



Ideal Spaces Working Group

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Ideal Spaces Working Group is a charitable foundation run by an international group of experts: cultural theorists, digital engineers, modellers, architects, and artists. Through the intersection of art, science, technology, and vision, Ideal Spaces Working Group is tackling one of the most important problems of the future: ongoing urbanization and the deterioration of natural and human conditions.

Why the naming?

Architecture is not only a question of architecture. We are not only concerned with visible architecture but also with processes of imagination, both of which are firmly rooted in cultural memory. Imagination also extends to questions of social imagination and involves humans projecting inner images ('ideas') of how they shall or want to live. When expressed as an architecture of the built space, social imagination is about ideal spaces in the literal sense. Ideal spaces are formed by certain preconceptions people hold, such as of the world around them, which consist of culturally inherited ideas and symbols. This can also be applied to architectural space. These ideas are based on central assumptions about people and the spaces they occupy, though these are mostly implicit, existing as tacit knowledge. They inform actual architecture and real space.

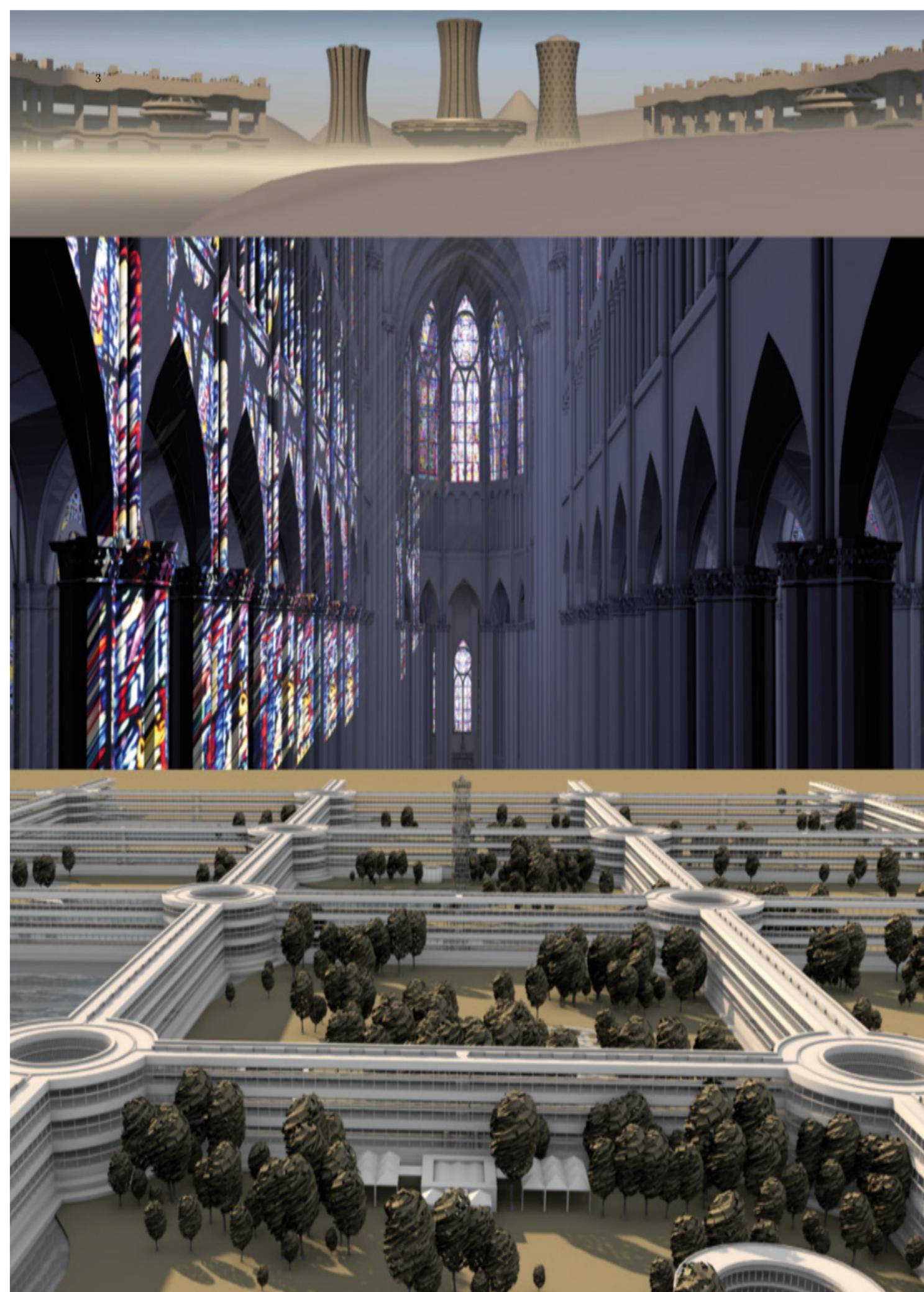
What we do

Not only addressing architecture but also these 'ideal' backgrounds are important for our work. Parallel to the activities of our foundation, we run the DOI-based journal Urban Eidos that deals with such topics.

The work of our foundation concentrates on addressing and assisting architectural creations to foster communal life. With a focus on the relationship between space, place, and community, the group aims to assist in developing concepts that will shape better contemporary living spaces and places for the future. This in turn will inspire real change to people's living conditions. Communities need places and not just spaces for mere human existence, but real places of identity, distinctiveness, and belonging. The Ideal Spaces Foundation aims to help make this change. Based on this, the Ideal Spaces Working Group aims to assist in the development of new concepts and ways of generating places for communities.

Ideal Spaces provides a forum for relevant themes related to architecture and community, focusing on concepts about place and community. We challenge existing concepts, for better placemaking. Ideal Spaces wants to bring to life the history of underlying ideas that influence the present and future, and their expressions in visible architecture.

