Landscapes of Care

Public housing across multiple geographies: crossing theories and practices

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Introduction

An Editorial Project as a Catalyst for Discussion and Construction of Architectural Ideas: Sophia Journal

Pedro Leão Neto

The Sophia Journal editorial project, initiated at the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto (FAUP) and its R&D Centre for Architecture and Urbanism Studies (CEAU), is a pivotal platform for discussing and constructing architectural ideas through photography, film, and other visual media. This initiative fosters international engagement, bridging academia with various professional and creative communities interested in architecture, photography, and urban studies.

At the core of Sophia Journal's mission is integrating contemporary visual culture with architectural discourse, significantly influencing scholarly and public debates. This focus is reflected in a range of high-impact publications, including peer-reviewed issues, special thematic volumes, and the organization of international conferences. Since its founding in 2016, Sophia Journal has provided a rigorous academic space for critical inquiry into the intersection of architecture, urban transformation, and visual narratives.

The journal's international conferences, initiated in 2010 with *On the Surface*, have played a crucial role in fostering dialogue on architecture and visual culture. These events have helped establish a global research network, positioning Sophia Journal as a key reference for exploring the role of photography and film in architectural and urban studies.

In addition to its editorial mission, Sophia Journal collaborates closely with the Architecture, Art, and Image (AAI) research group, which has been instrumental in promoting interdisciplinary studies. This collaboration has led to various initiatives, such as academic partnerships with institutions like the Liverpool School of Architecture and RIBA Photo Festival, further reinforcing the journal's global influence.

As visual culture increasingly mediates architectural experience, photography and film emerge as critical research tools rather than mere representations. Thus, Sophia Journal actively explores how these mediums can reframe architectural narratives, offering alternative perspectives on spatial transformation, cultural identity, and urban memory. The journal promotes visual research methodologies, drawing from interdisciplinary perspectives inspired by scholars

such as Marion Gautreau and Jean Kempf[1], investigating photography's scientific, artistic, and documentary roles in studying architecture. These approaches enable critical reflections on the social, political, and historical dimensions of urban change.

One of Sophia Journal's key research focuses is the use of visual constructs to document and analyze architectural and urban transformations. This includes identifying sites undergoing renewal, conducting diachronic studies of urban environments, and exploring visual storytelling techniques that challenge dominant architectural narratives. Through these methodologies, photography and film transcend documentation, becoming active agents in reimagining the built environment. This critical engagement with visual culture not only enhances architectural discourse but also deepens our understanding of the socio-political forces shaping contemporary urban landscapes.

Accordingly, Sophia Journal's editorial and research initiatives will continue to challenge conventional architectural discourse, fostering an interdisciplinary, visually-driven approach to urban studies. By integrating print, digital, and visual research methodologies, the journal expands the boundaries of architectural knowledge, offering new perspectives on the role of image-making in shaping our understanding of cities and built environments.

About "Landscapes of Care" and its concluding theme "Public housing across multiple geographies: crossing theories and practices"

With this 9th Volume of Sophia Journal, we finish our third thematic cycle "Landscapes of Care" that had as its overall interest 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 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 concepts[2].

1 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

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.

In fact, as has been already explained in past Volumes[3], the concept of landscapes of care has been widely adopted across disciplines, from health geography to architecture, offering a transdisciplinary approach to understanding space and place for care. It builds upon earlier research linking landscapes to sustainability and 'site' as an evolving concept, emphasizing dynamic interactions between theory and practice in design.

We believe that a comprehensive approach to design is needed to address environmental transformations, seeing architecture, city, and territory as living and inclusive organisms with complex spatialities. As global urban spaces undergo significant changes, embracing this complexity is essential, as Daniel Innerarity suggests[4]. Landscapes of care introduces a humanist perspective to urban transformation, countering technocratic and economic logics by valuing cultural heritage, identity, and sustainable development.

This approach promotes research that documents and enhances site identity while fostering urban transformations that prioritize well-being. Achieving this requires interdisciplinary collaboration, reorienting design through enriched documentation methods. Photography plays a crucial role as a critical research tool, enabling an affirmation of identity, memory retrieval, and alternative architectural narratives.

Therefore, Sophia Journal endorses visual and documentary research to examine the evolving perception of architecture and document transformation sites and undertake diachronic studies of urban transformation over time. Through international forums, it fosters critical reflection and active dialogue, advancing innovative documentation methods and reinforcing past and ongoing research.

Focusing now on this 9th Volume "Landscapes of care: Public housing across multiple geographies: crossing theories and practices" the overall concern was to study and give visibility to contemporary photographic and visual practices that explore how architecture, in its broadest sense, can contribute to healing a planet in crisis, centred on a dynamic reading of the city that is conditional and conditioned by housing typology. Combining architecture, public housing,

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; Pedro Neto. (2023). Interdisciplinary research reorienting the perceptions and understanding of Modern architecture and landscape heritage through an enriched documentary utilization, namely of photography and film. (2023). *Sophia Journal* , *8*(1), 3–8. https://doi.org/10.24840/2183-8976_2023-0008_0001_1

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

habitat, and urban planning, the works that are published in this Volume forward an interpretative narrative about housing and those who live in it, analysing pilot projects with communities of practice capable of generating strategic visions about the possible future of city and territory, housing and the lives it (trans)forms, in this ontological relationship between the Man and house.

The significant theoretical papers and visual essays published, as well as the Editors' texts, substantiate a collection of analysis and projects structured through three major themes – "Resonances", "Trans-Formations", "Cycles" – which converge in a shared exploration of community agency, participatory urban transformation, and the power of visual narratives, highlighting how cooperative housing, adaptive urban practices, and photography collectively shape, document, and reimagine the built environment.

To demonstrate these points, consider for example, how participatory practices in vulnerable communities are examined in the theme "Resonances", edited by Maria Neto and Joan Mac Donald, through "Bairros Saudáveis" project (Ramires, Ochoa) that showcases community-driven urban interventions in Portuguese neighborhoods, drawing parallels with the SAAL program after Portugal's Carnation Revolution, or "The Impact of Care", exploring how design-build programs (e.g., Yale Building Project, Rural Studio) incorporate participatory housing into architectural education.

Then, the significant contributions in "Trans-Formations", edited by Maria Neto and Paz Núñez Martí, advocating the need to rethink dominant urban practices and embracing context-sensitive, participatory approaches to urban transformation that integrate architecture, photography, and social inquiry. Some cases in point that can be pointed out are "Hybrid Landscapes in the Pearl River Delta" (Galliano, Arnaut, Tostões) examining how modernist housing in Macau integrates Western and local traditions or "Territory as Threshold" reflecting on dissolving boundaries between city and landscape, proposing new ways of perceiving urban space through Benjamin's and Frank Lloyd Wright's ideas. Specialy interesting is the comparative study, "Errante: Contemporary Devices for Heuristic Reflections on Housing", exploring three social housing projects—Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation, Álvaro Siza's Malagueira, and La Borda in Barcelona, and discussing gentrification, community autonomy, and the impact of architectural forms on urban life.

The "Cycles" theme, edited by Igea Troiani and Jorge Tárrago Mingo, explores the evolving role of photography in capturing architectural and social transformations, particularly in public housing, drawing from historical and contemporary perspectives, referencing Hiroshi Sugimoto's photographic experiment, Walter Benjamin's reflections on reproduction, and Paul Valéry's predictions about the ubiquity of images. It is worth referencing this interesting idea

that is forwarded that we have moved beyond Benjamin's era of mechanical reproduction into a new phase of "multiperception," where images are instantly accessible, detached from physical space, and mediated by AI and digital technologies.

Within this thematic framework, we find contributions that connect theory and practice in public housing. One example is Housing by People (1976), which argues that when residents control the design, construction, and management of their homes, both individual and social well-being improve, or the case study, "Revitalizing Housing: The Vital Trajectories of Cooperative Systems" (Frigolett), analyzes Uruguay's mutual aid housing cooperatives. By integrating Turner's philosophy with systems thinking, it highlights how adaptability and shared responsibility sustain cooperative housing over time.

Sophia Journal is currently accepting submissions for its fourth thematic cycle "Landscapes of Repair", encouraging a humanist approach to urban transformation that transcends purely economic considerations. By exploring the impactful realms of photography, film, and various visual practices, we aim to highlight their significant contributions to the discourse surrounding architectural programs. Our goal is to draw urgent attention to the necessity of repairing our fractured planet. In doing so, we also seek to address and connect the multitude of challenges that contemporary cities and territories around the world are grappling with. These visual mediums not only document but also critically engage with the diverse and complex issues of our time, offering a unique perspective on urban and environmental crises. Through this lens, we hope to foster a deeper understanding and inspire actionable solutions to the pressing problems facing our global communities.

As for our prospective Sophia Journal Vol.10 No. 1 "Landscapes of Repair: The Role of Photography and Film in Documenting the Legacy of Modern and Contemporary Architecture and Public Spaces" it is interested in theoretical and field work using photographic and visual practices to explore and document both Modern and Contemporary Architecture and Public Space infrastructure. The call aims to understand and document architecture, building, city and territory as living and inclusive organisms, focused on recent past and present positive experiences that have shaped the quality of urban space, as well as on heritage resources for global sustainability.

All this means, on the one hand, to comprehend the relationship between culture and space, within the context of Modern Architecture heritage preservation, as it belongs to a recent past that has not yet been sufficiently recognised by the authorities, scholars and general public. On the other hand, 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 concepts.

Resonances

Maria Neto, Joan MacDonald

> "The commodification of housing and urban land has turned what should be a basic human right into an instrument of speculative profit-making, systematically excluding the poor and reinforcing class divides within cities."[1]

What remains when housing is no longer considered a need or a right but a commodity? This question frames the urgency of rethinking how we conceive and produce space today. The idea that the home is a private, apolitical realm has long been dismantled by scholars such as Christopher Reed, who, in 'Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture', frames domesticity as a contested cultural and political field.[2]From this perspective, the contemporary housing crisis is not merely a failure of supply and demand mechanisms, but the manifestation of deep structural inequalities, demanding a fundamental redefinition of what it means to inhabit collectively.

This panel examines how cooperative practices and participatory models challenge dominant paradigms by proposing new forms of collective living that emphasize agency, mutual support, and care as central to spatial production. John Turner's influential argument in *Housing by People* — that when inhabitants control key decisions, housing becomes a source of individual and social well-being — remains highly relevant.[3] Already in *Freedom to Build* (1972), Turner had introduced the idea of "housing as a verb," stressing that housing should be understood not as a finished object, but as an active, ongoing process shaped by its users.[4] Contemporary cooperative models adopt this perspective, framing housing as a living, adaptive system rather than a static commodity.

One of the articles presented in this panel, "Revitalizing Housing: The Vital Trajectories of Cooperative Systems" by Luisa Frigolett, expands Turner's insights by integrating systems thinking, demonstrating how mutual aid cooperatives in Uruguay function as dynamic social ecosystems based on interaction and shared responsibility. Her analysis resonates with Donella Meadows' concept of "dancing with systems," emphasizing resilience through continuous adaptation.[5] Nevertheless, systemic fragilities — economic instability, political pressures — highlight the precariousness of these cooperative models. Similarly, another contribution to this issue, "Collective Housing by Collective Practice: The Inclined Condominium in Bergamo" by

1 David Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2012), 15.
2 Christopher Reed, *Not at Home: The Suppression of Domesticity in Modern Art and Architecture* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1996).
3 John F.C. Turner, *Housing by People: Towards Autonomy in Building Environments* (London: Marion Boyars, 1976).
4 John F. C. Turner, "Housing as a Verb," in *Freedom to Build: Dweller Control of the Housing Process*, ed. John F. C. Turner and Robert Fichter (New York: Macmillan, 1972).
5 Donella H. Meadows, *Thinking in Systems: A Primer* (White River Junction, VT: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2008).

Loris L. Perillo, Lorenzo de Pascale and Federica Mambrini, analyses the Terrazze Fiorite project, where collective architectural authorship redefines the production of space itself. This approach echoes Henri Lefebvre's proposition that "(social) space is a (social) product,"[6] emphasizing how participatory models are deeply embedded within broader socio-political dynamics. Participation, however, is not without tension: collective decision-making often collides with individual aspirations, revealing the complex negotiations inherent in shared inhabitation.

Building upon this, Reed's notion of domesticity invites a deeper reading of cooperative housing initiatives. These are not merely technical alternatives, but cultural interventions that subvert dominant logics of privatisation and isolation. By foregrounding practices of collective care and mutual support, they resist the neoliberal framing of housing as a purely financial asset. Yet the balance between collective governance and personal autonomy remains a continual site of negotiation and contestation. This articulation between participation, care, and domestic space is further illuminated by the "Bairros Saudáveis" case study by Leonardo Ramires and Rita Ochoa, which documents participatory urban interventions in vulnerable Portuguese neighbourhoods. The bottom-up approach recalls the SAAL programme (Serviço de Apoio Ambulátorio Local) of the post-revolutionary period in Portugal, reaffirming the political potential of resident-led urban transformation — while also exposing the challenges of sustaining participation in shifting socio-economic contexts.

Educational initiatives in architecture, such as the Yale Building Project, Auburn University's Rural Studio, and Studio 804 — discussed in "The Impact of Care" — demonstrate how embedding community engagement within design-build pedagogies produces not only more equitable housing solutions, but also a critical rethinking of professional identities in architecture. These models shift architectural education away from object-centred production towards relational, care-oriented practices.

Visual media, likewise, emerges as a critical agent in the reconfiguration of housing practices. As Walter Benjamin noted in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', the reproduction of images carries profound political potential.[7] In today's context of visual saturation and continuous digital streaming, photographic documentation serves not merely as an archive but as an active tool of critique — interrogating who builds, who inhabits, and who claims space. In this panel, photography does not passively record; it constructs dialogical spaces that challenge dominant narratives of ownership, authorship, and belonging. Thus, the works presented here affirm that cooperation in housing is not merely a technical fix or an economic adjustment, but a radical reconfiguration of social relations, domestic imaginaries, and spatial practices. By foregrounding participatory processes, mutual aid, and reimagined forms of domesticity as practices of care and resistance, they open pathways towards housing futures that are more inclusive, resilient, and just — while acknowledging that collective inhabitation remains an open, dynamic, and inherently contested project.

6 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).
7 Walter Benjamin, The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction, trans. J.A. Underwood (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

Trans-Formations

Maria Neto, Paz Núñez Martí

> "Each epoch dreams the one to follow. In the dream in which each epoch entertains images of its successor, the latter appears wedded to elements of primal history (Urgeschichte)—that is, to elements of a classless society. And the experiences of such a society—as stored in the unconscious of the collective—engender, through interpenetration with what is new, the utopia that has left its trace in a thousand configurations of life, from enduring edifices to passing fashions."[1]

The contemporary urban landscape is traversed by complex layers of transformation, where architecture and territory overlap in dynamic processes of occupation, memory, and experimentation. In this panel, we bring together contributions that examine emerging forms of inhabiting and contemporary devices that reconfigure the relationship between the built environment and everyday life, particularly in vulnerable and hybrid territories.

This panel addresses the complexities of designing and transforming hybrid and vulnerable territories. The papers and visual essays investigate how architecture responds to cultural, social, and environmental shifts, highlighting the necessity for innovative and context-sensitive approaches. Urban and hybrid landscapes are shaped and represented through photography and other visual media. In this context, the image plays a crucial role in capturing territorial transformations and the intricacies of spaces that defy modernist norms. The works utilise photography as a means to comprehend and convey the subtleties of contemporary urban interventions, offering a profound understanding of the interplay between the built environment and the cultural and social forces that shape it.

As Bruno Latour articulates in 'We Have Never Been Modern', "we have never been modern in the sense that we have never been separated from nature."[2] Latour expands on this by arguing that "the proliferation of hybrids... has made it impossible to maintain the old divisions between nature and culture." Beyond simply acknowledging hybridity, Latour invites us to recognise the active agency of quasi-objects—those entities that are simultaneously natural and social—in shaping contemporary territories. This conceptual shift directly complements the panel's focus on the fluid intersections of urban and territorial dynamics, where architecture participates in complex negotiations between environment, technology, and culture.

1 Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 4

2 Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).

Walter Benjamin, in 'The Arcades Project', reinforces this vision by asserting that "the city is the landscape of dreams of the collective,"[3] highlighting how urban spaces accumulate layers of history and collective memory that shape their contemporary transformations. As he notes, "To dwell means to leave traces. In the interior, these are accentuated... the traces of the inhabitant are imprinted in the interior."[4]

Henri Lefebvre, in *The Production of Space*, similarly asserts that "(social) space is a (social) product" and elaborates that "space is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things."[5] His theoretical framework underscores how vulnerable and hybrid territories are constantly reshaped by lived experiences, situating architecture as a critical tool in negotiating the complexities of urban transformation. Benjamin further contributes to this perspective in 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction', where he emphasises how images and visual narratives capture and reinterpret transformations, revealing the interdependencies between material and social dimensions.[6] Together, Lefebvre and Benjamin illuminate the layers of meaning embedded in contemporary urban interventions.

The article "Hybrid Landscapes in the Pearl River Delta: The Case of Macau Modern Housing's Approach" by Niccolò Arnaldo Galliano, Daniela Arnaut, and Ana Tostões investigates modern housing architecture in Macau, highlighting how Western influences intertwine with local construction practices. The research analyses modern housing editions from the 1960s, revealing their interaction with the region's urban morphology and climatic conditions.

"Territory as Threshold: Images of Thought for a Non-Modern Landscape" by Luís Ginja, proposes a reflection on the dissolution of boundaries between city and landscape. The essay reframes the relationship between body and territory through theoretical references such as Benjamin and Frank Lloyd Wright, drawing parallels between the dissolution of modern distinctions and new urban configurations.

In the article "Errante: Contemporary Devices for Heuristic Reflections on Housing, Malagueira, Marseille, and La Borda" by Sérgio Magalhães, the author examine three paradigmatic examples of social housing: Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation, Álvaro Siza's Malagueira, and La Borda in Barcelona. Through a comparative reading, the text discusses the impact of architectural forms and housing practices on the construction of new urban narratives and the challenges of gentrification and community autonomy.

3 Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 406.

4 Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, 9.

5 Henri Lefebvre, T*he Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), 83.

6 Walter Benjamin, *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, trans. J.A. Underwood (London: Penguin Books, 2008).

The visual essays in this panel establish a dialogue with theoretical reflections, highlighting the power of photography in understanding social housing spaces and documenting urban changes and reconfigurations. The essay "Public Housing from Within: Childhood Memories as a Landscape of Care" by Chloé Darmon offers a sensitive look at childhood experiences in public housing, revealing layers of belonging and identity embedded in the space.

Together, the works gathered here reaffirm the critical role of architecture and urbanism as fields of inquiry capable of fostering social transformation. By addressing contemporary cartographies of inhabitation and interventions in vulnerable and hybrid territories, this panel advocates for the revision of dominant spatial practices and invites us to reimagine urban space as a site of collective agency and reappropriation.

Rethinking urban space today demands more than technical innovation; it requires recovering the political and social dimensions of inhabitation, and affirming architecture and urbanism as acts of resistance against fragmentation, commodification, and exclusion.

Cycles

Jorge Tárrago Mingo, Igea Troani

> "One evening I had a near-hallucinatory vision. The question-and-answer session that led up to this vision went something like this: Suppose you shoot a whole movie in a single frame? And the answer: You get a shining screen. Immediately I sprang into action, experimenting toward realizing this vision. Dressed up as a tourist, I walked into a cheap cinema in the East Village with a large-format camera. As soon as the movie started, I fixed the shutter at a wide-open aperture, and two hours later when the movie finished, I clicked the shutter closed. That evening, I developed the film, and the vision exploded behind my eyes. This idea struck me as being very interesting, mysterious, and even religious."[1]

The almost century old, now well-known account by Japanese photographer Hiroshi Sugimoto describes the creative process of his series 'Theaters' (1976) as a kind of epiphany about image making whereby time is compressed into a single frame. Sugimoto's quest for the single, total image had already been pursued by Western philosopher, Walter Benjamin in 1936. In 'The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technical Reproducibility', Benjamin announced a future marked by reproduction and the technical transformation of the nature of art with political implications. A couple of years earlier, the French poet Paul Valéry had already anticipated that very profound changes could be expected in relation to the arts, since all visual arts had until then featured a physical component that could no longer be considered or treated as before. Neither matter, nor space, nor time were the same anymore. In The Conquest of Ubiquity ("La conquete de l'ubiquité") Valéry explains:

> "Just as water, gas, and electricity are brought into our houses from far off to satisfy our needs in response to a minimal effort, so we shall be supplied with visual or auditory images, which will appear and disappear at a simple movement of the hand, hardly more than a sign."[2]

Benjamin, Valéry, and others have outlined the framework for the theoretical principles that shape our contemporary visual culture. Today, we no longer expect our works of art to be published globally as one offs in physical or digital form. Instead, we are conditioned to reproduce any and every image at any moment, now, in real time and in any place. Analogue reproduction has mostly been replaced by digital reproduction and therefore is no longer linked to a defined size or format. And, perhaps more importantly, and as Jacques Rancière argues, the

1 Hiroshi Sujimoto. *Hiroshi Sugimoto: Theaters.* (Bologna: Damiani/Matsumoto Editions, 2016).
2 Paul Valéry. *Piezas sobre arte.* (Madrid: Visor, 1999), 131. Transl. by the author.

digital reproduction of images has led to the abandonment of the association between image and a specific place where it can be observed, displayed or preserved, now or in the future.[3] Sugimoto's Theater series contains not only each frame of the film, but also each experience of its viewers in a single white rectangle, dully white and yet subtly different, capturing the different shades of light that surround each of the different captured films, making them essentially abstract and similar, as well as unique.

In a society where we are constantly surrounded by a myriad of multiple and simultaneous images, the idea of one single image commanding our attention might seem curious. As the Spanish-American art theorist, Beatriz Colomina suggests:

> We are surrounded today, everywhere, all the time, by arrays of multiple, simultaneous images. The idea of a single image commanding our attention has faded away. It seems as if we need to be distracted in order to concentrate. As if we – all of us living in this new kind of space, the space of information– could be diagnosed en masse with Attention Deficit Disorder (...) Rather than wandering cinematically through the city, we now look in one direction and see many juxtaposed moving images, more than we can possibly synthesize or reduce to a single impression.[4]

We are no longer immersed in the era of Benjaminian reproduction, but in the era of streaming, where these other multiple realities, massively distributed as an illusion, seem more vivid than the moment experienced by each of its viewers. We live in a context never imagined by Benjamin or the first photographers. Global webcams, high-resolution satellite vision and above all AI image generation open the door to new scenarios with unsuspected levels of realism. All of this, taken together, exponentially multiplies our world, photographed or imagined, in what has been defined as contemporary multiperception.[5]

In this context, the production of image making of architecture is subject to similar phenomenon. In this time of visual saturation and extreme, or almost absolute, virtuality, architecture participates in this process, often remaining alien to the physical reality of its construction. Sometimes, its realization is only possible in the mirror, in that platonically more real place where categories are pure, absolutely abstract, and not limited by circumstantial, budgetary, political, social, logistical, normative or even purely physical restrictions. Perhaps this is why architectural practice is increasingly aided by the eloquence with which photography is able to enunciate its intentions. While there are diffuse boundaries between architecture and photography, nowadays contemporary architecture is inseparable from its photographic images.

3 Jacques Rancière. *The Future of the Image*. (London/New York: Verso Books, 2007), 8–10.
4 Beatriz Colomina. Enclosed by images: The Eameses' Multimedia Architecture. In Tanya Leighton (ed.). *Art and the Moving Image* (London: Tate Publishing, 2008), 75.
5 Rubén Alcolea. "Multiperceptions / Multiportraits", *New Architecture Magazine, Critical Fabrications*, 129 (2010): 10–15.

The three theoretical papers and two visual essays in this section entitled 'Cycles' address the complexities of urban regeneration, the right to the city, and the social dynamics inherent in social housing, influenced by collective memories. In all the essays, the photographic image serves as a form of dialogue, linking and containing past and present actors. The contributions highlight how collective memories and urban rights are interwoven by different social groups of varying ages, backgrounds and professional expertise, shaping the urban environment and underscoring the importance of preserving and reimagining urban narratives through the powerful medium of the image.

"Fenix Spaces: Youth and Livability in Inner Areas" by Frederica Serra explores how population ageing, can be a powerful tool to transform and revitalize marginal areas in our European countries and the current exodus to the big cities rather than be perceived as a challenge. Serrar analyses two specific Italian policies; the Strategia Nazionale Aree Interne (SNAI or National Strategy for "Inner Areas") and the Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza (PNRR or National Recovery and Resilience Plan). Both policies, the former held by the Agenzia per la coesione territoriale, the latter included under the European Union's strategic priorities for all members, address demographic decline from different layers to enhance cultural, social and economic resources. The article illustrates through the case of Castel del Giudice, a very small village located in the inner region of Molise, how innovative welfare services, assisted living facilities and community initiatives can reverse depopulation and offer positive impact, opportunities, relationships, tions and improved habitability.

"Right to the City (photo)voices: Participatory photography with children in Greater Lisbon" by Rosa Arma and Camila Andrade dos Santos uniquely examines two participatory photographic workshops conducted in 2018 and 2021 by the Socio-Territorial, Urban and Local Action Studies Group (GESTUAL). The workshops included children of African origin and Roma ethnicity from the self-produced neighbourhood Bairro da Torre in Greater Lisbon, who experienced a rehousing process that began in 2007 and concluded in 2023. The photographs by the children are testimony to the cycles of collective memory making by all age groups living in the housing and the social dynamics that construct their lived spaces.

Focusing instead on a now iconic social housing project in Porto, "Differentiated Inhabitation of 'Auteur Architecture': Photographing Álvaro Siza's Bouça Housing Estate" by Eduardo Ascensão, Marta Machado, Paulo Catrica and Ana Catarina Costa uses photography alongside interviewing of the original and newcomer residents to examine how the socio-economic background, history and knowledge of the significance of Siza and his social housing values can be treated reverently or irreverently in interior changes made to select flats. The juxtaposition of photographs alongside testimonies by the residents make clear how the flats, designed originally around a utopian strategy for a classless Portuguese society have instead

succumbed to problems associated with urban gentrification. A story now common in many cities worldwide, the architectural value and iconic significance of the Bouça Housing Estate uses image-making to showcase how preservation of iconic architecture relates to the class, background and professional knowledge of the users. The dilemma of an 'interclassist city' is laid bare through a critique of the consumption of images selling short-term stays at the flats advertised on Airbnb create pressure on elderly residents whose family have moved them elsewhere to capitalise on profitmaking from selling the flat.

The visual essay entitled "The Right Distance: Photographing the neighbourhoods built under the Carnation Revolution" by Ana Catarina Costa, Francisco Ascensão, João Paupério, Maria

Rebelo and Ricardo Santos critically reflects through eight photographs taken by the authors on the dynamic relationship between the collective memories of neighbourhoods built under SAAL (Serviço Ambulatório de Apoio Local or Local Ambulatory Support Service), a housing program implemented during the Portuguese revolutionary period which included the Carnation Revolution of the 25th April 1974. What is striking about the carefully chosen images is their ability to adopt 'the right distance' between occupants —human and non-human— of the SAAL neighbourhoods detached from nostalgia. The colour photographs are an affirmation of everyday life of the social housing flats with all their imperfection, material degradation, messiness and raw beauty. They make a distinct challenge to the world of flooded imagery in which we operate through their critical selectiveness focusing the viewer's eye purposely.

The second visual essay in the section, 'Cycles' entitled "Housing the Basque Country: Photography of the Collective Space" by Asier Santas Torres, Luis Suárez Mansilla, and photographer Luis Asín Lapique, depicts some research findings showcased a 2018 exhibition by the authors of the public housing policies by the Basque Regional Government (a northern Spanish Region) in the last three decades. After visiting and selecting thirty projects, the photographs explain the present public housing from a human dimension, highlighting traces of humanisation and contemporary domestic and social realities. Beyond the superficial evidence of formal change and obsolescence of the housing, the six photographs avoid an entirely aesthetic view of architecture and its concepts by featuring and focusing the inhabitants' links to everyday life in the collective spaces they occupy.

