

IMMERSIVE INFOTECHTURE

Virtual Archive for Referendums

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The Virtual Parliament?
Case Study
Space, time and data
The Virtual Archive
Build-Your-Own Satellite
References

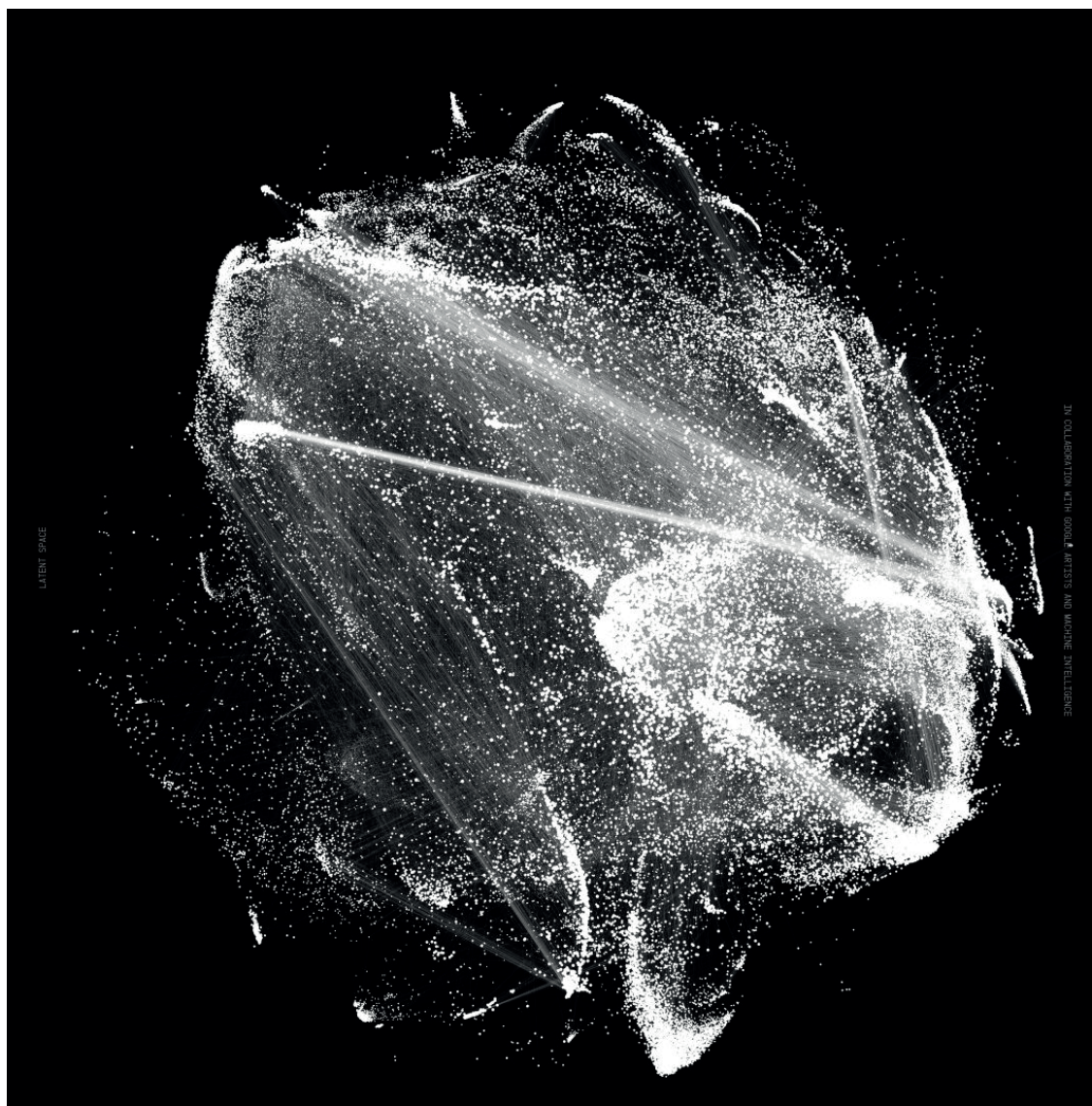


Kids visiting the 'salle de pas
perdu'
in the Federal Palace in Berne,
november 2018

The Virtual Parliament?

Nearly six months have passed since the benchmarking moment when due to the exceptional situation of the COVID-19 pandemic the initiative got accepted that allows congress members to vote remotely for the first time in Swiss history. This significant break with the long tradition that was demanding the physical presence of parliamentarians in the Swiss parliament, questions its value and necessity and starts our reflection on possibilities and consequences of virtualization.

With the fast progressing digitalisation in today's data-saturated world, the emergence of immersive media is on the rise. Virtual tools for are now demanded more than ever and a world of multiple realities –augmented, mixed or virtual – can be soon the reality of our daily life and can also bring necessary changes and adaptation into the long and traditional system of Swiss democracy .



LATENT SPACE

IN COLLABORATION WITH GOOD & ARTISTS AND MACHINE INTELLIGENCE

Data univers of SALT archive
'Archive Dreaming' by Refik
Anadol, march 2017

Stating our reflection on the virtual parliament based on the fact that also the parliament was forced to be dispersed a few months due to the pandemic, we were looking at one of the main instrument for direct democracy, referenda and votings. As important quarterly events for Swiss citizens, it allows voters to have the final say at the ballot box on certain parliamentary decisions.

