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critic|all

V International Conference
on Architecture Design & Criticism

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DIGITAL PROCEEDINGS
Delft 10-11 October

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INDEX

- 01 **Presentation**
- 02 **Call for Papers**
- 03 **Conference Program**
- 04 **Index of selected papers**
- 05 **Papers**

01 Presentation

This 5th edition of Critic|all Conference consolidates the initiative that the Architectural Design Department of the Madrid School of Architecture at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (ETSAM-UPM) started ten years ago to provide an international forum for architectural criticism.

The Conference enhances its scope as a place for knowledge production from which to convene relevant voices around the proposed topic at each edition. This time, with a joint event co-organized with the Department of Architecture of the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment at the Delft University of Technology (BK-TU Delft).

We would like to thank all participants for their work and trust, as well as the members of the Scientific Committee for their effort and commitment.

We want to reinforce the idea contained in the conference's name. Critic|all is a *call on criticism*, and also a *call for all*. An appointment that, beyond the scope of each edition, we hope will be able to reinforce a more general debate on the role of architecture in the present context.

Silvia Colmenares
Director of Critic|all

02

Call for Papers

e(time)ologies or the changing meaning of architectural words

The study of the origin and history of words has played a central role in the recurrent search for a deep, allegedly forgotten, meaning of architecture. The strikingly persistent and often problematic influence of Martin Heidegger's *Bauen Wohnen Denken* proves the fascination of architects with the ancestral power of words. The same fascination explains the equally recurrent urge to explore new meanings and invent new terms in architecture, in order to alleviate the weight of old cultural prejudices and connotations. Hence, etymological lines extend in two opposite time directions: one pointing to roots and sources, the other to future visions and transformations. Architectural thought oscillates between the illusory stability of conventional, present meanings, the mystery of remote, often obscure, connotations, and the poetic, creative drive of language invention. Choosing between communication (order) and noise (entropy), the opposite terms used by Umberto Eco, becomes a typically architectural problem, one which relates both to words and forms, terms and materials.

The heavy architecture-is-a-language fever of the 1960s is long overcome. Robin Evans' "all things with conceptual dimension are like language, as all grey things are like elephants" might suffice to prevent its return. However, the multiplication and transformation of architectural words has probably accelerated since then, pushed by the development of competitive research production. In fact, every research problem is, at its core, a problem of language, of word use and word definition. Research on the contemporary urban and architectural condition can be no exception.

Meaningful arguments about the changing meaning of architectural words need to address the role of language in the description of current matters and realities as well as its potential to unchain innovative perspectives and actions. New situations call for new terms as much as new terms provoke new situations. Today's interface of architecture with other disciplines is exemplary in this sense. The growing need to establish meaningful communication between experts from different fields fosters both codification and distortion of language, the homologation of terms and its expansion through translation and borrowing. In the first case, the descriptive precision is favoured to produce an objective (codified) system, whereas misunderstandings, metaphors and inaccuracies can lead to the generation of new knowledge and actions in the second. Such complexities are especially evident in the terminology emerging from practice-based or design-based research. In fact, the translation between visual and verbal signs, which is at the core of architectural practice, tends to obscure the distinction between descriptions and actions.

While the transdisciplinary context might certainly lead to an intensified look, in the last decades architecture has engaged in a process of expansion and adjustment led, in part, by new combinations of old keywords (ecology, landscape, urbanism, infrastructure, logistics...). Beyond disciplinary discourses, contemporary debates addressing the social, ecological and political connotations of architecture are providing a new set of critical words. Adjectives ("post-anthropocentric", "non-human", "inclusive", "transcultural") names ("decolonization", "decarbonization") and phrases ("climate change", "race and gender identity"...), have gained increasing visibility over the last two decades, both to inform and transform architecture's critical thinking. The proliferation of prefixes in many of them (post-, de-, trans-), denotes the urge to build new words and concepts from existing materials, pushed by the speed of contemporary culture. The problem of meaning persistence and change, but also of the tacit positions inscribed in words, can be exemplified by the crucial differences between "post-colonization" and "decolonization".

These and other terms are generated by a sequence of adjustments and oppositions, distortions and borrowings. The study of such processes, not in strict etymological terms but in a broader sense including the complex relations between words, practices, disciplines, is key to unveil the cultural and ideological positions behind current architectural debates. We propose to carry out this critique as a tool to explore today's emerging terminologies, and the ones to come.

The 5th edition of Critic|all Conference welcomes contributions that critically address the uses and misuses, the creation and wearing, the transformation and timeliness of the words with which architecture is – or has been – described, historized or updated through time. We expect interpretive work that draws new relations between words, concepts, things and practices, not strict etymological studies.

The most basic structure should present the expression or word under scrutiny, explain the reasons that justify the choice, formulate new interpretations or perspectives stemming from it, support these with arguments in the main body and bring the paper to a conclusion.

03

Conference
Program

TUESDAY 10-10-2023

All schedule indicates local time in Delft, NL (UTC/GMT +2 hours)

	09:15 - 09:30	Welcome and Presentation
panel #1 Revisited Terms	09:30 - 11:00	Faculteit Bouwkunde TU Delft Berlagezaal 1
Elisa Monaci Università Iuav di Venezia, Italy	09:35	Kitsch. Learning from Ordinary Dreams of Architecture
Francesca Gotti Politecnico di Milano, Italy	09:50	Critical Spatial Practices: Inhabiting an Ever-changing Term
Jana Culek Delft University of Technology, Netherlands University of Rijeka, Croatia	10:05	(Re)Defining Utopia. The Changing Concept of an Ideal World
Carla Molinari (1) and Marco Spada (2) (1) Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom (2) University of Suffolk, United Kingdom	10:20	Past and Future of Townscape. For a Humane Urbanism (*)
Session Chair: Marcos Pantaleón Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain	10:35 - 11:00	Discussion
Welcome by BK Dean Dick van Gameren	11:00	Berlagezaal 2
Coffee Break	11:00 - 11:30	Berlagezaal 2
panel #2 Modern Genealogies	11:30 - 13:00	Berlagezaal 1
J. Igor Fardin and Richard Lee Peragine Politecnico di Torino, Italy	11:35	The promise(s) of sustainability
Cássio Carvalho and Alexandra Alegre Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal	11:50	Visions on Democratic Architecture
Frederico Costa Universidade Estadual de Campinas & Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo, Brazil	12:05	Nostalgia for Backwardness. Investigating the Persistent Influence of Modernity on Brazilian Contemporary Architecture
Öykü Şimşek Istanbul Technical University, Turkey	12:20	Vulnerable architecture as a/n (im)material assemblage
Session Chair: Heidi Sohn Delft University of Technology, Netherlands	12:35 - 13:00	Discussion
Lunch Break	13:00 - 14:00	Berlagezaal 2
panel #3 Situated Terms	14:00 - 16:00	Berlagezaal 1
Mohammad Sayed Ahmad (1) & Munia Hweidi (2) (1) Tohoku University, Japan (2) Sophia University, Japan	14:05	Space, Makan, Kūkan. Phenomenology of Space through Etymology
Khevna Modi CEPT University, India Carnegie Mellon University, USA	14:20	Word, Associations, and Worldviews. A case of pol Architecture of Ahmedabad (*)
Marine Zorea Kyoto Institute of Technology, Japan Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Israel	14:35	Speaking of Collective Dining. The Spatial, Social and Semiotic Realities of the Kibbutz Dining Room
Lola Lozano Architectural Association, UK	14:50	Redistribution: Domestic space and Land Sharing in Mexico City's urban centre
Hanxi Wang Cornell University, USA University College London, UK	15:05	HOME-steading. Subversions, Reversions, and Diversions of the Moral Right to Space

