

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



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Places

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In this panel, focusing on place in terms of Landscapes of Care, Richard Williams, Sotiria Alexiadou with Vassilis Colonas, and Joao Gadelho Novais Tavares examine urban architectures through a shared aperture of film, thereby showing an engagement with the historical, spatial and 'social production of space'.¹ The temporal dimension of film opens up for analysis of the places of their individual studies in historical, real-time and fictitious dimensions, showing how visual images contribute to understandings of the care of places and peoples. Lars Rolfsted Mortensen's photographs of dams in the Swiss Alps raise broader questions about place and our need for care of the landscape. The photographs present us with the ambivalence of sublime infrastructures that are both destructive and removable interventions in Alpine ecosystems but vital for green energy.

Williams's study of São Paulo's Elevado João Goulart, a 3.5km elevated expressway close to the historic centre of the city, "the largest work in reinforced concrete in all of Latin America", popularly known as the Minhocão and completed in 1971, is understood through wide colourful cinematic shots looking at the wormlike shape from above or from the window of residents living at its edge in the 1985 drama film, *Kiss of the Spider Woman* directed by Hector Babenco² and the 2010 documentary film *Elevado 3.5* directed by Maira Bühler, Paulo Pastorelo and João Sodré.³ Reading such films in relation to utopian urban designs and successful occupation of the expressway by local communities, Williams registers a shift in the deep socio-cultural dimension that ties the everyday lives of Paulistanos to this modernist urban infrastructure. From being represented as an initially carceral and dystopian structure in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, the later documentary film registers "a more accepting attitude" of this former toxic space. In a closing discussion of another documentary film—Rosa Barba's 2016 *Disseminate and Hold*⁴—about the moment every evening when the Minhocão closes to traffic and is open to pedestrians, Williams shows how the expressway becomes the site where a "hedonistic future for the city is played out".

Alexiadou and Colonas's study of Thessaloniki's manmade natural east waterfront, developed in the 1960s and 1970s, centres mostly on the study of the cinematography in two films,

1 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, Hoboken, New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991.

2 Babenco, Hector, director, *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, Film Dallas Pictures/Sugarloaf Films/HB Filmes, 1985, 2 hr 1 min.

3 Maira Bühler, Paulo Pastorelo and João Sodré, directors, *Elevado 3.5*, Primo Filmes/TV Cultura, 2010, 1 hr., 15 min.

4 Rosa Barba, director, *Disseminate and Hold*, 2016, Foundation Prince Pierre de Monaco, 21 min.

Parenthesi (Dir. Kanellopoulos 1968)⁵ and *Eternity and a Day* (Dir. Angelopoulos 1993).⁶ Alongside plans of the urban growth and development of the waterfront, and photographs from the 1960s, the authors analyse stills from the films that register the transition of the natural waterfront landscape, with its mansions and fishing industry, to “the artificial urban landscape that draws a straight line between water and land”. The new modern landscape nevertheless opens a more inclusive and democratic social space as borne out by images of cyclists and lovers promenading. Like Williams’s study of Minhocão, this research into Thessaloniki’s natural east waterfront shows how photographic and cinematic records of places of modern heritage provide valuable and “moving documents” of the changing social uses and functions of such radically transformative urban structures.

In his study of urban development and associated image making of the Foz Velha or Foz do Douro, an old Portuguese neighborhood in Porto, Tavares studies in detail segments of its representation in the black and white 1975 television documentary *Foz Velha* directed by José Caria.⁷ Caria identifies, surveys, and films the architectural, urban, and social characteristics of Foz Velha in search of authentic representations at a time of radical urban change. Through its typological studies, Tavares argues that the documentary offers a new reading of the old buildings of Foz Velha that goes beyond aesthetics and a desire for aesthetic cleansing and gentrification. Instead, it values traits of its local architectural heritage and community in need of preservation, re-evaluation, and care.

While these three papers centre on different places in Brazil, Greece, and Portugal they share a methodology of using filmic and photographic representations to allow us to show how modern buildings and landscapes have responded to and reflect the local conditions of their production and importance. The papers critique and expand our understanding of what constitutes modern architecture and landscape, in terms of place, languages, functions, and publics. In contrast, Mortensen’s photographs dramatise and accentuate the powerful presence of dams within the Swiss landscape. Mortensen’s photographs shift the viewer from reflections about the changing social use, adaptation, and value of places as shown through cultural representations to a more primary and fundamental encounter with the impact of “the ecological and infrastructural reach” of modern dams, inviting them to see and think not so much about a conflict between nature and culture but how a constant exchange between the dams and their ecosystems is more appositely framed as one of interdependence. The destruction and slow violence of the

5 Takis Kanellopoulos, director, *Parenthesi* (or *Interlude*), 1968, 1 hr 27 min.

6 Thodoros Angelopoulos, director, *Eternity and a Day*, Merchant Ivory Productions, Curzon Film, Greek Film Center, 1998, 2 hr 7 min.

7 José Caria, director, *As Pedras e o Homem: Foz Velha* [documentary, digital], Portugal: RTP, 1975. 20 min. arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/foz-velha/

dams continues, but the photographs are alert the viewer to the dangers of thinking in duality; they invite humility in recognising how we cannot separate ourselves from nature, how our very condition, like these dams, is inextricably tied to the earth's ecosystem. From focused studies of the historical value of both fictional and documentary film as a valuable medium to begin to show and understand our modern architectural heritage and its importance to the cultural identity of place, the repercussions of Mortensen's photographs concern the more immediate present, contemporary documents that allow the viewer to reflect upon brutalist infrastructures, fraught with contradictions.

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