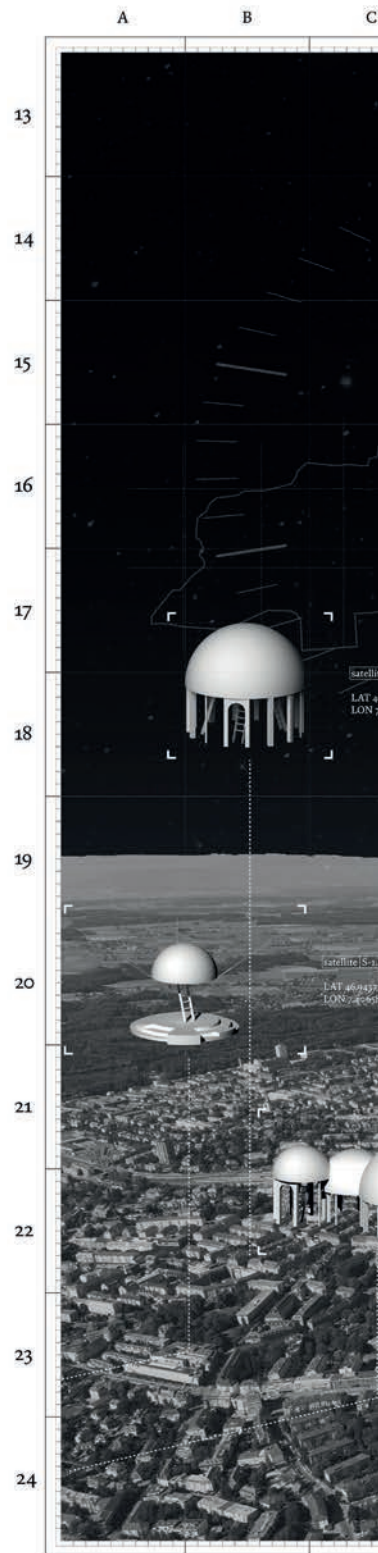
We were asking ourselves how most citizens will get informed, if the tools they use have changed during these times and in general how the way you get informed will influence your vote? So we investigated further into the political process of influencing and opinion shaping.

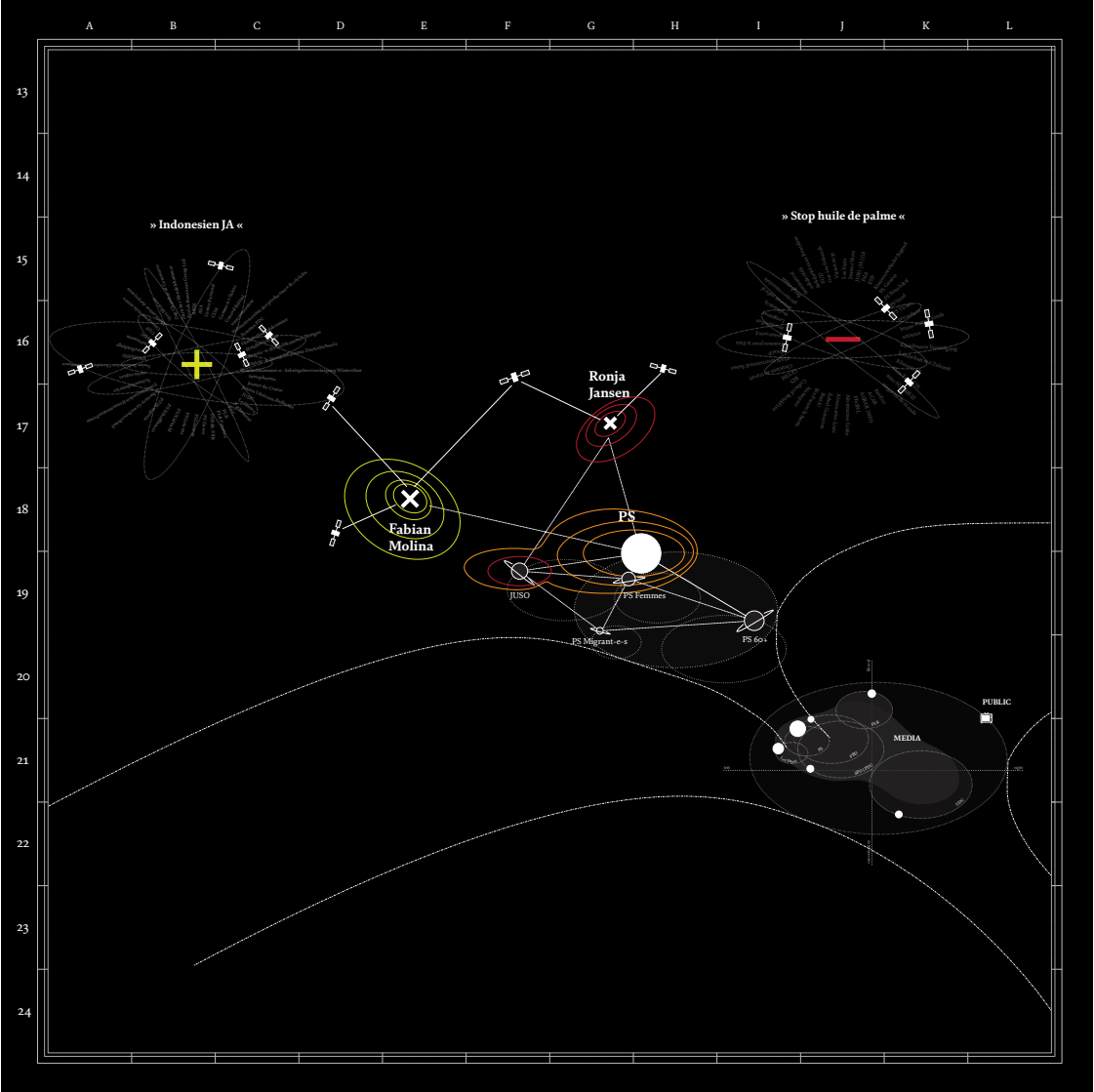
From that main question about influences and the flow of information and with the main objective to tackle the difficulty of accessibility of the mass of digital information in mind, this booklet shows the development of our project for a virtual archive curating information on referenda which connects to the physical world by satellite structures set up in public spaces around Switzerland.

Votings are decided by people's opinions and opinions are based/built on information and influences. We saw that information is the key for understanding decision-making processes and nowadays, where most information is online (also from sources of other mediums like newspapers, TV channels or radio stations), the internet therefore already takes on the role of an archive. Or better to say a storage. Because the information is not organized in the first place, it resembles more a jungle of data that is difficult to navigate through.

