

Landscapes of Care

photography, film, modern
architecture and
landscape heritage

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*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 Printsmann & 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=cG80EAAQBAJ>.

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 Olivia 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.

Types

Evidence of the Typical

Hugh Campbell, Teresa Ferreira

The pieces in this section share an interest in the typical and in the ways in which photography can be used to provide evidence of that very typicality. Photography's capacity to record evidence has been central to its practice and theory from the outset, founded on the premise (and the promise) of an indexical relationship between the thing recorded and the record made. Of course that relationship could always be distorted, manipulated or fabricated by technical means – with increasing ease and regularity in the digital era – but even such distortions would only serve to point up the dominant assumption of fidelity, of the photograph simply recording and conveying the facts. This is not to say, however, that such photographs would lack aesthetic quality or conceptual interest. Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan's seminal 1977 publication 'Evidence' enduringly demonstrated this through a careful selection and sequencing of photographs culled from numerous government agencies and research institutions. Nominally objective, the pictures were unfailingly strange, sometimes surreal, sometimes disturbing and often forlorn. These were, as Sandra S. Phillips notes in her essay for the revised edition, 'photographs made for the purpose of record', but by virtue of what they deemed worthy of recording, and how that record was composed and framed, much was revealed, both about the unavoidably expressive capacities of the medium and about the prevalence of scientific and technical development which typified the era.¹

Photographic evidence operates in distinct but related ways in each of these four pieces. There is a shared affirmation that the making of photographs serves to confer significance and value on something hitherto overlooked, ignored or misunderstood. In Jasna Galjer's carefully considered essay, she traces how the Kravica Children's Health Resort in Croatia – a striking piece of socialist-era architecture by Rikard Marasovic – is being reframed in terms of its cultural meaning and value through photographic and filmic projects. Despite, or perhaps because of, being neglected and in disrepair, the complex demands to be incorporated into the collective consciousness, to allow its past to be reconciled with a potential future. This is as much to do with its overt formal properties as its layered history in use, both of which are captured in the photographic and filmic projects which Galjer discusses.

¹ Sandra S. Phillips, A History of the Evidence, in Mike Mandel and Larry Sultan, Evidence, New York: D.A.P., 2017 (first published 1977)

For Birgit Schilke-Hammer and Leonie Bunte, working in a more active mode 'in the field', photography is pressed into service to bring into view buildings within the urban landscape which were hitherto almost invisible, although quite ubiquitous. The almost-anonymous architecture of the 1980s is thus made available to analysis and critical re-evaluation. The project of photographic recording is understood as a necessary step in a journey towards securing viable futures for these buildings. The exploration thus connects to the larger imperative for adaptive reuse to supplant abandonment and demolition as the underpinning of urban development. In order to retain something, we must understand its value, but in order to understand its value, we must first see it. That evidence is vital.

The small, street-facing, urban gardens of Milan, a common motif in post-WWII middle-class housing blocks, can hardly be said to be neglected or undervalued, but they are perhaps not as carefully noticed or studied as the blocks themselves. The photographic essay by Natalia Voroshilova and Giulio Galasso is notable for the way in which it draws attention to the special qualities of these typical places – what they term 'Oases in the grid'. And through that attentiveness comes a fresh awareness of the shared urban values which produced and shaped those spaces in the first place, as well as their potential as templates for future development.

Julia Maria Bezerra de Mello Fabbriani also explores housing typologies, in this case Oscar Niemeyer's Centro De Barra project in Rio De Janeiro. Intended as a paradisiac low-cost settlement away from the density of the city, the project was never finished, with Tower H becoming an emblem of that unfulfilled potential and general air of abandonment. The tower now serves as both setting and apparatus for photographic recording, with the shells of apartment rooms transformed into camera obscura, the moving image of the surrounding city emblazoned on the erected cloth screens. The building witnesses a life it never had, most poignantly in the projected ghost of the neighbouring, occupied tower: its thriving twin.

This complete commingling of the recorded subject and the means of recording vividly reveals the continuing potency of photographic evidence in drawing attention to the value of the built environment. This is especially the case with buildings and landscapes which are seen as typical. Ubiquity can very rapidly lead to a fading from the collective imaginary of a city or country. Our ability not to see what is in front of us everyday is remarkable. This was partly what prompted Thomas Struth's epic series of urban portraits, *Unconscious Places*: a determination simply to look, to register and to bring to consciousness, urban landscapes which might otherwise disappear from view. Buildings often just need to be seen.

Places

Igea Troiani, Mark Durden

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 Cária.⁷ Cária 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

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

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

Processes

The Act of Doing

João Leal, Rikke Munck Petersen

There is a big gap between the abstraction of an idea and its concrete implementation. This gap is filled with processes that imply the taking of actions to help achieve a tangible result, and there is a myriad of ways these actions can follow through. Photographic and filmic methodologies shape work through the processes of doing informed by gestures in the photographic and filmic operations on site and in the later editing phase¹ by which an understanding is changed into a story, an idea in a final visual and/or sequential form.

The need for good ideas due to the growing challenges presented by climate changes, imposes serious thinking around actual ways of doing relevant contributions to help 'heal a broken world'. Photographic and filmic work processes can support that purpose embedding specific site experience methodologies open to the passage of time and the changes it encompasses associated with the landscape we have inherited. Exploring a place or a landscape and working with what is found through movement: walking, driving, flying, the editing of footage, the study of photographs, films, or selected material, reveal changes to specific landscapes and possible readings, interpretations, and understandings of those changes. Such actions and processes have a long tradition in artistic practices transecting land art, landscape architecture and environmental studies.²

In this regard, photographs and film can reveal often hidden or invisible sensorial and experiential qualities of complex changes and approaches to a site, that otherwise would not be present and aware of notions and attunement³ regarding the site's past, present, and future potentials. The processes of photographic and filmic actions to read and understand a site, embed a possible projection of new knowledge that is closely linked to sensorial and experiential aspects of exploring and analysing a place and its spatial, sensory-aesthetic, and historical connotations brought forward through the footage.⁴

1 Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Sense and Non-Sense*, (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1964).

2 Richard Long, *Walking the Line*, (Oakland: University of California Press, 2002); Robert Smithson, "Robert Smithson: The Collective Writings", ed. Jack D. Flam (Oakland: University of California Press, 1996); David Borthwick, Pippa Marland, Anna Stenning, *Walking, Landscape and Environment*, (Abingdon, Oxon/Neew York: Routledge 2020).

3 Albert Péres-Gómez, *Attunement. Architectural Meaning after the Crisis of Modern Science*, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016).

4 Fred Truniger, *Filmic mapping* (Berlin: Jovis, 2013); Rikke Munck Petersen and Mads Farso, "Resonance and Transcendence of a Bodily Presence: How a filmic mapping of non-visual, aural and bodily relations in space can strengthen the sensory dimension in landscape architectural design", in *Architecture Filmmaking* (1 ed) eds. Igea Troiani and Hugh Campbell (Bristol: Intellect Ltd, 2020), 299–321.

This panel focused on such hidden or unseen aspects as the red dust in Brasilia, Brazil, a constant reminder of the mistreatment of the natural environment, where the modernist capital was built; nutrient sensitive plants elucidating the slippage from secured greenhouses in the Netherlands; plants projected on a moving drawing table emphasizing attentiveness towards valuable landscapes in Australia; or houses literal being moved from one site to the next in Sweden, with its former place and context being projected to their walls. These are all processes and actions that transport stories and culture from one site to the next, drawing attention and care to the subtitled interrelationships and knowledge emerging.

In the theoretical essay *Ektachrome Color: White buildings, Red Dust* Ciro Miguel discusses how dust tainted the representation of Brasilia, and how the introduction of the newest colour film Ektachrome by photojournalists made earthworks and dust visible. It argues how these fine particles and their accidental reproduction, operated as visual dissonances that confuse the modern distinction between nature and culture and constantly remind us about the importance of not neglecting the specific environment, knowledge and culture of nature-landscape practices of a given site.

Through filmmaking, Corne Strootmann addresses the unseen or that which is normally disregarded. In the theoretical essay *Filmmaking as a tool for landscape architecture: Analysing and mediating the spatial impact of agricultural techniques* he discusses film, as an eidetic image, that mediates multivalent, open-ended, and non-linear narratives for an Anthropocenic greenhouse landscape in the Netherlands. Using his latest film project '*Tussen de Kassen*', he illustrates how filmmaking can strengthen imagination and spatial considerations of the unseen or unnoticed in the transition to sustainable agricultural landscapes, since filmmaking operations give spatial designers a glimpse of and operative actions for working with the aesthetic impact of a future where these agricultural techniques are applied more broadly.

Methodologies that strengthen researchers' close engagement with a site through walking, making the researcher a participant of the landscape, is the anchor point of Millicent Gunner's approach in her visual essay *Walking the Table: Caring-with landscape*. Photography is used to capture the process of a dialogue emerging between the walker and the landscape, between a movable drawing table and the projection of plant shadows upon it. Landscape, table, and plants intermingle — an action that the projected shadows make present. The camera, capturing only the shadow, aligns differences in color and texture of plants and terrain, which emphasizes their subtle interrelationship and supports an ongoing dialog of attentiveness and care.

In *Unsettling in Norrlands* Tonia Carless captures and projects a dialog across time, site, distances, and local cultures in Northern Sweden, through photographic and filmic documentation of houses being moved out of their original places. Projections of houses in the places where they once were, to the interior walls of newly installed houses or ones that stand nearby, or filmic projections of houses on the road being moved to new locations create careful threads between what is, where it was, where it went, and where and how it is now. These projections emphasize not only how culture travels but at the same time how a reuse of stories and materials forms sustainable cultural processes.

These essays are four very different proposals, from distinct geographies, discussing processes and ideas in different contexts contributing to an ongoing and rhizomatic ecology discussion embedded in methodological photographic and filmic actions.

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Changing the Image: Photographic Investigations on the Anonymous Modern in Aachen, Germany 1970–1989

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Abstract:

In the 1970s and 1980s a certain kind of anonymous architecture emerged in West German cities of the former Bonn Republic which is currently confronted with the risk of demolition, stemming mainly from the lack of recognition and care. These buildings have played a significant role in shaping the character of today's typical West German cities, thus holding a crucial place in the identity of these urban and suburban areas. Therefore, this paper focuses on the concept of photography as a visual preservation method, using the city of Aachen as a representative example of an average-sized West German city. The objective is to enhance the appreciation of this neglected cultural heritage, both in terms of sustainable urban planning and potential inclusion in the canon of architectural history.

Keywords: mediatization, architecture, photography, film, socialist modernism

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This paper explores the concept of photography as a visual preservation method by taking the example of Aachen, an average middle-sized West-German City. Similar to numerous other major cities¹ situated in the territory of the former Bonn Republic, Aachen is characterized by a certain kind of anonymous architecture which emerged in West German cities in the 1970s and 1980s. Buildings from this era currently confront the risk of demolition, stemming from their lack of recognition, appreciation and lack of maintenance and care.² This is not only problematic regarding their underrated heritage value and a potential inclusion in the canon of architecture history but also in terms of sustainability. These buildings have played a significant role in shaping the character of today's typical West German cityscapes, thus holding a crucial place in the identity of these urban and suburban areas. Therefore, it is necessary to impart their architectural qualities and importance as part of the urban culture to the authorities, academics and a wider public.

This paper will focus on the possible contribution of photography in creating a heritage value and preserving underestimated urban architecture of the 1970s and 1980s in West German cities using the city of Aachen as a case study. To what extent is it possible to evaluate, promote and preserve these buildings through visual representation? And how can that affect a more sustainable way of future urban planning in West-Germany?

The research is based on a seminar which was initiated by the authors at the Faculty of Architecture at RWTH Aachen University and funded by the Federal Institute for Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development in the context of the *Zukunft Bau – Pop-up Campus* entitled "Save Material – Save the Planet" in Aachen. According to the title all projects were meant to contribute to sustainable building methods. The project, led by the authors and realized by master students in architecture, aimed to explore various buildings from the 1970s and 1980s in Aachen, particularly those at risk of demolition, and to develop critical approaches to preservation through photographic exploration.

The seminar consisted of a theoretical component conducted over the span of one semester and a one-week photography workshop. The theoretical part covered various topics, including media theory, art historical classification, the essentials of architectural photography, aesthetic

¹ In Germany cities with a population exceeding 100,000 inhabitants are classified as "Großstadt" (major city). cf. 'Statistiken zu den größten Städten in Deutschland', *Statista*, 30 August 2023, <https://de.statista.com/themen/8116/grossstaedte-in-deutschland/#topicOverview> (20.06.23).

² Andreas Cichowski, 'Die alten Zweckbauten haben ausgedient', *Aachener Zeitung*, 20 December 2021, https://www.aachener-zeitung.de/lokales/aachen/zweckbauten-auf-dem-campus-melaten-in-aachen-haben-ausgesorgt_aid-64712795 (20.06.23); Eckhard Heck, 'Ein Riese in der Krise— Schmuckstück Bushof', *Movie Aachen*, 2017, <https://movieaachen.de/ein-riese-in-der-krise-schmuckstueck-bushof/> (20.06.23); 'Bushof Aachen. Da Capo! Al Fine?', *Deutsche BauZeitschrift*, 2019, https://www.dbz.de/artikel/dbz_Bushof_Aachen_Da_capo_Al_fine_-3431662.html (20.06.23).

theory, the identification of objects for photography and various references. The workshop allowed students to refine their projects, enhance their photographic techniques, and explore the architectural character through extensive studies. Finally, the photographic series were shown in an exhibition. A catalog including both the architectural photographs and accompanying texts about the objects and their architectonic peculiarities complemented the exhibit.

Aachen and the 'Anonymous modern'

Aachen is a medium-sized city with a population of approximately 250,000, bordering Belgium and the Netherlands. Historically, Aachen was a significant centre during the Carolingian Empire, serving as a site of pilgrimage, a religious hub, and a coronation location. It stands out as a noteworthy example in European urban planning history. Despite substantial war-related destruction and subsequent impacts from city and traffic planning, the Roman city layout remains preserved in its core.³

To define and identify the architecture of the 'anonymous modern' it is necessary to take a closer look at Aachen's urban development after the Second World War.⁴ During the war, the city centre and 62% of the residences were destroyed. By 1955, post-war development efforts were underway, making up for building investments that were deferred due to economic challenges during the Depression and World War II. The city's settlements maintain a relatively compact layout, with a focus on linear orientation toward public transportation. Between 1960 and 1980, significant renewal and densification took place across all parts of the city. As recently as the 1970s, the city proposed a development plan for the main streets of the city centre. This plan included making the area more car-friendly by reconfiguring the rings and radials. In 1982, further expansion of settlement areas progressed.⁵

Starting point for the student project was the ongoing discussion around the Aachen bus station completed in 1973. (Fig. 01)

3 Gerhard Curdes, *Die Entwicklung des Aachener Stadtraumes: Der Einfluss von Leitbildern und Innovationen auf die Form der Stadt* (Dortmund: Dortmunder Vertrieb für Bau- und Planungsliteratur, 1999).

4 Helmut Kirsch, ed., *Straßen- Und Verkehrsgeschichte deutscher Städte nach 1945: Stuttgart – Aachen – Bayreuth* (Bonn: Kirschbaum, 1996); Anton Kurze, ed., *Aachen 1945–1970: 25 Jahre Baugeschehen* (Stuttgart: Bek Verlag, 1970).

5 Gerhard Curdes, *Teilräumliche Planung: Der Stand der Stadtteilplanung in der Bundesrepublik* (Köln: Deutscher Gemeindeverlag, 1980).



Once a signature project of urban planning and modern traffic policy it is now regarded as an eyesore in the heart of the city centre. The public debate whether to rebuilt or tear down the whole complex is massively heated-up by the reporting in the local press, where the building is described as 'ugly' and 'concrete block'.⁶

The buildings chosen by the students can be classified by three categories: The ones that were unwanted stated by the local press, like the bus station, the ones in discussion to be teared down because of their in-utility, like the former Police headquarter (Fig. 02) and the ones simply unseen, for example average housing estates, municipal administration, or sacred buildings. To identify those objects in the city, the participants strolled through the cityscape looking for a certain kind of buildings from the 1970s and 1980s defined by materials, like concrete and aluminium, and a specific use of forms and colours. The chosen buildings were described by the students as disregarded but somehow intriguing in their appearance. Most of them were in a neglected condition and in need of renovation. They all had in common that it was not much known about their building history and they were generally considered as disruptive elements

6 'Betonklotz Bushof droht die Abrissbirne.', *Aachener Zeitung*, 11 March 2011, <http://www.aachener-zeitung.de/lokales/aachen/beton-klotz-bushof-droht-die-abrissbirne-1.37> (20.06.23).

[Fig. 01]

Marie Becker, Dennis Sommer, "Peterstr. 21–25 – 52062 Aachen", 2022; RWTH Aachen University, Aachen.

in the city landscape, disregarded by the authorities, scholars and not least the mass media.⁷ Until now, neither a specific heritage value nor certain photographs of these buildings exist.⁸ Nevertheless, these buildings arouse a kind of familiar atmosphere of typical West-German post-war cityscapes in their entirety. Their run-down facades reminding of bygone promise of modern urban living.



⁷ Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA, USA: MIT Press, 1994).

⁸ Mark Cousins, 'The Ugly [Part 1]', *AA Files* 28 (1994): 61–64.

[Fig. 02]

Fiona Cordes, Georges Reiser, "Hubert Wien Str. 37. – 52070 Aachen", 2022; RWTH Aachen University, Aachen.

Attempts to characterize this kind of architecture in West-Germany and analyse their possible heritage value often focus on the period of the 1960s and 1970s.⁹ For example, the term 'grey architecture', used by Benedikt Boucsein, categorizes the anonymous everyday architecture of the 1950s and 1960s in West-Germany, but at the same time unites various architectural languages and cannot be easily attributed to a specific style.¹⁰

Regarding the history of urban planning in both parts of Germany before 1989 it seems reasonable to focus on the 1970s and 1980s, especially when it comes to differences in the appearance of cityscapes in East and West Germany. Before the construction of the Berlin wall in 1961 there was still hope for a reunited Germany and thus urban planning still connected, especially in Berlin where amongst others Hans Scharoun and Wils Ebert developed a plan for Greater Berlin (Groß-Berlin).¹¹ Around 1970 urban planners furthermore dismissed the idea of a car-friendly city and the suburban mass housing (Großsiedlung) as the ideal solution for housing shortage. The rethinking was amongst others caused by the sociocultural changes in the late 1960s.¹²

The architectural style emerging especially in the 1970s and 1980s is therefore still to be defined. The architectural historian Charles Jencks offers a possible definition of an architectural style practiced around the end of 'modernism' which to a certain extent can be referenced as a first attempt to define the West-German buildings of the 1970s and 1980s. Following Jenck's thesis 'modernity' ends with the demolition of the Pruitt-Igoe, built in 1954–1955 and demolished in 1972.¹³ Followed by a period, which lies between the end of modernism and the entry into postmodernism. This is particularly interesting to the extent that the so-called 'Late Modern' spans over a period of about twenty years, 1960–1980, during which the western German cities underwent a period of intense urbanization. As Jencks describes, modern housing typologies developed a character that deviated from the purism of the modern masters or exaggerated certain aspects. This contradiction between exaggeration and anonymity makes the stylistic designation 'late modernism' particularly difficult. Architectural styles develop at different times around the world and Jencks' definition applies to some extent to the architecture built

⁹ Alexandra Apfelbaum, Gudrun Escher, and Yasemin Utku, *Mit den Riesen auf Augenhöhe. Ein neuer Blick auf Großstrukturen der 1960er und 1970er*, 2016. <https://baukultur.nrw/projekte/mit-den-riesen-auf-augenhoehe/> (30.08.23).

¹⁰ Benedikt Boucsein, *Graue Architektur: Bauen im Westdeutschland der Nachkriegszeit* (Köln: Verlag Walter König, 2010).

¹¹ For different perspectives on rebuilding German cities after WW2 cf. Ulrich Conrads, *Die Städte Himmelloffen. Reden und Reflexionen über den Wiederaufbau des Untergegangenen und die Wiederkehr des Neuen Bauens 1948/49*, *Bauwelt Fundamente* 125 (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2003).

¹² Andreas Jüttemann, *Berlin (West) – Eine unwirkliche Stadt? Stadtautobahnen und Großsiedlungen in der Kritik (1954–1982)* (Berlin: vbb, Verlag für Berlin-Brandenburg, 2021).

¹³ Sabine Horlitz, 'The Case of Pruitt-Igoe: On the Demolition of the US Public Housing Complex in St. Louis, 1972', ed. Axel Sowa, *Candidate. Journal for Architectural Knowledge*, no.10, 2010.

in the 1970s and 1980s in West Germany as well. In his work *Late Modern*, published in 1980, he defines certain rhetorical features but also ideologies and design concepts to classify late modern architecture.¹⁴ According to Jencks, ideologies of the time were an unconscious style, pragmatic, expansive and late capitalist architecture, the suppressed artist and the architect who offers service, rather than representing a saviour or master. All of them a possible explanation for the fact that so little information is known about the architects and the style of that time. Selected appearance characteristics, which are more abstract than the symbolism of postmodernism, as specified by Jencks, are: technical perfection, extreme repetitions and articulation, structure and construction as ornament, and second machine age aesthetics as well as an emphasis on extreme logic, transport, mechanics, technology and construction. To a certain degree these characteristics are applicable to the anonymous modern, but at the same time, 1970s and 1980s West-German buildings are most likely too vague in representing these characteristics to make it into Jencks' illustrative selection.

Cultural heritage at risk

When analysing the reasons for the underestimation of these buildings in Aachen and exploring methods to illuminate their significance, next to the definition of a certain architectural style, several other aspects need to be taken into consideration. The aspect of maintenance and care plays an important role in increasing the heritage value of the anonymous modern.¹⁵ The buildings are not appreciated when they are in bad condition: faded colours and materials or the disappearance of the structure of the formwork on visible concrete. (Fig. 03)

When asked why architecture from the 1970s and 1980s is in general not very much appreciated, architecture critic Nikolaus Bernau states that these buildings have been in use for almost 50 years, but since then hardly any financial means have been invested into their maintenance. Therefore, especially municipal buildings are affected by a wave of demolition since the early 1990s. Dilapidated buildings are often cheaper to demolish than to renovate: "A mistake of the German financing methods, how to maintain buildings. The maintenance funds are always part of the operating funds and are therefore always in competition with the financing of exhibitions etc."¹⁶ Far too little has been and is invested in maintenance.

¹⁴ Charles Jencks, *Late-Modern Architecture and Other Essays* (New York: Rizzoli, 1980).

¹⁵ Jan Capol, 'Denkmalpflege für die Bauten der Boomjahre?', in *Bauten der Boomjahre, Paradoxien der Erhaltung*, ed. Uta Hassler, Catherine Dumont d'Ayot, and Institut für Denkmalpflege und Bauforschung ETH Zürich (Gollion: Édition in Folio, 2009).

¹⁶ Nikolaus Bernau, *Warum werden so viele Gebäude aus den 70ern Abgerissen?*, May 5, 2020, Interview with Deutschlandfunk: <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/endlich-mal-erklaert-warum-werden-so-viele-gebäude-aus-den-100.html> (27.03.2023). Translated by the authors.



Architect and urban designer Charlotte Malterre-Barthes argues in a similar way when she states: "... to excuse their demise, politicians and officials are quick to blame the natural aging process or factors such as rain, squatting, or vandalism. Such aspects may play a role, but so does the lack of public funding for maintenance, a disengagement epitomized by budget cuts, privatization, outsourcing of cleaning and repair services, and a general contempt for upkeep efforts", and "... in Western societies seeking to constantly create themselves anew, to maintain what exists is rather unpopular".¹⁷

¹⁷ Charlotte Malterre-Barthes, 'Maintenance as a Political Act', in *Everyday Matters: Contemporary Approaches to Architecture*, ed. Ciro Miguel and Vanessa Grossman (Berlin: Ruby Press, 2022), 193–203.

[Fig. 03]

Hannah Gobien, Jakob Polster, "Lagerhausstr. 20 – 52064 Aachen", 2022; RWTH Aachen University, Aachen.

Accordingly, 'caring' for architecture – in a literal sense as well as in a broader context – is a crucial factor when it comes to preservation. As stated above the first step is to arouse attention for a subject, but what is decisive when it comes to attracting the authorities, researchers and/or photographer's attention? Is it just a coincidence which buildings are chosen or are there certain circumstances that lead to a more intense engagement with certain buildings? In the following further open questions and ideas on the decisive circumstances are proposed.

Labelling – When referring to certain eras in architectural history the assignment of an architectural style and the labelling of an era is crucial. This phenomenon resembles indeed the process of creating a brand name. Labels like 'Italian Renaissance', 'Bauhaus' or 'Brutalism' are far more than academic terms. Apart from their scientific use and definition, they stand for a much wider, more popular characterization of architecture or a certain expectation or expertise that comes with that architecture. For example, the excessive use of the term Bauhaus is not only motivated by its original meaning or the true Bauhaus architecture – if that even exists – but because it comes with a certain connotation of an image that was created by Walter Gropius and others. Similar can be said on Brutalism. In 1954, the term was coined in Britain regarding the *beton brut* used for the mass production of large housing developments in urban suburbs as well as for sculptural buildings with extreme cantilevers and carved ornaments. Despite its controversial appearance, brutalism is nevertheless a renowned architectural style. Moreover, it is recently experiencing a renaissance photography was jointly responsible for. It indeed hasn't always been subject to extensive photographic documentation, even though one of the three concepts assigned to Brutalism by Reyner Banham is the "memorability as image" or "quality of being imageable".¹⁸ Especially the increasing interest in photographs of brutalist buildings on social media is remarkable.¹⁹ Buildings of the 1970s and 1980s are not attached to such a memorable label yet.

'Zeitgeist' – How far back in time does an era have to be in order to be appreciated? How significant is the current 'Zeitgeist'? From Gründerzeit buildings to modern architecture, architectural styles often experience a period of forgetting, neglecting and demolition before their heritage value is acknowledged again. As stated above, the anonymity of the 1970s and 1980s architecture can be attributed partly to the fact that architectural historians have not assigned an architectural style to them. Buildings of this period are listed under their date of origin but are not further placed in the context of a style period. Reference works on architectural styles conclude with Modernism, leaving little information about the history and architects of these structures. Consequently, they may not align with the current 'Zeitgeist'.

18 Claire Zimmerman, *Photographic Architecture in the Twentieth Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

19 Hamish Lonergan, Meme, Memory or Critic. Revaluing Brutalism on Social Media, in *Valuing Architecture. Heritage and the Economics of Culture*, ed. Ashley Paine, Susan Holden, John Macarthur (Amsterdam: Valiz, 2020) 208–224.

The architect's image – The anonymity of the intended buildings is enhanced by the anonymity of the architects and their missing image. Nowadays nobody would question the existence and preservation of a building that Ludwig Mies van der Rohe may have only briefly laid his hand on. Moreover, destroyed buildings like the Barcelona Pavilion or House Wolf are being rebuilt. Mies, Le Corbusier and many other iconic architects, contributed to their own myth, not least through the deliberate use of photography.²⁰

The photogenic – The technical development of photography favours the photographic representation of certain styles. Throughout history, the interaction between photography and architecture has led to a concentration on certain works and artists such as the modern architecture of 1920s and 1930s.²¹ But is there such a thing as photogenic architecture?²² If there is, this implicates, that also non-photogenic architecture exists. As from the 1920s architects knew their buildings would be photographed and were fully aware about the importance on photography in regard of self-marketing as well. Meanwhile, buildings from the 1970s and 1980s might still be associated with architects for whom self-promotion was not a priority.

Picturing the 'anonymous modern'

The chosen objects in Aachen, as described above, were photographically recorded and examined by the students from both documentary and aesthetic points of view. Photographs of the buildings were to be taken from various perspectives and prints were created, discussed and curated. This process aimed to train the participants' perception of the buildings and uncover their aesthetic qualities. It was preceded by intensive studies of the fundamentals of architecture and urban photography as a visual method to document, evaluate, promote or preserve architecture.²³

Projects like Ed Ruscha's *Some Los Angeles Apartments or Every Building on the Sunset Strip* as well as *Learning from Las Vegas* by Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown served as a starting point on the possibilities of exploring and explaining architecture by the means of photographic approaches.²⁴ Regarding the countless works and publications that aim to promote a certain architectural style or principles the focus was on the 1920s, a turning point in media history.

20 Nathalie Herschdorfer and Lada Umstätter, *Le Corbusier and the Power of Photography* (London: Thames & Hudson, 2012).

21 Robert Elwall, *Building with Light: An International History of Architectural Photography* (London: Merrell Publishers Limited, 2004).

22 Andreas Haus, 'Fotogene Architektur – Photogenic Architecture', *Daidalos* 66 (1997): 84–91.

23 A detailed analysis of the many different existing approaches would go beyond the scope of this paper. Cf. Rolf Sachsse, *Bild und Bau. Zur Nutzung technischer Medien beim Entwerfen von Architektur*. (Braunschweig/Wiesbaden: Vieweg Verlag, 1997); Zimmerman, *Photographic Architecture in the Twentieth Century*.

24 Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1972); Martino Stierli, *Las Vegas im Rückspiegel: Die Stadt in Theorie, Fotografie und Film*, *Architektonisches Wissen* (Zürich: gta Verlag, 2007); see also Robert Venturi, *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, The Museum of Modern Art Papers on Architecture (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977).

The function of architectural photography shifted from documentation in terms of monument preservation and historical studies to a tool for explaining and promoting modern architecture. Pioneers like Walter Gropius and Sigfried Giedion set the stage and many other architects, critics, and scholars followed until today.²⁵

In regard to activism towards preserving architecture, an important reference was the work of Richard Nickel, an architectural photographer and historic preservationist who worked in post-war Chicago from the 1950s to the 1970s. Nickel attempted to save the neglected or diminished buildings of architect Louis Sullivan from demolition, pioneering a new form of activist preservation photography.²⁶ The historian Sarah Rogers Morris argues that Nickel's work used the photographic medium to understand, represent, and revalue the work of Sullivan, while elevating the act of preservation as one of righteous heroism.²⁷

Of course, the work of Bernd and Hilla Becher was also discussed in the context of the seminar. The Bechers' intentions regarding the content or purpose of the pictures offer similarities but also slightly differentiate from the project in Aachen. Bernd and Hilla Becher started their work with the aim to document certain architectural types before they would be gone and used photography as a tool that gained advantage over drawings in terms of speed.²⁸ The Bechers were equally interested in the formal correspondences within groups of water towers or furnaces, as well as in the technical aspects, as evidenced by their numerous publications, especially from the early years.²⁹ The actual artwork wasn't photography but the concept of a series of typologies in accordance with the principles of Concept Art in the late 1960s. In contrast to today's preferred presentation of photography in museums their pictures were initially presented on unframed cardboards which strengthened the conceptual, documentary character.³⁰ It was not the Becher's objective to save the industrial architecture from demolition in the first place nor was it a priority for them to evaluate the architectural style or create a better image. Their approach was rather focused on exploring the sculptural qualities of the industrial sites and documenting them from a retrospective point of view than to provide perspectives as a cultural heritage in the future.

25 Walter Gropius, *Bauhausbauten Dessau*, Bauhausbücher 12 (München: Albert Langen Verlag, 1930); Sigfried Giedion, *Bauen in Frankreich. Bauen in Eisen, Bauen in Eisenbeton* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Biermann, 1928); Sigfried Giedion, *Space, Time and Architecture. The Growth of a New Tradition* (Cambridge, MA, USA: Harvard University Press, 1941).

26 Richard Cahan, *They All Fall down: Richard Nickel's Struggle to Save America's Architecture* (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1994).

27 Sarah Rogers Morris, 'Richard Nickel's Photography: Preserving Ornament in Architecture', *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 10, No.2 (Winter 2013): 67–80.

28 Hilla Becher, 'Klar waren wir Freaks', *Süddeutsche Zeitung Magazin*, 2008.

29 Bernhard und Hilla Becher, *Vergleiche technischer Konstruktionen*, (Aachen: Gegenverkehr. Zentrum für aktuelle Kunst (Exh.-Cat.), 1971).

30 Rolf Sachsse, Hilla und Bernhard Becher, *Silo für Kokskohle, Zeche Hannibal, Bochum-Hofstede, 1976. Das Anonyme und das Plastische der Industriephoto-graphie* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer Verlag, 1999).

Nevertheless, the students' works assembled some stylistic features made popular by the Bechers such as monochrome backgrounds, front views, flatness and one-point perspective. In contrast to the Bechers, all students in Aachen chose colour photography, a fact that was amongst others influenced by the bold use of colours in the buildings. (Fig. 04)



[Fig. 04]

Andre Mangad, Carlos Schrewe, "Sommerfeldstr. 18 - 52074 Aachen", 2022; RWTH Aachen University, Aachen.



Some of the series also referred to the Becher school at the Academy in Düsseldorf: For example, colourful detailed views that reminded of the work of Jörg Sasse, interiors reflecting the work of Candida Höfer, or the carefully composed facades by Thomas Ruff. (Fig. 05–06)

Thomas Struth's series *Unconscious Places* may also be mentioned as an example with an impact. The series Struth created in the 1970s and 1980s deals with at first sight commonplace urban settings in cities all over the world, documenting urban development sensitively and pictorially while allowing the viewer to discover these underrated places.³¹

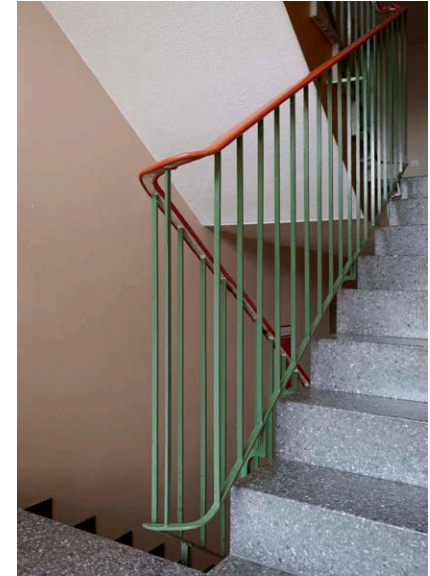
Beside the Becher school, other photographic projects focused on the anonymous architecture of the 1970s and 1980s in Europe. One example is the Swiss artists Peter Fischli and David Weiss, whose work focuses on the periphery of the Central European (especially Swiss) city, considering it a place where nature and architecture coexist harmoniously. In a collection of photographs titled *Siedlungen*, *Agglomeration* Fischli and Weiss show some glimpses of a suburb that remains anonymous and without a precise identity regarding its location.³² Fischli and Weiss take a closer look at other, non-human but nevertheless 'living' elements: trees, bushes, and lawns. Their assertion of value thus starts from the details of places.

31 Hugh Campbell, *Unconscious Places – Thomas Struth and the Architecture of the City*, 2014.

32 Peter Fischli and David Weiss, *Siedlungen, Agglomeration* (Zürich: Edition Patrick Frey : Kunsthalle Zürich, 1993).

[Fig. 05]

David Herrmann, Maya Keim, Wenzel Weikert, "Augustastr. 1 – 52070 Aachen", 2022; RWTH Aachen University, Aachen.



As a counterpart to the typical western urban scenes some East-German examples were discussed as well; amongst others an early project by Leipzig based photographer Matthias Hoch who pictured the underground stations of various East-German cities in 1988 and later documented the deconstruction of the famous Silver Tower in Frankfurt, built between 1975 and 1978.³³ And of course the work of Roman Bezjak who led the photography workshop in Aachen. In his work he takes a closer look at the dismissed and politically charged urban architecture of the former Soviet Union.³⁴

As a result of engaging with these different approaches, photography was employed as a visual tool for various purposes in the Aachen project: documenting the buildings that will be torn down in the nearby future, promoting the architecture of the 1970s and 1980s to prevent the demolition of further buildings emphasizing the importance of caring for these buildings, and evaluating the architectural style of the anonymous modern regarding its importance for the canon of architectural history.

33 Matthias Hoch, *Silver Tower* (Leipzig: Spector Books, 2013).

34 Roman Bezjak, *Roman Bezjak. Socialist Modernism*, ed. Inka Schube (Berlin: Hatje Cantz, 2011).

[Fig. 06]

Sophia-Franziska Bouveret, Teresa Schreier, "Königsbergerstr. 2–6 – 52078 Aachen", 2022; RWTH Aachen University, Aachen.

Promoting the 'anonymous modern'

Subsequently, the visual material produced by the students was intended to offer a new point of view on the buildings and the architectural style. The focus was on conveying visual-aesthetic arguments for the preservation and reutilization of the existing building stock. The buildings and their qualities were to be made visible while situating them within their urban context. The visual language is notably clear and analytical, though it adapts to each subject and specific context. Thus, the distinction between photography as an art form and photography for a practical purpose becomes less distinct. The photographs simultaneously serve as tools for architectural communication and, through their consistently applied visual style, blur the line into the realm of art.

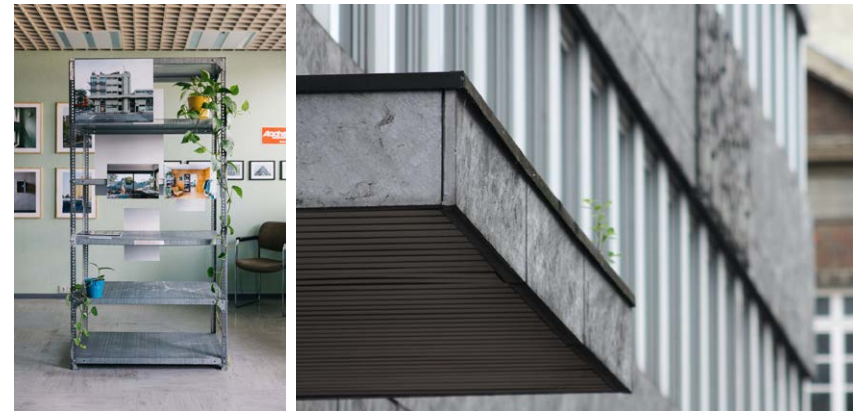
The individual photographic approach of the students was a result of the intensive work on the object, its history and above all the architectural qualities of the specific building. Corresponding to the heterogeneity of the objects, the series turned out very different. While some projects concentrated on the surroundings (Fig. 07) or the socio-political context, others broached the issue of the usage by the habitants or focused on the architectural stylistic form of the object in detail. In the end, each work provided a specific analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of the pictured architecture. But in order to make a difference in the perception of these buildings the material had to be made accessible to a wider public.



[Fig. 07]
Hannah Gobien, Jakob Polster, Lagerhausstr. 20 – 52064 Aachen, 2022; RWTH Aachen University, Aachen.

This leads to the aspect of the dissemination of photography, which takes place in almost every communication concerning architecture and in various media such as photobooks, architectural magazines, (online) magazines, journals, exhibitions and social media. The interrelation and interdependence of photography and its publication has always played an important role. As a reproducing mass media, photography functions as a substitution for the building itself and as an effective distributor.³⁵ Digital photography enables not only professional architectural photographers but also amateurs to disseminate their photographs. Today, digital photography is accessible to the mass, an effect that is comparable to the invention of the compact camera in the beginning of the 20th Century. Taking pictures is economic, fast, uncomplicated and the result can be shared online immediately.³⁶ It can therefore be argued that photography is a tool which makes architecture and objects visible on a large scale in a literal sense, partially enables an understanding of architecture and can indeed contribute to the appreciation of an architectural style.

Therefore, the results of the Aachen case study were shown in an exhibition that took place in a vacant office building from the early 1970s and was also documented photographically. (Fig. 08–09)



35 Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*; Birgit Schillak-Hammers, 'Das Bild vom Bauhaus. Zur Architektur als Massenmedium damals und heute', in *Die Sprache der Stadt. Architektur- und urbane Raumbilder zwischen Ästhetischer Subjektivierung und normalisierender Kommerzialisierung*, ed. Markus Baum (Leverkusen: Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2022), 77–94.

36 Felix Hoffmann, Kathrin Schöneegg, and C/O Berlin Foundation, eds., *Send Me an Image: From Postcards to Social Media* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2021).

[Fig. 08]
David Herrmann, Exhibition "Ugly Ducklings" at the Pop-up Campus, Theaterstraße 92–94, Aachen, 2022; RWTH Aachen University, Aachen.

[Fig. 09]
Anna Hensel, "Theaterstr. 92–94 – 52062 Aachen", 2022; RWTH Aachen University, Aachen.

The students were responsible for conceptualizing and executing the exhibition. This involved creating prints, selecting support materials, designing the exhibition architecture, and curating the objects. The exhibition was complemented by the catalogue featuring architectural photographs and explanatory texts about the photographic series.³⁷ The texts were written by the students, having a twofold aim: firstly, to research and provide background knowledge about the objects and the individuals responsible for their construction, and secondly, to describe the often-overlooked architectural merits of the buildings. The combination of pictures and text helped to generate compelling reasons for preserving each of the objects. Moreover, this approach allowed the project's results to be shared with a broader audience.

