CA²RE MILANO

Au thor ship (s)

Book of Proceedings

Conference for Artistic and Architectural Research

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Conference for Artistic and Architectural Research

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CA²RE-Milan AUTHORSHIP(S): Conference for Artistic and Architectural Research

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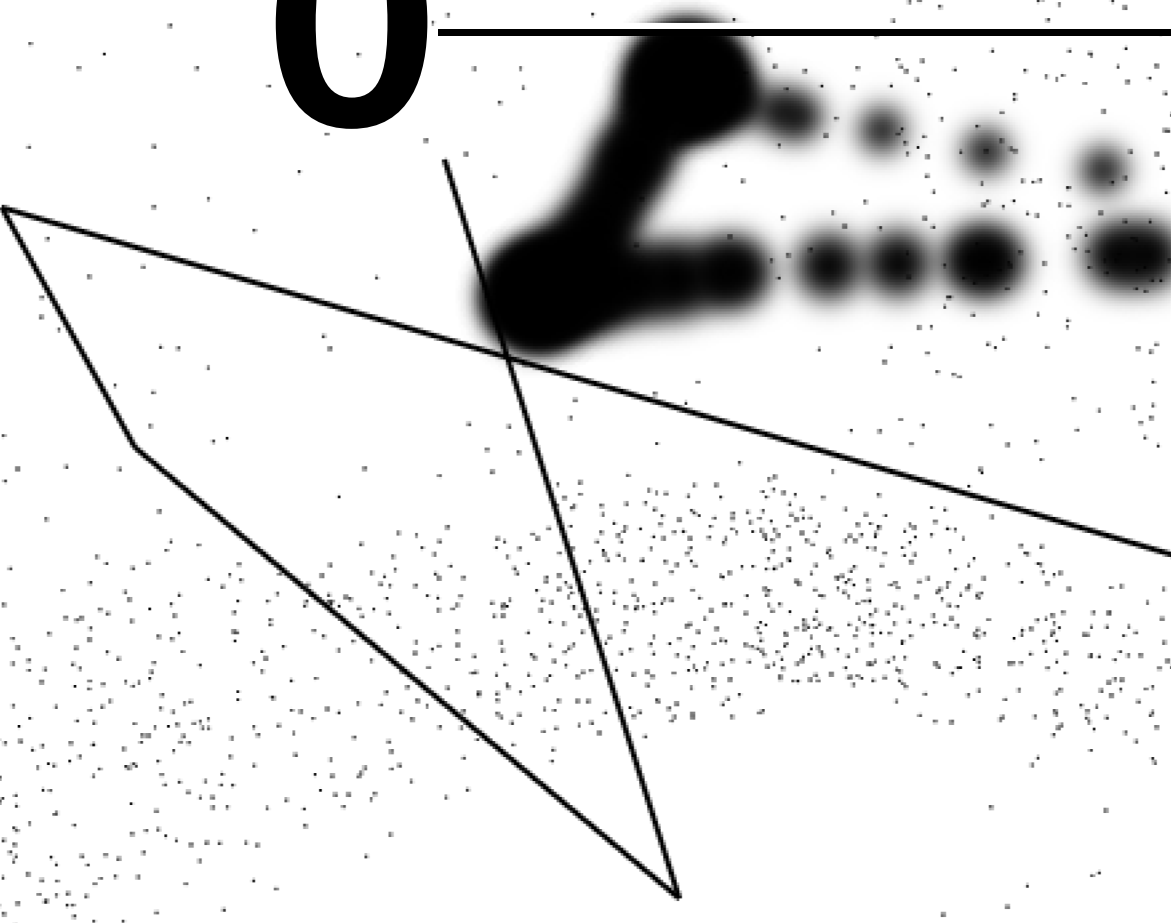
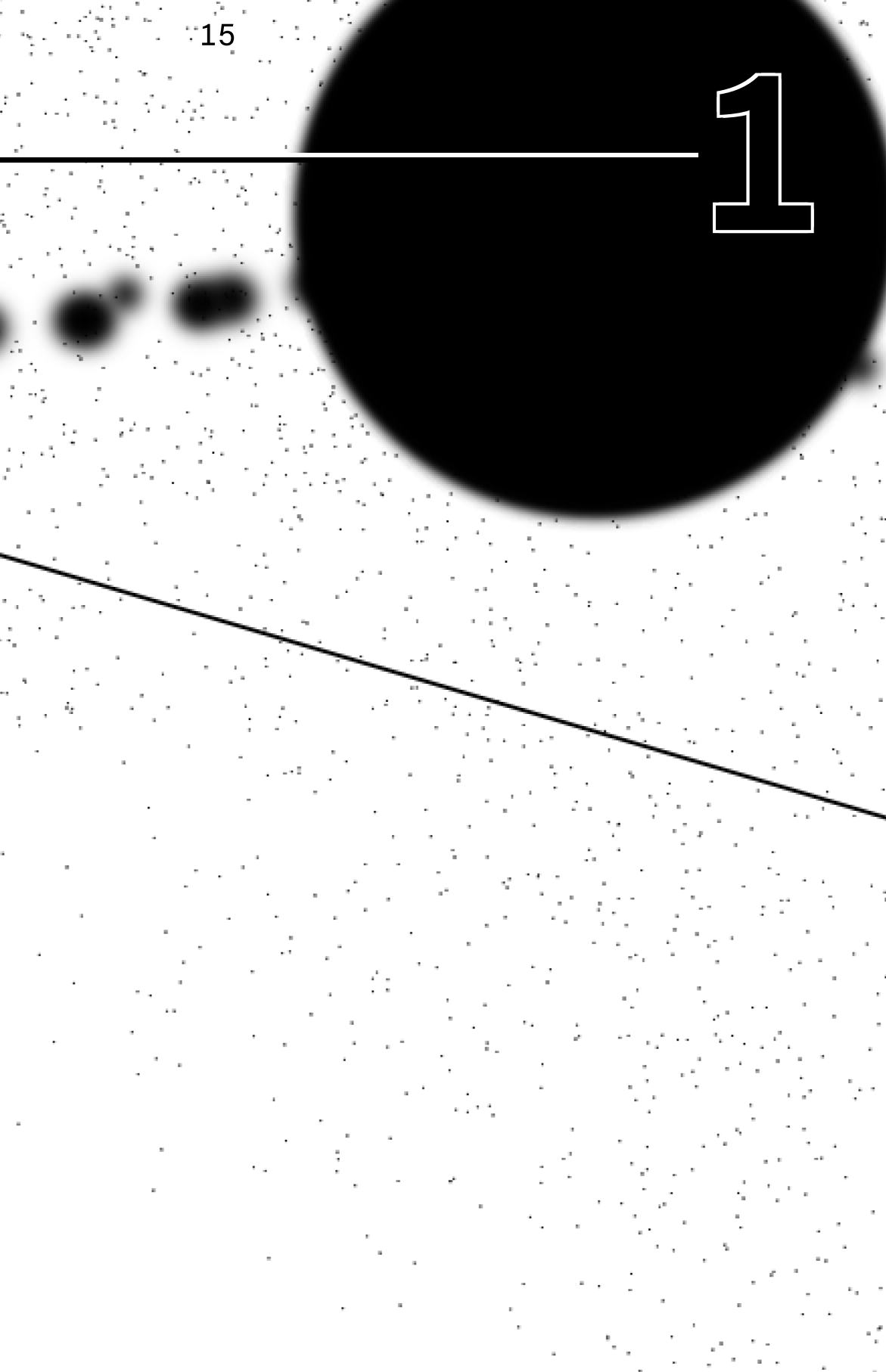


Introduction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Author/ship(s)

Fabrizia Berlingieri, DAStU, Politecnico di Milano

The Milan CA[2]RE conference delves into the topic of *authorship* consciously recognizing its controversial modern legacy. According to the Oxford Dictionary[1], the term – as original, and legally recognized act – first appeared at the beginning of the eighteenth century, starting from the notion of the individual as the source of creativity during the Enlightenment and Romantic periods[2]. From a contemporary perspective, it is particularly interesting that this shift coincided with the rise of the printing press and copyright laws, a moment of radical changes not only in techniques but also in the way of advancing knowledge when patents and licenses began to codify what a scientific work should be, explicitly orienting it towards a process of standardization (Benjamin 1936). Still today, in everyday use, *authorship* evokes issues of paternity and ownership of work in literary, artistic, and scientific realms. It implies not only the official nature of a work's creation but, more important, its responsibility and recognition. This becomes even more evident within academic settings, where the term has come to embody a kind of cultural nightmare and obsession, due to the contemporary emphasis placed on originality and innovation within the scientific domain of research, often driven by automatic parameters such as citation counts, measurable scientific impact, and qualitative rankings. This, in turn, influences how funding establishments assign value to it, directly impacting the reputation and credibility of both the author/researcher and the affiliated academic institution.

In this context, we are not concerned with the idea of authorship as 'signature' and intellectual property, nor with the author as individual bearer of knowledge. On the contrary, we start by quoting a famous statement of Roland Barthes: "the birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author"[3]. The aim of this conference is not to revise or redefine the role of the author in the knowledge-production process, but to reflect on how this process – or, more precisely, the act of the work itself – is produced, in what forms and under what conditions, and, in turn, what kind of relationship it establishes with the authorial dimension. This is exactly where also Michel Foucault offered a possible transition regarding the role of the author, toward being a vector of a situated discursive field. The *author-function* (Foucault, 1998), he claimed, is not universal: it changes over time and by discourse. And authors are historically produced by disciplinary, legal, social, and institutional forces:

To accomplish this rather demanding theoretical goal, Foucault had to reduce the author, ceremoniously buried by Barthes, to the author function, characterising "the mode of existence, circulation, and functioning of certain discourses in society". (Procházka 2024, 2)

And indeed, if we look closer to the etymology of the term *author/ship*, as a compound noun, it traces back to the Latin *auctor* meaning "one who brings forward or increases", and later connected to the English suffix -*ship*, transposing its meaning from that of the subject to the concreteness of a certain action, fact, or relationship. In this sense, authorship can be understood as the action of advancing and increasing the body of knowledge by shifting from the subject to the work itself and thus placing

the author's *aura* in the background. According to Leo Tolstoy an author who speaks about his own work is always a bad author, since:

A real work of art destroys, in the consciousness of the receiver, the separation between himself and the artist – not that alone, but also between himself and all whose minds receive this work of art. In this freeing of our personality from its separation and isolation, in this uniting of it with others, lies the chief characteristic and the great attractive force of art. (Tolstoy 1904, 153)

This movement from isolation to unity, from the subjectivity to the exteriority of the world, also recalls Immanuel Kant's speculation on the *sensus communis*[4]. In his *Critique of Judgment* (Kant 1987) the term 'common sense' does not belong to the empirical sphere of the perception, but rather it defines an idea – a principle that underlies the existence of a shared capacity for judgment as intersubjective confrontation – and refers to the communicability of the feeling of pleasure and beauty within the aesthetic realm.

It may be worth revisiting the importance of a purely humanistic meaning of authorship, by undertaking it as a progressive action in the domain of knowledge production through human experience. In fact, a*uthor/ship* claims for more complex dynamics in the contemporary context, for several reasons. While it is unquestionable that – regardless of disciplinary specifics – the researcher must address 'where' and 'how' knowledge production becomes authorial, it is equally undeniable how much emerging technologies, open-source accessibility, and the increasing technification of processes are reframing both research agencies and the very meaning of author/ship. The rise of collaborative tools, networked research, digital shared media, and interdisciplinary methods all contribute to destabilizing its traditional forms and even more so, the notion of being 'authentically' authorial. Even institutional evaluation systems – for funding, hiring, disseminating – that rely on individual outputs are being challenged by practices that do not fit easily into those schemas. Materials, methods, technology mediate authorship, raising serious questions about what it means to 'author a work.'

According to Sylvia Lavin, over the past 30 years there have been multiple disciplinary efforts to shift the meaning of what architectural production, as a cultural output, can be. She refers to the "inadvertent step" made by Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (Venturi 1966) as a clear example: a body of work – his architectural (built) projects, explained within a precise theoretical framework of curatorial collecting, presented in book format – making it difficult to define the boundaries and conditions of what can be considered an authorial architectural work.

This newly flexible attitude toward what might constitute a work of course derives largely from poststructuralist literary and critical theory through which many forms of interpretation were enfolded into the notion of textual analysis, allowing the much looser notion of text to distend not just the category of literature, but to set into motion the entire hierarchy of writing genres and by extension differences

between mediums and cultural typologies more generally. This is the same intellectual proposition that permitted architecture to be distinguished from building, to become also drawing, which became text, texts which in turn became constructions, and so on. (Lavin 2010, 6)

An interesting parallel to our contemporary stage is offered by the research project *The Other Architect: Another Way of Building Architecture*. This collection of alternative architectural practices and agencies, presented in an exhibition curated by Giovanna Borasi at the Canadian Centre for Architecture, traced a moment of role confusion and openings between profession and research in the 1960s and '70s, while also demanding 'other' authorial dimensions:

They [the selected practices] explored possible forms between collectives, collaborative groups, partnerships, fellowships, and networks. These modalities are more open and pluralistic – often, they are explicitly multidisciplinary – and they are better suited to engaging with new fields of investigation. The attributes that we can identify in the names of some of these entities, words like "laboratory", "institute", "agency", "group" and "unit", further suggest a search for other institutional forms than those of an architecture firm or an architecture school. They highlight a will to seek out different operating models, structures based on the fluidity of roles, and modes of exchange among diverse subjects. (Borasi 2015)

Alongside the rise of curatorial approaches in architecture – which through *assemblage* methodologies challenge notions of authorship, authenticity, and originality – there are other emerging practices that move toward more blurried boundaries. One such case is *co-authorship*, recently investigated by Ana Miljački and Ann Lui, who report that:

Contemporary conceptions (and forms) of agency in architecture exceed, spill around, and challenge the model of architectural authorship that dominates both architectural discourse and the market. Because most of these alternative conceptions of agency are not codified or stable, understanding them (…) may require to accept the shifting grounds, to enter the space of political and identity negotiations, to relinquish absolutes, and to open up to multiple forms of agency and their manifestations. (Miljački & Lui, 2022, 9)

Design-driven research is not exception to this discussion, currently undergoing profound changes due to the emergence of an expanded idea of the design realm, more reticular and multidirectional. To the point that even doctoral, independent, or individual research, is often no longer the product of a single author, but rather relies on specific tactical constructs designed to connect heterogeneous disciplines and contributions, without expecting unified or coherent outcomes. Both in terms of techniques and of approach, we see how "research on, by, and for design" (Roggema 2015, Schoen 1983, Frayling 1993), today works as a connector between different sets of knowledge, enlightens dismissed historiographies, and introduces lateral perspectives, by assembling heterogeneous and preexisting fragments in new and unexpected

narrations. The definitive shift from author as singular creator to author-function, co-author, network, curator, reflects the changing conditions on several levels: technological, institutional, cultural. Yet even as we move away from singular authorship, issues of subjectivity do not disappear. Rather, author/ship(s) becomes more situated: embedded in place, context, identity, and materiality.

Within the context of the CA^{2}RE conference, we aim to broaden the spectrum of contemporary author/ship(s) considering its plural forms as an unavoidable, critical and situated action, a *conditio sine qua non* for practicing and researching in architecture and artistic fields. We propose the following open questions, directed both to presenters and to CA^{2}RE consortium members:

What is the role of subjectivity, situatedness, and intersubjectivity in authorial practices today? Is it still about cultural and personal positioning, research precision, and the balance between subjective experience and recognizable, communicable processes, or can all these aspects now be considered obsolete? Can the plurality of author/ship(s) be reconciled with institutional needs for recognition and evaluation?

However, when we look at the type of contributions we received through the open call, it is striking to note that out of 97 submissions, around 90% are authored by individuals, and nearly the same number presents individual research experiences. That inevitably brings to minds Caspar David Friedrich's painting *The Wanderer above the sea of fog* (1817), the vision of the solitary explorer turning his back towards gazing into the unknown.

This rich Milanese occasion – through the conference working sessions, the book and journal presentations, the institutional roundtable and the opening dialogues – aims to open up the discussion within our international and transdisciplinary platform, and possibly to add more pieces to the puzzle of contemporary author/ship(s), for embracing lateral research approaches, expanded agencies and shared values in the field of Design Driven Research.

1 The *Oxford English Dictionary* online website: https://www.oed.com/.

2 «If, as was commonly believed since antiquity, the genius derives his extraordinary creative power from a propensity to be moved by external forces, how could he claim at the same time to be the source and therefore the legal proprietor of his work? (…) As the proponents of authors' rights soon realized, to grant authors legal rights to their work on the basis that it bears the imprint of their unique personality meant that the nature of creativity needed to be redefined.» (Piroux 2014, 353)

3 «The text is a tissue of quotations drawn from the innumerable centres of culture. (…). His [the author's] only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them.» (Barthes 1977, 142-148).

4 The etymology of the expression can be traced back to the Greek term κοινὴ αἴσθησις – *koinè aisthesis*, common sense – which Aristotle claims in the *De Sensu* and *De Anima* to describe the perceptual faculty that integrates the inputs of the various sense organs, attributing them to a single external source. As the unity of individual sensory data, this common sense accompanies every act of perception and represents its self-awareness.

See: “Senso comune” (voce) , in *Dizionario di Filosofia*, Enciclopedia Treccani online 2009, https://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/senso-comune_(Dizionario-di-filosofia)/ (accessed 08.10.2025).

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Some Notes on Contemporary Authorships in Architecture

Jacopo Leveratto, DAStU, Politecnico di Milano

In the field of architecture, it is not unusual to use the term *direction* (Rossi 1995) – whether borrowed from theatre or cinema – to express two ideas that would otherwise seem rather banal outside of metaphor. First, that architecture – and in this sense architectural research is no exception – *depends* on a vast constellation of disciplinary knowledges and contextual contingencies that are largely beyond the architect's direct control (Till 2009). And second, that the true specialization of architectural design – regardless of the outcome it pursues – lies in coordinating, managing, and orienting all the different expertise that converge within the project in order to endow it with meaning. Ideas, these, that have been stated countless times and that, over the years – amid the increasing specialization of production processes and, more generally, the growing complexity of the conditions of production – have become ever more evident. So much so that one might reasonably question the need to reiterate, yet again, the multivocal character of architectural design, or to speak of *authorship* in the plural, as if it were something new rather than self-evident. However, if we consider the term "authorship" in its functional sense (Foucault 1998) and look more closely at contemporary forms of collaborative and shared authorship, it soon becomes clear that there *is* something new at stake. For today, the conditions under which architectural projects are produced differ radically from those of only twenty years ago. And as always, these conditions shape not only the kind of product to which the project aspires but also the very meaning attached to the word *architecture*. What follows, then, is not an analysis of the organic evolution of an idea of authorship as part of an internal disciplinary discourse (Borasi 2015). Rather, it is an attempt to highlight the reasons behind its transformation in relation to the changing material modes through which it is produced – whether architecture is understood as a "commodity" for which the architect serves as "provider", or as a form of critical theory of reality (Biraghi 2019), which, by definition, cannot be independent from that same reality.

An atlas of emerging practices

To understand in which direction things are moving, the most useful tool, usually, is to equip oneself with a map. And even in the field of theory – at least as far as architecture is concerned – maps have historically played a central role in this sense. It is enough to look, for example, at the best-known one in this field, the map drawn by Charles Jencks in 1970, to realize this: six different traditions or future tendencies are represented as a series of wavy blobs on a grid marked by a timeline stretching from 1920 to 2000. And to compare it with another one, produced by Alejandro Zaera-Polo and Guillermo Fernandez-Abascal in 2016, in order to grasp the orientation of the profession after the global economic crisis of 2008 and its political positioning in relation to the contradictions that emerged around what is still referred to as the *Architecture of Neoliberalism* (Spencer 2016). A proper map, the first, and a "political compass", the second – as defined by its authors – used to find one's bearings in two fundamentally different moments from a theoretical, economic, and social point of view. And, moreover, constructed through entirely different methods, even though perfectly consistent with their content. Based on

a well-established idea of authorship, the first was produced as the reflection of Jencks's own autonomous critical interpretation, however widely contested it may later have been. And based on a more open idea, the second was refined through a process of self-assessment submitted to the very subjects being mapped, which led to a reformulation of the categories first hypothesized (Zaera-Polo 2016). Yet what is most striking about them is not the form or the process, but rather the content – or, better, the definition of the categories themselves. Defined in the first case as the projection of an equally autonomous theoretical position of the authors included on the map, and in the second as a reaction to a series of external events to which the participants found themselves responding, whether they wished to or not. A definition that, by contrast, has essentially disappeared from what – though less well known – turns out to be the map best suited to describing the contemporary situation, and which has been replaced by words such as "collaboration", "participation", and "network" (Venturini 2019).

More an *Atlas of Emerging Practices* than a map, this work was assembled by Gianpiero Venturini as the outcome of a statistical study of the state of the profession after 2008, bringing together a series of data points. These include the starting conditions of a market marked by an enormous contraction in private investment – due to a crisis that originated precisely in the real-estate sector – and the simultaneous withdrawal of most public investment, as a result of the austerity policies with which the vast majority of European states responded to that crisis. And thus they also highlight the extremely high number of architects in comparison to the very limited number of commissions, which forced many emerging offices to undertake an independent path whose primary objective was *survival* in a context with scarce professional opportunities. A path, this, that involved the creation of new organizational forms, the realization of low-cost projects, and the search for alternative funding sources beyond traditional ones – as well as new means of communication and self-promotion made possible by the simultaneous spread of social media[1]. And which therefore constituted the true material basis for the rise of a new generation of emerging practices for which the structuring of collaborative and participatory processes has represented the dominant feature of a production. One that has focused primarily on projects of urban reactivation based on new practices of engagement and self-construction, on ephemeral installations in contexts related to art, architecture, and, more generally, public space, and on curatorial operations at various scales, from publishing to public art. And within a framework in which what stand out are the so-called unsolicited projects – those without an initial budget, to be understood as an investment in the possibility of realizing one's ideas – and those born from the involvement of users, investors, and policymakers through the online dissemination of initiatives designed to trigger a complex decision-making process. Projects, in other words, which are not so much aimed at intercepting a market as at creating one from below, according to a model of diffuse entrepreneurship that has evolved from widespread to openly collaborative.

The post-2008 architect(s)

In summary, what Venturini investigates statistically is an "other way of doing architecture" (Schneider, Awan, and Till 2011), which begins with a form of urban activism organized into multidisciplinary collectives and infiltrates the margins of reality in order to make it more livable, in the absence of a still-functioning welfare state. And which, from a resistant practice – if not outright clandestine – it has become predominant in terms of the production of meaning with respect to the very idea of doing architecture, at least according to the most important occasions for reflection on the subject. It is enough to look, for instance, at the most recent Venice Biennales, which until 2008 had been focused on conceptual innovations, parametric fantasies, or the boom in global metropolitan urbanization. The progression has been evident, beginning with Aaron Betsky's *Architecture Beyond Building*, and increasingly rapid after 2016, with the edition curated by Alejandro Aravena. *Reporting from the Front*, *Freespace*, *How Will We Live Together?*, *The Laboratory of the Future*, *Intelligens* – the titles alone suffice to show how architecture is no longer identified solely with the built environment, but rather with a spatial practice of social, civic, and political responsibility, expressed through activities of inclusion, system-building, mobilization, identity expression, reorganization, and, above all, *care*. In a participatory process of programmatic elaboration, consensus-building, and communication design, in which – through a curious semantic shift – this idea of care unfolds spatially as an action of *curatorship*, although in this case too increasingly distributed and plural. And in which the architect – or rather a group organized under forms that may assume the most varied denominations – is alternately a mediator, a facilitator, a collector of ideas, or a simple service technician: what one might call a *municipal architect*. An architect whose authorship, at least in the historical sense, fades both horizontally – through participation in a complex network of other practitioners – and vertically – relatively to a whole range of inhabitants and stakeholders, both human and non-human, who express their spatial agency in different ways.

It is therefore also another way of being an architect, understanding by this term the means by which the subject of authorship is identified in relation to a spatial construction and, more narrowly, in relation to its meaning. Thus, the devolution of one's authorship actually corresponds – at least ideally – to a greater capacity to grasp reality, both analytically and constructively. And although this identity, in recent years, has been refined in parallel with what has developed in the artistic field under the notion of post-production (Bourriaud 2002), it cannot be denied that this change has taken on a recognizable autonomous form only in relation and as a reaction to the transformations of professional reality and to the new conditions of architectural production after 2008. Whether this conception of the profession is in fact largely marginal from the point of view of global building production – as Pier Vittorio Aureli also emphasizes in his reformulation of Jencks's map, in which he frames the contemporary architect as a precarious wage laborer[2] – it is entirely irrelevant, since, in terms of cultural dissemination, this model has already become consolidated across every branch of contemporary architectural research. There

are now few published projects – except for a small fraction by established masters – that are not the outcome of a multidisciplinary group in which responsibility is shared among professionals, inhabitants, and other stakeholders. And it is nearly impossible to imagine an exhibition on the subject without a curator issuing a call for ideas to collect contributions even before clearly defining its object. Not to mention, in the field of fundamental research, the progressive disappearance of personal monographic works in favor of a proliferation of editorial projects – such as magazines, fanzines, or digital platforms – more open to various stimuli. In a process in which adherence to this principle of collaborative sharing becomes a qualifying factor for any proposal being put forward and, consequently, for the success of a project one intends to complete, regardless of its specific relevance.

The post-authorial contradictions

Now, if what has just been described represents the basic conditions within which a contemporary idea of authorship in the architectural field can be produced – assuming the positive aspects in terms of openness and richness, which are rather self-evident –, it is necessary to highlight the contradictions that these conditions entail, which are primarily political in nature. All tactical practices, in fact, born as resistant forms of design in a period of crisis, have in a very short time become one of the tools most actively promoted at the institutional level to conceal the withdrawal of the public sector from many of the responsibilities it was traditionally meant to carry out. Funding an activity of urban activism, for example, instead of supporting the costs of a complete project, drastically reduces the expenses involved. And the social participation that this activity requires makes greater political consensus on the operation more likely, while simultaneously reducing the attribution of clear responsibility in the event of possible failures (Leveratto 2022). All this to say – as has already been noted (Aureli 2013; Chabard 2018) – that designers who work with a bottom-up notion of care, through their operations of repair, often lend themselves in good faith to an aestheticization of a lack – namely, that of the public sector – which should instead be addressed through different means. They thus become, unknowingly, functional to a neoliberal conception of the public realm which, by virtue of their intervention, acquires a new and unprecedented value in terms of inclusiveness and attractiveness – and which holds true for a square, as mentioned, for a masterplan, or, more simply, for the organization of an exhibition. The devolution of responsibility implied by a shared and collaborative idea of authorship, in other words, concerns primarily the risks and costs of a given operation, not its benefits – or at least this is how it is most often used from a political standpoint. And the indiscriminate adoption of this same logic from a design perspective risks being used to cover yet another lack, this time of a technical nature.

In other words, the refusal on the part of authors to assume final responsibility for the outcomes of a design operation, in favor of a diffuse idea of spatial agency, risks devaluing from the outset the specialist contribution of that operation, whether technical or cultural. This, in turn, risks shifting

– and indeed, in most cases it actually shifts – every principle for evaluating its effects from a formal field – determined by the coherence between those effects and their meanings – to a substantive one in which only content serves as a parameter. As though the intention or meaning of a design operation – understood primarily from an ethical standpoint – were the only thing that matters, and the specialist language through which these are realized were entirely irrelevant – if not outright counterproductive in terms of reception and, therefore, social acceptance. If to all this we also add the fact that architecture has been replaced, in terms of spatial production, by an idea of curating programmatic, constructive, and communicative contributions of highly diverse – though rarely specialist – nature, and that the primary medium for architectural discourse is now represented by social media – with the resulting combination of linguistic flattening and aestheticization of content – the picture becomes problematic for at least one reason, one that concerns precisely the political role of the architect. For once the architect's specialist contribution is considered superfluous – or at least comparable to that of any other actor involved in a given operation – their attempt to reposition themselves as mediator, facilitator, or collector of ideas – when others possess specialist competencies in this respect – within a political and economic framework shaped by the conditions described above, risks resulting in a role closer to that of a *volunteering activist*, whose social vocation and awareness of acting for a good cause must suffice as compensation for their work, in a manner that ultimately serves the very public withdrawal mentioned earlier.

Conclusions

As mentioned at the outset, what applies to architectural design, in terms of production conditions, naturally applies also to research on or by design. And the effects of the framework described above are already quite visible in this field. Traditional monographic studies of a critical-interpretative nature, aimed at supporting a theoretical argument – often rather aspirational – have been replaced by a series of researches of a *quasi-geographical* nature, in which the author's voice fades into the multivocality of the whole. Collections of plural histories, anthologies of forgotten political micrologies, atlases of long-ignored design positions, or situated surveys of exemplary case studies, to name just a few. Each aimed not at interpreting but rather at revealing the fabric of a reality too often hidden beneath the surface, through the voices of its very protagonists, to whom dignity and relevance are restored by means of an unprecedented narrative context. And all united by that expanded conception of the architectural project that spans scales, contributions that are more or less specialized, and material dimensions of the most diverse kinds, identifying itself with that broader dimension of *critical spatial practice* (Hirsch and Miessen 2012). A fact that, if on the one hand offers undeniable benefits in terms of plurality, inclusion, and, ultimately, the richness of the research activated in this sense, on the other hand presents the same risks determined by the conditions discussed with regard to the design of space itself. The disappearance of a specific specialist language and the proliferation of extra-disciplinary contributions,

the flattening of an argument to its mere content, all the mechanisms of information retrieval, dissemination, and communication based on social media – and on the biases embedded in their algorithms – are all phenomena that are already widely perceptible. These phenomena are not problematic in themselves, but only potentially so, in relation to the objective of any scientific research – namely, that of contributing to the creation of original knowledge within a given field – and in relation to the political role of research itself. A role that must always be kept clearly in mind, in order to avoid the risks to which professional practice now seems to have grown accustomed.

1 The global diffusion of Facebook dates back to 2008.

2 Reformulation exhibited in *Chronograms of Architecture*, held at the Architectural Association School of Architecture in London from October 20 to December 9, 2023, and at CIVA in Brussels from May 14 to September 28, 2025.

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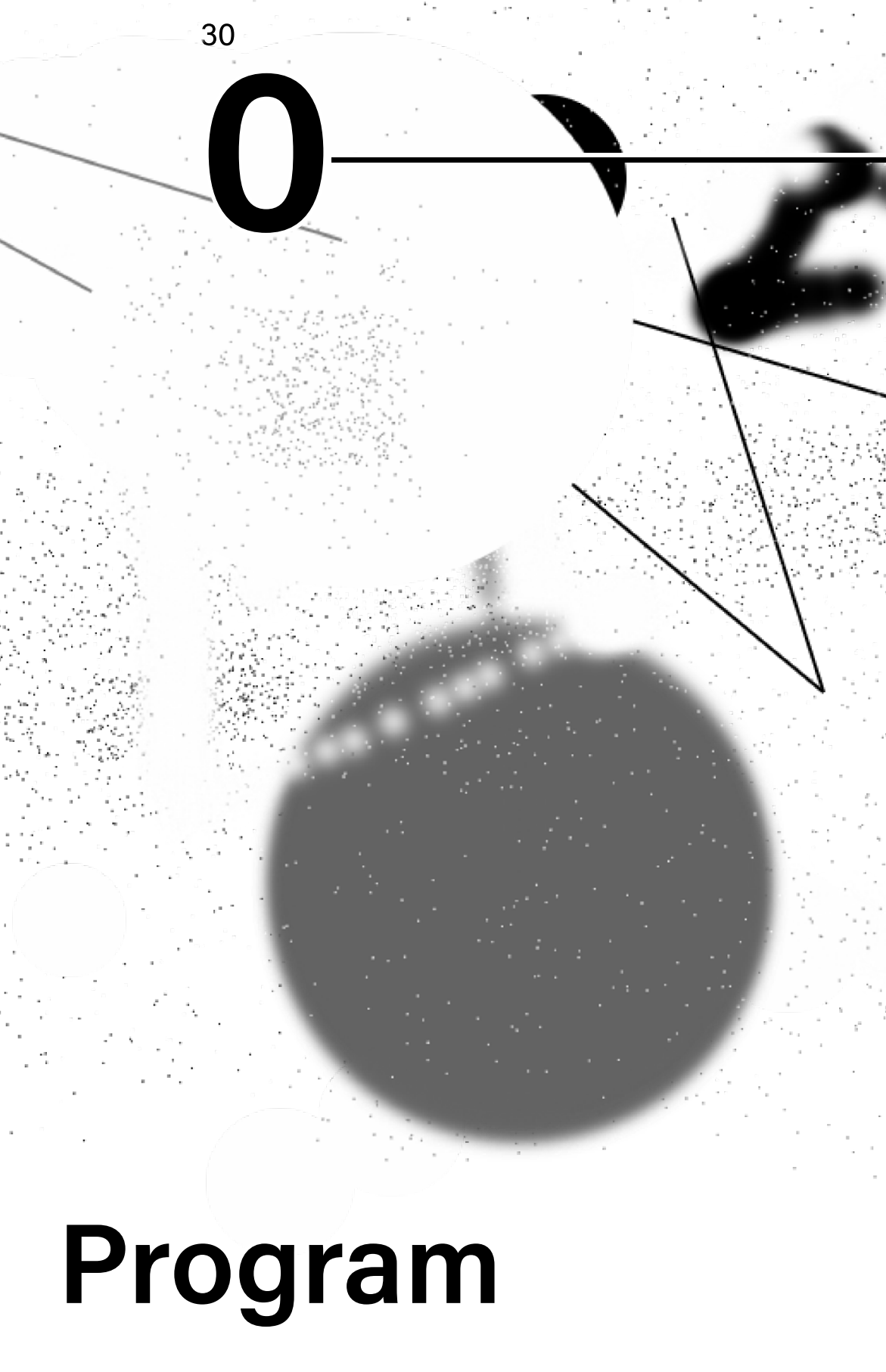

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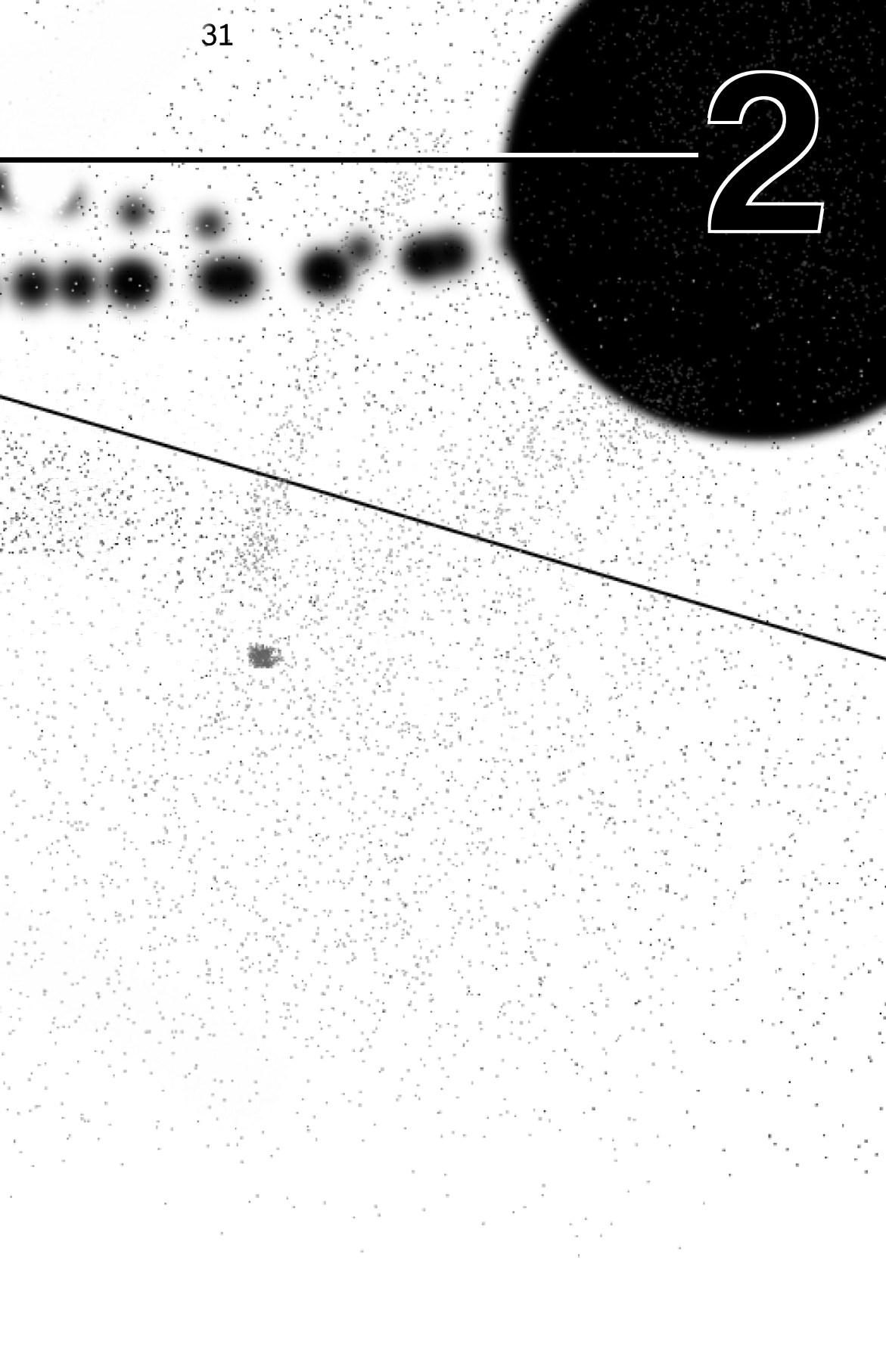

Thursday——03 Apr.

13:30 Meeting Point and Registration of Participants

14:45 Book Presentations

Architectural Affordances. Typologies of Umbau
with Andreas Lechner, Gennaro Postiglione, Francesca Serrazanetti

The book investigates 30 international Umbau projects—architectural transformations—through three temporal scales: those spanning centuries, those exceeding a hundred years, and those occurring within a single century. Central to the book is the exploration of the dynamic interplay between enduring structural elements and temporary components, illustrating architecture's ability to adapt to shifting societal and temporal demands. Traditional buildings demonstrate their versatility through established typologies, enabling diverse and enduring uses over time. In contrast, contemporary construction—often characterized by the separation of structural frameworks and building envelopes—introduces new complexities that call for inventive, autonomous, and adaptive design strategies.

Maike Gold, Andreas Lechner, Gennaro Postiglione, Francesca Serrazanetti, eds. 2024 *Architectural Affordances – Typologies of Umbau*, Napoli: Thymos Books.

https://thymosbooks.com/Architectural-Affordances

Experimental Diagrams in Architecture
with Lidia Gasperoni, Guro Sollid

After its golden age in the last decades of the 20th century, diagramming is still an experimental practice today, but it focuses on the synthesis of complexity and on new disciplinary territories on the edge between humanities, art, architecture, urban planning and landscape. This manual presents experimental diagrams through sensing, analysing and transforming space. The contributions critically delineate diagrammatic behaviours in architectural history, present the design practices of offices such as AZPML and MVRDV, take the medium to its extreme consequences, and outline future trajectories.

Lidia Gasperoni, ed. 2022, *Experimental Diagrams in Architecture. Construction and Design Manual*, Berlin: DOM Publisher.

https://dom-publishers.com/products/experimental-diagrams-in-architecture

17:30 Opening Dialogues

Introduction by Fabrizia Berlingieri and Jacopo Leveratto

Welcoming
with Gennaro Postiglione, deputy director Department of Architecture and Urban Design (DAStU), and Sara Protasoni, head PhD Program in Architectural Urban Interior Design (AUID)

Social Infrastructures in Upstate Rome
Lina Malfona

The Human and the Non-Human Towards a New Form of Being Authorial
Ettore Rocca

Friday——04 Apr.

08:00 Welcoming Coffee

09:00 Sessions

Designing the Process, Designing the Space. Self-generative Spaces for More-than-human Communities
Presenter: Michele Porcelluzzi
Panel members: Venrooij [c], Cavallo, Schröder

Point Cloud Departures
Presenter: Guro Sollid
Panel members: Lechner [c], Postiglione, Betancour

Miesunderstanding
Presenter: Federico Casati
Panel members: Salema [c], De Walsche, Roesler

Indeterminacy As Method
Presenter: Jose Cherem Serur
Panel members:
Peder Pedersen [c], McGarry, Semprebon

Improvisation in Urban Space: Affordances, Commons, and Domestic Practices
Presenter: Yuwei Ren
Panel members:
Almeida [c], Setti, Zupančič

From Affordances to Supernormal: Collective vs. Individual Authorship and Back
Presenter: Ivana Fabrio et al.
Panel members: Gheysen [c], Lepratto, Stewart

10:00 Sessions

Awakening Palladio: A Methodological Exploration of the Study of Palladian Villas
Presenter: Chaoxin Yan
Panel members: Schwai [c], Botas Kenda, Zuccaro Marchi

Ruination Game: A Performance Exploring Collective Dimensions of Authorship Through a Spatio-Temporal Record
Presenter: Ugur Sarisen et al.
Panel members:
Vuga [c], Muro, Tognon

Eidetic Buildings
Presenter: Giorgio Castellano
Panel members:
Hirschberg [c], Cazzaniga, Dahl

Design at the Service of the Collective: The Malagueira Neighbourhood (1977–1993). Mapping Fragments of Architectural Design Theory through its corpus of Tacit Knowledge
Presenter: Claudia Batista
Panel members: Rosa [c], Kousidi, Semprebon

Spaces for Learning in Contemporary Metropolitan Cities. Rethinking Authorship Through Collaborative Processes and Design Narratives.
Presenter: Raffaella Cavallaro
Panel members: Lagrange [c], Oliveira, Rowden

The Window in Álvaro Siza's Work on Residential Buildings: 1974-2014 Influence, Context, Form and Methodology
Presenter: Filipe Vaz et al.
Panel members: Rocca [c], Paolo Tamburelli, Vroman

11:00 Sessions

Cultural Narratives in Collective Spaces. The Role of Architectural Design in the Regeneration of Miao Villages
Presenter: Yidan Liu
Panel members: Almeida [c], Schwai, Gheysen

Architectures in Search for an Author. Re-scripting the Yards of Tbilisi
Presenter: Duccio Fantoni
Panel members: Van Den Berghe [c], Careva, Roesler

The productive Infrastructure for off-grid communities
Presenter: Maddalena Laddaga
Panel members: Cappeller [c], Betancour, Guilherme

Architectures of Caretaking. Reinventing migrant patrimonies amid collapse
Presenter: Stefan Gzyl
Panel members: De Walsche [c], Gasperoni, Tognon

Revisiting Forms of Authorship in Film and Architecture: The Concept of Auteur Space
Presenter: Nina Bačun
Panel members: Cavallo [c], Cozza, Peder Pedersen

Authorship as a Differentiated Practice. Rethinking Carlo Mollino
Presenter: Marco Addona
Panel members: Postiglione [c], Oliveira, Setti

12:00 Sessions

Story of a Doctoral (Design) Research: An Iterative Process
Presenter: Sarah Javed Shah
Panel members: Venrooij [c], Gasperoni, Rowden

Assembling Authorship in Participatory Design: The Ten Eekhovelei as a Collaborative Inquiry
Presenter: Nathan De Feyter, Ana-Clara Van den Berghe, Axelle Van Nuffelen, Paulien Van den Nest
Panel members: Roesler [c], Rosa, Semprebon

Inquiring Sensate Scapes
Presenter: Maja Zander Fisker
Panel members: Rocca [c], Lagrange, Zuccaro Marchi

The Changing Roles of Sustainable Landscape Design in Historical Industrial Landscapes
Presenter: Petra Boudova
Panel members: Zupančič [c], Hirschberg, Tognon

Claybody / House-body: The Cosmic Body
Presenter: Elena Perez Guembe
Panel members: Vroman [c], Cazzaniga, Paolo Tamburelli

Intersecting Authorships in Community-Based Healthcare Architecture for the Elderly
Presenter: Zhihang Lin
Panel members: Botas Kenda [c], Lechner, Salema

13:00 LUNCH BREAK

13:00 WORKING SESSION CA^{2}RE (private meeting)

14:00 Sessions

Curating as a Form of Collective Authorship: Rethinking the Architect's Role
Presenter: Marie Stalpaert
Panel members:
Muro [c], Careva, Oliveira

Illustrating Research Complexities: A Case Study of Authorship and Research Narratives on the Heritage Conservation of George Town, Malaysia
Presenter: Yi Xing Chow
Panel members: Guilherme [c], Peder Pedersen, Stewart

'Making-with': Transdisciplinary Experiments in Authorship
Presenter: Colm Mac Aoidh
Panel members:
Betancour [c], Coppetti, Setti

Authorship and Anonymity in the Pavillon Des Temps Nouveaux, 1937
Presenter: Oljer Cardenas Niño
Panel members:
Cappeller [c], Cavallo, Vroman

Transcalar Materials as Narrative Agents: Challenging Traditional Metrics of Originality
Presenter: Fitnat Cimsit Kos et al.
Panel members: Schwai [c], Bodei, Di Cosmo

Spatial enactments. Performance as architectural production in the 21st century
Presenter: Alessandro Pasero
Panel members: Schröder [c], McGarry, Van Den Berghe

15:00 Sessions

Authorship in Empirical Creation — the Universe of Anonymous Authors
Presenter: Ana Marta Morgado Clemente
Panel members:
Gheysen [c], Bovati, Vuga

Spaces for Community Health Care. Architectural Approaches for Health Promotion in the Contemporary City
Presenter: Francesca Ripamonti
Panel members:
De Walsche [c], Hirschberg, Zupančič

Rethinking the Author as an Open Field. The "Dishwasher House" by Frances Gabe
Presenter: Laura Mucciolo
Panel members: Dahl [c], Bodei, Di Cosmo

16:00 Coffee/tea break ———— BLDG 13 – Conference Room, Ground Floor

16:30 WORKSHOPS AND SEMINARS

Research by Talking

chair: Alessandro Rocca
with: Orsina Simona Pierini and Valter Scelsi
place: Sala Riunioni, Ground Floor, Building 29

This conversation aims to present and discuss some research of particular interest that illustrates different ways of deepening knowledge and reflection on the architectural project. The research is presented through its results but also with its premises, uncertainties, technicalities, and paths. Particular attention is given to the role of the author, his relationship with the object of the research, and we will try to investigate how the author decides to express himself, question himself, and define himself in the research activity.

Authorship(s) vis-a-vis the research path

chair: Fabrizia Berlingieri, Jacopo Leveratto
place: Sala Consiglio, 1st Floor, Building 29

The workshop explores the authorship's dimension within doctoral research processes, presenting some examples of positioning, and discussing them starting from the individual research experiences of the participants. After an initial insight on the topic, the participants will collectively discuss the authorship's meaning and relevance in their own research process, through a personal visual contribution on an authorial model of reference adopted within the research process. The workshop will delve by grouping approaches and tools, and then will focus on assessment and in-depth tests.

Participants are expected to bring with them a printed A4 with their personal contribution, to work offline and together.

18:30 JOURNAL PRESENTATIONS

ARDETH, A magazine on the power of the project
with Ilaria Valente, Sascha Roesler, Francesca Frassoldati, Cassandra Cozza and Lidia Gasperoni

While in the recent decades, the field of architecture has primarily focused on the self-sufficiency of individual buildings, the ARDETH #13 issue wishes to bring back scholarly attention to an approach that prioritizes energy conservation and generation at the urban scale. Such an approach relies on the idea of the productive (and not only consumptive) urban environment, in which the built fabric, topography, soil, bodies of water, green spaces, as well as regional climatic conditions (determined by sun, wind, rain flows, and seasonal temperatures), serve as potential parameters for energy production.
https://www.ardeth.eu/about/

STOÀ - Tools for architectural design pedagogies
with Alberto Calderoni, Carlo Gandolfi, Jacopo Leveratto

Teaching how to think architecture is one of the most challenging tasks in the profession of those who design the pedagogy of the project. Throughout the history of architectural education, numerous examples can be found of schools where thought has often transcended immediate horizons, fostering a community of individuals who have questioned the meaning of the teaching endeavor. At its core, teaching is a continuous inquiry, enriched by a dialectic shaped through the coexistence and expression of heterogeneous perspectives. Theories and worldviews capable of marking pivotal moments or shifts away from the status quo, which have profoundly influenced schools, educators, and students, are at the center of the new issue of Stoà Journal about Schools and Theories, which tries to show how these have shaped society and the ways of constructing realities, spaces, and cultural projects.
https://stoajournal.com/

20:30 SOCIAL DINNER @MOSSO

Via Angelo Mosso, 3, 20127 Milano MI

Saturday——05 Apr.

08:00 Welcoming Coffee

09:00 ROUND TABLE

Trajectories for a shared agenda on design driven research

chair: Sara Protasoni
with: **ARENA** (Ana Betancour, Johan De Walsche, Urs Hirschberg, Tadeja Zupančič), and **EAAE** (Roberto Cavallo, Claus Peder Pedersen, Jörg Schröder)

The joint discussion on the values of design-driven research in international doctoral research is at the heart of this meeting. The conference's topic raises the question of recognizing a contextualized position of the researcher and of the construction of tailored and non-generalizable research paths in methodologies often assumed as the foundation of shared scientific research. Authorship is, in fact, the basis of design-driven research, of an often divining and iterative approach based on both intuitive aspects and comparison with contemporary themes and urgencies. What is changing at an international level? Is it possible to push for overcoming methodological barriers – quantitative/qualitative – that can put the value of an authorial "path" back at the center? Starting from the EAAE Charter on Architectural Research (09.02.2022), the roundtable discusses possible synergies at an institutional level to promote design-driven research within the international panorama as a recognizable method for architectural and artistic research.

11:00 ARENA WORKING SESSION (private meeting)

11:00 Sessions

The Undedicated Form. Resonant Spaces as a catalyst for the individual attribution of meaning
Presenter: Tobias Rabold
Panel members: Protasoni [c], Gasperoni, Schwai

The Gift of Stories
Presenter: Greer MacKeogh
Panel members: Cappeller [c], Van Den Berghe, Rocca

Authorship in Design Research: A Collective and Evolving Framework for Innovation and Knowledge Production
Presenter: Federico Wulff et al.
Panel members: Schröder [c], Valente, Zanotto

Authorship on the Margins: Regenerating Urban Voids through Design-Driven Narratives
Presenter: Nicolò Chierichetti
Panel members: McGarry [c], Guilherme, Vuga

12:00 Sessions

Exploring the Architecture for Urban Air Mobility: An Investigation from Collage to AI-Generated Image
Presenter: Ottavio Pedretti
Panel members: Careva [c], Lechner, Rosa

Regeneration as Rewriting. Exploring the Authors of the Narrative in Neoliberal Urban Redevelopment Projects
Presenter: Morika Kakinuma Deangelis
Panel members: Venrooij [c], Lagrange, Muro

Celebrating the Absence. Contemporary Architecture for Farewell Rituals
Presenter: Sarah Becchio
Panel members: Stewart [c], Protasoni, Tolve

Cooperation in Upcycling Architecture and Coauthorship in Cultural Change
Presenter: Wen Quan Zhang
Panel members: Dahl [c], Rowden, Salema

13:00 WRAP UP / Lunch Break + Final Discussion and Launch next CA^{2}RE Events

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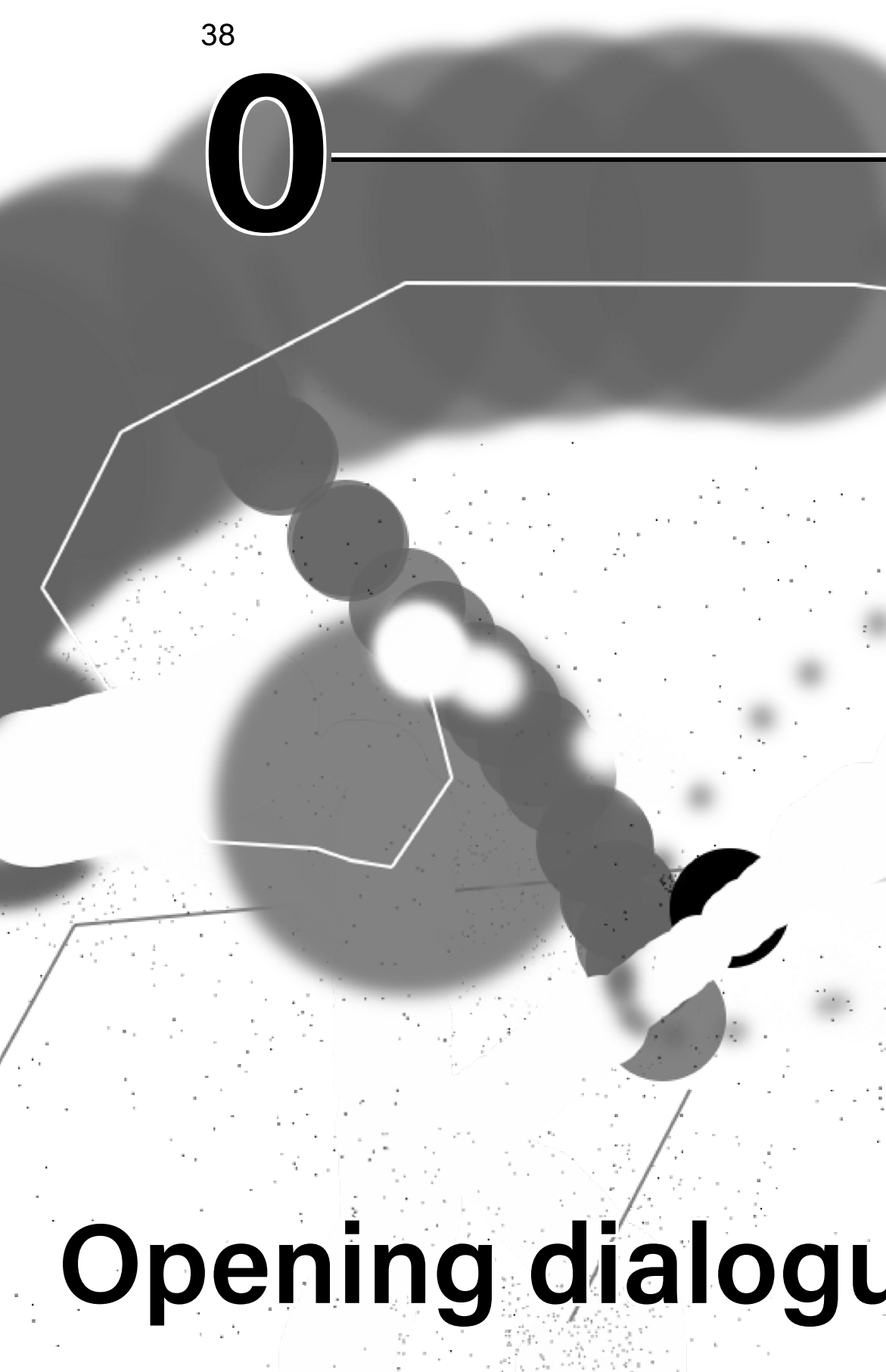

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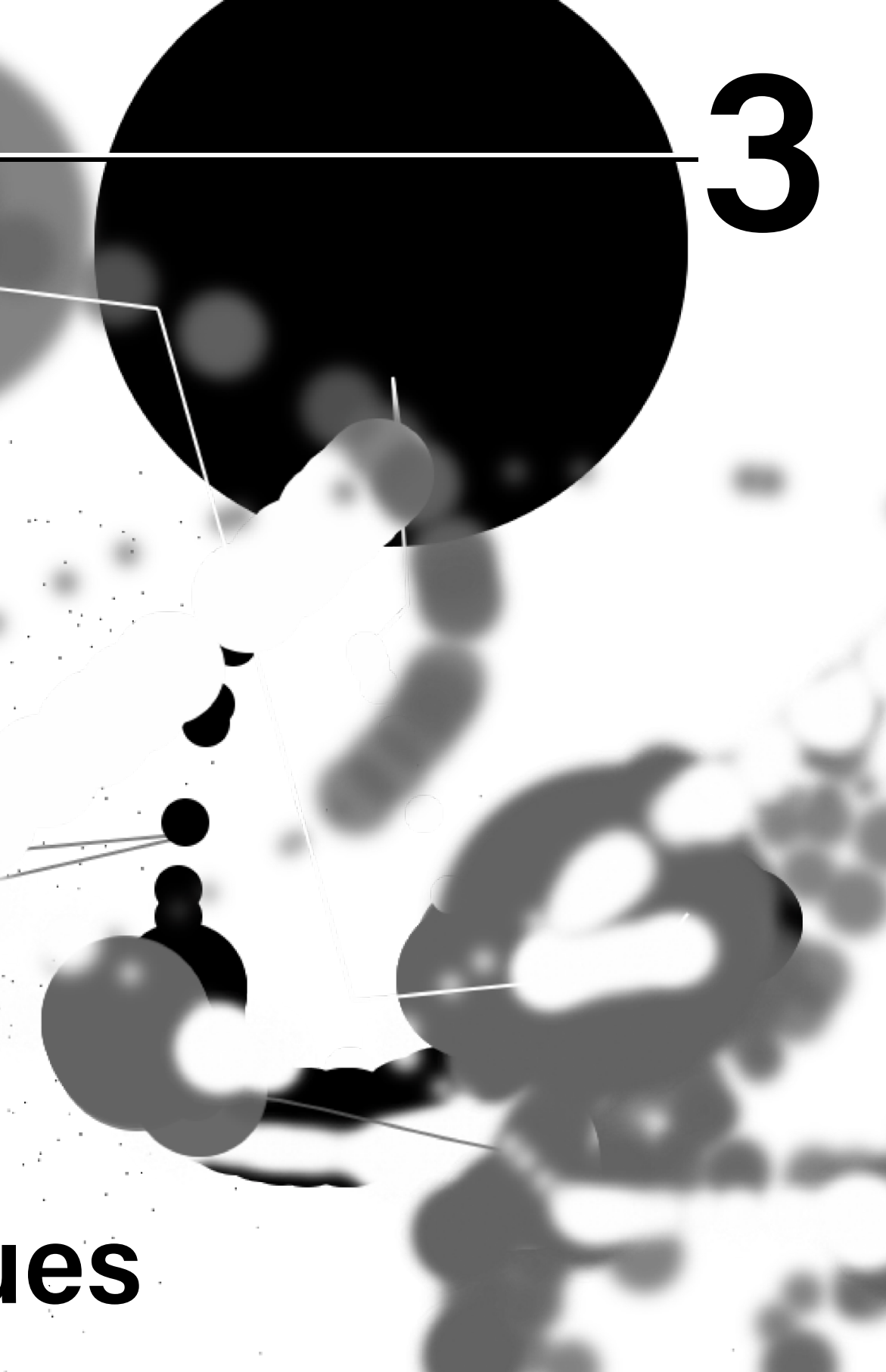

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All About the Author

Lina Malfona, Pisa University

In his 1969 lecture at the Collège de France, entitled *Qu'est-ce qu'un auteur?*, Michel Foucault argued that the "author function" primarily expresses a form of ownership (Focault, 1969). Being the author of a project means being responsible for actions, decisions, triumphs, or failures. Authors, in fact, are recognized as such when they can be punished, that is, when they can be held accountable for their actions (Malfona 2021a, 241–249). As Foucault reports, in his *De viris illustribus*, St. Jerome identified criteria for recognizing and defining authorship: consistent value, conceptual coherence, and stylistic unity. From the characteristics highlighted by St. Jerome, it would seem that the evolution, maturation, influences, and contaminations to which an author is inevitably exposed during their formation must be leveled out. Today, the belief that an author has a well-defined identity seems insufficient to describe this figure who, on the contrary, expresses the contradictions of his or her time through his or her work. Consistency of style is no longer sought after as if it were a brand, and the author is no longer the unchallengeable individuality of the past. On the contrary, being an author today means being predisposed to discuss, reconsider, and modify the very condition of being an author from time to time.

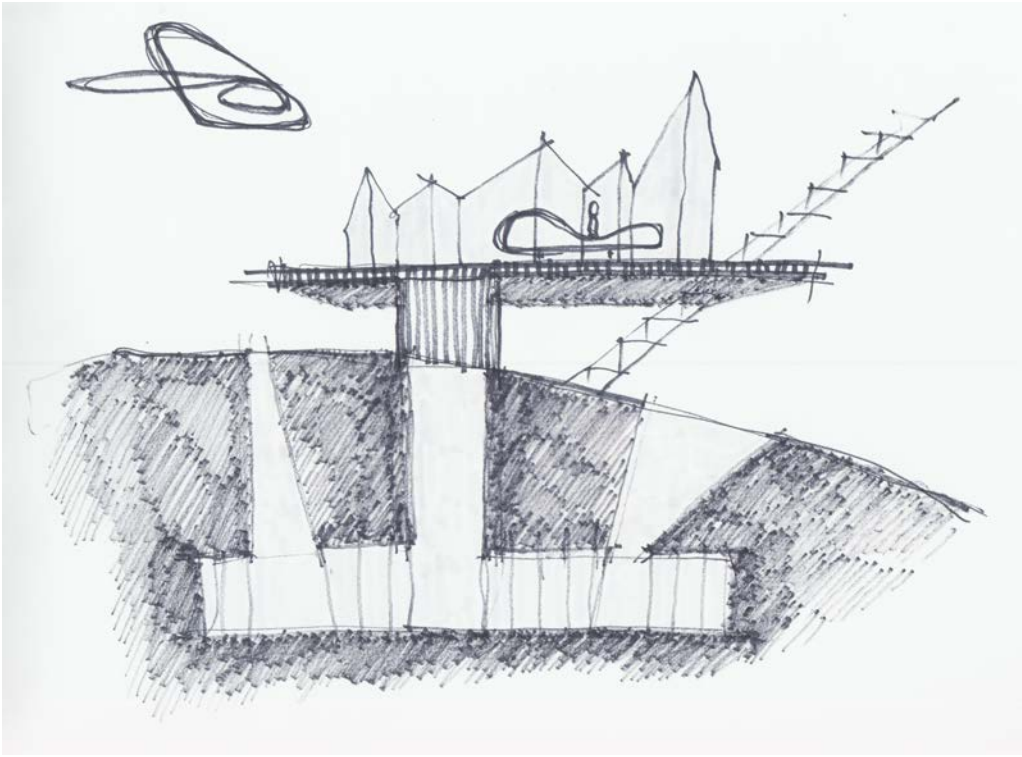

Figure 1: Lina Malfona, Study sketches for the "The city of the future present," 2022

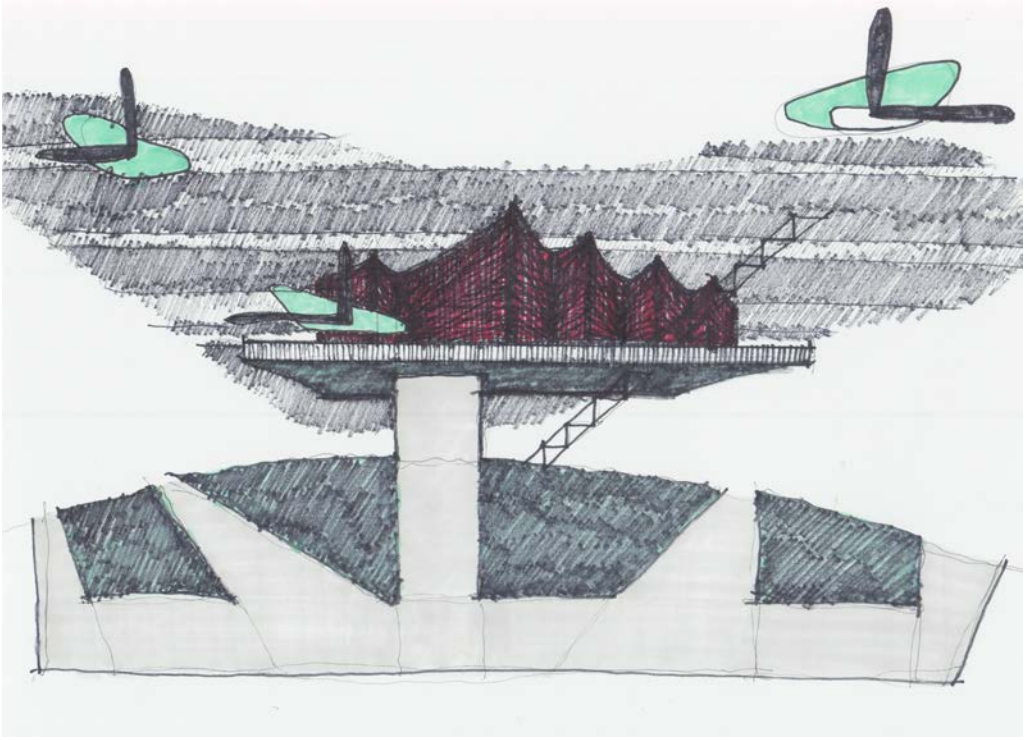

Figure 2: Lina Malfona, Study sketches for the "The city of the future present," 2022

But if the author becomes an eclectic figure, no longer identifiable by his or her *stylistic code*, it will become difficult to certify the authorship of a work. Whereas in the past authorship was characterized by an immediate correspondence between author and work, today this correspondence has become blurred. Added to this change is the imminent dissolution of authorship itself, caused by generative artificial intelligence, which has ushered in the era of post-truth. Who will be able to say what is true and what is false? And who will be able to distinguish the authorship of a work? Perhaps only the sketch, which reveals the concept of the work but also the hand of the author, will be revealing. **[1] [2] [3]**

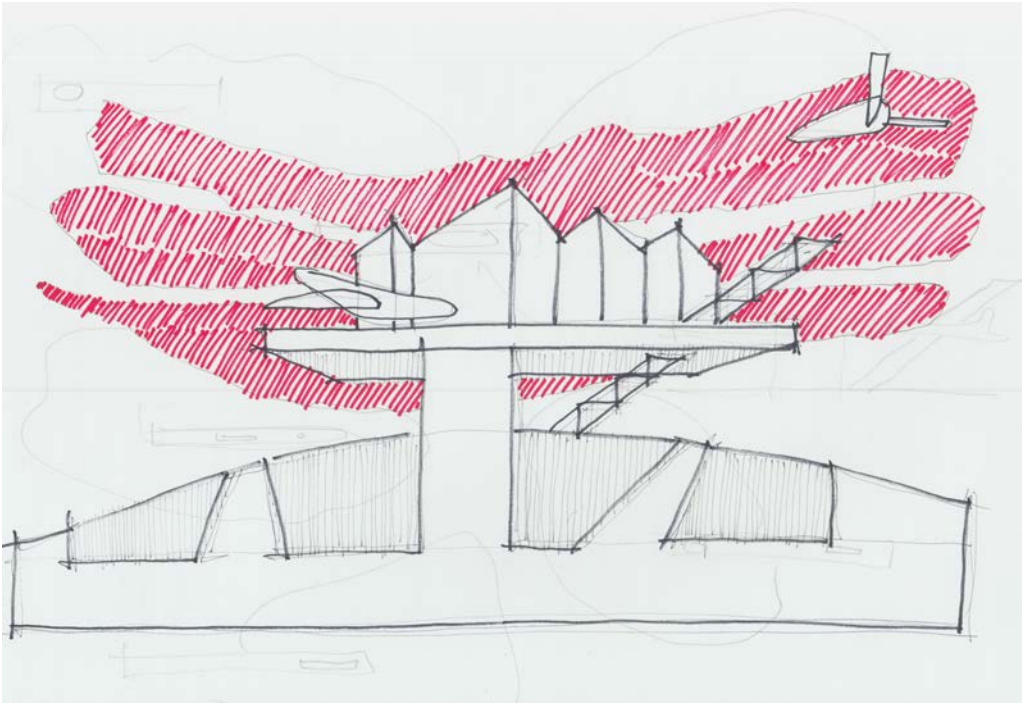

Figure 3: Lina Malfona, Study sketches for the "The city of the future present," 2022

Authorship vs. agency

In the vision of Leon Battista Alberti, architect and intellectual, architecture is pure theoretical construction. Conceived by architects in their workshops as a sophisticated intellectual endeavor, architecture is the creation of a language, a form of writing. Construction, on the other hand, is a purely mechanical operation, devoid of any added value from an intellectual point of view. Alberti, indeed, used to refrain from practicing his craft, and therefore from visiting construction sites, which he delegated to others. Today, Alberti's Manichean vision is perceived as an authoritarian drift that proposes a clear separation between *auctor* and *artifex*. In Alberti's paradigm, in fact, the craftsman is deprived of his essential link with the work and is considered a mere executor, a mere labor force (Carpo 2023).

In recent years, the concept of authorship is criticized precisely because it is associated with the hegemonic role that authors have assumed in the past, from the abuses of star architects to those of so-called university "barons". Perhaps for these reasons, the concept of authorship has been replaced by that of *agency*, which is more open to the contribution of different skills in the process of creation, production, and communication[1]. A distinctive feature of contemporary agency is the metamorphic attitude that follows the need to respond to an ever-changing, evolving, and highly competitive demand, or the simple desire to gain consensus. In fact, if authorship is associated with the concept of consistency, agency is linked to the concept of strategy. The replacement of

Figure 4: Malfona Petrini Architettura, *Slot House*, Formello, Roma 2012-17

authorship with *agency* also corresponds to the substantial transition from a mannerist phase of research, dealing with language issues – which coincides with the aspiration to create a masterpiece – to an eclectic period, linked to the chameleon-like attitude that many architecture firms today end up favoring. They must equip themselves to adapt their work both to highly competitive commissions and to the stringent demands of an increasingly oppressive market.

According to critic Nicolas Bourriaud – author of the book *Relational Aesthetics*, which is now back in the spotlight thanks to an exhibition at the MAXXI Museum in Rome – art world focuses primarily on building possible relationships between distinct units and alliances between different partners (Bourriaud 2002, 45). And since this relational – and in some ways *tactical* – thinking is strongly influencing contemporary architects, one wonders whether an architect can still be considered a creator of forms or whether he or she has become instead a cynical and ruthless analyst, a shrewd networker, or a skilled negotiator…

Bourriaud highlights the current shift in interest from the purely formal aspects of artistic creation to processes, relationships, cultural transfers, and conditions of adaptation. But in his or her effort to embrace and investigate all these aspects, the author ends up becoming just one of many co-founders and co-creators of the creative, compositional, and constructive process. As a creator of new and different discourses, the author is no longer just a *form-maker* but also a creator of processes, a *facilitator*. Furthermore, the transition from a mannerist condition – entirely focused on the perfection of language – to a condition of *adaptive indeterminacy* risks transforming the architect into a know-it-all and the project into a social and political apparatus that indulges desires rather than directing them.

In this whirlwind of change, the definitive disappearance of the architect-demiurge has led to the rise of various figures – the historian, the anthropologist, the ethnologist, the sociologist – who have replaced the architect as producers of knowledge. Furthermore, in the era of the triumph of science and technology, the figure of the engineer has also replaced that of the architect as coordinator of processes. The engineer is, in fact, a specialist with a wide range of skills and training that has proven to be more solid than that of the architect. In our time, engineers are proving increasingly capable of understanding the complexity of phenomena and building relationships between them, as demonstrated by the work of engineer-architects such as Carlo Ratti and Lydia Kallipoliti. Architects,

on the other hand, risk becoming generalists, figures who limit themselves to safeguarding the *sacred gift* of creativity, but who use it in a ritualistic or unorthodox way...

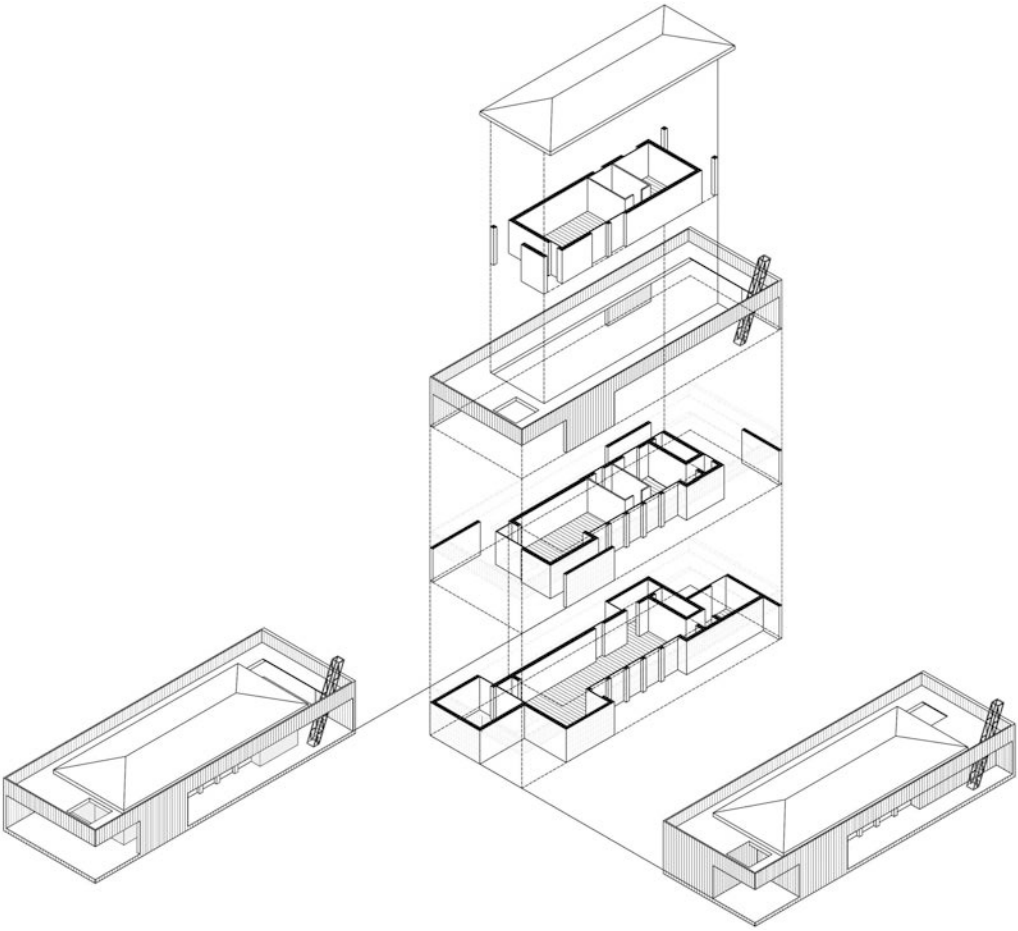

Figure 5: Malfona Petrini Architettura, *Slot House*, Formello, Roma 2012-17

Figure 6: Malfona Petrini Architettura, *Slot House*, Formello, Roma 2012-17

In recent years, attempts have been made to mend the relationship between the author and all those involved in the project by renewing the critical tools that allow us to reconsider these relationships. The authorial model, in fact, implies civil responsibility and stimulates the creation of a strong synergy between authors, executors, and users, a relationship in which, however, the role of the architect is never secondary. Authorship refers to the crystallization of the designer's political and social action in architectural form, an effort that allows only a glimpse of the author's hand (Malfona 2021b). **[4] [5] [6]**

Critique vs. curatorship

It would be pointless to talk about authorship without questioning the role played by architectural criticism today. It is now clear indeed that professional critics no longer work to identify research trends that link the work of architects, seeking similarities rather than divisions. To be more explicit, critics have abandoned authors, whose work has ended up in the hands of curators who, in most cases, do not have all the tools to understand it. Suffice it to say that only a very few critics construct comprehensive and detailed histories of architecture, such as the great *maps of knowledge* to which historians, critics and intellectuals such as Jean-Louis Cohen, Kenneth Frampton, Manfredo Tafuri, and Bruno Zevi had accustomed us. Our time, it is often said, is not characterized by architectural trends but by individuality and *micro-histories* that are impossible to completely cover, given their scope. For this reason, authors are left to their own devices, very often driven to write about their own work to promote themselves on social media and digital platforms... The

interpretation of the contemporary age as characterized by the singularity of languages is not convincing. What is missing is the figure of the critic as author, a figure capable of identifying emerging trends and discussing them constantly with authors, stimulating cultural debate.

More than ten years ago, I began to reflect on the situation of architectural criticism in Italy, a topic I addressed in a series of articles (Malfona 2011; 2015), some of which explored the reflections that arose following the conference *Criticism Today*, conceived by Franco Purini and held at the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca in Rome and at the Triennale di Milano in 2014 (De Albertis et al 2014). At the time, the crisis of criticism was beginning to emerge as a concern. The question I asked myself then was: what is the role of criticism today? Is it to map or to investigate? Is it to describe or to continue to probe and dissect the work of art? During the twentieth century, various critical approaches emerged. Charles Baudelaire, in his essay *A quoi bon la critique?,* wrote that criticism is partial, passionate, and political. Along the same lines, Luigi Russo, founder of the literary magazine *Belfagor*, argued that good criticism is always militant. With great insight, Luciano Anceschi, founder of the magazine *Il Verri*, described the activity of the critic in these terms:

Our approach in any case is to continuously rummage through things, even the smallest ones – and some would say even through the *fragments of rubble* – to question them, uncover them, search for their meaning, to free the words that a silence full of noise and disturbance has concealed – and then find the most suitable and flexible terms for a new, more comprehensive and complex semantics in a new possibility of communication. (De Angelis 1983, 9; English translation by the author)

This is a way of analyzing the work based on facts, through a practice that is *investigative* in some ways: the critic puts the pieces together, attempts to make deductions, is neither passionate nor partial, but merely weaves the threads together. This latter type of criticism can be represented as a *piercing gaze*, which passes through the material of the work, probing it section by section. Today, however, a different critical position is emerging, that of those who adopt a *diagonal gaze*, which passes around the object of investigation or observes it from a distance, making assessments that also involve the surrounding conditions, from the *backstage* of the work to its mechanisms of consumption and dissemination. This type of criticism considers the work of architecture as a dynamic and constantly changing *discourse*, not as an object but as a phenomenon to be examined throughout the entire period of time from its creation to the effects it produces.

As can be easily understood, it is very difficult for this type of criticism to deal exclusively with the work of architecture as the result of an authorial creative process. In other words, this latter critical approach – which is the most widely used today – tends to bypass questions of language. It is no coincidence that the very concept of authorship – which is closely connected to an author's specific language, to his or her *maniera* – is generally opposed or avoided.

Twilight of criticism, rise of reflective practice

A few years ago, I revisited the field of study on architectural critique, organizing a conference at the University of Pisa and a lecture series at the MAXXI Museum in Rome, initiatives known as *The Future or Eclipse of Criticism* (Malfona et al. 2025). I resumed my thoughts on the decline of professional criticism, which has abdicated history, curatorial practices, and architectural journalism, inevitably producing the figure of the architect as communicator, critic, and self-promoter, the *Koolhaas model*. Being a form of writing, criticism is an eminently authorial practice: the critic differs from the curator precisely because he or she is, first and foremost, an author. For this reason, it is quite obvious that many architects have become critics of their own work; after all, even T. S. Eliot considered criticism by architects to be the most reasoned, acute, and vital.

With regard to the decline of the professional critic and the identification between critic and author, it is interesting to reconsider the brilliant text *The Critic as Artist*, written by Oscar Wilde in 1890 in the form of a dialogue between two characters, Ernst and Gilbert, set in a house in Piccadilly (Wilde 1890). From the outset, it is clear that one of the two characters supports the primacy of art, while the other supports that of criticism. Without critical faculties, there can be no artistic creation, argues Gilbert, as it is criticism that legitimizes the work, and this requires infinitely greater culture than creation (Wilde 1890, 53). "More difficult to do a thing than to talk about it?", asks Gilbert. "Not at all. That is a gross popular error. It is very much more difficult to talk about a thing than to do it. In the sphere of actual life that is of course obvious. Anybody can make history. Only a great man can write it" (Wilde 1890, 55). Based on these statements, the critic can be considered an author, like the architect and the artist. But immediately afterwards, Wilde paradoxically goes on to argue that art is actually at the service of criticism, i.e. that criticism occupies a higher position than creation. His plea for the cause, which places criticism on a higher level than the work of art itself, is intended to emphasize that the critical text is also a work of art, in that it is characterized by refinement and passion.

Many years later, Roland Barthes explained that modernist poets – starting with Mallarmé – had already demonstrated the unification between poetry and criticism and that literature itself was a critique of language. "The writer and the critic come together, working on the same difficult tasks and faced with the same object: language", Barthes wrote (Barthes 2022, 42). His conclusion is that the categories of literature and criticism can no longer be separated and that now there are only *writers* (Barthes 2022, 99). In fact, the critic creates another work, breaks down the world and recreates it:

The critic cannot claim to "translate" the work, and particularly not to make it clearer, for nothing is clearer than the work. What the critic can do is to "engender" a certain meaning by deriving it from the form which is the work. […] The critic separates meanings, he causes a second language – that is to say, a coherence of signs – to float

above the first language of the work. In brief, we are concerned with a kind of anamorphosis, […] a guided transformation, subject to optical constraints. (Barthes 2022, 53)

Oscar Wilde's dialogue ends with the question: "What is the future of criticism?" Gilbert replies that the future belongs to criticism, and if creation is to endure, it can only do so on condition that it becomes much more critical than it is at present. This response prompts us to reflect on our own times and on how reflective practice is emerging as a specific critical trend, developed by architects who are accustomed to *getting their shoes dirty* on construction sites but who are also capable of engaging in sophisticated discourse about their own work.

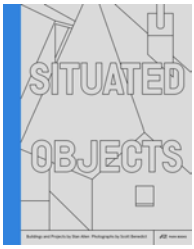

Figure 7: Stan Allen, *Situated Objects* (Park Books, 2024); Michael Meredith, *Smaller Architecture* (Architecture Exchange 2025); Mark Lee, *Five Footnotes Toward an Architecture* (Sternberg Press 2026).

Figure 8: Stan Allen, *Situated Objects* (Park Books, 2024); Michael Meredith, *Smaller Architecture* (Architecture Exchange 2025); Mark Lee, *Five Footnotes Toward an Architecture* (Sternberg Press 2026).

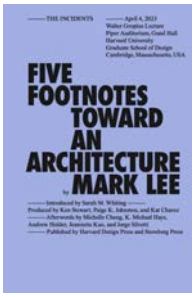

Figure 9: Stan Allen, *Situated Objects* (Park Books, 2024); Michael Meredith, *Smaller Architecture* (Architecture Exchange 2025); Mark Lee, *Five Footnotes Toward an Architecture* (Sternberg Press 2026).

Today, a number of architects are dedicated to the practice of architecture as a work of intellect. Although the expression "intellectual architect" may now be out of fashion, there are still architects who operate between the practice of doing and the elaboration of a personal design

philosophy, within a perspective in which history, theory, and criticism are intertwined (Malfona 2025). While Robert Venturi has repeatedly intersected his work (and his authorship) as a designer with his work as a historian and critic, Rem Koolhaas tends to separate his work as a critic and ruthless analyst from that of an architect. In both cases, however, their work emerges as a reflective practice. Even Valerio Olgiati and Franco Purini (Studio Purini Thermes) write about their design philosophy, and many (more or less) young architects publish monographs on their work, aimed at illustrating a specific critical point of view or a particular design philosophy – think about the recent books by Stan Allen (Allen 2024), Michael Meredith-MOS (Meredith 2025), and Mark Lee-JohnstonMarklee (Mark Lee 2026). In this regard, it is significant that when Manfredo Tafuri declared that he wanted to abandon criticism for history, he wrote that criticism should be left to designers, as they are more expert in the "empirical science of design methods" (Tafuri 1968, 272). **[7][8][9]**

To draw a tentative conclusion, I believe that the growing popularity of reflective practices – although it is a reaction to the disappearance of critics – once again underscores the fundamental importance of writing, language, and authorship, clearly demonstrating that writing issues cannot be buried under the more pressing problems of our time, because every critical issue is essentially a matter of writing.

1 Watch Robert Somol's speech at the symposium *The Future or the Eclipse of Criticism*, Università di Pisa, April 4, 2023, curated by Lina Malfona, https://polittico.unipi.it/event/symposium-the-future-or-the-eclipse-of-criticism (accessed October 27, 2025).

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Withdrawing Towards a Different Authorial Relationship

Ettore Rocca, Pegaso University, Søren Kierkegaard Research Centre

1. Two models of authorial relationship

I will depict two models of authorial relationships. Each of them is related to a different model of creation.

However, before coming to these two models of creation (and consequently of authorial relationship), I begin with a linguistic remark. The relation between a work and its author is also expressed through linguistic conventions. A clue that in architecture the relationship between work and author is different than in other art forms is given by the way we *call* architectural works. I draw attention to the difference between *titles* and *names*, and thereby to the difference between *two ways of being authorial*.

2. Giving titles

Literary and visual artworks have *titles* that are decided by their authors. The author creates a work and gives it a title. The attribution of a title to a work is the very prerogative of an author (Levinson 1985, 33). It is the author who, as *creator* of the work, has the right to give the artwork a title. Being an author is equivalent to the right to give the artwork a title, and the operation of giving a title repeats the theological act of creation. Ultimately, the author-title relationship is the secularization of a theological model: *God* creates things and gives them a *name*. Similarly, the *artist* creates works and gives them a *title*. This relation of authorship between the creator and the creature is described in Genesis' seven days of creation. In Genesis 1 the creation of the elements of the universe goes hand in hand with giving a name to created things: sky, water, planets, plants, animals, human beings. Creating and naming are one and the same thing.

However, we must consider that the act through which God gives a name to creation does not correspond to the anonymous act of name giving in human language; it rather corresponds to the relationship between *artist* and his/her *work*, i.e. between *author* and her/hir work. Therefore, it concerns the *authorial act* of giving a title to a work.

Instead, objects in the world have no titles; they have names. The fact that an object has a name indicates there is *no specific author* of that object. Asking who is the author of the moon or the oak, or of the words "moon" and "oak" is a question that does not seem to make sense. There is no paternity for the names of objects. There is no author of objects just as there is no author of the objects' names and in general of language. The author of a language (and here I am using author in a purely metaphorical way) is the entire anonymous community that speaks that language. The object-name relationship indicates a *non-authorial* relationship, unlike the work-title relationship which is an *authorial* relationship.

And now the question: do architectural works have names or titles (Rocca 2009)? The answer to this question is crucial to understanding what kind of relationship exists between an architectural work and its author or authors. "Maison Carré" is a name, "Colosseum" is a name, "Ville

Savoye" is a name. These names are given according to the place, the function, or the client. Sometimes they simply arise from the linguistic community of a place, as if they were nicknames.

And yet architects are increasingly giving *titles* to their works, often encouraged by critics. I will give just an example: a college built in Copenhagen in 2024 and designed by the design studio EFFEKT. The design studio named the building "UMEUS Noli". This name does not seem to make sense until we apprehend that it is an acronym. "UMEUS" stands for "you-me-us". "Noli" stands for "Nordic living". Thus, "UMEUS Noli" intends to signify something like "the (beautiful) Nordic way of living and of building together a community". However, one of the most important Danish critics, Karsten Ifversen, wrote in a newspaper review that, according to him, the right name of the building should be "Accordion Houses", because of its zigzag façade (Ifversen 2024). Finally, on its homepage, EFFEKT adopted the name "Accordion Houses" for the building (EFFEKT 2025). However, both "UMEUS Noli" and "Accordion Houses" are not names; they are titles. They express an idea of authorship, of authorial fatherhood, of relationship between author and work, as if the author were the divine creator.

And here it makes no difference whether the author is a single architect, an entire studio or an interdisciplinary team of engineers, architects, landscape architects and so on. What matters is the kind of relationship established between the author (or the authors) and the work.

3. Withdrawing

If we want to find a different form of authorship, we must look at another model of creation. In my opinion, this other model of creation can be found in the kabbalistic theory of Tsimtsum. Tsimtsum is a theological concept that could be of great relevance to architectural thought and to the question of authorship in architecture. Its author was the 16th century kabbalist and mystic Isaac Luria (1534–1572). He lived in the city of Safed, in Palestine, and died without leaving anything written. His follower Hayyim Vital (1542–1620, called Calabrese, the Calabrian, after his father's birthplace) put Luria's esoteric teachings for the first time into writing. At the beginning, these handwritings circulated in narrow circles. The publication of the *Kabbala Denudata* by Christian Knorr von Rosenroth, half a century after Vital's death, was decisive for the diffusion of Luria's kabbalistic doctrines throughout the European cultural world. Vital's text was published in Hebrew, its original language, two centuries after Luria's death, in 1782 in Korets (Ukraine) under the title of *Ez Hayyim* (*The Tree of Life*). Here we find the original formulation of the doctrine of Tsimtsum, the contraction or withdrawal of God.

Luria is driven by the following question: how is creation possible if God, the Infinite, is everywhere? Indeed, creation cannot begin until there is room for the world. I quote from *The Tree of Life*:

Know that before the emanations were emanated and the created things were created, there was a pure highest light [*Or*] filling all that exists, and there was no unoccupied room [*Makom*] in the sense of

empty air or space. On the contrary, everything was filled with the pure light of the Infinite [*Ein Sof*]. … And behold, the Infinite contracted [*tsimtsem*] to the point at Its own center, truly to the center of Its own light, and contracted this light and removed Itself to the extremities, away from the central point, so that an unoccupied place now remained in the center, empty air and space. And behold, this contraction and withdrawal [*Tsimtsum*] took place uniformly around that empty central point, so that the place of this space was round on all sides and in perfect proportions. … And behold, after the withdrawal described above, which thus left room for space, truly empty and free air in the midst of the light of the Infinite, there was now a place where what was emanated, created, shaped, and made could exist.' (Schulte 2014, 58–61; English translation by the author)

This tale of the origin of space concerns the condition of possibility of creation. It concerns the *moment before* creation. For creation to take place, the Infinite must first make space for the world. It does so with a double movement. First the light of the Infinite contracts to a point. Then the light withdraws, moving away from its center, like the waves that are generated when we throw a stone on the surface of a lake. So, the Infinite leaves its center empty and dark, like "a man who gathers in and contracts his breath", as was already said in a 13th century treatise (Scholem 1961, 260, 410; Scholem 1988, 129). This empty and dark center – called Tehiru – produced by the withdrawal of the light of the Infinite will be the place for the universe. The Tsimtsum doctrine "states that the 'nothing' of creation is the one that opens in God when God withdraws in itself (and in sum from itself) in the act of creating. God annihilates as a 'self' or as a distinct being in order to 'withdraw' in this act – which makes the opening of the world" (Nancy 2007, 70). God's withdrawal means its and self-annihilation as pure identity, allowing the opening of the world, or better, allowing the opening of the *space* of the world.

Christoph Schulte argues that the concept of Tsimtsum is the most original idea in the entire kabbalistic corpus. Instead of the Aristotelian concept of an immutable God, prime mover of the universe, we find the idea of a God who limits himself and his power to give space to the world, while continuing to contain and embrace it. Moreover, "in tradition only the self-contraction of God in or near a place was known, not away from a place … In Luria the Tsimtsum is no longer God's concentration and taking up residence in a specific place, but on the contrary his withdrawal from a place in God's own center" (Schulte 2014, 47; English translation by the author).

Tsimtsum is a paradoxical conception of space before time and before the universe. There must be space before time can begin. In this, it is analogous to the Plato's concept of space, called *chóra*, as described in the *Timaeus* (Cornford 1937, 159–197). It is noteworthy that one of the meanings of the verb *choréo*, from which the noun *chóra* derives, means precisely: "I withdraw" (Sallis 1999, 118). Furthermore, like the *chóra*, the void space produced by the Tsimtsum, "both mediates between and separates the creator and the created" (Lipszyc 2021, 196). And in philosophy the mediating term is more important than the terms that are related. The third and mediating term is the condition of possibility of the other two

terms to be thought. In this case without the void of Tehiru we cannot think of the relationship between the creator and the created universe.

4. Four paradoxical features

If the story of creation is the account of the universe's architectural design, it should be possible to secularize the mystical concept of Tsimtsum and see its potential for architectural thought and for architectural authorship. I suggest four lines of thought: withdrawal, self-limitation, giving freedom, impotence. However, these features are paradoxical: my thesis is that Tsimtsum names something that is the ultimate condition of possibility for architecture, but at the same time pushes architecture to the limits of its possibility. Architecture's condition of possibility seems to make unrealizable an architectural practice which is faithful to its own condition.

4.1. *Withdrawal*. First of all, in Luria's thought, God, as author of the universe, creates the universe not by expanding, but by retracting. The Tsimtsum, then, leads us to think of the inaugural architectural authorial act not as an act of expansion, but of retraction. Architectural Tsimtsum is not an act that makes space by extension, continually conquering new (already existing) spaces, but as an act that gives space by retraction. Space is allowed to be by retracting. Architecture must therefore begin with retraction.

But is this retraction possible? In practice, however, architecture is expansion, conquest of soil; it makes space by clearing, leveling, excavating, demolishing. If the ultimate goal of architecture is to make room for human activity, and if making space can only be achieved by retracting, the architectural act should be inaugurated by an act of retraction. Consequently, the condition of making space, and therefore of architectural creation, is always disregarded by the architectural act. Architecture disregards and overturns its own condition of possibility. Compared to Tsimtsum, the condition of all space-giving, architectural practice is paradoxically counter-architectural. Tsimtsum can be symbolized in architectural practice, but in reality it is always contradicted by architecture. Architecture betrays its first condition of possibility. The architect-author must live this contradiction: knowing that creation presupposes an act of withdrawal but not being able to do so.

4.2. *Self-limitation*. In the divine Tsimtsum, the Ein Sof, the "limitless", limits itself. There is again an almost contradictory movement: the Infinite, which by definition has no limits, limits itself, and yet remains infinite. The Infinite does not manifest its omnipotence in the solitude of its infinity, but in opening a nothingness at the center of itself. God "is nothing more than the opening of this void. Only the opening is divine, but the divine is nothing more than the opening" (Nancy 2007, 70). God is accessible only through his own empty non-being. In other words, God is accessible only through his being non-God.

In the last phase of his thinking, Friedrich Nietzsche argued that architecture is the greatest expression of the will to power as synthesis of

Apollonian and Dionysian (Nietzsche 1997, 56–57). So, architecture is the most human activity, the highest form for a human being to be an author.

By contrast, the Tsimtsum as an architectural act means that the greatest power of architecture is expressed in its self-limitation. Self-limitation, and not having all resources at one's disposal, is the prerequisite for any creative deployment. The architectural act is all the more powerful when it is an act of self-limitation, an act that gives space to the non-human. The non-human, the void of the human, is the way through which we can access this other authorial architectural act.

If architecture believes it can exert unlimited power by political, economic, technological, or artistic means, it systematically betrays the second aspect of its condition of possibility. Self-limitation is believed to be a new theme for architecture, imposed by human-induced global warming; instead, it has always been a condition, mostly ignored, of architectural practice, conceived in terms of its possibility.

