

*Landscapes of Care: Photography, Film, Modern Architecture
and Landscape Heritage*



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Introduction

Interdisciplinary research reorienting the perceptions and understanding of Modern architecture and landscape heritage through an enriched documentary utilization, namely of photography and film

Pedro Leão Neto

“ [When] I am taking a photograph, I am conscious that I am constructing images rather than taking snapshots. Since I do not take rapid photographs it is in this respect like painting which takes a long time where you are very aware of what you are doing in the process. Exposure is only the final act of making the image as a photograph.”¹

Thomas Struth

With this 8th Volume of *Sophia Journal*, we are continuing our third thematic cycle “Landscapes of Care” and our interest is to understand and explore through diverse visual practices, with a specific interest in photography and film, how the physical environment is understood and shaped by a diverse field of study, practices and cultures. This means, besides other things, to better understand the relationship between culture and space and to explore how culture, beliefs, behaviours, and practices, interact with and shape the physical environment of different territories and their architectures, cities and landscapes, as well as to acknowledge contemporary discourses and usages of landscape concepts².

As we had already explained³, the concept of landscapes of care has increasingly been adopted by diverse areas of study, from health geography to the arts and architecture. It allows us to comprehend architecture, city and territory as living and inclusive organisms, constituted by multifaceted landscapes with complex social and organisational spatialities, as well as exploring the concepts of space and place for care within a transdisciplinary research environment. All these more recent studies around landscapes of care are naturally related to precedent notions

1 Johnson, B. (2004) *Photography Speaks: 150 Photographers on their art*. Norfolk, Va. Aperture Foundation / The Chrysler Museum, 310

2 See the discussion of key conceptions of landscape circulating as part of the recent discourse i.e. landscape as a fundamental building block, a communicative medium, and a realm of imaginative constructs.” Vera Vicenzotti. “The Landscape of Landscape Urbanism.” *Landscape Journal* 36, no. 1 (2018): 75–86. <https://doi.org/10.3368/lj.36.1.75>. <https://lj.uwpress.org/content/wplj/36/1/75.full.pdf>.

3 See Pedro Neto. (2022). About “Landscapes of Care” and how contemporary photography can help to heal a broken planet. *Sophia Journal*, 7(1), 7. https://doi.org/10.24840/2183-8976_2022-0007_0001_1

as the ones linking landscapes with sustainability, which are the subject of research at least since the eighties, underlining the complexities of the relation between the ideas of sustainability and landscapes⁴. 'Site' is another related concept subject of earlier research and that now has been taken anew to think and work in our complex contemporary constructed environments. Consisting of active and changing interrelations, overlapping spaces and uses, 'site' allows us to understand simultaneously the levels of theory and practice enriching concrete experience in the design field as a whole⁵.

We believe that this more comprehensive design development capable of securing the site's potential demands for a broader understanding of environmental transformations, meaning apart from other issues, to understand architecture, city and territory as living and inclusive organisms, constituted by multifaceted landscapes with complex social and organisational spatiality. Within this multipart context, significant changes are taking place in diverse physical spaces all around the world and we need to thoroughly embrace these changes as the world is growing in complexity as Daniel Innerarity points out⁶.

Landscapes of care, the concept of our present cycle, entails a humanist perspective upon urban transformations and its management, in contrast to the technocratic and instrumental character that tends to overpower the economic and financial logics. This means, amongst other things, being able to balance the former by integrating other important values as the unique characteristics of each place, valuating cultural heritage and concurring for a sustainable development practice and urban spatial identity. By doing this, we are making context more relevant for architecture and the planning of cities, allowing for a more comprehensive understanding of and alternative development models for architecture, city and territory⁷.

Thus, we are interested in research creating complex living documents of sites that recognise and give space and value to each facet of what gives identity to those landscapes and allows place making, as well as promoting the transformation of the urban environment that concurs for people's health, happiness, and well-being. We also believe that to achieve the former, we need interdisciplinary research combining diverse fields of knowledge capable of reorienting the perceptions and understanding of design development through an enriched documentary utilization.

4 Hannes Palang, Katriina Soini, Anu Printsman & Inger Birkeland (2017) Landscape and cultural sustainability, Norsk Geografisk Tidsskrift – Norwegian Journal of Geography, 71:3, 127–131, DOI: 10.1080/00291951.2017.1343381

5 Kahn, A., and C.J. Burns. *Site Matters: Strategies for Uncertainty through Planning and Design*. Taylor & Francis, 2020. <https://books.google.pt/books?id=cG80EAAAQBAJ>.