The received response from professionals as well as visitors of the exhibition was very positive. Every discussion in context with the exhibition, for example with researchers or representatives of the city such as the administration for building matters, led to an intensive discourse on the displayed architecture, its history and the urban context. Especially the highly controversial architecture of the bus station, once the first of its kind in West Germany, attracted the professionals' attention. This effect was increased enormously when the local press picked up the issue, so that it was made accessible to the local population.³⁸ The approach to raise awareness for the anonymous modern of the 1970s and 1980s in Aachen by using photography as a tool was thus achieved. The general perception for these buildings in the public space could be sharpened and a deepened debate about their preservation was initiated in the local context. Furthermore, the intense research led to the rediscovery of the once very reputable architect, Erwin Lynen, who was responsible for many building projects, mostly housing estates, in the 1970s and 1980s in Aachen but nowadays is almost forgotten. One of his buildings, pictured for the project, is now in debate to be listed for monument protection. (Fig. 10)

Research perspectives

Successful on a small level, the Aachen case study introduced the broader theoretical question that takes the discussion further than the local context it originated in: Can photography affect the preservation dynamics of controversial and underestimated buildings?

Assuming that the case study previously described can also be applied to other West German cities – especially the ones with a controversial aesthetic reputation like Saarbrücken, Kassel, Bochum or Bielefeld – a continuance of this research project in a larger scope and with the collaboration of different disciplines in consequence appears to be promising and necessary to answer the broader question.

³⁷ Birgit Schillak-Hammers and Leonie Bunte, eds., *Hässliche Entlein: Nachhaltigkeit als Problem der Ästhetik* (Aachen: RWTH Aachen, 2022).

³⁸ Birgit Franchy, 'Ausstellung „Hässliche Entlein“ – Architektur der 70er und 80er Jahre im Fokus', *Movie Aachen*, 3 September 2023, <https://movieaachen.de/ausstellung-haessliche-entlein-architektur-der-70er-und-80er-jahre-im-fokus/> (20.08.23); 'Pop-Up Campus und das Bauen Der Zukunft', *Aachener Zeitung*, 4 September 2022.



[Fig. 10]

David Herrmann, Maya Keim, Wenzel Weikert, "Augustastr. 1 – 52070 Aachen", 2022; RWTH Aachen University, Aachen.

Making architecture visible through photography and influencing its appreciation and preservation dynamics only works when the photo is published and simultaneously connected to a name and location, ideally accompanied by specific keywords related to the era. It does not function effectively without attribution, merely serving as a representation of anonymous architecture. At best, it can be successful in capturing and promoting an entire architectural style. In such cases, however, an analysis of individual buildings is necessary to establish their association with the style.

Defining the buildings as an important background buzz of the city, the anonymous modern contributed to shaping the often overlooked and highly underestimated urban image of West German cities. Therefore, it is of great importance to strengthen the argument by comparing characteristic cityscapes in West Germany in the 1970s and 1980s with those in East German cities. This comparison can help define the distinct urban atmosphere unique to these cities. With the potential loss of buildings from the 1970s and 1980s through demolition West German cities could lose their specific visual character and thus a part of their historical identity.

This paper can only provide first thoughts on the very complex subject which involves the fields of architectural theory, history of architecture, urban planning (history and perspectives), cultural heritage, photography and media studies. Next to further field studies in different cities it is essential to expand the theoretical framework, especially regarding other approaches to architectural photography as method to visualize arguments in the discourse of architectural theory and history.

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Ways of seeing architecture and landscape in the voids of presence. The case of a health resort on the Adriatic coast of Croatia

Jasna Galjer

Abstract:

The article examines the multi-layered roles of photography and film in "cultural translation," representing architecture and landscape as a mediated place of conflicting visions, meanings and experiences. Taking the concept of the "production of space" as a starting point, it aims to contextualise the mediatory practices of photography and film by means of analysing the case study of a multifunctional building – the Krvavica Children's Health Resort – designed in the 1960s by Rikard Marasović on the Adriatic coast of Croatia (formerly Yugoslavia). Focusing on an analysis of three paradigmatic examples of visual practices, the photographic series by Wolfgang Thaler (2011), the episode Mysterious Object in the Pine Forest filmed as part of the documentary series Slumbering Concrete (2016), and the experimental film A Record of Landscape without Prehistory by the artistic duo Doplgenger (2020), the article explores how photography and film communicate quality, in particular how mediated representations (re)create current interpretation and understanding of the intertwined heritage of modern architecture and landscape. Examining aspects of recording the site from different perspectives, a series of questions arise when addressing the issue of space, focused on its role in reshaping meanings, memories, emotions and experiences, narrating not only what architecture and landscape are but also what they could become and how they might be constituted in the context of different cultural identities.

Keywords: mediatisation, architecture, photography, film, socialist modernism

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Despite recent historiographic interest in the architecture of socialist modernism, attitudes towards the heritage of the period from 1945 to 1989 are still ambivalent. However, its negative portrayal as a relic of a repressive communist regime is gradually becoming mitigated by research that has shown a surprisingly high-level popular trend of constructing the narrative of socialist modernism as culturally dominant in the architecture of socialist Yugoslavia.¹

The project *Iconic Ruins? Post-war Socialist Architecture in the Visegrad Countries* confirms the premise that it is precisely the connection with the now defunct political system which plays a key role in examining contemporary attitudes towards architectural heritage and memory.² This is a particularly sensitive issue in the case of specific social roles assumed by architecture, where the disappearance of social conditions and original purpose brings into focus the ethical and cultural integrity of the variable and unstable relationship between architecture and the social environment. The presumptions that the modernity of socially engaged architecture is conditioned by political ideology and discovering the "absent present"³ of this modernity in the space "in-between" of what is culturally dominant in the East and the West are a constant of architectural historiography.⁴ This is confirmed by the prevalence of particular subjects and iconic architectural examples in media, from photography to exhibitions and experimental films.⁵ This article aims to conduct a comparative analysis of a selection of media strategies, thereby contributing to a better understanding of the heritage of modernism, which continues to be contested, in order to establish the critical decolonisation of its memory as a metaphor of the Balkans as the "Other". That current models need to be redefined is confirmed by the problematic nature of collective identity theses which use the example of the construct of the Balkans as the "Other".⁶

1 The timeframe of the "second", i.e. socialist Yugoslavia is most often given as the period from 1945 to 1992.

2 The exhibition is part of a multinational project titled *Shared Cities: Creative Momentum* – a European cultural platform addressing the contemporary urban challenges of European cities.

3 Victor Buchli, and Lucas Gavin, eds., *The Absent Present: Archaeologies of the Contemporary Past* (London: Routledge, 2001).

4 Ákos Moravánszky, and Judith Hopfengärtner, eds., *Re-Humanizing Architecture: New Forms of Community, 1950–1970* (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 2017); Ákos Moravánszky, and Judith Hopfengärtner, eds., *Re-Humanizing Architecture: New Forms of Community, 1950–1970* (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 2017); Ákos Moravánszky, and Karl R. Kögler, eds., *Re-Scaling the Environment: New Landscapes of Design, 1960–1980* (Basel: Birkhäuser Verlag, 2017).

5 Sanjin Pejčević, "Displaced Film Memories in the post-Yugoslav Context," *Contemporary Southeastern Europe* 4, no. 2 (2017): 89–101; 100.

6 Maria Todorova, *Imagining the Balkans* (New York–Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); Maria Todorova, and Zsuzsa Gille, eds., *Post-communist Nostalgia* (New York–Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010).

The article takes as its starting point Pierre Nora's premise that *lieux de mémoires* are places where history and memories conflict⁷ and goes on to analyse the processes and forms of the deconstruction, manipulation and transformation of their meaning. Particular attention will be paid to media presentation strategies, from nostalgia and melancholy for lost time to the critical redefinition of values, quality and meaning. This is because of specific purposes which are linked to the ideology of the former political system. Their cultural symbolism has still not become part of the value system of contemporary society, urban identity and heritage, as can be seen from a range of diverse purposes, from multifunctional buildings intended for adult education and cultural centres,⁸ industrial facilities that went under during the transition, to whole urbanistic complexes of exhibition pavilions (the Zagreb Fair). However, buildings that had a military purpose in the former system are most often subject to devastation. Because of their military function, they were rarely mentioned even in the architectural press, which is why they were not only unavailable but also unknown to the general public.⁹

Paradoxically, with the end of their original function in the 1990s, these architectural sites began to deteriorate, precisely when they had started to gain visibility and become more available to the public. The process of their discovery includes many contradictory and conflicting aspects of politicality (and politicisation) of the public sphere, which are both an expression and a reflection of a society in transition and are also evident in other post-socialist milieux. However, war in the early 1990s in Croatia, in which the Yugoslav National Army was the occupying force, was an additional burden with regard to subsequent attitudes towards architectural heritage from the socialist period. Instead of being re-evaluated, this type of architecture is still – three decades after Yugoslavia has ceased to exist – labeled as "dark", "difficult", "contested", "dissonant", and as "negative heritage". Boris Groys offers an illustrative explanation of this complex and contradictory state. He believes that in former socialist countries the strategy of erasing intellectual, emotional, cultural and political memories is constant.¹⁰ Groys analyses the relationship between public space and social and finds it paradoxical. He argues that the experience of socialist utopia became functional only when the socialist socio-political system had failed. He argues that "if one will the public space to be constituted as a space that, in its turn, can constitute the public – then one has to build this public space, e.g. to build the void, to

7 Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," *Representations*, Special Issue: Memory and CounterMemory 26 (Spring 1989): 7–24.

8 Jasna Galjer, and Sanja Lončar, eds., *The Caring State and Architecture: Sites of Education and Culture in Socialist Countries* (Zagreb: Hrvatsko etnološko društvo / Croatian Ethnological Society, 2021).

9 Former army halls, resorts and hotels include numerous valuable architectural gems which were handed over to local communities and state privatisation funds to be managed as part of the demilitarisation process after 1991. They were then subject to devastation and further decay.

10 Boris Groys, *Public space: From emptiness to paradox* (London–Moscow: Strelka Press, 2012). The author of this article would like to thank Professor Boris Groys for collegial assistance.

build the emptiness where the public can find its place: to let the void, the nothingness, the no-place, the U-Topia, enter the city." Public space is seen here not a construct within the public sphere, nor is it to be found in a void. It is, rather, the void of utopia within privatised spaces and spaces of public interest. Here, voids refer to imaginary vacuums, territories which acquire different meanings through exposure to the eye and spatial experience.

1. The void as metaphor

The former children's health resort of Kravica is used as a case study to examine the question of whether "voids" in contemporary political and social circumstances can assume a universal and/or universally understood meaning and how this meaning might impact the way we see imaginary and real voids in real space. The building dates back to the early 1960s and is specific due to its inventive structuralist approach to spatial design of multifunctional building; however, this example of unwanted heritage has a complex and contradictory status, and its fate hangs in the balance. It was designed in the period 1960–1962, completed in 1964, and it operated until the late 1980s as a health resort for military personnel children who suffered from pulmonary diseases.



[Fig. 1]

Children's Health Resort of Kravica, aerial view. Postcard, 1960s. Courtesy of Makarska Municipal Museum; Inv. No. S-675

Even though it is of high architectural quality, because of its military purpose, the building remained "invisible" and cannot even be found in cadastral plans. The complex was built on municipal land and during construction the army regulated the stream and access roads. The construction documents are kept in the archives of the military port of Lora in Split, which is part of the Ministry of the Interior of the Republic of Croatia. Following the departure of the Yugoslav National Army, its owner until 1991, the previously undamaged complex became a centre for refugees from various parts of Croatia affected by the war. In the early 2000s, it was taken over by the Government Asset Management Agency and instead of being revitalised and repurposed, total devastation followed. However, despite this, the building continues to inspire growing interest among architectural professionals, as well as members of the general public who are interested in profit opportunities.

Much like the status of this architectural site, the "absent present" can be said to characterise its author's entire opus. Very little information is available on the architect Rikard Marasović (1913–1987)¹¹ Perhaps the reason for this lies precisely in the fact that he played an important role in the urbanistic and conservation services of socialist Yugoslavia and participated in prominent restoration projects following 1945. His first experiences with design took place during his studies, at the Zagreb studio of Ernest Weissmann, an associate of Le Corbusier and a representative of the radical school of socially engaged architecture in Croatia in the 1930s.¹² He studied at technical faculties in Paris, Nancy and Berlin, and graduated in Zagreb in 1942. He taught at the Department of Urban Planning (1948–55) of the Technical Faculty of Zagreb, and designed health facilities, hotels and residential buildings. Even though his contemporaries had also noted the quality of his architectural design and recognised the sensitivity and clarity of his volumetric composition, Marasović's activity has remained marginalised in architectural historiography. It is, therefore, not unusual that in the atmosphere of nostalgia for the lost Arcadia of socialist humanism an aura of an "object of mystery" has been bestowed on the derelict health resort, which has thus once again been decontextualised from both a historical and a contemporary social framework. This architectural site is an unwanted metaphor of a time when in socialist Yugoslavia tourist facilities were built at the most attractive coastal locations so that they could be used by children, the ill and workers on holiday. The fact that this building was a product of social policies that afforded everyone a right to rest renders it additionally undesirable in circumstances of neoliberal commodification of spatial quality.

¹¹ Mladen Obad–Šitaroci, ed., *Sveučilište u Zagrebu–Arhitektonski fakultet, 1919./1920.–1999./2000. osamdeset godina izobrazbe arhitekata u Hrvatskoj* (Zagreb: Arhitektonski fakultet Sveučilišta u Zagrebu, 2000); Igor Skopin, "Rikard Marasović (1913–1987)," *Čovjek i prostor* 411, no. 6 (June 1987): 5.

¹² Tamara Bjažić–Klarin, *Ernest Weissmann: Društveno angažirana arhitektura 1926.–1939.* [Socially Engaged Architecture 1926–1939] (Zagreb: Hrvatska akademija znanosti i umjetnosti, 2015).

2. Synthesis of architecture and landscape: contested quality

The Kravica resort building is located at a juxtaposition of diametrically different configurations: at the foot of the rocky mountain range of Biokovo, in the midst of dense pine forest, and in close proximity to one of the most beautiful stretches of the eastern Adriatic coast. At the core of the central construction, which is on pillars, there is a ramp which creates a dynamic movement spiral. The ramp activates and draws together all spatial segments, opening up its core towards the ambience of the surrounding park. Such an innovative structure and unusual combination of a central building on pillars also allows wind to blow through, regardless of direction, as well as permits equal insolation of all parts of the building. At the same time, the scale of the building achieves harmony with the dynamic balance of heterogeneous ambient qualities (the sea, the vegetation and the rocky terrain) through the rhythmic form of roof planes of varying heights. Particular attention is devoted to combining materials, especially different types and treatments of stone, which lends the architecture a subtle vernacular. The ground floor is dominated by an L-shaped multi-purpose space which separates the circular inner yard from the park. This is where public functions converge: from a sitting room and canteen to a children's playroom and TV room;¹³ Multifunctionality is a consistent aspect of connecting spaces: the roof of the ground floor area is also a spacious terrace where children can spend time outdoors and which is accessible from all the rooms located along the perimeter of the top floor. Apart from the inner, shared terrace, each unit has its own terrace at the level of the canopy of trees in the surrounding park. Owing to this spatial organisation, each segment is double-sided, i.e. it is airy and exposed to the sun, while at the same time, it is protected from excess heat and exposure to wind. The integration of architecture and landscape is consistent at building level as well as in the details, while the expressiveness of construction is a subtle response to the specific function aimed at children. The surprise element of architecture in landscape is not merely an exercise in style, but the result of an intentional process based on the synthesis of a concept and context of architecture that is organically immersed in the landscape.

3. Architectural photography between reality and fiction

In the context of the recent mediatisation of socialist modernism heritage, architectural photography plays a key role. More than any other, this medium documents "objective" reality by manipulating images. This is why the methodological apparatus of "variantology of media" proposed by Siegfried Zielinski is better suited to investigating the media space of architectural

photography. Instead of historiographical models which reduce research to the dimension of material culture of historical remains, the focus is on discovering media as "spaces of action for constructed attempts to connect what is separated."¹⁴

Photographs are often reduced to instruments of aestheticisation of architectural ideology, which no longer poses a threat and becomes a source of enjoyable visual effects. Richly illustrated photography monographs testify to a trend of portraying this type of architecture as "secondary", thoroughly failing to contribute to the critical examination of the historical and cultural heritage of the socialist modernism project. A significant example of this kind of mediatisation is the exhibition and monograph titled *Socialist Modernism* (2011), which portrays the "dirty magic of socialist architecture" through the photographs of Roman Bezjak.¹⁵

In addition to the example above, a series of photographs by Wolfgang Thaler (2011) aim to reconfigure documentation and photographic fiction, revealing the transformation of the site and the environment from the early 1960s to the contemporary period.¹⁶



14 Siegfried Zielinski, *Deep Time of the Media: Toward an Archaeology of Hearing and Seeing by Technical Means* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006), 7.

15 Roman Bezjak (born 1962), a German photographer of Slovene origin who made a name for himself in the early 2000s doing reportage photography.

16 Wolfgang Thaler (born 1969), an Austrian photographer whose oeuvre is centred on architectural photography.

[Fig. 2.1]

Children's Health Resort of Kravica. Photo: Wolfgang Thaler, 2011.
Courtesy of Wolfgang Thaler

13 The 60s in Yugoslavia saw the increased influence of television as a medium. Because many families could not afford a television set, watching TV in public spaces such as community halls and workers' universities constituted a social event.

These photographs evoke but also critically interpret former utopian projections of socialism with a “human face” to contrast these, without idealising them, with complete negation and deconstruction. The photographs retain their documentary role but their function is to reveal the processual nature of architecture, cities and landscapes that have been destroyed, while their remains testify to the non-existence of stable categories of the meaning of space.¹⁷

It was with the exhibition titled *Unfinished Modernisations: Reconstructing the Architectural History of Socialist Yugoslavia*, followed by the publication of the book *Unfinished Modernizations: Between Utopia and Pragmatism* (2012), that the process of constructing the narrative of Yugoslav architectural modernism began. However, despite the critical stance towards exploiting “Cold War Modernism”, the issue of what was specifically “Yugoslav” and how it was different from other socialist modernisms remains unresolved. Analogous to this, the publication titled *Modernism In-Between: The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia*¹⁸ which also makes use of Wolfgang Thaler’s photography, focuses on the concepts of interspace and liminality within the geopolitical and cultural framework of Yugoslav space.

A paradigmatic example of the use of this conceptual framework is in the mediation of the Kravica health resort architecture. Thaler’s photographs were taken at a time when the complex was still virtually unknown to the wider public, and by appropriating a serial concept they incorporate a focused critical view of visual facts. While Bezjak examines the similarities between architectural typologies in former socialist countries, Thaler’s flâneur-like investigation focuses on discovering the ideological and social constructs of architecture. It is significant that the photographs mostly show spaces devoid of people. Yet, unlike the highly aestheticised architectural photographs in architectural journals, visual representation explicitly evokes the melancholy of ruins which serve as a reminder of the failed project of a socialist society.

Focusing on the beauty of the ugly,¹⁹ Thaler’s photographs of the abandoned Kravica health resort also frame visual representation of “ordinary” panorama views as site-specific interventions, emphasizing instability and temporariness. Low-angle shots are particularly impressive as they foreground a wealth of colour-rich detail which can only be seen from up close. Repeated sequences and varying motifs indicate an experience of movement and view which is similar to a *tableau vivant*. Graffiti, bits of broken furnishings strewn about, shattered panes of glass, discarded waste and other traces of decay provide a hyperrealistic framework for the void of space.

17 Maroje Mrduljaš and Vladimir Kulić, “Scenes from an Unfinished Modernisation,” in *Hintergrund 54: 19th Vienna Architecture Congress: Soviet Modernism 1955–1991. Unknown Stories* (Wien: Architekturzentrum, 2012), 66–77.

18 Maroje Mrduljaš, Vladimir Kulić and Wolfgang Thaler, eds., *Modernism In-between: The Mediatory Architectures of Socialist Yugoslavia* (Berlin: Jovis, 2012).

19 Till Briegleb, “The Dirty Magic of Failure,” in *Roman Bezjak: Socialist Modernism*, ed. Inka Schube (Ostfildern bei Stuttgart: Hatje Cantz, 2011), 144–147.



[Fig. 2.2–2.3]

Children’s Health Resort of Kravica. Photo: Wolfgang Thaler, 2011.
Courtesy of Wolfgang Thaler

This void is coded by the failure of the utopian project of the past and the dystopian void of the present;²⁰ however, Thaler's photographs of Kravica are equally focused on the materiality of architecture and landscape. Particular emphasis is placed on the presence of stone, from natural rocks to sculpted blocks. These haptic qualities show that it is impossible to be separated from both the natural environment and emotional experience, which confirms theories that it is not enough to simply view architecture. It is only through feeling it that the opportunity for a complete experience presents itself.²¹ The fact that the theoretical precepts of Christian Norberg-Schulz regarding the phenomenology of space were very influential in Yugoslavia at the time when this architecture originated, presents us with the additional opportunity to interpret the Kravica complex in terms of an intention to reshape the relationship between architecture and landscape.

4. Slumbering Concrete as the instrument of a visual turn: from documentarism to socially engaged criticism

In addition to its documentary appeal, the television series *Slumbering Concrete* (2016–2019), which examines the modernist architecture of socialist Yugoslavia, is intriguing because of its critical approach to the investigation of change and loss of collective and personal memory as a result of radical social change.²² Another important fact to consider is the impact of the national broadcasting company, which broadcast the series, on shaping local public opinion. The series was modelled on earlier media projects under the common title of *Unfinished Modernisations*,²³ and was planned as a series of distinct thematic units, two of which have been realised so far. The first one deals with tourist architecture, the second with memorial and commemorative heritage, while the third and fourth, whose preparation is under way, will take a closer look at post-industrial and post-military complexes and the ambitions of modernisation projects respectively. The central theme of the series is an attempt to introduce the architecture of socialist modernism within the atmosphere of its utopian ambitions and controversial destinies.

20 An inspiring interpretation of dystopian voids was offered by the exhibition titled *Voids of Presence. Between past and future*. Berlin, 2021.

21 Erik Wegerhoff, "Neue Sinnlichkeit. Postcritical Issues Regarding an Architecture of Sensuousness," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 13, no. 2 (2016): 119–137.

22 Direction: Saša Ban, the script by Saša Ban, Maroje Mrduljaš, Nevenka Sablić, Produced by HRT (Croatian Radio Television). The series was awarded the Neven Šegvić Award for critical, scientific–research and theoretical achievement by the Association of Croatian Architects for 2016.

23 After Maribor (Slovenia) the exhibition was held in Belgrade (Serbia) and Zadar (Croatia). For information on other activities, see footnotes 20 and 21.

A series of examples of modernist architecture of the 1960s and 1970s represent specific contributions of architecture to social modernisation processes, with an emphasis on social roles in democratisation, emancipation and the emergence of new qualities of everyday life. The series lays bare the fact that even though this architecture has been declared cultural heritage on paper, it is actually unwanted heritage and a symptom of social, political and economic inability to establish a new value system which would enable its revitalisation. Much like the concept of the series of photographs by Wolfgang Thaler, the episode *Mysterious Object in the Pine Forest* (2016), which is dedicated to the Kravica health resort, only appears to be documentary in character.



[Fig. 3.1]

Film still from the episode *Mysterious Object in the Pine Forest*, third part of the documentary series *Slumbering Concrete*, 2016. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czHx0IHVUGo/> Courtesy of Hulahop

The introduction to the film narrative begins with the sentence, "deserted and forgotten, these derelict spaces which are slowly being taken over by nature, appear to be remnants of an ancient, vanished civilization." The meaning of these bleak words is at complete odds with the beauty of the architecture and the Mediterranean landscape, which, as the camera moves in, transforms from a bucolic Arcadia to scenes of apocalyptic dereliction. However, a closer look at the derelict space and crumbling furnishings shows a different reality, that of a perfectly designed space and a dangerous, hellish location.



[Fig. 3.2]
Film still from the episode *Mysterious Object in the Pine Forest*, third part of the documentary series *Slumbering Concrete*, 2016.
Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czHx0IHVUGo/> Courtesy of Hulahop

[Fig. 3.3]
Film still from the episode *Mysterious Object in the Pine Forest*, third part of the documentary series *Slumbering Concrete*, 2016.
Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=czHx0IHVUGo/> Courtesy of Hulahop

The architecture that was built during the boom of tourism-related construction in socialist Yugoslavia has indeed been left to decay, but it is by no means forgotten. The episode shows this by documenting the conflict of interest of various actors in current social and political life. Representatives of activist, bottom-up initiatives are trying to mobilise the public in order to influence political centres of power, advocating for the protection of architecture that would, as part of its new function, like a multifunctional contemporary arts centre, gain a new social role of generating cultural production. They are opposed by those who support the idea of repurposing the complex for elite tourism, while the most radical voices believe that the existing building should be torn down so that the attractive location might be better used for tourism purposes. The connection with the photographs of Wolfgang Thaler lies in the emotions behind these actors' attitudes. While some narrators evoke personal memories of idyllic scenes and the joy of living, others see only ugly remnants of concrete. The alternating rhythm of scenes showing opposing views on the environment in which the actors have been filmed, brings to mind a fictional dialogue which lends the film narrative a dimension of direct experience, which turns viewers into participants, an effect which is heightened by the soundscape. The background sounds of cicadas, the sea and the wind occasionally take on the role of the voice of nature. The result is a complete film environment, which convincingly argues the ideology-independent fact that in the 1960s tourist infrastructure intended for the use of children was built in some of the most attractive spots along the coast.

This architecture was an integral part of a social policy according to which everyone had an equal right to a vacation – something that no longer exists in post-socialism. From a historical and narrative distance, *Slumbering Concrete* uses the example of the erstwhile children's health resort of Krvavica to render an almost hyperrealistic picture of the ambience of a lost ideal in a natural landscape. It is precisely in this dimension of a synthesis of spatial relations and communication codes of architecture in space, the portrayal of the dynamism of the relationship between the world of children and that of adults, that this film differs most from static scenes which are characteristic of the medium of photography.

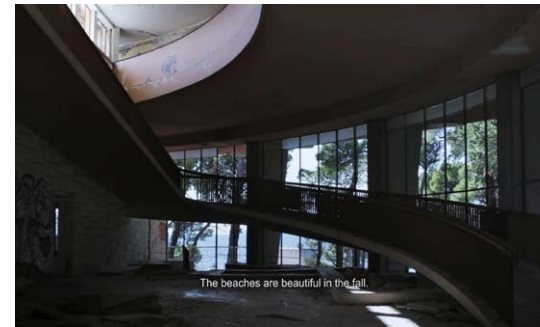
5. Towards a deconstruction of media space

In comparison with the deliberate pseudo-documentary narrative of the television series *Slumbering Concrete*, the experimental film by the Doplgenger duo (Isidora Ilić and Boško Prostran) titled *A Record of Landscape Without Prehistory* portrays the derelict former health resort of Krvavica as a site of conceptualisation and intertwining of significantly more complex meanings. Appropriating the genre poetics of a visual essay, the film engages in the deconstruction of the linear flow of time, the meaning of the speech act and, eventually, the materiality of film as a medium. The title of the film is a quotation from the eponymous poem by Oskar Davičo (1909–1989), a protagonist of the surrealist and revolutionary movement in Yugoslavia.²⁴ Aware that he was irrevocably losing his powers of comprehension and expression due to aphasia, Davičo attempted to note down unconnected sets of words, thus hoping to preserve at least some traces of their meaning. Paradoxically, these mental images reflect the automatic nature of the stream of consciousness which is related to the surrealist poetics from the author's early work.

The film comprises two frames: a view of the hall, the ramp in the former children's health resort, and a view of the sea from the top floor where the children's bedrooms used to be. The circular form of the architectural object is analogous to the cyclical repetition of text and image, which is further reduced and fragmented with each cycle, reminiscent of memory loss. Against the constant backdrop of cicadas, seagulls and sounds of waves lapping against the shore,²⁵ a female voice intones the words on a postcard once sent from the health resort. However, the seemingly dull intonation, content and images are contradictory, reminiscent of the poetics of the ready-made. We are told the beaches are beautiful in the fall. They are empty and appear to be on the edge of the world. Then the atmosphere grows more apprehensive: before the war... which war? We are walking on the ruins of another time. They stare at us like skulls.

24 Oskar Davičo, *Kairos-Snimci* (Beograd-Sarajevo: Prosveta-Svijetlost, 1969), 157.

25 By chance, the soundscape in this segment coincides with the Krvavica episode of the *Slumbering Concrete* series.



[Fig.4.1– Fig.4.3]

Art collective Doplgenger, series of stills from the film *A Record of Landscape without Prehistory*. Video, 2020. Series of frames. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://www.doplgenger.org/a-record-of-landscape-without-prehistory/> Courtesy of Doplgenger



There is no more.

These surviving concrete constructions are reminiscent of landscapes of ruins in 17th-century paintings; they are linked by an odd attempt to mediate between history and nature. As the narrative progresses, impressions and memories grow further intertwined, while the linear flow of time and the meanings of words and images become more fractal-like. At the same time, visual representation disintegrates.

Colour plays a key role in the disintegration process and gradually loses its signifier function, growing more abstract as the images are modified by overexposure. Eventually, it ends in a blue that engulfs the screen. The intensity of the blue and the symbolic significance of the void is reminiscent of the eponymous film by Derek Jarman (1993) as well as the universally understood visual language of the blue of Yves Klein. The monochrome image on the screen is equivalent to the final sentence of the postcard: it is different on the beach – there is no more history. Because sound and image are manipulated, it is unclear if the voice and images

[Fig.4.4– Fig.4.5]

Art collective Doplgenger, series of stills from the film *A Record of Landscape without Prehistory*. Video, 2020. Series of frames. Accessed March 15, 2023. <https://www.doplgenger.org/a-record-of-landscape-without-prehistory/> Courtesy of Doplgenger



belong to the past or the future, but the melancholy that surrounds them suggest that the loss of memory is in fact a symbol of final decay. As the authors Doplgenger say, "the aim is to deconstruct narratives that serve as a template for our memories, in order to question the present as a consequence of these past processes, the decisions and identities which were constructed that way and which participated in the construction of these narratives." Referring to the interpretation of the contemporary ruin offered by the Chilean theorist Cristián Gómez Moya²⁶ they transform the *locus* of Krvavica into a metaphor of the past, linked to the failure of the socialist project and the traumatic period of the 1990s. The cathartic visualisation of the process of forgetting confirms the premise that in this intentional, programmed forgetting it is the media that play a decisive role. In this case, the media (analogue, magnetic and digital) are modified by the editing of "media fragments" which formerly used to shape collective memory, only to become, in post-socialist reality, ideologically programmed symptoms of unwanted memory – a history whose future was taken away.

26 Cristián Gómez Moya, *Ruins* 2011 (March 15, 2023), <http://monumenttotransformation.org/atlas-of-transformation/html/r/ruins/ruins-cristian-gomez-moya.html>

Conclusion

The selected examples of visual representation demonstrate the double-sidedness of persuasive power in mediating the quality and meaning of architecture vs. the lack of impact in public space. Case studies affirming contextual perspectives, or compelling experimental models of re-interpreting architectural ideas in photography and film, are much more adjustable to reality than constructing narratives, such as the exhibition *Towards a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia 1948–1980*, held in MOMA in 2018.²⁷ When rethinking the meaning of this particular building, the question is: why is it still there, surrounded by other "iconic ruins", remaining in this landscape as voids of liminality?

The example of mediatizing architecture is used in the paper to examine a range of approaches, actors and means involved in the construction of the socialist modernism narrative. A comparative analysis of the concepts and performative strategies of media presentations of architecture in an artificial and natural landscape examines the sustainability of the fundamental categories of architectural culture.

The selected examples in which photography and film take on a key role in mediatizing architecture and landscape are based on a theoretical and conceptual framework of socialist modernism as a social formation which has realised authentic values in the time of modernity. Regardless of the media format, ranging from a photograph as a code of visual representation and a photographic series as a separate context, to a documentary and finally an experimental film, these media are interlinked insofar as they document the decay and disintegration of architecture in landscape. However, this is not the static, fixed view of an uninterested observer; it is, rather, a subjective view, a dynamic and fluid process of constructing meaning which draws the observer inside. The photographic records of Wolfgang Thaler, the episode of the documentary *Slumbering Concrete* and the experimental film *A Record of Landscape Without Prehistory* – these are consequently only possible to understand within the context of the deconstruction of expression, from visual scenes rich in detail to the monochrome silence of blueness. This deconstruction of visual portrayal is analogous with the disintegration of the system of former values, ranging from the loss of the social role of architecture, the destroyed beauty of architecture merged with the landscape, to the erasing of memories of personal experience of places. The following question remains:

can qualities of architectural culture, contested as a result of socio-political circumstances like the Kravica health resort, survive a (post-)transitional setting? Failures that have so far been the result of attempts to secure this heritage a meaningful existence suggest that the "victory of modernism" as a cultural paradigm is definitely at risk.²⁸ Strategies which rely on photography and film to mediate architecture enhance the opportunities to act, while critical reflection on the topic still presents the greatest challenge.

²⁷ Martino Stierli and Vladimir Kulić, eds., *Toward a Concrete Utopia: Architecture in Yugoslavia 1948–1980* (New York: MOMA, 2018).

²⁸ Tomislav Premerl, "Pobjeda moderne," *Arhitektura* 30, no.156–157 (1976): 41–54.

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Other Interpretations on Tower H

Julia Maria Fabbriani

Abstract:

The essay 'Other Interpretations on Tower H' is the result of a keen interest in exploring the multiple interpretative possibilities concerning a specific abandoned residential building in Rio's Barra da Tijuca district. Tower H was part of modernist architect Oscar Niemeyer's 'Centro da Barra' project (1969), developed in this up-and-coming neighbourhood at that time. The research for this text began in 2021, while the tower was under structural inspection. As a result of it, I identified 'ambiguous' and 'open' aspects of the building that relate to Ignasi de Solà-Morales' terrain vague concept. The recent demolition of the tower's sealing surface and the subsequent excavation of a landfilled area next to the tower have changed the city's perception and memory fluxes of the building: from the past to the present; from closed to exposed interiors; from covered to excavated landfilled sand that was buried since the tower construction. All of this brings back memories of the neighbourhood's landscape not only during the presence of this imposing building but also prior to its existence. A photographic experiment promoted a tactical experience inside this enigmatic architectural object. Additionally, it analysed displacement operations from the last two years, allowing new interpretations on this landmark.

Keywords: Architecture; Camera obscura; Terrain vague; Photography; Art Installation.

Julia Maria Fabbriani is an architect, urbanist and artist from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, having graduated from PUC-Rio in July 2022. Her work follows the intersections between the urban landscape and its use by singular and multiple bodies. It comes from a desire to research and partially disclose the mysterious and strange manifestations that are seen in contemporary cities. She is curious about revelations and enclosings and how architecture can affect individuals' perceptions on different scales. Julia has been researching and applying bodily-sized objects, from sound sculptures to video installations, to investigate how interactive architecture can amplify our critical perception of the city and its relations.

Introduction

The essay "Other Interpretations on Tower H" is the result of a keen interest in exploring the multiple interpretive possibilities concerning this tower, which is part of Oscar Niemeyer's 1969 "Centro da Barra" project. In its current state, Tower H has the ambiguity and openness characteristic of the *terrain vague* (Solà-Morales 1996). The research and reasoning on possible scenarios for the tower produced an installation that aimed to capture the architectural object's singularity and ephemerality at this given moment.

A new sensibility is built upon three main sources: Ignasi de Solà-Morales's text *Terrain Vague*¹ as the principal conceptual reference; Walter Benjamin's essay *Short Story of Photography*² regarding the photography of city ruins; and Richard Scoffier's article *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Contemporary Architecture*³, exploring the concept of *happening* from the optics of the *terrain vague*. Using these readings, this multimedia essay was developed to map the potentials of the tower in its present state.

Aiming to preserve the tower's potential emptiness, the existent paradigms and displacements gave way to an ephemeral installation. In parallel, an 'inside out' narrative was created, proposing a reflection as the result of an *in loco* experience. Tower H, at the present hour, reveals itself as a massive and exposed structure that can be seen either as in construction or in demolition. Without its sealing surface, it reminds us both of the time of its construction and of its decay. The facade ceases to communicate any functionality, and the tower turns itself into an abstract object, open to multiple interpretations or inquisitions.

Approach

Towers A, H and G belong to what was once designated as Barra Centre. The 1969 project developed by Brazilian architect and urbanist Oscar Niemeyer aspired to be a modern, different city from the one that we have become familiar with. His project anticipated the construction of a total of 72 cylindrical corporate and residential towers. This 'city of dreams' as it was named in many newspaper ads was never completed therefore it represents an utopia, far distant from today's reality. The 3 existing towers provide a glimpse to what the Barra da Tijuca neighbourhood could have become; they are a memory of a dream that was never materialised.

1 "Terrain Vague / Ignasi de Solà-Morales", 1995, accessed November 12, 2021: <http://www.archdaily.com.br/35561/terrain-vague-ignasi-de-sola-morales>.

2 Walter Benjamin, "Short Story of Photography", 1931. Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://www.artforum.com/print/197702/walter-benjamin-s-short-history-of-photography-36010#:~:text=Published%20by%20Camille%20Recht%2C%20Paris%20and%20Leipzig%2C%201931>.

3 Richard Scoffier, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Contemporary Architecture* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2009).

Oscar Niemeyer's Barra Centre project inspired Urbanist Lúcio Costa's Pilot Plan for the design of the neighbourhood. In this plan, both architects imagined Barra da Tijuca as a sort of paradise away from the grittiness of the city, with quality low-cost apartments surrounded by landscaped gardens near the coastline area. Niemeyer's Conceptual Plan aimed for a low-density land occupation to allow the same ample, unobstructed vistas and high ventilation for all the towers.

Today, 50 years after the beginning of their construction, towers A and H form an enigmatic pair within the urban landscape of Barra da Tijuca neighbourhood. Tower H has been abandoned since 1984 and to this day remains unoccupied. It seems to be a ghostly structure located in the middle of other edifices that were constructed around it within the last few decades. Its exposed, large structure could be perceived as in construction or as in deconstruction, or even could be seen as a contemporary ruin.

Tower A was completed in 1990 and it presents a facade with masonry shutters including small hexagonal openings. In turn, Tower H had exactly the same shutters for several years but in the last years its facade displayed a state of abandonment, with many absent window frames and broken glasses. Coupled with the removal of its sealing surface within the last 2 years, a hidden depth has been revealed. This open structure, without any type of shutters, has become exposed once again and as a result, it establishes a new dialogue with the city. Now Tower H can be considered as an immense neutral object which does not express any idea of functionality or symbolism. Its open structure evokes a type of ambiguity revealing an enormous potential lying asleep.

Tower H can also be interpreted as a shadow, the extreme opposite of its twin, Tower A. The dialog between them brings out a ghostly atmosphere which refers to meanings such as mirroring and 'enigma of the double'. While one tower represents order and functionality, the other is an undefined space, a vague body outside of the urban economy and dynamic. Tower H finds itself inside the city however it is away from the real estate dynamic. There is some sort of tension over it. A dormant potential lies over this unused space.

The current scenario is ephemeral, and it is in the threat of a radical transformation that myths and mysteries are born. The actual moment is instigating because it seems to evoke the entire historical time in the present. The ruined Tower H is a reminiscence of Jorge Luis Borges' *Circular Ruins*⁴ tale. His essay tells the journey of an outsider who looks for the sacred space of a ruin to dream. This sorcerer aims for the ruin, where the accumulated temporal load is dense, to enter in a kind of inventive transcendent dream. The emptiness of the temple can be compared to the empty skeleton of Tower H, which presents itself as an imaginary space, a place of eternal afterlife.

4 Jorge Luis Borges, *As Ruínas Circulares* (Buenos Aires: SUR, v. 75, 1940).

Firstly, the architectural object was identified as a building explicitly revealing its insides. The present state of exposure provokes questions about its history, of what it once was and how it would be perceived in the future. Here, Tower H is understood as a phantom enigma in relation to its visibility, presence, appearance and also as a counterpoint to its twin tower, presently occupied. Whichever occupation, attribution or modification of its physical space and character could suppress its condition of vagueness, indefiniteness, openness and freedom of being. The ambiguous, fluid self-image could not be fixated or crystallised by a single reading.