The specific focus on this issue of Sophia devoted to 'Landscapes of Care' centring on 'Public housing across multiple geographies: crossing theories and practices' in the section on 'Cycles' draws together not only invaluable textual and visual discourse on changes to social housing developments in various countries but it also uniquely draws in the role of the photographer, whether researcher or resident or visitor, in the active process of understanding the process of cycles of urban change being undergone in relation to socio-political motives and pressures and who creates a dialogic exchange with the viewer-reader. The projects and practices discussed here attest not only to the deep critique of the ongoing significance and importance of photographic image making to capture meaning, as Sugimoto sought, in a world flooded with images but to the potentialities that the photograph, whether archival, fictional or real, can facilitate to create new modes of practice, collective action, memory and user engagement and interaction. Understanding 'cycles' in public housing through critical photographic practice resembles Rut Blees Luxemburg, 'Future Archive' project in which in her artistic research laboratory collaborates with users, artists and residents to record the past, present and future of the re-development of a large brownfield site in Battersea, South London which was the former Sculpture Building of the Royal College of Art (RCA) transformed by Herzog & de Meuron into their new Battersea campus to identify what was, is and could be.[6] Like Blees Luxemburg's collaborative practice, the theoretical and visual essays here, through their focus on public housing, open up active and operational textual and visual opportunities for archiving, creating and envisioning modern public housing through understanding in-between dialogues from users, residents and designers who reaffirm architecture not as icon or object but for the purpose of living for others.

6 *Future Archive* was designed by RCA alumna Emily Schofield (MA Visual Communication, 202) and is published on 1 June 2022 by FOLIUM, an independent arts publisher founded by two RCA alumni, Stewart Hardie and Harry Gammer-Flitcroft (MA Photography, 2018).

Index

Revitalizing housing: the vital trajectories of cooperative systems

Luisa Frigolett

Abstract

In a present time of crisis. Disruptive, turbulent and problematic (Haraway 2022), cooperative housing have re-emerged as a resilient network. These dynamic systems came to challenge prevailing narratives about housing and city production, offering alternatives through an innovative social technology. These cooperative systems become authentic collaborative and supportive cells of habitat generation, thus forming a complex assemblage of multiple entities.

This essay invites to think about the vital and cyclical nature of housing cooperatives, by observing the phenomenon as an open system capable of establishing complex relationships that transcend the built object, towards giving value to the role of self-management and self-construction played by the community.

The Mutual Aid Housing Cooperatives developed in Uruguay since 1968 is an example of comprehensive and sustainable solutions to the country's housing needs. Supported by the National Housing Law of 1968, these cooperatives have established an alternative system that integrates environmental relationships and strengthens cross-sector collaboration between the community and the State.

The concept of vitality in cooperativism, which this essay addresses, aligns with the organic and biological approaches to perception and world-building proposed by authors such as John Turner, Donella Meadows and Donna Haraway.

Additionally, it seeks to consolidate the importance of collective ownership in mutual aid cooperatives as a safeguard mechanism against real estate speculation and as a symbol of popular resistance. Furthermore, it underlines the relevance of community practices and active participation in the construction and management of housing as essential pillars to sustain the vitality of the system.

Keywords: systems; cooperative housing; collective housing; habitat production; communities.

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[Fig. 1.]
Own author. 2023. COVIMT9 Cooperative (1970)

I. The vitality of Cooperative housing systems.

According to the English architect John Turner, a house is a vital function of human life. In reference to it, he used the verb ''housing''. Understanding housing as an evolutionary process between users and the space they inhabit throughout life, rather than as an isolated object (Zimmermann 2018).

This relational and vital understanding of Turner's concept of housing recognizes the organic nature of society. An influence of Patrick Geddes who, in his biosociological interpretation, assumed the social whole as organic by nature and function (Turner 2018).

In cooperative housing, the community plays a pivotal role in shaping the habitat. Architect Cristina Gamboa from Lacol raises a fundamental question: Does the process of building housing creates a sense of community, or does community itself precede the construction process? She emphasizes the crucial role that users and citizens play in configuring urban space and in the process of making architecture (Gamboa 2024).

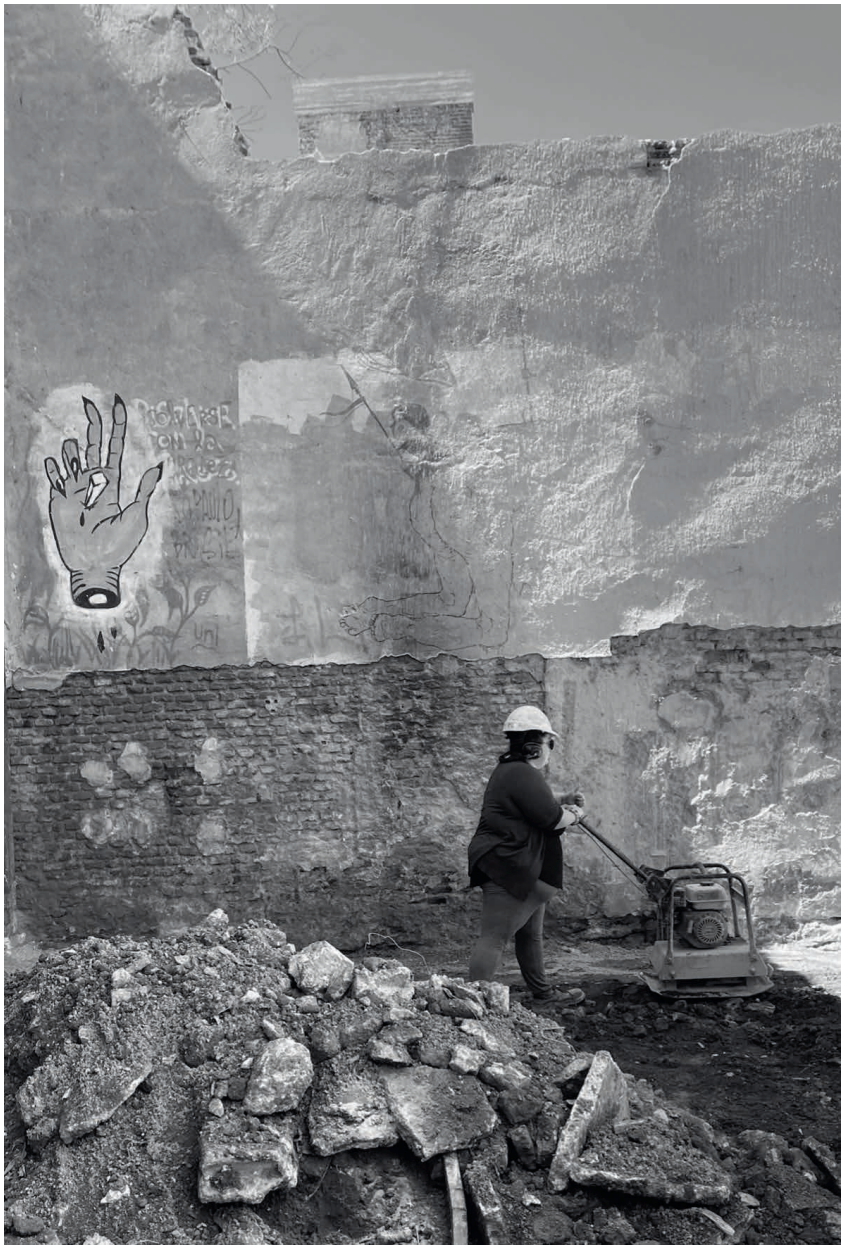
Community agency, through processes such as self-construction and self-management, builds a systemic framework that provides alternative and transversal solutions to current housing needs. Self-construction involves not only the physical production of housing, but also a continuous process of management and improvement. This approach expands the notion of time within the system, adding complexity to its characteristics and requiring a dynamic understanding.

Interpreting the cooperative housing model as a system of vital relationships, where the community and its agency are key components, allows for a more comprehensive and dynamic understanding of cooperative housing. This perspective highlights the cyclical nature of space production sustained over time.

These social relationships not only ensure the survival and resistance of the system, but also promote a transformation in the perception of the world. This allows us to recognize nature and other beings as sources of wealth and knowledge, rather than threats (Federici 2020). These new perspectives of the world integrate variables such as: gender and race inclusion (Fig.2), care concerns, urban gardening development (Fig.3), implementation of renewable technologies, as well as the promotion of leisure and culture. All these concerns are being incorporated by cooperative housing as part of a common agenda, where the relevance of community relationships within the system and their impact on the built environment are once again emphasized.

This article adopts an organic and vital perspective for understanding cooperative housing, where everything is interted: constant, dynamic processes between people, their environment, objects,

[Fig. 2.]
Own Author. 2023. UFAMA Cooperative under construction. Cooperatives of Afro-descendant women heads of households



and other species, creating a multidimensional and multi-entity network. This holistic approach, as envisioned by John Turner and inspired by Patrick Geddes *"notation of life"* method, integrates a wide range of variables, contrasting with a reductionist and static approach that isolates them for analysis (Zimmermann 2018).

II. Mutual Aid Cooperative Housing in Uruguay

Mutual Aid Housing Cooperatives in Uruguay have experienced significant growth and evolution since the 1960s. Driven by labor union movements, they emerged as a comprehensive solution to the country's housing needs. Led by the Uruguayan Federation of Housing Cooperatives through Mutual Aid (FUCVAM), these initiatives have been building an alternative system that intertwines and weaves sustainable relationships with the environment, as well as cross-cutting collaborations between the community and the State.

[Fig. 3.]
Own author, 2023. "Urban gardening development". - *"Nuevo Amanecer"* neighborhood (MESA 1) a complex of 5 cooperatives of mutual aid (1971)

The production and management of habitat led by cooperatives create a multidimensional and multiscale system that transcends the built object. From searching a plot of land to its protection and care - *"sereneadas"*- each stage becomes a crucial part of a vital process of social cohesion that strengthens over time. Additionally, the active participation of cooperative members in assemblies and periodic committees contributes to the development of a comprehensive system that keeps the community active, engaged and united.

In 1968, Uruguay enacted Housing Law 13.728, which established a legal framework for the construction of cooperative-based housing. This law facilitated the development of two cooperative models: Savings-based and Mutual Aid. While both share the goal of providing housing, they differ in their approach. The Saving-based model focuses on the individual savings of each member and operates under private property ownership, while the Mutual Aid model emphasizes in an active participation and collective ownership, with members defending their status as users, as a mechanism of resistance against speculation and market dynamics.

For Piotr Kropotkin, Mutual Aid represented an essential factor for humanity evolution. Opposed to individualism and self-affirmation, he highlighted collaboration and solidarity as key mechanisms for human progress (Kropotkin 2020). These principles are fundamental to the development of mutual aid housing cooperatives, where the obligation to contribute work hours toward housing construction, has not only ensured the participation of all members, but also strengthened community ties from the very first stages of the project.

Cross-sector collaboration between the State and the community is essential for shaping the structural framework of the cooperative housing system. Each party plays a crucial role: The State provides funding and oversight, while the community contributes labor and manages the project (Nahoum 2013). According to Benjamín Nahoum, an engineer from FUCVAM, the system´s effectiveness and sustainability rely on both public funding and the active involvement of communities throughout the entire process. The construction phase, in particular, stands out as a challenging yet educational experience for cooperative members. During this period, forge meaningful connections that lay the foundation for social cohesion and community identity. It also serves as a critical learning environment, where cultivate cooperative values and acquire practical and technical skills in areas such as project management, administration, development and construction. These skills not only build human capital but can also be transferred to new cooperatives, fostering a virtuous cycle of housing production.

III. Dancing with systems: A systemic perspective of housing cooperatives.

Raúl Vallés, an Uruguayan architect, describes housing cooperatives as highly complex subsystems for habitat production. This definition requires a dynamic and holistic understanding, moving away from a mere synthesis of parts toward a global and systemic perspective that reveals how these systems function.

Donella Meadows, in her book "Thinking in Systems" defines systems as *"a set of interrelated elements organized in a coherent way to achieve a purpose"*. Meadows elaborates on this definition and describes its main components: elements, interrelationships and a function or purpose. She emphasizes the need to focus on the interrelations rather than the elements, as a system is more than the sum of its parts. It is the interrelations that hold the system together and allow it to function. An example is the relationships among neighbors, where mutual knowledge and dialogue sustains the vitality of the social system. (Meadows 2008)

The integrity or wholeness of a system resides in a set of active mechanisms designed to preserve it. These mechanisms can be organized in different ways, allowing the system to change, adapt, heal, and sustain itself as if it were a living organism –even when it is composed of inanimate elements. These inherent abilities provide systems with qualities such as resilience, self-organization and hierarchy, which grant them vitality and the potential to create new and previously unanimagined complementary systems (Meadows 2008).

The ability to create new systems and understand their trajectory and vitality requires a comprehensive understanding that views systems as dynamic wholes. American anthropologist Anna L. Tsing, in her discussion of vital trajectories in forests, invites us to see community movements as a kind of dance, a form of knowledge not encoded in reports but expressed through diverse community stories, each with disparate aesthetics and orientations (Tsing 2023).

This idea resonates with what Meadows expressed in her posthumous book "Dancing with Systems", where she invites us to view systems as complex, nonlinear, and unpredictable entities. These systems, composed of multiple interted elements, cannot be fully understood through a reductionist science, as they generate additional information through their different combinatorics. A reductionism that also John Turner sought to overcome in his effort to understand community systems and their capacity to produce holistic habitats.

The possibility of creating new alternative systems through different combinatorics is one of the qualities of those "strange kinships" identified by Donna Haraway. Unusual relationships that can help to restore and heal the vitality of damaged environments. In this sense, cooperative housing should be understood as an open system of production, allowing for new combinations in a flexible process of constant change and evolution. As Meadows noted, systems cannot be controlled or predicted, but we can *"dance with them"*.

IV. Social Technology: Dialogues and cooperative practices.

The International Cooperative Alliance (ICA) defines cooperatives as an *"autonomous association of people who have voluntarily joined together to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs and aspirations through a jointly owned and democratically controlled enterprise"* (ICA 2024).

A fundamental aspect of cooperativism, as defined by the ICA, is the pursuit of common goals through a collective structure that promotes horizontal relationships, thereby strengthening democracy. This pursuit is based not only by deeply held values, but also by a significant commitment to dialogue, which facilitates agreements and build consensus toward the creation of a common project.

We understand each other through conversation, said the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, often misunderstanding each other, but ultimately it is through words that we achieve mutual understanding in a common space-time. For Gadamer, uncovering meaning or discovering the truth was part of a process he called the "dialectical miracle". In this process, through dialogue and the use of language, we create a space of understanding that enables the development of common projects. Similarly, South Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han, based on the concept of "ritual", suggests that such action serve as a way to revitalize communities and restore ties.

Whether due to the excessive scientific-technical focus of society (Gadamer 1998) or the technological encroachment of the neoliberal model, as proposed by Han, contemporary society faces an increasing phenomenon of alienation and loneliness, which have eroded community bonds. In this context, dialogue and ritual emerge as essential tools to rebuild and reconnect communities once again, directing them toward a common collective project, as promoted by cooperatives. These tools serve as fundamental pillars for fostering meaningful interactions, consolidating a shared vision in the pursuit of a common well-being.

Modern society, which emerged from the Industrial Revolution, with its accelerated growth, serialized production, and technologization of life, represents, for both Han and Gadamer, one of the crises that has led to increasing individualism, with negative impacts on holistic human development. Both authors, in different times and with a certain sense of nostalgia, caution that the technologization and mathematization of the world have resulted in the loss of personal growth centered on reflection, dialogue, and establishment of interpersonal relationships within a broader community.

This transformation has been eroding the community, weakening the creation of networks that promote a collective vision for shaping the world. Society has fragmented into isolated individualities, materializing in disconnected urban environments that lack meaningful connections. This shift reflects an increasingly individualistic society, one without common goals and devoid of solid systemic relationships.

The assemblies held periodically in mutual aid housing cooperatives have become spaces for ongoing dialogue throughout the entire project process. From the initial formation, through construction, to its use, these assemblies, organized through various committees, discuss and decide on the cooperative's future. These instances of dialogue, held in the community rooms of each one of these cooperatives in Uruguay, have helped maintain unity even during crisis such as the dictatorship or, more recently, the COVID-19 pandemic. Dialogue, associated with a defined physical space, materializes and strengthens the sense of community within each cooperative, with these community rooms often being the first to be built.

V. Healing vital relationships.

Following the call of this edition, which invites us to reflect on how to heal the connections between humans and their environment, certain features of mutual aid cooperative housing systems offer potential insights.

Cooperatives create beyond physical structures; they weave relationships with the habitat in a vital process that operates outside the predominant space-production dynamics proposed by the State or the market, thus promoting community self-management (Ostrom 1990). In doing so, the community becomes a dynamic agent, activating vital trajectories (Tsing, 2023) and sustaining the system alive, through a self-management process that not only provides housing solutions, but also creates high-value urban pieces.

Some of the key aspects of cooperative systems are:

1. Recognition of a damaged planet

Healing the relationships between humans and their environment requires first acknowledging our current reality. Donna Haraway describes the era we inhabit with the concept of the *"Chthulucene"*, a space-time where we confront a damaged planet. Recognizing that we are in an era of climate, social and economic crises allows us to address the problem, act responsibly and seek new strategies for its solution.

Similarly, Rosi Braidotti, in her book "Posthuman Feminism", emphasizes the importance of listening to marginalized voices in times of transformation. A vital and democratic project, in this context, would combine social justice with community-based experiments, forming a dense network of interactions that raise awareness of environmental impact and foster response-ability, what Haraway describes as a novel ability of agency.

Mutual aid housing cooperatives embody values and principles such as equity, democracy, social responsibility, equality, solidarity, and a commitment to collaboration with other cooperatives and the broader community. These qualities enable their members to work across local, national, regional and international structures. In turn, they are committed to the sustainable development of communities through policies approved by their members (ACI 2024).

These values and principles contribute to a greater sensitivity of the crises we face. Cooperatives have provided alternative solutions to cyclical problems that have persisted since the Industrial Revolution. The Rochdale Society of Equitable Pioneers, which founded the cooperative system in England in 1844, sought alternative measures to uphold these principles during the 19th century, a time when access to goods and services was critically problematic, a situation not so distant from what we experience today.

Housing cooperatives have responded to environmental and social challenges by creating sustainable housing solutions that respect the environment and promote solidarity. By focusing on the creation of sustainable communities, they reflect Haraway's idea of the need to generate unexpected connections and transform the notion of subjectivity within a broader context, recognizing environmental damage and adapting their practices to contribute on a collective scale.

2. Collective creativity

Questioning traditional forms creates opportunities to find new solutions. Challenging pre-established networks allows for cutting and weaving new relationships. Haraway introduces *"sympoiesis"* as a collective and systemic approach to face contemporary challenges through unconventional connections and generative collaborations. Both Haraway and Braidotti draw inspiration from Lynn Margulis, an American biologist who, in the field of biology, explored ecological interdependence through the concept of symbiotic life. Margulis explain how bacteria come together to create emergent properties and evolve into complex cells. Similarly, by joining forces and recombining in a cooperative effort, productive relationships among organisms from different kingdoms generate changes in organic systems[1]. (Braidotti 2022).

Just as John Turner drew inspiration from Patrick Geddes's organic perspective when addressing housing issues, emerging feminist movements are inspired by biological systems and the richness of their networks to better understand the world. In the case of cooperatives, they have developed complex systems that innovatively and transversally assemble agents, resources and construction methods. This represent an alternative way of creating and organizing space, one that promotes an equitable and supportive vision for housing development.

1. In 1974, Margulis and James Lovelock developed the Gaia hypothesis, arguing that the Earth is a self-regulating physiological system created by collaborative bacterial communities. They highlight the self-organizing or autopoietic activity of the planet. (Braidotti, 2022:144)

Examples of this system include collective ownership of users, the use of labor instead money as an initial contribution, the active participation of women from the earliest stages of construction, and the collective building of the project without individualizing ownership of units until the end of the project, at which point housing units are raffled and assigned. Additionally, cooperatives have been formed by marginalized or excluded groups such as Afro descendant women, LGBTQ+ communities, the elderly, and people with reduced capacities, among others.

Mutual aid housing cooperatives are based on the principles of collective ownership and shared use of assets. This collective approach challenges the traditional notion of private property, transforming housing into an asset for use and enjoyment. According to Benjamín Nahoum, collective ownership has a range of impacts on both the physical and social dimensions, joining together the community in shared rights and obligations.

This type of collective ownership unites cooperative members in areas such as shared access to financing. While the cooperative assumes the debt, each member commits to paying their share. Another relevant aspect is the care and maintenance of common spaces and housing. These actions transform into a way of enhancing the collective heritage over time, improving both the quality of social life and the condition of the property (Nahoum 2013).

Collective ownership, being indivisible, cannot be commercialized. Prioritizing the value of use over the value of exchange means that the property cannot be sold, mortgaged, rented, or transferred. Emphasizing use value rather than exchange value protects families from foreclosures or loss of property. Although this model faces many criticisms, Nahoum argues that this feature is one of the keys to its success, as collective ownership ensures resident's permanence and consolidates the system over time. In contrast, individual ownership regime tends to create separation, building boundaries between "yours" and "mine", whereas the mutual aid cooperative system fosters a bond of unity (Nahoum 2013).

This system of collective ownership resonates with Donna Haraway's concept of *"sympoiesis"*, which promotes a collaborative and generative approach in contrast to traditional ownership and capital models. It offers a model of self-management and cooperation that reinforces the idea of collective construction.

For Haraway, *"sympoiesis" (generative-with)* represents a dynamic and meaningful way to collectively address contemporary challenges. It encourages the creation of unexpected connections across different scales and species, fostering unusual collaborations that could be key to collectively tackling the issues our planet faces today. This concept calls for action, promoting the development of collective and transformative thinking. (Haraway 2022)

3. The Multidimensional Space of Cooperativism: Adaptability and Flexibility as Essential Qualities.

Flexibility dissolves boundaries, allowing new relationships to form and fostering the development of innovative ways to inhabit the world. This flexibility should encourage the creation of novel and coherent solutions that are tailored to the specific needs of each community in its unique context. As a result, we cannot promote methods that are merely exportable and universalizable, as each community faces its own complexities that must be managed specifically.

The adaptability of cooperatives has allowed for the development of alternative solutions for housing production. Rather than enforcing a one-size-fits-all model, cooperatives have crafted approaches tailored to the unique characteristics of each context and community.

This dynamism resonates with Haraway´s concept of challenging static, traditional structures to embrace new forms of coexistence and spatial organization. Haraway´s inquiries into novel forms of kinships highlight the importance of forging innovative relationships and actions that are essential for multispecies flourishing. In the context of cooperatives, this approach addresses a wide range of differences and needs within communities, fostering a more inclusive and adaptive environment.

Questioning the type of space that hosts these initiatives shows the importance of their typological, programmatic and spatial qualities. These characteristics must support the diverse needs of communities, reflecting the specific context and the identity of each group.

For Haraway, a space that supports broad-spectrum coexistence possesses multidimensional qualities that enable the agency of diverse species. Such a space is co-created by various participating entities, allowing for the formation of unexpected companionships. Consequently, the attributes of the space should offer the freedom to forge and adapt to these new relationships, accommodating the needs and actions of multiple entities.

Additionally, Haraway distinguishes between *"sympoietic"* and *"autopoietic"* systems. *Sympoietic* systems are characterized by collaboration, evolution, and openness to unexpected changes, while *autopoietic* systems are closed, controlled, and predictable. She advocates for a systemic approach that fosters collaboration and challenges the concept of closed systems, promoting a more dynamic and cooperative environment that encourages *"becoming-with"*. (Haraway 2022)

4. Autonomy and Independence:

Cooperative principles provide the framework through which cooperatives express their values (ACI 2024). Of the seven principles identified by the ACI, autonomy and independence are ranked fourth. This principle emphasizes the self-managing nature of cooperatives, where members exercise control and self-help. It underscores that any agreements with external

organizations—including governments—or efforts to secure additional capital from outside sources must ensure that democratic control remains firmly in the hands of the members, thereby preserving the cooperative's autonomy (ACI 2024).

The principle of autonomy and independence has been crucial to the development of mutual aid housing cooperatives, enabling them to function effectively across the housing production sector. While they benefit from State support, such as land access and financing, this assistance does not compromise the cooperative's democratic integrity.

The Gaia theory, proposed by James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis, presents Earth as a living organism that naturally seeks self-regulation and balance, emphasizing its inherent autonomy[2]. Similarly, cooperatives operate as independent entities, separate from State structures and market forces, granting them greater freedom to innovate and address their unique needs. This autonomy translates into a more democratic and participatory approach to managing housing projects, resonating with Haraway's critique of the Anthropocene and the *Capitalocene*. It supports, through self-governance, more collaborative and horizontal forms of organization.

Autonomy is essential for habitat production systems to adopt diverse forms. It allows for cross-sector commitments without being tied to specific political interests, creating spaces for free action and democracy. This independence helps to avoid dominant tensions that could undermine autonomy and ensure the freedom to operate without constraints.

One might consider cooperative members as the *"chthonic"* beings described by Haraway—inhabitants of the *Chthulucene*—whom she portrays as both ancient and contemporary entities, free from ideologies and affiliations. She envisions them with tentacles capable of transversal articulations, opposing the dichotomies and exclusions of the current world (Haraway 2022).

Although the State provides funding and facilitates the necessary conditions for these initiatives, its support does not compromise the autonomy of the cooperatives. Despite political affinities, these cooperatives have demonstrated the ability to engage across party lines and with various governments, even during periods of significant political upheaval. During Uruguay's dictatorship (1973-1985), they were known as "islands of freedom," offering safe havens for those opposing the regime and providing spaces of security, trust, and resistance. The cooperatives' neutrality and independence, inherent to their autonomous structure, enable them to foster environments that genuinely promote freedom and democracy.

2. By incorporating Maturana and Varela's concept of *autopoiesis*, Margulis emphasizes the ability of living systems to autonomously self-produce. This perspective illustrates how, despite Earth's finite limits—visible in early images like the Blue Marble (1972)—the planet sustains its vitality through self-regulation and the effective use of solar energy for its continuous self-production.

[Fig. 4.]
Own author, 2023. COVICIVI Cooperative. (1998)

Nowadays, Mutual Aid Housing Cooperatives, according to FUCVAM data, have established nearly 550 cooperatives across Uruguay, providing homes for over 22.000 families. Additionally, 60 projects are currently underway, which will offer housing solutions to more than 1600 families nationwide.

Conclusions

Mutual aid housing cooperative systems become collaborative and supportive cells for habitat generation, forming a network of multiple entities. These cooperatives establish complex relationships that go beyond physical construction, emphasizing the community's role in self-management and self-construction, which bring dynamism and vitality into the system. These organic and dynamic systems show an ability to reshape their relationships with their environment, leading to inclusive, supportive, and sustainable solutions.

Community practices and active participation in the construction and management of cooperative housing are fundamental pillars for the integral habitat production. This involvement imbues the process with a vital quality, enabling transversal relationships with other entities and fostering alternative solutions beyond those offered by the State or the market. Furthermore, by promoting collective ownership and the right to use and enjoy housing, these cooperatives reimagine other forms of tenure, transforming themselves into a symbol of resistance against real estate speculation.

The transversality of cooperativism could be crucial in weaving relationships across different categories and disciplines. This approach fosters connections and creates resonances between seemingly incompatible positions, while also promoting the integration of different generations and collaboration among various social actors, such as the interactions between the community and the State, federations, and other institutions.

The vitality discussed in this article, when compared to biological and organic approaches, highlights qualities within cooperative housing that parallel the complexity of living systems, where the community plays a key role in revitalizing the habitat. These habitat-generation projects can be understood as dynamic processes that encompass the life cycle of what is built, where horizontal social relationships, transversal connection with other entities, and maintenance practices become essential for the long-term sustainability of the cooperative system.

Similarly, qualities like autonomy, flexibility, and dynamism inherent in mutual aid housing cooperatives enable the creation of unexpected connections that embrace a broad spectrum of diversity. This autonomy, regardless of any affinities with specific political sectors, allows them

to act transversally, independent from the government in power. By avoiding rigid models and ideologies, cooperatives remain dynamic and adaptable, empowering them to act freely and across different sectors. This flexibility and vitality enable to forge unexpected relationships that uniquely address the specific needs of the community itself, its culture, or a particular territory.

