

This project is a speculation that planning regulations and building code could have an alternative form as an object. The resulting form is comprised from minimum standards from the Better Apartment Design Standards, the Moreland Apartment Design Code, the NCC/BCA, Victorian Planning Scheme, as well as some ancillary regulations.

What is presented is an inspection of the built form of planning. Planning is not pre-emptive or speculative, it exists, now, as an oscillating constellation of objects that approach homeostasis, but are unable to coalesce. It is a network of objects with stringent dependencies, each reliant on another regulation to formalise themselves. What you're looking at is a more acute case of the general condition of housing in Melbourne.

It's located on Lygon Street in Brunswick. Upon approach we hardly recognise it in its setting, and only as we draw nearer does it reveal its oscillations and twitches.

The nature of translating planning into object is depicted in this drawing as the pulling taught of single standards, to understand the relationships they had within the nebula of regulation.

1. The construction of the constellations begins with an individual code, and individual apartment where living spaces and bedrooms are dimensioned out, and oriented towards daylight.
2. Natural ventilation requires both a minimum and maximum distance between openings, and locates doors in the process quite rigidly.
3. A minimum amount of storage is dispersed into the living and bedrooms, deflecting to to preserved floor space adjacent to the window.
4. Ventilation and daylight actually remain discrete provisions, so vents are installed next to fixed windows, and are dimensioned by 5% of adjacent floor area. (windows are a set minimum size in BADS and 10% of floor area in other codes, which starts to reveal different metrics or values in the codes, and closely relate seemingly discrete elements).

The apartment is then overlaid with other planning layouts, and they begin to override and contest each other. With different room area requirements and room depths they begin to misalign.

(in plan) The adjacent apartments are then laid out by placing similar room types next to each other as required by Noise Attenuation standards, and further conflict occurs as single oriented apartments differ greatly between the BADS and MADC meaning there is a large amount of lateral disparity, which when aligning the apartments causes areas that overlap and erode.

The floorplan is limited by a requirement that more than 40% of apartments on a floor level require dual orientation for natural ventilation, and a corridor limit of 40m, which constricts this building to 4 apartments per floor before needing another core. The requirement of apartment diversity (1 bed 2bed 3 bed) pushes out against this limitation of the floorplate.

Then there are larger constellations of objects that have limited language around how they would coalesce, meaning the circulation and core do not meld, or react to the apartments when superimposed, nor does the bin store, bike store, or communal space.

As they are superimposed the regulations actually diminish each other and begin to impede each others standards, like floor area, or ventilation paths, so I have carved or reconciled these conflicts (seen in gold) using only the values established from the objects. For example if a door hits a lower ceiling, its swing path is eroded. Or a vent has its own dimensions eroded from the wall covering it

Across the scale of apartment through to building as a whole, each piece is in tension within its own standard, planning document, its overlaid documents and the building as a whole. What I'm trying to illustrate is that every element is rigidly tied to all its constituent parts, even if a window and a storage unit don't seem to relate at first.

The scenes on the left document a number of occurrences in the building, and descent from least problematic, to most problematic.

1. The first scene collates clean duplications of objects. Where ventilation paths have differed and arranged the doors independently of each other in this bedroom.
2. The second scene shows an intersecting wall hitting a number of windows, which then has their dimensions carved out of it.
3. The third scene shows objects in oscillation and misalignment, where the sizes of these windows differ and create a hybrid, entire room is created from overlapping bedrooms creating a third room for your telescope
4. The fourth scene shows reversible outcomes, like the orientation of bathrooms, which creates a complete duplicate of itself in the room, or an entire floor level which begins to offset balconies.
5. The fifth scene depicts moments of detailed resolution able to be actioned using rules set out from the standards. The erosion of this wall and misalignment of window frames requires a weather seal, or additional frame as shown in gold, or this cranked door is a hybrid of two marginally misaligned doors.
6. The sixth scene shows moments of collapse, or unsolvable problems. This bedroom requires a minimum floor area which is reached through the erosion of the bottom of the wall to the value of the wall

thickness, but there is nothing written to provide adequate space to fit a queen bed. The kitchens typically fall within areas of over lapping and are also in conflict with walls.