Session Chair: Janina Gosseye Delft University of Technology, Netherlands	15:20 - 16:00	Discussion
<i>Coffee Break</i>	16:00 - 16:30	Berlagezaal 2
panel #4 Expanded Meanings	16:30 - 18:30	Berlagezaal 1
Clarissa Duarte and Mariana Magalhães Costa Université Jean Jaurès (UT2J), France	16:35	From sustainable development to sustainable (urban) engagement: The evolution of a concept
Haitam Daoudi Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain	16:50	A relational approach to performance. Composition of meaning through Price and Ábalos
Grayson Bailey Leibniz Universität Hannover, Germany Association for the Promotion of Cultural Practice in Berlin, Germany	17:05	Architecture / architectural
Zeynep Soysal Atılım University, Turkey	17:20	Platform: as an Architectural Ecotone Transtemporal
Maria Kouvari and Regine Hess ETH Zurich, Switzerland	17:35	Unlocking Time in the Architectural Discourse
Session Chair: Alejandro Campos Delft University of Technology, Netherlands	17:50 - 18:30	Discussion
<i>Dinner</i>	19:00 - 21:30	Huszár, Delft

(*) presenting remotely

(**) by express desire of the author the full article is not included in these digital minutes

WEDNESDAY 11·10·2023

All schedule indicates local time in Delft, NL (UTC/GMT +2 hours)

panel #5 Projective Language	09:00 - 11:00	Berlagezaal 1
Cathelijne Nuijsink Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA	09:05	Redefining Architecture from an Undecidable 'Anybody'. The Anybody Conference in Buenos Aires, 1996 (**)
Caterina Padoa Schioppa Sapienza University of Rome, Italy	09:20	Composting Death. Towards a Body Sublimation
Federico Broggin and Annalisa Metta University of RomaTre, Italy	09:35	Mundus. Designing landscape as wholeness, thickness, and fertility
Silvia Calderoni CIRSDe, Interdisciplinary Centre for Research and Studies on Women and Gender, Italy	09:50	Architecture, transfeminism, queerness: reimagining the urban space
Marco Spada (1) and Carla Molinari (2) (1) University of Suffolk, United Kingdom (2) Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom	10:05	Industrial Pastoralism. Post-productive arcadias in machine-modified landscapes
Session Chair: Mariana Wilderom Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil	10:20 - 11:00	Discussion
<i>Coffee Break</i>	11:00 - 11:30	Berlagezaal 2
Keynote Lecture Albena Yaneva	11:30 - 12:30	Berlagezaal 1 Don't Fly, Don't Jump: Critical Proximity in Architectural Research
<i>Lunch Break</i>	12:30 - 13:30	Berlagezaal 2
panel #6 Translated Terms	13:30 - 15:30	Berlagezaal 1
Xuerui Wang Tongji University, China	13:35	The Term "Architectural Art" in the 1950s Chinese Architectural Theory. A Semantic Transplantation (*)
Miho Nakagawa University of East London, United Kingdom	13:50	Analysing English translation of ma interpretations between the 1960s and 80s (**)
Mustapha El Moussaoui Free University of Bolzano, Italy	14:05	Going Back Home/House. Unravelling Linguistic and Existential Differences
Marcela Aragüez IE University, Spain	14:20	From Kankyō to Environment to Enbairamento. A Mutating Concept Between Intermedia Art and Architecture in Post-War Japan
Ye Chen Nagoya Institute of Technology, Japan	14:35	Comparison of Jiàngòu and Kekkō. Differences in Terminology Translations of Tectonic Between China and Japan in <i>Studies in Tectonic Culture</i>
Session Chair: Marcos L. Rosa Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil	14:50 - 15:30	Discussion
<i>Coffee Break</i>	15:30 - 16:00	Berlagezaal 2
Round Table	16:00 - 17:15	Berlagezaal 1
<i>Break</i>	17:15 - 17:45	
Keynote Lecture Adrian Forty	17:45 - 18:45	Oostserre Words and Buildings Revisited
<i>Closing Ceremony</i>	18:45 - 19:45	Oostserre

04

Index of selected papers

Authors	pag.	Papers
Aragüez, Marcela	20	From Kankyō to Environment to Enbairamento A Mutating Concept Between Intermedia Art and Architecture in Post-War Japan
Bailey, Grayson	30	Architecture / <i>architectural</i>
Batuk, Aybike Kökner, Sait Ali	38	Atmosphere becomes Atmospher(ic)
Bissett, Tara	47	Human Scale: The Vicissitudes of the Standard
Broggini, Federico Metta, Annalisa	56	Mundus: Designing landscape as wholeness, thickness, and fertility
Calderoni, Silvia	65	Architecture, Transfeminism, Queerness: Reimagining the urban space
Carvalho, Cássio Alegre, Alexandra	74	Visions on <i>Democratic Architecture</i>
Charitonidou, Marianna	82	Mobility Justice and Big Data in urban planning Towards an ecological approach to space of flows
Chen, Ye	95	Comparison of Jiàngòu and Kekkō Differences in Terminology Translations of Tectonic Between China and Japan in <i>Studies in Tectonic Culture</i>
Cortés Sánchez, Luis Miguel	105	Reima Pietilä and the Morphology of Architectural Language
Costa, Frederico	116	Nostalgia for Backwardness: Investigating the Persistent Influence of Modernity on Brazilian Contemporary Architecture
Čulek, Jana	125	(Re)Defining Utopia: The Changing Concept of an Ideal World
Daoudi, Haitam	134	A relational approach to performance: Composition of meaning through Price and Ábalos
Duarte, Clarissa Magalhães Costa, Mariana	143	From sustainable development to sustainable (urban) engagement: The evolution of a concept
Fardin, J. Igor Peragine, Richard Lee	154	The promise(s) of sustainability
Gotti, Francesca	163	Critical Spatial Practices: Inhabiting an Ever-changing Term
Kouvari, Maria Hess, Regine	173	Transtemporal: Unlocking Time in the Architectural Discourse
Lozano Lara, Lola	183	Redistribution: Domestic space and Land Sharing in Mexico City's urban centre