Drawing from cultural, historical, and technological research, Ideal Spaces Working Group develops and hosts exhibitions, events, and platforms of exchange that bring together policymakers, scholars, cultural institutions, urban planners, architects, and citizens.



Venue of Ideal Spaces Foundation
Nesslerstr. 16, 76227 Karlsruhe/Germany

The venue of our foundation, located in a landscape-protected area, has a garden of 4.000.- square meters with old trees, places to rest and to discuss, and a villa from the 1950s. The place is a kind of utopian island, perfectly suited for symposia and other events.

Our foundation also offers residencies here, for artists, scholars, writers, and other persons interested to come for rest and to work in a peaceful natural atmosphere, at a distance from the hectic pace of our normal everyday life.



Symposium Natural City Ideal Spaces Foundation's venue, 2023

The main focus is not on the tech about green cities today, but on the history of the idea of a city being 'natural', together with its culturally inherited lead ideas and myths: from the paradise myth to diverse utopias to the garden city, up to the "green" city of today. We focused on these strains of ideas, and how they emanate today, as a green city. Central was also to illuminate the image of the human standing behind these concepts.

In the symposium, we highlighted perspectives of the "natural" in the "natural city" a bit more deeper, and critically. Since a natural city for humans is not only nature domesticated, brought into the city, and not just the technologically optimized "green" city of today. Following our occidental understanding about an (assumed) basic human condition or *conditio humana*, and following the nature/culture-divide so characteristic for occidental thought, it is also natural for humans to have culture.

What about this aspect, in the discourse about new, 'natural' cities to be constructed in the face of climate crisis, limited resources and ecological problems? What to do with culture and its architectural heritage, that other part of an ecology which is, or should be, truly human?

These were topics we addressed in the symposium, together with presentations from renowned international architects and scholars.

For more information, see <https://www.idealspaces.org/projects/symposium-natural-city/> on our Ideal Spaces website.



Project Utopian Disruption Ideal Spaces Working Group and vrbn.io, 2023

In a collaboration of Ideal Spaces and vrbn, we reframed an old architectural and utopian theme under a new approach: what would an ideal city look like in a contemporary context?