6 Following the idea of Daniel Innerarity of how we are living in complex democracies (see his latest book "Democracy in Europe")

7 Wang, W. (2019). The Future of the American Dream. CENTER 22: LATITUDES – Architecture in the Americas, Volume 3, 124–125. ISBN: 978-0-93951-33-3

All of the above means, on the one hand, a more encompassing photography documentary research and practice able to integrate the diverse modes which can be found in many documentary projects, as referred by Marion Gautreau and Jean Kempf⁸: (i) scientific, or conversely, ideological reference; (ii) artistic form as an access to the complexities of the real world; (iii) the documentary as enabling an affirmation of identity or the retrieval of memory. On the other hand, integrating into the research material processes⁹ where photography is explored as a significant inquiry tool for critical and innovative views on architecture and urban transformation in their expanded fields and contextualized by larger systems: cultural, political, artistic, technical, and historical dimensions. This means, innovative documentation or archival projects exploring discursive forms of presentation and visual constructs, articles and research papers discussing the rich spectrum of techniques and visual strategies employed in environmental discussions.

As a result, we find it fascinating and interesting the research focused on exploring how visual constructs, namely photography and film, may set forward the idea of an architecture, changing our on-site perception and even turning it into a projected vision in space, as well as identifying, recording and 'unlocking' sites of transformation – i.e. buildings and places which are undergoing, or will undergo, a process of renewal. Another example of our interests is the diachronic studies of urban environments focused on patterns of activities and phenomena aiming at sequentially researching social change, and physical and cultural expressions that may occur during different time lapses¹⁰.

It is important to note that Sophia Journal and its international forums make a significant contribution to the reflection towards new thoughts and research paths around the world of images and the diverse territories and realities we live in and in this way, encourage society to look and act more critically, making the observer even more sensitive and knowledgeable about these subjects. International forums that are an exercise of joint reflexivity creating the opportunity and space for an active dialogue between researchers, authors, and the public, contributing to the identification of new avenues of research, diverse instruments of inquiry and documenting as well artistic expressions related with the urban and environmental transformations of several territories. All this underwrites and reinforces past and ongoing investigations and initiatives of the research group Architecture, Art, and Image (AAI – CEAU/FAUP).

8 Marion Gautreau e Jean Kempf, «La photographie documentaire contemporaine dans les Amériques», *IdeAs* [Online], 13 | 2019, posto online no dia 01 março 2019, consultado o 17 dezembro 2023. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/ideas/5099>; DOI: <https://doi.org/10.4000/ideas.5099>

9 Rose, G., *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to Researching with Visual Materials*. London: Sage, 2012

10 Jon Rieger, "Rephotography for Documenting Social Change", in *The Sage Handbook of Visual Research Methods* (2nd ed), eds. Luc Pauwels and Dawn Mannay (Beverly Hills, CA/London: Sage, 2020), 99–113.

Focusing now on this 8th Volume "Landscapes of care: photography, film, modern architecture and landscape heritage" the overall concern was to study and give visibility to photography and film practices comprehending architecture outside the dominant narratives and understanding the city and the territory as living and inclusive organisms. The aim was to call our attention to Modern architecture as a 'heritage at risk' and to explore ways in which photography and film are used as meaningful instruments of research into the socioeconomic, political, historical, technical and ecological dimensions of architecture and landscapes heritage.

The significant theoretical papers and visual essays published, as well as the Editors' texts, substantiate a collection of analysis and projects which critique and expand our understanding of what constitutes modern architecture and landscape, in terms of its language, locations, functions, creators, patrons and public. A set of photography and film projects that show how modern buildings and landscapes have responded to and reflect the local conditions of their production and importance.

To illustrate this point, consider the article titled "Ways of Seeing Architecture and Landscape in the Void of Presence: The Case of a Health Resort on the Adriatic Coast of Croatia" by Jasna Galjer. In this article, Galjer explores the analysis of projects where photography and film are utilized to provide critical insights into Croatia's architectural heritage during the era of socialist modernism. Namely, the article examines how photography and film were employed to re-envision the architectural concepts underlying the Kravica health resort—a remarkable but now dilapidated example of socialist-era architecture designed by Rikard Marasovic. Galjer describes this resort as a manifestation of the "... theoretical and conceptual framework of socialist modernism as a social formation which has realised authentic values in the time of modernity".