Comparing mutual aid cooperative networks to organic and biological systems also provides valuable insights into revitalizing the relationship between humans and their environment. Understanding habitat production systems as collective, organic and dynamic frameworks reveals them as open and continuously developing projects. The connections between the community and the collectively built common project, as Donna Haraway suggests with her concept of "sympoiesis" or "becoming-with" -understood as a collaborative and evolving process- can create new pathways for building resilient and vital cooperative systems.

Adopting a holistic approach -rather than a reductionist one that fragments systems into isolated components- is essential for recognizing the interconnectedness that create new opportunities for innovation. Moreover, dialogue, as a social technology that promote collective thinking, is essential for scaling projects across sectors and levels. Finally, acknowledging that we live in a time of crisis compels us to embrace our responsibility to restore the environment. As Haraway suggests, we must view this *response-ability* as a novel ability of agency.

In conclusion, habitat production can be recognized as a dynamic system: an open and constantly evolving porcess. Although these systems can be complex, it is possible to develop analytical methods that help us understand them as a whole and, as Meadows suggests, learn to *"dance with them."* It is essential to understand the collective vital trajectories that aim to preserve and restore the planet's continuity through multi-entities and trans-scalar connections. These relationships not only sustain the vitality of our immediate environment but also enable us to expand solutions that restore how we inhabit and care for our planetary system as a whole.

Note: This essay was based on a series of interviews conducted with the communities of mutual aid cooperatives in Uruguay in November 2023 (COVICIVI, TEBELPA, COVIESS 90, COVIMT 9, COVIREUS, ICOVI, ZONA 3, MESA 1, El Hormiguero, and the Mundo Afro cooperatives UFAMA CORDON 1 and UFAMA al Sur). Special thanks to FUCVAM for their management and support, especially to Ramón Fratti, who accompanied and guided me throughout this journey. I would also extend my gratitude to Gustavo González, Enrique Cal, Benjamín Nahoum, and Isabel Zervoni from FUCVAM, as well as to Horacio Pérez from the Uruguayan Cooperative Center CCU and Raúl Vallés, architect and academic from FADU-Udelar.

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Spatial interventions in vulnerable territories: the "Bairros Saudáveis" case

Leonardo Ramires, Rita Ochoa

Abstract:

The "Bairros Saudáveis" (Healthy Neighborhoods) programme in Portugal emerged in 2020 during the Covid-19 pandemic. Its aim was to improve health conditions and quality of life in vulnerable territories through small, bottom-up interventions. A key condition for these interventions was the formation of partnerships between associations, NGOs, residents, and public entities.

This article examines the relationships between the quality of spaces in vulnerable territories and participatory and/or bottom-up public policies, using "Bairros Saudáveis" (BS) as a case study. The research involves a selection of projects developed within the BS programme, combining information obtained from interviews with individuals and entities involved in these projects and analysing official project documents.

The objectives of the study are to contextualize and understand the BS programme within the social and public health crises it coincided with; examine how the themes of "space" and "architecture" were addressed by the programme and its proposed projects; verify the programme's adherence to participatory principles; and identify good practices for future similar actions or new editions of the programme. Additionally, this study aims to contribute to a broader reflection on the state of participatory practices in architecture within the Portuguese context. It seeks to understand whether these practices are helping to mitigate socio-economic-cultural problems and improve the quality of life in marginalized contexts.

Methodologically, the paper explores the official communication channels of the BS programme; key primary and secondary sources related to the theme; interviews with actors involved in the selected case studies, as well as privileged observers; and in situ participatory observation. We acknowledge the challenge of identifying concrete outcomes from an unfinished public policy, as some projects remain incomplete. Therefore, we present this as a work in progress, aimed at promoting relevant and necessary debate both within and outside the academic sphere.

In conclusion, this study highlights numerous deficiencies in many Portuguese housing contexts, whether geographically peripheral or socially excluded in urban centres. The pandemic exacerbated social and territorial inequality in Portugal, leading to problems that directly impact the quality of life for marginalised populations. The cases analysed also underscore the potential of architecture and spatial interventions as strategies for social transformation.

Keywords: Bairros Saudáveis; participatory processes in architecture; vulnerable territories; public policies; social role of the architect.

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I. Citizen participation in urban public policies in Portugal: Main steps before Bairros Saudáveis programme

The concept of citizen participation can be understood as a continuous social process that values the influence of all the individuals in the political issues of society. In a combination of institutional and social mechanisms that overcomes the conventional dichotomy between representation and participation, each social group's specific demands are expressed and debated in community spaces, articulated with collective claims, and then implemented.[1] In general, it is about involving in decision-making all those who are impacted by the respective processes. It aims to share decisions, goals, public policy projects, the operation of State facilities and even tax definition.[2] However, in modern societies, citizen participation has not been consistently and uniformly applied, emerging more as a reaction than as a structural premise, as stated by Bordenave:

> It is as if modern civilization, with its enormous industrial and business complexes and with its electronic means of mass communication, had first led men to a massifying and atomizing individualism and, later, as a defensive reaction to growing alienation, increasingly led them to collective participation.[3]

In Portugal, the experience of the Local Support Ambulatory Service (SAAL) is definitively a mark in terms of citizen participation. It consisted of a popular housing and urban intervention programme carried out between 1974 and 1976, immediately after the fall of the Portuguese dictatorship. Despite its short duration, SAAL has left a strong legacy and remains a case study all over the world.[4]

Popular participation occurred intensely in SAAL, the inhabitants having an active voice in the definition of the houses' location, the organization of the programme and spaces distribution, the building systems and materials, as well as on the future community management, or the development of financing methods.[5]

In 2002, an important instrument of civic participation, the "Participatory Budget", began to be applied, at the initiative of the Municipality of Palmela, being then profusely used in several

1 Elenaldo Celso Teixeira, O Local e o Global: Limites e Desafios da Participação Cidadã, 3a (São Paulo: Cortez, 2001).
2 Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," 1969, https://doi.org/10.1080/01944366908977225.
3 Juan E. Diaz Bordenave, O que é Participação, 6a (São Paulo: Brasiliense, 1983), https://www.ces.uc.pt/projectos/somus/docs/BORDENAVE-D.-O-que-e-participacao.pdf.
4 Gaspar Martins Pereira, "SAAL: Um Programa de Habitação Popular No Processo Revolucionário" Revista Da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto, 4, 2014, https://ojs.letras.up.pt/index.php/historia/article/view/1200.
5 Mónica Soares, "Cidade Partilhada, Cidade Participada" (Master dissertation in Architecture, Lisbon, Universidade de Lisboa, 2017), http://hdl.handle.net/10400.5/15399.

other contexts.[6] This form of governance also implies the direct involvement of citizens in government decisions, relying on consultation and/or co-decision processes to define the investment priorities of the public budget for a given territory.

In 2011, following the experience of the Participatory Budget, the Municipality of Lisbon started to implement the BIP-ZIP programme – Bairros e Zonas de Intervenção Prioritária de Lisboa (Lisbon's Priority Intervention Neighbourhoods and Zones), a public policy tool that fosters partnerships and small local interventions to improve residential area – covered by a previously diagnosis of vulnerable territories.

The success of BIP-ZIP — which is already in its 14th edition — was decisive for the development of the "Bairros Saudáveis" (BS) programme. As in BIP-ZIP, BS initiatives were driven by local communities, with a strong participatory and bottom-up component. Moving from the municipal to the national scale, the BS programme introduced participation in the identification of vulnerable territories, through a public consultation, in which citizens are the ones to signal vulnerable territories — while in BIP-ZIP the territories are previously mapped, in the "Priority Intervention Neighbourhoods" chart.[7]

II. COVID-19 pandemic crisis and creation of Bairros Saudáveis

> In a country where many people still live in precarious conditions, as highlighted during the COVID pandemic, the emergence of a programme of this scale to mitigate social consequences was almost inevitable.[8]

The mandatories lockdowns resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic, highlighted the importance of public space in cities, and with the restrictions and physical distancing, the dynamics of space appropriations changed. Open spaces, gardens, even the house's balconies, gained greater value and occupied more time in our daily lives.[9] On the other hand, the diversity and multifunctionality and flexibility of urban public spaces has been a constant in the premises of contemporary urbanism. Different types of activities and leisure, greater diversity of social groups, new means of transport and various ways of using the city between genders and generations are becoming increasingly common.

Also, there seems to be a consensus that the greater the diversity in cities, the greater the success of their public spaces and even the security issues, since a greater number of people enjoying the common space reduces the probability of unassisted crimes.[10] In addition to diversity, multifunctionality and flexibility, cities have been witnessing the adoption of intermittent practices, to design public spaces, or to test programmes and uses before final construction, after the intense period of confinement of the Covid 19 Pandemic's crisis.[11]

It was in this context that emerged, on July 1st, 2020, the "Bairros Saudáveis" (BS), a programme of participatory nature, aimed to improve health conditions, well-being, and quality of life in Portuguese vulnerable territories. As mentioned, BS was based on small interventions, supported by ideas and proposals presented by associations, resident collectives, NGOs, neighbourhood movements in coordination with local authorities or other public entities. The objective was to empower and give voice to resident communities in the processes that concerned them.

The programme was established by Resolution 52-A/2020 of the Council of Ministers and was initially scheduled to take place between July 2020 and December 2021. Nevertheless, it had to be extended to the end of 2022, due to delays in the processes of contracting with the programme's beneficiaries. It proposed to leverage resources and stimulate the potential of communities living in the most vulnerable areas, that was to say, where there is more poverty, higher number of overcrowded and/or degraded housing, unemployment and job insecurity, and lower educational attainment. It was the commitment of various sectors of society, from local power to government, and with the financing of the State, to alleviate or even solve some problems in those vulnerable territories.

It reassigned the responsibility of identifying both community needs and the respective solutions from the State to the citizens themselves, which, upon approval, provides funding for their implementation. This model highlights a shift away from the State proposing solutions to the problems it has identified or solely creating conditions to enhance the quality of life. Instead, it places the onus on citizens to advance their own well-being, without the consultative and accountability mechanisms inherent in traditional public policy systems.[12]

It is not possible to approach BS without highlighting the significant role of Architect Helena Roseta, national coordinator of the first edition of BS and responsible for the implementation and promotion of the programme with the Government, together with a group of architects and doctors.

6 Abel Coentrão et al., *20 Anos de Orçamentos Participativos em Portugal*, 1st ed. (Vila Ruiva, Portugal: Europeia Books, 2022).
7 Helena Roseta, *Uma Politica de Habitação para Portugal*, *Jornal dos Arquitectos* 261 (2022): 26–29.
8 Helena Roseta and Aitor Varea Oro, *Relatório Da Consulta Pública Do Projecto de Regulamento*, October 2020.
9 Rita Ochoa and Alessia Allegri, "Espaço Público e Cidade Pós-Pandemia. Para Uma Nova Geografia Do Comum," 2021, https://www.urbanologo.com/espa%C3%A7o-p%C3%BAblico.
10 Jane Jacobs, *Morte e Vida de Grandes Cidades*, 3a ed. (São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1961).
11 Alessia Allegri and Rita Ochoa, "Intermittent Practices in the Contemporary City. The Case of Lisbon," in *Advances in Human Factors in Architecture, Sustainable Urban Planning and Infrastructure*, ed. Jerzy Charytonowicz, Alicja Maciejko, and Christianne S. Falcão (Cham: Springer, 2021), 249—256.
12 Paula Urbano Antunes, "O Poder da Colaboração," January 23, 2022, https://jornal.bairrossaudaveis.gov.pt/opiniao/00000084/index.htm?o-poder-da-colaboracao.

Her political background and her tireless work in the field of housing public policies, both at local, national and European levels, or even her contact with the profession of Architecture – she was president of the *Architects' Association* for 6 years –were decisive for the enormous success of BS. Also noteworthy is Roseta's ability to leave a legacy and inspire teams and individuals to take on this challenge. Her example is compelling for the field of architecture, her role as a coordinator and architect is an inspiration for the profession and an incentive to the social role of the architects and their engagement in projects within vulnerable communities.

III. "Space" and "Architecture" in "Bairros Saudáveis'" approved proposals

In June 2021, the programme launched an official communication platform with a strong participatory component, the ''Jornal dos Bairros Saudáveis''. In addition to the communication objectives, it promoted events to communicate the work carried out and naturally evolved into a support network, detailing the projects' progress and the global impact of the programme. In addition, an ''Opinion'' section was generated, opening the journal to criticism and suggestions on its developments and results.[13]

On May 14, 2021, the official BS website shared the final list of admitted projects, with access to all submitted applications, their final score or their geographical location, which provided an interesting map of the territories considered vulnerable and their proposals. This mapping also made it possible to assess the level of participation, by geographical area.[14] With a total funding of 10 million euros, 246 applications were approved in a set of 774 submitted proposals. Only 32% of the submitted proposals were funded, leaving many highly ranked proposals unselected. This was considered a small number, originating several complaints of the non-accepted teams.

Within the scope of the applications, each promoting entity must select a thematic axis, within 5 possibilities: Health, Social, Economic, Environmental and Urban. In a more specific approach, social exclusion, problematic behaviours, vandalism, domestic violence, substance abuse and lack of life projects were the problems most frequently identified by the approved applications. Economic needs related to food support, thermal comfort and house improvements were also very frequent. Overall, there was also a notable concern for mental health, possibly demonstrating an awareness of how damaging the pandemic crisis was in this regard.[15]

13 Bairros Saudáveis, ''Jornal Dos Bairros Saudáveis Já Está On-Line'', June 8, 2021, https://www.bairrossaudaveis.gov.pt/noticias/384,08062021/index.htm.
14 Programa Bairros Saudáveis, *Candidaturas aprovadas para financiamento, por freguesia*, June 8, 2021 (updated August 19, 2024), https://public.flourish.studio/visualisation/6298976/.
15 Isabel Loureiro, ''Uma Política Nacional Para a Mobilização Local'' May 10, 2021, https://jornal.bairrossaudaveis.gov.pt/opiniao/00000022/index.htm?uma-politica-nacional-para-a-mobilizacao-local.

Through the analysis of the 246 funded proposals in terms of their ''keywords'', ''objectives'', ''description'' and intervention methods (''activities''), it was possible to observe that, although the BS programme was not mainly focused on architectural or urban issues, the proportion of projects involving Spatial Interventions – 42%,103 out of 246 – was very significant, considering that it was an inaugural edition.

This engagement with spatial considerations (aiming modifying or enhancing spaces) may potentially be influenced by the involvement and the popularity of Helena Roseta, known for her social advocacy through architectural and urban interventions. Although – as we will see below in a finer analysis – not all of them propose directly architectural interventions, this could also translate an awareness of the crucial role that urban social identity and the quality of our living environments play in our health, well-being and quality of life in general.[16]

IV. Participatory assumptions in "Bairros Saudáveis"

> (...) I know that, sometimes, with little money, we can make that improvement that can make a difference, and that's what the Programme aims to do. (...) It is a very participatory programme, so we will invite neighbourhoods to present proposals. (...) It's the people who will discuss in the neighbourhoods what is most important; it's not us who will say: Do this, do that! [17]

To know the city is to respect it and be part of it [18]

BS assumed a co-decision approach, privileging bottom-up actions. There was an evident will for some other transversal results to occur organically and gradually, such as the elimination of architectonic barriers, discrimination factors contributing to the negative images of peripheral neighbourhoods, or the combating of fake and stigmatizing information.

The participatory nature of the programme was applauded by all. However, it has been proven that the will to make public policies effectively participatory can diminish when it comes to involving disadvantaged minorities. In fact, actions to include citizens in public processes can even contribute to gentrification processes, to an unequal distribution of benefits or to the segregation of the political class. When not effectively planned and, above all, executed, supposedly participatory interventions can become empty and frustrating processes for

16 Jaime Lerner, *Acupuntura Urbana*, 2a ed. (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2005), 65.
17 Helena Roseta, Bairros Saudáveis - *Helena Roseta explica na RTP 1*, Youtube Video. June 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2_4k0cUeXms.
18 Jaime Lerner, Acupuntura Urbana, 2a (Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2005), 65.
Pol, Enric. *Symbolism a Priori. Symbolism a Posteriori, Urban regeneration.* A challenge for public art, 2ªed. (Barcelona: UB, 2005), 71.

the most vulnerable layers of the population, who may feel disillusioned in a utopia of active democracy.[19] Participatory work can work best when it turns into active collaboration — and this can only exist with the creation of platforms for thought and action, with a unity of mutual understanding and respect for both actors and beneficiaries. In short, a culture of the commons is needed, or at least common cultural foundations that act in favour of the same needs and interests.[20]

It is on this fragile ground that BS is implemented. If will always subject to criticism, the programme tried to include the participatory character in all its stages and processes, calling the citizens to: define which were the vulnerable territories to intervene; discuss and select its main needs with local promoters; outline stages and modes of operation; suggest methods of execution and budget, the State entering only with the funding.

V. Case Studies

Although 103 funded proposals self-identified as space-related, we assume that this association could be direct related to it. In fact, of those 103 proposals, only 69 had a direct relationship with the space, proposing concrete physical actions. Within those 69, we decided to analyse a small set, combining two crucial factors, diversity and relevance.

Diversity was assessed considering the architectural scope of the project, the geographic area of the vulnerable territory, the target audience of the proposal, its actors, objectives, and forms of implementation – thus seeking proposals that could bring as diverse stories as possible among themselves.

The relevance was evaluated considering aspects of tactical urbanism (relationship between how many people will benefit from the proposal – agility of construction – cost), replicability of the proposals and its ability to be inspiring for other actions, and even the usefulness of the research, in academic terms. The final selection covered 4 of the 5 Portuguese ''geographical zones'' and all the ''architectural areas''. [21]

19 Sherry R. Arnstein, ''A Ladder of Citizen Participation,'' *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 35, no. 4 (1969): 216–224

20 Fernando Távora, *Da organização do espaço*, 9ª ed., Argumentos 2 (Porto: Rainho & Neves, 1962).

21 Initially, we planned to include all 5 zones in our case studies; however, one did not respond to the invitation within the given timeframe. Consequently, the study proceeded with the inclusion of 4 zones.

1 – "Mulheres em Construção"

Score	90.50 points
Ranking	18th place
Entity	Mulheres na Arquitetura (MA)
Region	Central
Project type	Small Investment or Integrated Action
Budget	50,000€
Axes	Health, Social, Economic, Environmental and Urbanistic
Relation with Architecture	Direct (Housing, Action in Built Environment and Debate)

''Mulheres em Construção'' (Woman in Construction) is a project composed of the following stages: i. certified training in civil construction for women at risk of unemployment; ii. rehabilitation of a property for community use; iii. creation of a construction materials bank; iv. training in Gender Equality. The project was born from a group of local entities, which invited participants, identified the property to be rehabilitated, and assisted in the training.[22]

Regarding the participation of the participating residents, there was a weakness in the moment of ideation of the ''Mulheres em Construção'' project. However, ''Mulheres na Arquitectura'' made sure to apply intense participation and cooperation with the local neighbourhood associations to launch the proposal through meetings, visits to the site, and presentation of previews of the application.[23]

The progress and implementation of the project were strongly participated. There were even changes in content to adapt to the needs and desires of the participants according to their interests in certain subjects. The discussion and distribution of who and how would participate in the works were other aspects widely discussed with the trainees – essentially, the establishment between the workers and the assistants. However, the attendance of all in the works, even if they did not have physical conditions for manual labour, fulfilled a social function and the feeling of inclusion and monitoring of group work are fulfilled.[24]

22 Jornal dos Bairros Saudáveis, ''Mulheres Em Construção!'' *Jornal dos Bairros Saudáveis*, 2020, https://jornal.bairrossaudaveis.gov.pt/projetos/00000075/index.htm.

23 Isabella Rusconi, Interview, Zoom, May 20, 2022.

24 Isabella Rusconi, Interview, Zoom, May 20, 2022.

2 – "910 fogos — espaços mentais, espaços reais"

Score	82.50 points
Ranking	92nd place
Entity	Efabula
Region	Lisbon and Tejo Valley
Project type	Small Investment or Integrated Action
Budget	50,000€
Axes	Health, Economic, Environmental and Urbanistic
Relation with Architecture	Direct (Debate)

"910 Fogos – Espaços Mentais, Espaços Reais" (910 Houses – Mental Spaces, Real Spaces) is defined as a project composed of awareness actions related to mental health and quality of life for various age groups. It integrates multidisciplinary actions that have as their starting point the relationship of the body in space and the questioning of what it means to inhabit a "social neighbourhood" and how to design the transformation of its public space, turning it into a space that promotes the mental health of residents.[25]

Overall, the issue of population participation in the project was present, as mentioned, from its inception, as the idea of its creation came from a neighbourhood resident. Some residents immersed in the experience and assisted the executing entities, being more present in the day-to-day of the project, as well as in the strategic decisions that were being made.[26]

There was no direct participation of the population in choosing the topics for the weekly debates, as these arose and were shaped according to the visits that the architect had the opportunity to make in the neighbourhood, with the follow-up of other actions of the project that were already taking place in the neighbourhood.[27]

25 Jornal dos Bairros Saudáveis, "910 Fogos – Espaços Mentais, Espaços Reais" *Jornal dos Bairros Saudáveis*, 2020, https://jornal.bairrossaudaveis.gov.pt/projetos/00000179/index.htm.
26 Luisa Sol, Interview by the author, Zoom, June 3, 2022.
27 Luisa Sol, Interview by the author, Zoom, June 3, 2022.

[Fig. 1]
Mulheres em Construção. Photo: Mulheres na Arquitetura, 2022.
Courtesy of Mulheres na Arquitetura.

3 – "Balneários Comunitários"

Score	83 points
Ranking	86th place
Entity	Instituição Particular de Solidariedade Social Os Pioneiros
Region	Central
Project type	Small Investment or Integrated Action
Budget	49,000€
Axes	Health, Social, Economic, Environmental and Urbanistic
Relation with Architecture	Direct (Space to be built and Public space)

"Balneários Comunitários" (Community Bathhouses) involved the construction of two portable bathhouses in communities where there are precarious conditions of sanitation, habitability, and hygiene. In addition to the installation of the facilities, there was close monitoring through awareness sessions, workshops, and capacity-building moments for the community. Due to technical and logistics constraints, only one of the planned bathhouses could be implemented.[28]

Population participation was significantly active in the project from its inception. The close relationship that the entity "Os Pioneiros" has with the Carvalhosa community facilitated a quick diagnosis of what was most needed for the residents: some equipment related to hygiene and health. After the project outline, the community could participate in the sizing of the bathhouse and the equipment it would offer.[29]

According to Mano, social worker and project manager, participation continued during the implementation of the bathhouse – residents participated in choosing the best location for the bathhouse, helped prepare the ground, and dug the hole for the septic tank.[30]

28 Jornal dos Bairros Saudáveis, "Balneários/WC Comunitários" *Jornal dos Bairros Saudáveis*, 2020, https://jornal.bairrossaudaveis.gov.pt/projetos/00000247/index.htm.
29 Ana Mano, Interview by the author, Zoom, June 29, 2022.
30 Ana Mano, Interview by the author, Zoom, June 29, 2022.

[Fig. 2]
910 fogos — espaços mentais, espaços reais. Photo: Leonardo Ramires, 2022.

Introducing self-construction, even if not in the entirety of the project, may have contributed to the sense of belonging and ownership of the equipment. Naturally, a relationship of care and stewardship for the new facility emerged. Ana Mano reports:[31]

> The feedback from residents is extremely positive. They decorated the bathhouse in their own way and always keep it very clean and hygienic. Simply installing a bathhouse has significantly improved the quality of life for several families.

This was the first time the entity intervened in the common space of communities, but it already works with architecture in some actions to improve social housing residences to which they belong. However, the success of the project has already led "Os Pioneiros" to consider and work on other projects related to public space in some communities in Águeda and to desire new editions of "Bairros Saudáveis".

4 – "Desenvolvimento comunitário participado através de obra de dois fogos para renda acessível"

Score	80 points
Ranking	146th place
Entity	Pele
Region	North
Project type	Small Investment or Integrated Action
Budget	49,947€
Axes	Health, Economic and Urbanistic
Relation with Architecture	Direct (Housing)

31 Ana Mano, Interview by the author, Zoom, June 29, 2022.

[Fig. 3]
Balneários Comunitários. Photo: Os Pioneiros, 2022.
Courtesy of Os Pioneiros.

"Desenvolvimento Comunitário Participado através de Obra de Dois Fogos para Renda Acessível" (Participatory Community Development through the Two Affordable Rental Units Rehabilitation) project focuses on the renovation of a vacant property for housing a family in urgent need of relocation due to the indignity and unsanitary conditions of their current residence. Due to financial constraints, exacerbated by the rising costs of construction and labour during the pandemic, it was only possible to implement one of the initially planned renovations.[32]

The project's main action involves the rehabilitation of a property for a family living on one of the *ilhas* ("islands", a type of working-class housing very common in Porto) of Granja. The family consists of a couple and their two children, who currently reside in a housing unit of approximately 15m2 without sanitary facilities – using shared facilities with other residents of their island. Their current residence has limited and poor natural lighting and ventilation, making it particularly unsuitable for the two children; the housing situation of this family was deemed the most urgent.[33]

The participatory component is strong and evident in the project due to the understanding of the project-work as a social practice, with a multidisciplinary approach that integrates designers, social workers, builders, and residents in a horizontal practice. Through activities, workshops, assemblies, and gatherings, the entities aimed to promote a model of empowerment for self-management of both the process and the new housing itself. The act of designing and the construction site are interpreted as tools for co-production and sharing of knowledge and skills among all involved parties.[34]

The interaction with the four individuals who will inhabit the new space became increasingly intense due to the actions of the entities, who know and actively engage with the territory and its people, turning the action into a laboratory for understanding its socioeconomic-cultural context.[35]

Vanessa, Tiago, Letícia, and Santiago could participate and negotiate in the architectural project actively and constantly. The design of electrical and plumbing installations was also discussed with the family to adapt to their needs and desires. Self-construction is also something that is desired to be introduced in small tasks such as assisting in painting, wood treatments, tile placement, and finishes with less technical responsibility – not to increase participation but to expedite the process so that the family, who showed themselves willing and excited to help, can move to the new home as soon as possible.[36]

32 Jornal dos Bairros Saudáveis, "Desenvolvimento Comunitário Participado Através de Obra de Dois Fogos Para Renda Acessível.," *Jornal dos Bairros Saudáveis*, 2020, https://jornal.bairrossaudaveis.gov.pt/projetos/00000535/index.htm.
33 Fernando Pimenta, Interview by the author, in person, July 15, 2022.
34 *Jornal dos Bairros Saudáveis*, "Desenvolvimento Comunitário Participado Através de Obra de Dois Fogos para Renda Acessível," Jornal dos Bairros Saudáveis, 2020, https://jornal.bairrossaudaveis.gov.pt/projetos/00000188/index.htm.
35 Fernando Pimenta, Interview by the author, in person, July 15, 2022.
36 Fernando Pimenta, Interview by the author, in person, July 15, 2022.

Final Discussion

The Resolution of the Council of Ministers 158/2023, dated December 11, announced the launch of the second edition of Bairros Saudáveis, which was allocated €15 million, representing a 50% increase in budget compared to the first edition. However, on August 7, 2024, the Government decided not to continue with BS. This information was communicated by the Assistant Secretary of State to the Presidency, Rui Armindo de Freitas, justifying the decision with the fact that the pandemic context in which the programme was initially created had been overcome. Also, he assumed that the current government does not share the same assumptions as its predecessor, who had decided to move forward with the second edition of the programme.

Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, it will not be possible to analyse or speculate on future editions of the programme studied in this research. However, it is pertinent to consider several related issues, including the role of NGOs and organizations directly engaging with marginalized populations, the housing crisis in Portugal, the social role of participatory architecture, the exacerbation of social inequality due to the COVID-19 pandemic, public awareness of the need to improve the quality of both public and private spaces, and the necessity for the creation and continuation of public policies similar to the one examined in this study.

Regarding the initial ideas of the projects, 3 out of 4 (cases 2, 3 and 4) originated from diagnoses, perceptions and research carried out by entities directly involved and active in their respective territories, together with the residents. These results were already present before BS existed, and with its implementation, some identified problems were solved. This demonstrates the importance of these entities and partnerships and may indicate the need for direct public support in their creation and maintenance.