4.3. *Giving freedom*. The purpose of the act of divine withdrawal is not that of leaving an empty space, but of preparing the place where the universe can be created, and can begin its history. By withdrawing, the Infinite makes it possible for there to be a world, as something other than the Infinite, and makes possible the relationship between itself and the world. God makes room for the other than himself. In a diary entry, Søren Kierkegaard, ignoring the tradition of Tsimtsum, notes that only through an omnipotent movement of withdrawal can God give human beings the highest gift: making them free and independent (Kierkegaard 2011, 56–57).

In the same way the architectural Tsimtsum is not the simple act of emptying, but it is the premise in order that the architectural composition and construction can be realized. In this way architecture can give space to the other, that is, it can give space to the (not only human) lives of those who will live there. To design and to build places means allowing relationships between the place and those who live there, and allowing the inhabitants to relate to one another, thanks to the place. Therefore, the aim of the architectural Tsimtsum is to establish places where individuals and communities can unfold by developing their relationships. Its purpose is to give freedom. *Giving space is giving freedom*. The authorial architectural act is not about the solipsistic manifestation of the conquering and building power of architecture. Rather, architecture manifests its power by allowing the establishment of relationships between individuals, so that individuals can unfold their freedom. By giving space, architecture works to enable free relationships. Without retraction, no gift of freedom. Giving freedom, the third aspect of architecture's condition of possibility, should be the maxim that guides and directs every architectural act.

4.4. *Impotence*. However, the act of giving freedom is connected to an admission of impotence. What do I mean by this?

The act of divine Tsimtsum involves the Infinite withdrawing from the place of the world, but at the same time continuing to contain the world, since the space of the world is the result of the Infinite's withdrawing from its own center. However, the world is not the plaything of the

Infinite. God leaves the world to human beings and their responsibility and thus accepts his own impotence.

In the same way, the architectural act cannot claim to pre-figure what will happen in the places it designs. It must create the conditions for the free unfolding of individuals, but it cannot predetermine the future behavior of those who will live there. The architectural act is always a wager, that is to say a hope and a promise of emancipation and freedom, but a promise that will always remain unfulfilled (Derrida 1987, 491–492). It is a lost wager, a broken promise. The architectural act must be aware of its impotence in creating freedom, in creating emancipation. If it thinks it can predetermine the behavior of those who will live there, it transforms itself from an opportunity for freedom into an act of domination (Adorno 1967, 104–127). The power of the authorial architectural act is a confession of impotence, of impossibility of control.

5. The other form of authorship

These are the four features of the Tsimtsum model of creation, and these are the four features of this other form of authorship: withdrawal, self-limitation, giving freedom, impotence. These four features define an alternative relationship between the authors and their works, a relationship that in my eyes is more fundamental than the model creator-creature described in Genesis. As argued, the relationship creator-created universe needs a middle term, which is the non-human void as the result of the Tsimtsum, and which is more fundamental than the two terms creator and creature. Therefore, the Tsimtsum authorial model of designing is more fundamental than the Genesis authorial model. On the one hand, the concept of Tsimtsum imposes itself as a condition of possibility for the architectural act; on the other, it shows us how architecture disregards, overturns, and betrays its own condition, that is, the condition of giving space; and how architecture must continually denounce its own betrayal, under penalty of transforming itself into an act of domination.

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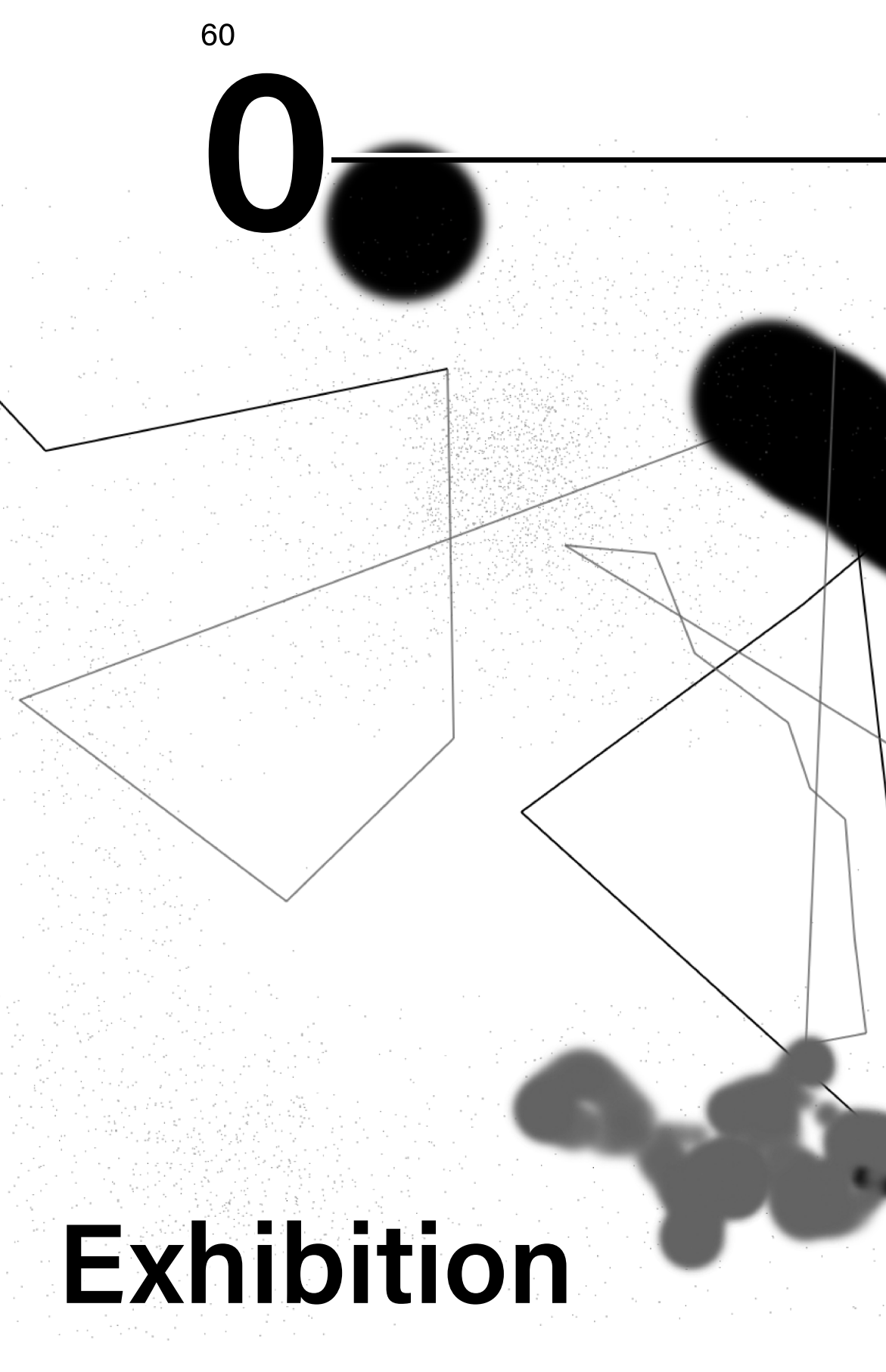

Exhibition

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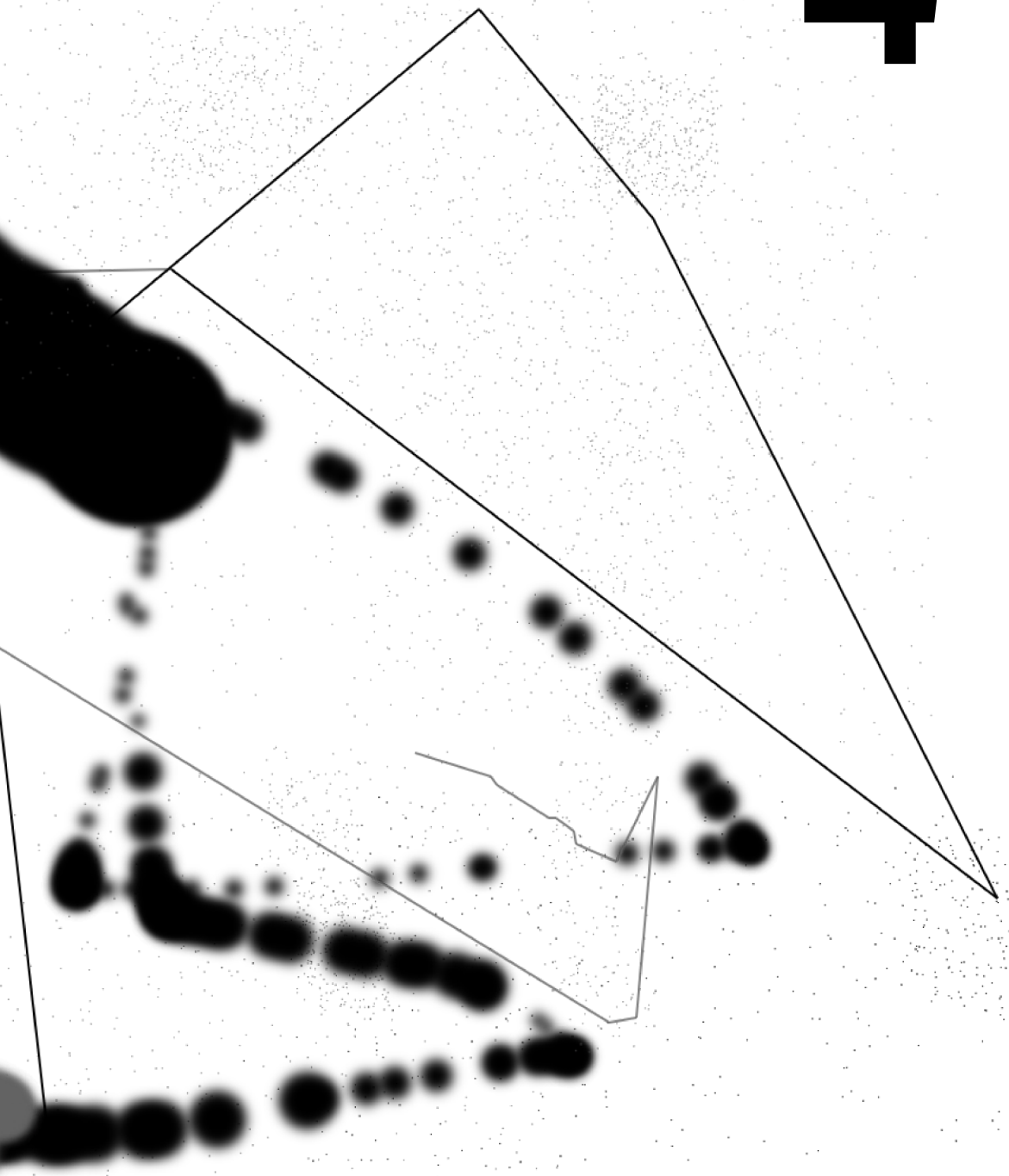

CA2RE Authorship Exhibition / AUID 2025

Curators

Francesco Airoldi, Gino Baldi, Duccio Fantoni, Sara Anna Sapone

Participants

Cheng Ai, Francesco Airoldi, Fuat Arabaci, Giulia Azzini, Beatrice Azzola, Simone Baccaglini, Filippo Balma, Riccardo Maria Balzarotti, Beatrice Basile, Irene Benincasa, Dorde Bulajic, Thomas Cabai, Chiara Caravello, Oljer Cardenas, Raffaella Cavallaro, Ahilong Chai, Tianqin Chen, Nicolo Chierichetti, Yi Xing Chow, Jiarui Cui, Saskia De Fabritiis, Giulio Delle Sedie, Silvia Di Mauro, Majdulin Elmansuri, Duccio Fantoni, Andrea Foppiani, Yiling Fu, Isabella Gioia, Aya Glida, Francesca Gotti, Kaiyue Guan, Francesco Gugliotta Yichuan Guo, Dan Hu, Shilu Huang, Maddalena Laddaga, Dongni Li, Jiaxi Li, Xiang Li, Zhihang Lin, Xiaoyun Liu, Yidan Liu, Zhaozhan Lu, Elena Marchiori, Margherita Marri, Camilla Martino, Giuliana Miglierina, Rose-ann Mishio, Elisa Mondin, Riccardo Monella, Davide Montanari, Francesca Monteleone, Silvia Mundula, Valentina Noce, Ekin Olcay, Filippo Oppimitti, Alessandro Pasero, Benedetta Patella, Marco Paturno, Ottavio Pedretti, Mariana Pereira Guimares, Miriam Pistocchi, Michele Porcelluzzi, Qu Yangyi, Yuwei Ren, Andrea Renucci, Francesca Ripamonti, Carla Rizzo, Kevin Santus, Sara Anna Sapone, Stefano Sartorio, Arianna Scaioli, Maria Scandroglio, Erika Sezzi, Sarah Javed Shah, Likun Shen, Liu Siyu, Jiajia Wei, Qianqian Yang, Wen Quan Zang, Yue Zhong, Yuhan Zhou, Lixuan Zhu, Zhengwen Zhu

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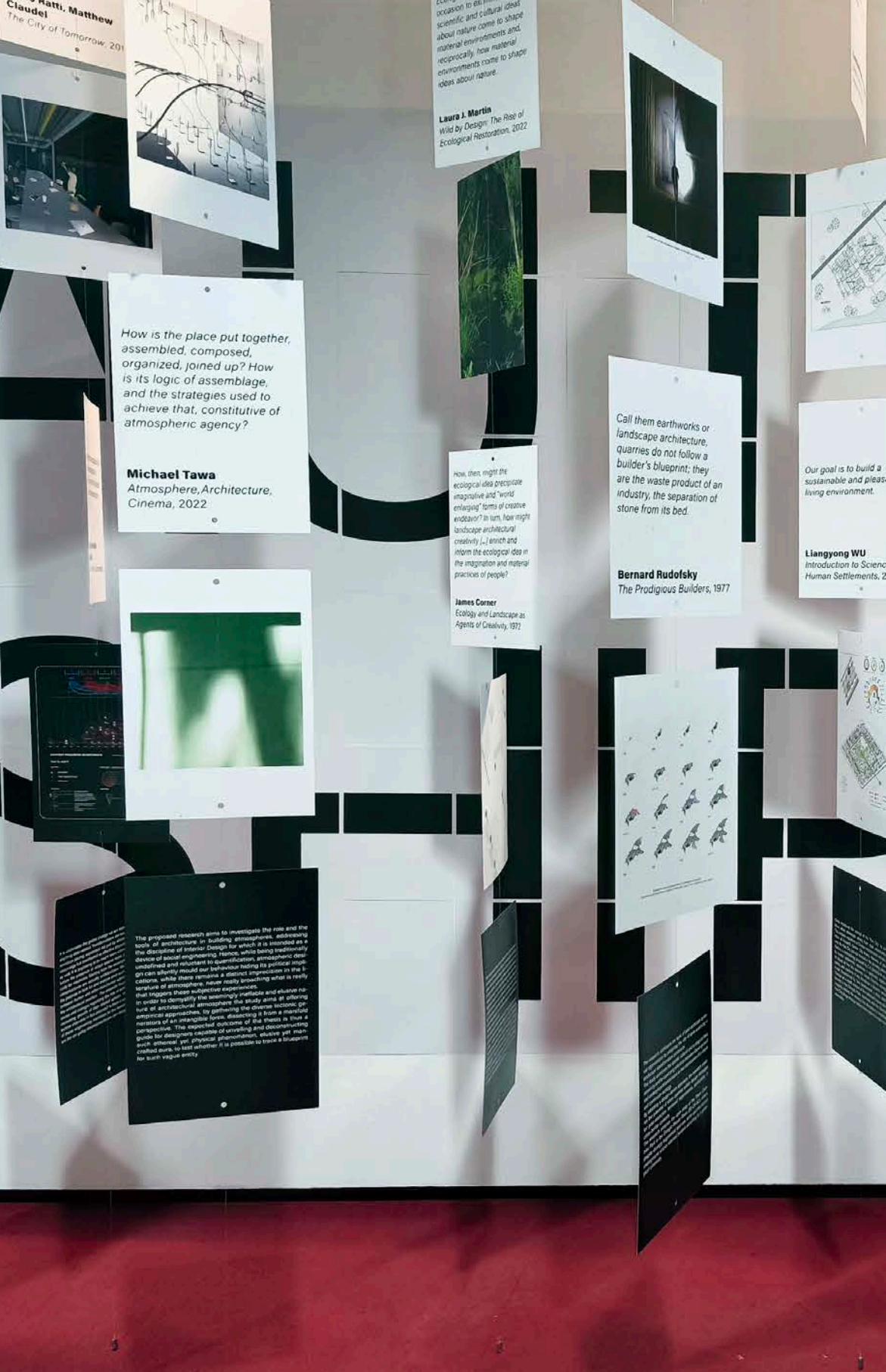
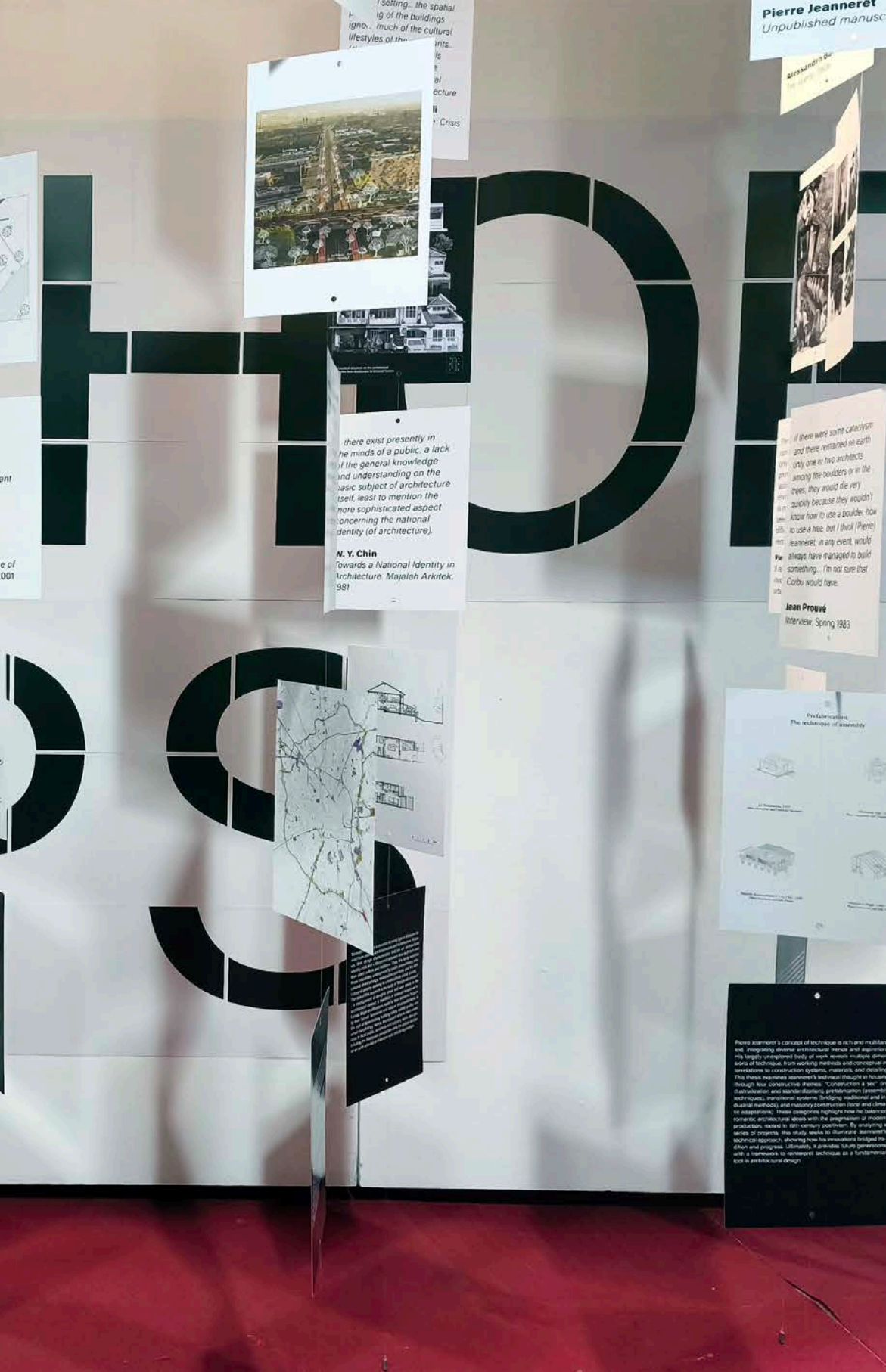
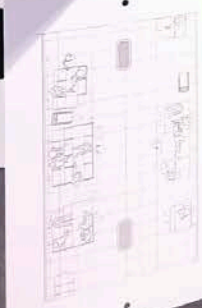
Fabrizia Berlingieri, Francesco Airoldi, Gino Baldi


Ratti, Matthew
Claudel
The City of Tomorrow, 201
How, then, might the ecological idea precipitate imaginative and "world enlarging" forms of creative endeavor? In turn, how might landscape architectural creativity [...] enrich and inform the ecological idea in the imagination and material practices of people?
James Corner
Ecology and Landscape as Agents of Creativity, 1972
How is the place put together, assembled, composed, organized, joined up? How is its logic of assemblage, and the strategies used to achieve that, constitutive of atmospheric agency?
Michael Tawa
Atmosphere, Architecture, Cinema, 2022
Call them earthworks or landscape architecture, quarries do not follow a builder's blueprint; they are the waste product of an industry, the separation of stone from its bed.
Bernard Rudofsky
The Prodigious Builders, 1977
Our goal is to build a sustainable and pleas
living environment.
Liangyong WU
Introduction to Scienc
Human Settlements, 2
The proposed research aims to investigate the role and the tools of architecture in building atmospheres, addressing the discipline of Interior Design for which it is intended as a device of social engineering. Hence, while being traditionally undefined and reluctant to quantification, atmospheric design can silently mould our behaviour hiding its political implications, while there remains a distinct imprecision in the literature of atmosphere, never really broaching what is really that triggers these subjective experiences.
In order to demystify the seemingly ineffable and elusive nature of architectural atmosphere the study aims at offering empirical approaches, by gathering the diverse ecotonic generators of an intangible force, dissecting it from a manifold perspective. The expected outcome of the thesis is thus a guide for designers capable of unveiling and deconstructing such ethereal, yet, physical phenomenon, elusive yet manicrafted aura, to test whether it is possible to trace a blueprint for such visual entity.


Pierre Jeanneret
Unpublished manus
there exist presently in
he minds of a public, a lack
of the general knowledge
nd understanding on the
asic subject of architecture
tself, least to mention the
more sophisticated aspect
oncerning the national
dentity (of architecture).
N. Y. Chin
Towards a National Identity in
Architecture. Majalah Arkitek.
981
if there were some cataclysm
and there remained on earth
only one or two architects
among the boulders or in the
trees, they would die very
quickly because they wouldn't
know how to use a boulder, how
to use a tree, but I think (Pierre)
Jeanneret, in any event, would
always have managed to build
something... I'm not sure that
Corbu would have.
Jean Prouvé
Interview, Spring 1983
Prefabrication.
The technique of assembly

Mary Douglas
The Idea of a Home: A kind of Space, 1991

Andrea Branzi
Regaining in the Dimension
Era, 2008



It is on the emergence of the interstices—the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated.

Homi Kharshedji Bhabha
The Location of Culture, 1994

The Qilou Arcade in Guangzhou is one of the most represen native modern architectural types in the Lingnan region and a typical example of cultural hybridization in modern Chinese urban architecture. It is not simply a product of the combina tion of Chinese and Western cultures, but a spatial political interface that combines global colonial modernity, local ind native, and technological flow in the 19th and 20th centuries. This article takes architectural typology as the core methodo logy, focuses on the Qilou Arcade in Guangzhou, constructs a "Critical Hybrid Typology" analytical framework, and revea als "Negotiated Hybridity" as the core paradigm of non We stern architectural modernity.
The study takes typological classification, generation mecha nism, and power decoding as the logical mainline, selecting arcade groups as key cases to analyze the interlation of Qi lou Arcade types and mixed styles in Guangzhou and combi ned with cross-regional comparison.

We need to
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they need in

Mariam Ka
Mariam Kam
Holcim Foun

Professionals are against participation because it destroys the arcane privile of specialisation, unveils t professional secret, strips bare incompetence, multiplies responsibilities and converts them from the private into the social.
Giancarlo De Carlo
An Architecture of Participation, 1972
(...) la casa a torre s in verticale con l'aggiunta successiva di locali sovrapposti a quello con il focolare. Questo è un tipo di edificio primitivo che non è raro trovare ancora sui monti.
Aldo Rossi
La costruzione del territorio: uno studio sul canton Ticino, 1986
Yang is a modern architect in the sense that his architecture is beyond the image of a stylistic modernity that has predominantly defined both the academic and the popular classifications of modern architecture.
Xin Ruan
Chinese architecture And the Beaux-arts, 2011
History is what a historian regards as worth recording and heritage is what contemporary society chooses to inherit and to pass on.
J.E. Tunbridge and G.J. Ashworth
Dissonant Heritage, 1996
Community gardens have been started by local residents seeking an alternative form of open space, by institutions that use gardening to fulfill programmatic functions such as job training and horticultural therapy, and by public recreation.
Jeffrey Hou, Julie M. Johnson, Laura J. Lawson
Greening Cities, Growing Communities, 2009
Architecture should be a process of collaboration, involving the users in the creation of their own environment.
Lucien Kroll
The Architecture of Complexity, 1987
Il patrimonio rurale italiano è un eterogeneo "deposito di cultura": lo specchio di "Tante Italia (...) mescolate in ogni luogo che si riconfigurino dinamicamente, incessantemente"
Francesca Vigotti
I paesaggi rurali come patrimonio nei territori interni: strategie, metodi e strumenti per la conoscenza e la conservazione, 2021
The juxtaposition between essence and form is crucial. The key to a more comfortable relation between the two- architecturally speaking, at least —appears to lie in a deeper and more informed appreciation of their very foundations.
Peter Rowe
Architectural encounters with essence and form in modern China, 2002
The colonizers' policies brought different ethnic groups to settle in their colonial port cities, and the presence of these people from different backgrounds contributed to the emergence of modernities there.
Desmond Hok-Man Sham
Heritage as Resistance, 2015

ontological anguish of living and especially to the modern humiliation of being boxed in - what we call being lodged.

Jean-François Lyotard
The postmodern condition, 1985

Although in history, night has always been perceived decisive, unknown and scary, it seems that now night is an inevitable part of city life [...] lighting is the main tool to let cities tell their stories during the nighttime.

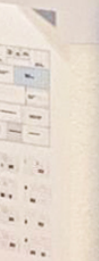
Sebnem Gemalmaz
Cities with endless stories. Città dalle storie infinite, 2019

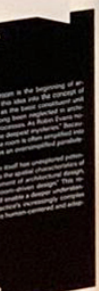
The interior space has as its boundary surface that cortex on which the energies and facts that enable and shape it are condensed and read, and whose existence the space in turn generates.

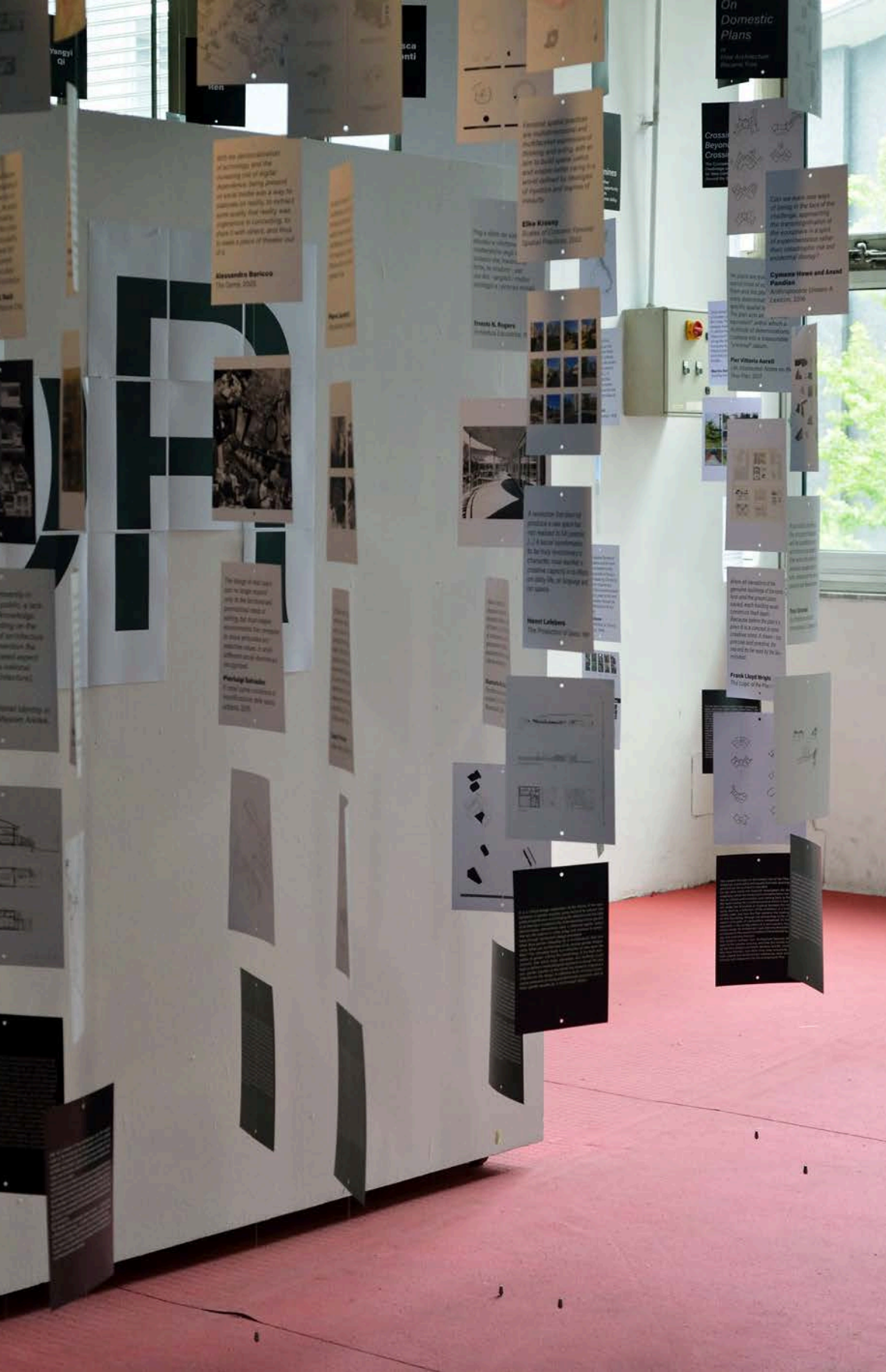
Luigi Moretti
Structures and sequences of spaces, 1953

It is only with the benefit of light, after all, that urban spaces become accessible at night. The symbiosis of light and its surroundings plays an essential role in architecture, as well as in landscape design and urban planning.

Ulrike Brandi
Light for Cities, 2009






On Domestic Plans
Alessandro Baricco
Elke Krasny
Cymene Howe and Anand Pandian
Pier Vittorio Aureli
Frank Lloyd Wright

practicality and illusory.

40th Cycle
within the Teaching of Francesco

ped the field of architectural edu-
at intertwines theory and practice,
y and materiality of construction.
developed at institutions such as
the IUAV in Venice, and the Acca
fiendrisio, has outlined a method
with the past and the layering of

cises focused on the reinterpre-
and the figurative analysis of hi-
zia has taught students to deeply
struction, promoting a view of ar-
y evolving process. This research
the themes addressed in the wor-
hip between teaching and archi-
ing how his pedagogy reflects an
anence, transformation, and poe-

Jiarui Cui 37th Cycle
Productive Environment. The re-definition of space for production in contemporary context

Supervisor: Pierluigi Salvadeo
Tutor: Michela Bassanelli

With a global mental mutation being underway, and the digital revolution as an effect, we are blurring the conventional boundaries of the spaces, and re-constructing the value of spaces. In this socio-technologic context, spaces have become urban, and urban has become spaces. The home we live in, the space we work in, the city we wander around, all diffused into a Productive Environment. The nature of this environment is cybernetic. The essence of production, the spaces it takes place within, and the bodies that carry it out, are all being reshaped and redefined. The aim of this research is to define a cognition of Productive Environment, obtained from selective case studies and socio-technologic phenomenon analysis; to provide innovative architectural solutions, which will profound the redefinition of the production and space, that will be able to produce effects for the contemporary and future context.

39th Cycle
Typological Stu-

Saskia De Fabritiis 40th Cycle
Public space design occasions along slow mobility infrastructures for the city of Brescia

Space), and sentiment of humanity to analyze how sports centers build themselves operating systems. From an urban perspective, not only does the public space need, functional harmonization but also how to handle the problem of large volumes and urban land use issues, like the collision and harmonization with nature. At the same time, some issues about urban dynamics will be analyzed.

Western participatory ideals, this approach reveals how public art negotiates historical legacies and neoliberal pressures, offering a Global South paradigm for sustaining cultural identity amid rapid urbanization.

Maria Scandroglio Anelli 39th Cycle

The quality of architectural design for sustainable regeneration. The reuse of abandoned barracks in Italy

Supervisor: Ilaria Valente

This work contributes to the literature on public heritage reuse by examining former military barracks built within conventual areas. It explores whether and how these properties undergo forward-thinking conversions that (re)interpret them as cultural resources for sustainable development.
Reuse is analyzed through the lens of architectural quality, including a typological analysis, to address questions like: "What saves a building from destruction?" and "How much can I change the building I'm working on?". At the same time, during research at Agenzia del Demanio, public asset conversion processes were studied and will be compared with international cases.
A design atlas follows, mapping abandoned barracks in Italy, systematically analyzing key features before applying insights to the case study: the former convent of Santa Maria della Ripa in Forlì.

Camilla Martino 40th Cycle

Adequate and Appropriate Shelter Practices. Sustainable modular construction systems for emergency contexts using local materials

Supervisor: Alessio Dionigi Battistella

The research investigates current response and intervention models in the humanitarian sector, proposing alternative approaches to shelter design that challenge the prevailing Western paradigm.
The study seeks to develop an adequate shelter that upholds not only universal human rights but also meets essential criteria for emergency contexts, including speed, flexibility, modularity, replicability, scalability, and comfort, while remaining contextually appropriate in terms of geographic, climatic, social, and cultural factors. This research critically investigates the application of locally sourced materials and contextually appropriate technologies in shelter design to mitigate environmental impact, reduce operational and construction costs, and support long-term recovery. It posits the promotion of sustainable construction methodologies with potential for broader applicability beyond emergency contexts.
The study includes the development of both scaled and full-scale prototypes to rigorously evaluate the design, technological and structural components of the proposed models.

Thomas Cabai 38th Cycle

Composing Ecologies. Reading, drawing, designing biotopes in the nortern italian sprawl

Supervisor: Matteo Umberto Poli
Co-Supervisor: Chiara Geroldi

This research explores the conditions under which biodiver-

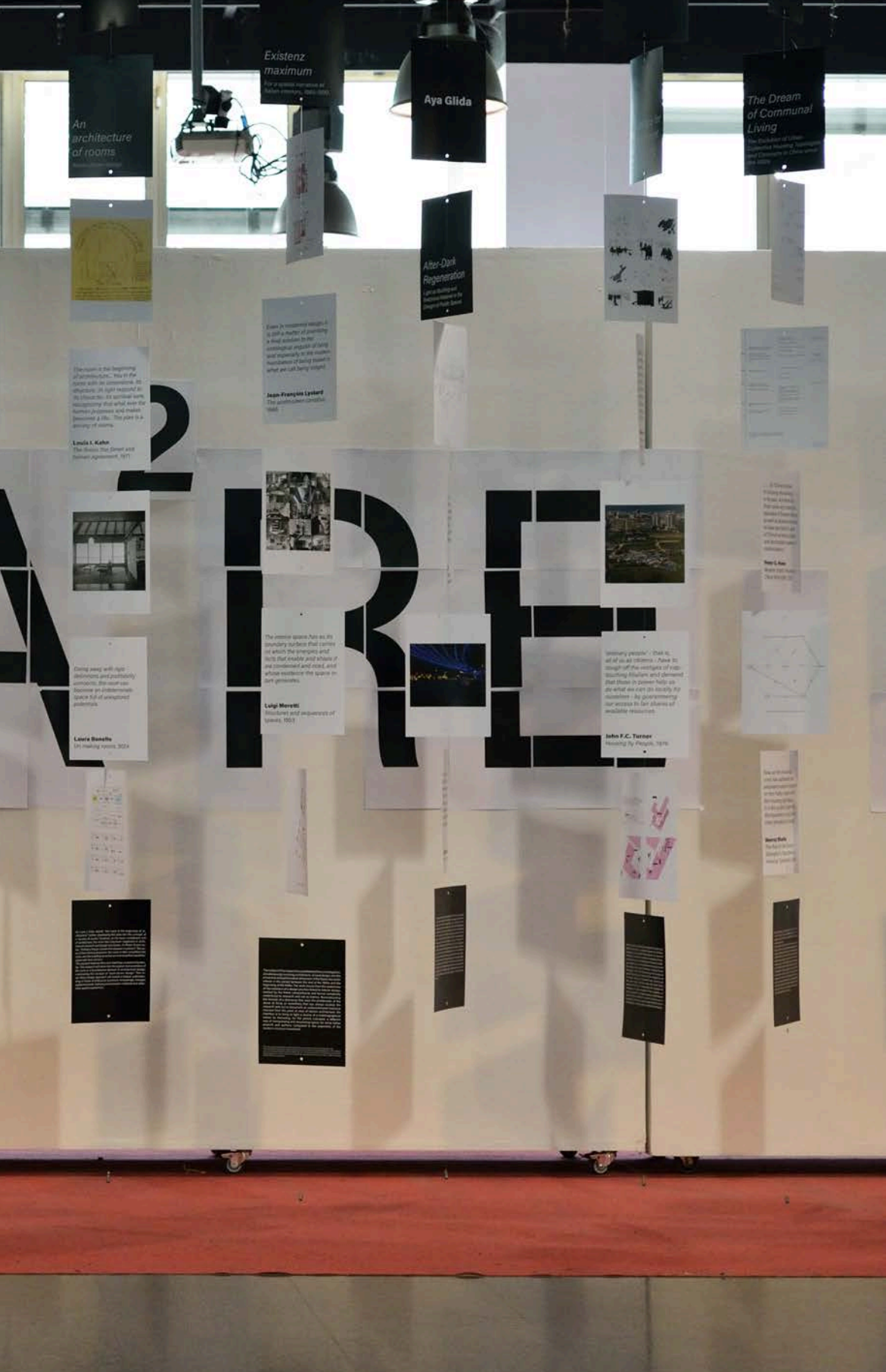
Chiara Caravello 37th Cycle

Stone quarries as architectural landscapes. Design strategies for post-extraction territorial regeneration

Supervisor: Martina Barcelloni Corte e Andrea Gritti
Co-Supervisor: Rita Occhiello
Tutor: Andrea Oldani

The research addresses the topic of post-extraction territorial regeneration by analysing the role of stone quarrying in landscape transformation processes.
The study examines the spatial, cultural and ecological links woven by and for quarrying practices between above-ground and underground landscapes as two expressions of a unique

Reviving the Lost
Beyond Local Identity
The Role of Traditional Architectural Legacy in Design Thinking within China
Community-Based Architectures for the Elderly
Students' Informal Learning Spaces in Universities
Performative Housing for Self-sufficient Communities
Jean-Philippe Vassal
Manuel de Solà-Morales
Mexico Charter
Mariam Kamara
Bernabas Calder
Ivan Illich
John McPhee


An architecture of rooms
Existenz maximum
Aya Glida
The Dream of Communal Living
Alter-Dark Regeneration
Louis I. Kahn
Jean-François Lyotard
Luigi Moretti
Laura Bonello
John F.C. Turner

The hero of modern times "culminates" up there, on the mountain, raising the monument of his own greatness. Here then is the hymn to progress carved in dams, power plants, tunnels.
Michael Jakob
Les Alpes reconstruites?, 1988
There has been no Architecture of a similar vigour in the last 100 years. It is based strictly on codes, algorithms, technologies, engineering, and performance, not intention. [...] Its boredom is hypnotic, its banality breathtaking. A new architecture is born beyond our attention, without any symptoms of humanism.
Rem Koolhaas
Countryside, A Report, 2020
This research explores the design of hydroelectric power plants as an opportunity to enhance the contemporary mountain landscape. These structures are part of a complex system, defined as hydropower infrastructure, which forms a significant territorial network. However, intensive exploitation in the 20th century and climate change have led to widespread indifference toward these facilities, while emerging renewable energies limit their future expansion. This calls for a reassessment of their spatial and architectural role.
Through a design-driven approach, based on three systemic design attitudes (adaptation, hybridization, and reuse), this research investigates the evolution of hydropower infrastructures with a specific focus on Rosso Valley, an inner area affected by depopulation and socio-economic decline. The goal is to develop design prototypes that bridge theory and architectural practice, redefining the role of hydroelectric power plants in the contemporary mountain landscape.

Car consumption is never simply about rational economic choices, but is as much about aesthetic, emotional and sensory responses to driving, as well as patterns of kinship, sociability, habitation and work.
Mimi Sheller
Automotive Emotions, 2004
The archive is against time. In fact, the archive is the enemy of time; it is against entropy. Not only are the documents within the archive rescued from destruction, but they then are not allowed to age, even gracefully.
Mark Wigley
Unleashing the Archive, 2005

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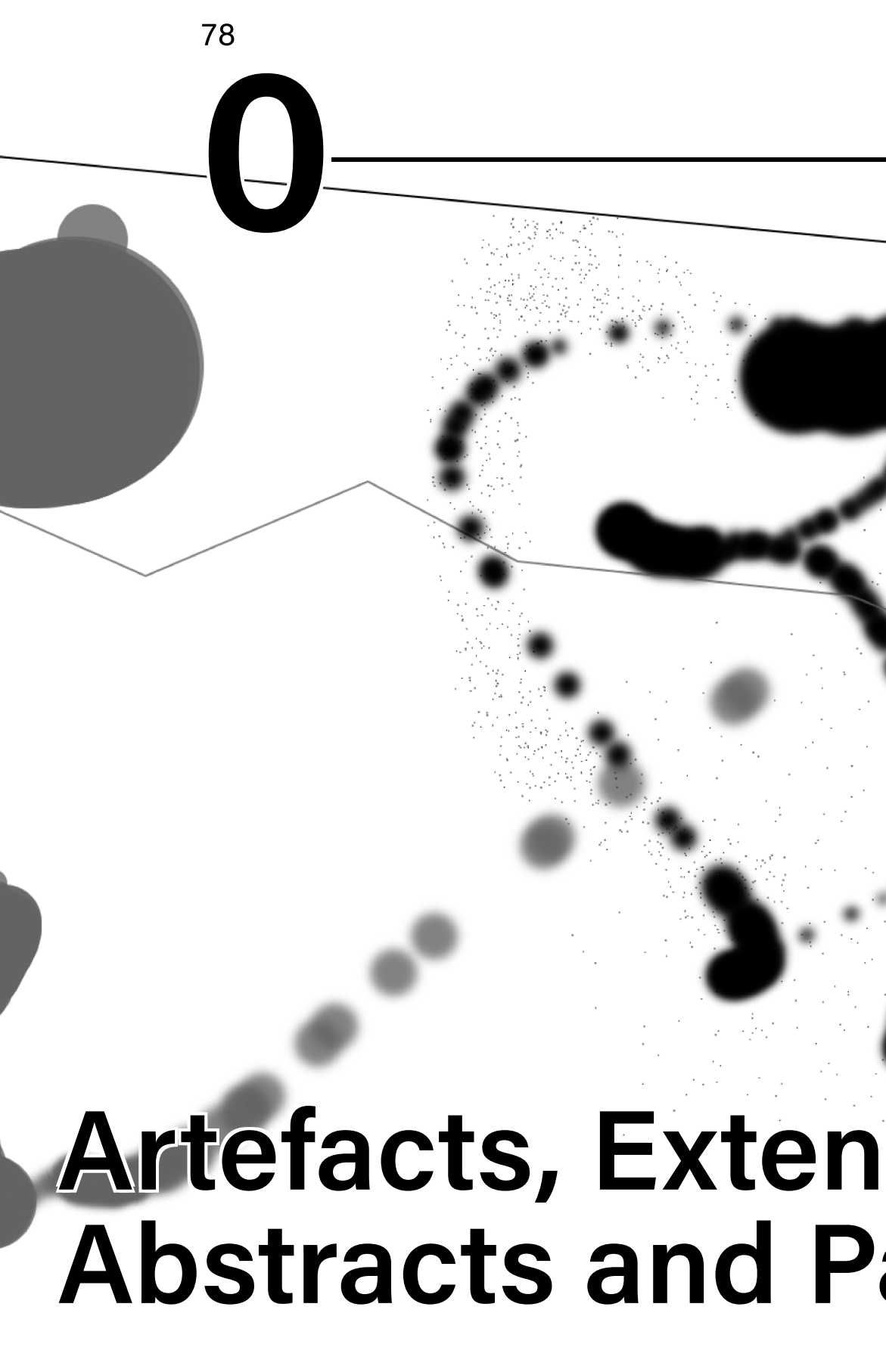

Artefacts, Exten
Abstracts and Pa

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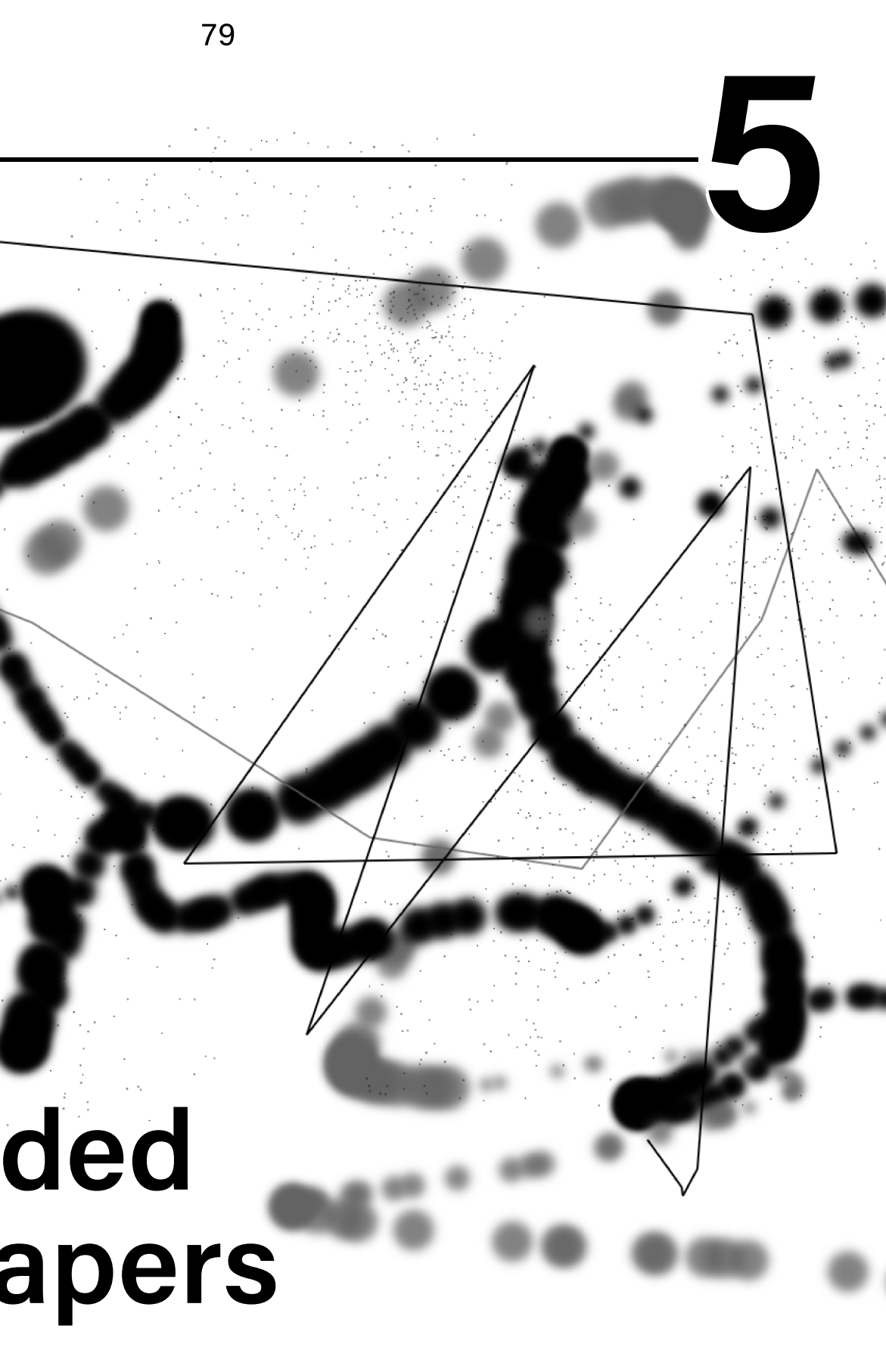

ded
apers

The Figure of the Author

Gino Baldi, DAStU, Politecnico di Milano

Who is the author? What does one mean by this title? And what requirements must they fulfill? The following section gathers a series of contributions that explore different forms of authorship, identifiable through specific clues and interpretative keys, aimed at constructing an identikit or alias. The question arises as to what defines a form of authorship, whether it depends on external factors such as the client, context, or budget, or rather on the way one responds to these unpredictable conditions. It can be understood as the definition of a distinctive and recognizable *modus operandi*: a point of continuity and personal control within otherwise uncontrollable circumstances. Perhaps it should be seen as a process rather than a result.

The text brings together various contributions that revolve around the topic of authorship, aiming to raise questions, suggest possible answers, and outline potential points of convergence. In particular, it examines the author in their most commonly recognized form, as the acknowledged protagonist of a work. Yet, even within this canonical and almost self-evident framework, certain nuances emerge that shift the interpretation of both well-known and lesser-known authors and works into uncharted territories, prompting reinterpretation or partial reconsideration. Authorship, in fact, is shaped by a wide range of conditions that can nonetheless be traced back to a few fundamental principles.

The various contributions refer to different manifestations of authorship: cases of misunderstanding, concerning the messages attributed to a work or to the role of co-authors, which invite alternative analyses and interpretations; the condition of the hidden author, invisible or overshadowed within the production process or by other agents; and, finally, the uncertain author, whose authorship is blurred by broader, often collective and social, dynamics. It thus becomes evident that the figure of the author is neither fixed nor self-evident, but rather subject to shifting interpretations, readings, and revelations depending on the context. In particular, examining the first condition of authorship as *misunderstood* provides an opportunity to reinterpret authors or situations traditionally consolidated by critical discourse. This category raises questions about the author's true intent, on the one hand, and their reception by the public, on the other. These two axes, intention and interpretation, do not always coincide, leaving an ambiguous space open to multiple readings. The contributions by Federico Casati *Miesunderstanding,* Chaoxin Yan *Awakening Palladio*, and Filipe Vaz, Hugo Farias, Pedro Lima Gaspar *The Window in Álvaro Siza's Work on Residential Buildings* address authorship in these terms, each identifying a specific author, typically already declared in the title, and proposing a different interpretative framework around them. These readings operate through contrast, functioning almost as biographical oxymora that challenge conventional ways of perceiving and defining these figures. Ludwig Mies van der Rohe is reconsidered through the value of the opaque elements of his buildings, in opposition to the celebrated transparency of his works (Casati); Andrea Palladio is reinterpreted through his asymmetries**,** the anomalous points within the geometric rigour of his constructions (Yan); and finally, the freedom that characterizes Álvaro Siza's architecture is reframed through a supposed rule linked to the typology of windows recurring in his projects (Vaz, Farias, Gaspar). This is a reading by contrast, a biographical antithesis of

these authors, capable of questioning, at least partially, established interpretations and suggesting new insights into the meaning of authorship.

There are also authors who remain unseen, escaping conventional assessments of authorship, concealing their authorial presence, and risking being overshadowed by others. One may define them as *hidden* as illustrated in the contributions of Oljer Cárdenas Niño *Authorship and Anonymity in the Pavillon des temps nouveaux, 1937*, Marco Addona *Authorship as a Different Practice: Rethinking Carlo Mollino*, and Cláudia Batista *Design at the Service of the Collective: The Malagueira Neighbourhood (1977–1993).* The *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux* can be understood as the outcome of a fictitious monologue by Le Corbusier within his collaboration with Pierre Jeanneret (Cárdenas). In fact, Jeanneret appears to have played a crucial role in the pavilion's development, revealing a form of hidden, almost invisible authorship that exposes the fragility of authorial identity itself. Another example is Carlo Mollino's *Casa Miller*, which seemingly displays an ideal dialogue between client and architect. In reality, however, the work unveils a soliloquy by Mollino: a narrative constructed with a fictitious or self-invented client, defining what could be called a symbolic authorship (Addona). In contrast to this soliloquy, the author's *modus operandi* can also assume the role of mediator, as in the socially engaged architecture of the *Malagueira Social Housing* project (Batista). Here, the role of individual authorship is diluted to foster an ongoing dialogue with residents and collective interests. The project and its authorship thus opens up to the concept of the unfinished, leaving room for continuous transformation and for conclusions ultimately determined by the inhabitants themselves.

There are also forms of authorship that appear anomalous, discontinuous with the characteristics discussed above and perhaps precisely for this reason, particularly compelling. They possess the capacity to unsettle the established order of authorship, exploring alternative ways of affirming a role or claiming a work, often through gestures that are subtle or even whispered between the lines. These are the *uncertain* authors, as highlighted by Laura Mucciolo *Rethinking the Author as an Open Field*, Ren Yuwei *Improvisation in Urban Space*, Ana Marta Morgado Clemente *Authorship in Empirical Creation*, and Josè Cherem *Indeterminacy as Method*.

In this perspective, individual authorship finds an unusual form in the aggregation of small discoveries or inventions, united by a single guiding idea. It is a kind of authorship by aggregation, almost a mathematical operation, structured around a concept (Mucciolo). One might also question the very existence of a single author, reading the urban space instead as the sum of those who inhabit and continuously inscribe its spatial qualities (Ren). This shift from author to inhabitant highlights the ambiguity of processes related to everyday and vernacular architectures, raising the question of whether authorship might emerge from a community rather than an individual or small collective.

Authorship without individual authors, without architects: only vernacular elements, pure in their intentions, escaping commercial logics and the very definition of the author, falling instead into the domain of collective memory (Morgado Clemente).

In other cases, authorship is defined by indeterminacy by a lack of fixed

determination as a generative principle (Cherem). It is a process rather than a subject, one that draws upon multiple contexts and their shared nature.

This kaleidoscope of interpretations surrounding the notion of authorship reveals, on the one hand, the complexity of the topic and, on the other, how the idea of the single author often proves to be a myth, an illusion, rare and incomplete, challenged by the presence of collaborations, collective practices, and alternative processes of authorial definition. The question of authorship thus shifts from who to how, underscoring the primacy of process.

Authorship as a Differentiated Practice Rethinking Carlo Mollino

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Carlo Mollino, atmosphere, authorship

Abstract

The contribution explores authorship as a processual and relational practice through the work of Carlo Mollino. Rather than being defined by formal consistency, authorship in this context is constructed through the design process itself. The case of *Casa Miller* is particularly revealing: here, architect and client are one and the same. Yet this overlap does not erase the relational dimension of the project –instead, it reframes it. Mollino constructs a fictional counterpart, a symbolic client who becomes a narrative agent within the space. As Carlo Levi (Levi 1938) observed, the inhabitant of *Casa Miller* acts like a character, inhabiting and enacting a story through architecture. The authorial presence is not imposed but negotiated, emerging through internal dialogue and imaginative projection. Adopting a design-driven research approach based on spatial reconstruction and interpretative analysis of drawings and photographs, this study reveals how the project becomes a site for symbolic authorship, culminating in the creation of an intentional atmosphere.

Introduction

In the contemporary architectural discourse, authorship is increasingly being reconsidered not as a stable signature or a recognizable and immutable identity, but as a transitional condition that emerges from a process woven through contexts, bodies, practices, and images. The project becomes a field of forces, a scene crossed by multiple presences – material, symbolic, narrative – within which authorship inscribes itself rather than imposing a form.

As Sara Marini has noted, the very notion of the author as a singular subjectivity and a "term that condenses prestige" was already questioned by the historical avant-gardes through strategies of de-subjectivization, and later by the post-war avant-gardes through the reproducible gesture of the machine (Marini 2020). In place of the modern myth of the author as legitimizing origin, a more open and plural conception takes shape, one in which authorship is expressed through the performativity of the project, its effects, and its capacity to activate experiences.

This shift also affects the relationship between author, work, and user. Roland Barthes conceives the text as an open space, composed of multiple writings from different cultures intertwined in relations of dialogue, parody, and contamination. In this framework, the unity of the work lies not in its origin, but in its destination: "there is one place where this multiplicity is focused and that place is the reader" (Barthes 1967). The author does not disappear, but is displaced, no longer a guarantor of stable meaning, but a figure who activates, suggests, and leaves space for multiple paths of interpretation. In this light, authorship becomes an indirect presence, less about imposing meaning and more about enabling it.

From this perspective, re-thinking Carlo Mollino means recognizing how his authorship is shaped by the tension between design and

interpretation, between intention and *mise-en-scène*. Casa Miller, in particular, embodies this complexity: Mollino is both the author and the reader of the space – his creator and inhabitant – two roles that neither overlap entirely nor remain completely separate. It is a double presence, consciously enacted, and materialized in the construction of an interior designed to be observed, inhabited, and photographed for and by himself.

As Carlo Levi observed, the inhabitant of Casa Miller is a character (Levi 1938), not someone else, but a constructed version of the self, with whom Mollino enters into a relationship through space. The house thus becomes the site where the author multiplies, observes, and stages himself. In this case, authorship does not precede the work; rather, it emerges from the relational process between author and user – who, in this case, coincide – resulting in the formation of a specific atmosphere. It is precisely this atmosphere, constructed and experienced together, that renders the space recognizable, responsive, and capable of engaging with life and human body.

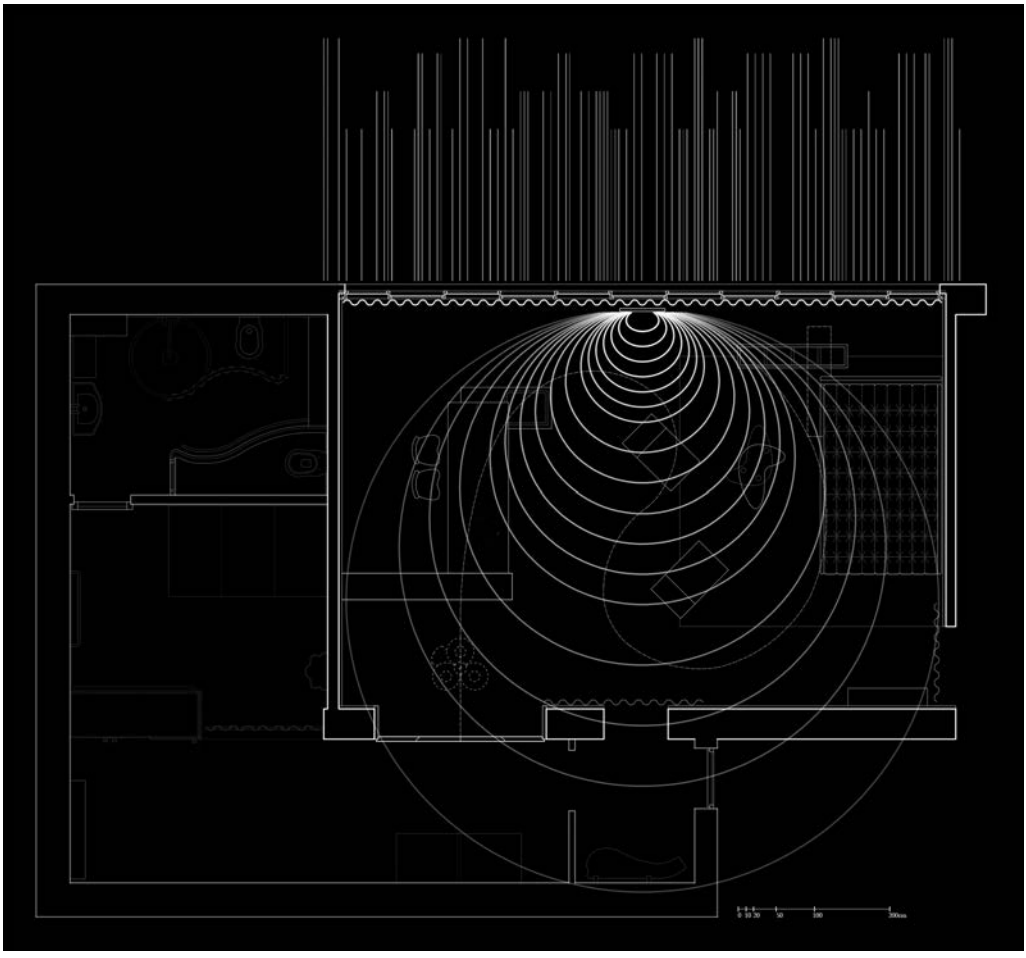

Figure 1: Plan of Casa Miller, author's elaboration.
The drawing reveals the internal genesis of space in Casa Miller, where architecture unfolds from within. The layered threshold along the perimeter, marked by heavy drapes, separates the interior from the city, creating a protected and atmospheric environment. From this enclosed core, space irradiates outward, guided by devices such as mirrors, fabrics, and furniture. The

concentric lines evoke not a static layout but a dynamic field of relations – mutable, performative, and responsive to the presence of bodies. Here, architecture becomes a scene, and authorship emerges as a spatial practice of attention.

The interior as scene

In 1936, just a few years after graduating, Carlo Mollino designed and furnished Casa Miller[1]. This was his first interior project, and it served simultaneously as a photographic studio, personal retreat, and space of aesthetic experimentation. Detached from the paternal home and office, the apartment was shaped entirely around Mollino's imaginary, a narrative interior rather than a functional one, where every element contributes to a specific mental and perceptual atmosphere.

This space was not a conventional home, but rather a place to be traversed with the body, observed, staged. It was within Casa Miller that Mollino produced the series of so-called "ritratti ambientati"[2], where he photographes young women immersed in a mutable environment built through light, mirrors, drapes, and carefully arranged objects.

As Ermanno Scopinich wrote, "I imagine these graceful female figures entering Mollino's studio, which must be a happy intersection between a phantasmatic laboratory and a rationalist studio à la Gropius", an environment where the models move between "the classicism of a Greek mask and the decadence of a voile curtain" (Scopinich 1944).
This photographic series provides valuable insight into how the space was used and how relationships were established between bodies and objects. Each photo generates a tension with the furnished environment, giving rise to alternate worlds in which a kind of inhabited performance takes place. In this sense, the designed space bends to the needs of the shot, being reconfigured according to specific aesthetic intentions.

These photographs thus become evidence of the relational processes that shaped the work: Mollino, in designing this interior, was not a solitary author but the central node of a process. Casa Miller had to adapt and recompose itself depending on the specific 'scene' being pursued. The project is therefore not a fixed and immutable structure, but a sensitive mechanism, a continuous negotiation between aesthetics and life, between construction and use.

Atmospheric devices

The spatial layout of Casa Miller revolves around a large central salon – the "red and yellow studio" (Doleatto 1936) – which serves as both symbolic and spatial core, surrounded by smaller rooms and a vestibule that acts as both threshold and filter.

In configuring these spaces, Mollino employed a series of devices[3] whose material and sensory consistency actively contributes to the construction of atmosphere[4].

One such device is the system of drapes that forms a soft diaphragm between the inner and outer worlds of the house. A dark, heavy fabric

covers the sloped ceiling and walls of the peripheral rooms and vestibule, while the only large window, in the studio, is screened by a dual curtain system: a lighter one facing outward and a velvet one on the inside. This layered threshold isolates the environment while simultaneously enveloping it. The resulting space is mobile, mutable, shaped by gestures and movements[5].

Another key device is the mirror. Reflective surfaces placed throughout the apartment are used to manipulate spatial perception. Mirrors expand, duplicate, and visually pierce through surfaces; they generate unexpected lines of sight, shifting reflections, illusionistic openings. In an interior designed for photography, the mirror becomes an active tool: it constructs framings, introduces ambiguity, multiplies viewpoints. These are not merely decorative surfaces, but optical agents that participate in image-making and spatial transformation.

Alongside these, a rich decorative system contributes to the environment: anatomical plaster casts, fossils, shells, small sculptures[6]. These elements do not form a homogeneous style, but a constellation of presences – a fragmented universe – like a private *Wunderkammer*. Often repositioned by Mollino for each photograph, these objects do not fix the identity of the space but keep it mutable, opening up new narratives each time. They are fragments of body, of nature, of time: fetish-objects that generate emotional climate rather than formal coherence.

Conclusions

Re-reading Carlo Mollino through the lens of Casa Miller shifts our focus from the author as 'design genius' to the author as a choreographer of relationships, gestures, and devices. As Peter Eisenman writes, architecture "is not a 'stable object' but rather a process, a transgressive activity which disperses the author as the centre, limit, guarantor of truth" (Eisenman 1988, 71).

In Mollino's case, the value of the work does not lie in stylistic unity, but in the capacity to activate imaginaries, to design spaces that generate meaning through their relation to bodies, movements, and life.

In this sense, Casa Miller offers a critical key that remains relevant: authorship is not a signature, but a situated practice, a form of thought that takes shape through space and unfolds through the relationships it manages to set in motion.

1 The name «Miller» is a tribute to the American writer Henry Valentine Miller.

2 *Ritratti ambientati* (literally "environmental portraits") refers here to a series of photographs in which the figure is staged in direct relation to the surrounding interior. The portrait is conceived not as an isolated likeness, but as an expression of the space itself—its atmosphere, its objects, its composition.

[3] These elements would reappear in Mollino's later interior works.

[4] For a discussion of atmosphere as an emergent quality of built space, see Zumthor (2006) and Griffero (2010).

3 These elements would reappear in Mollino's later interior works.

4 For a discussion of atmosphere as an emergent quality of built space, see Zumthor (2006) and Griffero (2010).

5 The concept is expressed in Arnheim: «The opposite kind of building (to the shelter) is the lair, which, considered as a pure abstract type, is nothing but the result of the physical penetration of its inhabitant. The trace left by the excavation serves as a channel to be exploited later; it therefore prescribes for the user an itinerary as inevitable as a railway track. And it offers a wider space, not because the structure itself requires it as part of its own form, but because the one who uses it desires greater freedom of orientation or has a need for breadth». (Arnheim 2020, 169–170). Author's translation. First published in 1981.

6 Many of these objects were developed in collaboration with painter Italo Cremona, with whom Mollino designed the installation *Te n.2* the year before Casa Miller.

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Design at the Service of the Collective: The Malagueira Neighbourhood (1977-1993)

Mapping Fragments of Architectural Design Theory Through Its Corpus of Tacit Knowledge

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Álvaro Siza social housing, architectural drawing, tacit knowledge

Abstract

The Malagueira social housing project (1977-1993) by Álvaro Siza is a seminal work in urban design and public space planning, balancing collective and individual needs. The integration of informal settlements into Évora's urban fabric required careful negotiation of conflicting interests, documented in an extensive analogue archive. This research examines Siza's conceptual process through his drawings and notes, highlighting his engagement with residents and his commitment to social responsibility. Employing a cross-methodological approach inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, the study maps his design thinking through diagrammatic analysis. By re-evaluating Malagueira's socio-political significance, this research provides insights into urban design, authorship, and the collaborative nature of architecture, emphasising democratic dialogue and the evolving role of the architect.

The Malagueira social housing project (1977–1993), by architect Álvaro Siza, is an exemplary lesson in the history of the discipline, in terms of city design and public space planning, and the necessary interplay between the collective and individual living cells. The intricate process of integrating an illegally constructed fabric into the urban fabric of the city, and the subsequent latent web of conflicting interests, required a superior memory exercise, crystallized in a consolidated analogue archive, expressed in working sketches that oscillate between the effort to depict a changing reality, experimental exercises and final drawings that excel in the rigor of technical representation that social approval and future construction demand.

This research aims to retrace the iterations of Álvaro Siza's conceptual thinking and modus operandi through an exploration of the tacit knowledge embedded in the archive's drawings and written notes. It highlights the dilution of individual authorship in favour of collective endeavours, underscoring the project's enduring relevance in documenting the complexities and contradictions of contemporary urban dynamics.

The socio-political context that preceded and characterized the process of building the Malagueira neighborhood followed a particular triangulation between "Politics, Process and Project" (Grande 2023, 96). Emerging during a post-revolutionary democratic transition in southern Europe, the project aimed to legitimize and ensure basic housing for the socially and spatially segregated outskirts of Évora. In this sense, the political circumstances demanded a heightened social and political commitment from the architect Álvaro Siza (Brito and Guilherme 2024, 7), as evidenced by the architect's continuous engagement with the residents and his written reflections. The architect utilized drawing, embodied in a series of graphic diaries, along with other resources, as a research tool (research by design), thus establishing and mediating interests between the displaced population, the role of cooperatives and divergent political pressures, under the weight of the collective memory of an expanding city. An

apparent paradox emerges: while the intimacy and authorship of the graphic diary suggest a personal narrative, Siza's approach translates into spatial exercises that prioritize collective engagement and embrace "incompleteness" as an essential condition of architectural practice (Testa 1998, 41). Despite the political singularity that favoured social initiatives, Álvaro Siza sought to reposition the role of the architect beyond its circumstances. In doing so, he promoted values of empathy and dialogue, while also embracing a certain degree of anonymity in his projects in the face of a consolidated historical reality.

Mapping the *modus operandi* of its process, in its creative/social duality, is part of both individual and collective efforts, given the involvement of a large team and the community it was intended to accommodate, but also due to the formal and technological choices drawing upon the history of architecture and its discipline. There remains a terminology and chain of images and references that are linked to a common heritage.

To this end, a cross methodology is employed, oscillating between digital and analogue, and drawing upon the principles of the cartographic method. Successive analysis and translation exercises informed the diagrammatic mapping of the architect's conceptual process, based on his corpus of drawings and written notes, in its experimental, speculative and therefore non-linear matrix. The result is the spatialization of the interactions of thought, in a web of influences that prefigures the final project images. The proposed geographies encourage new ways of reading and rethinking the relationship between the individual and the collective, and the role of the architect as a facilitator of these processes.

The investigation of the theory of design in architecture entails a meticulous examination of the creative processes underpinning the act of designing. This involves the contemplation of its own methodologies as a point of reference for scholarly pursuits within the domain of architecture. In this sense, the research itself, by highlighting some of the singularities of the project through its mapping, raises other issues related to originality and the notion of authorship, insofar as it dissects the mechanisms of the latter, exposing the intimacy of the architect, in their tacit processes, to external scrutiny and, on the other hand, asserting itself through its own creative value.

The objective of this research is to revalue, from its analogue archive, what is one of the last social housing projects, in its condition as a city design with political connotations, given its social framework. The findings of this study will offer insights not only into the realm of urban design but also shed light on the role of the architect, the methodological and formal images that inform his practice, the relationship he forges with the inhabitants of the city, and the dialogue he engages in with various urban layers, both established and emergent. Lessons can be inferred which can help to reframe the modern practice of the discipline according to more diffuse premises. These premises can be permeated by democratic dialogue and a collaborative culture between the author, the team, and the client. Indeed, the matrix of urban expansion points to collective efforts which are permeable to time and the appropriation that the history of societies implies.

In relation to the media narrative

The proposed methodology is founded on the principles of the cartographic method, in accordance with the philosophical system of Gilles Deleuze and Guattari. This approach aims to structure a narrative that maps the collective and creative endeavours involved in the Malagueira neighbourhood project. According to a rhizomatic logic that values the process, exploratory maps are woven that cross images, texts and words, resulting in thematic constellations that are faithful to the cadences of the tacit knowledge that underpins architecture.

Reflection on the role of authorship

The concept of authorship is usually associated with a single individual that brings to life a work of art through his individual *endeavour*. In architecture, authorship relies on the assumption of the author as the main driving force of the project.

This modern necessity to identify a clear authorship between the volatile and often ambiguous interplay between builders, users and the architect is counter to its production process and undermines the social value of architecture. In an age that grapples with challenges related to climatic changes, resurgent political turmoil and an increasing fragmentation, the process of architecture, more than ever, should be perceived as closer to a collective *endeavour*, that stems from intuitive and collaborative research and practice.

As Siza states, "Architecture does not allow or accept improvisation, the immediate and directly transposed idea. Architecture is the revelation of nebulously latent collective desire" (Siza 2009, 169). The architect does not lose its intellectual and artistic status but instead is valued for its capacity to promote the dialogue between the collective and the individual. The resulting cartography of case study of the project of Malagueira, through the lenses of its architect Álvaro Siza, is an example that the exercise of architecture can require a certain capacity to let go of the modern notion of authorship and self-entitlement, without losing its intellectual value.

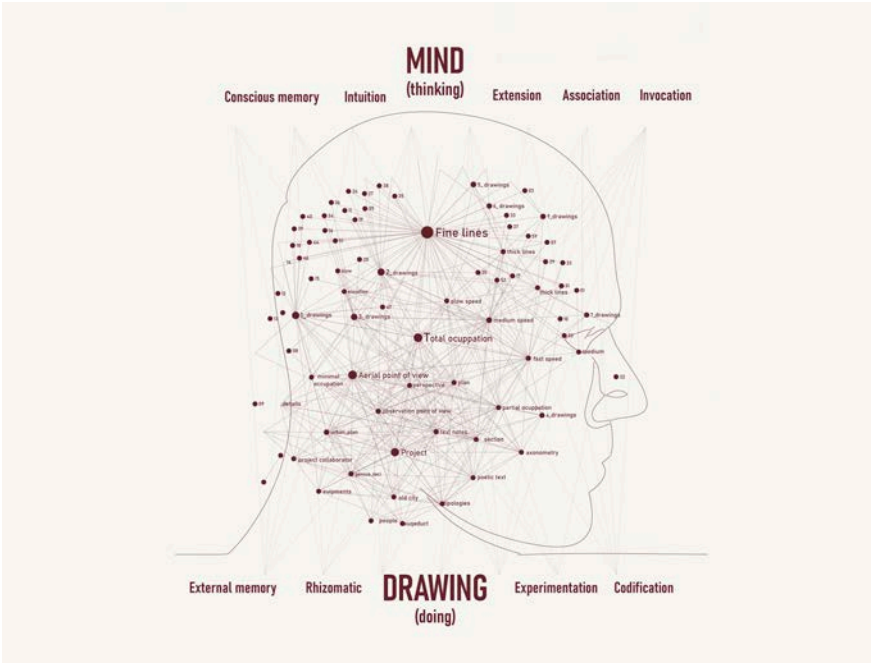

Figure 1: Dichotomy between mind (think) and drawing (doing) and its underlying concepts. (Adapted from Batista 2024)

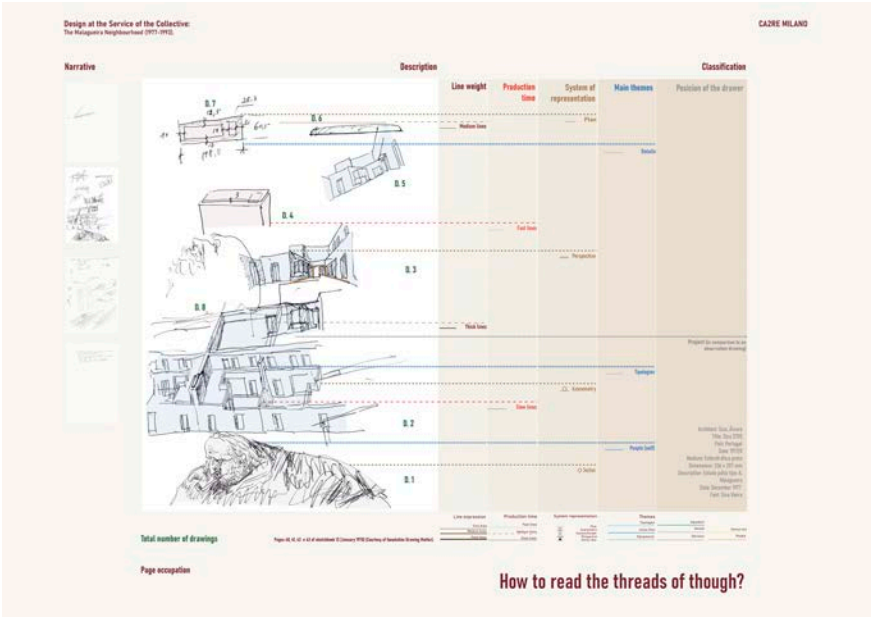

Figure 2: Cartographic methodology. Analyzing drawings is a complex task as it requires measuring the intangible. Therefore, every drawing requires a certain degree of decoding of its signs. The threads of thought vary in their strength, expression and movement. Thus, the research identifies the corpus of the sketchbooks materialised in variable traces, in terms of their codification (i.e. system of representation), line typology (thickness, speed and occupation) and the images evoked (themes), which are filtered through successive exercises of recognition, quantification, qualification and synthesis.

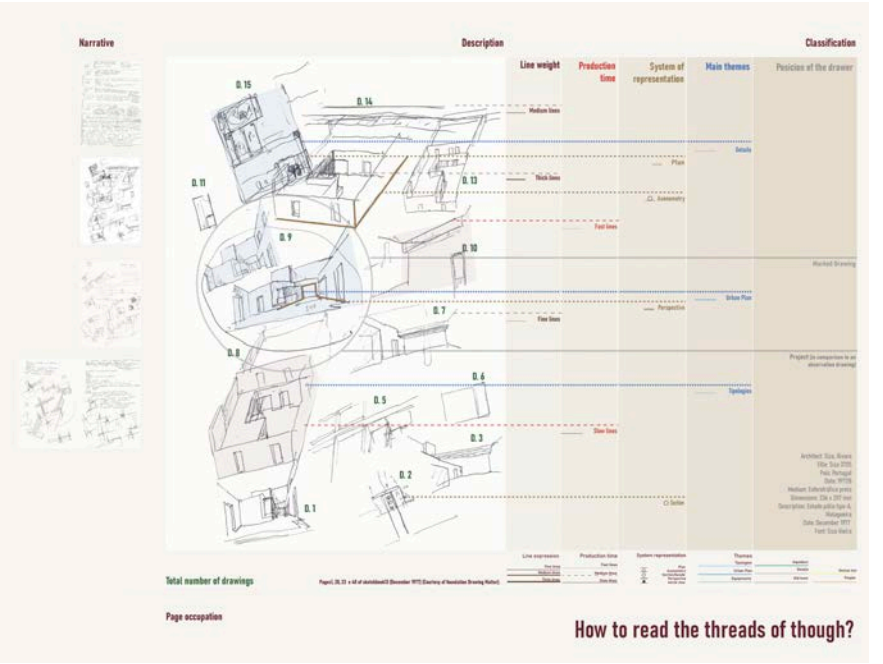

Figure 3: Analysis exemplifying a single page, sketchbook 01 (1977), in terms of their codification (i.e. system of representation), line typology (thickness, speed and occupation) and the images evoked (themes). (Adapted from Batista 2024)

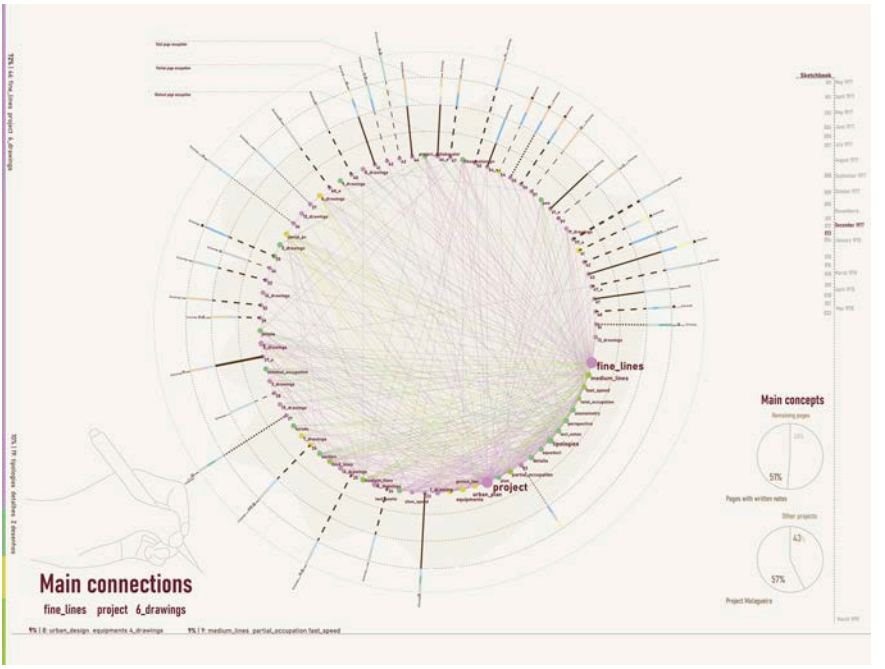

Figure 4: Rhizomatic diagram that results from the critical analysis of sketchbook 01 (1977), based on criteria such as line typology (thickness and strength), speed of hand movements (slow, medium, or fast lines), page occupation, themes, and the number of drawings. The main topics, which had the greatest influence, were assigned different colours: pink (above 70%), green (20 to 30%), light green (below 10%), and orange (remaining). The first notebook, dated from March 1977, shows that the architect mainly used a fine, quick line, having filled several pages with a single drawing. Multiple aerial views were used to sketch the urban plan. (Adapted from Batista 2024)

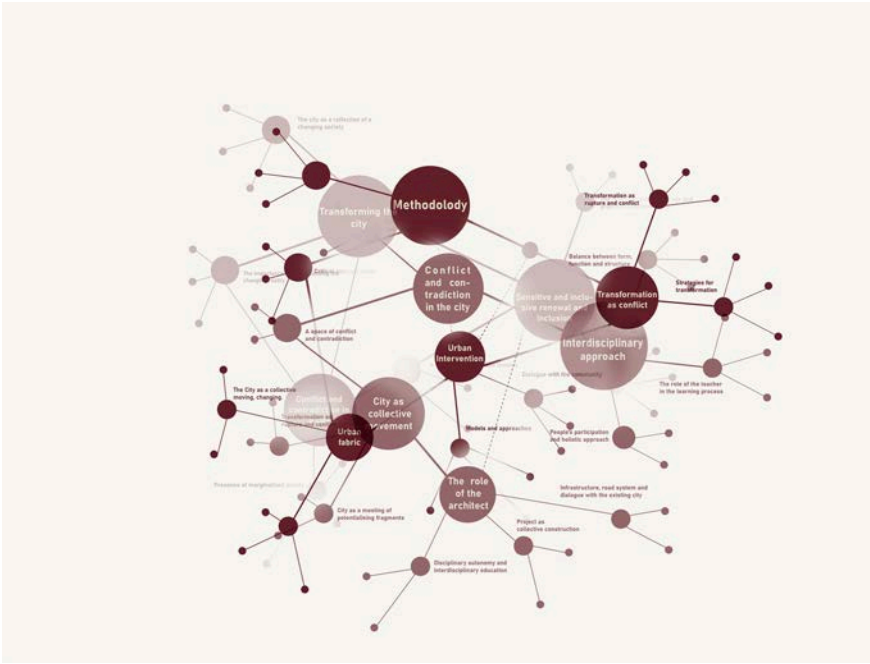

Figure 5: Rhizomatic diagram that results from the critical analysis of sketchbook 19 (1978), based on criteria such as line typology (thickness and strength), speed of hand movements (slow, medium, or fast lines), page occupation, themes, and the number of drawings. The thirteenth notebook, dated from December 1977, shows a complete occupation of the pages, with an average of six drawings dedicated to the theme of typologies and detailing. The notebook, dated from April 1978, the nineteenth in the series, shows an average of four drawings per page. The author mainly used perspective as a means of representation, accompanied by axonometries, to illustrate the typologies and details of the general scheme. Thicker lines were also employed. (Adapted from Batista 2024)

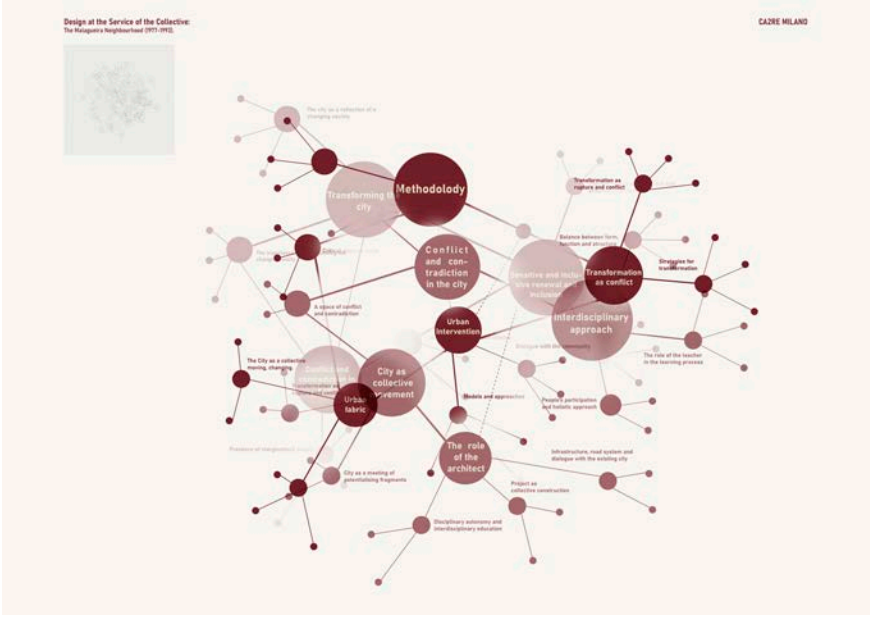

Figure 6: Rhizomatic synthesis in relation to the corpus of sketchbooks (1977-78). This corpus encompasses both the written and drawn elements of the sketchbooks.

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Authorship and Anonymity in the Pavillon Des Temps Nouveaux, 1937

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Pierre Jeanneret, Le Corbusier, Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux

Abstract

The *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux*, inaugurated on July 17, 1937, as part of the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*, embodies the ideals of modern architecture. Designed by Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, it featured a removable metal structure with sixteen inclined fusiform pillars supporting a suspended canvas, creating a flexible exhibition space. While often attributed solely to Le Corbusier, archival evidence reveals that Pierre Jeanneret played the central role in its design, with contributions from Charlotte Perriand. Jeanneret's leadership is evident in early project proposals, developed during Le Corbusier's absence. The pavilion also marks the onset of tensions between the cousins, leading to their eventual separation in 1940. Beyond its architectural significance, the project underscores the complexities of authorship in architecture, challenging the traditional focus on singular genius and highlighting the essential role of collaboration in modern design.

In 1932, in preparation for the 1937 International Exhibition in Paris[1], several architectural competitions were held to design the event's pavilions. The objective was to illustrate modern life in housing, and the prizes consisted of the construction of residential projects at various scales and categories. In response to these calls, between 1932 and 1936, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret submitted three projects at different urban scales[2], culminating in the design and construction of the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux* in 1937.

Conceived as a traveling exhibition space, its final design featured a metal structure composed of sixteen fusiform lattice pillars arranged in a 5×5 mt grid and inclined at a 10 degree angle. The columns, spaced five meters apart and forming an almost square layout, were connected by metal cables. A yellow Austrian-style tent canvas was suspended from these cables, creating an open interior space designed to house the architects' exhibition on new ideals of modern life.
The *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux* holds a prominent place in the history of modern architecture due to its structural simplicity and bold architectural approach. Considered a paradigm of modern ideals, it embodies a functional approach, new industrial technologies, and remarkable adaptability to different needs.

Over the years, this work has been recognized as a milestone within Le Corbusier's legacy, often credited with shaping the vision of modern architecture and establishing him as the undisputed author of the project. However, a closer examination of its history reveals that Le Corbusier played a secondary role in its creation. It was his partner, Pierre Jeanneret, who took on the primary responsibility for the design, working in collaboration with the team at the *Atelier 35 rue de Sèvres*, notably including Charlotte Perriand.

Third project: *Un Musée de la Connaissance à croissance illimitée*

After rejecting their first[3] and second[4] projects, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret risked being excluded from the Exposition. To encourage a new proposal, the exhibition organizers offered them a new site at *Porte d'Italie*, along with a sum of 500,000 francs, on the condition that they propose a modest and temporary design – a *pavillon*. The idea did not appeal to Le Corbusier, as he considered such structures superficial, or as he called them, *Pavilloner*[5].

Determined to build a more permanent structure, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret proposed the *Musée de la Connaissance*, based on a concept of unlimited growth in a square spiral, inspired by previous projects such as the *Musée des Artistes Vivants*[6]. To optimize costs and facilitate assembly, they adopted a dismantlable metal structure[7]. Despite these adjustments, the budget remained insufficient[8], leading them to reformulate the proposal under the name *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux: Musée Éducation Populaire*, seeking support from the *Parti Populaire*, which had come to power in May 1936.
Taking advantage of P. Jeanneret's affiliation with the Communist Party and his work with the association sponsored by him and Charlotte Perriand, *Jeunes 1937*, they proposed a cultural center integrating two projects: the first, the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux*, and the second, the *Centre de la jeunesse pour les loisirs et la culture 1937* [9]. Both projects were to be connected by a metal footbridge, creating a large service center. However, a lack of funding prevented the realization of both projects. Unwilling to adapt to budgetary constraints, Le Corbusier persisted in promoting his *Musée à croissance illimitée*, even proposing canceling the 1937 Exposition in favor of a new one in 1941[10].

The fourth project of October 14, 1936, by Pierre Jeanneret

On July 6, 1936, Le Corbusier departed for Brazil[11], leaving Pierre Jeanneret, Charlotte Perriand, and Jacques Gréber – Commissaire of the exhibition – trying to find alternative sources of funding for the museum, as the *architecte en chef* had generously granted Le Corbusier another extension[12]. On August 24, J. Gréber wrote again to P. Jeanneret, urging him to find a solution[13]. Gréber' letter concluded with a final deadline for securing the necessary funds for construction: August 31, 1936. Pierre Jeanneret received the letter on September 7, several days after the deadline. At the time, P. Jeanneret was in *La Sarraz*, attending the *CIRPAC* meeting, as he had been delegated by *CIAM-France*, alongside Charlotte Perriand and Pierre Chareau, to participate in the congress[14].

Following J. Gréber's ultimatum, Pierre Jeanneret decided to meet to negotiate a fourth extension of the deadline. The meeting, held on September 25, was successful, and P. Jeanneret was granted one final extension. However, J. Gréber advised P. Jeanneret that if the funds – whether public or private – were not secured within the next seven days, by

October 1, 1936, he should abandon the idea of constructing the museum and instead submit a new design for the exhibition as soon as possible, taking into account the funds already allocated by the directors – the 500,000 francs that had already been assigned[15].

Once again, the search for museum funding yielded no results. Following J. Gréber's advice, P. Jeanneret opted for a new proposal. Le Corbusier was notably absent from the process; after returning from South America, he immediately left for Italy to attend the *Congresso della Reale Accademia d'Italia Fondazione Alessandro Volta*, held from October 25 to 31, 1936. Thus, Le Corbusier left Pierre Jeanneret in charge of leading the project for the new *pavillon*[16].

Pierre Jeanneret's role at *Atelier 35 rue de Sèvres* was not secondary, as he actively participated in design decisions related to the organization, modulation, and distribution of floor plans, elevations, and sections[17]. In addition to being the technical expert of the *Atelier*, he was described by Charlotte Perriand as follows:

"Pierre was, for all of us, a brother and the ring connection between Corbu and us. Pierre, at the Atelier, drew and drew everything, even the tiniest detail. He was the mechanic of the new times; his love and a strong inclination for mechanics filled him completely..." (Perriand 1998, 26)[18]

On October 14, 1936, Pierre Jeanneret presented the new proposal to Jacques Gréber. The new *pavillon* was a cubic volume, matching the dimensions of the central core of the spiral museum. The cube, designed without any façade, was conceived to eventually evolve into the spiral museum, as an orthogonal spiral could unfold from one of the core's sides. The building was composed of panels – thin membranes of *Eternit* and *Rhodoïd* – which could be disassembled and reassembled at will. This time, P. Jeanneret adhered to the guidelines of the general commission by making the building dismantlable. During the meeting with J. Gréber, a new idea regarding the project's materiality was discussed: replacing the *Rhodoïd* panels with fabric. This change would reduce the cost of the *pavillon* and enhance its mobility, making it genuinely dismantlable.

First version: draft of October 20, 1936

On October 20, 1936, Pierre Jeanneret presented the site plan for the *Pavillon* (FLC-30814). P. Jeanneret continued with the idea of creating a *Centre culturel*, proposing a set of three dismantlable structures: the first, the main *pavillon* with an outdoor amphitheater; the second, a transportable *Wagon-remorque*; and the third, the prototype of the *Maison dépliable et transportable*.

The main *pavillon*, a rectangle measuring 49 mt by 35 mt – both multiples of 7 – followed the structural grid previously determined for the *Musée de la Connaissance à croissance illimitée*. Its tensile structure characterized the volume, consisting of external metal pillars supporting the fabric façades. The two sections adjacent to the floor plan were related to the

section of the *Wagon-remorque* and the *Maison dépliable et transportable*, both featuring a gabled roof with a central channel for rainwater collection. Unlike these two, the main *pavillon* incorporated an *impluvium* instead of a central drainage channel.

Charlotte Perriand's collaboration was crucial in the preparation of the project. Le Corbusier appointed her as manager, and she was responsible for designing the *Wagon-remorque*, a deployable structure intended to transport the *pavillon* across the country – the collaboration between P. Jeanneret and Ch. Perriand was not surprising, as they had previously worked together on other buildings – without Le Corbusier – focusing on developing prefabricated leisure housing.

A typical structure and shape for a demountable pavilion

This is not the first time that Pierre Jeanneret used a similar structure for an exhibition *pavillon* within the *Atelier 35 rue de Sèvres* – a series of sequential metal lattice portals that free up the interior space. As early as 1927, a similar metal structure was proposed for the *Pavillon Nestlé*. The façades of the *pavillon* were conceived as a structure composed of seven portals connected by a set of beams, to which a series of seven metal tubes were added along the building's central axis to facilitate assembly, disassembly, and transport.

Another unbuilt example, designed and entirely overseen by Pierre Jeanneret, was the *Pavillon Bat'a* (1937)[19]. A contemporary of the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux*, it featured a structure of double-T metal lattice pillars with a glass roof. The pillar portals were arranged in seven rows to form the rectangular void of the *pavillon*. Its cladding was envisioned as interwoven tanned hides, assembled like large tiles, which would also function as a vast projection screen.