Our idea of a single virtual platform as an archive or search engine therefore introduces a new form of access to complex connections inherited in referenda. It should serve as a tool for citizens to get informed, as a virtual space where you navigate through more instinctively, like how we are used to moving around in physical spaces.

And as we all know by now, physical interactions can't be replaced by digital meetings. That's why it was important to also add a physical component to the virtual archive that links the virtual to the physical world to encourage social interaction and political discourses between citizens. Satellite structures that should be set up in public spaces like parks or squares throughout Switzerland, take on this important role. They can adapt their appearance according to the context of their surroundings, but always keep the same manner of transmitting the information through the dome shaped screen.





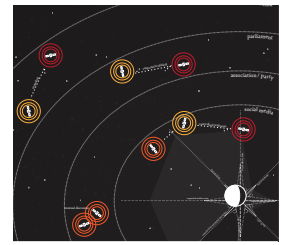
Case study – economic partnership agreement with Indonesia

Through the analysis of the referendum against the free-trade agreement with Indonesia, we discovered the analogy to the solar system.

Under the name "Stop huile de palme!" a referendum against the free trade agreement was officially launched on January 27, 2020. The initiator Willy Cretegny is a wine producer from Satigny (Geneva). He sees a threat against local productions, arguing that the agreement supports the principle of comparative advantage (producing where it cost at least), subjecting Swiss producers to unfair competition. In order to protect the hard-won interests in this agreement, the Indonesia-Yes-committee was founded shortly after the referendum was launched. It is first and foremost made up of business circles and right-wing parties. But according to the referendum committee – consisting of many environmental alliances and agricultural companies like Uniterre or PanEco – also ecological and social standards regarding the protection of primary forests are not being met, especially focusing on palm oil. On June 22, 2020 the referendum was submitted and soon after accepted by the Federal Chancellery in Berne.

Scales of influence
stakeholders diagram as part
of the research on the virtual
parliament, march 2021

The multitude and superposition of forces of influences throughout a political process was exemplary in the case of this referendum. Especially in regard of the situation inside the Swiss socialist party. It was divided: On the one hand side, there are the proponents, who fought for certain demands included in the agreement, such as the promotion of sustainability of palm oil crops with a labelling system under international law. On the other hand side, there are the referendums who denounced a mistrust in the rightful implementation of the ecological and social standards imposed on Indonesia by signing the agreement.



spheres of communication
from more controllable/
informal (social media) to
less controllable/more formal
(parliament)

Following this, the members of the Swiss Socialist Party met virtually at the end of 2020 to deliberate and give the party's line on this referendum. They advocate the agreement. But at the second virtual assembly of the Socialist Party on February 13, 2021, the delegates were invited to vote again, with the result that the delegates finally voted against the agreement (119/80/10).

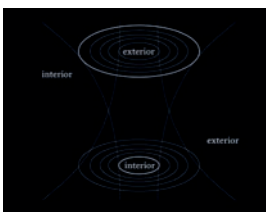
This shift of opinion could be traced back to two main protagonists, National Council Fabian Molina and the president of the Young Socialists Ronja Jansen, that took the floor on that day to present their opinions.

Our conclusion from the analysis of this referendum was the idea of the stakeholders relating to each other like planets orbiting around a bigger attracting mass and influencing each other's orbits. By mapping these relations, the forces but also the different scales of influences were made visible.



Space, time and data – Immersive spaces

Developing further the ideas of information flow, scalability and influencing forces, it was the merge of the two worlds, the physical and the virtual that we want to put forward. Bringing attention to the fact that even though the data available on the web always refers to a territory, a physical place or person, we want to stress and make visible with the virtual archive project. With this in mind, combining the tangible and the intangible, the map represents this idea of interconnected elements of information and territory in a space for a better understanding of influences in our voting choices.

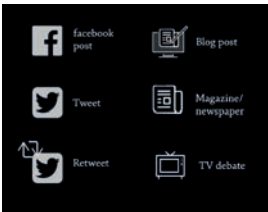


The territorial layers in the middle refer to the physical component of the project and show the different scales of the network of pavilions, spread as satellites across the country during the month of the voting. The reversed order of organisation where the biggest scale of the federal is located in the inner circle and the smallest scale of the district is the biggest outer circle, we want to give a adapted understanding of territorial scales to the digital information space and therefore focuses on the link between the tangible small scale structure in your district and the intangible widths of the virtual data sphere.

The virtual space that is shown as an encompassing sphere surrounding the territorial circles is organized in time by years, months and days.

In this case, the outer galaxy represents one of the four annual referenda, showing all its important events, whereas the inner galaxies refer to the different stakeholders and show the connection of data to the date of their publication.

