

“Nature has introduced great variety into the landscape, but man has displayed a passion for simplifying it. Thus, man undoes the built-in checks and balances by which nature holds the species within bounds.”
Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, Critical Edition, 1962

TOWARDS AN INTERSECTING ECOLOGY

The distancing of the human way of life from the cycles of the biosphere and the elevation of humans over all other life forms have contributed to a civilizing project that now critically confronts us with our ability to survive, likewise with our own nature as a species. Under the guise of progress, the mechanisms of technological development, extractivism, scalability and domination have led to systematic, irreversible imbalances on the planet. Timothy Morton argues that anxiety over the attempt to conceal and minimise our wildness has led to greater anxiety. "Pesticides have caused the bees to die off, leading to agricultural collapse" (*Where Monsters Dwell, Beyond Human*, Bartlebooth, 2018).

According to philosopher and researcher Baptiste Morizot (*Manières d'être vivant*, Actes Sud, 2020), a thing loses its ontological consistency when it ceases to be understood as a being in its own right, that is part of collective life. He sees the ecological crisis as a crisis of sensitivity: we have impoverished our emotional, perceptive, and cognitive sensitivity to the non-human and the cycles that connect us to it. We have not been able to build a committed awareness of the notions of biological variety and diversity, reducing our relationship with ecosystems to control, instrumentalisation, productivity or, ultimately, contemplation.

Although we inhabit a constructed environment, we tend to underestimate, forget, and neglect the complexity of the living species that also inhabit it. For a long time, certain traditional typologies, architectural inaccuracies, or interstices of our ageing constructions have offered a suitable refuge for a multitude of organisms. Old walls, ruins or places with no defined character often harbour rare or reviled flora and fauna with their own spontaneous ecological value. Certain vernacular dwellings remind us of our forgotten interdependence with other species, where the warmth of animals helped to heat the domestic spaces of peasant families or the presence of birds in the eaves of roofs kept the pests at bay.

Today, however, the processes of urban construction, transformation, and renovation, driven and guided in most cases by market interests, tend to omit the ecological question in order to avoid the possibility of conflict. Cities have been conceived in such a way as to establish a prudential demarcation between humans and other forms of life, appealing to reasons of decency, health, or comfort. As a result, they have become biodiversity deserts, which put the benefits of possible alliances out of reach and are doomed to post-natural languishing. At this point, architecture should be understood not only as the spatial form of a construction in time, but also as the set of tensions, vectors and potentialities that arise from the relationship, the intersection between human beings and the environment.

As Philippe Simay reminds us, "To inhabit is not to claim a place, but to enter into conflict, to learn to co-inhabit and share resources with the rest of the biosphere." He, in turn, establishes three principles for co-habitation: living outside, with no clear separation between the inside and the

outside; making space for the living, by invitation; and learning to do things together, considering the needs of other beings in an interspecific relationship, but without profit being an end in itself. Worth noting along these lines is the approach of Anna L. Tsing, which brings us closer to ecologies based on disturbance, where sometimes, "numerous species live together without harmony or conquest". (Anne L. Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World, Captain Swing*, 2021). We outline an invitation to the ecological in its intersection with the existing, which does not lend itself to the production of measurable and immediate results, but which can, in a speculative way help to establish links of mutual understanding, including our position at the heart of the living.

In philosophy there are no trees: there are only ideas [...]
There is a whole world there outside;
And a dream of what one could see if the window were opened,
but it is never what you see when you open the window.

Poemas inconjuntos by Alberto Caeiro, Fernando Pessoa, Abada editores, 2011

STORIES OF AN OPEN WINDOW

On the basis of these observations, two parallel projects are proposed for preliminary research on how to relate inhabiting and the environment through possible transformations of constructive and architectural paradigms. From an inclusive and empathetic perspective, a collaboration of knowledge is proposed in the interstitial space between structures. This collaboration, which operates through difference, seeks to trace possible alliances with the living creatures with whom we share the environment. As an experimental approach, the aim is to launch strategic actions over time, to initiate processes without clear final objectives, and to open the door to questions in dialogue mode.