Second version: draft of November 6, 1936

On November 6, 1936, a second design for the *pavillon* was presented. The site plan (*FLC 30818*) shows that the proposed *pavillon* underwent several modifications in both form and placement. The static system of metal and tensile pillars was maintained, but the shape of the *pavillon* was altered. The original rectangular volume was adjusted to a square with 35 mt sides. The series of lateral and front pillars were replaced by four pillars, one at each corner of the square, and the *impluvium* was eliminated. The site layout also changed, the entrance was rotated, the amphitheater, initially positioned at the entrance, was regularized into a rectangle and relocated to the north of the building. The modifications to the project were likely a result of Le Corbusier's return to the *Atelier*. The pursuit of a perfect cube with a simplified structure revisited the original concept of the *Musée de la Connaissance*. However, executing it this way would present significant technical challenges, particularly

concerning the tent structure. Although in the perspective drawing, the *pavillon* appears as a solid cube due to the tensioning of the fabric, in reality, this would not be feasible, as the material's own weight would generate a catenary curve.

Final Project: December 8, 1936

On December 8, 1936, Pierre Jeanneret and Le Corbusier presented the final design for the *pavillon*. The site plan (*FLC-633*) synthesizes the building's final structure. The main *pavillon*, returning to its initial version from October 20, 1936, once again adopts a rectangular form measuring 30 × 35 mt. However, unlike its previous versions, it is no longer conceived as a pure volume but instead reflects the gravitational and atmospheric effects inherent to tensile structures. In this way, the tent's weight becomes evident, forming the natural catenary curve generated by the load of the fabric and the cables supporting it. Additionally, the long sides of the building are slightly inclined toward the rear to facilitate rainwater drainage, preventing accumulation that could create excessive tension and potentially lead to the rupture of the fabric.

At this stage, Le Corbusier focused on planning and designing the exhibition housed within the *pavillon*, as evidenced by a series of his drawings and notes in his *carnets* and in documents from the *Fondation Le Corbusier*. The exhibition showcased the series of projects developed for the Exposition competitions and images and themes explored over the years, both at the *Atelier* and within the *CIAM*. On July 17, 1937, two months after the opening of the Exposition, the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux* was opened to the public.

Conclusion: authorship and anonymity

The *pavillon*, as a fundamental part of the *Exposition Internationale des Arts et Techniques dans la Vie Moderne*, encapsulates the ideals of modern architecture of its time. Its structure, innovative in its use of industrial materials and its ability to adapt to the functional needs of the exhibition, reflected an approach that would transform architectural practice in the decades to come. However, it also demonstrates how the internal dynamics of the *Atelier 35 rue de Sèvres* and the complex personal relationships among the architects involved exemplify the intricacies of architectural project development and authorship. It is not merely an individual endeavor but rather a collective effort. Thus, the *Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux* not only represents an architectural achievement but also serves as a turning point in the discourse on authorship in architecture, where the contributions of Pierre Jeanneret deserve recognition.

In the design of the *pavillon*, two contrasting figures can be identified, clearly illustrating contemporary debates on architectural authorship. On the one hand, Le Corbusier, regarded as the quintessential author – the Nietzschean Zarathustra – who has been solidified throughout history as an individual, autonomous, and visionary figure. Far from representing

a collective or following traditions, his work rises above the masses, adopting a radically new stance in thought and design. On the other hand, Pierre Jeanneret emerges as a contrasting figure, embodying anonymity – an architect whose relevance lies in his subversive approach and his emphasis on collectivity over individuality in the creative process. His work highlights the importance of collaboration and an inclusive approach, where ideas do not originate solely from the mind of a solitary genius but from a collective effort that prioritizes the common good above all.

The dynamics present in the *Atelier 35 rue de Sèvres* illustrate the collective processes that characterize architectural practice – processes that remain relevant today despite time. Since the early 20th century, architecture has been closely associated with identifying ideas and buildings through individual figures, elevating certain personalities as exclusive authors. However, these figures built their fame and recognition upon a more complex structure in which collaborative work was essential. This collective approach contributed to the success of their projects, and it is necessary to restore recognition to those figures who, though not always at the forefront, were crucial in the creative process and the materialization of architectural works.

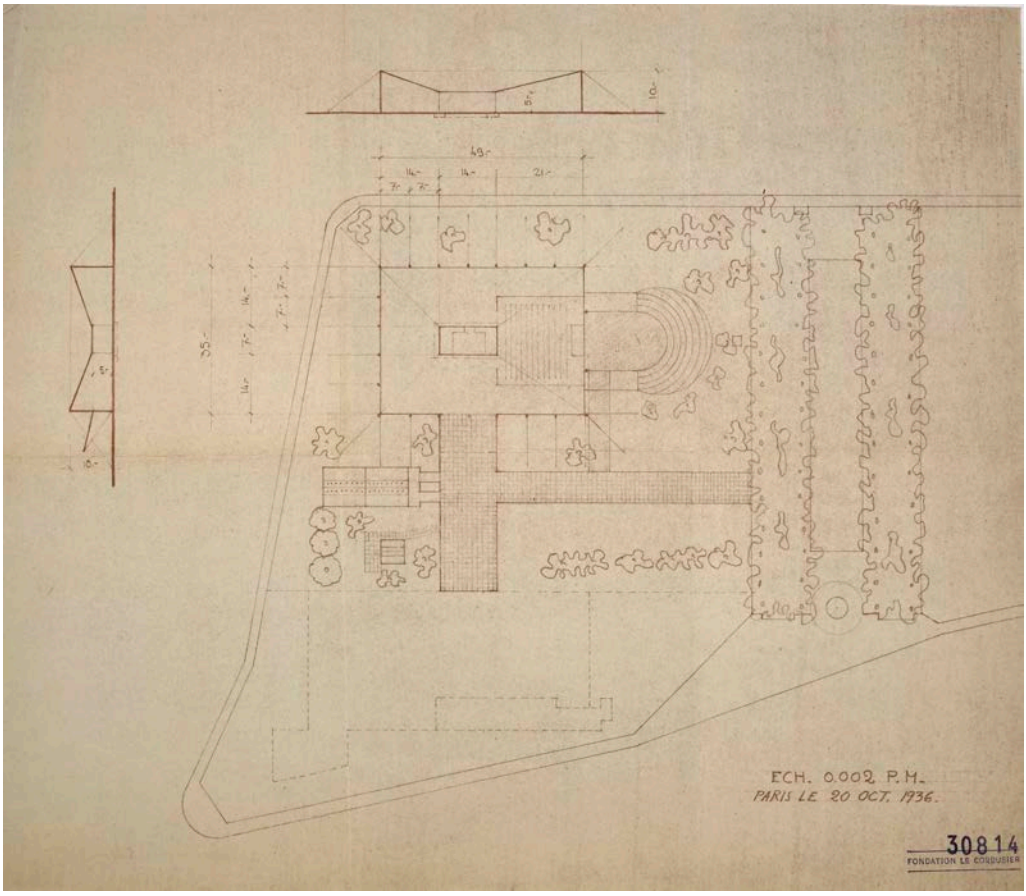

Figure 1: Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, Pavillon des Temps Nouveaux, project dated 20 October 1936 drawn by P. Jeanneret. Foundation Le Corbusier - FLC30814

1 The Universal Exhibition of 1937, officially *Exposition internationale des arts et des techniques appliqués à la vie moderne*, held in Paris from May 25 to November 25, 1937, was the first universal exhibition organized in France under the rules of the 1928 Paris Convention on International Exhibitions.

2 The three projects were subsequently part of the content of the exhibition designed by Le Corbusier and presented inside the pavilion: the first, *Vincennes 37;* the second, *Immeuble Bastion Kellermann* and the third one, *Un musée de la Connaissance à croissance illimitée.*

3 The first proposal, "Vincennes 37", later called Project "A", was Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret's response to the exhibition's main theme. It envisioned a new neighborhood near *Bois de Vincennes*, applying the principles of the *Ville Radieuse*. The design featured 50-meter-high buildings with standardized, replicable structures, reflecting their belief that construction should be driven by high-level industry.

4 In 1934, Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret presented Project "B" on behalf of the CIAM. While it retained the *Ville Radieuse* principles from Project "A", it evolved in form and scale, as Le Corbusier himself explained.

5 *Pavilloner,* or the superficial business of "pavilion making," was Le Corbusier's pun on the word *papilloner*, to flutter like a butterfly.

6 Le Corbusier, *Des canons, des munitions? Merci! Des logis... s.v.p.* (Paris: L'Architecture d'Ajourd'hui, 1938), p. 12

7 Le Corbuiser y Pierre Jeanneret, FLC H2-14-141

8 For the construction of the project Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret would need 2 million francs, 4 times more than the prize awarded by the exhibition. Le Corbusier spent the second part of 1935 searching for funds and investors for the construction of the building, a search that ended without success. In search of investors, Le Corbusier presents the contents of the project to the CIAM group - France, in March 1936, once again without obtaining any funding.

9 Pierre Jeanneret and Charlotte Perriand, along with André Masson and Jean Bossu, proposed a program for the Jeunes 1937 project, following the guidelines of the association's manifesto. Their proposal envisioned a complex featuring an 800-seat theater, a restaurant, a sports hall, a tourism office, an exhibition space, and a multipurpose area connecting the building's interior and exterior, as well as conference rooms, press offices, a library, sports fields, and workshops for design, theater, dance, photography, film, radio, and even television.

10 The year 1941 was probably not chosen arbitrarily, as Mussolini had scheduled his own exhibition, The Esposizione Universale di Roma (EUR), for 1942. Unable to attract Mussolinis's attention, despite numerous efforts. The meeting of 3 July was chaired by Francis Jourdain with three speakers: Le Corbusier, the art historian Jean Cassou, and two distinguished Communist leaders, Paul Vaillant-Couturier and Marcel Gitton (President of the Paris council). In Danilo Udovicki-Selb, *Le Corbusier and the Paris Exhibition of 1937: The Temps Nouveaux Pavilion. (Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 56, no. 1, 1997),* p. 62

11 Le Corbusier departs on July 8, 1936 for South America in the airship LZ 127, a journey that lasts 4 days, landing on July 12, 1936. Le Corbusier would end his passage through the South American country on August 14, 1936.

12 See Danilo Udovicki-Selb, *Le Corbusier and the Paris Exhibition of 1937: The Temps Nouveaux Pavilion. (Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 56, no. 1, 1997),* p. 50

13 "Comme suite à mes précédentes lettres, je viens vous demander si vous avez pu réunir les concours sur lesquels vous comptiez pour compléter le budget nécessaire à la construction du Palais des Temps Modernes. Vous savez sous quelles conditions un terrain vous a été attribué et une promesse de subvention vous a été faite. Mais nous sommes maintenant à 8 mois de l'ouverture de l'Exposition et le Commissariat Général me presse d'obtenir une

réponse définitive ... Au cas où il ne vous serait pas possible d'apporter justification d'un financement complémentaire pour l'édification que vous avez projeté, je me verrai, à mon grand regret, dans l'obligation de disposer du terrain qui vous a été attribué conditionnellement." In Gréber to Pierre Jeanneret, Letter dated August 24th, 1936. FLC H2-17 52

14 In Pierre Jeanneret to Gréber, Letter dated 7 Semptember, 1936. Archive Nationales, Presidence du Conseil des Ministres F60-965

15 See Pierre Jeanneret, typewritten note dates 25 September 1936 "Visite à M. Gréber". FLC H2-17 58

16 All sketches' notes and letters throughout this period regarding the 1937 project and the contacts with the exhibition leadership are by Pierre Jeanneret.

17 "Le Corbusier's association with his cousin Pierre Jeanneret, for example, and during the 20s and 30s with other personalities working in the studio, often played the successive roles of tidying up and opening up, with Le Corbusier usually, but not always, playing the latter role. Pierre usually had the task of making plans work in terms of accessibility, contiguity, uses, relationship between plan and elevation and so on. Le Corbusier's interventions often consisted in adding curved walls, attempting to visualize the depth of spaces by means of strong shadows, adding cheeses rich in symbolic or immaginary resonances (balconies, vaults, alcoves)". Tim Benton, *Les villas de Le Corbusier et Pierre Jeanneret 1920-1930* (Paris: P. Sers, 1987), p. 11

18 Charlotte Perriand, *Une vie de création.* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 1998), p. 26. Transalation by the author.

19 The sketches and plans of the only preliminary project were made by Pierre Jeanneret, as is shown by the records in the *Livre Noir* of the *Atelier 35 rue de Sèvres*.

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Miesunderstanding

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opacity, transparency, Ludwig Mies van der Rohe

Abstract

The text aims to address a critical rereading of opacity in architecture, trying to undermine the nowadays widely used *transparent = modern* assumption. In addition to having led to problematic applications in contemporary architecture, this axiom does not actually seem to be based on solid foundations. Through the use of a method capable of objectively mapping the opacities of a given space, this paper aims to prove that even in the modern era a particular opacity of spaces has survived, especially in domestic ones. Mies van der Rohe's Villa Tugendhat is analyzed to try to demonstrate that, despite being considered a master of transparency, his interiors integrate a certain opacity of spaces to balance exposure with privacy. In doing so, the aim is to re-evaluate opacity as a design tool to foster a new architectural approach that considers transparency just as a relatively small part of the Modern's legacy.

I.

Transparency has been considered, from the 18th century until nowadays, a symbol of social and cultural development. From Rousseau on, the myth of a good transparent society, which had an enormous impact in Europe, started to shape not only the cultural panorama but also the construction of spaces. The *openness* of buildings was seen as a practical means to encourage that rational, objective, knowledge-seeking gaze invoked by the philosophers of that period.

"Don't do, don't ever say what it is that you don't want everyone to see and hear; as for me, I have always considered as the man most worthy of esteem that Roman who wanted his house to be built in such a way that everything that was done could be seen". (Rousseau 1971,7)

During the 19th century, following this initial imprint given by previous philosophers, architecture starts experimenting with new possible forms of spatial transparency such as the Panopticon of Jeremy Bentham, initially conceived as a surveillance device. By creating an asymmetry between seeing and being seen and not offering any impediment to the gaze, the Panopticon ensured total control of the individual over the many. However, from a practical point of view, the project saw very few realizations, partial and marginal, and never managed to establish itself as a general model, despite of its inventor' s hopes for a wider use:

Morality reformed, health preserved, industry reinvigorated, education widespread, (...) all this with a simple architectural idea. (Bentham 1997, 33)

On the contrary, the theoretical scope of the Panoptic was significant, identifying in a rather exemplary manner the connection between transparent space and the possibility of exercising centralized control. Despite

this rather disturbing aspect, the fascination for transparency in architecture persisted until 1920, when Le Corbusier's 5 points, combined with a revolution in construction methods, gave architecture all the means to finally put into practice the aspirations of almost two centuries, creating completely transparent buildings once and for all. Under the aegis of many authoritative critics such as Paul Scheerbart [1] and Sigfried Giedion who hoped for *unlimited transparency* [2] of buildings and cities, architectural production started to be mainly – if not only –oriented towards that path. Was probably by recording this unbalanced and euphoric adherence to the doctrine of transparency that Colin Rowe and Robert Slutzky felt the need of dividing into Literal and Phenomenal transparency[3]. By doing so they opened the way to a critique of transparency *tout court* that was then one of the premises for the Postmodern movement which saw in the opacity – both literal and phenomenal – a new appeal "to roots, to tradition, to local and regional specificity, to a renewed search for domestic security" (Vidler 1992, 218). For four decades, Postmodernism has distanced Western culture from its obsessions with transparency. Today, however, after having dismissed Postmodernism as a movement "of historical and typological exploration of "false walls" and fake stones " [4] we are witnessing an even more aggressive return to transparency justified by the rather simple axiom: transparent = modern. But is this axiom well founded? Has the Modern been unequivocally transparent? Is this a return to unquestionable modernity or is it all just a huge misunderstanding?

II.

Rowe and Slutzky's division of transparency actually laid, more or less consciously, the foundation for starting work on the definition of phenomenological opacity, which shares some initial findings with phenomenological transparency:

Le Corbusier, by the introduction of a wall surface almost equal in height to his glazing divisions, stiffens his glass plane and provides it with an over-all surface tension, while Gropius permits his translucent surface the appearance of hanging rather loosely from a fascia which protrudes somewhat in the fashion of a curtain box.
At Garches we can enjoy the sensation that possibly the framing or the windows passes behind the wall surface: at the Bauhaus, since we are never for a moment unaware that the slab is pressing up behind the window, we are not enabled to indulge in such speculations.
(Rowe and Slutzky 1997, 36)

If on the one hand literal transparency, showing its interior without resistance, leaves no room for speculation, phenomenological transparency plays with these opaque resistances on the facade to achieve a more stimulating effect on the visual and intellectual level. The term resistance is therefore useful not only to better understand how phenomenological transparency works but also to better define phenomenological opacity and therefore an opaque space: a space which offer resistance to any type of penetration – luminous, thermal, optical, physical. Unlike literal

opacity, which offers total resistance to penetration, phenomenological opacity, like phenomenological transparency, relies on the coexistence of resistant zones with zero resistance zones or, to be clearer, of transparent and opaque elements within the same system. Finally, both phenomenological transparency and phenomenological opacity offer an ambiguous reading of space, the first through the interpenetration of different spatial planes while the second through the concealment of some of its parts. For the total understanding of an opaque space, one cannot rely solely and exclusively on sight, but one must use the intellect – or imagination – to reconstruct the space in its entirety through the individual parts, fostering that intellectual speculation that Rowe and Slutzky sees only as a quality linked to transparency.

But phenomenological transparency and phenomenological opacity, while sharing some initial definitions, are not the same thing. Phenomenological transparency guarantees an almost complete vision – albeit ambiguous – from all points in space. To understand the space in its totality, only few observation's points are necessary, usually oriented along orthogonal axes. Phenomenological opacity, on the other hand, allows only a partial comprehension from each point and therefore relies on the presence of numerous observation's points, oriented along diagonal axes.

And here a final substantial difference emerges: Rowe and Slutzky's transparency connects singularities – with the possible Benthamian reversals already seen above – while phenomenological opacity separates singularities – a quality perhaps not desirable in public spaces but certainly useful within domestic space – favoring privacy.

To conclude, if it is true that transparency has proven to be an effective tool for improving the control and management of some spaces – factories, offices, prisons, schools and even hospitals – it is equally true that this urge for transparency has ignored its repercussions on the living space, without the will to resolve some questions or concerns that still remain today in conceiving the home as a transparent place:

it is written that the knell has sounded for the dwelling in its old sense, dwelling in which security prevailed. Giedion, Mendelssohn, Le Corbusier have made the place of abode of men above all the transitory space of all the imaginable forces and waves of air and light. What is being prepared is found under the sign of transparency. (Benjamin 1973, 128)

III.

The home is certainly one of the most fragile and complex places in our society, historically freer from some logics – functional, economic, political – that often dilute the strength and poetic of projects on a larger scale. It seems therefore adequate to start from the home to begin a possible reasoning on the opacity of spaces not only because this is perhaps the place that has received the least benefit from this shift towards transparency – while being affected the most – but also because this return to the home as a space for production, from the global pandemic on, brings

back to the abode a set of problem that will have to be face in the upcoming future. If we accept the definition of a building as a *social and cultural object*[5], capable of influencing and being influenced by both society and culture, then returning to reflect on the domestic space, a space that more than any other influence the individual, means returning to reflect on our society and culture.

But to undermine the axiom transparent = modern at its foundations, it is necessary to trace within the modern a persistence of design methodologies that consider opacity as a fundamental quality in the construction of space. Once the legacy left by the modern is better understood, it will be easier to reflect on the current condition of architecture and some of its tendencies, in many ways paradoxical, to which it seems to adhere without a critical vision.

In order to do so is proposed an in-depth analysis of the most significative single-family houses designed by one of the masters of the twentieth century, closely linked to an image of transparency: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Mies' work has left a precious legacy, a numerous set of forms and a very sparse set of writings. Perhaps precisely for this reason his work still remains open to interpretation and its relevance does not yet seem to be exhausted. What at first glance may seem like a gamble actually proves to be a valid and fruitful path to follow to demonstrate the existence of a parallel, untold story. Mies' work seems strangely to resonate with this research on opacity and guarantees an unusual point of view that question the certainties of the newfound contemporary transparency. His work, commonly used as an example of an absolute and precise adherence to the Modern, actually seems to suggest a restlessness and reluctance to completely adhere to its dictates:

Mies' work had an essence of formlessness, amorphousness, nothingness, perversion, and anxiety behind a stealth shield of serenity. (Koolhaas, 2008)

Similarly to the text by Rem Koolhaas, which suggested a different reading of the master of modernity, we want to focus here on an aspect linked to Mies' domestic interiors and suggest how his interiors have retained an extremely human scale, preserving opacity and granting to transparency only a portion of his designs. The aim is not to provocatively indicate a mistake in the reading of Mies'work, but rather a misunderstanding, or a reading that is only partly correct.

Mies's facades are certainly mostly composed of metal and glass, but precisely to balance this opening of the external envelope, his internal layouts are mostly opaque and allow the domestic space to *resist* this *excessive exposure*. The literal transparency of its facades corresponds to a phenomenological opacity of the spaces, a characteristic that is even more interesting precisely because it is related to the dissolution of the canonical boundary between interior and exterior.

If on one hand this in-depth analysis aims to add a new contribution to the reading of the Modern, on the other it aims to recover some of the possible *forms of opacity* recurring in the production of Mies. Some of those forms seems to be borrowed directly from the culture of Anglo-

Saxon domestic design as for the complex *clusters of halls* [6] of different sizes that mark the various passages to access the interior or the use of numerous *screen passages*, others more daringly used perhaps for the first time in housing projects such as the labyrinthine spaces of the Country Brick House. Some others are instead echoes of a classical architecture that Mies never stopped looking at and which he re-proposed more or less consciously as for the *shrine*, *the pedestal*, *the transept*, *the enclosure.* The catalog that will be produced, considered partial and in no way exhaustive, will constitute a set of useful tools for reflecting on the construction of living spaces today.

IV.

In order to scientifically map the degree of resistance of a space and therefore its phenomenological opacity, it was decided to use a method very similar to the isovist introduced into the space syntax's set of tools by Michael Benedikt. But while the isovist is used in the urban space and imply the presence of an observer and only consider some privileged points of view, usually chosen on the basis of main paths and flows, here we want to try to operate in a different manner, not based on flows, neither on space's users.

Instead the set of drawings done by Paul Rudolph while analyzing the Barcelona Pavillion of Mies , even if still partially based on users and flows, constituted a solid reference from which to start from[7]. 25 projection points are positioned inside the space at a height of 1.5 m (indicatively the centerline of an interior height) arranged in the space according to a regular 5×5 m grid. The outermost rows are usually positioned outside the building so as to record the transition between inside and outside. The glass portions are removed since considered as completely transparent. The projected cones are then superimposed on a single plan allowing to read the areas that most *resist* (darker) and those that *surrender* (lighter).

In this way, no particular points of view are privileged, avoiding personal speculation, favoring instead an objective scan of the space. The proposed drawings can perhaps be closer to what done later by Dawes and Ostwald who applied isovist to an interior but while there the intention was to operate within the prospect-refuge theory , trying to scientifically define which points of the space aroused in the visitor the sense of mystery and complexity[8], here there is no interest in the effect produced by the space on man and the aim is to concentrate on an intrinsic quality of the space, forgetting for a moment its users.

Although this particular type of drawing indicates opaque areas in the plan quite accurately, it does not record as accurately elements that are less than 1.5 m, or elements that exceed, even slightly, this height. To solve this lack of information that can be retrieved through the use of plans, a different method was developed, that of *wrong sections*. The wrong sections are so called because instead of sectioning the voids of a building, all the solids are sectioned. Once all the sections have been collected, the method proceeds in a manner similar to the isovist,

superimposing all the sections in a single drawing, obtaining a result similar to an x-ray scan. Together, the plans and sections try to exhaustively map the opacities of Mies' domestic spaces and to highlight some forms of opacity as seen before.

V.

The main intention, as already reiterated in the text, is not to affirm a different reading of the work of Mies Van Der Rohe or of the modern, but to use this new interpretation to question the current state of built space, trying to indicate a new possible alternative, which sees in opacity a fundamental and necessary quality, not only (albeit primarily) of domestic spaces.

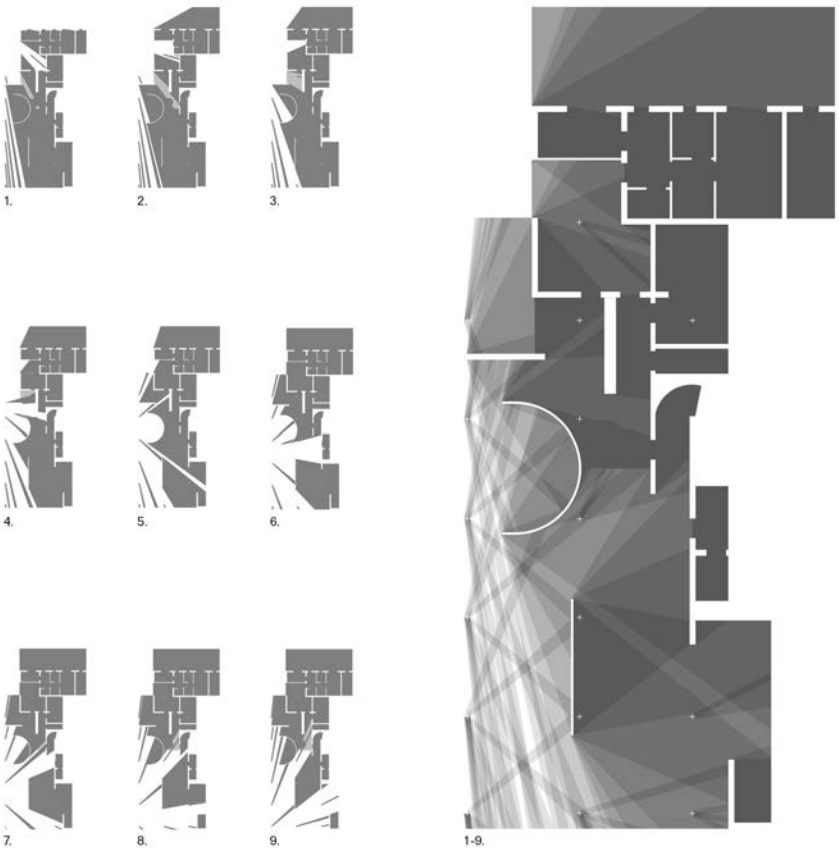

Figure 1: Using Isovist to map opacities. Villa Tugendhat, first floor: example of nine superimposed isovist.

1 Paul Scheerbart, *Glasarchitektur* (Verlag der Sturm, 1914).

2 Sigfried Giedion, *Space Time and Architecture, The Growth of a New Tradition* (Harvard University press, 1941).

3 Colin Rowe, Robert Slutzky, *Transparency* (Birkhauser Architecture, 1997).

4 Anthony Vidler, *Transparency*, 218.

5 Hillier Bill, "Building as the transmission of culture through artefacts," in *Space is the Machine, A Configurational Theory of Architecture* (Space Syntax, 2007).

6 Adriano Cornoldi, "Casa appartata" in *Architettura dei luoghi domestici: Il progetto del comfort,* (Jaka Book, 1994).

7 Paul Rudolph, "Conversation at 23 Beekman Place," interview by Peter Blake, *The Paul Rudolph Institute for Modern Architecture*, 1996. https://www.paulrudolph.institute/interview-peter-blake

8 Dawes Michael, Ostwald Michael J., "Using Isovists to Analyse Prospect-Refuge Theory: An Examination of the Usefulness of Potential Spatio-Visual Measures," The International Journal of the Constructed Environment, January, 2013. www.constructedenvironment.com.

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Indeterminacy as Method

José Cherem, DAStU, Politecnico di Milano

indeterminacy, method, space

Abstract

Authorship should not be understood as an isolated act of individual originality but as an open-ended, collective process shaped by shared knowledge. Employing a production method developed outside of the context they address.

How can a method based on indeterminacy be affronted in spatial terms? Certain principles produce certain methods of production and, ultimately, a particular set of forms. Positioning a method-driven practice, where theory and practice operate as a unified process challenges conventional notions of originality. It embraces reinterpretation and misinterpretation as essential tools where references, options, and preferences come alive.

A clear delimitation on how to act somehow (contradictorily) guarantees the indeterminacy of the result. Starting from these limited ambitions, authorship becomes an evolving process of synthesis and reinterpretation as a contribution to collective knowledge. Every project is not a declaration of individual genius but an attempt to refine tools, methods, and knowledge to better engage with the complexity of reality as it is.

This text explores the idea that the significance of a production method outweighs the role of the individual who employs it. It examines the relationship between theory and practice, arguing that when the two are understood as a single process, the notion of individual authorship becomes secondary to the dynamics of production itself. This discussion takes place within the framework of my PhD research on the indeterminacy of spaces, drawing comparisons between architectural, artistic, and philosophical practices. Concerned with how production is approached, questioning authorship as an act of individual creation and instead proposing it as a process shaped by methodology.

Introducing a discourse about the way of producing works involves a pre-attitude or a pre-judice, something that comes before and helps avoid wasting energy. So, there is a discourse about fascination, which affects what we produce. In this sense, the importance of theory and its autonomy as a way to spare time once one is faced with practice provides a framework to guide practical choices and interventions, acting as a strategic tool for a production method. It is not only a methodological indication but also takes on a paradoxically operational value.

Stan Allen proposes a view where practice and theory are understood as the same thing, the know-how when dealing with production “is not a static construct but is defined precisely by its movements and trajectories. There is no theory; there is no practice. There are only practices; practices unfold in time, and their repetitions are never identical” (Allen 1999, 112). Theory, then, is not the ultimate answer but a tool constantly reshaped by the ongoing development of practice.

From this point of view, architecture, understood in a theoretical sense, can represent a form of knowledge in which authorship is based as

a critical understanding of shared collective knowledge and less on a subjectivity of beauty. The theoretical framework behind the architect's practice functions as both a guiding and an operational tool that allows for constant reconfiguration and reinterpretation.

Can we interpret a production method, a particular – systematic or established – procedure for accomplishing or approaching something, as a practice that has been developed outside of the context they address? An example can be found in Sol Lewitt's 1968 Wall Markings, which "represent the visual expression of an accumulation of rules and principles – guidelines – that are preconceived through a total disconnection from the context in which they were executed" (Geers 2021,54), where the draughtsman (author) of the drawing should interpret the task 'without too much personal input' in order not to make a fake of the original.

A practice that does not invent anything new but observes attentively learns from different places and recycles proven solutions. Authorship is understood not as a form of a singular expression of originality but as an open-ended, dynamic process that builds upon shared knowledge and engages in a dialogue with a multiplicity of contexts.

A different example is understood in the work of Felix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze, where the relevance of the author is questioned, as explained by Andrew Ballantyne, when they collaborated their individual voices cannot be separated out and they seem to dissolve in one another "To reach, not the point where one no longer says I, but the point where it is no longer of any importance whether one says I. We are no longer ourselves." (Ballantyne 2007, 12). Explicitly making the idea of identity problematic through their use of different *personae* to define a topic from different perspectives, as exemplified in their dialogues "since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 3).

A proven method used by Hume two hundred years before who copied from Cicero and go back to Plato, where the various views are distributed amongst the monomaniacs who participated in conversation with Socrates.

One can undoubtedly address the differences between the work of the above-mentioned philosophers or the different outcomes in the wall paintings of Le Witt's iterations. A clear delimitation on how to act, somehow contradictorily, guarantees the indeterminacy of the result.

In this sense, architectural authorship should not be perceived as an isolated act of originality but rather as an act of engagement – a continuous process of refining tools, methods, and knowledge to respond to reality as it is. The relevance of a method of production lies in its ability to synthesize knowledge and respond to context. Thus, architecture does not stand alone as a singular, authored work but rather as part of an ongoing conversation, a dialogue where indeterminacy becomes an essential condition of both method and meaning.

How can a method based on indeterminacy be affronted in spatial terms? The research titled *Blurred, Indetermined. Clues from the Contemporary* currently in its first year of development, proposes a definition (a

sort of state of the art) based on the topics of Generic space, void, and type.

To deal with space as genealogies of the indeterminate and the possibilities of architecture as the absence of matter, conformed, measured, delimited void. Architecture as a condition that allows actions to be performed "a form of possibility, the form of something that is not yet, and will not necessarily be, the rule of the innumerable gestures possible within it" (Tamburelli and Princen 2022, 159).

An indeterminate space represents a potential that aligns with a long-term perspective on architecture – one that is adaptable and allows for evolving uses. The less a space is predetermined, the more it remains flexible, non-specific in function, and open-ended, embodying a collection of possibilities that may materialize over time in unforeseen ways.

A good example can be found in the work of Lina Bo Bardi, an author who did not design certain spaces solely based on rigid design principles, as if aiming to control every variable. Instead, she created environments that remained open to their users' influences.

The act of engagement and the use of reality as is is explained in her text, first published in 1958, titled *Culture and Non-Culture*, where she states how the key is not to impose the historico-critical problem by force, but simply to "accept the realities as they are, to consider all the tendencies, however spurious, and gradually modify and absorb them" (Bo Bardi 2014, 56). Sure in the knowledge that this is an effective course of political action. Criticizing the efforts of the time that ignored the existing reality and proposing a new cultural action focused on acknowledging and engaging with the existing cultural language rather than simplifying or diluting complex issues, Bo Bardi argues for interpreting and evaluating its diverse tendencies.

The significance of the architect's positions is clear because it takes the cultural relevance of architecture, fundamentally associated with space, by considering the common and supporting an idea of architecture as a reflection of our society, therefore the author is not as important, relevant, as the capacity of an indetermined space for embracing diversity and change.

A method where every possibility becomes a trial to develop form. By embracing this approach, authorship becomes less of an authoritative statement and more of an ongoing, collaborative conversation where misinterpretation is not an obstacle but an opportunity. "Less obsessed with maintaining control and more open to the potentially positive results of misunderstandings" (San Rocco) or reinterpretation where references, options, and preferences come alive.

The attempt is reflected in an architectural approach in which form remains defined while facilitating future transformations. As Giorgio Grassi highlights this condition when writing about Ludwig Hillberseimer's work as that of "capturing the generality of architecture in its most complete form" (Grassi 2000, 158). The carefully defined and complete architectural form clearly reflects both the need and the potential for real change. They serve as the fundamental basis for that transformation.

Suppose one considers oneself part of a much larger tradition, where the need for invention is not an obligation, in that case, every project becomes an exploration to contribute to a broader and shared discourse. Starting from these limited ambitions, such projects aim to consider transformation and adaptability rather than assert individual genius. Architecture – or practice – thus becomes a continuous exploration of closed forms born out of a multiplicity of contexts, striving to propose something that remains universally valid. It maintains a generic ambition – not one of radical novelty but of relevance and continuity.

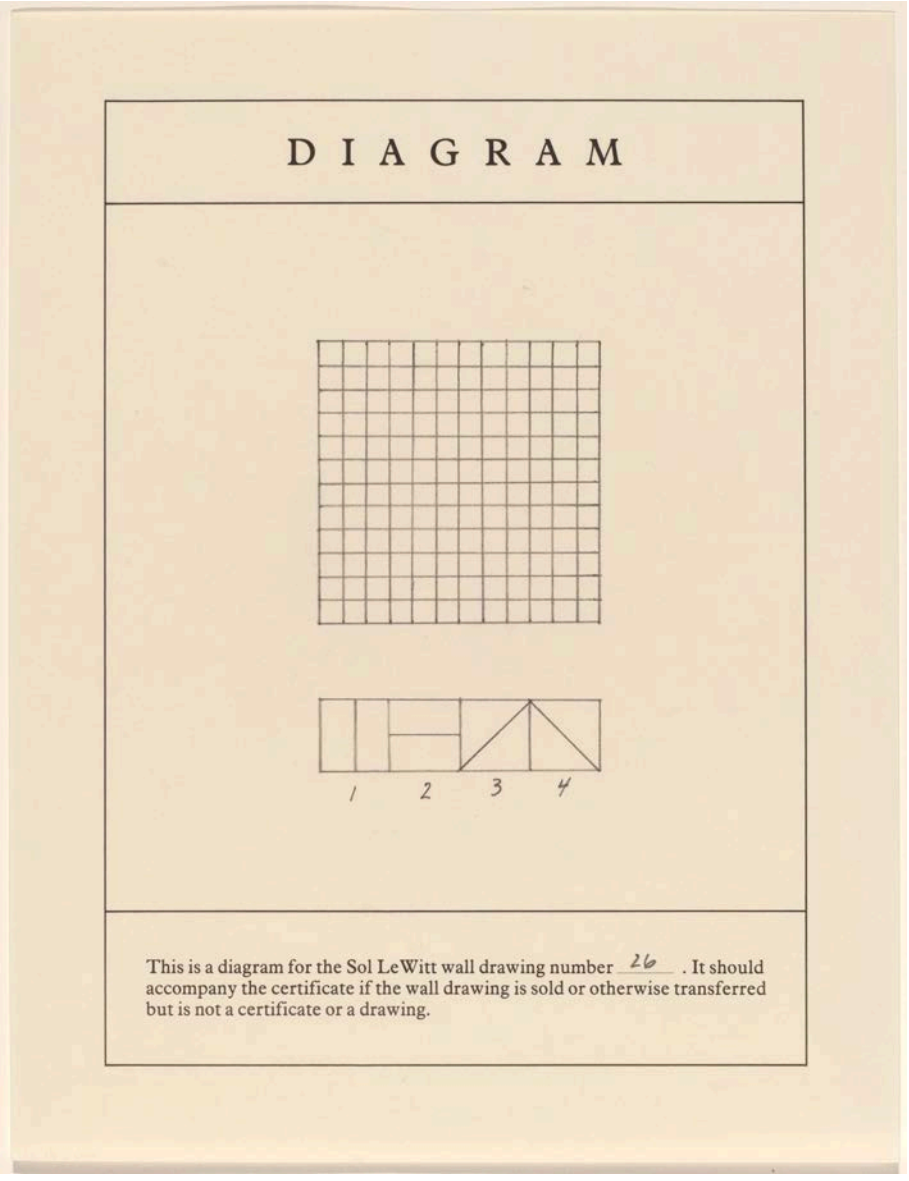

Figure 1: Wall Drawing No. 26 / A one-inch (2.5 cm) grid covering a 36" (90 cm) square. Within each one-inch (2.5 cm) square, there is a line in one of the four directions. 1969. Black pencil. © 2012 Estate of Sol Lewitt / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York; Contact information: NGA Images, National Gallery of Art, 4th Street and Constitution Avenue, NW Washington DC 20565, ngaimages@nga.gov; Image: Courtesy of National Gallery of Art, Washington

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Authorship in Empirical Creation The Universe of Anonymous Authors

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vernacular culture, design, authorship

Abstract

This study analyses cultural manifestations based on the empirical knowledge of a community, questioning the hierarchy between authorial and anonymous work, as well as the concepts of high and low culture. It analyses traditional arts and vernacular architecture as practices rooted in collective knowledge, unrelated to individual authorial criteria, questioning the hierarchy of authorship between conception and execution, recognizing the community origin of knowledge and its generational transmission. The current research favours proximity to sources and immersion in the field, focusing on everyday practices and the community's symbiotic relationship with the ecosystem. Design-driven research is used as a tool, using drawn, photographic and multimedia records, the collection of testimonies and on-site experiences to analyse and disseminate knowledge. Previous multidisciplinary experiences converge in the research project *Experimental Territory - vernacular architecture as heritage on the Cape Verde islands*.

The author's experience in the fields of craft knowledge[1] and architectural heritage[2] underpins her reflections, which are supported by bibliographical analyses of philosophy, anthropology and architecture. The development of the Integrated Handicrafts System, with its focus on recognizing artisans and certifying master crafts, has raised questions about authenticity, authorship and regulation in creative processes. Art is defined as know-how applied to the creation of symbolic or utilitarian objects, the result of individual or community experience, involving self-sufficiency in the transformation of raw materials. This perspective allows us to expand our reflection to vernacular architecture, understood as a form of architecture without an architect[3], enriching the understanding and appreciation of this concept in the context of artistic creation.

Authorship, associated with authenticity and originality, is a central concept in cultural manifestations, influenced by constantly changing social and political contexts. This study addresses three axes of reflection:

High and low culture: While authorship in 'high culture' (art, design, architecture) is commercially valorized, 'low culture' authors (Martins, Sèrvio 2012) (Paz 1997), linked to local communities and less exposed to commercial logics, preserve memory and cultural identity through adaptive practices. However, globalization has reduced local recognition of this empirical knowledge, to the same extent that the current debate, contradictorily, involves the exaltation of identities.

Hierarchies of authorship: Cultural creation involves conception and execution, but recognition tends to favour those who conceive, to the detriment of those who execute (Borges 2021), reflecting a valorization of formal knowledge over empirical knowledge. UNESCO proposes ethical guidelines to balance this relationship, emphasizing the need to value co-creation and collective effort.

Originality and regulation: Craft creation, traditionally free of regulations, faces challenges imposed by certification processes that can jeopardise

creativity and generate uniformity. In handicrafts and vernacular architecture, the absence of originality in mass production contrasts with the cultural expressiveness and autonomy of local creators, raising questions about the relationship between regulation, the market and authenticity.

The contemporary relevance of vernacular and artisanal knowledge

Although formally recognized as cultural and intangible heritage[4], vernacular and artisanal knowledge still lacks effective protection and appreciation of its contemporary potential. This concern is echoed in the document Design meets artisans: " There is an imperative need to research, analyze, categorize and document craft traditions so that this knowledge is accessible to a wider public." (UNESCO 2005). The gradual disappearance of the holders of this knowledge threatens both the preservation of protected assets and the transmission of knowledge that is fundamental to current challenges such as sustainability, resilience and the generation of local income. Valuing this knowledge as authorial creations would help to deconstruct prejudices and attract new generations. Researching, documenting and disseminating these practices raises awareness of their cultural and utilitarian value, revealing their timelessness and importance for artistic creation and innovative solutions today.

The current research project is part of the concept of lo-tek, "a design movement to rebuild an understanding of indigenous philosophy and vernacular architecture that regenerates sustainable, climate-resilient infrastructures" (Watson 2019).

Architecture without an architect, without the need of identification of an author to legitimize it, is the result of community learning and is analyzed as part of a complex system that for centuries has sought balance through practices that promote symbiosis between the territory, the ecosystem, resources and society, through traditional ecological knowledge. These practices construct the landscape in such a way as to fulfil the basic needs of life.

Vernacular constructions in the form of land modelling, the creation of infrastructures that allow for cultivation, water collection and conveyance, paths and living and working spaces, are a repository of this time-tested knowledge. Their morphology tends to be extremely efficient in design, with remarkable functionality and minimalist resources. They use locally available materials and the scale does not exceed what is strictly necessary. In addition to the constructions, utilitarian objects appear, in a very intimate relationship with the same raw materials and techniques. These raw materials are transformed from direct collection such as earth and stone and sometimes wood and some endogenous plants, or originate from agricultural and livestock production, in a system that today could be labelled a circular economy and the reuse of resources.

Reading this reality on its different scales and cross-referencing the information that establishes the interrelationship between them, provides

a holistic reading of the living space as an archive of knowledge and as a fundamental piece in studies of a community's memory and identity. In this context, the identification of authorship is not relevant. Although the author is recognized: the craftsman, the stonemason, the bricklayer, their value lies in their usefulness, functionality and quality. Their knowledge is inherited and shared with their peers. Their individuality lies in the perfection of their execution, the introduction of new ways of doing things, improvements or the creativity with which they think about and execute their work. These will also become part of the collective body of knowledge, that is, part of their culture and identity, read as the evolving body of practices, knowledge, values, beliefs, customs and behaviours shared by a community. From this perspective, local know-how represents the heritage of the place and is a vehicle for the identity not only of its author, but of the entire community.

Research through project and design: For the past eight years, the author has been researching raw materials and traditional know-how in Cape Verde, integrating design and the production of new objects. The research has combined documentary and archival studies with a participatory approach centred on 'living sources', the artisans. These professionals have knowledge of the origin of raw materials, transformation processes and production techniques, as well as their own notions of aesthetics, orientated by practicality and the representation of their world. Reflection on authorship in the context of this research is based on an awareness of the fine line that separates the use of cultural references in contemporary creation from the appropriation of the cultural elements referenced. The methodology included recording testimonies, mapping practices and developing product lines that meet contemporary needs, valuing local characteristics, economic sustainability and design rooted in Cape Verdean identity. The resulting projects were recognized in the Created in Cape Verde Salon competition and the POTE artistic residency, promoted by the Cape Verde National Centre for Art, Crafts and Design. This journey is part of the author's doctoral research into vernacular architecture and know-how, seeking to recognize traditional arts as contemporary solutions. Authorship was central to all stages, prioritizing collaboration between designer and artisan. These practices construct the landscape in such a way as to fulfil the basic needs of life. Vernacular constructions in the form of land modelling, the creation of infrastructures that enable cultivation, the collection and conveyance of water, paths and living and working spaces, are a repository of this time-tested knowledge.

Figure 1: Images of designed pieces and the prototypes of the PASSAGU and PODOGÓ21, selected and produced as part of the 'Identity of our home' competition, Salão Design Created in, promoted by the Cape Verde National Centre for Art, Crafts and Design, 2017.PASSAGU was designed by the author and produced by Atelier Terracota, and PODOGÓ21 co-authored project by the author with Gustavo Duarte and produced by Oficina Lizardo, Mindelo, Cape Verde. @martaclemente.

Figure 2: Images of designed pieces and the prototype of the PINTADURA piece selected and produced as part of the 'Boca Panu' competition, Design Created in Salon, promoted by the Cape Verde National Centre for Art, Crafts and Design, 2018, designed by the author and produced by Atelier Terracota, Mindelo, Cape Verde. @martaclemente & @CNAD (bottom right)

Figure 3: Drawings of the 7Sois7Luas Festival Cultural Centre project and photo of the building's south façade, built in 2016. Part of the project wasn't built, leaving the wood and plant fibre roofing of the circulation areas, around the courtyard and at the entrances to be completed. Ribeira Grande, Santo Antão, Cape Verde. Built in 2016 @martaclemente.

Figure 4: Top left: "moringa" image from research on tradicional poterie in Cabo Verde (photo made in Museu de Arqueologia da Praia). Top right: local material research@martaclemente. Bottom left: author piece. Bottom right : author working in Centro de Artes e Ofícios de Trás di Monti, Cabo Verde.

Figure 5: Images of the research and a prototype of the POTE bottle piece, created and produced as part of the 'POTE' creative residency promoted by the Cape Verde National Centre for Art, Crafts and Design, 2021, with a project by the author and collaborative production with Emanuel Soares, Mindelo, Cape Verde. @martaclemente & @CNAD (top and bottom right).

Figure 6: Images from field research in preparation for the PhD thesis project 'Experimental territory - vernacular architecture as heritage.' Image top right: Photo from the book page image - The three Sister Cycle of Companion Planting in WATSON, Julia, Lo-TEK Design by radical Indeginism, 2019, page 211. @martaclemente.

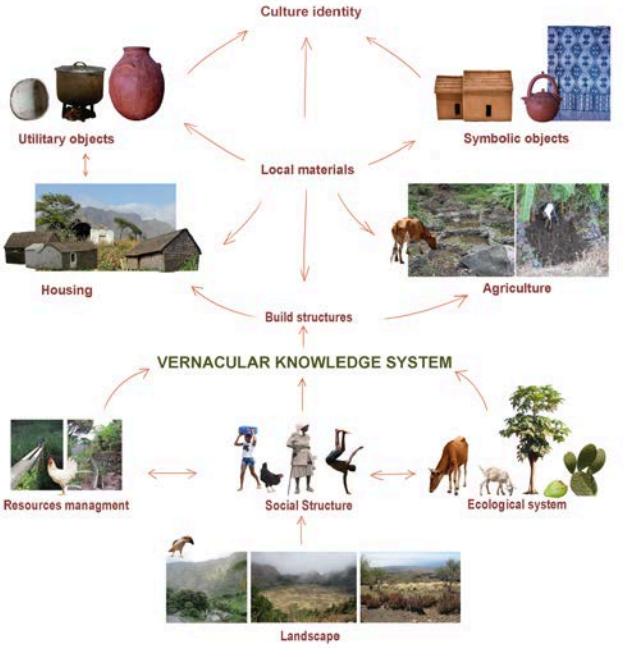

Figure 7: Author's mental map based on Julia Watson's Traditional Ecological System concepts. @martaclemente | Concepts frame: CULTURE AND IDENTITY: An evolving body of practices, knowledge, values, beliefs, customs, and behaviors shared by a community. LOCAL MATERIALS: Building or crafting materials that are sourced from the immediate region. These materials are typically abundant, easily accessible, and suited to the local environment and climate. BUILD STRUCTURES Vernacular: The local style of architecture, focused on domestic and functional buildings rather than monumental ones. VERNACULAR KNOWLEDGE SYSTEM: A cumulative body of multigenerational knowledge, practices, and beliefs. SOCIAL STRUCTURE: Community: Social organization that offers coordination, cooperation, and governance. / Individual: A unique person with their own distinct personality, thoughts, feelings, and experiences. Heir to a vast accumulation of traditional knowledge passed down through generations within their community. ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM: The variety of life within a specific habitat (biodiversity) RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: Local environmental knowledge and practices involving an understanding of ecological processes and performance. LANDSCAPE: The visible features of an area of land, including physical elements such as mountains, valleys, water bodies, vegetation, and human-made structures.

1 Coordination of the creation and implementation of SIART - National Centre for Art, Crafts and Design, Ministry of Culture of Cape Verde (2018-2023) and with the creation of her own pottery brand, in which the author collaborates in the development of objects with a community of potters (2016-2025).

2 Technician on the Urban Nuclei Inventory team, IPA - Architectural Heritage Inventory - Directorate-General for National Buildings and Monuments (1998-2009).

3 Expression that was the title of an exhibition and book by Bernard Rudofsky at the MoMA in New York in 1964. Architecture without architects: a brief introduction to architecture without pedigree demonstrates the cultural, artistic and functional richness of vernacular architecture.

4 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (1972): This is the main UNESCO convention governing the protection of sites with cultural and natural value. There are many examples of vernacular architecture listed as World Heritage under this convention and the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural

Heritage (2003): This convention aims to protect practices, representations, expressions, knowledge and skills that communities, groups and individuals, recognize as part of their cultural heritage.

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Rethinking the Author as an Open Field The Dishwasher House by Frances Gabe

Laura Mucciolo, Sapienza University of Rome

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authorship, GABE self-cleaning house, design-driven research

Abstract

Starting from a dismissed history, the self-cleaning house designed by Frances Gabe in 1984 –conceived through separate patents – this contribution explores how patents both define and negate the role of the architect by enabling replication, complicating conventional notions of intellectual authorship.

Gabe proposes an autonomous and self-taught design research methodology focusing on a central question: does designing a house using patents equate to designing a space itself?

The author develops a design process that is not the result of specific contexts or concepts but rather emerges from a certain mathematical sum of assembled parts.

This contribution aims to investigate the trajectories suggested by this case study, namely, to open up the field of the author to undefined or indefinable instances, transforming methodological experimentation in design. It does so by examining a one-of-a-kind house – on the edge of epic – that merges the person-author with hypotheses of automatism, programmatic intents, and patents.

Introduction

Within the broader inquiry into the relationship between author and work, this contribution aims to explore the role played by discarded historiographies – those narratives that, despite being submerged, forgotten, obscured, dead, or uncirculated by the media, have nonetheless shaped methodologies, areas of interest, tools, and histories of authorship.

The case of Frances Gabe, the inventor of the self-cleaning house known as the GABE Self-Cleaning House, or the dishwasher house, exemplifies these trajectories. Patented on January 31, 1984, the prototype emerged from 68 separate patents that Gabe obtained over time.

Following in the wake of Modernist reflections on hygiene and anticipating contemporary considerations of the sick space as a structuring element of habitation (Colomina 2019), Gabe's case circulated only in minor media outlets (*People*, 1982; *The Ottawa Citizen*, 1996; *The New York Times* 2017). Additionally, due to her irascible character, the prototype – built as a single copy –never gained significant recognition.

The paradox of the one-of-a-kind prototype ultimately reaffirms the authorship of the project within the field of architecture, which has traditionally been reduced to a synthesis of inventive components. In this case, the role of the author insists on a design process that is not the result of specific contexts, concepts, geographies, or geometries, but rather emerges from a mathematical sum of parts that, once assembled,

respond to a precise and explicitly stated question: Is it possible to stop doing household chores? (Barthes 1957).

Gabe introduces an autonomous and self-taught design methodology that appears to lack a specific genealogy yet proves capable of generating architecture.

Epically designing a house

[…] While I have shown and described several embodiments of my invention, it will be apparent to those skilled in the art that many changes and modifications may be made without departing from my invention in its broader aspects. I therefore intend the appended claims to cover all such changes and modifications as fall within the true spirit and scope of my invention.

I claim:
1. A self-cleaning building construction comprising: walls, ceiling and a floor defining an enclosure wherein said foor slopes with respect to the horizontal toward a drain and wherein surfaces of said walls, ceiling and floor are substantially waterproof. […] (Bateson 1980, 16).

The house, known in the media as the dishwasher house, was originally patented as a self-cleaning building in 1984 under patent number 4,428,085 (Bateson 1980). The patent begins with a ground floor plan of the building, represented using non-architectural conventions and standards, with no explicit indications of different rooms – identifiable only through furniture. The plan is densely packed with numbers, dashed lines, and a very brief legend consisting of four items: spray apparatuses, baseboard device, mesh or grillwork, drainage direction arrow. These four operational elements correspond to two fundamental design operations: flooding and drying. Each room is conceived as an isolated block separated from adjacent spaces, "like an enclosure" (Gabe 1984, 8). A rotating nozzle on each ceiling floods the room with a soapy aqueous liquid, which drains through the sloped floors into designated metal grates. Drying occurs through a continuous baseboard system that emits warm air.

Other related patents include wardrobes equipped with misting nozzles for clothes, prototypes of self-cleaning windows, a dishwasher-closet, a self-cleaning bathtub, sink, and toilet. Every component of the house, conceived as amphibious (Tavares 2024), was repeatedly coated with a waterproofing paint typically used for boats. The patent suggests expelling dirty water directly into the ground or through sewage pipes, disregarding any potential environmental harm caused by the detergent, including its "abrasive and deep-cleaning nature" (Barthes, 1957, 32). Defying legal restrictions and prohibitions against patenting building materials (Christensen, 2024, 41), Gabe submitted an architectural model of the two-story house – an unusual and eccentric move, yet crucial for certifying the invention. The model, far from the austere abstraction of architectural prototypes, appears crude, hyper-didactic, and kitsch, conveying abstract rather than real information. Wall thicknesses are entirely

eliminated and represented with plexiglass, distorting both their dimensions and their opacity. Large masonry sections are depicted with exposed stone elements, which were never actually constructed. The most significant invention – or falsification –is an entire floor meticulously designed and detailed in the model but absent from the patent (no additional floor plans exist), and in reality, it was never built. These discrepancies lead to the definition of three distinct houses, rather than just one. The first, the inhabited house, exists as a singular, physically constructed entity, shaped by a haptic and practical methodological approach. It has endured beyond the patented invention despite the passage of time. The second, the patented house, is a technical, legally claimed structure, whose intellectual property rights have since expired. The third is the imagined house, a "plausible" version articulated through the model, capable of adapting to future variations and additional floors. These three houses are neither comparable nor interchangeable. Instead, when placed side by side, they appear as three fundamentally distinct objects. This substantial incongruity, in which " the work, with each new interpretation, is never identical to itself " (Eco 1997, 51), represents an evolutionary trajectory for the author. In the "epic" construction of a project, driven by historical, cultural, and administrative factors, Gabe directs the house toward contradictory (ambiguous plans), polysemic (diversified communication tools), and even self-excluding interpretations. Yet, she does so without fear of compromising her authorship, for all variations constitute the definitive and provisional project at once.

Designing patents *vs* designing projects

The house highlights two fundamentally opposing dynamics: on one hand, the definition of a patent, and on the other, the design of a space. These two overlapping trajectories shape the identity of this house.
The process of designing a space generally follows a sequence of distinct phases which, whether extended over time or compressed into a shorter period, adhere to a specific course of action. From the initial design intent – which, for simplicity, includes interactions with clients or competition procedures – drawings serve as an intermediary for a general hypothesis. Subsequent phases refine these drawings, subjecting them to modifications based on emerging needs. If the project is particularly fortunate, it may ultimately be realized. However, once completed, there are no specific procedures for obtaining a patent for an artistic creation, as architectural projects do not propose solutions to a technical problem, which is the primary criterion for patents. An alternative form of protection is copyright law, which, although theoretically automatic (Ghia 2024), often fails to safeguard lesser-known, forgotten, or marginal authors.
In contrast, a patent emerges from the identification of a technical problem that requires resolution – in this case, domestic chores, as identified by Frances Gabe. Within this framework, technical interventions were applied to the house through trial and error, ultimately producing a one-of-a-kind prototype. If an inventor intends to profit from their invention,

they must initiate a process of documentation through technical drawings and written descriptions, which ultimately leads to obtaining a patent.
The dishwasher house represents an extreme case that challenges both architectural and patent theories. The house was conceived with the explicit aim of becoming a patent, allowing Gabe to claim the title of inventor – even though there is a disconnect between the physical prototype and its documentation. The patent application, along with the conceptual shift that framed the house at a different scale, led to the creation of an architectural model of the "dreamed" house. In doing so, Gabe repositioned her authorial role onto the plane of design, presenting herself as the "architect" of a space. Yet, the granting of the patent once again disrupted this authorial trajectory: by officially certifying the invention, the patent simultaneously kills the author (Barthes, 1988, 52), precisely because it enables the potential replication of the invention. However, the house's high complexity, limited practical applicability, and costly maintenance ultimately constrained the patent's lifespan – it was never replicated and eventually expired. This marked yet another turning point in Gabe's authorial trajectory, confirming the paradox of an invention that exists as a single, unique work. In contrast to a principle of reproducibility, the work-the house-the prototype-preserved its 'aura' (Benjamin, 2012, 35).
The short circuit created by the impossibility of defining Gabe as either fully an architect or fully an inventor disrupts any singular perspective and instead generates multiple centers. Is this house a collection of patents or the design of a space?

The open field of the author

Academic disdain toward the dishwasher house falls within a specific case of disciplinary isolation. Technically, patents rarely intersect with research in architectural design, and when they do, the object of interest is not the patenting of components or specific technologies, but rather the architectural project itself, which operates within an author-system that typically does not require patents.
Within an increasingly interconnected and technologically mediated scientific landscape, traditional notions of intellectual authorship – or, more accurately and uncommonly, intellectual maternity – and academic authority are being redefined, enriched, or at times challenged by new forms of collaboration, open data, and methodological innovations, introducing the idea of the author as an open instance (Marini Mengoni 2020, 9).
The case of Frances Gabe's house directly engages with this system of challenges. Numerous external voices intervene in the process, disrupting a conventional structure.
The first of these challenges is the subject of the research itself: a self-built house, where a single anonymous individual becomes an author out of necessity and intent, despite lacking formal credentials. The house is designed to technically solve everyday domestic issues, making the author simultaneously an inventor.
As it aspires to patentability, the constructed house transforms into

a text, both written and drawn, adopting an impersonal and quasi-automated language. In its drawings, the author merges canonical architectural symbols – shading, hatching, standardized line weights, and familiar rules – with unconventional and unshared symbols, suggesting that inventing space also requires opening new representational frameworks. Actions potentially harmful or disruptive to the building and its occupants (spray apparatuses, baseboard devices, mesh or grillwork, drainage direction arrows) serve both as signifiers and as elements that make architectural drawing dependent on a necessary system of transduction, which in turn becomes part of the norms of representation. The legend, functioning as a conversion system, extends the readability of the drawing from author to audience – acting as an alphabet that allows the prototype's components to be identified. In this sense, the sign as a code becomes a dormant language invented by the author.
Furthermore, and crucially for the house to become a patent, the need to engage a new profession in the patenting process fundamentally alters the structure of authorship: patent attorneys draft the state of the art on behalf of the author (Christensen 2024, 43). The authorial presence also emerges through the self-built architectural model of the house, which was submitted in support of an administrative procedure – even though, by conventional standards, such a model would be considered inadmissible.
Thus, the author operates transversally, navigating between two professions and two ways of conceptualizing space, attempting to interface with both disciplines through the use of "new" materials.
At the boundaries of authorship lies the paradox of the single copy with which this house contends. A patent presupposes a replicable invention, yet the house's irreproducibility ultimately limited the dissemination of its author. As a result, today, only a few reliable traces of the project remain: a comprehensive model of the house and four models of individual components are housed at the Hagley Museum & Library (Delaware), the original diaries and patents were sold online by McLaren Auction Services for approximately $60, a children's book recounting the story of Gabe and her house (Dershewitz, Romberg 2019), a story about her in literature (Palahniuk 2003).

Epilogue

The case of Frances Gabe and her self-cleaning house challenges conventional narratives of authorship, invention, and architectural project debate. As a singular prototype, Gabe's work disrupts the traditional categories that define both fields. Her house was conceived not as an architectural project in the conventional sense, but as a technical solution to a domestic problem – an approach that aligns more closely with the logic of invention than with the practice of architecture. Yet, in seeking to patent her house, Gabe inadvertently engaged with architectural representation, modeling, and discourse, despite lacking formal training in the field. This duality forces a reconsideration of how authorship is constructed and validated within architectural historiography and design research.

The self-cleaning house exists as a paradox. On one hand, it embodies the ultimate goal of technological modernism: the automation of domestic labor and the reduction of human effort in maintaining a home. On the other, its failure to be replicated or widely adopted highlights the limits of such an ambition. Gabe's design proved impractical in execution, both in terms of cost and maintenance. The patent itself, which should have facilitated the reproduction of her invention, ultimately became a static document, preserving an idea rather than enabling its proliferation. This contradiction – between the theoretical replicability of the patent and the practical uniqueness of the house – reinforces the tension between invention and architectural authorship.

Furthermore, Gabe's engagement with the patenting process underscores the ways in which legal and bureaucratic structures shape and constrain creative authorship. Unlike traditional architectural works, which are protected under copyright laws that emphasize artistic expression, Gabe's house was subjected to the rigid framework of patent law, which prioritizes technical innovation over aesthetic or conceptual contributions. The necessity of working with patent attorneys, as well as the transformation of her house into a legal document, displaced Gabe's role as an autonomous author, fragmenting her authorship across multiple professional domains. The house, in this sense, became a contested site of meaning – existing simultaneously as a lived space, a technical drawing, and an administrative artifact.

Gabe's project also raises broader questions about the visibility and recognition of alternative design methodologies. As a self-taught inventor, she operated outside the traditional networks of architectural discourse, which contributed to the marginalization of her work. Her irascible character and unconventional approach further distanced her from potential allies who might have helped to legitimize her project within architectural academia or industry. This exclusion reflects a broader tendency within architectural historiography to prioritize certain forms of authorship while neglecting others that emerge from peripheral or self-taught practices.

Gabe's house, though largely forgotten, represents an extreme yet insightful exploration of how space can be designed, inhabited, and maintained. In the end, Gabe's house stands as both a monument to individual ingenuity and a cautionary tale about the limits of technological utopianism within domestic space.

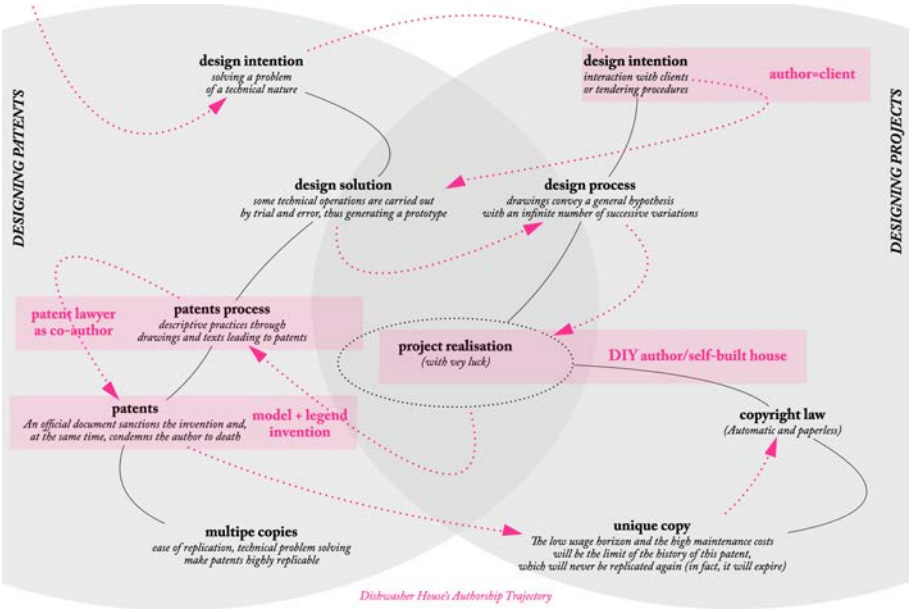

Figure 1: Laura Mucciolo, *Designing Projects vs Designing Patents*. Diagram of a design-models comparison through the case study of Frances Gabe's self-cleaning house (1980), Oregon, now dismantled. Digital diagram by the author (2025).

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Improvisation in Urban Space Affordances, Commons, and Domestic Practices

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urban commons, affordance, domestic practices

Abstract

Contemporary urban development driven by industrial imperatives often fails to accommodate everyday life requirements, leaving gaps between public space design and users' informal practices overflowed from their home. This study adopts authorship as a metaphorical concept to bridge the theories of affordance and urban commons, arguing that architects are the authors of original works while citizens create derivative or improvised works in response, thereby challenging the single-author model of space-making.

This study hires fieldworks and ethnographic drawings as a method for case studies, which documents how users appropriate and release the commons in public spaces through domestic practices. The purpose is to summarize the patterns or characteristics of domestic practices in achieving authorship from three aspects: experience, materiality, and governance, thereby contributing to new common laws for public space design.

Introduction

Extracting from public space is a primitive human behavior, representing an expression of power. Urban public space has always been defined as a legal concept, accessible to everyone. In contemporary cities, capitalism and industrialization have erased traditional urban structures (Harvey 2013). The actors of enclosure have shifted to elites' hierarchy (Wang, Leung, and Mui 2023), pushing the control of public space into a professionalized domain (Till 2009; De Carlo 2013). However, residents' daily life scenarios challenge this singular authorship. Citizens often spontaneously use tables, sofas, and blankets to transform buffer zones into temporary spaces for rest. These domestic practices not only challenge the singular authorship of creation but also the allocation of spatial resources. When urban spaces are appropriated, the functions and characteristics defined by architects are altered, revealing possible opportunities within the space.

Authorship encompasses both creation and copyright. In spatial contexts, architects are typically viewed as the authors due to their professional expertise and thus wield discursive power. From a creation standpoint, these authors not only produce their own works but also set possibilities and formation rules for others. From a copyright's viewpoint, however, they represent the class in power (Jones, Petrescu, and Till 2013), meaning ownership and control of architectural and urban spaces largely belong to elites. Foucault questions the idea of a single author, including critics, publishers, and readers' interpretations as authors (Foucault 1998). Barthes also asserts "It is language which speaks, not the author" (Barthes 1977), suggesting that a work's vocabulary, grammar, and structure allow multiple reader interpretations. Consequently, users' reading of public space challenges the sole discourse of heroes, not by replacing

architects but by offering a complementary interpretation. In other words, architects' works create opportunities not only for fellow architects but also for users' improvisation within the space.

This research, based on the concept of authorship, metaphorically combines the theories of affordance and commons to explore the phenomenon of domestic practices appropriating public space. In-depth observation of Hong Kong is selected as the case study. The purpose is to summarize the patterns or characteristics of domestic practices in achieving authorship from three aspects: experience, materiality, and governance, thereby contributing to new common laws for public space design.

The retreat of authors

Just as derivative works in literature break boundaries with original works, the same applies to architecture, especially in public spaces, where improvisation often occurs naturally through domestic practices without the need for professional knowledge. Informal behaviors challenge both the boundary of interior and exterior and the boundary of authorship. On the one hand, improvisational behaviors represent a form of "creation" based on urban space; on the other hand, temporary occupation and functional changes are also a contest for rights. This contest does not deny the status of architects as the primary authors but attempts to continue the creation process. Thus, authorship in public space is a constantly evolving process involving multi-actor creation and negotiation over spatial usage rights.

The improvisation of affordance

Users' domestic practices that exceed designers' intentions rewrite public space. As mentioned earlier, architects initiate a possibility, and the vibrancy of public life often relies on creative improvisation and serendipitous encounters (Stevens, Daly, and Dovey 2024). Gibson refers to these potentials, directly perceived by users and beyond original functions, as affordance (Gibson 1978). This potential arises from both the qualities of objects and the capabilities of interacting agents, thus forming a relationship (Norman 2013). Stevens further attributes the phenomenon of public space appropriation in daily life to improvised affordance (Stevens et al. 2024).

Due to individual differences, improvisation is closely related to the cultural background of users and the built environment, bringing private interiors into urban space. Public space functions are largely indeterminate, and many activities such as lying down, sitting, socializing, and dining fall within normal functional categories. Thus, improvised affordance implies experiences and perceptions beyond preconceptions. Heft and Gibson argue that such alienation is rooted in and constrained by the culture in which one lives (Heft 2017). A person or group's cultural background is reflected at an intimate scale, through home and private interior elements such as carpets, furniture, and living habits. Hence, interior experience becomes a manifestation of alienation in urban space.

The inspiration for improvisation comes from users' home, which here transcends the physical foundation of housing to establish a relational dynamic (Steiner and Veel 2017). Various forms of domestic practices habitually cross the boundary between private and public, extending from the bodily scale of family to larger scales (Boccagni and Duyvendak 2021). Improvised affordance causes similar practices to correspond between interior and exterior spaces, highlighting domestic and bodily dimensions in urban renewal. However, real affordance, as an objective and physically determined entity, exists regardless of perception (Norman 1988). Improvisation often exceeds real affordance by modifying spatial structures based on existing infrastructures, which necessitates a discussion of usage rights.

The rights for urban commons

Improvised affordance transforms urban spaces into urban commons through domestic practices. Although informal interventions are mostly temporary, they still create conflicts in governance with planners and regular users. For a long time, urban spaces have been considered driven by the state and the market (Avermaete 2021), but people believe that rather than relying on the state as a steward of public interests, it is better to spontaneously seek sovereignty to control resources related to daily life (Bollier 2016). Urban spaces are common pool resources, continuously reused as urban conditions evolve. However, they are not yet commons and must be transformed into commons by their users (Helfrich 2011).

Following the experience of domesticity, the perspective of improvisation complements the macro perspective of urban commons with a micro perspective. Urban commons require analysis of how the proximity of inhabitants and the diversity of users interact with tangible and intangible resources (Urban Commons Research Collective 2022), such as the creation of atmosphere and the utilization of living ecology. Ecology is not only environmental but also social and mental, referring to the surroundings of living spaces (Sigler et al. 2017). These elements collectively contribute to the experience of domesticity.

From a micro perspective, materials become important in the process of commoning. At this level, affordance becomes part of the process, as creation facilitates rights shifting. The authorship of public space does not escape the control of architects but becomes a multi-actor understanding at different times. However, urban commons include a spectrum of resources, both material and immaterial, encompassing social, political, and cultural elements. Therefore, such complex relationships require the formulation of a common law to coordinate relations between users, the government, and architects. The potential and design of public space can thus be continuously updated within this system.

The works by citizens

Therefore, authorship emphasizes both macro and micro perspectives in understanding the production and design of public spaces. The study of common laws is difficult to separate from actors from communities (Feinberg, Ghorbani, and Herder 2021), shifting the focus toward personal behaviors. Figure **[1]** shows a series of public spaces in Hong Kong. Due to its colonial history, the city features advanced urban planning akin to an industrialized metropolis, yet its inhabitants have preserved habits more characteristic of underdeveloped contexts—thus bridging Eastern and Western urban traits. **[1]**

The back lanes in Hong Kong **[1a]** demonstrate the potential provided by public space at an intimate distance for domestic practices. These alleys, 60–100 mt long and 3–5 mt wide, are accompanied by numerous installations such as ventilation pipes, rear shop doors, and air conditioner units. Since the Local Open Space – term for a certain type of public space in Hong Kong – available to residents in the city center is only 0.6 sq.m./person, far below the government's standard of 2 sq.m./ person (Lai 2017), these alleys, originally intended for public hygiene and transportation, have been appropriated by workers in stores and residents as lounges. They put closets, chairs, dry racks and other devices in combination with the unevenness of facades to divide the linear transportation space into smaller resting spaces for smoking or napping during breaks. The cramped volume and poor sanitation often place such spaces outside government supervision.

Domestic practices in personal space tend to involve more social interactions. The gatherings of domestic workers on skywalks every Sunday serve as a good example **[1b]**. Due to extremely low wages and policy constraints, domestic workers often live in their employers' living rooms, laundries, and storages. As a result, activities such as gathering, singing, and dining frequently overflow into public spaces. They use discarded cardboards, sheets, and tarpaulins to build living rooms on skywalks and streets, which has persisted for decades. These living rooms limit activities to personal distances, with singing, vending, and other gathering activities.

When the scale expands further, the sense of appropriation diminishes. The communal spaces of public housing **[1c]** are parts of the city's public space, they primarily serve the residents of the housing complex. Practices within a social distance return the research focus to the scope studied by scholars such as Gehl and Van Eyck. In the highwalks of public housing, domestic practices are expressed not only through the obvious overflow of furniture but, more importantly, through the construction of interiority. Squares, shops, kindergartens and other infrastructure are all located within the semi-interior communal space, together forming a vertical system that ultimately connects to the city via elevators. Here, residents and outsiders alike can fully develop affordance, resulting in fewer spontaneous constructions.

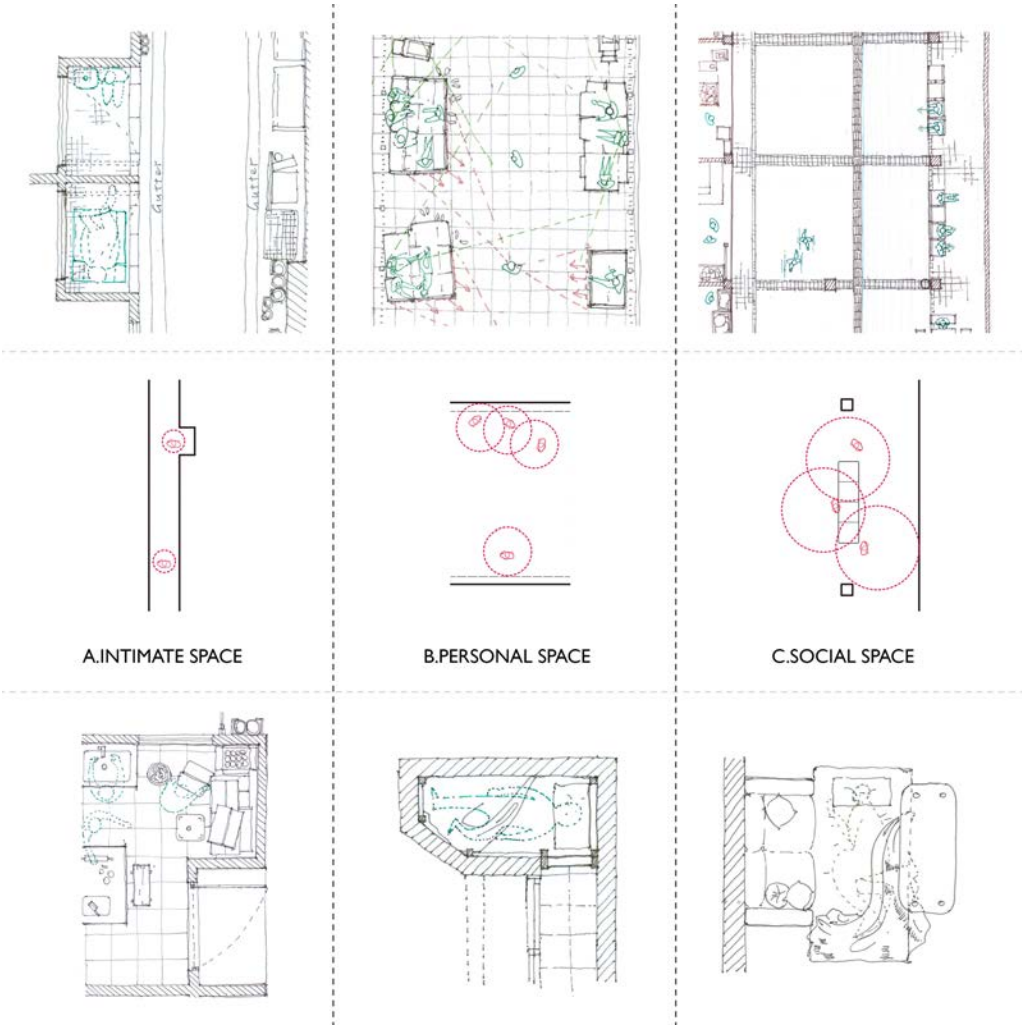

Figure 1: *The Investigation of Hong Kong Public Space.* Yuwei Ren, 2024. Gibson frequently underscores the influence of body, height, palm size, and shoulder width on affordance, while Gehl highlights proximity in urban observation (Sim and Gehl 2019). Following these perspectives, the present analysis addresses how domestic practices perceive and interact with the built environment, given that bodily-centered perception is shaped by physical context, movement range, and specific needs. Drawing on Hall's proxemics (Hall 1966), domestic practices are examined within three perception scales, Intimate (0–0.45m), Personal (0.45–1.2m), and Social (1.2–3.6m), to identify common behavioral patterns.

The figures of improvisation

Since inhabiting is a form of connection, attachment, and atmosphere (Malpas 2021), such phenomena require holistic analysis. As mentioned earlier, users' behaviors, devices, and rights influence their practices. Therefore, according to urban commons theory, this study identifies experience, materiality, and governance as three critical factors shaping common laws and as processes through which users exercise authorship.

Experience

The initial engagement with a work often begins with reading, and the reading experience of public space influences subsequent improvisation. For example, domestic practices in back lanes alter the typology and qualities of space. As part of the urban transportation network, these alleys were originally intended as pedestrian pathways but have largely turned into storage spaces, indicating that citizens interpret these spaces differently from architects, planners, and policymakers.

Traditional architectural interpretations and writings, such as Eisenman's ontological approach, deconstruct space using geometric grids, walls, diagrams, and floor plans (Eisenman 1999). However, users typically lack such analytical frameworks, relying instead on direct sensory or perceptual engagement. As Attiwill and others argue, interiority is an experience (Attiwill 2020; Teston 2020).

Spaces with the highest accessibility have been turned into intimate experiences because the built environment offers the affordance of privacy, transforming public spaces into urban commons through appropriation. Although such temporary occupation occurs only during rest periods, the lack of regulation often leads to long-term presence of overflow furniture, intensifying the sense of privacy in alleys. This fosters a contagion effect, where other workers imitate the practice, ultimately making alleys more enclosed and private. One reader interprets and improvises on a space, and subsequent readers continue interpreting and creating.

Materiality

Following interpretation comes creation, and the devices reflect the space's culture, structure, and narrative. The gathering spaces on skywalks are particularly illustrative. Workers' selection and use of materials reshape public space structures. This agency goes beyond affordance development, becoming a direct contestation of rights against businesses, government, and pedestrians. These minorities up-cycle daily furniture and waste, reshaping spatial structures to create atmospheres unique to their culture. Cardboards and truck tarps, typically considered waste, become building materials, provided by vendors who collect and sell these items before they are sent to the waste processing plant.

Material choice is often improvised, with citizens casually picking up nearby objects and bringing them into public spaces for activities. When interior furniture becomes the primary element constituting a (public) space, that space acquires an interior character. Unlike architects who deliberately select local or sustainable materials, these materials cannot be predetermined. Avermaete notes that releasing commons is a crucial task of small-scale architectural interventions (Avermaete 2021), making materials used in these installations part of the commons warehouse.

Governance

Improvisation reflects citizens' resistance to spatial allocation. The communal space case reorients the discussion of affordance to its original meaning. Residents do not need to build or alter space. Instead, they reinterpret infrastructures, using public spaces privately. As Hertzberger's research on in-between spaces suggests, public housing systems reflect a contrast and transition between public and private (Hertzberger 1991).

Compared to public housing in the UK, Hong Kong's public housing has achieved more favorable outcomes. Thus, communal spaces within public housing systems can be considered part of the city's public space. Commons function as porous thresholds, or in-betweens, that both separate and connect social and material realms (Boccagni and Duyvendak 2021; Stavrides 2016). Commons are porous social and material constructions that separate while connecting. They are thresholds connecting various actors in society and fostering a culture of collective participation and negotiation. In community centers, negotiations occur between the government, shops, and residents: non-residents can access community facilities, and residents can appropriate urban infrastructures. In this negotiation, users and authorities hold relatively equal status which means effective resource distribution depends on a flexible system, mutual agreements, and shared values.

However, such laws cannot be formulated solely by users but require architects to design rules based on observation. This does not necessarily imply that tactical urbanism, co-design, or participatory design are solutions, as affordance will emerge regardless of user participation in design. Architects continuously learn throughout this process, and public spaces are continually updated.

Conclusion

Indeed, within the architects' perspective, authorship is often related to writing as a semantic and ontological inquiry, but user perspectives and observations of urban informality extend this meaning to social and cultural dimensions, offering a more comprehensive approach to design and case analysis. Through the three parameters of experience, materiality, and governance, this study does not advocate for users to dominate or seize control in public space design. Citizens may voice previously silenced perspectives, but these voices are not always universally welcomed, as they do not represent all. Moreover, even participatory design may create new starting points and unforeseen positive possibilities within communities (Jones et al. 2013). Therefore, authorship in public space is a dynamic process of continuous renewal – just as interior spaces' periodic updates, so do urban spaces. This ongoing process is precisely the embodiment of urban vitality.

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The Window in Alvaro Siza's Work on Residential Buildings 1974-2014 Context, Constraints, Form and Methodology

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window, Álvaro Siza's design methodology, context and constraints

Abstract

The essay focuses on the most important criteria in Álvaro Siza Vieira's decision-making process in the design of the opening in residential buildings. *Contextual* and *Constraint* factors seem to form the premises of Siza's working methodology. Context refers to the elements that arise from the architect's individual ability to analyze controllable variants. Constraints are established by actors external to the creative process of project development. A cross analysis between contexts and constraints within four case studies is presented to identify which of those are transversal / preponderant in all projects. The aim is to identify criteria that are constant in the way that this architect approaches each project/ problem presented, which could eventually be used to reach a broader understanding of Siza´s design decision making process.

Throughout his career Álvaro Siza has always deeply matured on windows and openings taking into consideration their surroundings. When studying the opening in each particular situation, Siza takes into consideration context and constraints to which he always tries to respond as well as to grant a personality and uniqueness to each situation. By context we understand the Siza's particular interpretation of the unrepeatable site conditions, such as immediate visual surrounding, a singular angle of visualization, the desired quantity and quality of light in the interior, and the way each of these affect the dimension, proportions, scale (referred to the human dimensions), materials chosen, and depth of the opening / window on the wall in which it is inserted, as well as the type of glass and light shading. *Constraints* also here are referred as conditioning factors are situations imposed by a determined contract or regulation, a particular material whose use may be mandatory, or adaptation of the desired width / height of the opening to construction standards, industry production and commercial availability.

In this paper, examples are presented to illustrate the complex combination of factors that guide the decision-making process of Siza. Although the study focuses on windows, it aims to illustrate the broader creative process of Siza. To achieve this goal, case studies are presented, chosen from residential buildings designed by Siza. This programmatic similitude allows us to compare the design criteria for windows in relatively analogous urban contexts and types of use.

Case study selection

Four case studies have been chosen to illustrate some of the design principles and decision-making process of Siza Vieira: Bouça,in Oporto,Portugal,1975; Malagueira, in Évora, Portugal,1977; Block 121, Schlesisches Tor (*Bonjour Tristesse*) in Berlin, Germany, 1980; Punt en Komma social housing in The Hague, Netherlands, 1981.

The chosen case studies correspond to social housing schemes and roughly belong to the same period of production of Siza, immediately after the Portuguese Carnation Revolution and transition to democracy – in 1974 – and when Siza began to receive international commissions. This option was made to narrow down the number and type of works analyzed and thus better understand the approach of Siza to designing a window in a residential building – with similar programs, urban form, type of usage and scale.

The contextual factors studied include: location of the window; specific angles of vision to the immediate surroundings; orientation of the window and shading control; sun exposure of the window; quantity and quality of light inside the space; the dimensions of the window; window' geometry and proportions; visual permeability; interstitial space – with or without a sill; the depth of the window.

Regarding the condition factors that are external to the architect's individual interpretation and are imposed by an external organization or regulations, we considered: the definition of a certain material that must be used in a specific building or project; the definition of a certain width and heigh measurements of the opening due to specific local regulations or to control production costs; structural and constructive constraints.

The case studies will focus on the variables and the possibilities that we can extract from the observation of the typical window in each case and on the creation of a matrix where the different factors can be compared, and, ultimately, through comparison, determine which window design' Álvaro Siza most commonly uses in each project.

Data analysis

For each case study, the most predominant type of window used – i.e. repeated more often – was identified and briefly characterized: In the first case study, the *Bouça's social housing complex* in Oporto, Portugal (1975), the most predominant opening in the building is a vertical one, with the dimensions of 80 x 200 cm. At Malagueira, in Évora (1977), Siza defines a vertical opening as well, with 100 x 200 cm. The width in this case was defined by a particular constraint: the capacity of the concrete blocks to construct the transom of the opening. In *Schlesisches Tor* (*Bonjour Tristesse*) in Berlin (1980), we find that the main opening design, also vertical, measures 90 x140 cm. Finally at the Punt en Komma social housing in Haia (1981), we are confronted with a very distinct design – compared to the previous ones – the window displays a horizontal design, with 150 x140 cm.

The first conclusion that we can extract from this brief survey is that Siza chooses to design the opening in a rectangular shape in these early social housing projects. The window is inserted vertically into the wall to reduce the visual permeability of the interior when seen from the exterior. This happens both in Bouça district, in Malagueira and in Berlin, although in Berlin the height is more restricted in dimension to provide even more privacy in the interior, especially in the one-bedroom apartments. In The Hague, although the geometry is still based on a rectangle, the

proportions between width and height change in order to produce a horizontally oriented window, perhaps due to a less dense urban area. Siza also tries to achieve a closer relationship between the interior and the exterior space.

The *Bouça social housing* complex is composed of four buildings spaced between 16 and 18 mt. apart. Between the buildings there are public community spaces. Since the central space is the most used one, being the center of community life of the neighborhood, ground floor windows opening onto this space are protected by a tectonic element, a stair that allows access to the first level. This element creates a second layer of privacy for the interior space that confronts with the public area.

In Bouça the systematic use of the same window opening, with the same dimensions and proportional is deliberate. The main factor that contributed to this decision was cost constraints, which were a major limiting factor. The issue of visual permeability and privacy control of the interior space from the exterior, a contextual factor, is secondary but is also an objective achieved by Álvaro Siza. In the cases studied, the most frequent window type is the two – leaf outward – opening window measuring 80 x 200 cm, made from painted exotic wood. The second most repeated opening is the single leaf inward-opening window, with 80 x 195 cm, made of a metallized iron profile and plate.

Malagueira follows the same design principles and concepts as those in Bouça. The dimensions of the opening and the tectonic principles are similar to those applied on the Bouça project. However, in Malagueira the economic constraints are even more significant since it corresponded to a 1.200 –dwelling scheme designed at a time when there was no local brick masonry production capacity to meet the construction demands. For this reason, it was necessary to build an on-site a cement block factory directly supply the required blocks demanded for construction. The window width was defined by the structural limitations of the junction of blocks at the top of the opening, as explained by Siza himself, a constraint dictated the width of the windows and doors throughout the scheme. Although Malagueira sits in a rural area of Portugal, the houses are built in close proximity forming a dense urban fabric.

In Berlin, a place denser that Oporto at the urban level, Siza reduces the height of the window, controlling the visual permeability to the interior. The relationship between public and private space is thus contained. The only variations observed in the building's openings occur on the upper floors, where the ability to visually intrude upon the interior space is much less likely. The window's opening has a defined geometry, and the dimensions of the opening type are 90 x 140 cm. The windowsill is set at a height of 60 cm above the floor in all levels. The window, not having a very pronounced width, promotes more privacy of it's interior space. The only angle that doesn't work is when the pedestrian is perpendicular to the window. In this case we see that Siza enhances privacy simply by adjusting the sill height, in contrast to Bouça, where fluid social and communal relationships were sought for.

In Berlin, Siza uses the thickness of the wall to increase the privacy, especially in the most private interior spaces such as bedrooms. Again, the

window sill height creates a barrier between inside and outside: in fact, a relationship with the exterior is only possible when the user approaches the window pane at a short distance.

Finally, in *Punt en Komma*, as noted, the opening follows a horizontal vector, although its proportions come close to a square form with 150 cm width by 140 cm height. This small difference of 10 cm between the width and height has a big influence on the reading of the interior space from outside and the exterior space from inside, establishing social relations in this interstitial space.

Since the *Punt en Komma* is inserted in a predominantly residential area and outside the central area of The Hague, the relationships that the interior of the apartments can establish with the exterior can be enriched with a more direct connection between interior and exterior spaces. Moreover, the windows do not directly open to other buildings, but confront a railway line that allows the increase of the visual depth towards the landscape once the street is wide. Increasing the width of the window, Siza creates a different relation between the interior and the exterior without compromising the costs.

Conclusion

The analysis of the cases studied confirms that indeed context and constraints are major decision making factors of Siza's design. All cases are very sensitive to the urban context, allowing for privacy of the interior spaces and, when possible, inviting stronger links between inside and outside. Thus, in each particular project and according to contextual factors, like the amount of light that the architect intents the interior to have, and the urban density of the immediate surroundings, Siza defines the width and the height of the window' opening type and the space's function where that window opening will be in the building.

Dense urban areas Siza prefers narrow vertical windows; when the surrounding area allows, he increases just enough the width of the opening just enough to allow for greater permeability of the spaces.
The control of the height of the sill of the window, establishes, by its design, the capacity of relationship between the interior and the exterior of the space adjacent to that window, it determines whether the window is a barrier to the crossing of the interior space to the exterior or just a border between spaces.

The opening with a width of 80 cm and a height of 140 cm is the most used opening dimension in these case studies when the opening doesn't allow it to be crossed; and the 80 cm width by 200 cm height is the most opening dimensions when it is intended to be crossed.

It is also concluded that the constraint factors are very powerful and define many of the design decisions. In the cases studies presented this aspect is particularly evident since they are social housing buildings where costs are extremely controlled. There is thus a greater systematization and definition of the window's opening type that are usually smaller.

Figure 1: From top to bottom, left to right: Bouça Social Housing Complex – Porto, Portugal, 1975, Main elevation; Bouça Social Housing Complex – Porto, Portugal, 1975, View from interior window, house 67; Malagueira Social Housing Complex – Évora, Portugal, 1977, Main window/door opening type; Malagueira Social Housing Complex – Evora, Portugal, 1977, Current elevation; Malagueira Social Housing Complex, Évora, Portugal, 1977, Álvaro Siza's sketch; Block 121 Schlesisches Tor (Bonjour Tristesse) – Berlin, Germany, 1980, building from opposite corner; Block 121 Schlesisches Tor (Bonjour Tristesse) – Berlin, Germany, 1980, View of a window from a living room; Punt en Komma Social Housing Complex – The Hague, Netherlands, 1981, View from one of the main elevations; Punt en Komma Social Housing Complex – The Hague, Netherlands, 1981; Photo from a human scale model made to illustrate to the future inhabitants the organization of the housing units.

In addition to the particular question presented in this essay regarding the window opening, the various elements of context and constraints are equally present throughout Álvaro Siza's creative process and are preponderant in his diverse decisions that define and give his own identity to the project. The size and function of the various interior spaces, areas of the housing units (defined by the preliminary program) and materials are, for example, other elements that are determined by the context/constraints duality. These two premises are thus always present in the design process and methodology of Álvaro Siza.

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Awakening Palladio A Methodological Exploration of the Study of Palladian Villas

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Palladio, villa, Rudolf Wittkower

Abstract

This study re-examines Andrea Palladio's architectural legacy beyond the canonical interpretation centered on symmetry and classical temple motifs. By analyzing three non-centralized villas – Thiene, Repeta, and Sarego – the paper reveals Palladio's experimental approach to spatial hierarchy, circulation, and façade treatment, challenging Rudolf Wittkower's geometric reductionism. Through planimetric and sectional analysis, the research demonstrates how these villas subvert the Renaissance matrix model through courtyard-centric layouts, fragmented temple elements, and decentralized façades, with Villa Sarego even negating classical frontality entirely. The findings suggest that Palladio's authorship accommodated divergent design logics, influenced by contextual factors and patron demands. This alternative reading critiques the enduring dominance of Palladianism in neoclassical architecture, proposing that Palladio's historical reception has been selectively filtered through later ideological frameworks.

In the over 400 years since Andrea Palladio's death, the authorship of this last Renaissance architect has been manifested through two paths: practice and theory. On the one hand, from the 17th to the 19th century, the extensive construction and widespread dissemination of Palladianism in Britain, the United States, and elsewhere interpreted people's understanding of Palladio through architectural language (Wittkower 1983; Tavernor 1991). Most of these works were based on Villa Rotonda, with the combination of Greek temple fronts and domed rotundas as their most fundamental feature. On the other hand, the explosion of theories and texts on Palladio since the 20th century has allowed for a deeper understanding of the architect (Howard 1980). Among these, Rudolf Wittkower's *Principles of Palladio's Architecture* summarized the design methods of Palladio's villa plans and elevations (Wittkower 1944). His conclusions not only apply to most of Palladio's villas but also to Palladianism architecture. Thus, the understanding of Palladio presented in practice and theory appears to be consistent and without contradiction.

