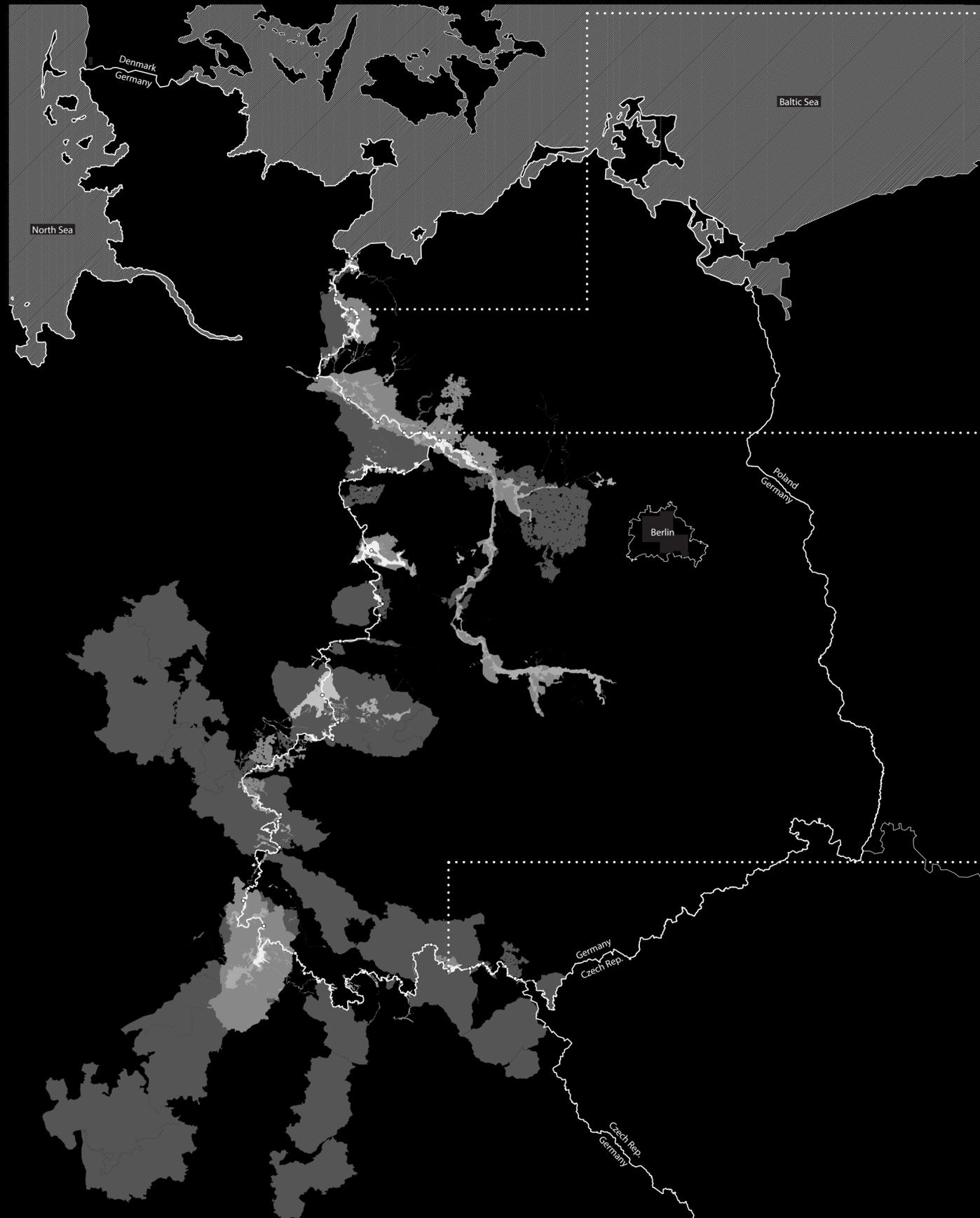
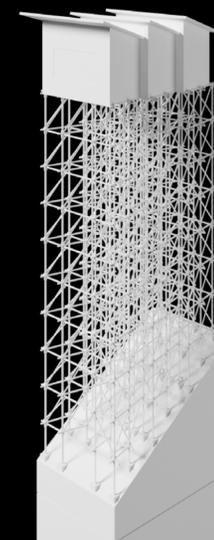
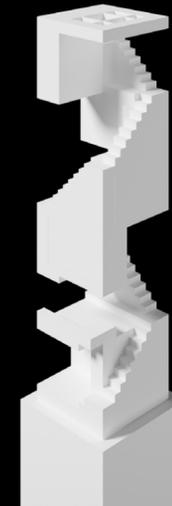
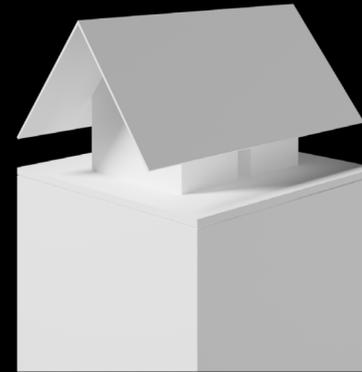


From Separation and Unity

[Hi]stories of a border



This map shows the former boundary line and within the location of today's Green Belt. The grey areas show the different levels of nature conservation along the Green Belt (the lighter the grey the more strictly protected). The black framed points along the line mark the location of the shelters.