- Malfona, Lina** 194 Mannerism as a Critical Tool: Projecting the VSBA Method into the Future
- Modi, Khevna** 203 Words, Associations, and Worldviews: A case of pol Architecture of Ahmedabad
- Molinari, Carla Spada, Marco** 215 Past and Future of Townscape: For a Humane Urbanism
- Monaci, Elisa** 223 Kitsch: Learning from Ordinary Dreams of Architecture
- El Moussaoui, Mustapha** 233 Going Back Home/House: Unravelling Linguistic and Existential Differences
- Mucciolo, Laura** 239 Panic: Domestic Space as Imaginal Architecture
- Padoa Schioppa, Caterina** 250 Composting Death: Towards a Body Sublimation
- Parisi, Luisa** 260 Notes for an androgyned architecture: Gender migrations in contemporary architecture
- Sánchez Tappan, Juan Carlos** 266 P.V. (Dromo)logies: From the Ultracity to the Hypercity
- Sarica, Sezin** 276 Between Bild and Bildung: A Sample of Re-reading the Making of Architectural Knowledge
- Sayed Ahmad, Mohammad Hweidi, Munia** 289 Space, Makan, Kūkan Phenomenology of Space through Etymology
- Şimşek, Öykü** 299 Vulnerable architecture as a/n (im)material assemblage
- Soysal, Zeynep** 308 Platform As an Architectural Ecotone
- Spada, Marco Molinari, Carla** 316 Industrial Pastoralism: Post-productive arcadias in machine-modified landscapes
- Valchera Flaminia** 327 The border that becomes a frontier: A new way to inhabit the edge
- Wang, Hanxi** 333 HOME-steading: Subversions, Reversions, and Diversions of the Moral Right to Space
- Wang, Xuerui** 344 The Term "Architectural Art" in the 1950s Chinese Architectural Theory: A Semantic Transplantation
- Yılmaz, İmge** 352 Renouncing or Reinventing Scale: A critical inquiry into environmental totalities
- Zorea, Marine** 359 Speaking of Collective Dining: The Spatial, Social and Semiotic Realities of the Kibbutz Dining Room

05 Papers

Bibliography

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Biography

J. Igor Fardin is a doctoral student at the Politecnico di Torino (Italy) in the program of Urban and Regional Development. After studying contemporary history in Milan and Paris and writing journalistic articles concerning spatial issues for years, he decided to start a PhD dedicated to the study of play as a specific form of spatial use that allows to uncover the radical potential of a series of spatial practices and figures like skateboarding and the practice of Italian designer and artist Ugo La Pietra. His interests include critical theory, contemporary philosophy and psychoanalysis as well as art, design and architecture history and theory.

Richard Lee Peragine is a trained architect and PhD candidate at the Dipartimento Interateneo di Scienze, Progetto e Politiche del Territorio (DIST) of the Politecnico di Torino, Italy. His doctoral work looks at the relationship between sovereignty and the notion of emptiness in the northwesternmost corner of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as a way to address the ethics of the project of architecture. His research interests include the intersections between architecture, political philosophy and critical theory. Before joining DIST, he studied at the Dipartimento di Architettura di Ferrara and at the Faculdade de Arquitetura da Universidade de Lisboa, and then worked in architectural studios in London, Bologna, Berlin and Brussels.

Critical Spatial Practices Inhabiting an Ever-changing Term

Gotti, Francesca

Politecnico di Milano, DASTU, Milano, Italy, francescac.gotti@polimi.it

Abstract

In her 2006 publication, "Art and Architecture: a Place Between," Jane Rendell formally introduces the concept of Critical Spatial Practices (CSP), which encompasses projects operating at the intersection of theory and practice, the public and private spheres, and art and architecture. Rendell's definition encompasses both contemporary and historical projects and delves into discussions on space and place in cultural geography, dialectic techniques, and feminist spatial construction. Since Rendell's work, other practitioners and theorists have expanded upon this term. Markus Miessen, for instance, has dedicated an educational program at Frankfurt's Städelschule to CSP and, alongside Nikoalus Hirsch, developed a book series in 2011 that invites various guests to explore the ethical and political implications and conflicts within their practice. Prior to them, Helen Liggett and David C. Perry addressed the same topic in their 1995 book, which examined the relationship between urban practices and capitalist development. While Liggett and Perry's definition draws on political science, geography, and urban studies, their research carries equally important political implications.

Within the discourse on the politics of design, this paper aims to discuss the evolution of the term CSP by comparing its diverse definitions and the way the boundaries between disciplines are being blurred, or shifted.

The paper explores the potential to establish the term as a tool for architects that aim to critically challenge the protocols of their practice and their political responsibilities. It reflects on the development of interdisciplinary, hybrid, and activist approaches, distancing themselves from established norms while validating the necessity of their work.

Key words: Critical Spatial Practices, Politics, Recognition, Spatial Turn.

1. New Words for New Worlds

The discourse surrounding counter-practices and dissidence in architecture has ignited a vibrant debate since the 1960s. With the emergence of movements and influential figures advocating for a disruptive approach to established practices, new mediums and spheres of intervention have been explored. Towards the end of the 20th century, the imposition of the globalized market led to a rapid economic boom followed by subsequent political and economic crises. These events triggered a strong reaction among architectural practitioners, who began developing alternative and self-generated projects that challenge the established system.

During this same period, terms such as tactical urbanism, grassroots architecture, and DIY architecture emerged, alongside expressions like pop-up urbanism, urban acupuncture, and guerrilla urbanism. These terms have contributed to the ongoing discourse on spatial counter-practices that emerged in previous decades. However, it is important to note that they often reflect an informal perspective that may not always be precise. They are used to describe practices primarily based on spontaneous interventions, elevating the role of non-pedigreed designers and architects. These practices are developed by citizens leveraging local knowledge and social relationships to reclaim the "right to the city" and re-appropriate public spaces.¹

Nevertheless, this category often includes practices that fall in-between the realms of spontaneity and mainstream. These practices are informed by professional knowledge and blur the boundaries between bottom-up and top-down approaches, they actively experiment with new modes of spatial production through interdisciplinary approaches.

Within the context of contemporary counter-practices, a new definition has emerged that pertains to professional practices with design and space at their core: critical spatial practices. This term, closely associated with design and art, emphasises a critical approach to professional practice and recognises the need to establish new modes of action and production. The epistemological debate, preceding the exploration of this new approach to the profession, focused on reimagining the context of intervention—the urban space—from a sociological perspective. This approach builds upon the interdisciplinary field of "spatial theory."

In their seminal book *Spatial Practices - Critical Explorations in Social/Spatial Theory*, published in 1995,² Helen Liggett and David C. Perry compile various essays that challenge the very notion of "social space." These essays question the spatiality of political, economic, and physical relationships that constitute cities, in the wake of the "spatial turn" occurred between the end of the 80s beginning of the 90s across all kinds of academic disciplines. The book is the first to openly connect the urban planning debate with the works of spatial scholars such as Michel De Certeau (*The Practice of Everyday Life*), Michel Foucault (*Discipline and Punish*), and Henry Lefebvre (*The Production of Space*). As stated in the book, Liggett and Perry's definition of "spatial practices" as "spatial patterns of everyday life" derives from Lefebvre's theory of space, and takes into account his notion of space as process where "spatial practices" are distinguished from, but related to, "representations of space" (professional practices) and "representational spaces" (symbolic meanings embodied in space).³ The authors draw from De Certeau's perspective that privileges "everyday operations", to question how these are joined to "abstract modes of representation", thus promoting a self-critical approach for planners to take part into processes of space making without taking on an abstract existence.⁴ Finally, Liggett and Perry's theory points out the role of power relations between actors in the production of space, building upon Foucault's concept for whom professional practices both exercise power and are objects of the exercise of power.⁵ The contributors to the book span diverse fields such as Political Science, Politics of Racial Representation, Geography, Urban Planning, and Architecture. The book is founded on the assumption that interdisciplinary research and recognising the role of physical space in shaping, maintaining, and challenging social life are crucial in "enabling work in the in-between areas of a theoretical and practical world conditioned by deindustrialised urban markets".⁶ The essays in the collection prompt research to consider new questions of action and representation, exploring topics such as the negation of the city as a coherent entity through physical design patterns, the relationship between the representation of urban problems and corresponding policies, and the racial urban politics embodied by cultural spaces. The collection originated in 1990 as the Albert A. Levin lecture series "Representing the City" at Cleveland State University.