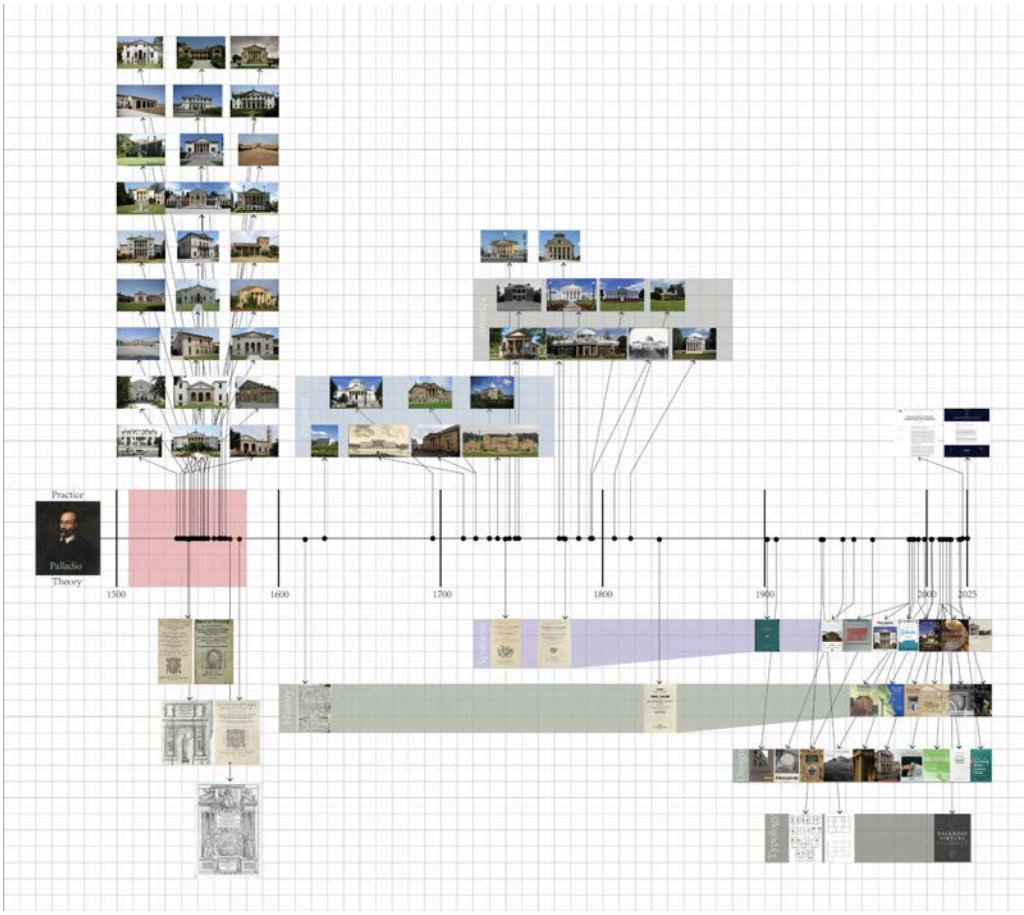

Figure 1: Presents a systematic synthesis of Palladio's architectural theory and built villas, analyzing their dual legacy in shaping later practice and discourse.

However, behind this unity lies a singular perception of Palladio. As Palladio's most important work, *The Four Books of Architecture* does not fully elucidate the design methods and reasoning behind each of his works (Palladio and Placzek 1965). This leaves ample room for later scholars to offer new interpretations, which inevitably incorporate their own subjective understanding, selective emphasis, and even deliberate omissions, including Wittkower. In his study of Palladio's villa plans, Wittkower selected 11 villas for abstraction and typological analysis, establishing a fundamental geometrical pattern that influenced Colin Rowe and Peter Eisenman. However, this pattern was constructed through his subjective selection and simplification. As revealed in my reconstructed diagram **[2]**, Wittkower retained only the main body of each villa – omitting elements such as barchessa, porticos, stables, and staircases – elements that are far from insignificant and, in some of Palladio's other villas, play a crucial role. Wittkower's model may reflect his continued focus on centralized church architecture. Therefore, his constructed narrative of Palladio is not entirely universal.

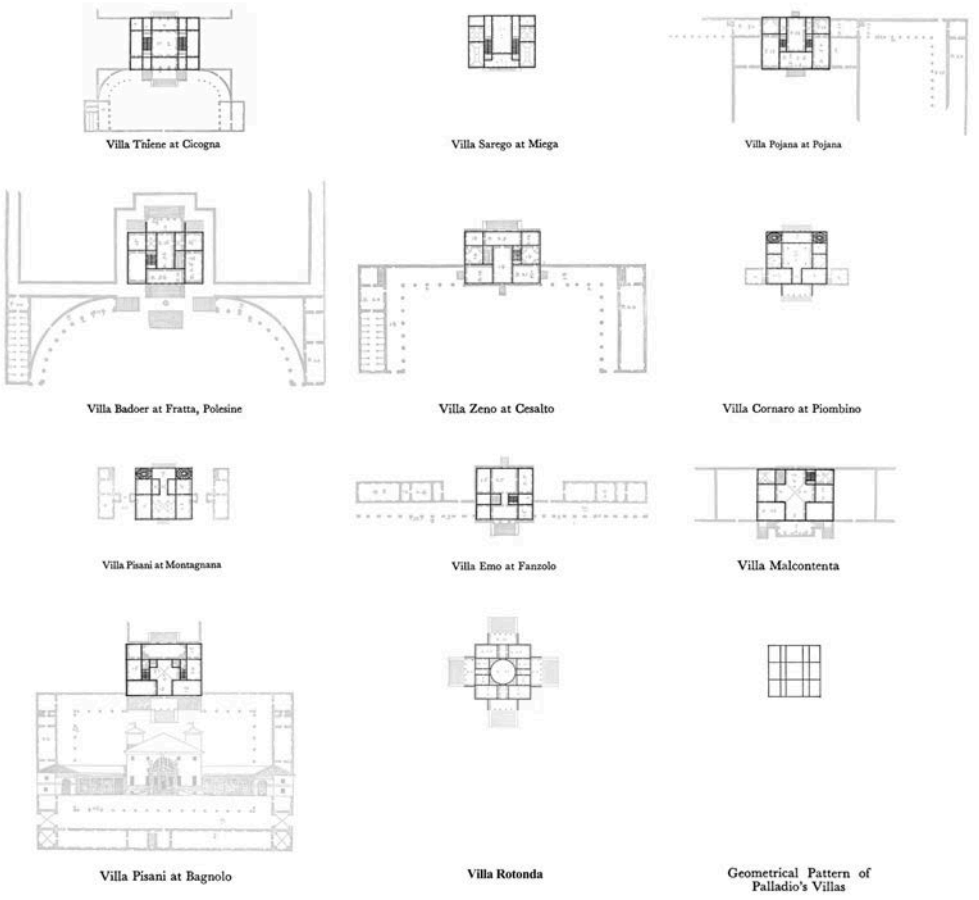

Figure 2: Critically examines Wittkower's Geometrical Pattern through superimposition analysis with original villa plans in The Four Books of Architecture, demonstrating its inherent constraints.

An analysis of the circulation in Palladio's villas reveals a distinctive comparative scenario. Robin Evans once noted that one of the most important features of Renaissance villas is their matrix circulation (Evans 1978). I selected nine villa drawings from *The Four Books of Architecture* **[3]**: Villa Rotonda, Villa Sarego at Miega, and Villa Cornaro at Piombino indeed exhibit matrix circulation. Meanwhile, in Villa Zeno at Cessalto, Villa Emo at Fanzolo, and Villa Badoer at Fratta, the portico serves a circulatory function, though subordinate to the matrix. In contrast, Villa Thiene at Quinto, Villa Repeta at Campiglia, and Villa Sarego at Santa Sofia show a gradual blending of the two circulation modes, with the portico's role becoming dominant in Villa Sarego at Santa Sofia.

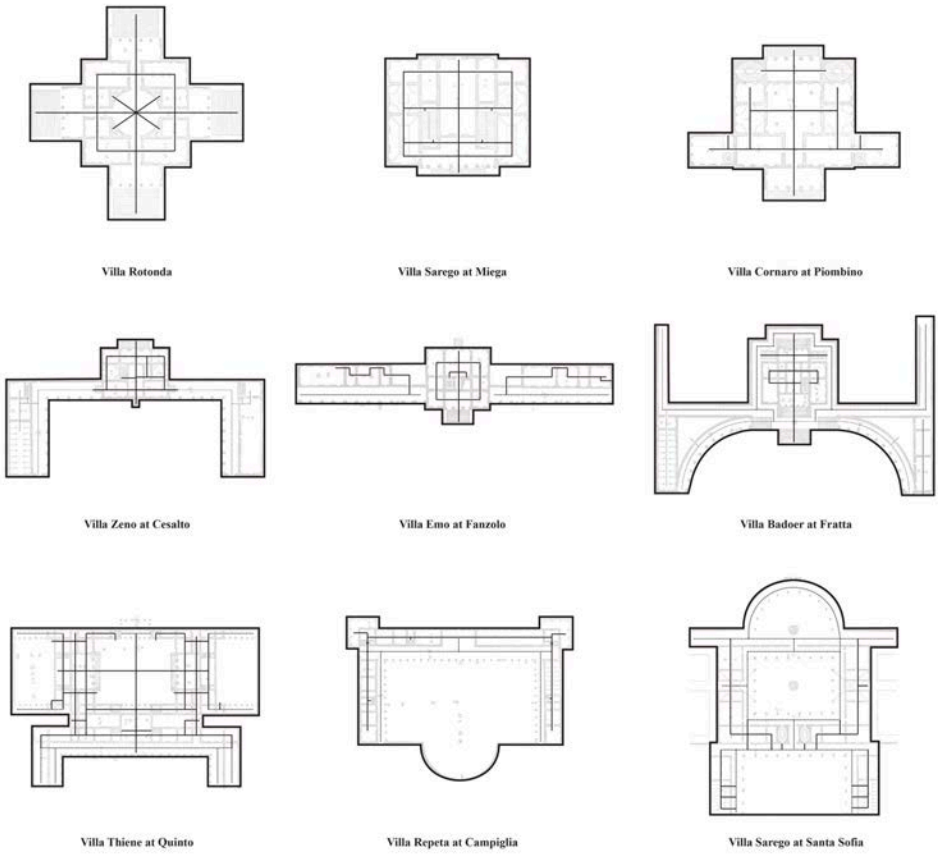

Figure 3: Selects nine Palladian villas and conducts an analytical study of their internal circulation patterns.

Thus, I conducted a deeper analysis of these three villas, seeking to supplement the understanding of Palladio's villas beyond Wittkower's established model. These three villas do not follow the matrix pattern; instead, their central halls are replaced by courtyards. The variations in their plans also reflect changes in internal circulation, where the juxtaposition of corridors and the matrix destabilizes what Robin Evans termed carnality. In terms of elevation, Villa Thiene retains a full Greek temple front, Villa Repeta preserves only a solitary pediment, and Villa Sarego completely lacks any temple elements. In fact, Villa Sarego's elevation almost entirely subverts the concept of the façade.

Villa Thiene consists of a front courtyard and a rear courtyard. The front section features an open layout, with rooms arranged along a C-shaped portico to form functional strips. The rectangular hall at the center of the strip projects backward, connecting to the enclosed inner courtyard at the rear, which is further divided into three smaller courtyards. Most rooms are positioned at the intersections of these courtyards. The front halls on either side of the inner courtyard, distinguished by their prominent scale and height, mark the most important spaces of the villa. Together with the front portico spaces above and below, they create a centripetal order directed toward the villa's center. Thus, the physical

center of Villa Thiene dissolves, replaced by a new spatial hierarchy: the front halls on either side – the front porticoes and the front hall – and the other rooms. The concept of the façade also undergoes a transformation here. Although the elevation depicts a central temple-form portico, the two front halls on either side are clearly more prominent, featuring a two-story temple form. Therefore, Villa Thiene has four temple "faces," eliminating any singular frontality. The temple forms serve to establish a centripetal spatial order.

Villa Repeta exhibits an even more dissolved center. Its plan consists of a C-shaped portico and room strips, with towers protruding at the corners. The central space is merely a transitional zone, thinly decorated by a triangular pediment that feebly marks this *spatial subject*.

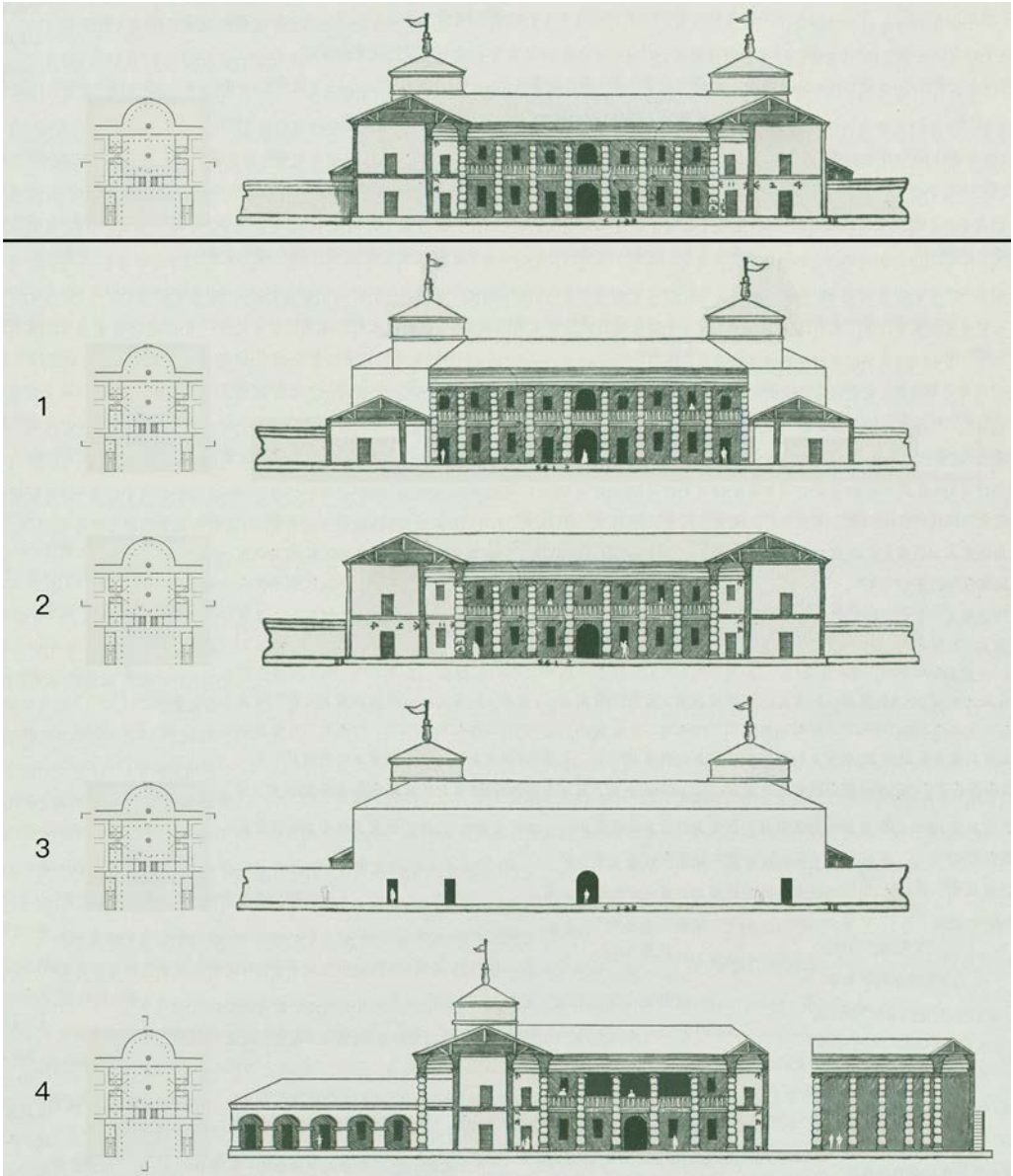

Figure 4: Builds upon original drawings to produce cross-sectional analyses at four distinct locations of Villa Sarego

(Santa Sofia).

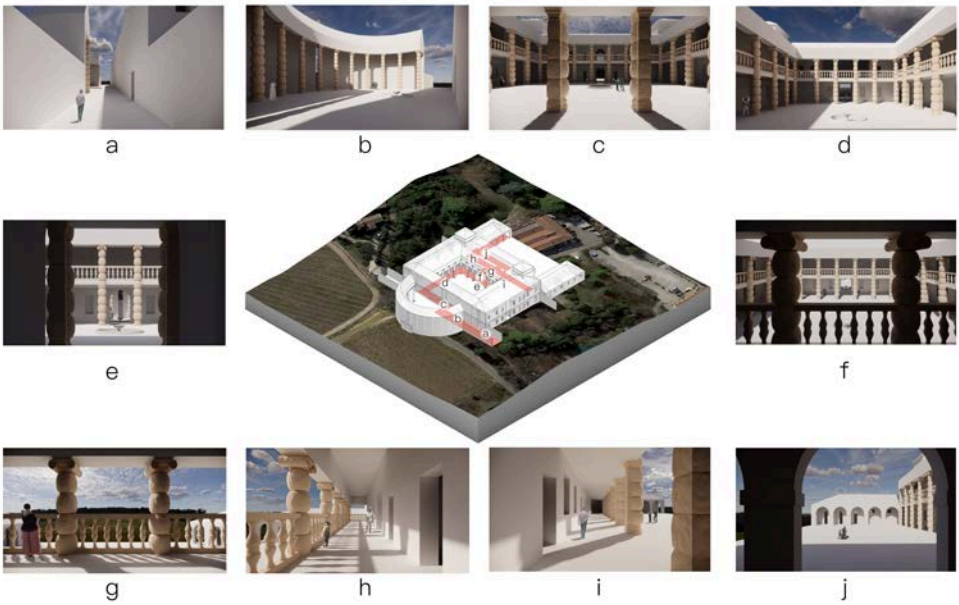

Figure 5: Presents a spatial sequence analysis and contextual reconstruction of Villa Sarego (Santa Sofia).

In Villa Sarego, the Greek temple front has completely disappeared, with Ionic capitals being the only classical element. Along with this disappearance is the classical notion of the façade. Sectional drawings from multiple angles reveal that there is no single primary elevation; instead, all sides are nearly identical **[4]**. A reconstructed scene of Villa Sarego demonstrates that the portico space has become both the spatial and visual subject of the villa **[5]**. Due to the absence of a central mass and the dispersed room layout, its linear circulation does not develop as extensively as in Palladio's other villas. Instead, the corridor's circulatory function surpasses the matrix, becoming the dominant element. This diverges entirely from Palladio's conventional villa design methods, possibly due to the military background of the Sarego family or an experimental approach by Palladio himself.

Each villa in *The Four Books of Architecture* holds its own significance, and the drawings within may better reflect Palladio's original design concepts than the villas' current states. For centuries, centralized villas like Villa Rotonda have influenced countless architectural practices. This was not only the choice of the Venetian nobility but also of other nations, who employed ancient Greek and Roman elements to articulate their traditions and power. Even today, Donald Trump's *Executive Order on Promoting Beautiful Federal Civic Architecture* advocates for classical American architecture modeled after Palladio's works. Yet these three non-centralized villas reveal another side of Palladio – one whose design philosophy extends beyond Greek temples and domes. To conclude, I pose a straightforward question: If American architecture were truly built following the model of Villa Sarego (Santa Sofia), would Trump be pleased?

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Authorships and Collective Practices Toward a Shared Spatial Agency

Francesco Airoldi

The debate on authorship in visual arts has long oscillated between the myth of the individual creator and the recognition of transformation as a collective process. In the field of architecture and design disciplines, starting from Giancarlo De Carlo's participatory and Lucien Kroll's socially engaged projects, the question of who designs – and for whom – has revealed that the production of space and spatial thinking are never individual acts, but a "negotiation" (Till 2005, 23) among multiple human and non-human agents (De Carlo 1972; Kroll 2015). The contributions presented in this section of the CA²RE Milano 2025 conference expand this cultural debate, reframing authorship as a fluid, processual, and distributed condition. They demonstrate that design-driven knowledge is often co-authored through diverse collaborations – between designers and users, matter and memory, theory and practice – resulting in a shared "spatial agency" (Awan et al. 2011).

Here, the established figure of the author-designer has been deconstructed. It might be argued that space can perform as an author itself, – as in Nina Bačun's paper, echoing Umberto Eco's notion of the "*opera aperta*" (Eco 1962) – with the concept of *auteur* space that resonates in Cedric Price's idea of architecture as an unfinished script. By reframing the architect as mediator and the spatial environment as an active agent, it is possible to reinterpret authorship through the lens of collective and material agency. The author's role becomes one of orchestration rather than domination, aligning with De Carlo's advocacy for architecture as a process of communication (1972).

These instances are extended if design theory is intertwined with ecological psychology. As in Ivana Fabrio and Nina Bačun contribution, this union reveals how ordinary objects accumulate meanings through collective use. Authorship, in this sense, emerges from interaction rather than invention, because objects and spaces become repositories of shared cultural intelligence. Referencing Roland Barthes' "death of the author" and Walter Benjamin's "author as producer" (Barthes 1977, 142; Benjamin 1934), a fluid authorship arises, foregrounding production and use over originality: the designer acts as a scriptwriter of affordances, enabling the world to co-author itself through practice.

A similar sensibility informs what we can call collective infrastructures, as Raffaella Cavallaro shows in her research. Proposing a methodological reframing of authorship within research-by-design, the architect operates as mediator between pedagogical, administrative, and spatial dimensions. Authorship here is understood as a continuous translation between theory and practice – a recursive, non-linear process akin to Aldo van Eyck's in-between realm. By viewing educational architecture as a living system shaped by many voices, we can situate authorship within shared governance and narrative, a kind of co-production (Petrescu 2005).

Some other interesting intersections can be found between authorship and collective care, according to Francesca Ripamonti's and Zhihang Lin's pieces. Design-driven research can be framed as a tool to reconnect architecture with the social and political realities of health promotion: through the notion of designer as *auctor*, reclaiming the Latin root of authorship – as one who augments, adds meaning – it is possible to

emphasize architecture's interpretive agency within interdisciplinary contexts. Likewise, transitional spaces between care and cure, public and private, become thresholds where design and life intersect, in the direction of co-production of space. This resonates with Kroll's principle that the architect must accept to be one of the inhabitants (Kroll 1996), asserting that the built environment's authorship is inseparable from the communities it serves.

In order to deepen this understanding of collective authorships, Marie Stalpaert introduces the lens of participatory action research PAR. In this cultural-design environment, authorship is defined as curation – an act of care, mediation, and attunement. The emerging profile is the architect-as-curator one: not a designer of objects but a facilitator of relationships and narratives. Curation thus extends authorship beyond the material artifact toward the immaterial ethics of collaboration and continuity. This notion of curating as ongoing commitment echoes De Carlo's insistence on open-ended processes and anticipates recent notions of spatial commoning (Vervloesem et al. 2016).

In addition, the reflection on collective authorships expands authorship beyond the human realm, as in Michele Porcelluzzi paper. This reinterprets design as co-production between social, ecological, and institutional systems. Drawing on Bruno Latour and Albena Yaneva's relational theory (2017), it can be argued that space and process are mutually constitutive: to design the process is already to design the space. Authorship is thus decentered, shared among maintenance rituals, human participants, and non-human agencies. The more-than-human approach situates architecture within the ethics of care and reciprocity developing a proper ecological thought. In this way, the architect's authorship dissolves into assemblages of living and non-living collaborators.

Within contemporary design research on recycling and reuse, upcycling can be understood as a dialogic act between past and present authors – as Wenquan Zhang writes. The continuity of material traces, vernacular intelligence, and contemporary reinterpretation illustrates Hegel's dialectics of thesis, antithesis, and synthesis applied to architectural time: the designer becomes a mediator within a chain of authors – craftsmen, materials, communities, and environments – whose collaboration embodies the cultural evolution of architecture itself. By expanding this dialogue to the territorial scale – as in the case of Petra Boudová's reflections on post-industrial landscapes – participation and living laboratories can constitute mechanisms of collective authorship in the regeneration of cultural heritage. In such a vision, the landscape is considered both an archive and a laboratory, where users, scientists, and designers share the power to shape adaptive futures. This participatory philosophy is in line with the contemporary need for co-design processes that integrate environmental, social, and cultural dimensions.

Yi Xing Chow's contribution, finally, introduces yet another layer: the authorship of research communication. Through infographic methodologies, it is possible to highlight how visual representation can democratize architectural knowledge. By transforming data into narrative diagrams, the author constructs a shared understanding between experts and lay audiences. Authorship becomes an act of translation – visual, rhetorical,

and ethical – bridging the gap that separates professional discourse from public comprehension. This perspective situates the author not as authority but as communicator and catalyst of collective awareness.

Across this section of the CA²RE Milano 2025 conference's book of contributions, a pattern emerges: authorship is reframed as relation rather than possession. Whether through participatory action (Stalpaert), ecological reciprocity (Porcelluzzi), pedagogical mediation (Cavallaro), or material continuity (Zhang), each work redefines creative agency as a distributed, negotiated, and often contested practice. In this light, authorship functions less as a signature than as a practice of exchange, binding heterogeneous actors across time and scale. This shift resonates with the avant-garde's critique of artistic genius and with post-structuralist notions of intertextuality. Yet in design disciplines, its spatial implications are profound: authorship now describes not a personal imprint, but a field of forces – a spatial ecology of contributions. As Giancarlo De Carlo envisioned, the architect's task is to build the conditions for participation rather than to impose form (De Carlo 1972). The ten essays discussed here reaffirm that architecture relevance today depends on this openness: its capacity to host multiple authorships, to negotiate between care and control, and to translate shared narratives into spatial form. Authorship, once tied to autonomy, becomes a practice of attentive dependence – a collective endeavor shaped by empathy, temporality, and interrelation.

In this expanded field, the designer-researcher is neither a sovereign *auteur* nor a neutral facilitator but a situated actor within an evolving network of co-authors: human, spatial, ecological, and institutional. Authorship, then, is no longer an individual claim, but a spatial condition: a choreography of participation through which architecture continually redefines itself as a shared work in progress.

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Revisiting Authorship in Film and Architecture

Auteurs and Collaborative Authorship Toward Auteur Space

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#

auteur space, collaborative authorship, space auteur

Abstract

This text synthesizes key revolutionary writings on film theory related to authorship – specifically 'la politique des auteurs' (auteur policy) and the Russian avant-garde – to clarify their original intentions and reaffirm their relevance for contemporary filmmakers, architects, designers, artists, and scholars. It examines the concept of authorship in both architecture and film, focusing on cultural shifts that have amplified the role of the individual creator, redefined the attribution of creative works, and transformed power dynamics. Through a comparative analysis of individual and collaborative creation, the text introduces a concept of 'auteur space', wherein space itself assumes the role of the author. This approach offers a fresh perspective on the intersection of space, narrative, and artistic identity, facilitating new forms of agency.

This text explores the notion of authorship within the realms of architecture and film, analysing cultural shifts that have heightened the prominence of the individual creator, redefined the attribution of creative works, and transformed power dynamics. It introduces the concept of 'space auteur', in which space itself functions as an author, enabling novel forms of agency.

The construct of the architect as auteur

In architecture, the cult of the author reached its peak in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, driven by the cultural and intellectual currents of modernity. This period saw the rise of individualism, prioritizing personal authorship and framing the architect as a unique creative 'genius', typically envisioned as male. It also marked a deliberate separation of architecture from traditional craft practices, emphasizing intellectual contributions. Figures such as Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, and Ludwig Mies van der Rohe exemplified this shift, with their distinctive creative authority becoming central to their architectural identities. While modernism shaped the architect's individual identity and cultural authority through aesthetic and theoretical coherence, modernity provided the societal conditions and technological advancements that allowed architects to assume these roles. The two forces worked symbiotically to establish the architect not just as a designer of spaces but as a cultural and social visionary.

By the mid-20th century, architects such as Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Rem Koolhaas expanded on the intersections of authorship, cultural narrative, and social critique, positioning architecture as both a product and a tool for social transformation. Koolhaas (2016), for example cites the influence of Soviet architectural avant-gardes on his decision to pursue architecture. This shift reinterpreted the discipline, aiming

Figure 1: Composition made from a portrait of Esfir Ilyinichna Schub and excerpts from her film *The Fall of the Romanov Dynasty* (1927).

to reinvent daily life and framing architecture as a form of scriptwriting rather than merely the creation of physical spaces.

Such perspectives parallel 'auteur theory' in film, where creators reshape the medium to reflect their personal worldview and creative intentions.

The evolution of auteurship in cinema

In contrast to architecture's notion of individual authorship, early film theory embraced a more collective approach[1]. During cinema's formative years, Russian montage theorists and filmmakers such as Sergei Eisenstein, Dziga Vertov, Vsevolod Pudovkin, and Lev V. Kuleshov prioritized cinema's social and political potential over individual creative authority. A significant shift toward a distinct interpretation of authorship in cinema was initiated by their colleague, Esfir Ilyinichna Shub. As a pioneering 'female author as producer'[2], Shub innovatively repurposed archival footage to create compelling narratives. Her work documenting the Revolution established the 'compilation film'[3] subgenre **[1]** and set a model to empower future filmmakers. As Dunja Dogo (2013) highlights, Shub employed restoration techniques to preserve revolutionary footage that might otherwise have been lost. By focusing on collaboration and the film archive as the ultimate author, Shub challenged the romanticized ideal of the solitary genius and redefined authorship within cinema.

With the rise of *la politique des auteurs* (auteur policy)[4] in the 1950s, French film critics André Bazin and Alexandre Astruc laid its theoretical foundation, while filmmakers such as François Truffaut and Jean-Luc

Godard championed the director as the central creative force behind a film. Astruc's concept of the 'camera-stylo' (camera-pen) linked the director's vision to an author's literary voice, positioning personal expression at the heart of filmmaking. This shift required from a filmmaker an exploration of three domains: the practical, the aesthetic, and the metaphysical (Hess, John 1973)[5]. Godard's approach rejected fixed rules in favour of techniques selected for their narrative function, and he emphasized the *mise en scène*[6] as a profound form of artistic expression that allowed space from time to time to assume the role of the author.

These principles elevated directors from mere technicians to creators, granting them a privileged status in film history and criticism. Moreover, Claude-Edmonde Magny (1947) framed *auteur cinema* as embodying a new form of humanism, where the director's vision connected deeply with human experience[7].

Auteurism and its limitations

While 'auteur theory' transformed film criticism by elevating the director as the central creative force, it has faced significant critiques for neglecting the inherently collaborative nature of filmmaking. From the cinematographer's vision to the screenwriter's narrative, the editor's composition, and the actors' performances, film is a highly collaborative endeavour. Moreover, production conditions, technical limitations, and copyright issues further challenge the notion of the director as a singular creative genius.

In response, Bazin introduced the concept of the 'genius of the system' as a counterpoint, arguing that films are not solely the product of individual brilliance but emerge from the harmonious interplay of various contributors within a larger system – including the audience's interpretive role. This perspective shifts the focus from the auteur to the collective mechanisms that shape cinematic production.

A similar argument can be extended to architecture. Adapting Robert Self's (1985, 4) statement – "The apparatus of film, with its mix of many crafts, its plurality of producers, its range of spectators, quite literally models the idea of the multi-authored text" – and substituting *film* with *architecture* highlights a comparable dynamic. The inherently collaborative nature of architectural practice, which involves numerous contributors, makes the attribution of authorship to a single individual even more artificial than in other artistic disciplines.

Nevertheless, the principles of 'auteur theory' offer valuable insights for architecture, particularly in understanding how authorship is constructed, attributed, and critiqued within a broader cultural and collaborative framework.

Figure 2: Composition of images from two different films: *Man Is Not a Bird* (*Čovek nije tica*, Makavejev, Dušan, 1965) [top] and *Tilva Rosh* (*Tilva Roš*, Ležaić, Nikola, 2010) [bottom]. A comparative analysis of cinematic spaces over a half-century period (1965-2010) in the industrial city of Bor, Serbia. The juxtaposition highlights the transformation of Bor's landscapes, shaped by the forces of contemporary globalization, and reflects the notion of *space auteur* through its 'ghosted' topographies.

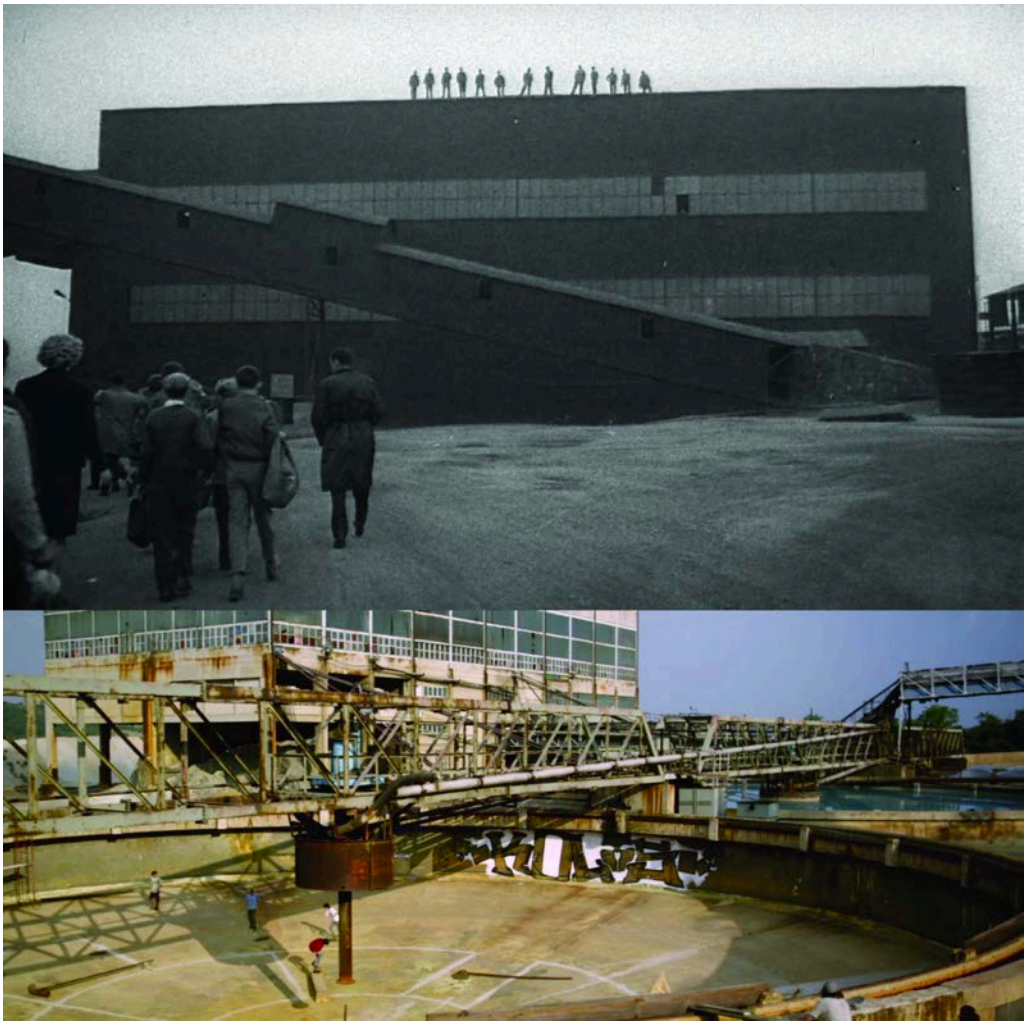

Figure 3: Composition of images from two different films: *Man Is Not a Bird* (*Čovek nije tica*, Makavejev, Dušan, 1965) [top] and *Tilva Rosh* (*Tilva Roš*, Ležaić, Nikola, 2010) [bottom]. A comparative analysis of cinematic spaces over a half-century period (1965-2010) in the industrial city of Bor, Serbia. The juxtaposition highlights the transformation of Bor's landscapes, shaped by the forces of contemporary globalization, and reflects the notion of *space auteur* through its 'ghosted' topographies.

Figure 4: Composition of images from two different films: *Man Is Not a Bird* (*Čovek nije tica*, Makavejev, Dušan, 1965) [top] and *Tilva Rosh* (*Tilva Roš*, Ležaić, Nikola, 2010) [bottom]. A comparative analysis of cinematic spaces over a half-century period (1965-2010) in the industrial city of Bor, Serbia. The juxtaposition highlights the transformation of Bor's landscapes, shaped by the forces of contemporary globalization, and reflects the notion of *space auteur* through its 'ghosted' topographies.

Figure 5: Composition of images from two different films: *Man Is Not a Bird* (*Čovek nije tica*, Makavejev, Dušan, 1965) [top] and *Tilva Rosh* (*Tilva Roš*, Ležaić, Nikola, 2010) [bottom]. A comparative analysis of cinematic spaces over a half-century period (1965-2010) in the industrial city of Bor, Serbia. The juxtaposition highlights the transformation of Bor's landscapes, shaped by the forces of contemporary globalization, and reflects the notion of *space auteur* through its 'ghosted' topographies.

Figure 6: Composition of images from two different films: *Man Is Not a Bird* (*Čovek nije tica*, Makavejev, Dušan, 1965) [top] and *Tilva Rosh* (*Tilva Roš*, Ležaić, Nikola, 2010) [bottom]. A comparative analysis of cinematic spaces over a half-century period (1965-2010) in the industrial city of Bor, Serbia. The juxtaposition highlights the transformation of Bor's landscapes, shaped by the forces of contemporary globalization, and reflects the notion of *space auteur* through its 'ghosted' topographies.

Figure 7: Composition of images from two different films: *Man Is Not a Bird* (*Čovek nije tica*, Makavejev, Dušan, 1965) [top] and *Tilva Rosh* (*Tilva Roš*, Ležaić, Nikola, 2010) [bottom]. A comparative analysis of cinematic spaces over a half-century period (1965-2010) in the industrial city of Bor, Serbia. The juxtaposition highlights the transformation of Bor's landscapes, shaped by the forces of contemporary globalization, and reflects the notion of *space auteur* through its 'ghosted' topographies.

Auteur space: between autonomy, hospitality, and collective authorship

By redefining authorship and ownership, and adopting Giovanni Bellotti and Alessandra Covini's (2022) concept of "architecture as a form of hospitality", we engage with spaces that evoke affection and desire toward their materiality while remaining open to critique and contribution. These spaces align with Umberto Eco's (1962) concept of the "open work", which posits an artwork as a flexible structure, open to multiple interpretations.

If space is understood as an autonomous entity – both within and beyond human agency – the shifting roles of those who design, construct, and care for it become more apparent, allowing space itself to emerge as an author **[2] [3] [4] [5] [6] [7]**. This perspective challenges traditional notions of authorship by positioning space as an active participant in the creative process.

Beyond boundaries: human, non-human, and disciplinary

In a time of disciplinary re-evaluation and role transformation, across disciplines, accepting the premise that singular authorship is a theoretical construct allows for a critical examination of its implications on both practical and intellectual discourse.

At the same time, authorship is not merely a matter of originality or the right to distribute; it entails a profound commitment to the work. Being an author carries distinct responsibilities, as the relationship between the author and the work is never neutral. Thus, authorship serves as the foundation for critical public discourse and provides a means to question established narratives.

The ability to collaborate and navigate the question of authorship – whether to embrace or reject it – across disciplines is essential for addressing the complex challenges of contemporary practice. By examining the intersection of individual vision and collective effort, architectural discourse can benefit from a more nuanced approach to authorship.

Looking ahead, it is crucial to reconsider the construction and attribution of authorship, accounting for both human and non-human agencies within an increasingly complex, culturally transformed creative landscape. This includes recognizing the concept of the 'space auteur' as an active force, inducing reflection on how space itself can embody and express authorship.

1 In its early days, the film industry viewed films as commercial products, prioritizing collective effort over individual artistic expression. Directors were considered part of a technical team, with more focus on screenwriters and producers.

2 Walter Benjamin's concept of the "author as producer" represents one of the most radical perspectives on authorship to emerge from Leftist avant-garde cultural debates of the 1920s and 1930s. It examined individual development and cultural creation through the lens of social relations and divergences. However, its political implications varied significantly depending on context and application.

3 Shub combined a diverse range of footage, including old newsreels, amateur recordings, and material captured by official cinematographers of the imperial family. Moreover, by employing restoration methods, Shub preserved invaluable revolutionary footage that might otherwise have been lost. See: https://wfpp.columbia.edu/pioneer/ccpesfir-shub/

4 The auteur policy aimed to elevate film to the status of art, as it was still striving for recognition as an artistic medium during that period. The American film critic Andrew G. Sarris later coined the term 'auteur theory.

5 John Hess mentions two criteria in auteur filmmaking: an intimate relationship to contemporary filmmaking and an extrinsic goal that auteur critics needed to address. To do so, they had to explore those domains.

6 Refers to the arrangement of elements within the frame.

7 Mangy argued that it created "a certain idea of man, independent of the accidents of class and condition. Truly classic in spirit… it is more nearly universal than our eighteenth-century literature because it encompasses all races and all classes".

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The Changing Roles of Sustainable Landscape Design in Historical Industrial Landscapes

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#

historical industrial landscape, sustainability, participation

Abstract

Post-industrial landscapes are often characterized by neglected industrial areas that have lost their original purpose. Transforming these areas through sustainable design can include the revitalization of brownfields, the creation of green spaces and the integration of renewable energy sources. These steps can significantly improve the quality of life of local residents and attract new investment.

But current efforts to redevelop industrial wastelands and abandoned buildings raises broader views than just architectural, construction or environmental issues.

How will these changes and construction activities affect he living memory of the population and the local communities? Rediscovering and recognising the heritage and natural values just as social potential of decaying industrial sites are important and well known issues. But successful transformation of these mostly abandoned areas with recent decline of quality of living standards should open the door also to new forms of planning and designing of regeneration projects with highlighting the interdisciplinary collaboration and participation.

Introduction

Research into the forms and functioning of historical landscapes has been largely emphasized in the scientific fields dealing with landscape and its individual elements. It is an important source of inspiration for solutions of the current issues in the landscape (climate change, drought, agricultural soil erosion, biodiversity loss), and at the same time, with the use of knowledge about historical information related to a certain landscape we can model scenarios of the future development of this landscape and its use. This research also has a significant role in identifying the landscape segments requiring special attention with respect to their importance as items of cultural heritage. We can see the historical industrial landscape as a landscape with cultural-historical values but also as part of green infrastructure. With increasing climate change, there is a growing interest in minimizing its impacts, and the opportunity to influence the development of such a valuable landscape environment is one way to do so. The need to protect cultural-historical and natural values fulfills the idea of sustainable landscape design. However, industrial heritage and the issue of transformation and new uses for industrial sites are now often viewed from very different perspectives, from the scale of individual buildings or the scale of large areas of brownfields. Increasingly discussed as an absolutely key theme in recent years, however, is the mid-level scale of the cultural landscape. This change of perspective raises new questions about how to preserve and protect historical industrial landscape in an active, living area. Will intervention bring positive or negative impact on the socio-economic development and status of the areas? Is it possible to prevent failure and rejection of the project through

including participation of the local population, the gradual phasing of the project or choosing an appropriate scale?

Sustainable landscape design in historical industrial landscape: a bridge to social justice, resilient landscape and community

Understanding the specifics of historical industrial landscape, focusing on citizens – they are new approaches to finding hidden sustainable potential of industrial heritage. But the first step should be interdisciplinary collaboration (urban planning, environmental science, architecture, and community activism).

Living Lab

Shifting the narrative of historical industrial landscapes through collaboration with local communities creates networking and brings education. Historical industrial landscape as creative incubator or crowdsourced placemaking living Labs are the future for areas previously used by industry. Former industries not only leaved behind a material cultural heritage such as industrial monuments but also an immaterial heritage like numerable traditions and philosophies of life related to the former industrial work (Walther and Albrecht 2014). The Living labs phenomenon originated from the work of William Mitchell at MIT (Leminen et al. 2019). He argued that a living lab represents a user-centric research methodology for sensing, prototyping, validating and refining complex solutions in multiple and evolving reallife contexts. Integrating users in the development context would ensure a more reliable evaluation, as well as reduce technological and business risks.

Participation of all stakeholders and social justice

One of the key aspects of sustainable design is the involvement of all stakeholders in the decision-making process. This includes local communities, businesses, environmental organizations and government bodies. Transparent communication and inclusive planning can minimize conflicts and ensure that all interests are considered (Benedict and McMahon 2006). Sustainable design has the potential to contribute to social justice by providing equal opportunities for all members of society. This can include access to public spaces, affordable housing and employment opportunities. Involving communities in the design and implementation of projects ensures that results are equitably distributed and benefits flow to all levels of society.
When the interests of different stakeholders are in conflict, sustainable design can offer compromises and innovative solutions. For example, the

integration of green infrastructure can not only improve the environment but also provide economic benefits and increase the aesthetic value of an area (Wolch et al. 2014). In this way, sustainable design can serve as a bridge between different interests and promote harmonious coexistence. Workshops organized with all stakeholders look for new ways and methods of promoting development in the industrial site and bring different concepts and ideas the local communities come up. The future is in the hands of local citizens.

Living Lab in Train station Pilsen-Hospital

A good example of successfully implemented method of Living Lab is the project of revitalizing an abandoned train stop in the city of Pilsen (Czech Republic) – Train station Pilsen-Hospital. The building of the passenger train station was prepared from 1895, when the nearby military hospital was completed. The considerable influence of Art Deco and Cubism shows in the front of the building interiors of the vestibule as well as in the arrangement of the outdoor area (Bernhardt et al. 2013). The vestibule has been preserved in almost original condition, the station building is a cultural monument. Nowadays Pilsen station Community leased the beautiful building from Czech Railways and turned it slowly to a nice place to meet while retaining all the essential details of the old railway station. The building is changing to a spot where people can use a shared working space, an open workshop or take a yoga courses. The adoption of a minimalist approach respects the original structure and helps to retain its industrial character. The project was financed by the Pilsen Community Program for Public Space and its platform, where local residents can support any of the submitted ideas. The cooperation between the initiators of the cultural program in the station, architects, urban planners and designers of the new wooden furniture was exemplary. The project began in 2014 and still offers interesting events. The station building is now used as a train station again, but the cultural community program in the former ticket office section still continues.

Historical industrial landscape as part of landscape infrastructure

Examining the wider context related to the particular time layer inscribed into the landscape allowing us to identify specific features related to the values of the cultural heritage of this period. At the same time it gives us the opportunity to discover the mutual relationship between the historical perception of the landscape and the natural phenomenon. Historical industrial landscapes whose activity ceased by the end of the first half of the 20th century are currently taking on the character of a monument. At the same time, the vegetation in this former industrial area has been taxonomically enriched and has become very valuable.

The importance of these biologically valuable habitats is growing. At a time of recognition of the need to fight against threats related to

climate change, these habitats give a chance to take a new look at these places with natural succession as places of great natural value and a stable element of the landscape structure. At the same time, they are bearers of the cultural-historical values of the industrial heritage.

The recognition of historical industrial landscapes with spontaneous succession as stable, green and viable localities creates their new role: a significant position in the landscape structure, an important share in the fulfillment of ecosystem functions and the formation of a sustainable landscape. Unfortunately, despite their specific aesthetics and tourist popularity, these locations continue to fall through the sieve of monument protection, are not recorded in spatial planning documents as cultural-historical values, and are often destroyed.

Austria Mine, coking factory and briquette plant and the railway siding route connecting Linhaim's mines

This example focuses on the development of historical industrial landscapes associated with hard coal mining in the Lindheim's mines near Mantov (Pilsen region, Czech Republic), where mining activities were terminated in 1920. Natural processes of ecological succession influence in this location the long-term development of landscape structures that were originally created by intensive human activity.

After mining ceasing the area was abandoned for a very long time, overgrown with vegetation, from the original mine only the mining tower building, the mining machine building, the boiler room, the briquette plant with a chimney and a residential house for the mine employees were preserved. The site was naturally connected by overgrown vegetation with the adjacent depression after mining, gradually flooded by mine water, interesting growths of various wetland and terrestrial plant species appeared here in the vicinity of the water surface. In the second decade of the new millennium, a paddock for a small herd of fallow deer was created on part of the area. Among the interesting relicts on the route of the former railway siding was also the iconic wooden cabin built by campers on a granite pillar of the former railway bridge in the middle of the river. Although the tiny cottage was built in the 1990s, it was an important reference to workers' tourism at the beginning of the 20th century and the phenomenon of the tramp movement in the Czech Republic.

Unfortunately, today we can no longer find any of the industrial buildings in the former Austria mine; in the once romantic place we can only find a huge newly built concrete cube of a modern powder coating plant. The chimney, an important landscape landmark, has also disappeared. The fallow deer enclosure is only half full, a new road leads to the powder coating plant, and a newly approved cycle path made of rough asphalt leads through the mine depression with valuable plant habitats, disrupting the forest and water ecosystems. The cute cottage built on the torso of a granite bridge pillar has also disappeared.

The project for the new using of the former Austria mine and the new cycle path along the route of the former railway siding had a top-down approach, without participation from local residents and interdisciplinary cooperation. A footbridge is planned to connect both river banks on the site where the iconic cottage used to stand.

Conclusion

Abandoned industrial sites are closely shaped by the necessity of everyday life. Also, they have a broader impact on the community's everyday life as well. Contributing to a collective effort to discover historical industrial landscape and industrial heritage promote more inclusive and equitable practices in the transformation of the territory.

Community engagement and sustainable landscape design are a key tools for transforming historical industrial landscapes, where conflict between stakeholders often hinders progress towards a sustainable future. New approaches to the identification of natural values of historical industrial landscapes are needed. The role of sustainable landscape design in the transformation projects of former industrial sites is changing, as is the approach to authorship of such projects.

By linking industrial heritage with sustainable land-use, we can expand conservation frameworks to include community perspectives and cultural narratives and innovative approaches to regional identity preservation that foster a strong sense of local ownership.

This means actively involving communities in the research process, recognising their expertise, and co-creating new understandings of industrial heritage. This requires a shift away from top-down approach creation, towards a model where the ideas and projects are generated by and for citizens. This will allow us a more inclusive understanding of the past and present of historical industrial landscape, and to co-design the future.

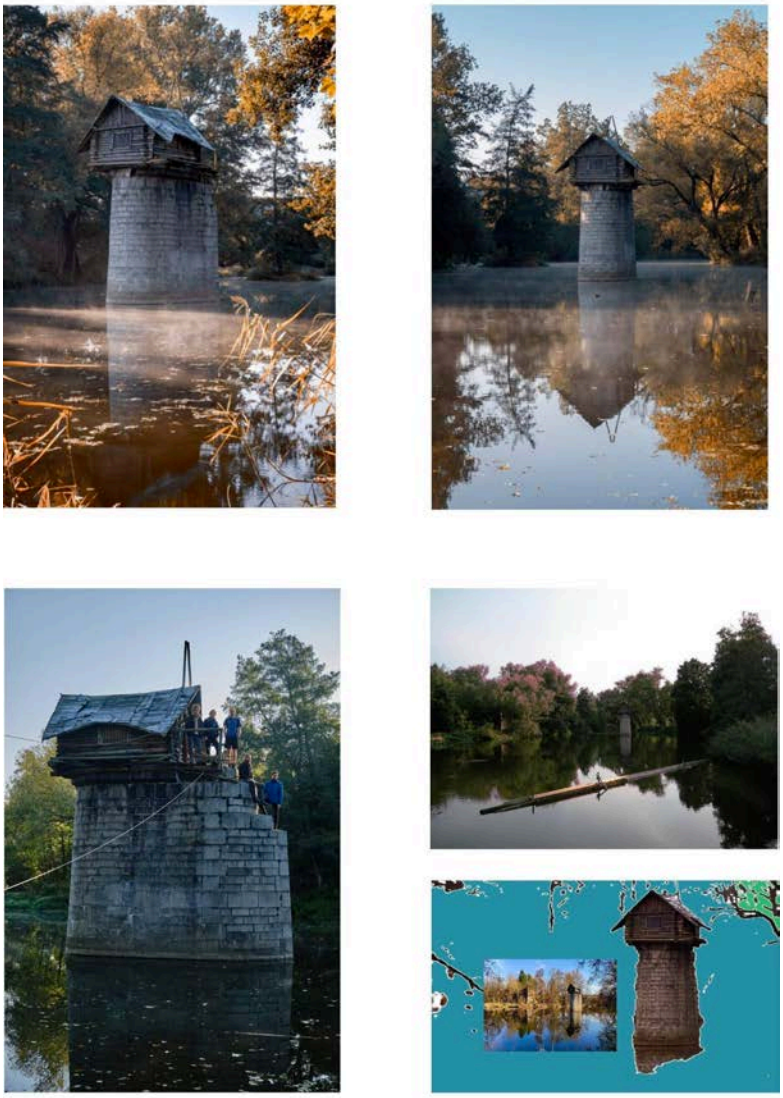

Figure 1: Tiny little cottage on the pillar of the former railway siding in the middle of the river Radbuza in Pilsen region, Czech Republic. The iconic building used to be a frequent tourist destination and a much-photographed object. The wooden cabin on the granite pillar was built by local campers, it was a reference to the phenomenon of the tramp movement in the Czech Republic.x

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Spaces for Learning in Contemporary Metropolitan Cities Rethinking Authorship Through Collaborative Processes and Design Narratives

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#

public administration, shared narratives, space for learning

Abstract

In contemporary metropolitan cities, school spaces are no longer static containers of knowledge transmission but are evolving into dynamic social infrastructures. The research project *Spaces for Learning in Contemporary Metropolitan Cities* explores the transformation of school spaces into adaptive environments that respond to pedagogical, social and environmental needs of contemporary cities. Through a multidisciplinary approach integrating spatial, pedagogical, technical and regulatory dimensions, the research challenges the static concept of school buildings, proposing dynamic, flexible and resilient spaces. The contribution investigates a reframed concept of authorship as a methodological tool, guiding the researcher to mediate between academic knowledge, administrative constraints and architectural practices, fostering the co-creation of shared spatial narratives. The research unfolds through an iterative process linking theory and practice, focusing on transforming Milan's school heritage and designing adaptable strategies that address contemporary educational and administrative challenges.

The research project *Spaces for Learning in Contemporary Metropolitan Cities* investigates the updating of learning spaces through an approach interweaving spatial, pedagogical, cultural, technical and normative dimensions. Moving beyond an 'archi-centric' perspective – shifting from architecture as an object of design to architecture as an enabling framework –, the paper explores how this reframing supports new design practices and interdisciplinary collaboration. It considers educational spaces as dynamic and evolving structures, shaped by multiple and diverse contributions. Additionally, given the nature of the PhD scholarship – financed with investments provided by the National Plan for Recovery and Resilience (NPRR) on research lines for Public Administration – the *fil rouge* is to address the discrepancy between action programs and initiatives on a European and national scale, architectural practice and the reality of municipal administrations. This is achieved by developing design strategies that function not only as responses to technical challenges but also as mechanisms for constructing collective narratives that redefine the meaning of educational spaces.

This multidisciplinary approach is essential to conceive school spaces not only as physical architectures but as interconnected systems, where pedagogical innovation, administrative feasibility and spatial quality converge to define environments that promote long-term educational and social transition. The proposed approach reframes the concept of learning spaces away from static architectural objects towards the perspective of adaptable, evolving social infrastructures. Within this theoretical framework, *research by design* is conceptualised as a mediator between educational needs, public policies and spatial transformation processes. The compositional forms that school buildings can take in the many and varied urban fabrics that make up the contemporary city, in fact, are

multiple and complex, requiring an integrated approach to address also challenges such as environmental sustainability, renewed educational practices and the optimization of public resources.

In this way, the research seeks to reconsider school spaces as adaptive spatial devices that respond to contemporary cities' educational, social and environmental emergencies. In the proposed framework, the concept of authorship is reconceptualised as a methodological tool: the researcher assumes the role of mediator between academic knowledge, administrative constraints and architectural practices, translating these heterogeneous agents into design strategies that allow the construction of new spatial narratives. The goal is not to produce a static architectural model but to generate adaptive actions and configurations, where design itself becomes part of the general transitional process.

The positionality of the researcher plays a crucial role in this process. Positioned as both an observer and an active participant, the researcher's perspective inevitably shapes the interpretation and mediation of diverse inputs. This reflective stance acknowledges the researcher's influence on the outcomes, recognizing that the act of mediation is inherently situated within their personal, academic and professional background. This dual role – balancing between critical distance and embedded action – becomes a strength in navigating the intersection of many points of view.

Context: learning spaces as a collective good

Spaces for learning are fundamental collective resources that transcend their materiality, acting as a social infrastructure capable of influencing educational outcomes and community well-being. According to the OECD, "on their quality an important part of the challenge on social welfare and economic development is played out" (OECD 2012). The current socio-economic trend – between generalized crisis, restriction of resources and inefficiency in their use – exacerbates the fragility of the community service sector, to which school buildings belong, and underscores the declining quality of learning spaces. Environmental and energy issues further demand the transformation of outdated design practices.

Milan's school buildings have been in hot pursuit of population growth for many decades (ISTAT). However, as demographic trends shift toward population decline and lower birth rates, the demand for new school buildings is expected to decrease. Instead, the focus will shift to the renovation and adaptive reuse of existing structures or, where necessary, their demolition and reconstruction.

This shift represents an opportunity to redefine school buildings as adaptable, multifunctional environments – designed not just for learning but as flexible, community-centered spaces that evolve alongside social needs. The present vision constitutes an opportunity to change the emphasis from the imperative for quantitative expansion to one for investment in spatial quality – understood not merely in terms of comfort

or aesthetics, but as the capacity of school buildings to adapt to new pedagogical needs, foster community interaction and support diverse, evolving uses –, with the aim of transforming schools into flexible, resilient and inclusive environments (Fondazione Giovanni Agnelli 2019).

Open-air spaces are a crucial, often ignored, dimension of learning environments: beyond serving as leisure areas, they involve the potential to become active educational spaces, accessible to local communities as well. Such spaces could function as outdoor classrooms for experiential learning, community gathering spaces and potential *oases of coolness* mitigating heat islands and capable of storing water and reducing heat, 'cooling' dense urban spaces (Les Cours Oasis 2025). The integration of these spaces into the school design narrative supports various evolving uses and promotes environmental awareness. By blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior, school environments can foster a more holistic, dynamic learning experience, encouraging exploration, collaboration and well-being while maximizing spatial resources.

The role of narrative in the *research by design* process

A central aspect of the research is the narrative potential of design, understood both as a methodological tool and an outcome of the research process itself. The narrative is not only a descriptive tool but an active agent in redefining space, capable of transforming perceptions of learning environments by revealing latent possibilities and new spatial configurations. The research is structured into three interconnected phases: an initial period at the Politecnico di Milano for theoretical elaboration, which establishes the conceptual foundations and identifies key spatial and methodological principles; this informs the second phase, the internship at the Area Tecnica Scuole del Comune di Milano, where the direct engagement with administrative constraints and design practices are conducted in light of the theoretical groundwork; experience that in turn strongly influenced the final phase at ENSA Paris Malaquais, an in-depth design phase, where design strategies are synthesized and tested through iterative prototypes and scenario-based explorations.

This phased approach allows for a continuous feedback loop between theory and practice, in which the research evolves through iterative refinements rather than a linear progression. Each phase informs the next, creating a dynamic interplay where theoretical insights are researched in real-world settings and design outputs feedback into the theoretical framework.

The internship represented an opportunity to test early theoretical assumptions and to specify the theme according to the actual needs (spatial, pedagogical, technical and mainly economic) of the Milanese school heritage. Through historical investigations and consultation of databases, a mapping of the municipality schools was developed, classifying buildings into categories based on their potential for transformation. This classification system serves as a foundation for exploring spatial narratives – stories embedded in the built environment that reveal

patterns of use, adaptation and social interaction. This classification not only supports design strategies but also acts as a narrative device, revealing how each category holds specific transformative potential. By mapping buildings according to their adaptability, the research identifies spatial archetypes representing different ways of reinterpreting school spaces as dynamic, living infrastructures.

Reframing authorship in architectural research

The conventional perception of the researcher/author as a predominant and exclusive figure is being revised. Instead of functioning as an autonomous subject, the researcher adopts the role of a mediator and translator, promoting interdisciplinary interactions and addressing conflicting realities. The concept of authorship is thus reshaped as a dynamic attribute, evolving through a progression where the researcher assimilates distinct contributions from designers, educators, administrators and people into a cohesive yet adaptable spatial narrative. This approach shifts the emphasis from a singular, authoritative design output to a collective, continuously negotiable design framework that can respond to changing educational and social needs.

It is no longer considered to be the generation of a singular design output, but rather the interpreter and curator of heterogeneous contributions of a multitude of disciplines, – sometimes disparate and even contradictory, complementary but often conflicting – resulting in a collective design process that adapts over time. This reframing of authorship is rooted in the idea that architectural research does not simply generate design outputs but constructs new epistemologies that shape spatial practices.

The practical implications of this reframing become particularly evident in the classification of Milan's school buildings, developed through collaboration with the Schools Technical Area, and in the consequential selection and exploration of specific international case studies. The proposed mapping system is intended to provide a framework for categorising schools according to their degree of adaptability and transformation potential. The categories are designed to range from minimal renovations to complete reconstructions. It is posited that the distinct design strategies, characteristic of each category, indicate how the researcher's curatorial role shapes these strategies, thus giving rise to adaptable narratives. For instance, schools classified as *historic heritage* present challenges due to preservation constraints, but also opportunities for hybrid educational and community uses. Meanwhile, schools categorised as having *high potential for adaptive reuse* suggest strategies focused on small-medium-large spatial interventions to enable new pedagogical configurations, while *obsolete schools*, which are to be demolished and rebuilt, promote more radical redesign approaches that prioritise compactness, environmental sustainability and spatial flexibility. These categories provide a technical framework and a narrative device that can inform design strategies, demonstrating how spatial configurations can

embody evolving educational practices. In the exploration of case studies, instead, the researcher's role extends beyond documentation to active curation – selecting, combining and interpreting diverse spatial strategies and design approaches. The outcome is not a singular vision but a layered, evolving spatial narrative that reflects contemporary educational needs and international administrative solutions.

In this sense, the researcher's role becomes a connective one, synthesizing inputs from administrators, pedagogists, educators, academic researchers and practitioners to enable a more democratic design approach, developing practical tools to translate them into actionable design guidelines. One key example is the *check-list* tool produced during the internship at the Schools Technical Area, synthesizing insights from PNRR projects into a practical operational tool. This checklist merges regulatory constraints, pedagogical needs and spatial quality parameters into an adaptable framework for evaluating and guiding school transformations.

The layering of this intricate process is an attempt to answer a question that underpins and accompanies the entire architectural research process, namely how the latter can produce outcomes capable of supporting, and even suggesting, innovative and contemporary educational scenarios and good practices, while simultaneously confronting complex bureaucratic processes managed by municipal administrations.

Experimentation and redesign: toward new learning models

How can school spaces be rethought through the research lens? Through the *research by design* methodology, design is used as both a method of inquiry and a form of knowledge production. The field experience was fundamental in outlining the explored macro-strategies by constructing diagrams and spatial configurations.

The common thread linking the design macro-strategies for contemporary learning spaces is the qualitative- quantitative optimisation of surfaces and spaces. This expression, taken from the Cantonal Administration's Logistics Standards (Carpinelli and Vitali 2020), implies "an optimisation of the overall building surface area and at the same time an increase in the surface area available to each pupil within his or her own workspace".

This definition leads to a more rational and efficient use of space. Principles underlying the design actions include minimising, even eliminating, and replacing corridors with meeting, exchange, and study spaces. The school's common areas, which are the actual living spaces, are redesigned to accommodate activities that complement the teaching activities in the classroom. Another important factor is the coexistence of few additional but differentiated teaching spaces in the same location. However, these strategies' great potential lies in taking open-air spaces as effective learning places. Parallel to rethinking teaching spaces, the concept of open-air spaces must be updated. Finally, the densification of

the existing heritage and the factor of compactness of the school building are guiding criteria when defining strategies.

Therefore, the continuing need to maintain, repair and replace the school stock encompasses a wide range of strategies (from small-scale expansion of existing schools to replacement of outdated buildings under the priority school building programme), currently being developed through the research period in Paris.

Authorship as an act of connection

What methodological role can the researcher play, beyond interpreting the programmes and navigating accompanying regulations, to actively construct shared narratives and adaptive design strategies? The researcher's methodological role consists of orchestrating and translating interdisciplinary contributions into a collective project narrative through a shared vocabulary that can adapt and regenerate over time. The researcher takes on the 'disconnects' between administrative requirements, pedagogical visions and architectural practices. Each field has its own vocabulary and constraints: the researcher becomes the 'bridge' that translates these languages into design strategies that all involved can understand and implement. The design becomes an act of connection and assembly, in which authorship is constructed through the synthesis of theoretical, administrative and practical experiences and the design solutions arise from a collective vision. This approach supports the emergence of spatial configurations that are not fixed or final, but responsive to shifting educational models, demographic changes and administrative constraints – redefining school spaces as living frameworks for ongoing adaptation.

The work of the researcher is therefore characterised by continuous reversals of perspective, due to the heterogeneity of the interlocutors (academics, municipal technicians, professionals and, finally, users). Filtering and curating diverse inputs according to one's scientific expertise becomes the greatest challenge in constructing authorship. Following Michel Foucault's perspective, "*L'auteur n'est pas une source indéfinie de signification qui viendraient combler l'œuvre, l'auteur ne précède pas les œuvres. Il est un certain principe fonctionnel par lequel, dans notre culture, on délimite, on exclut, on sélectionne*" (Foucault 1969).

Conclusions: toward a laboratory of collective narratives

The research is not limited to the production of an architectural project; instead, it becomes an evolving process that continuously reformulates and reinterprets the needs of educational spaces. At the centre of a multi-dimensional knowledge system, the researcher can generate new meanings for school spaces and redefine the role of authorship in architectural and design research.

Figure 1: Munari, B. (1981). *Da cosa nasce cosa* + AA.VV. (2020). *Munari per Rodari.* [drawings]. © Bruno Munari Munari's idea of process and some sketches to be interpreted in relation to the 'green rice recipe' page: heterogeneous disciplines and the construction of a personal non-linear process-path.

The outcome is not a singular project, but a prototype of an adaptive design methodology for municipalities to co-design contemporary learning spaces that evolve alongside their communities. The resulting design strategies are not static solutions but adaptive configurations that respond to the school building stock's heterogeneous nature and contemporary urban and educational challenges. The research, therefore, serves as a laboratory for collective narratives, an experimental 'place' where multiple voices and perspectives intersect, creating a richer, more articulated understanding of contemporary learning environments.

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Illustrating Research Complexities A Case Study of Authorship and Research Narratives on the Heritage Conservation of George Town, Malaysia

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#

root cause analysis, research mapping, heritage

Abstract

This paper elaborates on developing a method for communicating complex research findings. The study responds to the interdisciplinary nature of architectural research, and the challenges of effectively conveying research processes and findings to a broader audience. Using the case study of heritage conservation of old shophouses in George Town, Penang, Malaysia, the author develops infographic drawings that illustrate the process of literature review, analysis, and research findings. These visualisations emphasise the importance of visual hierarchy and narrative in communicating research. Finally, this paper highlights the author's role in effectively sharing research findings, to engage readers with the topics of study, to foster a shared understanding among them, and to empower them with the context and knowledge for future discourses and actions.

Introduction

Responding to the expanding complexities in architectural research of the information age, as well as a widening rift between the producers of knowledge (i.e. architects, researchers) and the public, as represented by the "design-disconnect" (Halpern 2014) phenomenon and the rising anti-intellectualism sentiments in our societies, this paper elaborates on the author's process in developing a methodology to better communicate intricate research processes and findings to a general audience. Referencing the highly nuanced issues on the heritage conservation of the historical urban centre of George Town, a designated UNESCO world heritage site in Malaysia as a case study, the author demonstrates the use of narrative-driven, hierarchy-based illustrations and infographics as a means of communication.

Causality is universal. Nowhere in the world can there be any phenomena that do not give rise to certain consequences and have not been caused by other phenomena (Spirkin 1984).

State-of-the-art

In conducting research and design, it is pertinent to recognize that our findings do not exist in isolation, as every piece of information, idea, and understanding is shaped at varying degrees by our literary references, discussions, reasonings, interpretations, and creative processes that we have engaged with. In the case of George Town, existing architectural and urban planning literature has contributed to the understanding of its built heritage and conservation methods. This is a well-studied topic with an abundance of related studies, particularly in the extensive works of Alexander Koenig et. al (1994), architect Tan Yeow Ooi (2011, 2015), and expert conservators such as Tan Chin Ling (2023). Their research

identifies the immediate causes for addressing their critical issues of study, and demonstrates a deep understanding of historical research, spatial analysis, strategic planning, and technical knowledge that are crucial for preserving the city's urban heritage. However, their specialised research disciplines critically limit engagements with broader, interdisciplinary reasonings, and deprives them of the coherence that ties them to a greater narrative or conceptual framework on the issue. Therefore, this paper aims to address these interdisciplinary research gaps by further inquiring on rhetorical depths in relation to each other and to related extra-disciplinary topics, whist situating them in a more structured and grounded narrative for prospective readers.

Presently, the agendas of heritage conservation is not well communicated with the people of George Town; As heritage shophouses and storied streetscapes languish in inadequate care, misuse, inappropriate modifications, dereliction, and demolition, the continued public inaction and indifference point to a chronic lack of awareness, resources, and coordinated efforts for rectifying the loss of built heritage. In fact, prior endeavours to publicly communicating this predicament have had limited success, hampered by the inability to convey the scale, urgency, and relevance of these issues to the public, even when they are clear among local conservator architects and academics. This public-professional, perceptual dichotomy resembles the psychological study on "design disconnect" (Halpern 2014), a term first described by psychologist David Halpern in 1987 for measuring the gap in architectural preferences and ideals between architects and non-architects. While previous case studies in the UK, Canada, and Chile (Chavez and Milner 2019) were mostly focused on aesthetic preferences and architecture styles, it is more nuanced and layered in the context of George Town, where architects and heritage conservators also have to account for the owners/inhabitants' conflicting interests/intentions regarding their shophouses, all while fighting against gentrification, property buyouts of opportunistic developers/foreign investors, and the capitalistic commodification of heritage tourism, among other obstacles.

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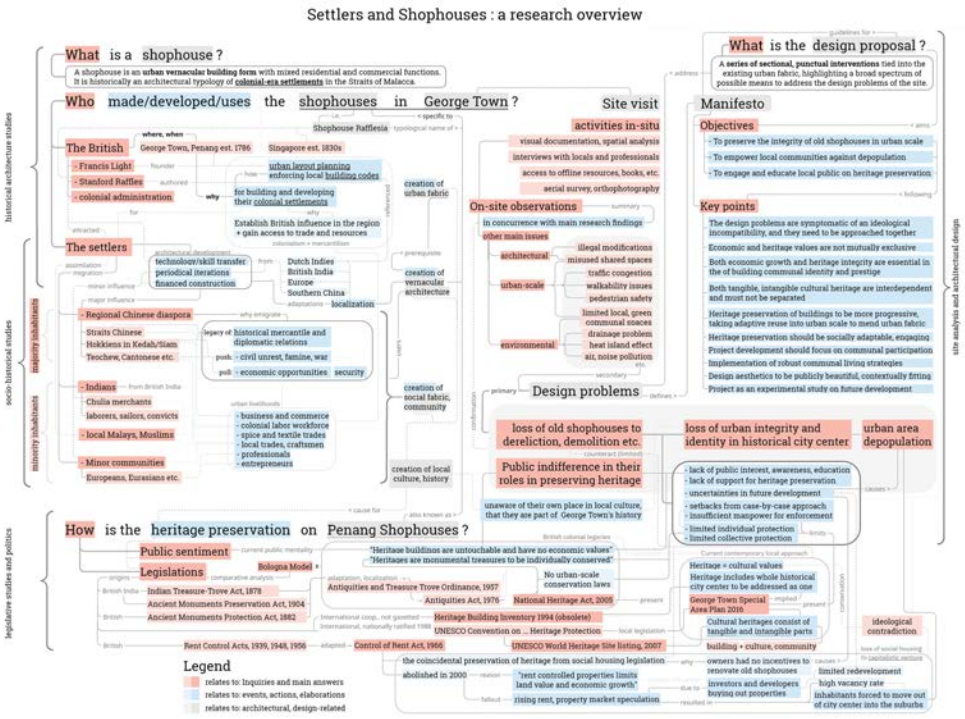

Figure 2: This is a research diagram from the author's prior investigation on the topic of heritage conservation, extracted from the master thesis titled "Settlers and Shophouses: A study on the history, architecture and heritage preservation in George Town, Penang". The diagram is anchored to the three main research questions in overlapping sections of historical studies on architecture, socio-cultural, and law. They are accompanied by notes from the site visit, an analysis on the design problems, and the synthesis of a design manifest for the research-by-design thesis paper.

Methodology

Having unravelled the complexities of this research, shaped by a variety of intertwined factors, how does one synthesize relevant pieces of information into a coherent narrative while situating them within the broader context to provide a comprehensive overview of this study? This is the main question on research authorship in this paper, concerning our roles in analysing/curating information and forming narratives in our knowledge production steps.

For developing an in-depth perspective on the state-of-the-art of a study, an interrogational approach is adopted during the critical literature review process to identify research questions and observations for the repeated inquiries of "whys" (Myszewski 2013, Serrat 2017) – to explore their underlying causal relationships, and to approach a common root cause. In the case of George Town, authors of its literary references have stated and justified the reasons, need and utilities of their research, gesturing to their inquiries of "whys" to at least the second degree; however, their research narratives drawn from this level are often limited in scope and depth, but sufficient as individual papers.

As illustrated in the diagram of critical inquiries, diving deeper into the third and fourth degree of “whys” leads the line of inquiry out of the premises of architecture and heritage conservation onto an interdisciplinary trajectory, and some initially isolated inquiries will also converge at deeper levels, overlapping on the notions of human nature, culture, society, economics, politics etc. Any further forays beyond fifth degree tend to corral and funnel all the strands of inquiries into convergence points of deep, underlying factors that are normally imperceptible, but have long-lasting causal influences over the issues of inquiry. Therein hides the narrative unity in the form of a root cause, a vital linchpin for building a comprehensive narrative for visualising a clear research overview, and as a common point of understanding for all readers coming from their respective perspectives.

Implication

Referencing the above methodology, research queries from the domains of architecture and heritage can traverse the chain of causality into adjacent disciplines of anthropology, social science, politics, economy, culture, law, history, and eventually converge on a singularity. This points to the inherent interdisciplinary potential in architectural practices and research that authors should take note of. In the case of George Town, they were traced back to concepts of colonialism; these remnant influences from a colonial past have shown to still overshadow and undermine endeavours at advancing the agendas for heritage conservation, lingering in present-day sociopolitical structure, in the country's legislations, and in public sentiments on heritage. Thus, the task of communication then weighs on the author's ability to process the findings into a coherent story and to convey them effectively. Upholding common authorial standards aside, the author should be cognizant that the work of curating, parsing, and writing is also a gesture of democratizing knowledge that invites everyone to participate in their own readings of the research process.

Through effective communications via visual storytelling or similarly accessible mediums, readers are invited to actively read the process and material, thus helping them develop their own understandings autonomously, and situate themselves within a shared context of the research. This enables everyone to be on the same page and take part in discussions. In the case of George Town, the diagrams developed from this paper will be shared to the local shareholders to elucidate them on their issues in heritage conservation, and to serve as grounds for future participatory research and design. Therefore, we as research authors should acknowledge our societal responsibilities in enabling readers to fully understand their issues at hand, and in facilitating their participation in future discourses and actions empowered by our works.

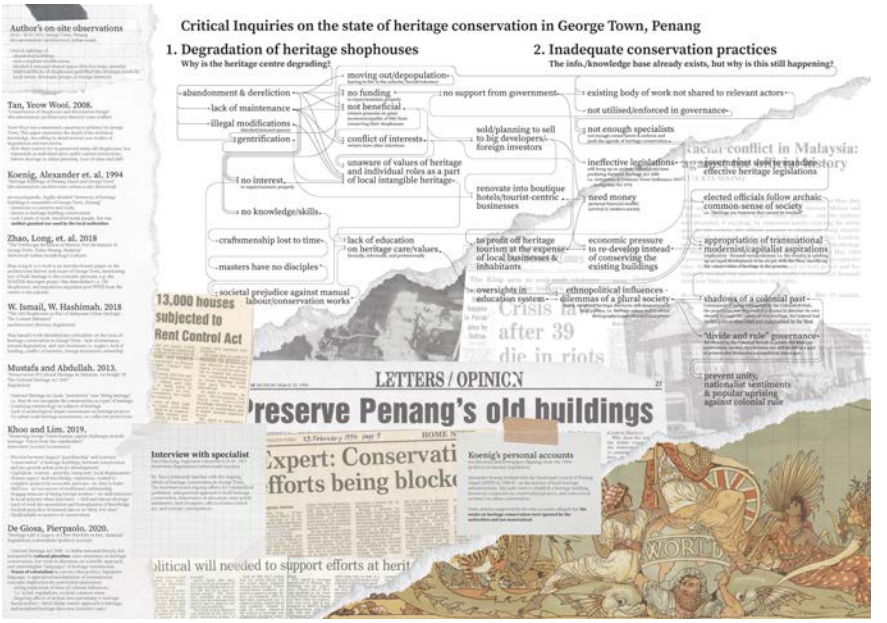

Figure 3: This is a diagram of critical inquiries that maps out the process of questioning the two issues regarding the degradation of heritage shophouses and the inadequate conservation practices in George Town. The inquiry is made in reference to the list of literature on the left column of the diagram, supplemented by the author's on-site observations, interview with a specialist, and discovery of the personal accounts from a formal researcher in George Town.

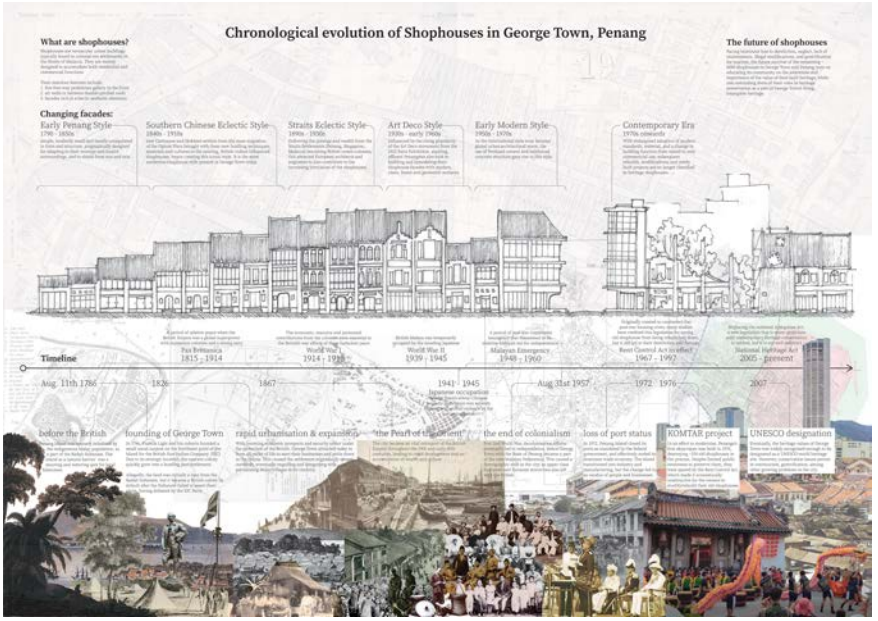

Figure 4: This diagram is based on a timeline that shows the evolution of shophouses, George Town, and the events concerning their changes over the years. The bottom parts of the diagram consist of a graphical collage made from the collection of images gathered during the literature review and the author's photographs from the site visit. The illustrated row of shophouses is made by the author as a synthesis on the general change in façade styles based on on-site and existing studies.

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From Affordances to Supernormal
Collective vs Individual Authorship and Back

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Nina Bačun, Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb

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collective contributions, fluid authorship, ordinary

Abstract

The text examines the theoretical concepts of ‘Super Normal’ and ‘Affordance’, positioning them as methodological tools that enrich *design-driven research*. It challenges the excessive focus on innovation, advocating for a return to collective practices and the appreciation of 'ordinary' objects that embody cultural wisdom. Rooted in the works of designers Naoto Fukasawa and Jasper Morrison, as well as James J. Gibson's ecological psychology, the text explores how design influences and is influenced by human interaction, collective memory, and historical contexts. It challenges the notion of individual authorship, drawing on Barthes’ and Benjamin’s theories to propose a collaborative, non-authorial approach. The research project 'From Affordances to Super Normal and Back' implements these concepts through workshops, encouraging students to perceive design as a collective process. This methodology redefines the designer's fluid role within contemporary contexts, offering new perspectives on the process of meaning-making across design, architecture, and related disciplines.

This text explores the theoretical concepts of ‘Super Normal’ and ‘Affordance’, examining their relationship to authorship and positioning them as methodological tools that enrich design-driven research in the contemporary context.

In times of crisis and challenging circumstances, there is a need to reintroduce collective practices and recover lost wisdoms. This involves celebrating the taken-for-granted ‘normalness’ of everyday life and employing design to foster deeper engagement with communities, ultimately striving for more inclusive environments. The relentless pursuit of ‘innovation’ and the uncritical chase for ‘progress’ have often led to the neglect of the essence found in anonymous, ordinary, and ‘Super Normal’ objects of the past.

The pioneers of the ‘Super Normal’ concept, designers Naoto Fukasawa and Jasper Morrison (2007), argue that the design world has strayed from its roots in normalcy, overlooking its origins and the fundamental purpose of design: to improve life within the humanly transformed environment. Morrison articulates that the ‘Super Normal’ concept revolves around the idea that well-designed objects derive their distinctive value not primarily from aesthetic qualities, but from their use and the familiarity they cultivate over time.

This premise aligns closely with the theory of ‘Affordances’, which explores the ways in which an object’s (or environment’s) design inherently suggests potential modes of use. These insights arise both from what the object enables us to do – rooted in collective memory – and from actions evoked by prior experience. Originating in James J. Gibson’s work in ecological psychology, the concept of affordance refers to the action-opportunities provided by an environment to a person or an animal (Lanamäki et al. 2015). Importantly, affordances are shaped by

cultural and historical contexts, as well as by social norms that define their understanding within a particular setting. The physical environment is shaped by disciplinary power and reflects ecological forces that link humans to their surroundings. While disciplinary power defines a chair as for sitting, ecological perception reveals its broader potential, recognizing it as a "resource for resistance" (Michael et al. 1992, 881) – standing, throwing, lying, etc.

In contrast to the conventional design practice of attributing work to a specific creator, most 'Super Normal' objects, with unknown origins, exemplify non-authorship. As Francesca Picchi highlighted, Enzo Mari redefines the designer's role from author to guardian of collective knowledge, making subtle adjustments to objects regulated by ancient use (Fukasawa and Morrison 2007, 110).

A similar perspective applies to affordances. These interactions often facilitate outcomes that diffuse authorship, making them appear as collective contributions from multiple users or authors over time – unlike participatory design processes, where organized multidisciplinary teams have distributed responsibilities, which Tom Avermaete, Irina Davidovici, Christoph Grafe, and Véronique Patteeuw describe as "design by committee" (2023, 3).

Rejecting a myth of individual authorship by accepting the idea of 'author as producer'

The concept of 'the author' is a modern phenomenon, traceable to the Renaissance and the emergence of the idea of 'the individual.' As Roland Barthes (1977, 142–188) observed, much literary criticism remains preoccupied with the notion of the author as a singular creator of a particular work. For Barthes, the relationship between author, text, and reader can be more accurately understood as a tripartite partnership, where all three elements play a crucial role in constructing the meaning. This framework can also be applied to design: by substituting 'text' with object and 'reader' with user, the same principle holds true. While it is important to consider who designed the object, it is equally critical to acknowledge that once the object is introduced into the world, it is no longer solely the domain of its creator. Its meaning and significance are also shaped by those who interact with it over time, existing as "a sedimentation of intellectual or creative labor" (Avermaete et al. 2023, 1).

In relation to affordance, and inspired by Barthes (1977), we should not think of the designer as 'the Author' or 'the Scriptor,' but rather as the 'Scriptwriter of affordances.'

Additionally, Walter Benjamin's (1934, 62) concept of the "author as producer" explores individual development and cultural creation through the lens of social relations. Its political implications, however, vary significantly depending on context and application. Arguably, this concept anticipated Barthes's rejection of authorial individuality by prioritizing

production over authorship. Benjamin's radical perspective points out that the political role of aesthetic production needs to be reconsidered.

Methodology

The design-driven research project *From Affordance to Super Normal and Back* began in 2023 with a workshop led by Ivana Fabrio and Nina Bačun at the Köln International School of Design. This methodology was subsequently replicated with students from the School of Design, Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb. The workshops, exhibitions, and related publications form part of institutional research projects at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb.

This research integrates the theories of 'Super Normal' and 'Affordance' within the framework of 'designerly ways of knowing.' Drawing on Martin Heidegger's concept of Dasein – 'being-there' – (Latour 2008, 7), it examines how the design of objects shapes human existence and how, conversely, our existence influences the design of objects. Central to this process is the power of observation, a fundamental tool that enables designers to understand why things are the way they are.

The role of the designer is reconceptualized to encompass practices akin to archaeology (unearthing knowledge), anthropology (understanding collective memory and behavior), and curation (identifying and preserving disappearing or overlooked objects).

Students detected, documented, and classified interventions in their immediate environment, abandoning the notion of individual authorship and recognizing it instead as a collective process. These interventions were systematically categorized according to visual cues related to the functionality of objects, classified as either spontaneous, unconscious actions or deliberate modifications, adjustments, corrections, and repairs, indexed as knowledge-based, skill-based, and rule-based. The final phase involved creating speculative narratives inspired by the observed situations, positioning students from the role of researchers to that of authors, thus closing the circle.

The concluding observations invite reflection on how objects are perceived and how meaning and significance are assigned to them. These insights inform the design process, enriching creative approaches and expanding possibilities for new forms, functions, and meanings.

Ultimately, this methodology fosters more conscious ways of designing and being in the world.

This principle is mirrored in the exhibition setup, which extends the exploration through an interactive dialogue between space and visitors. The exhibition offers an experience that encourages deeper reflection and engagement.

Figure 1: A composition of images from the research and exhibition *From Affordance to Super Normal and Back*.

Conclusion

Rather than focusing solely on anticipating the new and projecting it into the future, the workshop was guided by a 'back to the roots' approach, which sought to reconnect humans with their environment. It promoted a multiperspective pedagogy, yielding diverse outcomes.

Drawing on Barthes's notion of the 'death of the author' and Benjamin's concept of the 'author as producer', the text questions traditional notions of authorship by emphasizing collective and collaborative contributions over individual creativity. This approach framed design as a participatory process, where meaning is shaped by the interactions and interventions of multiple agents over time.

While deconstructing dominant design pedagogies, the project fosters an approach that integrates, rather than dismisses prior knowledge. By employing the concept of the 'Super Normal' as a critical lens, the workshop developed methodologies grounded in affordance to recover lost wisdom, reimagine imperceptible practices, and reintroduce forgotten or obsolete objects and habits. In doing so, it not only challenged prevailing design practices but also redefined the construct of authorship as

ip as a distributed, diffused, and relational act, reflecting broader social and ecological contexts.

The project functioned both as a pedagogical experiment, challenging disciplinary foundations, and as a design-oriented research endeavor. It was based on the premise that the design process entails a fluid transition between roles, beginning with that of an archaeologist and archivist, followed by the role of an anthropologist, then a scriptwriter, and ultimately a producer. In the context of the exhibition, the role of curator was embraced. This fluidity is applied across scales, demonstrating the broad applicability of these roles in design, architecture, and beyond, and defining the main trajectory of this research.

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Intersecting Authorships in Community-Based Healthcare Architecture for the Elderly

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healthcare architectural design, cure and care, elderly communities

Abstract

Contemporary architectural discourse redefines authorship as an intersecting, collaborative paradigm involving multidisciplinary contributors. Research on care and cure has gained significant attention in recent years, driven by the increasing global focus on the ageing issue and the impact of the pandemic, particularly in architectural design research. This research project investigates community-based healthcare architecture for the elderly through attention to the performance of transitional spaces between inside and outside, public and private, and built and natural realms. The study aims to identify current European practices and recurring design features in elderly healthcare spaces and to develop design principles and tools for future projects that integrate built and natural environments as one system. The design-driven approach will be applied in the project, following the hypothesis that integrating public spaces into community-based healthcare architecture and revising the character of circulation spaces may lead to a definition of better-quality living spaces for the elderly on functional, typological, social, and biological levels.

In contemporary architectural practice and research, the concept of authorship has evolved beyond the singular vision of the architect to encompass a collaborative and interdisciplinary approach. The growing diversity of specialised knowledge challenges traditional notions of individual authorship while fostering innovative approaches to architectural design. Contemporary practices reveal diverse collaborative approaches, mirroring the inherently collective nature of architectural projects. Such transformations in architectural authorship simultaneously question conventional notions of originality and redefine creativity within artistic and academic domains (Bal 2020, 135). The growing diversity of expertise challenges sole authorship and fosters new architectural conceptions of authorship. In asserting authorship in a project, the architect takes on distinct accountability for the aesthetic, technical, and social qualities. (Avermaete et al. 2023, 5). In the context of community-based healthcare architecture for the elderly, this intersecting authorship model becomes essential, as it is no longer confined to the architect alone but extends to a network of contributors/participants. This collaborative model of authorship is particularly vital in design-driven research, where theoretical insights and practical applications must align to address complex challenges. Each perspective enhances the design process, ensuring outcomes are both innovative and responsive to the nuanced needs of ageing populations.

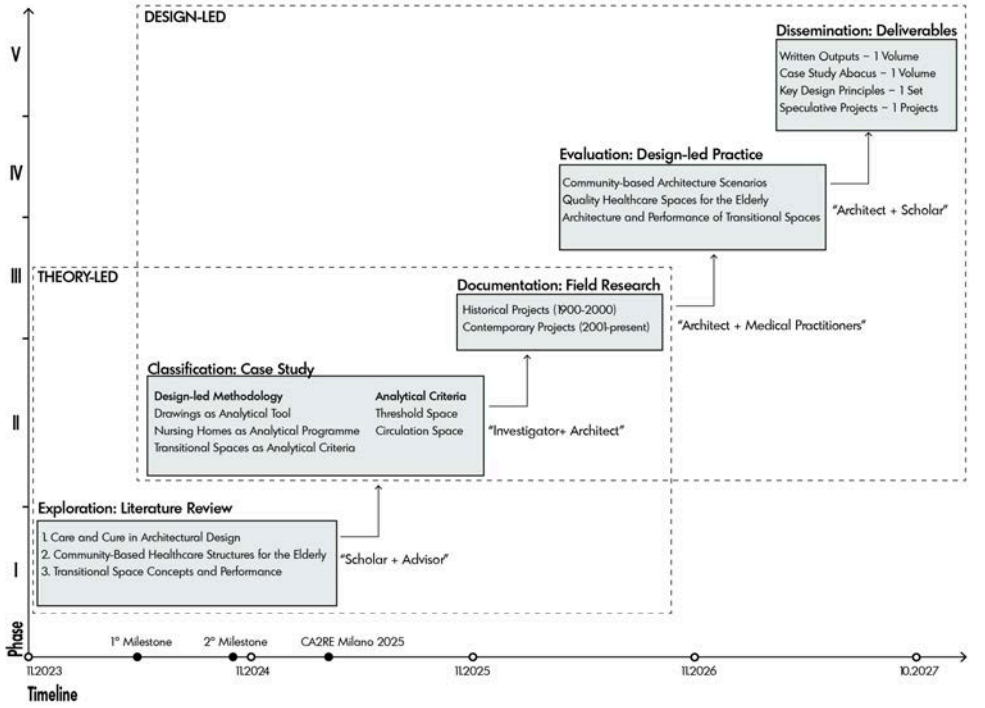

Figure 1: Research framework integrating intersecting authorship perspectives. Diagram by the author.

Multiple authorships: towards an intersecting design-driven research approach

This paper illustrates how diverse perspectives – architects, scholars, advisors, investigators, medical practitioners, and users – collectively contribute to a deep understanding of transitional spaces in healthcare environments. This research project focuses on the architecture of community-based healthcare structures for the elderly in the urban and peri-urban context through attention to examining the architectural performance of transitional spaces. By integrating these intersecting authorships, the research transcends traditional disciplinary boundaries, offering a holistic framework that addresses the functional, social, and biological dimensions of elderly care [1].

The first phase, 'Exploration: Literature Review', establishes the theoretical foundation by examining scholarly and advisory perspectives. It analyses the convergence of community-based architectural discourses with the typological evolution of European elderly healthcare facilities while evaluating methodological approaches to threshold and in-between spaces. In addition, the advisor's lens further enriches this theoretical framework through design manuals, revealing the dynamic relationship between architectural typologies, the evolving requirements of ageing populations, and the advances in medical/geriatric practices.

The second and third phases, 'Classification: Case Study' and 'Documentation: Field Research', shift the focus of authorship to the investigator and aim to develop a comparative framework, taking nursing homes/daycare centres as analytical programmes, and transitional spaces as design analytical criteria, includes 'circulation spaces' and 'threshold spaces'. This comparative framework identifies innovative design strategies for optimising transitional spaces in healthcare settings, and yields novel functional, spatial, and aesthetic parameters for ten key elements of transitional spaces.

The fourth and fifth phases, 'Evaluation: Design-Led Practice' and 'Dissemination: Research Deliverables', centre on the collaborative roles of architects and medical practitioners. These stages demonstrate how design innovation can transform transitional spaces into dynamic, socially integrative environments, ultimately establishing quality benchmarks and design standards for elderly-oriented healthcare architecture.

Research relevance: redefining the role of transitional spaces

Transitional spaces in healthcare architecture for the elderly have emerged as critical zones for social interaction, city/hospital connections, and retreat/contemplation within the built environment. This project focuses on the performance of the transitional spaces between inside and outside, public and private, built and natural realms. By analysing contemporary design practices and identifying recurring architectural features, the research aims to define design principles, tools, and processes that could guide future projects.

This project introduces the hypothesis that by integrating transitional spaces in community-based healthcare architecture, the design project can create higher-quality living environments for the elderly, improving functionality, social integration, and biological well-being. Employing a design-driven methodology, this project incorporates diverse authorship perspectives, including architects, scholars, researchers, advisors, medical practitioners, and users. It examines the impact of transitional spaces on the functional, typological, social, and biological aspects of healthcare environments.

The conceptual ambiguities of the architect's role have consistently emerged in both architectural practice and theoretical discourse during pivotal moments throughout the discipline's historical development (Anstey et al. 2007). Healthcare architecture design for the elderly

requires critically re-evaluating traditional architectural authorship paradigms. The debate is particularly urgent in healthcare architectural design, where the architect's role must be carefully balanced with elderly/user-centred approaches and interdisciplinary collaboration with healthcare professionals. Currently, the research is progressing through the exploratory and classificatory phases, systematically reviewing the available architectural literature on healthcare architecture for the elderly and transitional spaces to establish a theoretical framework by examining the etymology and discourses surrounding 'Care and Cure in Architectural Design', 'Community-Based Healthcare Structures for the Elderly', and 'Transitional Spaces Concepts and Performances'.