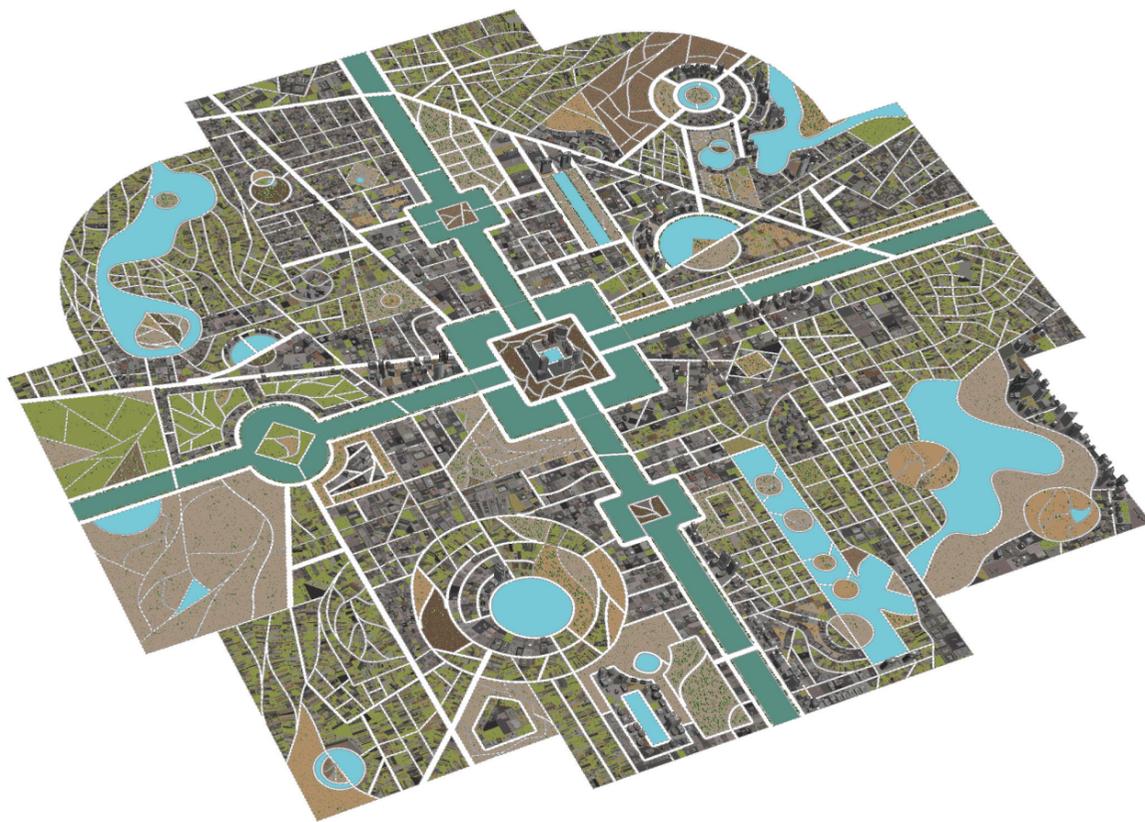
The project proposes an ever-growing dynamic ideal city, adapted to the contemporary needs of communities, whilst embedding symbolic meanings and concepts characteristic of past ideal cities at the same time.

In contrast to the common understanding of an ideal space being generated with rather “ideal” luxurious architectural designs, our city utilizes the realistic, predominant contemporary architecture that is spread worldwide: we took what we have today, and tried to make something out of it, something more beautiful and appealing.

The cities’ general layout consists of three domains, referring to the ecological and human needs to reconcile culture, expressed by the city, with nature.

The center (first domain) of the city is a strictly symmetrical area, the core domain of culture; surrounded by a second domain, where the architectural design becomes more organic - the transition is smooth, from “culture” to “nature”. The third domain is where the landscape takes over, with architectural expressions coming even closer to the organicity of green areas (parks, forests and their intersection with waterbodies). The third domain also embodies a possibility of the city to grow, if needed.

We were delighted that Esri, global market leader in geographic information systems, made a blog about our project.