In the 1996 *Terrain Vague* published excerpt in the XIX UIA (Architects International Union) catalogue, Ignasi de Sola-Morales develops the *terrain vague* concept identifying the potential of undefined empty spaces. The Architect investigates alternatives to the predetermined forms in which the field of architecture defines vacant terrains in cities, with the objective of helping to preserve these spaces. Although generally associated with empty spaces, the *terrain vague* concept is attributed to an architectural object in the scope of this essay. The identification of Tower H as a *terrain vague* creates an instigating challenge. How to act inside the boundaries of an open, empty space without destroying the existing forces contained within the limits of its emptiness?

Ephemeral installation

The *experiment* at Tower H emerges from a wish to translate the ephemerality of the present moment through photography. The proposed creation of a camera obscura in a specific location inside the building was an action based on Richard Scoffier's concept of *happening*⁵ that aimed to amplify the perspectives of this indeterminate space.

A *happening* is an ephemeral gesture that cannot be reproduced. This action was proposed as an invitation for an in-depth examination of Tower H's peculiarities, without leaving any marks. It could be seen as if the inside surfaces of the building were used as a mirror, depicting the images without being altered by the *happening*.

⁵ Richard Scoffier, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Contemporary Architecture* (Paris: Éditions Norma, 2009).

[Fig. 1]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Camera Obscura"

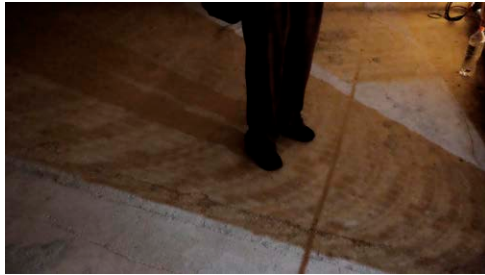


The ephemeral installation translated the fleetingness aspect of the *terrain vague*, which can become undone at any sudden moment. According to architect Beatriz Colomina on her essay about Dan Graham's body of work, a distinct sensibility is achieved in the ephemerality of the pavilion:

The maximum strength of the pavilion is the possibility that it will disappear as abruptly as it appeared, reorganising ambitions and creating new connections between what were once utopic fantasies and are now plausibly constructed realities. The true signal that a building is a pavilion is that it goes, flies away or at least promises to do so. The encounter with an object that is about to disappear is fundamentally different. The thought that you may not be able to come back to it turns the experience of being in that space indescribable, even romantic. The conventional understating is challenged. Afterwards, what happened becomes strangely obscure, and it is this lack of clarity that opens new horizons of interpretation.⁶

For the intervention we selected unit 611 at Tower H taking into consideration its frontal relation to Tower A and Avenida das Americas, and the images that these elements could generate once they were projected inside the building.

⁶ Beatriz Colomina, *Beyond Pavilions: Architecture as a Machine to See, Dan Graham: Beyond* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2009).



As a result of this interference, unit 611 could no longer be branded as a generic module. The framework of a camera obscura is similar to the capturing of a photographic image through the use of a regular camera. The frame reduces the amount of external information and promotes other readings, fictional or not, with a mediated image⁷. Like a large scale camera, the device projects an outdoor urban landscape inside the unit. This outside image exposed in the building insides creates new conditions to be explored virtually and temporarily. These are new forms for the body to experiment with the constructed as well as the imaginary spaces.

Projected over the floor, walls and roof of the camera obscura was the inverted image of Tower A, as a ghost revealing itself inside another ghost. The image of the inhabited tower seems to symbolise a promise that the unfinished Tower H will become, or what it could have become thirty (30) years ago. It seems that Tower H is embodying its twin, the two towers merging into a single one, completely filling the camera obscura.

7 Walter Benjamin, "Short Story of Photography", 1931. Accessed October 6, 2022. <https://www.artforum.com/print/197702/walter-benjamin-s-short-history-of-photography-36010#:~:text=Published%20by%20Camille%20Recht%2C%20Paris%20and%20Leipzig%2C%201931>.

[Fig. 2]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Camera Obscura 2"

[Fig. 3]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Camera Obscura 3"



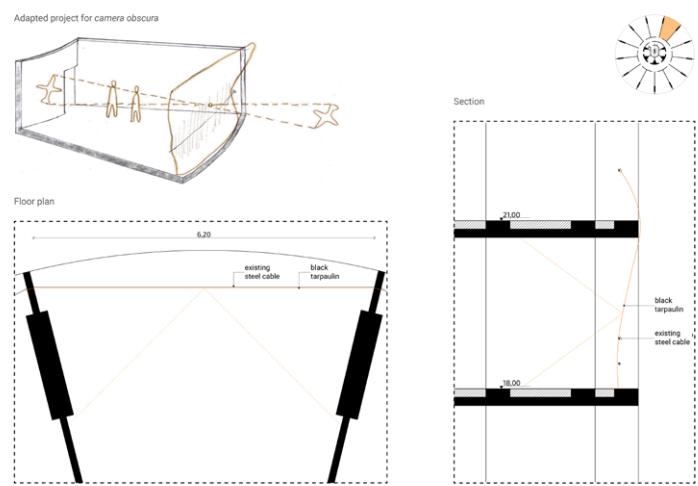
With the development of this *experiment*, the internal environment transformed itself from an empty residential unit into a video mechanism. The space can also be seen as Tarnovsky's Room of Dreams or a place where the world could have an alternate meaning, in reverse, away from what one perceives as reality. Our bodies dressed in white were touched by the images, reoriented and reorganised by the sky that became the ground, by the inside that turned into the outside.

The projected image superimposed on the inside created, virtually and provisionally, new conditions to be explored. The inverted virtual images of the tower interior created confusion and disorientation that allowed an ambiguous and poetic reading. In the photographic registries, we perceive several overlapping virtual layers: the image projected on the camera; the image projected on the screen; the beam of light bringing the image; the image projected over white sheets suspended on the interior walls at unit 611. The ephemeral act generates a certain sense of nostalgia as moments escape from comprehension and are doomed to end.

[Fig. 4]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Camera Obscura 4"

[Fig. 5]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Camera Obscura 5"

On May 10th 2022, from 10 AM to 16 PM, Unit 611 was transformed into a camera obscura. The setting up of the black sealing sheet with an opening for the camera obscura lasted approximately 3 hours while its tearing down took only 10 minutes. Once the equipment was removed from the unit, everything looked exactly as it was before the experiment. One can even affirm that nothing happened there as no traces of the experiment were left behind. Tower H remains exactly as it was before our presence there.



Tower H

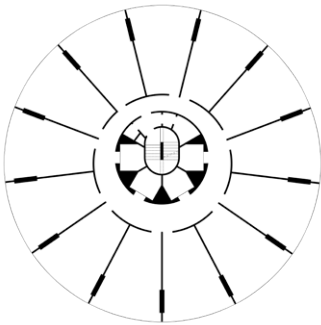
Rio de Janeiro's urbanisation project for the Barra da Tijuca neighbourhood had an urgent profile as the expansion of the city towards its Western Region in the late 1960's was occurring in a fast, chaotic manner. The 1969 *Barra Centre* project developed an utopic, romantic way to organise this urban growth. Oscar Niemeyer proposed a neighbourhood conveying an orderly way of healthy and natural communal living, a modern garden city by the coastline of western Rio de Janeiro. Tall towers were to be built with ample spaces in between them to avoid the intense occupation of the land. They would be surrounded by the Atlantic Rain Forest, Rio's original ecosystem, which would be designed by Landscape Artist Roberto Burle-Marx.

[Fig. 6]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Project for camera obscura", drawings.

Besides Tower H, only four other buildings from the original project were constructed: Tower A, in 1990; Tower H, interrupted in 1984 due to fiscal irregularities; Tower G, in 1994; and Tower F, never completed and subsequently imploded in late 1990's.

The *Barra Centre* towers represent an occupational mark and to this day are still the highest structures in the neighbourhood, with 36 floors and 122,2 metres of height. It is estimated that 10.157,75m³ of concrete was used in their construction. Approximately 4.936,70m³ of sand were displaced from the nearby Guandu riverbed.

The towers were erected along the margins of existing Avenues. These roads were developed at an elevated level and from this height the Tower's ground floor was levelled. Below, two garage levels were constructed and then landfilled till the ground floor height. It is estimated that 32.083,20m³ of sand from the vicinity as well as scrap land and waste from other constructions were added to fill the Tower H lot. The white sand dunes that formed the original natural landscape of Barra da Tijuca neighbourhood area were flattened and hidden from the surface. Also, it is believed that 37.019,9m³ of sand was dislodged to build Tower H and its embankment.



[Fig. 7]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Floor Plan", drawing.



[Fig. 8]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Section", drawing.

In 1984 the works at Tower H were paralyzed due to irregularities regarding the payment of taxes. Heraldo da Silva, the Engineer in charge of the tower and also one of its acquirer, founded the Tower H Acquirers' Association that recently decided to complete the works at its own expense based on a new architectural project by architect Paulo Sérgio Niemeyer, a relative of Oscar Niemeyer.

In 2020 the tower's sealing surface was demolished and an embankment area of 1.210.000m² between the tower and the Avenue of the Americas was removed, where at least 4.840.000m³ of sand were relocated to other construction projects in the city. The enormous hole left open, at least 4 mts deep, revealed the covered fine white sands that formed the dunes that existed all over the neighbourhood of Barra da Tijuca.

The current scenario is unique because it is situated in a time period between the construction and the demolition of Tower H. This is the moment in which the 'insides' of the building and the original soil underneath the tower, previously hidden from sight, are now exposed and establish a sensible relationship with the city.

Terrain vague

Ignasi de Solà Morales stated that the *terrain vague* concept had a more comprehensive interpretation in the French language. The term *terrain* refers to the urban land available for construction or to an usable piece of land inside and/or in the outskirts of cities. In turn, the word *vague* refers to movement as well as to instability, as it shares a common Germanic root to the English word *wave*. Additionally the word *vague* also originates from the latin expression *vaccus*, which means not only empty but also vague, open, undetermined.

In this essay, the term *terrain vague* has been used in the interpretation of an architectural work and not attributed to an empty piece of land, as it is generally associated to. In this case study the external form of Tower H is dismissed as it is considered a symbolic territory, as an empty lot of land or a parcel of the city that never came to be. As a *terrain vague*, it is a territory outside of the productive logic of the city, an alternative to its hermetic order. The city has not appropriated this space, and there is uncertainty over what is to come of them or what has already happened to them. The emptiness of the *terrain vague* is where one finds the full potential of what these spaces can become:

Their edges lack an effective incorporation, they are interior islands emptied of any activity, they are forgotten remains settled outside of the urban dynamics. They have become uninhabited, insecure and unproductive areas. In addition, they are strange places to the urban system, mental exteriors within the physical city interior that appear as a counterimage of themselves, in the sense of their criticism or their possible alternative.⁸

8 "Terrain Vague / Ignasi de Solà-Morales", 1995, accessed November 12, 2021: <http://www.archdaily.com.br/35561/terrain-vague-ignasi-de-sola-morales>.

To consider Tower H as a *terrain vague* is a way of validating its interpretative opening, of identifying in its emptiness a contained and undetermined force that can break free and transform itself at any given moment. It is solely at the threat of its disappearance that the present moment appears to escape from comprehension. A nostalgic desire to capture the aura of the *terrain vague* concept emerges when it can suddenly disappear at any moment. There exists a willingness to comprehend the peculiarities of these spaces, to unravel how the mystery manifests itself at Tower H.

In Ethnologist Marc Augé's book named *Non-Places* there exists a feeling of freedom when entering spaces with such openness, a "vague enchantment"⁹ for the wasteland. According to him, the *non-place* idea is characterised by the lack of any identity as well as a historical and relational absence. In fact, the history of Tower H is veiled as a result of its secrets and political intrigues. The abandoned tower does not relate directly to the city as it has always been unoccupied. It doesn't even present any recognizable identity. Notwithstanding, the possible relations with the ruined tower are of another nature, not at all clear. These are the imaginable, virtual relations that operate in an opposite timeframe from the productive logic of the city. It is at these physical spaces within the city that the frontiers between fiction and reality get blurred, where myths and fantasies come afloat.

The concern for the contemporary urban wastelands emerged from an anguish caused by the increasingly rapid growth of modern cities at the end of the 19th century.¹⁰ Eugène Atget, a photographer active from 1890 to 1927, grasped the strange feeling of 19th century cities' fast growth in its extreme opposite, picturing the spaces that they had not reached completely, or where they could have already occurred.

In the essay titled *The Small History of Photography*, Walter Benjamin describes Atget as a photographer who transferred the aura of 19th century photography to the streets of Paris. This photographer contributed to the creation of a new perception of the great European cities. One could see the city through its absence, its nostalgia and its desire. The aura of the great cities is an indecipherable sentiment which can be found present within their limits, where it has not yet manifested itself. There is a moment of tension amongst these spaces and a feeling of expectation manifests itself in the *terrain vague*.

The urban individual, according to Solà-Morales, builds their experience from negativity: we endear ourselves to chaos from the moment that the urban order prevails. Tower H's feeling of freedom corresponds to the opposite of the monotonous functionality of the city, to the pervading control of the alienating security systems of Barra da Tijuca gated residential/corporate communities. It is a space where the speed imposed by the modern world has not reached or arrived yet. It is where an errant and slow body can get lost.

9 Marc Augé, *Não-Lugares: Introdução a uma antropologia da supermodernidade* (São Paulo: Papirus, 1994), 8.

10 Antony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 4.

How to act on a terrain vague without destroying its essence?

In the movie *Stalker* (1979) by director Andrei Tarkovsky, a forbidden and mysterious territory called Zone should only be visited with caution and with the use of specific methodologies. The stalker is a wanderer who establishes a symbiotic relationship with the Zone therefore becoming familiar with its oaths and its secrets. In the depths of this inhospitable territory he discovers the *Room of Desires* where wishes turn to reality and new possibilities abound.

The Zone is a type of terrain vague, its emptiness and indetermination provide a sense of freedom. Without the existence of this space there would be no hope, a sense of anticipation for what can happen to it. The Room of Desires can be understood as a manifestation of this expectation, as the search object and the essence of *terrain vague*. In the Zone, the path to be walked with caution is indispensable to reach the sacred space where all the dreams come to fruition. The slow, experimental observation of Tower H, which is the scope of this essay, refers to the path taken by the Stalker in the Zone, as both share a purposely errant process although are aware of their destination.

Architect Paola Bernstein Jacques' text named *Errant Landscapes*, published in the Fresta Magazine of the School of Architecture and Urbanism at the Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro (PUC-RJ) discusses on the experience of the errant spatial body in the city:

Errant landscapes are experienced from within, in other words, they are the contrary to the remote and disembodied landscape of logo marketing or urban branding. The city makers and primarily the urban wanderers experience places as they move through them, giving them body and life simply as a result of experiencing them. A sensorial experience cannot be reduced to a simple look, image or logo. Cities and their landscapes are no longer simple scenarios after they are experienced. They become other bodies. To the errant urban dweller, the relationship can be characterised as an embodiment.¹¹

Errant is the entity which disregards the pre-planned ways and experiences the city with freedom and with a willingness to get lost into it. The errant body possesses a slow pace of movement as it denies the high speed of urban centres. It is the personification of the *terrain vague* according to Ignasi de Solà Morales. This body is contaminated by space and consequently embodies it within.

The three attributes of errantry – to willingness to lose oneself, its slowness and physical existence – are, according to Paola Bernstein Jacques, intimately related to the practical experience of the city. Based on these concepts, it can be said that this essay proposes an errant action, an experience of embodiment of the *terrain vague* that exists in Tower H.

¹¹ Paola Berenstein Jacques, *Paisagens Errantes* (Rio de Janeiro: Fresta, v. 1, 2007), 2.

Could we have other interpretations of Tower H?

It is understood that the difficult apprehension of time and its slowness as it relates to Tower H, can be comprehended more easily through its insides. The internal understanding traces a mysterious narrative about this space that partially unveils its ephemeral peculiarities. The reading from the inside to the outside is opposite to the external image of the tower, in which the object reveals itself entirely.

The pilot plan designed by Urbanist Lúcio Costa for the Barra da Tijuca neighbourhood and surrounding areas was conceived from a modernist blueprint. The modern spatial interpretation is understood as originating from the 'outside to the inside.' According to Le Corbusier: "Architecture is the masterly, correct and magnificent play of masses brought together in light"¹². In Tower H, the habitational units are generic, all of them possessing the same qualities and proportions. Tower H does not guide itself from the city. It has its own order, coming from the abstract circle, the ideal cylinder. In this sense, Tower H can be considered as an element from the 'outside.' It is outside of time, outside of the city, but still inside itself, as a counterpoint to its own logic.

Tower H appears to be decipherable from its exterior with its space limits and evident format. Nonetheless, the shedding of its external facade partially reveals another spatiality. The displacement of 'outside to inside' with the sealing demolition entices new relations between the interior and the exterior facade of the tower. Between its apparent superficiality and its deep enclosings.

The original *terrain*, once landfilled to hide away the underground of Towers A and H, is partially visible nowadays as a result of soil removal. Similar to the facade sealing removal, the excavation of the soil around the buildings reminds us of the time when the towers were erected, when there were only sand dunes, lagoons and swamps in the Barra da Tijuca plains. A fine, white sand that once formed the famed dunes at Barra da Tijuca was revealed during the last 2 years of excavations in a tract of land spread between Tower H and the Avenue of the Americas. An area of 1.210.000m² was reworked and approximately 3.630.000m³ of sand were relocated to other construction sites in Rio de Janeiro. The stabilised soil brings with it a series of memories and associations with the nearby coastline. Memories of a land that was completely altered within a few years come back to light.

Which memories surface with the sand dunes? And how will this immense hole near the tower be filled? What will be hidden in the sands once a real estate boom in the region entices the completion of the tower? What else will go under within the abyss of forgetfulness?

The displacements in space, from the outside to the inside, from the concealed to the exposed are operations that imply changes in the perception of the city, in the passage of time and in the fluxes of memory. The identified operations also change the perception to a certain estrangement. Moreover, they foster a destabilisation that allows speculations about the future as well as other readings of the architectural object.

¹² Le Corbusier, *Por uma arquitetura* (São Paulo: Editora Perspectiva, 1977), 13.

Displacement



[Fig. 9]
Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Collection of objects", photomontage made by the author.

Displacement

A number of physical elements were relocated from the inside to the outside of Tower H, to create a record of the actual state of the building at the present time. This ensemble of forgotten objects, long left abandoned inside the building or uncovered through excavations, also unveil themselves from the sands only at the present moment of their recording. The sand dunes, typical geological formations of Barra da Tijuca's oceanic region, were partially concealed and flattened by the real estate developments which covered all of the neighbourhood's great plain. Today, the white sand of these former dunes seems to be a restrained memory of the site. The sand and objects left on the grounds are records of a specific time in the tower's existence.

Land artist Robert Smithson elaborated the concepts of *site* and *non-site* as well as the methodology of works that he entitled *Earthworks*. Smithson searched for forms to establish a dialogue between his works and the art galleries, taking into consideration the logistical, spatial and political challenges to showcase his work in limited spaces. The concept of *non-site* is an abstraction to the concept of *site*¹³. It is a delimited clipping that refers to the original work and the site in which it is located. Different from the photographic record, the non-site establishes a language that is less direct but more metaphoric with the work site. This somewhat vague meaning amplifies the fictional and playful character of the art work.

The non-site concept establishes a dialogue between Tower H in its present state and the city surrounding it. This experiment is complemented with the extraction and posterior removal of sand from the inside to the outside of the tower through the use of test tubes (as shown in figure 11). This process intends to link the experiment with the interpretations regarding space developed throughout this essay: from the outside to the inside; from the concealed to the exposed and from the land filling to the unearthing. The procedure of digging for remains, which could even be viewed as an archaeological excavation, tries to guarantee the survival of something that refers to the current and past physical state of Tower H, prior to its disappearance.

This essay does not aim to reach a conclusion, as no one knows what will happen to Tower H. The suspension of any certainties allows for even more interpretations on the nature of this architectural object. Thus both the ephemeral installation and the displacement operations were actions taken in the physical space which helped to unveil a parallel story. A sensible point of view based on the hidden elements, ambiguous images and reflections.

13 Smithson, Robert. Interview with Robert Smithson for The Archives of American Art / Smithsonian Institution. In: FLAM, Jack (Org.) Robert Smithson. The Collected Writings. Berkeley, (Los Angeles/London, University of California Press, 1996), 234-236.



[Fig. 10]

Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Uncovering a thermostat at the base of Tower H", frame from video made by the author: <https://youtu.be/MF12L6OU9x0?si=mYSDDtMwtZXg-2PB>.

[Fig. 11]

Julia Maria Fabbriani, "Black box containing book, samples of sand and pictures", photograph.

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São Paulo's Minhocão on Film

Richard Williams

Abstract:

This paper concerns the cinematic representation of São Paulo's Elevado João Goulart, a 3.5km elevated expressway close to the historic centre of the city, popularly known as the Minhocão. Built during the boom period of Brazil's dictatorship, the Minhocão opened to traffic in January 1971. Controversial at the beginning of its existence, it has been partially rehabilitated, a process in which film has been important. The paper describes three general modes of the Minhocão's depiction on film: in the first it represents a generalised fear of the modern city, in the second it is a normal part of the landscape, and in the third it is a form of aesthetic occupation. Key films discussed include *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985), directed by Hector Babenco (1985) and the documentary *Elevado 3.5* (Maira Bühler, Paulo Pastorelo and João Sodré 2006). The paper responds to Sophia's Landscapes of Care theme by showing how over time film can, over time, help rehabilitate seemingly irredeemable infrastructure.

Keywords: infrastructure, film, expressway, occupation, Brazil, care

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Introduction

Can we learn to love the expressway?¹ Or can we at least learn to live with it? Can it be used, or inhabited, or represented in ways that at least partially rehabilitate it, and mitigate its worst effects? And how might film assist in that process? I try to answer these questions here in relation to São Paulo's Minhocão expressway, an unusually toxic object when opened in 1971, but one which has since become an object of sustained fascination for filmmakers, and artists in general – and it is one that through the attention of those artists has arguably found some form of redemption. The Minhocão case is good evidence, I argue, for Landscapes of Care, the theme of the present issue of *Sophia*. As the other essays here show, photography and film can expand the ways we understand modern architecture, and in particular what we consider valuable, and therefore worth preservation. With good reason the Minhocão started life as the most unloved of objects; through film, and film's documentation of its lived existence, it has become an unlikely subject of care.

More broadly, and in line with recent research on infrastructure, this paper treats the expressway as culture. For readers who know the work of the novelist J. G. Ballard, his autophile novels *Crash* (1973) and *Concrete Island* (1974) show precisely how this might come about. In *Concrete Island*, Ballard's protagonist is an architect who, after a bad accident while driving, finds himself marooned on the central reservation of London's Westway. After multiple failed attempts to escape, he chooses to stay, the expressway permitting the full realisation of his life, perversely impossible in civilisation.² He comes to love the Westway, as some (as we shall see) come to love the Minhocão. Those themes have proved irresistible to humanities scholars, and research on Ballard has proliferated in recent years.³ More generally, the study of infrastructure has become a respectable, and frequent humanities topic. It has been explored in terms of its capacity for 'fantasy', its 'poetics and politics' (Brian Larkin), discussed in terms of the language of care (Keller Easterling), or even recently its capacity to inspire 'love' (Helene Frichot et al), to pick three examples.⁴ Meanwhile the so-called 'mobilities turn' in cultural geography has now produced numerous accounts of specific roads. Peter Merriman's account of the M1 motorway

in England is a good example. Merriman treats the M1 as a space of culture rather than a mute object to be noticed only when it fails.⁵ When it comes to the study of infrastructure, culture is arguably in the ascendant.⁶

But back to Ballard for a moment. There is a background presence of Ballard here, partly because his work radically expands the ways we might think about the expressway, but also because his imagination was so cinematic. *Crash* had more than one cinematic adaptation, while Ballard himself wrote a screenplay for an unrealised film adaptation of *Concrete Island*. While never making its way into a film, the script is, if anything, more attentive to the expressway site than the book. It is a remarkably detailed set of observations, and imaginative projections, rather more attentive to the expressway as an object lived and experienced in the world than the work of its designers.⁷

The architect and theorist Katherine Shonfield wrote precisely about this attention in *Walls Have Feelings* (2000).⁸ 'I am struck', Shonfield wrote, 'by the way a film maker will commonly spend much longer determining how the artefacts of architects and other urban designers are to be filmed than was originally spent designing the artefacts in the first place.'⁹ One of Shonfield's key examples is Jean-Luc Godard's 1967 film, *Two or Three Things I Know About Her* which repeatedly shows the Périphérique orbital expressway, then under construction at Saint Denis just outside Paris. Like the Minhocão when built, the Périphérique here is a strange, somewhat alien object. Its relationship with its surroundings is, Shonfield writes, 'one of absolute difference.'¹⁰ It 'sweeps through the city at high level, ignoring the vertical spatial hierarchy of the buildings it cuts through, isolating them and rendering them forlorn objects subordinated to the road's curvaceous power.'¹¹ It's a profoundly irrational object, in Shonfield account – but it is also one with which Godard's citizens somehow learn to live. And the key point is that it has, through the attention of film, thoroughly exceeded the functional objectives of its designers. It has become culture.

1 I use the term 'expressway' here in place of the British English 'motorway' as it corresponds better to the Portuguese term 'via expressa'. Also in the intellectual hinterland of the paper is Marshall Berman's essay 'The Expressway World' from *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air*.

2 J. G. Ballard, *Concrete Island* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974)

3 J. G. Ballard, *Crash* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1973), *Concrete Island* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1974). For academic commentary see *Literary Geographies* 2, 1 (2016), special issue on *Concrete Island*.

4 Brian Larkin, "The Poetics and Politics of Infrastructure." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 42 (2013), 327; Keller, Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* (London: Verso Books, 2014); Hélène Frichot, Adria Carbonell, Hannes Frykholm and Sepideh Karami, eds., *Infrastructural Love: Caring for our Architectural Support Systems* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2022), 15.

5 See Paul Merriman, *Driving Spaces: A Cultural-Historical Geography of England's M1 Motorway* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 4, 11. On the failure of infrastructure see Larkin, "The Poetics and Politics of Infrastructure", 336. See also J. Moran, *On Roads: A Hidden History* (London: Profile Books, 2009). For an earlier, US-oriented approach, see J. B. Jackson, 'Other-Directed Houses', *Landscape* 6, 2 (Winter 1956-7)

6 In the Anglophone world at least, it is hard to imagine now how the Buchanan Report – a highly technical report on projected traffic flows – became a bestseller. See Colin Buchanan, *Traffic in Towns: The Specially Shortened Edition of the Buchanan Report* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1963)

7 J. G. Ballard, *Concrete Island*, unpublished screenplay (20 September 1972), British Library manuscript 88938/3/9/2

8 Katherine Shonfield, *Walls Have Feelings: Architecture, Film and the City* (London: Routledge, 2000), 154.

9 Shonfield, *Walls Have Feelings*, 165

10 Shonfield, *Walls Have Feelings*, 115.

11 Shonfield, *Walls Have Feelings*, 115.

The Minhocão

So it is with São Paulo's Minhocão. Literally the 'Big Worm', it is officially now the Elevado João Goulart, named after the leftist president deposed in Brazil's 1964 coup, and one of the more dramatic results of São Paulo's colossal restructuring in favour of the private car.¹² It lies just to the south of the historic centre of the city, and runs for 3.5 kilometres east–west along a short stretch of the Rua Amaral Gurgel, and a much longer stretch of the Avenida São João, once a smart European-style boulevard celebrated by the anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss in the 1930s.¹³ According to Paulo Maluf, mayor of São Paulo, and the project's chief advocate, it was 'the largest work in reinforced concrete in all of Latin America', a region that does not exactly lack for works in reinforced concrete.¹⁴ Built in a remarkable 14 months, it opened on 24 January 1971, timed to celebrate the city's annual Founder's Day. Opened first to pedestrians, and then in the afternoon to car traffic, it was almost immediately paralysed by a broken-down Volkswagen, as the newspapers mischievously reported: photographs of the day show immense tailbacks.¹⁵

Unlike contemporaneous highway developments elsewhere such as the Cross-Bronx Expressway in New York, the Minhocão wasn't an act of wholesale demolition.¹⁶ Still the effect of the Avenida São João and its environs has been catastrophic, and for many it remains a difficult object by virtue of its form alone. Its builders, Hidroservice, a private firm of engineers close to the government of the day, apparently did no studies of its impact on the surrounding area.¹⁷ As a result the highway runs close to the surrounding apartment buildings, just three metres in places, while shops and residences at ground level are left in permanent shadow. What was a popular entertainment district became a tunnel for cars. Even it was hard not to see as an attack on the existing city, even an erasure of it. In one of the many perspective drawings produced by Hidroservice, the existing city of São Paulo dissolved into abstraction, a thing simply to be traversed as quickly as possible; its characteristic forest of highrises reduced to a pale outline.

12 M. A. Lagonegro, "Metrópole sem metrô: transporte público, rodoviarismo e populismo em São Paulo (1955–1965)" (PhD diss., University of São Paulo, 2003)

13 Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques* (London: Hutchinson, 1961)

14 Paulo Maluf, "Paulo Maluf anuncia construção do Minhocão", 1969, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j44cTNnDHps>

15 *Estado de São Paulo*, "Minhocão Aberto, Sem Repercussão Esperada," (26 January, 1971), 16.

16 Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts Into Air* (London: Verso, 1983)

17 Luiz R. Florence, "Arquitetura e Autopia: Infraestrutura Rodoviária em São Paulo 1952–1972" (PhD thesis, University of São Paulo, 2020)

The Minhocão's difficulty has not only to do with its form; it was legible for many on the left of as an act of political violence too, widely understood as one of the key achievements of the military government that came to power in the 1964 coup. Not for nothing was it originally named after Artur da Costa e Silva, the president of the military government who died in office during its construction.¹⁸ When later described as a 'scar' on the city, the reasons were political as much as urban.¹⁹

Fobópole

There are good reasons therefore to think the Minhocão toxic, and on film it appears first a space of overbearing political authority, suffused with fear. It's tempting to think of the carceral in these films, to use the rather over-worn Foucauldian concept, the city made into a prison. Perhaps a more precise term, given the local context, might be *fobópole* (literally, 'fear city'), coined by Marcelo Lopes de Souza, a geographer, for a 2008 book.²⁰ For de Souza, *fobópole* is a condition of generalised fear endemic in Brazilian cities. The fear in the first instance might be that of crime, a problem far from unique to Brazil, although peculiarly exaggerated there (on the same topic see also Teresa Caldeira, an anthropologist, in her book *City of Walls*).²¹ *Fobópole* signified not only a social phenomenon, but a structural condition too, involving the militarisation of urban space in relation to crime. The physical traces of militarisation – walls, security cameras, guard posts and so on – he argues come to define the city.²² This militarisation can be traced back to Brazil's experience with dictatorship, which he argues, left its cities structured distinctively by fear.

Something like this can be seen in the work of Hector Babenco, a film-maker unusually alert to the structures of power, having left one dictatorship – his native Argentina – for another, Brazil, then in 1969 at its repressive peak. The Minhocão plays an important role in the creation of fear

18 Guilherme Wisnik, "Dentro do Nevoeiro: diálogos cruzadas entre arte e arquitetura contemporânea" (PhD thesis, University of São Paulo, 2012)

19 Francisco Vidal Luna and Manuelito Pereira Magalhães Júnior, 'Uma Cicatriz Urbana', in *Caminhos do Elevado: Memória e Projetos*, eds. Rosa Artigas, Joana Mello and Ana Claudia Castro (São Paulo: IMESP, 2008), 8.

20 Marcelo Lopes de Souza, *Fobópole: O Medo Generalizado e a Militarização da Questão Urbana* (Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2008)

21 Teresa Caldeira, *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in São Paulo*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2001.

22 See also Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (London: Verso Books, 1990)

in Babenco's 1985 prison drama *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, a good deal of which was filmed in an apartment overlooking it.²³ (Fig. 1.) The Minhocão appears, unidentified about three quarters of the way through; it occupies the whole screen, the camera located centrally somewhere in the central reservation pointing at the intense, fast-moving traffic. Huge apartment buildings loom on either side, defining a dense corridor stretching into the distance. It's dusk and the light is poor, the scene is grainy, and the details are indistinct. Its mood, you could say is anxious, depicting the metropolis as an object of indeterminate fear. A few minutes later, the film returns to the same location, but shows it from a different perspective. The film's protagonist Luis Molina, a gay man just out of prison on a trumped-up sexual offence charge, sits in his apartment looking out at the same highway. It is now late at night, and the highway has become a river of light, a real spectacle, but one from which he is evidently alienated. The camera cuts to a plainclothes policeman in a car, monitoring Molina's position from outside. He speaks mechanically into a radio telephone: 'surveillance reveals subject has not returned to work. He almost never leaves home. He spends his evenings staring out the window for no apparent reason.'

The camera cuts to Molina seen from outside the apartment, staring blankly into space. Nearly all of the action has taken place to this point in the intensely claustrophobic confines of the prison cell he shares with a political prisoner. His sudden release only goes to show that the carceral state extends far beyond the prison cell. The highway is a metaphor for it, an inhuman, mechanised space designed to keep its citizens under control. The city, here and elsewhere in the film, is itself a prison, the *jobópole*.

Significantly, this fearful vision is placeless, as if to say that it represents a ubiquitous modern condition. The dialogue is entirely in English and it's only the odd glimpse of Portuguese signage that suggest Brazil. Without clear place markers, its high rises are generic modern high rises, the metro a generic metro, the Minhocão a generic highway. For Natalia Pinazza, a film theorist, this São Paulo is precisely a 'non-place', referring to the anthropological concept popularised by Marc Augé. Pinazza finds cinematic São Paulo defined by such spaces; they explicitly lack 'self-evident local colour', she writes.²⁴ It is the non-place metropolis, a stand-in for the modern city everywhere.²⁵ 'Non-place' is apposite: Augé's book begins precisely on an urban expressway, which, like all of his non-place, he describes in carceral terms – a space in which one always has to prove one's identity, in which one is always surveilled, a de facto prison.²⁶

23 Athos Comolatti, interview with the author, 5 April 2022. The semi-official headquarters of the Associação Parque Minhocão can be found on the floor below.

24 Natalia Pinazza and Louis Bayman, eds., *World Film Locations: São Paulo* (Bristol: Intellect, 2013)

25 This concept of São Paulo as a placeless archetype had some appeal for the German artist Anselm Kiefer in a series of works made in the late 1980s. See Anselm Kiefer, *Gross Will Grow Over Your Cities* (Munich: Schirmer/Mosel Verlag GmbH, 1999)

26 Marc Augé, *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London: Verso, 1995), 1.



[Fig. 1]
Still from Hector Babenco (dir.), *Kiss of the Spider Woman* (1985)



[Fig. 2.]
Still from Walter Salles (dir.) *Terra Estrangeira* (1996)

The fearful Minhocão shows up if anything more dramatically in 1995 in *Terra Estrangeira* (1995) ('Foreign Land') by Walter Salles.²⁷ (Fig. 2) Here São Paulo actually plays itself, and the terrifying historical moment at which incoming president Fernando Collor de Mello nationalised citizens' bank deposits, rendering savings worthless. The film's narrative centres on Paco, a young man who flees, against the odds, Brazil for Portugal. At the start of the film, he lives with his mother in an apartment overlooking the Minhocão. Again, it's photographed in the poor light of dusk or early morning, and is the location of a generalised sense of threat. Paco, like Babenco's protagonist Luis spends a lot of time staring at it from inside, with a mixture of alienation and fear. Images of it cut back and forth with the presidential announcement on TV, as if to say the Minhocão is the materialisation of state power.

The Minhocão is there again momentarily in another of Babenco's films, *Carandiru*, the prison riot film of 2003, in which it frames a rare scene outside of the São Paulo prison of the film's title, a scene of social breakdown.²⁸ As in *Kiss of the Spider Woman*, the central conceit of the film is the moral equivalence of carceral and free worlds, the one a representation of the other. In *Carandiru*, the undercroft of the Minhocão at its eastern end, frames a city in dissolution, defined by the homeless and prostitutes. Fires burn in the street, and human relations are defined by sexual violence – exactly reproducing on the outside the meltdown conditions of the Carandiru prison.

The fearful Minhocão as a space of fear reaches its apogee perhaps in Fernando Meirelles's *Blindness* 2008, in which, strewn with wrecked vehicles, it symbolises a nameless metropolis's descent into anarchy.²⁹ The Minhocão here and in the other films appears repeatedly on screen as the representation of a violent state, both in a condition of authority, and when that authority has dissolved – it embodies what many on Brazil's political left thought about it anyway, but it supplies a convincing metaphor for the carceral city. The Minhocão is a space of fear, both a representation of an authoritarian state, and a space that imperils its users. (I might add that the Minhocão was a uniquely dangerous space for drivers too. By the end of 1976, it was the site for as much as a fifth of São Paulo's traffic accidents, by far the city's most accident-prone road.)³⁰

27 Salles, Walter, director, *Terra Estrangeira*, Animatógrafo/VideoFilmes, 1996, 1hr., 50 min.

28 Babenco, Hector, director, *Carandiru*, Sony Pictures Classics/Globo Filmes, 2003, 2 hr., 27 min. See also Alex Bellos, "Hard Cells and Transvestite Weddings," *Guardian*, 2 November 2003, <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2003/nov/02/londonfilmfestival2003.features1>

29 Meirelles, Fernando, director, *Blindness*, Fox Film do Brasil/Alliance Films/GAGA USEN, (2008)

30 Folha de São Paulo, 'DSV fecha o elevado durante a madrugada' (30 December 1976), 14.

The Minhocão, domesticated

These cinematic representations of the Minhocão elaborate generalised urban fears consistent with *fobópole*. But the Minhocão did not remain constant: from 1977, it edged towards a more ambiguous existence, closing to nocturnal traffic that year after pressure from a group of sleep-deprived residents.³¹ By the early 2000s it was routinely closing at weekends too, and started to acquire some of its present-day, somewhat beach-like character.³² In 2006, the municipality of São Paulo held an architectural competition to find design solutions to ameliorate its worst effects, the Premio Prestes Maia, named after Francisco, a planner and former city mayor. Significantly, none of the winning entries recommended demolition, proposing instead adaptive reuse, some turning the carriageway into elevated parkland.³³

It was evidence, perhaps, of the Minhocão's domestication. There was something similar in film – while the Minhocão continued, intermittently, to play out as dystopian horror (for example, in *Blindness*) there was increasing evidence of a more humane approach, *All the Invisible Children* (2005) being one example. An Italian anthology film comprising seven shorts by global directors, it included one episode directed and scripted by Kátia Lund, whose previous film was the apocalyptic favela drama, *City of God* (co-directed with Meirelles, who shot *Blindness*). In Lund's short, *Bilú and João*, the environment around the Minhocão is hard, but essentially benign. The protagonists, children who make a living scavenging metal scraps for recycling, are plucky survivors, and their stories describe successful improvisations. The Minhocão is simply there, an integral part of the cityscape rather than an alien imposition; the tone is unjudgmental. Normalised, no longer uniquely toxic, the Minhocão is just one of the places the children make a living.

Altogether more complex evidence of the Minhocão's domestication is the documentary film *Elevado 3.5* (also 2005) directed by Maira Bühler, Paulo Pastorelo and João Sodrê, two of whom (Sodrê and Pastorelo) had trained as architects.³⁴ (Fig. 3) *Elevado 3.5* has familiar elements of previous representations. It opens with a poetic, somewhat abstract scene photographed from the back seat of a car, looking upwards through the rear window. To the accompaniment of a pulsing techno soundtrack, the Minhocão gradually appears, dark and vast against the blue sky. As a structure, it's a constant throughout the film, as a frame, or background, and most often as a soundtrack – its rumbling traffic accompanies nearly all of the scenes.

31 *Folha de São Paulo*, 'DSV fecha o elevado'.

32 Nate Millington, "Public Space and Terrain Vague on São Paulo's Minhocão," in *Deconstructing the High Line*, eds. Christoph Lindner and Brian Rosa (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2017), 201–18.

