

Emerging European Practices
 New Generations (ed.)

New Generations is a European platform that investigates the changes that have occurred in the architectural profession since the economic crisis of 2008 through the analysis of some of the most pioneering practices operating at the European level. Since 2013, New Generations has involved over 500 European emerging studios in a wide array of cultural projects and events, including architecture festivals, exhibitions, open calls, video interviews, workshops, and printed and online publications.

In 2020, we introduced a new element to our multi-dimensional research: the New Generations online publishing platform, which offers emerging practices affiliated to our network a chance to increase their visibility and share their ideas to a wider audience. This observatory of new talents called "studio profiles" has been reorganised and is now compiled in the present publication. The book presents a selection of 95 studio profiles, a series of short interviews that allow the reader with a closer look at the offices' approach, early steps, current work fields, and future challenges.

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stardust architects* (RO)

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Vinklu (RO)

✕ SO? (TK)

PILA (GR, US)

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draftworks* architects (CY/GR)

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STEFAN
WÜLSER

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Challenges for the future

New Generations is a European platform that investigates the changes that have occurred in the architectural profession since the economic crisis of 2008 through the analysis of some of the most pioneering practices operating at the European level. Since 2013, New Generations has involved over 500 European emerging studios in a wide array of cultural projects and events, including architecture festivals, exhibitions, open calls, video interviews, workshops, and printed and online publications.

Since its conception, New Generations aims to foster a new space for alternative cultural exchange, which offers the current and upcoming generations of architects a novel stage for experimentation and confrontation. All the activities carried out by New Generations in the past decade were grounded on these concepts. The research and activities carried out by New Generations seek to build bridges between two worlds that usually run in parallel—that of official institutions such as foreign cultural centres, public administrations, and foundations; and a more informal world made of small associations or independent groups active in the field of architecture. In such way, our work has laid the foundations for the construction of a solid European network, a network that recognises itself in a set of shared values and ideas. Over the past decade, New Generations has worked implacably in order to

weave collaborations and lift barriers between these separate worlds.

In 2020, we introduced a new element to our multi-dimensional research: the New Generations online publishing platform, which offers emerging practices affiliated to our network a chance to increase their visibility and share their ideas to a wider audience. This observatory of new talents called "studio profiles" has been reorganised and is now compiled in the present publication. About 100 ideas and urban challenges for the future—as many as the number of practices that have contributed to this book project—disclose new insights and help us understand the experimental and vanguard trends that will take shape the architecture of the years to come.

The reader will detect important concepts that appear over and over in this publication: the need to rethink sustainable construction processes that eliminate or at least reduce contamination in all possible ways; the inclusion of different stakeholders in the development of a project, ranging from experts of different disciplines, who can offer cutting-edge technical solutions, to local citizens and collectives who can participate in the design process; the constant research for new habitat models that respond to the needs of an ever-changing population, offering standardised and yet flexible solutions for living. Climate Change and its effects on our lives also arise as a central idea: the

rise of water levels and its impact on populations living in vulnerable areas; the sudden change in temperatures and extreme weather, have triggered an urgent need to imagine architectural solutions capable of responding to these new climatic conditions; growing migratory flows and conflicts put food security at stake, while resources and raw materials will also be lacking as a consequence of these many problems.

From the small to the large scale, the challenges of today are complex and cannot be dealt with by sole individuals. The era of the architect seen as an orchestra conductor—or *deus ex machina*—able to offer irrevocable solutions, is over. The complex challenges of today require solutions that incorporate composite knowledge and systems of ideas from different areas and disciplines. This publication collects the point of view of 100 emerging architects, who strive to develop anticipatory approaches and alternative solutions to the challenges of the future.