Care and cure in architectural design

The growing ageing problem is accompanied by an increasing demand for elderly healthcare facilities, prompting significant scholarly attention to the variations in healthcare systems and the discourse surrounding care and cure in architectural design. This discourse critically examines the evolving paradigms of 'care' and 'cure' within the built environment, reflecting broader societal and cultural shifts. Giovanna Borasi and Mirko Zardini (2012) critique the growing influence of health concerns on architectural discourse and practice, examining the pressures placed on architects and urban planners to design spaces that promote health. Beatriz Colomina (2019, 13) situates this trend within modern architectural discourse, revealing how X-ray technologies have historically shaped architectural theory – framing the architect as a diagnostician and the client as a subject of analysis. This metaphor underscores the architect's role in diagnosing and addressing users' needs, particularly in healthcare environments.

Ana Tostões (2020, 3) expands this discussion by advocating for a more holistic architectural approach that addresses sustainability and cultural considerations, such as belonging and identity. This perspective aligns with Cor Wagenaar's (2020, 37–43) argument that modern hospitals should be viewed as functional structures and cultural heritage, emphasising their relationship with social and natural environments. These scholarly contributions reflect a broader shift in architectural discourse, exemplified by the Modern Movement and Modern Hospice Movements, which prioritise comfort over cure, aligning with a broader care-focused paradigm (Brawley 2006, 265). This shift underscores a focus on creating environments that promote safety, accessibility, and adaptability – factors within the architect's domain (Regnier 2018, 10).

Healthcare architectures for the elderly in architecture design manuals

The question of how to live healthily in old age presents a transformative challenge for design projects. The typological evolution of elderly care architecture reflects a shift from institutionalised models to community-based, patient-centred environments that emphasise accessibility, social

integration, and the therapeutic benefits of nature. In recent years, there have been significant changes in community-based healthcare building types, introducing new challenges to well-established architectural norms. Some scholars and experts have continuously explored and categorised these transformations in design manuals to guide adaptation. For example, Perkins Eastman (2013) summarises key concerns in the planning and designing environments tailored to elder living, categorising ten major building types in *Building Type Basics for Senior Living*. In Europe, Eckhard Feddersen and Insa Lüdtke
(2017) updated their earlier work in *Living for the Elderly: A Design Manual*, incorporating emerging theories and projects to reflect the latest advancements in the field. Their updated manual highlights the dynamic nature of architectural practice, emphasising the need for continuous adaptation to evolving societal demands.

Julia Park and Jeremy Porteus (2018) examine age-friendly housing, emphasising how individual preferences, personal histories, and expectations often precede objective planning for current or future care needs. Their research underscores the importance of designing spaces that align with the lived experiences of elderly residents, fostering a sense of belonging and autonomy. Furthermore, situating senior housing at the heart of communities is a pragmatic and socially enriching approach. Establishing health and care 'hubs' or 'zones' within these communities could serve as a central resource for both medical and social support services (Park and Porteus 2018, 40). Additionally, Sten Gromark and Björn Andersson (2021) investigate the interplay between integrated architectural and care-focused developments, aiming to envision reimagined environmental design patterns that foster innovative approaches to welfare and significantly enhance the quality of life. Inga Malmqvist (2021,107–120) conducts an in-depth examination of residential healthcare for the elderly population, arguing that innovative approaches to eldercare and housing solutions must be developed to address the challenges posed by the rapidly ageing demographic. Collectively, these contributions highlight the transformative potential of design manuals in shaping healthcare architecture for the elderly.

Transitional spaces concepts and performances

Existing healthcare facilities for the elderly frequently encounter spatial challenges, including a lack of transitional spaces for social interaction and limited aesthetic and comfort qualities, which can undermine the efficiency of healthcare services. Addressing these issues requires incorporating the latest research and translating it into practical design solutions, particularly in the context of transitional spaces.

The discourse surrounding transitional spaces in architectural theory delves deeply into the concepts of threshold and in-between spaces. Herman Hertzberger (1991) emphasises the importance of the "in-between" concept in dissolving stark distinctions between spaces with varying territorial claims, particularly regarding private and public

domains. Bill Hillier (1996) provides a theoretical foundation for understanding spatial relationships, including the function of in-between spaces in facilitating social interaction. Aldo van Eyck introduced the threshold concept, advocating for architecture to reconcile spatial polarities such as inside and outside (Teyssot 2013, 162). Till Boettger (2014, 47) further elaborates that thresholds facilitate transitions and serve as integral components of the spaces they connect, embodying the dualities of opening and closing. More recently, *GTA Papers 5: Social Distance*, edited by Adam Jasper (2021), and explores the concept of social distance from a multidisciplinary perspective, examines how spatial configurations and architectural practices reflect societal relationships and modes of interaction. In addition, Doris Zoller (2024, 90–95) expands on this by investigating "in-between" spaces formed by architectural elements, highlighting their role in mediating interior and exterior environments.

Transitional spaces are fundamental in shaping the circulation, guiding users, and influencing their spatial perceptions. This project identifies key elements of transitional spaces and organises them into an analytical framework, referencing the book series *Elements of Architecture* (Koolhaas and Boom 2018). These elements are categorised into two indexes, "Circulation Spaces" and "Threshold Spaces", which include corridors, ramps, galleries, stairs, foyers, entrances, *pilotis*, arcades, and others. Circulation spaces represent linear transitional spaces, whereas threshold spaces typically function as discrete, localised transitions.

Comparative analysis and project practice

The 'Case Study' and 'Field Research' phases illustrate intersecting theory-led and design-led exploration approaches. The architect's creative process evolves into a continuous journey of discovery, positioning them as both researchers and pioneers. This dual role enables uncovering new spatial possibilities and developing innovative design pathways that embody originality and push the boundaries of architectural exploration (Coll-Barreu 2021).

This section selects specific European architectural practices and incorporates field studies conducted in urban and peri-urban contexts, choosing nursing homes and daycare centres as the primary analytical programme. In addition, the projects are classified into four categories based on circulation space typologies: 'Linear Mode', 'Radial Mode', 'Loop Mode', and 'Composite Mode'. Movement is an important category with significant potential to enhance the experience in both residential and healthcare architecture for the elderly. The objective is to connect the 'indoors', 'outdoors', and 'in-between' zones, facilitating seamless movement between them (Schmieder 2021, 69). Researchers and designers can gain valuable insights into how architecture influences and reflects societal dynamics by considering the arrangement of elements within a built environment, such as doors and passages (Evans 1997). In this phase, drawing serves as an analytical tool, with the table presenting selected examples represented by diagrammatic drawings.

Additionally, seminal architects who created classic nursing homes in the 20th century are explored, including Aldo van Eyck, Herman Hertzberger, and Peter Zumthor. These projects are systematically organised within a 'Transitional Space Abacus' to identify and compare ten interconnected elements, illustrating the transformative potential of transitional spaces in healthcare environments. Among them, Hertzberger's work emphasises architecture's role in shaping social interactions and enriching everyday life. An example of this is *the De Drie Hoven Housing Complex* (Netherlands 1971), which features distinctive elements such as open courtyards, shared spaces, and interconnected corridors designed to foster movement and social interaction among residents. The philosophy of exploring the public and private realms of housing for the elderly continues to inspire ongoing reflection.

In the next phase, a series of experimental field studies under the urban and peri-urban context will be conducted, integrating the findings of observation, onsite documentation, and design-led analysis. Prominent contemporary architectural studios specialising in healthcare environments for the elderly, such as Dominique Coulon & Associés, Dietger Wissounig Architects, and Sergison Bates Architects, are critically examined. For example, Dietger Wissounig Architects are known for their innovative approach to integrating architecture with functionality and environmental sustainability. *Nenzing Nursing Home* (Austria, 2014) and *Peter Rosegger Nursing Home* (Austria, 2014), which feature a central atrium and multiple courtyards, create a pleasant interface between architecture and the built environment. After completing the previous research phase, a preliminary theoretical design toolkit will be integrated to guide further research. In the last phase, a practical project will be implemented to develop design standards for diverse transitional spatial conditions within community-based healthcare architecture.

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Designing the Process, Designing the Space Self-generative Spaces for More-than-human Communities

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#

process-oriented design, spatial co-production, more-than-human communities

Abstract

The paper investigates how spatial and processual dimensions of urban public spaces co-produce each other, using the Floating University in Berlin as a case study. Conventional approaches in public space design typically work with the establishment of fixed spatial configurations, disconnected from ongoing social and ecological processes. In contrast, this text argues for a shift toward viewing design as continuous engagement with social practices, ecological rhythms, and everyday maintenance. At the Floating University, spaces evolve iteratively through collaborative actions involving diverse participants, including local communities, maintenance groups, and ecological agents. Designing the process means actively shaping participatory structures, decision-making systems, and maintenance routines that influence spatial outcomes. Concurrently, designing the space involves creating frameworks flexible enough to accommodate ecological variability and collective practices. By integrating spatial and processual perspectives, the Floating University demonstrates that urban public spaces can be read as dynamic systems, continuously reshaped through collective and ecological interaction rather than fixed architectural artifacts.

To understand the relationship between urban public spaces and biodiversity, it is not enough to think in terms of the **design of the space**. It is equally necessary to consider the **design of the process** – the ongoing practices, negotiations, and transformations that shape and sustain these spaces over time.
While spatial design traditionally refers to the configuration of physical forms, process design involves the ways in which spaces are initiated, inhabited, adapted, and maintained. In urban environments, especially those where ecological and social systems intersect, these two dimensions are deeply intertwined. Space is not simply a backdrop for action; it is co-produced by the living, material, and institutional processes that unfold within it.

This paper explores the entanglement of process and spatial design through the lens of **relationality**, **assemblage theory** and the notion of **process-oriented design**. These frameworks help to reframe urban public spaces as open-ended and continuously reconfigured by multispecies interactions and ecological rhythms.
To ground this inquiry, the paper focuses on the **Floating University in Berlin**, a site where more-than-human life, collective maintenance, and adaptive reuse converge. Drawing on fieldwork and theoretical reflection, the case study illustrates how spatial form and ongoing processes co-constitute one another, offering a model for understanding public spaces as **living systems** – flexible and shaped by both human and nonhuman actors.

On process design and spatial design

The design of public spaces is often approached as the shaping of physical form. Materials, volumes, circulation, and program are drawn and defined, rendered and built. Yet in spaces where life is constantly unfolding – where people gather, species interact, seasons shift, and maintenance routines take shape – the role of design becomes something else. In these contexts, spatial form does not precede use. It is produced, adapted, and redefined through use. Space emerges with time, through gestures, responses, and negotiations that are both human and more-than-human. Here, spatial design and process design are no longer separable.

To work with space in this way is to engage with it reflectively, not as an abstract object but as a dynamic situation. Design becomes a practice of careful listening, of testing, of returning – what has been described as a "reflective conversation with the situation" (Schön 1992). Each intervention generates a response, and each response reshapes what the space becomes. This kind of conversation doesn't end at the moment of construction. It continues as people inhabit the space, as plants spread, as maintenance practices evolve.

In these public settings, social and ecological interactions are shaped by the spatial framework, but never dictated by it. The presence of neighbors chatting across hedges or pausing along a path is not simply the outcome of good form – it is the result of a supportive interplay between physical possibilities and lived processes (Gehl 2011). Design can open up this spectrum of possibilities – or it can restrict it entirely. It can either block or support the kinds of interactions, adaptations, and relationships that allow public spaces to remain alive.

The more a space is used, the more it changes. Social activity, ecological rhythms, and even informal interventions by users push against the edges of what was planned. A garden may spread beyond its original boundary. A footpath may emerge where none was intended. A gathering may grow into a weekly ritual. These are not exceptions to design but part of the design process itself – if the process is understood as open-ended and relational.

This requires letting go of the idea of control. Rather than finalizing form, designers working in these contexts often engage in setting up conditions – conditions that make it possible for something to happen, without deciding exactly what that something must be. The role of design becomes less about defining outcomes and more about holding open certain relationships, certain affordances. That means attending not just to program or layout, but to cycles, edges, tolerances, and patterns of use that can evolve with time (Till 2009; Karami 2022).

Bruno Latour and Albena Yaneva (2017) further support this relational perspective by challenging the idea of architectural stability. Rather than perceiving spaces as fixed, completed structures, they propose understanding architecture as continually moving and evolving – subject to constant processes of transformation, adaptation, and negotiation. This perspective aligns closely with the conception of public spaces as

dynamic assemblages discussed here, emphasizing that urban environments are never finished objects.

When designing the process, we are already shaping the space. Decisions about who participates, how decisions are made, which maintenance rituals are established, and what types of temporalities are allowed – all of these leave spatial traces. They guide the formation of paths, the density of vegetation, the layering of use. The way a process unfolds will inscribe itself into the materiality of the site. This means that spatial design does not follow process design, nor does it precede it. They co-produce one another.

Likewise, the spatial configuration – how open, modular, accessible, or constrained it is – affects the kinds of processes that are possible. A locked gate, a fixed bench, a sloped terrain – each of these may enable certain actions and inhibit others. In this sense, designing space is designing the conditions for a process to take place, just as designing the process sets the parameters through which space can emerge. Their relationship is recursive, not sequential.

Thinking in this way also expands who and what is considered a participant in shaping space. The air and water that pass through a site, the materials that decay or erode, the species that settle or depart – these are all part of the process. Urban biodiversity is not something that is simply added into a design; it is a spatial force in its own right, shaping paths and thresholds through the movement of nutrients, pollinators, water, and seeds (Lepczyk et al. 2017). To design for biodiversity means designing with these forces, not just around them.

In turn, this demands a more situated and collective understanding of knowledge. No single actor can grasp the full complexity of how a space changes through use and time. What matters are the plural perspectives, embodied practices, and small adjustments that accumulate into a shared transformation of space. This is a knowledge of the many, emerging not from abstract expertise but from doing, maintaining, experimenting, and paying attention (Persyn et al. 2021).

What holds these spaces together is not a single narrative, but a kind of assemblage – a loosely coordinated, continually shifting constellation of relations (Tsing 2020). These assemblages are not designed in the traditional sense, but they are not accidental either. They are shaped through iteration, through care, through the accumulation of situated actions and decisions.

Crucially, this perspective recognizes that public space is never neutral. It is full of politics, affordances, exclusions, and invitations. Design can facilitate interaction, or it can block it entirely. It can allow cohabitation, or force displacement. It can make space for uncertainty, or try to erase it. Rather than resolving these tensions, process-aware design works within them – holding space open long enough for others to participate in its becoming (Escobar 2018; Wigley 2017).

When spatial and process design are treated as interdependent, public spaces begin to act more like living systems than finished projects. They adapt, they age, they respond. And in doing so, they offer something that

static design cannot: the capacity to remain relevant, inhabited, and meaningful over time.

Floating University

The Floating University in Berlin exemplifies precisely this relational and processual understanding of public space. Initiated in 2018 by the architecture collective Raumlabor, the project occupies a former rainwater retention basin, previously inaccessible and overlooked. Rather than erasing its existing ecological and infrastructural characteristics, the design embraces them as integral conditions for collective life, experimentation, and multispecies cohabitation.

From its inception, the Floating University was understood not as a finalized architectural statement but as a spatial framework inviting interaction, adaptation, and ongoing transformation. Its physical structures – built from scaffolding, reclaimed materials, and modular components – are deliberately unfinished, inviting continuous intervention and incremental growth. Paths, platforms, gathering spaces, and experimental installations remain flexible and reconfigurable, shifting according to seasonal cycles, community needs, and ecological dynamics.

The ecological dimension of the site is not simply background scenery or decoration – it is an active participant in shaping the space. One vital ecological process is performed by reeds (*Phragmites australis*), which naturally purify the rainwater collected in the basin. These reeds are not just passive elements but actively facilitate access and use, enabling both human and nonhuman actors to engage with the site. This natural process illustrates clearly how ecological systems actively shape spatial design and influence patterns of use, demonstrating that biodiversity is integral to urban spatial processes (Lepczyk et al. 2017).

Maintenance practices at the Floating University intertwine ecological stewardship, educational activities, and social engagement. Consider again the cutting of reeds: an ostensibly routine maintenance task becomes a collaborative event involving university students, neighbors, ecologists, artists, and activists. This collective action transcends mere upkeep, becoming a form of co-design that addresses ecological, social, and educational needs simultaneously (Di Prete et al. 2021). Through these collective practices, maintenance emerges as an iterative form of design, adapting the space in response to the evolving demands of its diverse actors – human and more-than-human alike.

Educational and community activities at Floating University further emphasize this interconnectedness. Workshops held at the main pavilion – a repurposed structure initially designed by Atelier Bow-Wow for the 2015 exhibition *Wohnungsfrage* in Berlin – highlight adaptive reuse as an essential design principle. Originally conceived as a prototype for student housing, the pavilion now serves as the central hub for gatherings, workshops, and experimental activities. Its transformation underscores the inseparability of spatial design from the actors and processes that sustain it. Spatial form evolves continuously, responding to shifting ecological conditions, social dynamics, and practical needs.

In this context, Floating University exemplifies how public spaces can be designed and understood relationally and dynamically. Spatial transformations here cannot be fully grasped without recognizing the ongoing processes that define them. Maintenance, ecological rhythms, and adaptive reuse become forms of spatial co-production – collaborative, iterative processes that continuously redefine the site. This approach demonstrates that adaptability and responsiveness in public spaces emerge from their openness to ongoing transformation, interaction, and relational dynamics.

At Floating University, spatial and ecological transformations are inseparable. The reeds that purify water, the collaborative maintenance events, the workshops that foster collective learning, and the adaptive reuse of architectural elements all contribute to an understanding of the site as a continuous process rather than a fixed object.

By embracing this more-than-human perspective, designers and planners have the opportunity to move beyond static, human-centered approaches. Recognizing public spaces as open-ended and dynamic systems requires integrating the design of processes with spatial form, ensuring adaptability and responsiveness to ever-changing urban conditions. Floating University thus reveals public space not merely as physical territory but as a living system – a relational assemblage whose value lies precisely in its capacity to evolve, remain relevant, and sustain collective and ecological life over time.

Conclusion

Rethinking the design of public spaces through the lens of relationality and dynamic processes expands the conventional boundaries of architectural and urban practice. As demonstrated through the analysis of the Floating University Berlin, this approach moves beyond fixed spatial definitions, highlighting how spaces emerge continuously from interactions among ecological, social, and material actors. In this perspective, design is neither limited to the act of initial construction nor confined to human-centered decisions; rather, it extends into practices conventionally seen as maintenance, stewardship, or informal adaptation. These practices become integral mechanisms through which spatial qualities and ecological conditions mutually inform and transform one another.
The case of Floating University further demonstrates that the continuous interplay of ecological processes – such as the purifying action of reeds – and collective human interventions reshapes both the physical space and its potential uses over time. Spatial configuration is thus inseparable from the processes that sustain it, emphasizing the necessity of a design approach attuned to evolving conditions and multispecies relationships. Through iterative, reflective, and situated practices, the boundaries between process and spatial form become increasingly porous, revealing public spaces as ongoing assemblages rather than completed artifacts. In recognizing these complexities, urban designers and planners are compelled to integrate ecological literacy and participatory engagement directly into their methods. Rather than merely providing frameworks for use, this demands attention to the conditions that facilitate or inhibit

Figure 1: Floating University's spatial configuration is not pre-determined by one single design action but rather by several ongoing processes: activities with local community, resources availability, life cycles of non-human species, and more. The space is in constant transformation and therefore more capable to stage unplanned and unexpected events. (Photo by the author taken on 14-06-2024).

relational processes, both ecological and social. This shift offers pathways toward more resilient urban spaces, capable of adapting to ecological variability and diverse social practices, thereby sustaining their functionality and significance in rapidly changing urban contexts.

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Spaces for Community Health Care Architectural Approaches for Health Promotion in the Contemporary City

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#

community health care, urban centrality, public interior

Abstract

The redefinition of spaces for community health care has become increasingly necessary, especially considering the systemic vulnerabilities exposed by the pandemic, which heightened institutional awareness and prompted reforms in territorial care.

To avoid being constrained by ongoing redefinition while maintaining responsiveness to contingent issues, the design of community health care spaces can benefit from the concept of authorship to ensure a degree of stability beyond immediate contingencies.

This paper proposes a design-driven research interrogating authorship in its capacity to construct a specific narrative engaging with extra-disciplinary domains, such as health and social care, through an architectural design perspective.

Architectural authorship, transcending a functional and parameter-driven approach, enables the shaping of new spatial realities and the unveiling of hidden potentials. This is crucial to shape a paradigm shift that calls for urban spaces distinct from existing archetypes: new urban centralities, public interiors for community health promotion.

A design-driven research explored through the lens of authorship

The proposed paper explores how the concept of authorship is addressed in the homonymous research project.

The design-driven research highlights the pivotal role of architectural design in shaping community health spaces – primarily through the redefinition of Healthcare Centres, primary healthcare structures at the neighbourhood level – as civic buildings, crucial for community health, social and urban regeneration.

The redefinition of spaces dedicated to the health of the community, fostering health promotion at the neighbourhood level, has become increasingly necessary considering the systemic vulnerabilities exposed by the pandemic, which heightened institutional awareness and prompted reforms in territorial care.

To ensure stability amid ongoing redefinitions while remaining adaptable to emerging challenges, architectural design and design-driven research can harness the concept of authorship in response to the continuous evolution of societal, political, environmental, and economic dynamics that shape the health realm.

This article explores this concept on two levels.

From a design-driven research perspective, authorship is valuable in its ability to construct a distinct narrative, enabling engagement with extra-

disciplinary domains such as health and social care through the lens of architectural design.

In this specific case, by constructing a compendium of spatial possibilities, the design-driven research interprets a complex extra-disciplinary theme, bridging gaps and reconnecting the seemingly missing links between different disciplines.

On a second level, in the realm of architectural design for healthcare, authorship means transcending a purely functional or parameter-driven approach, allowing for the creation of new spatial realities. The architectural designer, as a contributor to an autonomous yet responsive discipline, adds meaning, unveiling unexpressed identities and defining a framework of uses and interpretations. This open system enables a continuous interaction between space and society, perpetually redefining the value and significance of places over time.

As the second part of the paper will illustrate, the disciplinary contribution of architectural design, and thus its authorship, has proven essential in shaping a paradigm shift in health that calls for urban spaces distinct from existing archetypes: new urban centralities for community health promotion.

Design-driven research(er) as auctor: reconnecting fragments

The primary objective of the presented research is to define the role and potential of architectural design in shaping the paradigm shift in community-oriented health spaces that has not yet been adequately accommodated, particularly at the Italian national level.

Engaging with the extra-disciplinary realm of the socio-health sector implied starting with the definition of the subject matter, outlining the evolution of primary healthcare and its shifting paradigms. The design lens has served as a tool to analyse, understand, and bridge extra-disciplinary demands, translating them into a compendium of architectural approaches that respond to the continuous evolution of healthcare models.

As early as 1986, the Ottawa Charter, the document of the First International Conference on Health Promotion, emphasized the importance of community actions in planning strategies to achieve better health. It is important to highlight that the concept of health was defined in 1948 by the Constitution of the World Health Organization as “a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (WHO 2020).

According to the Ottawa Charter, “an empowered community is one in which individuals and organizations apply their skills and resources in collective efforts to address health priorities and meet their respective health needs” (WHO 1986), thereby gaining greater control over the determinants of health. These determinants are understood as “social (and, to some extent, economic) factors that influence health”, whether they are “distal factors, meaning distant ones, such as income and

education, or proximal factors, meaning those directly connected to health, such as lifestyle choices" (Maturo 2024).

This health concept, emphasized in the post-pandemic, showcases a paradigm shift from a vertical, disease-focused healthcare model to a horizontal, inclusive, community-oriented approach centred on prevention and active participation.

Forty years later, this shift is still far from being fully implemented. Although the pandemic period appears to have heightened institutional awareness of the importance of proximity in healthcare facilities and among professionals – as demonstrated, in the Italian case, by the funds allocated through the PNRR for the establishment of primary healthcare facilities, known as *Case della Comunità*, across the national territory – citizen participation in their own health remains a highly complex challenge for service organization, as well as for the definition of the spaces that should host them.

In the Italian context, the transition from simple outpatient clinics or, in regions where they already existed, from *Case della Salute* to *Case della Comunità* has not resulted in a true spatial rethinking but rather in a mere change in nomenclature.

Taking the Italian case as the initial observation, this research argues that questioning the role of widespread spaces for community health promotion is also, and necessarily, a significant opportunity for the architectural discipline: the definition of a "new typology of community building with a hybrid nature" (Setola 2022). On one hand, it would continue to host spaces dedicated to healthcare services; on the other, it should integrate spaces where the community can gather, interact, and actively shape its own health journey.

The transition to *Case della Comunità* has often resulted in a mere rebranding of existing structures rather than a true spatial evolution capable of enhancing their urban role. In parallel with developments in Italy, the research draws on international experiences, focusing primarily on the British and Spanish contexts. These models are particularly relevant for comparison as they share the Beveridge framework of universal healthcare and incorporate primary care facilities like *Case della Comunità*.

The British model has been a pioneer in neighbourhood-based primary healthcare, leading to the development of structured architectural guidelines. The Health Building Note 11–01 provides not only functional, parametric, and dimensional recommendations but also concrete examples through significant case studies (Department of Health, 2013).

In Spain, primary healthcare is organized at the regional level, with facilities known by different names (*Centro de Salud*, *Centro de Atenció Primaria*, *Centro de Saúde*). These structures are widely distributed across the country and are often of architectural interest, featuring diverse spatial responses that integrate with their specific urban contexts.

The approach to the case study analysis has been conducted from an interscalar perspective, emphasizing the need to interpret these structures in relation to their urban context.

At the urban scale, the study highlights the relationship between health centres and the service network, the characteristics of the urban fabric, green spaces, sustainable mobility, and residential density. This analysis is carried out at different levels: the city scale, the neighbourhood scale (within a two-kilometre radius), and the immediate surroundings of the building (within a 250 mt. radius).

The architectural analysis examines not only the volumetry of the building but, more importantly, its spatial relationships at the ground level, its interior-exterior connections, and the distribution of both indoor and outdoor spaces. Particular attention is given to areas with a stronger community-oriented function and their relationship with more private, strictly health-related spaces.

Design(er) as auctor: adding meaning

The case study analysis has revealed that, where architectural design has challenged a purely parametric approach based on standards and dimensional requirements, and has instead undertaken a careful spatial construction rooted in its disciplinary prerogatives, it has been able to anticipate – even when not explicitly required by guidelines – a paradigm shift. This shift moves from introverted, specialized buildings conceived as mere service containers to urban landmarks capable of accommodating new modes of use and engaging with the community.

This overcoming of a purely technical approach demonstrates the ability of an authored architectural project to go beyond merely responding to contingent demands, shaping buildings with enduring significance and intrinsic architectural value.

As highlighted by Gianni Ottolini in *Forma e significato in architettura*, architecture must inevitably confront the shifting definitions of what is considered objective, functional, or comfortable at a given time, while also engaging with the tension between historical contingency and the enduring nature of beauty. In unfolding within a real context, even when originating from a temporary need, it succeeds in establishing a framework for individual and collective behaviours and new ways of inhabiting space. "*However, this does not preclude the possibility that the material form thus defined may acquire a lasting significance that extends beyond the explicit or implicit design proposal regarding its intended use" (Ottolini 1966).*

The set of spatial possibilities identified through a survey of the most significant case studies highlights three main ways in which the architecture of community health spaces can spatially translate new prerogatives while preserving its intrinsic value: integrating spaces dedicated to the community, articulating thresholds of privacy between these and the more traditional healthcare areas, and reestablishing a relationship with the city through the design of public space, whether outdoors or internally configured.

Firstly, promoting a culture of health in places close to those frequented by communities in their daily lives means considering who the community spaces are intended for and designing environments suitable for

associations, public events, and groups such as schools, the elderly, and people with disabilities. It means opening to the possibility of new and diverse gestures.

The spaces of a Healthcare Centre welcome a diverse range of individuals and, consequently, a variety of actions and gestures: the patient waits and seeks answers; the citizen participates, gathers information, collaborates; the doctor, the healthcare worker, the social assistant provide care, offer solutions, educate, comfort, work, take breaks, communicate. Educators, artists, and poets could also animate public events connected to the well-being of the community.

This approach is well exemplified by the Kentish Town Health Centre in London, designed by the British architecture firm Allford Hall Monaghan Morris. The project was exhibited at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2012 and was referenced in the 2013 National Health System (NHS) guidelines for the design of primary healthcare facilities.

In 2009, it won an RIBA competition initiated by a general practitioner Dr. Roy Macgregor, whose vision was to create a building that would host spaces where health and art could merge to promote community well-being. This multidisciplinary work, at the intersection of architecture and primary care medicine, contributed to the creation of a building that embodies a holistic approach to health and well-being.

This project stands as an example of how architectural design can integrate cross-disciplinary priorities, spatially interpreting the holistic nature of care, the central role of culture in community health, and ultimately shaping an institution that bridges health, community, and culture.

The building itself is a single-volume structure that incorporates urban spatiality, shaping an internal street around which a rich system of spaces and functions unfolds, cutting through the mass of the building to establish multiple relationships with natural light and the exterior at different heights and perspectives. The interior spaces accommodate a wide range of experiences for visitors, allowing them to walk, wait, pass through, engage, consult, take a break, and communicate: an array of spatial appropriations that define the space itself, reflecting the diverse services related to health, well-being, social interaction, and community culture.

In the second place, articulating thresholds of privacy between these new spaces and the more traditional healthcare *core business* (medical clinics, analysis rooms, and other essential primary healthcare services) is essential.

In *Community and Privacy: Toward a New Architecture of Humanism*, Serge Chermayeff and Christopher Alexander state that "to develop both privacy *and* the true advantages of living in a community, an entirely new anatomy of urbanism is needed, built on many hierarchies of clearly articulated domains [...] ranging from the most intimately private to the most intensely communal" (1968).

The same could be said for a healthcare centres: it should be a civic building, open to spontaneous use by the public. As such, it provides spaces for community gatherings – squares, courtyards, atriums, halls,

terraces – while also serving as a place for clinical consultation, which requires areas ensuring privacy. In between, it is essential to establish thresholds that gradually transition toward increasing levels of privacy.

The spaces of the Waldron Health Centre, described by its designers (Henley Halebrown Architects) as a civic building (like a library or a town hall), but with the humanity and intimacy required for clinical consultation, have been conceived in relation to one another, defining a meaningful spatial journey for users (primarily patients) through key places: the designed new square, the foyer, the cloister, the waiting room, and the consultation or examination room.

Replacing a previous, nondescript single-story healthcare centre, the new architecture – with its strong urban character – reshapes the neighbourhood fabric, a predominantly residential area, by structuring a public space.

The project redefines the perception of a healthcare facility. While maintaining the primary function of medical assistance – with the necessary level of privacy for clinical consultations – the building successfully assumes a key urban role, actively engaging with the city's public space.

Establishing an osmotic relationship with the urban space is considered essential to be able to transform healthcare centres into spaces open to their community.

This involves working on public open spaces, enclosed public spaces, and the transitional elements that mediate between the two. This process generates *public interiors*, "those interiors that we make to be public: those within which we consider ourselves to be free individuals, and where we see ourselves among others; those within which we are conscious of our place in society and in the world" (Pimlott 2016).

Located in the historic centre of Córdoba, the Centro de Salud Lucano (designed by Estudio de Arquitectura Javier Terrados) originates from the transformation of its ground floor into an urban passageway. This intervention interprets a key aspect of Córdoba's urban morphology, where large and dense blocks are often traversed by inner courtyards.

The passageway punctures the continuous building frontage at street level, inviting pedestrians inside through a sequence of gateways, porticos, and patios – open-air rooms and urban interiors – allowing them either to enter the building, which opens onto the inner courtyard with a fully glazed ground-floor façade, or to continue their route, re-emerging onto a perpendicular street. This architectural gesture encourages movement and, as the architect describes, creates "the impression of a sanctuary, a contemplative oasis for passersby in one of the most touristic areas of Córdoba's historic center", where otherwise "public space sustains consumption and tourism as primary activities, [...] the glass of storefronts imposes a barrier to senses and bodies, [and] ground floors are only frequented by those who can afford to buy" (Terrados 2012).

By making the building permeable, this intervention opens the space of community healthcare to the city, inviting it in while simultaneously keeping its fast-paced rhythms at a measured distance.

Design-driven research can harness the concept of authorship to assemble extra disciplinary fragments, highlighting how architectural design can activate societal change constructing new and unexpected narrations, exposing things that could be otherwise.

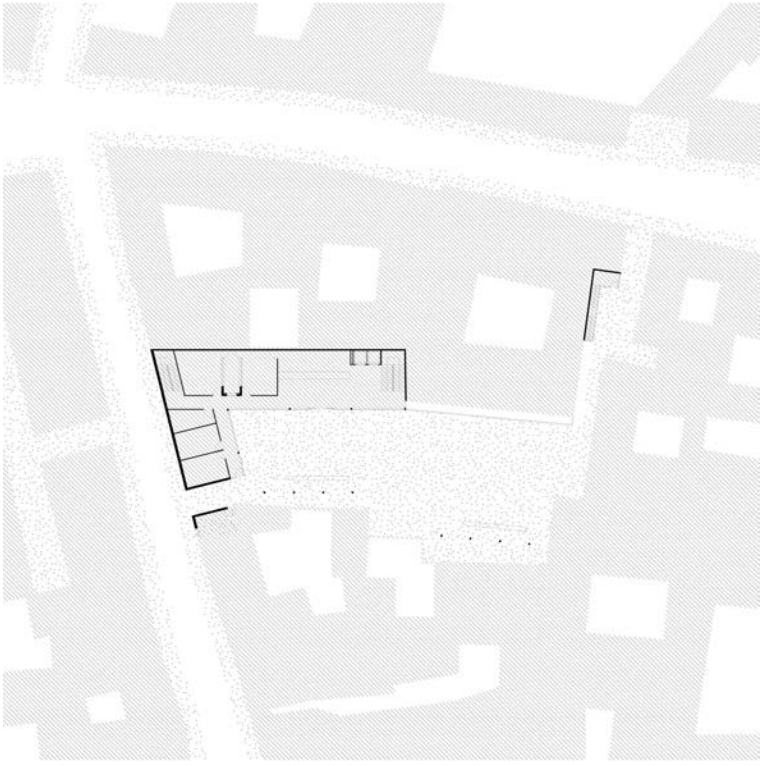

Figure 1: The architectural design of a building for community health activates the public space, interpreting the urban fabric morphology (Estudio de Arquitectura Javier Terrados, Centro de Salud Lucano in Cordoba, graphic reinterpretation by author).

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Curating as a Form of Collective Authorship Rethinking the Architect's Role

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#

curating, collective authorship, participatory action research

Abstract

Aligning with the Milan CA^{2}RE Conference's focus on authorships in design and artistic research, this paper explores how the architect's role evolves within design-driven participatory action research (DD-PAR). The DD-PAR approach not only challenges traditional roles of the architect but also reveals how their position is subject to shifts, resulting in a fluid form of authorship. This fluidity – understanding who takes the lead at any given moment and which contributions are made by whom – is best captured through the concept of 'curation.'

Using the redevelopment of the Beatrix Theatre in Moengo, Suriname, as a case study, the research reflects on a three-month fieldwork period. Through this process, the traditional role of the architect was questioned, while also exploring the expanded responsibilities and contributions required in PAR beyond the conventional scope of architectural design. Architecture here is not defined by individual genius or singular authorship, but by a collaborative, iterative process rooted in participation, dialogue and care.

The Beatrix Theatre as a case-study

The Beatrix Theatre in Moengo, Suriname, built in 1955, once served as a cultural hub. However, the decline of the mining industry and the Interior War left the town and theatre in disrepair. Moengo's struggles with poor infrastructure, economic challenges, and a reputation for being 'dangerous' have hindered engagement with external organizations. Despite some recent progress, recovery remains inconsistent due to financial instability and unclear governance. By the early 2000s, the Beatrix Theatre stood abandoned, yet its architectural value hinted at its potential for renewal. In 2023, the theatre was acquired by Stichting Kracht voor de Toekomst, a charity founded and led by a former Moengo resident, with the intention of transforming it into a cultural and educational center that would restore its connection to the community.

Resulting from its longterm engagement with the urban development of Moengo, the ISTT research unit got involved in the repurposing process, which turned out to become a fascinating case for questioning the architect-designer roles in community-driven projects. This case study is part of an established research collaboration between ISTT (University of Antwerp, faculty of design sciences), Stichting Kracht voor de Toekomst and Anton de Kom University of Paramaribo. The 2024 team focused on this repurposing process as a path to an urban common and on the initiation of an urban common through concrete interventions to ensure a sustainable future for the theatre as a place for the community (Stalpaert et al. 2024).

The theatre became a space for experimentation, a ground for activating collective agency through temporary interventions, activation events and participatory planning. The architect's task expanded beyond the design

of a physical space to the co-creation of an urban common where the goal of an architectural project shift from materiality to immateriality — the design is the process.

Curation vis-à-vis design

The Beatrix Theatre repurpose project allows to explore how PAR principles can contribute to the reactivation and functionality of the building in question. This approach requires a redefinition of the role of the architect within the framework of PAR. It asks the architect to actively participate in the community and act *as a curator*, who is not only a designer of the physical redevelopment, but also a supporter of the immaterial aspects of community and cultural transmission. Through conducting a DD-PAR the architect can be a key figure capable of using spatial and temporal frameworks to not only interpret society, but also guide socio-political processes, policies and practices (Oya Atalay Franck n.d.).

As highlighted in PAR literature and echoed in Sevgi Türkkan's critical reflections on architectural authorship, this shift destabilizes the traditional model of the architect as "sole author"(Türkkan 2023). Instead, feedback, participation, and iteration take center stage. Similar dynamics can be found in co-design processes, which invite users into the design process as co-authors, and in community-led design, where the initiatives and leadership stem from the grassroots. *Urban commoning* further complements this by framing shared resources – resources, knowledge, skill, space – as collectively governed and sustained.

This approach, implemented in the case of the Beatrix Theatre through DD-PAR, aligns with values of flexibility and inclusivity. It allows for emergent contributions rather than predefined outcomes and welcomes non-academic voices as equal agents in the process. As seen in Moengo, even a simple, collectively created chalkboard diagram mapping daily tasks and contributions proved powerful in acknowledging and legitimizing the community's sense of authorship.

Curating collective change

In PAR, we must recognize that we, as architects, are not the sole authors of the work. Authorship emerges collectively, shaped by all participants as Sara Kindon highlights in her work on PAR, where knowledge is co-created through active engagement (Kindon, et al. 2007). Our role as architects is to engage with this shared knowledge and use it to help shape a cohesive narrative.

Collaborating with the local community and the charity as a team was essential in developing a temporary design practice that fostered a strong interaction between the designers and the community. This collaboration not only contributed to the revitalization and activation of the Beatrix theatre but also laid the groundwork for its ongoing care. The various relationships, interactions, and perspectives that emerged throughout the process can best be understood through the concept of *curating*.

In line with this perspective, the research encourages a broader comprehension of curating that surpasses the conventional notion of the latin word *curare*, the care of objects and materiality. Instead, it embraces curating as a means to appreciate and understand the development of, in this case, the theatre and its diverse potential futures. Curating is approached here not only as a method but as an attitude — an ethos of openness, attentiveness, and responsiveness. As an attitude, curating is less about control and more about enabling, less about finality and more about continuity. It implies a willingness to acknowledge the fragility and temporality of shared processes. In this sense, curating becomes an ongoing commitment to care for conditions in which collectivity and creativity can emerge.
Central to this research is a focus on group-mindedness, self-organization, and collective authorship. By opening up the research process to non-academics and to non-academic knowledge, a participatory approach not only leads to the democratization of knowledge, but also broadens the field of possibilities for all participants to strive for change in society. Thereby, PAR aims to facilitate changes that, in an ideal scenario, also meet the wishes and needs of the actors and social groups at all levels of the power hierarchies of society. In accordance with Els Vervloesem, Michiel Dehaene, Marleen Goethals, and Hüsnü Yegenoglu, four different forms of curation were identified (2016).

+ the community curates the architect
The community is seen as a collection of diverse actors, each with their own perspectives, knowledge and expertise. The different actors curate the architect through their unique insights and expertise, leading to a design that is better suited to the specific needs and circumstances of the community. This makes the design not only more inclusive, but also more resilient and relevant to the local situation.

+ the architect curates the community
It is the architect's responsibility to ensure that, even after they step back, the design principles continue to exist as a tool to structure and curate the ongoing transformation of the space. The interventions carried out need to be monitored both in the short and long term in order to know the effects on the community. In addition, the organization of different activation moments aims a constant use of the theatre.

+ the community curates the community
In this principle, the designer moves into the background and makes way for intensive interaction between a wider constellation of parties: citizens, social institutions, governments… Using the principles of urban commons, a community can thus act as its own curator.

+ the architect curates the architect
The iterative nature of DDPAR required the architect to reassess their role and methods. Drawing on Elinor Ostrom's commons theory and adaptive reuse strategies, the architect curates their approach to authorship, emphasizing adaptability and co-authorship over a singular vision.

Rethinking the architect's role in a fluid process of multiple curation

The architect in this context is part of a broader design process that brings together a variety of roles, with shifting initiators, contributions, and relationships unfolding simultaneously. These multiple inputs and initiatives can be seen as a form of curation. While the architect plays a central role, they primarily act as a facilitator, supporting the community and stakeholders in identifying needs and reimagining the building's future. This role includes fostering dialogue, gathering and integrating input from various parties, and compiling design ideas that meet both the aesthetic and functional needs of the community. The architect-curator in this role is thus not only a designer, but also a moderator and assembler who helps to build a bridge between the physical given building and its community where cultural and social values should be respected and reinforced.

In the case of Moengo, the architect's role was also defined by its temporality. As a temporary presence embedded within the community, the architect had to consider how to design for their own absence. This was reflected in tools like the above-mentioned chalkboard diagram, which visualizes a flexible and inclusive organizational structure that could evolve independently of the architect. This role also encompassed the position of observer-participant: through daily engagement, informal interactions, and a shared living context, the architect became attuned to the subtle social dynamics, enabling a design process that was rooted in listening rather than leading. Such a position also entailed forms of invisible labor – coordinating transport, assisting in repairs, or simply being physically present on-site – which reinforced trust and helped sustain momentum across community initiatives. In this sense, curating became not only about orchestrating design, but also about proximity: being accessible, open to feedback, and immersed in the everyday realities of the site and its people.

Conclusion: curating as an attitude

The architect-curator operates through trust, empathy, participation, and care. In Moengo, the architect was equally guided as guiding. The process emphasized strategic interventions, reflexive action, and open-ended authorship. The goal was not to finalize a design, but to initiate a framework – a cultural and spatial infrastructure – within which the community could continue to act.

Curating, then, becomes not just a role or metaphor, but a methodology for practicing architecture with others. It is a mode of engagement that values plural voices, challenges inherited hierarchies, and opens space for emerging forms of collective agency. Curating as an attitude involves a shift from authorship as control toward authorship as care, enabling others to act, speak and shape. It requires humility and adaptability, especially in contexts marked by complexity, fragility, and ongoing transformation.

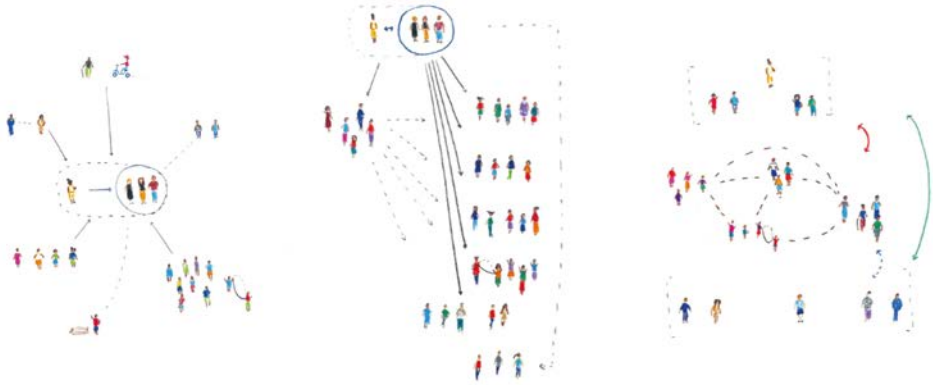

Figure 1: From left to right: the community curates the architect, the architect curates the community and the community curates the community.

Acknowledgements

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Cooperation in Upcycling Architecture and Coauthorship in Cultural Change

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#

upcycling architecture, coauthorship, cultural change

Abstract

This paper discusses the upcycling architecture from the perspective of different authors' cooperation across time. Three case studies – Zeitz MOCAA in South Africa, Strawberry Facility in Japan, and KEVN in the Netherlands – reveal how architecture has evolved through collaboration between past builders, materials, and contemporary architects. Drawing on Hegelian dialectics and vernacular theory, it argues that upcycling architecture reflects the continuity and transformation of culture. Material reuse, collage, and emotional expression combine to produce multiple layers of meaning. Contemporary architects act as mediators, integrating historical traces and environmental values into new spatial forms that reflect sustainability and identity.

Upcycling, in the dictionary, is "the activity of making new furniture, objects, etc., out of old or used things or waste material" (Cambridge Dictionary 2025). It is a kind of recycling; however, it is very different from recycling. William McDonough and Michael Braungart use downcycling to describe recycling, "as we have noted, most recycling is downcycling; it reduces the quality of a material over time" (McDonough and Braungart 2002, 56–57). According to Watson & Wolfe, "upcycling, also known as creative reuse, is the process of transforming by-products, waste materials, useless or unwanted products into new materials or products perceived to be of greater quality, such as artistic value or environmental value" (Watson & Wolfe 2021). Despite its potential, the definition of upcycling in architecture remains vague and lacks a standardized framework in the design and construction discourse (Gorgolewski 2017, 48). The value-adding process in the unmeasurable areas, like aesthetics or art, is still confusing.

In the preface of *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel proposed the famous proposition that "substance is subject" (Hegel 1977, 21–23). He argued that the world's fundamental essence (substance) is not a static existence but a self-moving and self-developing subject. This process is often described as "thesis — antithesis – synthesis", in which an initial thesis leads to a negative antithesis. The contradiction between them is resolved through synthesis, forming a new state that retains the initial and the opposition elements, thus achieving an upper level of unity.

A similar process happens in the development of vernacular architectural style. The evolution of Georgian-style houses in Virginia experienced three phases: Phase 1 (Balance), Phase 2 (Disequilibrium-Expansion-Synthesis), and Phase 3 (Contraction-New Balance) (Glassie 2023, 214). Throughout this process, individual houses must both confront the challenge posed by existing architectural forms (the disequilibrium phase) and integrate elements of the Georgian style to achieve synthesis (the synthesis phase), ultimately reaching a new state of equilibrium (the new balance phase). The joining of the Georgian style is not by coincidence because of the cultural environment change, especially the exchanges

between local architects who returned from eastern Virginia and London and residents in Virginia led to the introduction of new styles.

Nevertheless, from the following three case studies, upcycling architecture is an extension of Hegel's philosophy, in which not one architecture is self-developing or only two groups contradict. Many kinds of authors, not only architects, cooperated historically to generate one new architecture.

The Zeitz Museum of Contemporary Art Africa (Zeitz MOCAA) is an example of upcycling architecture in South Africa. Located on Cape Town's V&A Waterfront, the project was originally a grain silo complex built in 1921, consisting of 42 tightly packed concrete silos used for storing and grading corn from across South Africa. With the advent of container shipping, this massive concrete infrastructure was decommissioned. In 2015, the local government sought to transform it into Africa's first international museum dedicated to collecting and showcasing contemporary art (Heatherwick Studio 2025).

In upcycling architecture, the original authors are always not architects. In the introduction part of the *Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World,* the buildings "in much of the world these are still built by their owners, by local specialized communities that pool resources builders and craftsmen". Moreover, "these builders have shaped much of man's built environment, even if they have not been responsible for its most massive constructions" (Oliver 1997, XXI). In the original version of the MOCAA case, the 42 tightly arranged concrete silos defined the spatial grid and the minimum functional boundaries, creating a unique order and scale. In the book *Architecture Without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture*, Bernard Rudofsky highlighted the artistic, functional, and cultural richness of vernacular architecture created by non-professionals, even questioning the necessity of architectural intervention (1964, 1–3).

Later, as the building becomes used, authors can also be things or traces from the past. As Jennifer Ferng discusses in her 2015 article *Elemental Vernacular: Designing Beyond Human Authorship*, non-architectural factors are crucial in shaping architectural meaning—such as rusting steel, plants, and animals (2015, 291–295). These temporal traces are elements that architects cannot fully predict or control.

As time passes, such design inevitably faces challenges and the need for further improvement to meet the social demands and spirits, the intervention of architects achieving collaboration with former authors to create a balance between preservation and transformation. In the Zeitz MOCAA case, the solution is carving out a seed-shaped atrium from the honeycomb concrete structure, breaking up the original configuration, and forming a central social space. This intervention by the architect negates the original design's spatial layout and structural features, transforming the rigid matrix into an open configuration and allowing free movement. In addition, raised glass windows were added to the top of the silo to bring natural light in, transforming the enclosed interior space into a bright and inviting space. However, all silos were partially preserved, and the architects' strategy revealed unexpectedly the original

structure. The texture of the old concrete enhances the space with a distinctive aesthetic value and is more in contrast with the new reinforced concrete.

A similar process can be observed in other upcycling architecture. On the outskirts of Gifu, Japan, Tamotsu Ito used a limited budget to build a small complex for a strawberry farm that serves as a shop, cafe, and packaging and storage. The site is located at the junction of agricultural land and the urban edge, surrounded by industrial sheds and simple agricultural buildings (Owoo 2022). The wave roof strongly distinguishes the new architecture from the surrounding environment. However, the material texture of the building is integrated into the site. The architecture's most distinctive roof structure is derived from the metal tube of the owner's old vinyl shed. The architect creates an outward-looking cafe space by turning one-half of the structure upwards. In contrast, logically unchanged, the other half of the structure is an inward packing and storage function, which contrasts the spatial extrovert and introvert and is finally unified in a wave shape. In addition, a collage of various materials gives the building its unique texture, including leftover CLT scraps from the factory and concrete blocks from the surrounding area. The influence of the previous authors, such as the bending of the wood, the oxidation of the metal, the fracture of the edge, etc., also represents a unique culture.

Lastly, the KEVN project is located in Eindhoven, the Netherlands. Superuse Studio was invited to design for a monumental school by adding a pavilion that meets the building users' and surroundings' needs (Superuse Studios 2022). The studio reused the roof trusses of a simple old chicken coop by cutting and crossing them, transforming the originally inward-facing structure into an outward-facing bar. Other parts are made of reused materials, including the Stelcon concrete slabs, the steel in the foundation, aluminum vertical profiles for windows, and roof insulation. These materials come from different sites nearby, with traces of past use. Their materiality is involved in constructing architecture, history, and culture.

We can find cultural similarities in these cases from the authors of different stages. In their original authors' designs, silos, vinyl shed, and chicken coop powerfully embody modernist aesthetics from the modular, single, and straightforward. In Le Corbusier's book, *Towards a New Architecture*, he repeatedly emphasized that architects should learn from engineers. He proposed that buildings should be as precise and functional as machines (Le Corbusier 1986, 1–8). Moreover, the second author preserves historical traces that reflect the cultural spirit of brutalism. Kenneth Frampton (2007, 262–269) believes that the aesthetics of brutalism come from the pursuit of authenticity, which emphasizes the "essential performance" of building materials, especially undecorated concrete, and scratches on rusty metal or wooden beams are an extension of this performance. It rejects late modernism's fascination with form and function. The last third authors, the contemporary architects, open the introverted space. Their works Zeitz MOCAA, the strawberry facility, and KVEN reflect the contemporary spirit of the place, not only the openness of the design level but also a comprehensive expression of social relations. This

expression aligns with Team X's advocacy of considering local culture and environment in design to enhance the connection between buildings and users and to meet human needs for belonging and identity (Frampton 2007, 272–273).

Although the goal of contemporary architects is the same due to the spirit of The Times, there are still differences in the cooperation methods with the previous. In the cases of the strawberry facility and KVEN, the two groups of architects gathered the materials for the architecture from different surroundings. This emphasis on collage and randomness aligns with the concept of "Bricolage" proposed by French anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss (1966), as well as "Adhocism" by Charles Jencks and Nathan Silver (2013) against the rigidity of modernism. At the same time, the redesign process involves a reconfiguration of materials and prefers dry connections in the structural design. These approaches are based on the principle of Design for Disassembly, which ensures that "future authors" can easily reuse materials and prolong the life cycle of a building. In contrast, the expressionist approach in Zeitz MOCAA reflects a high degree of symbolism, and its architectural language pursues the transmission of emotion and spiritual experience. Frampton points out that while expressionist architectural forms are visually striking, they often lack a sustainable construction logic challenging to integrate into the mainstream path of modern architectural industrialization and social functionalism and rely too much on "the externalization of individual emotions" (Frampton 2007, 32–45).

Each author represents the cultural spirit of the time. In upcycling architecture, value enhancement lies more in the richness of dimensions and not in the quantity of a single dimension; that is, it can be interpreted from different cultural perspectives. Because of the collaboration of the authors of different periods, readers can experience the harmonious integration of different cultural stages in one architecture. In addition, the role of contemporary architects is pivotal in the whole upcycling process. His chosen method will determine not only the integration of different cultures but also the direction of architecture in the future.

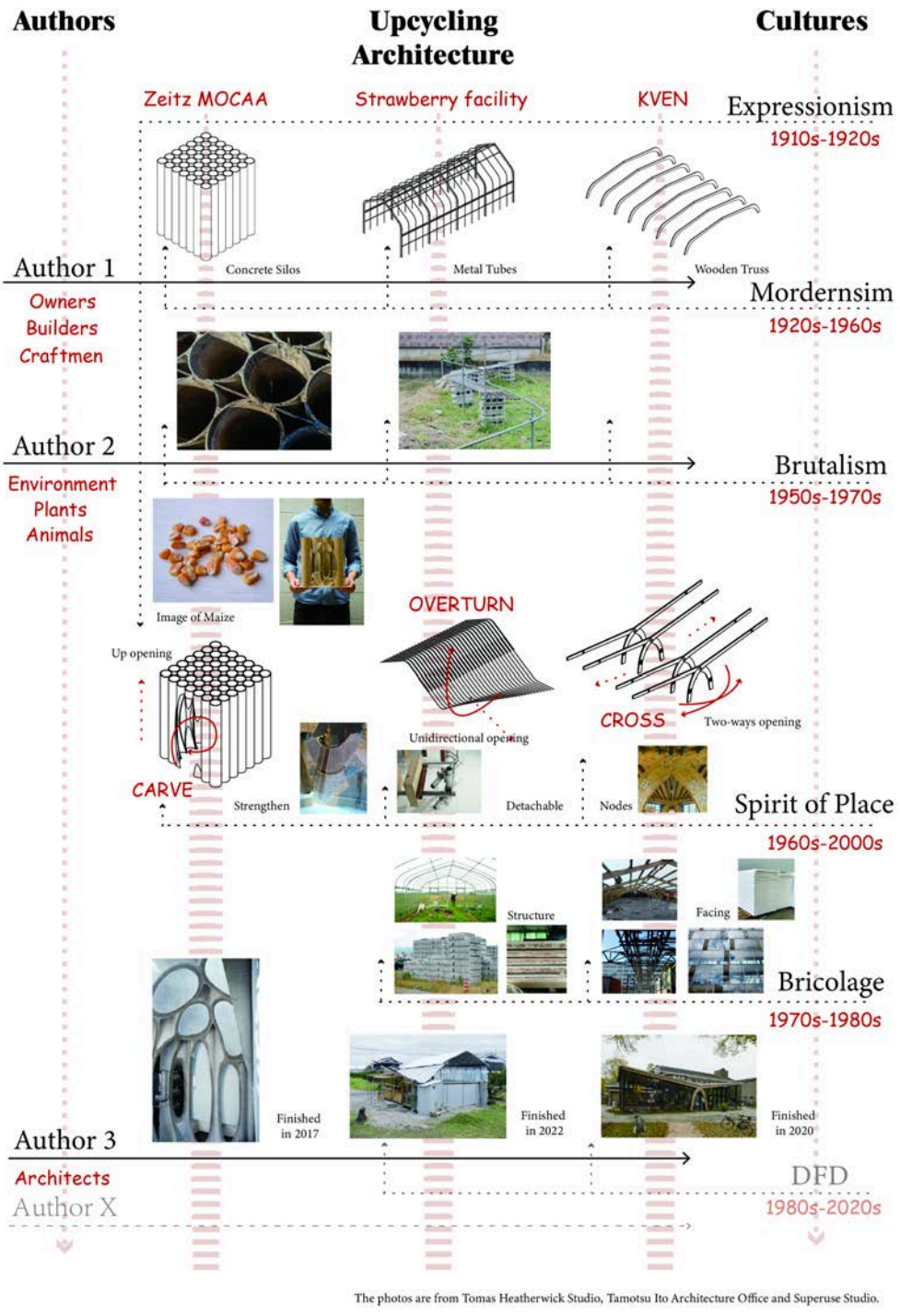

Figure 1: This diagram shows the evolution of the "Upcycling Architecture" of three case studies - Zeitz MOCAA in South Africa, Strawberry Facility in Japan, and KEVN in the Netherlands -, matching three types of authors (artisans and architects, natural environments, architects) with six cultural currents (e.g., expressionism, modernism, etc.), combining specific cases with structural operations (e.g., Carve, Overturn, Cross), and so on, reveal how collaboration works between authors and cultural changes.

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The Authorship of Processes

Duccio Fantoni, DAStU, Politecnico di Milano

The role of authorship has long served as one of the fundamental coordinates of architectural practice. To be an author implied agency, intentionality, and control: the capacity to translate a project into being through design. Yet within the contemporary design panorama, this position has progressively shifted and been displaced by processes that are collective, iterative, or materially self-determining. Authorship no longer appears merely as the mark of a signature or an identifiable subject; it seems instead the dynamic field where the act of making and the emergence of meaning unfold together. In this light, the question of authorship becomes less a matter of ownership and more one of involvement in a process. It concerns the complex negotiations between subjects and tools, materials and data, social actors and environments through which architecture is continuously articulated. As Bruno Latour argues, "action is not a property of humans but of associations" (Latour 2005, 53); agency, and thus authorship, is distributed across the heterogeneous networks that bring a project into being.

To define authorship by processes is to understand architectural creation as an open system of exchanges, where decisions, intentions, and interpretations circulate within the project. This expanded framework challenges the linearity of design as an act of conception followed by execution, proposing instead a recursive model – one in which thinking and making, theory and representation, research and design constantly redefine each other. The processual author does not precede the work but is constituted through it; authorship becomes a temporary configuration within an ongoing ecology of transformation. Such an approach displaces the heroic figure of the architect in favor of distributed, participatory, or algorithmic forms of agency, where knowledge is generated through feedback, adaptation, and dialogue.

The contributions gathered in this section share this perspective, situating the act of design within broader processes – technological, environmental, social, and epistemological. Across diverse contexts, they investigate how authorship is reconfigured when mediated by Artificial Intelligence (AI), collective research, material intelligence, infrastructural systems, pedagogical collaboration, or aesthetic experimentation. Their approaches diverge in scale and method, yet they converge in the understanding that to design today is to participate in processes that exceed individual intention. This resonates with Donna Haraway's notion of *sympoiesis* – "making-with" rather than self-making – where creative knowledge emerges through networks of shared becoming (Haraway 2016).

Some explore the dissolution of authorship through human–machine collaboration, others through the collective agency of materials, communities, or narratives. Together, they map a landscape in which architectural knowledge emerges through iterative processes rather than predetermined outcomes. Between technological speculation and material sensitivity, these contributions trace a spectrum of new authorial conditions.

At one end of this spectrum, AI provides a powerful lens for questioning authorship as a shared condition between human and algorithm. *Eidetic Buildings*, by Giorgio Castellano, engages AI as a quasi-subject capable of reconfiguring memory and form, transforming the latent data of architectural archives into new eidetic realities. Here, the architect becomes

a mediator between collective memory and generative autonomy, navigating a space where authorship is distributed between human intention and machine imagination. A similar negotiation unfolds in *Exploring the Architecture for Urban Air Mobility*, by Ottavio Pedretti, where AI-driven speculation serves as a design methodology for unprecedented infrastructural typologies. The study demonstrates how authorship shifts from direct form-making to curatorial selection, as the designer interprets and filters algorithmic outputs within a speculative discourse on future mobility. Both works reveal the double bind of technological authorship: while AI amplifies creative potential, it simultaneously destabilizes the boundaries of authorship, inviting ethical and aesthetic reconsiderations.

In a parallel, materially grounded register, *Transcalar Materials as Narrative Agents*, by Fitnat Cimsit Kos et al., repositions matter itself as a co-author. Through a series of iterative experiments, the research presents materials not as passive recipients of design but as active participants that negotiate across biological, technological, and architectural scales. This process-based epistemology extends authorship to the nonhuman domain, where the designer's role is to attune rather than impose – to orchestrate dialogues between living systems and computational processes. The resonance of this material intelligence can be traced further in *Point Cloud Departures* and *Inquiring Sensate Scapes*, respectively by Guro Sollid and Maja Zander Fisker, both of which explore the aesthetic and perceptual implications of data, landscape, and mediation. In these works, authorship becomes an act of reception – an ethical and imaginative engagement with landscapes and their material traces. Through tools such as Light Detection and Ranging (LIDAR), point cloud modeling, and 1:1 material experiments, they reframe architectural practice as a form of correspondence with the world's granular and more-than-human agencies.

Other contributions turn toward social and narrative processes as sites of shared authorship. *Authorship on the Margins*, by Nicolò Chierichetti, examines infrastructural voids as opportunities for collaborative regeneration, revealing how design evolves through negotiations between institutional, technical, and local actors. The designer emerges as a mediator who constructs frameworks rather than forms, translating complex systems of interest into adaptable guidelines. Similarly, *The Productive Infrastructure for Off-Grid Communities*, by Maddalena Laddaga, situates authorship within collective energy autonomy. By conceiving architecture as an open and modifiable infrastructure, it proposes a model where inhabitants become co-authors of their environment – producers rather than consumers of resources. In both cases, authorship manifests as a form of governance and responsibility distributed across communities, technologies, and time.

The educational and performative dimensions of authorship appear in *"Making-with": Transdisciplinary Experiments in Authorship* and *Performance as Architectural Production in the 21st Century*, respectively by Colm mac Aoidh and Alessandro Pasero. The first articulates a pedagogy of collaboration, where literary and architectural practices intertwine through iterative workshops that transform the notion of originality into a synergic exercise of collective rewriting. The second investigates

performance as a contemporary mode of architectural production, where authorship unfolds through the choreography of bodies, audiences, and events. In both, the author is dissolved into a network of participants and mediations; design becomes an act of coordination, translation, and re-enactment rather than solitary creation.

Processual authorship also finds narrative form in *Story of a Doctoral (Design) Research: An Iterative Process*, by Sarah Javed Shah, where the research itself becomes the site of authorship. Structured as a cyclical dialogue between theory, drawing, and fieldwork, this contribution demonstrates how knowledge is produced through iteration – each phase reinforming the next in a reflexive continuum. Authorship here is neither fixed nor concluded but perpetually reformulated through practice. This recursive structure echoes the methodological openness shared by many works in the section, where research and design co-produce one another through feedback loops.

Across these diverse investigations, authorship appears less as a position of control than as a condition of engagement. Whether through AI's latent mechanisms, material responsiveness, infrastructural negotiation, or collaborative pedagogy, each contribution reveals a shift from product to process, from authority to relation. Architecture is no longer conceived as a static object authored by an individual but as an evolving constellation of interactions – between minds and machines, materials and ecologies, institutions and publics. The architect becomes a catalyst within these dynamics, shaping trajectories rather than final forms.

Together, the ten contributions assembled here outline a contemporary landscape of architectural authorship defined not by signature but by process. They suggest a fruitful tendency in design that resides in the ability to navigate uncertainty, choreograph complexity, and allow meaning to emerge through practice. Authorship, in this sense, is neither lost nor dissolved – it is redistributed, expanded, and made porous, reflecting the very processes through which architecture continues to think, imagine, and become.

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Eidetic Buildings

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collective authorship, technical consciousness, architectural agency

Abstract

Eidetic Buildings are a series of architectural objects at the intersection of artificial intelligence, memory, and authorship. By leveraging a curated repository of 3D models coupled with Generative Adversarial Networks, a symbiotic dialogue with AI expands creative boundaries and fundamentally questions traditional concepts of originality.

AI's capacity to reconfigure forms from latent data transforms it from a tool into a quasi-subject that redefines the design landscape.

Drawing on frameworks from Jung's collective unconscious to Michel Serres's quasi-object, this approach parallels Warburg's stratified archive, as digital processes become generative of architectural visions rather than simply mimetic.

As the boundaries between designer and machine dissolve, questions of creative agency and accountability come to the fore, inviting ethical, aesthetic, and theoretical considerations, and reimagining design's future. In this post-digital paradigm, architecture becomes a process of shared authorship, blurring divisions between organic and synthetic creation.

Intro

The use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in design raises critical questions about authorship, creativity, agency, and accountability. How does the designer navigate the fertile yet indeterminate territories of virtual creation? What kind of considerations arise when machine-generated outputs blur the boundaries of authorship?

The Eidetic Building series invites reflection on these issues, positioning AI as a collaborator that expands the scope of architectural research.

Act 1 – Using is not knowing; the author of the output is not the author of the process

Historically, architects have relied on specialized techniques without fully mastering the underlying principles. In 1683, Giulio Troili, in *Paradossi per pratticare la prospettiva senza saperla* (Troili 1683), gave architects the tools to depict their visions and develop and control their design without requiring full knowledge of the perspective tool.

Today, a similar dynamic emerges with AI, marking a clear separation between those who write the code (programmers) and those who use the software (designers). At a higher level of abstraction, even programmers lose sight of how AI truly functions.

Mario Carpo's discussion of Renaissance architectural design (Carpo 2011) emphasizes that architecture's foundations lie in systems of authorial notation, governed by architects themselves. While architects have traditionally exercised control over the creative act, the latest digital trends complicate their role. Contemporary developments suggest digital tools have evolved from passive instruments to more tangled self-generative partners. Through successive digital *turns*, computers have assumed progressively more significant roles in imagining and producing architectural images, diagrams, and models, from auxiliary tools to mind-thinking agents that re-produce architectural renders, diagrams, and eventually objects.

Ellie Abrons observes that no original exists (Abrons 2019), whether instance or flattened continuum, in which physical artifacts, drawings, and digital renderings share the same ontological plane. This post-digital sensibility legitimizes virtual imagery as a core material in design, expanding architecture's audience and redefining conventional ideas of representation.

Act 2 – What is eidetic?

Eidetic building is a series of architectural objects generated by artificial intelligence from a human-curated database.

Here, *eidetic* describes a memory of a perception — whether of an emotion, a person, or an artifact — where the once-distinct boundaries become blurred. What remains is a remembrance of it, a residual image, like the sun when you look at it; even just fleetingly, it is still visible in other things, unclearly. In an analogy, this is the seeing that we have when we confront ourselves with digital entities elaborated by AI. The digital neuronal iterative process acts as our unconscious moving between archetypes of human-produced data and memory.

How, then, does the architect's authorship, together with its human mnemonic component, manifest in this context?

In 2018, Refik Anadol was commissioned to create a data sculpture for the LA Philharmonic based on the building's history. By feeding an AI with a heritage of memories, Anadol questioned whether the machine could also interpret and extend themself:

"What can a machine do with someone else's memories? [...] If a machine can process memories, can (it) also dream? Hallucinate? Involuntarily recall, or forge links between multiple individuals' dreams?" (Leach 2022, pag.123)

As defined by Carl Jung (Jung 1977), the collective unconscious is a part of the psyche distinct from the personal unconscious. While the personal unconscious consists mainly of content that was once conscious but has since been forgotten or repressed, the contents of the collective unconscious have never been conscious and are not acquired individually; their existence is purely hereditary. When considering the collections of morphological data, understood as built forms and their formal articulation,

topological data, referring to spatial organization, and typological data, representing modes of habitation, they become a form of memory for artificial intelligence (AI) algorithms. In this sense, the technological tool can become a collective design unconscious, where once they were acts of formal choice rooted in individual unconscious processes.

Like Warburg's stratified geology (Warburg 1966), the entirety of the contemporary world is a returning archive that never ceases to be contemporary. It exists in a virtual state perpetually in genetic formation, where the new is perceived as a fold of the old. This memory can be altered, covered, or surpassed by the designer or the person inhabiting space, fostering the emergence of a fertile unconscious blending the virtual and the material. AI continually reshapes our imagination and is no longer a mimesis of something else but generative.

These virtual spaces allow for the generation of architectural forms that exist as residual, dream-like impressions, reminiscent of Jung's collective unconscious and Warburg's *Pathosformeln* (pathos formula). Steven Connor (Connor 2002) extends this thinking by referencing Michel Serres's intensely topological mode, which interweaves space, time, matter, and process (Serres 1995). These evolving digital spaces produce residual forms that echo Jung's collective unconscious and Warburg's *Pathosformeln*, now refracted through autonomous algorithmic processes.

Act 3 – The proposal

The project begins with creating a digital archive of architectural 3^d models **[1]**, from which sections have been extracted as JPEG images from 3D-modelled buildings **[2]**.

This dataset of building drawings concepts acts as a Bergsonian memory, a dynamic, ever-evolving repository that feeds the generative processes of AI. Unlike some traditional archives that fetishize the past through nostalgia, this approach transforms memory into a source of creative potential. Memory is not a static recollection but an embryonic state of becoming, where latent images evolve into tangible designs.

Generative Adversarial Networks (GANs) have been chosen as tools for their significant employment in the Art and Architecture disciplines (Zhang 2019; Bank et al. 2022). Employing StyleGAN2-ADA-Pytorch, the generative process centers on interpolations among two or more selected section images. These interpolations rely on vectors that consolidate points within the latent space, known as *seeds*. Practically, each seed is a numerical identifier referring to an array of coordinates that situates a particular datum — here, an image — within the latent space's dimensions. When two images (i.e., vectors referencing distinct points in the latent space) are selected, the interpolative output is a sequence of images transitioning from the first to the second.

These solutions **[3]** are then converted into 3D point clouds and assembled as subdomains of the 3D latent space **[4]**. AI thus becomes a collaborator, not replicating the past but reinterpreting it through the lens of

Figure 1: The foundational dataset for the AI-based generative process, comprising 21 man-made 3D architectural models. Each model captures distinct geometric forms and morphological characteristics, providing broad variety for subsequent slicing and training. By merging multiple typologies into a unified repository, the project ensures the AI can access a robust range of architectural features during later stages of learning and generation.

indeterminacy. The resultant forms **[5]** are not mere mimetic reproductions but novel configurations that challenge the boundaries of perception and understanding.

The virtual realm serves a dual purpose: it constructs environments for exploration and infuses them with conceptual memory. This interplay dissolves the clear demarcation between the designer's intent and the AI's generative autonomy, fostering a shared authorship. The latent space within AI tools operates as a field of potentiality, decoding and assembling fragmented memories into cohesive yet indeterminate forms.

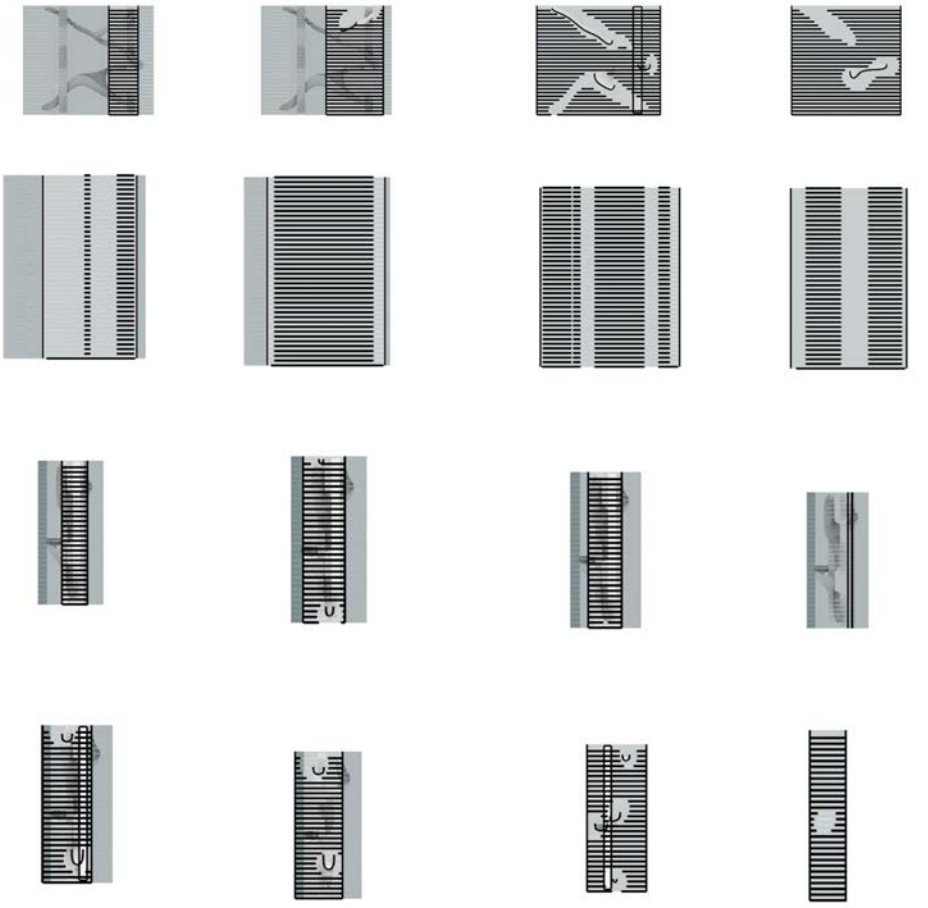

Figure 2: Each 3D model is systematically sliced at regular one-meter intervals along both axes, producing a rich collection of two-dimensional sectional views. These cross-sections, representing variations in form and spatial organization, form the core database for AI training.

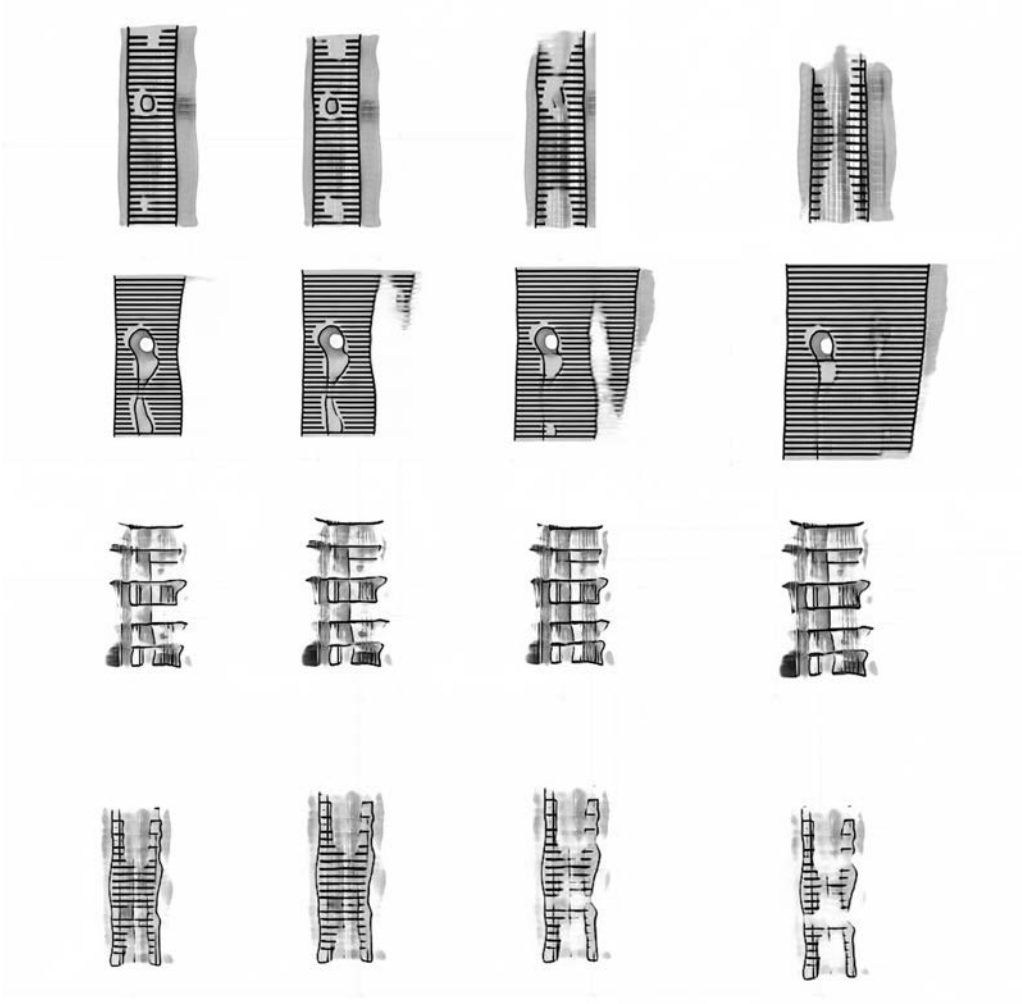

Figure 3: Once trained on the collated sectional dataset, the AI generates a new series of 2D sections that reflect learned spatial patterns and inferred formal relationships. This output illustrates the network's capacity to interpolate and transform the original slices, hinting at emergent and sometimes unexpected architectural possibilities.

Figure 4: The AI-generated 2D sections are reassembled into three-dimensional point clouds conceptual *latent space buildings*. These volumetric reconstructions integrate both the original data and the AI's inferred abstractions, providing a spatial canvas for exploring how machine intelligence reframes and remixes architectural elements.

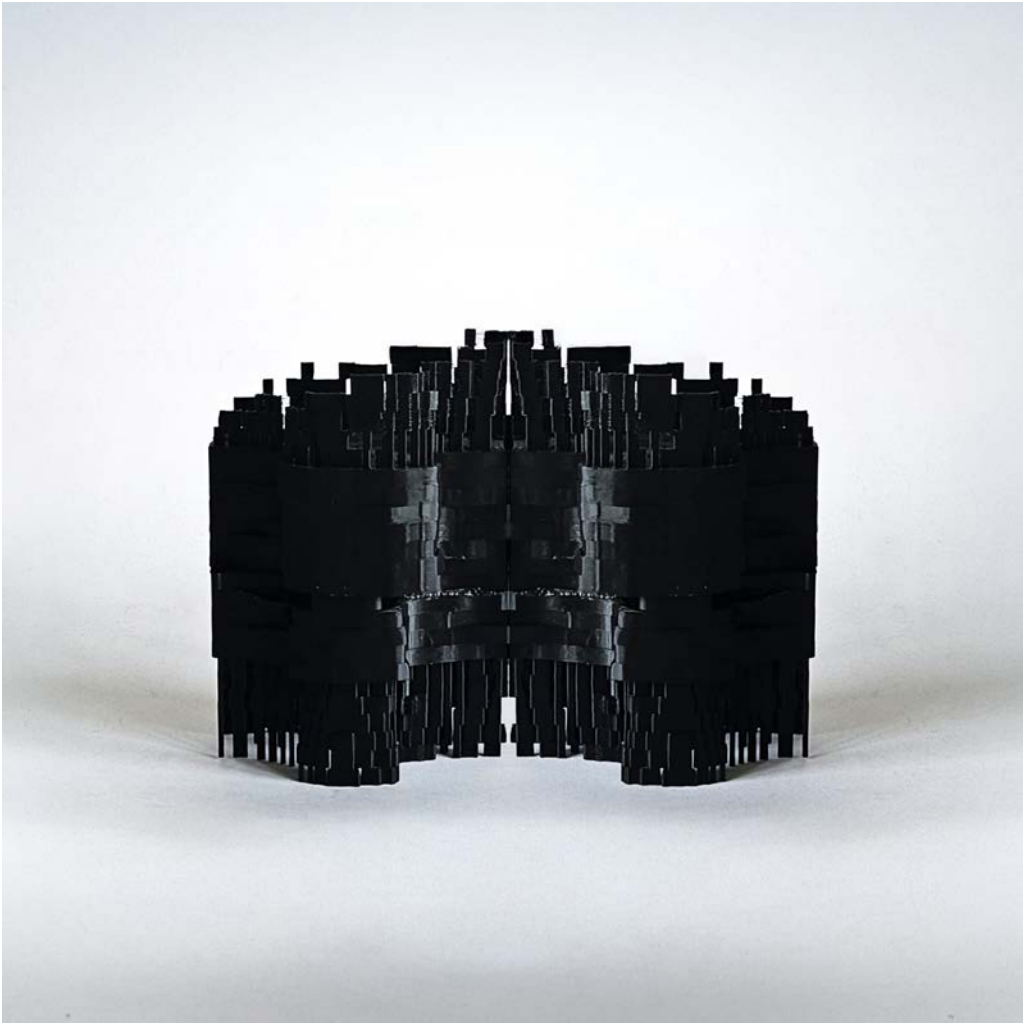

Figure 5: *Eidetic Building* realized as a physical model, 3D-printed in PLA. This tangible prototype manifests the project's core premise: human-curated data and AI-driven processes collaborating to produce innovative architectural artifacts, challenging conventional boundaries of authorship and representation.

Final

When assessing AI's capacity to co-generate architectural visions, the designer's role becomes akin to what Slavoj Žižek calls an evanescent mediator (Žižek 2016): someone who temporarily inhabits the threshold of technological transformation. As individuals in this networked interplay, following Michel Serres's idea of the quasi-object, designers become fluid quasi-subjects bound by an I that dissolves into a collection of intersubjective ties. (Serres and Latour 1995)

This newly reconfigured subject is no longer an individual, a modern subject; instead, they are held together by multiple cords, contracts, and communication channels. There is a constellation of relations and becoming rather than a being.

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Authorship on the Margins Regenerating Urban Voids through Design-Driven Narratives

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metadesign, mobility residual spaces, applied research

Abstract

The reconfiguration of residual spaces along infrastructures, such as Milan ring roads, offers fertile ground to explore authorship as a collective and iterative process. Through methodologies including mapping, taxonomy-building, and the construction of narratives, this research investigates how the designer role transitions from individual creator to mediator who synthesizes technical, cultural, and spatial components. It addresses site-specific explorations beside broader systemic analyses, stressing the balance between micro-scale sensitivity and macro-scale strategic frameworks. It places infrastructural voids as opportunities for urban regeneration, challenging traditional and prescriptive approaches by adopting adaptive and scalable guidelines. Co-funded by a third-party commissioner, this applied research aims to define conditions for future interventions without fixed outcomes, raising critical questions about the nature of authorship when multiple stakeholders are involved. Eventually, by reclaiming neglected urban voids through collaborative narratives and design-driven explorations, the research expands disciplinary boundaries and reframes infrastructure as both a technical necessity and a cultural opportunity.

Reconfiguring residual spaces along infrastructures, such as the ones of the ring roads of Milan, represents a valuable design testing field to explore how authorship emerges not as an individual act but as a collective and iterative process through technical, cultural, and spatial dimensions. This contribution wants to reflect on how design methodologies – including mapping, taxonomy-building, and atmospheres/visions/narrative construction – would redefine the authorial role in reclaiming and regenerating these neglected urban voids while acting on behalf of a third-party commissioner.

The framework is one of a co-funded PhD research, under PNRR[1] and Milano Serravalle Milano Tangenziali[2] fundings, tackling the role of sustainable mobility as an opportunity for Urban and Landscape Regeneration. This peculiar background is an extremely relevant scenario in which we can discuss the research authorship's limitations and peculiarities, when the project's commissioners and stakeholders have different interests. A key question within such research is the shifting nature of authorship between individual and private-collective interests. On the one hand, site-specificity demands a designer’s direct engagement with the unique socio-spatial characteristics of specific urban voids. On the other hand, the systemic nature of a sequence of spaces requires a design taxonomy and atlas that reflect a broader, collaborative mode of authorship and intervention. This dichotomy identified the designer’s role not as the sole creator but as a mediator synthesizing multiple perspectives, systems, and border conditions. For instance, an analytical and design taxonomy can rely on multidisciplinary inputs and reframe urban voids as opportunities for urban regeneration, shifting between a site-specific surface and a more general intervention model. Such authorial gestures

allow us to define macro-structures that enable future interventions without prescribing definitive outcomes ex-ante.

The essential form of authorship lies in its focus on *reliquati stradali* road residual spaces in Italy), which remains a poorly researched and underexplored topic. In the geography of academic literature such non-places are recurrent indeed, but always being considered with a negative sensitivity, as something else. On the other hand, for example, Purini presents in an essay on Casabella 739–740[3] the sensitivity of understanding such surfaces not as "technical entities", but within their presence that exceeds the limitation of the functional footprint, in their plural role which the modern times could not effectively evoke (Purini 2006).

Producing knowledge about these overlooked spaces – identifying, analyzing, and proposing interventions for them – identifies an act of authorship. The applied research also configures the opportunity to raise awareness on topics that have been ignored in academic, political, and professional circles, and the study aims to reclaim the physical spaces and expand the disciplinary boundaries of architecture and urban design. This approach to research recalls the principles of infrastructural urbanism, as Kelly Shannon and Marcel Smets discussed in *The Landscape of Contemporary Infrastructure* (Smets and Shannon 2010), where infrastructure is not merely a technical necessity but a spatial and cultural opportunity. They argue that the physical infrastructure is intrinsically entangled with the generation of architecture, landscapes, and the production of urban and living environments that contribute to constructing imaginative dimensions on the same plane of the engineering act.

In the same way, Pierre Belanger's work on landscape as infrastructure highlights (Bélanger 2017) the importance of integrating ecological and urban systems into the design of infrastructural spaces. Belanger argues that it is crucial to "sponsor" an interdisciplinary crossover not only in terms of practical design but also in terms of the different urban components in the design process, especially in shifting the paradigm of infrastructures as a simple technical act. He underlines how infrastructure strategies at an architectural level should transcend a broad spectrum of scales and de-professionalize the conventional and monothematic approach given in dealing with such technical monuments. The approach that the research is trying to follow is to step aside from an "objectification of the infrastructure" (D'Hooghe 2010), which has characterized the previous century, by exploding the physicality and revealing to the commissioner a sequence of hidden values that can be emphasized instead of being reduced to the primary function of the object.

The research adopts a methodology that reflects a collaborative, scalable, reproducible, and iterative *modus operandi*. The combination of macro and micro-scale analyses, the development of systemic categories, and the definition of design-driven explorations define a methodology that steps ahead from traditional notions of originality as a defined outcome but instead attempts to assemble and reconfigure heterogeneous elements and systems in an infinite combination of possibilities. At the macro scale, it identifies and maps the complex territorial systems intersecting with the Milanese mobility infrastructure – such as ecological corridors, intermodal mobility hubs, and marginal residual spaces –

as potential sites for regeneration. Understanding the crossovers and the overlapping of the physical bi-dimensional spatiality with the peculiarities of interfering themes allows us to adopt a more comprehensive perspective not only as an operative act but also in the ability of sight and perception. At the micro-scale, site-specific explorations reveal individual surfaces' unique conditions and opportunities, offering a more profound and sensitive understanding of their potential. Each act of design and research requires the integration of technical, cultural, and ecological perspectives — challenging a conventional view of the designer as a self-referential creator while framing authorship as a process of both negotiation and synthesis. A critical dimension of this research lies in its applied nature. While the presence of an external commissioner reinforces the real-world applicability of the research, it also introduces layers of negotiation. The researcher becomes entangled in a matrix of interests, timelines, and bureaucratic thresholds. In such a context, authorship is no longer singular or heroic but distributed among multiple agents — some visible, others embedded within the protocols of institutional operations.

Being co-funded by an external company operating on the Milan territory[4], the research outcomes would be constituted by guidelines and meta-design explorations intended to inform the competencies within the motorway concessionaire offices of different perspectives on how to design and develop, and to finally overcome their presence as dominant figures of a dangerous rationality (Secchi 2005). Such strategies are essential for bridging infrastructure's technical and spatial components and establishing a solid framework for future design practices with a renovated approach. However, this raises a critical question: what becomes the role of the researcher, when another practitioner adopts the guidelines and translates the design exploration into a definitive project? Can the researcher still reclaim authorship over the final realized outcome, or is their role limited to the one of a guideline writer?

The proposed guidelines and toolkit are not prescriptive, but rather adaptive, and allow the translation of site-specific insights into broader, scalable scenarios. They represent a form of authorship that is both situated and proactive. This form of authorship creates conditions for other practitioners and researchers to build upon the initial vision. The construction of narratives shows infrastructure to be more than just technical or functional entities — it reveals them as cultural and spatial phenomena. The taxonomy of residual spaces can also be intended as a narrative tool: it highlights the latent potential of these neglected spaces. It positions them within a broader discourse on urban regeneration, on the path of the explorations by Stan Allen in *Infrastructural Urbanism* (Allen 1999) on the performative role of infrastructure. The overlooked nature of these residual spaces connects to a broader historical condition, often labeled as *terrain vague* (De Solà-Morales Rubiò 1995) or part of the Third Landscape (Gilles 2004). These concepts frame such spaces not merely as neglected but as charged with potential – landscapes of indeterminacy where new ecological and spatial futures might unfold. Within the Italian context, the infrastructural developments of the mid-20th century prioritized separation and flow, often at the cost of fragmenting local territorial identities. Re-engaging with these fragments becomes both an act of repair and of authorship.

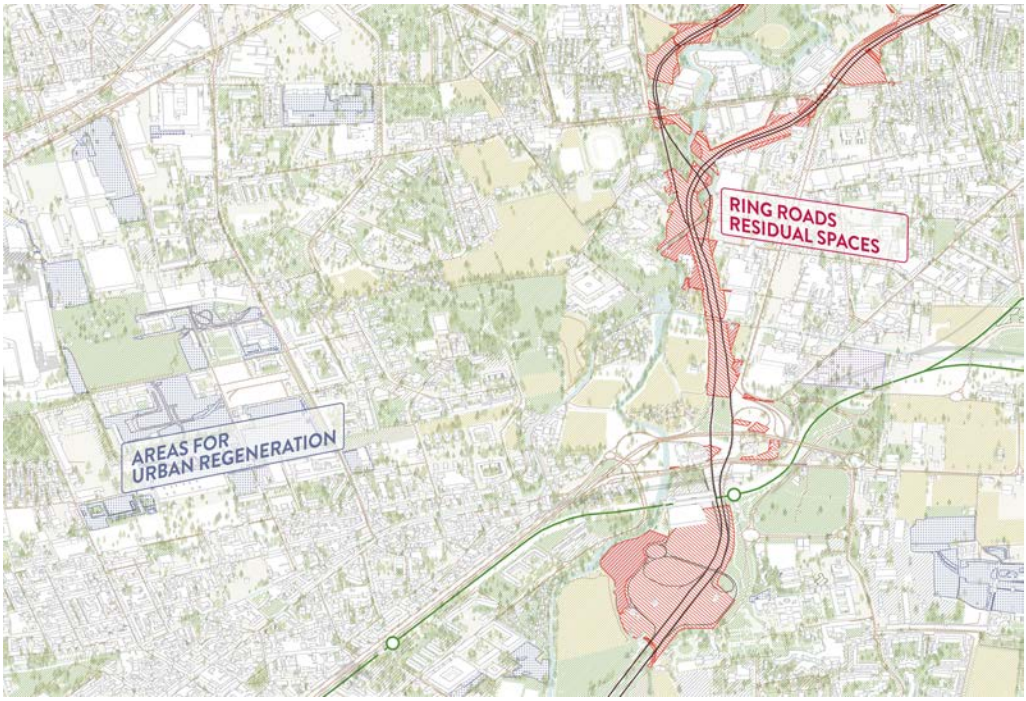

Figure 1: Chierichetti N. (2024). Whose space? In-between the city and the A50 highway infrastructure. The node of Cascina Gobba. [drawing]

Through the tools of drawing, mapping, and design probes, atmospheres are proposed by assembling and reimagining preexisting elements, as well as proposing original combinations and models of interaction. These methods enable the definition of atmospheres and visions that overpass technical limitations typical of infrastructure, opening new perspectives for understanding and interacting with mobility urban voids. By constructing these narratives, the intention is to reclaim authorship over spaces traditionally dominated by technical, bureaucratic, or engineering logic through the sensitivity of an architectural approach: that is indeed one of the added contributions. The use of the section, for instance, plays a key role in revealing vertical relationships and spatial dynamics – while analytical and strategic mappings, as well as the construction of an investigative taxonomy, offer a structured framework for organizing and systematizing heterogeneous inputs to lay the groundwork for future design explorations and interactions. The design research through the use of the section, especially in *territorial architectures* such the highways networks, allows to capture the uniqueness of its transversal interaction, in the same reading that Appleyard and Lynch adopted in their most famous work (Appleyard, Lynch and Myer 1964).

The design solutions proposed in this research balance site-specificity with broader applicability. The explorations are based on the unique conditions of the Milanese case study and are adaptable to other contexts, navigating between the particular and the general declination of strategies. The toolkit would be constituted by an atlas of design probes, which act as pilot case studies and guidelines for future interventions and test transformation premises. They offer a model for reclaiming urban voids in

other cities and regions. These adaptable, combined, and reproducible solutions are also useful to push such knowledge production beyond the boundaries of the immediate case study. This research discourse also underlines how authorship in design-driven practices can be redefined as a collaborative and iterative process that shifts between individual contributions as designers and the further levels of complexity given by the combination of upcoming donations.

The research proves the designer's role as both a mediator and a creator by reclaiming urban spaces and constructing narratives illuminating their potential for a forthcoming stakeholder. Guidelines and toolkits enable the translation of site-specific insights into broader, scalable scenarios, and they challenge traditional notions of originality, embracing the collaborative and multidisciplinary dimensions of design-driven research.

1 National Recovery and Resilience Plan

2 Milano Serravalle, in short, is a is an Italian infrastructure company that manages and operates a network of motorways and ring roads (tangenziali) around the city of Milan

3 The issue 739-740 was devoted to the "Forms of Movement"

4 Milano Serravalle Milano Tangenziali

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Transcalar Materials as Narrative Agents Challenging Traditional Metrics of Originality

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redefining authorship, materials as narrative agents, transcalar design

Abstract

Authorship in *Transcalar Material* is reconceived as an entanglement of agency among designers, materials, and technological systems. Rather than positioning the designer as the sole creator, this approach foregrounds materials as active participants, shaping outcomes through their intrinsic properties, environmental interactions, and computational extensions. This shift moves beyond symbolic authorship, proposing a material-driven epistemology where knowledge emerges through adaptive, multi-scalar processes.

Parametric and AI-driven experiments reveal transcalarity as a continuous negotiation between material agency and systemic frameworks. The study unfolds through three iterative phases: *Tangible Mapping*, documenting symbiotic relationships between organisms and materials; *Keep Information Alive*, integrating AI to encode and evolve material intelligence; and *Digital Crafting*, constructing tectonic augmentations informed by material behavior. Rather than static components, materials operate as mediators across morphological, technological, and architectural dimensions, actively shaping design methodologies. This process reframes materials as co-authors, generating novel morphologies and ecological futures.