Since then, the epistemological debate on spatial practices has expanded to include gender, intergenerational, racial, and environmental studies. This expansion is exemplified by research such as "Spatial Practices" (2006-2022), an interdisciplinary series in Cultural History, Geography, and Literature edited by Brill (Amsterdam).⁷ The debate has also linked theoretical representations to tactical actions from the realms of activism, art, design, and architecture. This is where the term "critical" joins "spatial practices." "Critical spatial practices" is a broad term used to identify professional experiences that question both their contribution to the representation of social space and their own definition as practices.

The term "critical spatial practices" first emerged in the early 2000s, and since then, numerous scholars and practitioners have contributed different definitions, emphasising political engagement and the strong

hybridisation of disciplines. Among the scholars who have extensively dedicated their research and practice to the debate on critical spatial practices, as well as promoting the work of practitioners falling under this umbrella, are Jane Rendell and Markus Miessen.

From the comparison of the definitions offered by the two scholars, emerges an intense negotiation of the term critical spatial practices, nourished by a wide spectrum of contributions, leaving with an open ended scenario of actions.

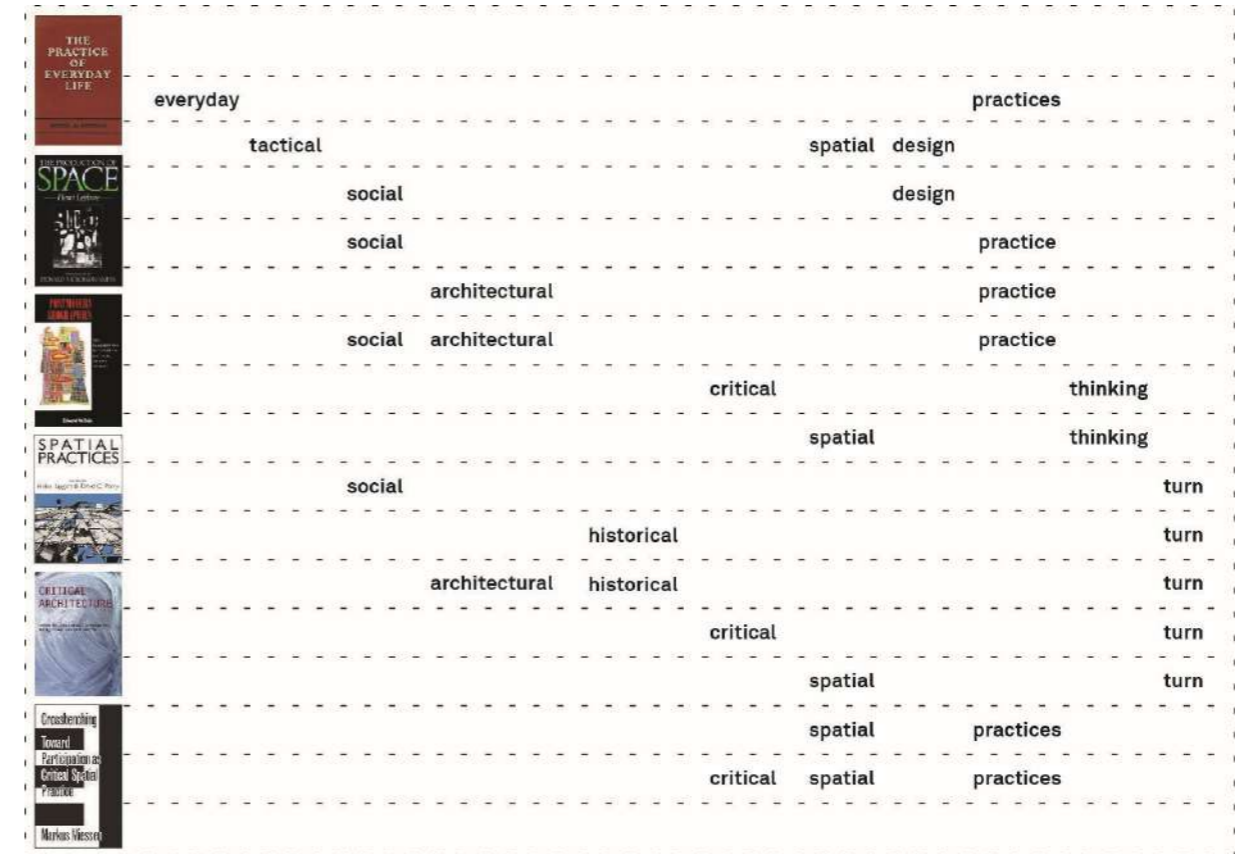


Fig. 1

2. Between Art and Architecture

The interdisciplinary realm of "spatial theory" has been enriched by multiple contributions from the fields of geography, anthropology, cultural studies, history, art, and architecture. In this context, Jane Rendell has particularly emphasised the relationship between art and architecture, with "between" serving as a key interpretive lens for understanding the discourse on spatial practices.

Jane Rendell, an architectural historian, cultural critic, and art writer, currently holds the position of Professor of Critical Spatial Practices at the Bartlett School of Architecture (UCL). Her work occupies a unique space that straddles art and architecture, theory and practice. This positioning is eloquently described in her book "Art and Architecture: A Place Between,"⁸ which expands upon and reevaluates her earlier edited volume from 1999, titled "A Place Between."⁹

The contemporary practices examined in "Art and Architecture: A Place Between" are situated within the historical framework of minimalism, conceptual art, land art, and performance art movements of the 1960s and 1970s. These practices often demonstrate a profound engagement with architecture and public space, prioritising artistic expressions over strictly architectural ones. The research presented in the book offers architecture an opportunity for introspection, prompting reflection on its own operational modes. Rendell emphasises that architecture has traditionally lacked the ability to critically reflect on diverse theoretical approaches, their value, and their relationship with the objects they engage with, as well as the intricate dynamics between theory and practice. This architectural introspection is linked to Rendell's earlier work, particularly her book "InterSections: Architectural History and Critical Theory," co-edited with Iain Borden.¹⁰ In that book, they explore the potential for self-reflective modes of thought within architectural practices.

