SUCCESS STORY: H(A)UNTING PROMISES ON THE GROUNDS OF CREATIVE DESTRUCTION

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The blast furnace C of Belval, made of 1000 tons of steel, is the starting point of an exploration: How do territories change, and which promises of progress circulate between places as an industrial structure migrates? The furnace - once the pumping heart of the region and an anchor of local identity in the industrial South of Luxembourg, later reassembled into a different landscape in Yunnan, China - offers a way to read shifting geographies of production, labour, value, and memory.

After the 1970s steel crisis, steel production in Luxembourg shifted from using "native" primary raw materials to recycling in so-called mini-mills. Blast furnace C, still state-of-the-art technology, could not keep up with this transformation, became irrelevant to Luxembourgish steel production, and was sold to the Chinese steel producer KISCO in a deal that benefited both parties. The company sent 240.000 Chinese workers to Esch to dismantle 10.000 tons of steel over a period of 5 months. Once reassembled in China, the furnace reached new peaks of productivity during its second youth. Working at blast furnace C became an aspiration, a source of pride, and a means of social recognition. The oven remained active until 2022, when the aim to centralize led to relocating production 10 kilometers away.
This translocal movement is not considered an isolated event but an index of micro and macro transformations: the rationalisation of production leading to a significant reduction in employment while output and profit increase, the emergence of vast industrial heritage, and the need to build new identities. Between structural change and cultural reinvention, large-scale narratives of success often obscure what is in flux in collective memory.

By following the furnace as an object that crosses territories, economies, and demographies, this research questions what remains when industries move, how regions rebuild their futures, and how different places assign value to their industrial pasts within the process of "Schöpferische Zerstörung". Creative Destruction is a macroeconomic term that refers to the process of destruction as a necessary prerequisite of any economic development. Through a successful recombination of production factors, old structures are displaced and eventually destroyed. In this understanding, destruction is considered necessary – not a system failure – for (economic) reorganization to take place.
But how does the successful recombination of production factors manifest on the ground?

FELDER starts from a shared curiosity to look at real-life spaces shaped by economic and political power structures. Our work happens on site: we look, listen, learn from people and experiment with camera-based and multimedia tools. We pick up micro-stories and connect them to macro dynamics to understand what is happening on the ground, allowing counter-tellings to surface. To make sense of what we fi nd, we need a "messy mix"[1] of disciplines and move between scales. Recently, we have observed, documented and written about lobbying and everyday decision-making in the European Parliament in Brussels.
In parallel, we have been working in architecture between Zurich, Basel, Berlin and Paris, collaborated as Teaching and Research Assistants at EPFL Lausanne and ETH Zurich and have developed artistic research projects in São Paulo (Pivô SP) and Armenia.

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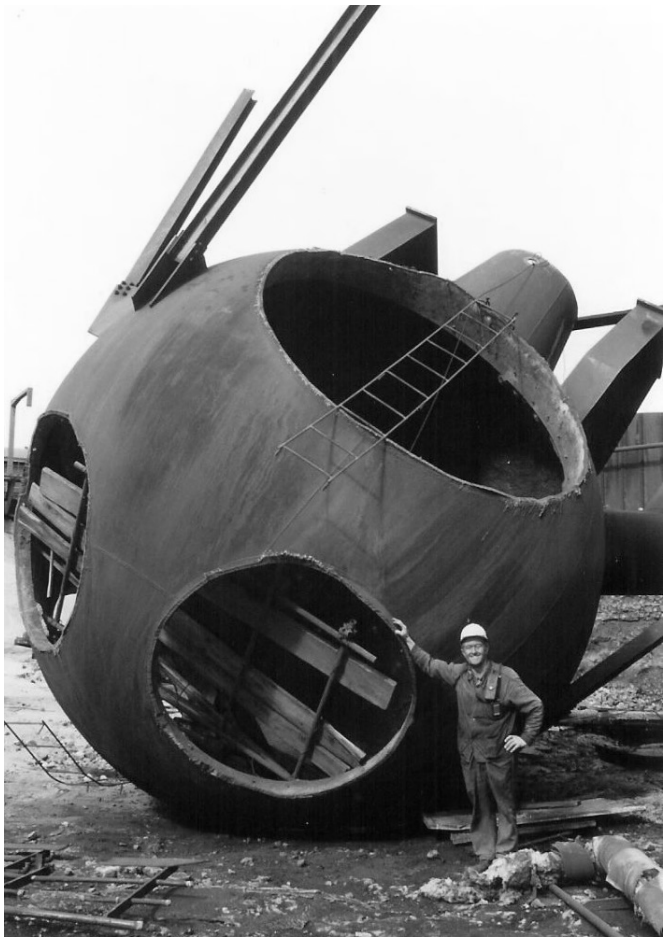
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Our inquiry, therefore, turns to the collision between the super-global (capital flows, knowledge economies, geopolitical ambition) and the super-local (unemployment, social displacement, memory). By using methods from artistic and spatial research, including oral accounts, archival fragments, and site-driven observations, the methodology will necessarily jump between layers, gaps, and contradictions.

As we start with micro-stories in Esch and lived encounters and move on to social and spatial realities in Anning, we aim to construct a counter-narrative that questions the accepted "truths" of economic success and post-industrial transformation by centering what is often structurally excluded.



Dismantling of blast furnace "C" in Esch-Belval and installation in Kungang/China, 1996. Source: HO „C":Francis Gross / Archiv Edy Sand sowie Guy Bock – BF N6: KISKO und Paul Wurth Beijing.

1. Keller Easterling, Maybe something more like disposition, e-fl ux Positions (2025), https://www.e-fl ux.com/architecture/positions/6782972/maybe-something-more-like-disposition