In the context of *Transcalar Material*, authorship is redefined as an entanglement of agency between designers, materials, and technological systems. Rather than positioning the designer as a singular creator, this approach foregrounds materials as active participants in design processes, shaping outcomes through their intrinsic behaviors, environmental interactions, and computational extensions. This shift does not merely reframe authorship as a collective act but suggests a material-driven epistemology, where knowledge emerges through adaptive, multi-scalar processes. By integrating morphological, technological, and artificial components, this perspective moves beyond symbolic interpretations of authorship, advocating for a dynamic, process-oriented model that reconfigures the relationship between human intentionality and material agency.

Traditionally, materials in design have been perceived as passive entities, subordinated to a designer's vision. The dominant *form* discourse since the late 1960s is largely based on a hylomorphic approach. However, the epistemological limitations of this approach are quite evident (Moe 2017). This perspective established the designer as the ultimate authority, treating materials as mere instruments of execution. However, Transcalar Material challenges this notion by repositioning materials as active participants in the design process. As Deleuze and Guattari mention, "one addresses less a form capable of imposing properties upon a matter than material traits of expression constituting affects" (Deleuze and Guattari 1987) emphasizing that the relationship between form and matter is not a static process of shaping. Instead, it is an interaction, a state of mobility

and change. Material is considered not as something subjected to the impositions of form, but as a dynamic entity that expresses itself. A more fluid, continuous interaction emerges between "material traits" and "form". Thus, the design process progresses not by following a fixed form, but by understanding and guiding matter, taking into account its potential and variability within itself. Aligning with this perspective, Karana (Karana et al. 2015) explores the approach to design when the material serves as the explicit starting point, and the outcome is an experience. This approach presents the Material Driven Design (MDD) method, which integrates both technical properties of materials and their experiential qualities, guiding the designer through a process that evolves from material properties to concepts. Rather than serving as static resources, materials mediate between scales — morphological, technological, and computational -adapting to and informing design trajectories. Their role extends beyond form-making, actively shaping process-driven and relational design methodologies. As Malafouris (Malafouris 2008) emphasizes, agency is grounded in the relational dynamics of material engagement; it is not something given but something that emerges.

This shift is particularly evident in the parametric and AI-driven experiments, where material behaviors are not preconditioned but emerge through iterative interaction. Transcalarity, in this context, refers to the continuous negotiation between material agency and systemic frameworks across multiple scales, rather than a singular, deterministic approach. As Oxman (Oxman 2010) stated, materiality should be considered within a non-hierarchical system. The collective narrative is formed through this entanglement – where design intelligence is distributed across human, material, and algorithmic interactions, rather than dictated by an isolated author.

By reassembling material fragments through parametric modeling and AI-driven processes, revisiting site-specific material histories, and incorporating cross-scalar interactions, this research positions materials as active mediators in design workflows. Rather than viewing materials as static components, the study proposes a process-driven methodology where material agency informs adaptive, iterative outcomes. Transcalar Material will test these strategies in three experimental phases, demonstrating how materials facilitate knowledge production beyond predefined formal constraints, where, as Ingold (Ingold 2022) has said, “material thinks”.

The concept of scale is central to the *Transcalar Material* process. The term transcalar defines processes and structures that span across interconnected scales. With this approach, processes do not progress in a linear manner; a specific scale or dialogue is not considered in isolation (Goidea et al. 2022). In this concept, scale is not merely a measurement but a medium for interaction, allowing seamless transitions between natural and artificial, micro and macro. This reframing facilitates a deeper understanding of how living organisms interact with architectural practices across dimensions. The process, where the author’s challenge to traditional hierarchical paradigms begins, positions scale as a dynamic framework that fosters mutual exchange and collaboration. Proposed research-based practices, materials take on the role of narrative agents,

actively shaping the processes informed by design research. With interconnected experiments: *Tangible Mapping, Keep Information Alive*, and *Digital Crafting* which function as iterative processes rather than sequential steps.

This approach reframes scale as a dynamic field of exchange, fostering mutual interactions across morphological, computational, and architectural dimensions. By challenging traditional hierarchical paradigms, this methodology foregrounds materials as narrative agents, actively shaping and being shaped by design research.

Tangible Mapping examines the adaptive behaviors of living organisms in relation to physical surfaces. As Pisciella (Pisciella 2014) mentioned, re-presentation implies a double focus: awareness of the coexistence of a double plane, of both visibility and invisibility, otherwise re-presentation would make no sense. As Malafouris (Malafouris 2008) states, material is not merely a passive element shaped by the designer's intervention; rather, it is an active agent that guides and transforms the form. In this context, the physical properties of material are not merely a result of design but also a guiding factor in the process. By documenting their responses in situ, this phase uncovers symbiotic relationships between organisms and materials, redefining authorship as a shared process between disciplines. These insights set the foundation for the next stages, demonstrating how materials can become active mediators between natural and built environments.

Keep Information Alive extends these observations by utilizing AI-driven tools such as Runway, KreaAI, ChatGPT, Stable Diffusion, Vizcom, and Midjourney. This phase explores how morphological patterns and material behaviors can be interpreted and expanded through algorithmic processes. AI is used not as a tool for representation but as an active medium for encoding, analyzing, and evolving material intelligence. As Buehler mentioned "the intersection of artificial and human intelligence is converging towards new methods that systematically mine natural material data for incorporation into synthetic design solutions" (Buehler 2023). Here, authorship emerges from the interplay between designers, computational agents, and material processes, highlighting how design knowledge can be dynamically preserved and transformed. The iterative nature of the process allows for continuous refinement, ensuring that outcomes remain responsive to evolving contexts and challenges.

Digital Crafting advances this approach by constructing transcalar modules, focusing on material behavior and tectonic augmentations. Rather than treating materials as passive substrates, this phase explores their co-creative potential, investigating the dynamic interplay between material possibilities, such as elasticity, stress, porosity, strain, expansion and adaptability, and their capacity to inform and respond to tectonics. By merging data-driven methods with material experimentation, digital crafting serves as both a synthesis and a generative platform, allowing materials to inform and respond to tectonic formations. As Malafouris (2008) discussed with respect to agency there is nothing to be found outside this tension of mediated activity and this is precisely the area to which we should look for its manifestations – human or material. Agency is a property or possession neither of humans nor of nonhumans.

Figure 1: The following image is provided for experimental purposes. It depicts a synthesis of data-driven methodologies and material experimentation in the context of digital crafting. This synthesis functions as a generative platform, whereby materials are able to inform and respond to tectonic formations. It shows materials as active parts of the design process. The behaviour leads to outcomes that can change and improve as a Transcalar Material.

Agency is the relational and emergent product of material engagement. It is not something given but something to become realised.

Embracing process-driven methodologies, *Transcalar Material* illustrates the active participation of materials in co-creation processes. This approach not only reinforces the ecological and architectural relevance of the research but also repositions materials as co-authors, actively contributing to shaping of novel morphologies and ecological futures. As global challenges demand innovative solutions, the *Transcalar Material* process offers a compelling model for addressing complexity through adaptive design. The integration of living organisms and AI-driven methodologies provides a blueprint for sustainable, responsive systems that align with ecological principles.

In this context, the role of materials extends beyond functionality to encompass agency, adaptability, and narrative potential. Reassembling fragments and incorporating lateral perspectives, materials act as active participants in shaping sustainable futures. This process exemplifies a transformative shift in design research, redefining authorship through the active agency of materials. By proposing both speculative prototypes and tangible explorations, the research highlights the potential of hybrid, open-ended outcomes that challenge traditional notions of authority and originality. Integrating interdisciplinary perspectives, embracing process-oriented methodologies, and leveraging the dynamic interplay between natural and artificial systems, this approach challenges traditional paradigms and opens new avenues for innovation. With this framework, materials are not merely tools but vital contributors to the creation of knowledge and the shaping of ecological, architectural, and morphological futures. The designer's role evolves into that of a mediator, fostering collaboration and co-creation within a living knowledge system. Through the redefinition of the relationship between materials and design, *Transcalar Material* illuminates the profound potential of materials as active agents in addressing contemporary challenges and envisioning transformative futures.

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The Productive Infrastructure for Off-Grid Communities

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energy and water sufficient housing, off-grid community, energy justice

Abstract

Climate change and rising energy poverty reclaim the urgency for a new connection between design and energy. Energy justice for vulnerable communities highlights the structural inequalities in energy provision worldwide.

Therefore, this research investigates how to develop energy and water self-sufficient community housing solutions, and the research-by-design methodology is based on a comparative analysis of case studies in the field of self-sufficiency, water reusing cycle and energy production systems in realised housing projects. Furthermore, the research focuses on an integrated design approach towards architectural solutions conceived as infrastructural devices to produce, stock, collect and share energy and water in response to local community needs. This also has the aim of improving the environmental performance of the housing in different ways to maximise the inhabitant's human comfort and minimise energy and water consumption. With a collective approach, the community becomes more responsible, shares resources, and self-produces their energy, shifting from energy and water consumers to producers.

Energy poverty in the EU was defined in a range between 8% and 16% of the EU population by the European Commission in 2024, as the energy poverty definition is a household that could not properly get access to essential energy services (European Commission 2024). The last report about energy poverty defines three essential causes: high-energy expenditures in proportion to the household budget, low levels of income and low energy performance of buildings.

In a capitalistic energy provision context, energy poverty is one of the existing key aspects of inequality based on the distribution system, access to raw materials, and the relation to resources and population needs. The political strategies for this urgent topic are desperate and different: "We will drill, baby, drill," is Donald Trump's first statement, the new former USA president, to ditch the Paris Climate Agreement and achieve the issue of a "national energy emergency" in the USA. As predicted by Ivan Illich, the energy crisis serves as an alibi to centralise more and more production, pollution and its control (Ivan Illich 1974). Although a new dark and not green will come in the future for the USA, the EU is still working on a political view of energy transition to remark on the relevance of the Paris Climate Agreement (United Nations 2015). Furthermore, the European approach is still working on a clean energy transition, and the European Green Deal project is a significant and valuable goal to achieve in 25 years until 2050.

In order to have a genuine energy transition and achieve the EU policies and targets, it is essential to avoid the mistakes from the past, firstly considering energy as an inexhaustible resource, secondly not taking into

account the environment and climate consequences, research and design should play a central role in the essential transition.

Buildings are a large segment of energy consumption. Hence, the research focuses on residence buildings, considering this as a significant sector in the urban context where energy could be rethought in private and collective households.

We assume that energy is a common interest, starting from the energy in our home, and the key aspects are access to energy, distribution, and control of the whole system. In the energy poverty and climate change scenario, the research focuses on a collective housing solution with an energy and water self-production system based on the users' needs.

Therefore, the initial research stage aimed to collect and analyse case studies on built energy self-sufficient housing and water collection from the environment while understanding the difference between the lexicon on this topic: autonomous, self-sufficient and off-grid. The paper shows the main case studies according to their innovative solutions, avoiding only technologies solutions and selecting case studies with an architectural design integrated approach.

The research analysed mainly collective housing case studies, quoting also single unit case studies mainly for their impact on the theoretical backgrounds. Some interviews are part of the case study analysis to investigate their approach and their reflection on the architectural results in a conversation with the designers beyond the projects.

The researcher has selected mainly three case studies: BedZED from 2002 in south London by ZedFactory, the *Solarsiedlung am Schlierberg,* and the Solar Community by Rolf Dish, built in 2006 in Freiburg, both are realised projects and after 20 years, it is now also possible understanding the success and failures of the architectural projects. The last and third one is a most recent project in Zurich. It is an extension project in the Hirzenbach estate, and the project was selected by an architectural competition won by Lütjens Padmanabhan in 2020. The projects extended the existing balconies, and with PV cell patterns, the new balusters define the whole façade; the last project is the most recent and was finalised in October 2024. (Eleanor Beaumont 2025, 100–109). The three projects are analysed and compared for the design approaches, the bioclimatic strategies and energy and water solutions considering the context and users.

The research by design considers the energy production chains as a driver for an integrated design process, and the final design project is an infrastructure for the collective housing. The infrastructural system is influenced by some Japanese metabolism principles, particularly the case studies of the Agricultural City by Kisho Kurokawa.

Taking inspiration from the analysed case studies, the research explores an information-based design methodology that contains both the infrastructural and technological aspects of an interconnected architectural system.

The production function is based on an infrastructural system that is designed for collective housing and has the role of producing renewable

energy, from the sun or the wind, at the same time, collecting rainwater for the community water needs. Furthermore, the infrastructure improves the building performance for maximising the users' comfort and minimising the energy and water consumption. As a double driver, the production and the performance, the infrastructure is designed as an architectural element that could be applied to an existing collective building or as an integrated design for a new collective housing project. The infrastructure connects design and energy, combining new technologies and community needs and improving housing performance. Nevertheless, the infrastructure is an architectural integrated solution related to renewable energy (production, sharing system of stocking and distribution), water optimisation and collection (collecting rainwater, reuse system, stocking, filter system and distribution). Design and strategy point to new ways of how and where renewable energies could be used and integrated.

The project is tested in two different contexts, Milan and London, as a location for the design project. The project's users are students and academics in a mixed programme that includes single-unit and family housing units to test the community energy and water needs for the collective housing.

The design project is based on a grid and modular system; at the same time, the system is adaptive and informed by environmental elements and the context. The design has an incremental principle, where the community, based on their needs, could update or modify the infrastructure as an open system.

Therefore, the research paper will contribute to the conference debate about authorship, reflecting on the open design context. In this circumstance, the meaning of authorship changes or evolves when the design project has principles of openness.

The design that led all the research, focus on a project for a residential community and how the project could be changed by the community needs, time by time, or how the community could interact with the physical project and eventually augment it. This has some principles similar to Elemental by Alejandro Aravena, as Villa Verde Housing has the principle of incremental construction based on needs and financial sources (Aravena et al. 2018).

Nevertheless, one more reference came from “the open work” of Umberto Eco, where the ‘opera aperta’ and the openness is defined by the active approach of the consumer, the user. The ‘opera aperta’ is defined as a structure that could decompose in many relations (Eco 2016).

Learning from the above references, the infrastructure is an open project where the community could change the structure based on the users’ needs, and the structure could be partially incremented: the energy production system could be updated over time.

Considering the role of the community essential, from consumers becoming producers and proactively involved in the governance to sharing, stoking, and distributing the sources; this approach must be taught in a circular way, where energy and water are available in a local and renewable way; with of course a reconsideration of energy consumption.

In a contemporary scenario of energy justice, this approach overturns the system to avoid inequality in the energy sector. The urban impact of this approach is the decentralisation of energy production, where local communities become independent from urban energy and water supply, using the same footprint of the collective housing.

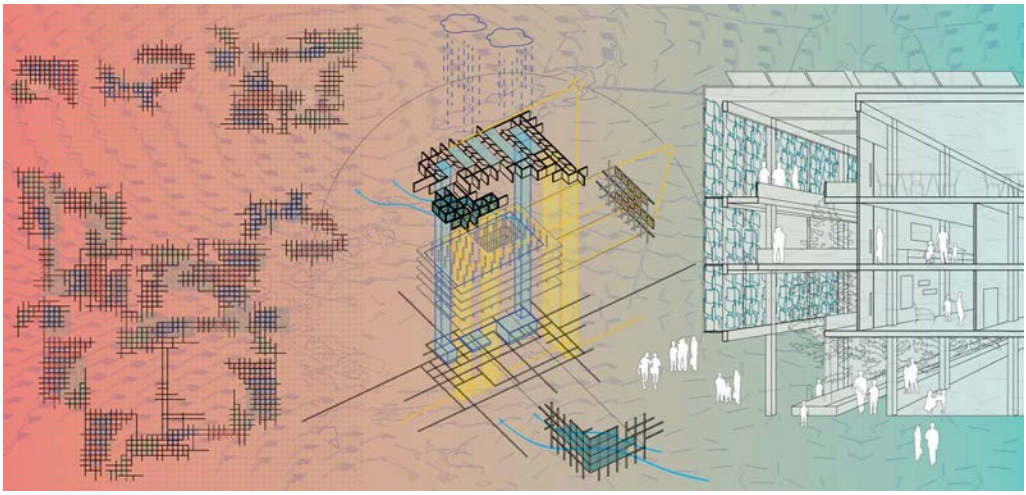

Figure 1: A scenario of energy and water positive infrastructure: incremental system concept plan, the energy production and water collection diagram, an inhabited infrastructure. Image by the author.

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‘Making-with’ Transdisciplinary Experiments in Authorship

Colm mac Aoidh, Trace research group

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sympoiesis, transdisciplinary research, experimental workshops

Abstract

This paper sets out from a sympoietic understanding of authorship as an ongoing, collaborative process of constant evolution. It explores how literary strategies and material procedures, including text and image manipulation, can be integrated into architectural pedagogy as a way to stimulate students and practitioners to critically reconsider authorship and originality when working with the existing built environment. Through a series of experimental workshops, it investigates how reciprocal transdisciplinary borrowing between literature and architecture can influence adaptive reuse practices and design thinking, reflecting on possible future applications and implications.

Introduction

What does it mean to be an author, to be original? These questions carry particular relevance for contemporary architects practicing in a reality where the majority of our urban environment has already been built. The renovation and adaptation of existing buildings currently accounts for half of all construction in the EU (Architects' Council of Europe 2023, 28), a percentage that is only expected to increase (European Commission 2020).

This shift towards practices of adaptation and reuse brings with it a blurring of authorial boundaries, not just across time, through working with previous and future authors, but also across space, as more collaborative modes of practice question previously-accepted notions of a single, autonomous author-architect.

This has been accompanied by a simultaneous troubling of disciplinary boundaries. Kasia Nawratek highlights architecture's propensity "to explore beyond its disciplinary boundaries, and constantly probe and redefine its field of exploration in search for inspiration and better understanding of its own practices and tools" (Nawratek 2022, 2). Sally Stone notes how architectural practices of adaptive reuse draw upon "a collage of different sources [...] including installation art, fine art, curation, interior design, and urban design" (Stone 2023, 477). Jane Rendell and Klaske Havik both emphasise the particularly close, symbiotic relationship between architecture and writing, identifying potential for transposing literary methods to architectural research, education and practice (Rendell 2005, Havik 2006).

Sympoiesis, or 'making-with'

Embracing this transdisciplinary reciprocity, the research project Adapt, Reuse (www.adaptreuse.org) engages textual and non-textual sources from within and beyond architecture as a way to develop a theoretical foundation that can support and reinforce practices of adaptive reuse.

Representing an exercise in *sympoiesis*, or "making-with" (Haraway 2016), it is guided by a sympoietic understanding of authorship as "a collaborative, multi-authored process of permanent evolution, an ongoing dialogue in time and space" (mac Aoidh 2024, 161).

This paper discusses a series of experimental workshops organised within the framework of the Adapt, Reuse project that were developed following a suggestion from author and translator Kate Briggs. Inviting participants from different backgrounds to engage with adaptive reuse in a collective setting, these hands-on, practical workshops actively investigate the extent to which reciprocal 'borrowing' or transposing of terms and strategies between architecture and literature allow participants to explore, reframe and ultimately redefine concepts such as creativity, originality and authorship through embodied, co-creative acts of adaptive reuse.

Methodology

Two iterations of the workshop have been held so far. The first was organised in collaboration with Dr. Elke Couchez as part of the Master seminar in Advanced Architectural Theories at KU Leuven Sint-Lucas Ghent. All of the 25 participants were Master students in architecture of a similar age (early twenties). The group was a diverse mix of Belgian and international students from all over the world.

The second iteration, organised in collaboration with the doctoral school at Hasselt University, was an inter-university and transdisciplinary initiative aimed at junior researchers. It brought together 17 participants from six European universities, a mix of PhD students, post-doctoral researchers and professors, with diverse backgrounds that included architecture, visual art, decolonial studies, environmental engineering, literature, and linguistics. As well as being more disciplinarily diverse, the participants in the second workshop varied both in age and in the stage of their academic and professional careers.

Both iterations of the workshop followed the same structure, with a few differences. Since the Ghent edition took place as part of the syllabus of a weekly academic seminar, its duration was limited to the seminar's usual three-hour timeslot. By contrast, the Hasselt edition was a standalone activity that took place over the course of a whole day. This meant that due to time constraints, certain elements (such as the *cadavre exquis* collective writing exercise) only happened during the extended second iteration. Another major difference was that the Ghent edition was led only by Colm mac Aoidh, while the Hasselt edition was co-led with poet, translator, and author Dr. Mia You.

— Both editions opened with mac Aoidh sharing a brief introduction to adaptive reuse and the ideas behind the workshop. In Hasselt, this was followed by Mia You presenting her work and practice in a short lecture that also introduced examples of iterative transformations in poetry and literature.

— Participants were then invited to choose and read one 'as found' text from a selection of printed pamphlets. Each pamphlet introduced

duced a lemma – an action verb describing an architectural strategy – illustrated through an intervention in a real-life architectural project of adaptive reuse. The lemmas and interventions presented were:

- BREAKING THROUGH to excavate and gain height | *Atelier Théâtre Jean Vilar, Louvain-La-Neuve, Belgium, by Ouest architecture*
- OPENING UP to connect to daylight and the surroundings | *House in Laveu, Liège, by Simon Pirlot Architecte in collaboration with Luc Nelles Architectes*
- STRIPPING BACK to investigate and expose | *Southover House, Lewes, UK, by Material Cultures*
- REARRANGING to recompose existing interior elements | *Karreveld School, Brussels, Belgium, by AgwA*
- REMOVING & REPLACING to gain space and light | *Arlon-Trier EQ, Brussels, Belgium, by ATAMA (formerly TRANS), Bureau Bouwtechniek, Captif, CES, Daidalos Peutz and Util*

- When they had chosen a pamphlet, the participants were given ten minutes to read it at their own pace. Once everyone had read their text, we had a ten minute exercise in free writing to open up their thinking and collect and record their immediate thoughts on the lemmas following the prompt: *What does reading this text make you think of, does it spark any thoughts, associations or connections in your brain?*
- Round 1: Sitting in groups per lemma, participants were asked to rework and transform their chosen pamphlets – this could be by making an annotation, a citation, a drawing, a footnote, a translation, a link to a reference… however they wished to respond to the material. The brief was deliberately left open in order to avoid set expectations or predefined outputs that might unduly influence participants' responses.
- Round 2: After a short group reflection, everyone swapped their work with another participant who had been working on a different lemma, and the whole exercise began all over again, with participants this time responding to and transforming the already-reauthored pamphlets of their peers. Following this second round, everyone was again invited to share their reflections in a group discussion.
- At the end of the Hasselt workshop, in smaller groups of four or five, participants were asked to collectively redefine the terms explored in the workshop in a written exercise of *cadavre exquis*.

Outcomes

Participants' responses to the pamphlets took a variety of forms across both iterations of the workshop. While participants were permitted to use their laptops and had access to printing facilities, only a few chose to take advantage of this, with the majority opting for an analogue approach using only the materials at hand.

First iteration, Sint-Lucas Ghent: Unsurprisingly, since the participants of the first workshop were all Master students in architecture, they mainly

engaged with the material through architectural terms and techniques such as sketches, plans, and sections. Some students chose to work collaboratively in small groups to produce a shared output rather individual artefacts, something which the brief deliberately neither encouraged nor discouraged.

Many of the responses during this edition took the form of a critique of the architectural projects described, with participants including references to other examples that they were familiar with. Others chose not to focus on the projects but instead took the lemmas or actions as starting points to reflect on wider issues around architecture and design.

The students reworked the pamphlets by writing directly on them, annotating them, underlining sentences, crossing out words, sticking on Post-its, cutting out sections, folding pages, sticking on photos and print-outs, photocopying, attaching new pages… Their interactions with the source material were often literal and physical interpretations of the lemmas themselves.

At the same time, the transformations during this edition of the workshop remained somewhat reserved: students tended to add to the pamphlets rather than subtract from them, and additions were mostly taped or stuck on in such a way that they could be easily removed, leaving practically all of the pamphlets more-or-less intact at the end of the workshop.

Some of the participants in the first round left notes or questions on their pamphlet for the people who would be working on it in the second round, as a way of opening up a conversation with those following. A degree of dialogue could be observed between participants who engaged with what had been drawn and written by their peers in the previous round, but this was by no means always the case – sometimes participants chose to ignore the previous interventions, or even cover or remove them.

Second iteration, Hasselt University: The participants in the second iteration were less reserved in how they engaged with the pamphlets, going much further in transforming them. As happened during the previous edition, many participants imitated the architectural gestures described in the pamphlets, but unlike in Ghent these reworkings tended to be more abstract and suggestive rather than descriptive, with hardly any architectural references. They also employed a greater variety of techniques, including collage, montage, removing elements, peeling or scraping back sections, folding, creating pop-ups, incorporating *objets trouvés*, even soaking the pamphlets in water. The participants experimented more with literary forms, such as erasure poems, cut and paste poetry, even a play in nine acts.

All of the participants chose to work on individual pamphlets, with none collaborating to produce a shared artefact. While in Ghent most of the interventions made were non-invasive and reversible, by the end of the Hasselt iteration, none of the pamphlets remained intact, with many barely recognisable compared to their original state. Sometimes transformations made by participants during the first round were incorporated into the second round of transformations, but in other cases they were also removed or worked over.

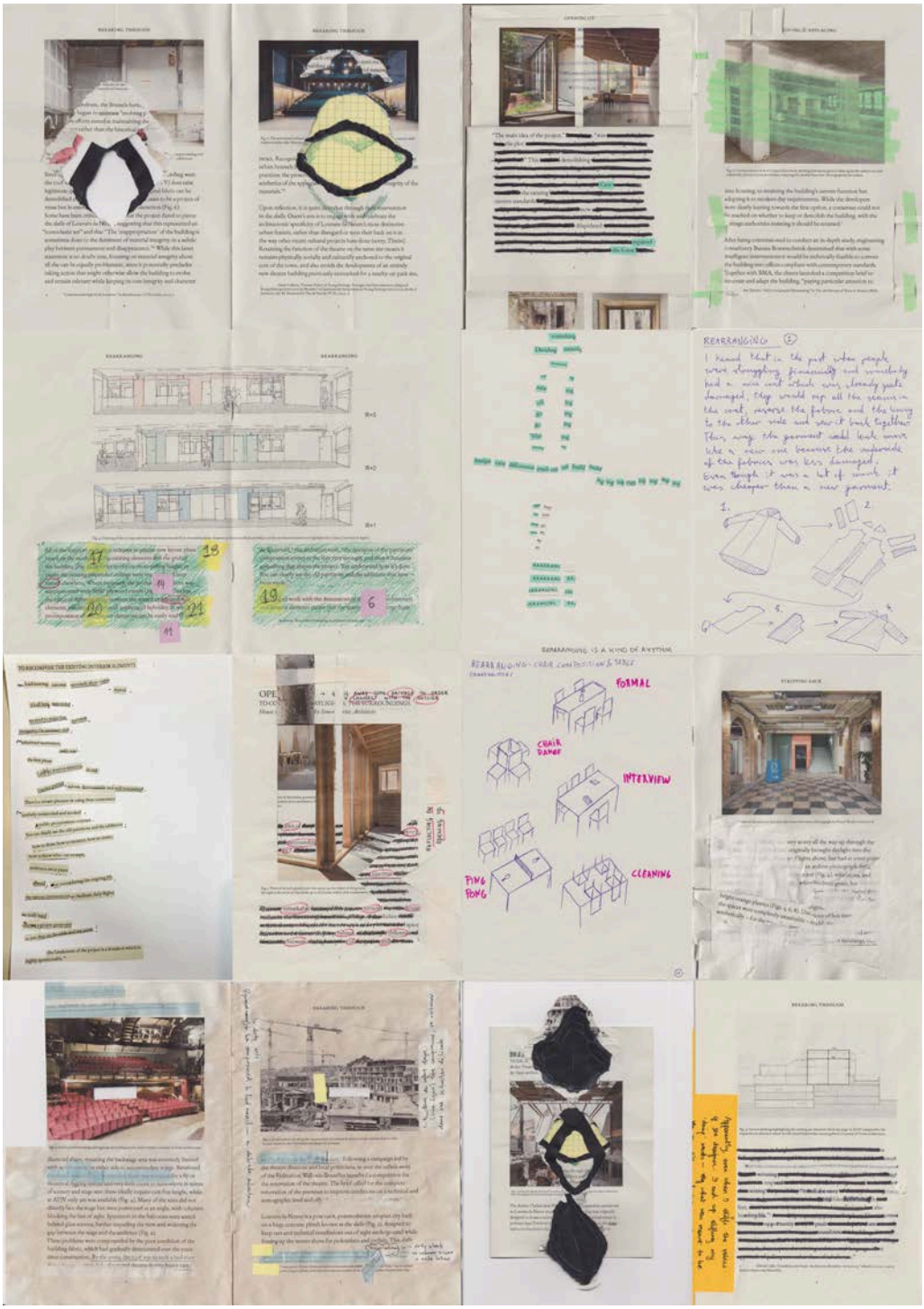

Figure 1: Collage of the collectively authored and iteratively transformed printed pamphlets produced during the workshops.

Pedagogical impact and skill development

Most of the workshop participants had never experimented with free writing before, with many commenting on how *literally* freeing they found it in terms of helping them to loosen up and jumpstart their thought process. According to one, "this stream of consciousness and associations happens automatically when I read but I don't usually record it… I will definitely use the technique again as a way to capture ideas and feelings." Angeliki Sioli and Kristen Kelsch have observed how employing these kinds of literary techniques as a generative tool in the design studio can help "to eliminate fears of the blank page and struggles which come with starting new ideas and spatial inspirations" (Sioli and Kelsch 2022, 62).

Students during the Ghent workshop in particular appreciated the hands-on approach as "another way of analysing that we don't get the chance to do very often". Their enthusiasm underscores the importance of embodied experiments that enable theoretical ideas and concepts to be explored physically in a practical, hands-on manner. As Nawratek notes, approaches that embrace the inherent "messiness, openness, and uncertainty" of the creative process can offer an alternative to the stifling anxiety and lack of confidence that often result from rigid learning frameworks and narrowly pre-determined outcomes (Nawratek 2022, 86).

Another student remarked that it was refreshing to discover an architectural project through reading rather than looking at images or drawings. "It was nice to have the projects described by text – it is another way to understand it, the way it guides you or leads you to notice a particular aspect or slant". As a lineage of scholars have argued, in contrast to the passive consumption of visual representations of space, literary representations require the active participation of the reader, who "slips into the author's place" (de Certeau 1988, xxi) to construct in their imagination the space being described, thereby becoming "a producer, an appropriator, a maker, an assembler" (Bloomer 1995, 13; Havik 2014, 105).

One key takeaway from both iterations of the workshops was how effective the architectural interventions embodied by the lemmas proved to be when applied as methods to engage with text in a material way. According to a student from the first workshop, "the fact that they were verbs or 'doing words' meant they became strategies to interact with the pamphlets," while another participant from the second workshop commented that "formally imitating the gestures from the lemmas lets you get closer to the core of the text". This exchange represents a form of cross-appropriation, when one field or discipline 'borrows' a practice previously generated by another, embodying it differently to discover new, unintended uses (Spinosa, Flores, and Dreyfus 1995, 14).

Reflections on authorship

Across both iterations of the workshop, participants almost unanimously found it easier to engage with the unedited printed pamphlets during the first round than with the already reworked artefacts during the second. The reauthored pamphlet "felt like a creatively-owned thing, less reproducible than the original text and therefore harder to edit", perhaps because participants were now "confronted with its uniqueness, that is, its aura" (Benjamin 1986 [1968], 223) which in turn forced them to reflect on the fact that their own work would someday be changed by those following them. Benjamin's definition of the aura "as the unique phenomenon of a distance" here seems very relevant, since for the workshop participants, the level of difficulty in intervening on an authored work directly corresponded to the distance and degree of separation from the previous author in space and in time – the further removed, the easier.

The participants' understandable reluctance to undo, modify or destroy the work of their peers, despite feeling their creativity hampered by the previously-made interventions made, reveals a tension between finding one's own voice as an author and respecting the voice of preceding authors, something most participants had not yet encountered or considered. As Nawratek points out, "one of the biggest challenges in architectural education is to anticipate and prepare students for conditions of future practice" (Nawratek 2022, 79). The experience of the workshops so far suggests contemporary practitioners are not necessarily equipped with the skills or experience needed to engage with existing sites and buildings, since working with previously-authored materials presents a set of challenges quite distinct from working with a blank sheet.

While these findings demonstrate that transdisciplinary exercises of adaptation and reuse encourage critical interrogation of accepted notions of authorship and originality, there remains an urgent need to update and expand both our definition of what authorship can encompass, and our understanding of how it can be shared and distributed. The integration of collaborative, generative literary strategies offers intriguing possibilities for architectural pedagogy and practice that future iterations of the workshop intend to investigate further.

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Performance as Architectural Production in the 21st century

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Abstract

The research investigates performances as a form of architectural production in the 21st century. It focuses on performances enacted and designed by architects in the context of exhibitions, questioning them both as projects and as media.

By unfolding a partial yet global panorama of authors the research builds an atlas of 21st century performance-as-architecture. By doing so, it positions live events, enacted situations, and collaborative interactions as legitimate modes of architectural production.

In such cases, the outcome (and the reception) of the project lies in a gray area between the architect's authorial design and its relationship with different types of audiences and their spectrum of participation to the work. The objective is to generate a more nuanced critical reflection with which to address the vicissitudes of collaborative authorship and spectatorship in relation to this type of performative interventions which advocate for a shift of values and the construction of new narratives.

Performance and architecture

As art historian and performance art curator RoseLee Goldberg writes "architecture is often seen as a container of history and culture, a close-up of the barometer of shifting politics, economics, and the sociology of everyday life: [...] marketplace or sacred arena, choreographed ritual or impromptu gathering, performance and architecture are always entwined" (Goldberg 2019, 6). Expanding on this relationship between architecture and performance, quoting Bernard Tschumi's essay *Violence of Architecture*, architecture should be considered as a place that "confronts space and action" (Tschumi 1994), lying in the interplay of the built space, human beings, and other activities. By "violence" it's not intended the "brutality that destroys physical or emotional integrity, but a metaphor for the intensity of a relationship between individuals and their surrounding spaces" (ivi, 44).

Still addressing "violence" meaning the high degree of involvement with the space around us, Mark Wigley wishes that "to speak of the unspeakable violence of space will necessarily be to disturb the terms of traditional discourse and make available new ways of talking" (Wigley 1993, 7). As he further explains, "it is not simply a matter of addressing a different aspect of space: rather it is a matter of finding a different form of address" (ibid.). The hypothesis of this research is that within this quest to find new forms of addressing complex spatial dynamics, the medium of the performance can be considered as such: "performance is demonstrative. It produces the evidence. It is a probationary device. [...] And also, performance is something that builds an audience around it – witness" (Jaque 2019, 110).

Performance and architecture exhibitions

The research draws on architecture exhibitions (in a broad sense) as context for the investigation: on the one hand the more and more increasing *eventification* of architecture exhibitions (Stierli 2019) has shown that what's been exhibited tackles architecture considering it in an expanded field, *producing events which produce events within themselves*. And on the other hand, "Biennals and Triennials offer the context to stage performance and experiment with it as another form of representation. They provide great opportunities not only to initiate urgent discussions, but also to act as platforms to experiment with new languages for knowledge, production and dissemination. There is a sort of aggregation between the logic and representations of the traditions associated with the arts, and the logic and representations traditionally associated with architecture" (Pestellini Laparelli 2019, 66).

Furthermore, the exhibition space has been proven to be a space for knowledge productions (Gigliotti 2015, CCA 2019), experimentations and media evolutions (Rattenbury 2002, Colomina 2013, Pelkonen 2015 and 2018, Szacka 2019, Jaque and Colomina 2020), criticality (Zardini 2011, Arrhenius, et al. 2014, Pestellini Laparelli 2019, Watson 2021). Here, the relationship between the object (on display) and the observer follows different rules than those of *architecture*, which is usually experienced "in a state of distraction" (Benjamin 1936, 18). With live performances or events, spectatorship is designed according to an even more limited timeframe, in which the attention is catalyzed and built around the *happening*.

This relationship (between architecture and audience, but not only) has provided fertile ground for the architects to rethink their own discipline within an *expanded field*, where the disciplinary boundaries of architecture and art are blurred (Gadanho 2013, 34). Therefore, *performance* is not intended as a discipline, but it's considered as a "form of questioning disciplinary boundaries" (Tschumi 2015, 11). Despite "by its very nature performance defies precise or easy definition beyond the simple declaration that it is live art by artists and any strict definition would immediately negate the possibility of performance itself" (Goldberg 2001, 9) the attempt to define the term being discussed seems necessary. By *performances*, as simple as it may sound, are intended actions, happenings, events, or staged situations.

They may or may not include bodies; but their intrinsic nature lies in a shared, even if furtive, experience. Here, performance is understood as a live experience or action involving a specific and deliberate theatricality, even minimal, in the power fields encompassing performers (bodies or ephemeral constructions), viewers and the action scaring out. An intentionality is required (Aubin and Mínguez Carrasco 2019, 12).

A precedent has been set

In 2012, the (at the time) architecture curator of MoMA (NY) Pedro Gadanho made the museum acquire for the first time in history a performance as part of the architecture collection (Aubin 2025, Gadanho, 2025). It was a piece by Andrés Jaque / Office for Political Innovation titled *IKEA Disobedients*, a performance that "reappropriated IKEA's transmedia strategy to empower alternative domesticities" in response to the "world's most important architectural actor" (Jaque 2012).

The first acquisition of a performance in the department of architecture of a contemporary affirmed museum represents a precedent or rather a first record that legitimates *architecture performance* as a valid format of architectural production. For a performance to be acquired it's not enough to have the video recording of what's happened: many other materials must be included among the data, including a statement and an interview with the author, in order for the performance to be reenacted in the future (Gadanho 2025, Galloway 2025). Therefore, the research adopts this framework as method to map, collect and study performances. Furthermore, not only the exhibition as context for the inquiry offers forms of records of the event via its ephemera (information, time, author and actors) but it also allows for a trackability of the experience thanks to the people who participated.

By unpacking and unfolding a non-traditional archive of projects composed of miscellaneous material, it seems right to ask whether these performances are projects on their own, media to display spatial issues or forms of representation of architecture.

Performance as architecture

This section presents contemporary authors who design, enact and engage with *performances* as architectural production. The partial display of this atlas *in the making* unpacks three projects. These authors may take different forms, reminding of the *Drago* of Alessandro Mendini (2006), in which he depicts himself as a multi-species creature, which aim is not design *per se* but rather design as a media to *communicate* (Mendini 1985), by learning from other fields and assembling a new operative body.

Be it the architect who becomes a theatrical plays' director (Andrés Jaque 2011, 2015 and 2021), the actor who presents their critic (Beatriz Colomina 2018; Forensic Architecture, 2018) or enact an alternative story (Cooking Sections, 2016; Something Fantastic, 2023), the conductor whose audience creates the event (Matilde Cassani 2018), the activists who occupy public spaces (Stalker 2000; Post Disaster Rooftops 2018), the choreographer who delegates performances (Didier Fiúza Faustino 2013; SO-IL 2018; Sumayya Vally 2023). Enacting spatial dynamics becomes a way to move across scales of time and space and to construct new narratives.

These performances of the 21st century could be understood as *transmedia architecture* (Jaque and Colomina 2020), which, commonly mixed

with other elements, objects and technology, relies on the critical narration embodied in the event and its experience.

The theatre play

In 1977 Charles and Ray Eames designed *Powers of Ten*, a nine-minute film intended to promote a human centered universe focused on the ideas of home and American neighborhood. As described by Beatriz Colomina, this *transmedia architectural weapon* (Jaque and Colomina 2020) was used to present a precise political narration of the 70s American society. In a similar way but through different media, in 2013, at the Lisbon Architecture Triennial, Andrés Jaque performed *Superpowers of Ten*, a research-based reenactment of the 1977 video, as "architectural response to the Eameses' centered universe". On this occasion, the performance became a way and a format to discuss architectural concepts against the 1977 vision of the world (Jaque 2020).

Here, the audience was invited to arrive at a specific time and place: the project relied on performers using props and carrying out actions to draw the audience's attention to a scenario unfolding in front of them. Afterwards, the performance was reenacted in other cultural manifestations and institutions. During performances, in these temporary constellations of bodies, architecture functions primarily as a medium instead of an end (Otero Verzier 2019). The author partially delegates the visual component of the work and the emotional response of the audience to the actors enacting its narration (which every time are different, and local): their bodies on stage – not the one of the director, or author – are the ones who present, tell and embody the new narrative proposed.

The re-enactment

In 2018, in one room of the Dutch pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennial curated by Marina Otero Verzier, Beatriz Colomina performed a reenactment of the iconic John Lennon and Yoko Ono *Bed-in for Peace* 1969 protest, held from March 25 to 31 at the Amsterdam Hilton Hotel. A sign on the pavilion door read: "Here the bed – a horizontal architecture for protest, work, production and reproduction – becomes a *fucktory*, anticipating the working bed of today". Inside, architects and curators put on pajamas and sit around the table while waiting to lay on the bed with Colomina, who interviews each of them for ten minutes. Together, the construct new narratives around the meaning of the bed today and our relationship with work and labor. They are surrounded by journalists, professionals and tourists armed with cameras and smartphones, broadcasting to other smartphones and laptops, in a loop of work, production and reproduction. In this live event, performers in pajamas turn into the audience, and the audience, impersonating the cloud of journalists surrounding Lennon and Ono, into performers. Meanwhile, Instagrammers move around searching for the perfect selfie background, also becoming part of the set (Otero Verzier 2019).

The performance harbors a critical potential beyond the textual or the visual and toward the live, the spatial and immersive: the narrative is unfolded and delivered as a play. In the *attention-seeking reality* we are all immersed, in which the audience's attention is catalyzed by action rather than by images, "in the 21th century, a performance of this kind is just another way to address that architecture, as valid as a model, a review, or a rendering" (Aubin and Carrasco 2019, 22).

The event

The same year, by further embracing the scale of the urban ritual and making the audience of the exhibition the central part of the work, Matilde Cassani presents *Tutto* for the nomadic Biennial Manifesta 12, in Palermo. She orchestrated a gigantic and theatrical religious performance in the form of a daily firework as a celebration of Palermo multiculturalism. She designed a new *transreligious symbology* in the forms of hanging drapes – a local tradition – featuring divinities caring both Christian and Tamil Symbols. The drapes were hanging from historic buildings in the center of the Sicilian enacted as a corniche to the celebration. *Tutto* was a live performance, showcasing an update of cultural traditions in relation to the contemporary city physical and social structure.

Rather than designed, the project was scripted and constructed as a play in which bodies passing by became the architecture. The bodies involved are here a heterogenous ensemble of visitors who were aware of the event and distracted audience passing by the site: following Judith Butler's *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, the gathering of *bodies en masse* performs collectivity, embodying shared experiences and assert political presence (Butler 2015).

Authors, audiences and new narratives

It seems that against the *slowness* of architecture, performance acts swift and loudly, raising awareness, creating debates, displaying urgent topics of and around the architectural debate. These projects serve as a critical lens to unpack a situation and uncover hidden agendas inscribed within the built environment. The bodies of the authors, the audience involved, and their act are a vehicle for materializing architectural concepts, preserving ambiguity, and acting directly in the architectural discourse and – broader – in the cultural debate. Such enactments generate novel perspectives and vocabularies for rethinking architectural practice: according to an Actor-Network Theory's view of architecture, the contemporary project could be understood as "a *navigation* through a controversial *datascape*" and therefore "regulating different intensities of engagement, redirecting users' attention, mixing and putting people together, *concentrating* flows of actors and *distributing* them so as *to compose* a productive force in time-space" (Latour and Yaneva 2017, 109).

The result of these multiple forms of negotiation is a revised conception of authorship: no longer singular and heroic, but rather multiple, fluid,

emergent. Such a definition relocates the agency of the conception and realization of architecture projects with a collective of multitasking actors where the reciprocal claim between author and work is “not mere romantic cliché, but a matter of engagement” (Avermaete et al. 2023, 5). This process is accompanied by the “emergence of an alternative narrative” (ibid.).

The products and the cultural reception of these practices lie in a "gray area" between the architect’s (as author) design and the audience’s participation, questioning the rigidity and the structure of a project which is scripted or designed yet enacted, and therefore *a live thing* with a degree of unpredictability. “As Roland Barthes reminded us in 1968, authorships (of all kinds) are multiple and continually indebted to others: what matters are the ideas, experiences and possibilities that result from these interactions” (Bishop 2012, 9). Within these projects, of performance-as-architecture, authorship becomes an often collective and fluid matter, where the audience is crucial and it informs the performance, which – in turn – displays, critics, mediates and becomes itself architecture.

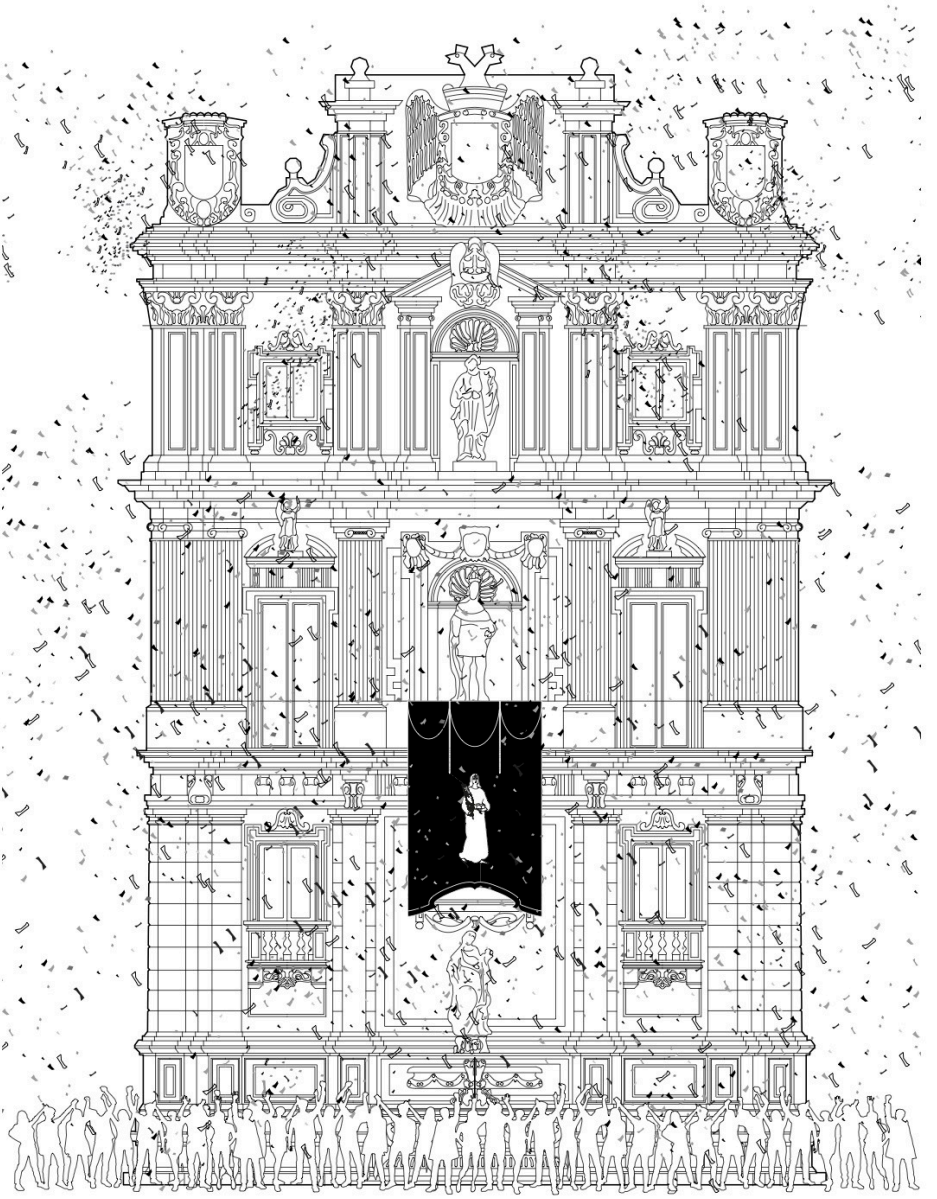

Figure 1: Matilde Cassani, *Tutto*, Manifesta 12, Palermo, 2018.

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Exploring the Architecture for Urban Air Mobility An Investigation from Collage to AI-Generated Image

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urban air mobility, collage, artificial intelligence

Abstract

This research explores the intersection of Urban Air Mobility and Artificial Intelligence, investigating AI's role in speculative design methodologies and its potential to conceptualize new infrastructural architecture. Given that vertiports lack built precedents, AI-generated imaginary is a tool for spatial experimentation, multimodal integration, and architectural speculation. Drawing on the historical practice of collage as an avant-garde design tool, this study examines the transition from manual compositional techniques to AI generative processes. The research tests how different AI platforms interpret prompts and influence design speculation. However, while AI enables rapid visualization of UAM infrastructures, it raises critical concerns about authorship, aesthetic bias, and the reinforcement of stereotypical futuristic imaginary. This study ultimately positions AI not as a replacement for architectural intuition but as a tool for curating urban futures, demanding active critical engagement to ensure its meaningful application in design.

Institutional framework

The research[1] is developed within the framework of Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR)[2], part of the European Union's Next Generation EU initiative, aligning with Spoke 1[3] under the MOST — Centro Nazionale per la Mobilità Sostenibile[4].

Introduction

Urban Air Mobility (UAM), initially introduced in 2016, is reshaping the future of urban transportation by introducing electric vertical take-off and landing (eVTOL) systems, offering new possibilities for urban connectivity and efficiency (Holden and Goel 2016). Unlike traditional transit hubs, vertiports lack built precedents[5], making them a peculiar architectural and infrastructural challenge. Their integration into cities raises questions about spatial organization, multimodal connectivity, and urban adaptability, requiring innovative approaches to architecture and design.

Simultaneously, Artificial Intelligence (AI) transforms architectural workflows, providing new spatial exploration and design tools. AI encompasses various approaches to intelligent behavior, but the rational agent model – where AI optimizes decision-making under uncertainty – is widely accepted (Russell and Norvig, 2010). AI-generated images enable rapid testing of spatial configurations, urban scenarios, and infrastructures within architectural design, expanding architectural experimentation beyond conventional methodologies.

This study examines the evolving relationship between human intent and algorithmic autonomy, questioning whether AI serves merely as a representational tool or if it introduces new spatial logic beyond human

intuition. AI challenges traditional notions of architectural authorship, shifting creativity from direct form-making to prompt-based[6]. Selecting, refining, and adapting AI-generated outputs becomes critical in decision-making, blurring the boundaries between human and algorithmic creativity.

Through the case of UAM, the aim is to understand if AI-driven methodologies can generate new designs. As an unbuilt infrastructure, vertiports allow for experimentation at the intersection of airspace technologies and architecture, offering a unique opportunity to push the boundaries of architectural vision while addressing the future of new air mobility systems.

Objectives

This research explores the intersection of Urban Air Mobility and Artificial Intelligence by investigating how AI can aid in conceptualizing and testing new infrastructure types without historical examples. Vertiports present a new opportunity to examine how AI speculative design can inform urban integration, spatial configurations, and multimodal connectivity.

Building on using collage as an avant-garde tool in architectural experimentation, this study examines the transition from manual compositional techniques to AI generative processes. To understand whether AI's ability to interpolate and extrapolate from existing datasets generates new architectural paradigms or merely reorganizes pre-existing forms.

By examining AI's impact on design methodologies, these research questions are raising up:

How does AI-generated imaginary contribute to the conceptualization of new infrastructure?

How does AI shift architectural authorship from a human-led process to a human-machine collaboration?

What are the implications of AI in the design-driven research methodology?

Through a combination of theoretical reading and AI-generated design exploration, the aim is to place AI within the discourse on emerging infrastructure, demonstrating its potential as a tool for envisioning and testing urban futures in ways that extend beyond traditional design methodologies.

Changing paradigms in infrastructure architecture

Infrastructure has long been a driving force in shaping cities, influencing movement, connectivity, and economic development. Unlike traditional architecture, which is defined by form and program, infrastructure functions as a networked system, prioritizing efficiency, adaptability, and logistical functionality. Historically, infrastructure followed a linear model,

with centralized hubs directing movement through fixed routes. However, movement is no longer structured linearly but as a set of choices articulated for a series of alternatives (Mosco 2005). This shift toward distributed mobility networks has transformed transportation hubs into multifunctional urban spaces, integrating commerce, business, and public services.

This evolution is evident in airports and ports, which have expanded beyond transit functions into economic and logistical powerhouses (Bhatjia 2024), highlighting how they are crucial instruments of globalization, facilitating the seamless flow of goods and labor. Infrastructure extends beyond terrestrial landscapes, shaping global mobility networks and geopolitical strategies (Toscano 2024). These expansions reflect mobility as a defining feature of contemporary urbanism, and mobility, like consumption, has become an inalienable absolute value. As cities become more complex, mobility infrastructures must evolve to respond to growing demands for efficiency, sustainability, and seamless integration within urban environments.

UAM represents a new frontier in this evolving landscape, shifting from ground-based to aerial mobility solutions in the urban context. UAM introduces a vertical dimension to urban movement, fundamentally altering how cities manage congestion and spatial organization. As a result, vertiports – key infrastructural nodes enabling UAM – become a critical element in this new phase of mobility development. Their introduction follows the trajectory of infrastructural transformation, where transport hubs evolve into multifunctional spaces, integrating technology, logistics, and urban services.

As infrastructure adapts to emerging technologies, the nodes project shifts the focus onto language, reopening discussions on the connection between the form of architecture and its functionality (Maffioletti 2005). This shift allows for new spatial configurations and hybrid typologies. Vertiports lack built precedents, making them a ground for experimental design solutions that redefine how infrastructure integrates into the urban fabric. Their development signals a fundamental shift in the relationship between mobility, infrastructure, and the city.

Speculative tools for envisioning technological futures in architecture

Throughout history, architects have relied on visual techniques to explore the impact of new technologies on the built environment. In the 1960s, collage became a fundamental tool for architectural experimentation, particularly in the work of Archigram, which used it to depict radical urban futures shaped by emerging technological advancements. Archigram, frequently utilizing collage – a medium strongly linked to the avant-garde – became a pivotal force in the renewal of avant-garde architectural discourse. Plug-In City, a walking megastructure, and high-tech urban environments were not purely theoretical but deeply rooted in the empirical activity of drawing. This process was constituted more through the empirical activity of drawing than the contemplative

abstraction of theory (Sadler 2005). Archigram projected alternative architectural realities through collage, visualizing how futuristic technologies could redefine the relationship between architecture, infrastructure, and urban space.

Much like collage in the 1960s, AI-generated imaginary serves as a contemporary theoretical tool, enabling architects to visualize the impact of emerging mobility systems on cities. Just as collage once challenged conventional spatial narratives (Rowe and Koetter 1983), AI allows for exploring new infrastructural paradigms, providing a way to anticipate and critically engage with future urban transformations before they materialize. AI's ability to interpolate and extrapolate from existing datasets creates a unique architectural aesthetic. AI-generated design operates through latent space navigation, producing hybrid spatial conditions that can feel familiar and, at the same time, radically new (Del Campo and Manninger 2022). One step further to understand how AI works is introducing the concept of machine hallucination, a phenomenon where the algorithm generates unexpected spatial forms beyond the input data. AI hallucinations are artifacts that do not strictly exist within the input data but emerge from the algorithm's attempt to generate coherent imaginary (Maynez et al. 2020). This shift moves AI from a tool of replication to a tool of invention, producing forms that challenge traditional design intuition. The transition from college to AI images represents a shift in architectural authorship and agency. While collage is a manual, deliberate composition of images, AI introduces a level of autonomy, challenging the design phase. While potentially risky, this autonomy becomes a source of creative interaction, requiring the architect to critically interpret and curate results, reinforcing their authorship through selection.

AI as a design tool: from visualization to exploration

The research employs AI-generated imaginary to explore the architectural and urban implications of UAM. Through a design-driven research approach, AI-generated images provide a dynamic exploration method, allowing for rapid iteration and visualization of hypothetical infrastructures.

To investigate how AI-generated design methodologies contribute to architectural speculation, the research engages with multiple AI platforms — Adobe Firefly, DALL-E 3, and Midjourney — each offering distinct processing methods and visual outcomes.

Adobe Firefly was initially used to establish a focused lexicon tailored to UAM, ensuring that generated images aligned with keywords in the field. The lexicon included terms directly related to infrastructure: Futuristic, Architecture, Integration, Park, and Technology. By drawing from a broad dataset, Firefly produced structured representations, assessing how vertiports could be imagined in the urban environment.

The experimentation with AI-generated images expanded from vertiports as isolated objects to their broader urban integration. The focus shifted to visualizing landing pads within existing cityscapes and assessing their

impact on urban expansion and transformation. The goal was to explore how UAM reshapes spatial dynamics, from integrating landing spots to reimagining urban growth. Using DALL-E 3, the study employed a lexicon including: Futuristic, Architecture, Urban, Nature, and Sustainable.

Using Midjourney, the interaction between lexicon terms proved crucial, directly shaping the diversity of AI-generated urban scenarios. This iterative process refined spatial interpretations, sometimes producing surreal, thought-provoking alternatives beyond conventional perceptions. The study employed the lexicon: Air Transportation System, Urban Environment, Cityscape, Agriculture, and Nature to enhance realism and generate photographic-like depictions. This approach facilitated a deeper exploration of transportation systems and urban transformations, revealing alternative strategies.

These platform-specific variations reveal critical insights into how AI operates as a design tool, emphasizing the importance of prompt engineering in shaping visual outcomes (Betker et al. 2023). The same prompt produces different results depending on the AI model's training dataset and interpretative mechanisms. This highlights AI's potential as a representational tool and a generative force capable of producing alternative spatial narratives for urban conditions.

A second set of trials was developed using only Stable Diffusion, introducing a more controlled generation process. This phase integrated a two-layer prompt strategy – combining textual inputs with reference images. The platform allowed users to adjust the influence of the reference image through a percentage slider, enabling better coherence in the visual output during the experimentation.

AI-generated images operate through algorithmic synthesis, blending diverse visual elements, and can produce nonlinear overlap. Transitioning from the definition of montage as the unexpected combination of incongruous elements, forming a fundamental methodology for architectural design (Rocca 2022), introduces a pivotal aspect of creativity into the architectural process. In this sense, AI is an automated montage process, combining spatial data, formal references, and speculative elements into architectural compositions that challenge conventional design means. From an architectural perspective, AI-generated images allow architects to explore complex spatial configurations and test alternative urban arrangements for vertiports, supporting rapid prototyping and iterative refinement. While their direct application remains limited, they serve as a tool for conceptualization, providing insights into form, urban integration, and spatial organization.

Between exploration and reinforced stereotypes

AI allows for rapidly exploring new spatial conditions, urban configurations, and infrastructural systems. In the context of UAM, AI-generated images assist in visualizing infrastructural nodes, multimodal networks, and urban transformations. However, AI expands possibilities and

introduces critical challenges regarding authorship, aesthetic direction, and theoretical contribution.

Many AI-generated architectural visuals resemble stereotypical futuristic renderings, prioritizing visual spectacle over spatial reasoning and contextual adaptability. Instead of questioning architectural paradigms, AI-generated imaginary often reinforces idealized sci-fi aesthetics, producing utopian cityscapes, floating megastructures, and highly polished yet theoretically shallow visions of the future. This tendency reflects a broader issue in AI-driven design, where generated architecture risks becoming a self-referential aesthetic loop, prioritizing visual appeal over meaningful spatial or theoretical innovation (Schneider, 2023). Rather than challenging conventions, AI often amplifies pre-existing biases embedded within its training data, leading to abstract proposals that conform to established futuristic imagery rather than introducing genuinely new spatial ideas.

The role of authorship in AI-generated design is central to the current debate on creative responsibility in architecture. In traditional processes, where architects directly perform manipulation, AI operates through latent space navigation, recombining elements drawn from pre-existing data. This challenges conventional notions of authorship, making it ambiguous and distributed among the architect, the AI model, and the dataset from which it draws.

The dataset functions like a library, while the AI platform acts as a retrieval system – guided by the architect, who gives inputs and proceeds with a work of interpretation and translating conceptual suggestions into architectural drawings. In this sense, authorship cannot be considered collaborative unless the process ends with generating the image itself. When developed into a drawn, authorship reasserts itself in the architect's critical choices.

However, the final result ultimately remains in the hands of the architect, who approaches AI-generated outputs more as a brainstorming tool than a design partner. Yet, if AI primarily reconfigures existing typologies, its role in design shifts from generating new paradigms to synthesizing familiar spatial elements, raising questions about its potential for true architectural innovation. Its dependence on pre-trained datasets also risks reinforcing homogenized global aesthetics, detached from local specificity. If collage was once a tool for radical critique, AI should be similarly directed – not toward producing polished or superficial visions but toward provoking new architectural thought. This evolving dynamic introduces a critical ethical consideration: responsibility in design now emerges from the space between curation and computation, prompting ongoing reflection on how authorship should be understood in AI-driven practices.

Figure 1: This grid of AI-generated architectural visualizations explores future urban air mobility scenarios. Organized into numbered rows, each set of images represents different conceptual approaches within the research. Some images appear blurred, reflecting iterative AI design processes or incomplete outputs. The lower section contains empty placeholders, indicating ongoing experimentation. This matrix highlights AI's ability to generate diverse yet sometimes stereotypical futuristic visions, raising questions about exploring new architectural typologies, their spatial coherence, and AI's role in shaping architectural discourse.

Conclusion

This research has explored the intersection of AI-generated images and Urban Air Mobility, examining how AI tools contribute to the conceptualization of vertiports and challenge conventional architectural authorship. The findings reveal that AI allows for rapid spatial experimentation yet often generates stereotypical, futuristic aesthetics detached from real-world feasibility. While AI expands speculative possibilities, its reliance on pre-trained datasets and latent space navigation raises concerns about reinforcing clichés rather than provoking new architectural discourse.

A key challenge remains in redirecting AI-generated imaginary toward meaningful architectural speculation. Rather than simply producing utopian cinematic visions, AI in this research centers on the design phase and its challenges, intending to disclose new approaches to architectural thinking. The objective is to test a new architectural typology, exploring the qualities of this new architecture. Moreover, AI's role in architectural authorship must be reconsidered — shifting from a tool of mere visualization to a curated design process where architects refine and interpret machine-generated possibilities.

Future research should focus on enhancing AI methodologies, ensuring greater contextual awareness and integration with urban realities. By moving beyond aesthetic spectacle toward informed design, AI can contribute to rethinking urban mobility infrastructures and shaping resilient, adaptive cities that extend beyond traditional design methods.

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This manuscript reflects only the authors' views and opinions, neither the European Union nor the European Commission can be considered responsible for them.

1 The research conducted within the doctoral program AUID Architectural Urban Interior Design at the Politecnico di Milano; it is supervised by prof. Giulia Setti, Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DAStU), with co-supervisors prof. Fabrizia Berlingieri, DAStU, and Prof. Giuseppe Quaranta from the Department of Aerospace Science and Technology, (DAER), at the Politecnico di Milano.

2 The National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR), or *Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza*, is a comprehensive framework under the European Union's investment strategy, known as Next Generation EU, to finance diverse activities. The PNRR includes three transversal priorities shared at the European level: digitalization and innovation, ecological transition, and social inclusion. The PNRR has six missions: digitalization, innovation, competitiveness, culture, green revolution and ecological transition, infrastructures for sustainable mobility, education and research, inclusion and cohesion, and Health.

3 Spoke 1, Air mobility is one of the 14 spoke around the hub of the MOST. The activities will leverage cutting-edge technologies to improve the competitiveness of the Italian aerospace industry worldwide. Spoke 1, based at Politecnico di Torino, provides guidelines for deploying advanced/urban air mobility from new technologies. Work Package 1 at Politecnico di Milano focuses on sustainable design and social acceptance, ensuring a holistic approach to urban air mobility.

4 MOST - Centro Nazionale per la Mobilità Sostenibile is the National Center for Sustainable Mobility. The aim is to implement modern, sustainable, and inclusive solutions for the entire national territory through collaboration with 24 universities, CNR, and 24 large companies. MOST, accessed August1, 2024, https://www.centronazionalemost.it/eg/

5 Vertiports lack built precedents as an emerging infrastructure, making their architectural definition. The available material primarily consists of rendered visualizations, which serve as conceptual representations rather than concrete architectural references. While these renders provide insights into design intentions, they remain fictional projections, often shaped by marketing strategies rather than technical or spatial realities. This ambiguity leaves a margin for interpretation, allowing for critical reading and exploration.

6 Prompt-based refers to a design approach in which the user interacts with an AI system through textual or coded instructions, called prompts, that guide the generation of images. In this process, creativity is expressed through language.

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Story of a Doctoral (Design) Research An Iterative Process

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storytelling, iterative process, urban interiority

Abstract

This doctoral (design) research reflects the authorship of (visual) storytelling—interpreting, analysing, and translating spatial experiences through drawing. It seeks to enrich the emerging discourse on *urban interiority* by integrating histories, theories, and design practices - predominantly shaped by Western perspectives - with insights from a non-Western context (Lahore). Initially, it traces the narrative of the transformation of public space and its redefinition to collective space. Secondly, it enables the reconceptualisation of *urban interiority* by overcoming conventional spatial polarities and embracing continuity of experience. Finally, it develops a (visual) narrative of manifestations of *urban interiority as spatial continuum* in the (retail-oriented) collective spaces of Lahore. A three-stage research methodology is not a linear sequence but a reflection of an iterative process where each phase reinforms, redefines, and reshapes the others, forming a cohesive and evolving narrative. Structuring the research into two volumes and a set of plates creates a multilayered experience for readers.

Humans are uniquely driven to tell stories, a defining trait of our species. "To be human is to tell stories" (Emmons et al. 2017, 1). From the moment children learn to speak, they seek stories to make sense of the world, connect with others, and spark imagination. Hence, storytelling is both a survival tool and a creative act that shapes our understanding of the world and our place in it. Storytelling and architecture are fundamental forms of "world-making" (Goodman 1978). Architecture creates a deep connection between people and the spaces they inhabit by engaging their senses, reflecting cultural values, and adapting to personal narratives. Architecture, in essence, is spatial storytelling – designed to mediate human knowledge of the world, humans, and architecture, which is never isolated from the world and human beings (Lyu 2019, 282).

Likewise, architectural research, when considered as a creative act of storytelling, seeks to interpret spatial experiences into meaningful spatial narratives. Designer(s)-researcher(s) often merge profound narratives, concepts, matters, and moments, tempting to reconnect with everyday life's commonplaces while offering glimpses into dreams, fantasies, and hypothetical or imagined possibilities. In contemporary architectural (design) research, storytelling has transcended the concept of standard authorship. Research narratives are now constructed by assembling diverse voices, disciplines, realms, and contexts, promoting multifaceted explorations and allowing for nuanced, layered narratives. These narratives encourage intellectual dialogue, confronting conventional, fixed interpretations and opening up new ways of understanding. Thus, storytelling challenges conventional linearity, a move away from a linear cause-and-effect structure toward a more reflective, reflexive, and iterative research process.

The authorship of this research develops into an act of storytelling through weaving together texts, analytical drawings, and visual narratives. The narrative encompasses spatial experiences by revealing the deeper layers of meanings embedded in unique spatial practices in distinct socio-cultural contexts. The research is structured into two volumes and a set of plates: (I) *Tracing the Narrative* and (II) *An Expedition to Lahore* and (III) *Plates* (of on-scale analytical drawings and visual narratives of the case studies), designed to be engaged with independently or together concurrently rather than strictly sequentially. The research is positioned in the emerging design field of the conjunction of urban and interior, theorised and practised dualistically as "Urban Interiors" and "Interior Urbanism". The approach distances away from the concept of purely geometrically presented space while remaining in dialogue with this idea of space as an experiential and relational field. It responds to the primary question: *How can the spatial notion of interiority be redefined from a concept of "contained" space to one that embodies a spatial experience of "continuity"?*

The research follows a three-stage methodology:

Stage I: tracing the narrative of the transformation of public space.

It narrates the contemporary paradigm shift in public space through historical discourse, theoretical debates, and perspectives from design practice. While contemporary debates often focus on the death, decay, and decline of public space, parallel narratives and design practices emphasise renewal and rejuvenation found through public-private partnerships and urban-interior conjunction. The research endorses the reconceptualisation as *collective space*, proposed by Manuel de Solà-Morales (de Solà-Morales 1992), which challenges the conventional definition of public space: it should be publicly owned and freely accessible to everyone. The concept recognises that land ownership does not seem to be the actual parameter for understanding how the spaces in contemporary cities function, and even less so for associating public practices with outdoor space and private ones with indoor or interior space (Shah and Muro 2023, 178). It also unfolds the retail-oriented collective realm, where shopping emerges as a key dynamic of urbanity. It builds on the argument that shopping is perhaps "the last remaining form of public activity" (Chung et al. 2001, 1). By framing it as more than a transactional activity but a critical socio-spatial experience, it becomes a viewpoint to perceive the evolving relationship between urban spaces and how people engage with them. The discussion pivots on the dual narratives of r*etailisation* and the counterargument of the *humanisation* of cities, exploring the connection between retail and urbanism.

Stage II: capturing urban interiority through overcoming polarities and embracing continuity.

It recounts the development of the research proposition: *urban interiority as spatial continuum*. Interiority repositions into the urban context, leaving interior space constraints and emerging as *urban interiority* beyond the fixed boundaries of inside and outside (Shah 2022, 311). Conventionally, urban refers to the public or collective, while interiority refers to the individual and conditions of the interior, such as privacy, intimacy, and retreat. The proposition establishes the relationship between two realms by emphasising the spatial continuum through blurred boundaries. *Urban interiority* poses a set of problems about the space we inhabit and the relationship between its social and physical components. It stimulates the prospects of defining methodologies for design-driven research (Shah and Muro 2023, 197). While subjectivity in design research influences outcomes, it is neutralised if every observer reads the space through specific lenses or spectacles. This research, thus, constructs a set of five interconnected lenses — liminality, permeability, intermingling, ephemerality, and interiority – to read, interpret, analyse, and narrate the spatial experience. The lenses are elaborated through the composition of a (visual) design taxonomy – a structured presentation of visual narratives by developing people-centric drawings to illustrate the interaction between people, objects, and space (Shah 2024, 85).

Stage III: applying the theoretical framework to explore case studies on (retail-oriented) collective spaces in Lahore, using drawing as the primary tool.

The research critically engaged with a substantial body of literature, much of which originates from Western perspectives. Recognising this gap, it aims to expand the discourse on *urban interiority* by proposing a holistic framework equally applicable to spatial analysis in non-Western contexts. Therefore, it focuses on Lahore (Pakistan) as a representative case of a developing and transforming city in the non-Western context.

Lahore is a historic city imbued with multifaceted, layered narratives rooted in the art, history, and culture of the Southwest Asia region. The contemporary city presents a complex urban morphology and a *dualistic* identity –- a reconciliation of tradition and modernity. Despite its rich layers of history, Lahore has attracted surprisingly little scholarship in recent decades. The city, built upon centuries of thriving civilisations, presents a living narrative where the past, present, and future coexist, offering abundant opportunities for reflection and growth; there is much that architects and designers can explore. Particularly, Lahore's Walled City epitomises a profound collective realm to look at and value – where social ideals materialise and architecture attains its zenith, shaping a cohesive and interconnected society. The narrow labyrinth street pattern and juxtaposition of houses were initially intended as a defence

system against invaders and a strategy against the harsh climate, which eventually contributed to cultivating a vibrant collective realm (Shah and Zhu 2024, 66).

Historic cities serve as repositories of design knowledge (Doxiadis 1968), offering invaluable lessons for future design practices. Therefore, the research focuses on Lahore to highlight its unique character and foster learning from it, aspiring to enrich the discourse – predominantly shaped by Western perspectives – with insights from a non-Western context.

The research explores various collective spaces in Lahore, tracing their socio-spatial narratives, highlighting not just the city *as it was* but mainly the city *as it is*. It constructs analytical spatial narratives using drawing as the primary tool, examining collective spaces such as canals, streets, squares, gardens, and mosques alongside retail spaces, bazaars, markets, and shopping malls. The narratives incorporate participatory surveys, interviews, and the author's observations, focusing on everyday experiences and spatial practices.

Conclusively, the research is not conceived as an end but rather as an ongoing process that paves the way for future discourse on *urban interiority*, with its framework and findings potentially serving as a pedagogical resource.

Iterative process: the research is not a linear sequence but a reflection of an iterative and reflexive process

Each research phase informs and shapes the others in a continuous refinement cycle. Insights prompt revisions across stages, keeping the research flexible and responsive to emerging patterns. This iterative process ensures coherence, deepens understanding, and shapes a holistic, evolving narrative.

Interestingly, the very idea of this research was incepted from the exploration of Lahore (Stage III). Lahore is a city that hordes a whole range of banal situations, a series of peripheral, unconnected, informal spaces inhabited, occupied, encroached, and appropriated. Including the continuous, endless flow of the Lahore Canal, a maze of narrow meandering streets and tree-lined broad boulevards, fountains, sculptures, and monuments within urban squares, endless zones of gated housing communities, never-ending rows of linear facades of high-rises, a complex urban morphology – make it a continuum of time and space.

Here, a profound collective realm is visible: the houses extend into the streets through *tharra*(s) (doorsteps), where men sit and socialise while women take up the rooftops for their daily chores and observe their children playing in the streets through extended *jharoka*(s) (covered balconies). People have their daily meals in street-side cafes and *dhaba*(s) with provisional pieces of furniture extending out, adapting to noise, pollution, and extreme weather conditions. They enjoy the *free swimming pool* of the Canal, rest in the shaded refuge of the *baradari*(s) of historic Mughal gardens, and indulge in observation and reflection within

the spatial enclosures of bustling urban squares. They stroll in the transient settings of traditional bazaars and covered passages and buy from the mobile carts of street vendors. They rush towards the mosques for five daily prayers upon hearing the call for prayers from the minarets of mosques and wait in long queues outside the shrines for *langar* (free food distribution). They indulge in the cultural performances of *dastangoi* (storytelling), folklore, Heer singing, Sufi chants, and dancing on the beats of drums in the informal spaces.

The collective activities, personal engagements, social encounters, and "observational cruising" (Sennett 2016) make Lahore a city of people, an arena of experiences – manifesting prosaic conditions and experiential embodiment of *urban interiority*.

A preliminary on-site survey in Lahore revealed people's changing perceptions and preferences about public space. They increasingly use spaces perceived as public yet privately owned (such as shopping malls), existing at the intersection of urban and interior realms and characterised by defining attributes of *urban interiority*. This initial exploration forms the basis of the formulation of this doctoral research proposal, prompting a deeper investigation into the changing socio-spatial dynamics of the city. The idea pivots on how everyday spaces of collective use are conceived, designed, perceived, and experienced (Stage II).

The survey also highlighted an intriguing aspect: retail spaces have historically been, and continue to be, one of the most significant forms of the collective realm. The city originated along a major trade route through Central Asia and within the Indian Subcontinent for north-south trade (Rudduck 1964, 106). Consequently, a substantial portion of the literature review focuses on the retail-oriented collective realm (Stage I), emphasising its dual trajectory of simultaneous decline and evolution in response to shifting economic, social, and environmental dynamics. While traditional malls in the West face challenges such as the rise of e-commerce and changing consumer preferences, the non-Western context, particularly Southwest Asia, is witnessing a surge in large-scale retail development driven by economic growth and a burgeoning middle class.

Shifting the focus from Lahore's specific context (Stage III) to a global discourse (Stage I) broadens the research scope. The literature review revealed that public space has long existed beyond public/private and outside/inside distinctions. Such ideas were traced from the historical discourse. For instance, the Nolli Map (1748) indicates that publicly accessible interiors also fall within the public realm, and Camillo Sitte's (1889) argument establishes approaching cities as a series of continuous, furnished, and decorated spatial enclosures.

The redefinition of public space as collective space involves rethinking modes of representation, including introducing intermediate records between the solid black of private spaces and the white void of public spaces (as in the Nolli Map), symbolised by shades of grey, illustrating the gradations of *publicness*. The *research-by-drawing* approach (Stage II and III), which dominates Volume II, is primarily inspired by exploring previous studies and cartographic techniques in Volume I, which

informed the subsequent visual and analytical methodology. Also, the AUID program at Politecnico di Milano emphasises a *design-driven research* approach, making the *research-by-drawing* methodology a natural and appropriate choice. The research culminates into a comprehensive dissertation accompanied by an extensive set of detailed, on-scale drawings, presenting an in-depth spatial analysis.

While the narrative of contemporary paradigm shift in public space (Stage I) initially appears to anchor the research, it is, in fact, reorganised and reinterpreted based on observations made in Lahore (Stage III). This reverse influence emphasises the *iterative research process*, where theoretical constructs are shaped by on-ground realities rather than imposed successively. Similarly, exploring the interplay between urban and interior spaces within the collective realm, introduced in the literature review (Stage I), gains new depth and relevance through the concept of *urban interiority* (Stage II). This concept, which holds increasing significance in contemporary architectural discourse, forms the underlying thread connecting the research's various components.

Moreover, the definition of lenses and the taxonomy (Stage II) is not predetermined or fixed; instead, it is continuously revised and refined in response to the diverse spatial experiences observed during case studies surveys in Lahore (Stage III). It is expected to be further enhanced, revised, and elaborated upon as new insights emerge, ensuring their relevance and adaptability in both theoretical and practical contexts (Stage I). This research is not conceived as an end but rather as a process that opens up avenues for future research and practice focussed on design objectives of *urban interiority*. This evolving framework serves as a dynamic pedagogical resource, adapting to new interpretations and reconceptualisations amid shifting urban conditions while remaining flexible for diverse socio-spatial contexts.

Conclusion: the research challenges the conventional linearity of inquisitive authorship

It suggests a transcultural dialogue between Western discourse with insights from case studies in the non-Western context of Lahore. It bridges the gap between theory and design by engaging in the theoretical debate and considering perspectives from design practice. It proposes a reconceptualisation of *urban interiority as spatial continuum*, thus challenging the conventional understanding of spatial polarities and their experience. It develops a design-driven methodology, a *research-by-drawing* approach, primarily delineating the spatial experience through people-centric visual narratives. This research, thus, challenges conventional linearity by adopting an *iterative*, reflexive, and reflective narrative approach, continuously transitioning between the three stages. It transforms the standard academic authorship into a creative act of (visual) storytelling that mirrors the complexities of contemporary urban space, offering readers an immersive and layered experience.

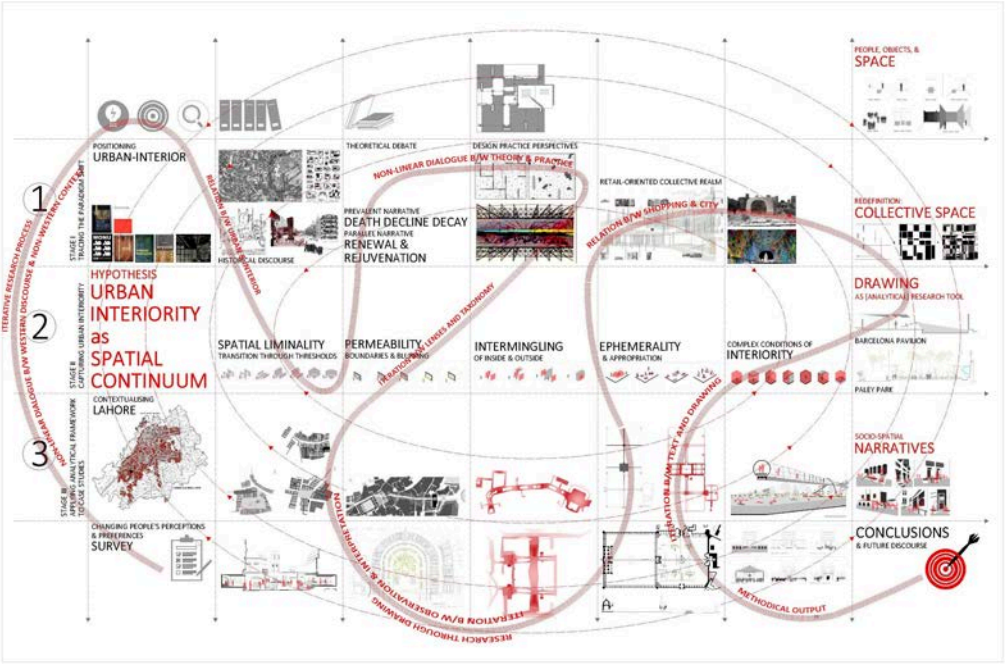

Figure 1: Three-Stage Methodology of an Iterative Research Process: I. Tracing the Paradigm Shift; II. Capturing *Urban Interiority*; III. Applying the Analytical Framework to Case Studies (Author)

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Point Cloud Departures

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particles, partial perspectives, LIDAR

Abstract

Witnessing stunning sunrises in red, gold, and apricot hues, caused by traveling Sahara sands in the northern hemisphere, the flow of earth's grain is rendered visible. Stone, so often perceived as something permanent and reliable, appears in its most granular form, circulating across borders, evading any notion of solid boundaries. Calling attention to transitions in scale and temporality inherent to the processes, relations, and duration of stone, I dig into mineral particles as both principle (Nature) and concept (Landscape). Drawing on strands of vital materialism, I explore landscape properties where a virtually pulverized worldview conflates with a contemporary material permeability. The Project is conducted and expressed through Design Driven Research, investigating tools capable of bridging the gap between dirt, dust and deep geology; LIDAR, Point Cloud Modeling and AR layering, all of which pursue questions of authorship as a multidirectional exchange of knowledge between materiality, landscape, resource, technology, and imagination.

New Ending.

All over the world the beautiful red breezes went
on blowing hand in hand.
– Anne Carson, Autobiography of Red (1998)

Witnessing stunning sunrises in red, gold, and apricot hues, caused by traveling Sahara sands in the northern hemisphere, the flow of earth's grain is rendered visible. Stone, so often perceived as something permanent and reliable, appears in its most granular form, circulating across borders, evading any notion of solid boundaries. Yet, from ancient and mythical notions of 'blood rain', to the blackening polar ice caused by carbon dust, these airborne particles often come with omens of warning[1]. A notable lesson was the darkening ash clouds caused by the 2010 Eyjafjallajökull eruption in Iceland. Composed of miniscule particles of rock, mineral crystals and volcanic glass, the far-reaching clouds shrouded large parts of the northern skies and infamously disrupted air traffic way beyond Europe.

Calling attention to transitions in scale and temporality as inherent to the processes, relations, and duration of stone, I dig into mineral particles as both principle (Nature) and concept (Landscape). Drawing on strands of vital materialism, where materiality "tends to horizontalize the relations between humans, biota and abiota"[2] and where stones, humans, and all other material compositions have agency as actants in a pluriverse of assemblages, the project explores how stone "densely enfolds nonlinear time suggesting that things emerge multiple times, intensifying and adapting rather than engendering definitive breaks."[3]

The investigation is both particular and partial[4], somewhat obsessing with the vibrant impermanence of terrain and our efforts to communicate this vitality within a contemporary architectural practice. The Earth's

Figure 1: Point Cloud Variations, Hydra Island, 2025

Figure 2: Point Cloud Variations, Hydra Island, 2025

crust is dissolved, mobile, pulverized, and porous, transformed and traveling as sand, exhaust, volcanic ash, dust, dirt, minerals, pollution. Small particles, yet in their sum large as mountain ranges or carried worldwide by ocean currents.

As explicitly unfolded in Karen Barads work, the continuous space-time-mattering denies a common understanding of scale as something large or small[5], rather I explore complementary landscape properties, where a virtually pulverized worldview conflates with a contemporary material permeability. As such, materiality appears both as a texture, landscape, resource, molecular physics and building material, yet also as living matter, with vibrating and porous properties.

Departing from the premise that technology, science and art are strongly connected, and that we approach the phenomena of the world through mediations and devices, one might claim that the technologies available in our time calibrate our view of the world[6]. As such, relations between the natural and the artificial are always fleeting constellations, as it is appreciated in contemporary discourses on the Anthropocene condition.

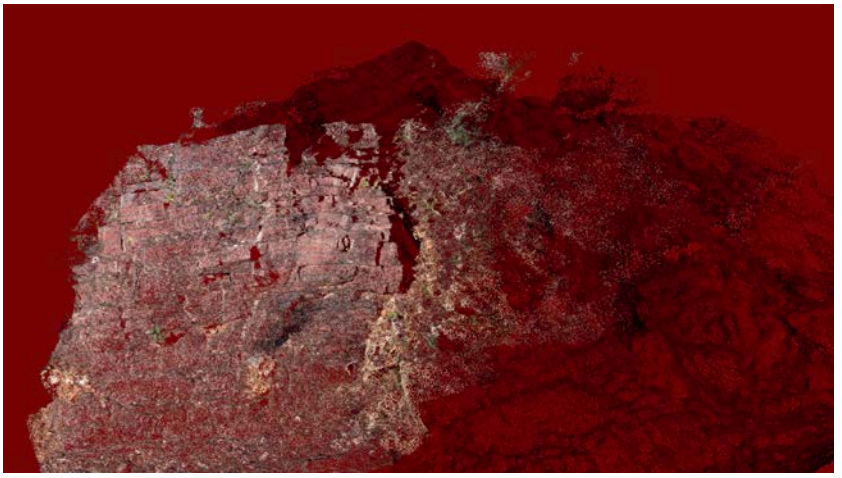

Figure 3: Point Cloud Variations, Hydra Island, 2025

Figure 4: Point Cloud Variations, Hydra Island, 2025

The Project is conducted and expressed through Design Driven Research, investigating tools capable of bridging the gap between dirt, dust and deep geology; LIDAR, Point Cloud Modeling and AR layering, all of which pursue questions of authorship as a multidirectional exchange of knowledge between materiality, technology, and imagination. The approach to making is not a linear deterministic kind, rather it is full of experiments, it is emergent. In particular, I ask how situated knowledge evoke new processes of enchantment and alliances with our environments, and how we can counter exploitative relations to matter 'as resource' in our research methodologies. In recent efforts to reconcile with our landscapes, rich in violent forces and monstrous compositions, and to further counter modernity's imaginative control over nature, I investigate new ways to decolonize knowledge/production. To further prompt this investigation, I find support in the creative act of "following the dirt", as Hélène Frichot eloquently puts it. "Dirt is what gives relief to the mark drawn on the dusty ground with a stick to say: inside/outside, included/excluded."[7] A critical inquiry into conventional dichotomies,

challenging binaries like natural/artificial, digital/physical, right/wrong, must surely dispute the gap between the arts and sciences. As such, I search for new relations and ambiguous ways of knowing, perhaps found in the porous and positively impure realm of Design Driven Research. "Most powerfully, following the dirt can be a creative movement, a profound relationship with our local environments-worlds."[8]

Some of the questions investigated in the project are as follows: How are the optics of our environment-worlds developed through the various media that the architect uses – and perhaps not typically make use of? How might the elusive point cloud aesthetics calibrate new worldviews? Do we see nature with different or new eyes? And how do we relate these types of mediations to the more traditional of the architect's media, such as the drawing, the map, photographs, and models? Most importantly, I ask how an inquiry into aesthetic practices "train one's imagination to go visiting"[9], cultivate response-ability towards situated environments, and how this response-ability is crucial to future architectural practises.[10] Nurturing an ethic sensitivity and companionship with matter, I invite technology, artifacts and vital matter into the mediations of landscapes, where all material compositions have agency.[11] Following Bennet, to horizontalize the relations in any assemblage, this means to acknowledge that sometimes the drawing is wiser that yourself.

In addition to asking questions about architecture's media and forms of (re)presentation, the project is part of a larger inquiry into contemporary concepts of landscapes, where *the partial* is examined as both a productive perspective and a compositional strategy. I would like to offer here a quote from the publication 'Textures of the Anthropocene: Grain Vapor Ray', that 'engages with earthly conditions and human imagination in a discursive, trans-historical experiment', a topological statement that resonates strongly with me:

Seeds, kernels, and data objects are not fixed, neither as points of origin nor within their particular arrangement. Rather, as discrete units that aggregate to immense numbers, they exhibit a continuous fluid medium of their own – viscous, gravitational, flowing, blowing — constantly composing, and recomposing itself, instigating morphological variation.[12]

Delving into this continuous fluid affords an explicitly topological promise of moving grounds, where any sense of authenticity or originality is overshadowed by a dynamic and joint composing and recomposing, an open-ended authorship, an ongoing rewriting of landscapes through its minuscule particles of animated rock, dust, data, mineral, exhaust. This unearthing is fully aware of not offering any solid or exhaustive truth, yet pursue a powerful strategy that does not retreat, but negotiate between categories, able of producing on the outside of systems, simultaneously challenging customs and values on the inside. At any rate, as Frichot unfolds, "dirt was never whole to begin with."[13]

Figure 5: Gaussian Splat, Fieldwork at Hydra Island, 2025

Figure 6: Gaussian Splat, Fieldwork at Hydra Island, 2025

All images by author.

1 Katrin Klingan, Ashkan Sepahvand, Christoph Rosol, Bernd M. Scherer (2015) Textures of the Anthropocene: Grain Vapor Ray, The MIT Press, p.69

2 Jane Bennet (2010) Vibrant Matter. A Political Ecology of Things, Duke University Press. p 112

3 Jefffrey Jerome Cohen (2015) Stone. An Ecology of the Inhuman, University of Minnesota Press

4 Part, Partial, Particle are etymologically linked to one another, and this particular investigation is indebted to Donna Haraway (1988) Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective.

5 Karan Barad (2017) No Small Matter: Mushroom Clouds, Ecologies of Nothingness, and Strange Topologies of Spacetimemattering, in Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet. Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene, University of Minnesota Press

6 Think only of the grand particle accelerators from the Bubble Chambers in the early 60's to the current Large Halldron Collidor (HLC) at CERN.

7 Hélène Frichot (2019) Dirty Theory: Troubling Architecture, AADR Spurbuchverlag, p. 11.

8 Ibid., p. 6

9 Haraway quoting Hannah Arendt in Donna Haraway (2016) Staying with the trouble. Making Kin in the Chthulucene, Duke Universtity Press. P. 126

10 Cultivating response-ability is a key concept throughout Donna Haraway's Staying with the trouble. Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

13 Ibid. p. 60

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Inquiring Sensate Scapes

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landscape, mediators, aesthetics

Abstract

In a time of climatic, ecological and social change, we ask: how can architecture, as an aesthetic category involving perception and meaning-formation, contribute to an understanding of the challenges of our contemporary landscapes? The presented material operates as the first phase of a collaborative project *(Sensate Scapes)* with architect Lizette Araza Jensen, focusing on materiality, techniques and methods for landscape studies and investigating how the developed material can inform and translate into aesthetic articulations. The project considers mediation as a reciprocal event between the practitioner and the producing, animating, material, and between the aesthetic articulation and the world it inhabits. The work explores the ability of different media and modes of articulation to convey and create encounters between human and more-than-human entities through articulation and visibilization. The aim is to continuously examine and challenge our aesthetic practices to ensure that they remain dynamic and responsive to evolving worlds.

Whereas analysts once agonized over the question, "Are our collections adequate to know the world? We now ask, "Are they lively enough to participate in the world?" The provocative issue before was representation; now it is animation. Materials as data join materials as things in this provocation. (Tsing 2019, 221)

Aesthetic practices are not only affected by the contexts they are part of, they also intervene actively. Thus, the aesthetic modes of articulation, like all forms of expression, must be continuously examined and challenged so that they correspond to the complexity they work into. The presented work considers mediation as a reciprocal event between the practitioner and the producing, animating, material, and between the aesthetic articulation and the world it inhabits. The work explores the ability of different media and modes of articulation to convey and create encounters between human and more-than-human entities through articulation and visibilization (Latour 2013).

In a time of climatic, ecological and social change, the meaning of architecture is also being challenged. So how can architecture, as an aesthetic category that involves both perception and meaning-formation, contribute to an understanding of the challenges of our contemporary landscapes? The aim is to open the discussion by examining and developing these challenges as physical perception and embeddedness in the world. The presented material stems from a collaborative project with architect Lizette Araza Jensen, a 1:1 landscape model that can map and represent phenomena that do not already have a form of representation. Phenomena that we may be able to register and measure, but that we do not yet have the means or formats to communicate. The intention is to develop aesthetics that can form the basis for raising awareness of the yet unmediated, for new perspectives on the world as (we think) we know it.

The investigations take shape through sensing, measurement and mapping: The 1:1 landscape model is intended as a receptive body that can both record differences from the surroundings and give them expression; at the same time record measurements of the world, transform and communicate them. The measuring instruments are to be used for specific investigations at selected sites — of e.g. pollution levels, distribution of opportunities, life expectancies — and function as model components. The mapping of the various investigation processes is continuously summarized and will make basis for theorization.

The model construction and materiality relate to natural, social and existential ecologies. For example, water and soil quality measurements and biodiversity density; inequality coefficients and digital extraction; affective infrastructures and relational life-worlds. The project combines the investigation, representation and communication of site-specific issues in a transformable construction. The presented work will be work-in-progress, and the preliminary results of fieldwork studies – registration and measurement – at the island Hydra, Greece, in March 2025. The on-site studies work on two levels: 1) to investigate the properties and data-recording capabilities of different materials. 2) to investigate and develop techniques and methods for analyzing a landscape through on-site testing.

Materials: Erosion control jute blankets (rough weave 100x1500cm, fine weave 60x300m), chalk paint, gypsum, etc.

Techniques: 3D scan, photography, chalk painting and plaster modelling.

Methods: iterations of material sketching and testing (jute, chalk, gypsum), on-site interventions, and trans-medial reflections on the process through scans, photography, video, and writing.

This work thus operates as the first phase of the *Sensate Scapes* project, focusing on materiality, techniques and methods for landscape studies (data collection) and investigating how the developed material can be included and translated into an aesthetic articulation, in this specific case inform the creative process and components of the 1:1 landscape model. The media used to present the inquiries at the Ca2re Milano Conference will primarily be photographic series and samples of material tests and sketches: "Aesthetics is, crucially, a question of the material relation within and between entities and the ecologies of which they are part." (Fuller and Weizman 2021, 37)

To Aestheticize something is to render it more attuned to sensing, it is a process of becoming or making sensitive, according to Fuller and Weizman (Fuller and Weizman 2021). Aesthetics is a matter of *sensing* and *sense-making*, of how we sense and perceive the world, in which we take part. It concerns our comprehension and thus pertains to our senses and our intellect. Aesthetics is important for our common sense, *sensus communis*, for our ability to see the world through the eyes of others through aesthetic expression. Aesthetic practices have the potential to open up to views other than one's own and thus nuance our understanding of our anchoring in the world and our relationships to each other. The aesthetic generates communities, while at the same time instituting ruptures in our notions of communities.