33 Rosa Artigas, Joana Mello and Ana Claudia Castro, eds., *Caminhos do Elevado: Memória e Projetos* (São Paulo: IMESP, 2008)

34 Maira Bühler, Paulo Pastorelo and João Sodrê, directors, *Elevado 3.5*, Primo Filmes/TV Cultura, 2005, 1hr., 15 min. For an account of its screening on the Minhocão in 2010, see Luiz Ricardo Florence "Estréia documentário 'Elevado 3.5,'" *Vitruvius* 032, no. 03 (June 2010) <https://vitruvius.com.br/revistas/read/drops/10.032/3441>

But mainly *Elevado 3.5* represents people, through a series of face-to-camera interviews with nineteen local inhabitants focused on the marginal and the eccentric, in a manner closely resembling the successful *Edifício Master* (Edouardo Coutinho, 2003), about the life of a run-down Copacabana apartment building.³⁵ The Minhocão's people are a colourful mix, from the glamorous to the destitute, to the merely ordinary – for example, a couple simply bemused at the way the Minhocão has become both a Sunday leisure attraction, and the subject of a film. And there are, predictably, a couple of hard cases for whom the Minhocão represents a descent from a better life. One of these, Alcyristóforo is perhaps the saddest of the film's interviewees. There's not much to look at, he says to the interviewer in his portion of the film, gesturing at the three square metres of his room. He's elderly, broke and alone, at 'the end of the road' after years of spectacular excess. This is it: life reduced to a tiny box on the edge of the expressway, with only photographs for memories. The camera pulls away for a final shot in the sequence where Cristóforo flings open the shutters to provide some light in order to shave. His tiny room looks right out onto the Minhocão, here as elsewhere so close you feel you could touch the passing cars. Taken in isolation, it's a wretched scene, the Minhocão as prison.

In terms of the film's mood, however Cristóforo's case is an outlier. His plight is shared by Ananias Pereira dos Santos, an older man who lives in circumstances that are if anything even worse. Dos Santos inhabits if anything a tinier, and even more compromised room, and even that is a step up from the shack he once occupied on the pavement outside. However, he seems happy enough despite the interviewer's asking after his wellbeing. His ex-wife and children live in a big house some distance away, and he seems glad to be free of the hassles of family life. Here, looking out onto the buses coming and going ('my pastime'), he is free to be himself.

And that broadly accepting attitude to the Minhocão characterises the film as a whole, even in sections when the account draws attention to the loss of amenity the road has brought with it. In an early part of the film, three Italian sisters from the Ferrara family sit on an antique sofa against the light, as the Minhocão looms through the window. Their account of an idyllic, pre-Minhocão childhood is cut with home movie fragments in which the Avenida São João bustles with smartly dressed families and trams, a picture of vanished urban order and propriety. But there's no real nostalgia about that part of the film, nor (surprisingly) anywhere. A couple living close to the roadway note that it's hard to sleep on Sundays when the Minhocão is closed to traffic, as 'you get addicted to the noise.'

³⁵ Coutinho, Edouardo, director, *Edifício Master*, VideoFilmes, 2003, 1 hr., 50 min.

See Silvana Olivieri, *Quando o cinema vira urbanismo: o documentário como ferramenta de abordagem da cidade* (Salvador: SciELO Books, 2011) Kindle edition, location 1816. For an earlier precedent, see also *Rua São Bento: Prédio Martinelli* (dir. Ugo Giorgetti, 1976), a documentary account of the eccentric inhabitants of the eponymous São Paulo skyscraper.



Perhaps most counter-intuitive is a taxi driver (Wilson dos Santos) in a flat overlooking the Minhocão. It was always his 'dream' to live near it, he says, tending his luxuriant terrace. It's beautiful he says, and he 'applauds' its builders; the camera pans away from him and his garden towards the sound of the traffic, showing his flat to be one of the very closest to the structure, at the same level as the roadway. His attachment to the Minhocão far exceeds anything that could have been meant by its designers. A man sincerely in love with a road, he could have been a Ballardian invention.

Mostly however, *Elevado 3.5* is a film of tactical engagement with the Minhocão, of hedging and fudging, and ultimately learning to live with it. Its landscape is naturally messy and unresolved, the opposite of both the vision found in the perspective drawings of the original designers, and the more recent plans for a permanent park. That heterogeneity has been the subject of academic research, mapping the social complexity of the area around the Minhocão as part of an activist project of resisting gentrification.³⁶

³⁶ For a Brazilian example, this project mapping the cultural life of the area around the Minhocão: Mariana Da Silva Nito and Simone Scifoni, "O Patrimônio Contra a Gentrificação: a Experiência do Inventário Participativo de Referências Culturais do Minhocão", *Revista do Centro da Pesquisa e Formação* 5 (2017), 82–94.

[Fig. 3.]

Still from Maíra Bühler, Paulo Pastorelo and João Sodré (dirs.) *Elevado 3.5* (2006)

The Minhocão occupied

In image, the Minhocão is first a dystopian, carceral space. Then it's a partially domesticated one, a home for a diverse and eclectic population. Then it becomes something else: a space of apparently spontaneous, and somewhat hedonistic events. It is sometimes spoken of as an open-air art gallery – a municipal public art project, the Museu de Arte de Rua (Museum of Street Art) has funded the production of forty or so large-scale works of street art along the Minhocão since 2017.³⁷ The best word for this is perhaps 'occupation'. The Minhocão is neither art, nor is it a coherent political project. It can nevertheless look like both at weekends, and it has some of the same character as the socially engaged or participatory art projects that have proliferated since 2000, especially since the Occupy movement of 2011.³⁸

A good example from 2010 was not a film per se, but a screening of a film – *Elevado 3.5* to be precise, projected from a specially constructed stage on the Minhocão itself. Reporting on it for the Brazilian architecture journal *Vitruvius*, a local architect, Luiz Florence wrote that it was hard to get a decent view. A thousand people turned up to see it, some hanging off balconies. That event created a new kind of image, the Minhocão as a carnivalesque space.³⁹ It was a significant, arguably transformative moment; the documentary itself legitimised a more humane approach to the Minhocão even if its directors were sceptical about the possibility (Sodré thought it should simply be demolished).⁴⁰ The event turned the Minhocão into an occupation.

The aesthetics of occupation are present – although to possibly quite different ends – in the activities of the Associação Parque Minhocão (Minhocão Park Association), founded to coincide with the São Paulo architecture biennale in 2013, and which continues to agitate for the transformation of the highway into a permanent park in the style of New York's High Line. (The High Line is a conversion of a former freight rail line in lower Manhattan to a carefully landscaped elevated park, linking cultural attractions and the massive retail and office development of Hudson Yards, along with residential development along the route.)⁴¹ The Associação has been an important source of images of an imagined new Minhocão. It commissioned fantastic architectural capriccios from an architect, Ciro Miguel in 2013, and was behind a kitschy book

of illustrated poems in 2015, both of which represented the Minhocão as a space of pleasure.⁴² Miguel's sketches included a number of fantasy scenarios, including one in which the road surface had been turned into a literal beach, complete with sand and a waterfront. It was a literal enactment of the Situationist slogan 'sous les pavés, la plage' ('beneath the pavement, the beach'). Collaged figures in bathing costumes signalled the final displacement of the Minhocão's original use; leisure definitively replacing transport. Something of the spirit of Miguel's images came to life in a project by an artist Luana Geiger, who installed an Olympic-sized swimming pool on the Minhocão for a day in March 2024.⁴³ And the images find echoes in a series of perspectives produced in 2017 by Jaime Lerner Arquitetos Associados, a major Brazilian firm of architects. The images, pitched speculatively to the Municipality of São Paulo as a possible future development, depict the Minhocão as a space of play, aestheticised occupation having entirely displaced its original function.

In terms of film, the closest ideological equivalent to those images is a documentary made by the Italian artist Rosa Barba for the 2016 São Paulo Bienal. *Disseminate and Hold* fixates on the moment every evening at 8.30 pm when the Minhocão closes to traffic, and in a few minutes opens to pedestrians. Each time it does this, according to Barba, it re-enacts a popular resistance to political authoritarianism; it is for her a spectacular, albeit temporary, theatricalisation of democracy, a reclamation of space for public use, a spontaneous, daily occupation.⁴⁴ Cut through with historic footage of the Minhocão under construction, and in use as a highway now, *Disseminate and Hold* is nevertheless clear its sympathy lies with the occupation. It's a bundle of contradictions, as is the Minhocão in general. If it is an occupation, it's an officially sanctioned one, for it is the municipality of São Paulo that permits it, with the assistance of the police department. And as an occupation, it is curiously oblivious to the other, more permanent occupation of the Minhocão by the homeless underneath the carriageway underlines how far the perception of the Minhocão has shifted in that direction, and how film has been complicit in that shift.⁴⁵ Thanks to these events, and now the extraordinary proliferation of amateur films on social media platforms, it is this version of the Minhocão, the Minhcão as occupation, that predominates as image.

37 <https://www.capital.sp.gov.br/noticia/museu-de-arte-de-rua-tera-intervencoes-artisticas-em-todas-as-regioes-da-cidade>

38 A useful overview of the aesthetics of occupation is Yates McKee, 'Occupy and the End of Socially /engaged Art', e-flux Journal, 72 (April 2016), <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/72/60504/occupy-and-the-end-of-socially-engaged-art/>
39 Florence, "Estréia documental 'Elevado 3.5'."

40 Conversation with João Sodré, São Paulo (April 2022)

41 On the High Line, see R. J. Williams, *The Culture Factory: Architecture and the Contemporary Art Museum* (London: Lund Humphries, 2021), pp. 107–114.

42 Felipe Morozini, interview with the author, 17 March 2022; Athos Comolatti, interview with the author, 5 April 2022. The book is Gil Veloso and Paulo von Poser, *Um Viaduto Chamado Minhocão* (São Paulo: Dedo de Prosa, 2015)

43 Ricardo Senra, 'Após proibição, prefeitura autoriza piscina olímpica no Minhocão', *Folha de São Paulo* (20 March 2014)

44 Jason Farago, "Rosa Barba examines the everyday chaos of São Paulo's 'giant earthworm' highway," *Guardian* (20 September 2016) <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/sep/20/rosa-barba-sao-paulo-biennial-disseminate-and-hold-film>

45 The Minhocão-as-beach dominates its social media presence. See, for example, the social media page of the APM: <https://www.facebook.com/parqueminhocao>

Conclusion

The Minhocão is a curious site. Arguably its undoubted fascination for urbanists has to do with its fundamental lack of resolution. More or less exactly the same structure in 2023 as it was when completed in 1971, it is claimed by several distinct constituencies, without entirely belonging to any of them. It is still during the day a vital traffic artery, carrying some 55,000 cars; at night and weekends it is a park; whatever time of day it is, home to a sizeable population of street dwellers who occupy its undercroft throughout. It has also been the subject of innumerable architectural fantasises, most of which imagine it transformed from its workaday existence into a permanent park. Most of these fantasies present the Minhocão as a zone of pleasure for the well-off, excluding the many marginal populations who currently live in its environs. The Minhocão might not have changed as a physical object, but the way it is understood undoubtedly has; cinema offers a set of parallel texts on its evolution, separate from the discourse of its ostensible authors, the engineers and politicians. Cinema is the place where the Minhocão exceeds its design, firstly as a fearful space, a disciplinary space, the embodiment of the carceral state. In documentary it's then a place that provides shelter for a ragged and eccentric population. Finally, in more recent film, it is where a hedonistic future for the city is played out, in which the on aesthetics of occupation are arguably turned to developmental ends. Finally, along with all of these at times spectacular cinematic renderings, it is also more prosaically often just another place in the city, as it is in *Segundo Tempo* of 2019, a normalised signifier of São Paulo, unspectacular and unremarkable.⁴⁶ That is perhaps most indicative of the city of São Paulo's present attitude to the Minhocão as seen in film. It is now simply just there, the subject of enough care to continue to exist.

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46 Another mainstream use of the Minhocão as a location, not discussed here: Rewald, Rubens, director, *Segundo Tempo*, Miração Filmes/Heartwake Films, 2019, 1 hr., 47 min.

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Unclaiming the natural waterfront landscape: Thessaloniki's manmade east waterfront.

Sotiria Alexiadou, Vassilis Colonas

Abstract:

This article focuses on the transition of the natural landscape of Thessaloniki's east waterfront to the artificial urban landscape that draws a straight line between water and land, while noting the developing rigid homogeneous multistorey buildings as a background image of the city in contrast to the former porosity and architectural variety of the late 19th-early 20th century mansions. The transition is captured either as a commentary on the new landscape or as a memoir of a lost era by cinematographers, such as Takis Kanellopoulos in his film "Parenthesis" (1968) and Theo Angelopoulos in his film "Eternity and a Day" (1998) and photographers of the 1960's such as Socratis Iordanidis and Yiannis Stylianou.

Keywords: waterfront landscape, architecture, Thessaloniki, Takis Kanellopoulos, Theo Angelopoulos.

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Introduction

Pictures and motion pictures taken inside the urban tissue record, intentionally or not, the transformation of a landscape or a built environment.¹ A common theme, which recurs repeatedly,² in a coastal city is the limit between the city and the water; the relationship between the natural and the artificial and their dynamic, like in *Topkapi* capturing Istanbul's waterfront,³ in *Moderato Cantabile* capturing Blaye in southwestern France,⁴ in *Dans la ville blanche* capturing Lisbon's waterfront.⁵ Shooting the transformation and the renewal of the cityscape enriches the perception of urban transformations that otherwise are documented exclusively through plans and maps. Documents on paper imprint the intention before its application, while films capture aspects that have affected their implementation being thus the first to record any new planning activity in the urban space. In the way directors and cinematographers capture it, they add information to the city's data, and emerge as architectural historians!

Films can document features directly or indirectly related to the process.⁶ For example, weather conditions during the construction phases, construction process and equipment, and people involved in the renewal, like workers or administration. After the completion, the new space that welcomes former users and attracts new ones is frequently documented. Information that could not survive in other historical periods is added to the story of the 19th–20th centuries urban renewal.

Heritage value is usually added to places and architecture after a period of time when the image witnessed today, has changed from the filmed one. In the Madrid–New Delhi Document of ICOMOS 2017 about “Approaches to the Conservation of Twentieth Century Cultural Heritage” photography is explicitly mentioned as a recording technique when making changes to twentieth-century heritage places or sites.⁷ In addition, editing techniques in a film or a picture can enrich the storylines of a past, present, and future condition of the same elements of the captured public space.

1 Like in Vittorio De Sica, *Lardi Di Biciclette*, 1948; Federico Fellini, *La Dolce Vita*, 1960.

2 Siegfried Kracauer, *The Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays* (Cambridge, Massachusetts & London: Harvard University Press, 1995), 294. cited in Sertaç Timur Demir, “The City on Screen: A Methodological Approach on Cinematic City Studies,” *CINEJ Cinema Journal* 4, no. 1 (July 13, 2015): 20–36, <https://doi.org/10.5195/cinej.2014.67>.

3 Jules Dassin, *Topkapi*, 1964.

4 Peter Brook, *Moderato Cantabile*, 1960.

5 Alain Tanner, *Dans La Ville Blanche*, 1983.

6 Like the Lumière brothers' were ‘the ripple of leaves stirred by the wind’ was captured on the background of the film. Siegfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960). Cited in Film & Media Studies, *Siegfried Kracauer's Theory of Film*, 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IK_J3h3ZM20.

7 ICOMOS ISC20C, *Approaches to the Conservation of Twentieth Century Cultural Heritage: Madrid–New Delhi Document*, 2017.

This article focuses on the transition of the natural landscape of Thessaloniki's east waterfront to the artificial urban landscape that draws a straight line between water and land, overcoming the natural force of the water towards the land. It also presents the consequences of the urban transformation on the reconstruction of the area.

The research combines the traditional sources of urban and architectural research that rely on masterplans, building designs and building laws while enhancing it with photographic and film documentation that captured or commented on the transformation of the city's eastern coastline.

Thessaloniki's eastern waterfront

The eastern natural waterfront of Thessaloniki was the city's recreation area until the beginning of the post-WW II era. The natural waterfront landscape was framed by impressive mansions of notable citizens of the late 19th–early 20th century, whose gardens were reaching the water.⁸ The original natural landscape of the waterfront was shaped by four natural watercourse streams that flowed towards the Thermaikos Gulf forming small peninsulas and bays. Since 1893, the area was reachable by the tramway that connected the east waterfront part of the city with the historical city center. After the introduction of the tramway, the area became popular for permanent settlement of the wealthiest citizens of the three most important ethno-religious communities of the city: the Christians, the Jews, and the Muslims. Members of each one of them decided to construct their private mansions designed by the most eminent architects in the city; Pietro Arrigoni, Vitaliano Poselli and Xenophon Paionidis. The architecture style of the mansions was eclecticism with some morphological variations with references to the ethnic-religious identity of the owner; neo-renaissance–neoclassical for the Christians, neo-baroque, ottoman arches and domes for the Muslims, and continental European suburban styles (chalets) for the Jews.⁹ Considering the urban scale, most of the mansions that developed between the main street and the waterfront were in the middle of big gardens. Their facades faced both the street and the sea. The vast majority of the waterfront space was part of the mansions' gardens, where the residents had their private pier to access the sea, for recreational¹⁰ or commuting reasons.¹¹ The area was rather dispersed, resembling a garden city with low densities and high urban porosity. The extraordinary private gardens and European style architecture contrasted the historical city's image, which was a dense post-roman-ottoman style city, with limited

8 Vassilis Colonas, *Thessaloniki extra muros: The Iconography of the “Exoches” District (1885–1912)*. (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2014).

9 Colonas.

10 D.K. Vardouniotis, 1894 cited in Colonas, 20.

11 E. Kounio, *50 years later...*, 2006, 13 cited in Sotiria Alexiadou, “Recreation in the coastal zone of Thessaloniki during the interwar period,” *Scientific Annals of Thessaloniki*, no. 8 (2013): 343–77.

modernizing interventions (partial demolition of the city walls, reconstruction after fire etc).¹² After the Great Fire in 1917, which burned down almost half of the traditional nucleus of the city, many citizens who lost their dwellings in the fire relocated to the east, west and north of the city. The eastern part received much more people and thus became a high-density area. The French urban planner Ernest Hébrard and the International City Plan Committee undertook the design of a new plan for the city center and its expansions to the east and west.¹³

The first attempt to rationalize the water landscape was introduced in a new masterplan in 1925, for the east part of the city. Its primary urban strategy was to open the waterfront to the public and "Europeanise" the city's image. This would be accomplished through a landfill that would shape a promenade.¹⁴ The plan was not implemented, but the waterfront zone was developing a rising recreational character. Between the privately owned space leading to the sea, there were some accessible public beaches where *bains-mixtes* were not prohibited.¹⁵ Other leisure facilities on the waterfront plots included bath facilities, the nautical sailing club of Thessaloniki,¹⁶ cafes and music halls.

The construction of an artificial waterfront as a rational straight line was first implemented in the "intra muros" city after demolishing in 1869 its sea walls and providing a series of new building blocks and the new "quay".¹⁷ After World War II and Europe's division into the West and East worlds, Thessaloniki emerged as an important waterfront city for NATO due to its proximity to the socialist countries of the "Iron Curtain". On 20/10/1952, NATO established the "Advanced Command Station of Thessaloniki" which belonged to the headquarters of ground forces of South-Eastern Europe, based in Smyrna. This had an impact on the urban image of Thessaloniki's east waterfront since the new masterplan was conducted in order to provide the possibility of landing the NATO fleet in the event of an attack from the north. The military-naval caused the wide landfill expansion that transformed the natural coastline to a rigid straight one.

¹² Alexandra Karadimou– Yerolympos, *Between East and West. Thessaloniki And Northern Greek Cities at the End of the 19th Century* (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 2004), 136–79.

¹³ Alexandra Karadimou– Yerolympos, *The Reconstruction of Thessaloniki After the Fire of 1917: A Milestone in the History of the City and in the Development of Greek Town Planning*, 2nd ed (Thessaloniki: University Studio Press, 1995).

¹⁴ Sotiria Alexiadou, "Urban reconstruction after World War II: city and architecture in Thessaloniki during the period 1947–1974" (PhD Thesis, University of Thessaly, Department of Architecture, 2022), 117–18, <http://hdl.handle.net/10442/hedi/51975>.

¹⁵ Alexiadou, "Recreation in the coastal zone of Thessaloniki during the interwar period."

¹⁶ Nicoleta Molocha and Anestis Stefanidis, *Sailing Club of Thessaloniki 1933–2008* (Thessaloniki: Municipality of Thessaloniki – Thessaloniki History Center, 2009).

¹⁷ The plan was designed by Rocco Vitali in 1871. Vassilis Colonas, *Greek Architects in the Ottoman Empire 19th – 20th Century* (Athens: Olkos, 2005)



[Fig. 1]

Villas on the waterfront, Thessaloniki, 1915–1917; E. Fysikas Collection

[Fig. 2]

Ch. Denti, The natural waterfront, Thessaloniki, 1916; A. Denis collection

THEORETICAL PAPERS

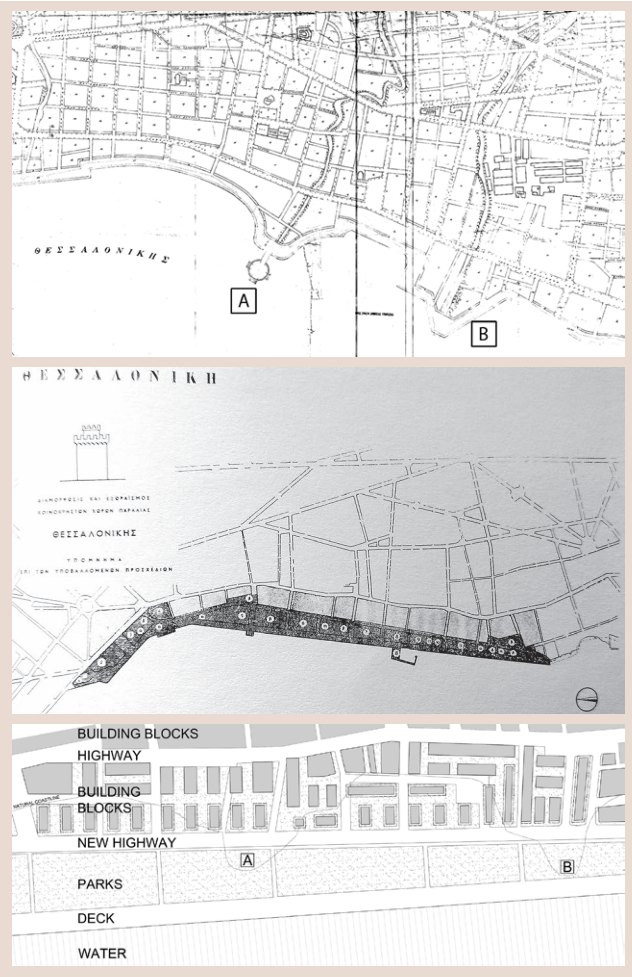
Postwar landfiling took place in two phases. The first part was completed in 1953–1960, reaching half of the distance. The second part of the landfiling started in 1963 and was concluded in the early 1970's. It is important to point out that the project was directly related to the city's construction activity since the backfill material was provided by demolition and excavation for private or public construction works.

The expanded landfill was organized in four parallel areas: the deck– promenade, the parks, and the coastline highway, which were all products of the infilling, leading to the fourth area which was the residential one. On the deck of the new waterfront, five "special" docks for NATO's warships were designed. The docks were frequently used during NATO exercises and the arrivals of American fleet warships, as documented in newsreels and press pictures.¹⁸



18 Alexiadou, "Urban reconstruction after World War II," 15, 119.

[Fig. 3]
Villas on the natural waterfront, Thessaloniki, 1898;
National Map Archives. Polyphylli Maps of Thessaloniki
Large-Scale Depictions of the City, Late 19th - Early
20th Century. Thessaloniki: National Map Archives, 2005



[Fig. 4]
Masterplan, Thessaloniki, 1925; Official Gazette
423/A/29–12–1925

[Fig. 5]
The linear eastern manmade waterfront
and A. Siagas' study of uses' distribution of
communal areas of the waterfront 1960–1961;
Holevas, Nikos. The Architect Angelos I. Siagas,
1899–1987. Athens: Papsotiriou, 1992, p.99

[Fig. 6]
The linear waterfront and the landfill. The
dotted line, [A] and [B] represent the previously
natural waterfront and the two streams,
Thessaloniki, 1962; Official Gazette 161/Δ/10–
12–1962; edited by Sotiria Alexiadou, 2022

During this era, it was not just the city's waterfront that would change, but most of the old buildings of the city would be replaced, through "antiparochi model", with high-rise multistorey buildings, also known as "polykatoikia". The "antiparochi model" took advantage of the increased "permitted building heights", since a two-three storey building could be replaced by up to an eight-storey building. The landowner would earn a few apartments in the new building that could be sold or rented, and so would the contractor.¹⁹ The city's reconstruction and the huge rhythm of building activity were presented in many films of the Greek popular cinema of the 1960s with praises or criticism.

The mansions with the gardens were a product of a past glamorous era. The heirs or the public administration handling individual properties were not interested in preserving those houses that needed a lot of money to maintain and upgrade. Further, the new masterplan of the eastern area, between the boulevard of the old tram line and the new seafront highway, applied modern urban planning principles to the new building blocks. For the first time in Greece, the building block was "opened". The buildings would develop into linear building units providing accessible public space in between, following the recommendations of the Athens' Charter concerning "Recreation".²⁰ The implementation of the plan resulted in a relatively rigid homogenous image of high-rise residential buildings. This sense has been amplified even more, since the buildings should follow a common general building regulation and were constructed using the same method and materials. The in-between space was quickly occupied by private cars. The former urban porosity and architectural style variety of the mansions period shrank down to the minimum due to the new building regulations.

Simultaneously a vast urban space empty of official uses was ready to be reoccupied and reintroduced to the public. The masterplanned parks, initially, had no specific use but they were necessary from the military point of view. A local architect, head of "The Deanery of National Landscape and Cities", Angelos Siagas, proposed three variations for the indicative arrangement and landscaping of the common areas from the White Tower to the landfill's edge (1960–1961). Since, he was against the city's dense construction, referring to the apartments of the new building blocks as "rabbit holes", he emphasized the citizens' need to have open access to open vast spaces and parks, following the recommendations of the Athens' Charter concerning

"Recreation".²¹ In his proposals for distribution of uses, he set up a sports center, a playground, cafes, a nursing school, parking space and, inside vast green areas, he proposed kiosks and semi-outdoor cafes-bars. Furthermore, he kept in place the facilities of the city's Nautical-Sailing Club. Moreover, he set the location of the city's "Hilton's style" modern touristic hotel.²²

The architect Nikolaos Regos, director of the municipality's architectural department, would evolve the plans of Angelos Siagas and designed the parks of Nea Paralia (1961–1962). The parks and public amenities were developed in low density and with a minimal design approach, unifying the green area. A major landmark of the new waterfront image was the touristic hotel designed by the internationally renowned architectural office *Doxiades Associates*. It was the only building built in the parks' area interrupting the seaview to all building blocks behind it. Its construction period was rather long (1958–1971) due to location controversies and construction difficulties. The hotel formed a powerful landmark of the international style architecture on the waterfront of Thessaloniki.

Commenting the new landscape in Film

Cinematographers included the change of Thessaloniki's waterfront in their films as a commentary on the new landscape. Cinematographers, like Takis Kanellopoulos in his movie "Parenthesis" (1968), tried to express how the modern landscape reshaped relationships. He used that vast empty space as an allegory. Kanellopoulos in a realistic way filmed the border between water and land providing both its natural and "constructed" versions. The film storyline is divided into a memory of an accidental visit of the female protagonist in Thessaloniki and a "constructed memory" of her return to the city. The natural water limit was related to the protagonist's memory, while the artificial water limit enhanced the protagonist's "constructed memory". Kanellopoulos narrated his story mostly providing images of the villas' architecture. All the buildings and facilities shown by the director were still inhabited and in use, with no need for revival or set design. Although the urban -building- change was massive, he chose not to emphasize it. He just offered a glimpse of a multistorey building's construction site in a street view of a series of old mansions in the foreground, and the transformation from the villas to the "polykatoikia" in the far. The filming locations expanded to the coastline of Thermaikos Gulf and captured spaces that no longer exist today, such as the piers that enter the sea, some tavernas on the waterfront and the kiosks near the White Tower that would serve the sea transportation. Thus, the film becomes not only an artistic event but an archival source for scholars and searchers as well.

19 Further study on the 'antiparochi model': Ioanna Theocharopoulou, *Builders, Housewives, and the Construction of Modern Athens* (London: Black Dog Publishers, 2017); Konstantina Kalfa and Lefteris Theodosis, "Dealing with the Commonplace: Constantinos A. Doxiadis and the Zygos Technical Company," *ABE Journal [Online]*, 2022, <http://journals.openedition.org/abe/13699>.

20 "35. All residential areas should be provided with sufficient open space to meet reasonable needs for recreation and active sports for children, adolescents and adults." IV International Congress for Modern Architecture, "Charter of Athens," The Getty Conservation Institute, 1933.

21 "37. The new open spaces should be used for well-defined purposes: children's playgrounds, schools, youth clubs and other community buildings closely related to housing. 39. These should be laid out as public parks, forests, sports grounds, stadiums, beaches, etc." IV International Congress for Modern Architecture.

22 Nikos Holevas, *The Architect Angelos I. Siagas, 1899–1987* (Athens: Papasotiriou, 1992), 88–89, 99–100.



In general, he filmed on the border facing directly the waterfront taking advantage of the movement of the waves to identify the narrator's emotions and providing a "clean" point of view (without landmarks) for the watchers. His most emblematic shots were the parallel zones of the deck, the water, the horizon line and the sky in which movement is represented either by nature like waves, wind and clouds, or by the actors performing with minimal movements, or with the swarm of cyclists that appear in the "constructed memory". Even though the cyclists were not a realistic event, the new deck was widely used by cyclists. In this way, Kanellopoulos structured the documentation of a new use of the manmade waterfront. The contrast between movement and stillness enforced his narration and brought into the foreground the vastness of the new deck as an allegory for his story. He only set one film shot by the waterfront that would not picture the sea. In this shot, the camera captured the construction of the touristic hotel of Thessaloniki, designed by *Doxiades Associates*. The crane of the construction site, the tall trees, and the repetition of the tall lighting pillars on the snowed landscape narrated the vastness of the new deck. Simultaneously the shot deepened the horizon line for the viewer, representing a tunnel down to the "constructed memory" lane.

[Fig. 7-9]

Takis Kanellopoulos, Film stills, *Parenthesis*, Thessaloniki, 1968



Two renowned photographers captured the transition of the coastline from different points of view. Sokratis Iordanidis tried to capture the experience of "the altering site". He would depict the transformation of the landscape and the buildings in various stages. He carefully included both in his frames, commenting on the parallel timeline of their conversion even if their production mechanism derived from different directions. The landscape was a top-down intervention, while the buildings developed as a bottom-up initiative following specific rules and addressing a common urban-architectural idea. In his two pictures documenting the time after the complement of the first and second phases of the landfilling, he captured the coastline via aerial photography, amplifying the vast new land and the disruption of the urban tissue.

Yiannis Stylianou recorded vanishing, progressing and emerging uses of the waterfront. He captured the carnages contraposing two products of different eras placed on the seaside landscape. In his shot, he placed boats and shells in the foreground, while the background was filled with the image of a modern "polykatoikia" on the edge of the shore. The multistorey building was the new "ship" that brought along modernity and the modern lifestyle of the post-war reconstruction era. In another series of shots, he created a juxtaposition between a fleet of boats in front of a fleet of "polykatoikias", the first facing the past of the beach coastline and the second facing the future of the deck extension. He also walked on the new deck with his camera in hand, capturing the new life of social life patterns and the continuation of activities emerging by the modern waterfront. In his pictures, one can see fishermen on the deck and no longer in their boats, couples sitting on the waterfront, rather than going in a barcarole, and young people who walk on the deck gazing at the old city, from a vantage point previously accessible only by sea.

A memoir of a lost era in Film

Thirty years later (1998) Theo Angelopoulos in his film "Eternity and a Day" in a poetic mood, recreated the previous landscape of the natural waterfront to highlight the complete interruption and the end of the previous era. The movie's storyline moves back and forth between the past and the present film-time. In the scenes of the past storyline, the landscape and the villa were pictured full of life, while in the present storyline, the villa is on its last survival day, similar to the protagonist's life. In the movie, the lines announcing the villa's demolition and the excuse for this act were: "Son-in-law: *We sold the beach house. Tomorrow, I hand the keys and the bulldoze will take over.* Daughter: *Father, what should we do? It's only two of us in a huge house. The house is "broken" by the earthquakes and surrounded by multistorey buildings*". Angelopoulos would only offer a short glimpse of the neighboring "polykatoikia", commenting on the future end of the villa's era. The Emanuel Salem villa (by architect Xenophon Paionidis, 1906) that is pictured

[Fig. 10]

Sokratis Iordanidis, Thessaloniki, 1960s; © Sokratis Iordanidis
Archive/ MOMus-Museum of Photography Thessaloniki



[Fig. 11-12]

Yannis Stylianou, Thessaloniki, 1960s; © Yannis Stylianou
Archive/ MOMus-Museum of Photography Thessaloniki

[Fig. 13]

Yannis Stylianou, Thessaloniki, 1960s; © Yannis Stylianou
Archive/ MOMus-Museum of Photography Thessaloniki

in the film as the protagonist's home was already abandoned and empty at the time of filming. Its backyard had direct access to the natural waterfront. The house was refurbished in order to shoot the internal shots while the external shots were edited to recreate the vicinity of the villa to the past natural waterfront of Thessaloniki. The villa didn't have the future that Angelopoulos foresaw; it is not demolished, though its current preservation condition is rather poor.

Angelopoulos captured the view of the new coastline as seen from the historical city center "quay" on a foggy day, where only the straight line of the deck can be seen, together with the vague image of the touristic hotel. In another shot, he depicted the eastern part of the waterfront as a very vivid space, with people using and occupying the vast openness displayed by the 1960s seafront's designers. The modern inclusive space that offered free access to the seafront to everyone allowed the director to create multiple background happenings. He occupied the whole area, bringing into the foreground the main action of the scene, while in the background, on an open-accessed waterfront promenade, strangers could appear and interact. By contrast, in the protagonist's memory, it is only his family members who appear on the waterfront, accessing it only through the villa's garden, enhancing privacy and denying access to the urban waterfront afforded in the previous era.

It can be supported that Angelopoulos had Kanellopoulos' film as a reference since several sets share common characteristics. For example, the direct horizontal shots of the dancing couple on a wooden deck, and the parallel to the sea waterfront long table with a woman seated on the left top chair. Some shots appear in remarkable variations, like the woman facing the sea instead of the camera and the cyclists that don't move in a tight circle, but in an extended circle on the "intra muros" city's waterfront. It is noteworthy that the female protagonist of Kanellopoulos, Ms Alexandra Ladikou (b. 1933), is also participating in Angelopoulos' film, appearing in the memories part of the film, like returning to the city where she never returned in "Parenthesis".



[Fig. 14]
Vassilis Colonas, The Emanuel Salem villa by Xenophon Paionidis
built in 1906, Thessaloniki, 1980s; V. Colonas Collection



[Fig. 15]
Theo Angelopoulos, The Emanuel Salem, film still, *Eternity and a Day*, Thessaloniki, 1998



[Fig. 16-17]
Theo Angelopoulos, Film stills, *Eternity and a Day*,
Thessaloniki, 1998

[Fig. 18]
Theo Angelopoulos, Populated manmade waterfront,
Film still, *Eternity and a Day*, Thessaloniki, 1998

Regarding the background formed by the high-rise building development that followed the construction of the new quay, Kanellopoulos turned his camera towards the sea without any reference to the newly built waterfront behind him. He admired the openness of the city to its horizon and Mount Olympus, but avoided filming the “polykatoikia” buildings, although this intervention offered the possibility to contemplate this unique panorama to all inhabitants of the city and not only to the privileged, the heirs of the demolished, in their majority, old mansions. He admired the modern aspect that this new seafront gave the city, but he denied the effect of the urban strategies that made it possible. Angelopoulos, on the other hand, after realizing the huge scale of this “progressive” development and the irreparable loss of the *Campagnes*’ image for those arriving from the sea, tried through the magic of his lens to restore the once direct access of the villas to the sea, although, in his film, this access is limited to the owners of one of these remaining villas.

Twenty years later, after the refurbishment of the east coastline of Thessaloniki by the architectural firm *P. Nikiforidis– B. Cuomo Architects*, the photographer Yorgis Yerolymbos captured the vividness of the new interventions, focusing on sports, culture, and art installations (Zoggolopoulos, *Umbrellas*, Paul Vasiliades, *Little Moon on the Coast*.) Through pictures full of people enjoying their walking and sports activities on the waterfront promenade, continuous parks and gardens that provided citizens with the precious open space and natural zone that Angelos Siagas was in favor of, Yerolymbos showed the parallel between the deck and water, horizon and sky, as Kanellopoulos and Angelopoulos did, but he turned also his camera to the opposite side. He captured the background of the coastline, which was formed by the multistorey buildings, as a trademark of the contemporary city.

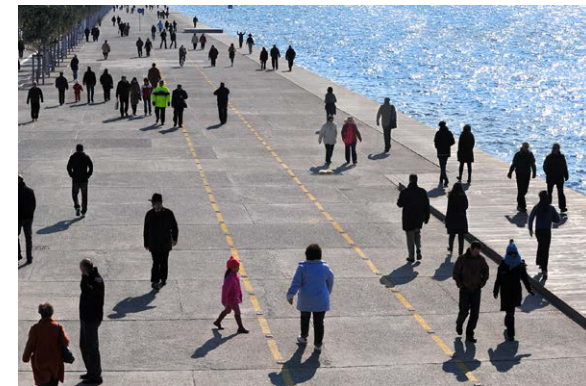
Conclusions

Thessaloniki’s east waterfront came across a significant transition during the 20th century. It turned from a natural coastline on which housing and leisure activities took place into an artificial linear deck with a specific urban development combining top–town and bottom–up directions of construction emergence. As Jean Roudaut mentioned for Thessaloniki’s transformation: “The construction of the contemporary city emerges as if nothing was there before [...] the contemporary city doesn’t expand the former one, but it cancels it.”²³

Since the city, as Lefebvre states, is a collective being and social organism,²⁴ to analyze it, awareness and documentation of the socioeconomic and political background of the “built– environment” added layers of historical, technical, and ecological dimensions to the city’s waterfront.

²³ Jean Roudaut, *Trois Villes Orientées* (Paris: Gallimard, 1967), 104.

²⁴ Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities* (Malden & Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1996), 95. Cited in Demir, “The City on Screen.”



[Fig. 19–21]

Yorgis Yerolymbos, Thessaloniki new water seafront, Thessaloniki, 2009;
www.yerolymbos.com/architecture/thessaloniki-new-water-seafront/;
 © Yorgis Yerolymbos

Through a different approach, the documentation through photography and film enhanced the understanding of urban transformations by adding layers of information in various dimensions, while adding the intangible individual perceptions of the new site.

While Kanellopoulos opted for an “eclectic” late neorealism and Angelopoulos, some thirty years later, for a romantic recreation of an ideal –lost for the eternity– past, both however, have not simply “added new emotions, colors and sounds to the city while portraying it”²⁵. Within the framework of their artistic freedom to act beyond any rules, they literally changed the urban history of the city and in a way, they became its new “city planners”.

The pictures and films presented in this article are already part of the city's cultural heritage. Although different approaches are used, the background or sometimes the foreground, remains the cityscape and its waterfront. Multiple film resources fragmentarily captured the city's waterfront at various moments in its history.²⁶ Equally numerous photographers fragmentarily captured the transformation of the waterfront formally or informally. Unfortunately, unlike other forms of art and literature, films were not considered as a documentation of equal value until recently, thus, many private collections like Marinos Charalampous' Super 8 films of the 50s and 60s were lost.²⁷ Researchers of various fields should discover these moving documents, study them, and retrieve previously ignored information from them. Research on architecture, city and territory could benefit significantly from the study of this recent cultural heritage, “unlocking” the care for the landscape.

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25 Demir, “The City on Screen.”

26 For example: Yiannis Daliannides, *Christina*, 1960; Yiannis Grigoriou, *The Shuffler*, 1967.

27 Colonas, “Thessaloniki Extra Muros”, 430.

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Foz Velha: The creation of an image of permanencies and transformations

João Gadelho Novais Tavares

Abstract:

The present proposal uses the television documentary *Foz Velha* (1975)¹, from the series *As Pedras e o Homem* (1973–1976), produced by RTP (Rádotelevisão Portuguesa²), as a means to understand the image that is linked to the territory of Foz Velha, in Foz do Douro (Porto).

Aware of RTP's will to promote culture and its ability to condition the viewer's perception of a certain theme, object or space, we intend to analyse this phenomenon at Foz Velha in the aforementioned documentary, to which contribute the script, the selected shots, and the chosen soundtrack. This intermediality helps determining the sensorial and affective experience of the space.

It is noteworthy that the study of this urban area has been focused on the architectural and urbanistic characterization that occurred during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, associated with the character of *villeggiatura* inherent to Foz, lacking a holistic view of the transformations that occurred from the second half of the twentieth century and the perception that is being linked to it.