Throughout her investigation, Rendell navigates projects that transcend their physical boundaries, encountering artists, architects, and collaborative groups involved in various critical endeavours ranging from performance art to urban design.¹¹ These endeavours engage with both the social and aesthetic realms while exploring the spatial aspects of interdisciplinary processes. Rendell's conceptual framework for defining critical spatial practices draws from the theoretical ideas of both Henry Lefebvre

and Edward Soja. From Lefebvre's "Production of Space", Rendell borrows the interpretation of one of the key problems with studies of space: the fact that these studies usually understand the social and the spatial field in a one-way relationship, rather than adopting the idea that space has an equal impact on the social, that the organisation of space expresses social relationship while reacting back. Drawing from Lefebvre's socio-spatial dialectic, Soja formulates a trialectical thinking introducing in this relationship the dimension of time.¹² Building upon Soja's triad, Rendell organises the investigated practices into three distinct categories.

Exploring practices that challenge the spatial dimension, Rendell highlights the contributions of art critics such as Nick Kaye, Alex Coles, Miwon Kwon, James Clifford, and Rosalind Krauss, who curate practices primarily developed by artists outside the confines of traditional gallery spaces. In this section, Rendell lists artists whose practice often encompass the concept of the 'non-site' and frequently appear in 'off-site' programs, transforming places into "spaces of social critique".¹³ To mention one, Rendell recalls the art-piece "A-Z Cellular Compartment Units" (2001) by Andrea Zittel: the artist built a living unit inside a warehouse soon to be demolished (to leave space for luxury residential blocks), in Birmingham, commissioned by Ikon Gallery, briefly inhabiting it and later opening it to the public. The artwork did not point at mimicking an actual living unit but it rather aimed at questioning the need for living space, and the difficulties of sharing accommodation.¹⁴

From the architectural realm, Rendell mentions projects by designers who embody a critical approach to architecture through their innovative use of resources, materials, exploration of atmospheric processes, and deconstruction of architectural space; nevertheless, she questions the ambiguity of the relationship between their theoretical and practical projects and examines the extent to which their work can genuinely be considered critical.¹⁵ As a positive example, she reports the firm Décoster&Rahm: their approach seeks to deconstruct the spatiality of architecture by creating atmospheres that trigger biological processes, focusing on "physiological responses of the occupants in the programming of the space". Their critical approach lies in the paradoxical attitude of producing a functionalist aesthetic while negating any material pleasure, promoting senses and perception over material presence.¹⁶

In terms of the temporality, Rendell draws on Walter Benjamin's perspectives on history, allegory, and montage: she identifies those artistic practices that align with his theories, and that emphasise the ability of artworks to interrupt established historical narratives.¹⁷ One of the cited practitioner of this category, is Anya Gallaccio: not only the artist experiments with the non-site, exhibiting in former factories and in the open landscape, but she explores the ephemeral and transformative dimension of materials and objects, thus triggering in the viewer the perception of time and transition. With "Two Sisters" (1998) Gallaccio intervened in Minerva Basin, Hull, by placing a column of chalk quarried locally, that was gradually eroded over five months by the waves and tides, offering a reflection on the erosion of the coastline.¹⁸

From the architectural field, Rendell cites examples of critical interventions as they explore notions of duration, emptiness, transience, and incompleteness.¹⁹ Lacaton & Vassal are among the most representative practices: analysing their work for the Palais de Tokyo (1999), Rendell outlines a dual approach to time, expressed by the treatment of the ruin and by the interaction with transient uses. On one hand, the architects emphasise the effect of time on the building rather than hiding it, and on the other they produce a space that welcomes metamorphosis defined by how people move around it.²⁰

In terms of social interactions, Rendell reflects on the challenges posed by commissioned public art referencing the work of critics such as Judith Butler, by participatory projects defined by Joseph Beuys' concept of "social sculpture", and by nomadic projects drawing on Rosi Braidotti's concept of "nomadic subject". This group emphasises the dialogic and relational value of art and architecture, focusing on the collaborations between architects and artists, and the complementary nature of ethical and aesthetic aspects of interventions, collecting examples of works that aim at empowering users.²¹ Initiatives that seek to connect artists and architects seem to be superficial fallacious, and Rendell on the contrary tends to promote in her discourse individual researchers. Rendell mentions, among others, artist Mierle Laderman Ukeles, who performs a series of gestures, by placing the users at the center of her actions. Choosing to perform without using any device as mediation, Ukeles represents a radical example of art as agent of empowerment.²²

The architectural projects never seem to completely satisfy the critical approach to the social dimension, as in these cases users are portrayed as passively engaged actors. Rendell, though, values deeply the practice of Public Works: in particular, she describes their "Park Products" (2004), a project realised for the Serpentine Gallery, where they have generated a series of device that would answer users' needs. What spurs Rendell's approval is the way the practice relinquishes control over the final work, empowering users to autonomously produce spatial solutions.²³

In summary, Rendell's book explores various practices from both the artistic and architectural realms that embody critical approaches to spatial, temporal, and social dimensions, challenging established norms and generating new perspectives on artistic and architectural interventions.

Rendell presents exemplary instances of what she considers critical spatial practices. Simultaneously, she argues that "criticism is a mode of critical spatial practice"²⁴ in and of itself, a mode she appropriates

in her own work and one she recognises in the endeavours of other theorists from the fields of art, philosophy, anthropology, history, and design. While the majority of the examples analysed emerge from the realm of art in its broader sense, Rendell asserts that artists are often more inclined to critically examine their own modes of intervention compared to architects.²⁵ The architectural practices she mentions as representative of a critical approach are relatively few, and their inclusion sometimes underscores their ambiguity or contradictions, highlighting the challenges faced when translating architectural theories into coherent spatial interventions. This weakens the development of a critical approach within architectural practice. The examples seem to be limited to the architecture of official firms - and do not take into consideration minor architectural practices (except for few cases); in addition, the approach developed by the architects listed poses a critical reflection that is actively shared with the many other professionals they collaborate with, an aspect that seems to be underestimated by Rendell. After this initial collection of examples, Rendell continued her investigation through various means. She has co-edited additional works, such as *Space, Place, Site: Critical Spatial Arts Practice*²⁶ and *Critical Architecture*,²⁷ where the debate on critical spatial practices is more closely tied to the field of architecture. This last publication promotes the idea that design and criticism should not be seen as separate entities within architectural discourse, acknowledging that practitioners often tend to favor an autonomous and oppositional approach, but she argues that architecture needs to reclaim its dual nature.

Her teaching practice, particularly at UCL since 2017 with the Situated Practice MA,²⁸ has contributed to the exploration of critical spatial practices, expanded through the development of a collaborative and ongoing digital atlas of contemporary practices.²⁹

Finally, Rendell has recently examined the ethical implications of practices as part of KNOW - Knowledge in Action for Urban Equality (2018-2022), a research project aimed at proposing an open access tool on policy and planning, exploring different ethical codes developed by various institutions, professional bodies, disciplinary groups, and research councils.³⁰



Fig. 2.