Concerning the vulnerable territories under analysis, 2 out of 4 are municipal social neighbourhoods (cases 1 and 2), while the remaining 2 consist of illegal occupations of vacant or self-constructed buildings (cases 3 and 4), all facing substandard living conditions. This illustrates that the housing crisis in Portugal remains unresolved and, compounded by the escalating housing rents due to the influx of tourism, may be exacerbating over time. The average waiting period of five years for adequate housing in a social neighbourhood in the Porto district further underscores this assessment of the Portuguese housing crisis.[37]

37 Fernando Pimenta, Interview by the author, in person, July 15, 2022.

All 4 case studies reported that community participation was crucial and significant, even if sometimes inconsistent and not present in all phases. These statements confirm the data in the application forms and are in line with the principles of the programme. The parallel participation of external people from vulnerable territories in the projects proves to be a positive and interesting strategy, increasing the relationship between territories and their respective cities and citizens.

Half of the 4 case studies had to suppress activities and objectives due to insufficient funding: "Desenvolvimento Comunitário Participado através de obra de dois fogos para Renda Acessível" could only execute one of the two renovations, and "910 Fogos – Espaços Mentais, Espaços Reais" did not conclude two of its nine activity fronts. Additionally, the "Balneários Comunitários" only managed to build one of the two promised bathhouses. These failures to fulfil tasks and objectives presented to the residents of the intervened territories need indeed greater monitoring and attention in possible future similar programmes to manage the expectations and frustrations caused to the project beneficiaries.

Regarding architecture, 100% of the case studies relied on architects to conduct their projects or were even created by them. It is interesting and hopeful to perceive that architecture is still sought after as a means of social transformation and that, even in complex and multidisciplinary projects, the social role of the architect can still be exercised.

There were various positive aspects and enthusiastic feedback from those involved. There were also, as expected from an experimental programme in its first edition, mistakes and paths to be improved in the 4 case studies and in general. For example, the bureaucratic and the contracting parts, which was intended to be much simpler, but which ended up being extended, leading to an unforeseen extension of the programme.

The present study revealed and reaffirmed numerous deficiencies in many Portuguese housing contexts, whether geographically peripheral or socially excluded in urban centres. Social inequality was shown to be even more accentuated in the times of the pandemic crisis, causing social problems that directly interfere with the quality of life of people living on the margins of society. Architectural intervention or action in space as strategies (or part of them) for social transformation was also addressed and made visible through the analysed cases.

The awareness of the population regarding the direct relationship between the quality of their spaces and their own quality of life seems to be questioned in academia. However, the research showed that even in a public programme not directly related to space, 42% of its applications were directly or indirectly related to it, demonstrating a broad awareness of that relationship. This may be a consequence of a recent extrapolation from the field of architecture and urbanism, reaching common and even media spheres, and should be a crucial step towards solving existing problems – since the first step in solving a problem is identifying it.

[Fig. 4]
Desenvolvimento comunitário participado através de obra de dois fogos para renda acessível.
Photo: Leonardo Ramires, 2022.

However, it is not in the interest of the evolution of a city and even of society for people to identify the problems of their homes, streets, and neighbourhoods if hypotheses for solving them are not formulated. The recovery of strategies that succeeded and even the demonstration of completed BS projects showed that, even in a brief period and with a short budget, significant social improvements can be made. It becomes quite evident that it is necessary and urgent to democratize access to architecture and reconnect it with its essential role of political action and fraternity for/to the people.

Every architectural action is political, every architectural action is social. The exploration of architecture as a tool for social transformation through public policies should be more active. Still, it is known that capital aims for profits and breaks the social function of each profession, not only that of the architect. For instance, the teaching in the generality of the architecture schools should explore other possibilities of action beyond the figure of the "star architect" and their autonomous practice, which has been commonly addressed and is still notably predominant.

Raising awareness among students, professionals, entities, and even public authorities about the need for popular participation in public policies is necessary, but still ineffective. When crossing the theme of public participation with the high multidisciplinary nature of the case studied, something different from what is commonly studied in architecture courses emerges: no one works alone, and architects are always in contact with the social sciences and with their practitioners. As stated by Távora[38]: "The architect must not suppose himself the demiurge, the only one, the genius of organized space – others also participate in the organization of space. We must attend to them and collaborate with them in the common work."

Given the success of the BS programme and its demonstrated impact on spatial development, it would be beneficial to consider establishing a mentoring system focused on architecture and urbanism. Such a system could help promote entities in creating more coherent and viable project proposals related to spatial issues and support the execution of approved projects. Additionally, as Isabela Rusconi suggested, exploring the implementation of a model like Brazil's, which provides free architectural assistance to low-income families, could be valuable. This model, known as "ATHIS" (Technical Assistance for Social Housing), offers project preparation, monitoring, and execution support for construction, renovation, expansion, or regularization of homes, ensuring the right to decent housing as outlined in the Brazilian Constitution. A deeper examination of the first edition of Bairros Saudáveis and similar initiatives could further stimulate architectural education to address social inequalities and foster empathy as a core principle for architects.[39]

The development of this study on the problems of quality of life faced by economically segregated social strata and the potential of architecture to address these issues is not aimed at solving the problem, but rather at contributing to the debate and fostering new questions and inquiries.

38 Fernando Távora, *Da organização do espaço*, 9°, Argumentos 2 (Porto: Rainho & Neves, 1962), 74.
39 Rusconi, Isabella. Interview by the author. Zoom, May 20, 2022.

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The Impact of care: Expanding Architectural education through Community Design-Build Projects

James Doerfler

Abstract:

The influence of community-centered design and design-build projects on architectural education has increased in the last decade. Including student-led community-engaged projects in the curriculum of architecture schools has shaped architectural education and influenced the profession. These projects provide a service to communities or non-profit organisations in need of design solutions. Engaging social responsibility and public interest design represents an ideological shift in the way that architecture schools are approaching education. There is often an intersection of public interest design and design-build in these projects. This paper explores the question, can an academic community-based design-build project provide a new transitional housing prototype for the homeless? And, do these projects fulfil the needs of students to provide effective learning experiences for promoting their desire to promote communities they serve?

Architecture schools provide learning experiences through various initiatives. For example, Yale University's "The Yale Building Project," Auburn University's "Rural Studio" and University of Kansas "Studio 804" have had long-running public interest design studios. These design-build initiatives educate students outside the typical design studio. This article will provide an overview of public interest and design-build education in the United States to provide context for introducing this into the curriculum at an Australian university.

The Prefab 21 design-build studio is a partnership between the Deakin University School of Architecture and Built Environment, FormFlow, and Samaritan House, a shelter for homeless men, that focuses on the design and fabrication of a prototype house. This transdisciplinary project was accomplished in design studio and workshop sessions that designed, documented, and built an Independent Living Unit (ILU) and created a microvillage of seven ILUs at Samaritan House. This prototype has an extensive impact through it providing a new typology for transitional homeless accommodation and jobs in the region.

Keywords: design-build; community-engaged; architectural education; prefabrication; homelessness.

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Introduction

Since the late 1960s the expansion of the architecture curriculum being taught in architecture schools has grown to include the relationship of community-engaged projects, also called public interest design, and design/build. These are two different pedagogical approaches to teaching a pragmatic aspect of architecture. The degree to which they overlap occurs across a spectrum in different architecture schools throughout the world.

Students today are increasingly eager to make a positive impact on the communities they are part of and are looking for ways to align their education and career skills with these goals. Arguably, the current generation of students is highly motivated to contribute to society[1], seeking to combine meaningful social impact with a more advanced professional skill set through such projects. The design-build educational model represents a fusion of two stages of an architectural project, with the same team involved in both stages. This approach offers a comprehensive and integrated experience that encompasses both theoretical knowledge and practical application.

This article provides a brief historical overview of design-build philosophy and pedagogy related to community-engaged projects and examples of design-build education in the United States. The case studies of the successful aspects of these examples of design-build pedagogy in the U.S. form the basis for taking what was learned and translating it to an Australian university. This article connects the development of a design-build pedagogy to students and faculty engaging in public interest design as a methodology for expanding experiential curricula in architecture schools in other countries. The goal is to create community-based projects that provide new homes and buildings for marginalized populations, positively impacting the local community. The primary methodology for this process is hands-on education, involving students, under

1 Jean M. Twenge, *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood—and What That Means for the Rest of Us* (New York: Atria Books, 2018)

faculty supervision, in the design and construction of a permanent building. This practice differs from prototype, model-making courses, or internships. The full-scale project is designed with direct client interaction and an understanding of the needs of the real stakeholders. The project is built with the inherent constraints of the building site and budget, using appropriate construction methods and available materials. It provides a valuable and holistic experiential learning experience. The research and exploration structured into the academic experience is a strongway of providing a new perspective on the transitional housing typology. Neither the client, builder, faculty, or students had previously designed or built transitional housing. This project was an experiment in the process of creating transitional housing and providing an outcome that would respond to the needs of this community. This article explores the question, can an academic community-based design-build project provide a new transitional housing prototype for the homeless? And then, do these projects fulfil the needs of students to provide effective learning experiences to supporting the communities they serve?

The focus for the Australian project providing transitional housing for the homeless fits the theme of this journal, *Landscapes of Care. Public housing across multiple geographies: crossing theories and practices on public housing.* This project questions the typical practices of providing crisis housing for the homeless. Moving beyond the night-by-night crisis accommodation as a short-term fix, this project creates a new vision for delivering a strategy of care and providing a supportive environment of teaching and learning skills for homeless people in addition to a medium to long-term approach to accommodation and the creation of a stable living environment for the occupants. This ongoing support over months breaks patterns of homelessness and creates a strategy for transitioning out of the homeless cycle. This is a pilot project that has a vision of transforming lives.

Background of Community-Centered Design-Build Projects

> *The connection of theory and practice not only makes the former concrete and understandable but prevents the manual work from being routine and narrow.*[2]

The concept of Design-Build has been a longstanding tradition in architectural education. In the past, the same individual was responsible for both designing and constructing buildings. This integration of design and building within the role of a master builder was a fundamental aspect of construction for many centuries. However, as theoretical design took precedence from the time of Alberti through the Enlightenment, industrial revolution, and modernism, the master builders and craft guilds gradually became a distant memory. During this period, architects prioritized theoretical design over materiality and craft. In education, the mechanical arts became the legacy of the master builder and guild system, while elite American institutions

2 John Dewey and Evelyn Dewey, Schools of Tomorrow (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1915), 278

focused on the liberal arts as the framework for learning, thereby creating a separation between the applied sciences and classical studies and theory.

By the end of the 19th Century educators, such as John Dewey, explored aspects of the vocational combined with general education to promote a broader intellectual exploration for students. Dewey's philosophy of pragmatism coupled with his support of "learning-by-doing" curricula became an educational methodology. In Dewey's book, Schools of Tomorrow, we see a discussion of the value of learning both inside and outside the classroom. In one school mentioned in the book, the buildings were built by the students, getting experience in drawing plans, digging and laying the foundations, providing carpentry, and painting the structure. Dewey suggests that educators harnessing the "students' natural curiosity and love of action" are better placed to focus on "useful problems."[3]

Joan Ockman observes, American Pragmatism as a movement waxed and waned over the 20th Century. There are connections between pragmatism and the development of modern architecture, that involved both American and European sources. Applications of a form of pragmatism in the curricula of the Bauhaus that circle back to the US with the immigration of many Bauhaus faculty to the US in the 1930s. After the Second World War pragmatism waned in the face of different philosophies and the development of post-modernism.[4] In 2000, the Buell Center at Columbia University hosted two events that captured how pragmatism was viewed at the end of the 20th Century. The turn of the century interpretation of pragmatism has led to the inclusion of design research projects that provide measurable results with words like "performativity, implementation, risk analysis" becoming the language of studying design-build. Using these terms is moving design-build research into the fact-based side of research. But at its fundamental core pragmatism is about "hands-on [sic] experience, trial and error experimentation, innovation, and an open-ended future."[5]

The influence of these pragmatic community-engaged design-build projects on architectural education has increased in the last decade. This has influenced the acceptance of these projects as design research for faculty. Including faculty-guided, student-led community-engaged projects in the curriculum of architecture schools has shaped architectural education and influenced the profession. Through combining the learning experiences of community engagement, public participation, and multifaceted requirements that explore the full services that architects provide, these projects provide a service to underrepresented communities or non-profit organisations in

3 Dewey and Dewey, Schools of Tomorrow.
4 Joan Ockman, "Pragmatism/Architecture: The Idea of the Workshop Project," in *The Pragmatist Imagination: Thinking About 'Things in the Making'*, ed. Joan Ockman (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2000)
5 Joan Ockman, "Consequences of Pragmatism: A Retrospect on 'The Pragmatist Imagination,'" in The Figure of Knowledge: Conditioning Architectural Theory, 1960s–1990s, ed. Hilde Heynen, Rajesh Heynickx, and Sebastiaan Loosen (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2020)

need of design solutions. Engaging social responsibility and public interest design represents an ideological shift in the way that many architecture schools are approaching education. There is often an intersection of public interest design and design-build in these projects.

The architecture curriculum provides one of the few truly integrated pedagogical frameworks that spans theory to practice. The design studio is the focus of architecture education, providing the focal point in most architecture curricula for the integration to occur. The design studio is an example of active learning. It teaches a process for each student to "find" the parameters of the assigned project through research, investigation, iteration of strategies, and interaction with the client or community who are the focus of the design.

The 1996 report about architecture education and practice, *Building Community: A New Future for Architecture Education and Practice*, authored by Ernest Boyer and Lee Mitgang, includes mention of design-build as an excellent approach to the report's goal of creating a "connected curriculum" through integrating the subdisciplines of architectural education. Professor Bruce Meyer from Ball State University states that design build provides the setting for students to be "total architects" by emulating the profession. This is done by working in teams, practicing communication skills, negotiating, and following a project through to completion provides integration of knowledge.[6]

Another goal described in the Boyer Report is "service to the nation,"[7] to improve community-minded scholarship in the curriculum. The report challenged architecture schools to "elevate the concept of service to the nation."[8] Students and faculty engaged in civic activism should be seen as a prelude to professional engagement. The Boyer Report's promotion of service and community-based projects in the curriculum of schools nationwide reminded schools of the importance of the inclusion of outreach programs for both the university and student educational experiences. In 2012, the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) added Design-Build to their Architecture Education Awards in recognition of the increased prominence. The ACSA webpage describes this award and provides a formalized design-build acknowledgment of the importance of this a method for sharing innovative curricula across the member schools. The Design Build Exchange was formed by a group of like-minded educators, that has now become a worldwide platform for academics and non-academics to share ideas and resources.[9] There are currently 99 organizations listed as members. Most architecture schools in North America have some type of design-build student experience.[10]

6 Ernest L. Boyer and Lee D. Mitgang, *Building Community: A New Future for Architecture Education and Practice; A Special Report*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 1996)
7 Boyer and Mitgang, *Building Community*.
8 Boyer and Mitgang, *Building Community*.
9 "DesignBuildXchange," accessed March 1, 2024, https://www.dbxchange.eu.
10 Chad Kraus, "Introduction: Hands On, Minds On," in *Designbuild Education*, ed. Chad Kraus (New York and London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017).

Three examples of Design-Build from the United States pedagogy in Conneticut, Alabama and Kansas

In the following section, we will delve into three specific design-build programs in the U.S.. Beginning in 1967, the Yale First Year Building Project is the first of these programs. Other subsequent programs have succeeded and failed at various schools. Despite sharing similar overarching pedagogical objectives, these programs demonstrate distinct approaches in their project execution.

In 1967 the Yale School of Architecture began the Yale Building Project, a mandatory design-build program for all first-year postgraduate Masters of Architecture students. This program offered students the opportunity to design and build a building in an underprivileged community. The Chair in Architecture, Charles W. Moore, founded the First-Year Building Project by developing student-led initiatives into a commitment to community-based and socially responsive design. These projects aligned with Moore's educational views and were also a reflection of the late 1960's awakening to social activism in the U.S., thereby. Paralleling the community-based initiatives of President Johnson's "Great Society," the Yale Building Project is a commitment to the "direct involvement of students in real-world problems. "[11]

Moore's pedagogical position was to have the students understand the importance of collaboration combined with social involvement, an ambition the students also sought. Moore supported this student-led movement "to make design more responsive to the complex needs around us."[12] This transformation of architecture pedagogy was based on Moore's approach to architecture with the use of simple forms and basic technologies in projects such as Sea Ranch. The students were encouraged to embrace this vocabulary and learn the process of building at this scale. The project was chosen based on the criteria the students and faculty created for community impact in a poor community and being buildable in the time available.

It is interesting to note that the first projects were located outside of New Haven in Appalachia, a far distance from the Yale campus. This which posed extra challenges due to the remoteness from campus of the projects and available housing for the students. In the 1970s and 1980s several camp buildings and pavilions in rural Connecticut were the focus of the studio. Off-campus locations meant the students would move to the site for periods and live with local families or camp out in temporary shelters.

11 Richard W. Hayes and Robert A. M. Stern, *The Yale Building Project: The First 40 Years* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2007)
12 Hayes and Stern, *The Yale Building Project*

As the Yale First Year Building Project moved forward into the 1990s, the projects became local and focused on the City of New Haven. Partnerships were made with Habitat for Humanity, Neighborhood Housing Services, Common Ground, NeighborWorks New Horizons, Columbus House, and Friends Center for Children. This has created a focus on affordable housing, replacement, and infill. The First Year Building Project is now connected to community development and neighborhood improvement in challenged districts of New Haven. The student-designed houses become the touchstones of the improving neighborhood.[13]

Expanding on the experiments at Yale, Auburn University's Rural Studio is in Newbern, Hale County in rural West Alabama. Newbern is two and a half hours from the Auburn Campus. Since 1993, Rural Studio has called Newbern home. Almost all the projects of Rural Studio have been done within a 25-mile radius of Newbern. Faculty that teach at Rural Studio also live there. The over forty students who participate in the program each year live there for one or two semesters or longer. In addition to taking classes, the students have local jobs, tutor at the local school, go to the local churches and play on the local sports teams. Rural Studio has immersed itself in the community of Hale County.

Founding directors Samuel Mockbee and D.K. Ruth were driven by the moral responsibilities of architecture. Mockbee's concept of "citizen architect" placed architects as leaders to bring about environmental and social change. He believed that architectural education should be hands-on, building for real clients in their communities. In Newbern, Rural Studio has become the town architect.[14]

Cultivating the relationships that have existed in Hale County for over thirty years has built trust in the community. Rural Studio began by designing and building houses and small community buildings. Over time the buildings have become larger and more complex projects. The current director, Andrew Freear, has guided civic projects including a fire station, library, boys and girls club, and a museum. The local government trusts Rural Studio to provide buildings to service the community and provides money and support to develop and build the projects. When working on complex projects, Rural Studio has often collaborated with other professionals and incorporated their work into the projects.

Rural Studio projects are an example of American pragmatism, the expression of practical solutions and self-reliance. The use of found materials in Mockbee's projects and the stripped-down necessity of Freear's projects show this pragmatism. The needs of the community have shifted from early projects questioning what *can* we build, to what *should* we build. This demanded a strategy for programming building uses and providing long-term plans for projects.

13 Hayes and Stern, *The Yale Building Project*

14 Andrew Freear, Elena Barthel, Andrea Oppenheimer Dean, and Timothy Hursley, *Rural Studio at Twenty: Designing and Building in Hale County*, Alabama (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2014)

The mission for Rural Studio has expanded to research other opportunities for underserved rural communities. Since 2005, a cohort of students each year has explored the *20K House Program*, an affordable house that can be built by local builders for $20,000, including materials and labor. Part of this program is to cultivate a local workforce to build these houses to replace the dilapidated local housing stock. Another project is the Rural Studio Farm. Before the farm, it was easier to get processed and pre-packaged food than it was to get fresh food despite being in a rural farming region. The project demands the collaboration of botanists, horticulturalists, and biologists to provide productive soil and the care needed to produce food.[15]

The learning process at Rural Studio includes a dedicated group of Auburn University faculty and staff and many collaborators who are both local and nationally recognized. Architects, engineers, and other specialists generously donate their time and serve as team members and reviewers on projects. The collaborators are encouraged to be proactive and equal team members contributing to the projects. This emulation of professional interdisciplinary teams is an additional learning opportunity for the students to experience.[16]

> "While design-build education is not solely focused on design, it is equally not really about building. I doubt anyone involved in this considers design-build education to be vocational in any way...Students are most empowered by having experienced the intertwined relationship between designing and building, the mind and the hand."[17]

Studio 804 at the University of Kansas was founded in 1995 by Dan Rockhill to engage his students in the final design studio in the curriculum. Rockhill observed that students had "one foot out the door," and he wanted them to have a passionate outlet for their final design experience in school. The design-build project was this vehicle to get the students enthusiastic about the design studio. The early projects were small affordable houses in marginal neighbourhoods close to campus. These first projects had the students find the property and sought the funding. The projects were seeded through the neighborhoods bringing change and solutions to the housing problems the city faced.

The funding for these projects in the early years was obtained every year from loans from neighborhood associations and the cost would be recouped by selling the house. By 2009, Studio 804 became self-funded, by incrementally saving over the years to create their own development funds for their projects. They now use the funding from Studio 804 Inc., a non-profit, to purchase the property, finance the house, and generate enough savings for the next project. The business side of Studio 804 also provides another area of learning for the students

15 Freear et al., *Rural Studio at Twenty*.

16 Freear et al., *Rural Studio at Twenty*.

17 Chad Kraus and Dan Rockhill, "Work Ethic, Ethical Work: A Conversation with Designbuild Pioneer Dan Rockhill," in *Designbuild Education*, ed. Chad Kraus (New York and London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 227

and is an example of establishing similar non-profit community-based architecture practices. Studio 804 is the designer, builder, and developer of their projects.[18]

The work of Studio 804 is driven by a strong conceptual framework around sustainability. Passive environmental strategies are where the design starts. Connections to the landscape and an understanding of the culture of Kansas, its prairie location of long horizons, agricultural buildings, and experimenting with materials that may be repurposed are hallmarks of the design approach. Being resourceful and reusing materials is both sustainable and efficient, keeping the cost of the project down. Many projects comply with LEED and Passivehaus standards, and the students do the follow-up work for certification.[19]

Rockhill encourages his students to feel comfortable asking questions of the contractor as part of their learning experience. This provides them with the opportunity to collaborate with tradespeople and engage in honest interactions to share knowledge. The goal of the design-build studio is to empower students to become better architects by taking abstract ideas designed on paper and turning them into actual buildings. The aim is for students to graduate feeling empowered by the experience of integrating theory with practice.[20]

The a+b studio at Deakin University

The a+b studio at Deakin University in Australia has a rich history of working in the context of Geelong and regional Victoria. Since its inception in 1999, the "Urbanheart" studio has initiated a series of ongoing projects with various stakeholders from the City of Geelong and the State of Victoria. In these studios, students collaborate directly with clients to understand regional issues and promote a culture of community involvement. The focus of the projects is less on theoretical concepts and more on providing practical solutions and promoting social activism. Through community-based design-build studios, students have the opportunity to engage directly with the individuals they are designing for, gaining valuable practical experience. The Architecture Program at Deakin University aims to offer students more than just readiness for professional practice, by exposing them to alternative contemporary approaches. This type of Public Interest Architecture involves taking students beyond the confines of the design studio, involving them in local projects, and treating the community as an equal partner in impactful applied research.[21]

18 Dan Kraus and Rockhill, "Work Ethic, Ethical Work" 227
19 Dan Kraus and Rockhill, "Work Ethic, Ethical Work" 227
20 Dan Kraus and Rockhill, "Work Ethic, Ethical Work" 227
21 Yolanda Esteban, John Rollo, and James Doerfler, "The A+B Studio: Contributing Drivers for Change with the City of Greater Geelong 2000–2021," in *Contested Architectural Pasts and Futures of a Regional City, Geelong, Australia*, ed. Mirjana Lozanovska and Ursula de Jong (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2024)

Because the a+b studio at Deakin was already invested in community-based projects, the inclusion of design-build as part of the studio offerings was a compliment to this stream. Design-build becomes a new method of working with community groups and communities in need to provide design services and explore options for improving the built environment. In some ways, design-build is an academic-professional bridge providing vehicles to introduce integrated building practices and explore complex solutions for sustainability. The ability to embrace the complexity emulates professional experience.

The design-build structure involves dividing the studio into design and construction phases, fostering a partnership between the university and a non-profit organization or community group. It also entails raising funds and securing donations from vendors, manufacturers, and government agencies for the construction materials. As we have seen in the earlier examples of design-build studios, in these projects, students blend their idealism with active involvement in the community, gathering support and enthusiastically engaging in the project.[22]

The Background of the Prefab 21 Partnership Provides the Necessary Factors for Design-Build

FormFlow is an Australian company that developed innovative building products to address housing affordability, accessibility, and sustainability. They focus on reducing the carbon footprint of homes through technology, using recycled and recyclable materials, and sustainable practices. They employ Industry 4.0 and lean manufacturing principles to minimize construction waste and maximize social impact. The company started at the business incubator Manufutures, at Deakin University.[23]

Samaritan House Geelong is a not-for-profit organization providing crisis accommodation and support for homeless men in the Geelong Region. Over the last twelve years, they have provided accommodation for over 600 men, with more than 50% transitioning to permanent housing. They are now focusing on building Independent Living Units (ILUs) to help homeless men transition to self-sufficiency and break the cycle of homelessness by providing affordable rent in supported accommodation for a period of time. Samaritan House planned to develop seven single-bedroom units to comply with planning regulations for the site.[24]

The Prefabricated House in the 21st Century (Prefab 21) design studio was established through a collaboration with FormFlow to explore their innovative process of bending corrugated steel cladding. FormFlow approached the School of Architecture and Built Environment to engage

22 Esteban, Rollo, and Doerfler, "The A+B Studio".
23 Esteban, Rollo, and Doerfler, "The A+B Studio".
24 Esteban, Rollo, and Doerfler, "The A+B Studio".

architects in a design/build project using their unique method of bending corrugated steel. At the same time, Samaritan House was in discussions with FormFlow to develop a housing prototype for their facility. This presented an opportunity to bring the three parties together to create a design/build project, with Deakin architecture students working alongside FormFlow as the builder and Samaritan House as the client to produce a prototype prefabricated Independent Living Unit (ILU). This interdisciplinary project came to fruition through design studio and workshop sessions, resulting in the design, documentation, and construction of an ILU, as well as the establishment of a microvillage comprising seven ILUs at Samaritan House.[25]

Creating a new design-build program at a university can be a challenging process. There are many questions to be answered during the initial weeks of the process as the project is being developed. Most importantly, the project itself should have a few factors that are aligned to be able to move forward. The project should have a client or sponsor that provides the funding to ensure it is not just a paper project. In addition, the client should have a site and be familiar with the local government approval process for building the project. In this project, we had these factors aligned. The client had funding for one prototype, a site for the development, and planning approval for future development.

The second aspect that is needed for the design-build project is the academic side of the project. The design studio format gives the project structure and an appropriate degree of priority in the student's class schedule. Design studio courses are usually double the credit and four times the time of a typical class. The demands of developing the project with interactive sessions are considered normal methods in the design studio. In addition, the instructor guiding the class should have some experience doing design-build projects and/or similar professional experience. It is important to establish a critical path strategy to be able to meet the required outcomes in the timeframe.

The third aspect needed for design-build projects is a relationship with a builder or someone who will manage construction. This can be the instructor or the instruction team, or it can be a qualified builder. In the case of this project, our goal was to provide a design for a prototype for a prefabricated house, which has a degree of specialist knowledge. Our partner, FormFlow, had all the needed factory space, construction safety regimens, knowledge of prefab structures, and skilled labor and machinery to guide this aspect of the project.

Our client and industrial partner were eager to move forward with the project within a 12-week timeframe aligned with the academic semester. Without the support to operate within this tight schedule, achieving completion would have been challenging. The collaboration of these three partners supplied the essential resources and capabilities to advance the project.