Gianpiero Venturini
Founder of Itinerant Office
Director of New Generations

strike a design on a site. Our first message is that any design or material choice engages us into a network of numerous excavation sites, labour and global logistics. Secondly, we ask them to find a material sample as soon as possible in order to get a physical feel of the material. Instead of a concept or symbolic explanation we immediately ask them to think of how to put things on top of another or even what ingredients can be changed in composite materials. Gradually you can notice how the students begin to come up with their own material driven narratives and stories that meaningfully and directly aim to engage with the physical world.

Maintaining a digital workspace and archive

We love working on Miro, where we can trace back initial ideas and mark up each other's or students' work in front of everybody, wherever they might be. We are very open to sharing our drawings and archives with students and sometimes we even do Dropbox Talks, where we roam around in our documents to show projects so that they can see how to manage files or also how not to do it. We work between Estonia and the UK, so an organised online server is crucial. Physical models are helpful for clients who don't read plans and diagrams as architects do. But as a practice we rather work between material tests and digital 3D models and skip conceptual models, which is an abstraction of an idea. A merit of being a small practice is that we are always aware of each other's workflow. A large office with several project leaders and exchangeable team members would require a different approach.

“Our generation is often under the pressure of newness, innovation and novel statements, but learning from and positioning oneself towards the complexity of the world takes time and we don't mind it”

Accepting a more composed approach

We like to be engaged with projects from the start or simply start projects ourselves. We have organised community workshops for public spaces, produced an art biennale, have been curators, designers, architects and been invited to participate in shows and competitions. In reality it is a very volatile and unstable way of living, but the merit is that we know the processes that traditionally take place before a project is handed over to a designer. This

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involves know-how in forming production teams, construction budgeting, procurement routes, communication etc. And secondly it allows us to be critically vocal about certain processes because we rely on our personal experience. We call this composed approach simply agency – to be deeply engaged with processes beyond a single profession. Our generation is often under the pressure of newness, innovation and novel statements, but learning from and positioning oneself towards the complexity of the world takes time and we don't mind it.

Finding a place within architecture

Architecture as a discipline is increasingly more about creating revenue and in the context of a polarised, climatically as well as socially fragile world, we find that frustrating. We hope that with our skill set, we can do more and also feel good and proud about what we do. It means giving up a lot of what we pictured our professional futures to be when we started architecture school at the age of 18 but that is okay. It will have to be! Most of our work now is about actively searching for our place within a discipline that we hope can still be creative but not at the expense of others and the environment.

A FRAGILE EQUILIBRIUM



© Stefan Wülser Architektur

Stefan Wülser Architektur is currently located in Zürich, Switzerland. With a philosophy closely attached to deep reflection of contemporary challenges, the studio believes in involving themselves in changing contexts and scenarios in order to rewrite programs and produce a very pragmatic architecture described as “poetic simplicity” that looks for the inherent value in things.

Making new connections

I'm getting experienced with my first steps. After running the office together with a partner for 3 years, we finally decided to go different

directions. I used 2019 to reinvent and restructure my practice and to reflect on how to implement all the other fields I'm passionate about - such as politics or sociology or art. That was an incredibly valuable process and it really sharpened not only my methodologies but also opened a world full of connections and potential topics in this vast, elusive field surrounding architecture. Today we work with 9 employees and follow a strongly team- and discussion-based approach. I strongly believe in the relevance and the inherent potentials of architecture for the challenges we as society currently face.

Short-lived timelessness

An eye-opening experience that was almost synchronous to the resetting of my self-employment was the completion and the very early dismantling of a project. After an extensive conceptual phase we realised a wine bar that challenged a lot of a-prioris about gastronomic projects and about going to bars. We basically put 5 blocks of massive marble in the ground floor of a townhouse in the old centre of Zurich and declared the space around this new centre of gravity as a hierarchy-free zone. Waiters and guests shared what is usually strictly defined as behind and in-front-of a bar. Whoever had the pleasure of working with Swiss gastronomic hygiene regulations can maybe imagine what we've been through at this point. So I was super enthusiastic about the outcome and about the years of inspiring discussions at this bar to come. The owner then decided to move his business to another country and the bar was profitably sold within the first months. His successor disassembled the 30 tons of marble in an absurdly expensive process to sell it as a resource for (most likely) kitchen tops.