The connectedness with our landscapes, and the aesthetic practices we employ, is the optics of the presented investigations. How do we develop practices with a sensibility to more-than-human interests? The aesthetic articulation involves us, and we make room for it within us. The aesthetic articulation offers us a change through the encounter: It is not pure communication aimed at a recipient, it is a relational, open utterance to which the recipient can make herself sensitive and accessible (Arendt 1958). We must protect and nurture aesthetic articulations and forms of expression to maintain them. There is a reciprocity between articulation and recipient, and although the aesthetic articulation exists in its own right, it is maintained by virtue of encounter. The aesthetic articulation must be constantly repeated, reexperienced, reinterpreted: "I need my mediators to express myself, and they'd never express themselves without me: you're always working in a group, even when you seem to be on your own" (Deleuze 1985, 25).

Aesthetic articulations are a common concern and the creative practitioner is, just like forms of expression, mediator for something to emerge. It is not only other practitioners who can have an impact, but also other media, forms of expression, or life-forms that can have this mediating function. Contact zones of different aesthetic practices and forms of expression constitute the starting point of all creative practice: mediators and intersections of perspectives on the object of investigation and development. The aim is to continuously examine and challenge our aesthetic practices to ensure that they remain dynamic and responsive to evolving worlds.

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Situated Authorships

Sara Anna Sapone, DAStU, Politecnico di Milano

We bring the past out of the land and bear the land into the future, but at heart of all is the land, contested, exploited and beloved. (Jamie 2024, 55)

Sites are repositories of stories, overwritten by the passage of time and intentional alterations. These stories can be embodied in their physical features and in the cultural meanings imbued in them (Corner 1999), through a process of becoming that concerns physical alterations as much as the societal attribution of meaning. Sites undergo a process of layering of traces in time (Corboz 1983) – material remains, rituals, and memories – due to the linear sequence of events, involving choices and mistakes, or cyclical occurrences linked to natural phenomena or unpredictable events. The acknowledgment of such traces can become the catalyst for architectural invention and research. As pointed out by Elizabeth Meyer, "plots are not empty canvases, but full spaces, full of nature and history, whose latent forms and meanings can be surfaced, and made palpable, through design" (Meyer 2005, 102).

The contributions gathered in this section[1] share the understanding of authorship as situated knowledge, with processes directly tied to a specific site, both in terms of physical characteristics and social energies surrounding it.

Across the contributions, sites are viewed as composed of a layered set of meaning and traces. Within them lies an opportunity for architecture to interpret them and create spaces that enable the projection of plural meaning onto them, either by individuals or society. Thus, buildings and public spaces, and the projects that concern them, are described in their potential to evoke feelings and enable experiences. They embody beliefs in physical spaces, whether this attribution of meaning is given by the place's occupants (2, 6, 8, 9), through the recollection of memories (7, 10), or as platforms for collective representation and cultural resonance (1, 3, 5, 6, 9) even beyond the conceiver's intentions. This sparks the possibility for spaces perceived as minor, like courtyards and functional buildings, to question rule systems and established narratives surrounding representational spaces and collective emotions. (1, 3, 6)

Overall, the collected research depart from traditional approaches, with the singular heroic author shaping the world – often through the western gaze and using science for persuasion (Haraway 1988, 577) – embracing instead authorship as a plural and multilayered practice, situated in different settings and belief systems. Authorship is also a method of critique. In this outlook, it is possible to conceive sites as a product of collective action, even rewriting in a political turn national narratives and the establishment, such as neoliberal policies (4) or central governments' imprints (3, 6) that tend to monopolise spatial narratives, overwriting local experiences. It celebrates instead uncontrolled spaces, disentangled from official regulations, as an embodiment of the true soul of the surrounding communities, shaping spaces through time and the way they inhabit them. Non-hierarchical practices involving participatory research (2) and subjective attribution of meaning (9, 10), a practice of correspondence with others and the place (Ingold 2017), to reassert the importance of authorship as a practice of relations, a political act of

interpretation and creation. The collective notion of authorship emerges from a conflict between those who have the authority to write history and those who have the capacity to live it. The author-researchers in this sense can be both a receiver of stories, becoming a storyteller for minorities (6, 7) or utilise their stories to reinvent them (8, 9), stressing the importance of plurality and multiple possible perspectives (4, 10). In this process of selecting stories is implicit the importance of singular choices, including or excluding narratives as an act, conscious or not, of creation of the place identity.

Sites are seen as arenas to bring about and mediate change with a potential value for art as mediator, able to communicate invisible aspects or re-signify the ordinary with new meanings. Thus, throughout this section, the potential of storytelling and its poetic translation is highlighted. Meanings are attributed to a place beyond the visible, translating situated knowledge through research, uncovering or creating new site-specific narratives. The shared goal is to go beyond established gazes, mainly the traditional Western one (3, 6, 8, 10), tapping into local stories, myths, and workshops on-site with local communities. The results are a mix of art and science, able to capture knowledge beyond rigid disciplinary boundaries. In this, the choice of representational tools is also relevant, as they function as methods of thinking and articulating knowledge, using bidimensional representations, like drawings (1, 3, 9), counter-maps (2, 4), and poems or small stories (5, 6, 7, 8), or tridimensional ones in the form of installations (9, 10). The use of such tools, rooted in the researchers' personal sensitivity or site-specific anecdotes, shows how abstract concepts can be made tangible in physical spaces and lived practices, allowing the embodiment of larger theoretical arguments. They produce hybrid artefacts, results of the combination of factual knowledge, deriving from physical documents, and stories mediated by the cultural attribution of meaning and singular experiences. The researcher-author here also acts as mediator, creating an interface between experience, either direct or indirect, and representation, shifting from a historical quest for production knowledge to one of knowledge relation. This knowledge is gained through immersion, with researchers inserting themselves into the site by living it, listening, mapping, making and caring for it, stressing the importance of physical presence. However, this implies a risk of conflicting narratives and a challenge to properly represent them (4). Authorship is not neutral but is co-produced through the interaction between subjects – human, institutional or more than human – and the physical space they shape and inhabit. The site becomes a living archive in which authorship is shared between those who inhabit, those who design and those who remember. Architecture becomes a physical medium through which these emotions are materialised and experienced.

Among the cited physical spaces – such as unassuming courtyards (3,6), a countryside hotel (7) or a humble pottery workshop (8) – each can also act as a meeting point to generate and create stories, forms for finding lost identities, or create a new sense of belonging to a place. The passage of time has the power to create a temporal layering of meaning. Buildings and landscapes relate past and present, what happened and what could be. In some instances, even more than the original authors'

intention, it is the potential interpretation given by observers (9, 10) that, according to their belief system, memories and feelings, constructs and deconstructs the meaning and role of a space.

Therefore, in this section, research is mostly intended as an open-ended process, without fixed results and embracing the changes linked to social dynamics, time passage and unforeseen events. This can invoke "an attitude of incompleteness; rather than building a final solution, seeds are sown, questions raised, and potential structured" (Marot 1999, 5). The approach is not authoritarian but mostly an act of co-creation, relying also on the willingness of others to share their outlook, with the authors-researchers inhabiting sites and becoming a part of their network of relations continuously rewritten. Thus, authorship – or better yet, plural authorships- lie in *situatedness* (Haraway 1988), translating and designing reality in its complexity without claiming universality. Relinquishing the assumption of objectivity while relying on the acknowledgment of the individual gaze, the situated authorships accept the possibility of an unfinished practice.

1 **The contributions will be referenced from here onwards in the order they appear in the section. To clarify, this is considered as follows:**
(1) *Celebrating the absence* by Sarah Becchio
(2) *Assembling Authorship in Participatory Design: The Ten Eekhovelei as a Collaborative Inquiry* by Nathan De Feyter et. al
(3) *Architecture in search for an author* by Duccio Fantoni
(4) *Regeneration as rewriting* by Morika Kakinuma DeAngelis
(5) *Tortoises: a story of caretaking* by Stefan Gzyl
(6) *Cultural Narratives in Collective Spaces* by Yidan Liu
(7) *The Gift of Stories* by Greer Lorca Mac Keogh
(8) *Claybody / House-body: The Cosmic Body* by Elena Perez Guembe
(9) *The Undedicated Form* by Tobias Rabold
(10) *Ruination Game: A Performance Exploring Collective Dimensions of Authorship Through a Spatio-Temporal Record* by Uğur Sarışen

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Celebrating the Absence. Contemporary Architecture for Farewell Rituals

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#

farewell, inclusion, absence

Abstract

The contribution reflects on how European crematoria are shaped today to reflect contemporary society's existential conditions and needs while promoting social, cultural and ecological innovation.

The widespread adoption of cremation in the last decades – driven mainly but not exclusively by secularization – has driven the transformation of the crematorium from a necessary infrastructure for bodies' disposal into a significant building whose architectural expression is crucial in reshaping how people interpret farewell. This shift is particularly evident in Flanders, where several crematoria have been constructed through the Open Call procedure. The projects raise numerous open questions, representing both design challenges and opportunities for experimentation. The results highlight architects' different authorial imprints, together with the guidance of the Flemish Government Architect and the influence of evolving funerary practices, ritual behaviour and memorial conventions that contribute to shaping and adding further layers of authorship to projects.

Farewell architecture

Even though the origins of western European architecture are linked to human dying (Colvin 1991, 1), and it is the mound of earth in the wood that Loos points to as an unequivocal example of architecture (Loos 1910, 255), today architecture for death often belongs to the long list of buildings affected by the *Weilean phenomenon* of *uprooting,* whose only purpose is to respond to a function (Biraghi 2021, 8–13). This situation results from a slow transformation of the *mentalité collective* towards human mortality. An evolution that can be seen in funerary art and architecture went from undisputed symbolic forms capable of expressing the essence of the time (Panofsky 1964) to, from the Baroque onwards, the expression of an event that was less and less comprehensible through shared values. In the twentieth century, death became a taboo (Gorer 1955, 192–199), closely linked to the level of visibility it had in the city (Ariès 1975, 68–81). In this process, the widespread diffusion of the practice of cremation in recent decades has seemed to some to be a further step towards the loss of the physicality of death in the urban context and, therefore, towards the disappearance of funerary architecture and consequent, unintended transformation of all space into the space of death (Ragon 1981, 314).

The cremation's social and environmental impact is fuelling the debate about an articulated infrastructure that provides ceremonial spaces for farewells and services for the living, alongside spaces for the custody of the dead, the transformation of bodies, and the scattering and burial of ashes. Crematoria and farewell spaces are among the buildings necessary for an increasingly multicultural and secularised society, characterised by evolving funerary practices, ritual behaviour and memorial conventions. From a political point of view, these ceremonial spaces are crucial in witnessing a shift in centuries-old customs linked to the

Christianisation of European society. From an architectural point of view, they are equally important when understood as a field of disciplinary experimentation. This perspective is evident in Belgium, a country where, in 2003, a law was enacted to exclude private companies from the construction of crematoria (Dubois 2019); later, in 2010, the government identified, together with intermunicipal organisations, thirteen sites for constructing as many public crematoria. Several crematoria were built in Flanders through the Open Call award procedure led by the Flemish Government Architect, a choice that underlines the importance attributed to the architectural expression of cremation (Liefooghe 2021, 106–123). New crematoria were built anticipating the increase in demand, with the objective to offer an adequate civic service in the future. This initiative, coupled with the decision to entrust their design to international competitions – an investment in architecture's future that crematoria share with other Flemish public buildings (Van Gerrewey 2024, 37) – underlines the intention to make the crematorium a significant service, centred around social inclusiveness, transcending mere utilitarian logic.

Starting from exploring the spatial implications of certain phenomena regarding mourning, death, disposal and burial methods in the European context, the research focuses on how spaces for the celebration of a universal rite of passage (Van Gennep 1909, 127–144) are shaped today to reflect the existential conditions and needs of contemporary society while promoting social, cultural and ecological innovation. Recent crematoria built in Flanders since 2008 serve as a testing ground, the subject of comparative evaluation conducted through analysis of competition documentation, re-drawing, field observation, and interviews to identify themes and questions relevant to the current architectural debate. The architectural ethnography perspective helps to understand the relationships between spaces, artefacts, and people established in projects. Additionally, a phenomenological lens aims to investigate the experiential qualities of architecture. To this end, we adopt Loos's perspective that the architect's role is to serve humankind by producing architecture capable of "arouse moods" (Loos 1910, 255). We will examine the authors' architectural choices and aesthetic approaches to influence embodied experiences. Specifically, it is a question of reflecting on how aesthetic repertoires, which since archaic times have been called upon to activate a symbolic world to accompany people emotionally and psychically, resonate today with emerging needs, including those driven by technological advancements.

Dealing with absence

The individualisation of rituals, the deconstruction of the ceremonial sequence, and the tendency to heal the rift between the space of the living and the space of the dead (Valentijn and Verhoeven 2018) are all key aspects regarding a building that hosts cremation and farewell ceremonies for a multicultural and secularised society. These aspects encompass a wide range of reflections that, while central to the design of a crematorium, do not follow a linear cause-and-effect relationship in the project. Instead, they represent open questions that confront the

architect with indeterminacy, variability, and unpredictability. Claus en Kaan Architecten (2008), Eduardo Souto De Moura + SUMProject (2011), RCR Arquitectes + Cousseé & Goris architecten (2013), Christian Kieckens + DAE (2015), KAAN Architecten (2019), and OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen + Richard Venlet (2021) on the occasion of their respective Open Call competitions treated those issues as design materials. Due to this procedure, the projects began with a common starting point in which the architects' authorship was placed within a broader framework of guidance and cooperation where many contributed to a "shared creative process" (Heilmeyer 2021,67). Additionally, although the projects were developed for similar assignments about ten years apart, the variety of results was remarkable. This diversity underscores the significant potential for design experimentation in addressing open questions related to crematoria (Delbeke 2012).

The main driving force behind design experimentation is inherent in the way the category of 'absence' (Corbellini 2018, 86–91) is addressed by each author. The 'absence' can pertain to various aspects, such as the ritual associated with the denial of a faith or the co-presence of multiple creeds, the lack of specific social conventions and codified rituals tied to cremation, and the erosion of the perspective of eternity traditionally connected with funerary architecture. On a physical level, 'absence' can refer to the removal of customary boundaries. This includes the lack of a wall that separates the realm of the living from that of the dead, the absence of a strong separation between the ceremonial space and the area for body committal, the lack of opacity towards the space where machines perform the cremation industrial process, and the concealment of the chimney. Recent Flemish crematoria highlight how architects' authorial imprints emerge precisely in dealing with the pervasive category of absence, witnessing that cremation does not imply the disappearance of funerary architecture, as Ragon feared. On the contrary, it opens new avenues for exploring design opportunities. In case studies, plan organisation, ritual sequence, relationship with the outside, etc., are answered by different design teams with even contradictory spatial and aesthetic solutions. In every project, architects have been interpreters of multiple sensibilities, under the guidance of a government procedure whose aim was to answer and to guide the social demand. Furthermore, the study uncovers an additional layer of authorship through field observation and oral history. Living in a time of rapid evolution in societal attitudes toward ritual behaviour and technological innovation allows the researcher to witness unpredictable shifts in funerary customs and their spatial implications. A new ritual demand prompts unprecedented narratives, adaptations, and developments in unique buildings and their surrounding landscape, shaping a framework for new authorships to come.

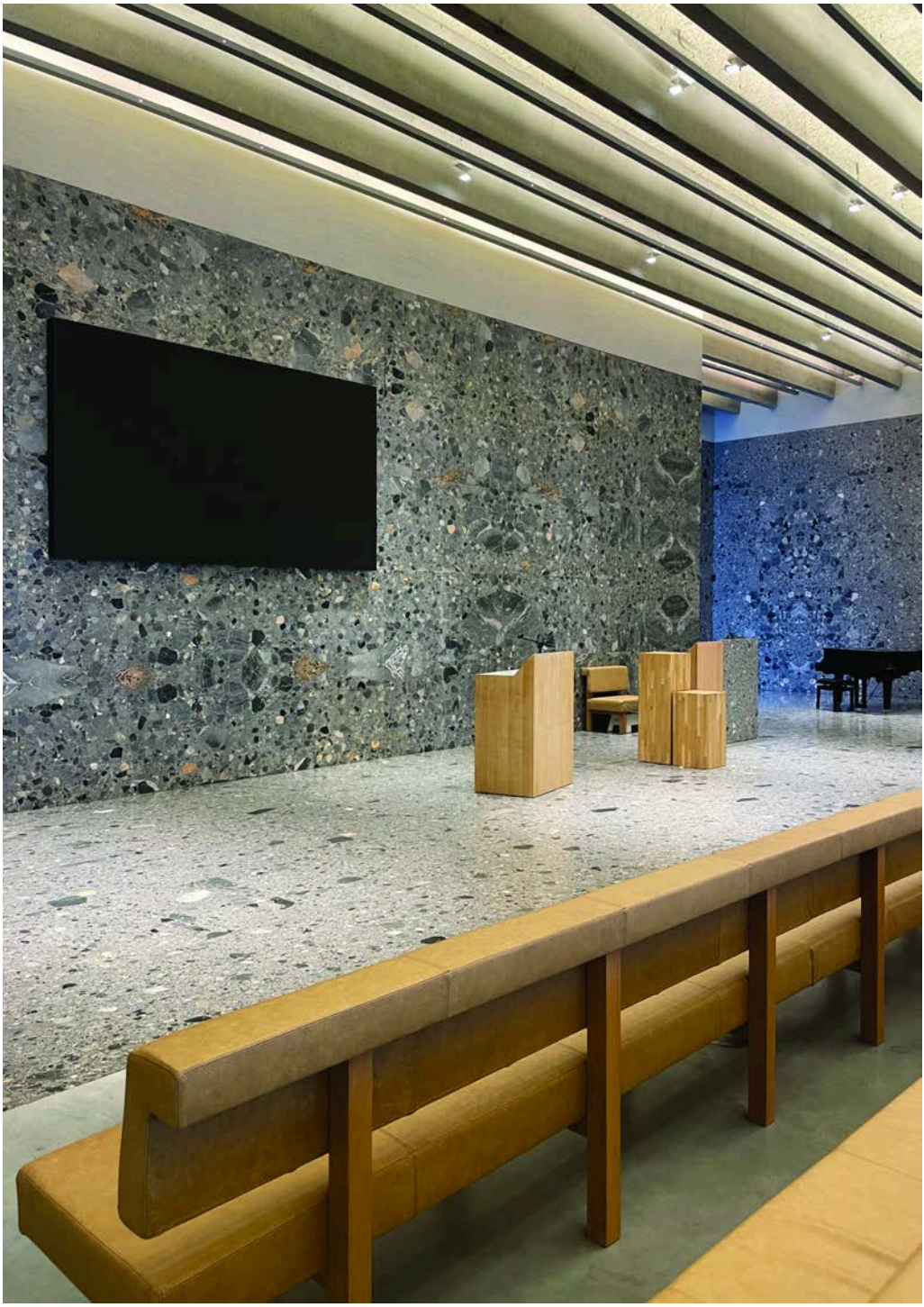

Figure 1: Crematorium Siesegem in Aalst by KAAN Architecten, 2019. In Flemish crematoria, a plural, universal sacred space is achieved through the 'negative strategy', in which religious images and symbols are absent but can be added to the setup if required. A monitor, a pulpit with a microphone, often a piano, and many movable pedestals for photos, personal belongings, and flowers allow the organisation of a personalised setup for every ceremony. Photography by the author.

Figure 2: Crematorium Polderbos in Oostende by OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen + Richard Venlet, 2021 Technological systems are relevant elements of the interior design of the auditorium. During the celebration, monitors share the stage with the coffin or urn, turning the audience's attention to the deceased's life. The picture shows how video and audio installation allows flexible setups involving the combination of both small and large auditoria for a farewell celebration. Photography by the author.

Figure 3: Crematorium Polderbos in Oostende by OFFICE Kersten Geers David Van Severen + Richard Venlet, 2021 Farewell ceremonies in crematoria typically aim to celebrate the deceased's life by projecting videos that include slideshows of significant moments accompanied by live or recorded music. Songs are alternated with readings and speeches. For this reason, special attention is paid to acoustics and audio and video equipment in the auditorium. The direction of the ceremony is managed by specialised personnel from locations inside or outside the auditorium. Photography by the author.

Figure 4: Crematorium Uitzicht in Kortrijk by Eduardo Souto de Moura + SUMProject, 2011 In the past, only close relatives accompanied the deceased's body to the crematorium. Today, an increasing number of people attend ceremonies in crematoria, for many, the only ceremony to be celebrated. This change necessitates large auditoria. At Uitzicht, this shift led the administrators to add a series of doors on the rear elevation of the larger auditorium to connect it with the entrance during crowded ceremonies. This alteration was made without the architect's approval. Spatial practice generated a conflict between the client and the architect. Photography by the author.

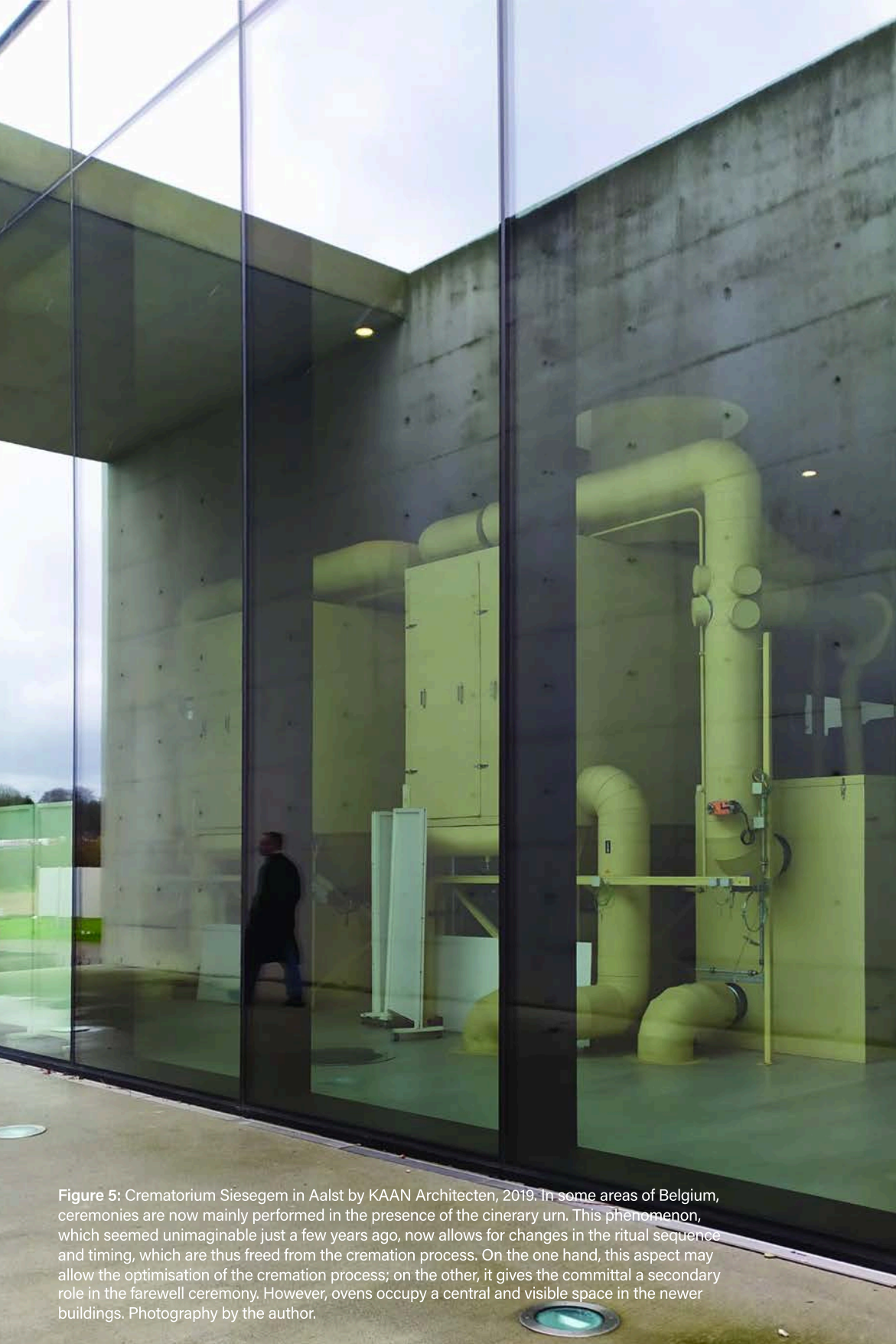

Figure 5: Crematorium Siesegem in Aalst by KAAN Architecten, 2019. In some areas of Belgium, ceremonies are now mainly performed in the presence of the cinerary urn. This phenomenon, which seemed unimaginable just a few years ago, now allows for changes in the ritual sequence and timing, which are thus freed from the cremation process. On the one hand, this aspect may allow the optimisation of the cremation process; on the other, it gives the committal a secondary role in the farewell ceremony. However, ovens occupy a central and visible space in the newer buildings. Photography by the author.

Figure 6: Crematorium Daelhof in Zemst by Christian Kieckens + DAE, 2015. In Flemish crematoria, trees tend to replace the tombstone to represent eternal rest. Forests, green fields and water landscapes grow around the crematoria, keeping the memory of countless stories alive. In the picture, the existing wood adjacent to the Daelhof crematorium is being cleared (February 2025) to make way for a new ash scattering area in the wood to meet the increasing demand for ash scattering in areas with spontaneous vegetation. Photography by the author.

Figure 7: Hofheide Crematorium in Holsbeek by RCR Arquitectes + Coussée & Goris architecten, 2013 Flemish crematoria are not heterotopic places; they are, on the contrary, landmarks of an open territorial network. In addition to private mobility, crematoria are reached by public transport and crossed by footpaths. The Hofheide crematorium is the starting point of a long circular route that passes through wetlands, different kinds of scattering fields, cultivated fields, and wooded and residential areas. The increasing demand for planting trees in memory of loved ones during the scattering of ashes continuously reshapes the landscape surrounding the crematoria, gradually transforming it into wood. Photography by the author.

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Assembling Authorship in Participatory Design
The Ten Eekhovelei as a Collaborative Inquiry

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assembling authorship, participatory design, collaborative inquiry

Abstract

This paper explores the evolving notion of authorship in design-driven participatory action research, using the Ten Eekhovelei project in Deurne, Antwerp, as a case study. Conducted by scholars and students from the Interdisciplinary Studio for Territories in Transition (ISTT) at the University of Antwerp in collaboration with local residents and stakeholders, the project challenges traditional, singular models of authorship in architectural research. It employs co-design, participatory mapping, and narrative-building to integrate multiple voices, highlighting the power dynamics in knowledge production. Drawing on Sevgi Türkkan's (2022) critique of individual authorship and Denicke-Polcher & Khonsari's (2015) concept of "Live Projects", the study illustrates how participatory design fosters collective authorship and shared authority. The research underscores the ethical and representational dimensions of authorship, advocating for fluid, inclusive, and dynamic approaches to architectural practice. The findings contribute to broader discussions on originality, ownership, and collaborative methodologies in contemporary urban research and design.

This paper examines the evolving concept of authorship in design-driven participatory action research, focusing on the Ten Eekhovelei in Deurne, Antwerp, as a case study. Developed through collaboration between scholars and students from the Interdisciplinary Studio for Territories in Transition (ISTT) at the University of Antwerp, non-academic partners, and local residents, this project exemplifies a collective mode of knowledge production and authorship. It explores spatial interventions through co-creative processes, intertwining academic inquiry, community engagement, and local expertise to propose alternative urban transformation.

The research project includes various elements that engage 'others' in knowledge production and insight generation, resulting in multiple authorships. Firstly, it features co-design, where designs are collaboratively created with diverse stakeholders. Secondly, every participant is regarded as a co-researcher, moving away from the conventional researcher role (Kindon et al., 2008). Thirdly, architecture students are integral to the project. Lastly, the implementation aligns with the notion of *Live Projects* (Denicke-Polcher and Khonsari 2015). This active collaboration raises an essential question: who is the author?

Türkkan (2022) critiques the traditional notion of authorship in architectural design research, often characterised by a singular, heroic perspective. She argues that this model is outdated, failing to capture the collaborative and interdisciplinary nature of contemporary architectural research. Relating *authorship* to its etymological counterpart *authority*, Türkkan highlights the power dynamics inherent in traditional authorship, where authority is concentrated in the hands of a single individual, often marginalising the contributions of collaborators and other stakeholders.

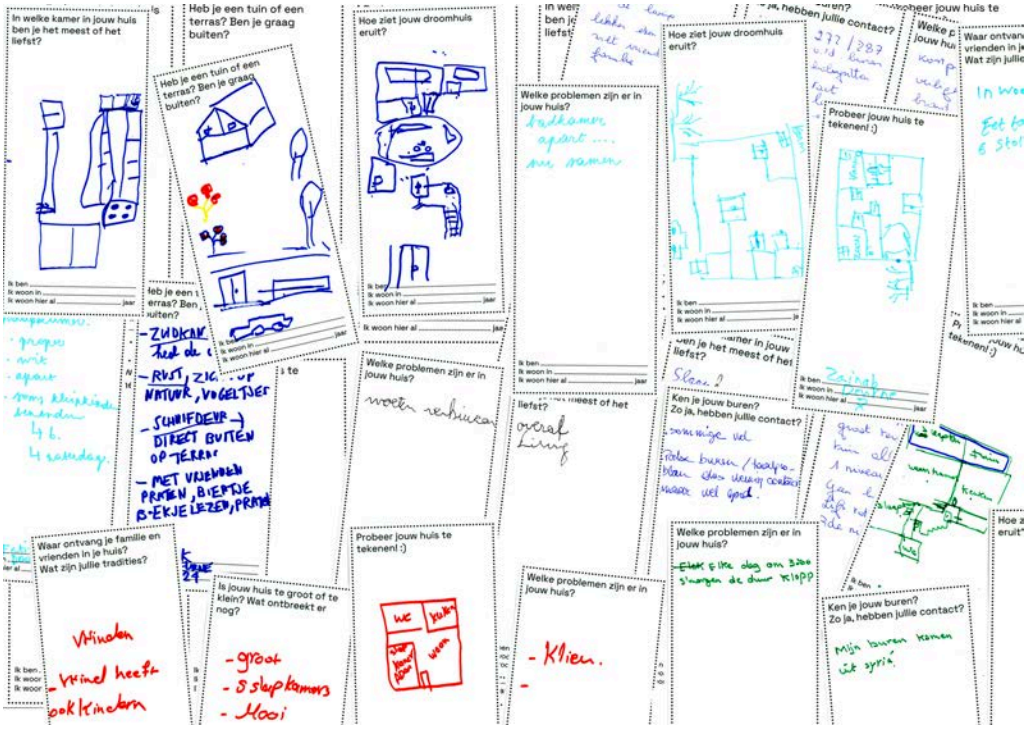

Figure 1: A set of question cards filled out by residents of Ten Eekhovelei. These were utilised in a community centre workshop, where residents shared their housing and living situations as well as their aspirations for the future.

She proposes that authorship should evolve into a dynamic and iterative practice marked by fluid delineations of roles for individuals, groups and clusters.

Issues of representation and ownership are central to this critique. In architectural research, representation – often through drawings – serves as a critical medium for capturing and communicating ideas. Traditionally seen as evidence of the architect's creative spirit, such representations are instrumental in claiming authorship. Türkkan (2023) argues that an overemphasis on individual authorship narrows the understanding of creative work, obscuring its inherently collective and iterative nature. She calls for ethical and equitable practices that recognise diverse contributions to architectural research. Moving beyond the singular-heroic model, Türkkan advocates for a fluid, dynamic concept of authorship. This approach better reflects the collaborative and evolving nature of contemporary research and practice.

In *Architecture of Multiple Authorship*, Denicke-Polcher and Khonsari (2015) explore collaborative and non-hierarchical practices in architectural education. Their socially engaged 'Live Projects' integrate students into real-world scenarios, emphasising community outreach, hands-on construction, and locally sourced materials. They argue for educational reform that extends projects across multiple academic years and student cohorts, challenging traditional notions of architecture and the architect's role. This model fosters continuous community engagement and practical experience, preparing students for professional practice and civic involvement.

Figure 2: Photo captured during a workshop at the Dinamo neighbourhood centre, featuring architecture students from the University of Antwerp alongside community centre staff and residents.

The Ten Eekhovelei project exemplifies this collaborative ethos. In 2022, a participatory design process was established between the UA (University of Antwerp), SAAMO (a local community centre), AG Vespa (the city's real estate management company), and a group of community members. The initial engagement involved a series of public workshops at the community centre, where residents shared concerns about displacement and aspirations for the future. UA scholars and SAAMO supervisors conducted door-to-door surveys to reach marginalised groups, ensuring diverse perspectives shaped the project vision. Engaging residents, including marginalised groups, the project facilitated tangible outcomes such as resident-led design proposals for green spaces and advocacy for preserving culturally significant local spatial practices. Next to that, a neighbourhood atlas was produced. The atlas highlights local patterns that testify to a richness of spatial practices and includes inclusive spaces that support and promote (trans-) local traditions and behaviours that are not yet seen.

Students served as mediators, facilitating participatory mapping sessions and co-design workshops. In these gatherings, residents and students collaboratively developed design solutions. These efforts were complemented by narrative-building exercises, where residents shared personal stories that informed culturally sensitive design strategies. As a result, students started to formulate their own hypotheses from these insights, fostering a sense of authorship. They presented the community members' vision to city officials, enhancing their influence in the development process. By integrating interdisciplinary perspectives, the project

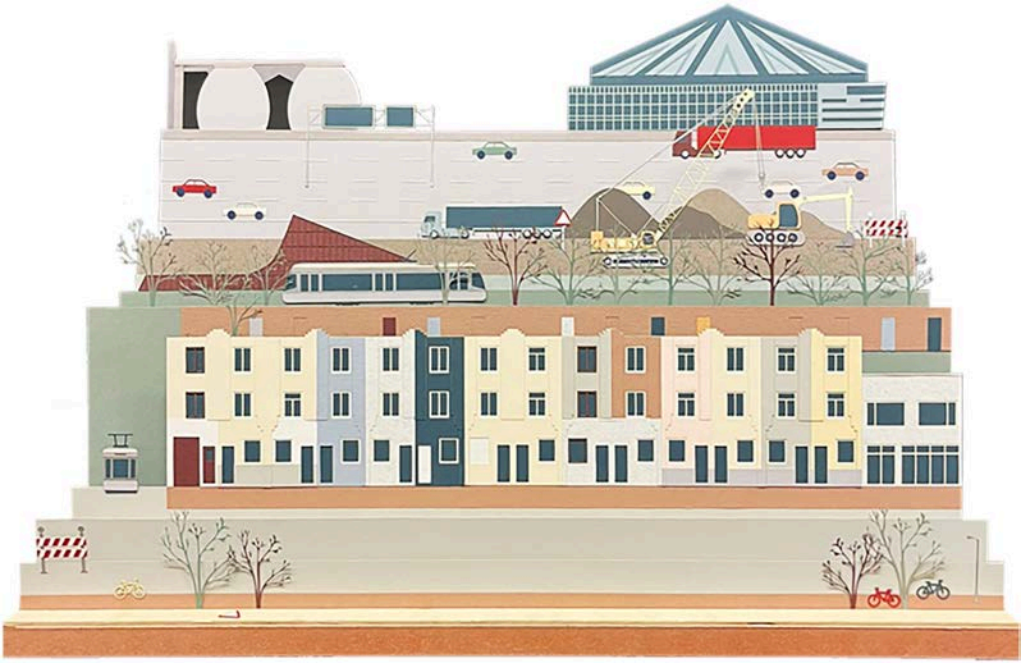

Figure 3: This diorama model illustrates the current horizontal layering of the area: in the foreground, you see Ten Eekhovelei, followed by a line of identical row houses. Behind them, there is a garden wall featuring several garden doors. Beyond the tramline, you can observe a construction site along with the bustling ring road of Antwerp. All these elements are quite linear and present obstacles, contributing to the site's sense of impenetrability.

questions traditional notions of a single author and encourages new forms of collective knowledge production.

This case study highlights how several participants generate situated knowledge. For instance, during a counter-mapping session, residents marked areas of cultural significance and identified environmental concerns. These maps were refined iteratively through feedback sessions, ensuring the final designs addressed both immediate needs and long-term aspirations. The concept of authorship becomes a negotiated construct, reflecting the diverse voices and tensions that shape the project. Participatory methods provide a framework for assembling fragmented contributions into meaningful, but provisional, narratives, contributing to contemporary debates on originality and ownership in architectural research.

The architecture of multiple authorship recognises the collaborative nature of design, promoting inclusivity, equity, and innovation. By valuing the contributions of all stakeholders and encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration, it fosters holistic and impactful architectural solutions.

The Ten Eekhovelei project serves as a compelling example, demonstrating how participatory design can reimagine authorship to align with the complexities of contemporary urban and architectural challenges. It states that participatory design transforms authorship into an open-ended, inclusive, and dynamic endeavour. It examines how authority and authorship can be restructured in collaborative projects. These insights lay the groundwork for further investigation into how these concepts influence architectural practice and larger creative domains.

In line with the project's collaborative spirit, four co-researchers will present the project's *assembly of insights* at CA2RE Milano 2025. This presentation will be based on the artefacts produced, including models, a diorama and design proposals. The argument will challenge traditional academic conventions by highlighting the 'collaborative inquiry' of knowledge creation and distribution.

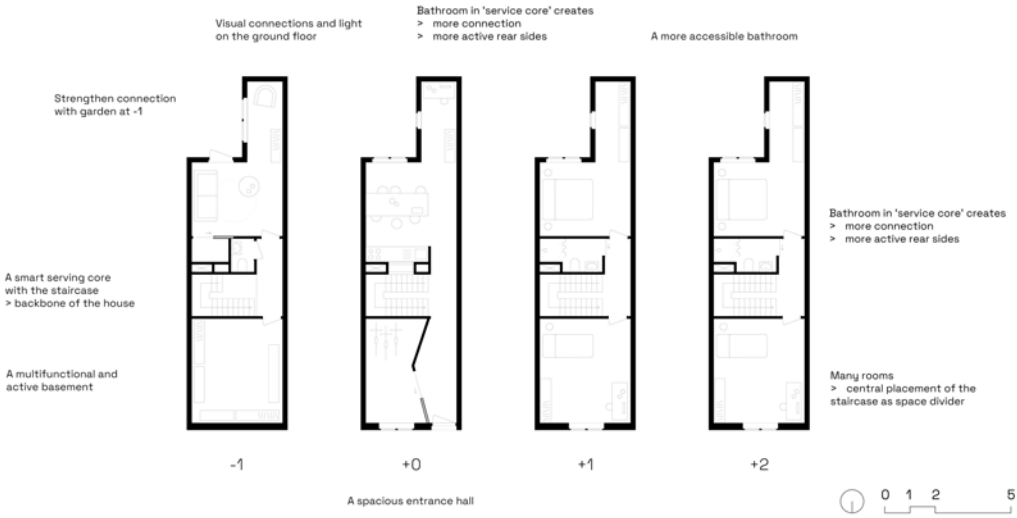

Figure 4: This collection of floor plans presents design concepts for renovating a typical *Conforta house*, with accompanying notes that emphasise the key design principles. These principles were formulated based on the collaborative insights gathered throughout the participatory design process.

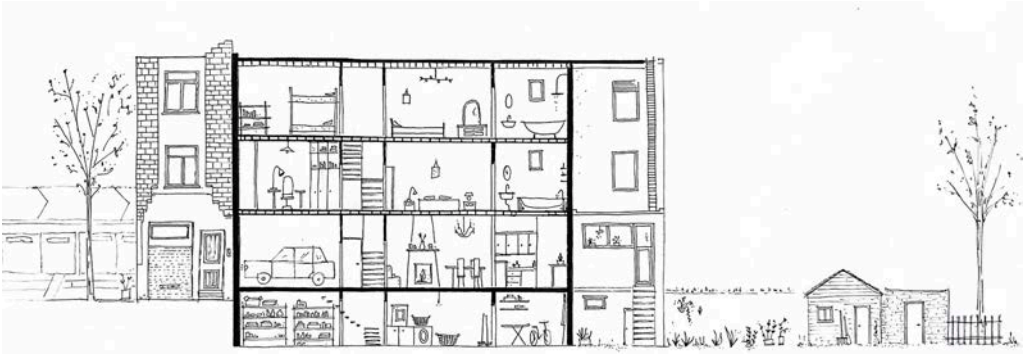

Figure 5: A detailed drawing of a house in the Ten Eekhovelei that integrates various architectural projections to depict and showcase the spatial behaviours of its residents.

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Regeneration as Rewriting Exploring the Authors of the Narrative in Neoliberal Urban Redevelopment Projects

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ageing in place, urban regeneration, urban experience

Abstract

The PhD research titled *Public housing and private interests: The experience of ageing in place in public housing in Italy and Austria* explores the effects of neoliberal urban regeneration on the housing conditions of older adults, through case studies in Milan, Italy and Vienna, Austria. The research project compares the transformation of neoliberal urban policies, the role of private and public housing policies, and how differing approaches to urban regeneration have affected the housing conditions of older adults in public housing. At the heart of this research lies the complex question of authorship over the narrative of urban regeneration: What narratives are inscribed upon the urban space undergoing transformation, by whom and in what ways? This paper examines how neoliberal urban projects are subject to overlapping, conflicting narratives, and interrogates their authorship together with the role of the researcher in shaping and reconstructing these narratives.

Since the 1980s, neoliberal rhetoric has dominated global financial and institutional systems and significantly reconstituted the urban terrain to reflect changes in political economic governance and social struggle (Brenner and Theodore 2005). The reframed institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free market and free trade is evidenced by how municipalities have approached major urban development projects: as a vehicle for capital accumulation and consolidation of economic power (Harvey 2007; Swyngedouw, Moulaert, and Rodriguez 2002). To enable this, urban areas needed to be reorganized via new narratives to justify demolition and redevelopment. The processes of (re)writing both the histories and future narratives of urban areas address not only the urban physical aspects but also the inhabitants, as their presence is rendered invisible or invalidated. Urban space became the arena where political, economic and social changes were mediated, to reimagine and recreate urban space "for the outsider, the investor, developer, businesswoman or -man, or the money-packed tourist" (Swyngedouw, Moulaert, and Rodriguez 2002, 551). In this context, cities are key conduits for extending the neoliberal urban agenda and "proving grounds for an increasingly broad range of neoliberal policy experiments, institutional innovations and political projects" (Peck, Theodore, and Brenner 2009, 65).

This paper explores the evolving narratives characterizing urban redevelopment projects, and how these descriptions are predominantly authored by media outlets, real estate, developers and financial institutions to exclude existing residents from shaping their urban environment and history. The paper draws from the author's doctoral research project that investigates the relationship between public and private housing policies, and how neoliberal urban regeneration strategies and projects influence housing conditions and exacerbate social and spatial inequities for older adults in public housing through case study analyses in Milan and Vienna. The methodology employed combines qualitative and

quantitative data collected via interviews, literature review, participant observation, systems-mapping, statistical census analysis and GIS analysis to reconstruct the housing needs, economic challenges, and health experiences of residents in neighbourhoods that have undergone urban renewal. The choice to utilize different methods of data collection and analysis offers opportunity for new or hidden perspectives to emerge. The use of interviews, literature review and participant observation engage residents and stakeholders as co-authors in defining their housing needs and experiences, lending opportunities to reveal perspectives that would otherwise be lost in census data or GIS analysis. Meanwhile, systems-mapping allows for a framework to visualize the often-conflicting narratives and challenges the traditional, singular notion of authorship in academic research.

The last two centuries have seen profound epistemological shifts in how knowledge production is conceived, explored, and circulated. The traditional spectrum that places pure and applied research on opposite ends has evolved to encapsulate different shades of disciplinary research approaches. This is evident in urban planning research, where knowledge-holders are not involved in the academic practices of organizing, publishing and disseminating the work. These epistemological changes are reflected in the urban landscape, as space becomes a mechanism through which conflicting narratives are negotiated, where knowledge is manufactured, and experiences are filtered to serve the author's narrative. As urban planning research trends towards participatory and collaborative approaches, researchers must inevitably engage with the ethical discussion around knowledge collection and publication, their positionality and corresponding responsibilities (Friedmann 1989). This paper and the research project critically question how authorship is defined when the population subjects being studied are simultaneously participants in defining the research goals and outcomes. Through outlining the different narratives inscribed upon urban areas before, during and after urban regeneration, this paper interrogates when and how, and by whom knowledge about urban regeneration projects is produced.

The urban area pre-renewal is perceived as an underutilized and deprived site, with potential for delivering public good

Governments, financial actors and real estate corporations will often portray neighbourhoods earmarked for urban regeneration as underused in contrast to the potential social value that could be extracted from urban regeneration, through "discursive practices that stigmatize properties targeted for demolition and redevelopment" (Weber 2002, 519). This narrative relies upon a negative rhetoric that discredits the current inhabitants, the quality of the built environment, or the activities occurring in the neighbourhood. The negative images of the neighbourhood are furthered by media outlets. Importantly, this narrative helps gain public favour and acceptance by contrasting the impoverished neighbourhood to the

vibrant potential future with new housing, economic growth and opportunities for social cohesion. This narrative focuses on the future potential of the urban area, while negating the existing role of the urban area as a place of belonging or identity for residents.

An example of this narrative is evidenced in the redevelopment of Porta Nuova, Milan. Since the 1990s, this neighbourhood has been characterized as "reminders of a bygone era – defunct steel foundries, sprawling chemical plants and shuttered factories" that is "a mix of overgrown wasteland, unused railroad tracks and even bombed-out buildings left behind from World War II" (Galbraith 2007, 10). This stark description of a barren, empty industrial graveyard justified the need for the Municipality of Milan to embark on a mission of complete redevelopment. The Municipality and project developer (Hines) engaged the public in planning workshops and events to neutralize community opposition, and touted the future neighbourhood amenities, including kindergartens, cultural facilities and public space (Anselmi and Vicari 2020). COIMA (a real estate corporation that developed and manages Porta Nuova) described the transformation from a formerly neglected and isolated zone into a reconnected neighbourhood with opportunities for social and cultural growth (COIMA 2020).

This narrative is also very much present in the history of Vienna's urban renewal, particularly during the period known as Red Vienna, wherein the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Austria addressed inadequate housing conditions, overcrowding and poor sanitation by launching an ambitious initiative of land acquisition, social housing construction, management and provision. This large-scale housing project was key to the political ideology at the time, that "well-equipped housing units and apartment complexes would not only raise the living conditions of the working class" but also "set a counterpoint to reactionary political forces of conservatism and fascism", thereby mobilizing the object of social housing as a tool to influence political and public reform (Kadi and Suitner 2019, 2).

The urban area and its potential renewal are designated as a vehicle for financial profit

An essential prerequisite for urban regeneration is the narrative of unproductive, financially underperforming land versus the speculative economic return to be gained through strategic redevelopment. This narrative mobilizes land financialization to frame land itself as an asset for economic growth, as opposed to an existing and inhabited neighbourhood. Similar to the scene in *Miracolo a Milano*, where businesspeople survey the peripheral informal settlement where Totò, the social value of land as a community and home for vulnerable residents is systematically erased through forced evictions (De Sica 1951). Instead, the economic value of the land takes precedence, due to the presence of oil and potential financial return. The financialization of land that underpins urban regeneration projects is visible in the increasingly complex global partnerships or coalitions involved in financing renewal projects.

Government institutions enable land financialization by creating policy conditions for global investment and transnational partnerships, through modifying existing policies and introducing mechanisms to expedite approvals or bypass political and citizen involvement. Massive redevelopment activities are made feasible by government institutions that cede key roles, functions and ownership to financial institutions, real estate corporations and developers. This phenomenon is very clear in Milan, where "the growth of the city has become increasingly dependent on capital investors to promote large-scale regeneration projects" and the municipality has reformed policy frameworks to incentivize public-private partnerships (Conte and Anselmi 2022, 1185). The privatization of urban space (particularly space that is functionally intended for public use) is central to the urban regeneration project. Certain urban functions such as social or subsidized housing are not conducive to this narrative. For example, in Porta Nuova, many of the promised public amenities did not come to fruition as originally intended: Instead of public kindergartens, there were two private kindergartens, a private Exhibition Hall, and one residential complex with only ten subsidized rental apartments (Anselmi and Vicari 2020). Ultimately, these urban development mega-projects are aimed at achieving profitability, while social welfare and social cohesion goals are perceived as secondary (Fainstein 2008).

Conversely, narratives of urban regeneration and land financialization in Vienna focus more on the significant role of the municipality in owning social housing, holding land reserves for social housing, and prioritizing affordability through rent regulations instead of wholesale profit. In this context, financial speculation and commodification of land are countered and reframed according to the goals of Vienna's social welfare system that aims to construct, manage and provide social or affordable housing. The global investment and development partnerships present in Milan are far less active in Vienna, where the municipality has historically owned and maintained large shares of the social housing stock and land themselves or through partnerships with non-profit associations (Kadi 2015).

The urban area post-redevelopment is marketed as a tourist destination and cultural hotspot

Recalling the role of Expo 2015 in boosting Milan's global visibility, an important narrative is the revitalized tourist destination with cultural or entertainment landmarks and high-profile flagship projects that transform the urban area into an object of consumption for the global visitor. This narrative, ironically outlined in Giovanni Semi's *Breve manuale per una gentrificazione carina*, is constructed and put forth by the government institutions, developers and real estate corporations, cultural and entertainment organizations, local tourism agencies, and financial investors (Semi 2023). Meanwhile, media outlets and tourists take up and disseminate this narrative. For example, the neighbourhood of Via Padova in Milan, historically a working-class area inhabited primarily by new

immigrants, was rebranded as NoLo (North of Loreto) mimicking trendy neighbourhoods in New York and has since undergone a significant gentrification process as increasing property values have pushed out low-income residents (CURA Lab 2025). Similarly, the former Fiera Milano site in the neighbourhood of CityLife underwent redevelopment and introduced three skyscrapers, a shopping centre, and a park all designed by internationally renowned architecture firms through a massive place-making and branding project (Conte and Anselmi 2022). These post-redevelopment narratives of the urban regeneration project are carefully curated and promoted in accessible and engaging marketing initiatives online and through social media, advertising the finished neighbourhood (CityLife, Porta Nuova, Certosa District) or the neighbourhood under development (MIND Milano Innovation District, Scalo Porta Romana). This narrative is developed with a particular target audience in mind: the global consumer with capacity to spend and contribute superficially to the local economy, as opposed to the local resident seeking affordable housing. In short, urban space is strategically re-organized and reproduced for more affluent users through development of attractive leisure, entertainment and cultural magnets (Hackworth 2002).

The urban area post-redevelopment is experienced as a site of displacement and social segregation

Finally, it is necessary to return to the fundamental role of the urban areas as a lived environment and home, and the narrative of urban regeneration as authored by the residents themselves. Here, the neighbourhood post-redevelopment is experienced as an exclusionary, economically and socially inaccessible space for residents, who are displaced, segregated and marginalized. Recalling Porta Nuova's redevelopment, the early development phase was resisted by residents, who protested the demolition of community facilities. One resident describes how locals have since been priced out and replaced by tourists, while the surrounding building value skyrocketed (COIMA 2020). The current context is a far cry from the prior industrial land use: Porta Nuova is now home to a mix of retail, office and residential functions, the latter of which are primarily luxury with prices far out of reach for the average renter or homeowner in Milan.

It is interesting to recount the medium through which this narrative is recounted (news articles, video, protests) and how the medium itself can change the narrative. For example, documentary-style films such as *The Pruitt-Igoe Myth, La hora de los hornos, Push, Ekümenopolis: City Without Limits, Whose City?* and *Remember Africville* present the overlapping perspectives of residents in urban areas undergoing extreme change in a comprehensible and organized structure that somehow validates the narrative to those audiences without first-person experience. In this sense, the videographer, producer or interviewer are not just observers but have an active role in retelling and authenticating the narrative of displacement and segregation. By comparison, resistance against

displacement presented through social mobilization movements such as occupations or protests are somehow framed as inherently alternative narratives versus mainstream narratives (Annunziata and Rivas-Alonso 2018).

Looking at Vienna, this narrative of social segregation is directly addressed and resisted through the municipality's policy of soft urban renewal. This approach towards urban redevelopment attempts to avoid displacement and segregation of residents, by steering away from demolition and large-scale construction and instead towards strategic rehabilitation of existing residential buildings (Housing 2030 2025). Soft urban renewal focuses on decentralizing the building and neighbourhood redevelopment processes, while encouraging community participation primarily from homeowners, vulnerable households, the elderly and new migrants. However, since the 1980s, Vienna's private rental housing stock has been subject to policy shifts encouraging liberalization of rents and temporary rent contracts (Kadi and Matznetter 2022). Landlords can legally regularly raise rents through temporary rental contracts, by converting residential rental buildings into owner-occupied housing, and by demolishing rental buildings and constructing new residential buildings, since rent regulation strictly concerns buildings built prior to 1953 (Kadi and Matznetter 2022). As a result, low-income tenants are still at risk of segregation and exclusion from the rental market, particularly in areas where prior affordable housing has been redeveloped.

Redefining authorship in neoliberal urban regeneration projects

This paper described the narratives of urban areas before, during, and after urban regeneration to reflect on the multiple competing narratives and critically analyze the traditional view of authorship in academic knowledge production. The paper questioned how authorship is defined and validated according to the author's role and medium in which the narrative is constructed or disseminated. This exploration found that different narratives take precedence at different stages of the redevelopment process, according to the author and medium in which it is presented. For example, the narrative of the urban area pre-regeneration as a financial asset reimagines the city and urban space for economic investment by erasing and sanitizing the experiences of existing residents that do not align with land financialization. The process of erasing and rewriting can be metaphorical, through subjectively reframing the experience of residents in the media according to the goals of real estate developers, or literally through forced evictions and demolition. The case studies of urban regeneration projects show that authorship is not an objective process for researchers or for those with lived experience. Rather, authorship of urban experience and knowledge related to urban regeneration is constantly negotiated by multiple actors with conflicting perspectives and goals related to the narrative itself.

The paper findings indicate a methodological approach to data collection, analysis and organization of the doctoral research project that

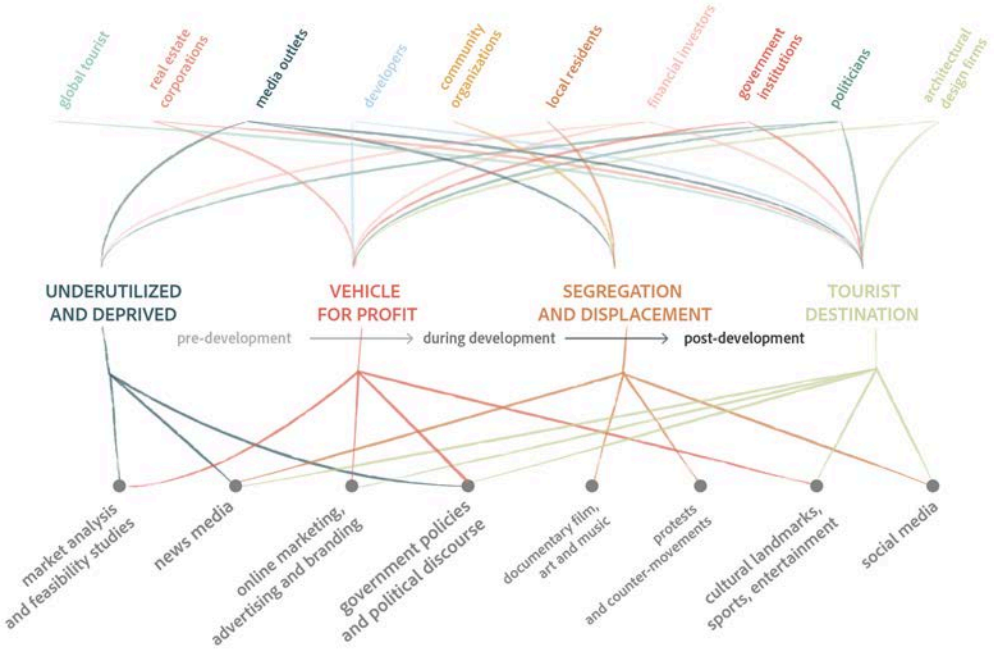

Figure 1: Diagram of conflicting narratives characterizing urban space pre-, during, and post-redevelopment.

leverages the intricacies of navigating multiple perspectives in research activities, by centering the lived experience of residents in areas undergoing urban regeneration. This approach challenges traditional forms of knowledge production and dissemination and mobilizes a definition of authorship wherein the study subject population maintains ownership over the narrative of their urban experience.

Just as Calvino's Marco Polo narrates his experiences exploring many fantastical cities through conversations with Emperor Kublai Khan, both the reader and the researcher attempt to find patterns and discern the 'true' urbanity through our own positionality and references. The perception of the urban environment is constantly under construction via the mechanisms of imaginative storytelling, and primary or secondary recollections. As researchers and readers of an urban landscape that has undergone significant change, we are inevitably tasked with negotiating and assembling interwoven fragments of information to consolidate meaning and give dignity to lived experience. The narrative of urban regeneration in academic research concerns not only who has the capacity to construct a narrative, but whose voices or experiences are excluded. It is not the academic positionality of the researcher that legitimizes the research findings or outputs, but the fact that the research process itself centres the narrative of residents throughout.

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Architecture in Search for an Author Re-scripting the Yards of Tbilisi

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notational drawing, yards of Tbilisi, post-authorship

Abstract

This study examines the role of authorship through the architecture of the Yards of Tbilisi –spaces shaped over time by various agents without a clearly defined origin. These structures, often overlooked by formal regulations during the Russian Empire, developed along independent trajectories, diverging from officially sanctioned design. Through notational drawings that combine visual representation with stories, memories, and observations, the research reassembles fragmented traces into a new narrative. Drawing on the theoretical contributions of Barthes, Eco, and Ricoeur, the Yards are interpreted as open frameworks, where the absence of a central author invites reinterpretation and transformation. The study proposes a design approach based on re-scripting, where architectural and narrative elements are recomposed to imagine possible futures. Positioned between historical investigation and fictional invention, this work explores how spatial configurations, once excluded from dominant architectural discourse, can become sites for creative redefinition and renewed relevance within the urban fabric.

The following text focuses on the role of authorship in the architecture of the Yards of Tbilisi. The study of these spaces provides an opportunity to explore the role of authorship in the case of structures whose origins and creators are largely uncertain. Using notational drawings in combining graphical representation with notes on anecdotes, stories, and information, this study acts as an act of overwriting what exists to gather the fragmented nature of the Yards into a new narrative at the crossroads between design and narrative, historical research, and fictional invention.

In architecture, the issue of the author's role is central in defining the scope and mechanisms of the discipline in its relation to tools, techniques of representation, and the built reality. The fluctuating impact of authorship in design practices outlines a territory where different agents present specific ambitions to transform reality with different trajectories. Despite the broad multiplicity of aspects involved in shaping any architectural work, the author is still considered the primary source of its intentionality, which safeguards the relationship between original purposes and results, both in terms of legal accountability, social commitment, and cultural impact. In this sense, the author's presence ensures the intelligibility of the work and its ability to be read and interpreted effectively. In his famous essay on the death of the author, Roland Barthes opposes the myth of filiation, based on the idea of the author as a primary source of invention, in favor of the figure of the scriptor, whose production is open to multiple readings (Barthes 1977).

The target of his polemic was not the author as such, but the idea of an indisputable authority that supports their figure and legitimizes the work in a cultural and social context. Indeed, the author's intentionality guarantees membership in a shared framework of rules, norms, and expected outcomes.

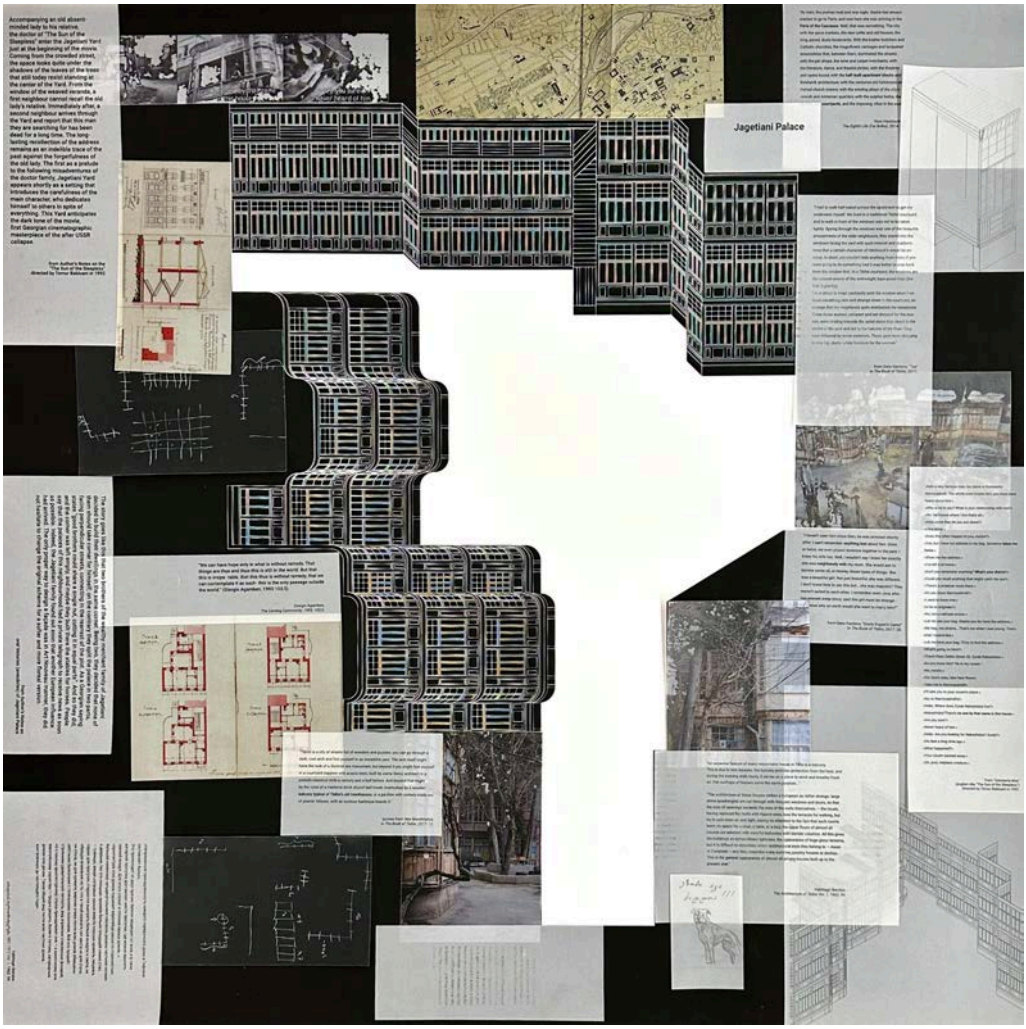

Figure 1: Notational Drawing on Jagetiani Palace's Yard, drawing by the author, 2025

Provocatively, Barthes presents the alternative scriptor's figure to replace the problematic ambiguity between authorship and authority.

The scriptor is defined by mutual dependency between different practices, such as writing and reading, assembling and interpreting, collecting and editing.

This understanding redefines the role of the identity and singularity of the author as such in favour of a vaguer and more inclusive engagement with the material of any cultural production. The architectural field is not an exception to this fruitful shift of perspective regarding the relationship between the potential of the work, the official author, and the other actors involved.

In this sense, the case of Tbilisi is emblematic of the intertwining of different forces and stories that shape the city in an overlapping of regulations, tacit agreements, cultural ambitions, informal practices, and unspoken customs. Emblematically, the emergence of the figure of the architect during Russian rule was marked by the need for a figure who could guarantee this legal framework along with the assurance of socially appropriate constructions for the new cultural context of the empire. From this perspective, the arrival of the architect-author represented a forced innovation to try to organize, transform, and control the city's identity. Historian Vakhtang Beridze pointed out how the control of the design over the construction was highly tenuous, with very few correspondences between the projects and construction (Beridze 1960). This gap corresponds to the tension between the necessity to quickly transform the city into a modern metropolis and the different forms of resistance to this process. To overcome this difficulty in controlling the everchanging aspect of the city, the Russian Empire proposed a stylistic manual from which solutions for facades, compositions, and details could be copied, at least for the facade visible from the street, to influence the building culture. This expedient was intended to provide a surrogate for the role that a hypothetical designer would play, affecting the city's architectural appearance through suggestions, directions, and prescriptions. However, architecture hidden from public view, such as in the Yards, often omits these principles. The secondary urban spaces could follow a different logic, with less control from official regulations and architects; in this sense, they present a form of diffuse authorship, straddling grassroots constructive knowledge and a more informal spatial organization. These structures consist of slender wooden frameworks with wide balconies and verandas that were probably only partially constructed based on vague graphical indications.

Nested in secondary spaces of the city, the architecture of Yards belongs to the shadow zones of these strategies of control of the urban tissue, where the link between precise intentions and tangible results fades or remains only as partial traces. As lateral spaces hidden between the folds of the city, the Yards have condensed practices of adaptation and reconfiguration that transcend the role, hypothetical and indeterminate, of their creators, whether they were architects or groups of builders. Beyond their physical presence in the city, scarce information about these spaces remains in original architectural projects, with few undetailed drawings. Their documental traces appear mostly in technical

documentation such as administrative site plans, infrastructure surveys, or other media like poems, movies, illustrations, and paintings.

In the string of events that develop in these spaces, the original moment of detachment from the author's intention becomes just one of many moments in the trajectory of the Yards. The uncertainty of stable assumptions and the lack of precise documentation demand a different interpretative perspective, in which narratives coexist adjacently, archive drawings with oral stories, anecdotes with photographic surveys, and historical texts with fictional tales. The composition of this new script resonates with the architectural character of the Yards, focusing on their vibrant perimeter.

To bridge the distances between these different narratives, this study deploys notational drawing to focus on the case of Jagetiani Place's Yard, establishing a physical correspondence among these fragments. The main objective of the drawing, as an interpretative artifact, is to produce a space in which the different narratives come together and relate to the architectural configuration of the Yard. The materiality of the notes, mostly printed on transparent paper, allows for stratification and overlapping of documents of different natures. As a panel for notations, the drawing is not a conclusive research result; quite the opposite, it is a device to constantly elaborate the documentation, excluding, adding, and transferring fragments. The provisional character of the artifact reflects the use of the drawing as a tool for establishing relationships and connections.

The unfinished character of the notational drawing is part of the operational character of this tool of investigation, open for changes and additions.

An essential obstacle for the research, such as the scarcity of coherent documentation, provides the opportunity to broaden the field of interest to other cultural spheres, producing a trans-medial investigation that assembles different works related to this urban phenomenon. The polyphonic character of this tool emerges from its content, its techniques, and its format: it juxtaposes historical, fictional, anecdotal, and personal materials through drawings, photographs, texts, still-frames, sketches, scanning, photogrammetry, transcriptions, and annotations. The act of re-scripting begins in the selection and combination of fragments that outline an alternative narrative for these spaces beyond their specific source and author. This collection of documentation gravitates around an original representation of the Yard, which centres the research on a specific spatial configuration as a stable reference point for the different narratives that are added. In particular, the Yard becomes an inverted architecture in which the exterior space becomes an interior defined by the peculiar wooden verandas. The representation technique directs the reading of space through the different textual and graphic fragments, suggesting an interpretation that depends on the spatiality, materiality, and configuration of the architecture of these places.

The case of Jagetiani Palace is particularly compelling in highlighting how the architecture and narrative constantly intertwine. The anecdotal story regarding the decision to divide the palace into two wings, facing perpendicular streets yet connected on the back through the Yard's area,

describes the spatial condition of the intervention in detail, no matter if it corresponds to a historical fact. Similarly, the incongruity between archival drawing and current facades raises questions regarding the adaptation of the initial intentions to the new stylistic influence of Art Nouveau influences on the taste of urban higher-class clients.

The notion of architectural authorship oscillates between the definition of a general scheme for the project and the countless unexpected events that unfolded starting from the construction phase. It is plausible to imagine that the group of builders of this project had no more indications to proceed than the few pages of drawings submitted to the imperial office of the city.

Nevertheless, the sinuous glazed surface of the facades in the Yard resulted from their constructive knowledge adapting to the initial urban configuration of the corner plot. In the first post-soviet masterpiece of Georgian cinematography, *The Sun of the Sleepless* by Temur Babluani, the charm of this place became so emblematic that it introduced the first scenes of the story. The main character, a doctor, offers to help an absent-minded old lady find her home; following the address written as a note in her purse, they end up in Jagetiani Palace's Yard. Asking the neighbours for indications, they discover that the address belonged to the old lady's cousin, who had died long before. The conversations occur in the middle of the Yards while the inhabitants are busy with their daily matters. The death of this former resident is almost already forgotten, and the Yard is the only conjunction between the lives of the different generations, despite its ephemeral appearance.

Similarly, the contemporary narratives regarding the life of Tbilisi focus intensely on the Yards as catalysts for interactions, encounters, and conflicts.

In a recent anthology, *The Book of Tbilisi*, collecting short tales by different local writers, these spaces are a constant setting for the development of the stories, depicting the events within a scenario deeply embedded in the city's character, as in the short story *Tsa* by Iva Pezuashvili:

I had to walk half-naked across the apartment to get my underwear myself. We lived in a traditional Tbilisi courtyard, and to walk in front of the windows was not to be taken lightly. Spying through the windows was one of the favourite amusements of the older neighbours; they stared into the windows facing the yard with such interest and stubbornness that a certain character of Hitchcock's would be envious. In short, you couldn't hide anything from them; if you were going to do something bad it was better to step back from the window first. In a Tbilisi courtyard, the windows are the second enemy of the overweight, bare-arsed man (the first is gravity). I was about to tread cautiously past the window when I noticed something new and strange down in the courtyard, so strange that my neighbours quite overlooked my nakedness. (Jobava and Parkinson 2017, 101).

Although Jagetiani Palace is not directly referred to, in fact, no place appears with its precise name, the Yards are constantly presented as an architectural phenomenon with substantial social impact: the

transparency of the verandas and the proximity of the apartments blurred the limits of the private areas and intimacy in a complex practice of reciprocal tolerance. In addition, anecdotes and oral stories contribute to this archipelago of tales through the direct recollection of personal memories and rumours.

Paradoxically, the uncertainty in defining a precise author is replaced by a multitude of narratives that constantly reshape and rescript the space of the Yard in a proliferation of perspectives.

From this perspective, the Yards offer a paradoxical extreme case in which authorship is controversial or even entirely unknown and mysterious. If the absence of authors defines any unscripted alteration as a form of betrayal against the original, in this case, the ambiguity of the authorship triggers future interpretations and re-inventions, even if this process leaves traces and reconfigurations that fall outside the authorial sphere. Umberto Eco defines this *poetic of the 'open work'* as the intrinsic ambiguity of artistic structures that can be turned into a programmatic 'field of possibilities' that transgress the hypothetical intentionality of the author or original state (Eco 1989). Although openness is a quality shared by different works, some houses have a strong disposition for ambiguity and plurality of meaning. These features bypass any original intentionality and foster constant overwriting in the form of constant readiness for change and reappropriation. The philosopher Paul Ricoeur suggests a compelling parallel between forms of narrative and architecture:

In turn, the act of construction is given as the spatial equivalent of narrative configuration through emplotment. From narrative to the edifice, it is the same intention of internal coherence that dwells in the narrator's and the builder's mind. Finally, the inhabiting, which results from this act of construction, can be taken for the equivalent of that 'refiguration' that, in the order of narrative, takes place through reading. The inhabitant, like the reader, welcomes the construction with his expectations and also his resistance and challenges. (Ricoeur 2004, 527)

Thus, the sequence that links the moment of emplotment to inhabitation is prolonged for the open work in a re-emplotment that regenerates the possibilities of inhabitation. This reactivation of narrative and spatial potential transcends the intention of the hypothetical original author and also that of the inhabitant/reader. It involves a form of authorship that does not allow exclusive control of the work but works on the margins of description and design, like a scriptor exploring alternative stories and unexpected developments.

Starting from an operation of recognition, reading, and transcription, the potential of re-scription emerges from their intrinsic spatial qualities and existing narratives as a starting point for hypothetical scenarios. Lying halfway between the construction of a difficult description of reality and a work of fictional narrative, the drawing allows the creation of a shadow zone in which, metaphorically, the difference between reader and scriptor dissolves. The selective representation of the Yard's architectural elements constitutes the design of an alternative space to the one it is intended to describe. At the same time, the combination of parts of

narratives, anecdotes, information, and observations shape a plot that suggests scenarios that are still possible.

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Tortoises
A Story of Caretaking

Stefan Gzyl, TU Delft

care, Caracas, emigration

Abstract

The profound crisis affecting Venezuela has triggered a massive migratory crisis. More than eight million people have fled the country. However, in Caracas, massive emigration and the ensuing vacancy have not reduced the city to abandonment and ruin. On the contrary, migrants' decision to protect their left-behind patrimonies has set in motion caretaking practices that preserve these. These practices are introverted and protective, yet through their action, 'preservation' becomes more than suspension in time. Caretaking is entangled with migration dynamics and the ongoing collapse, integrated with emerging coping strategies, transforming spaces and livelihoods.

In a narrative style that straddles between the short story and the field report, the essay examines one instance of caretaking, reflecting on how mundane actions extend the patrimonies and the relations around them. The text explores the idea of 'extended caption' as a way to create a fluid, non-subordinate dialogue between text and image. (Bowring 2020)

I met with Zaida Osorio on a Wednesday morning in November of 2022 after speaking on the phone and explaining my intentions. "I am researching vacant houses and the people who look after them; I would like to interview you at the house", I had said.

Zaida had been Dietrich Kunckel's assistant for more than twenty years. After he closed his architecture practice and emigrated in 2017, Zaida stayed on, looking after both office and house. Her continued engagement constituted her main source of income. Yet it was not simply an extension of a professional relationship but rather entangled in an affective connection to her boss – whom she considered a father figure – and his family.

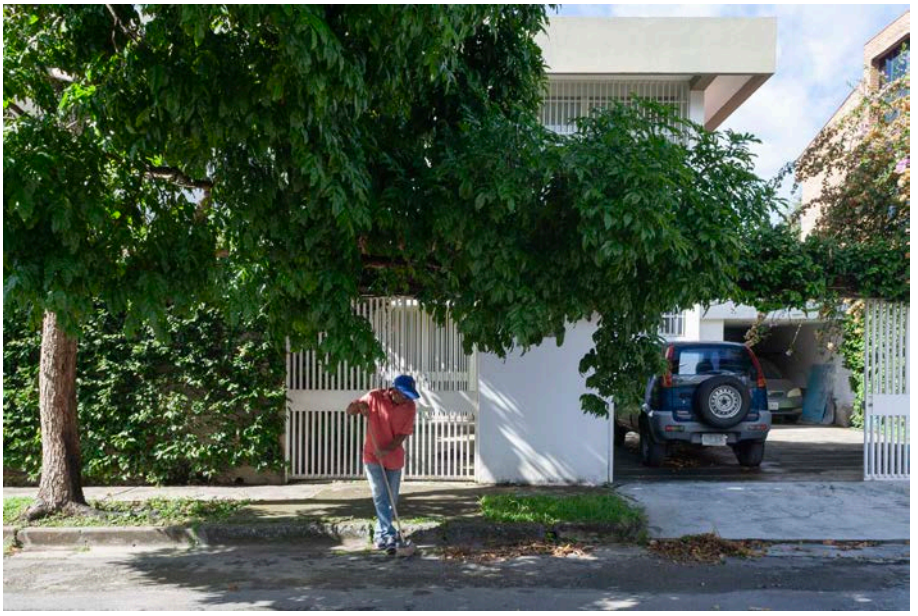
It took a few phone calls for her to accept our meeting. She later explained she had asked her boss before allowing me to accompany her. I picked her up at the office and drove together to the house, which was a few minutes away. When she got in the car, I immediately noticed the lettuce.

"These are for the tortoises", she said, showing me a translucent plastic bag with three green balls. "They haven't eaten in a few days". She had bought the vegetables near her house and carried them to work. They wore the marks of the commute, bruised from the pressure of bodies in a cramped subway.

"I didn't know you kept tortoises in the house", I commented.

"There are three of them. They got them before leaving, and now I care for them. There used to be a cat too, but she died. Enrique buried her in the garden". Enrique had been a draftsman at the office for thirty years; he now assisted Zaida in the housekeeping duties.

In the short drive to the house, we crossed two checkpoints. The first, an automatic barrier along a large avenue, required a code that changed weekly, which Zaida had at hand. A few meters away, we arrived at a booth where a man stared blankly at the traffic. He recognized Zaida and lifted the barrier into the long cul-de-sac where the house was. In the last decades, many streets in the city have been closed with gates and checkpoints. Initially, the measure was a private alternative to deficient policing and rising insecurity, but amid massive emigration, checkpoints were incorporated into the collective, self-managed mechanisms for protecting vacant houses.



Like almost every other house in the city, this one was concealed behind a tall perimeter wall so that all one could see from the street was parts of

its upper floor and roof behind a lush garden. Zaida inspected the sidewalk in front of the house as she opened the front door.

"We keep the front clean so it looks like there are people in the house. I also keep these lights on", she said, pointing at the lit floodlights by the front door. "When I come, I open and close the garage and move the trash bins around so that people see the house is not alone. I tell my boss: '*Jefe*, why don't you install a security system?' But he doesn't listen". Instead of technology, Zaida had improvised a series of strategies for simulating occupancy, carried out individually or in coordination with neighbours.

We walked straight into the living room, not for a formal welcome but because it was where the emptiness of the house was most dramatic. It was a large room lined with wooden panels and bookshelves along two walls. The dark wood had marks of where books and paintings had been. Random objects remained on the shelves: a seashell, an old teapot, and metallic bookends that held nothing. Another wall was stained from a recent leak, peeled paint on the floor. There was a sofa and two grey chairs with stains and scratch marks.

"Cats get in through the window and sleep on these chairs", Zaida offered as an explanation for the furniture. "But if you lock everything up, the house gets moldy and the humidity damages clothes in the closets". The house was overflowing with problems that demand attention, from leaks and mold to fallen trees. Reparation costs were an economic burden for the family, but they had no intention of selling.

Glass doors opening to the garden made up the fourth side. Behind them, steel bars added a final layer of security. The sunlight outside reflected on the overgrown grass, tinting the interior green. It was the end of the rainy season, and the garden had grown lushly.

“Maintaining this garden is my day-to-day, Zaida explained”. If unkempt, it would convey an image of abandonment and encourage break-ins. The garden shaped her routines and frequency of visits, and its maintenance was incorporated into the repertoire of occupancy simulation strategies. Zaida walked out and filled a green plastic watering jug. She carried it up the stairs, lettuce bag in one hand and ten liters of water in the other. Once upstairs, she slid open a large window and greeted the tortoises.

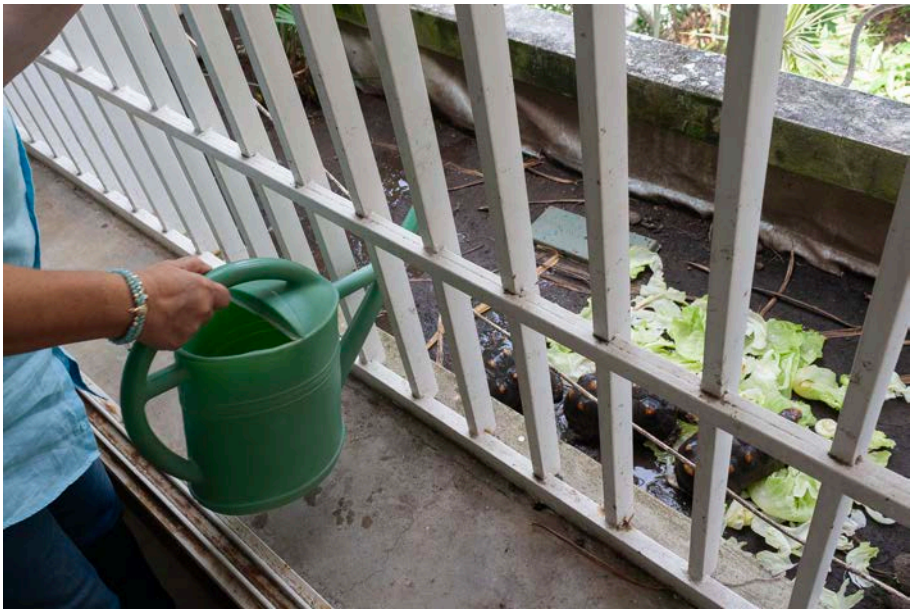
"Hello, my kids", she said cheerfully. The animals did not respond in any noticeable way.

"I thought the tortoises would be in the garden".

"No, it's safer to keep them in here", Zaida responded.

Yellow-footed tortoises are a common pet in the city. They roam free around homes and gardens, but in this empty house they were confined to a small concrete planter behind vertical security bars, like in a miniature zoo display.

With practiced movements, Zaida peeled leaves off the lettuce and threw them through the bars. The tortoises raised from their slumber and ate without pause.



"What is the water for?" I asked after a moment.

"They get hot, so you have to water them", Zaida responded. She stuck the tip of the jug through the bars and poured its content on the animals, watering them like plants while talking to them. Their shells gleamed as the water washed off the dirt. They kept on eating the lettuce, undisturbed by the shower. Why keep these animals in this vacant house? What do we preserve when we preserve something? "Is it the thing itself, or the negotiated order that surrounds it, or some 'larger' entity?" (Graham and Thrift 2007)

Like the caged leopard in Borges' story, who existed to inspire a line in a poem, (Borges 1960) the captivity of the tortoises also served a purpose: it contained the claim over the house and the city, anchoring abstract notions of 'nation' to something discrete and tangible. In their purpose, the tortoises were together with the rest of the house, with its unkempt garden, moldy walls, and its spotless-clean sidewalk. They were joined by Zaida herself, whose existence revolved around keeping that claim alive one lettuce leaf at a time, by the coordinated efforts of the remaining neighbours, and the atomized labor of thousands of

caretakers who extend the ways of life of a disappearing middle class and the relations woven around them.

We heard noises downstairs.

“Enrique is here!” Zaida exclaimed. “Let’s go. I need him to grab me some avocados from the tree”.

All images by the author.

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Cultural Narratives in Collective Spaces
The Role of Architectural Design in the Regeneration of Miao Villages

Yidan Liu, DAStU, Politecnico di Milano

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design-driven research, rural revitalization, Miao Village

Abstract

Modernization and urbanization improved the lifestyle of local people, and the layout of collective space was modified accordingly, disrupting the historical grammar of public space in Miao villages in Guizhou. Amidst China's rural revitalization efforts, locals are adapting to rapid societal changes, with architectural design subtly influencing their survival strategies. This research investigates the interplay between Architectural Design, Cultural Narratives, and Collective Spaces in Miao villages, offering insights into their cultural dynamics. The study uses cultural narratives and collective spaces theory within architectural design, using Narratology to understand how architectural elements contribute to Miao villages' cultural narrative landscape. Additionally, the research emphasizes the importance of collective spaces for social interaction and cultural preservation in Miao villages, fostering community cohesion and identity. The core focus lies in examining how architectural design conveys cultural meaning in Miao villages, portraying cultural identity and values symbolically. By integrating theoretical frameworks with empirical research, the study deepens our understanding of the relationship between architecture and culture in Miao communities.

Research background: development and culture

The Communist Party of China published the Rural Revitalization Strategic Plan (2018-2022) in 2018, which aimed to promote rural economic prosperity and improve the livelihoods of villagers through rural reform and development to achieve common urban-rural development. (CPC Central Committee and the State Council 2018) On the other hand, in the process of Rural Revitalization, the rapid and profound transformations have significantly changed the original societal order in the countryside. Concurrently, the realization of psychological needs and self-fulfillment is worth careful attention. The main crisis facing China's rural areas at this stage is how to safeguard and activate the traditional culture and lifestyle, especially in the remote mountainous areas.

Guizhou has a large Miao population who are celebrated for their distinctive stilt house style. Currently, Miao villages and their culture are confronted with an array of complex challenges stemming from the changes in villages. In recent years, some commendable architectural design projects have been implemented in Miao villages, such as accommodations, museums, and libraries. However, their cultural resonance is primarily confined to the interior design housed within these structures, and the characteristics of Miao architectural culture remain largely unexplored and inadequately investigated. Focusing on the intricate interplay between architecture and culture, this study delves into the possibility of multifaceted dimensions of cultural regeneration in Miao villages,

focusing on the pivotal role that architectural design plays in shaping and sustaining cultural identity.

Design philosophy: cultural narratives and collective spaces

Narratology as a discipline originated in France and then quickly spread to European and American countries (especially the Netherlands, Israel, Germany, and the United States). Gerald Prince made a summary and gave a definition of this word in his book *A Dictionary of Narratology* from three different views. Exploring cultural narratives within Miao village architecture involves delving deeply into the stories, symbols, and traditions that shape the built environment. (Prince 1982, 57–58). In the context of Miao villages, cultural narratives are not only expressed through oral traditions and social practices but are also embedded in the physical structures and spatial layouts that form the core of community life. These narratives, intertwined with the village's history, identity, and cultural values, offer a rich tapestry for understanding how architecture serves as a repository for cultural memory and continuity.

The notion of collective space is with no doubt coined by the Spanish architect and urban designer Manuel de Solà-Morales at the beginning of the 1990s. (Solà-Morales i Rubió, Frampton, and Ibelings 2008, 12) Collective spaces play a vital role in preserving and reinforcing the cultural memory of communities, and in Miao villages, these spaces serve as living repositories of shared experiences, traditions, and social practices. The collective memory embedded in these public areas – such as squares, courtyards, and communal halls – reflects the social fabric of the Miao people and their deep connection to their cultural heritage. Through rituals, festivals, and everyday interactions, these spaces foster a strong sense of belonging and continuity, making them indispensable to the life and sustainability of the community.

Design approach: integrating cultural narratives into spatial design

The design approach for the regeneration of Miao villages emphasizes the integration of cultural narratives into spatial design, ensuring that architectural interventions are both culturally resonant and functionally relevant. To achieve this, the design process incorporates anthropological research methods, such as questionnaires and oral history, to gather in-depth insights into the community's cultural practices, values, and spatial needs. Oral history and questionnaires provide rich, qualitative and quantitative data that reveal the cultural narratives, values, and spatial practices of the Miao community. This approach ensures that the design is informed by the voices and experiences of the local residents, fostering a sense of ownership and cultural continuity.

Cultural Symbolism and Identity: The design incorporates traditional Miao architectural elements, such as the stilt house structure, intricate wood carvings, and symbolic patterns, into modern spaces. These elements serve as visual and spatial narratives that reflect the Miao people's history, beliefs, and values. For example, the use of traditional motifs in public squares or communal halls can evoke a sense of cultural continuity and pride.

Community-Centric Design: The design process actively involves local residents, ensuring that their voices and needs shape the outcomes. (Bandyopadhyay et al. 2010, 45) This participatory approach fosters a sense of ownership and ensures that the spaces are functional and meaningful to the community. Workshops, interviews, and collaborative design sessions are employed to gather insights and co-create solutions. Collect personal stories and memories associated with existing public spaces, such as drum fields or ancestral halls, to understand their cultural and emotional significance. This information can guide the redesign of these spaces to preserve their cultural meaning while enhancing their functionality.

Revitalization of Collective Memory: the design seeks to revive and reinforce the collective memory embedded in public spaces. Survey residents on their attachment to these spaces and their ideas for revitalizing them, ensuring that the design fosters a sense of belonging and continuity. By restoring and enhancing spaces like drum fields, communal courtyards, and ancestral halls, the design ensures that these areas continue to serve as living repositories of cultural heritage. These spaces are designed to host rituals, festivals, and everyday interactions, fostering a strong sense of belonging and continuity.

Design strategy: enrich function and reorganize courtyard

Based on the Rural Revitalization Strategic Plan officially published, the Chinese government pays more attention to its development in tourism, culture, health care, and other ways. CPC Central Committee and the State Council 2018) It is also the most suitable design direction for domestic village development, especially for small-scale villages such as the Miao nationality in Guizhou, so that the villagers can basically achieve self-sufficiency. Based on field research and on-site visits, the overall design strategy of the traditional Miao village in Guizhou should conform to the national development direction, take sustainable development as the design basis, and carry out targeted collective space cultural narrative design.

The square constitutes an important place for the cultural life of the villagers. As a public group behavior, the square culture relies on a good aesthetic and cultural ecology. It not only shows the contribution of the spiritual civilization of the countryside, but more importantly, its creative role, because it can adapt and optimize the group cultural personality of the masses. The village infrastructure is still quite weak, lacking rural village-level public service places, daily exchanges, festival activities and

mass cultural and sports activities lack good space for development, which to a large extent restricts the prosperity of cultural undertakings at the township and village levels, cannot meet the growing cultural and spiritual life needs in rural areas, and seriously hinders the enthusiasm of the masses to carry out cultural activities. In order to meet the needs of villagers' daily life, festival activities, sports activities, etc., it is necessary to make full use of the drum field in the village. Set up detachable or easily movable public sports facilities and convenient living facilities in each drum-stepping field in the village. In this way, the original function and culture of the drum-stepping field can be maintained while ensuring the daily entertainment life of the villagers.

Although the courtyard space belongs to a private space, it is also a small collective space in certain specific cases. However, the courtyards in the village now have problems such as unclear functional divisions, messy stacking of labor tools, scattered and poor hygiene of livestock pens, and no complete courtyard space. Therefore, the reorganization of the inner and outer spaces of the courtyard can not only vigorously improve the courtyard environment, but also resolutely eliminate the phenomenon of random stacking and placement inside the courtyard and in front of and behind the house. In terms of the functional division of the courtyard, it can be isolated and divided according to the living area, planting area, and breeding area. At the same time, the poultry breeding, toilets, and miscellaneous items that most affect the courtyard environment can be separated into three areas to ensure that the courtyard is clean and tidy.

Conclusion: sustaining cultural identity through architectural design

The regeneration of Miao villages in Guizhou represents a critical opportunity to balance modernization with cultural preservation, ensuring that the unique identity of the Miao people is sustained amidst rapid societal changes. This study has explored the interplay between architectural design, cultural narratives, and collective spaces, emphasizing the pivotal role of architecture in shaping and sustaining cultural identity. By integrating cultural narratives into spatial design, the research demonstrates how architectural interventions can serve as powerful tools for cultural regeneration and community empowerment.

The design philosophy, grounded in narratology and the concept of collective spaces, highlights the importance of embedding cultural memory and traditions into the built environment. Through the use of traditional symbols, participatory design processes, and the revitalization of collective memory, the design approach ensures that the architectural interventions resonate deeply with the Miao community. The incorporation of anthropological research methods, such as questionnaires and oral history, further enriches the design process, ensuring that it is informed by the voices and experiences of local residents.

The proposed design strategies, which focus on enriching public space functionality and regeneration courtyard spaces, address both the

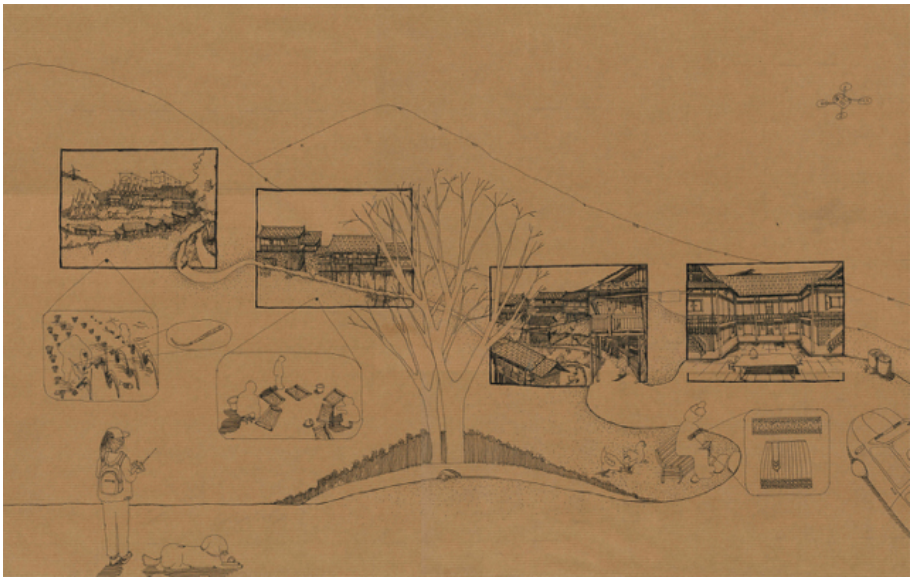

Figure 1: A drawing of the daily life of villagers in traditional villages in Guizhou, drawn by the author. This drawing shows the behavior of local people in different collective spaces at different times from the author's perspective. There are women doing handicrafts in the open space at the entrance of the village, children resting in the courtyard, old people on their way to visit their neighbors, laborers wetting seeds in early summer, and people harvesting in rice fields in late autumn. All these activities are guided by the road, connecting the perspectives from near to far.

practical and cultural needs of the community. By enhancing the role of public spaces like drum fields and communal courtyards, the design fosters social interaction, cultural continuity, and a sense of belonging. Simultaneously, the reorganization of private courtyard spaces improves living conditions while preserving the traditional layout and functions that reflect the Miao way of life.

In conclusion, this research underscores the importance of architectural design as a medium for cultural expression and preservation in rural revitalization efforts. By prioritizing cultural narratives and community engagement, the regeneration of Miao villages can achieve a harmonious balance between tradition and modernity, ensuring that the cultural heritage of the Miao people is not only preserved but also celebrated and revitalized. This approach offers valuable insights for similar rural development projects, demonstrating how architecture can serve as a bridge between the past and the future, fostering sustainable and culturally rich communities.

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The Gift of Stories

Greer Lorca Mac Keogh, University of the Arts London

hospitality, gifts, storyteller

Abstract

My current research centres on my experiences as an artist, a 'guest' and 'host' in rural communities in Ireland, where building relationships at a local level has revealed wider notions of hospitality towards 'outsiders' on a national and international scale. Over time, it has become clear that the act of being a guest, or host, is deeply personal, shaped by an entanglement of influences and experiences. Under the title *The Hotel,* my enquiry consists of a body of practical, site-based, and archival research, interwoven with contextual and conceptual research, from which the perspective of guest, host, and storyteller are explored.

This research arises from stories. Stories from my own experiences and of those shared with me by others. An empty hotel is the starting point for this research and the vessel which holds it together. The Royal Hotel is a real physical space, in a small rural town called Boyle, in County Roscommon, Ireland. Since 2016, I have been speaking with people in Boyle about the Royal Hotel and they have shared their experiences and local knowledge of hospitality in rural communities in Ireland. The durational nature of this project means it has lived through a number of inflection points, with the global pandemic, local changes, and personal transformations, all feeding into and influencing my research journey.

Figure 1: The Royal Hotel, 2016.

Figure 2: Barry brings me to the site on the Rockingham Estate where a stick in the ground indicates an ancient passage tomb, 2016.