In this sense, the documentary will be analysed through the identification of the places filmed and the survey of associated architectural, urban and social characteristics, as these are pointed out both visually and discursively throughout the documentary, as well as considerations, which are made regarding what is considered to be authentic as opposed to contemporary practices.

The existing heterogeneity of Foz Velha will also be characterised through the examination of existing typologies, the materials used, and the ornamental elements of the façades, as well as the size of the plots and urban transformations, displayed at different moments in the documentary. In this way, relationships can be established with the different moments of paradigm change in Foz.

With the association of Foz Velha with the idea of an old town, marked by a devout community, with strong links to fishing practices, living a simple and serene domestic life, the documentary makes it possible to trace the profile of the area under study in the 1970s–80s, a period marked by radical urban change, understanding the buildings existing at the time and identifying typologies, materials and elements used. Through comparison with the present day, it is also possible to assess subsequent constructions and interventions in the buildings.

¹ *Foz Velha*. Directed by José Caria. RTP, 1975. Arquivos RTP. <arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/foz-velha/>.

² It is the Portuguese public television broadcasting.

The research also allows us to understand the perception of contemporary buildings as a poor quality architectural conception that de-characterizes the territory, justifying that «it is hurting the harmony of Foz Velha with awful buildings that mean nothing and care little or nothing to conserve the trait of local architecture»³ [00:12:43 – 00:12:58].

Keywords : Foz Velha; Urban perception; RTP documentary ; territorial characterisation

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Introduction

The urban landscape is something mutable, it is in constant transformation, at the mercy of the satisfaction of new social, demographic, and aesthetic needs. These vary according to the period in which the urban core is developed, as well as being dependent on the type of occupation, which results in a palimpsest, an overlapping of various chronological layers, with various artistic cultures and principles.

Currently, we are witnessing a growing investigation of visual sources, such as illustrations, illustrated postcards, photographs, or television documentaries, elements that perpetuate the testimony of a place in a certain period. These sources are thus essential to the understanding of urban evolution, allowing the comparison between records from different times and their confrontation with written sources and bibliography.

In this sense, the present work intends to focus on the urbanism of Foz Velha (Porto), through the analysis of the television documentary *Foz Velha* (1975), from the series *As Pedras e o Homem*, available in the RTP Archive, trying concomitantly to distinguish the *image* that is linked to this nucleus.

It should be noted that, although this urban area has been studied in the field of art historiography, architecture, and geography, it lacks an up-to-date holistic view of the urban transformations that took place in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in the 1970–80s, characterised by the construction of buildings with different volumes compared to the pre-existing ones. Therefore, the aforementioned documentary is a primary source for its coetaneous recording of this period.

³ Free translation from Portuguese, as the following direct quotes along the article.

In this way, we will seek to particularize the different moments of Foz Velha, through the analysis of the documentary, directed by José Caria, and subsequently identify the places filmed and map the view cones; analyse the characteristics of the building, such as typology, lot size, number of levels and elements of *venustas*; and understand the urban changes that occurred. It is also proposed to inquire about the production context of the documentary, whether it will correspond to new socio-cultural matrices adventitious of the post-April 25 or whether it will have specific objectives towards the viewer. We also intend to analyse which *image* of Foz Velha is transmitted, which elements they choose to represent and which resources are used, paying attention to both the script, written by Luís de Pina, and the soundtrack. Throughout the text, allusions will be made to the timing [hh:mm:ss] of the frame or shot of the documentary⁴ where a certain object of analysis is found, including narrative excerpts, since the referred documentary is available in the online repository of the RTP Archive, thus valorising the digitalization of the filmic material and its public availability.

Several authors have dedicated research to Foz do Douro, allowing contributions to the theme in the area of urbanism, architecture and local practices. In this sense, we point out Nuno Moura (2009), regarding the analysis of the phases of development of this territory; José A. Rio Fernandes (1987) regarding the characterization of the territory, offering data on the demographic evolution and the occupation of urban space; Francisco Barata Fernandes, allowing the analysis of the existing buildings; and Maria Filomena Carvalho (1996), referring to the phenomenon of *villegiature* on the seafront of Porto. Also of note is the article by Marisa Pereira Santos (2019), concerning the Steps of the Passion of Christ in Foz do Douro and the respective procession, simultaneously allowing the contact with a methodology of film record analysis. About RTP in the period of analysis, we denote Madalena Soares dos Reis (2008) and Vasco Hogan Teves (1998; 2007), enabling the understanding of the changes that occurred and consequent adaptations.

In this sense, this research uses methodological principles explained in the doctoral thesis of Hugo Barreira (2017) concerning the survey and visualization of moving images, their dissection and organization of the information collected in analytical sheets, as well as the analysis of the various components present in the image construction, namely the script, the music and its articulation with the points of view, allowing the crossing of the analysis of images with the discourse analysis. It is also applied the methodology of Marisa Pereira Santos' article (2019) regarding the identification of the filming locations and their comparative analysis with contemporaneity. For the perception of the several chronological layers, of the permanencies and alterations in the urbanism of Foz Velha, we sought to identify the several filming locations,

enabling the mapping of cones of view and subsequent comparison of the documentary, primary source in this research, with the present time, through visits to the locations and their visualization in the Street View functionality of *Google Maps*, since it provides the observation of moments captured previously, but also comparing with photographs and other visual sources. Given the unequivocal nature of the music as a conditioning element for the perception of the images and the conventionalism of the music at the time, the *Shazam* application was used to identify the soundtrack used, namely *Orchestral Suite No. 1, BWV. 1066*, by Bach and the Mozartian 2nd movement of *Piano Sonata No. 18, K. 576*; *Rondo in A minor, K. 511*; and 1st movement of *Piano Sonata No. 8, K. 310*.

1. Film record: context and production

The documentary television series *As Pedras e o Homem*, broadcast by Radiotevisão Portuguesa (RTP) between 1973 and 1976, produced either by the ENSAIO team (1973–1974), or by Jaime Silva (1974–1975), José Manuel Tocha (1975), Sérgio Ferreira (1975), João Roque (1975), or José Caria (1975), as can be seen in the programmes available in the RTP Archive in the collection *As Pedras e o Homem* (1973–1976), aims disseminating the Portuguese built heritage, alternating between the contemporary, with programmes dedicated to Cassiano Branco or to working-class neighbourhoods, and the historical past, resorting to the artistic culture of the Romanesque or Baroque, e. g.. Initially, the series is indicated as being written by João Martins, and from 23 August 1975, with the episode *Paço do Lumiar: a Quinta dos Azulejos*, it is indicated as a production of the Planigrafe Workers (RTP 1973–1976), when João Martins joined the company⁵. From this date onwards, Luís de Pina or Fernando Gonçalves also began to be mentioned as being responsible for the text of the various episodes.

It is worth noting that from 1972 onwards a heated debate about television as a public service and the concession of radio and television stations began, advocated by Francisco Pinto Balsemão⁶, in a period in which RTP had the broadcasting monopoly. In October 1972, a new model map of RTP programmes⁷ is also introduced, with pro-regime political goals⁸, under the guidance of Ramiro Valadão, with particular attention to the department of cultural programmes, in which intellectuals, mostly associated with the left, are introduced⁹. Cultural programmes remained, such as *Se bem me lembro*, by Vitorino Nemésio, and new ones debuted, *TV Palco*

5 Cf. Carlos Melo Ferreira, "Conversa com José Nascimento", *Jornal dos Encontros Cinematográficos*, 2011, 5.

6 Cf. Vasco Hogan Teves, "RTP chega mais longe" in *RTP 50 anos de história*, coord. Vasco Hogan Teves (RTP, 2007), 7.

7 The programming maps are responsible for giving a certain meaning to programmes, defining the very service of the channel where it is broadcast by deprecating the making of choices. Cf. Madalena Soares dos Reis, "A programação televisiva revolucionária RTP 1974–1975" (Master diss., University of Lisbon, 2008) 7.

8 *Ibid.*, 23.

9 *Ibid.*, 27.

4 *As Pedras e o Homem: Foz Velha*, Real. José Caria, Programas. Arquivo RTP, Portugal, 1975, 20 min. arquivos.rtp.pt/conteudos/foz-velha/

or *Movimento*, of a more informative nature, or *Impacto*, more documental, while ethnographic programmes remained active, of which *Povo que canta* stands out¹⁰.

With the 25th of April 1974, RTP should respond to the new principles of the MFA, following the premises of freedom of information and cultural promotion¹¹. At the same time, Planígrafe witnessed an internal struggle, the result of a greater political awareness of the team, leading to the rupture of the film team¹². In the period that followed, there was an adaptation of the programming to a new television, resulting from the revolution, not exempt from the Portuguese political and social tensions, even indicating the time that each genre should have in the programming¹³.

Thus, new programmes dedicated to Portuguese society, history and culture were created with a new discourse, such as *Escrever é lutar*, *A gente que nós somos*, *Das artes e ofícios* and *A história é feita pelo povo*, with a syndicalist and left-wing tendency. However, *As Pedras e o Homem*, which had more broadcasts¹⁴, as well as *Ensaio*, *Museu Aberto* and *Se bem me lembro* were kept on air, as they fit into the new vision for RTP and the will of cultural promotion of the viewers, being able to explore new themes now free of censorship¹⁵. Despite the existing freedom, *As Pedras e o Homem* will maintain its thematic register, even during the PREC and the predominance of the MFA in the RTP board and the understanding of this as a means of propaganda¹⁶, by portraying the main national monuments, architectural languages used and villages or towns considered *traditional*, without there being an exacerbated politicised stamp in the discourse, but rather a colloquial tone, directed towards the masses, which has been evident since the beginning of the series and which also suited the new RTP, directed towards the people¹⁷.

"Regarding cultural promotion, the [post-April 25] discourse resembles that of Valadão [during the Estado Novo], [...] when he said that he did not make television programmes for the 'snobs of Chiado'. The idea is total connection to the people, although what the 'people' are is not clarified [...]"¹⁸

10 Cf. Vasco Hogan Teves, "RTP chega mais longe", 6

11 Cf. Reis, "A programação televisiva revolucionária", 47, 52–53.

12 Cf. Carlos Melo Ferreira, "Conversa com José Nascimento", 5.

13 Cf. Madalena Soares dos Reis, "A programação televisiva revolucionária", 51–52.

14 In 1973 three programmes are presented, contrasting with the broadcasting of thirteen programmes between May and December 1974, from which point it will be mainly shown bi-monthly until its suspension in June 1976.

15 Ibid., 55, 61, 68–69.

16 Ibid., 91–98.

17 These *people*, whom the political and intellectual elites intended to address and *teach how to live in a democracy*, were made up of rural workers, labourers and poorly educated citizens. Ibid., 110.

18 Ibid., 76.

The episode of *As Pedras e o Homem* dedicated to Foz Velha¹⁹ was aired on the 13th December 1975, after the 25th November 1975 and the end of PREC, a period marked by a greater stability in RTP and the end of programming as a vehicle for ideological propaganda²⁰.

In June 1976, the programme was suspended, which may be related to the inauguration of Carlos Cruz as Programme Director, aiming for a new programming map that would reflect a more *Portuguese television*, since he considered it to be a target of excessive foreign influence, and more accessible to non-urban layers²¹.

2. Analysis of the documentary (images and speech)

The documentary begins with the opening credits of the programme, accompanied by the *Orchestral Suite No. 1, BWV. 1066*, by Bach, and then successive shots of the waves breaking at Foz, interspersed with details of the sculpture *O Homem do Leme*, by Américo Gomes, and *O Salva-vidas*, by Henrique Moreira. This is followed by fixed shots, panoramic views and zoom-outs, in an increasing cadence until the frame [00:01:36], in which a shot of the arrival of a ship in Barra do Douro is fixed.



19 *As Pedras e o Homem: Foz Velha*, Real. José Caria, Programas. Arquivo RTP, Portugal, 1975

20 Cf. Madalena Soares dos Reis, "A programação televisiva revolucionária", 105.

21 Cf. Vasco Hogan Teves, *História da Televisão em Portugal* (Lisboa: Ed. TV Guia, 1998), 234–235.

[Fig. 1]

Entrance of a fishing ship in Barra do Douro, 1975 (Source: Arquivo RTP. Caria, José, dir. *As Pedras e o Homem: Foz Velha* [documentary, digital]. Portugal: RTP, 1975, 00:01:53)

The programme starts with a panoramic view of the Cantareira area, moving on to a zoom-out of its houses [00:03:41], seen from the current R. Duarte Barbosa²², and then transfers the viewer's gaze to the Church of S. João da Foz [00:04:12] in a panoramic view. In the following moments details of the church's façade are recorded [00:04:16–00:05:02], which is considered to be *simple*, "without the baroque paradoxes of other northern times" [00:04:45–00:04:50]. He also registers the surroundings, being visible the spires of the *Casa dos Sousa Guedes* [00:05:08], in R. do Passeio Alegre, and the houses between this street, Largo da Igreja and R. das Laranjeiras.

Later, the camera's gaze captures R. Adro da Foz [00:05:41] and R. de Montebelo [00:06:10], paying attention to the architectural characterization of the buildings, with the narrator pointing to "all the architectural contrast of the village, the cut of its roofs in successive visual plans, the labyrinth of its streets, alleys, squares and lanes, pavements, walls and lamps" [00:05:50–00:06:04], then focusing on a group of children playing between R. Adro da Foz and Largo da Igreja [00:06:25].

The documentary continues through R. das Laranjeiras in a panoramic view by the wall until it comes across the Passo da Feira [00:06:56], one of the Steps of the Passion of Christ, then wandering through R. das Motas [00:07:07] and R. Padre Luís Cabral, where it briefly fixes the Passo do Alto da Vila [00:07:25], resuming fixed shots of architectural details of R. das Motas.

After that, we are transported to the corner between R. da Quinta and R. de Montebelo [00:08:17], to then be presented a *popular dwelling* in Foz Velha [00:08:48], a theme that will be resumed later, however taking the opportunity to introduce in the narrative elements considered characteristic of the houses in Foz Velha, such as the vases on the windows, the light wall surfaces, the reddish brown tiles, and the abundant vegetation [00:07:54–00:08:06].

The following moments are dedicated to the Chapel of Nossa Senhora da Conceição (Immaculate Conception of Mary) and the surrounding houses, capturing various details of the façades, captured both from the churchyard and the square facing R. Diogo Botelho, as well as the crosses on the ridges and the cross in front, particularly in the Dutch shot [00:09:17–00:09:35].

In successive shots he focuses on residential architecture of the so-called traditional *Foz Velha's family* [00:10:05], filming their daily life from the backyard, a woman doing domestic chores assisted by her children. In Luís de Pina's text we witness for the first time a clear tendency in favour of what is considered to be *authentic* to the detriment of contemporary architectural forms and urban thought.

22 Currently this view is partially obstructed by skyscrapers.



"On the other hand, Foz lives next door to the countryside and part of its houses have vegetable gardens, backyards and gardens that serve as a tradition between stone and earth. Here there is none of the hatred of plants, trees, or nature, in sum, that characterises the dubious urbanizations of our days." [00:09:45–00:10:05]

After these shots, the camera focuses on recording the sinuous streets of Foz Velha, contrasting with the subsequent shots of the more regular urbanization of R. Padre Luís Cabral [00:11:03] and R. da Bela [00:11:11], detailing architecturally through tilts, fixed shots and a Dutch shot "the truth and the picturesque of this fishing village, and even the contrast between the houses of the rich and the houses of the poor [that] only hurts the eye once or twice" [00:11:37–00:11:50].

In the immediate moment, we are led to the Passo de Santa Anastácia, in R. Padre Luís Cabral, and the adjoining buildings, closing the shot with a group of children, interspersed with a view of the toponymy sign "Rua de Santa Anastácia" [00:12:27].

[Fig. 2]

View of the so-called traditional Foz Velha's family, 1975 (Source: Arquivo RTP. Caria, José, dir. *As Pedras e o Homem: Foz Velha* [documentary, digital]. Portugal: RTP, 1975, 00:10:05)

The following minutes are dedicated to modern constructions, trying to emphasize the contrast between *new* and *old*, what is considered *authentic* and de-characterizer, starting the tour in R. da Cerca through a panoramic view from no. 422 to no. 526 [00:12:33–00:13:06], passing to the Esplanada do Castelo, with the new rental apartment buildings in the surrounding area of the Castelo da Foz and pre-existing houses of the R. do Passeio Alegre, closing the plan in the *Torres Vermelhas* of Pasteleira [00:13:50]. Later on, images of reference elements of this Atlantic front area are captured, from the Castelo da Foz (with several detail shots), to the Avenida Dom Carlos I [00:14:41] and the Monument to Raúl Brandão [00:14:45].

"But today, unfortunately, a low-level architectural conception is hurting the harmony of Foz Velha with horrible buildings that mean nothing and care little or nothing to conserve the trace of the local architecture." [00:12:43–00:12:58]

The documentary ends with shots of boats in Barra do Douro, followed by recreational fishermen at the Cantareira jetty and shots of the sculptures *O Salva-Vidas* and *O Homem do Leme*, which are located in Av. Brasil, interspersed with shots of the breaking waves, closing in a fade-out of the sunset in Foz.

3. Changes and permanencies of Foz Velha

The documentary episode under analysis exposes two contrasting realities of the same geographical and temporal space. If, on the one hand, it shows a Foz Velha of single-family dwellings on a few levels, with adjoining yards and gardens, along narrow and sinuous streets; on the other hand, it captures reinforced concrete architecture, built at height and in aesthetic and volumetric dissonance with the preceding adjoining buildings.

It should be noted that the Couto de S. João da Foz, belonging to the Benedictine Monastery of Santo Tirso, develops throughout the middle and modern age, benefiting from the commercial dynamism of Oporto, with the settlement of a fishing community at low level, around the Cantareira and near the river, despite the existence of houses and rural property at high level, "already on the way to the fields of Pasteleira and Lordelo" [00:09:13–00:09:16], and in the nucleus of Nevogilde, a character that will remain until the dawn of the 19th century²³. Foz was then structured by rural dwellings, to the east, with simple façades and facing the vegetable gardens and green spaces in the back of the lots; and by buildings of greater exterior appearance, to the west²⁴, which would correspond to the current dwellings of the mercantilist

bourgeoisie, developed between the 15th and 17th centuries, spreading between the Castelo da Foz and the R. Alto da Vila and R. Padre Luís Cabral, to the high level, and the R. Bela and Cantareira, at low level²⁵.



These bourgeois single-family dwellings, with two to three levels, are set on irregular square plots, and may have one or two fronts, the latter being more common in the Foz do Douro, with the possibility of integrating a patio. Their main façade may be typologically defined by two or three openings (windows, balconies or doors) per floor, as opposed to the more simple and economical rear façade. In terms of materials, granite masonry on the façades, wood, and clay stand out, with the additional floors, built in the 18th and 19th centuries, being mainly in wood and rammed earth. In terms of functionality, the ground floor could have a small workshop or shop, while the upper levels were intended for housing²⁶.

From this period onwards there was a change in the paradigm of Foz, enhanced by the fashion for bathing, which had been growing under the influence of the British community since the end of the 18th century, making it a centre of *villeggiatura* for the aristocracy and economic elites of Oporto and the north of the country²⁷, resulting in urban expansion to the north and along

23 Cf. Nuno Moura, "A Foz do Douro: evolução urbana" (Master diss., University of Porto, 2009), 74–75.

24 Cf. J. M. Pereira Oliveira, "O espaço urbano do Porto: condições naturais de desenvolvimento" (PhD diss., University of Coimbra, 1973), 362.

25 Cf. Francisco Barata Fernandes, *Transformação e permanência na habitação portuense: as formas da casa na forma da cidade* (Porto: Faculty of Architecture of University of Porto, 1999), fig.1.

26 Ibid., 120–125.

27 Cf. Maria Filomena Carvalho, "Arquitectura e Villeggiatura na Foz do Douro (1850–1910)" (Master diss., University of Porto, 1996), 38, 52.

[Fig. 3]

Mercantilist bourgeoisie dwellings in Rua Bela, 1975 (Source: Arquivo RTP. Caria, José, dir. As Pedras e o Homem: Foz Velha [documentary, digital]. Portugal: RTP, 1975, 00:11:14)

the seafront²⁸. The construction of the Port of Leixões (1884–1895) transferred the function of commercial port from Foz do Douro to Matosinhos²⁹, confirming the change of habits that was emerging.

In this sense, there was the construction of villas and chalets as a response to this practice, resulting in urban changes to *shape and improve* the location and the construction of recreational equipment and support for thalassotherapy³⁰, leading however to the disappearance or displacement of the fishing community to other nuclei, such as Leixões³¹. The villas were characterised by the inclusion of exotic and picturesque references, appreciated by the Romantic spirit, or *beauxartian* elements, influenced by the artistic culture of French origin, as well as the nationalist nature, resulting in the application of historicist revivalism³².



Thus, "the trace of the local architecture" [00:12:57–00:12:58] of Foz Velha can be pointed out as the dwellings mostly composed of two and three levels, to which can be added raised or sub-basement levels, with vegetable gardens, backyards or adjacent gardens [00:09:37–00:10:13], and multiple-water or two-water roofs [00:03:54]. In terms of the brickwork used, we can identify the existence of dwellings with irregular blocks in ordinary masonry [00:03:50] or in

28 This parish increase 85% in inhabitants between 1864 and 1900. Cf. José Alberto Rio Fernandes, "A Foz", *Revista da Faculdade de Letras – Geografia*, I série, vol. III (1987), 18.

29 Cf. Moura, "A Foz do Douro", 75.

30 Cf. Carvalho, "Arquitectura e Vilegiatura", 10–13.

31 Cf. Moura, "A Foz do Douro", 92.

32 Cf. Carvalho, "Arquitectura e Vilegiatura", 32–36, 54–56.

[Fig. 4]

Villeggiatura villas in Rua da Cerca, 1975 (Source: Arquivo RTP. Caria, José, dir. *As Pedras e o Homem: Foz Velha* [documentary, digital]. Portugal: RTP, 1975, 00:13:08)

rustication, visible when they do not present cladding, which regularly appears with plaster, *azulejo* or slate, the latter particularly in the additional raised floors, visible at the junction of R. da Quinta and R. de Montebelo [00:08:17]. At the level of the façade, the framing of the openings, the pilasters in the cantonments, and the contours of different colours in the lower area of the façades and in the openings [00:05:52–00:06:17], as well as, occasionally, platbands [00:08:09], eaves with lambrequin [00:07:45] and urns [00:11:49]. There is also the predominance of narrow spans and the insertion of verandas on the upper levels with wrought iron railings, visible in the plans of R. Bela [00:11:11–00:11:24]. The chimneys are also a constant throughout the documentary, demonstrating a great formal variety, as the view from Largo da Igreja [00:05:03] attests.

In the 1930s there was an idea of urban restructuring of the city of Porto, with an important contribution of the engineer Ezequiel de Campos, foreseeing in the various regulatory plans the expansion of the city to the west, with Foz do Douro becoming a residential area³³. Thus, in the 1970s and 1980s, rental apartment buildings were constructed throughout Foz³⁴, mostly of four to nine levels³⁵, as a response to the demographic increase and to the housing demand, confirming its matrix change from an area of villeggiatura and seasonal occupation to an area of permanent residence. These multifamily dwellings of the twentieth century would maintain the same typological matrix of the bourgeois dwellings until the 1980s, implanted in contiguous lots, with relatively narrow fronts and developed in-depth, and could include patios in their programs and commercial areas or garage at ground level³⁶.

The new buildings in Foz Velha are presented in about a minute and a half, but it is possible to see the state of certain works and to understand the contrasts with the earlier ones, observable in R. da Cerca [00:12:38–00:13:03], with the predominance of three to four level buildings, with ceramic cladding and *devantures* on the ground floor for commercial establishments, and the insertion of awnings is visible. There is also an increase in the width of the openings and the number of balconies, now with wooden, iron, glass or concrete railings, and the placing of blinds. The panoramic from the Esplanada da Foz also captures the existence of blocks of typified flats in R. da Senhora da Luz [00:13:20] and the six *Torres Vermelhas* of Bairro da Pasteleira [00:13:20], then recently built (c.1972), that have fourteen levels, affirming themselves in the urban landscape.

33 Cf. Nuno Ferreira and Manuel Joaquim Moreira da Rocha, "Etapas de consolidação da paisagem urbana do Porto contemporâneo: da programação dos Almadás ao plano de 1952", *CEM – Cultura, Espaço & Memória*, vol. 4 (2013), 210–213.

34 Pereira Oliveira also noted this aspect, stating that in Foz there was a building tendency "towards flats in horizontal property" to the detriment of single-family dwellings. Cf. Oliveira, "O espaço urbano do Porto", 369.

35 Cf. Fernandes, "A Foz", 25.

36 Cf. Fernandes, *Transformação e permanência*, 231, 242.

[Fig. 5]

Contemporary building in Rua da Cerca, 1975 (Source: Arquivo RTP. Caria, José, dir. *As Pedras e o Homem: Foz Velha* [documentary, digital]. Portugal: RTP, 1975, 00:13:03)

4. The image of Foz Velha

However, what *image* is transmitted of Foz Velha? Does it correspond to the idea of a fishing village that remained unchanged until the mid-20th century? What kind of community is this?



The primary connection of Foz Velha to the sea is a constant in the script of the documentary, referring to it as a "fishing village" [00:03:37] and emphasizing its privileged location with the mouth of the River Douro, with mentions of Barra and Cantareira. We are thus faced with the idea of the settlement of a fishing community, comparing it to other fishing villages, such as Nazaré, where "the people of the sea discovered visual harmony" [00:12:9–00:12:12]. However, the same does not occur in the shots presented, with the register of the coastal area focusing on the prelude of the episode, when the Cantareira pier is captured [00:03:18–00:03:24], similarly to the closure, showing a trawler and a group of fishermen in leisure off the pontoon of Farolim da Felgueira [00:15:41–00:17:30]. On the other hand, rurality is evoked in the narrative discourse as shots of vegetable gardens, backyards and the family environment are shown, in which a woman and three children carry out domestic chores [00:09:46–00:10:40].

Regarding the community, there is the association of a laborious toil concomitant with the serenity of daily life, in which "these fishermen who rest fishing, are close perhaps to the authentic fishermen of Foz, those who go to the sea and to the river to earn their living" [00:17:33–00:17:42]. The religiousness of the community is also emphasized through several shots of the parochial church, *simple* and with a *naïve* Saint John Baptiste in the façade [00:04:46]; of the Chapel of N.ª Senhora da Conceição and the its front cross [00:09:15–00:09:32]; and of the Steps of the

[Fig. 6]

Cantareira, 1975 (Source: Arquivo RTP. Caria, José, dir. *As Pedras e o Homem: Foz Velha* [documentary, digital], Portugal: RTP, 1975, 00:03:24)

Passion of Christ, such as the Passo da Feira [00:06:56], the Passo do Alto da Vila [00:07:25] and the Passo de Santa Anastácia [00:12:16], important for the dignification of the Passion Steps procession, which occurs until 1972³⁷. [



In this sense, the *image* of an ancient village is transmitted, corroborated by the various historical facts announced, whose fishing population, *simple* and *cheerful*, lives in harmony with the sea and the countryside. Foz Velha, with "all the architectural contrast of the village, the cut of its roofs in successive visual plans, the labyrinth of its streets, alleys, squares and lanes" [00:05:50–00:06:01], becomes picturesque and attractive, leading Raúl Brandão, Teixeira Lopes, Antero de Figueiredo and "other figures of history, science or medicine" [00:11:28–00:11:31] to live or work here.

This *image* is created through the script itself and the intercalation of landscape shots, sometimes more rural, sometimes more urban, with figurative records, mostly groups of children [00:12:30], but also women and fishermen (even if recreational), contributing to the imagery of a village of *naïve*, pure, simple individuals. However, although the narration mentions the "contrast between the houses of the rich and the houses of the poor" [00:11:37–00:11:50], the lens focuses on the buildings present along the R. Padre Luís Cabral and R. Bela, mostly, as well as the Largo da Igreja and the streets Adro da Foz, Montebelo, Laranjeiras, Motas and Quinta,

37 Marisa Pereira Santos, "A procissão dos Passos da Paixão de São João da Foz do Douro: um registo fílmico documental", *Revelar* vol. IV (dez 2019), 104–105.

[Fig. 7]

Calvary and Chapel of N.ª Senhora da Conceição, 1975 (Source: Arquivo RTP. Caria, José, dir. *As Pedras e o Homem: Foz Velha* [documentary, digital], Portugal: RTP, 1975, 00:09:32)

corresponding to the current housing typology of a *mercantile bourgeoisie*³⁸, to rural houses, or to villa dwellings, deducing that they were intended for the middle and upper bourgeoisie or agricultural landowners. In this sense, there is a visual omission of the architectural genre associated with the fishing community, which was mostly located around the Cantareira and the Sobreiras area, and of the fishermen themselves, whose numbers had been declining since the mid-19th century, consequently leading to the disappearance of their dwellings.



The visual opposition created by the shots of the new buildings in Foz Velha, accompanied by a protesting and depreciative discourse, also contributes to reinforcing the *image* of a place with particular attributes, now threatened with loss of its character.

The soundtrack contributes in the same way to the ambiance of the shots, using the 2nd movement of the *Piano Sonata No. 18, K. 576* and the *Rondo in A minor, K. 511*, both by Mozart, with a soft rhythm, pleasant and rhythmic, giving a jovial and positive tone throughout the

38 Fernandes, *Transformação e permanência*, 120–125.

[Fig. 8]
Recreational fishing at Foz do Douro, 1975 (Source: Arquivo RTP. Caria, José, dir. *As Pedras e o Homem: Foz Velha* [documentary, digital]. Portugal: RTP, 1975, 00:16:38)



[Fig. 9]
View of Rua Padre Luís Cabral, 1975 (Source: Arquivo RTP. Caria, José, dir. *As Pedras e o Homem: Foz Velha* [documentary, digital]. Portugal: RTP, 1975, 00:12:23)

documentary. However, they synchronise the period referring to the visual opposition with episode C of the mentioned rondo, with the division of the beat into smaller units, transmitting a certain negativity and anxiety to the spectator, in harmony with the narrated discourse. It is followed by the first movement of the *Piano Sonata No. 8, K. 310*, in *allegro maestoso*, giving a triumphant tone to the script, which takes up the theme of the so-called *authentic fishermen of Foz*, while shots of the recreational practice are shown, followed by the recitation of an excerpt from *Memórias de Raúl Brandão*, which closes the episode. We should also note the continuous reference to this author, who is more connected to Foz Velha and the fishing community, to the detriment of Ramalho Ortigão, a fellow author, but who would offer a different view of Foz, previously bourgeois and the stage for *villeggiatura*.

This documentary demonstrates the relationship between image, text and sound to create a particular narrative, leading the viewer's gaze to certain aspects and conditioning their own perception through visual and sound suggestions. We are thus faced with a phenomenon of intermediality, combining views of Foz Velha with musical excerpts and a well-structured script, which uses excerpts from Raul Brandão as narrative illustration, making the *image* of the old fishing village come *alive* in a contemporary Foz Velha.



[Fig. 10]
Visual contrasts in Foz Velha, 1975 (Source: Arquivo RTP. Caria, José, dir. *As Pedras e o Homem: Foz Velha* [documentary, digital]. Portugal: RTP, 1975, 00:13:50)

Conclusion

Despite the adaptation of Foz Velha to the new housing reality of the 20th century, with the construction of rental apartment buildings for permanent residence, divergent to the volumetry and formal characteristics of the previous buildings, the idea of an old fishing village will remain linked to this urban area, granted by osmosis to all the buildings.

In order to create this *image* in the documentary under analysis, we used the selection of views that were not discordant with the discourse narrated to the eyes of an ordinary viewer, although the building recorded does not correspond to the dwellings of the aforementioned fishing community, but to a *mercantilist* and *bourgeois* group, with which they lived in the same space and period. On the other hand, the use of visual and narrative counterpoints contribute to the affirmation of a certain aesthetic, considered to be the bearer of the *trace of local architecture*, also revealing an early concern with heritage *authenticity*. The soundtrack used and synchronised with the script, acting in a passive but effective way in conditioning the perception of the images, should be highlighted.

The contribution of film analysis to the understanding of the urban transformations of Foz do Douro is also highlighted, since it portrays architecture from different chronologies or artistic cultures and moments of urban transformation, as well as enabling, through comparison with the present day, the perception of the changes and permanencies that have occurred in the space.

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White buildings, Red Dust: Brasília in Ektachrome Colour

Ciro Miguel

Abstract:

Brasília's red dust is everywhere. Regularly tinting the white surfaces of Brasília's modernist buildings red, a great effort of human labor is required every day to maintain their intended autonomy. Dust clouds first appeared in February 1957 due to massive earthworks and the clearing of the original landscape. While large tractors and caterpillars aggressively manipulated the ground following the forms of Lucio Costa's Pilot Plan, a formless entropic dispersal of red soil microparticles filled the air. As the floating dust spread over Brasília's construction site, it also filled the printed pages of newspapers and magazines

This article intends to discuss how dust tainted the representation of Brasília. As modernist architecture confronted the landscape, dust introduced a distortion in the pure image of Brasília, threatening not only the whiteness of the upcoming architectures but also contaminating drawings, cameras, lenses, printed photographs, clothes and lungs. While most of the architectural black and white photos of Brasília tended to produce clean images, the introduction of the newest color film Ektachrome by photojournalists made earthworks and dust visible. Associated with grainy reproduction in illustrated magazines and speckles of dust in the negatives themselves, the images enhanced the perception of Brasília's total environmental design.

If dust is, according to Richard Meyer, "an environment in miniature, a physical archive of our material surroundings," this article analyzes how these fine particles of solid matter and their accidental reproduction, operated as visual dissonances that confuse the modern distinction between nature and culture.

Keywords: Landscape, Dust, Modern Architecture, Brasília, Photography

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Introduction

As part of the government's propaganda to promote Brasília, the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs invited English writer Aldous Huxley to visit Brasília's construction site in 1958, hoping to inspire the science-fiction author to write about the city.¹ While Huxley only left a brief note, the most significant account came from North American poet Elisabeth Bishop who accompanied him on the trip. Even though some of the completed buildings fascinated Bishop, her overall description of the "city of hope" was grim: "The place had been described to me, but I was not prepared for quite such dreariness and desolation [...] one's first and last impression of Brasília was of miles and miles and miles of blowing red dust [...]."²

As the floating dust spread over Brasília's construction site, it also filled the printed pages of newspapers and magazines. For critics of the new capital, the dust was a vessel of their anxieties, described as a threat to health and maintenance. For supporters, the dust was "fundamental," and its dirtiness represented the efforts of a new country under construction. For President Juscelino Kubitschek, the dust was a metaphor for a more democratic future, hovering above all and leveling social extremes.³ For builders covered in dust, it was a daily concern that worsened the working conditions. For opportunistic salesmen, it was merchandise sold in bottles to tourists at Cidade Livre.⁴

This article discusses how dust tainted the representation of Brasília. As modernist architecture confronted the landscape, dust introduced distortion in its pure image, threatening not only the whiteness of the architecture but also contaminating the surfaces of drawings, cameras, lenses, printed photographs, clothes and lungs on the construction site. While most of the architectural black-and-white photos of Brasília produced clean images, the introduction of the newest color film Ektachrome by photojournalists made earthworks and dust visible. With their exaggerated color reproduction in illustrated magazines, these images enhanced the perception of Brasília's impact on the environment.

If dust is, according to Richard Meyer, "an environment in miniature, a physical archive of our material surroundings,"⁵ this chapter analyzes how these fine particles of solid matter and their accidental reproduction in illustrated magazines, operated as visual dissonances that confuse the modern distinction between nature and culture.

1 José Osvaldo de Meira Penna, *Depoimento – Programa de História Oral*, 1990, 7, Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal.

2 Elisabeth Bishop, "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, And Some Indians," *The Yale Review* 94, no. 3 (July 1, 2006): 82, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9736.2006.00213.x>.

3 Juscelino Kubitschek, *Por Que Construí Brasília* (Rio de Janeiro: Bloch Editores, 1975), 89–90.

4 Wolf Jesco Von Puttkammer, *Depoimento – Programa de História Oral*, 1990, 8, Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal.

5 Quoted in Anselm Wagner, "The Bauhaus and the Vacuum Cleaner," in *Dust & Data: Traces of the Bauhaus across 100 Years* (Leipzig: Spector Books, 2019), 42.

The Land Before Brasília and the Cerrado as Background

The vibrant green of a few photographs found in the Public Archive of Brasília (Fig.1), captured by Novacap's⁶ photojournalist Mário Fontenelle circa 1956, showcase this savannah-like landscape prior to Brasília's construction. Far from pristine nature, these images evoked how the region had been used in an incipient way at the time, with wood extraction, animal grazing, and low-tech agricultural practices.⁷ [Fig. 1]

Although some of these photographs were published in the state-sponsored magazine *Brasília* —mostly used as official propaganda for the region's natural resources —the original colorful photos found in the archive provide a vivid depiction of the so-called Cerrado, a rich biome that occupies a vast area of Brazil's central plateau, encompassing diverse fauna and flora, indigenous populations, and quilombos (settlements of Afro-Brazilian slave descendants).⁸

If, as Susan Sontag put it, "to photograph is to appropriate the thing photographed,"⁹ it can be said that Fontenelle's photographs were part of a larger historical context of occupation attempts in that environment that had started in the 16th century, with Portuguese explorers seeking gold and indigenous peoples to enslave.¹⁰

Mapping the Ground

Lucio Costa's winning proposal for Brasília's Pilot Plan does not mention the biome Cerrado, but references the landscape early in the text. The architect, attentive to the topographical lines, described how the ground suggested his initial conceptual drawing of a cross to subtly bend its horizontal line: "It was then sought to adapt [the plan] to the local topography, the natural flow of water, the best orientation, arching one of the axes in order to contain it in the equilateral triangle that defines the urbanized area."¹¹

Despite all sorts of mapping materials available, when construction started, the very first drawings by Lucio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer were still considered inaccurate compared to the actual landscape. Urban planner Jayme Zettel, who was part of Costa's team explained the issue:



"These first drawings had nothing to do with reality. [Brasília] was still a drawing that did not say how to materialize the city, to put it on the ground, as we called it."¹² This transfer from drawing to the ground was indeed more challenging than expected, as the site was not as flat as the urban plan initially suggested: "We were making cuts in the terrain, trying to put in that axis' arc [from Lucio Costa's plan] ... [It was] said that [the ground] was a billiard table, but the billiard table had a 3% drop, it was a complicated billiard table. But we had to, in fact, manipulate the terrain a lot until you put the position of Lucio Costa's plan in the best position, for cutting and landfill purposes."¹³

6 Companhia Urbanizadora da Nova Capital [Novacap] was founded in 1956 as a federal 'super-agency,' responsible for the planning, administration, police force, real estate, construction and also propaganda of the new capital.

7 Interview with researcher from Embrapa Cerrados, Fábio Gelape Faleiro, April 20, 2023.

8 Quilombo Mesquita, <https://www.metropoles.com/distrito-federal/brasilia-a-capital-que-ha-63-anos-afastou-um-quilombo-para-existir>

9 Susan Sontag, *On Photography*, 3rd printing (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1978), 5.

10 Bertran, *História Da Terra e Do Homem No Planalto Central: Eco-História Do Distrito Federal*, 67.

11 Original quote: "Procurou-se depois a adaptação à topografia local, ao escoamento natural das águas, à melhor orientação, arqueando-se um dos eixos a fim de contê-lo no triângulo equilátero que define a área urbanizada." In Lúcio Costa, "Memória Descritiva do Plano Piloto, 1957," in *Registro de uma vivência* (São Paulo: Empresa das Artes, 1997), 284.

12 Original quote: "Então os primeiros desenhos desses colegas meus mais velhos, era sempre um desenho que não tinha nada a ver com a realidade. Era um desenho ainda de projeto, era um desenho que não dizia ainda o que a gente tinha que fazer na verdade como urbanista, que era pegar a cidade, materializar, botar ela no chão, como nós chamávamos." In Jayme Zettel, Depoimento – Programa de História oral, 1989, 5, Brasília, Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal.

13 Original quote: "Fazendo cortes no terreno, tentando botar aquele arco do, vamos dizer, dos eixos. Colocar aqueles eixos, no terreno, que o que tinha... o Israel Pinheiro dizia que aquela era uma mesa de bilhar, mas a mesa de bilhar tinha 3% de calimto, era uma mesa de bilhar meio complicada. Mas a gente teve que, na verdade, mexer muito no terreno até você colocar na melhor posição, para efeito de cortes, de aterros, a posição do plano, do risco do Lucio Costa." In Zettel, 3.