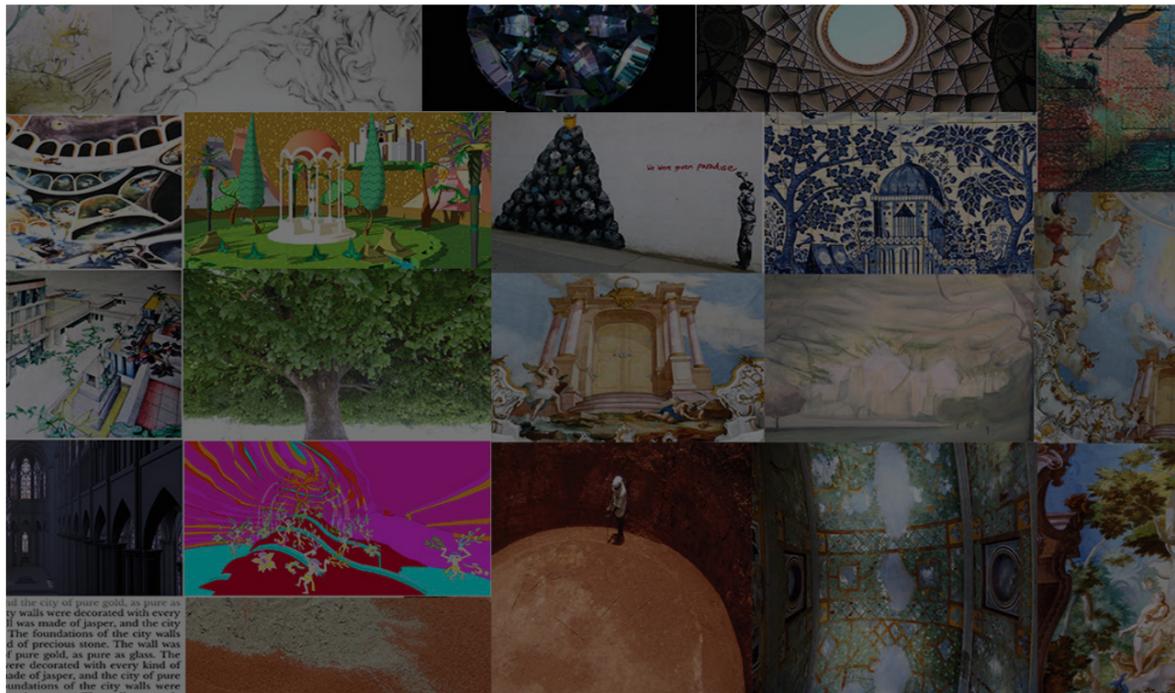


For more information, please see the Esri Blog What If the Urban Utopia Was Something We Could Actually Build?, <https://www.esri.com/about/newsroom/blog/designing-urban-utopia/> and our website <https://www.idealspaces.org/projects/utopian-disruption-concept/>

Exhibition Heavenly City and Paradise World Council of Churches, Karlsruhe 2022

We projected different images of paradise from different epochs and cultures onto the ceiling of the city's main church, situated on the central marketplace, as was historically done with traditional frescoes.

In accordance with Christian heritage, we ordered images in a sequence to form a narrative; ranging from the first paradise, the mythic beginning of a 'natural' state and human history, to the second paradise, the mythic end of history and the world as we know it. The narrative that emerged between the first and second paradise unfolded on the church's ceiling in a sequence of alternating still images and videos. Besides many other imageries, it included the Gothic Cathedral, the Christian epitome of the symbolic Heavenly City on earth.



We collaborated with local and international artists and architects, like Romolo Del Deo and Jateen Lad. Resulting from our research, we also explored and tested new approaches to present ideal spaces; such as the animation Skopein by Michael Johansson and Andreas Sieß, members of our Ideal Spaces Working Group.

For more information, see The Heavenly City and Paradise - Ideal Spaces on our Ideal Spaces website.
<https://www.idealspaces.org/projects/world-council-of-churches-karlsruhe-2022/>





Moving Art Karlsruhe, 2022

In collaboration with Vertical Waves, a dance group from Venice, we aimed to generate a dynamic entity called 'living space'.

A living space is a dynamic space that comes to life when three different entities combine: the physical, built space; the virtual spaces of worlds presented as scenarios; and body movement, generated as a type of space through the dynamics of dance.

The event was performed at the central historical place for the citizens of Karlsruhe/Germany, at the entrance of one of its main buildings.

Moving Art celebrated the idea of free citizenship in its authentic space. In this event, the real, historically grown space of citizenship was combined with projections of virtual, 'ideal' spaces and vertical dance. Real space, virtual spaces and dance formed a unity, through which a new space emerged, which was symbolically expressed as the space of free citizens.

Further information:
<https://www.idealspaces.org/projects/moving-art/>

Workshop Community and Concepts of Resilience Italian Pavilion, Venice Biennale 2021

Resilience became a buzzword. Ideal Spaces had been invited to perform a one day-workshop in the Italian Pavilion about aspects of resilience lacking in the majority of discourses. Amongst others, we had presenters from University of Berkeley, Aby Warburg Institute, Burning Man and Deep Blue Institute/New Orleans. Our focus was on relations between resilience, community, and utopia; together with the basic ideas and concepts behind them.

