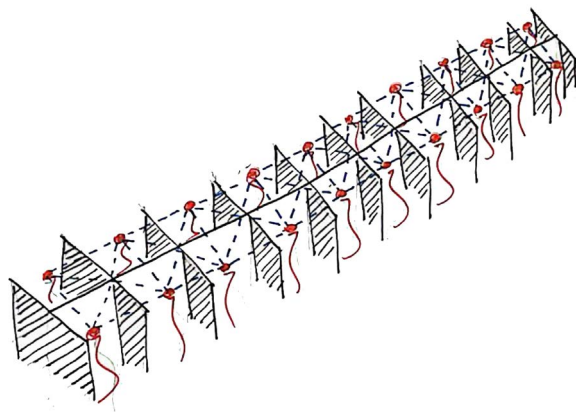


BUMSTR LABEL 2025: THE BORDERS BETWEEN US

How do we view public and private space through the separation that stands between them, the fence, the border? How do these borders affect the way we occupy space? Is it a demarcation of our territory we are looking for? Is it a sense of safety from the havoc of the contemporary life in the polis? Or are we just alienated beings, with a constructed self, based on the 'necessary ignorance' condition, enforced upon us by the Neoliberal pedagogy? Some might view the fence just as the simplicity of the form it suggests. But I think, it's the exact form and existence of the fence that can answer us the question of **what private and public space actually is and whether we are political or apolitical beings**. This is the main focus of this research.

Hanna Arendt writes that, "*Unlike desires, imagination, or metaphysics, politics does not exist in human essence, but only happens outside of human. Human is apolitical. The political arises between humans, and so quite, outside of human*"(1). If we understand human existence, in its apolitical form, as a private endeavor, then it's the confrontation of these existences that turns us into the political being. That can only happen outside of human. If we view the house as an extension of the apolitical self, the private serves no purpose in this yearning of confrontation. It provides hiding. But where the walls end and the confrontation can begin, there appears to be another form of boundary, the fence. **What space of confrontation then remains?** The public sphere of the park or the plaza of today, has turned into a model of human behavior on the basis of the 'citizen-consumer' form of existence, a distraction to feed ignorance, a sensory experience only to be viewed as a consumption of content, as enchanting as the form suggests.

But the transition from the private to the public, from apolitical to political has never been easy. There isn't an Ancient Greece no more and the Agora is dead. Only the oikos left. That's why this research wants to focus on the open space of the backyard and the courtyard and the separator between them, the fence. It wants to question if we can prefigure this private space as a public space. **Commoning starts with a one-on-one interaction. It starts with neighbouring. But we turn blind on that fact when we raise a fence.** So what this research wants to understand is why do we do this? Why do we raise these borders between us? And can we explore that very same separator as the capacitor for Commoning?



What if we start opening up these borders as an effort to create curiosity between us? Curiosity to transform anonymity into the acknowledgement of each other. What if we start viewing architecture as a subtractive practice that would facilitate Commoning through 'designing' the void, the emptiness. It is my belief that we already have built enough walls between us. And it is a true form of participation the one that would empower people to explore the confrontation in sharing space. Through letting go of the power we have of dictating human experience and behaviour by spatial design and give this power back to the people, to decide for themselves. Let us only make suggestions from now on and let people decide in a horizontal manner of what they, themselves, occupy.

So what this research wants to do is explore the borders between us. Use these borders as the initiator of a conversation within our communities to understand why we raise these borders, what purpose they serve for us. Use them as a way to understand ourselves through space appropriation. The methodology of this would be interviews, communal talk gatherings, on field dialogues on understanding the sub-sensory experiences behind the border-fence. Another aspect of this research would be the study of the material manifestation of these borders and possibly give insight on how we can manipulate this materiality in a way of enforcing Commoning, through opening holes for example. Holes that would **mobilize Commoning and Community, rather than alienation and Society**. The expected output would be to exhibit all this collected material (interviews, urban texture research, materiality, confrontations) in an invitation for people to understand more about themselves and why and how they use these barriers, what purpose do they serve and how do they view open space, as an extension of the private or as the ignitor of confrontation and Commoning. Through this questioning it wants to bring connection. It wants to **magnify the value of coexistence**. I already have started this research in the city of Ghent and I would like to apply this question in the more metropolitan city of Bruxelles too and compare differences. As Gordon Matta Clark said, "*We are all prisoners cause we believe the houses around us contain us*". It's our choice whether to extend this imprisonment to the shared space or **emancipate ourselves** from it.

The last aspect of this would be that if we reach a consensus in the sense that these borders obscure the coexisting values of Commoning then we can start prefiguring backyards and courtyards as a more public version of space. Designers and inhabitants can start designing these spaces as a totality that would resemble the park, the space of confrontation that is becoming scarcer and scarcer. Then **Commoning** would develop organically from the individuality of the person and the economic space of the house, to the community park of the courtyard and lastly to the totality of the public in the park. It **would vow to not stay enclosed in demarcated spaces but spread, accepting and flourishing through difference, because difference matters**.

(1) Arendt Hannah, "Introduction into politics", 93