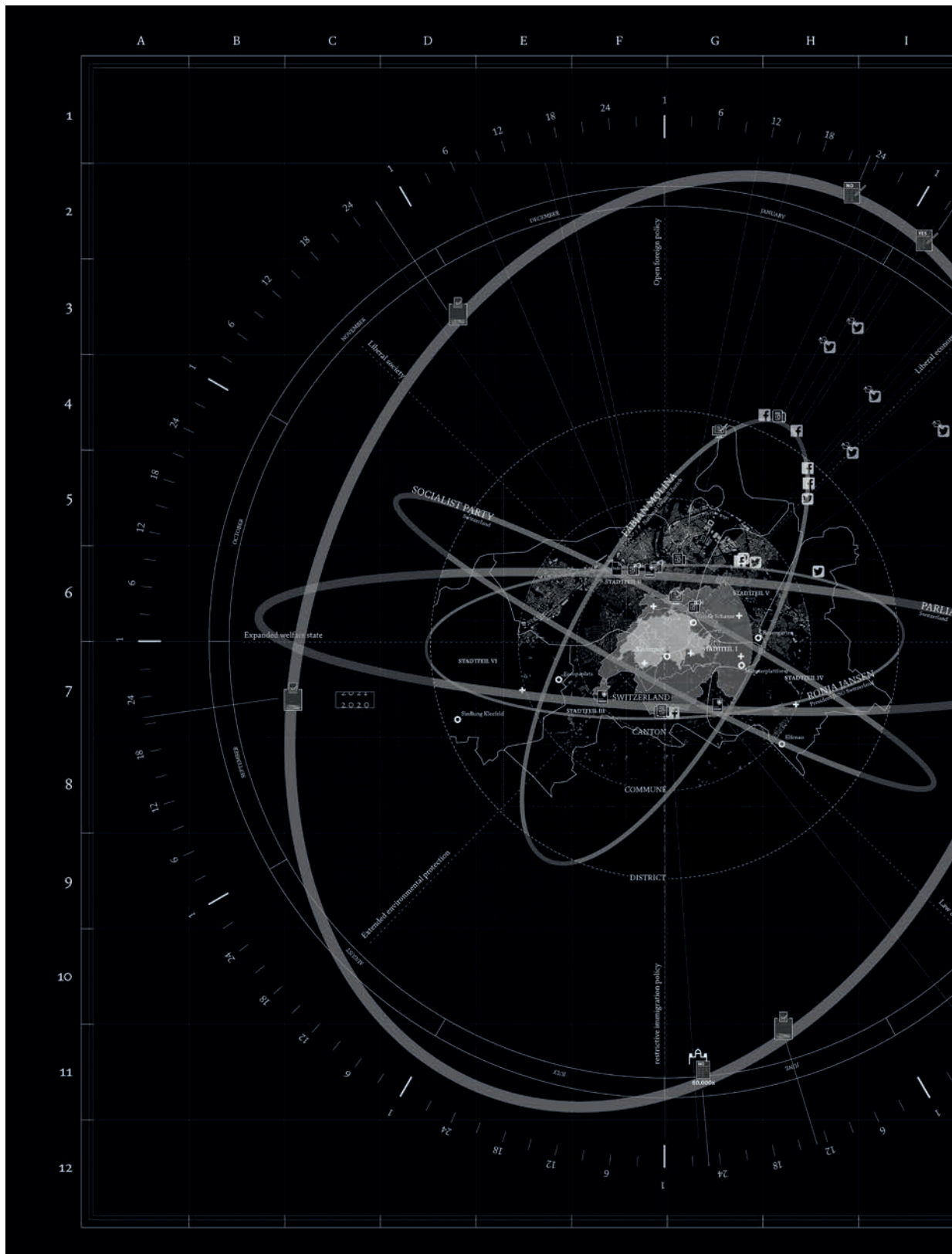
From facebook posts, TV debates, newspaper articles to official press releases or federal announcements on the referendum, everything is collected and accessible in the virtual archive.

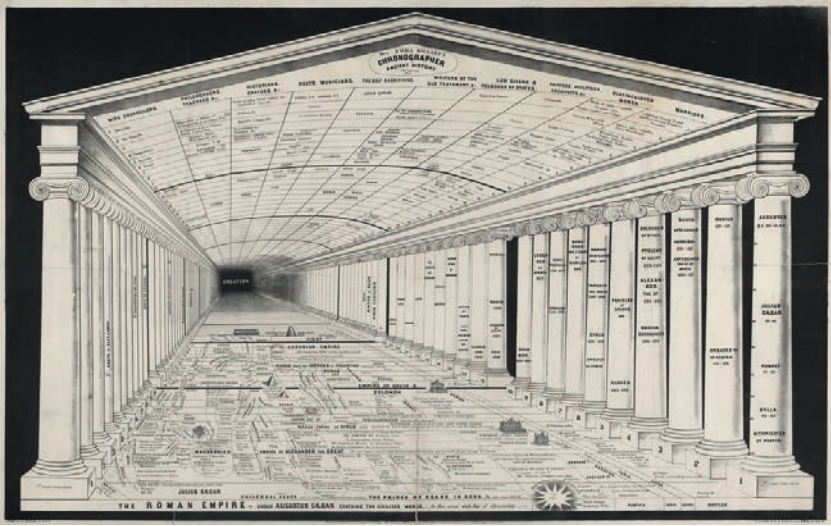


Virtual Archiving
data linked to date and publisher



Virtual Archiving
data linked to date and
publisher





Infrastructure en attente
Ancienne gare d'arrivée du
téléphérique des Prodains,
octobre 2020

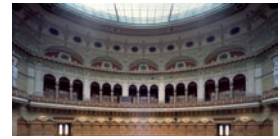
The Virtual Archive – spheres of information

Coming across the concept of ‘memory palaces’ which is similar to the even more ancient ‘method of loci’, a strategy of memory enhancement which uses visualizations of familiar spatial environments in order to enhance the recall of information, we were inspired by the general idea of spatial data processing. Information is connected to objects and can be linked and create a totally imaginary structure as in the drawing of Emma Willard.

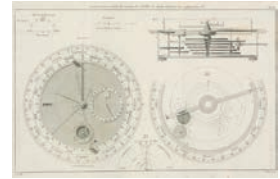
So the first challenge to create the virtual archive was to think of how to organise information to archive. Our objective of de-constructing the masses of data published by all different kind of stakeholders on all different kind of media channels and then to make it intuitively accessible to the user. Therefore merging the idea of the ‘memory palace’ and the known techniques of archiving, the virtual archive space we create is divided in three main parts: an the ‘memory galaxy’ as the archive space for the collection of data

Following the view of a user, the first virtual data space you can wander through is the digital chamber of the national council. This lobby is welcoming users from different locations as the archive is functioning as a web page that you can access with any device. Looking out of the gates, the galactic system of information that encircles the archive can be observed. It is in the information galaxy of the internet, that virtual space floats.

In the centre of the hall stands the ‘instrument of the parliament’. It organises the circular space and offers a vision of the Swiss party landscape. As a metaphor, the ‘mechanics’ behind the whole system that makes the archive work is also shown. The original instrument demonstrates the movement of the planets. In this situation it shows the parties and the evolution of their opinions about the referendum.