25 James. Esteban, Rollo, and Doerfler, "The A+B Studio".

Research and Interactive Design-Build Process

Samaritan House Geelong, as the client, had a clear vision of providing medium-term transitional accommodation through the Independent Living Unit (ILU) and working alongside their guests to transition to a better and stable future. This pioneering Independent Living Unit project in the region offers homeless men the opportunity to experience self-sufficiency through affordable rent in supported accommodation for a specified period, enabling them to transition to their own independent public or private housing and break the cycle of homelessness. The development of this new housing type involved an interactive process that included investigating sustainability, user experience, and social and economic awareness in providing transitional housing for the homeless. This project extends beyond the homeless shelter, with the ILU and microvillage design enabling better access to affordable housing, increasing housing equity in the community, and providing a pathway for the homeless to reintegrate into society.[26]

The project began with an in-depth exploration of historical and modern prefabrication methods by the students. FormFlow, our manufacturing partner, delivered insightful presentations on their prefabricated house philosophy and manufacturing approach. To ensure active participation in the design process, the studio implemented a specific design procedure that unfolded in stages. The initial stage involved individual work, during which each student formulated a design

26 James. Esteban, Rollo, and Doerfler, "The A+B Studio".

[Fig. 1]
Samaritan House ILU: design review

[Fig. 2]
Samaritan House ILU: Client and Student interaction

proposal based on the initial briefing from Samaritan House. This approach fostered a sense of ownership among the students, as each one contributed to identifying the most suitable design.

After reviewing the design proposals students, faculty, and partners voted on the design that fulfilled the goals of the studio and had high aesthetic merit. Based on the voting, two designs moved forward to the next stage. The students were now grouped into teams that included the designer of the chosen projects and students who gravitated to that design through the voting process. Or had similar features in their design that they could develop in the next stage. Some students were particularly engaged in the site design and landscape integration of the project. These students formed another team whose goal was to develop the site design for the microvillage on the Samaritan House property.

Following another round of development, presentation, and voting to select the preferred design, the final stage of the design process encompassed various parallel and simultaneous aspects. In close collaboration with FormFlow, the student team delivered a prefabricated system design that is both innovative in material and fulfills the client's requirements. The initial goals were established collectively by the students, FormFlow, and Samaritan House. Subsequently, the students provided the design and documentation to meet these objectives for the prefabricated system. Operating as a cohesive design and construction team, the group emulated a professional design process, engaging with builders and clients every week to bring the project to fruition. The functionality, form, and sustainability objectives that were developed for the project guided the creation of a distinctive exterior shape that prioritizes passive high performance.[27]

The non-technical interactions involved design reviews with various stakeholders, including HOME, the Deakin University-wide research group aimed at providing a home for everyone, and Sustainability Geelong. The students visited Samaritan House, where they interviewed staff and guests to better understand their needs. This first-hand knowledge helped the students gain an understanding of the necessary functions for the ILU and contributed to its success.[28]

The students provided design drawings that included 3D modeling, detailing, structure, screw-pile foundations, energy studies, material choices and life-cycle investigation, modular construction strategies, and construction sequencing The student team worked closely with the engineers and builders at FormFlow, who translated the design into the BIM models that

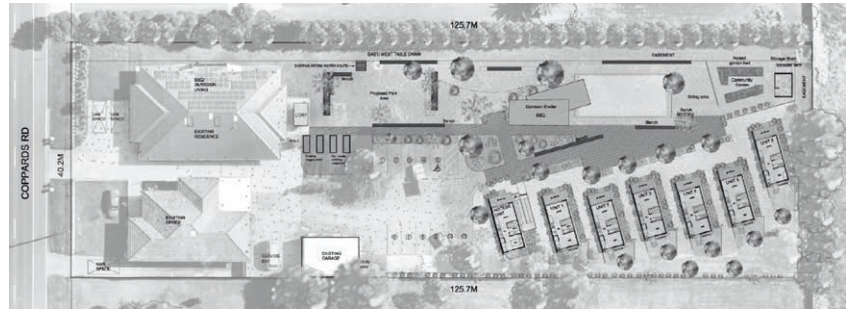
27 James. Esteban, Rollo, and Doerfler, "The A+B Studio".
28 James. Esteban, Rollo, and Doerfler, "The A+B Studio".

[Fig. 3]
Samaritan House ILU: FormFlow factory visit

[Fig. 4]
Samaritan House ILU: FormFlow and student interaction

determined how the buildings would be constructed. The site design team worked in parallel, was aware of the design development of the ILU, and consulted with Landscape Architecture faculty on the landscape elements. The first ILU prototype was designed and built in 12 weeks.

The majority of the construction fell on the manufacturer, FromFlow to coordinate and build. Half the students participated in building, and becoming part of the workforce in the FormFlow factory. The final weeks of construction were interrupted by the first of the lockdowns related to the pandemic. Compliance with the lockdown requirements limited the size of the crew that could work in the factory. The lockdowns put constraints on student participation.



[Fig. 5]
Samaritan House Microvillage Landscape Design Plan

[Fig. 6]
Samaritan House Microvillage: installation of prefab units

[Fig. 7]
Samaritan House Microvillage Aerial View

[Fig. 8]
Samaritan House ILU: interior, kitchen

The Prefab 21 team had project goals that focused on providing shelter and addressing the region's housing affordability crisis. They also aimed to reduce the carbon footprint of future homes, minimize waste through lean manufacturing principles, and utilize recycled/recyclable materials in a prefabricated and modular design, implementing a circular economy strategy. The student-designed ILU explores and tests the next generation of house design and manufacturing for the 21st Century. It demonstrates the industry partners' unique material technology and proves that prefabricated modular construction works for social housing. Collaboration between industry and university in research provides an opportunity to question and effectively test new experiments. This project serves as a model for design-build transdisciplinary projects that can transform how architecture students are taught, embracing an experimental and experiential culture. It also aims to positively engage communities, increase housing equity, and provide access to beautiful and functional sustainable housing.

The ILU prototype served as evidence to apply for and obtain grants from both the City and State, enabling the construction of a seven-unit microvillage. This successful prototype will provide essential support to address the homelessness challenges in the Geelong region. Its significance lies in introducing a new model for transitional homeless accommodation and job opportunities in the area.[29]

Learning Outcomes of the Project

The student experience started from an abstract representation of the project on the computer screen to a scaled model, scaled drawings, and ultimately a full-size building is a process that few students have participated in. Some students had realizations about the project being much smaller or larger than they envisioned. This project created a reference for their future professional lives being able to judge size, materials and construction, spatial qualities, and natural light in later projects.

Design-build projects provide holistic student experiences that are lacking in traditional architecture education. Design-build combines theory and practice, drawing and building, empathy, and social engagement. Students and clients develop a higher level of understanding and empathy for each other. They had a deeper understanding of their respective backgrounds and personal challenges.

During the course of the design-build studio the students were learning soft skills. Clear, concise emails to non-architects, phone etiquette, follow up communications with stakeholders, being prepared for meetings and taking useful notes were a few of the unexpected learning outcomes of the studio. These skills are valued by employers and give students additional personal tools to explain their work to different audiences.

29 James. Esteban, Rollo, and Doerfler, "The A+B Studio".

In surveys that were taken after the end of the semester, the students recognized that they learned about the homeless community, prefabricated homes, and the design-build process. One other important takeaway was they learned about working on teams with the extensive group work that occurred in the studio. They emphasized communication skills, the ability to delegate, knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses, and the advantages of working with fellow students with different abilities than themselves.

The community-based design-build studio requires interaction between students, instructors, and stakeholders. In his book, *The Craftsman*, Richard Sennett describes stages of experience on the road to expertise as guided by masters, experts, and people with expertise mentoring aspiring craftsmen. This process includes researching the problem and building on previous learning experiences, developing analytical powers, following a linear progression developing tools or skillsets through repetition and slow revisions, and engaging the imagination to discover new outcomes, building pragmatic skills through practice. The final stage of mastering a skill involves putting what has been learned into practice.[30] This includes being able to measure success, reflecting on what constitutes good practice, and maintaining a high level of professionalism and quality. These studios also provide a form of mentorship, where students are guided by the "masters" through the process, emulating good practice. In some ways, this mentorship also allows the "masters" to give back to their community or profession. A project infused with changing or improving something for the better affecting lives in the community provides the student, instructor, and stakeholder with an extra drive to change the world.

Sennett discusses the concept of two kinds of experience underlying Dewey's pragmatist philosophy. One aspect is that a pragmatist experience makes an internal emotional impression. The other aspect is that experience uses or encourages skills that have an external impact. The nature of community-based design-build projects combines both sides of Sennett's pragmatism. The students are affected by an emotional and personal response to community-based projects. The student feels a need to contribute or provide an ethical response to helping or contributing to the public good. The second aspect of engaging skill-based experience is created by the process of completing a design-build project. This focuses on the craft of creating and the value of the experience it provides. Hence, the *Practice* of architecture is the repetition and skill building that is required to become a professional.[31] The community-based design-build studio is an example of pragmatist pedagogy.

Architecture needs to continue to engage in dialogue with community groups, non-profits, and individual stakeholders that are impacted by our work. Public interest Design and Design-Build is a complement to traditional design education. Design-Build educators value interactive ideation

30 Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008).
31 Sennett, *The Craftsman*

and the development and execution of the physical project. The interaction with the client/community, the site, and the constraints of the project all combine to enrich the learning by making shared goals for the project. As Sennett suggests "the craft making of physical things provides insight into the techniques of experience that can shape our dealings with others."[32]

Architects must not just discuss community-engaged design amongst ourselves but include others in the conversation to make the built environment better. It is important to include diverse stakeholders such as planners, developers, community leaders, critics, bankers, and others with opinions about the environment. Otherwise, we can create an echo chamber and limit our solutions. We need a holistic discussion of how we can support the academic/professional/stakeholder partnerships, the research, innovation, and experimentation that comes out of these projects, and the potential effects these community-engaged design-build projects have on the community.

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32 Sennett, *The Craftsman*, 289

The Territory as Threshold: Images of Thought for a Non-Modern Landscape

Luís Miguel Ginja

Abstract

French philosopher Bruno Latour (1947–2022) proposed an idea in his 1991 book "We Have Never Been Modern" that challenges the age-old notion of a clear distinction between Nature and culture or Man and object. According to Latour, the traditional attempts to separate the concept from its counterpart have failed. Instead, he argues that these concepts are interconnected and cannot be treated as separate entities. This principle can be applied to contemporary urban areas and the surrounding region, where the borders between the city and Nature are becoming increasingly blurred. Design plays a crucial role in conscious thinking and addressing the challenges of using natural resources, their impact on sustainability, and how we interconnect with sites and the Land.

Furthermore, the relationship between urban areas and Nature is a critical issue that demands attention. These challenges are crucial for considering cities and landscapes and addressing them through design in terms of the territory. This act of design should tend towards a more holistic and integrated vision, which aligns with contemporary trends in various areas through a shift towards city projects that are less and less disruptive to the world. The conventional view of cities and Nature as separate entities is shifting towards an integrated perspective. This text deals with the territory as an agent of syntropy, as a link between the landscape and the city. The goal is to uncover how the relationship between the body and the territory can generate synergy in the system and create symbiotic relationships between the various parts involved. To achieve this, we will examine the available literature, starting from the central idea that we have never been modern. With this objective in mind, we will highlight the common areas to revisit the concept of assemblage. As a point of comparison, it is vital to closely examine Frank Lloyd Wright's almost century-old text, The Disappearing City from 1932, and determine which aspects of his utopian vision remain relevant today. Regarding that text, Kenneth Frampton (b. 1930) highlights gradually erasing the distinction between the countryside and the city, like the ideology of the Communist Manifesto of 1872.

Keywords: Modern; territory; landscape; city; design.

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We do not owe the term *Images of Thought* to Walter Benjamin (1892–1940) but rather to the organisers of the Benjamin texts collected under that name. Between 1925 and 1934, Benjamin wrote texts that were published in magazines and newspapers. Theodor W. Adorno (1903–1969) would come to comment and explain the meaning of the title, which was very characteristic of Benjamin's way of thinking, in the empirical and dreamlike dimensions that he developed with memory, or if we prefer images of a sensible reality (Benjamin 2018, 288–289). Benjamin uses city names as chapter titles to symbolise different themes and concepts related to urban life and Modernity. This motto becomes very clear in a text entitled Marseille. Right in the opening note is an epigraph by André Breton (1896–1966) – *La rue... Seul champ d'expérience valable*[1], thus making it clear that the space of the city moulds and defines those who live there. Benjamin, for his part, attributes human or animal characteristics to the city of Marseille by anthropomorphising it. He quickly constructs an oppressive image of the town over its inhabitants – Marseilles, fat yellow seal and carious [...] its fauces swallow the bodies of black and brown proletarians [...] (Benjamin 2018, 179). Each chapter explores various aspects of cities through these and other metaphors, such as architecture and urban planning and the resulting social dynamics. In Benjamin's texts, cities serve as sensitive landscapes for cultural exchange, political struggle, and technological innovation. They also reflect the impact of urbanisation on individual experiences and collective consciousness, where urban life, encompassing its physical, cultural, political, technological, and existential dimensions, opens windows to the complex interaction between cities and human experience in the modern world. However, we would like to bring into dialogue a text, albeit outside this collection, which serves as a motto for the argument of this article.

There is nothing special about not finding your way around a city. Nevertheless, getting lost in a city, like getting lost in a forest, is something you need to learn. The names of the streets must speak to the person who wanders through them like the snapping of dry branches, and the little alleys in the inner city show you the time of day as clearly as a valley in a mountain (Benjamin 2018, 82).

This is the beginning of the Tiergarten text from Benjamin's collection of texts, Berlin Childhood: 1900. As far as we can tell from the author's manuscripts, this was supposed to be the opening text of the collection, which is not the case today, possibly to orientate the theme. As we know, the text refers to the large park in the centre of Berlin. What we want to demarcate is already beginning to emerge. On the one hand, there is an apparent certainty that the spaces where we live influence not only who we are but also how we relate to others and how these experiences define us. On the other hand, there is a certainty that there should not be a qualitative or even classificatory divide between cities and landscapes. However, let us read the landscape as natural versus the city as cultural. It is, therefore, possible, through a review of the available

1 "The street... The only valid field of experience" TL

literature and on these premises of the natural versus the cultural, to revisit Bruno Latour's (1947–2022) premise that we have never been modern. In other words, there has never really been a clear cut between the built world and the natural world, and great misunderstandings in the construction of today's society derive from this cut. For the sake of brevity, and because the topic is much broader than the possibilities offered by this text, we have borrowed a question that seems timely and highly topical – Are we modern?

Professor Albena Yaneva (b. 1972) suggests this question at the beginning of the book *Latour for Architects*. What is at stake today, rather than the dichotomy between the natural and the cultural, are hybrid regions, where the culture imitates or tries to replicate the natural (Yaneva, 2022, 8). To better understand this third vector and its inherent implications, starting with a definition of Modern Man is essential.

The book Five Faces of Modernity (1977) by Matei Calinescu (1934–2009) defines the Man of the first phase through the medieval use of *modernus* instead of *antiquus*. *Modernus* is a man of the now, a newcomer, while *antiquus* is a man linked to the past, either by tradition or veneration. There is a clear distinction between *Modernus*, with no connections or limitations stemming from a past, almost like a blank canvas. *Antiquus*, on the other hand, are by choice or imposition. If we risk attributing social importance to both, Man *antiquus* is the dominant figure in the society of his time. The Man of the second phase is the Man of the Renaissance, which lasted until the Enlightenment. In this period, Calinescu denotes a segregation of the notion of Modernity from the church canon. If, at first, this notion only contaminated non-religious fields, because of the Renaissance, terms such as ancient and ancestral gained new connotations, and their semantic meaning changed (Călinescu 1977/1987, 59). What is clear to understand is that modern Man is always a projection of the new versus the old, of an apparent state of evolution, not in a Darwinian dimension, but in a Nietzschean one. It is a journey, a state of construction or ontological incompleteness. It should not be seen as a permanent state but rather as a lack that justifies this construction, *ad infinitum*. It is, therefore, easier to understand that the accelerated pace of cities and societies or their construction in the 20th century has posed profound challenges to the sustainable coexistence of human beings and the environment, but above all, in the construction of Man. Our development has often prioritised economic growth and social and technological development to the detriment of ecological integrity and social equity.

The need, especially two decades into the 21st century, for principles of ecological integrity, resilience and harmony with Nature seems increasingly clear. This text delves into the intricate relationship between humans and the environment and how the advent of modernity has impacted our perception of the world. Modernity has dramatically influenced our evolution, causing us to view ourselves as modern beings. Nonetheless, as Calinescu astutely observes, we remain individuals of the current age and cannot fully embody the concept of modernity.

By integrating these perspectives, we aim to develop a holistic framework that recognises the interdependence of humans and the environment, thus reforming Yaneva's question of – Are we modern? To our research question – What does it mean to be modern?

The ontological question is of the utmost importance; indeed, we could even say it is central. The blank sheet of paper with which Călinescu defines Modern Man illustrates this separation between Man and the environment. Connections are lost, and Nature becomes subservient to culture as a pool of natural resources that feed and make it thrive. The concept of "The Disappearing City", a 1932 text by Frank Lloyd Wright, represents a vision of cities that seeks to integrate human habitation in harmony with the natural environment. Wright imagined cities that would harmonise with their surroundings, blurring the boundaries between built structures and the natural landscape. In doing so, he dispelled the prevailing notion of the city as a separate and autonomous entity, divorced from its ecological context. The *Disappearing City* presents a utopian vision with elements that have endured. Author Kenneth Frampton emphasised the gradual urban-rural fusion, like the *Communist Manifesto* of 1872, which advocated the gradual abolition of the distinction between town and country through a more equitable distribution of the population on Earth (Tavares and Oliveira 2008, 51). This vision of the city aligns with the criticisms put forward by Latour and Philippe Descola (b. 1949), who challenge the artificial separation between Nature and culture that underpins Modernity. Latour's rejection of the "Great Divide" between Nature and culture exposes the fallacy of seeing the city as a purely cultural artefact, divorced from its ecological context. Similarly, Descola's typology of ontological frameworks reminds us that different cultures conceive of the relationship between human beings and Nature in various ways, challenging the universality of Western categories such as city and wilderness.

This is perhaps the intersection between Bruno Latour, mentioned earlier, and Philippe Descola, an anthropologist and ethnologist whose work culminates in the monumental 2021 book *Les Formes du Visible*. His ethnographic study of the Amazon rainforest unfolds the anthropology of culture into an anthropology of nature. In other words, we no longer look at our surroundings as the study of Man in Nature but instead at Nature as conditioned by Man. As heir to Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), his thesis was defended under the latter's guidance. However, it does not follow in the same footsteps; it is possibly, as Descola puts it, a parallel track. Lévi-Strauss defended a methodological opposition between Culture and Nature, while Descola is closer to an ontological vision. The crux of the matter is not to emphasise the similarities but the differences (Guerreiro 2024). It is possibly at this point that the ideas of Latour and Descola converge in the argument that Modernity reinforces the distinct division between the natural world, governed by objective laws and mechanisms, and that of human culture, characterised by subjective interpretations and social constructions. To emphasise the role of human and non-human actors in shaping our social reality, Latour introduces the concept of Actor-Network Theory (ANT).

This framework seeks to decentralise human subjectivity and highlight the active agency of non-human entities in shaping our world based on insights from scientific and technological studies. In other words, relationships between people and the environment are no longer primarily direct. All interactions with the world, both natural and cultural, are mediated through various degrees of interdependence. If we take oral communication between individuals as an example, only a tiny part is direct — the majority is mediated (Latour 1993, 107). Latour's critique of Modernity challenges the traditional boundaries between humans and Nature, rejecting the artificial dichotomy between the two. The concepts hold immense significance in guiding how we plan and comprehend our cities. They urge us to acknowledge and appreciate the complex, interdependent relationships between humans and the environment by promoting a holistic approach. The implications of this perspective extend beyond urban planning and are relevant in various other fields as well. Latour invites us to reimagine cities as complex human and non-human actor networks, where built environments and natural ecosystems are interconnected and mutually constitutive. Latour's approach intersects with Descola's at precisely this point in the unfolding of the anthropology of Nature, which translates into relationships of continuity, or lack thereof, between humans and non-humans. These relationships are not based on borders or the ontological classifications we commonly assign. As humans, we hold a unique position in nature. Our cognitive and moral capabilities enable us to accomplish incredible feats, such as creating art, science, and technology. However, human laws still bind us, and we must recognise our place within the natural world. Despite our exceptional abilities, we remain a part of the intricate web of life on Earth and must strive to coexist harmoniously with the rest of the planet. These are nothing more or less than preconceived ideas that establish clear boundaries between realities we want or insist on understanding. What we understand today as Nature is manipulated from within our Culture, which Yaneva calls hybrids, which we have already mentioned. Those hybrids appear for the time being as an artificial mediator between culture and nature, thus denoting a great danger between the two concepts, which is essentially the danger of further estrangement. At this point, the idea of landscape becomes striking, as the Invention of Nature. The term is borrowed from Andrea Wolf (b. 1967) about Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859), but it refers to modern naturalism, to the vision of the world constructed through images (Guerreiro 2024). The authors do not propose exploring the concept of images and the bones of reality they reveal but rather use it to bring themselves closer together and frame their dialogue. However, let us consider the intersection of the work of Latour and Descola further. We can develop more culturally sensitive and ecologically sustainable approaches to growing cities and life in them. Another dichotomy, which is the same, lies between the old and the new, precisely the same adjectives we use through Calinescu's thinking about modern Man versus ancient Man. Irénée Scalbert portrays this very intuitively in the 2013 book Never Modern. Today's difficulty is the need to negotiate between the past and the future, between

the new and the old. The project takes shape in this fragile balance between detective work on the past and the need for a future for the work and its contemporaneity (Scalbert 2013, 44–45).

As a complement to these notions, which are sometimes quite elusive to encapsulate, these authors' work can help strengthen the dialogue. One of them, Le Corbusier (1887–1965), and his search for new architectonic relationships that could make the built environment harmonic with human needs and natural principles led him to develop — *Le Modulor*. It was created to guarantee ergonomic functionality and establish a harmonious relationship between the human body, architecture, and the natural world. Le Corbusier believed that a more balanced connection could be achieved by aligning architectural dimensions with the proportions of the human body. However, some view *Le Modulor* as a symbol of modernists' aim to impose order and rationality on the complexity of urban environments. Le Corbusier's vision of the city, emphasising rational planning, standardised forms, and functional spaces, sharply contrasted with the organic and spontaneous nature of the countryside.

Another perspective of the exploration of the contemporary countryside by Rem Koolhaas (b.1944) offers a critical reassessment of this dichotomy between the countryside and the city, or if we wish, between the cultural and the natural. In his 2022 book — Countryside, A Report — derived from the 2020 exhibition — Countryside: The Future, Koolhaas challenges the conventional view of the countryside as a static, backward and unchanging landscape, positioning it as a place of rapid transformation and complexity. He argues that globalisation, technological innovation, and socio-economic change increasingly blur traditional boundaries between town and country. Once considered the antithesis of the urban, the countryside is now subject to the same processes of modernisation and urbanisation that define contemporary cities. Koolhaas' work suggests that the field is no longer a passive recipient of urban influence but an active participant in global production, communication, and cultural exchange networks. This perspective undermines the clear separation between urban and rural, proposing that these spaces are interconnected and mutually constitutive. The transformations in the field, documented by Koolhaas, reveal the fluidity of the boundaries between these two domains and challenge the binary thinking that has historically dominated architectural discourse.

The present text proposes that we transform Bruno Latour's *Actor-Network Theory* into an *Author-Network Theory*, reimagining the relationships and dynamics typically described by ANT in the context of authorship, intellectual production and creation. The Author-Network Theory would reinterpret the principles of ANT to focus on creating, disseminating, and interpreting texts or ideas. Instead of actors, we have authors. From this point of view, the authors (as creators of ideas, texts, or artefacts) are the central nodes within the networks. They interact with other authors, ideas, technologies and cultural contexts, contributing to the creating act. Although dedicated thinking is required, which is now outside the spectrum of this

[Fig. 1]
Culture + Nature, 2024, 38.835471, -7.579813, Author

[Fig. 2]
Nature - Culture, 2008, 38.836855, -7.578370, Author

text, these networks may include non-human elements that increasingly influence creation and will undoubtedly have a dominant weight in the future. One of the fundamental points for future generations will be distributed authorship. A work or an idea is not the product of an isolated author. Still, it emerges from a network of influences, including other works, texts, cultural norms, technological tools, and social interactions.

A point that can serve as a pivot in understanding this inversion, or if we want the transformation from actor to author, is the text by Latour and Yaneva — Give me a gun, and I will make buildings move. Latour, as we have already mentioned, explains that objects are not merely passive or static entities but can influence and be influenced by the networks of relations of which they are a part. Yaneva, working with Latour, extends this idea to architecture, emphasising that buildings are not fixed and inert structures but dynamic participants in the social and material world. According to this interpretation, the "gun" represents a tool that can introduce changes or highlight the agency of an object. The weapon symbolises an external force or influence that reveals the latent potential of objects (in this case, buildings) to act and interact within a network of relationships. By suggesting that buildings can "move," Latour and Yaneva emphasise that buildings can act within a network—they can influence human behaviour, change over time, and interact meaningfully with other actors (human and non-human). The gun, or if we want the pen, is essentially in the author's hand. This is what can push buildings to move. The phrase is a metaphor for the idea that architecture is not simply about creating fixed structures but about engaging with a dynamic network of relationships. In this view, buildings are not merely physical entities. Still, they are intertwined with the social, cultural, and material contexts in which they exist, capable of — moving — and evolving within these networks. Here, the networked author, with their agency, has played a decisive role in shaping the future of architecture. For further research, the works of British Professor and Architect Cedric Price (1934–2003) and Architecture Critic Reyner Banham (1922–1988) should be consulted. We believe that the critical thinking developed by Reyner Banham and his observation of the cities and technology, still in the 70s of the 20th century, mixed with Price's view of the city, can lead us to construct a framework for evaluating the present and decerning the near future.

Perhaps as a false postscript, it would be important to point out that this view of the world goes beyond science or philosophy. It also lies at the heart of what we loosely call poetry, or the ability to see beyond the visible. Benjamin's text, which must date back to 1932, speaks of this free movement between the city and the countryside. However, *Álvaro de Campos*, *Fernando Pessoa's* heteronym (1888–1935), wrote the following about the poet *Cesário Verde* (1855–1886) in poem III of *Guardador de Rebanhos* (1925) – [...] He was a peasant / Who wandered freely in the city. [...] But he walked in the city like someone who walks in the countryside. [...] (Pessoa 1925/2006, 26). More than being aligned with their time, various currents of thought at the beginning of the 20th century were already concerned with the non-separation between

culture and Nature, old and new, city and countryside or landscape. This emphasis on diversity challenges us to recognise the plurality of ways of understanding the world and to design cities that reflect this diversity based on an ontologically plural territory of lives and forms. This is the boundary we suggest breaking, the frontier that no longer makes sense in the face of the pressing needs of the future. The meaning of Being Modern is, first and foremost, a process of growth, the result of discovering the scarcity of our understanding of the world, not the totalisation of the knowledge we believe we know through our narrow methodological window. Faced with the growing demands of the 21st century, we now have a greater need to interact with the environment with Nature.

The urbanisation of the territory, as we understand it today, is, in a way, the production of this second Nature, artificial and hybrid, transformed through work, resulting in infrastructures and a built environment, which in turn allows Man to occupy that same territory (Gunz et al. 2016, 28). We need a new understanding of this concept, which essentially goes along two specific lines. Firstly, and perhaps most urgently, we need to stop climate change, which is destroying the human species, not Nature. As a more complex entity than the fragile human being, Nature will regenerate and transform itself into something else due to its evolutionary capacity. Human beings will be unable to do this due to their physical limitations and lack of understanding of their environment. The second is possibly due to these transformations' social changes and upheavals. Society today is already beginning to show signs of absenteeism towards its fellow human beings. We are currently witnessing two camouflaged wars, which have led to the destruction of cities and territories. Some of these memories are lost forever, and their reconstruction may never happen. Man will soon have to return to seeing the territory as home, and home not as something that protects him from the territory but as something that completes it.

If we want to close with an image, perhaps *The Spiral Jetty* (1970) by Robert Smithson (1938–1973) is the best metaphor for our description. The symbiotic way a building transforms its surroundings while allowing itself to be transformed by it. Perhaps this is the path we can take and that, in the near future, may offer an answer to what it means to be modern.