Switching between realisation and reflection

One of the very few rules for my practice is to not stay in a single mode for too long. While I believe in the quality of deep concentration and extensive reflection of things I also believe that different fields and different modes of approaching things can really enrich each other. I try to not have weeks where theory or building projects completely displace the other. I try to keep this fragile equilibrium in mixing up realisation and reflection as much as necessary to stimulate the mind.

Making the workspace a social one

Starting to work in a former gallery's space with huge windows on the ground floor inevitably connects you to the public. It triggers random encounters of many kinds and also creates interesting interferences between our daily rhythm and our surroundings. It also offered the potential to use

the space differently - to host lectures, discussions and workshops. I'd like to understand our working space as a hybrid one and make it more open and social and get rid of its fixed attribution.

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Expecting to deal with reality

While I'm convinced that our generation has to develop brave individual and collective visions to go forward, I also like to bluntly face reality. If we agree that reality is incredibly multi-layered and complex, the idea of clear answers - of yes-no or good-bad - quickly dissolves. We try to ban this kind of simplification from our working routines and to deal with all the uncertainties and the elusiveness. How can our métier more closely link to what is relevant to society and the negotiation of our common values? Today at the very same point in history we try to explain everything as if it's a technical object and also try to create unique and singular things as part of a cultural economy. Architecture currently suffers under this paradox and completely disconnects structural questions from spatial ideas. While the first is discussed as a hyper-rational thing, the latter loses depth, strength and authenticity.

Staying critical and productive

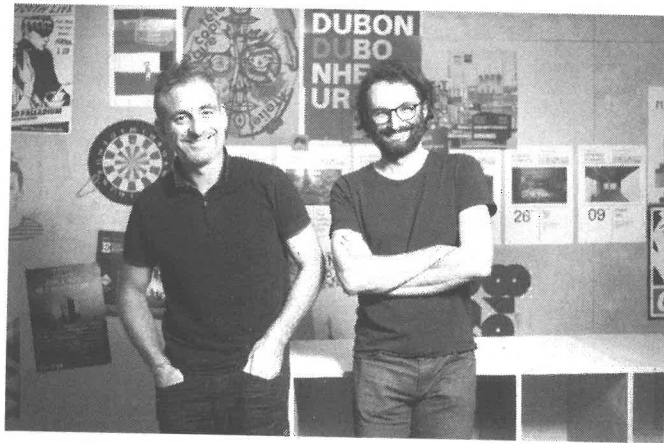
For me the parallel work on writings and building projects is essential. The research about contemporary production logics and philosophical views on it can quickly become a rabbit hole that doesn't allow you to give answers at all anymore... And answers are what concrete designs ultimately are about, right? Writing critical essays about the big picture - as I did for several magazines in the last years - and actually deciding what material a building is made of at the same time is demanding and rewarding. I guess we (as architects) should discuss much more about the inherent values of designs rather than focus only on concrete designs to develop sharp tools and reconnect things.

Navigating reality through space

The global urgent challenges are very central to our work. I'd like to oppose the wording of positioning our practice towards these challenges. We have to engage with the change happening right now. The lives of our children will be completely different than ours. While we (as architects) cannot solve all systematic problems, we still need to act confident and responsible. In the end, we create the spatial reality in which we all move every day.

TANK (FR)

SPACE FOR A THRIVING CONTEXT



© Julien Lanoo

After graduating architecture from the Institut Saint-Luc de Tournai (ISA Saint-Luc de Tournai) of UCLouvain (Université Catholique de Louvain), Olivier Camus and Lydéric Veauvy founded TANK in Lille in 2005. Their work results from a strong commitment to creating sensitive architecture in which the context resonates. The firm's approach addresses the ecological and economical challenges the architectural profession is facing today, while defending stronger cultural values of beauty and harmony at the same time.

