Tracing the actual significance of built heritage through encounters with undisclosed protagonists.

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The notion of heritage can be seen as an important agency towards creation of locality and place making. The way this functions today is challenged in a world that is struggling with transition processes, between the global and the local, immigration and inter-culturality[1]. Defining a one and unique historical 'genius loci' is therefore no longer possible.

The current societal developments paved the way for a shift in heritage paradigms such as the changing vision on heritage from a top-down to a bottom-up 'right to heritage'.[2]

It is now widely accepted that community involvement is fundamental when developing management plans for heritage sites. Interaction and participatory practices are put in place although it is increasingly difficult and complex to delineate what local communities are. They have to be understood as "social creations and experiences that are continuously in motion, rather than fixed entities and descriptions, in flux and constant motion, unstable and uncertain." [3][4]

As a consequence there are numerous undisclosed members of the community next to the well-known active stakeholders. And although they often have nuanced knowledge of the place they seem to remain invisible at the perimeter of the site. They are put outside the framework of the project, as the existing active methods and tools such as interview, organisation of meetings and workshops or the distribution of questionnaires do not reach them.

Furthermore it is often difficult, even for the well-defined stakeholders, to precise the significances of the most trusted things when directly asked for it.

There is a range of well-known and good functioning methods and tools for how to cope with acknowledged historical characteristics of built heritage either of artistic, archaeological, architectural or anthropological nature but a framework of how to detect, to unveil and to map the present fragile societal significances of built heritage is clearly lacking.

In our contribution we will concentrate on a new methodology with a strong narrative power developed through case study and participant observation to create this framework. With a community driven approach the multiple sense of place is triggered and explored by combining existing methods from other disciplines - such as anthropology - with the skills of an architect. The serendipitous encounter with the undisclosed protagonist and the understanding of how heritage is rooted in daily life is enhanced through interactive walking; the journeys are recorded by drawing in little jot-booklets. Meaningful narrative space is mapped and counter mapped in so-called Cartes Parlantes,[5] tackling possible relationships of heritage with its context and bringing to light the actual significance of heritage as part of a lively process.

Through nuanced regeneration strategies a greater inclusion of a more diversified community is ensured to come to socially better and better-accepted projects of restoration and adaptive reuse.

Our practice based research concentrates on these issues in a European context more precisely in the complex urbanising region of Flanders (Belgium).
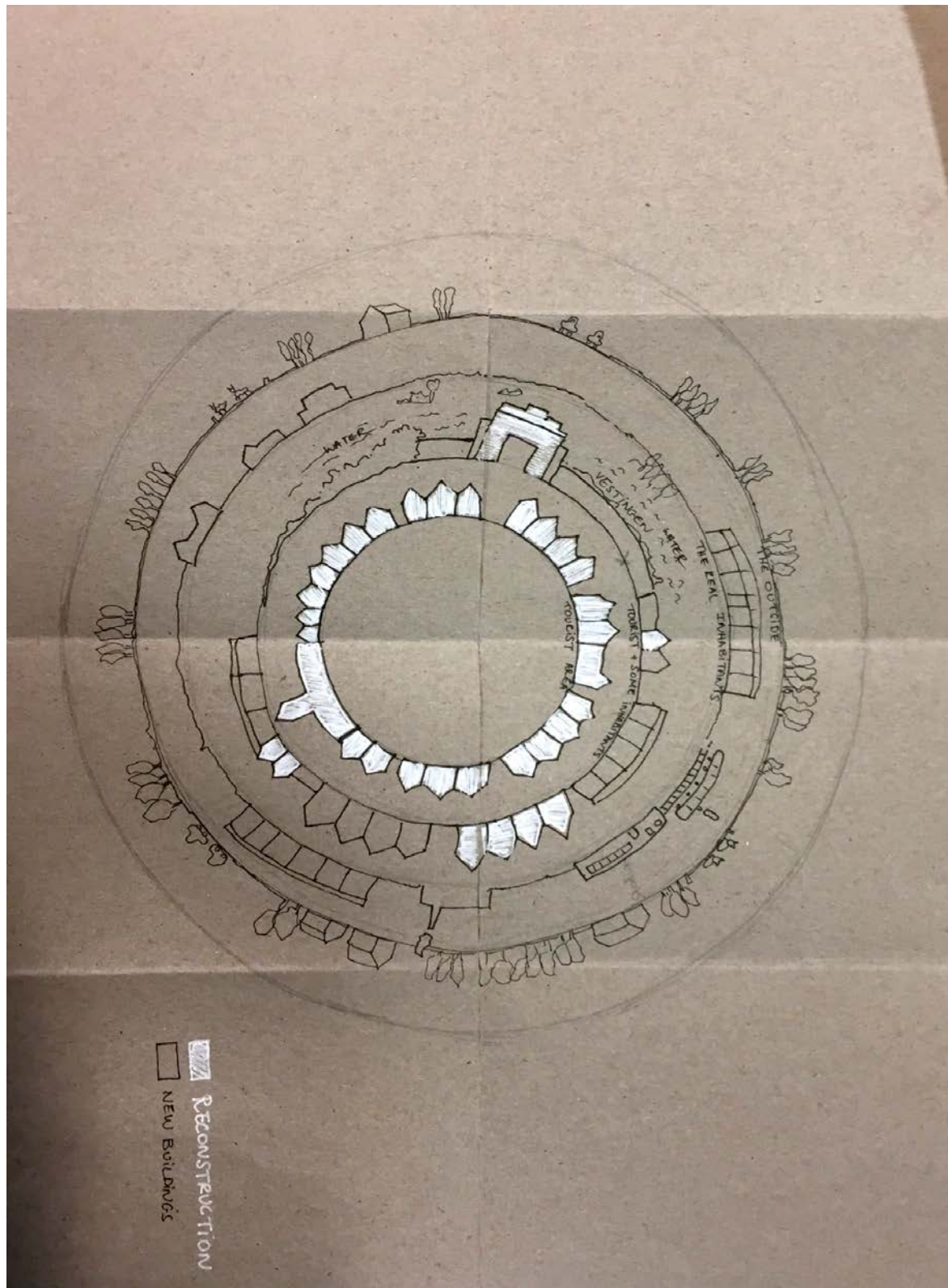
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[1] Grafe, C., 2011, *Dierbaar is duurzaam*, *Zes stellingen rond architectuur, cultuur en ecologie.* 2011, Vlugschrift Vlaams Architectuurinstituut.

[2] Gravari-Barbas, M. , 2014, *New challenges for cultural heritage: Synthesis of the final report,* France, Université Paris, Agence Nationale de la Recherche.

[3] Waterton, E, Smith, L, 2010, *The recognition and misrecognition of community heritage* in International Journal of Heritage Studies and Cohen, A., 1985, *The symbolic construction of community.* London: Routledge. p. 98

[4] Referring to Cohen (1985) "Community exists in the minds of its members, and should not be confused with geo-graphic or socio-graphic assertions of 'fact'. By extension, the distinctiveness of communities and, thus, the reality of their boundaries, similarly lies in the mind, in the meanings, which people attach to them, not in the structural forms."

[5] Term coined by the modern historian François de Dainville referring to the Middle Ages. These maps were judged according not to the adherence to coordinates or scale, but rather to the faithfulness with which they described relationships between people – usually landowners – and their physical environment. In Sack R. D., 1986, *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History*. New York: Cambridge University Press, p. 62

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