Harry K.'s family lived in East Germany. They had a farm house in a small town called Groß Thurow located near a lake, whose western bank marks the boundary line of the line of demarcation. Since the border had not yet been closed down by the government of East Germany, children from the surrounding communities of East and West Germany were able to gather on the frozen lake to skate and exchange sweets during cold seasons.

When his brother crossed the lake and thus the line of demarcation with a friend on the afternoon of the 31st of January 1951 to sell groceries to relatives, Harry K. secretly followed him on his skates.

He was only about one hundred feet away from the line of demarcation, when a shot was fired. The boy slowly kept sliding towards West Germany for a brief moment before breaking down on the ice. He had been shot right through the heart by a bullet fired from 900 meters away, somewhere on the other side of the lake.

According to the statement of Otto R., the 18 years old shooter, the shot had been released accidentally and since Harry K. had been so far away, the two border guards had not believed it to be deadly. They reported having pursued their patrol after assuming the boy had fallen down on the ice by accident.

Playing children saw everything happen and went to alert

Harry's father, who immediately ran to the scene of the event. He returned to his farm house — carrying his dead son's body on a slide.

By the time the homicide squad reached the farm house in the evening, the darkness outside made it impossible to reconstruct the events of the afternoon — only the patrol was questioned.

On the 17th of November 1951 it came to an argument between Harry K.'s parents and the border control. According to the border control's report, a mutual consent was found. Harry K.'s aunt however, reported her brother (Harry K.'s father) had been offered hush money, when accusing the border control and the General Prosecutor of covering up the crime committed against his son.

Within the second wave of forced resettlements, led under the working title *Operation Vermin*, Harry K.'s family was forced to leave Groß Thurow, having to abandon the tomb of their lost family member. It still lays there, bearing the inscription:

Out of sight, but forever in our hearts.

Harry K. was born on the 19th of September 1940 in Groß Thurow and shot on the 31st of January 1951, on the Gollensee near Groß Thurow.

Ingo, Holger and Egbert B. grew up in East Berlin as three brothers of parents that are loyal to the party line of the Socialist Unity Party.

Since Ingo B. is rated as not suspected of escape attempts, he is allowed to serve the border control along the Elbe River.

As there has been a break with the government of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in Ingo B.'s youth already, he pursues the intention of escaping from the GDR. He therefore takes the chance of the situation of serving the National People's Army to memorize the local conditions of the assigned segment of the border — especially its vulnerability.

On the 22nd of May 1975 — after having finished his service — he approaches the Elbe River as near as the border fortifications allow him to, 500 meters remote from the line of demarcation, he then cuts a square hole into the fence system — just big enough to squeeze himself through. Having passed the fence system, he gropes his way forward through the minefield, using a wooden block to trigger detonations at a safe distance. He succeeds passing the minefield without any noise and passes by a fully occupied guard tower, crawling on the ground. Having reached the bank of the river he blows up an air mattress he was carrying. Fortunately for him, there are patches of fog floating over the water, which makes it easier for Ingo B. to glide into the river's flow without being detected. He manages to cross the river to the West German bank side, unnoticed by speed boats of

the border control gliding through the brightly illuminated water.

Eight years later Ingo B.'s younger brother Holger also succeeds to escape from the GDR as well — with Ingo's help. They stretch a wire rope between two houses, one standing in East and the other one standing in West Berlin. In the middle of the night, Holger passes the border strip, sliding into West Berlin almost 22 meters above the Wall of Berlin.

After the escape of the second son, the parents are rated as traitors. They lose their positions in the government department as well as their membership in the government party and are strictly monitored by the security service.

The third son, Egbert B., receives an offer to legally leave the country, as long as he would agree to work for the security service of the GDR in West Germany. He declines and having to expect plugging sanctions for his refusal, decides to escape from the GDR too.

On a morning in May 1989, his brothers pick him up in East Berlin with lightweight aircrafts, having disguised them as soviet reconnaissance aircrafts, and bring him to West Berlin.

My dear mother, dear siblings, dear wife, and my dearest child!

I have a few minutes left to live before being executed. I am innocent, could prove it hundredfold, but didn't have the right to. I wasn't even allowed a solicitor, such an unbelievable thing to be possible.