Resilience is conceived as the ability to withstand disturbances and to return to a former state of existence conceived as 'better', more stable, and more desirable than the one existing in that particular moment.

Resilience can be described as a capacity to persist, adapt or transform in the face of change, in a way that maintains the basic identity of a system.

From this perspective, resilience is essentially backward-oriented, namely to achieve an 'ideal' state that existed in the past and was subsequently lost. The system's "basic identity" was once there and had to be regained. In such a way, the very idea of resilience relates to a 'back to the roots' movement: to return to one's identity, as a new base for viability and survival. By contrast, utopia is usually associated with progress, future and forward-orientation. In such a move towards the future, the creation of even new identities is sometimes possible. But resilience and utopia share similarities: in the feeling of loss, and in the need to overcome a present state of existence. Common to both resilience and utopia is a longing for something better, for overcoming the present. Both become future-oriented because now, at this particular moment in the present, there is no resilience anymore; we must first regain it. And it is a community, not a single person that has to regain it. As is utopia, resilience is a communal issue in literal sense, an issue of, and for communities of people.

Further information: Community & Concepts of Resilience - Ideal Spaces, on our website

<https://www.idealspaces.org/projects/community-and-concepts-of-resilience/>

WORKSHOP

Community and Concepts of Resilience

Conditions and contexts

In ideal terms, resilience refers to how desired spaces for resilient communities are imagined and conceptualized by their planners and inhabitants, and how the designed spaces reflect this, particularly with regard to their symbolic value as ideal spaces for communal living

COMUNITÀ RESILIENTI

20 OCT 2021

10AM 6PM

PRESENTATION

ideal spaces

community

by Ideal Spaces Working Group
@idealspaceswg

Evento organizzato nell'ambito del Padiglione Italia alla V7. Mostra Internazionale di Architettura della Biennale di Venezia

Exhibition Community and Place Schusev State Museum of Architecture, Moscow 2020

The Ideal Spaces Working Group was invited to participate in an exhibition on Architectures for Future Europe at the Schusev Museum. Our exhibition was about community and place.

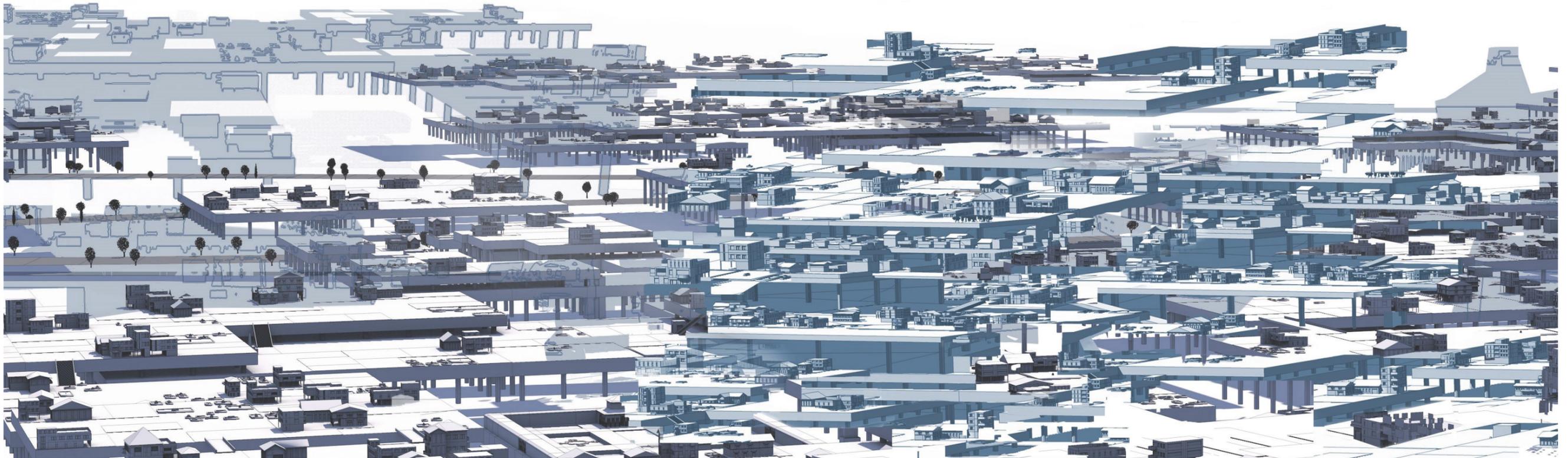
On an oval of 16 meters in length and 3.50 meters in height, we presented the ongoing scenery of a tapestry as “living carpet.” The concept was inspired by Gobelin tapestries, late medieval frescoes and Ray Bradbury’s novel *The Illustrated Man*.