National council chamber
Gallery for the public to attend
the parliamentary session in
the Federal Palace



**Instrument pour trouver la
situation des Satellites de
Jupiter & former leur config-
uration**
A.J. Delin, 1812



View of the archway
 Inspired by the national
 council chamber of the Swiss
 parliament



Virtual Lobby
 View of the first space



Perspective section

It show the whole system of the virtual archive with his two main pole : the lobby and the data dome

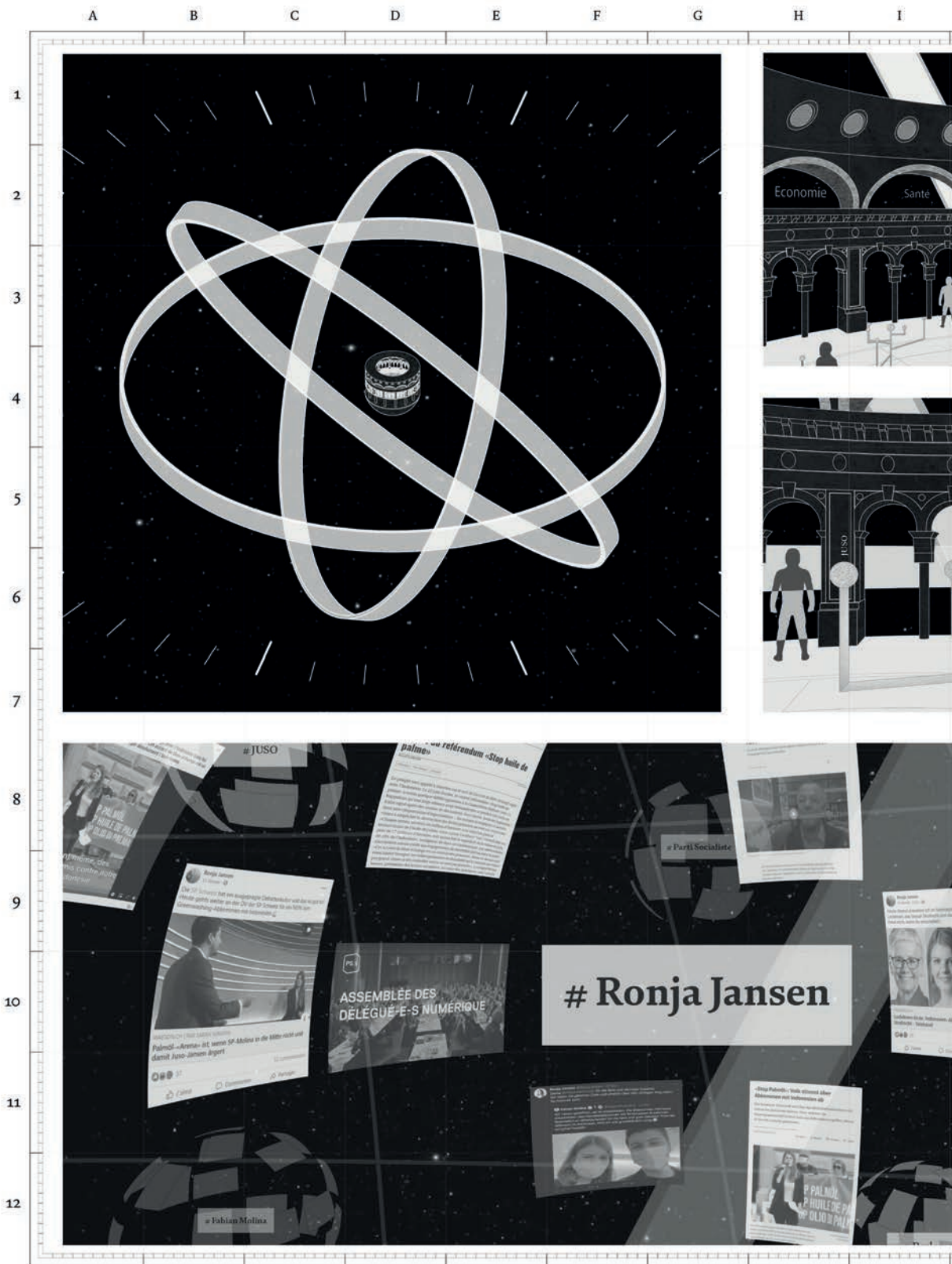


View from a tag sphere

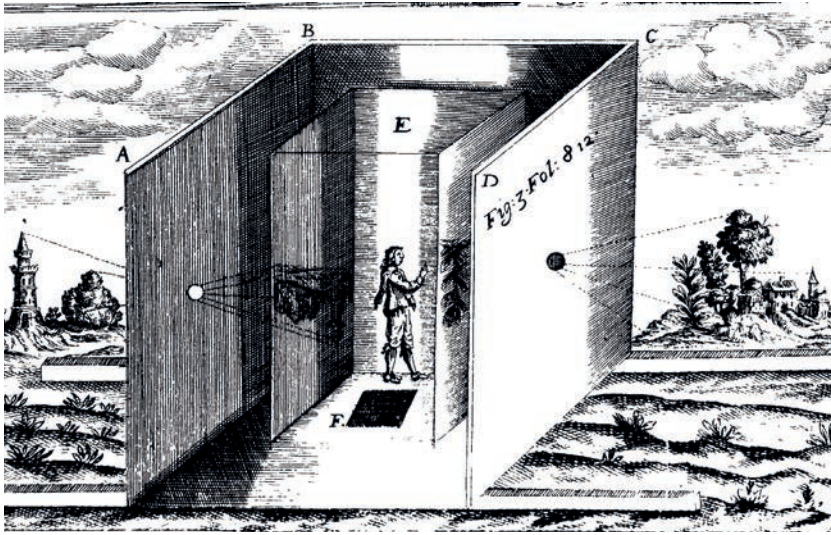
Ancienne gare d'arrivée du téléphérique des Prodains, octobre 2020

To get to the actual information space, you have to pass through these major portals to enter the archive space. Organized according to the different themes such as environment, security or economy, this helps the user to orientate him/her to the information he/she is looking for. After the user chose a topic and entered through the portals, he/she arrives on the opposite side in the reading room of the virtual archive. This space with the shape of a dome is where the tag spheres of articles that relate to the topic arrives from the stakeholder galaxies and come together to be explored by the user.