The standard path

We are both French and we met in Belgium at the beginning of our studies at ISA Saint Luc de Tournai. We developed a real rapport as far as group projects were concerned, out of friendship. In addition to that rapport, we wanted to work with a strong team to think carefully about how we would approach architectural design. The first important competition that we competed in and won together as TANK, with the College Claude Lévi Strauss in Lille, was an important marker of our history. The project has a powerful relationship to its context, strong and sensitive materiality, spatial expressiveness. We started with small private orders, houses, renovations, and gradually arrived at doing public commissions: a rather traditional professional path in France.

A multitude of activities

Our first beautiful project stories are those of the first individual houses; these small, stimulating and economical projects resulting from very sustained exchanges with their various owners. This is where our attention to experience, intimacy, use and listening was born. In the absence of tricks, an observation: being honest (about the economy, objectives, etc.) does not always allow you to win competitions! And that is really difficult. What sometimes appears as a weakness on the part of those who judge the competitions also remains the responsibility of the architects capable of promising everything.

We are both teachers at Saint-Luc, and our point of view is that we're there to train people to be armed to enter the profession: creatives with added value, not just good draughtsmen. We try to teach our students that what lies at the core of our activity is creativity, a capacity for in-depth thinking, an ability to see the big picture, and a sense of ethical responsibility.

Allowing nature to manifest itself

In our projects we try to leave room for nature. Although it might seem like a romantic position (and I'm comfortable with that), I especially like the 2+2 House and the Little House overgrown with weeds, lost in a kind of wasteland. It's just free, wild nature expressing itself and taking over. This attitude, which we share, sometimes creates difficulties with landscape designers. We're more naturalists and environmentalists than gardeners—the work and philosophy of Gilles Clément is essential for me (Olivier).

A passion for the craft

We moved to our Lille office a few years ago, the offices used to be a family house and we redesigned it and turned it into an office. We would like to say that we are well organised but we really are not, we were not trained in running large methodical agencies. We are rather passionate craftsmen, our office is like a big family, where the creative energy compensates for the lack of organisation. Our studio is a space where we always find attention and kindness for everyone, but as in any family, there are hierarchies of knowledge and experience. Everyone has an appropriate role and can express his or her talent, and we all discuss our different ideas and approaches. The intuitions that arise from these many discussions are tested using models in our model shop.

Attracting the right clientele

Rather than competitions, sometimes there

The New Raw (NL) X
Kumiki (NL) X
LAGADO Architects (NL) X

Traumnovelle (BE) X
NOTAN OFFICE (BE) X
Generiek (BE) X

X Morales Finch (UK, BE)
aparicio/eeraerts (BE) X
2001 (LU) X
TANK (FR) X
Exercice (FR) X

mmnk (FR) X
127af (FR) X
onomiau (FR) X
ABACO (FR) X
MBL architectes (FR) X

Collectif etc (FR) X

DF_DC (CH, UK) X
Stefan Wülser Architektur (CH) X
F.A.T. (CH) X
Diego Sologuren (CH) X

CIRCOLO-A (IT) X
gospian (IT) X

X
MONTAJE (ES)

X LiquenLAV (ES)

Estudio Além (ES)

Mecanismo (ES)

X X Conjuntos Empáticos (ES)
Eeestudio (ES) X

X MINIMO (ES)

X Lluís Alexandre Casanovas Blanco (ES)

X Pedro Pitarch Architectures & Urbanisms (ES)

X RUIZ PARDÓ—NEBREDÀ (ES)