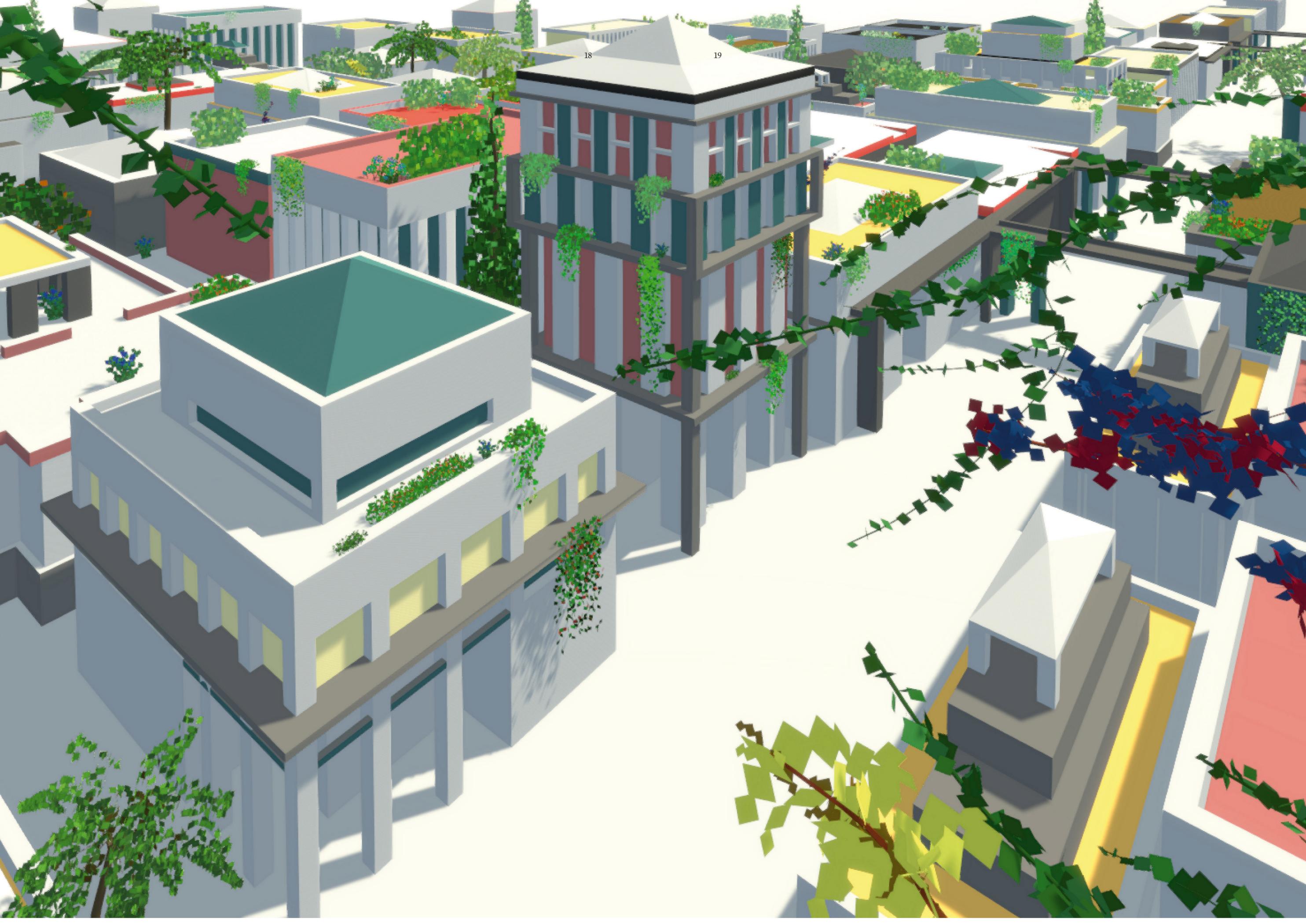
Our aim was to present something that could come to life, unfolding itself in a virtually endless stream of many different groups of figures, each of which told its own story. Out of the tapestry, single worlds appeared when opened by the visitors via touch.