3. Between Nightmares and Cross-benching

According to Markus Miessen, Rendell's perspective on critical spatial practice presents a problematic interpretation. In this context, Rendell appears to give art a privileged position as a discipline that is more detached from economic and social concerns. Consequently, she suggests that art can provide architecture with an opportunity for critical reflection on cultural production. However, architecture is

depicted as contradictory and often lacking in criticality, being excessively reliant on market forces. In this regard, Rendell underestimates the ethical implications of architecture and the tangible responsibilities that this practice must undertake when realizing projects. Miessen questions whether the critical spatial practices described by Rendell might be perceived as unprofessional and neglectful of the consequences they produce.³¹

While acknowledging Rendell's fundamental contribution and sharing her reference theorists Lefebvre and de Certeau, Miessen shifts the focus from the artistic realm as an inspiration for critical culture to a deeper exploration of the architectural realm: his aim is not to contribute to the debate with a different definition of the term, but rather to bring out from alternative spatial practices those strongly informed by architectural culture, that could and should be referred to as critical. In doing so, he adopts the term critical spatial practice as a platform of self-criticism among architects, but also as a tool to reclaim visibility and recognition for those architectural practices acting since long applying a trans-disciplinary and issue-based approach.

In the same year when Rendell publishes her first catalogue of practices, Miessen collaborates with Shumon Basar on the publication *Did Someone Say Participate? - An Atlas of Spatial Practices*.³² This collection of essays from various contributors aims to map participatory spatial practices and critically question the role of the architect as a creator, moving beyond the conceptualization of the crisis within the architectural profession.³³ The book showcases practices that transcend disciplinary boundaries and share an interest in understanding, producing, and altering spatial conditions as a "prerequisite for identifying the broader reaches of political reality".³⁴ The presented contemporary spatial practices originate from self-initiated cultural initiatives developed in the 1990s, that were disappointed by self-referential design firms promoting formalism and were shocked by subsequent political, economic, and environmental events.³⁵ These practices engage in experimental research, critically examine their own discipline, investigate conflicts, stimulate alternative debates, and they often lead to self-generated projects, engage in political and educational programs, advocate for spatial rights and policy design, and manifest strong reactions of dissent against formal practices.³⁶ Miessen highlights the fundamental turn that occurred in spatial practices at the end of the 20th century, emphasizing the shift from specialization to mediation between expertises and the application of experimental research to engage with "transient conditions of urban society".³⁷ He also points out that the collection of essays around the term "spatial practice" does not introduce new terms but rather seeks to trace an existing phenomenon that significantly impacts contemporary space production: these practices are tactical, (in de Certeau terms), operating "from outside existing disciplinary networks".³⁸

In the introduction to the collection, Miessen and Basar explore some key words that summarise the shift in the understanding of spatial practices, namely control, empowerment, consensus, participant and tactics, and Basar makes a point regarding specifically the figure of the amateur, in relation to the professional. The main question that rises from this introduction regards who actually is in charge of the urban transformations and for whose interests architects actually operate.

Writer Matthew Murphy elaborates on this in his cutting-edge essay "Glimpses of a future architecture": referring to built architectures of detention camps, space stations, mental health centres, prisons, and contemporary flattering designed spaces, Murphy points out architecture's urgency to constantly perform "organisational and psychological functions", while ignoring its ethical implications, highlighting the important role assumed by architecture in increasing empathy.³⁹

Aligned with the vision of an architecture of empathy, Francesca Ferguson stresses the responsibility, and potential, of architects in responding to the economy of scarcity, through transitional interventions. Ferguson analyses the case of Volkpalast in Berlin, inhabited by a long-term project of negotiation carried out by architects and activists against reactionary supporters fighting for the reconstruction of the original facade. The social, cultural and caring activities developed by the "defenders of the Palast as a social and public space" represent the concrete construction of an alternative "dialogical, broad-based and generative" architecture, affecting deeply a shift in the design practice.⁴⁰

As one of the closing contributions, Miessen summarises the turn in the architectural practice towards a critical perspective as a consistent change, where the spatial practitioner stands as an enabler building alternatives against the grand narrative. And it calls to take action all practitioners, students, and researchers from a broad spectrum of disciplines "producing unpredictable results" far from being related to building skills.⁴¹

Following this publication, Miessen further delves into the topic of spatial practices, particularly focusing on the aspect of participation, through his tetralogy: "The Violence of Participation" (2007)⁴², "The Nightmare of Participation" (2010)⁴³, "Waking up from the Nightmare of Participation" (2011)⁴⁴, and "Crossbenching - Towards Participation as Critical Spatial Practice" (2016)⁴⁵.

While in the first two volumes deviates on the deepening of the meaning and implications of participation, in this latest book, Miessen turns back to defining spatial practices within the context of a "new culture of space"⁴⁶, as that range of actions, methods, and experiments with political connotations. They entail a substantial relationship between humans, objects, and their environment. Practice, or praxis, takes various forms, including immaterial products, and when associated with the term spatial, it signifies

something occurring in space that can have an impact on space. The term critical emphasizes the role of practices as modes of interpreting existing conditions and protocols, as well as their potential to intersect with related disciplines. Miessen formulates critical spatial practices as an alternative mode of practicing architecture, an attempt to alter the prevailing working conditions of architectural practice and question the market within which it operates. He assimilates this definition with that presented in the publication *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (2011)⁴⁷. In both cases, the approach to architecture entails the creation of "agonistic fields of encounter"⁴⁸, exploiting misunderstandings and failures as bases for experimentation. Conflicts and feedback become the ignition and core structures of critical spatial practices, with the practitioner assuming the role of a crossbencher who mediates and advocates by interpreting "situated problematics through a spatial framework"⁴⁹, an evolution of the concept of the practitioner-enabler, as elaborated previously. Miessen introduces the term crossbencher in relation to practices, politics, participation, democracy, and conflict, citing relevant research and projects such as Suhail Malik's lecture on research as practice (Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths, in 2006), Adam Curtis's publication *The Trap: What Happened to Our Dream of Freedom*,⁵⁰ Nicole Deitelhoff's work at the University of Frankfurt, the political role of Josef Fischer, and curator Maria Lind's essay "The Collaborative Turn."

Miessen's tetralogy on participation and crossbenching intersects with another editorial series titled "Critical Spatial Practices," co-edited with Nikolaus Hirsch and published by Sternberg Press. In the first issue of the series⁵⁰ in 2012, Miessen once again questions the definition of critical spatial practices, examining how their discursive and physical dimensions influence each other. The urgency to debate the term arose with the emergence of the Occupy Wall Street movement worldwide, highlighting the correlation between spatial changes and "political means of social congregation".⁵¹ Miessen reiterates the need for architecture to take responsibility for all negotiations and mediations performed by individuals and groups in space.

To promote a collective critical reflection on the production of space, the serie has been collecting since 2012 various contributions to reflect on specific topics for each single volume. These topics include consensus-driven formats of political decision-making, the relationship between roundabouts and revolutions, the intersections of mass population displacement and architecture, and the environmental disaster related to the Fukushima radioactive zone, among others. The series involves over sixty contributors, including David Adjaye and Axel John Wieder. Among others, in "consensus driven formats of political decision", Miessen reports a conversation with Chantal Mouffe (second volume, 2012), Eyal Weizman discuss the relationship between roundabouts and revolutions from the 1980s onward (sixth volume, 2015), Andrew Herscher informs on the "intersections of mass population displacement and architecture" (ninth volume, 2017), and the collaborative project "Don't Follow the Wind" narrates the environmental disaster related to Fukushima radioactive zone, narrated through (twelfth volume, 2021). The format of the series gives space to individual practices, from which diverse approaches emerge, equally oriented towards activism and politics, and equally treated as practices with a spatial implication: the role of the crossbencher is addressed through different tools and on different levels, stressing the transdisciplinary approach. In the issues the topics take on a temporal depth, with the aim of rooting contemporary spatial phenomena back into historical transformations.