In strategic places on the envelopes of two chosen buildings, AZ Alhóndiga in Bilbao (Festival Prototipoak 2021) and La Rasude in Lausanne, Switzerland (Résidence Bivouac 2021), two buffer devices are installed between the "outside" and the "inside". Their boundary, now partially open, provides greater porosity and generosity. Both consist of a metal structure that interacts with a specific element of the envelope: a window on the façade of the centre's centenary building (horizontal position) and a skylight over a lorry unloading dock (vertical position), respectively. The points of contact that appear allow for new meeting areas, places of intertwined associations, new living spaces between the interior and the exterior and bridges to all living things. The hard, compact architectural elements are physically and conceptually dismantled, opening up an intersecting space for life.

A series of actions guided by the knowledge of experts in the fields of biology, human sciences or art are configured and installed on the devices in order to create a micro ecosystem. In the summer months, various local plant species are invited to coexist, creating a relationship of interdependence. The species, whose growth is aided by a drip irrigation system that is checked regularly to prevent water imbalances, are chosen according to their seasonality, compatibility, resistance, nectariferous interest, fruits, or flowers. In short, nests are built for the common swift (*Apus apus*), a migratory species traditionally found in European cities that is endangered due to the disappearance of nesting sites. Finally, an oyster mushroom (*Pleurotus ostreatus*) is cultivated from inoculated mycelium and leftover organic matter. The desire to include three kingdoms of biology goes hand in hand with opening up the actions and their experimental potential to a wider domain.

During the testing of the devices, the components are developed, generating a series of unforeseen events that require constant monitoring and calibration of the actions. The spontaneous appearance of insects inside the buildings, irrigation leaks, overflowing plants or interference with uses are all factors that need to be dealt with and that force humans to take a position as agents of the living whole. The processes of monitoring, caring for, studying, and supporting the species are combined with programmed educational and performative actions that delve into the notion of ecological immersion. The European firebug (*Pyrrhocoris apterus*), an insect that has an indeterminate relationship with humans from an ecological perspective, is symbolically

invited to come through an intergenerational event of dance and poetry that emphasises the unnecessary value of efficiency in terms of productivity or profit.

This coexistence in time teaches us values that lead us to reflect on our condition as sensitive, dependent, vulnerable agents in relation to others. On the one hand, it brings us closer to the notion of unpredictability as a driving force in inter-species relations. Living beings interact with one another according to their own rhythms, alliances, or climatic conditions, among other things, and our role as a part of the whole should be that of accompaniment based on observation. On the other hand, we deduce that the times are inconsistent with the ones we are dealing with in contemporary society, which we interpret as a call to decelerate as a pre-requisite for connecting with a clear commitment to the living.

From the conception of architecture, and with the previously discussed definition in mind, we discover the urgency of including subject matter experts in fields related to biology (ornithology, botany, mycology, entomology, etc.) as active members in the design and construction. By taking such an approach, we make a commitment to a construction method that looks at the production of materials, systems, skins, or structures in a way that allows for real and committed coexistence. Faced with the climatic challenges of our time, it is essential to propose experimental paths that open up to new alliances with the living creatures with whom we share the environment and find ways to re-empower our cities and move towards a new ecology that intersects with the existing one.

Broadwindow

Diego Sologuren+Sébastien Tripod
Azkuna Zentroa - Alhóndiga Bilbao
Prototipoak. International Biennial of New Artistic Forms
Bilbao 2021

