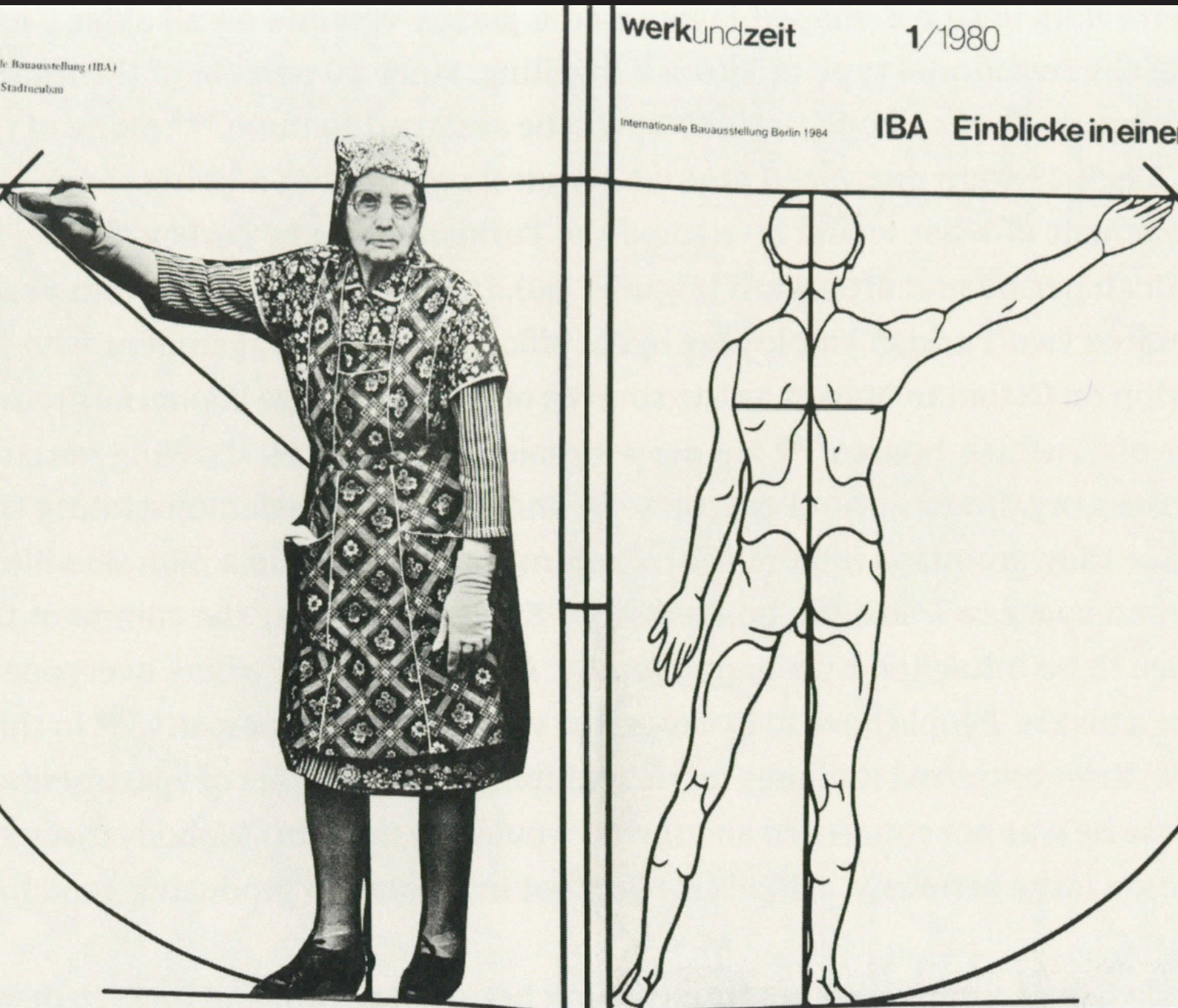


# THE ARRIVAL CITY ARCHITECTURE FOR THE DISPLACED

*One building representing the resettlement procedure in the  
arrival city of Berlin*



## COMPLEX PROJECTS

Reflection Paper

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## Project description

While migration is a megatrend and Germany is known as top host country, the process of getting refuge in Germany is still a long, demanding and overcomplicated process. By approaching the permanent but fluctuating influx of displaced people as a temporary problem, migration doesn't have a recognizable face in Berlin's cityscape, but is rather scattered and tucked away in several empty buildings throughout the city. Therefore, the multiple institutions in the process are collaborating inefficiently and the displaced have to move through the city to buildings that don't answer their specific needs.

The project *Architecture for the displaced: One building representing the resettlement procedure in the arrival city of Berlin* is about proposing a better building solution for both the institutions as the displaced. This starts by bringing the institutions and the court together on one site, in one building. The research question is: "How can a building treat displaced people in a societal inclusive way while maintaining institutional efficiency?"

The design concept is to make one building that brings all departments together. These departments are brought together with an inside street, where each department has its own address. The departments are separated by courtyards, which users of the building can use to take a break from the process inside. On the second floor of the building, the departments are connected with a circulation area and air bridges to encourage cooperation between the departments. The facade of the building involves an open plinth with a slat facade above. These slats give a more private character, through which the view can still be enjoyed.

## Aspect 1: the relationship between research and design

Research and design are interconnected with each other. Research provides the necessary understanding of the problem, context, and user needs. It helps identify challenges, opportunities, and relevant information. Design, on the other hand, translates this research into practical and creative solutions. The iterative nature of this collaborative process ensures ongoing refinement, optimization, and validation of designs based on continuous research findings. The Complex Projects studio is a research-led design studio with the aim to develop a methodological and structured approach to the design process. The assignment is to design a large, complex building, which is functionally specific and therefore 'one of' in the city of Berlin. Confronted with the complex and demanding design assignment, the Complex Projects graduation studio learns how to process, organize and use a large amount of data. This graduation project is approaching Berlin as the Arrival City, in which the Migration Court is the proposed 'one of' building.