Like Rendell, Miessen has promoted the debate on critical spatial practices in various spaces, teaching at different universities, such as holding the course "Architecture and Critical Spatial Practice" at the Städelschule in Frankfurt. He has also curated and produced exhibitions and workshops, including "Cultures of Assembly" for the City of Esch (ongoing).

4. Inhabiting an Ever-changing Term

Rendell and Miessen's collaborative efforts have brought together a diverse group of contributors who have shaped and inhabited different interpretations of critical spatial practices. These contributors, including Rendell and Miessen themselves, bring their own unique perspectives and approaches to the definition and understanding of critical spatial practices. While both Rendell and Miessen share a common emphasis on transdisciplinarity and an issue-based approach within the realm of critical spatial practices, their perspectives diverge significantly. Rendell delves into the necessity for artists and architects to embrace a critical mindset, with architects positioned somewhat less maturely in terms of critical thinking. This calls for collaboration and a heightened awareness of the impact they wield. Notably, architects stand to gain valuable insights from artists, who excel at broadening both their domain and linguistic capacities. On the other hand, Miessen broadens the very definition of the term, encompassing a wide array of practitioners, spanning professionals and even amateurs, across diverse fields beyond the confines of art and architecture. He underscores the potential for spatial transformation, particularly championed by those who unexpectedly and profoundly influence it. This extension signifies that spatial practices and their critical implications extend far beyond the conventional boundaries, highlighting the pivotal role played by various agents in reshaping our spatial experiences. The term has gained momentum and is increasingly embraced by scholars, designers, and activists, who actively contribute to its ongoing evolution. Their contributions serve to enrich the term's meanings,

connotations, and applications, extending its reach beyond its original geographic boundaries in Europe and North America. This growing interest in critical spatial practices also facilitates interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary collaborations, fostering the development of educational programs that bridge multiple fields.

Originally emerging from the field of geography and sociology, the term "spatial practices" has been appropriated by the realms of art and architecture, imbued with a critical dimension. However, its influence has now started to permeate other domains, such as marketing, social sciences, and cultural geographies. This expansion into various disciplines demonstrates the broad relevance and applicability of critical spatial practices as a concept that transcends disciplinary boundaries.

What sets critical spatial practice apart is its pragmatic and dynamic nature. It goes beyond reductionist categorizations like DIY, tactical, temporary, and informal, aiming to reclaim professional recognition for practices that engage in politically charged and site-specific interventions. It seeks to empower practitioners and advocate for political engagement by providing a framework for collective action and concrete institutional interventions. The term's significance extends beyond mere speculation on its etymology or a simple consensus on its meaning. It serves as a powerful tool that enables practitioners to challenge existing power structures and advocate for alternative ways of shaping space.

In her contribution to "Critical Practices in Architecture,"⁵² Rendell reflects on the efficacy of criticality in addressing contemporary challenges. She raises important questions about the potential of critical spatial practices to offer tangible alternatives beyond mere oppositional stances.⁵³ The ongoing application of the term and the increasing political resonance of the practices associated with it have the potential to demonstrate the effectiveness that Rendell questions. As the conversation around critical spatial practices continues to evolve, it is important to evaluate its impact and explore new possibilities for its application.

One forthcoming issue of the "Critical Spatial Practices" series, co-edited by Miessen, will feature a contribution by Charlotte Malterre-Barthes on the topic of a moratorium on new construction. While initially appearing as an oppositional stance, a call to halt space production, Barthes' proposition encompasses a proactive framework of concrete applications. It includes measures such as anti-extractive practices, housing redistribution, and curricular reforms, all aimed at dismantling the exploitative culture prevalent in office environments.⁵⁴ This example highlights the transformative potential of critical spatial practices to bring about real change and offer tangible solutions to pressing societal issues.

Digital platforms, publications, exhibitions, and workshops play a vital role in showcasing the continued relevance and potential of critical spatial practices in the realm of space production and modification. They serve as spaces for discourse, exploration, and the exchange of ideas, further enriching the evolving understanding of the term. By embracing the dynamic and ever-changing nature of critical spatial practices, practitioners from various disciplines can engage in constant negotiation and collaboration, leading to the construction of effective alternative future scenarios. These initiatives provide avenues for exploring new possibilities, challenging existing norms, and envisioning a more inclusive and equitable approach to spatial practices.

The term's expansion beyond its initial geographic and disciplinary boundaries, its pragmatic and dynamic nature, and its potential to empower practitioners and advocate for political engagement underscore its significance as a transformative concept. The continuous application and exploration of critical spatial practices across various contexts vividly illustrate its potential efficacy in tackling societal challenges and unfurling avenues for alternative futures within the domain of space conception and alteration. How far can this concept extend before dissipating its inherent dynamism and regressing into a mere commonplace label? A conceivable trajectory for the term's evolution envisions its tangible integration into other spheres of society, enabling each individual to grasp their influence and authority over spaces and locales.

If the term's profound essence can be embraced by professionals and even skillful enthusiasts from a range of disciplines — from politicians to factory workers, lawyers to doctors, farmers to engineers — then a more extensive web of critical, operative counteractions stands poised to proliferate and establish roots. Should the term surmount language barriers and accessibility constraints, these practices can, through transdisciplinary collaborations, bolster and fortify a pervasive framework of critical modes for space generation, originating from rights and necessities.

