panels 48 m²





clay roof tiles 216 m²

burnt wood



brick wall 720 m<sup>2</sup>



composited wood wall panel



stone wall





steel mesh wire







mineral wool insulation panel 1400x1000mm, 141 pc., 197 m²



brick wall 265 m<sup>2</sup>





**window glass, double glazed** 900x1950, 141 pc., 247,5 m<sup>2</sup> 300x1950, 141 pc., 82,5 m<sup>2</sup>



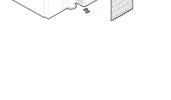
aluminum window frame 1400x2100mm, 141 pc., 84,5 m<sup>2</sup>



aluminum sun shading 1400x2100, 141 pc., 367 m²



**steel fence** 1400x2100, 4 pc.



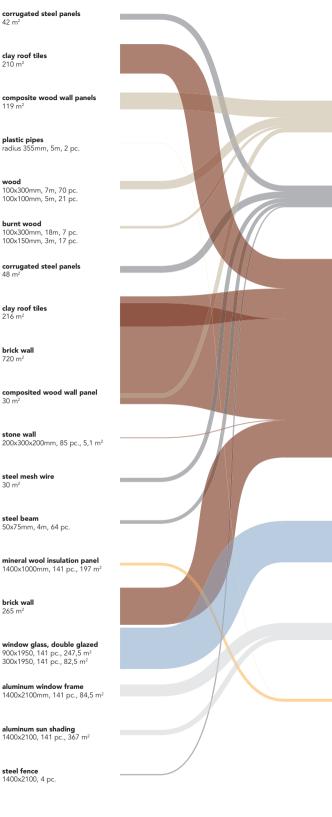
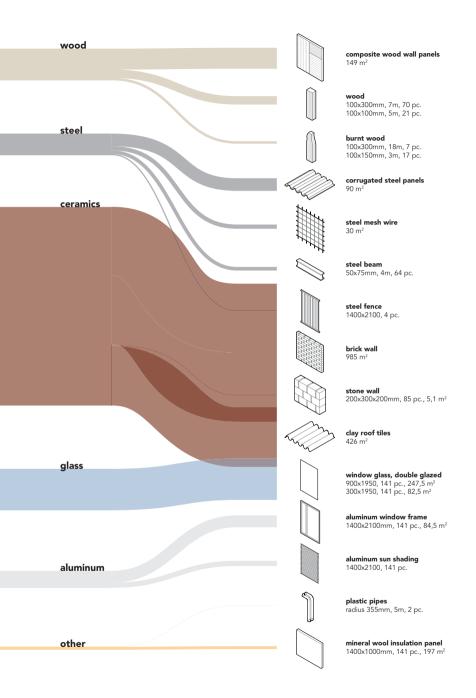


Fig. 36 Material flow diagram (own image, 2022)



## **EXHIBITION OBJECT**

Our first object exhibits a variety of materials which we mined from the site and its surroundings, together with the product of our exploration of their potential as new building material. By displaying both above one after, separated only a clear layer of perspex, a direct relationship between the mining and making - between source and outcome - becomes clear.

Fig. 41 (right) Exhibition object 1 (own image, 2022) Fig. 42 (bottom) Exhibition object 2 (own image, 2022) The second object consists of five extendable perspex layers that each show a different era in the history of the making culture in Bressoux and Droixhe, highlighting the large urban interventions that changed the structure of the building blocks. The sixth layer, fixed on top of this historical analysis, shows a result of those urban interventions: the unidentifiable potentially industrial structures that arose within the urban blocks. The bottom layer of the object, the backdrop of the topdown view through the historical layers, shows the geographical ground layer on which all other layers were built; pure soil, with traces of mining.





## REFLECTION

The initial theme 'Mining & Making' turned out not to be as obvious as we had expected. The 'mining' defined as 'extracting materials from a certain source' was immediately quite visible; the mining industry scarred the landscapes of Liège in the shape of slag heaps and abandoned mines. But the 'making' was far less recognisable. As we conducted primary research and looked closely at maps and photos of Bressoux and Droixhe, we discovered many, possibly, making industries or small businesses in the urban blocks.

To start our research, we intended to find out what was happening on the inside. But even physically trying to enter and conduct interviews, we did not get much wiser about their activity or purpose. The photographs from the first site visit seem to accurately show the impermeability of the city block: closed garage doors and fences hide the activities behind the vertical walls of façades.

While taking the next step, we came to accept that their actual purpose might not become clear to us at this point. Therefore through conducting archival research and applying the method of montage, we tried to connect the present neighbourhood with all its unidentifiable structures to its past, in different historical layers. That timeline, combined with typology research on multiple examples of the complexes, provided insight into how these 'unidentifiable potentially industrial complexes' were partially facilitated by urban interventions.

Parallel to the findings on the making of the neighbourhood, we inventoried and analysed available materials in vacant buildings and sites, investigating their potential as local materials with the possibility to be upcycled, whereas raw materials found in Droixhe and Bressoux were used as ingredients to create prototypes of new materials which tie together the consecutiveness of material-mining in relation to material-making.

Despite the sometimes unsure proceedings of certain topics and seemingly continuous shifting of research methods, the process has led us to a diverse but satisfying end result. A combined effort to investigate and exhibit relationships between mining and making in Liège, in both material and spatial sense has not become an endpoint to a journey but a knowledge hinge to take us further.

# **IMAGE CREDITS & BIBLIOGRAPHY**

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    Archives de la Ville de Liège. (1957a). Plan particulier Cour Jacquet.

    Archives de la Ville de Liège. (1957b). Plan particulier No. 8.

- Nicolas). Cirkwi. (2020, April 29). Retrieved November 2, 2022, from https://www.cirkwi.com/fr/cir cuit/184270-balade-entre-terrils-et-

Mining & Making; those two intertwined and consecutive actions became the subject matter of our group research. Looking at them through the lenses of the present and the future we dived into the topics of material reclamation (urban mining) and upcycling leaning towards a process of Re-Making. Unveiling the different planning authority approaches as well as the existence of the post-industrial activities on our site has also become the highlights of the research. Learning that mining and making are not only consecutive but also circular practices became an overarching theme throughout the coming pages. All of the data, materials and stories which have been 'mined', have also been [re]made into this narrative that tells the urban and industrial story of Droixhe & Bressoux.