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Hybrid Landscapes in the Pearl River Delta
The case of Macau Modern Housing's approach

Niccolò Arnaldo Galliano, Daniela Arnaut, Ana Tostões

Abstract

The present paper contemplates the ground of research on emerging forms of inhabiting spaces in contemporary urban territories, with a precise focus on Macau's 1960s housing production.

In order to settle a comprehensive understanding about inaugural statements of architectural modernity, in the field of modern housing, built in Pearl River Delta's region as a hybrid interpretation of Modern Movement's ideas in colonial Asian territory, this proposal aims to analyse and present a set of residential buildings and projects that show adaptations of Modern approaches to different cultures, climate, and environment.

The achievement of such goals is to be developed through a comparative analysis, based on archival research and a photographic survey, in order to derive, on one hand, an amplitude equation of adopted materialised theoretical matrix (forms, urban scales); and on the other hand, to identify variations between housing typologies' solutions, collective spaces, spatial distributions and technical systems (façade, cross-ventilation).

This classification needs to consider contextual factors, identify problematics and potentialities, and recognise architectural roles within Macau's generational urban growth.

Portuguese and local pioneers in Macau, such as Manuel Vicente, Raul Chorão Ramalho and José Maneiras, have demonstrated how the modern conception could be interpreted, understood, and enriched in terms of content. They were able to face and respond to diverse physical and social conditions, experimenting innovative solutions which remain currently interesting and valid.

This paper aims to document and value public housing works of other seas that, due to a tide of redevelopment guided by high commercial profit which seems not to consider the past, have not been conserved or valorised, and today may disappear. The landscape of care under analysis is part of the architectural scenario endangered of fade over time; his interaction with public interest and memory deserves further consideration.

Keywords: housing; Modern architecture; heritage; landscape; urban morphology.

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Introduction

The process of modern urbanization in the Pearl River Delta, in terms of urban planning and architectural language, has been developed mostly under the guidance of Western planning models, principles and practices, including few adaptations and revisions to meet local circumstances. The historical introduction of the architecture "of the West", followed by the rise of new modern experiments highlights the South China Sea concession's reality as uncommon case studies.

Macau, the former Portuguese colony, divided by two cultures, and simultaneously linked to both, plays an important role, in terms of investigation, on how modern principles, resulting from a Eurocentric condition, were crossed with far East's ancestral cultures, different climates and knowledges.

We have identified several instances that have extended our housing investigation to the urban matrix's exemplifications of tropical adaptation within architectural typologies in Macau. Specific public buildings dating back to the 1950s, conceived by local engineers with Portuguese education such as Aureliano Guterres Jorge, and João Canavarro Nolasco, have ventured South China Sea's Lusophone former colony into the emergent domain of modern design. This is evident in structures like *São Lourenço* Market, *Long Va* Tea House, *Liceu Nacional Infante D. Henrique* (demolished), and the principal block of São Januário Hospital (likewise demolished), the last two masterminded by *Ministério do Ultramar* Planning Office.

A comprehensive examination of the aforementioned details relocates a design ethos presumed to be both Portuguese and indigenous. Such interactions, in the field of housing scale, occurred within the dynamic framework of post-war decolonization, navigating the intricate political landscapes of the region. During the early 1960s, a cohort of emerging architects established an Urban Planning department in Macau, positioned to supplant urbanization responsibilities GUC's[1]. Within the Macau milieu, his daily life rhythm and peculiarity, young architects, guided by Portuguese education and inspiration, undertook architectural ventures that delved into the nuanced considerations of climate, culture, and site-specific context. Employing a modernist vocabulary, transposed as the action of the social state in the housing sector, which generates a relationship of care between state and society, framed by economic, social, and cultural parameters, they start to produce distinctive architectural manifestations. By re-thinking modern principles characterized by crossed paths within Macau's dynamics, the new department's architects embarked on a heightened phase of experimental innovation, profoundly influencing their design endeavours.

1 Gabinete de Urbanização Colonial (1944-1974) of Portugal. Government office responsible for urban planning in Portuguese colonies.

Among the emerging professionals stand out Raul Chorao Ramalho (1914–2002), Manuel Vicente (1934–2013), and José Celestino Maneiras (1935–). Their arrival introduced experiences rooted in Portuguese research of Modern expression, linked to the two major schools of thought, *Escola Superior de Belas-Artes de Lisboa* and *Escola Superior de Belas-Artes* do *Porto, within* the erudite character derived from the Survey on Popular Architecture (Inquérito à Arquitectura Popular em Portugal[2]).

CTT Residential Block – Manuel Vicente

Manuel Vicente ascended as a preeminent figure among the cohort of emerging architects. Commencing his professional practice in both Macau and Lisbon from the 1960s onward, he consistently upheld an active engagement with the local social context. He endeavoured to elucidate how the Portuguese paradigm of public involvement could resonate within the intricate milieu of Southeast Asia.

In Macau, Vicente cultivated an appreciation for Asian latitudes incorporating diverse realities into architectural projects and yielding a distinctive liberty of form discernible in his body of work. His architectural production not only attests to his proficiency in adapting to indigenous building practices but also underscores his profound fascination with unravelling the phenomenological distinctions inherent to Chinese culture, especially about artistic dimensions of architecture. This exploration extends to nuanced considerations of light, colour, scale, and spatial proportions.

Within the temporal scope of the 1960s, some projects by Vicente significantly enriched the cultural dialogue surrounding public housing typologies as a foundational benchmark for architectural discourse.

CTT Housing Block stands as an architectural pursuit not only as a showcase of technical adeptness, but also substantively contributes to the broader cultural discourse of housing standards' improvement within the domains of housing typologies and climate control systems.

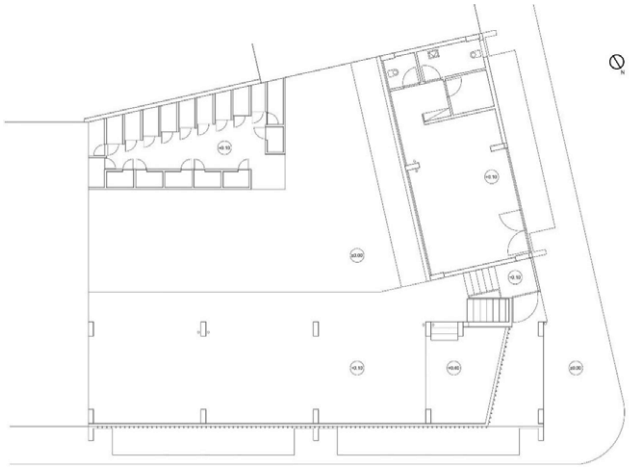
The building is located on the corner between *Avenida Almirante Lacerda* and *Avenida Ouvidor Arriaga* in the city centre of Macau. Conceived in 1963 and completed in 1965, with six storeys, this building was one of the first modern constructions in between the today consolidated urban grid and the historical site of *Freguesia de Santo António*, close to *Mercado Vermelho*, and it serves as a paradigmatic manifestation of architect's innovative approach.

2 (1961. 1st edition). Comprehensive national inquiry, entailed by collaborative initiatives among architect groups, organizing and documenting autochthonous architecture, throughout Portuguese regions, giving rise to substantial ramifications. It conspicuously shaped the succeeding cohort of modernist architects, instigating a profound reassessment of contextual, pre-existing, and dimensional facets inherent to autochthonous elements in the execution of architectural endeavors.

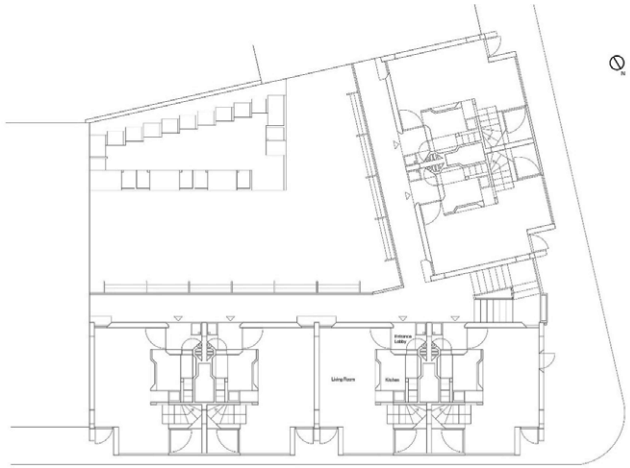
Structured around a low-rise stacking of duplex apartments, this project strategically integrates brise-soleils, and sunscreens to modulate sunlight within living spaces and communal areas. In order to maintain the existing street shape, the outer perimeter of the building is aligned with the lot boundary, creating an L-shaped volume. The architectural composition revolves around an internal open patio and staircase, collaboratively engendering a ventilated micro-climate throughout the entire block. The ground floor mainly constitutes an expansive area characterized by an unobstructed layout, hosting the Post Office machine positioned street front, ceremonially at its focal point. The architectural configuration of exterior surfaces engages in a compelling inquiry into the dimensions of the standardized windows, with the explicit aim of optimizing climatic regulation within the office spaces. The architect, while locating the CTT post office station in the L's short side ground floor, releases and raises the L's long side body creating a covered open space, providing common/recreation areas, and a place for clotheslines along the galleries, as well as washing tanks. The whole ground floor is serving today as a public library (*Biblioteca do Mercado Vermelho*).

[Fig. 1]
CTT Residential Block, 1965, Macau;
© Centro de Documentação FAUP

[Fig. 2]
CTT Residential Block, 2023, Macau;
© Niccolò Arnaldo Galliano



[Fig. 3]
CTT Residential Block, Ground Floor, Own elaboration based on CD-FAUP



[Fig. 4]
CTT Residential Block, 1° Floor, Own elaboration based on CD-FAUP

Vicente's building hosts in total 18 minimal duplex apartments, 15 double rooms flats (54 m2), and 3 single-room flats (42 m2). Horizontal distribution leads to living entrances by an open gallery located on the interior side of the perimeter, which visually communicates with the interior patio. The middle central core of ventilated staircase, located in the centre of the two main wings, composes the vertical distribution line.

The apartment's internal organisation is simple and able to give comfort to its users even if intended to be extremely economical in terms of construction.

Upon entering the unit, the entrance floor is divided into an open kitchen, a small private balcony, and a main living room where independent stairs give access to the upper floor's bedrooms and bathroom. The outside corner of the entrance creates a separate laundry area integrated into the kitchen window, where a washing tank is orientated towards the gallery's sides.

In order to guarantee privacy to inhabitants, the entrance door is placed perpendicularly to the façade in a recessed area; this manner did not allow open views of the living room. A reduced number of windows given to the internal gallery were conveniently located in high position for privacy reasons.

Reasonable solutions to maximize available space were adopted, not only because of limited conservation costs but especially for available ground reasons. Duplex typology's configuration allowed maximum usable space profit; within the apartments, the upper floor gained the gallery area; within the whole building, the introduction of an elevator can be dispensed. Additionally, the double-floor unit solution guarantees internal privacy between living and sleeping zones, located at different heights.

[Fig. 5]
CTT Residential Block, 2023, Macau; © Niccolò Arnaldo Galliano

The building's original project provided natural cross-ventilation benefits to each unit in response to the hot and humid Macanese sub-tropical climate.

In terms of construction, the building is made of reinforced concrete structure and brickwork filler panels. The facades are guided by the structural grid; materials are rough, clean, and undecorated. The structure is the main actor of the building's functional skin, and the elevations show an unequivocal relationship between the exterior and interior. It is clear the attempt to enrich the set of facades with an accentuation of horizontal and vertical structural elements' marks.

A diverse array of climate control mechanisms joins the façade's scheme encompassing elements such as brise-soleil, louvers, perforated cement bricks, raised ventilation windows, and pergolas. These features collectively contribute to the creation of a sophisticated architectural entity, elevating a seemingly straightforward volumetric design into a multifaceted face. Notably, each functional component displays the strategic application of distinct fenestration and shading devices.

The adept integration of these elements, alongside a judicious use of concrete and brick, serves a dual purpose: on one hand, it signifies the functional distribution of the architectural plan; while on the other, it yields a novel aesthetic manifestation that is both Brutalist and heterogeneously composed. It is noteworthy that local South Chinese Architecture had historically evolved effective solutions tailored to the subtropical climate of the region. This expertise is evident in the temples, mansions, and other public edifices constructed within local tradition and interests.

The adoption of materials such as concrete, steel, and glass, in dialogue with environmental control systems, gives CTT Residential Block a strong character of innovation.

The nuanced understanding and application of revisited elements of regional architectural heritage are perceptibly filtered into Manuel Vicente's project, showcasing a deliberate effort to circumvent any semblance of cultural appropriation.

The rational organisation of space of CTT Residential Block identifies the search for optimal and healthy conditions within the desire to establish an equivalence of structured spaces with the urban framework. Concepts such as the minimum surface area, dynamics of orthogonal lines, accesses through shared galleries, and public or semi-public use of ground floor plan platforms, can be interpreted as influent guidelines' characters of Modern Movement's path for collective housing.

The resulting architectural endeavour encapsulates a synthesis of functional innovation, climatic responsiveness, and a conscientious avoidance of inappropriate cultural borrowings.

[Fig. 6]
CTT Residential Block, 2023, Macau; © Niccolò Arnaldo Galliano

São Francisco Housing Complex – José Maneiras

José Maneiras is considered one of the most influential native architects among new-wave planners of the early 1960s. Once completed his architectural studies in Porto, he brought a breath of fresh air into Macanese's urban framework, designing numerous housing projects during his first decades of practice.

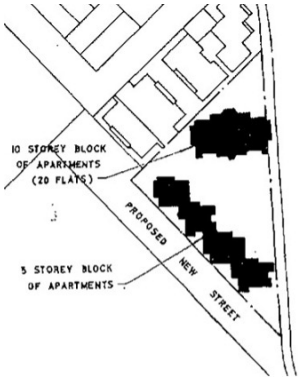
His primary objectives included minimizing soil disruption while concurrently prioritizing the facilitation of natural ventilation and solar control. However, architectural overarching aspects of Maneiras's contributions indicate relevant connections between technical considerations and research of plastic/cultural identity, always supported by careful attention to integrating his architectural structures within their respective sites.

A noteworthy illustration of Maneiras's innovative approach, in the field of public housing, is discernible in his 1962-1965 *São Francisco* Housing Complex.

Located in the central area of Praia Grande, the architect's project approaches a triangular site of about 2100 m2 with two housing blocks: a ten-storey taller building leaning over the whole and giving balance to the five-storey lower body, located on the south side of the plot. A public land lease established that 40 flats were to be built in two buildings (20 flats each); one for government use and civil servants' housing, while the other was to be sold by the land tenant.

After overcoming various real estate and governmental impositions, the layout of the different blocks was determined according to the best solar orientation, strongly conditioned by the triangular shape of the site.

[Fig. 7]
São Francisco Housing Complex, 2023, Macau; © Niccolò Arnaldo Galliano

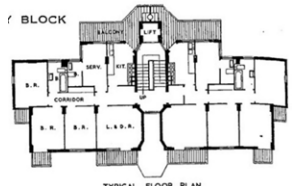


The architect proposed a five-story structure, composed of four nearly cubical volumes arranged in a terraced formation with gradual setbacks. This design achieves a well-balanced volumetric arrangement within the triangular site, ensuring that each apartment enjoys exterior exposure with four walls. Taking into account climate considerations and wind orientation, the buildings were strategically designed to maximize solar exposure during winter while offering effective protection from heat during summer. Placing the lower building on the southern plot's side ensures that it doesn't obstruct summer breezes or winter sunlight for the taller building. Likewise, positioning the taller building on the northern side prevents it from casting shadows on the smaller structure and acts as a barrier against winter winds. While primarily driven by climate concerns, this layout, within setbacks and recess façades, also creates open spaces that enhance privacy for both buildings to the main avenue.

The five-story building hosts 20 flats, divided into two sets of ten flats with independent access. Each set has a common staircase positioned in the centre distributing 4 units per floor, 2 units per access.

[Fig. 8]
São Francisco Housing Complex, Urban Plot, Own elaboration based on Archival Research

[Fig. 9]
São Francisco Housing Complex, 2023, Macau; © Niccolò Arnaldo Galliano



The internal layout follows a functional distribution scheme combining traditional space necessities, mainly organized around three distinct interconnected cores. The first one, the living and dining zone, is located near the entrance and kitchen for convenience. The services zone and servant's housing facilities are also located in proximity to the entrance and living area. Lastly, the private zone, distributing bedrooms and bathrooms, creates a self-contained nucleus which provides privacy from other zones' activities. Living room and bedroom areas are always oriented towards the south and east sides. Minimization of windows on the west façade aims to mitigate excessive heat and direct sunlight exposure during summer afternoons, as well as ensures privacy to/from the nearby building.

The internal layout of the ten-storey building reflects structural similarities to the smaller neighbour. Despite the transversal positioning of interior spaces following horizontal disposal, the individual compartments and rooms maintain similar orientations as well as hierarchic distribution.

Vertical access is facilitated by a staircase and an eight-passenger lift located in the centre of the volume. To minimize expenses, the lift stops are strategically positioned midway between floors. This choice ensures that all ten floors are serviced with five stops, requiring occupants to ascend or descend a short flight of stairs with nine steps to access the lift.

[Fig. 10]
São Francisco Housing Complex, Floor Type A, Docomomo Macau Archive

[Fig. 11]
São Francisco Housing Complex, Floor Type B, Docomomo Macau Archive

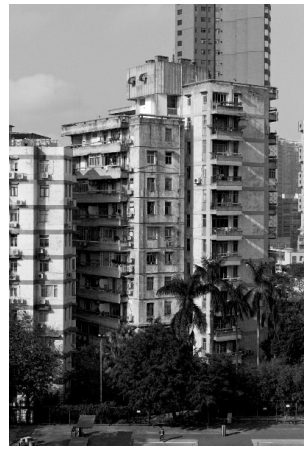
In both buildings structural materials are protagonists in the facades; rough and raw surfaces were adapted plastically throughout the construction phase, and luxury finishes were omitted due to cost considerations. This architectural endeavour showcases inventive strategies in the incorporation of shading devices into the façade's design proposal, deeply rooted in functionalist principles and yielding a distinctive plasticity.

Consistently aligning with modernist ideals adapted to tropical contexts, Maneiras's architectural creations consistently prioritize natural ventilation and fixed sun-protection solutions. Beyond addressing climate control concerns, it orchestrates a communal piazza between the structures, deftly harmonizing the scale of the traditional city with a high-rise typology.

The São Francisco Housing Complex case study delves into the utilization of projecting buildings composed of functional typologies adapted to different users and embraces an effective architectural language to contend with challenges related to climate control. In this endeavour, Maneiras not only attains pragmatic solutions but also introduces aesthetically captivating responses, contributing significantly to the overarching theme of tropical adaptability within architectural paradigms.

[Fig. 12]
São Francisco Housing Complex, 2023, Macau; © Niccolò Arnaldo Galliano

[Fig. 13]
São Francisco Housing Complex, 2023, Macau; © Niccolò Arnaldo Galliano



Leal Senado housing tower – Raul Chorão Ramalho

During the 1960s a noteworthy contributor emerged within the Modernist discourse of Macau. Portuguese architect Raul Chorão Ramalho, whose professional engagements had been extensively intertwined within public commissions and the SAAL process in Portugal and Madeira, designed several public buildings in Macau. Projects such as Leal Senado municipal staff housing tower of 1966, Guia Kindergarten of 1964, the semi-detached residences for higher-ranking government officials at *Avenida Coronel Mesquita* of 1962 (completed in 1965), and the *Escola Portuguesa de Macau*, formerly known as *Escola Comercial Pedro Nolasco*, built in 1966, stand as significant contributions.

Within the public housing context, our focus goes to the 1966 Leal Senado municipal staff housing tower located in *Avenida Sidónio Pais*.

Ramalho's project stands for its urban introduction. Considering the site's context particularities, the building is located on the farther side of a rectangular plot, opposite to avenue's traffic and close to a back green mountain, seeking calm and privacy. The walkway to the building from the street entrance is supported by a central ventilated pergola path and a parking lot on the side. Within the promenade character, the covered walkway, sometimes ventilated and sometimes protected by the sun, is equipped with benches and green areas, encouraging socialisation among inhabitants.

[Fig. 14]
Leal Senado Housing Tower, 2023, Macau; © Docomomo Macau Archive

[Fig. 15]
Leal Senado Housing Tower, 2023, Macau; © Niccolò Arnaldo Galliano

The architect assumes Brutalist principles highlighting the evident structural frame marked in the façade and protruding reinforced concrete elements within balconies' horizontal lines playing harmoniously with the brilliant plastic ensemble given by the ground floor's tiles covers.

Within twelve floors, the architect distributes two wings of apartments around a central vertical distribution core composed of ventilated concrete panels walls, steps up stairs and lifts. Each wing floor is located half a floor higher in comparison to the side one, ensuring entrance and living privacy. Ramalho composes his project's building with an interesting variety of apartment' typologies, from two to three-room units, combined with duplex compositions; the last four floors are occupied by four rooms higher class apartments. Social use spaces such as the foyer, terraces, meeting rooms and gyms are located on the ground floor, outside-accessible first floor and on the flat covered roof.

[Fig. 16]
Leal Senado Housing Tower, 2023, Macau; © Niccolò Arnaldo Galliano

Highlighting a rational design, the architect proposes minimum format housing looking to guarantee comfort and appropriate proportions.

[Fig. 17]
Leal Senado Housing Tower, 2023, Macau; © Niccolò Arnaldo Galliano

[Fig. 18]
Leal Senado Housing Tower, 2023, Macau; © Docomomo Macau Archive

[Fig. 19]
Leal Senado Housing Tower, T2, T3 & Duplex Floor, Own elaboration based on SIPA-DGPC

Interior layout follows functional distribution schemes combining traditional space necessities with innovative hierarchical solutions ensuring features as: flexible open kitchens to living rooms located on the overcast internal side of the apartment, next to the ventilated stairs core; privacy between night and day use areas; available external terraces to most compartments.

The veracity of materials and the subtleness of architectural details are applied with a ton of elegance combined with functionality showing the enormous architect's mastery of the housing programme.

The structural articulation incorporates elements such, as shading screens, and louvers, facilitating a nuanced response to the complex spatial configuration. Balconies profiles and guardrails are used as a means of sunlight protection, and, in some cases, side panels' balconies are applied as shelter from northern winds.

The façade, within a combination of structural horizontal line and orthogonal window openings tactically regulates the design of both exterior and interior skins. This meticulous integration reflects at the same time functional dialogue between interior and exterior, and an astute consideration in terms of shadowing elements for climatic responsiveness and spatial harmony within the broader framework of Macau's tropical climate.

Leal Senado Housing Tower deliberately fosters an intricate interplay of in-between reflections gathering urban, external, internal, public and social considerations, additionally introducing the presence of gardens, passages, patios and recreation areas. This intentional design achieves a harmonious integration of necessities, tailored to the specific functional requirements of modern living, standing as an exemplar of architectural sophistication within Pearl River Delta's scenario.

[Fig. 20]
Leal Senado Housing Tower, 2023, Macau; © Niccolò Arnaldo Galliano

Conclusion

We highlight public housing case studies as examples of innovative practices in terms of design, and urban and cultural circumstances within 1960s Macanese urban context.

Manuel Vicente, Raul Chorão Ramalho and José Maneiras found themselves in Macau at a global time of supremacy of modern principles and amid an uncommon period of urban growth. Guided by the affirmation's moment of international and modern language, they were looking to bring together local and foreign, tradition and modernity, combining economic and functional interests with social actual needs.

The architects, with different backgrounds, approaches, and ways of experimenting, frame their projects guided by different plastic goals and are capable of expanding our understanding in terms of architectural language, social landscape, location, residents' use, and neighbourhood.

Along with Macau's generational urban growth of the second half of the 20th century, the introduction of pivotal innovations reveals relevant cultural identity interpretations regarding architectural roles and foundations. Notably, these design choices draw inspiration from both Chinese tradition and Mediterranean influences, thereby establishing a dialogical relationship between the building and its context. As part of Macau's planning and architectural historical consolidation of more than 5 centuries of Euro-Asian cultural interconnection, it is with the arrival of this kind of projects that something has changed in the housing proposal from domestic to urban scale.

In order to disseminate and produce broad knowledge and debate, the analysed projects combine global colonial housing policies and site-specific actions on public housing interventions.

Macanese 1960s architectural production, framing colonial cultural context along multiple geographies, stands as a contribution centred on a dynamic reading of the city and crossing condition of housing typology. Combining architecture, public housing, habitat, and planning, the present paper seeks to explore an interpretative narrative about urban living and those who live in it.

This comprehensive understanding seeks to present and valorise part of the architectural scenario endanger of fade over time; a symbol of practices capable of generating strategic visions about possible future guidelines of city and territory.

Presented projects intend to show how the modern conception could be interpreted, understood, and enriched in terms of content, producing on one hand Architecture which generates a relationship of care between the state and society, framed by economic, social, and cultural rights, and in the other hand Architecture able to respond and reflect local conditions as an element of socio-territorial cohesion.

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Errante[1]: contemporary devices for heuristic reflexions on housing, *Malagueira*, *Marselha*, and *La Borda*.

Sérgio Miguel Teixeira Magalhães

Abstract

This reflexion makes visible the relationships between humans and the production of the built environment, proposing an exploration of the behavioural space between two collaborative narratives: the disciplinary, and the non-disciplinary.

The aim is to examine the position of architects and their practices in addressing *the socio-environmental crisis facing the planet today*.

Questioning architecture predominantly through a disciplinary lens limits the integration of practices that fall outside dominant narratives. In pedagogical frameworks, it is crucial to venture beyond these boundaries and question how to learn from divergent practices that inherently function as educational tools. Non-disciplinarily (by wandering about how *bodies* are perceived in its social context), we understand how these devices work and unmistakably broaden the field of architecture from multimodal design practices.

However, divergent methods alone are insufficient for professionals to effectively engage with communities in addressing contemporary issues (within the built environment) due to formal constraints. This inadequacy suggests the emergence of an ideo-cultural crisis alongside the socio-environmental one, underscoring the urgent need to resolve a persistent educational paradox regarding the relationship between disciplinary, and non-disciplinary approaches.

Through the analysis of three cases (*Unité*, *Malagueira*, and *La Borda*), the article identifies approaches that operate both within, and outside dominant narratives, relating complex scenarios as catalysts for simpler, more inclusive, and sustainable heuristic decisions.

Positioned as a proposal for a viable landscape of sustainable social progression, the article engages in heuristic reflections to interrogate how robust mechanisms of loss – reconfigured as constructive actions – inform project activities. These activities, in turn, are examined for their capacity to steer architectural *praxis* toward an empathetic framework for architect-education, derived from the *ethos* of the field and practice of architecture.

Keywords: *errante*; heuristic; multimodal; autonomy; power.

1 Errante (english (UK): wandering): author's translation, selected from Caspar David Friedrich's *Der Wanderer über dem Nebelmeer*, 1818. A work set in the Romantic period; it depicts a man standing before a rocky gorge while observing a landscape characterised by a thick sea of fog. A relationship between the sublime and self-reflection, based on the evocation of the landscape and on the contemplation of the man situated within the realisation of his drift in the time of his life.

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Since 2000, interpolates specific creative fields such as architecture, visual design (graphic and web) and product design in a studio environment STUDIUM *creative studio*; directs brand creation and brand strategy at AMMP *brand & management agency*; elaborates on products and systems at PTMADE *production house*.

> Such is our way of thinking – we find beauty not in the thing itself but in the patterns of shadows, the light and the darkness, that one thing against another creates.
>
> Jun'ichirō Tanizaki In Praise of Shadows 1933

[Fig. 1]
2024 Behavioural space "as" a place. La Borda. Barcelona, Spain. author's photograph

Capitalism of care

Wandering in between the disciplinary, and the non-disciplinary

Architecture can be understood as a medium of cultural and personal significance, shaped by the tension between collective and individual design aspirations, as well as the dynamics between autonomous creative expression and the interactive relationship between occupant (user) and designer (author).

According to (Barthes 1980), architecture, like photography, can be approached through either an intellectual lens (considering cultural, social, and historical contexts) or an emotional one, rooted in personal and sentimental understanding. His concepts of *studium* and *punctum* are particularly relevant: "studium" refers to the analytical observation of a composition or theme, understanding its cultural relevance; "punctum" describes how we are emotionally affected by the context, evoking a response based on personal memories and experiences. These concepts intertwine, blending detached observation (studium) with intimate connection (punctum) in a complex and dynamic relationship.