Using Machine Intelligence, we propose an analyze and deconstruction of the datas according to their similarities of themes. These themes can relate to the duration, medium, person or content and are used for our tagging system. All data points are marked with one or more tags and enable the visualization of the connections between the tagged topics.







Camera obscura
Athanasius Kircher, 1646

Build-Your-Own Satellite

The goal of the satellites is to offer an immersive experience of the virtual space, coherent to the galactic system of how the archive is organized. We want to bring the virtual space to a physical place.

Coming to our physical interventions, one main conceptual reference we were inspired by is the "camera obscura". With this apparatus you can observe the a virtual image of the outside world from the inside of a closed box, isolated from the exterior.

Transfigured to our project, the idea of the camera obscura is depicted in the satellite structures that create the linkage to the virtual world. As a kind of in-between-space, the small scale architecture can act like windows to virtual reality.

DOME...



☐ S



☐ M



☐ L



☐ XL

IMMERSION...

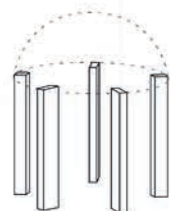


☐ Head



☐ Upper body

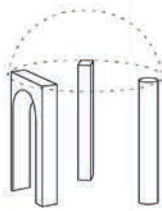
BASE...



☐ Pillars



☐ Sticks

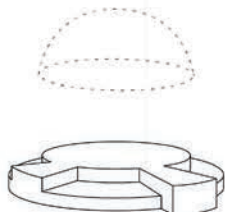


☐ Shapes



☐ Suspended

ADDITIONAL INTERACTIONS...