This work stands as a significant example, among others in the same volume, of how photography and film can be powerful tools for reimagining architecture, reshaping our on-site perception, and enhancing our understanding of it. These media are not mere passive records of architectural ruins; instead, they actively convey their meaning through carefully chosen visual strategies, drawing viewers into the very essence of these structures. Moreover, it reflects a humanistic perspective on urban transformations and their management, as it challenges the prevailing economic and financial motives that have left the health resort in ruins. In doing so, it offers a more comprehensive and contemporary outlook on these regions and their architectural treasures."

Speaking now about the International Conference held each year related to Sophia Journal's Open Call, we can say that it proved to be a significant event for addressing thought-provoking issues central to the discussion of photography and film, enabling us to view the social dimension of architecture, contributing to a deeper understanding of the potential for a more ecological and sustainable balance between nature within modern architecture and landscape.

In fact, the event proved to be an important forum for fostering reflection and debate within the realms of architecture, art, and imagery and also a significant platform for creating a congenial atmosphere that facilitated constructive exchanges of ideas and networking among researchers and colleagues from various countries. The conference had as a parallel program the exhibition *The Idea of Álvaro Siza*, showing the photographic work developed by Mark Durden and João Leal around two of Siza's paradigmatic buildings, which were the Carlos Ramos Pavilion and the Faculty of Architecture of Porto. The project involving a selection of architectural buildings designed by Álvaro Siza has been supported from the outset by the research group Architecture, Arte and Image – CEAU | AAI – and has given rise to the editorial | graphic design project scopionewspaper journal *The Idea of Álvaro Siza* with the seal of scopio Editions, being also supported by the University of South Wales.

The curatorial work of the Exhibition explored a site-oriented approach taking advantage of the unique architectural characteristics of the Pavilion Carlos Ramos in terms of natural light, rich relations between interior and exterior spaces and the white boards of many walls ready to be pinned with students' work. The objective was to communicate and exhibit the work in a more alternative way, as well as related to the project concept itself, withstanding from common strategies and challenging the viewer's relationship to the work exhibited, exploring the "architectural promenade" concept and trying to break any sequential monotony and barriers between the work and the public.

The Conference, on the 15th of September, presented the selection of the best theoretical papers and visual essays submitted that are now published in this Volume. Organised in 3 panels – Types, Places and Processes – it constituted a live forum for debating photography, film, modern architecture and landscape heritage, among other stimulating issues central to discussing theoretical and field work where photography and film-making are descriptive, analytical and interpretive, communicating original perceptions and new understandings of modern architecture and landscapes.

On the 16th, we had a panel focused on "Documentary artistic publications about architecture" moderated by Olívia Marques da Silva (P.PORTO/ESMAD), with the following invited speakers: Nuno Grande (FCTUC / CES), Paulo Catrica (UNL) and Rita Castro Neves (FBAUP).

Organized by the Center for Studies in Architecture and Urbanism, based at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (CEAU/FAUP), in collaboration with University College Dublin (UCD), London South Bank University (LSBU), University of Copenhagen (UCPH), Newport – University of South Wales (USW/eCDR), and the School of Media Arts and Design (P.PORTO/ESMAD), the 8th Sophia Journal International Conference "Landscapes of care: photography, film, modern architecture and landscape heritage" marked the continuation of

a series of conferences closely aligned with Sophia's peer-reviewed publication. The Sophia Journal Conferences have been an integral part of our academic community for over eight years, playing a significant role in establishing an international network focused on the intersection of Photography and Architecture.

As for our current 9th Volume of Sophia Journal Open Call "Landscapes of Care. Public housing across multiple geographies: crossing theories and practices" it was presented at the Conference on the 16th by Maria Neto (UBI-FAUP), Sophia Journal's Editor of this 9th Volume jointly with, Paz Nuñez Martí (UAH-ETSAM) and Guest Editors Igea Troiani (LSBU), Joan Mac Donald (U. Chile) and Jorge Tarrago Mingo (ETSAUN). The Open Call is interested in contributions centred on a dynamic reading of the city that is conditional and conditioned by housing typology, as well as on the use of photography and film work exploring the social and political dimensions of architecture and landscape and understand architecture as Alvar Aalto did, "as a great synthetic process of combining thousands of definite human functions".

Finally, and looking back on the past year, we would like to thank all those who have contributed to this 8th Volume of Sophia Journal "Landscapes of care: photography, film, modern architecture and landscape heritage".

Thank you, editors, authors, reviewers, and readers of Sophia.