The final view at the top depicts the shift of material or regulation that occurs through every wall, floor and ceiling, and we look from the communal gym, to another version of the building being built in the background. The project reveals a space of unthinking, or inaccessible reality that contributes to the forces that shape our cities, and it elucidates a kind of ambivalence that we're living in. Architects generally know that planning is a form, but are yet to really see it. The result is akin to Musil's "Man without qualities", in arriving at a synthesis between strict scientific fact, and the mystical. Knausgaard describes a similar phenomenon as "the world seeming to step forward from the world". We know it's there but we're not looking at it. Translating planning to object presents a disjunctive, and disorientating problem, but induces a more active cognitive relationship between architect and code – or subject to object.

It underscores the capacity of that object to act as a mirror that reflects back upon the agenda of the author. The project could have taken numerous paths throughout translation. In observing what I perceived as intention or logic within the syntax of planning, I could have pushed definitions to a greater limit, for example. "Window's" for the provision of natural light are not required by planning to provide visual permeability. It is implied through good practice, but not explicitly stated. Glass bricks for example are deemed adequate to provide all natural light, but in bringing the object closer to the materiality of what constructed ubiquitously throughout Melbourne, my hopes were for it to agitate the axioms between planning and architecture. This also reveals myself as a contingency in the making of the object, despite every attempt to position planning/code as author with objective rules. But planning is not authorless, and it is not objective. It is disregarded, and unprovoked. So really the project has a series of subject-subject relationships, which highlights the nature of the rules themselves.

At their most reduced form, the rules of planning and building code are accountable to the provision of health (daylight), safety (fire and access), and services for cooking and sanitary facilities. Almost all of the standards in planning accumulate to the provision of these things, but the definition, or aspiration of which is rather minimal. As is our cognitive relationship and scrutiny of them; we do not recognise the rules as an ideological construction. And the project aims to provide a lens to this, and posits questions as to what exactly is the relationship between 9 square metres, and adequate?

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In 1931, CIAM discussed the importance of solar orientation for directional positioning of low cost housing, and since then, planning policies world over have inherited versions of this agenda. We live in an aftermath of ideas and amendments that remain to be tested. This project suggests that architects are no longer the conscious author and arbiter of the design process, or at least not in multiple housing in Melbourne. The problem with architecture is that it does not recognise itself, and perhaps overclaims, or is conceited about its role in design. The architect's role in housing increasingly seems to be in the interpretation or reconciliation of things. We make versions.

If this object is what exists now, it says little of what architects do. There are a number of minor reconciliations that need to be made that could bring the object into alignment, such as the inclusion of a front door, and the problems of overlapping. I concede that apartment designs can vary from what is presented, but I would argue that they can only marginally differ.

By solving problems the project remains a demarcation, but brings architecture and planning closer and closer together. It would perhaps only take some minor amendments to planning documents, and a recording of the moves made in this project to bring the two into alignment, and we would have the problematic scenario of automated housing, and the question of what happens when architecture becomes law, or law becomes architecture?

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Finally, the project has a potential to be refined into a tool to assess a local governments sites against the intentions of planning and regulation. Problems can be revealed through the compositing of multiple documents into an active form/object. When finding a site to locate the building, which is essentially a kind of attributed block, I found that approximately 3% of the sites in Moreland's Lygon St and Nicholson St structure plans are able to accommodate this building (given its footprint and orientation), which would suggest that something doesn't add up between the subdivisions and the planning documents. Additionally, it may be possible to embed ideas or requirements like type (bedroom number) or lifestyle, or test happens when the metrics are increased beyond the minimum standards.

As a tool it certainly needs a revision, and higher calibration or responsiveness to other governing forces which I have not yet formalised, such as overlays, or more subjective/complex obstacles like Urban Design Reports. A suite of all the local governments planning objects may reveal further critical speculations about Melbourne's future housing developments.