☐ Platform



☐ Lighting



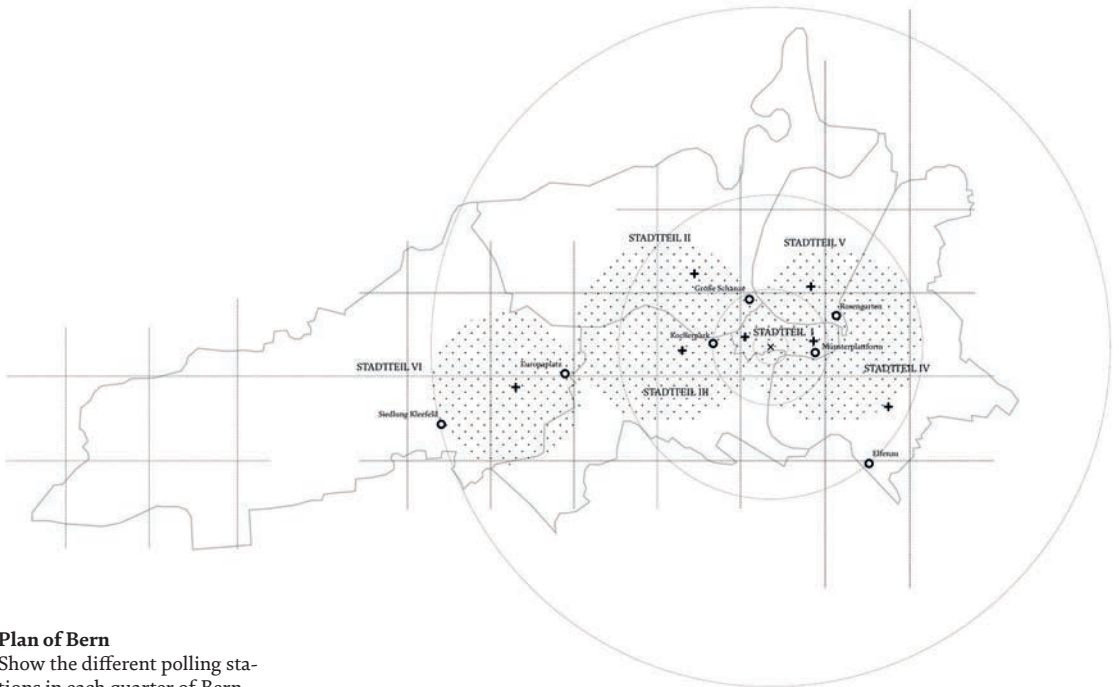
☐ Ladder



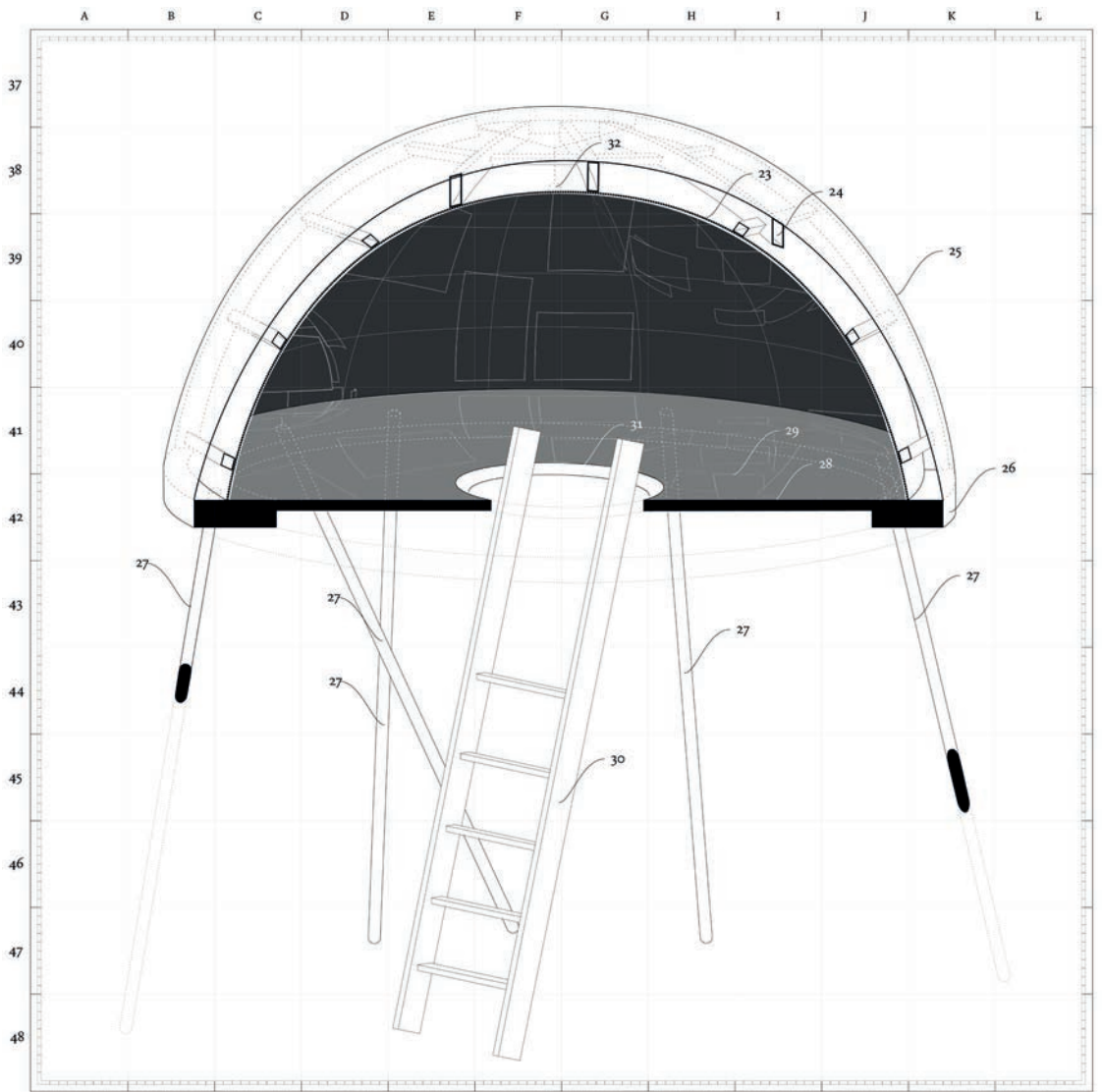
☐ Shelves

Taking the city of Berne as an example to illustrate the principle of the choice of locations, we were looking at communal polling stations and interjacent recreational spaces like public parks and squares. But as one can not know every city, the idea is to crowd source this part of the project and to include the municipality and the community at this point that knows best where people gather because in addition to the function of informing the participants, the satellites should provide possibilities for meeting and encourage people to socialise.

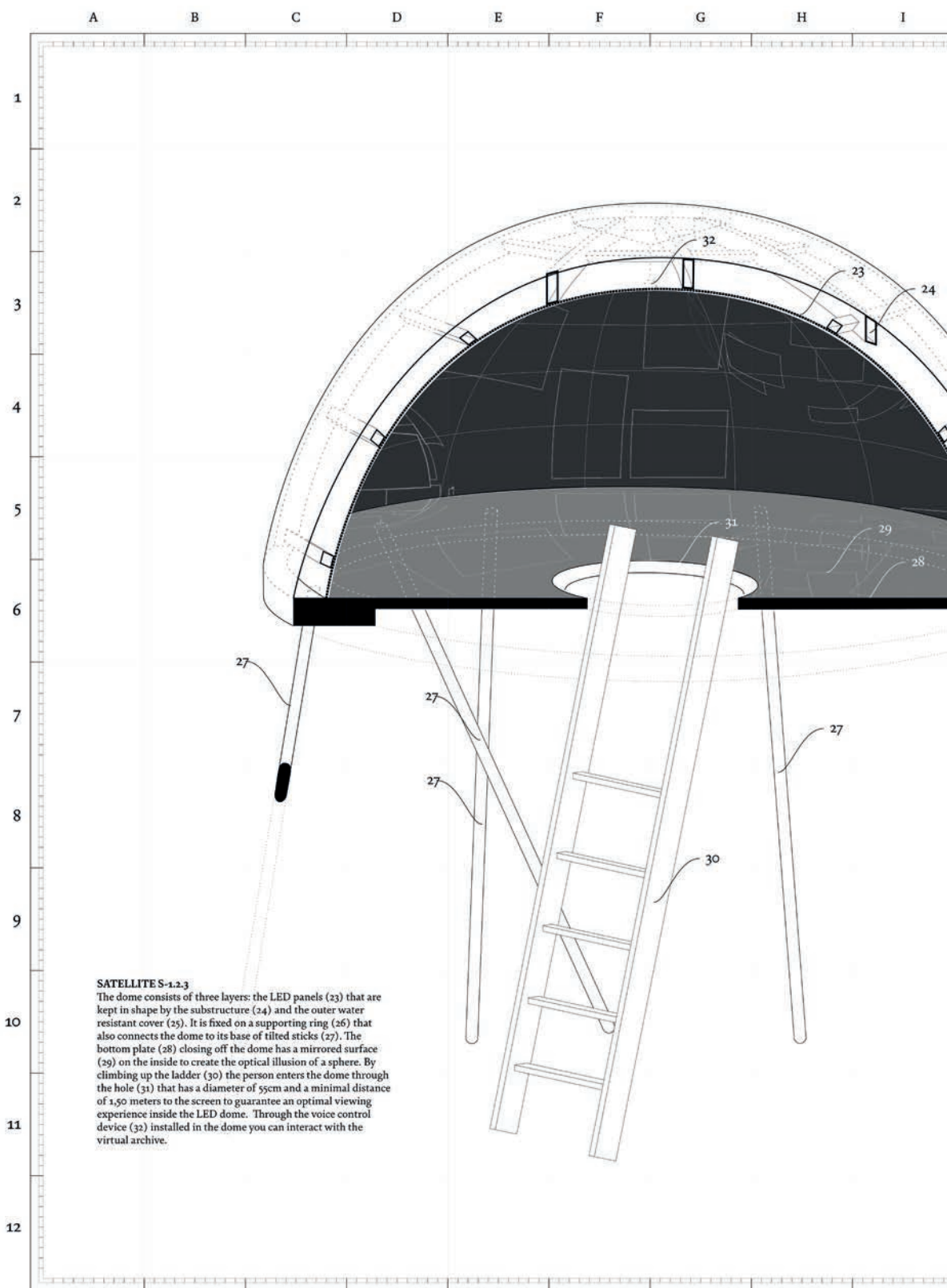
To generate adapted typologies to the context and keeping the main idea of the immersive information, we created a catalogue of different sizes, base structures, and interactions that the commune can choose from. The aim is to offer a response that is closer to the urban situation, while maintaining a unity in the set of satellites.