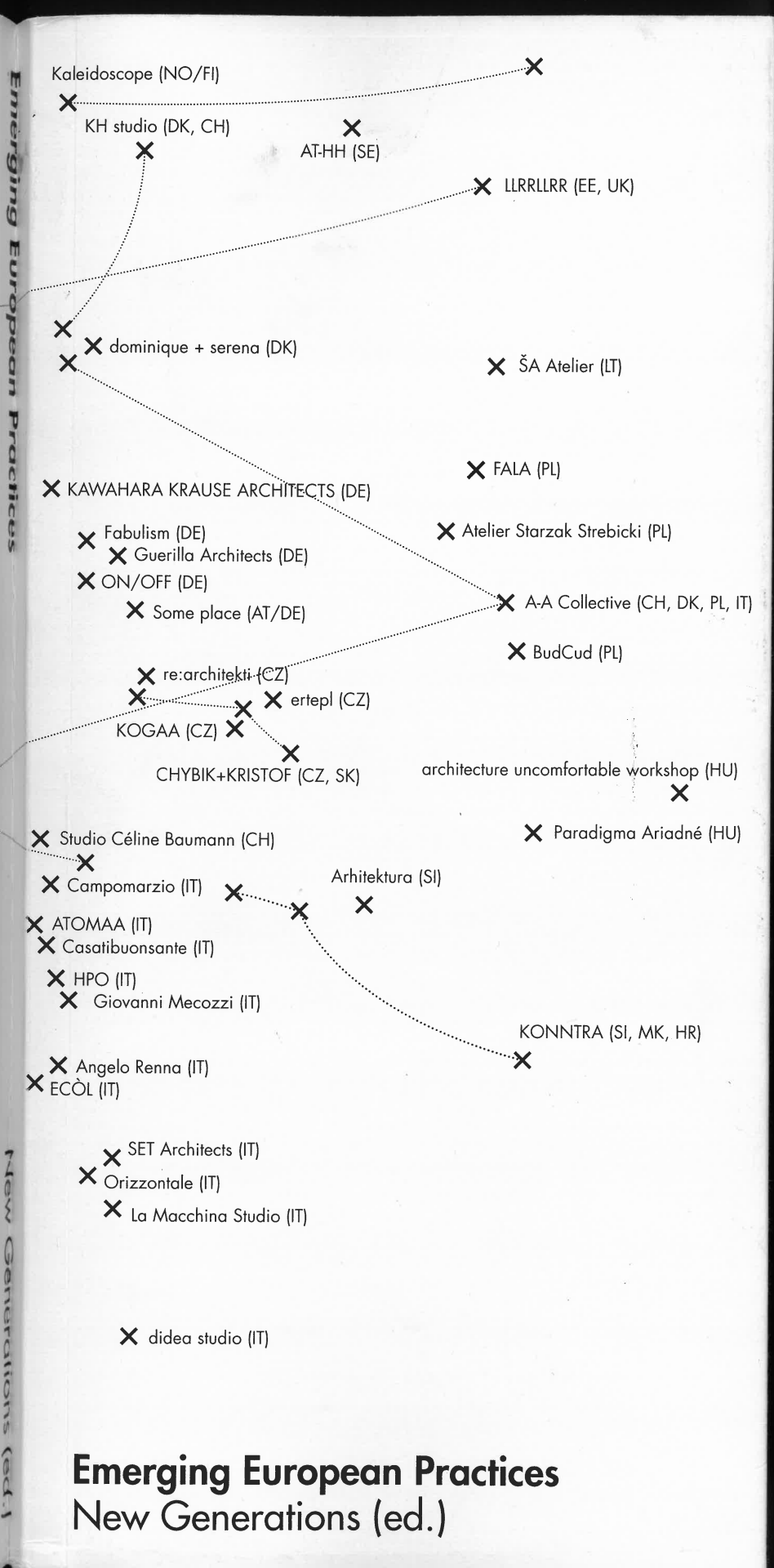
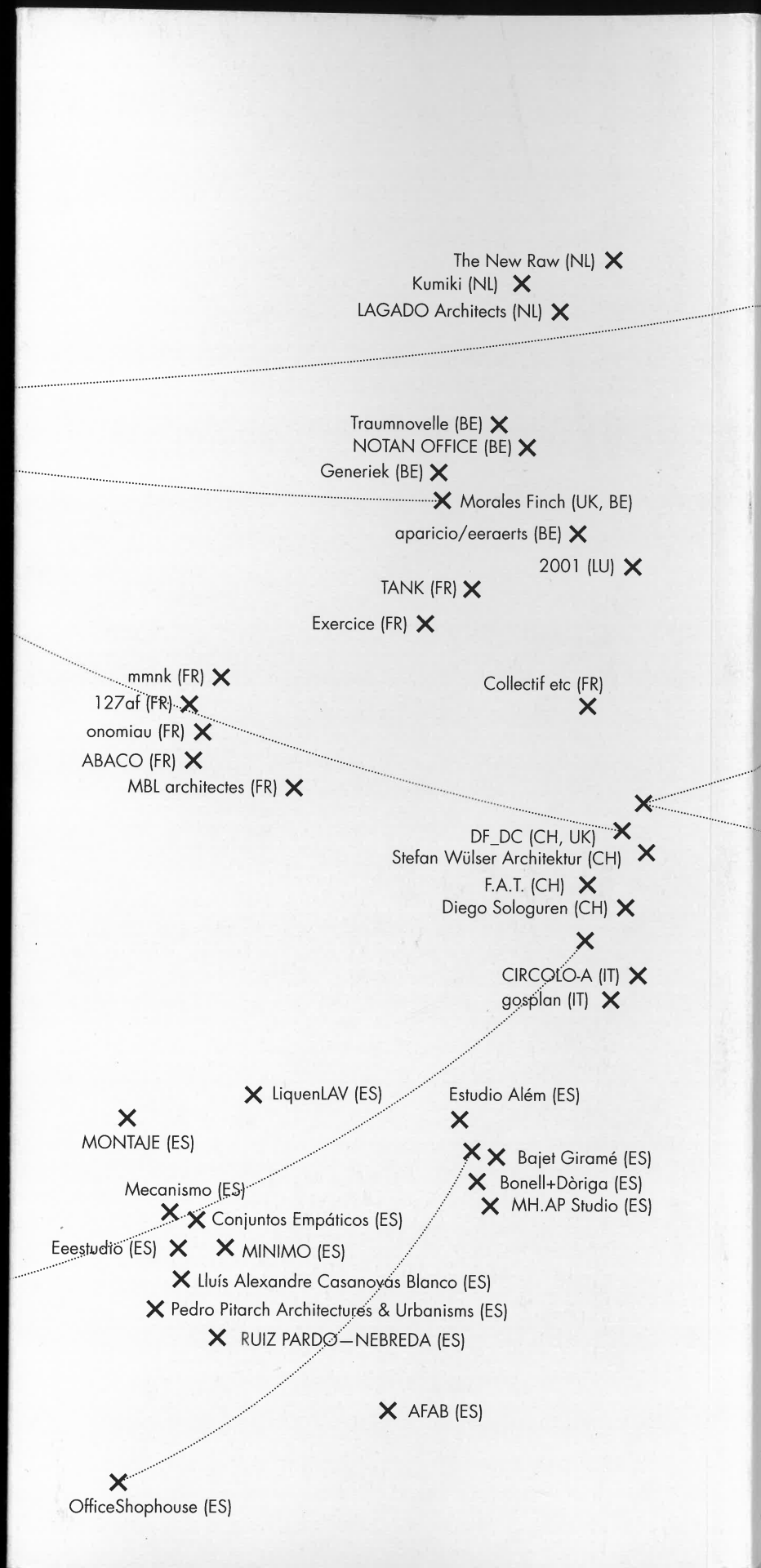
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X Bonell+Dòriga (ES)

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