But I will get through these last minutes as well, and I will see you again in this other life. Sadly, I couldn't get a few written lines from you one last time and don't know, how you are. I now stand here, without a solicitor, lonely and not knowing how things will be after my death. I would like to tell you that this uncertainty is not easy to bear, but it must be endured.

My beloved ones, if possible, I wish to be buried in West Germany, where I would have wanted to live my life. [...]

I do at the moment relive all the phases of my life and I thank you, my siblings, my wife and my child for all the kindness you gave me. I also let my memories go back to hunting, which I loved very much. Only a few days before in the nature and in the woods of Titschendorf, the amorous play of the roe deer begins again. I will be there in my mind.

My dear wife, we will be parted for all times of earthly being, forgive me if I sometimes made you sad. The greatness of one lies in their ability to forgive and forgiving is the most beautiful thing a human heart can offer. If, after a long time, you open your heart to another person, be sure to evaluate well, for our

child's sake. Do never forget the reason for my harm and pass it on into the heart of my child.

Dear Trautel, I had a happy life with you by my side, and if I could choose another time, it is you I would choose again.

All of my belongings in conjunction with hunting, my horns, my glasses, my carvings, my hunting license and certificate, please do keep them safe and think about me being a lucky man with these belongings. [...]

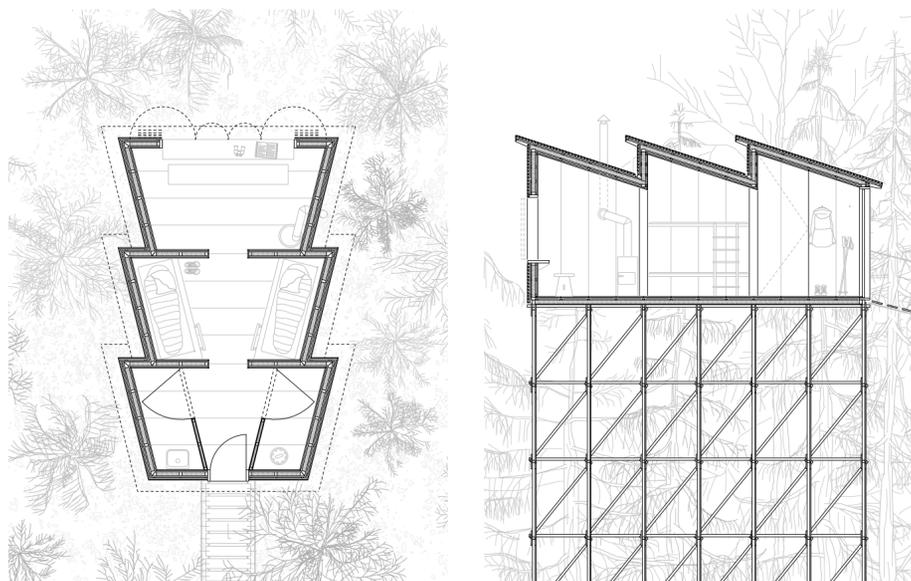
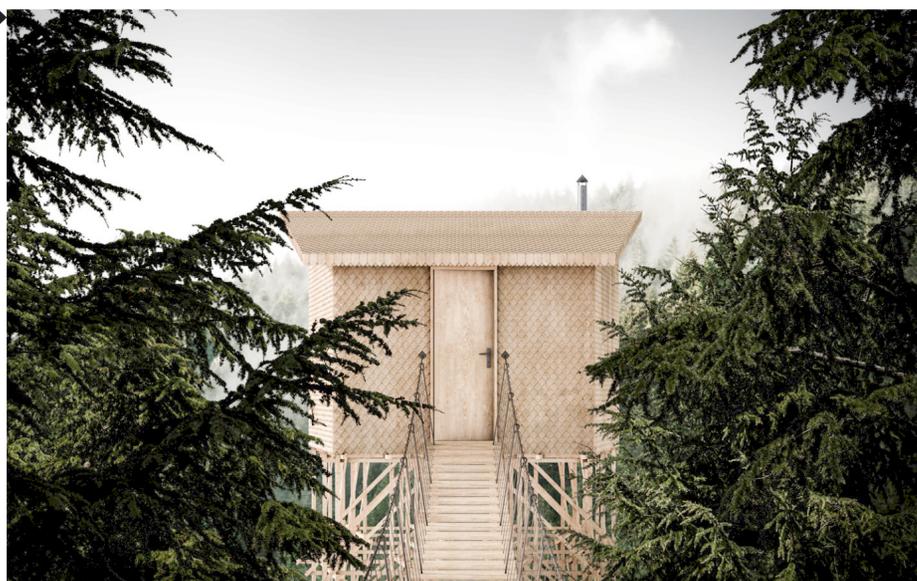
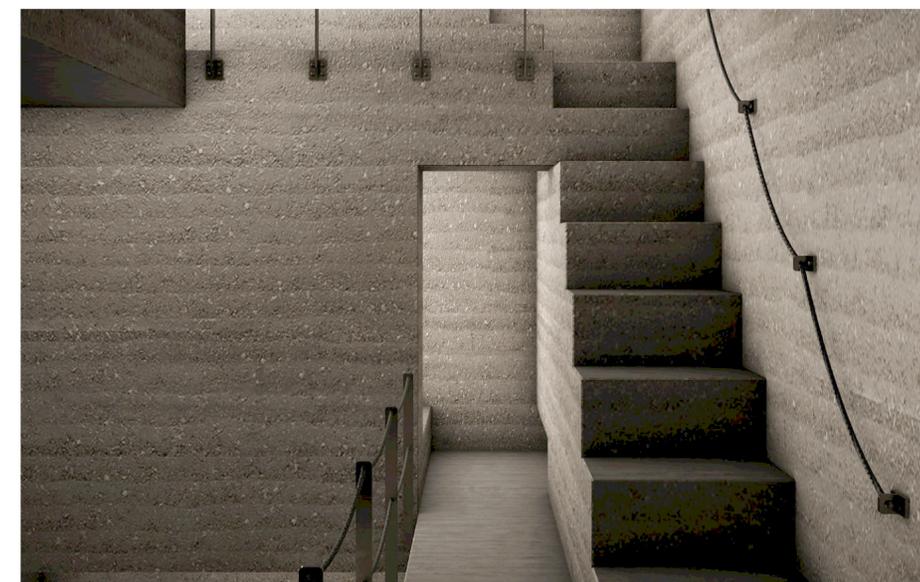
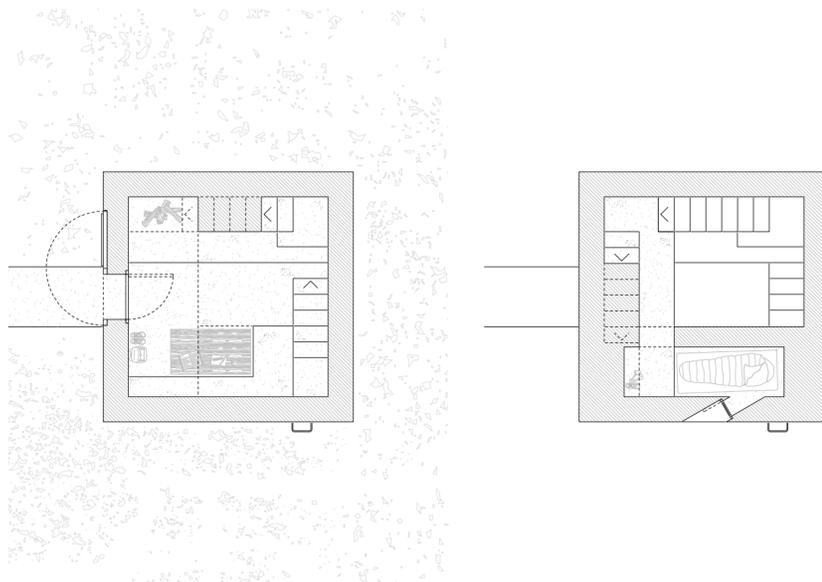
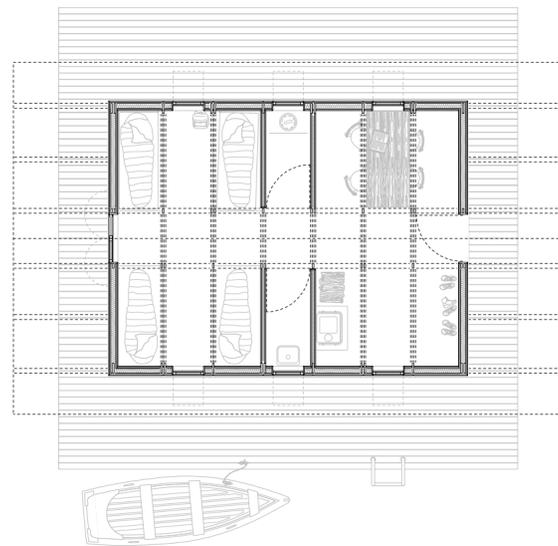
Within my last thoughts, I here express my wish for the German nation to be granted with a lucky future.

I would like to end with Goethe,

*Over all of the hills,
Peace comes anew,
The woodland stills
All through;
The birds make no sound on the bough,
Wait a while Soon now
Peace comes to you.*

Your Manfred.

Manfred S. was born on the 26th of November 1930 in Ratibor, today's Poland, and died under the guillotine on the 12th of July 1960 in Leipzig.



BDA-SARP-AWARD 2021

Theresa Felber, University of Stuttgart, Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Markus Allmann and Prof. Dr. phil. Stephan Trüby