[Fig. 1]

Mário Fontenelle, Cerrado, c.a. 1957, Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal

Deserts and Dust

In contrast to the available aerial photographs, and the photographs of Cerrado's lush vegetation by previous photographers, Brasília's protagonists, such as Kubitschek, Niemeyer, and Costa insistently described the existing landscape, or the ground, as a "desert," a forgotten land devoid of humans, animals, vegetation, and culture. Similar descriptions of emptiness emerge from reading the memoirs of Costa, Niemeyer, and Kubitschek. "The truth is that Brasília exists where there was only desert and loneliness a few years ago,"¹⁴ Costa wrote. "It was a huge desert, lost on the central plateau,"¹⁵ Niemeyer emphasized, and Kubitschek persisted, "Only the desert flatness existed in that region."¹⁶

Referring to the landscape around Brasília as "desert" was a strategy to construct a narrative of a blank space, unproductive, available for occupation and exploitation. As Historian Paul Carter writes, "(...) the question of the language you use and the space it conjures up are interrelated. It's not that one describes another; they constantly reflect on each other."¹⁷ To assume that space as empty, the Brasília operation intentionally erased previous cultures, fauna and flora, repeating the abstraction of previous colonial projects, such as Tordesilhas and the Hereditary Captaincies, of the 15th and 16th centuries.

The concept of a deserted territory was reinforced by the influential art critic Mário Pedrosa, who interpreted Brasília as an "oasis-civilization."¹⁸ In Pedrosa's view, colonial practices of land appropriation were inevitably reproduced in Brasília. Using the striking metaphor of Brasília being a "planted oasis in a desert," illustrated how the city would allow "the massive settlement of civilization and the mechanical dominance of an empty land, solitary, using imported techniques."¹⁹

Bulldozers and Earthworks

The cultural and environmental erasure was not only symbolic, but also physical. As modernity reached the frontier with its planning schemes, designs, resources, cameras, and heavy machinery, dust became the first and foremost side effect of progress' destructive force.

According to Juscelino Kubitschek, the dust clouds first appeared in 1957, triggered by massive earthworks and clearing of the original landscape. In just a few hours, hundreds of bulldozers, were assigned to carve the delicate lines of Lucio Costa's urban plan in the ground. Heavy machinery, with an unfair advantage over trees and grasslands, performed colossal earthworks and massive clearings to shape the Cerrado according to the imagined project. Suddenly, the original vegetation was removed, bringing to the surface layers of red soil and dust. These were samples of the red-yellow latosol, a soil rich in iron oxide characteristic of Brazil's central plateau. Kubitschek was quite dramatic about the red dust dispersal: "[...] in July, the first of the big tractors arrived, and soon there would be hundreds of them. A real battle had begun in the Cerrado, which, shredded by the construction equipment, was being pushed to the edges of the Plano-Piloto area. In its place came dust – the famous Brasília dust – red, oily, that infiltrated everything and there was no washing system capable of eliminating it. The workers, the engineers, the technicians were no longer the same. They became reddish in color, with their clothes and hair of the same hue."²⁰ (Fig.2)

This violent episode of environmental destruction constituted the first of many photographic events that were choreographed to be captured in a split second by photojournalists. The state-sponsored magazine *brasilíia* published many photographs of Brasília's earthworks and bulldozers taken by Mário Fontanelle. Accompanied by texts such as "Men, machines, enthusiasm, action,"²¹ the images, seen a posteriori, were an incredible testimony of the anthropic gesture of transforming the natural land into an entirely artificial man-made construct.

Altogether, the number of photographs documenting the Brazilian nation state's ambitious plans provided a unique visual representation of modernity-in-the-making to the world public. They echoed the praise of bulldozers, tractors, airplanes and other machinery as symbols

14 Lúcio Costa, "O Urbanista defende sua cidade, 1967," in *Registro de uma vivência*, (São Paulo: Empresa das Artes, 1997), 301.

15 Oscar Niemeyer, *As curvas do tempo: memórias* (Rio de Janeiro: Revan, 1998), 192.

16 Juscelino Kubitschek, *Por Que Construí Brasília* (Rio de Janeiro: Bloch Editores, 1975), 45.

17 "Space, Writing and Historical Identity: David Malouf Talks to Paul Carter about 'The Road to Botany Bay,'" *Thesis Eleven*

22, no. 1 (1989): 92–105, <https://doi.org/10.1177/072551368902200107>.

18 Mário Pedrosa, "Reflexões Em Torno Da Nova Capital," in *Acadêmicos e Modernos*, ed. Otilia Arantes (EDUSP, 2004), 391.

19 Pedrosa, 391.

20 Original quote: "Em fevereiro de 1957, cerca de duzentas máquinas estavam em atividade na região, trabalhando dia e noite, sem qualquer interrupção. Eram ainda máquinas pequenas, dada a falta de estradas, mas, em julho, ali chegou o primeiro dos grandes tratores, que logo seriam centenas. Uma verdadeira batalha tivera início no cerrado, o qual, retalhado pelos equipamentos de construção, foi sendo empurrado para as extremidades da área do Plano-Piloto. Em seu lugar surgiu a poeira – a famosa poeira de Brasília – vermelha, oleosa, que se infiltrava em tudo e não havia sistema de lavagem capaz de eliminá-la. Os operários, os engenheiros, os técnicos já não eram os mesmos. Tornaram-se de uma cor avermelhada, com as roupas e os cabelos apresentando a mesma tonalidade." In Kubitschek, *Por Que Construí Brasília*, 74.

21 Original quote: "Homens, máquinas, entusiasmo, ação" in *brasilíia* n.1, February 1957, 5

A marcha

• O homem e a máquina em trabalho conjugado.



• Tratores e caminhões em plena atividade.



S. Exa. o Sr. Presidente da República e o Dr. Israel Pinheiro, Presidente da Cia. Urbanizadora da Nova Capital, em palestra cordial com engenheiros e operários.



• Prosseguem os serviços de terraplenagem e nivelção de áreas.



• Uma estrada vai sendo rasgada...



• Uma ponte de emergência, sobre um riacho no seio verde da brenha.

da construção de Brasília



• A primeira descarga de cimento em Brasília.



• Materiais que em breve se transformarão em edificações e benfeitorias.

HOMENS, máquinas, entusiasmo, ação. E Brasília é uma idéia que se concretiza, um empreendimento que avança em ritmo acelerado.

Govêrno e Nação anseiam por que se transformem em realidade os planos da nova *urbs* cuja edificação, no centro do território nacional, modificará profundamente o panorama econômico, social, político e administrativo do país. Aquêle põe todo seu esforço, dinâmico e patriótico, na abreviação da obra; a Nação acompanha com vivo interesse e confiança a execução do trabalho, ciente de que Brasília constitui a iniciativa mais acertada e mais oportuna para que o Brasil possa, de fato, progredir.

Nestas palavras do Senhor Presidente da República encontramos a síntese, o sentido integral da magnífica realização que ora tem lugar em pleno sertão brasileiro:

"A fundação de Brasília é um ato político cujo alcance não pode ser ignorado por ninguém. É a marcha para o interior em sua plenitude. É a completa consumação da posse da terra. Vamos erguer no coração do nosso país um poderoso centro de irradiação de vida e progresso."



• Um palácio provisório de madeira edificado, por iniciativa de amigos do Sr. Presidente da República, em pouco mais de dez dias.

of progress, which was aligned to the discourse on modernization in the late 1950s in Brazil. President Kubitschek, as an enthusiast of air travel, and attentive to the media coverage, always made sure to have photographs of himself boarding planes or spectacularly flying around Brasília's different construction sites in his personal helicopter. While efforts to build a new road between Belém and Brasília through the Amazon Forest were under way, President Kubitschek made sure to have photographs of himself deforesting, crafting an image of a "Don Quijote on a tractor."²² (Fig.3)

Red Soil and Dust in Ektachrome

Italian journalist and writer Alberto Moravia offered a dramatic impression of Brasília's construction. In a text entitled "Brasília Barroca," published at *Corriere de la Sera* in 1960, he wrote: "From the airplane, Brasília, located fortuitously among the infinite horizontal undulations of the plateau (apparently, the place was chosen after exact calculations as the most central in Brazil), makes one think about the display on a butcher's counter of several bloody steaks. Depending on the time of earthworks, more or less bloody red parcels reveal the buildable areas that have been wrested from the tropical bush."²³ Moravia's analogy of "bloody steaks" on the green landscape, alluded to the red earth as forensic evidence of the ecological disruption in Brazil's central plateau.

While written accounts, newspaper articles and oral histories constantly referred to the impacts of the red dust, landscape and dust were hardly documented in architectural photographs of Brasília. This iconic representation focused on buildings which led historians Anne Troutman and Linda Hart to notice this "suppression of reality:" The pristine images of the capital, its monuments and axes, superblocks and plazas are carefully constructed compositions, dramatic and impersonal. Most of the views are framed and cropped to eliminate or change context, authorship, habitation, human scale or interaction. The buildings, not man or landscape, are the subject, the literal and symbolic heart of this universe... Several articles written on Brasília describe the magnificent landscape, the red earth and vast blue skies of a trackless prairie, but few images show this landscape... Where are these photographs?"²⁴

22 "Dom Quixote montado em um trator." Anos JK: *Uma Trajetória Política*, directed by Silvio Tendler, (Calaban Produções, 1980), 00:53:05, <https://youtube.be/Qe6RGrCE2fc>.

23 Original quote: "Dall'aeroplano il luogo di Brasília, situato come a caso tra le infinite ondulazioni orizzontali dell'altipiano (ma a quanto pare questo luogo è stato scelto dopo calcoli molto precisi come il più centrale del Brasile) fa pensare all'esposizione, sul banco di un macellaio, di una quantità di bistecche sanguinolente. Riquadri più o meno rossi secondo l'epoca più o meno recente degli steramenti, rivelano le aree fabbricabili che sono state strappate alla macchia tropicale." In *Corriere della Sera*, August 28, 1960.

24 Anne Troutman and Linda Hart, "The Photographic Suppression of Reality: Re-Presenting Brasília," 1998, 321, <https://www.acsa-arch.org/chapter/the-photographic-suppression-of-reality-re-presenting-brasilia/>.



These photographs exist and were shot by photojournalists carrying at least two cameras, one of them loaded with color film, 35mm Kodak Ektachrome. Depending on the future distribution of these images to different audiences and journals, Brasília images were constructed to validate a discourse of progress. With photography being an ambiguous representation that can both conceal and reveal, it seems that these color photographs appear to communicate something more than black and white.

Besides the availability of color film stock in the 50s, the aesthetics of photojournalism and architecture's photography was predominantly black and white. Color was mostly associated with mass consumerism, and being a medium still in development, posed several technical limitations related to speed, and color reproduction.

In the discourse of architectural photography, black and white film persisted for a long time as the main medium. Even in the 1970s, important figures such as British architectural photographer Eric de Maré contributed to color's bad reputation: "I believe that in creative photography black and white wins aesthetic laurels in competition with colour, particularly in architectural work. For one thing, color photography tends to be too naturalistic, often to a garish degree. Is anything more repellent, for example, than the combination of postcard-blue sky with vivid green grass

[Fig. 3]

Anonymous, Juscelino Kubitschek on a bulldozer, 1959, Arquivo Nacional

below it? Nature is by no means an artist. Black and white stresses forms, tones and textures, whereas colour can distract the eye from these and weaken the structural entity."²⁵

During Brasília's construction, color was exclusive to a few illustrated magazines, since architectural publications, newsreels, and television continued to transmit images mostly in black and white. With the introduction of Ektachrome in the mid-40s, color films did not require to be sent to Kodak Laboratories in Rochester, as was the case of Kodachrome, and could be developed by the photographer on-site. In addition to Ektachrome's faster workflow, vibrant colors, and crisp resolution even after enlargements soon made it the preferred film for illustrated magazines, photo agencies and photojournalists working in far-off places around the world.

Following Ariella Azoulay's assumption that the camera makes destruction acceptable,²⁶ in the case of Brasília, Ektachrome magnified the dusty side of modernity by rendering it visible. Black and white images converted the reds and greens of the transformed landscape into gray tones,²⁷ effectively concealing the impact of the earthworks. Ektachrome exaggerated the soil's red hues. A Kodak manual from 1955 stated, "No film can provide a perfect color match, and a perfect match isn't necessary for good pictures... Even the best films tend to render some colors more brilliantly than others. Ektachrome film provides excellent, really high color fidelity. Its greatest brilliance is in the yellow and the red end of the color scale, thus giving Ektachrome pictures a warmer appearance..."²⁸ Historically, red and green, were considered a problem in color photography. As colors of the same value, they seemed to "pulsate violently when represented adjacently."²⁹

The red-green contrast was exploited by René Burri, in a series of Ektachromes that ended up illustrating a 10-page visually rich photo-essay for the French illustrated magazine *Paris Match*. Among the color photos, a full-page image showed an aerial view of a road cutting through a large green surface with amorphous red stains of exposed soil on both sides. The accompanying text described how bulldozers carved vast patches in the 'jungle,' and that "10 million trees had to be cut down"³⁰ to build Brasília.

25 Eric Samuel De Maré, *Architectural Photography* (London: Batsford, 1975), 10, <http://archive.org/details/architecturalphoto0000dema>.

26 Ariella Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London: Verso, 2019), 6.

27 Sally Eaucclair, *The New Color Photography* (New York: Abbeville Press, Publ., 1981), 9.

28 Eastman Kodak Company of New York, *Kodak Ektachrome Film* ([Rochester, N.Y., Eastman kodak co.], 1955), 3, <http://archive.org/details/kodakektachromef00east>.

29 Eaucclair, *The New Color Photography*, 9.

30 Original quote: "Il a fallu abattre 10 million d'arbres pour qu'enfin la capitale vive," in *Paris Match*, n. 581, May 28, 1960.



It is interesting to note that, as found in Mário Fontenelle's archive, there are duplicated photographs that were shot both in color and in black and white. While the magazine *brasília* always printed his photos in black and white for economic reasons, many of the originals were indeed in color. Because Ektachrome's high color saturation, Fontenelle used the film's vivid palette to photograph the first clearings to locate the Pilot Plan on the ground. Fontenelle's images from the airplane of a massive red stain in the green landscape seemed to make a visual translation of Moravia's description of the earthworks as "bloody steaks." (Fig.4)

[Fig. 4]

Mário Fontenelle, Clearing, ca. 1958, Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal

Red Dust in Manchete Magazine

If Brasília tended to be seen as a fantasy in a faraway land, the first Ektachrome photos documenting the red soil made it even more unreal. Its representation in illustrated magazines introduced visual distortions that were fundamental to corroborate the narrative construct of Brasília as a modernist city in the “desert.”

In 1951, color reproduction was a major investment for the newly established illustrated magazine *Manchete* to outperform the local competition. At the company headquarters in Rio de Janeiro, a photographic department and a cutting-edge laboratory with imported equipment and chemicals was set up to specifically develop Ektachrome positive films. Under the direction of Hungarian-Brazilian photographer Nicolau Drei, who had prior experience in color development and close connections with the Kodak Research Labs, *Manchete* conducted many tests with Ektachrome, helping to update the film's development process.³¹

With this technology available, Brasília's red soil was first made available to the wider public in *Manchete* in 1958.³² These first ever color reproductions of Brasília's architecture were an important milestone for the government's promotional plan of the capital's transfer from Rio de Janeiro, and for the magazine, the sumptuous images were intended to capture the imagination of the readers and sell magazines. Two color photographs of the upcoming architecture were printed: the recently built Brasília Palace Hotel with workers in the foreground, and the Alvorada Palace, still with some scaffolding. Zooming into the image, it's noticeable that the color reproduction was achieved through color masking, a technique that manually translated the original positive film to print.³³ The reproduction of the Alvorada Palace appeared as a fantastic montage, giving both the building and the soil a quite astonishing otherworldly presence. (Fig.5)

The artificial appearance of the red color emphasized the perception of a lifeless environment. When combined with the buildings' unprecedented shapes, this visually fueled the readers' imagination of a futuristic city being built atop an existing “desert” by a “Pharaoh”-like president.

Dustiness vs Whiteness

As the construction works advanced, red dust introduced a material distortion into the pure image of Brasília. It threatened not only the whiteness of the architecture but also contaminated drawings, cameras, photographs, and lungs.

31 Drei Nicolau, Depoimento - Programa de História Oral, 1990, 2, Arquivo Público do Distrito Federal.

32 *Manchete*, n. 325, July 12, 1960.

33 Brian Gamm, “A Color Correction Maskerade,” *CMYK History* (blog), November 28, 2020, <https://cmykhistory.com/a-color-correction-maskerade/>.



When the first buildings were completed in 1958 the ever-present red dust became a threat to the architecture itself, dirtying the buildings' whiteness and proper appearance. If the white wall was associated with modern architecture, and order and hygiene, red dust was anti-modern, chaotic and dirty. With red dust covering its surfaces, Brasília failed to live up to its ambitions of being a symbol of modernity, taming Brazil's central plateau. The dust complicated the clear distinction that Brasília aimed to achieve between architecture and nature, between civilization and wilderness, order and disorder.

Many architectural features in Brasília were designed to protect the buildings from dust, following the architect's exaggerated vision of white modernity. The smooth surfaces of white marble cladding didn't let the dust settle and could be easily washed. The same for the glazing.

[Fig. 5]

Orlando Allii, *Manchete*, n.325, July 12, 1958, BN Digital

However, dust stubbornly kept staining everything red. In 1958, the writer Elizabeth Bishop had the opportunity to directly witness the human labor required to maintain the buildings' intended purity: "Dust seeped into the [Brasília Palace] hotel, tingeing the carpets and one's clothing and the gray marble floor of the lounge was powdered with it. I watched a workman trying to clean this floor with an electric polishing machine. After producing a few big spirals edged with banks of red dust, he gave up the attempt."³⁴ Besides this technological failure described by Bishop, cleaning workers proved to be fundamental to maintaining architecture's whiteness and transparency, thus validating the idea of the buildings' apparent timelessness.

Clean vs Dirty Images

While buildings had to be cleaned from dust, so were their photographic representations. Although newspapers and illustrated magazines frequently denounced the city's dusty air, Marcel Gautherot, commissioned by architect Oscar Niemeyer to document Brasília's construction, produced impressively clear black and white photographs. If dust clouds occasionally appeared in his photographs, they were always depicted, as critic Lorenzo Mammi writes, as a "luminous dust that made the buildings appear to float."³⁵

Gautherot's photos were never grainy and did not show any specks of dust on their surfaces. Combining the fine-grain resolution of medium format black and white film and pictures with no visible dust on its surface created the timeless modernist image of Brasília, which emphasized the "building's temporal otherness, suggesting it belongs to another time and place."³⁶ Against the physical reality of the landscape, Gautherot reinforced modernism's "environmental purity," and most of his Brasília photographs became the preferred choice for architectural magazines, exhibitions and books. To this day, they continue to illustrate most publications about Brasília.

Gautherot's portrayal of Brasília was similar to the images of German photographer Albert Renger-Patzsch, who photographed heavy industry in the Ruhr Valley in 1936. Art historian Korola explains that Renger-Patzsch worked in a highly polluted environment and took great pains to edit and avoid dust imperfections in his photos, adhering to the pictorial and

environmental clarity of New Objectivity.³⁷ According to Renger-Patzsch, the dust was an unacceptable distortion, "every grain of dust and the smallest damage on the verso becomes a disagreeably noticeable fleck or stroke after enlargement."³⁸

Contrary to Gautherot's work, the photographs of Brasília's construction published in mass-circulation magazines were often dirty and grainy. Their grittiness in both black and white and color images resulted from the enlargement of 35 mm films, the cheap paper, and occasional specks of dust in the negatives that would appear on the printed surface. As historians who look for manuscript errors, and side notes, to go through the distortions of Brasília's grainy photographs in illustrated magazines, provides insights on social and environmental issues taking place in Brasília's construction site. Instead of the artificially purified architectural images, these "dirty pictures" taken through the dusty lens of photojournalism, work as a litmus test of larger contingencies of modernity in Brazil.

Brasília is Only Dust

One day before the inauguration of Brasília, the newspaper *Tribuna da Imprensa* published an article with the headline: "Hours before the transfer, Brasília is still dust."³⁹ Owned by Carlos Lacerda, who was one of the most vocal opponents of the capital transfer, the newspaper continuously bashed the city. The article criticized the unfinished works, the high prices, the lack of electricity and, of course, the dust. According to the newspaper, "Brasília was taken over by violent clouds of dust that caused coughing and didn't allow anything to stay clean for more than a minute. Even the inverted bowl of the Congress building, originally white in design, was now red with so much dust."⁴⁰ The text also reported that masks were being distributed and that the city officials suggested not to wear clean clothes during the opening. Despite the sensationalist tone, the dust had indeed been a significant challenge during the whole construction. Because of its pervasiveness and disturbances, construction workers nicknamed the dust swirls as "Lacerdinhas," a reference to *Tribuna da Imprensa's* owner and Brasília's main enemy, Carlos Lacerda.

34 Bishop, "A New Capital, Aldous Huxley, And Some Indians," 87.

35 Mammi Lorenzo Mammi, "A Construção Da Sombra," in *As Construções de Brasília*, ed. Heloisa Espada (São Paulo: Instituto Moreira Salles, 2010).

36 Iain Borden, "Imaging Architecture: The Uses of Photography in the Practice of Architectural History," *The Journal of Architecture* 12, no. 1 (February 1, 2007): 57–77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602360701217989>.

37 Katerina Korola, "The Air of Objectivity: Albert Renger-Patzsch and the Photography of Industry," *Representations* 157, no. 1 (February 1, 2022): 90–114, <https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2022.157.5.90>.

38 Korola, 102.

39 Original quote: "Horas antes da mudança, Brasília é ainda poeira," *Tribuna da Imprensa*, April 20, 1960.

40 Original quote: "Brasília está tomada por violentas nuvens de poeira que provocam tosse e não permitem que nada fique limpo por mais de um minuto. A tigela invertida do prédio da câmara, branca em projeto, acabou ficando vermelha de tanta poeira," *Tribuna da Imprensa*, April 20, 1960.

In the days leading up to the inaugural ceremonies, an intense "cleaning ballet"⁴¹ was launched to get rid of the enduring presence of the red dust (Fig.6). Because the city and its buildings needed to be as white as possible for its major photographic event, an army of workers washed and swept the floors, ensuring that the appearance of cleanliness was maintained. The illustrated magazine *Manchete* reported on the last-minute frenzy cleaning, captured by the French photojournalist Yves Mancier. The impressive photograph depicted five unidentified workers cleaning the Congress slab, with the Senate dome in the background. This image can be considered as a major critical shift in how modern architecture tended to be represented at the time. Instead of sterile photographs with buildings portrayed in a continual state of newness, it uncovered the maintenance as a continuous ritual necessary to cherish the building's monumentality.

This was not only important to relieve the concerns of those opposed to the project, as the dust became the *leitmotif* of their campaign against the capital transfer,⁴² but also to produce timeless images of the architecture at its best. The effort to erase, at least temporarily, the material distortion of the dust ensured the city's whiteness as a symbol of modernity and progress. As Niemeyer wrote: "Brasília emerged white and civilized."⁴³

Modernization and Dust

During the postwar period, there was a general demand for modernization, consumption, and purity. In the European context, for example, as author Kristin Ross explains, a war-torn and deprived France, was gripped by a national desire for cleanliness.⁴⁴ Hygiene became a redemptive effort, and to be clean meant to be a modern and remodeled nation. French minister of cultural affairs André Malraux, who praised Brasília as the *capitale d'espoir* during his visit in 1959, even led a campaign in the same year to whiten the French monuments in Paris by scrubbing away the accumulated dust.⁴⁵

In Brazil, the main symbols of a new, developed nation were the white monuments of the post-war "capital of hope." Promoted by the state, illustrated magazines, and advertisements, Brasília's photogenic architecture intertwined modernization, modernism and cleanliness. To convey the message of progress, the buildings and their representations were supposed to appear dust-free, shiny, and clean. Mud, red dust, and dirt were associated with the backwardness of a rural country and an untamed disturbed environment.

41 Original quote: "Já começou o ballet da limpeza para o grande dia," *Manchete*, n.418, April 23, 1960.

42 Original quote: "A poeira, por exemplo, tornara-se o *leit-motiv* das suas reclamações. Já que seus integrantes não podiam mais dizer que a transferência não se faria, agarraram-se ao pó vermelho do Planalto e o transformaram numa das bases para a sua campanha contra a cidade." Kubitschek, *Por Que Construí Brasília*, 422.

43 Oscar Niemeyer, "Brasília 70," *Acrópole*, n.375-376, July-August, 1970.

44 Kristin Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies: Decolonization and the Reordering of French Culture*, (Cambridge, Mass: The MIT Press, 1996), 74.

45 Herman Lebovics, "Malraux's Mission," *The Wilson Quarterly* (1976-) 21, no. 1 (1997): 85.



[Fig. 6]

Yves Mancier, *Manchete*, n.418, April 23, 1960, BN Digital

As a result, both the architecture and the urban plan were designed apart from tropical nature. The buildings were elevated to minimize contact with the ground, and the Pilot Plan, affiliated with the “Modern Constitution,”⁴⁶ assumed a total separation between nature and culture. As the author Lucio Costa commented in 1974: “When I had the idea of positioning the [Three Powers] Square, it was, among other things, with the aim of highlighting the contrast between the civilized part, under the control of Brazil, and the wild nature of the Cerrado.”⁴⁷

Against all odds, the pernicious presence of the red dust, in buildings and photojournalistic photographs, failed to recognize this distinction, producing a hybrid condition that reinforced Bruno Latour’s statement that “We Have Never Been Modern.”⁴⁸ If postwar modernization promised development, cleanliness, and Brazil’s convergence on the world stage, the dust seemed to taint the desired purification, serving as a constant reminder of modernity’s unintended side effects.

Red Dust Matters

In the 1960s, Brasília was still part fantasy, and part reality.⁴⁹ The stubborn dust on its buildings discernible in some photojournalistic photographs, was material evidence of the construction, for better or worse. As Teresa Stoppani writes: “Dust occupies and measures the distance between architecture’s image and its physical realization, the non-coincidence of its idea and representation, and construction and inhabitation. Dust brings to architecture that which is difficult to measure, control and represent: its constant change, decay and corruption, or, in other words, time – what conventional architectural representations do not see.”⁵⁰

After attending the capital’s inauguration, Brazilian writer Nelson Rodrigues praised the dust as a subversive element. In his newspaper article “The Defeat of the Fools” (1960) he wrote that the dust was not an element that undermined the city’s image, but rather its main symbol. For him, dirt represented change and a better future, while cleanliness was elitist and reactionary. Rodrigues wrote that “This great horror of dust is obviously very symbolic. What is hidden, or rather, what is not hidden behind this allergy is the dream of a very comfortable honesty

in Copacabana, without risk, without running over, an immaculate physical cleanliness.”⁵¹ Then he continues, “For me, one of the fundamental things about Brasília is ... the dust. When we entered the city, a cinnamon-colored dust rose. I then had the idea that after inhaling this glorious emanation, one would breathe fire! ... All of us ... should be soaked in the holy dust of the plateau.”⁵²

The German philosopher Max Bense, who visited Brasília in 1961, wrote that “the air in Brasília is never just an element of breathing, it is also an element of perception.”⁵³ Invisible to official discourses of national progress, insistently swiped from architectural surfaces, and removed from architectural photographs, the subversive presence of dust destabilized the timeless and autonomous image of modern architecture and planning.

To perceive Brasília through the fine grains of red dust, is to realize that the city, after being built, could never be fully artificial and modern.

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46 Bruno Latour and Catherine Porter, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), loc. 312.

47 Original quote: “no meu espírito, quando tive essa intenção de marcar a posição da Praça era, em parte, com o objetivo de acentuar o contraste da parte civilizada, de comando do país, com a natureza agreste do cerrado.” Brasília uma questão de escala, p.39

48 Bruno Latour and Catherine Porter, *We Have Never Been Modern* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993).

49 Sophia Beal, *Brazil under Construction: Fiction and Public Works* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan US, 2013), 79.

50 Teresa Stoppani, “Dust Revolutions. Dust, Informe, Architecture (Notes for a Reading of Dust in Bataille),” *The Journal of Architecture* 12, no. 4 (September 1, 2007): 4, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602360701614714>.

51 Original quote: “Esse horror granfino ao pó tem, como é óbvio, muito de simbólico. O que se esconde, ou por outra, o que não se esconde por trás dessa alergia é o sonho de uma confortabilíssima honestidade em Copacabana, sem risco, sem atropelo, um imaculado asseio físico.” In Nelson Rodrigues, “A Derrota dos Cretinos,” *Última Hora*, April 22, 1960.

52 Original quote: “Para mim, uma das coisas fundamentais de Brasília e que, no futuro, devem ser provocadas artificialmente, é o pó. Quando entramos, erguia-se, na cidade, um pó cor de canela. Tive, então, a ideia de que, depois de aspirar essa emanção gloriosa o sujeito venta fogo! ... Todos nós, ... deviam se encharcar do santo pó do planalto.” In Nelson Rodrigues, “A Derrota dos Cretinos,” *Última Hora*, April 22, 1960.

53 Max Bense, *Inteligência Brasileira: Uma Reflexão Cartesiana* (Cosac Naify, 2009), 33.

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Filmmaking as architectural carpentry: Analysing and mediating the spatial impact of agricultural techniques

Corné Strootman

Abstract:

Food production is the largest cause of global environmental change. The debate on sustainable agriculture focuses largely on the implementation of new agricultural techniques. The impact of these techniques on agricultural landscapes is not often considered. With the film 'Tussen de kassen', I attempt to shift the current debate in a direction that allows consideration of the aesthetic and systemic consequences of the implementation of agricultural techniques on specific landscapes. 'Tussen de kassen' examines an innovative and sustainable landscape of greenhouse horticulture. More than a tool to communicate research or annotate site visits, film and filmmaking functioned as architectural carpentry. Meaning that the complete process of filmmaking (including preliminary site visits, editing, etc.) functioned as an unconventional method of knowledge production for an architectural research project.

Using 'Tussen de Kassen', I illustrate three ways in which filmmaking as architectural carpentry benefits the work of landscape architects whilst examining modern landscapes of food production;

As a tool to explore and examine the atmospheres of agricultural landscapes (1) Film is able to convey synaesthetic properties of a landscape. These are properties that belong to multiple sensory fields at once and play a part in generating 'atmosphere', the meaning a person assigns unconsciously and almost instantaneously to a space. Film allows viewers to explore the synaesthetic properties behind this initial atmosphere and (re-) examine their subconsciously assigned meanings to space.

As a method to explore unexpected entanglements in food production landscapes (2) The (architectural) medium used to analyse a site determines the understanding of that site. Filmmaking demands close engagement with a site, making the filmmaker a participant of the landscape. This results in unexpected discoveries of entanglements between agricultural techniques and other site aspects.

As a form of eidetic storytelling for landscapes of the Anthropocene (3) Narrating the functioning and conception of Anthropocenic landscapes in a causal, linear manner is problematic as it leads to 'undecidability' and inaction. Film, as an eidetic storytelling tool, combines different types of information (i.e. visual, acoustic, quantifiable, metaphoric, etc.) to mediate multivalent, open-ended and non-linear narratives for Anthropocenic landscapes.

Keywords: Agriculture; Sustainable food production; Filmmaking; Eidetic storytelling; Architectural Carpentry

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The fact that humankind needs to transition to more sustainable modes of agriculture has become all but indisputable. In 2019, a commission by the prestigious Lancet journal described the state of current global agricultural practice:

*"Food production is the largest cause of global environmental change. ...[it].. is responsible for up to 30% of global greenhouse-gas emissions and 70% of freshwater use. Conversion of natural ecosystems to croplands and pastures is the largest factor causing species to be threatened with extinction. Overuse and misuse of nitrogen and phosphorus causes eutrophication and dead zones in lakes and coastal zones."*¹

Modern agriculture and its products will become some of the key indicators of the Anthropocene in the geological strata. The industrial production of broiler chicken, for example, is *"likely to leave a widespread and distinctive biostratigraphic signal in the sedimentary record."*²

Simply downscaling current agricultural practices is not an option as more than 820 million people do not have access to sufficient nutrition and the world population keeps growing. Agricultural productivity needs to increase whilst simultaneously ceasing to be a damaging force to our planet.³

The debate on the approach to developing sustainable agricultural practices with sufficient productivity to support mankind has been ongoing ever since the end of the second World War. The debate has been contentious and polarised. There are those believing a full investment in technological innovation will result in sufficient and sustainable food production whilst society keeps consuming, functioning, and developing as it is. Others argue societies will need to change drastically in order to reduce consumption and produce food in a more ecological manner. Proponents of this side of the debate often look back to traditional techniques of agriculture for a sustainable mode of food production⁴. Both sides agree that radical change is needed in almost every system of food production. And both sides focus mainly on adopting certain agricultural techniques to achieve this radical change.

The spatial impact of innovating agricultural techniques

A radical change in food production techniques will have a substantial spatial impact on the landscapes humans inhabit. Agriculture takes up 50% of the inhabitable land mass and roughly

¹ Walter Willett et al. "Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT—Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems" *Lancet* (16 January 2019): 449 [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(18\)31788-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(18)31788-4)

² Carys Bennett et al. "The broiler chicken as a signal of a human reconfigured biosphere" *Royal Society Open Science* (December 12, 2018): 8 <https://doi.org/10.1098/rsos.180325>

³ Willett et al. "Food in the Anthropocene"

⁴ Mann, *The Wizard and the Prophet* (London: Picador, 2019)

a third of all land on the planet⁵. It only makes sense that spatial designers have lately become vocal in the debate that surrounds the sustainability of agriculture. Notable were two large exhibitions, one organised by Rem Koolhaas and AMO in New York's Guggenheim museum⁶ and the other by Sebastien Marot during the 2019 Lisbon architecture Triennale⁷. Both exhibitions take a stance in the polarised debate on food production techniques. Koolhaas is a proponent of innovative techniques like pixel farming. Marot argues for imposing limitations on agricultural production and introducing ecological farming techniques like permaculture.

Neither exhibition addresses the (spatial) impact of implementing new techniques onto existing landscapes. Marot presented the visitor with four birds-eye perspectives of hypothetical (semi-)agricultural landscapes, each representing a different approach to sustainable agriculture⁸. The images are too zoomed out to show us the aesthetic qualities, sounds, smells, views, textures and movements of the landscapes resulting from each approach. I'm left wondering how the new agricultural techniques have altered the everyday spaces of the inhabitants of the hypothetical landscape. The Guggenheim exhibition contained a series of installations showing futuristic farming practices, from pollinator robots to plants growing under infrared light⁹. What will happen, on a systemic and functional level, when these new agricultural techniques are applied to a specific place? How will the techniques affect (among many other things) the ecological, hydrological and economic functioning of a region?

The implementation of innovative agricultural techniques, be it pixel farming or permaculture will drastically alter the aesthetic qualities and systemic functioning of agricultural landscapes. As such, the aesthetic and systemic impact of sustainable agriculture on specific existing landscapes needs to be considered.

'Tussen de kassen', a reading of a greenhouse horticulture landscape

With the video-essay '*Tussen de kassen*', I attempt to shift the current architectural debate on food production in a direction that would allow consideration of the spatial impact of implementing agricultural new techniques. The video-essay will be the first in a series that examines landscapes where the most modern or pioneering food production techniques are applied. Looking at these pioneering landscapes gives a glimpse of a future where these techniques are applied more broadly. Allowing viewers to speculate on the impact of a certain

agricultural technique and discover ways to meaningfully contribute to the agricultural transition at hand. The video-essay was published on Archined¹⁰, a prominent Dutch online platform for articles on urbanism, architecture and landscape architecture¹¹.

'*Tussen de kassen*' presents a reading of the landscape of 'Wilgenlei' and 'Oosteindse polder'. Two clusters of greenhouse horticulture that are part of a larger conglomeration of horticulture and agrilogistics businesses, scattered throughout a meadow landscape north of Rotterdam (NL). The video essay is inspired by a loosely defined genre of experimental and documentary film that Film Scholar Fred Truniger coined 'Landscape Film'. Films in this genre vary widely in age and origin, but share the intent to depict and narrate specific landscapes.

*"[Landscape Films] share a primarily open form, which pre-interprets the landscape for the viewer by means of a precise reading of visible and invisible clues, but do so without enforcing a single interpretation. ... These films address active viewers, who question critically what the film offers and are able to integrate information into a more broadly conceived framework of interpretation so that in the end they develop their own, mutable image of the landscape."*¹²

Truniger considers works by filmmakers like Gerhard Friedl¹³ and James Benning¹⁴ as representative examples of 'Landscape Film'. Both present readings of landscapes in a documentarian style with relatively long, still or slowly panned shots. Both develop a narrative mainly through the positioning and framing of the camera and the sequencing of shots.¹⁵ I consider filmmakers like Lukas Marxt¹⁶ and Maeve Brennan¹⁷ equal parts of the genre. Both stray further from this documentarian style by experimenting with form and technique to present a more precise and intricate reading of a landscape based on "*visible and invisible clues*."¹⁸

'*Tussen de kassen*' combines the documentarian style described by Truniger with the more experimental use of media applied by Marxt and Brennan (see figures 1–8). Still and slowly panned shots represent the spatial and synaesthetic properties of the site. These are interspersed with images of architectural models laying out the geometry of the site and

5 Hannah Ritchie and Max Roser, "Land use for agriculture." 2019 <https://ourworldindata.org/land-use>

6 AMO and Rem Koolhaas, *Countryside, A Report* (Köln: TASCHEN, 2020)

7 Sebastien Marot, *Taking the country's side, Agriculture and Architecture* (Lisbon: Ediciones Poligrafa, 2019)

8 Marot, *Taking the country's side*

9 Deborah Gans, "Countryside: The Future and the Past" *Places Journal* (January 2021) <https://doi.org/10.22269/210126>

10 Corné Strootman, "Tussen de kassen - de ruimtelijke impact van de verduurzaming van landbouw in beeld." *Archined*, 2023 <https://www.archined.nl/2023/03/tussen-de-kassen/>

11 An English version of the essay can be viewed using the following link <https://vimeo.com/797997684/c8731c94c8>

12 Fred Truniger, *Landscript 2: Filmic Mapping* (Berlin: Jovis verlag, 2013), 17

13 Gerhard Benedikt Friedl, "Knittelfeld - Stadt ohne Geschichte" (Vienna: Sixpackfilm, 1997)

14 James Benning, "Sogobi" (Sierra Nevada: ALIVE, 2002)

15 Truniger, *Landscript 2: Filmic Mapping*

16 Lucas Marxt, "Imperial Valley (Cultivated run-off)" (Hamburg: Blinkvideo Media Art, 2018)

17 Maeve Brennan, "Listening in the Dark" (2018)

18 Truniger, *Landscript 2: Filmic Mapping*, 17



[Figures 1-8]
Stills from 'Tussen de Kassen'

revealing (spatial) relationships between the greenhouse and its surroundings that remain hidden below the landscape's surface. A written narrative provides context to the images with information based on academic studies and planological documents related to the site, as well as my personal reflections as the author.

The horticulture and agrilogistics businesses of 'Wilgenlei' and 'Oosteindse polder' work together in a regional organisation called 'Oostland'. The name is a response to the nearby 'Westland', as Oostland tries to resemble this innovative region lauded as the future of agriculture by Koolhaas in his Guggenheim exhibition¹⁹. The foundation for this 'future of agriculture' is a greenhouse system. The first images of the film reveal a greenhouse horticulture system as it is generally understood. A closed, controlled system with highly monitored in- and output. An architectural model reveals a mostly underground network of infrastructure that provides electricity, heating, and nutrients that allow a stable and controlled environment within the greenhouse. The captions explain that 'Oostland' does not radically change the systemic set-up but aims to become more sustainable by changing the input into the closed system. The conglomerate experiments with heating derived from geothermal sources and stimulating plant growth through exposure to CO₂ emitted by a nearby industrial harbour²⁰.

A second model shows that in practice greenhouse systems turn out to be less closed, as it is difficult to prevent leakage. Horticultural fertiliser somehow gets into the water system and influences flora growing in between the greenhouses. A series of shots show a peculiar ecosystem containing a selection of plants thriving on the high nutrition levels in the ground- and surface water of 'Wilgenlei' and 'Oosteindse polder'.²¹ Local legislation aims to close the horticultural system, preventing any type of runoff altogether, a seemingly naive and unachievable goal.

The greenhouses are perhaps more closed spatially than systemically. The film shows plexiglass greenhouse facades and discrete encasings containing energy infrastructure that disclose little of what happens inside to passers-by. Planting screens the greenhouse cluster from users of an adjacent cycling route. The captions argue that the spatial closedness of the horticultural system prevents stakeholders, sustainability experts and designers from entering a more multivocal discourse on the state of the greenhouse landscapes and halts a truly sustainable transformation of horticultural practices.

