The starting point

The streets are hectic in Ahmadabad, for a foreigner like me and for a local inhabitant. The sun stands high and it is exhaustingly hot.

The urban fabric of the old town is filled with small pockets, shaded niches; it could be an otla or a courtyard to which people withdraw from the busy street to rest. There are also the museums giving the visitor a break from the street. It is one of few places where you can be alone in an overcrowded city.

I was convinced that the shade and the pause had to be main features in my proposal.

As we lived on the west side during the visit, we crossed the central Ellis Bridge daily in a rickshaw. From the bridge you see some diffuse, distant hills in the south. It is the city dump, Pirana landfill site, located just outside the city.

The city of Ahmadabad had published a visionary plan aiming on Ahmedabad being a “zero waste city” by 2031. The plan is to close the dump and eventually transform it into a park.

Ca l i c o  D o m e

The site for the project is Calico Dome, a former fashion showroom under a Buckminster Fuller inspired dome that collapsed. It is still a landmark, however, just a memory.

The site has a central location along the Relief Road, running from the main train station to the central bridges. It is in the border between the dense network of narrow alleys with housing communities and temples, and the busy commercialized street packed with shops selling mainly electronics.

India is one of the world largest electronics producer, consumer and by that also one of the world largest electronic waste producer. A large part of the waste on the Pirana landfill site is electronic waste.

The strategy

The strategy of the project is to keep the e-waste in the city, in the district of electronics. It is to relocate the dump, placing it on Calico Dome, but never letting it become waste.

The project accommodates recycling, production, reparation, workshops, exhibition and education of electronics in order to demystify the devices of our everyday life.
One of the museums I visited in Ahmedabad is the Sanskar Kendra, the city museum, designed by Le Corbusier in the 50’s.

As in many of his projects, he lets the visitor enter in the middle of the building. You walk under it, through a dense forest of thick concrete pillars and reach the courtyard with a pond that fills up during the monsoon. A ramp brings you along the edge of the courtyard, turns and continues up to the hall.

In contrast to Sanskar Kendra where you first reach a reception when entering, I want to expose the core of the project, the workshop.

Interpreting Spiro Kostof in “The City Assembled”, it is the electronic device that killed public space. The public space that used to be a place for spreading news, collecting water, trials and executions has reached a point where “efforts to reinvest the urban plaza emphasize the use of public space as an artist’s canvas – now the space itself demands to be interpreted, admired, enjoyed.”

The public spaces in this project should not be just a sculpted landscape or based on a play of light but a place that tries to bring back the functionality of the public space. It is a place for accessing Wifi, charging your phone, and executions of the murderer, the electronics (the broken ones).
The Patchwork
centre of electronics

The proposal next to the neighbouring buildings.

The ground floor seen from the alley.
Pedestrians from Relief Road is invited with a generous ramp, for practical reasons of course, but also to act as a transition, blurring the line between the street and building. A ramp is not as aggressive as a step; a ramp does not define an edge as much. Either way, the ascent is needed to slow down the high tempo.

Towards the alley the pace is slower and steps works better. The plinth is arranged around the stairs for seating in connection to the kiosk towards the wall.

When entering you pass the recycling station with a dismantling and sorting section. You continue up by the kiosk, through the shaded courtyard and up a shallow staircase.

When you walk up the stairs, the core of the building is resolved, step-by-step through, the window ahead. It is the public workshop where a simple fix can save a fan.

On this floor are also a seminar room and a lounge in relation. The stairs to the next floor are right ahead. When walking up you get a good overview of the workshop space. This is a loud floor. It is also the main public floor.

The stairs bring you to the exhibition space where three sets of sliding wall panels arrange the room and can close sections off entirely.

There is a test lab for inventions and futuristic useless devices but also for production of ordinary devices but made from the recycled material brought in by the recycling station. These devices could be sold in collaboration with some of the shops along the road.

There is also a tool library, lending out tools you rarely use and a repairation workshop.

The ceiling has skylights. The angle of the ceiling is determined by the solar panels on the roof.

Here is the service room for the elevator. This floor is also used to access the solar panels on the roof.

A perforated concrete slab shades the courtyard. It lets in light, but diffuses it.

The roof shows very well the different sections in the building: the service core, the courtyard and the main spaces.

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The public workshop looking towards the courtyard.

The building has two main load bearing systems. Two brick sections towards the edges and a concrete pillar grid to allow the open plan.

The building cannot be completely sealed. The staircase has a perforated wall. The window has two layers: one glassed element, and closed. By sliding the panels, light, noise and ventilation can be adjusted according to situation.

The façade has three variations. The load bearing brick elements, the perforated concrete wall for the staircase and the one for the main spaces. It has a concrete core and a plastered outdoor surface.

The interior floor has three variations: ceramic tiles for the toilets, polished concrete for the staircase and elevator section, and a discrete square grid of linoleum in warm grey colours.

The parts of a whole

North facade 1:100
East facade 1:100
Section A 1:50
The exhibition space looking towards the alley.

- Interior wall
- Spline
- Concrete
- Leca block
- Plaster
- Solar panel
- Spline
- Concrete
- Brick
- 300 mm
- 300 mm
- 200 mm
- 300 concrete

Section D 1:50

Section B 1:100