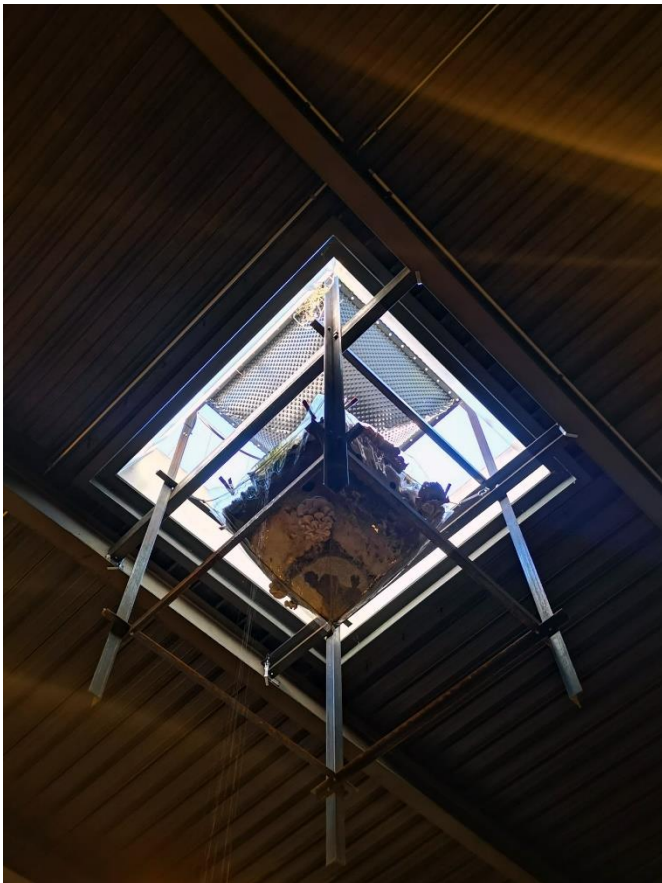


Photograph: Azkuna Zentroa - Alhóndiga Bilbao

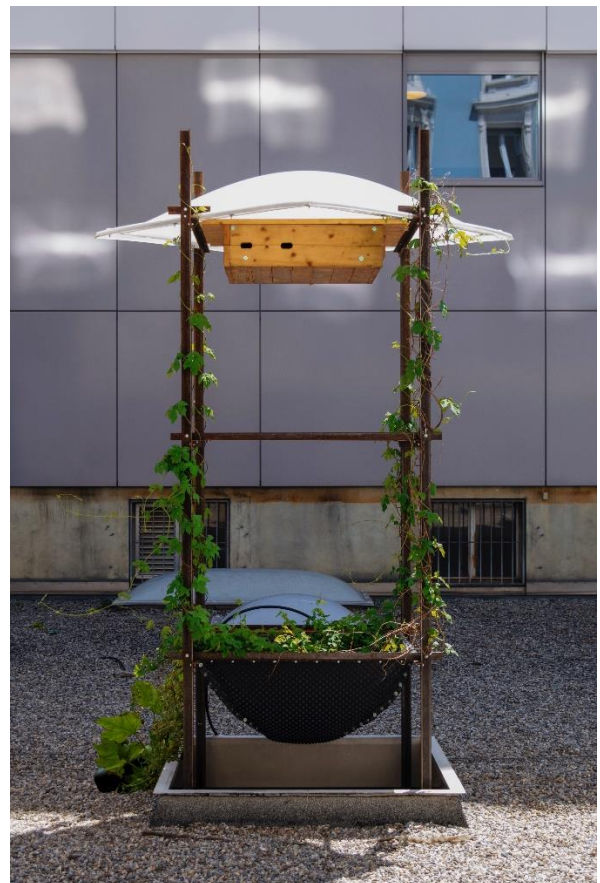


Photograph: Azkuna Zentroa - Alhóndiga Bilbao

Stratologique
Diego Sologuren+Sébastien Tripod
La Rasude
Bivouac Residence
Lausanne 2021



Photograph: Diego Sologuren



Photograph: Carlos Mangado

DIEGO SOLOGUREN:



Diego Sologuren, an architect by training, explores the limits between inhabiting and performing through the intervention of structures. Starting from fragmentation and with a deliberately poetic approach, in dialogue with other disciplines, his work seeks to critically question the norm and to raise questions around territory, action, memory and ecology.

Over the course of his international career he has worked with some highly renowned firms. In 2011, after completing his degree, he launched his professional career in Marseille. From 2014 to 2016 he worked for the Berlin-based Burkinabe architect, Francis Kéré, who won a Pritzker Prize 2022. This experience, somewhere between African and European, introduced him to a particular way of understanding architecture and design: honesty, economy of means and austerity. In 2017, he took part in the exhibition of the first Mugak Architecture Biennial in the Basque Country as one of the finalists for the Ganchegui prize. In 2020, he was recognised by the Future Architecture Platform for his project titled *Manifesto for Unexpected Architectures* and had the opportunity to create the exhibition for the Lisbon Architecture Triennial, among others. He received a Special Mention in the European Architecture and Urban Planning Competition in 2021 for an urban development proposal for the municipality of Haugesund in Norway. He combines his work as an architect with teaching and research at universities and institutions on a regular basis.