¹⁹ AMO and Koolhaas, *Countryside, A Report*

²⁰ Van Bergen Kolpa Architecten et al. "Werkboek Oostland" (Den Haag: Greenport West Holland, 2020)

²¹ Eddy Weeda, "Waterplanten als maat voor de biologische kwaliteit van oppervlaktewateren" (Wageningen: Alterra, 2011)

With '*Tussen de kassen*', I argue that agricultural landscapes should be developed with an eye for existing and potential recreational, historical and spatial qualities and awareness of larger landscape systems. The landscape shots towards the end of the film suggest that for 'Wilgenlei' and 'Oosteindse polder', the key to a sustainable and livable landscape lies in the spaces in between the greenhouses²². Workers are seen using these spaces to have lunch, smoke a cigarette or have a chat. More traditional agricultural practices, like sheep grazing and the sale of produce at the front doors of farmhouses take place. The presence of these activities stimulates interaction between horticultural practice and the outside world. As such they could be developed into spaces where passers-by, stakeholders, experts and designers come in contact with horticultural processes. Equally, a conscious planting plan for the spaces between the greenhouses can (combined with environmental policy) regulate runoff from greenhouse horticulture and lead to a rich and diverse ecosystem. The development of non-agricultural spaces in parallel to implementing new agricultural techniques is essential to create liveable and sustainable landscapes.

(Landscape) Architectural carpentry

Anthropologist Melanie van der Hoorn points out that film has been used as a tool by architects and urbanists as early as the 1920's to communicate and convince wider audiences of their design approach²³. Later, as cameras became handheld and affordable, architects started using film to annotate. Architect Jaap Bakema famously brought his camera to exhibitions and project sites²⁴ and Denise Scott Brown used film during her fieldwork in Las Vegas²⁵. But '*Tussen de Kassen*' was not a specific tool in a bigger project, it was a means of engaging with- and producing knowledge on a landscape. The complete process of filmmaking (including preliminary site visits, storyboarding, filming, editing, etc.) led to valuable insights into the horticultural landscape.

American philosopher Ian Bogost is a proponent of engaging in non-traditional methodologies as a means of knowledge production. He argues that the use of unconventional methods can lead to valuable insights in any discipline. These insights are often unexpected and could not have been attained using the traditional methods of a discipline, simply because a new method requires new actions, mediates knowledge differently and invites deeper reflection. He calls this approach to knowledge production 'philosophical carpentry' (carpentry is one of the practices

²² Strootman, "Tussen de kassen"

²³ Melanie Van der Hoorn, *Spots in Shots* (Rotterdam: nai010, 2018)

²⁴ Melanie Van der Hoorn, "Filmische schetsboekjes en hippe projectpresentaties. De films van Jaap Bakema" Archined, 2020 <https://www.archined.nl/2020/12/filmische-schetsboekjes-en-hippe-projectpresentaties-de-films-van-jaap-bakema/>

²⁵ Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown, and Steve Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas - Revised Edition*. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1977)

he believes could lead to new insights in philosophy)²⁶. With 'Tussen de kassen' I, as a landscape architect, used filmmaking as a form of architectural carpentry. Even though I have not found any direct references to Bogost's notion of carpentry in the work of (landscape) architects, many have taken on his approach in spirit. Artists Bas Gorter and Ernst van der Hoeven, for example, used loom-weaving as a method to develop thoughts on urban planning.²⁷ Landscape architect Christophe Girot used film to explore the effects of movement (specifically movement by car) on landscape perception.²⁸ Landscape architect Rikke Munck Petersen, together with Mads Farsø, developed the notion of film as a resonance tool to "represent and stimulate resonances between a sensing body and its surrounding"²⁹, and applies this tool in her design studio teaching. Visual artist Sophie Czich's video 'As the Facade bends' uses film as an architectural manifesto, an active work-document and an archive of architectural collages simultaneously³⁰.

Working on the video-essay revealed to me three ways in which filmmaking-as-carpentry benefits landscape architects working on the transition towards sustainable agricultural landscapes: (1) As a tool to explore and examine the atmospheres of agricultural landscapes. (2) As a method to discover unexpected entanglements in food production landscapes. (3) As a form of eidetic storytelling for landscapes of the Anthropocene.

Film as a tool to explore and examine atmospheres of agricultural landscapes

I initially decided to work with film in 'Tussen de kassen' to annotate, examine and convey the synaesthetic properties of 'Wilgenlei' and 'Oosteindse polder'. "*Synaesthetic properties are usually seen as qualities of the senses that belong to more than one sensory field at once*"³¹. Film is, more than any traditional architectural medium, able to convey (some of) the synaesthetic properties of a place. Representing simultaneously the visual, temporal, acoustic and (to a certain extent) tactile qualities of what is in front of the camera³². Synaesthetic properties are the foundation for what philosopher Gernot Böhme calls 'atmosphere'³³.

26 Ian Bogost, *Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2012)

27 Independent School for the city, "Urban tissue weaving" Accessed 30-09-2023 <https://www.schoolforthecity.nl/urban-tissue-weaving/>

28 Christophe Girot, "Landscape: Beyond the margins of vision." in *Emerging Landscapes : Between Production and Representation*. Ed. D. Deriu, K. Kamvasinou, and E. Shinkle (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Ltd, 2015)

29 Rikke Munck-Petersen and Mads Farsø, "Resonance and Transcendence of a Bodily Presence: How a filmic mapping of non-visual, aural and bodily relations in space can strengthen the sensory dimension in landscape architectural design." in *Architecture Filmmaking* ed. Igea Troiani and Hugh Campbell (Bristol: Intellect Ltd, 2019)

30 Sophie Czich, "Where the facade bends. An architectural critique in the form of an animation" *Archined*, 2021 <https://www.archined.nl/2021/09/where-the-facade-bends-an-architectural-critique-in-the-form-of-an-animation/>

31 Gernot Böhme, "Atmosphere as Mindful Physical Presence in Space" *OASE* issue 91 (2013): 29

32 Truniger, *Landscript 2: Filmic Mapping*

33 Gernot Böhme, "Atmosphere as the fundamental concept of a new aesthetics" *Thesis eleven, critical theory and historical sociology* vol. 36 (1993)

An 'atmosphere' is a descriptive tool used in everyday speech. 'Atmospheres' can be applied to spaces, things, people or events (a room of people, for example, can have an atmosphere that is tense, friendly, frigid, etc). Atmospheres "*fill the space with a certain tone of feeling like a haze*."³⁴ As a descriptive tool, 'atmospheres' have an in-between status, being not merely in the mind of an observer nor fully attributable as a quality of the perceived. To Böhme, "*atmosphere is the common reality of the perceiver and the perceived*,"³⁵ generated by the interaction between the two. Through 'atmospheres' a person assigns meaning unconsciously and almost instantaneously whenever they enter a space. Film transposes something that resembles the synaesthetic properties of a site, allowing the viewer to 'feel into'³⁶ that site and generate 'atmosphere' without a physical presence.

The aforementioned James Benning often seems to play with the relationship between synaesthetic properties and the 'atmospheric' meaning derived from them. His film 'Sogobi' portrays the Californian desert in 35 still shots, each with a duration of at least 2 minutes³⁷. Because of the long display of a single landscape image, viewers slowly become aware of the synaesthetic properties behind their initial unconscious reaction. Take a shot towards the end of the film, revealing the remains of a forest fire. As a viewer, I instantly recognize something is not right, even before spotting the last flames on the branches of a smouldering pinetree. As these flames slowly die, I realise it wasn't just the flames that stirred an unconscious feeling of unease, but a combination of textures, sounds and movements; The eerie quiet of the forest, interrupted every so often by a crackling sound. A thick white cloud reveals itself to be smoke by moving too fast and unpredictable to be fog. The combination of these aesthetic qualities led to the unconscious designation of meaning to the landscape.

Benning sometimes subverts the atmospheres generated by the viewer. After establishing a sense of serene and pristine wilderness through a series of landscapes containing hillsides, forests and lakes, a low flying helicopter disturbs the quiet. Throughout 'Sogobi', a number of human traces (like billboards, ships and cattle) question the initial sense of pristine wilderness, forcing the viewer to wonder how much of the landscape is the result of human intervention. By presenting visual and synaesthetic traces, Benning alters subconsciously assigned 'atmospheres'.

'Tussen de kassen' aims to do just this. Subverting intuitive readings of the landscape of 'Wilgenlei' and 'Oosteindse polder' by presenting its synaesthetic qualities. The video essay combines still images shot with a 10mm wide-angle lens and panned images shot with a 50mm close-up lens. The images initially reveal a reading of the landscape that supports the notion of

34 Böhme, "Atmosphere as Mindful Physical Presence", 114

35 Böhme, "Atmosphere as Mindful Physical Presence", 112

36 Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion* (New York: Verso, 2002)

37 These long duration shots are a trademark of Benning's work

greenhouse horticulture as a stand-alone, highly technological system (as established in the Guggenheim exhibition). Shots of geometrical water systems, plexiglass facades and a quietly humming electrical substation only reveal themselves to be film instead of photo through movements of the manicured lawns they are placed on. They establish the still and estranging feeling of a high-tech landscape far removed from many of our everyday lives.

As the video-essay develops, the images start to reveal a fuzzy landscape that comes across as equal parts futuristic and traditional. Both agricultural and urban. A single family house with a brightly flowering garden stands in between the greenhouses. So does a fading green container filled with sugar beets, fresh from the field. A man drives past sheep and chickens on an electric motorbike. Brambles overgrow a bin left in a ditch. A person walks their dog along the plexiglass facades. Again, the synaesthetic properties play a part in revealing the urban frills. The sounds of a plane taking off from an airport in the vicinity or the fading noise of heavy traffic invade the still, high-tech environments. Suggesting a concentration of urbanity nearby. Most of 'Wilgenlei' and 'Oosteindse polder' do not feel highly technological, but slow-paced, slightly messy and almost leisurely. Although visually different, the images of the video-essay bring to my mind the term 'Desakota'. A concept often used to describe the areas of large South-East Asian urban conglomerations that are both densely populated and have a high agricultural productivity. Places where urban and agricultural forms of land use intermingle and are often inseparable³⁸. The images and synaesthetic properties of 'Tussen de kassen' challenge the notion of horticulture as a stand-alone system separate from its surrounding natural and urban landscapes.

Film confronts the viewer with synaesthetic properties that challenge the preconceived meaning assigned to a landscape. Unexpected combinations of images, sounds and movements alter our attitude towards a space in a way that is not quite conscious, but certainly rooted in a precise reading of a landscape.

Filmmaking as a method to explore unexpected entanglements in food production landscapes.

During the making of 'Tussen de Kassen', filmmaking quickly became a structuring principle for me to systematically explore 'Wilgenlei' and 'Oosteindse polder'. Urbanists Andrea Kahn and Carol Burns argue that the (architectural) medium used to analyse and represent a site determines our understanding of that site. "*Graphic tools inform and bracket how designers think.*"³⁹ A model, plan drawing or diagram may include or omit certain information, simply

38 Kees Christiaanse, "Green urbanism. Models of a dense and green urban context" in *Textbook* ed. Kees Christiaanse and Jessica Bridger (Rotterdam: nai010, 2018): 162–178

39 Andrea Kahn and Carol Burns, "Why site matters" in *Site matters: Strategies for uncertainty through planning and design* ed. Andrea Kahn and Carol Burns (London: Routledge, 2020): 8

because of the representational limitations of that medium. Equally, different representational media require different approaches to a site and different methodologies to produce and process knowledge. It is interesting to compare 'Tussen de kassen' to 'Werkboek Oostland'⁴⁰ with this notion in mind.

'Werkboek Oostland' is a spatial analysis of the Oostland greenhouse conglomeration. It is produced by a collaboration of local horticulturalists, government officials, engineering offices, agriculture scientists and an architecture office. The publication perpetuates an image of 'Wilgenlei' and 'Oosteindse polder' as efficient, productive, closed and autonomous. Some aspects of the landscape merely need a little tweaking to remain functional in the future.

The collaborative takes a layered approach to understanding and representing the region. An analysis of geospatial data is presented in a series of thematic maps that highlight different characteristics of the region. The maps reveal the age of the different greenhouse developments, their primary form of produce, all buildings designated as 'housing', and so on. The layered approach is a useful tool to discover spatial patterns and large scale landscape processes that remain imperceptible when physically present on a site. However, it presupposes that different aspects of a landscape can be understood separately from one another. Unexpected (spatial) relationships between the different layers remain undiscovered⁴¹.

'Tussen de kassen' reveals a different reading of the landscape. 'Wilgenlei' and 'Oosteindse polder' become a system of greenhouse horticulture intentionally and unintentionally entangled with its surroundings. Where historic structures still influence current development. Nutrient runoff affects planting. And the spatial configuration of the horticulture system influences the discourse on sustainable development. The video-essay shows how altering one aspect of the greenhouse clusters will have diverse and unexpected consequences on the wider landscape.

Filmmaking asks for a close engagement with the site. As a filmmaker, I spend a considerable amount of time on site filming, visiting and revisiting locations. More than a passive observer, I became a participant in the studied landscape. I felt the warmth emanating from the greenhouses on a cold winter day and chatted with workers curious about the camera. It led to a more intimate understanding of the site beyond the direct topic of study and helped uncover unexpected entanglements between greenhouse horticulture and other landscape aspects. The way in which a camera indiscriminately records further helps this process, as it allows the filmmaker (as well as the viewer, later on) to reflect on things that went unnoticed during the site visit. Some of the slowly panned shots of planting along a canal show Rigid Hornwort. As Hornwort is an indicator species of high-nutrient levels in surface water, this was the starting

40 Van Bergen Kolpa Architecten et al. "Werkboek Oostland"

41 Marialessandra Secchi and Marco Voltini, "They do it with layers – How design by layers is killing urban complexity" OASE Issue 107 (Rotterdam: nai010, 2020): 74–87

point of research into the water quality of the region. The presence of Hornwort had escaped my attention during the visits, but became obvious during editing.

The editing process brings together images from separated locations taken at different times. Revealing spatial patterns and large scale landscape processes that remain imperceptible when physically present on a site, much like the layered approach. But where the layered approach observes 'Wilgenlei' and 'Oosteindse polder' at a distance, editing keeps the researcher in close relation to the site, able to perceive things in the periphery that didn't seem important when recording, but turned out to be significant. Filmmaking develops an entangled⁴² understanding of a landscape. By placing the researcher (or designer) directly on the ground, in front of- and in the same world as the topic of study, we can look for unintended and unexpected consequences of our human actions⁴³. It stimulates a more complete evaluation of the impact of new agricultural techniques, in line with the current state of the planet

Film as a form of eidetic storytelling for landscapes of the Anthropocene.

"Techniques of analysis, data collection processes, etc. [lend] identity to a site, since design actions are themselves definitive acts."⁴⁴ The landscape architect James Corner calls this process 'imaging', stating: "how one 'images' the world literally conditions how reality is both conceptualized and shaped."⁴⁵ Fred Truniger refers to the same process as narrating or storytelling. He goes as far as to say that the act of narrating is one of two ways in which humans transform landscapes, the other form being construction. Narratives actively define how we act in, experience and understand spaces: "a prominent hill, for example, becomes the Acropolis by means of a story."⁴⁶ I developed 'Tussen de kassen' as a video essay to experiment with forms of storytelling for Anthropocenic agricultural landscapes.

Representation plays an important role when developing a narrative. Any type of representational medium can be used to construct an image of a landscape, from photograph, to spoken word, pie-chart, painting, or audio recording. Often compositions of different media are used. The selection of types of media, and the tone and style of the composition do as much of the narration as the represented content. The medium oftentimes is the message⁴⁷. Corner notes that landscape architects often fall back on a limited number of techniques.

42 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the trouble* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016)

43 Timothy Morton, "The Mesh" in *Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Stephanie LeMenager, Teresa Shewry and Ken Hiltner (New York: Routledge, 2011): 19–30

44 Kahn and Burns, "Why site matters" 8

45 James Corner, "Eidetic operations and new landscapes" in *Recovering Landscape* ed. James Corner (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999): 153

46 Truniger, *Landscript 2: Filmic Mapping* 171

47 Marshall McLuhan and Quinten Fiore, *The Medium is the Message* (London: Penguin Books, 2008)

"Whether [looking at] maps, paintings, collage, performance arts, or cinematic and digital media- I am struck by the range of types and forms of representation in comparison to the relatively small number of techniques used in the landscape, architectural, and planning arts."⁴⁸

Designers often rely on pictorial techniques that treat landscapes as static and singular. Corner sees this as a lost opportunity for "emancipation, heterogeneity, and open-ended relations among parts" of the landscape⁴⁹.

Anthropologist Nils Bubant points out that "the increasing impossibility of distinguishing human from nonhuman forces" is an "important and unsettling feature of the Anthropocene."⁵⁰ As such, it is impossible to develop a meaningful singular narrative when working with Anthropocenic landscapes. Linear and singular narratives of Anthropocenic events and landscapes are what Bubant calls "undecidable"⁵¹. These narratives simply state it is impossible to say with certainty why, or because of whom, an Anthropocenic landscape came to be. These narratives do not convey the richness and multitude of observations of intermingling human and non-human processes that caused the uncertainty. 'Undecidability' often leads to inaction, as it can't be said with certainty what can be done to rehabilitate a landscape, or who to hold financially responsible for the actions that need to be taken. Politicians and companies often actively use the 'undecidability' of singular narratives to avoid responsibility⁵². This is visible in a minor way in 'Werkboek Oostland'. The document admittedly intends to minimise pollutants and improve water quality, but also states it is uncertain how much horticulture contributed to the current situation⁵³. 'Undecidability' helps the conglomerate avoid taking explicit responsibility for the region's poor water quality.

In his South-East Asian case studies, Bubants reveals how locals create stories of spirits to grasp Anthropocenic events and landscapes. The spirits are draped in mysticism but very much based on real life observations. Their stories combine human and non-human events that seem related but are hard to put together in traditional, linear narratives. The spirit narratives allow the locals to move forward in their Anthropocenic landscape. Using storytelling as a coping mechanism, to fuel protests and activism, and to generate new forms of income.⁵⁴

48 Corner, "Eidetic operations" 163

49 Corner, "Eidetic operations" 166

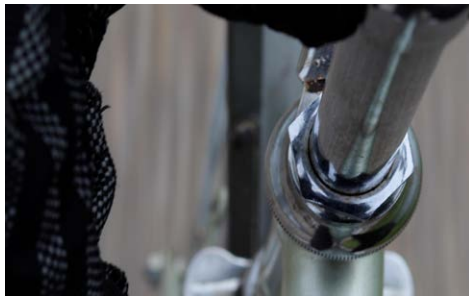
50 Nils Bubant, "Haunted Geologies: spirits, stones and the necropolitics of the anthropocene" in *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene* ed. Anna Tsing, Heather Swanson, Elaine Gan and Nils Bubant (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017): 122

51 Bubant, "Haunted Geologies" 127

52 Bubant, "Haunted Geologies"

53 Van Bergen Kolpa Architecten et al. *Werkboek Oostland*

54 Bubant, "Haunted Geologies"



[Figures 9–16]
 Stills from 'Tussen de Kassen' showing the use of different media in the essay

The spirits are an example of what James Corner calls 'eidetic images'. Images with "metaphoric agency"⁵⁵ that present a combination of different types of information, "picturable ... acoustic, tactile, cognitive, or intuitive"⁵⁶ to create "a host of associative possibilities."⁵⁷ "Through utilizing a variety of analytic and analogous imaging techniques, otherwise disparate parts can be brought into productive relationship"⁵⁸ Eidetic storytelling is heterogeneous and open-ended and provides a means for understanding and moving forward with Anthropocenic landscapes.

As is clear in figures 9–16, 'Tussen de kassen' aims to function as eidetic storytelling as it creates an open-ended landscape narrative based on different types of media and information. The final result does not provide a clear and definitive image of 'Wilgenlei' and 'Oosteindse polder'. It does allow scientific, political, spatial and phenomenological observations to intermingle and leads to a clear and reasoned course of action that could be taken to make the area more sustainable. Eidetic storytelling also makes 'Tussen de kassen' accessible to a wider audience. As it communicates a wider variety of information through different forms of media, it makes a niche subject more graspable for viewers without prior knowledge. This made it possible to share the video-essay on a popular architecture platform. I think it shows how film can be useful to communicate the processes at play in anthropocenic landscapes within their context and enrich the discourse on the transition to sustainable agriculture.

'Landscape architectural carpentry' in times of climate crisis

The scientists behind the Lancet-commission, referenced at the beginning of the essay, state that "a rising number of environmental systems and processes [is] being pushed beyond safe boundaries by food production, [and] methods of food production need to be urgently reviewed."⁵⁹ In the first part of this essay I argue that (landscape) architects should be part of this urgently needed reviewing process. The discourse on sustainable agriculture needs to move beyond agricultural techniques in the abstract and include the aesthetic and systemic consequences of implementing these techniques in specific landscapes. By presenting a reading of a landscape where innovative agricultural practices take place, 'Tussen de Kassen' aims to enrich the current discourse.

The second part of the essay outlines three ways in which filmmaking as architectural carpentry benefits the work of landscape architects whilst examining modern landscapes of food production. It is by no means an exhaustive overview and points at many subjects that could be explored deeper and further. A common thread of the anthology is film raising awareness

of the position of the researcher/designer. Be it their literal position in the field, as film allows the exploration and examination of the 'atmospheres' that flow forth from a synaesthetic experience of the site. Their intellectual position and approach, as filmmaking functions as a methodology to discover interrelations of agricultural landscapes. Or their political position, challenging narratives of 'undecidability' by applying film as an eidetic image to convey Anthropocenic landscapes as multivalent and non-linear.

For me, developing 'Tussen de kassen' as a video-essay was an experiment. To find my place as a spatial designer in a transition where this discipline has not traditionally been a part of. To develop an approach to site-specific research in times of ecological crisis. And to explore forms of representation for Anthropocenic agricultural landscapes. Eidetic storytelling turned out to be a fruitful experiment in representation. And filmmaking-as-carpentry is a helpful way to approach agricultural landscapes. I am sure other experiments in architectural carpentry would lead to other promising forms of representation, methodologies and approaches to the urgently needed review of agricultural practices.

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55 Corner, "Eidetic operations" 163

56 Corner, "Eidetic operations" 153

57 Corner, "Eidetic operations" 163

58 Corner, "Eidetic operations" 166

59 Willett et al. "Food in the Anthropocene" 449

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Oases in the grid: The gardens of postwar Milanese middle-class housing

Natalia Voroshilova, Giulio Galasso

Abstract:

The essay investigates the Milanese street-front gardens of post-WWII middle-class housing. Spread around the city by hectic developers, these gardens reflect specific cultural–al, political and social conditions of Italy's industrial capital during the economic miracle.

Street-facing gardens are an essential feature of modern middle-class condominiums. They reflected the modernist urban vision of a park-city and the Milanese tradition of the street facade; they encapsulate the bourgeois culture with its urge for representative decorum and the freedom of architectural experimentation; their image was used as a marketing tool in real estate advertisement but also as an argument in negotiation for the building licence.

In Post-WWII Milan urban nature radically changed its connotation: from a hygienic device, it transformed into a status symbol, and the Milanese started to take care of gardens precisely because of their decorative importance. Even though they are private, they are designed to be looked at from the street, and therefore they make an important part of the everyday urban experience.

Beyond their speculative nature, the gardens of Milanese condominiums transformed the urban landscape, bringing density together with well-cared nature into the city streets.

The essay explores this phenomenon through a series of distant and close-up views as if following a wandering gaze through the streets of the city.

Keywords: architecture, photography, middle-class, regional modernism.

Natalia Voroshilova is an architect and researcher based in Zurich. She studied at Politecnico di Milano and ETH Zurich, and she is currently a teaching assistant in Politecnico di Milano. Her field of research is XX century Italian middle-class housing and, together with Giulio Galasso, she has lectured at Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio, Biennale svizzera del territorio, ENSA Paris Val-de-Seine, Politecnico di Torino, Politecnico di Milano and University of Antwerp.

Giulio Galasso is an architect and researcher based in Zurich. He graduated from Politecnico di Milano, IUAV and TU Munich, and he is currently a research assistant at the Chair of Christ and Gantenbein at ETH Zurich. He is recipient of LINA Fellowship for the years 2023–24 and together with Natalia Voroshilova he runs continentale, an architecture firm based in Zurich.

While strolling in the streets of Milan, one can often encounter small oases of gardens interrupting the tight row of XIX-century street facades. Usually, these green voids are created by modernist condominiums that are set back from the street. These gardens include recurrent elements as if belonging to a common project: tall cedar and magnolia trees, low bowl planters, white sphere lamps, fountains clad with azure mosaic and stone-paved paths leading from the street to the building entrance. At the same time, each garden has its own shape and character, which together with architecture creates an individual atmosphere. Present in almost every street of Milan, these private gardens form a network of oases spread all over the city.

Condominiums with street-facing gardens are examples of middle-class housing built by private developers from 1949 to 1971. The housing construction boom was pushed by national subsidies aimed at stabilising the political situation through the expansion of homeownership¹. Differently from the majority of the neighbouring European countries, where the spread of private cars encompassed low-density suburban development, living in a "modern" apartment in the city became the major aspiration for Italian families in the post-war period. This model of "living together, living in the city" defined high-density urbanisation mechanisms in Italy with the condominium as its primary unit². The aspirations of the industrial capital's soaring population overlapped with the urge to reconstruct after the bombings. As a result, the punctually emptied XIX century urban grid was filled by autonomous profit-oriented operations, characterised by a plurality of actors involved in design, construction and transformation processes (large real-estate and insurance companies, private developers and cooperatives, design firms, architects and engineers, contractors and building companies, technicians, city administrators and middle-class families).

The construction of these buildings had to satisfy the diverse expectations of various actors and therefore reflects the spirit of the city at that time: the quest for "modern with the consciousness of history"³. This is why the gardens are grounded in the modernist urban visions of a park-city as well as in the Milanese tradition of representative street facades dating back to Commissione d'Ornato – a planning institution responsible for facade quality in the Napoleonic epoch⁴. These gardens were a fruit of bourgeois culture with its aspiration for

¹ Gaia Caramellino and Federico Zanfi (editors), *Post-war Middle-class Housing. Models, Construction, Change* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2015).

² Bruno Bonomo, Gaia Caramellino, Filippo De Pieri and Federico Zanfi (editors), *Storie di case. Abitare l'Italia del boom* (Rome: Donzelli editore, 2014).

³ Gio Ponti, "Paesaggio moderno di Milano", in *Domus*, no. 312, (1955), 7–10.

⁴ Corinna Morandi, Milano. La grande trasformazione urbana (Venezia: Marsilio, 2015), 19–22.

representative decorum⁵ as well as the professional architectural culture linked with arts and engineering experimentation⁶. The garden image was widely used as a marketing tool in real estate advertisement but also as an argument in negotiation for the building licence due to the common mechanism of agreements “in precario”⁷.

Due to the peculiarity of the post-war Milanese context, the modernist hygienic concept of urban nature totally changed its meaning as it transformed into a cultural phenomenon: the street-front garden became a status symbol of the building residents exhibited for the public view. Like the street facade and the entryway, the front garden became an essential element of the flaunting relationship between the private and the public in the city of Milan⁸.

The gardens are meticulously maintained due to their cultural significance; they represent a collective gift from middle-class residents to the city – a form of donation that enhances the daily street experience while also solidifying the social status of the donors. Beyond its speculative nature, middle-class mass housing transformed Milan into a denser but also greener city, with flourishing gardens adorning its streets, tall trees casting the lace of shadow, softly rippling fountains cooling the hot air and glazed clinker tiles shining on the sun.

These Milanese gardens stand as a precious example of how the modernist concept of a park city can integrate with the urban fabric of corridor-streets. Here, the gardens become an integral part of the continuous street facade, creating verdant niches that enrich urban environment while maintaining the integrity of the street experience. These vibrant, foliage-filled oases, adorned by colorful tiled facades, not only enhance the visual appeal of the streetscape but also improve the street climate. Originally conceived as symbols of middle-class social status, designed to captivate the gaze of passersby, they stand today as valuable human-scale spaces that with their abundant details make the street more attractive and invite residents to go for a stroll rather than relying on cars. Born from a convergence of diverse actors and aspirations, the street-front gardens of post-war Milan serve as a compelling source of inspiration for contemporary city planning.

⁵ Fulvio Irace, *Milano Moderna. Architettura e città nell'epoca della ricostruzione* (Milan: Motta Editore, 1996), 50–52.

⁶ Maria Vittoria Capitanucci, *Il professionismo colto nel dopoguerra* (Milan: Solferino edizioni, 2015), 13–23.

⁷ Federico Zanfi, “Convenzione urbanistiche e il nuovo paesaggio residenziale per i ceti medi a Milano tra gli anni '50 e '70”, in *Territorio*, n. 64, (2013), 66–74.

⁸ Daniel Sherer, “The Discreet Charm of the Entryway. Architecture, art, and design in the Milanese ingressi, 1910–70”, in *Entryways of Milan – Ingressi di Milano*, ed. Karl Kolbitz (Taschen: Cologne, 2017), 22–2.

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Captions

(Fig. 1-2)

Condominium in Piazzale Bacone, arch. Gustavo and Vito Latis, 1968;

(Fig. 3-4)

Condominium in via Maiocchi, cooperative Ornella Letizia, arch. Paula Arduini, 1967–1969;

(Fig. 5-6)

Condominium in via Monte Rosa, insurance company Toro s.r.l., arch. Vittorio Ceretti, 1967–1969;

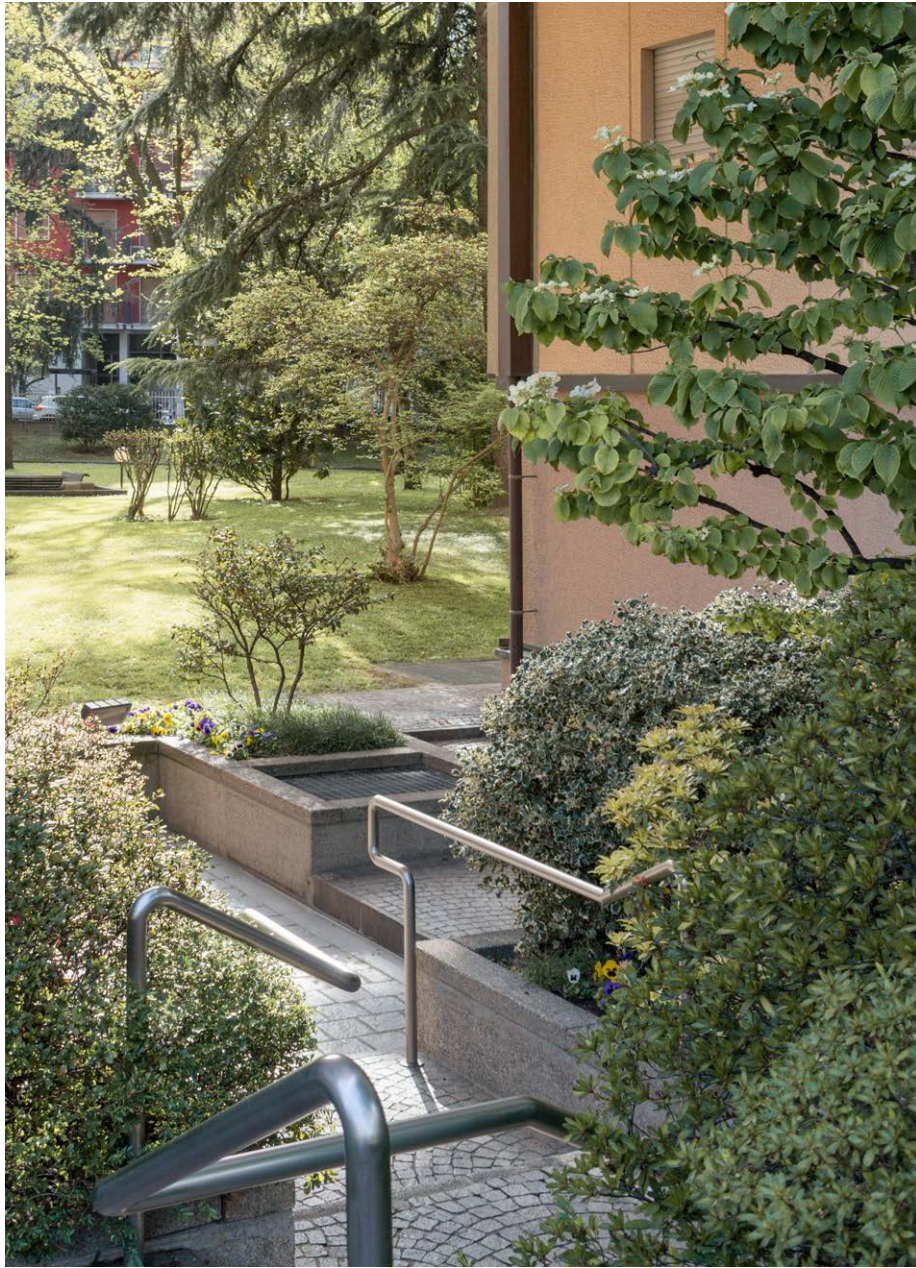
(Fig. 7-8)

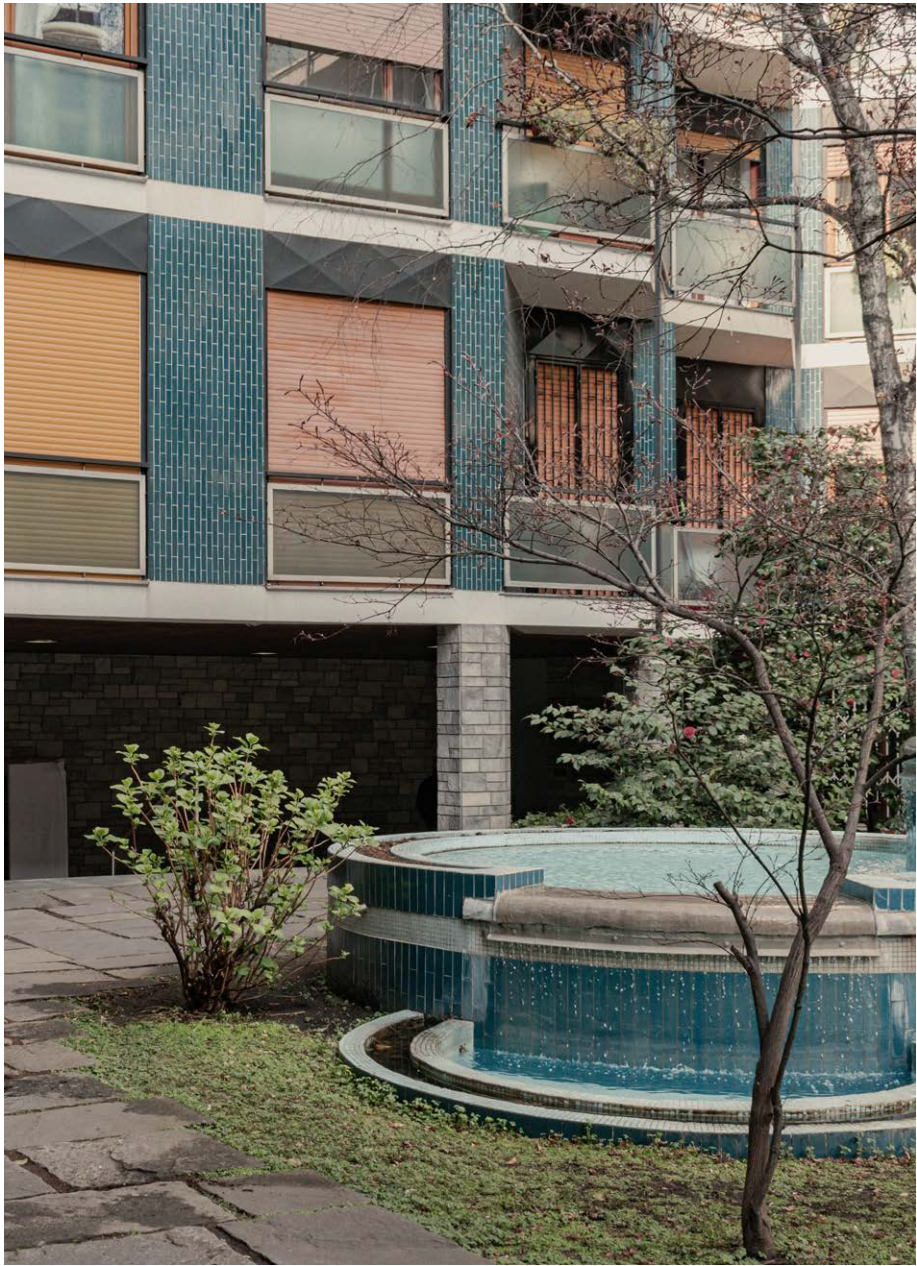
Condominium in Via Garofalo, anonymous, 1960s.











The Infrastructural Sublime. The Spectacle of Dams as a Catalyst for Environmental Consciousness

Lars Rolfsted Mortensen

Abstract:

Dams in the Swiss Alps are at once engineering marvels, dramatic man-made artefacts, crucial nodes in far-reaching infrastructural systems, and destructive interventions in alpine ecosystems. The essay explores the contradictory nature of dams in the Swiss Alps through the author's photographs and the experience of the infrastructural sublime. By focusing on the coming together of rockface and cast concrete shell within the images, the dams appear as distinct naturecultures interwoven with the flows and forces of the alpine landscape. Using the sublime as a lens to describe the aesthetic experience, the essay proposes the possibility of gaining environmental consciousness and humility of the vast impact of dams, through the encounter of the infrastructural sublime.

Key words: infrastructure, sublime aesthetics, photography, landscape, dams

VISUAL ESSAYS

Lars Rolfsted Mortensen Architect MA PhD is a research fellow from the Royal Danish Academy, Center for Sustainable Building Culture. His research focuses on recent heritage, particularly the industrial and infrastructural heritage from the post-war period. He incorporates photography into his practice to examine and disseminate spatial and aesthetic characteristics of liminal heritage objects and landscapes. Lars has contributed to the theory and methodology of using photography as empirical material within a phenomenological tradition.