Similarly, disciplinary practices invoke systematic approaches based on "detached observation," adhering to established rules and methods. In contrast, non-disciplinary practices are intuitive, flexible, and guided by "personal connections," diverging from formal structures and rooted in individual experience – *punctum* refers to our spontaneous and emotional responses. *Punctum's* unpredictability and unique "interpretation of real" are fundamental in decision-making and knowledge production-constructing where *punctum* is closer to a heuristic system (non-disciplinary) than to a formal and structured one (disciplinary).

In this study, the concepts of "studium" and "punctum" serve as metaphors for the interaction between "disciplinary" and "non-disciplinary" practices. *Studium* represents the structured and systematic approach of disciplinary practices, which often utilise formal pedagogical devices[2]. In contrast, *punctum* reflects the personal, emotional, and disruptive aspects of non-disciplinary practices, which frequently diverge into multimodal heuristic devices[3].

2 Formal pedagogical devices are structured, theory-based methods like lectures and group work, designed to guide content delivery and student engagement within a controlled educational framework.
3 Multimodal heuristic devices employ emotional, sentimental, and immaterial channels that transcend disciplinary boundaries, engaging the personal, evocative impact to intuitively guide problem-solving, learning, and exploration.

Recognising these cognitive mechanisms helps us understand the specific relationships between humans and their environment. Specifically, and from an architectural perspective, exploring the space between spatial practice, representations of space and symbolic experiences (Lefebvre 1991) can facilitate the assessment of how the position of architects and their practices can address *the socio-environmental challenges facing the* planet — exploring the distance that separates and/or engages the disciplinary and non-disciplinary fields.[4]

Architectural Autonomy and Porosity: Navigating Socio-Environmental Crises in Public Housing

This study avoids confronting two distinct approaches to architectural theory. Instead, it seeks to mitigate the inherent tensions associated with the concept of autonomy in architecture by examining *a behavioural space that exists between two distinct parts of the system*[5]. It is an exploration that takes place during a period of significant change in the socio-cultural environment, highlighting the need for action that accepts porosity in architectural practice as a multimodality for care.

We are exhausting the time of capitalism, transitioning into an new era called techno feudalism (Varoufakis 2023) where we must adapt to a unforeseen socio-environmental states in all disciplines. Architecture as a discipline relies on practitioners' motivation to address transversal issues (especially in the public housing sector) where design must evolve to meet immaterial needs and embrace a degree of uncertainty about the resulting *capital.*

4 Polarising projects like *Unité d'Habitation* exemplify representations of space, where top-down planning (Le Corbusier's "machines for living") imposed rigid social hierarchies, alienating residents from their lived space. This disconnection mirrors Lefebvre's critique of capitalist spatial production, where abstract, homogenized designs prioritize efficiency over socio-cultural specificity. Modernist housing, as a tool of state or capitalist power, reproduces inequality by commodifying space into standardized units, erasing local identities. In contrast, *La Borda* embodies representational spaces through cooperative design, where residents actively shape their environment. Lefebvre's emphasis on "the right to the city" aligns with such projects, advocating for spaces produced by and for communities rather than imposed ideologies. Siza's *Malagueira* stands in the middle.

5 The space is a meta reference to the disciplinary/non-disciplinary practices, that can help us translate the field of architecture into observable and actionable characteristics about the built environment engaging with Henri Lefevre (symbolic), Beatriz Colombini (gendered power dynamics) and Doreen Massey (geopolitic) symbiotic constructions of space.

We can now say that social housing, which initially aimed to defeat social inequalities, has been clearly exploited by capitalism (i.e. how it views occupants as marginalised groups by western standards).[6] Politically we must critique the nation-state model, which relies on domination and oppression, and advocate for "democratic confederalism," where power is decentralised, and communities govern themselves through direct responsibility and democracy. This is a vision that empowers marginalised groups, especially women, by emphasizing gender equality and ecological sustainability (Ocalan 2020) and by delving into the historical development of power structures, analysing how state systems perpetuate inequality. A radical rethinking of society to create a peaceful and just world beyond current political constraints must address the root of the problem even before questions are formulated.

Anticipation is key, and education is the only tool capable of igniting this need.

While capitalism in social housing has met its goals, fostering dependency on a discriminatory credit structure, it has also fallen victim to its own success, giving rise to new market dynamics, including algorithmic and virtual realities. In the broader housing sector, neoliberal practices have commodified property, leading to the privatisation of social housing and fragmented ownership, complicating large-scale asset control. Publicly funded projects are increasingly replaced by private investments to meet capital demands, catering again to large investment funds. This shift has led to a decline in traditional public housing investment (opening a space for hybrid-divergent models) as normal options are replaced by trendy private housing, pushing communities in need into an endless cycle of racialisation and discrimination due to subversive access to credit.

The opportunity for transformation presents itself every time a radical change occurs, repeatedly in the form of a transitional time and space architecture evokes as cure to our habitat, usually from loss.

6 Modernist housing's failure to resist these forces (evident in *Unité's* Airbnb conversion) highlights architecture's complicity in techno-feudal extractivism. *La Borda's* cooperative model counters this by decentralizing ownership, echoing Varoufakis' call for democratic confederalism.

[Fig. 2]
1972 Pruitt-Igoe collapse series. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development in: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Pruitt-igoe_collapse-series.jpg

... July 15, 1972 at 3:32 p.m. (or thereabouts) ...[7]

Gentrification has profoundly affected public and cooperative housing projects[8], leading to the displacement of urban communities and the replacement of established neighbourhoods with transient visitors. Many social housing examples have become politicised and perceived as dangerous or insecure. However, some have emerged as sites of resistance, challenging capitalism and renewing interest in social housing over investment-driven solutions. This shift has sparked criticism of traditional models and encouraged new experimental approaches informed by the 1970s.

At the turn of the millennium, architecture faced challenges that fuelled social change and created arenas for capitalist ideologies, such as private property, profit, individualism, and competition. This crisis also spurred the adoption of more practical and innovative solutions, moving beyond rigid dogmas.

The design of a building becomes central to materializing these ideologies, shaped by socio-political and economic contexts. Architects are influenced by their observations of the world, though peer pressure often dominates academia, office environments, and government sectors.

In response to these dynamics, some practitioners began stepping outside traditional structures in the 1970s, pursuing collaborative approaches aimed at addressing users' real needs and countering the decline of the modern movement. Their efforts sought equity rather than mere comparative evaluation among peers.

The transformations since the 1970s reveal a persistent modernist dominance. Postmodernism failed to break the paradigmatic colonisation of our habitat by modernist prototypes. Like capitalism, modernism imposed an enduring ideological perspective, with architects complicit in maintaining this power dynamic while deferring to political forces and unsustainable extraction practices.

The connection between modernism and globalisation is evident in contemporary architectural practice, where the uncritical repetition of models hampers the search for effective housing solutions. The environmental crisis and social fragmentation driven by inequality – exacerbated by global phenomena such as the international style and gentrification – highlight architecture's failure to break free from dogma and explore alternative ideological and disciplinary paths. In the end, comparing modernism and globalisation states the imminent disintegration of capitalism and the pressing need for new models for the built environment.

The modernist movement imposed an ideological perspective that still influences the field today, highlighting the urgent need for a critical reassessment of architectural practices (Tafuri 1976).

7 "Modern Architecture died in St Louis, Missouri on July 15, 1972 at 3.32 p.m. (or thereabouts) when the infamous Pruitt Igoe scheme, or rather several of its slab 3 blocks, were given the final coup de grâce by dynamite. Previously it had been vandalised, mutilated and defaced by its black inhabitants, and although millions of dollars were pumped back, trying to keep it alive (fixing the broken elevators, repairing smashed windows, repainting). It was finally put out of its misery. Boom, boom, boom." Jencks, Charles. 1984. *The Language of Post-Modern Architecture.* 4th, revised and enlarged edtion. Rizzoli: New York. Part One: The death of modern architecture p.09

8 i.e. some apartments in *Unité d'Habitation* and Siza's *Bairro da Bouça* are now privately owned and listed on Airbnb and Booking platforms.

Typo morphologies[9]	*Unité d'Habitation*	Bairro da Malagueira	*La Borda*
country	France	Portugal	Spain
city	Marseille	Évora	Barcelona
regime	Fourth Republic	I Democratic Government	Constitutional Monarchy
political ideology	tripartism socialism, communism, Christian democrats, and gaullism	socialism, communism	socialism, pro-independence
project	1947	1977	2014
work	1952	1997	2018
construction duration (y)	05	20	04
urban context	peripheric	peripheric	centre
land use	public	public/private	public/time lease
use duration	-	-	75
notion of property	ownership	ownership	rental/rightful succession
plot area	12 000	270 000	1000
type	single building	housing complex	single building
unit type	duplex apartment	single house	apartment
unit number	337	1200	28
variations	02	02	03 (40, 60, 75m^2)
amenities	private	public	private
floors	18	02	08
occupants	1600	~4500	~84
structure	concrete	concrete/masonry/block	concrete/wood/ polycarbonate
architect	Corbusier	Siza	Lacol
age	65	44	~
practice	individual	individual	collective cooperative
commission	public	public	private
politics of production	totalitarian	bourgeois	feminist

[Fig. 3]
2024 Public housing: ontological devices and architecture as condition – three scenarios in political chrono-geographies

9 From the post-war social totalitarianism of Le Corbusier's *Unité d'Habitation* (1952) to the post-revolutionary social demands of Siza's *Quinta da Malagueira* (1977) and the high-gentrification social crisis of Lacol's *La Borda* (2018), the selected cases challenge disciplinary and non-disciplinary practices, and examine how a heuristic system of decisions in architecture education could empower architects and enhance their pedagogical authority in the production of the built environment.

Housing as Heuristic: Lessons from Three Case Studies

The totalitarian model: Unité d'Habitation

Modernist visions

Architecture is constrained in its ability to address socio-environmental crises due to the limitations of traditional disciplinary boundaries, which frequently ignores the intricate human interactions that shape the built environment. Instead, it fosters a dyslexic social empathy through distinction rather than from the bases of sought after colourful social reform.

Presumptuously named *Unité d'Habitation* (1952), the project represents Le Corbusier's vision for housing after of a long period of obsession with the ''vertical garden city'' both as an idea for a self-sufficient complex (like a boat at sea) and as an ideal of the modern architect's role as a social philosopher (surely due to Fourier's phalanstère/familistère[10] utopian vision for society and morbid curiosity about the experiments of the soviet avant-garde).

The aphorism is designed from a single ''legement prolongé'' on top of audacious ''pilotis'' enclosing shelter for 1600 people, in a 17-story composition of 337 two-level apartments, (socially) condensing the neighbourhood complex of multiple unit buildings from the 1800's into a single block containing all necessary amenities[11]. The principles of design aimed at a conjunction of immaterial and material toolkits, disposed as a set of inspirational Christian and Socialist dynamics as a response to the post-war housing shortage, and a physical model for future urban development and urban living[12].

Although it was intended to promote a sense of community, its monumental scale and standardised design created social and physical distances between city, residents and visitors, undermining the collective life it was intended to promote (Moos 1979). The building's isolation from *Marseille*'s traditional urban fabric further contributed to this disconnection, exposing the contradictions in Le Corbusier's approach by disregarding the complex experiences of individuals (Cohen 2013).

At the age of 65, perhaps due to a lack of empathy (or from a clear personal fault in his personality), the architect's intentional design of the social programme exacerbated the questions it sought to answer.

10 Phalantère etymology: https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phalanst%C3%A8re
11 Library, post office, shopping centre, hotel, restaurant, club, clinic, gym, running-track on the roof, swimming-pool/baths and school are defined within the vertical structure of the property.
12 The concept of a 'vertical garden city' reduces urbanism to a formulaic approach, favouring efficiency and order over the nuances of social interaction. The standardised units and communal amenities, while intended to foster a cohesive social environment, have frequently resulted in feelings of alienation and isolation derived from functional verticality that has imposed a rigid social hierarchy, with the lower floors being perceived as more desirable due to their proximity to the ground. During my most recent visit, I observed the deterioration of the initial programme. Public spaces have become a form of musealisation and ritualisation that deviates from the idyllic vision of the architect. Commercial spaces were either unoccupied, closed, or even abandoned. The overall ambience of the building evoked a sense of a decaying social structure, serving as a cautionary reminder rather than an exemplar of successful urban design.

Socio-political implications

> Le Corbusier's Unité d'Habitation in Marseille demonstrates that modernist design ideology reflects social disconnection.

This affirmation is precisely how the *Unité* functions as an ontological device, representing a physical manifestation of a theme variation from the modernist ideology manifesto.

The project is indicative of his unwavering fixation on technology and standardisation as drivers of progress and with the assumption that architectural forms will influence social conduct. It materialises the inherent contradictions in modernist architectural theory and practice, on how the aspiration to establish a new social order through design often results in a top-down structural paradigm that fails to adequately address the needs and preferences of the inhabitants.

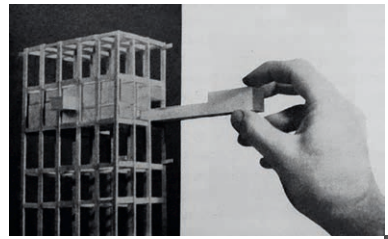
The building's detachment from *Marseille's* urban context serves as a clear example of this autocratic phenomenon. The traditional public spaces that were once integral to the city, including squares, boulevards, and markets, have been replaced by a closed sense of community that effectively isolates residents from the wider social and cultural life of old city. Reflecting a broader issue within modernist architecture, the prioritisation of abstract principles over the consideration of everyday lived realities, negates the understanding of space production as an inherently political process shaped by power relations that are frequently overlooked in the design process (Lefebvre 1991). The design of the vertical community imposed a specific social order, which, although well-intentioned, ultimately served to reinforce existing hierarchies and alienate residents from the city and perhaps even from themselves.

An actual representation of our time, today!

We must think (again) about how architecture affects social behaviour and (continue to) find ways to be more inclusive from context-sensitive approaches. We must accept our own porosity and doubt as constructive tools for architectural design by engaging non-disciplinary narratives to reassess and tackle social and environmental issues, across different areas of expertise and balancing the necessary disciplinary factors in the process.

This is why using no exclusively heuristic approaches activate communities to recognise contemporary concerns simply because the comprehension of the nuances that influence architectural design on social conduct are easier in acknowledging the significance of contextual factors, diversity, and inclusion (Schön 1983) and not because they are disciplinary able.

What is the answer: the building itself, the architect's vision, the underlying agenda, the discipline, or the practice? It also prompts consideration of whether the use of low-cost materials, and "immaterials" in social housing affects the longevity and (i.e.) financial sustainability of residents;



whether such impacts were anticipated beyond the project's initial goals and intangible factors as design considerations. In this case, the lack of an "extra-disciplinary" approach sheds light on why the original vision failed (perhaps rooted in the simplistic assumption that private transportation and long distances were essential for urban growth as Corbusier always dreamt of) resulting in social segregation rather than proposing cohesion.[13]

Unité exemplifies individualistic urban design, characterized by an artificial sense of porosity and rooted in displacement rather than organic continuity and historical integration. While it reflects genuine modernist ambitions, it also serves as a *cautionary tale* about the dangers of imposing "cartesian social structures" from a detached, top-down perspective. The case vigorously emphasises the need for decisions to emerge from the participatory ecology of society rather than the "sterile" environment of a studio.

In face of 21st-century socio-environmental challenges, it is vital to explore alternative positions and methodologies, prioritising heuristic needs over formal ideals.

13 Despite the urban expansion of Marseille encroaching upon the site, the sense of isolation and counter-design persists in the manner that the main avenue's contrast with the complex's entrance from the city and connection to the adjacent *quartiers*.

[Fig. 4]
1947 Model of the Unité d'Habitation showing insertion of dwelling units into structural grid in: Le Corbusier: Elements of a Synthesis. Stanislaus von Moos

[Fig. 5]
2024 In between light and shadows. Unité d'Habittation. Marseille; France. author's photograph

Historical Continuity and Cooperative Practices: Bairro da Malagueira

Context-sensitive architecture

The socio-political landscape of post-revolutionary Portugal underwent a profound transformation following the Carnation Revolution of 1974. The country transitioned from a long-standing dictatorship to a fervent (though brief), communist state. The shift significantly reshaped political dynamics, leading to an emphasis on addressing social issues, particularly on the urgency for affordable housing.

In response to severe shortages caused by rural-urban migration, the government's answer prioritised the creation of cooperative ownership models, mostly grounded in Marxist-Leninist ideals of fair distribution of resources and empowerment of the working class, exploring social housing models through the lens of collective collaboration and community engagement.

At the age of 44, Álvaro Siza's professional background was characterised by a practice focused on small houses and direct commissions from his family's influential connections (and some of his teachers). In stark contrast with the political and social events that lead to the popular upheaval (and despite his privileged practice), he began to take interest in social housing models shortly before the revolution.

Álvaro Siza's work on the *Malagueira* locality in 1977 arose during that time of deep reflection on the transformative potential of architecture in his life and in the Portuguese society, emphasising Siza's integration of communal design despite extreme political shifts in post-revolution Portugal.

He was also a widower.

The architect envisioned a high-density, two-storey housing complex designed to integrate seamlessly with existing neighbourhoods, serving as a pioneering experiment in cooperative living. Departing from Le Corbusier's authoritarian modernism, it embraced north European cooperative models, fostering resident ownership and active participation in the design process.

The 20-year project faced significant challenges, notably the abandonment of key public facilities, such as commercial streets and an acoustic shell, which weakened its connection to the urban context and vibrant community life. Despite these setbacks, the adaptation and constant change that emerged became defining elements of Siza's project. From a non-disciplinary perspective, these events functioned as design tools, reshaping disciplinary boundaries and underscoring Álvaro Siza's enduring political engagement with the community.

Amid shifting politics, Siza avoided rigid dogma. His porous framework allowed *Malagueira* to endure and this strong connection (nourished by his frequent travels to *Évora*) demonstrates how the architects integrated the socio-environmental complexities into their practice (the decision to reside in the neighbourhood revealed that choosing certain personal conditions significantly influenced the design process) which can be seen as precursors to a heuristic system.

This precise posture exemplifies the potential for embracing multimodal design and transcending dominant narratives is a personal choice, advancing a more inclusive politics of production within the domain of an architectural practice. *Malagueira*'s experiences support a broader argument that architecture must address not only socio-environmental crises but also the underlying ideo-cultural crises inherent to contemporary practices. In contrast with *Unité's* case, *Malagueira* would not have survived under a totalitarian design regime, even if the architect had made suggestions along those lines on occasion[14].

Unlike *Unité d'Habitation*'s alienating uniformity, *Malagueira* embraced Lefebvrian "lived space," prioritizing socio-cultural nuance and unpredictability over abstraction.

14 "*The plan is quite regulated. The regulation is, if you will, tyrannical. But with the understanding that the limits, fortunately, present to tyranny lead to subversion. However, this subversion can have, or may find, a framework. In reality, this already happens today, for example, in the treatment of gardens, walls, and even colour, where there is also regulation, but there is constant subversion. What I intended was to create very precise limits for spontaneous intervention, knowing from the start that this rigor does not translate into practice because there is a desire to be different that overcomes everything. But if there is not a framework of relative solidity, it leads to the chaos that we find in so many areas of the country, in so many parts of our territory. So, I believe there is a balance here and also good sense from the Évora City Council's administration, where there is never a tyrannical confrontation, but rather a kind of alert. I personally intervene in this because, as most of the houses there are built by cooperatives, I have very direct contact and constantly raise the alert: Hold on, that garden looks wonderful with the cement lion. But if everyone starts putting cement lions, we go back to the same. In other words, subversion can become regulation, and that's when the result is terrible. I believe there is a balance between the rigidity or strength of the regulation and the plan and the openness to occupation by the users. That is the objective.*" 1996 Program Name: Quinta da *Malagueira* - Ver Artes – time: 16:06 Álvaro Siza Vieira - Author: Manuel Graça Dias. Director: Edgar Feldman.; translation by the author

[Fig. 6]
1996 frame: Programa Ver Artes. Quinta da Malagueira. Image: Álvaro Siza

Cooperative principles

At the time, the project's objective was to enhance the landscape of *Évora*. However, there was a risk that it would exacerbate the challenges already facing a compromised urban area. The objective was to establish a new community, connected by residents through a cooperative organisation and linked to the city by means of key design features oriented by the adjacent city. The architect devised a high-density, two-storey, back-to-back housing complex that harmonises with proximate communities, prospective developments, and the historic setting of *Évora*. The integration of the new development into the existing urban fabric was achieved by simple elements (streets, ducts, ditches), along with the incorporation of the public infrastructure that directed itself at the existing urban layout. The design prioritised evolution, adaptation, and progression, allowing for interaction between the typologies (named as "evolutive") and the needs of the residents. This framed the project as an ongoing product rather than a static solution, prevailing even when some public programs (commercial street and auditorium), were not constructed.

That proposed commercial street, sought to create an idea of an autonomous community that would evoke the vibrant life of the old city. Like the mid-height efforts in *Marseille*, it could cultivate a self-sufficient environment maintaining the residents of *Malagueira* with trading opportunities in the historic town, from a polycentric urban strategy. Comparably, the acoustic shell/auditorium was designed to serve as a central feature promoting civic engagement and collective activities and is clearly reminiscent of Corbusier's sculptural works. It was Siza's original (sculptural) centrepiece for the main triangular square, as a geometric form defined by a ground colonnade, intended to foster civil participation and facilitate communal events.

The general design was inspired by the memories of simple, rural houses enhancing compositional complexity without merely juxtaposing vernacular models' side-by-side. It sought to maintain spatial and financial control over extreme scales (urban necessities and interior dimensions) while drawing from erudite classical and modernist influences. The infrastructure was divided into two distinct layers: one situated at ground level for the purpose of accommodating roads and canals, and another located above ground level for the distribution of water and electricity via dedicated ducts. This decision, while controversial, was defended by the architect on the grounds that it represented a cost-effective solution in comparison to underground alternatives.[15] Questionable, the decision for the hight standing infrastructure design mirroring the old aqueduct, reflects the architect's intent to pursue historical aesthetic contexts as a constant awareness of the medieval and historical city.

15 An example of a possible heuristic decision influencing architectural design through collaborative practices or just a manipulative way to impose a design exclusive feature.

The project echoes the urban ideas of permanency from monuments as a critic to functionalism (Rossi 2001), particularly in how the aqueduct functioned as an urban *operatore* – absorbing, negotiating, and influencing both old and new developments.

It is mostly from the connection to the historical aqueduct of *Évora* that *Malagueira* illustrates how the city accepts both its legacy and its future (which the new Bairro da *Malagueira* similarly embraced in its housing complex lexicon). From contrast and contradiction, the architect's potential to influence the history and transformation of a place through design is viewed as a continuous process of reflection rather than an isolated moment in the site's history. A continuous impact that must be approached from an ethnographic perspective, emphasising a practical understanding of the site and allowing for a design aimed at concrete explorations beyond mere "housing projects". Álvaro Siza's approach reflects both a comprehensive understanding of the context and at the same time his operational range outside traditional disciplinary boundaries by engaging professional practice with a personal connection[16].

Compared to Corbusier, Siza's design approach was more diverse and flexible. While Corbusier imposed a strict socialist ideology, Siza integrated a communist cooperative model, treating occupants as contextual groups rather than imposing rigid ideals. Corbusier used the post-war context to push his totalitarian agenda, whereas Siza focused on the historical and evolving nature of the site, aiming for integration rather than mere change. Siza's design for *Malagueira* aimed to create a sense of open continuity, respecting the historical context and embracing transformation. His design philosophy disobeys the soviet social mandate and reflects a profound comprehension of *Évora*'s socio-cultural context, emphasising material and immaterial flexibility and adaptability. Seen as a continuous process whereby the design is shaped by the ongoing engagement with a site's eventful and socio-cultural context without falling in the constraints of social housing models.

Malagueira project shows how architecture can bring transformative change when approached from a non-disciplinary perspective. Personal connection is a concrete design tool and Siza's position denounces how this can be achieved via "collective memory and a confrontation of a counter-pastoral view of modernity" (Mota 2014). His practice makes visible the "disciplinary codes and conventions" in specific contexts enabling a porous landscape to be

16 The political and financial climate necessitated a design characterised by frugality, and simplicity, leading to core decisions like the absence of ornamentation. However, this simplicity evolved throughout the project, as various aesthetic enhancements were introduced, raising the perceived costs. This shift may reflect a mechanism of sacralisation, driven by both the architect and stakeholders aiming to transcend the initial project brief, in response to Siza's erudite approach. This evolution highlights a contradiction between the intended simplicity of the aesthetic and probably due the architect's background in intricate detailing and specialized craftsmanship.

affected by conditions of social, environmental and notions of disciplinary dogmas through formal knowledge masterfully refusing to advocate the obsolescence of those mediums. Consequently, his "personal practice" acted as a membrane, permeating the narrative in which we are constructing our ever-modern habitat. Despite seeming otherwise, Siza's acknowledgment of the importance of contingency in heuristic systems went beyond banalisation of participatory design and while remaining autonomous, he acted in conjunction with the potential opportunities of the collective experiment. He chose to learn rather than to teach to better dominate the solutions of a future time.

The possibility for conflict should also be considered as the normal process of resistance from disciplinary/non-disciplinary perspectives may arise. Nonetheless, and closely mediating that process, the context of divergent design as a facilitator should be present, denying "hegemonic relations and the rhetoric of binary polarities" even from a more vulnerable position when exploring behavioural spaces that define the architect's position in society. Siza's project remains a benchmark for equitable urbanism, proving communal housing succeeds through empathy over ideology. By centering resident agency, he transcended fleeting political agendas, offering a timeless model for participatory design.

Almost clerically, Siza broadened the space in between disciplinary lessons and non-disciplinary learning.

Feminist and Participatory Futures: "La Borda"

Communal living

The disciplinary model of architectural discourse has typically been situated within a safer formal context, characterised by established norms and conventions.

From 1922 onwards, the conformity of a 'style' was evidenced through the principles of simplicity, functionalism, and global influence: the rejection of ornamentation, the preference for regularity over symmetry and the dominance of volume over mass became the defining characteristics of this style, which was widely accepted (Johnson, Hitchcock, and Massu 2001).

This model places particular emphasis on specific design principles, frequently marginalising practices that deviate from conventional narratives, inadvertently overlooking the considerable diversity of approaches that exist beyond the boundaries of mainstream paradigms (Hays 1998) and is in itself a mechanism for global conformation of practices in the last 100 years.

Rigid disciplinary constraints stifle creativity and innovation, undermining the profession's capacity to address contemporary socio-environmental challenges. Conversely, the necessity for non-disciplinary methodologies are logic reactions to the constraints of the disciplinary paradigm – reciprocated to the initial system of oppression. A growing discourse champions approaches that prioritise human experience and social context, demanding a critical scrutiny of urban space. For example, exploring how bodies are perceived within their social environments enables non-disciplinary narratives to broaden our understanding of architecture's role in societal transformation – challenging heteronormativity while addressing urgent socio-environmental concerns.

Since the early 20th century, Catalunya maintained a robust connection to the cooperative intricacies of collective and self-sustaining organisations. With an epicentre in Barcelona, cooperatives emerged as a response to the pressing need for coalition in the pursuit of a more equitable and progressive social context. Largely attributed to the region's highly industrialized economic structure, conditions resembling exploitation where crafted from a classist society excessively extracting human resources.

Fortunately, over the course of the 20th century, the movement evolved towards a democratic recognition of individual contexts and social needs of the population and by the early 2000s, the intensification of the political independence movement in Catalonia reinforced Barcelona's identity as a city committed to distancing itself from the conventional capitalist practices imposed by industrials and the central government in Madrid. In this ongoing struggle, a distinct revolutionary vocabulary has emerged, capturing the essence of the cooperative movement as a force that incites challenges to the established political order. This ideology actively engages participants by placing them within various power structures – political, economic, and social – in a cultural context while evolving the Northern European models from which cooperative movements originated.[17].