The worlds we presented were accompanied by musical compositions of Alexander Kadin & team, unifying visuals and music to reveal the character of the worlds shown.

Parallel to the worlds, we presented *Alternative Scenarios*, developed by Maya Zuckerman, a San Francisco-based writer and artist. Taking up the figure of the Gobelin tapestry and the topic of communities and their places, the tapestry could also reveal alternative futures, with alternative places for communities.

For more, see <https://www.idealspaces.org/projects/community-and-place/> on our Ideal Spaces website.





Exhibition Artificial Natures European Cultural Centre, Venice Biennale 2018

Today, we all are living in environments that became ‘natural’ to us but which are artifacts. In our exhibition, we presented a series of different scenarios of such artificial natures, ranging from the garden to the internet as the new, all-encompassing kind of ‘natural environment’.

We presented these scenarios as a theater scene, resembling the theatrum mundi, the world theater. The scene was built as a triptych, with a center and two sides on the left and right, built as arcades. The triptych is an old Christian symbol, and the arcades were derived from one of the earliest Renaissance buildings in Italy (1419), Italian architect Filippo Brunelleschi’s Ospedale degli Innocenti in Florence.



The exhibition consisted of lead scenarios, displayed in the scene’s central part, and assisting scenarios visible behind the arcades. The scenarios in the arcades reflected the theme in the center, through a presentation of that theme in different vistas.

The overall aim of this arrangement was to show comparable world views on the same theme, allowing the visitor to gain a deeper perspective of the different types of artificial natures presented, of the symbolic content of the worlds they stood for, and their different messages. Adapted to the layout of the theatrum mundi, our intention was to give an impression of variety, through the interplay of the worlds in the center with the sceneries presented in the arcades.



The worlds in the center of the triptych, developed in collaboration with the Swiss company vrbn.io, were abstract in style, to focus the viewer’s attention on the essential structural elements and spatial compositions. In contrast with the secondary sceneries in the arcades which were standstills, with each arcade serving as a window to “another world”, the center worlds were presented as slow-motion videos. Each world had its own music, composed by Alexander Kadin and his team.

For more information, see <https://www.idealspaces.org/projects/artificial-natures/> on our Ideal Spaces website.

The exhibition was accompanied by a symposium held together with the White City Centre from Tel Aviv, Israel. See <https://www.idealspaces.org/projects/artificial-natures-2/> on our website

Exhibition Ideal Spaces Venice Biennale 2016

The exhibition, performed in Palazzo Mora/Venice and running for half a year, was shortlisted for a prize, out of 173 exhibitors.

The exhibition consisted of three interconnected areas which were located on three different walls:

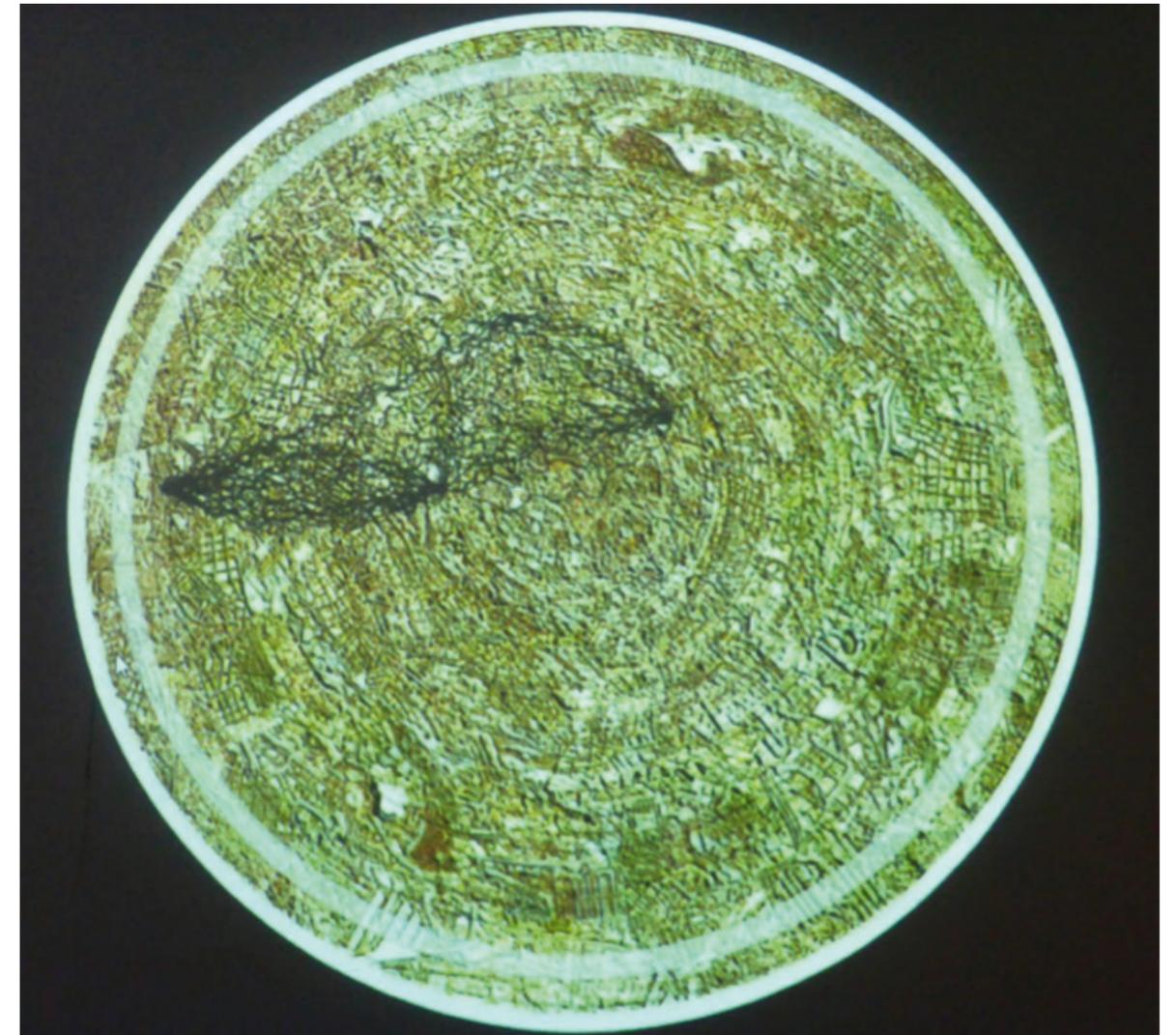
On the first wall, ideal spaces were presented as videos, forming a historical sequence. Each space stood for a world of its own, as that world's symbolic expression. Beginning with the Gothic Cathedral, the entire sequence showed a dominating tendency in the construction of occidental ideal spaces: that of an increasing abstraction. Each space presented had a motto and a musical composition made by Alexander Kadin & team, expressing the character of the world the respective space stood for.



Wall 1, showing Leonardo da Vinci's functional city (Photo A. Siess). A part of wall 3 is seen on the right.

On the second wall, developed by Matthias Wölfel & team, visitors could construct ideal spaces on their own, via an interactive table where elements could be moved, to build up the ideal space in question. The elements were derived from the spaces presented on the first wall. The visitors could see the results of their constructions on a screen above the table, during the whole process of construction. By that, changes in constructing the ideal spaces could be made, in a truly interactive process.

The cumulated results of these constructions were visualized on a third wall, in a large concentric circle made up of rings we called world disk. The rings correlated to the times of the ideal spaces presented on the first wall. The more certain elements were used in connection to others, the thicker the respective lines became, over time, a dynamic, ever-changing graphic developed on the disk, revealing patterns of frequency of usage. Below is a snapshot of the disk at a certain time.



World Disk (Michael Johansson)

Through the combination of all three components (walls 1 - 3), we generated an exhibition as an auto-evolving system. The data provided a rich source for our internal research on gestalt, typologies and other issues, research that is still ongoing.

For more, see <https://www.idealspaces.org/projects/ideal-spaces/> on our Ideal Spaces website.





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