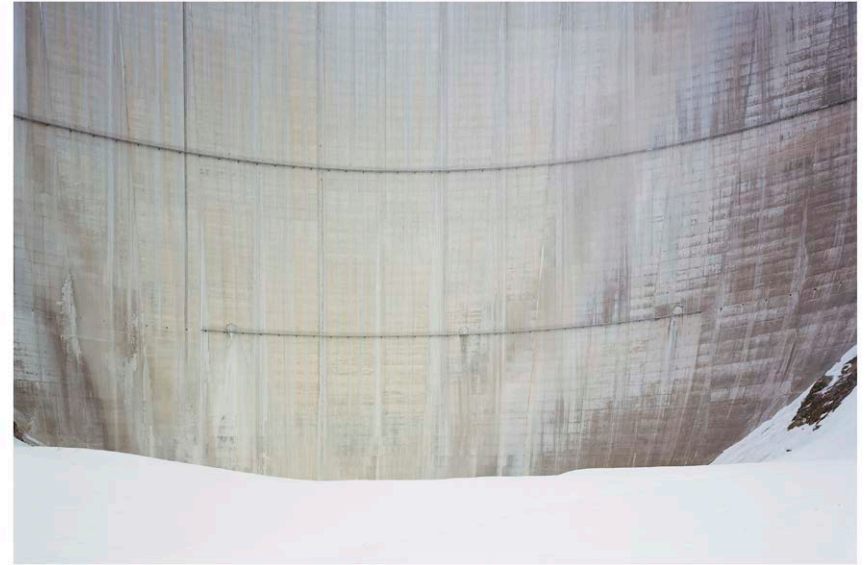


[Fig. 1]

Lars Rolfsted Mortensen, Duxence I from the series "Infra/Super/Structure", 2017, 128 x 160cm inkjet print

The Infrastructural Sublime. The Spectacle of Dams as a Catalyst for Environmental Consciousness

Two thirds of Swiss electricity come from hydroelectric powerplants¹ making them crucial to long-term carbon neutrality. With 220 dams, no other region in the world is as densely populated with the steep concrete artefacts as the Swiss Alps. As a human intervention to prevent flooding and control irrigation, dams date back at least 5000 years,² but the vast majority have been constructed after 1950 and they form significant, lasting components of the landscape. Dams are at once destructive interventions in alpine ecosystems, crucial nodes in infrastructural energy networks, and remarkable human achievements constituting future heritage inseparable from the landscape they inhabit. The photographs present the dams with a focus on the dramatic intersection between rockface and cast concrete shell. Methodically indebted to the oeuvre of Bernd & Hilla Becher,³ the construction of the images follows distinct compositional figures e.g., the frontal depiction of the concrete shell deliberately leaving out the top ridge to allow the structure to become open-ended, and the opposed diptychs taken from each side of the shell to emphasize the coming together of geological formation and human artefact. Employing the image category proposed in Hans-Georg Gadamer's phenomenological aesthetics, the images must be considered autonomous to the depicted as they form new presentations of the dams that allow new interpretations to surface.⁴ This translation from embodied experience to photographic image holds the potential to change our perception of infrastructures and their impact on the landscapes we inhabit.⁵



¹ "Energy – Facts & Figures," Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, accessed March 27th 2023,

<https://www.eda.admin.ch/aboutswitzerland/en/home/wirtschaft/energie/energie---fakten-und-zahlen.html>

² Stefan Schmutz and Otto Moog, "Dams: Ecological Impacts and Management", in *Riverine Ecosystem Management – Science for Governing Towards a Sustainable Future*, eds. Stefan Schmutz and Jan Sendzimier, (Cham: Springer, 2018) 111

³ Susanne Lange, *Bernd and Hilla Becher: Life and Work* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006), 79–83

⁴ Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Sandhed og metode: grundtræk af en filosofisk hermeneutik*, trans. Arne Jørgensen (Århus: Academica, 2004 [1960]), 136–142

⁵ Dag Petersson and Walter Niedermayr, "Photographic Space", in *Representational Machines: Photography and the Production of Space*, eds. Anna Dahlgren, Dag Petersson and Nina Lager Vestberg (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 2013) 108–110

[Fig. 2]

Lars Rolfsted Mortensen, Mauvoisin I from the series "Infra/Super/Structure", 2017, 128 x 160cm inkjet print



As a visual strategy, the compositions allow for a close examination of the characteristics pertaining to both mountain and dam—the jarring granite and the geometrically precise concrete surface. The scale of the dams is initially difficult to decipher. However, a closer examination of fixtures, doors, and handrails hints at just how tiny the human body is compared to the artefacts moulded into the landscape. *The infrastructural sublime* appears within these phenomena: the immense scale and the geometric clarity with which the dams sweep into the rockface inspire a classical awe and apprehension distinctive of both a Burkean⁶ and Kantean⁷ sublime experience. As engineering marvels, the dams express an almost divine material mastery amidst the vertical landscape. They become vital monuments within the vast infrastructural networks of contemporary society, and their engineered unnaturalness complies with Nye's term the *technological sublime*.⁸

6 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Inquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014 [1756])

7 Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Judgement*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987 [1790])

8 David E. Nye, "Technological" in *Seven Sublimes* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2022)

[Fig. 3]

Lars Rolfsted Mortensen, Emsoson Diptych from the series "Infra/Super/Structure", 2017, 2 inkjet prints of 100 x 80cm



However, it is essential to overcome the dichotomy of natural and constructed world to comprehend the dams and their conflicting agency within the landscape. Rockface and dam may first appear as a joining of two distinctly different phenomena. But the structural interdependency of the two, and the dam's *raison d'être* to block and tap the flow of glacial water bodies make them coalesce into one solid, aggregate body of rock—a man-made prosthesis transforming the geologically given. The dam and its networks of tunnels, turbines, spillway canals, transformers etc. cannot be understood solely as a solitary mesh of human artefacts, but only as a composite, interwoven and interdependent *natureculture*,⁹ where the constant exchange of flows and forces with the surroundings is constitutive of the dam itself. This allows for the acknowledgement of the continuous alterations of the landscape i.e., the alpine river flows prior to dam construction and the gradual expansion of hydropower stations in the Swiss Alps involving the flooding of pastures and settlements.¹⁰

9 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble—Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016) 13

10 Sabine Eggmann, "Vom Stausee Verdrängt – vom Stausee Geschenkt, Technikgeschichte aus kulturwissenschaftlicher Perspektive" in *Lebenskunst – Erkundungen zu Biographie, Lebenswelt und Erinnerung*, eds. Konrad J. Kuhn, Katrin Sontag, Walter Leimgruber (Köln: Böhlau Verlag GmbH, 2017)

[Fig. 4]

Lars Rolfsted Mortensen, Grimsel Diptych from the series "Infra/Super/Structure", 2017, 2 inkjet prints of 100 x 80cm

Returning to the sublime experience, a revised cognitive progression can be proposed: *apprehension* followed—not by a Kantian comprehension in *sensus communis*¹¹—but by a different, factual comprehension of the ecological and infrastructural reach of the depicted structure one is confronted with. Comprehending the potentiality of dams, their *slow violence*¹² of profound damage to ecosystems¹³ and the immense catastrophe a collapse would entail,¹⁴ can throw the spectator back to the initial, Burkean terror precisely through the enlightenment of comprehension. Such a cognitive progression corresponds to Brady's *environmental sublime*,¹⁵ founded upon humility and knowledge about the human condition as inextricably spun into the earth's ecosystems.¹⁶ Such sublime experience may bring in its wake the inclination to investigate, care for and work to heal the landscapes and ecosystems so heavily altered by human activity. Taking the prefix *infra* into account, an *infrastructural sublime* may precisely delineate the aesthetic potentiality to unearth new knowledge and environmental consciousness within the often-unseen structures that form the undergirding of contemporary society.¹⁷

11 Immanuel Kant, op.cit. 159–160

12 Rob Nixon, "Unimagined Communities: Megadams, Monumental Modernity, and Developmental Refugees" in *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011)

13 "Dams are among the most damaging human activities in river basins, deeply modifying the physiography of watersheds" Stefan Schmutz and Otto Moog, 2018 op.cit. 113

14 "Le scénario du pire", Les Archives de la RTS, accessed June 29th 2023,

<https://www.rts.ch/archives/tv/divers/documentaires/7461670-le-scenario-du-pire.html>

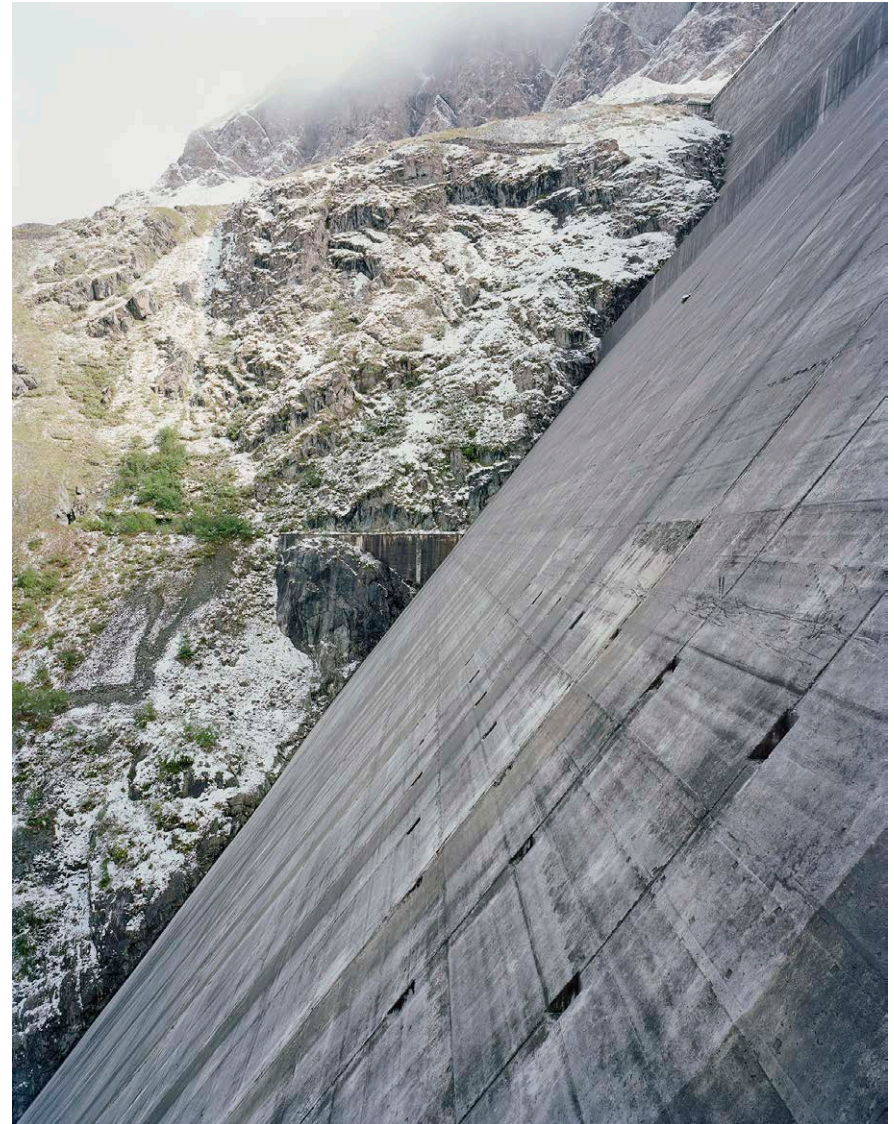
15 Emily Brady, *The Sublime in Modern Philosophy—Aesthetics, Ethics, and Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 183

16 Ibid., 195–201

17 Brian Larkin, "The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure". *Annu. Rev. Anthropol.* No. 42 (2013) 328

[Fig. 5]

Lars Rolfsted Mortensen, Dixence II from the series "Infra/Super/Structure", 2017, 128 x 160cm inkjet print



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Walking the Table: Caring-with landscape

Millicent Gunner

Abstract:

Walking the Table is an experimental project that develops a relationship of care, registering and becoming conscious of subtle changes within an Australian landscape. Drawing on Donna Haraway's ideas of 'making-with'¹ and Tim Ingold's concept of 'thinking through making'² this visual essay explores ideas of relational care within a rapidly altering landscape and how one may become an attentive participant, moving with a changing landscape as a practice of care. Understanding 'landscape' to be a layered entanglement of systems, materials and inhabitants (more-than-human and human) movements and projections that are influenced by the past and present, the role of the photographs and two forms of text is to weave three different layers of conversation that are relational and form an overall narrative.

Photography is used to capture the process of a dialogue emerging between the walker and the landscape, facilitated through the camera and the table when walking the table around the site. Landscape and care is an ever-evolving relationship that requires attentiveness and participation. When a relationship with a landscape is built over a prolonged period of time, revealed are the drastic differences in scales of temporal shifts that landscapes undergo, formulating an ongoing dialogue between the landscape and the inhabitant of that landscape.

Keywords: relationship; attentive; participatory; temporality; device

Millicent Gunner is a PhD candidate at RMIT University exploring an attentive landscape architectural research practice, in relation to practices of care. She completed the Bachelor of Landscape Architecture and Design and the Master of Landscape Architecture at RMIT University. She has taught in RMIT's Bachelor of Landscape Architecture and Design for the last 2 years, as well as a semester at the University of Tasmania in the Bachelor of Design.

¹ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (USA: Duke University Press, 2016), 5.

² Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (USA: Routledge, 2013), 21.

Walking the Table is an experimental project within a creative practice of relational care, registering and being attentive to subtle changes within an Australian landscape. This visual essay explores ideas of caring-with through a photographic method that focuses on relationality between devices that enables oneself to become an attentive participant within the foothills of the Alpine National Park.

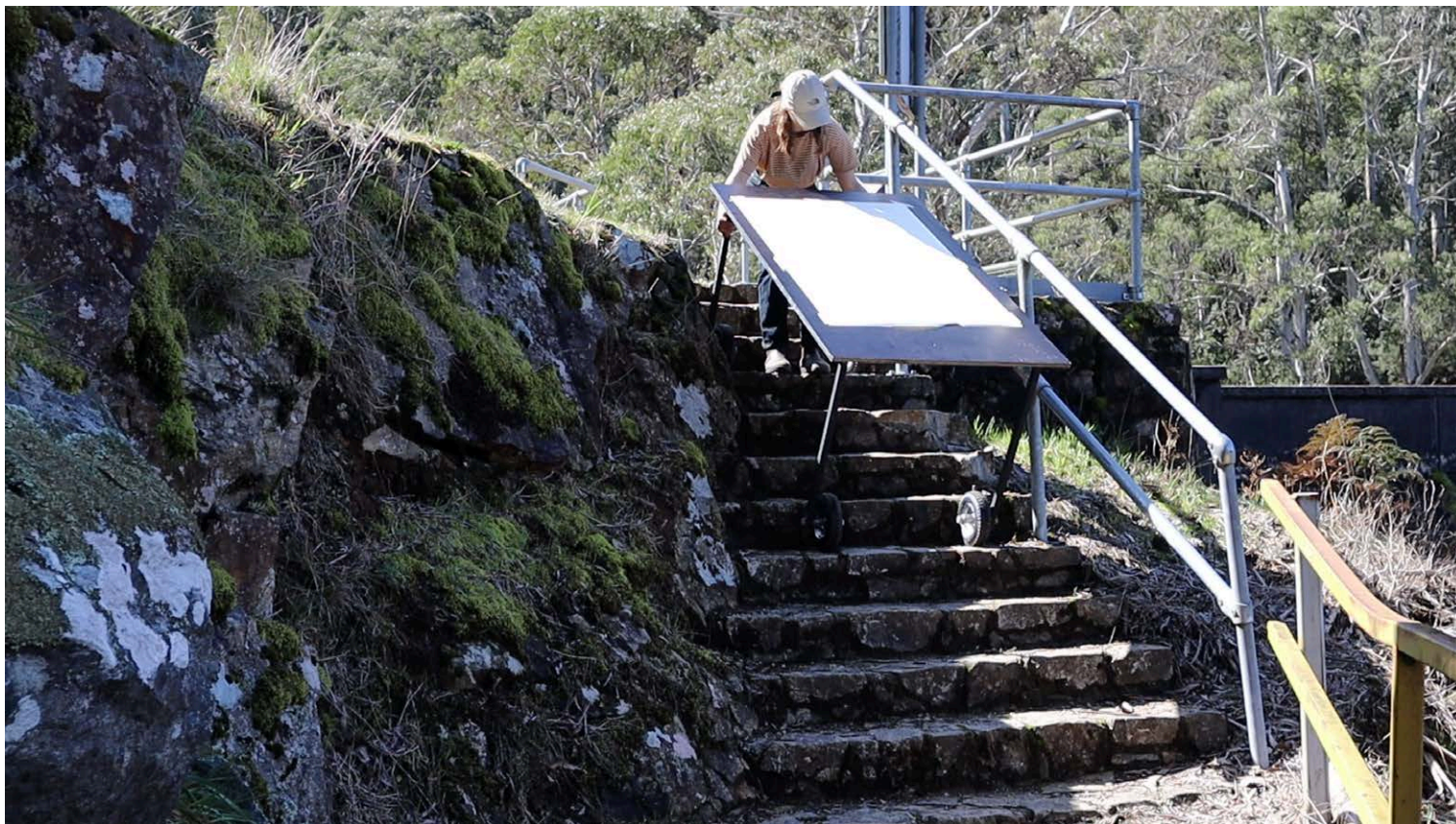
Building a table with pneumatic wheels to push and draw in the site enabled an unexpected relationship with the landscape, revealed by the absurdity of walking a table. Drawing on Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble* I am adopting a similar notion of 'making-with'³ a landscape as a practice of care, called caring-with. Caring-with means being consciously present and attentive to the landscape one is in, to listen to and be informed by the landscape. Responsive at a range of scales, this caring-with becomes apparent in the way the wheel rolls over rocks without disturbing the rocks' position, negotiating with the masonry stairs as I struggle to pull the table up them and utilising the camera as a device to register spatial time and changes over time. Caring-with is also situated in relation to Tim Ingold's method of 'thinking through making',⁴ allowing oneself to be vulnerable and open, one can harness unconstrained and improvised movement in response to or influenced by where one is moving and who one is moving with.

Improvisation and absurdity revealed the table and the camera together to be an experimental device, registering the site's temporal shifts and phenomena. Geoff Manaugh argues, 'given the right instruments, humans gain access to and, more importantly, begin to interact with entire systems of objects and landscapes that were present all along but had otherwise been physically unattainable'⁵. Both the camera and walking the table act as a device that enables one to enter into a conversation with the landscape, provoking a consciousness of details and processes that are occurring.

³ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (USA: Duke University Press, 2016), 5.

⁴ Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (USA: Routledge, 2013), 21

⁵ Geoff Manaugh, *Landscape Futures: Instruments, Devices and Architectural Inventions* (New York: ACTAR, 2013), 27.



[Fig. 1]
Walking the table, negotiating with the landscape.

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This photographic series captures a specific moment in time and the process of a dialogue emerging between the walker and the landscape, facilitated through the table when pushing it around the site. There are two layers of the image being produced. Firstly, the table being pushed through the landscape is hosting an interaction between the paper on the table's surface, the sunlight and the landscape matter above, producing and capturing its own image through shadow forms. Secondly, there is me (the human) and the camera, together making images of these shadows captured through the paper and table movement.

'Photography shows, but the very act of framing also takes away, removes and abstracts.'⁶ The photographs from walking the table encapsulate an interaction between the table, landscape, my body and time without the visibility of these actions or devices. This abstract method of capturing the shadows on the table and paper's horizontal surface provides insight into the phenomena of the landscape at that specific moment in time, as well as my body's connection to the camera and table as I stretch over and tilt the camera lens down towards the table's surface. These photographs are telling of a clear, sunny day with vegetation located above me, the table and the camera, their shadows being a reminder to look up, notice and pay attention. Photographer and landscape architect Anne Whiston Spirn speaks of photography being a device to notice and 'discover what cannot be seen directly or only at a different scale... to question, seek answers and find connections among what is seemingly unrelated.'⁷ Intertwined with movements of the table, the landscape and my body's experience in the landscape, the photographs have allowed a shadow transect of a temporal site to be engaged with and prompt questions of larger time scales.

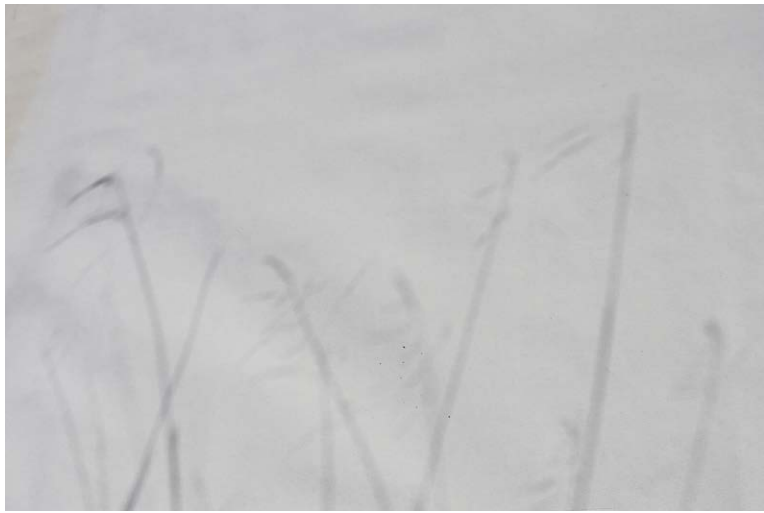
⁶ Anne C Godfrey, *Active Landscape Photography: Theoretical Groundwork for Landscape Architecture*. (UK: Routledge, 2020), 25.

⁷ "Sensing Place: Photography as Inquiry Lecture 8: Anne Whiston Spirn," filmed August 2019 at MIT, Cambridge, MA. video, 1:27, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BC6zatWVTM&ab_channel=DezignArk.



[Fig. 2-3]

Shadow 01 Shadow 02 Shadow 03, Activated through pushing and shifting the table around the site, the pneumatic wheels respond to the ground conditions. As the wheels turn the hex nuts become loose on the bolts. The washers spin and rattle. I bend down and tighten them again. The shadows are indifferent to their temporal host, merely a projection of what is growing out of the ground below the radiant sun and above me, the table and the camera.



[Fig. 5-7]

Shadow 04, Shadow 05, Shadow 06, Ephemeral are the shadows as the table moves along the transect. Permanent are the shadows on these pages captured by the camera. Standing on the tips of my toes, maneuvering my body as to not interfere with the shadows above, I point the camera down and press the shutter.



[Fig. 8-10]

Shadow 07, Shadow 08, Shadow 09, Growing from the earth's ground. Stretching upwards towards the light and sky. Slightly leaning over the embankments edge towards the lake. Shapes in the shadows share characteristics and habits of the native and introduced species.

Through a lens of attentiveness and participation, this engagement with the device and landscape is a practice of care that opens up space for 'others' and 'otherness' to reveal themselves and an invitation for myself, as a human participant, to be present, uncomfortable at times, and to move-along-with 'unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, meanings.'⁸ These photographs are a set of relationships, unseen in the images themselves. The shadows are an interaction between the table and paper, landscape and time, capturing phenomenological qualities of the landscape. Though the images distill the shadows at a certain moment in time, the series also represents a part of the process within my practice of caring—with that is being physically present and consciously attentive to the landscape. As Ingold reflects, 'care has lost much of its spontaneity... less personal, less imbued with feeling. It has become a service to be delivered rather than a recognition, in attention and response, of what we owe to others for our own existence as beings in a world.'⁹ Working as a device together, the camera and the table allow the opportunity for spontaneous encounters and draw one's attention to notice 'others' present in the landscape. The tempo and pace between the ground conditions, the table being pushed and the shadows on the surface engaged an attention to certain details I would have otherwise missed. The shadows communicated with the devices and unlocked an otherness of site, expanding my perception and immersion within the landscape and opening up a dialogue and opportunity for responsiveness.

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⁸ Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (USA: Duke University Press, 2016), 1.

⁹ Tim Ingold, *Correspondences* (UK: Polity Press, 2021), 3.



[Fig. 11]

Shadow 11, Noticing an unusual shadow of a tree branch I looked up. What we humans botanically classify as an *Ulmus* species had a strange growth on its smaller branches. Unknown to me whether the tree has wing-bark disease or is a cork-winged Elm, after this discovery and unsure whether the Elm was sick or not, each time I passed by, I would check on the tree.

Unsettling in Norrland

Tonia Carless and Robin Serjeant

Abstract:

This research uses film, photography and projection to analyse the changing space of Northern Sweden (Norrland). This peripheral region is one of the most rapidly reconfiguring spaces in Europe, with on-going programmes of corporate and state investment to exploit space and natural resources for settlement and extraction.

The images are part of an archive of the moving of buildings, a common practice in the region. Buildings are moved in relation to changing environmental conditions and now urban land values and global property speculation. It is understood to be a distinct process of what David Harvey has described as "remaking capitalism's geography"¹

Images analyse the material conditions, ideology and power in this frontier economy. The project considers an architecture of de-growth², challenging ideas of the expanding urbanisation of Norrland. As land values and modes of occupation change, buildings are displaced from the urban centre to increase occupation density through speculative investment. This process displaces social space and previous land formations. The city of Kiruna has been entirely displaced by expanding mine workings. The practice of relocation also has the capacity to shift large-scale historic architectures, as a distinct form of caretaking.

In this moment of new waves of investment in mining and forestry, of urbanisation of parts of the region, predicated on an underlying and largely uncontested agenda of 'development', the archive offers other conceptions of space and architectural production.

The images consider the wrenching of a house from its location and moving it to another location, documenting this process of detachment. It records the re-arrangements of space between land and building. Displacement is illuminated through projections to unsettle, by superimposing architectures onto previous conditions.

Keywords: Unsettling, de-growth, relocation, house-moving, displacement.

¹ David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis of Capitalism*. (London: Profile Books, 2011), 180.

² André Gorz, *Ecology As Politics*. (UK: Pluto Press, 1987)

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Tonia Carless is Senior Lecturer at the University of The West of England Bristol School of Architecture and Associate Professor of Architecture at Umeå University Sweden School of Architecture. She has publications on uneven development and the production of social space, architectural representation and trans-disciplinary approaches to visual and architectural research and design.

Robin Serjeant has been an architectural educator and is an independent researcher in common space.



[Fig. 1]
Tonia Carless, "Car under the house", June 2021, Film still

[Fig. 2] Next page
Tonia Carless, "Under the house and into the hall", 2021



The first sight of the one-hundred-year-old house was in an online newspaper article. The second was of the house raised up on low-grade pine, stacked timber, in a suburb of Umeå, Northern Sweden. The house seemed to rest lightly on the ground, floating above the surface, contained in its own stability and rigidity.

The space of the city, traffic and bodies, flowed between the underside of the house and the ground. The preparation for moving revealed a gap between house and ground. It was entrancing to see the acts of disconnection, shocking and inspiring to witness the slow wrenching of an apparently fixed object from its attachment to the ground, and floating it on air away to somewhere else. The unfixing occurred at a moment when the seventy-tonne house was held up with the lightness of air, at several atmospheres' pressure, on inflatable pillows.

The connection between house and the ground was wrenched apart; there is violence in this process to the land and its garden. This wrenching of parts is in contrast to the care of moving the house and maintaining aspects of its domestic space and three generations of family dwelling. Inside the house the disconnection was less obvious. Furniture remained in place, coats on hooks, mirrors on walls, chandelier wrapped in a dustbin liner. The domestic space was transported intact over ten kilometres to a rural location, and landed at the new site with things and artefacts 'in situ'. There was a delight in the paradox of domestic order maintained, fragile, lightweight, non-rigid, impermanent things moved and in place.

The gap between house and ground triggered ideas about Norrland as a place of settlement, of flux and shifting of things within and through a frontier landscape. Waves of European settlement have happened for four hundred years in this area. What was this land before the farm and house were laid out and built, and what will the land be after the house has been moved?

Norrland is a wilderness in Swedish popular and official culture³, a wilderness containing things to be exploited: Timber, iron magnetite, lithium, space, and recently, low ambient temperatures for cooling digital data banks. This area of Northern Sweden was occupied in stewardship by indigenous peoples for centuries before European ideas of territory, forms of production and exchange practices largely displaced these peoples. Now a further wave of investment, development, and movements of people from hinterlands to the cities of Norrland, and from further afield is swelling the numbers of incoming and transient occupiers in urban places, including the appropriation and refiguring of previously precious, preserved spaces of generations of city occupants.⁴

3 Madeleine Eriksson. *(Re)producing a periphery Popular representations of the Swedish North* (Umeå University Sweden Department of Social and Economic Geography Kungliga Skytteanska Samfundet. 2010)

4 Po Tidholm *Norrland. Essays and Reportage*. (Sweden. Teg Publishing, 2012) and David Loeffler, *Contested Landscapes/Contested Heritage history and heritage in Sweden and their archaeological implications concerning the interpretation of the Norrlandian past*. (Umeå University: Sweden, Department of Archaeology and Sámi Studies, 2005)



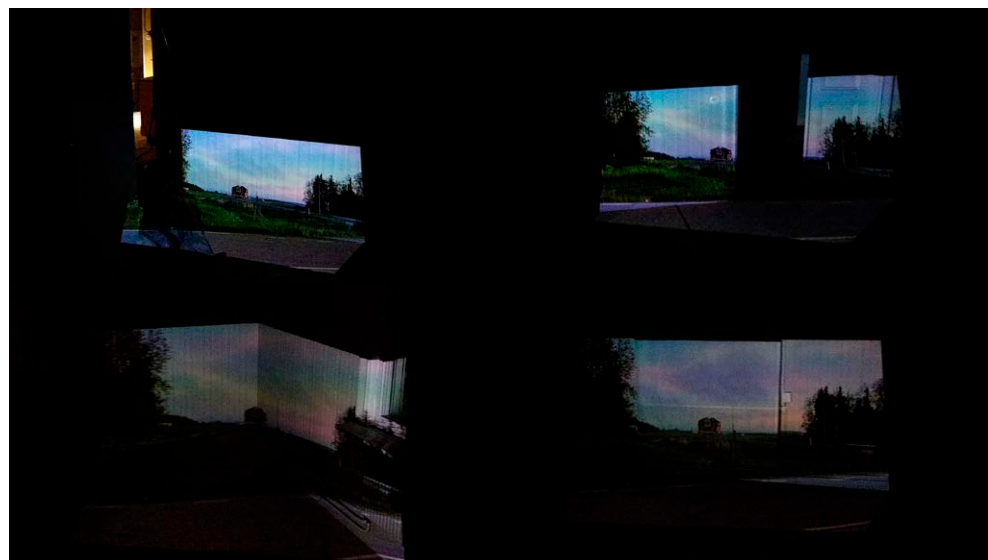
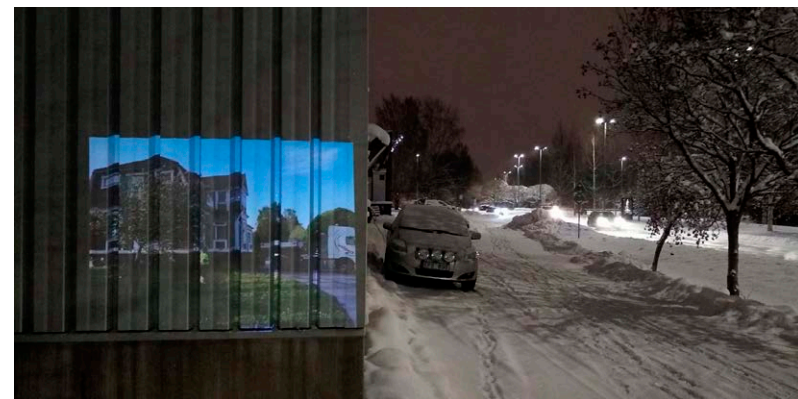
[Fig. 3]

Tonia Carless, "House passing Ikea", 21 June 2021



[Fig. 4]

Tonia Carless and Robin Serjeant, "The journey of the house back along the ten kilometre route projection: Bus stop with housemover flag 'to be moved'", December 2021



[Figs. 5-9]
Robin Serjeant, "Midwinter projection inside the house.,"
Degernäs, December 2021, Film stills

[Fig. 10]
Tonia Carless and Robin Serjeant, "E12 road to airport projection
onto industrial building.," Urmeå: Teg, December 2021

The building was moved across different territories of development, from a place of early twentieth-century farmsteads, and reframed against factories, shops, airfield, advertising hoardings for new apartment buildings, fast-food outlets, a 'do-it-yourself' home-making warehouse, over bridges and along highways of public infrastructure, artefacts of common service, uprooting and smashing traditional Swedish timber boundary fences.

"A friend came to see me in a dream. From far away. And I asked in the dream: 'Did you come by photograph or train?' All photographs are a form of transport and an expression of absence"⁵

Photography and video-making was unsettled. Photographs and video from one stage became material reused through projection at another. Different places and time were then documented by further image-making. The flux of image projection at places is not fixed they are at one moment settled and another moment unsettled and moved on.

Ephemeral media (light projections and digital modelling) left unmarked existing buildings, artefacts and surfaces whilst settling on them and into the imagination. The image superimpositions and resulting transparent juxtapositions were then the subject of further recording. It was a mobile, fleeting, transitory process, taking place inside and outside the house and along the path of its unsettling and settling. The act of projecting marked a speeded-up mutability of the house across land, through spaces and over artefacts in this Norrland moment of remaking capitalist geography, melting much that is solid into air. Projections onto trees, buildings, bus stops, roads along the route of the move, were later projected into the interior of the domestic landscape of wallpapers, radiators, cupboards, curtains and more.

What was left behind, months after the move, were artefacts of habitation, such as entrance steps, mangled washing line poles, fruit beds, which were the remnants of an understor[e]y as an archaeological reveal of previous settlement, including pipes connecting the site to the district and city infrastructure. Re-emergent flora reclaimed ground, unmaking the space of farmstead and garden.

Photographs and video brought focus upon material and substantial things such as the construction material of the house, the transformations of parts of domestic interior (a tactical, not a necessary, change to its internal structure), the materials, devices and tools used and constructed to carry out the move. Some of the projections align with how the previous occupant would see the 1960's city administrative Kommun building from the living room window and in the new position, a view across a rural, farmed landscape to the large Volvo plant, glowing white, in the distance. The process produces a temporary stillness in the hundred year history of a building in a landscape, the three month history of its unsettling and in its six-hour spatial relocation.

5 John Berger, John and Mohr, Jean *A Seventh Man*. (Cambridge: Granta, 1989.)

The image projections created a visual space for other views of making and the settling of space, land and architecture, all dynamic across surfaces, Projecting the images of the move, and of material of the building's and district history, back into the house were undertaken as a midwinter event in the long hours of darkness, illuminating this domestic space as a marker of settlement and inhabitation. These projections re-animated the house interior to re-imagine the space and its sliding capture across the ten-kilometre terrain, as acts of re-use through unsettling and settling.

Landscapes of care are manifest through the combined process of film, photography and projection. In the physical space of the region, these landscapes are made by the house movers (Magnus Mårtensson and Nya Töre Husflyttningar) with their understanding of the histories and weight of built form on land. They effect careful manoeuvring across highways, bridges and between narrow village roads, through seeking permissions and marking obstructions, of high-level communication cables, bus stops, trees and more. They are custodians through the move of three generations of home owner/dwellers.



[Figs 11-12]
Robin Serjeant, "After the house move.", Umeå: Teg, December 2021



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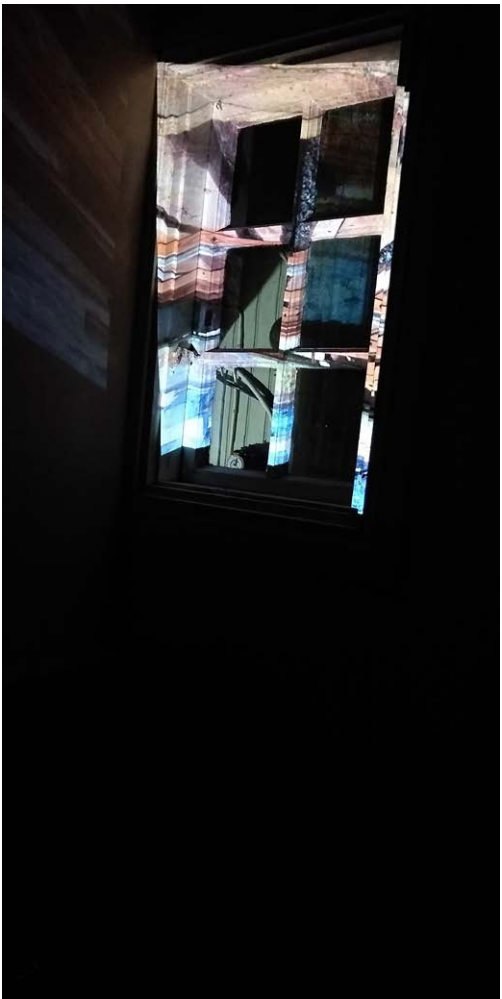
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[Figs. 13–14]
Tonia Carless and Sonja Lindgren, "Midwinter event, window and chimney gap projections.", December 2021

Biographies

Hugh Campbell is Professor of Architecture in the School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy at University College Dublin. His research focuses on modern and contemporary architectural production, on the relationship between photography, architecture and built space, and on the visual culture of cities. His recent publications include *Space Framed: Photography, Architecture, and the Inhabited Environment* (2020); *Architecture Filmmaking* (2019), co-edited with Igea Troiani; and *Architecture 1600–2000*, volume 4 of the RIA/Yale UP Art and Architecture of Ireland series (2014). With Grafton Architects, he curated the Close Encounter section of the 2018 Venice Biennale, Freespace. With Nathalie Weadick, he was curator of Ireland's pavilion at the 2008 Venice Biennale, *The Lives of Spaces*. He is on the steering group of the AHRA and on the board of *Places Journal*, to which he is a regular contributor.

Igea Troiani (PhD) is a Professor of Architecture and Head of Division for Architecture at London South Bank University (LSBU). She is an architect and filmmaker with almost 30 years' experience of working in a university, architecture practice and universities gained in the UK (London, Oxford and Plymouth), China (Suzhou), Germany (Münster) and Australia (Brisbane and Melbourne). Her three key areas of research are 1) the social production of architecture; 2) architecture and media (focusing on publishing and filmmaking) and 3) architectural labour, neoliberalism and sustainable ecologies. She studies architecture from transdisciplinary perspectives to determine the conditions in which architecture is, and architects are, socially, culturally and economically produced. Her books include *The Politics of Making* (2017/2007); *Transdisciplinary Urbanism and Culture* (2017); *Architecture Filmmaking* (2019); *Visual Research Methods in Architecture* (2021); and *Spaces of Tolerance* (2021), and *Work–life Balance in Architecture* (in press).

João Leal, artist and teacher. Participates in solo and group exhibitions since 2001. His artworks use still and moving images as well as sound and they are presented in exhibition, projection and installation formats. His main interests as a practitioner are the ideas of structure (and its multiple connotations), the "proximity/distance" dichotomy and the ways of occupying the exhibition space. In 2005 won, ex-aequo, the "Pedro Miguel Frade" award, from the Portuguese Centre of Photography, with the work "Night Order". In 2018 won the acquisition award of the XX Cerveira Biennale. PhD in Visual Arts (practice based in installation, photography and videoart) from the University of South Wales (supervised by Mark Durden and Lisa Barnard) in connection with the European Centre for Documentary Research. Has a degree in Audiovisual Communication Technology at the Polytechnic Institute of Porto, majoring in Photography. Worked in São João and D.Maria II National Theatres, RTP Portuguese television, and "Casa da Música". Full time professor in the Department of Image Arts P.Porto | ESMAD and member of the CEAU | AAI – Architecture, Art and Image Research Group and UNIMAD research unit. Since 2017, João Leal works collaboratively with Mark Durden in photographing modernist European architecture, beginning with Álvaro Siza. The website of the project is www.durden-leal.com

Mark Durden is a writer and artist. He studied Fine Art at Exeter College of Art and Design and at Glasgow School of Art, going on to study History and Theory of Art at University of Kent at Canterbury—attaining an MA by research for a thesis on Roland Barthes and a PhD on Photography and the Book. He has taught both Art History and Fine Art at Kent Institute of Art and Design, Canterbury and at Staffordshire University. He taught History of Photography at University of Derby where he became Reader in 2002 and Programme Leader for the BA (Hons) in Photography in 2003. He left Derby in 2007 to join Newport School of Art Media and Design, now University of South Wales as Professor of Photography. He has published extensively on photography and contemporary art and since 1997 has worked as part of the artists' group Common Culture.

Pedro Leão Neto is a researcher and professor at FAUP since 2007 in the area of Architecture Communication and Photography, he is the head of the courses "Computer Architecture Aided Design and Photography" (CAAD) and "Photography of Architecture, City and Territory" (FACT). He is the coordinator of the research group Architecture, Art and Image (AAI) integrated in FAUP's R&D Centre, director of the cultural association Cityscopio and the founder and editorial coordinator of scopio Editions and its open platform scopionetwork, being these AAI's research-based editorial projects focused on Contemporary Photography related with Architecture, City and Territory. He has curated several architectural photography exhibitions in Portugal and abroad, workshops and international debates and seminars around the universe of Architecture, Art and Image, being coordinator of 8 international conferences with blind peer review of papers and published proceedings. He is an author and editor of more than 40 books and the coordinator and / or Principal Investigator (PI) of several national and international projects publicly funded. He is currently a researcher of the project SizaATLAS, Filling the Gaps for World Heritage, PI of "Visual spaces of Change" and Coordinator of CONTRAST, all financed by Portuguese public agencies, namely FCT and DGARTES.

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Ana Miriam Rebelo is a photographer and researcher in the field of arts and visual culture. She graduated in Fine Arts from the École d'Enseignement Supérieur d'Art de Bordeaux (2005). Master in Contemporary Artistic Creation, University of Aveiro (2019). PhD research fellow in Design at the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto, with the project Visual and semantic identities of the city of Porto: an ascertainment of the contributions of informal dwelling (ID+/CEAU). Member of the Institute for Research in Design, Media and Culture (ID+) and collaborating member of the Centre for Studies in Architecture and Urbanism (CEAU). Her professional activity has been developed between practice, teaching and research in the field of arts and visual culture, with emphasis on photography and editorial projects. She was a teacher and coordinator of the Technical Photography Course at the Multimedia Institute. Her artistic and scientific production, disseminated through communications, publications and exhibitions in different contexts, focuses on the construction, perception and representation of urban space, with an emphasis on the dynamics of production and use of public space and its social, aesthetic and political impacts.

Sara Massi is an architect from the Department of Architecture (DIDA) at the University of Florence where she obtained her Bachelor degree in Architecture in 2021. Actually, she is attending the Master of Architecture, Built environment and Interiors at Politecnico di Milano (POLIMI), in which she integrated a period of studies and work at the Faculdade de Arquitectura do Porto (FAUP) through the Erasmus + programme. She has curated some architectural exhibitions in Italy, worked as book editor and graphic designer for some publications, as her own thesis book "Tessere musive di architettura". A daily practitioner and enthusiast of photography and its form of expression, she is interested in it as a tool for social, urban and architectural studies and analysis.

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