This journey began with an *Open Brief* (Jackson 2019). In a practical sense, this means that my position wasn't fixed. Rather, overtime, it was open to change and evolved in response to the context. The Open Brief ultimately allowed for the fluidity of switching between the roles of guest and host. Often, with a more prescriptive brief derived from a commission or project placement, the roles are more defined, artist, producer, facilitator, participants, or curator. Whereas with an Open Brief, I was able to, in essence, be more myself, have open conversations and get to know people without being tied to a particular mode of working. The *Open Brief* approach is a strategy developed by the Artist Placement Group (APG). APG was envisaged by Barbara Steveni in London in 1965 and established as a network of artists the following year (Henning and Jordan 2016). APG coordinated artists working on placements in industry, government, and beyond, but crucially the medium of their work would be independent of instructions and "deliberately left open-ended" (Kester 2004, 61). Not being beholden to an obligation to produce anything, I embraced the flow or movement between the position of guest and host. This open-ended-ness allowed a detailed picture of the social space of the hotel to emerge.

During my project visits to Boyle, I was brought on a series of semi-impromptu walks and journeys around the town and the townland. What ties these walks together is that each person wanted to show me something residing from the past in the landscape. Take the photograph of a stick in the ground. A local resident, Barry, took me on a drive to Lough

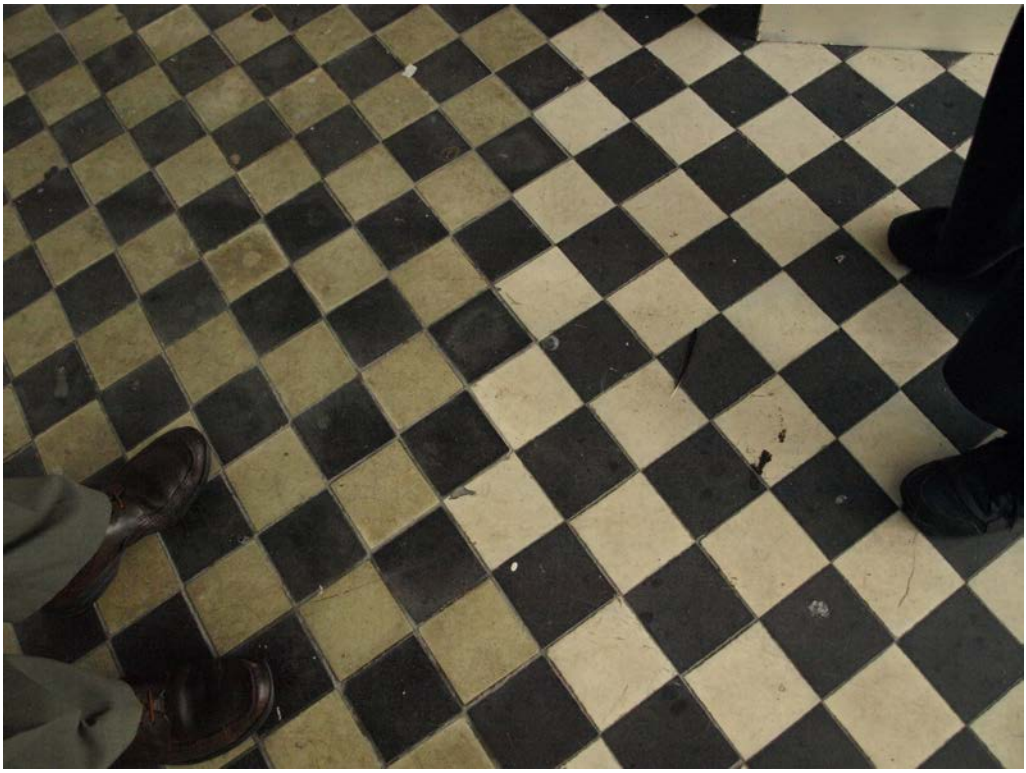

Figure 3: Cristy is pointing out the difference between the original tile, which is over 100 years old, and more recent replacements which now look older, 2016

Key Forest Park. The stick in the ground was a marker for, amongst the trees just off the road, a passage tomb. The tomb at one point was used by the IRA to hide weapons. An ancient site of which the landowners and British army were unaware. The image speaks to Barry's local knowledge, my position as guest, and the complexity of site, with layers of meaning and association. Cultural theorist Doreen Massey suggests that "what gives a place its specificity is not some long internalized history but the fact that it is constructed out of a particular constellation of social relations, meeting and weaving together at a particular locus" (Massey 1994, 154). It is through an accumulation of these encounters that I started to understand the specificity of Boyle, as a rural town, that can speak to the interconnected, universal, nature of hospitality.

The subject of authorship has been central to the ethical questions that underpin my research. As much as possible, I have tried not to abstract the stories shared with me, but rather to contextualise them. Through contextualising, the stories have generated further research, narratives, and dialogue, that I share with others. As author takes its roots from the Latin auctor, meaning "one who carries forward or increases", I situate myself in this action and role. My research is designed around the premise of perceiving the local knowledge shared with me as gifts, and I am the storyteller who carries them forward. This is one strategy for how I conceptualise how my own learning and understanding forms and reciprocate hospitality. It helps me locate and contextualise indebtedness, rationalising how 'authoring' this research is a gift in return.

Figure 4: Christine took me on a walk to visit the Drumanone Dolmen, an accident site outside Boyle, 2016.

This strategy draws from the work of American author, poet and academic, Lewis Hyde's influential book, *The Gift: How the Creative Spirit Transforms the World* (2007), in which he writes extensively on the action of gifts and gift giving. His examples all echo the same parable, that which is taken, and not passed along, ceases to be a gift. In other words, the expectation within gift giving is that they are shared, the advantage, value or gain, received from the gift, is passed along, or reciprocated. Grain or vegetables given as gift, made into a stew, must be shared with neighbours or they are no longer gifts. The power of the gift is in its 'increase,' that a bag of vegetables is prepared into a stew and shared. They are more than the sum of their parts. Hyde's premise is grounded in the seminal work by Marcel Mauss, first published in 1925, *The Gift: Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies* about the nature of gift giving and reciprocity in communities (Mauss and Douglas 2002). If I conceptualise the stories shared with me as gifts, is it the transformation of those gifts taking place through learning that I am obliged to pass on? Nevertheless, the conversations and encounters in a rural town, set me on a trajectory of making sense through authorship, the historical and cultural conditions that lie beneath or behind my Irish identity.

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Claybody / House-body
The Cosmic Body

Elena Pérez Guembe, TU Delft

#

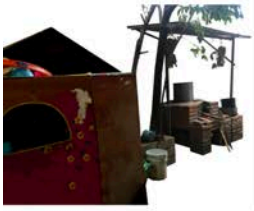
indigenous spatial narratives, symbolic hermeneutics, posthumanities

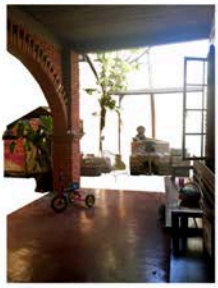
Abstract

Through this text the author explains the architectural research exploratory methods she applied for the architectural analysis of an indigenous Zapotec house-workshop and its urban context, as part of her doctoral thesis. Firstly, on the fieldwork with local communities, secondly, in the complex processing of information, and thirdly, in the various formats she developed for knowledge sharing. The author departs from indigenous premises of *comunalidad* for on-the-ground artistic fieldwork activities, posthuman critical theory tools, and symbolic hermeneutics for architectural analysis, creating an assemblage between the symbolic and the scientific. This depiction, not exactly western, neither completely indigenous, offers an unusual spatial reading, yet with important notions from the culture of study, where the uses of the spaces cannot be detached from their symbolic, poetic and ethical meaning. Understanding the house as a cultural artefact, graphically analysed and *narrated* through the lens of a myth, the author creates an *epistemological assemblage* between indigenous and occidental traditions, and between the sciences and the arts.

This essay offers a glimpse into the artistic processes applied to the analysis of four Zapotec houses, their urban context, and the everyday life that shapes them and vice versa, as part of her doctoral thesis *Architectures of Care. From the Zapotecs to the Cosmos*. Through each house the author goes on narrating an indigenous philosophy of living that differs from Western conceptions of space, scale and time. Looking at an epistemology historically excluded, the author becomes a translator who offers a new lens through which two cultures, historically set apart, can look at each other on equal grounds. Through a combination of artistic methods, the author overlays and weaves complex cultural aspects of the group of study; introducing the reader to their emotional-cultural ties with nature and the cosmos, their relationship with the Earth, and the interconnectedness among all that exists, amid other aspects. All this is narrated through local voices, myths and poetry, a field cultivated by oral cultures, that will also be translated into more sensorial forms of narration. Stories are transformed into matter through artefacts and assemblages, creating a more complex interconnected fabric. These processes serve altogether to inform cosmic architectural diagrams that narrate and reveal unseen worlds woven into the quotidian spaces through symbolic hermeneutics, creating a unitary yet multidimensional narrative system. The house thus, is approached as a situated cultural artefact, both in time and space, where the imaginary and the rational are conceived as a unitary aspect of the human psyche. A poem written by the author, which recollects a Mesoamerican myth of Creation, sets the ground for the narration of the first house: the house-workshop of the black clay artisan. This poem introduces the main principles of the Mesoamerican thought, still recognizable today.

great goddess' womb
fired clay/recreation of creation/
guanda - soul, parallel being
goddess of beauty and the arts





Black clay artisan house
1 garden / walled patio
2 kilns (husband main workplace area)
3 clay precension and storage area
4 toilet
5 grand children's playhouse
6 grand mother's traditional kitchen (Adelanto)
7 water fountain
8 porch
9 water tank
10 water tap
11 mural of a tree (living room & porch)
12 mural of an angel (phone area & bedroom access)
13 workshop (woman artisan area)

Micro-cosmic Immensities (or the Mesoamerican Hard Core[1])

My body is a house
And is also a cosmos.

My house is a body
It has eyes, mouth and feet
And a womb where I can sleep

Through this body, which is my house,
I have access to a cosmos,
beyond myself,
which is also myself.

My house is an extension of my body
As I built it with my own hands,
and it keeps in its flesh,
caught in its turns and bends,
the memory of my existence:

The barking of my dog
the phone conversations with my mother
the laughter of table talks
the taste of meals
the smell of flowers
and of copal[2].

My house, which is my body,
sits on a landscape,
which is a greater body
where other inhabited bodies lie.
Bodies within bodies
belonging to greater bodies.

Our *abuelos*[3] told us
That *Tlaltecuhtli*[4] was violently torn in half
To form the Earth and the sky
That Her eyes became wells, fountains and small caves
Her mouth, rivers and greater caves
And Her nose, mountains and valleys[5]
The same ones that my body has

It is Her body an extension of my own
And might Her great body move
In a cosmic dance
where I also belong,
Where other luminous bodies dance
In an infinite whole

Our *abuelos* also told us that all that exists
is sentient and has a heart[6]
and we can read through its body, its scars
The path of its existence,
the struggles and its fights.

Each cell of my body
As my whole body does
Feels and thinks, following its path
Because even the tiniest thing
can affect and certainly react

That's why we need to understand
to ask permission
to no body harm
To give thanks and share our luck

Because a grain of corn
fallen on the ground
will be crying and feeling lost

And if you ignore it,
to your home
might not more come.

It is sacred
since life it holds.

Transforming stories into matter: artifacts, assemblages and other architectural narratives

Indigenous anthropologist from the region of study, Floriberto Díaz, explains that for indigenous populations the relationship with the Earth is not built in terms of property but in terms of mutual belonging. "The Earth is for us a Mother, who gives us birth, feeds us and takes us back in her womb" (Díaz 2007, 36). This is, at the moment of death[7]. According to him, and for the communities of this region, the relationship with the Earth is built on two dimensions, where one cannot exist without the other. Horizontally, the Earth is understood as a platform that sustains all manifestations and life forms on equal grounds, where everything and everyone is important and fulfils a necessary function within the whole. Vertically, the Earth and the mountains, understood as a manifestation of the sacred, mediate between the individual and God. "The Earth is a mediator, a hierophantic Mother through which people can look at themselves as a mirror" (Díaz 2001, 39), explains Díaz. This relationship with the Earth also allows for the understanding of "God as the creator and life giver". Work and the making are understood as an inherent condition of life and therefore, work, as life, has a sacred dimension. "Work also means a recreation of creation" (Díaz 2001, 38). The physical, spatial and temporal dimensions from matter to body, place and action are rooted in a cosmic dimension which always follows the same scheme and permeates all imaginable scales. By studying the complex *cosmos-corpus-praxis,* this is "the gearing of the cognitive and practical world" (Toledo et al. 2009, 101), we find a different lens through which we can look at space, place and time.

In order to understand these dynamics and how they manifest in the house, the research fieldwork is a study-through-making at the house-

workshop of the Zapotec artisan. Working with clay not only allows to understand this natural interconnection between making, myths, rituals, spaces where these take place, belief systems and technology, but it opens other ways and rhythms of thinking and assimilating. It also allows to build the necessary bonds and trust, due to the investment of time that the action involves, and to participate in daily activities and events as life unfolds in the spaces of study. In the words of Preston Blier,

It is essential to study architecture in process, in the course of both everyday life and ceremonial life. The study of architecture also necessarily includes the study of its occupants, for it is in their use of architecture and in the symbols that they identify with it that a building can be understood in its most complete sense. (Preston Blier 1987, 2).

The material produced during the research fieldwork, is then assembled (narrated) in different manners depending on the audience and place where the story is told. The use of diverse media allows a narrative exploration where each artefact, while being a complete object on its own, adds different nuances to the story and, when being assembled with others, a new body is formed. This allows to deepen in a continuous interrogation process, not only for the maker but also for the audience. The multilayered information and the multi-interpretative quality of the assemblage encourage the viewer to an active engagement with what she sees. This is produced through installations, videos with local women stories, performative artifacts etc., that also inform analytical-architectural cosmic drawings. Each media opens a new dimension to further understand the interconnectedness of the multiple elements coming into play and how these belief systems manifest in the quotidian experience, therefore, in the house and the community life (urban context). Understanding this complexity allows for an exploration of the architectural drawing to accurately register symbolic meanings in relation to space for analysis. It is a process that requires openness and academic rigor. The applied local narratives create a new lens for architectural reading and, at the same time, the series of drawings form in themselves a narrative corpus which weaves the analytical with the symbolic: the multi-scalar, cosmic and mundane, feminine and masculine, the seen and the unseen… A world of contrary valences and complementary opposites (Solares 2007) or the *Mesoamerican hardcore* (López Austin 2004).

Authorship positioning

This research departs from indigenous premises of *comunalidad*[8] for on-the-ground artistic fieldwork activities, and posthuman critical theory principles and tools for the work of self-critique and knowledge sharing (Braidotti 2019). The intention is to stimulate an open discussion and foster cross-cultural conceptual communication for collaborative practices: "The approach of science to traditional wisdom, which is endowed with its own intrinsic characteristics, must be assessed through a shared dialogue of expertise" says Victor Toledo (Toledo and Barrera-Bassols 2009, 101). Or as Lina Bo Bardi shows us through her practice, "it is not a balance of folklore, always paternalistically assisted by high cultures, it is (…) a participating balance." (Bo Bardi 1994a, 235). Here lies the importance

for this research of creating *new alliances* and *epistemological assemblages* between indigenous and occidental traditions, and between the sciences and the arts (and myths), in order to overcome stagnated ways of thinking, and avoid patterns of exclusion to think creatively some of the challenges of our current historical condition. The researcher takes the role of a translator opening a world yet to be understood, so a dialogue of expertise can be established on equal grounds. She changes her position to look through a lens that she needs first to understand and assimilate, using all available possible tools. In this way, she becomes a mediator, creating an architectural language for an unusual spatial reading, yet important for the culture of study, where the uses of the spaces cannot be detached from their symbolic, poetic and ethical meaning. This depiction is also an assemblage, a common ground which is not exactly western nor completely indigenous, but yet approachable from both cultural views.

1 Term coined by Mexican historian López Austin, that he uses to denominate the group of elements from the religious Mesoamerican corpus which are very resistant to historical changes. (López Austin 2001)

2 Tree resin used in rituals.

3 *Abuelos* literally means 'grandparents', but in this context refers to ancestors.

4 *Tlaltecuhtli* stands for 'Lord Earth' in nahuatl. The equivalent goddess for the Zapotecs is *Xunaxidó*, where *xu* stands for '(earth)quake, power', *naxi* for 'sweet', and *do* for 'sacred, immensity'. Thus, in both languages the nature of the Great Goddess expresses the Mesoamerican principle of contrary valences and complementary opposites over which the world is structured: feminine-masculine, death-life, destroyer and nurturer. For the Mesoamerican archaic mentality, the Earth is conceived as a 'monster', depicted thirsty of blood and with jaguar claws but, at the same time, it is a sacred and prolific gigantic body, from which life constantly emerges.

5 Tlatehcutli's myth as narrated in *Historia de Mexico* (*Histoyre du Mechique)*, translated by Ramón Rosales Munguía, in *Teogonía e historía de los mexicanos.* Three brochures from the XVI century. Ed. Angel M. Garibay K. México: Editorial Porrúa, 1965.

6 Molina Cruz, Mario. 2003. *Primeras interpretaciones de simbolismos Zapotecos de la Sierra Juárez de Oaxaca.* Oaxaca: Ediciones Watíx Dillé & Casa de Cultura Oaxaqueña, pag. 7.

7 This universal symbolic formula of the Earth as mother-womb-vessel characteristic of old periods of humanity (Neumann et al.1983) is also described by anthropologist Marija Gimbutas, in relation to the European neolithic where burials were made in foetal position, often over beds of flowers and seeds, indicating transformation and rebirth and the understanding of death and life as part of a continuous process. According to her, this type of burials would have changed afterwards to warrior like positions with the invasion of Northern groups (Gimbutas 1991). Nevertheless, Gimbutas also points out the agglutination of the conditions of life, death and regeneration in the archetype of the Great Goddess, without reducing its feminine condition only to maternity.

8 *Comunalidad* is the term coined by indigenous intellectuals from the region of Oaxaca, that defines the indigenous episteme and the living praxis of the indigenous communities from the region, in their own terms and 'from the inside'. For more literature see: (Aquino Moreschi 2010, 2013; Aquino Moreschi et al. 2013; Díaz 2001, 2007).

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The Undedicated Form Resonant Spaces as a Catalyst for the Individual Attribution of Meaning

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#

attribution of meaning, undedicated form, appropriation

Abstract

In a society where overarching ideological references have lost universal validity, architecture's potential to foster individual meaning is increasingly relevant. This research explores the poetic potential of non-propositional spaces – architectural environments that provoke personal attribution of meaning without predefined ideological dedication. Two key parameters shape this inquiry: emotional resonance and absence of ideological dedication ex ante. Emotional resonance enables spaces to elicit affective responses, drawing from concepts like aura, atmosphere, and the sublime. The absence of ideological dedication challenges traditional spatial codification, allowing for open-ended interpretation. Through the method of intuitive drawings of spatial compositions, speculative projects, and suggestive spatial artifacts, this research investigates the dichotomy of authorship: the architect as the author of a spatial configuration and the user as the author of their own individual meaning. The study ultimately proposes a speculative typology that fosters individual sense-making in a pluralistic society.

One day, and probably soon, we need some recognition of what above all is lacking in our big cities: quiet and wide, expansive places for reflection. Places with long, high-ceilinged cloisters for bad or all too sunny weather where no shouting or noise of carriages can reach and where good manners would prohibit even priests from praying aloud – buildings and sites that would altogether give expression to the sublimity of thoughtfulness and of stepping aside. […] We wish to see ourselves translated into stone and plants, we want to take walks in ourselves when we stroll around these buildings and gardens. (Nietzsche 1974, 226)

We live in a society where overarching, ideological references have lost their universal validity. Worldviews have become a private matter, and ideological dogmas are increasingly questioned. At the same time, this has also led to a certain loss of common narratives within our society, which, according to some contemporary scholars, has resulted in a 'crisis of meaning' that currently seems to bear troubling consequences: a rising escapism into fantasy worlds – ranging from superhero sagas to the growing popularity of conspiracy theories – an eclectic search for spiritual fulfillment, or a rise in political and religious fundamentalism (Vervaeke et al. 2024). These tendencies, among many other factors, might nowadays contribute to the obvious erosion of social cohesion and individual mental well-being. These developments reflect both an individual struggle for significance and a wider societal need for the attribution of meaning.

Architecture, as both a discipline and practice, has the potential to play a role in this search for meaning. Throughout history, architecture has been closely linked to collective ideologies – whether religious, political,

or cultural. Buildings often served as symbols of specific ideological doctrines, carrying an imposed meaning or acquiring a new significance through ideological reinterpretation[1]. This codification of space was questioned throughout modernity and beyond, replaced by an evaluation of architectural quality based on functional or quantitative parameters, or attention-seeking hype. This shift has inevitably led to the often-criticized loss of emotional impact in architecture. However, if we can no longer agree on shared societal references and reject the ideological or metaphysical codification of space, how can we create buildings that provide meaning for a diverse range of people?[2] Recognizing a multifaceted, polyvalent and individualistic society, one possible answer might lie not in the dedication of collective meaning but in openness to the individual attribution of significance.

This research aims to explore the poetic potential of a speculative category of non-propositional spaces that provoke individual attribution of meaning / purpose / significance.

Two central parameters are key in the search for this potential: emotional resonance and the absence of dedication ex ante. Emotional resonance is understood as a fundamental prerequisite for a space to inspire attribution of significance. In this case, emotionally resonant spaces are defined as those that elicit an affective response from their visitors – spaces that move people. This term serves as an umbrella for concepts that are vastly different yet similarly ineffable and difficult to articulate, such as aura, atmosphere, the sublime, or the sacred (in its original sense, 'that which stands apart'). Resonant spaces can amplify the emotional disposition of their visitors. The traditional association of resonant, moving spaces with ideological charging is challenged by the second prerequisite. Spaces designed to encourage individual attribution of meaning must be free from underlying ideological dogma. This does not imply that such spaces lack purpose or utility[3].

Can spaces be designed that are not subject to ideological dedication ex ante and instead invite, inspire, or even provoke the personal and individual attribution of meaning through their resonance? Such spaces do exist – places that move us yet are not ideologically charged: the positive effect of natural spaces on our mental well-being is not mitigated but strengthened by their openness to the attribution of individual meaning. Industrial ruins, having lost their original purpose yet sometimes emitting specific atmospherical qualities, might as well evoke a projection of personal significance. Abstract works of art, not containing a specific ideological imposition, invite the recipient to be emotionally touched. Yet an architectural typology that has been intentionally designed to explore this effect is relatively unknown.

These spaces can touch us and invite the projection of individual meaning without ideological coloring. The absence of an ideological label does not make these spaces any less significant on an emotional level.

This research project does not aim to establish handbook-like guidelines but rather to examine the poetic potential of such spaces. Intuitive hand drawings, models, atmospherically charged perspectives, and traditional project representations create a series of suggestive artifacts for these

non-propositional spatial situations. An essayistic reflection, which considers relevant theoretical approaches and existing examples of such spaces, accompanies the design-based artifacts and articulates the phenomena that emerge. Within this process a set of design-tools emerged which can be employed to design undedicated spaces that provoke emotional appropriation: locking out the context from the inner world of the space, combining archaic forms with irrational compositions that irritate the visitors and require deciphering as well as the creation of a sense of physical awareness of one's own *bodily presence* (Böhme 2013, 126) through elements that exceed the visual (Pallasmaa 2005). Using these tools, amongst others, can lead to the creation of suggestive atmospheres that invite the observer to draw their own conclusions, based on the idea "[…] that well-being can be defined as a very special atmospheric feeling, a deep mood that is both personal and collective […]" (Griffero 2021, 154).

This is where the question of authorship enters:

Obviously, the person who conceives a space – its shape, form, materiality or proportions – can be traditionally called the author of that space. Now, following the thesis of this research, the aim of creating undedicated, resonant spaces is to provoke the user to attribute individual meaning and significance – a very private and intimate act of creating meaning. Even though this act of creation happens only in the mental realm of the recipient, it can nonetheless be considered an act of creation. Therefore, the proposed category or even typology of undedicated spaces let arise a dichotomy of authorship – the author(s) of the canvas and the author(s) of the projection.

When writing, one is alone. There is no other way. Writing is not a democratic process. It is the opposite. But later, the books do not belong anymore to the one who wrote them. They now belong to the one who reads them. (Von Schirach 2025, 11)

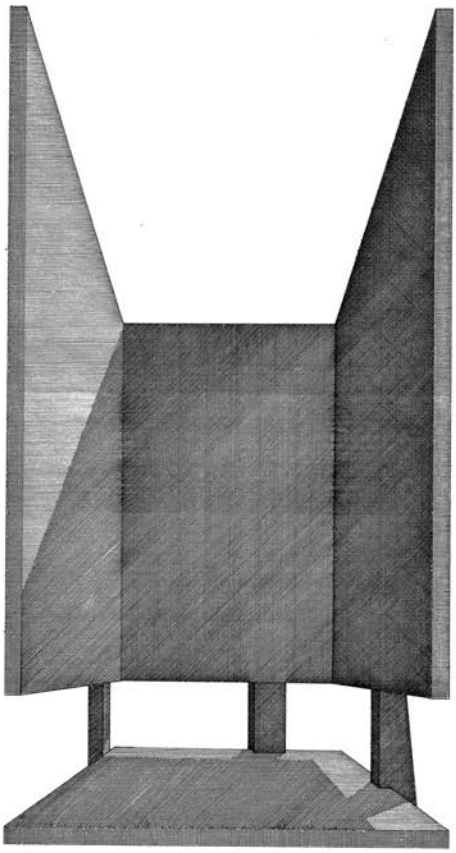

Figure 1: Useless Space No. 1 - Intuitive spatial composition inefficiently drawn by hand. This drawing is part of a series named 'Useless Spaces.' This provocative title points towards the intentional lack of utilitarian function. These spaces were intuitive compositions that are not merely sketches by the inefficient technique of rendering light and shadow, which evokes a sense of material qualities. The primary aim of these drawings was to explicate the research topic through the creative exploration of an implicit fascination of the author.

Figure 2: Resonant Space No. 1 – Translation of hand drawing into an atmospherically charged image. Additional spatial qualities can be shown that are not possible to depict in hand-drawn images. More nuanced lighting and the depiction of natural elements create a sense of context, even though the space itself obscures the visible context and symbolically directs the gaze of the observer towards the ground and the sky.

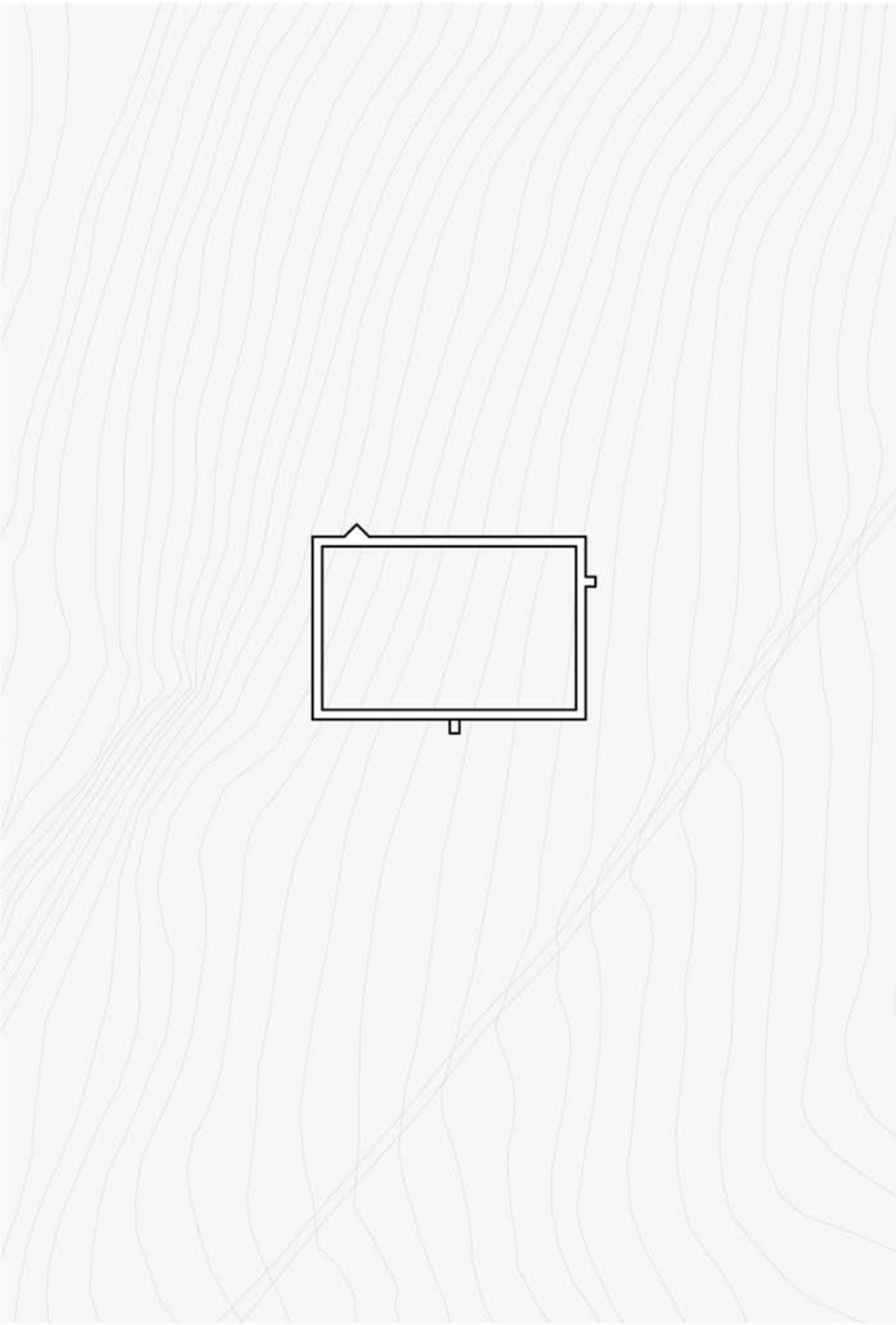

Figure 3: Floorplan No. 1 – Translation of perspective drawing into a speculative project. The perspective drawing depicts only a limited section of the actual space and needs verification of the qualities in an architectural project.

Figure 4: Resonant Space No. 2 – Intuitively composed atmospherically charged image. The exploration of undedicated spaces through different media allows for a change in direction. This resonant space has been created directly as an atmospherical rendering without having a hand-drawn predecessor.

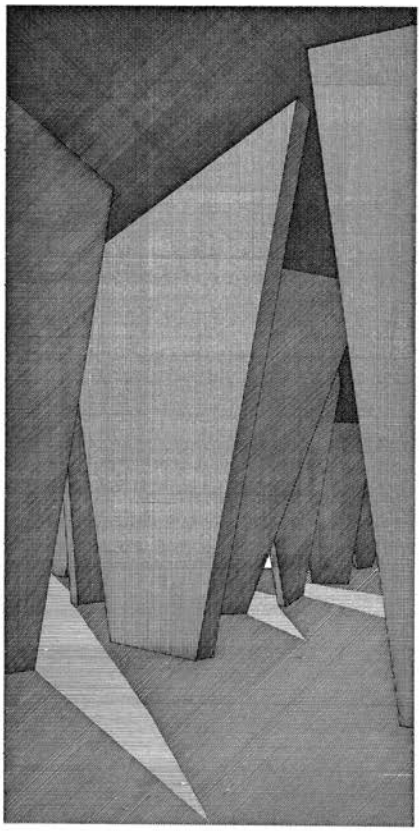

Figure 5: Useless Space No. 2 – Intuitive spatial composition inefficiently drawn by hand. This time created after the atmospheric rendering to explore spatial qualities outside of the evocative haptic texture and lighting. The geometry has been altered out of an irrational fear of banality.

Figure 6: Resonant Space No. 3 – Intuitive spatial composition without hand-drawn predecessor. The balancing and load-bearing rock tests the evocative qualities of irrational and archaic elements.

Figure 7: Resonant Space No. 4 – Intuitive spatial composition without hand-drawn predecessor. The obvious incorporation of atmosphere in its original sense (i.e., weather) evokes a sense of felt bodily presence through humidity or temperature, which charges the space. It also obscures the view of the context, which focuses the perception of the space itself. Without these elements the atmospheric suggestiveness of the space would likely be missing and the architectural qualities rather blunt.

1 I.e., the ever-changing recodifications of the Neue Wache Memorial in Berlin

2 See for example the contemporary idea of Olgiati and Breitschmid's *Non-referential Architecture* where it is argued that the architecture itself is to create the meaning, how exactly this can be achieved or how valid this form of meaning is, is not sufficiently answered though. (Breitschmid et. al. 2019, 122)

3 The inherent and seemingly ironic contradiction that the goal to create spaces which are free of social barriers and open for democratic and personal attribution of meaning, is in itself a form of contemporary ideology, is being acknowledged by the author.

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Ruination Game A Performance Exploring Collective Dimensions of Authorship Through a Spatio-Temporal Record

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collective authorship, ruination game, spatio-temporal

Abstract

This study proposes the Ruination Game as a performative method for rethinking authorship. Drawing on critiques of conventional historiography – where authorship often reinforces exclusionary truth-making – the project repositions ruins as generative, spatio-temporal records of marginalized narratives. Ruins, shaped by natural forces and fragmented memory, embody collective authorship beyond fixed authority. By combining the conceptual potential of ruination with the open-ended dynamics of play, the Ruination Game allows players to assume shifting roles – ruined witness, reader, and author – transforming both the ruin and themselves. Through this recursive process, ruins become speculative sites where new narratives and knowledge forms emerge. The game thus becomes a critical design-research tool aligned with non-representational theory, emphasizing relationality, temporality, and performativity. It proposes not a preservation of the past, but a continual re-writing through collaborative storytelling and embodied interaction. The Ruination Game invites us to explore authorship as a situated, plural, and already 'ruined' act.

In conventional historiography, we believe it is possible to state that authorship functions as a mechanism for the authoritative reproduction of truth. Paul Ricoeur (1984) explains that historiography is shaped by the historian through three interconnected components: the source of information (trace, document, testimony), the processes of explanation and understanding (questions, commentary), and historical representation (narrative). At the core of this process, the historian acts as the principal author, organizing traces and documents within a particular causal framework to construct a narrative. As Mark Jarzombek (1999) observes, historiography often elevates events deemed 'important' while overlooking others, reinforcing what Donna Haraway (1988) describes as power moves – acts that draw boundaries between what is considered legitimate knowledge and what is excluded. Consequently, the historian becomes inevitably influenced by both individual and societal power dynamics.

In this context, authorship can be understood not solely as a record of the past but also as a mechanism for exclusion and regulation. While this process glorifies certain pasts and preserves their legacy, it simultaneously marginalizes and erases others, fostering a tendency toward 'dehistoricizing' certain narratives. This marginalization extends beyond untold stories to render entire modes of existence outside social and cultural structures invisible.

The potential of ruins

Amid this context, we propose that ruins, abandoned and dehistoricized in the fabric of daily life, provide an alternative perspective for capturing

the spatio-temporal process records of marginalized phenomena.

Within the ruination process of a ruin, multiple authorships emerge. Natural processes, decay, destruction, contributions from living and non-living entities, the formation of micro-ecosystems, and climatic impacts can all be considered as authors actively shaping the transformation of the ruin. The decaying structure of the ruin enables new forms of existence through interventions by natural forces and environmental influences. In this regard, ruination represents not only destruction but also an act of creation.

Moreover, time and space actively participate in this disintegration process. As Andreas Huyssen (2006) points out, in ruins, history becomes spatialized, and space is temporalized, thereby blurring the boundary between past and present. Space, serving as a carrier of memory and a repository of temporal traces, plays a pivotal role in shaping the context of the ruin. This interplay transforms the spatio-temporal relationship into a tangible and immersive experience.

The transformation process between ruins and their temporal-spatial environment also holds significant potential for generating new knowledge. As Dylan Trigg (2006) suggests, ruins disrupt the remnants of certainty, creating opportunities for novel epistemic explorations. Narratives provide a means to interpret this knowledge. Andrew Ballantyne (2006) describes ruins as intersections of multiple narratives, while Ann Laura Stoler's concept of ruination (2013) frames it as a dynamic and continuous space where marginalized stories are reshaped and made visible. Thus, the ruination process serves to continually rewrite the narrative of a ruin in layered ways.

Further, the absence of conventional historical records steers ruins toward a speculative mode of storytelling. These speculative narratives, which reinterpret or transform the ruin, also position every subject engaged with the ruin as an author. Consequently, the authorship inherent to the ruin can be understood not as an individual endeavor but as a collective act.

Building on these characteristics, we argue that the ruin provides a conceptual framework that is particularly well-suited for discussions around authorship. The interplay of decay, creation, and relational dynamics offers an alternative lens for understanding how narratives are constructed and transformed. In this study, we aim to explore this conceptual potential of the ruin through a performative process, which we call the *Ruination Game*.

The potential of play

While the ruin provides a conceptual and material foundation for reconsidering authorship, the act of play opens further possibilities for participatory, speculative, and collective narrative formation. Games, by their nature, function through structured yet open-ended rules that encourage interaction, transformation, and repositioning – paralleling the dynamics of authorship in fragmented or marginalized contexts. Hans-Georg Gadamer says that play is not directed by a subject; rather, it draws

participants into its self-sustaining movement. He states, "The movement which is play has no goal which would bring it to an end… [it] represents itself" (Gadamer 2004). Authorship within play is not about control or singular voice but emerges through dialogical unfolding and mutual transformation. Gregory Bateson, by contrast, emphasizes play as a meta-communicative frame (1972). Applied to authorship, this frame may allow participants to shift between roles, realities, and fictions, engaging in the re-writing of narrative without assuming a singular authority. Jaques Derrida offers a more radical notion of play. He writes, "Play is the disruption of presence" and conceives of it as the endless substitution of signs within a structure lacking a fixed center (1978). This conception of play matches with authorship as a fluid and contingent process – decentered, recursive, and unfinished. Meaning is always deferred (*différance*), and authorship becomes a shared gesture of tracing and retracing, writing and erasure.

Ruination Game

These perspectives led us to define the ruination game as an installation-based performance where the subjects involved in the gameplay are themselves 'ruined.' This shifts authorship away from an individual authority toward a collective and dynamic process.

The ruination game seeks to document the spatio-temporal dynamics of a ruin marginalized by its exclusion from traditional historical records. At its core, it critically interrogates the relationship between history, historiography, truth, and the systems of marginalization they often reinforce. The documentation produced through the game functions as a foundation for exploring narratives that emerge from ruinations and ruination lines. This record engages with the players, forging connections through their ruined positions, and enables them to transform their roles, positions, and authorship while contributing to the evolving narrative.

Ruination, as conceived within the game, provides a narrative space continuously rebuilt – not only through the players' interventions but also through the ruin's inherent transformation as a spatio-temporal entity. The fragments of the ruin continuously evolve, carrying traces of the past while revealing the potential narratives of the future. As such, this process redefines not only the players but also the ruin itself as a *ruined author*.

Karen Barad's concept of performativity (2003) sits at the heart of this recording process, critiquing the authority of authorship. For Barad, representation does not merely convey knowledge of a space; rather, it transforms into a performative act where this knowledge interacts with dynamic processes, unveiling new ways of knowing. In this light, the ruination game serves as a performative recording methodology that embraces collective authorship through a pluralistic and participatory approach.

Thus, the ruination game represents a creative and multi-layered process and practice of authorship, where the roles of *ruined witness*, *ruined*

reader, and *ruined author* continually shift, interweave, and 'ruin' one another.

Ruined Witness: The ruined witness records the physical and narrative traces of the ruin at the beginning of the game. Their role is to bring the ruin's existence into the game. The traces recorded by the witness do not claim a fixed reality; rather, they remain open to continuous change within the spatio-temporal transformation process. The witness's knowledge may be shaped by elements such as misremembering, associations, or their social identity.

Ruined Reader: The ruined reader perceives and interprets the narrative before transitioning into the *ruined author* role, where they 'ruin' it. The reader reshapes the narrative through individual memory, associations, and imagination, redefining both the narrative and their position through their interaction.

Ruined Author: The ruined author interacts with and transforms the system recorded by the witness. They rearrange the fragmented narrative of the ruin and introduce new elements, thus furthering the ruination process. The author integrates their subjective position, imagination, and personal associations into the narrative and, through this process, becomes a part of the narrative themselves.

Ruined ruin: The spatiotemporal record of the ruin also becomes ruined during the game, with the interventions by the internal -its own onto-epismetologic tectonical possesions-and external -witness, reader, author- relations.

How to play the ruination game

1 The game is played with four players and a structure placed at the center. Suspended from the top of this structure is the 'spatio-temporal record of the ruin,' created by the initial witness who dismantled the ruin and revealed its network of relationships. These networks are represented by acetate pieces that are connected and hung. Below the structure, a platform holds various model materials, acetates, and tools needed for assembly.

2 Before the game, the witness deconstructs the ruin based on their situated relationality established with the ruin at different times (a). Following this, they create a spatio-temporal superimposed reconstruction based on the network of relations captured during this process (b). This reconstruction is then deconstructed again by the witness before the game begins. The fragments obtained from this deconstruction are used as the spatio-temporal record, which the witness places and suspends before the game starts ©.

3 The second player observes the suspended system and begins to develop, disrupt, or transform the narrative. They can reposition the acetate hangings, use model materials for 3^d extensions, draw fragments / scenes or write narratives. At this stage, the second player first assumes the role of reader and then transitions to author.

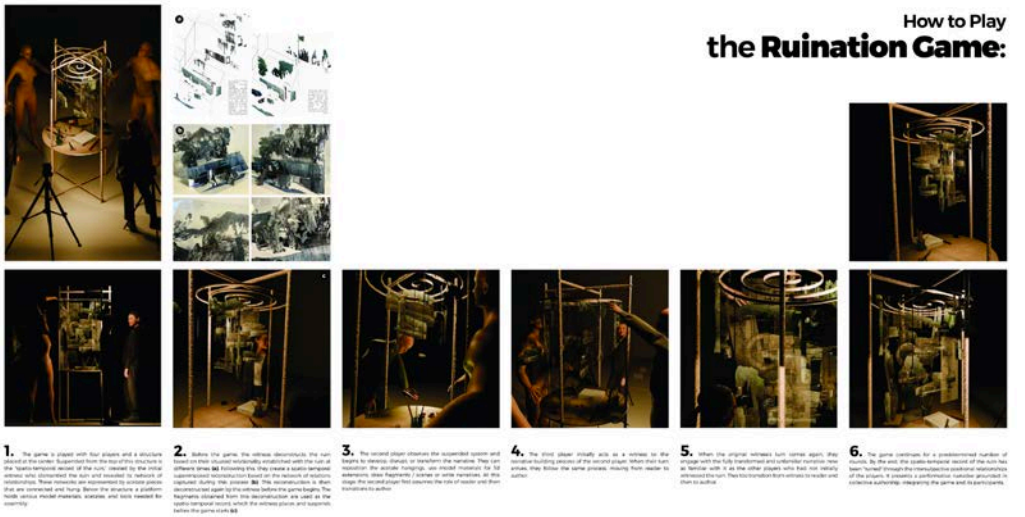

Figure 1: How to play the ruination game.

4 The third player initially acts as a witness to the narrative-building process of the second player. When their turn arrives, they follow the same process, moving from reader to author.

5 When the original witness's turn comes again, they engage with the fully transformed and unfamiliar narrative, now as familiar with it as the other players who had not initially witnessed the ruin. They too transition from witness to reader and then to author.

6 The game continues for a predetermined number of rounds. By the end, the spatio-temporal record of the ruin has been 'ruined' through the intersubjective positional relationships of the players. It presents a performative narrative grounded in collective authorship, integrating the game and its participants.

Ruination Game as a methodology for research by design in architecture

We believe that the Ruination Game as a methodology holds potential for architectural design research within the framework of research by design. By aligning with non-representational theories, the Ruination Game views the spatio-temporal recording process as a performative and relational construct rather than a fixed architectural representation. Instead, by redefining ruins as active sites of creative inquiry, it highlights the fluidity and relational nature of spatial experience, encouraging a deeper engagement with the temporal dimensions of design. The game's performative structure, where players collectively interact with and transform the spatio-temporal record of a ruin, aims to move beyond individual authorship. Instead, these interactions blur the boundaries between subjects, transforming the process of spatial engagement into a collaborative and relational act. In this way, this methodology tries to position design as a medium for critical and creative exploration of space, time, and narrative.

Conclusion: toward a ruined authorship

The Ruination Game offers an alternative mode of engaging with authorship – one that embraces disintegration, multiplicity, and mutual becoming. By situating the ruin not as a symbol of loss or absence but as a generative and relational entity, the game reconfigures historiographic conventions and invites a performative, collective practice of narrative construction. In doing so, it challenges the singular, authoritative authorial position and foregrounds a process where meaning emerges through temporal layering, spatial negotiation, and intersubjective transformation.

Authorship within this framework is neither linear nor individual – it is recursive, situated, and continuously 'ruined' through the play of memory, perception, and imagination. The ruined witness, reader, and author do not merely perform roles; they dissolve and reconfigure them, reshaping both the ruin and themselves. The ruin becomes a site of speculative storytelling and epistemic renewal, resisting closure and inviting ongoing reassemblies of knowledge.

As a design research methodology, the Ruination Game proposes a shift from representation to performance, from fixed artifacts to fluid processes. In architectural inquiry, this opens space for relational, critical, and temporal thinking, where space is not drawn but enacted, and history is not cited but re-authored. It does not aim to recover or preserve the past in its original form, but to engage with its fragments as live material – responsive to touch, time, and imagination.

Ultimately, the Ruination Game is not a method of documentation, but of becoming-with – a speculative apparatus for co-authoring situated knowledge, and for welcoming the generative possibilities of being, knowing, and designing as ruined.

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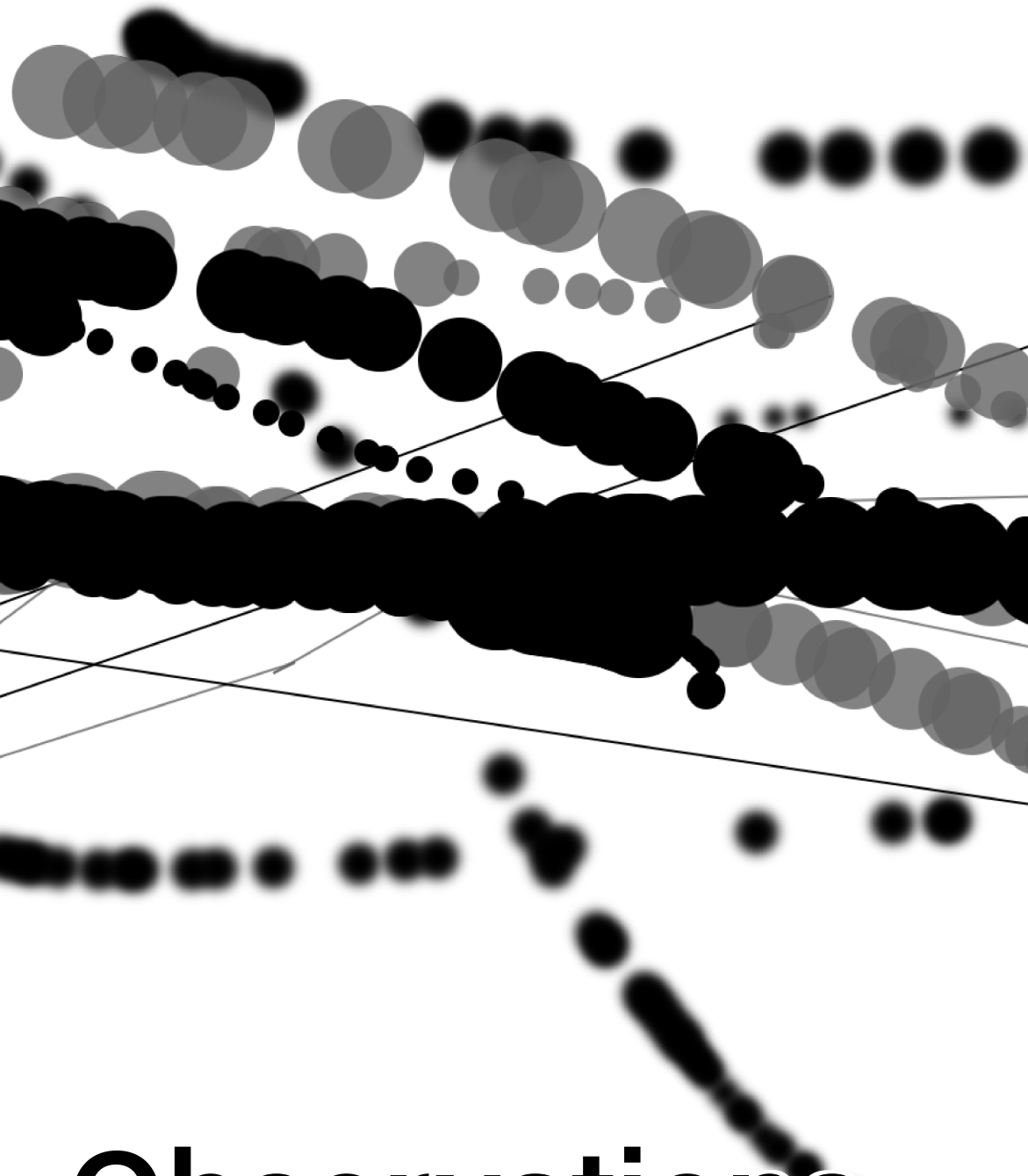

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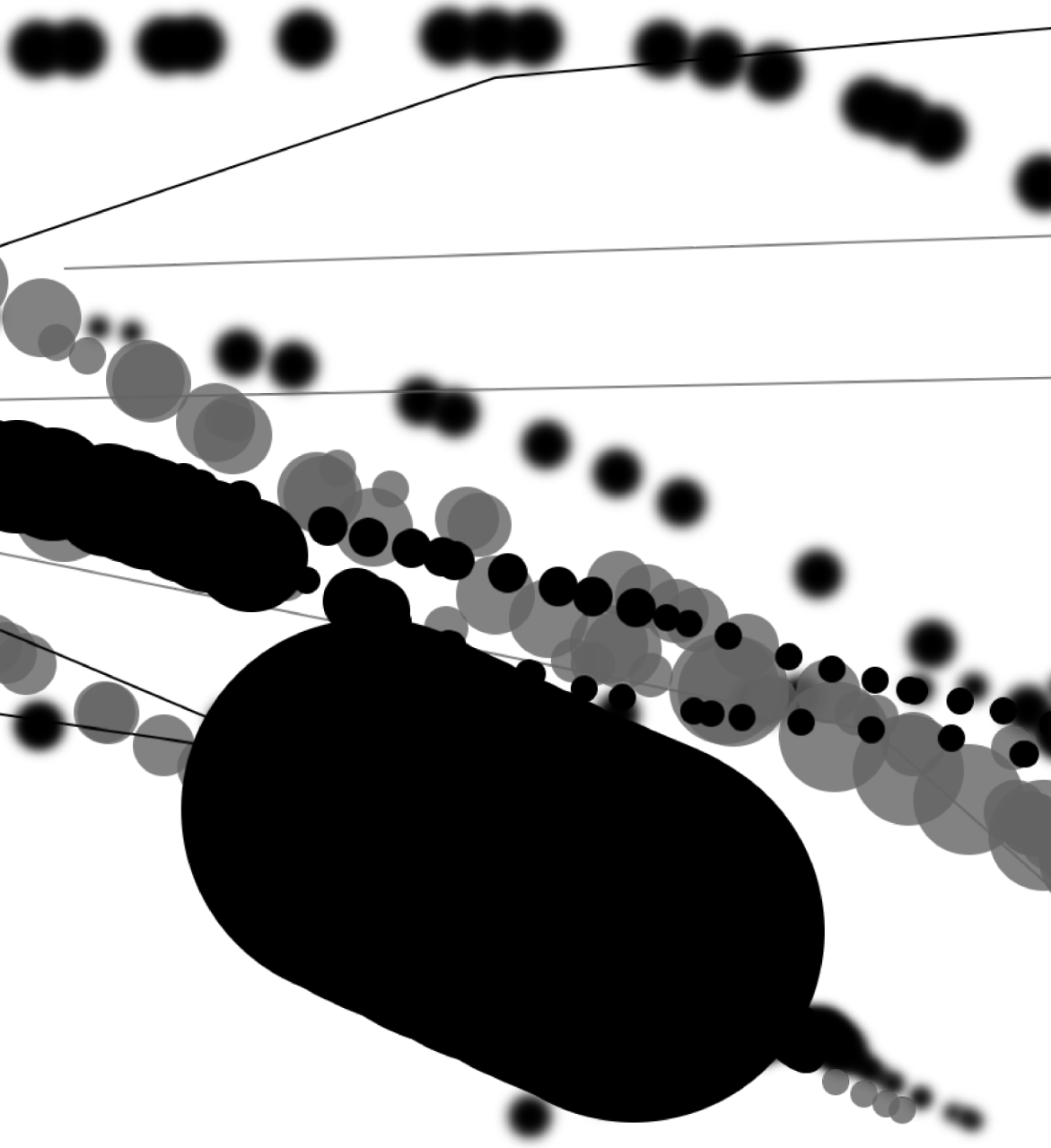

Authorship The Impossibility of the Ordinary

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"He who searches for style, finds death; he who searches for life, finds style". In architecture tackling the theme of form in and of itself leads you onto an impassable road. It seems more fruitful to me to get there through coincidences, necessities, opportunities[1].

The figure, role and aura of the author have long been under investigation; on May 30, 1968, a group of protesters broke into the Palazzo dell'Arte where Giancarlo De Carlo had just inaugurated the exhibition of the XIV Triennale of Milan entitled *The Big Number*, canceling an exhibition of great names, some very young others less so, in an anti-authoritarian, libertarian and revolutionary outburst[2]. In 1962, Umberto Eco (one of the curators of the 1964 Triennale exhibition, *Il tempo libero*, or "Leisure") published his essay *Opera aperta*, subtitled *Forma e indeterminazione nelle poetiche contemporanee* (*Form and indeterminacy in contemporary poetics*), in which the concept of a programmatically non-univocal interpretation of the work places the author in a mediating role between the writing of the work and its meaning (Eco 1989).

Presenting a new Italian edition of the book in 1997, Eco wrote a preface in which he accurately described a creative process used by musician Luciano Berio:

a sound experiment whose original title was *Omaggio a Joyce* (*Homage to Joyce*), a sort of forty-minute radio broadcast that began by reading chapter 11 of Ulysses (the one called *The Sirens*, an orgy of onomatopoeia and alliteration) in three languages: English, French, and Italian; but then, since Joyce himself had said that the structure of the chapter was a fugue, Berio began to superimpose the texts in the manner of a fugue, first English on English, then English on French, and so on, a sort of multilingual, Rabelaisian *Fra Martino Campanaro*, with great orchestral effects (but it was always and only the human voice). Finally, Berio worked on the English text alone (as Cathy Berberian said), filtering certain phonemes, until a real musical composition emerged, the one that circulates on record under the same title, *Omaggio a Joyce*, but it no longer has anything to do with the broadcast, which was instead critical-didactic and commented on the operations step by step. (Eco 1997, v-vi)

The starting point for the concept of open work is a voluntary reduction in authorial authority, as explained in the opening words of the text:

Among recent instrumental music productions, we can note some compositions marked by a common characteristic: the particular executive autonomy granted to the performer, who is not only free to interpret the composer's instructions according to his or her own sensibility (as is the case with traditional music), but must even intervene in the form of the composition, often determining the duration of the notes or the succession of sounds in an act of creative improvisation. (ibid., 31)

The following year, Gruppo 63 was founded in Palermo, an avant-garde literary movement founded by writers and intellectuals who were

important figures in Italian culture, such as Alfredo Giuliani, Edoardo Sanguineti, Nanni Balestrini, Alberto Arbasino, Umberto Eco, Angelo Guglielmi, Giorgio Manganelli, art critics Renato Barilli and Achille Bonito Oliva, and journalist Furio Colombo, all of whom would assume leadership roles in Italian culture over the next fifty years. This neo-avant-garde never published an explicit programmatic manifesto but clearly pursued a process of dissolving the author through a variety of different practices, all aimed at overcoming the established figures of the literary scene and beyond. Balestrini and Sanguineti, for example, nullified the aura that surrounded the poetry of previous decades, marked by the hermeticism of Eugenio Montale and Giuseppe Ungaretti, by practicing direct, even rough and conflictual, contact with the spirit of the times, drawing inspiration from directly to the political events of those years, from the hot autumn to the electoral advance of the Communist Party, but also carrying out an intense operation of deconstructing language and searching for new modes of production based on the dilution of the author into a collective form. The shared author in a multiple entity was very successful among the avant-garde of the 1960s and 1970s, with epic formations such as Archigram, Superstudio, Archizoom, and UFO, finding an affinity with the pop music scene where the figure of the solo performer succumbed to the advance of hippy culture and the emergence of the new beatnik bands.

In Rome, for example, around the early 1960s, a series of design collectives emerged that clearly presented themselves as alternatives to studios founded on the prestige of a single architect or, as was also frequently the case, a single family:

There were professional firms that also carried out research projects: e.g. the Society for Architecture and Urban Planning (SAU), founded by Leonardo Benevolo; the Roman Group of Architects and Urban Planners (GRAU), headed by Alessandro Anselmi; and the STASS practice, led by Giorgio Ciucci and Mario Manieri Elia, among others. Along with these offices, there were others that took their names from the streets where they were established, such as the Flaminia Street practice, the Mercati Street practice, and the Nicotera Street practice, which later became Atrio Testaccio. (Malfona 2024)

The collective model is now expanding again in line with the growing demand for interaction, participation, negotiation, and practices that are becoming increasingly widespread in certain areas where architectural action implies responsibility and an explicitly political vision, as can be seen, with different assumptions, in Rural Studio, Elemental and Rotor:

Today, architects and other agents explore new forms of authorship in the built environment, which are connected to multiple forms of negotiation. The numerous collective design groups and collaborative platforms that we see emerging nowadays in architectural practice are the *epitomai* of a revised conception of authorship: no longer singular and heroic, but rather multiple, fluid, emergent. (Avermaete et al. 2023, 5)

The shift from poetics to politics is also a recurring theme and is certainly linked to every technological acceleration. For the industrial age, in which we still find ourselves in some ways, Walter Benjamin's reflective contribution remains fundamental:

For the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility. From a photographic negative, for example, one can make any number of prints; to ask for the "authentic" print makes no sense. But the instant the criterion of authenticity ceases to be applicable to artistic production, the total function of art is reversed. Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice-politics. (Benjamin 1969, 234)

To participate in the Armory Show, the First Annual Exhibition of the Independent Artists organized in New York in April 1917, Marcel Duchamp asked Louise Norton to submit his *Fountain*, the famous upside-down urinal, indicating as the author a non-existent R. Mutt:

The pseudonym Richard Mutt is derived from the famous comic strip characters Mutt and Jeff, whose adventures were read almost everywhere in the United States at the time. Having grown up in poverty, Bud Fisher, the inventor of Mutt and Jeff, became famous and incredibly wealthy. A success story directly comparable to the dreams and expectations in the art world. (Banz 2019)

The ironic attribution to a comic book hero emphasizes the autonomy of the work, of the readymade, with respect to its author, who, in Duchampian logic, is nothing more than a discoverer capable of choosing and transporting objects, with a simple gesture of the index finger, from everyday life to the realm of art. In some ways, one could say that Duchamp also foresaw this, the role of the artist, the author, essentially as a curator, as a manipulator of already existing objects and meanings. Assembly and collage were means of expression through which the architect expressed himself not as a demiurge but as an intermediary, a manipulator of existing materials: the two versions of *Città analoga* ("Analogous City") are famous, one consisting of a collage on cardboard of projects, engravings, and drawings from various sources; the other a painting by Arduino Cantafora for an exhibition by a group of young architects led by Aldo Rossi[3], as well as the collage created by superimposing buildings and disparate fragments of cities, in the manner of Giovambattista Piranesi, which becomes the icon that sums up the entire meaning of the *Collage City* project (Griffin and Kollhoff 1978, n.p.).

In more recent times, Duchamp's approach has been put into practice by numerous artists and in Nicolas Bourriaud's theoretical work based on the concept of postproduction: "Since the early nineties, an ever increasing number of artworks have been created on the basis of preexisting works; more and more artists interpret, reproduce, re-exhibit, or use works made by others or available cultural products". Strategies which, according to Bourriaud, "contribute to the eradication of the traditional

distinction between production and consumption, creation and copy, readymade and original work." It follows that

Notions of originality (being at the origin of) and even of creation (making something from nothing) are slowly blurred in this new cultural landscape marked by the twin figures of the DJ and the programmer, both of whom have the task of selecting cultural objects and inserting them into new contexts.

The figure of the author is weakened and sometimes abolished:

Shareware does not have an author but a proper name. The musical practice of sampling has also contributed to destroying the figure of the Author, in a practical way that goes beyond theoretical deconstruction (the famous "death of the author" according to Barthes and Foucault). (Bourriaud 2002a, 86)

Writing about architecture is as dangerous as it is necessary. The pleasure, power, and autonomy of the text exert an irresistible seductive force on both the writer and the reader. At the same time, writing is immaterial, aleatory, and, when compared to the technical authority of the project and the physical reality of the building, can dissolve into an intangible breath. Architecture books and magazines have used and abused writing in every way possible; they have exalted it, elevating it to an indispensable and often primary vehicle for the expression of architectural thought, and they have debased it with recurring jargon, an abundance of clichés, and the rituals of corporate advertising. Drawing places architecture in a broad but clearly defined field, between the two extremes of figurative art and technical and engineering graphic documents, two material and cultural polarities that vividly represent the artistic and technical margins of a discipline always caught between expression and performance, symbol and practice, social and individual. Writing, on the other hand, has the opposite status: it is the tool that architecture shares with the humanities, and therefore, due to its accessibility to non-architects, it is the primary platform for exchange, communication, and hybridization between architecture and knowledge, practices, and techniques outside its specific discipline.

Roland Barthes addressed the question of the author who, like Ulysses in Polyphemus' cave, finds fulfillment in his own annihilation, in calling himself Nobody. According to Barthes, "literature is precisely the invention of this voice, to which we cannot assign a specific origin: literature is that neuter, that composite, that oblique into which every subject escapes, the trap where all identity is lost, beginning with the very identity of the body that writes (Barthes 1967). It is difficult to apply this interpretation to architecture, but it remains highly evocative and can be translated in different ways. For example, by analyzing the coefficient of authorship of the work, distinguishing how much of a project derives from the author's own, autonomous discourse, and how much derives from contingency: the client, the physical, economic, and social context. Barthes also recalls how the author is a modern figure, especially magnified by the romantic attitude of interpreting the work in relation to the author's biography:

The image of literature to be found in contemporary culture is tyrannically centered on the author, his person, his history, his tastes, his passions; criticism still consists, most of the time, in saying that Baudelaire's work is the failure of the man Baudelaire, Van Gogh's work his madness, Tchaikovsky's his vice: the explanation of the work is always sought in the man who has produced it, as if, through the more or less transparent allegory of fiction, it was always finally the voice of one and the same person, the author, which delivered his confidence.

The conclusion of Barthes' essay effectively leads to the fate announced by the title, with the complete transfer of the creative work into the reader's dimension. The true author is therefore the reader who, entering a professional dimension, is the critic, the curator, the only one capable of understanding all the levels included in the work:

A text consists of multiple writings, issuing from several cultures and entering into dialogue with each other, into parody, into contestation; but there is one place where this multiplicity is collected, united, and this place is not the author, as we have hitherto said it was, but the reader: the reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination; but this destination can no longer be personal: the reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the paths of which the text is constituted.

In Michel Foucault's view, the problem of the author is inextricably linked to that of the work:

When undertaking the publication of Nietzsche's works, for example, where should one stop? Surely everything must be published, but what is "everything"? Everything that Nietzsche himself published, certainly. And what about the rough drafts for his works? Obviously. The plans for his aphorisms? Yes. The deleted passages and the notes at the bottom of the page? Yes. What if, within a workbook filled with aphorisms, one finds a reference, the notation of a meeting or of an address, or a laundry list: is it a work, or not? Why not? And so on, ad infinitum. How can one define a work amid the millions of traces left by someone after his death? (Foucault 1998, 205–222)[4]

This problem has now been multiplied *ad infinitum* by digital technologies. When preserving the archive of a project or an architect, one is faced with an incalculable number of files that need to be classified and, perhaps, selected. This raises the problem of deciding which documents are part of the work and which are not, which are authorial, and which are not, which deserve to be cataloged and archived, and which should be confined to a secondary repository or even eliminated.

The prospect of design generated by digital sampling, a kind of equivalent to Deejay Music, provides a frame of reference for the frenetic way in which images and knowledge migrate freely from one desktop to

another. According to Mario Carpo, this process is caused by the spread of digital technologies and shifts the typically modern profile of the author. This is undoubtedly another factor in the crisis of authorship, which pushes the project from an auratic and strongly authorial sphere – which, according to Carpo, we owe to the intelligence of Leon Battista Alberti – to an open source environment of shared resources, information, and programs that dilute the figure of the author into a multitude of overlapping practices, exercised by individuals who do not hesitate to edit the work of others, producing an endless series of overlapping layers (Carpo 2011). When The Why Factory produces *Copy Paste*, it directly addresses the issue of authorship in the age of shared files, easy duplication and replication, and the dissemination of images that lend themselves to endless copying, distortion, and manipulation: "Opening up the archive of icons to further experimentation encourages creative copying and shared authorship: it is the ultimate act of 'copyleft'" (The Why Factory 2017, 54).

The return to copying, repetition, and resemblance has some of its roots in typological studies that limited the procedural nature of functionalist design, reinforcing the idea of continuity and permanence that was already inherent in Ernesto Nathan Rogers' vision. Every architect knows very well that practice, teaching, and research share the assumption that each project, and each new building, aims to reach a status of originality and difference. On the other hand, each project faces a force that acts in the opposite direction, towards repetition and homologation: "History and typology emerge as two complementary aspects; while history illuminates processes of change, typological analysis reveals what stays the same during these processes. Furthermore, each of these aspects requires the other, as only change can shed light on what persists" (Martí Arís 2021, 37). Even outside of typological studies, the question of authorship is a constantly active vertigo, a point of imbalance that must be kept active, an actor that cannot be removed from the architect's table, or laptop:

The themes of originality, copying and tradition have occupied the thoughts of art critics for many centuries. Different authors in different situations express statements that show unusual resonances, strange analogies, repetitions or slight variations. The author's personality sometimes gets lost in a myriad of linguistic events that together give rise to a great work of "collective literature" that passes through time. (Zucchi 2012, 82)

The digital universe looms like an infinite repository, a hunting ground open to plunder by replicants:

The internet changed design by replacing it with a Google search. Whatever we think to make has probably already been made, and some trace of it is available online, so that would be the first place to look. Looking at what has been made has replaced the proverbial blank page of a drafting table. Looking in our case involves being able to download parts of what has already been made, and proceeding to rearrange those downloaded parts, perhaps even using them as they are. (Angelidakis 2020, 16–22)

In conclusion, the author is destined to extricate himself from the almost always obscure jungle of references, memories, and analogies (Scelsi 2022), trying to find somehow an identity of their own that can only be relational (Bourriaud 2002b), in a constant back and forth between the past and the present, disciplinary knowledge and reality, as explained by Jasper Morrison:

I wouldn't argue with the concept of taking inspiration where you find it, and always having an eye open for what the mechanisms of daily life put in one's path. It always seemed to me absurd to imagine that inspiration can be found without the influence of things seen. I like the idea that creativity is in fact the art of reprocessing what already exists and not, after all, anything divine or mysterious. (Morrison in Lichtenstein and Schregenberger 2001, 19)

1 A saying of Eduardo De Filippo quoted by Giacomo Borella (2012, 23).

2 Among others, the exhibition featured: Arata Isozaki, Alison e Peter Smithson, Shadrach Woods, Aldo van Eyck, Archigram, Archizoom, Gyorgy Kepes, Hans Hollein, Marco Bellocchio with Giancarlo De Carlo, Renzo Piano with the Center for the Studies of Science and Art of London (Nicolin 2011).

3 The painting was exposed in the exhibition *Architettura-città*, curated by Aldo Rossi, Franco Raggi, Massimo Scolari, Rosaldo Bonicalzi, Gianni Braghieri, and Daniele Vitale; XV International Exhibition of the Triennale di Milano, 1973.

4 The text is the transcription of a lecture that Foucault gave at the Société Française de Philosophie on February 22, 1969.

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Trajectories for a Shared Agenda on Design Driven Research

EAAE/ARENA Roundtable

Ana Betancour, Malmö University
Anđelka Bnin-Bninski, University of Belgrade
Johan De Walsche, University of Antwerp
Urs Hirschberg, TU Graz
Tadeja Zupančič, University of Ljubljana
Roberto Cavallo, TU Delft
Jörg Schröder, Leibniz University Hannover
Claus Peder Pedersen, Aarhus School of Architecture

Moderator: Sara Protasoni, DAStU, Politecnico di Milano

The joint discussion on the values of design-driven research in international doctoral research is at the heart of this roundtable. The conference's topic raises the question of recognizing a contextualized position of the researcher and of the construction of tailored and non-generalizable research paths in methodologies often assumed as the foundation of shared scientific research. Authorship is, in fact, the basis of design-driven research, of an often divining and iterative approach based on both intuitive aspects and comparison with contemporary themes and urgencies. What is changing at an international level? Is it possible to push for overcoming methodological barriers – quantitative/qualitative – that can put the value of an authorial "path" back at the center? Starting from the EAAE Charter on Architectural Research (09.02.2022), the roundtable discusses possible synergies at an institutional level to promote design-driven research within the international panorama as a recognizable method for architectural and artistic research.

The university as a place of conceiving the world as it could be: a free port for playful anticipatory imagination

Johan De Walsche

"If we are to understand, explain, anticipate and influence the consequences of these changes, research is essential." (EAAE Charter on Architectural Research)

Research not only understand and explain, but also: to anticipate and influence, means that it addresses not only the world as it is, but also the world as how it could be. To do so, we need architectural research that (a) opens up to artistic practices and understanding, and that (b) is design-driven, meaning driven by conceiving possible futures.

By equalling what is known with what is real, science makes it appear as if all other dimensions of human life – such as the practical, aesthetic, ethical, or the religious dimensions – can only be real if they can scientifically be known. By doing so, modern science "has stripped the world of the qualities which made it beautiful and congenial to men". This has the disintegrating effect of putting us in a situation in which there are two equally unattractive options: the 'inhuman rationality' of modern science or the 'human irrationality' of everyday life. We need alternative tactics for understanding the world as a whole. Hence the need for embracing artistic approaches.

The uncertainties and challenges of living in a global society with its constant demand of responsiveness to change, imply that we have to learn how to respond creatively to difference and otherness. Problems should not be solved within the space that created them. Concepts about a possible future make this future more likely to happen. This is called anticipation. In architectural terms it can be called 'design'. We need concepts about a desirable future in order to orientate our conduct well. How is it

possible that in a time where visual culture is so dominant, architecture, with its strong visual capacities, is so absent?

There is a strong need for a safe place, freed of economic competition and political pressure, where such practices of playful anticipatory imagination can take place. A free port of inquiry, open to all disciplines, open for the senses, aiming at insights, fostering experimental processes in which ideas, hypothesis, concepts and theories are used instrumentally as tools-to-think-with, and as such is a playful, creative and potentially innovative process, of producing the 'hopeful suggestions', the 'warranted assertibilities' that we so much need.

Design-driven research as/in practice

Andelka Bnin Bniski

Our worlds are permanently and rapidly changing, as we are facing challenging times with ecological and economic crises. Under the burden of ethical challenges, architectural practice necessitates efforts towards awareness and critical engagement. The urge for rethinking how we inhabit our planet and how we live together demands for reinvention and vital creativity. In this context design-driven research is implied as a field of expertise that bridges essential domains of the profession: research, academia and (dwelling) practice, while holding on multi, and trans-disciplinarity and personal positioning. This expertise disposes ways, tools, tactics, approaches and communities of care and aims for the mindful and better futures for all. From this point two issues can be raised: 1) Design-driven research in practice (positioning, shareability); 2) Design-driven research as practice (knowledge production, policies).

In artistic and (architectural) design-driven research the 'basic' and the 'applied' (contextualised) research are both oriented to 'development' (as the third research 'category') and happen simultaneously. However, even in design research the cultural realities are often reduced to geometries and (computable) physical rules. How to challenge the reductionism of thinking and shift to simultaneous, synergetic research endeavours – within and beyond the disciplinary 'boundaries'? How can we demonstrate the societal relevance of collective, transdisciplinary, integrative, critical, but also playful and speculative research – to positivistic scientists? What kind of performance can be manifested from the 'performative nature' of design-driven research?

Tadeja Zupancic

Design-driven research as basic research?

Jörg Schroeder

While epistemiologically, epistemic justice , and methodologically-multi-methodical-multidisciplinary-multistakeholder orientation borders between basic and applied research and experimental development are

torn down, university and research politics keep on to frozen categories, in evaluation, funding, and development policies. Two aspects can be highlighted for a positioning and to change frameworks: can design-driven research be a recognised door-opener for dynamic mix between research categories based on its performative paradigm? Can design-driven research be a known experimental field to establish 'oriented basic research', as basis to tackle 'current or future problems and possibilites'?

Collective design-driven research?

Claus Peder Pedersen

Design-driven research holds the potential to address the complex challenges of the Anthropocene by embracing collective, transdisciplinary processes that move beyond the field's traditional focus on individual creativity and design skills. As climate and ecological crises call for transformation and re-use of local resources – highlighting the situated and the specific, as Anna Tsing notes in her claim that "nature cannot be scaled – design practices must adapt. These conditions open new avenues for impactful, explorative situated research while also prompting critical reflection on the role of subjectivity and new forms of authorship in design-driven research.

Empowering future professionals through design-driven research

Roberto Cavallo

In today's increasingly complex society, where challenges are continuously evolving, the field of architecture is expanding rapidly. Meanwhile, architects across Europe often operate within smaller practices, which present both unique constraints and opportunities. In this context, design-driven research stands out as a highly relevant and productive approach, providing invaluable pathways for fostering more reflective and contextually aware practices. This approach will not only elevate the profession but also make significant contributions to future generations of practitioners, helping them gain a better understanding of their role – and authorship – in navigating the complexities of contemporary challenges.

The CA²RE Conference
A Dialogue on Doctoral Research in Design

Sara Protasoni, DAStU, Politecnico di Milano

The recent edition of the CA^{2}RE conference held in Milan served as a significant platform for discourse surrounding doctoral research from an international comparative perspective. This event highlighted the rich, multifaceted engagement with both theoretical inquiry and practical application that characterizes contemporary research in design disciplines. As underscored in current scholarly discussions, there is an increasing emphasis on integrating diverse methodologies, fostering transdisciplinarity, and embracing innovative and speculative approaches to confront societal, environmental, and cultural challenges.

Design as a complex research paradigm

Central to contemporary doctoral research is the understanding that design – whether in architecture, urbanism, interiors, or landscape – is not merely a conventional discipline. Instead, it operates as a complex research paradigm that encompasses both the production and construction of tangible artefacts and the generation of knowledge. This paradigm stresses the necessity for research that is inherently reflective, contextually grounded, and capable of addressing unforeseen societal needs. The dual nature of design-driven research was a focal point of the discussions in Milan, illustrating how it operates within both basic and applied categories. This duality is essential for fostering development as a central theme within the research framework.

The risks of reductionism in design research

The discussions in Milan also brought to light the risks associated with reductionism, where cultural realities are often distilled to geometrical or computable rules. Such an approach can marginalize broader societal and cultural dimensions, undermining the richness of design inquiry. To overcome this reductionism, there is a pressing need for research that promotes synergetic endeavours – merging artistic practices, critical thinking, and experimental processes that traverse and transcend disciplinary boundaries. Tadeja Zupančič's insights further emphasized the performative potential of design as a mode of inquiry that can generate speculative, playful, and transformative insights, resonating beyond traditional positivist scientific paradigms.

The university as a space for anticipation and imagination

A recurring theme in the discourse is the concept of the university as a space for imagining futures – an arena for playful, anticipatory imagination that informs architectural research, as articulated by Johan De Walsche. It was articulated that research must extend beyond the mere understanding and explanation of existing conditions; it should also

encompass the capacity to foresee and influence potential futures. This necessitates an openness to artistic practices, creative speculation, and design-driven processes that generate visions of what might be, rather than what currently exists.

Furthermore, the discussions highlighted the essentiality of addressing the aesthetic and existential qualities of the world, moving beyond the modern scientific tendency to reduce complex phenomena to mere measurable entities. Embracing artistic and design practices that acknowledge the multidimensionality of human experience – spanning practical, ethical, spiritual, and aesthetic dimensions – is crucial. Such an integrated approach is vital for informing resilient, responsive, and ethically grounded architecture and urbanism. Within this context, anticipation emerges as a central aspect of the research process, with the potential to shape desirable futures through conceptual and speculative design.

Empowering future professionals in a complex society

In a societal context characterized by complexity and constant change, the profession of design must evolve towards greater reflection, context-awareness, and societal relevance. European doctoral programmes are increasingly oriented towards cultivating designers who possess critical thinking skills, ethical responsibility, and innovative problem-solving capabilities, all while focusing on sustainable and resilient practices. This perspective advocates for a pedagogical shift wherein doctoral research fosters a deep engagement with both local and global contexts. This engagement is designed to instil a sense of authorship and agency among emerging professionals, enabling them to navigate and shape complex societal challenges effectively.

Roberto Cavallo's contribution emphasized the importance of empowering future practitioners through research that is rooted in design-driven methodologies. By fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility, doctoral programmes can produce practitioners adept in both technical and aesthetic domains, as well as those who are equipped to address pressing societal concerns.

Addressing the challenges of the anthropocene through collective research

The conference discussions also underscored the profound impacts of the Anthropocene – climate change, ecological crises, and resource depletion – calling for a collective, transdisciplinary approach to design research. Klaus Peder Pedersen noted that design practices must adapt to local and specific conditions, reinforcing the notion that nature cannot be scaled. The horizontal, situated nature of such research fosters impact-driven exploration while critically reflecting on the roles, subjectivities, and new forms of authorship within design processes. This

approach aligns with the broader European trend towards embracing collaborative, participatory, and context-sensitive research that aspires to effect tangible societal and environmental change.

The political and institutional dimensions of design research

A significant aspect of the roundtable focused on the epistemological and institutional challenges faced by design-driven research. There was a critical examination of whether design research can be recognised as a form of basic or foundational research. The persistent stratification within European universities and funding bodies often impedes the recognition of hybrid, performative, and experimental practices. Jörg Schroeder advocated for a broader conceptualisation of design-driven research, suggesting it could serve as a 'door-opener' for innovative, basic research that addresses both current and future societal challenges. This perspective encourages European doctoral programmes to explore dynamic and flexible research frameworks capable of integrating multiple categories – basic, applied, and experimental – within a performative paradigm that can adapt to complex, real-world issues.

Conclusion: towards a transdisciplinary, performative future

In conclusion, the collective insights garnered from the CA^{2}RE conference articulate a vision of doctoral research within Europe's architecture-related fields as a deeply transdisciplinary, creative, and socially engaged enterprise. This paradigm underscores the significance of artistic, speculative, and collective approaches capable of addressing the pressing challenges of the twenty-first century. As the landscape of design research continues to evolve, embracing these principles will be essential for fostering innovation, resilience, and ethical responsibility among future professionals. By promoting a transdisciplinary approach, the academic community can better prepare emerging designers to navigate and contribute to a complex and rapidly changing world, ultimately fostering a more sustainable and equitable future for all.

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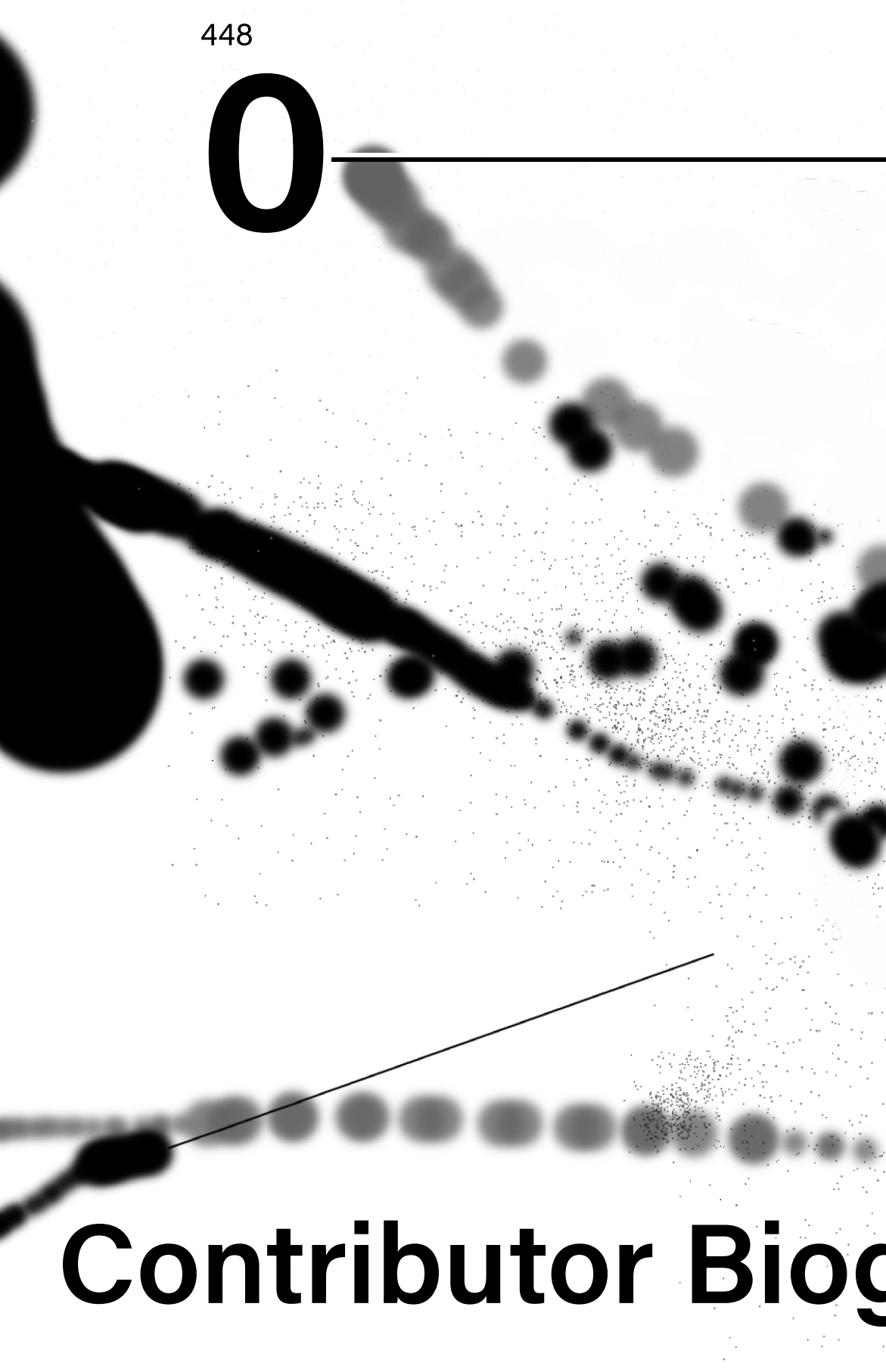

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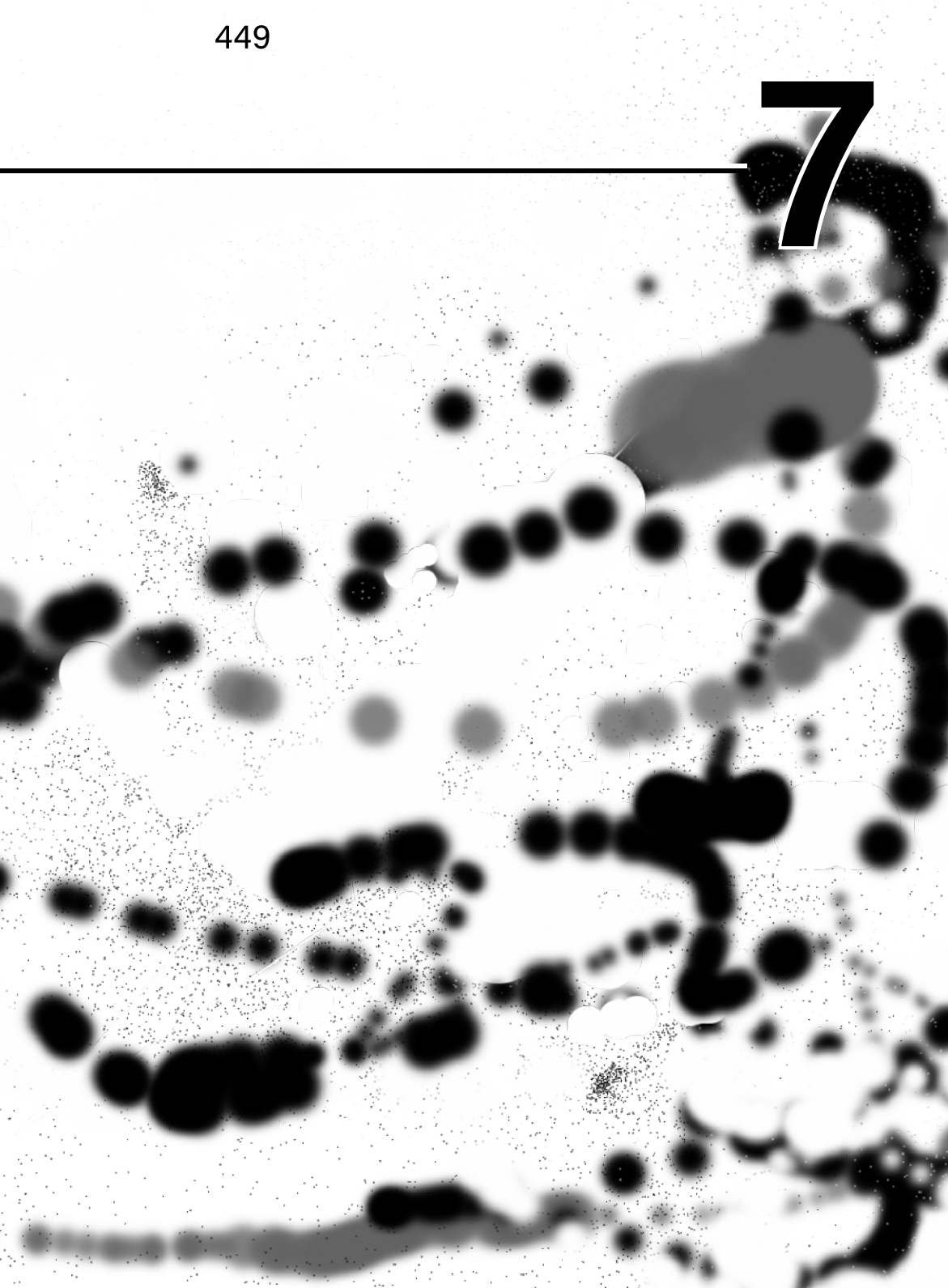

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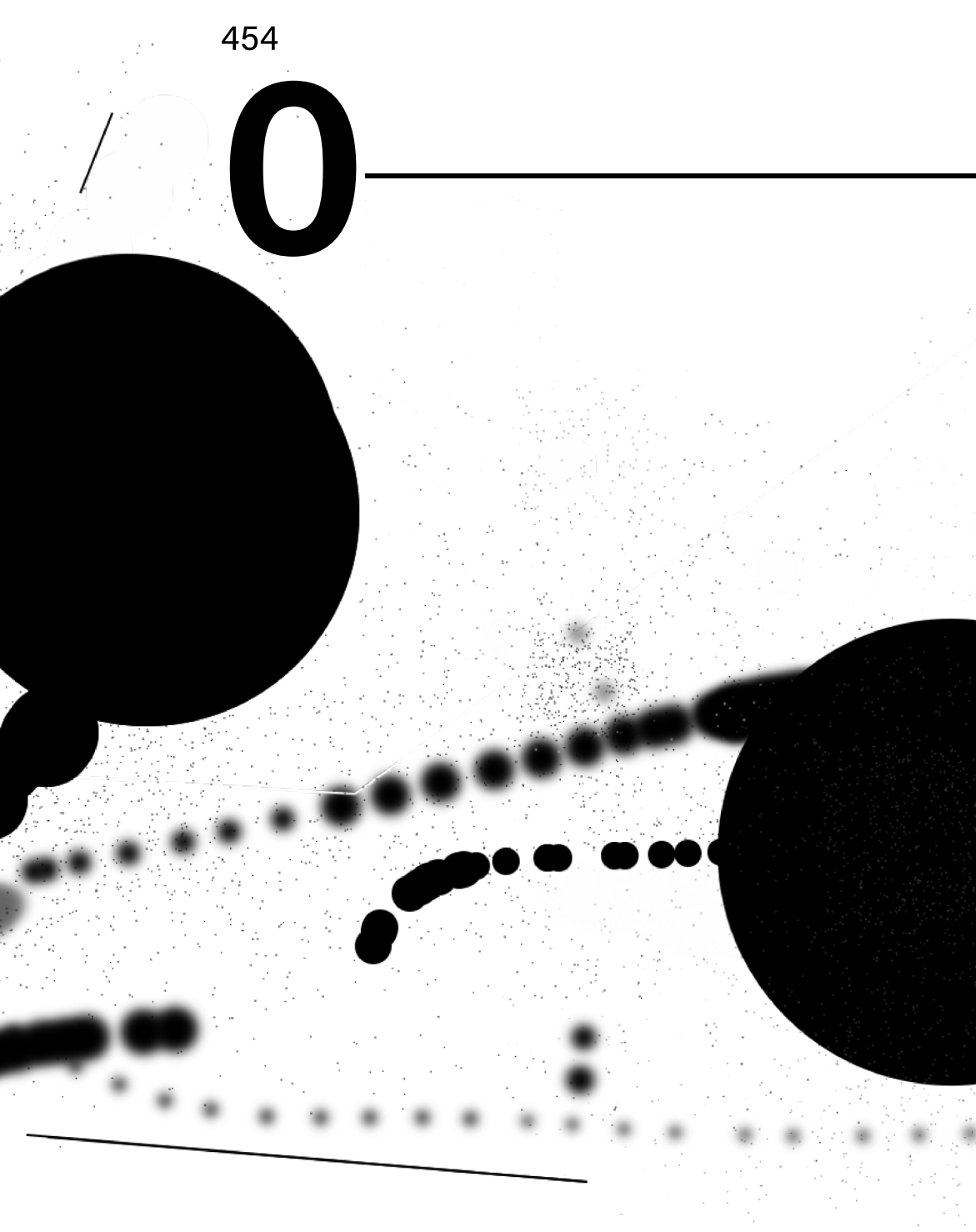

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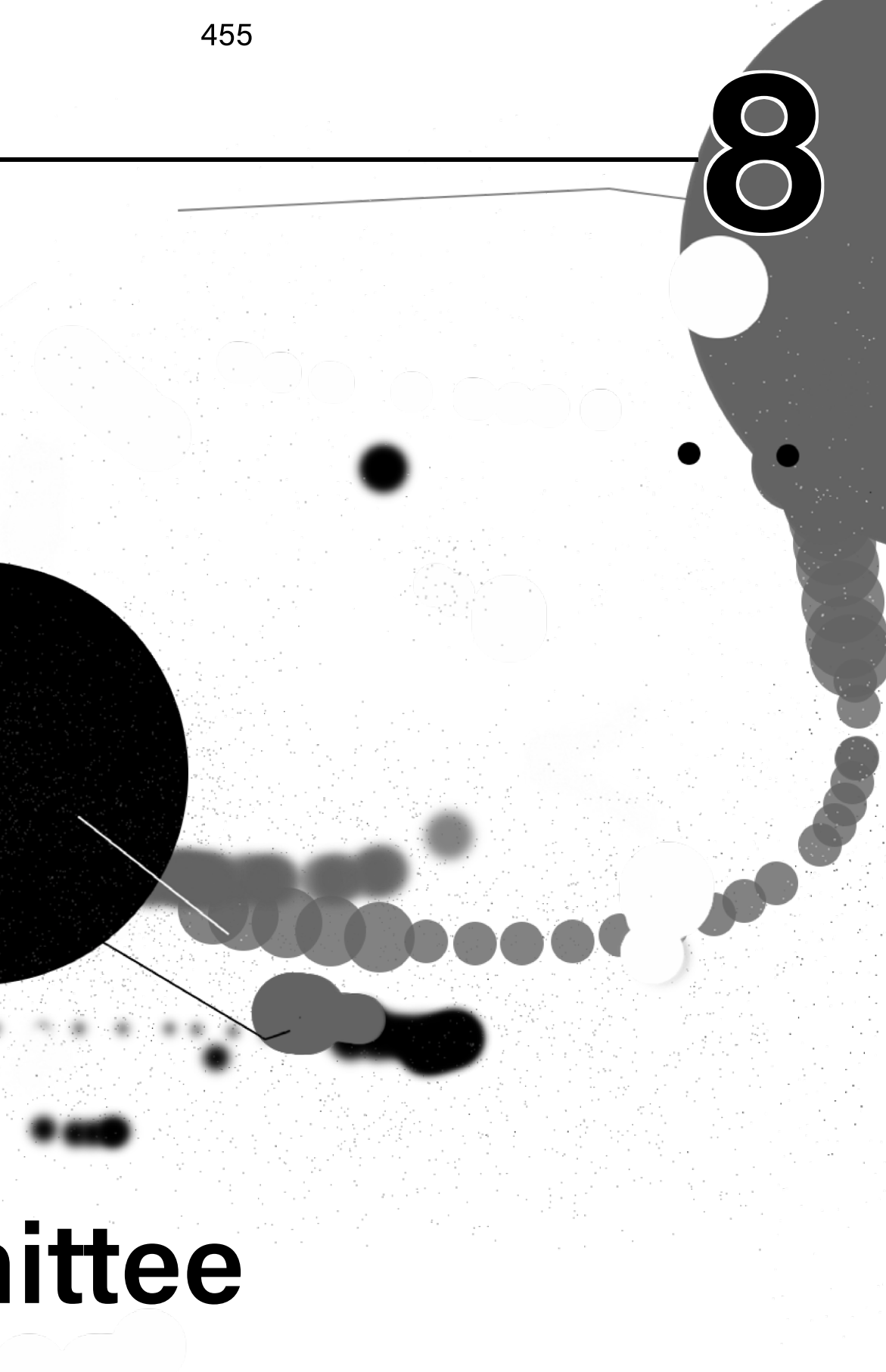

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