The research phase in the CP studio is constructed to draw up a design brief for program, site and client. To formulate and determine this design brief, extensive research was needed in order to understand the complexity of the resettlement processes. The design is then developed based on the collected information of the design brief.

The structure of the studio to work with the design brief helps to narrow down the research to research that is directly relevant for the design. The assignment of the studio is to design a large, complex building, but the topic of migration is also

complex itself. With my personal fascination for the project to design architecture for the displaced, an emphasis has been made on researching the topic of migration. The structure of the studio therefore helped me to research topics that are relevant for the design, instead of losing myself in the complexity of the topic of migration.

In every step of the process, research has been done to explore different options for the design. Comparing these options then lead to a design decision and a next step of the process. A leading factor in these decisions is the concept of the thesis. The research question, *How can a building treat displaced people in a societal inclusive way while maintaining institutional efficiency?*, and the ambitions that came forward from it, has therefore always been leading in the design decisions.

## **Aspect 2: the relationship between your graduation topic and studio topic**

The Complex Projects Graduation studio is about Bodies & Building. The building is seen as a result of bodies' requirements, related to measures, movements, comfort, experience, safety and security. This graduation project is titled *Architecture for the displaced*. The body has been leading from the start. The design is an user-centric approach of really thinking about the user needs, how they move and use a building. The users are therefore not only the displaced people, but also the employees and public. The Migration Court is a result of how the displaced people, employees of the institutions and public visitors move through the building.

The Complex Projects Graduation studio is also about designing a complex building

as a 'one of' in the city of Berlin. In this project, the city of Berlin is approached as The Arrival City, in which the Migration Court is the result of the 'one of' approach.

## **Aspect 3: research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio**

Various research methods were used to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the resettlement procedure and a building that brings all steps together. In the research phase, these methods included literature studies, client research, site analysis, precedents research and program analysis. As the project is proposing a new type of building, multiple methods were needed to gain an overall understanding of the requirements for the program. Precedent typologies are courthouses (for the courtrooms and flows separation), hospitals (the healing environments), and airports (types of waiting spaces). Two site visits to Berlin, two visits to asylum arrival centers (Ter Apel in the Netherlands and the Reinickendorf arrival center in Berlin) and several meetings with the COA, LAF (resettlement institutions) and Snøhetta (architecture firm currently designing an asylum court), helped forming this understanding.

In the design phase, the design brief including the overall aim and ambitions for the building, helped informing the design and had influence on the decisions. In this phase, it came forward that designing for inclusivity is easier on paper than to actually implement in

the design. A lot of testing, (re-)organising, priority ranking, and going through different scales was needed to bring all the ambitions together. This was the most difficult, but also fun and educating part of the process.

#### **Aspect 4: relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific relevance**

Migration is a megatrend. Not only have we reached the 100 million mark of forcibly displaced people worldwide mid-2022, but there are also rising causes for migration. One of these causes is climate migration, as due to climate change the world will go from 1% now to 19% unlivable hot zones in 2070. During this graduation project, multiple events took place which showed the relevance of the topic of migration in society, such as commotions around EU migration deals, the collapse of the Dutch government over migration policy or the outburst of the War in Gaza.

Migration is part of societal debate. One side of the spectrum wants to help as many people as possible, while the other side sees newcomers as a threat and want to keep them outside the country. During this graduation year it came to my attention that a lot of these opinions are formed by a lack of knowledge about the situation and a created distance between the individual and the migration buildings. As long as we segregate this and migration is not in our cityscape, how can one fully accept migration as part of today's internatio-

nal society? Inclusivity is being open to learn about the other, but then we also should bring this opportunity into the cityscape to be actually able to do so.

In the architecture world, architecture for inclusion and thinking beyond the universal standard man is becoming more and more a topic. Therefore, in the architecture field there are some examples of designing for the displaced, but this goes solely for housing displaced. But thinking beyond that, to design better architecture for the displaced in a building that helps them through a resettlement process, has not been seen before. The research focuses on social research design and aims to fill gaps in theory by investigating the role of social inclusivity in the design of a building for displaced people. The design focuses on making the process as welcoming and comfortable as possible, while maintaining the efficiency for the institutions.

#### **Aspect 5: ethical issues and dilemmas you may have encountered during graduation**

The topic of migration is part of societal and political debate. In the early research stage, it was important to understand the difference between the role as an architect and a personal political stance on the topic of migration. Given the personal fascination with designing architecture for the displaced, it was imperative to maintain a balanced approach in user-centered research, considering not only the needs of the displaced but also those of different user groups.

Another dilemma I encountered is that, in designing for inclusion, fostering collaboration and participation is crucial to hear different and diverse voices. Given that this is my graduation project and I am working on it independently, it is simply not possible to have full understanding of the precise needs to include everyone. Designing for an user group whose precise needs I can research but cannot not fully understand, considering that firsthand experience is essential for comprehensive understanding, is a realization I had to acknowledge as a designer. As feminist navigating in a man-made world, I deeply value the significance of diverse perspectives, but as an architect, encountering users with distinct needs divergent from my personal experiences is a common occurrence. Recognizing this divergence between my understanding and the varied needs of users remains an ongoing learning process. However, the user-centric approach in this project helped in both the research and design phases to make this project as inclusive as possible as within my scope.