If we look closer to the satellite, the dome is composed of 3 layers: the LED panels (23), the substructure (24) that keeps in shape the LED panels and the outer water-resistant cover (26). This installation is fixed on a supporting ring that also connects the dome to its base of tilted sticks (27). The bottom plate (28) closing off the dome, has a mirrored surface (29) on the inside to create the optical illusion of a sphere. By climbing up the ladder (30), the person enters the dome through the hole (31) that has a diameter of 55cm and a minimal distance of 1,50 meters to the screen to guarantee an optimal viewing experience inside the LED dome. Through the voice control device (32) installed in the dome, you can interact and navigate into the virtual archive.



Perspective section
 Show the interaction space
 dedicate for the virtual archive

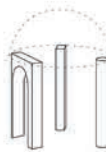
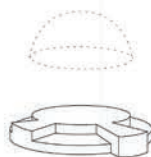


SATELLITE S-1.2.3

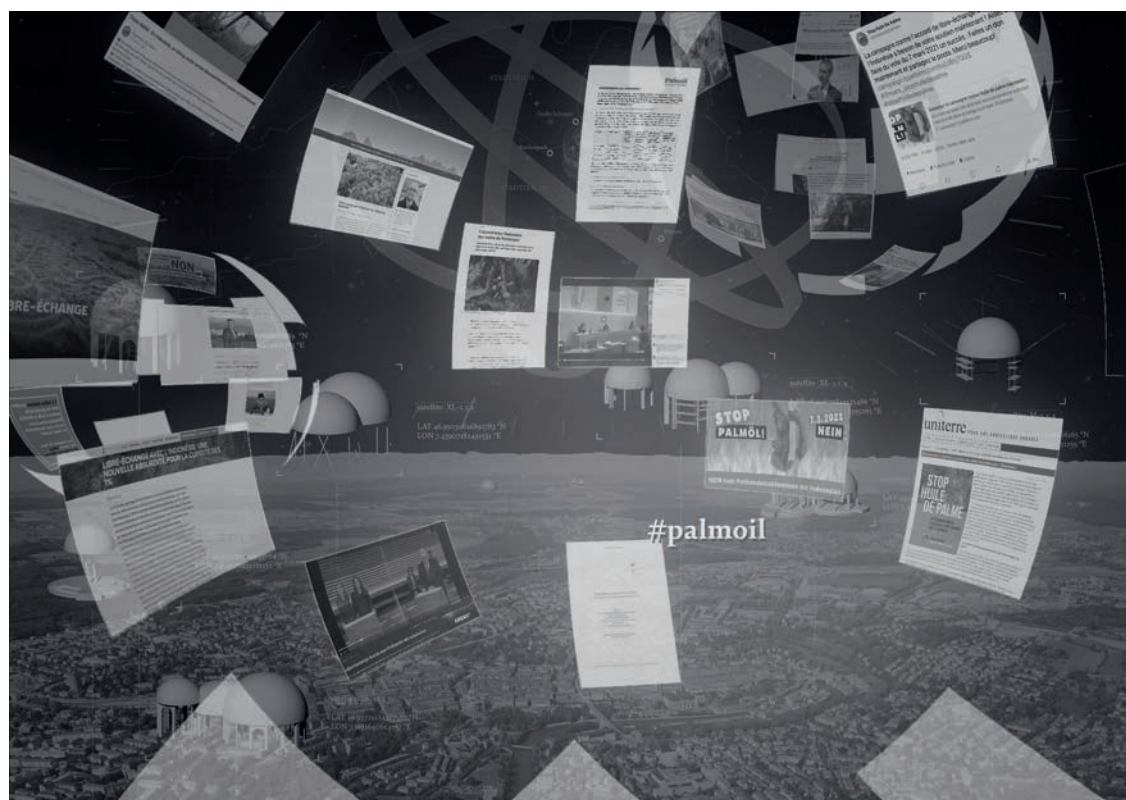
The dome consists of three layers: the LED panels (23) that are kept in shape by the substructure (24) and the outer water resistant cover (25). It is fixed on a supporting ring (26) that also connects the dome to its base of tilted sticks (27). The bottom plate (28) closing off the dome has a mirrored surface (29) on the inside to create the optical illusion of a sphere. By climbing up the ladder (30) the person enters the dome through the hole (31) that has a diameter of 55cm and a minimal distance of 1,50 meters to the screen to guarantee an optimal viewing experience inside the LED dome. Through the voice control device (32) installed in the dome you can interact with the virtual archive.

BUILD-YOUR-OWN SATELLITE

It's your satellite! Choose the size of dome, degree of immersion, the kind of base and possibilities of interaction that you think fits best for your community!

DOME...☐ S☐ M☐ L☐ XL**IMMERSION...**☐ Head☐ Upper body**BASE...**☐ Pillars☐ Sticks☐ Shapes☐ Suspended**ADDITIONAL INTERACTIONS...**☐ Platform☐ Lighting☐ Ladder☐ Shelves

*For the immersion and the additional interactions you can also pick multiple options.



superposition
virtual data scape and physical
satellite network

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