Notes

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2. Liggett, Helen, and David C. Perry (eds). *Spatial Practices - Critical explorations in Social/Spatial Theory* (London: Sage Publications, 1995)
3. Liggett, Perry, *Spatial Practices*, 7
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5. Liggett, Perry, *Spatial Practices*, 17
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7. <https://brill.com/display/serial/SPAT?page=1>
8. Rendell, Jane (ed.). *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (New Delhi: Bloomsbury, 2006)
9. Rendell, Jane (ed.). *A Place Between* (Special issue of *The Public Art Journal* 2, 1999)
10. Borden, Iain and Jane Rendell (eds). *InterSections: Architectural History and Critical Theory* (London: Routledge, 2000)
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12. Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Expanding the Geographical Imagination* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996)
13. Examples include renowned artists like Robert Smithson, Dennis Oppenheim, Dan Graham, Tania Kovats, Thomas Hirschhorn, Pierre Huyghe, Tadashi Kawamata, Andrea Zittel
14. Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 51
15. Examples include Herzog & de Meuron, Enric Miralles & Carmen Pinos, Décosterd & Rahm, OMA, FOA, MVRDV
16. Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 67
17. Examples include Tacita Dean, Jane and Louise Wilson, Rut Bles Luxemburg, Jane Prophet, Anya Gallaccio, Hans Haacke, and Victor Burgin
18. Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 112
19. Examples include Lacaton + Vassal, Diller & Scofidio, Sarah Wigglesworth and Jeremy Till, and Bernard Tschumi
20. Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 108-109
21. Examples include Joseph Beuys, Shelley Sacks, Pamela Wells, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Suzanne Lacy, PLATFORM, Marysia Lewandowska, Tim Brennan, Janet Cardiff, Hamish Fulton, and Richard Long
22. Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 173
23. Examples include Ralph Erskine, Lucien Kroll, and Shigeru Ban
24. Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 179-181
25. Rendell, *Art and Architecture*, p. 195
26. Rendell, Jane. Space, Place, Site: Critical Spatial Practice, in: Cartiere, Cameron and Shelly Willis (eds). *The Practice of Public Art* (London: Routledge, 2008)
27. Dorrian, Mark, Murray Freser, Jonathan Hill and Jane Rendell. *Critical Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2007)
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29. <https://criticalspatialpractice.co.uk>
30. <https://www.practisingethics.org>
31. Miessen, Markus. *Crossbenching - Towards a proactive mode of participation as a Critical Spatial Practice* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016), 41-42
32. Basar, Shumon and Markus Miessen. *Did Someone Say Participate? - An Atlas of Spatial Practices* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006)
33. Contributors include Stephen Graham and Eyal Weizman, John McSweeney, Francesca Ferguson, Bernd Kniess, Meyer Voggenreiter, and Peter Weibel, Brendan McGetrick and Rebecca Gomperts, Joseph Grima, Luke Skrebowski, Keller Easterling, Michael Hirsch, Johanna Billing, Celine Condorelli and Beatrice Gibson, School of Missing Studies, R&S(e)n and artist Pierre Huyghe, Armin Linke, Bas Princen, Mauricio Guillen and Frank van Der Salm, Åbåke.
34. Miessen, *Did Someone*, p. 23
35. Miessen, *Did Someone*, p. 274
36. Miessen, *Did Someone*, p. 288
37. Miessen, *Did Someone*, p. 24
38. Miessen, *Did Someone*, p. 25
39. Miessen, *Did Someone*, p. 68-79
40. Miessen, *Did Someone*, p. 123-135
41. Miessen, *Did Someone*, p. 273-289
42. Miessen, Markus (ed.). *The Violence of Participation* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2007)
43. Miessen, Markus (ed.). *The Nightmare of participation* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010)
44. Kolowratnik, Nina V. and Markus Miessen (eds.). *Waking up from the Nightmare of Participation* (Utrecht: Expodium, 2011)
45. Miessen, Markus. *Crossbenching - Towards a proactive mode of participation as a Critical Spatial Practice* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2016)
46. Miessen, *Crossbenching*, p. 27
47. Awan, Nishat, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till. *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2011)
48. Miessen, *Crossbenching*, p. 48
49. Miessen, *Crossbenching*, p. 69
50. Hirsch, Nikolaus, and Markus Miessen. *What is Critical Spatial Practice?* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2012)
51. Miessen, *What is*, p. 151
52. Rendell, Jane. Forward, in: Bean, Jonathan, Susannah Dickinson and Aletheia Ida. *Critical Practices in Architecture: the Unexamined* (Cambridge Scholars, 2020)
53. Rendell, *Forward*, pp. xvii
54. Malterre-Barthes, Charlotte (forthcoming). *A Moratorium on New Construction* (Berlin: Sternberg Press)

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Image Captions

Fig. 1. Rooting Critical Spatial Practices. Chart by the Author.

Fig. 2. Portraying Critical Spatial Practices, Collage by the Author.

Biography

Francesca Gotti is an architect and PhD Candidate at Politecnico di Milano. Between 2019-2021 she has been research fellow at DASTU for the European project "En/counter/points", on participatory reactivations of neglected urban spaces. Since 2021 she is assistant professor at USI Academy of Mendrisio for the design studio NEOTOPIA lead by Leopold Banchini. Between 2017-2019 she has worked as exhibition designer in Stuttgart for Atelier Brückner. Since 2015, she mediates projects of reuse of urban commons in Bergamo, through shared management, and she is part of the coordination team of the national network Lo Stato dei Luoghi. Since 2016, she is part of the editorial board of ARK magazine (Bergamo), curating a column on re-appropriation of the neglected landscape of Lombardia.

Transtemporal Unlocking Time in the Architectural Discourse

Kouvari, Maria¹; Hess, Regine²

1. ETH Zurich, Department of Architecture, Chair Construction Heritage and Preservation, Institute for Preservation and Construction History (IDB), Institute of Technology in Architecture (ITA), Zurich, Switzerland, kouvari@arch.ethz.ch

2. ETH Zurich, Department of Architecture, Chair Construction Heritage and Preservation, Institute for Preservation and Construction History (IDB), Institute of Technology in Architecture (ITA), Zurich, Switzerland, hess@arch.ethz.ch

Abstract

The conceptualization of time today appears relatively weak in design-led branches of the architectural discourse, dominated by the distinction between diachrony and synchrony, and thus locked in two axes whose entanglement is sometimes overlooked: one highlighting continuity across time (structure), the other situating it in a specific context (event). In opposition, architectural theory since the 1980s has developed a dialectical, non-essential understanding of structure and event, space and time, or ground and figure, mainly in discussion with French linguists and structuralists. In view of architecture's shift towards the engagement with the existing building stock and an ever-expanding definition of heritage, this paper posits the onset of the term transtemporal, which refers to the conjuncture of preservation, memory, and time scales in the architectural discourse. Built heritage can therefore be perceived as a possible bearer of the dialectic expressed in the linguistic concept of the synchronic and the diachronic, e.g., the present object as a container of the future of the past (Eisenman 1995, 504).

The attempt to rethink the synchronic and the diachronic under the premise of the "transtemporal" is found upon two sets of reflections: first, the ongoing quest for methodologies based on "inter-crossing" (Werner, and Zimmermann, 2006), witnessed by the rise of research on transnational and transcultural phenomena and the claim for transdisciplinary, and second, the until recent emergence of oxymora, such as "the past as resource," "archive of the future," and "future monuments," highlighting the need to revisit temporal interrelations from the disciplinary vantage of architecture.

The methodological approach combines literature on the conception of time in the fields of both architecture and preservation from the first half of the 20th century (Riegl, 1903; Giedion, 1941), focusing particularly on transtemporal perspectives from the humanities, and social sciences, where the term became fruitful (Serres, and Latour 1995; Armitage, 2012).

Engaging with the concept of "multiple temporalities" (Jordheim, 2012), our objective is to enable an understanding of the multitemporal structures of the built environment. A transtemporal approach invites us to revisit the modern dichotomy of past and future and rethink the composition of temporalities by means of values and experience, pointing toward the ongoing debate on sustainability and the reenactment of the existing building stock.

Key words: transtemporal, temporalities, architecture, preservation, repair.

Organized by:

Departamento de Proyectos Arquitectónicos
Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura
Universidad Politécnica de Madrid



Department of Architecture
Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment
Delft University of Technology