17 *Ándel* model (Scandinavian countries) model of access to housing located between purchasing and renting that integrates private initiative in a non-speculative market. (1866) *Wohnprojekte* model (Germany) a project of groups of people who cannot or do not want to resolve their housing demands (1970); *SostreCívic* model (Catalonia) a model of non-profit cooperatives where the ownership of the homes always falls in the hands of the cooperative and where its members participate and have indefinite and inheritable right to use the home based on a soft rent.

Ecological architecture

And still, tourism prevails...

...on both local and global levels, as a disciplinary approach that can address the ongoing struggle to overcome challenges that hinder understanding what is essential in housing. These issues significantly shape the discourse around universal social housing rights and inform design decisions.

The *La Borda* project serves as a contemporary tool for a heuristic reflexion on housing. Rather than being seen as a 'patient zero' of architectural innovation, it exemplifies a feminist argument that challenges patriarchal interpretations in the Western discipline. Although close to the capitalist paradigm, *La Borda* relies on co-ownership and co-management of spaces and resources, positioning the "sostre cívic" project as a model of resistance.

Continuously influencing authors and residents, constructed as an unwritten piece of architecture, *La Borda* effectively conveys a narrative that illustrates how open methodological practices can translate into deeper, more meaningful meta discourses. By fostering a landscape of care from collectivism and addressing underlying issues in architectural practice, the building promotes ethical, political, and social change, supporting a culture of cooperation and ecological sustainability to overcome the prevailing socio-economic model.

[Fig. 7]
2024 Everybody "as" a place I. La Borda. Barcelona, Spain. author's photograph

Intersectional and transgressive, *La Borda* embodies an inclusive and permissive vision that encapsulates social consolidation through the dilution of factors such as race, gender, and class. It follows the notions of place and political time as a collective and participative operation (Massey 1994), and deviates from conventional disciplinary autonomy entering the state of critical tension with the institutional values that dominate the social ecosystem. Consequently, facilitates the emergence of new organic and dynamic heuristic dialectics, replacing traditional disciplinary forums with more fluid and collaborative modes of engagement, on the distance of society and disciplinary communities. It questions urban life from a distinct view on the modern habitat.

The building's event-based program (rather than a functional establishment of use) designs spaces that support and advise on the creation of communal projects, using an objective value-neutral system as the primary aim is to cooperate with local entities, groups, and individuals that consider gaining from this collaborative ethos. Underscoring the effectiveness of alternative models that challenge and transform existing market logics, empirical evidence (comfort, wellbeing and health) is used to critique modernism's commitment to normativity and conformity. Moreover, *La Borda*'s formal envelope reflects the core aspirations of the collaborators (architects and owners), proclaiming community values through pragmatic choices in materials, techniques, and other intangible elements of the project's compositional system. Practical considerations, such as the duration of leases are carefully integrated into the design, serving equally as mechanisms for longevity – enabling "the building" to adapt to various needs, acting as an operable system that can respond to diverse questions beyond energy efficiency and spatial versatility.

[Fig. 8]
2024 Everybody "as" a place II. La Borda. Barcelona, Spain. author's photograph

A practice as an answer

Distinguishing the practitioner's approach from the resulting material product is nearly impossible. While autonomous, "the practice" is clearly dependent on the material outcomes that are produced as "the project". The relationship between practice and "the project of a building" is symbiotic and albeit the individual paths they may take, they remain reciprocal. This entanglement stands in stark contrast to traditional models that are often presented by "an author", usually totalitarian. *La Borda* elaborates on a delicate exit from the discipline of architecture while remaining deeply anchored in it by engaging the space in between field and practice, disciplinary and non-disciplinary.[18]

Radical approaches, such as those seen in *La Borda*, feed intangible relationships from the practitioners to the occupants who engage with the opportunistic potential of "a building", creating a continuous form (material and immaterial) that is opposite to the urban devices that reside in "a style". LACOL[19], much like *La Borda*, exemplifies a methodology that transcends classical design. It embodies a blend of experimentation, responsibility, and divergent responses to contemporary societal needs, addressing unavoidable daily challenges as a vehicle for navigating the noisy state of social consternation and decay the values that founded the notion of socio-environmental care.

Visionary, the typological spaces designated for work and living are agnostic and grounded in common areas that encourage interaction and provoke unexpected collaborations. Such collaborative practices in housing (and architecture practice) are indistinguishable, understood as mutually supportive, deeply interconnected in their inputs and outputs, deriving from the social context into a cultural ethnography of though. In contrast to the traditional model dominated by a totalitarian male architect, Lacol's systems of collaboration emerge from conscious feminist practices that of cooperation and participation, igniting change and critiquing entrenched dogmas and patriarchal norms.

Disciplinary non-models

Housing access can be approached through a hybrid model that diverges from traditional concepts of ownership and rental. A model that offers an alternative way and that is neither a purchase nor a rental but a dynamic connection to housing needs changes the importance of a plain brief. Paradoxically only a proper brief, as a very distinct strategy can change the actual tactics of the occupants away from the architect-centric assumptions of modernist models

18 Specifically highlighting the feminist and cooperative ethos of Lacol that in a way materialises Haraway's post-anthropocentric theory about traditional thought and broadening the understanding of the relations between the humans, non-humans, and the environment in a stimulative ethic of care.
19 Lacol is a cooperative of architects established in 2009 in the Sants district of Barcelona. Members: Eliseu Arrufat, Ari Artigas, Carles Baiges, Lali Daví, Cristina Gamboa, Ernest Garriga, Mirko Gegundez, Laura Lluch, Lluc Hernàndez, Pol Massoni, Jordi Miró, Arnau Andrés, Anna Clemente.

that have shaped much of Western urban life ideals. As an example, assuming a simple reduction in private spaces and amenities and favouring communal areas that enhance collective living, private spaces are minimized to the essential in favour of shared spaces (i.e. spare rooms for non-residents and visitors, collective kitchens, nurseries/childcare facilities, and central laundries). Simple stem derivations into empathy, solidarity and generosity as design tools escape endemic and systemic solutions and are open to accommodate i.e. elderly residents, providing spaces with support from other residents as they age, ensuring that the community remains inclusive and supportive across different life stages and generations. As a result, practical aspects as the duration of the lease and longevity of the investment become evident.

While this model bears some similarities to projects like *Unité*, particularly in concept, the key difference lies in the dynamics and organic connections within the social contract of a cooperative structure. In *La Borda*, the design is not just a physical manifestation, but an evolving reality, originated from the practiced design, intertwined with the daily lives and relationships of its occupants[20].

The pursuit of a pure and ideologically driven discipline may inadvertently strip away the autonomy and assertiveness needed to effectively characterise and engage with the modern world. It is crucial to recognise the profound responsibility and influence that architecture holds and how architects play a pivotal role in shaping the built environment. It is imperative to establish a thoughtful engagement with local heritage at the risk of creating homogeneous and generic spaces that lack cultural depth and diversity.

La Borda exemplifies a primal call to action, embodying collaborative efforts toward non-conformity, ideological commitment, and resistance. The project challenges the technical specialisation typically expected of architects by refusing to comply with traditional norms and by positioning housing as the most fundamental aspect of human existence—a realm often dominated by politicians and architects through totalitarian decisions. The social project highlights the loss of capitalist power among architects while simultaneously demonstrating the regaining of disciplinary power through cooperative and participatory design processes. This contradiction between the professional and personal sets of values and principles serves as proof of concept, disguised as an ethical call to action. Design should serve as the foundation for enacting the political dimensions of architecture, present in Lacol's confrontational projects, which aim to address core issues from a sensitive feminist perspective on the vocational role of architects. Lacol engages with feminist theory both individually and collectively, challenging the dominance of sex, race, gender, and class within the patriarchal status quo.

20 As an example, even the classification/lexicon used defines hoe the cooperative housing operates with various membership types that reflect different levels of involvement and commitment to the project: "The Inhabitant" (lives in the cooperative apartments, fully engaged in the daily life and responsibilities of the community); "The Expectant" (individuals interested in becoming residents, waiting for vacancies to become available); "The Partner" (supports the cooperative project, participating in events and activities but not living in the cooperative itself).

A shift in contemporary architectural practice marks a move towards Haraway's post-anthropocentric alliance diverging from the rational methodologies typically endorsed by academic institutions. Lacol embraces an intersectional and multimodal exploration of comfort, property, and participation between Haraway's human and non-human to Rendell's endeavour on feminist and interdisciplinary approaches to space in a practice that rejects traditional master over diversity, advocating for a more inclusive and bold relationship between people and the built environment as a way to rethink modernity.

Evolved architectural practices are not autonomous entities or fantasies; they are grounded in deliberate positions where design achieves both aesthetic effects and a concrete vision for equitable, inclusive spaces. Motivated by rejecting patriarchal domination, Lacol's search for alternatives to conservative conventions results in partnerships and contemporary approaches essential for understanding ecological, communal, and human/non-human dynamics more focused on sociology concept of social space and power dynamics as theoretical frameworks for the discussion of power in architectural education.

This acknowledgment is critical when considering the perspectives and needs of non-residents, who also interact with and are affected by these living experiments.

[Fig. 9]
2024 Nature "as" a place. La Borda. Barcelona, Spain. author's photograph

Erranting

Architecture has been guided by rigid disciplinary frameworks that rely on endemic, systemic, rule-based approaches, limiting the field's ability to address complex socio-environmental challenges.

These conventional methods, grounded in a system that Barthes describes as *studium*, focus on analytical and "detached observation" and fall short in navigating the evolving needs of our world by anchoring themselves to formal pedagogical devices.

Wandering allows architects to explore beyond established boundaries, "error", and to open themselves to non-disciplinary practices that may induce intuition, spontaneity, and emotional response. As an element of a intentional pursuit of a *punctum* incorporating heuristics facilitates the adoption of exploratory and highly adaptive tactics, using multimodal strategies to address diverse and complex design challenges.

Self-empowerment is achieved by liberating practice from traditional constraints through active engagement with modernity's socio-political dynamics. The examples of *Unité*, *Malagueira*, and *La Borda* illustrate how architecture can challenge and redistribute societal power: transforming the discipline into a heuristic tool free from exclusive critiques. Respectively, the cases illustrate architecture as a tool of resistance, either by cautionary tale on dominant narratives, by promoting prospective views on historical continuity or simply, by refusing to comply with dogma.

Architecture transcends mere technicality, emerging as a multimodal, cultural, and political practice that redefines power by integrating both material and immaterial elements in physical space. It must evolve beyond traditional construction to embody not only tangible structures but also intangible design expressions.[21]

As we face the collapse of traditional economic and political structures, this study advocates that architects reclaim their autonomy by adopting divergent, heuristic practices. By engaging with challenges like gentrification, commodification, and environmental degradation, architects can transcend conventional methods to design "in-between" spaces that are not only functional and aesthetically compelling but also adaptable to unforeseen uses and needs.

Much like light and shadow, disciplinary and non-disciplinary practices are entangled in a relationship of common interest, materially and immaterially, necessary for the progression of a system of production that positions the pedagogical recodification of the architect as an *other narrative* in response to the survival of the discipline of architecture.

I propose it as an *errante*: deriving, diverging, exploring and always, learning.

21 A public square is incomplete without the presence of people, who manifest their existence through intangible practices like assemblies and cultural events, and more open houses, prioritising human needs can accommodate residents, non-residents, visitors, and wanderers alike.

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Fenix architecture: Can a new and youth liveability for inner areas be based on the third and fourth-age community facilities?

Federica Serra

Abstract

The article takes its cue from the population ageing phenomenon in Italy, focusing on the country's inner and marginal areas. These areas, which cover nearly 60% of the national territory, are facing significant challenges due to depopulation and the migration of young people to cities, leading to their marginalisation and reduced access to essential services. However, in recent decades, these regions have been reevaluated, viewing them not only as a problem but also as an opportunity for development and regeneration.

The article explores how population ageing, traditionally seen as a challenge, can be transformed into a resource for the revitalization of inner areas. By analysing institutional policies such as the Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne (SNAI) and the Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza (PNRR), the text emphasises the importance of attracting new communities, including younger generations, to revitalize these territories. In fact, ageing can become a development factor, especially when combined with strategic planning and targeted architectural design projects, as illustrated by the case of Castel del Giudice, a small village in Molise that has managed to turn population ageing into an opportunity for economic and social growth.

The case study of Castel del Giudice demonstrates how an innovative approach to managing welfare services, particularly for the elderly, can help to reverse the depopulation trend and create new job opportunities for young people. Through the establishment of an assisted living facility and other community initiatives, the village has not only improved the quality of life for the elderly but also generated economic activity that has attracted new families to the area. This example shows how inner areas can become laboratories for good practices and social innovation if adequately supported by targeted policies and investments.

In conclusion, the article argues that population ageing in Italian inner areas should not be seen merely as a problem to be addressed, but as an opportunity to stimulate sustainable and inclusive development. Through targeted interventions that promote proximity welfare and community cohesion, it is possible to create new forms of liveability that can attract both young and old, contributing to the revival of territories currently considered fragile. Ageing, therefore, can become a catalyst for the revitalization of inner areas, transforming their fragility into a driving force for future development.

Keywords: territorial resilience; inner areas; multigenerational community.

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Introduction

The phenomenon of population aging in Italy and youth migration from inner areas has transformed small towns into 'fragile' places, depopulated, socially undervalued and lacking in cultural vitality and welfare services. This issue is part of a broader national and international debate over inner and marginal areas, anchored in the wider concept of 'territorial cohesion' defined by the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFUE). This issue finds its Italian reflection in the 'Barca Report', which is the basis for targeted policies oriented to bridge the gap between inner and urban areas in terms of essential services and local development.

Institutional policies, such as the Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne (SNAI) and the Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza (PNRR), and the numerous studies conducted by the 'Riabitare l'Italia' association, have laid the groundwork for a cultural and economic paradigm shift aimed at revitalizing these territories, emphasizing the need to attract a new and young community of residents.

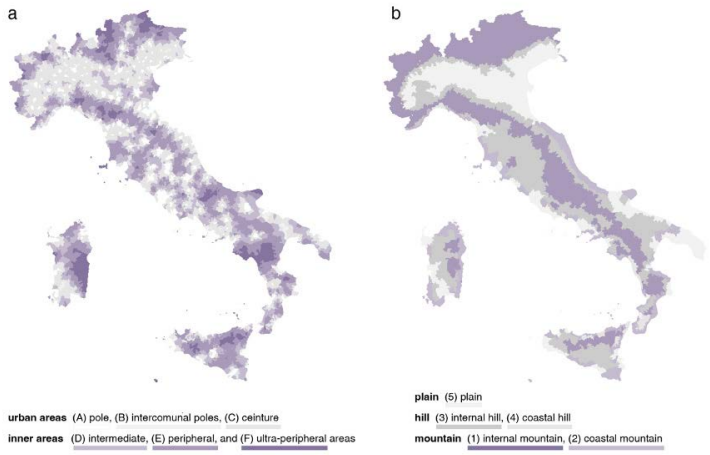
This essay aims to investigate the development potential held by the new generations of elderly people in generating various forms of community living for inner and marginal areas. To achieve this, it will be crucial to understand the role of local welfare in these contexts and then to highlight, through a specific case study, how strategic planning and architectural design projects of welfare services can act as catalysts for resources and new best practices. In the selected case it is described how the small village of Castel del Giudice (IS), known as the winner of the Bando Borghi A for the Molise region, has long experimented with new forms of community liveability. In that context, maintaining and resettling the elderly in the village is seen as an innovative tool for local development and youth employment. From this approach, that goes beyond the idea of population aging as a problem and turns it into a resource, it emerges as a virtuous model applicable in many inner territories already subject to reverse migration.

Italian policies for inner areas

Since its unification, the consideration of Italy as a territory of multiplicity, composed of the 'pulp and the bone' (Rossi Doria 2005) has led national policies to pay special attention to rural areas. For a century and a half, these places, perceived as fragile and problematic contexts from a socio-economic perspective, were considered territories to be saved, supporting them through funding and specific strategies. Indeed, although a significant portion of the Italian peninsula is characterized by places with limited access to essential citizenship services, the fragility and the regression of the marginalities have not been solved and sometimes even increased. Therefore, these territories, considered backward and resistant to innovation for a long time, started to be defined 'inner areas' as if to emphasize their marginalization, exclusion from national policies, and worsening inequalities compared to urban areas.

In the last decades for the first time these areas have started to be seen not only as a weakness but also as an opportunity. This paradigm shift, result of a profound institutional (Barca and others 2009) and cultural (De Rossi 2018) change, start to rediscovery inner territories as experimental physical laboratories of a new re-habitability that turns inherent criticism into strengths.

Marginalized territories cannot be ignored anymore: they cover 58.8% of the entire national territory and host around a quarter of the Italian population, according to the 2020 data highlighted by the Istat Report of July 2022. Among Italian municipalities, artificially classified in six ranges of peripherality in the map drawn up by Cipess, Comitato interministeriale per la programmazione economica e lo sviluppo sostenibile, 3.834 of them (48.5% of the total) are considered inner areas according to their time distance from the poles, identified by those places that can offer simultaneously health, education, and mobility services (Fig.1).



[Fig. 1]
a) Map of the peripherality through the classification of municipalities according to the new typology of internal areas made by Cipess in 2022 (source: politichecoesione.governo.it);
b) Map of the Italian municipalities according to the classification in altimetric zone (2024) (source: istat.it)
– elaboration of the author.

Moreover, this large portion of Italy, where marginalization, depopulation, and ageing phenomena are more evident, is where can be found most of the national environmental and cultural resources that are also relevant for urban and peri-urban areas. Starting from the national and European debate of the last twenty years, which highlighted the limitations of those spatial policies focused only on the urban development, the interest in rural areas has gradually grown in both their limit and possibilities. In any case, the urban-rural divide, even more pronounced after the 2008 crisis, has continuously intensified, generating a framework that considers marginal areas increasingly as a burden for different nations.

In the last decade, the 'places that do not matter' (Rodriguez-Pose 2018) have had the opportunity to demonstrate their impact on international governments and societies through symbolic political actions that highlight their geographical and territorial significance, even more so after the pandemic. COVID-19 led, in fact, to a paradigm shift in the interpretation of inner areas: a rediscovery of these territories as places where it would be possible to work and age (Perlik 2006) and where can be found a better quality of life in response to the inadequacy revealed by the cities during the pandemic.

In this context, from 2010s national and international institutions promoted some experimental policies focusing on marginal territories. The most relevant public policy is the Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne (SNAI), which, in its first season, involved 72 experimentation areas in both methodologically and conceptually innovative actions.

Unlike the other programs, the strategy was characterized by an important theoretical framework; starting from that the government could understand local and territorial vulnerabilities to lay the groundwork for the following improvement of service provision in pilot areas (Lucatelli, Luisi, and Tantillo 2022). The definition of interventions has been structured through a trans-scalar process, that involved local authorities, municipalities, aggregated and associated, regions, and various ministries coordinated by the Comitato Tecnico per le Aree Interne, dependent on the Dipartimento per le politiche di coesione e per il sud della Presidenza del Consiglio dei ministri.

In addition to the improvements of essential services related to education, health, and mobility, and the support of local development activities, the goal of the entire policy was to experiment with alternative and unconventional ways of managing sectoral policies to reorient ordinary state interventions with a place-based approach. (Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale 2021). Thanks to the PNRR, Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza, the SNAI experiment has moved beyond an experimental vision with the addition of 56 new areas that, added to the 72 of the first season, generate a new complete framework as a demonstration of the effectiveness of the initial programming in achieving the proposed objectives. (Storti 2021)

The PNRR also represents an unprecedented opportunity for marginal areas in terms of resources. In addition to specific interventions oriented to territorial cohesion, other funding lines aim to improve the quality of life in inner areas. The most interesting interventions regarding the welfare and the ageing population topic seem to be those related to territorial medicine in Mission 6, where the construction of new Community houses can make differences in the context of internal Italy, where the hospital network is increasingly sparse.

Among the actions oriented toward rediscovering marginal territories, there are two basic strategies to encourage new liveability in these places: on the one hand, the choice is to limit youth migration to urban areas, and on the other, to promote alternative modes of habitability for rural areas by city dwellers attracted by amenity migration (Perlik 2006). The first group of interventions aims to enhance, in inner territories, new forms of youth entrepreneurship, particularly those related to traditional rural professions, both culturally and economically. An important research on that issue (Membretti et al. 2023), argues that these actions could be implemented only after a series of surveys aimed at understanding both the desires of young people to stay in the villages and the reasons that drive them to leave.

The general framework presented in this paragraph highlights how the increasing attention to the habitability of inner areas, and consequently the policies and resources dedicated to it, must relate cultural and demographic changes to the causes that have generated them, according to an antifragile approach (Lupatelli 2022) that allows further development starting from the problems.

Aging in inner areas: a problem or an opportunity?

In a polycrisis Age (Juncker 2016), where the population role is fundamental in the daily economic and social challenges, communities aging worldwide, in particular in developed countries and in a more noticeable way in rural areas than in urban ones.

Eurostat demography dataset of 2022 (Eurostat statistics 2023) confirms this trend, the percentage of the population aged 80 years and over in the European Union increased from 3,5% to 6,1% in twenty years (2002–2022), especially in the rural areas where 6,3% of the population is over 80 in 2022 (in the cities only the 5,8%). Furthermore, the pattern is the opposite for those aged 20 to 64, in that case, the share is higher in the urban (60%) than in the rural regions (57%). This double phenomenon, the aging population and youth migration to the city due to the weakening of local economies, emphasizes the disproportionate distribution of older Europeans, concentrated in inner and mountain areas, where the distance from services and the lack of care structures seem to reduce health equity and highlight the rural–urban divide.

Aging in rural areas as an international topic

Aging in inner and mountain areas is a transnational and transdisciplinary topic: researchers and scholars from all around the world tried to understand the impact of the context in an increasingly aging society, from economic, social, and political perspectives evaluating both the criticism and the resources of a new rural elderly life. This issue is characterized by its double face; on one side older adults may decide to stay and live in these regions or they choose to settle there after retirement because they can find a better quality of life, on the other side, elderly inhabitants move from the villages to the cities to be closer to social and healthcare services. The reasons for these choices are all related to the context, in rural areas people can often find better living conditions, lower costs, natural and cultural benefits, and closer community cooperation (Glasgow and Brown 2012)

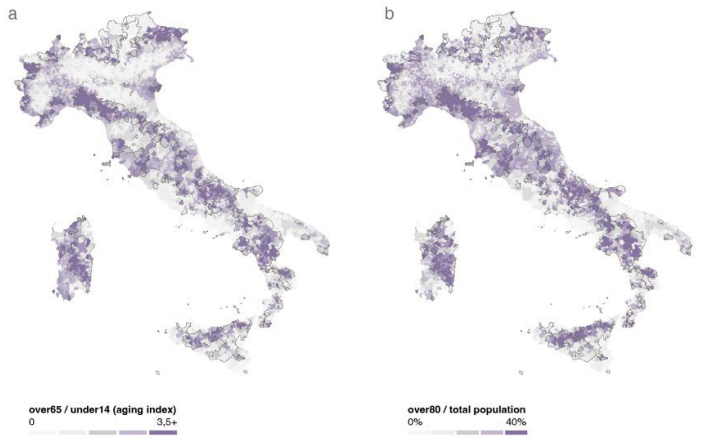
Furthermore, the increasingly frenetic and chaotic urban dynamics limit the interpersonal relationships between older individuals, who become more and more alone. On the contrary, the isolation processes can be faced in a smaller context, where solidarity and social interactions are enhanced (Gucher 2018). Nevertheless, rural ageing could still be problematic because of the physical distance from the welfare poles. Despite lots of services having digital access, personal welfare infrastructures are still visited in person, and fewer elderly people living in remote areas can easily reach them; even encouraging forced reversed mobility phenomena (Cholat, and Daconto 2021).

A map of the elderly Italy

The Eurostat statistical data for 2022 describes Italy as one of the European countries most economically and socially dependent on the third and fourth age groups. National demographic parameters show a national average age of 48 years, 3 years higher than the European Union one. Moreover, the dependency index, representing the ratio between the number of elderly individuals to the working-age population, significantly exceeds the European average of 32.5%. Particularly, a higher concentration of elderly people compared to the resident population is found in the inner areas.

Reading the map of the ageing index (Fig.2), defined as the percentage ratio between the population aged 65 and over and the population aged 0–14 years, it is evident that the municipalities characterized by a higher ageing index are in the mountain and inner areas on the Alps, the Apennines and in the Sicilia and Sardinia Island. In these territories, the number of older people is even 10 times more than the younger ones because of the reduction of natality and the emigration of young families to urban areas.

The geography of elderly Italy can be also superimposed on the map of the inner areas, drawn up by the Cipess; the comparative map (Fig.2), which shows the percentage of over 80 years old individuals in the total municipality's population and delimitates the municipalities classified as peripheral and ultraperipheral, clearly outlines the critical coincidence of the places with a high percentage of elderly presence and those far from the healthcare and mobility services. The ultraperipheral municipalities, far from the pole at least 75 minutes, have an average older people percentage of 8,72% much higher than 5,95% of the city belt ones. In peripheral and ultraperipheral municipalities, the elderly population is more than twice that of those under 15 (206.8 and 223.4 respectively), with an average value for inland areas close to double (196.1). The over-65 population, representing over a quarter of the total resident population in inland areas, is expected to increase further due to the rise in life expectancy, a positive sign of life quality and advancements in healthcare.



[Fig. 2]
a) map of the ageing index for each municipality made on Istat data of 2024; b) map of the population percentage over 80 years of age superimposed to the inner areas' boundaries (source: politichecoesione.governo.it) – elaboration of the author.

What possible future?

As already mentioned, the limited assistance services in marginal areas combined with a steadily increasing number of elderly individuals threatens to overwhelm the entire system, if governments and local communities do not implement specific interventions for territorial assistance and support for active ageing. In this condition, ageing in rural and inner areas is a conscious choice for elderly inhabitants, who sometimes are reluctantly forced to move away from their hometown to access elderly care services, especially in conditions of isolation without family care.

Recent studies conducted in the in-Age project (Melchiorre et al. 2021) by the Politecnico di Milano show that assistance to the elderly in rural areas is almost entirely provided by the family or the community and in small part by public or private services. In urban areas, the role of un-institutionalized care is limited in favour of more effective public service utilization by more than half of the survey respondents. So, where assistance services are present, they are used, although the networks of relationships built over time, including family and community, are crucial to limit the isolation of the elderly and promote active ageing (Gucher, Mallon and Roussel 2007).

The other side of the coin, which has become more evident in recent years, is related to the quality of life of a silver generation increasingly conditioned by the challenges of our time, especially in urban areas. Diseases like the heat islands, the pollution, the noise, and the crowding, combined to a higher cost of life, are some of the liveability challenges that the elderly face in cities. Moreover, the pandemic has shown how inland and rural areas can offer an alternative life standard that allows a reconnection with the nature and the community to benefit from those 'village care' that investments in proximity welfare services could guarantee.

The ageing of the population, therefore, represents an important territorial resource; the maintenance or the migration of the elderly to inland areas influences the ability to attract in these places ever-growing market demands. Alongside the idea of the silver economy, which defines the economy generated by the older population, the concept of the longevity economy has recently emerged, overcoming the previous definition linked to the idea of ageing with a positive perspective of physical and mental well-being for those over 50. In this context, demographic changes will be capable of generating technological innovations and new jobs in a new immense business where the natural and community potential of inland areas could fully manifest itself.

Proximity and community welfare spaces as tools for territorial development

An intergenerational approach

From a territorial development perspective of the inner areas, the over 65 years old population growth can be seen as an opportunity to arrange new living scenarios for both the older and the younger generations. This purpose can be achieved through dynamic welfare spaces that can provide the elderly with the conditions for living in a community with other citizens, promoting new housing paradigms based on mutual exchanges and common intergenerational values (Boccacin 1999; Dykstra 2010). Indeed, population ageing is not only a matter of older persons because it also affects the other generations. Despite the implicit assumption that demographic ageing mostly impacts elderly people, the combination of increasing longevity and decreasing birth rates generates a marked shift in the balance between old and young, changing their relationship. In this context, the increasingly necessary intergenerational collaboration is not limited to bringing together old and young people, but becomes a systematic approach oriented to a community development and a better life condition; these goals are achieved only through valuing the contribution of all the generations living there and setting up the context generative conditions (Ruggeri 2014).

[Fig. 3]
The mural 'Nonne a la fresca' by Marina Capdevila with the artist and some local ladies at the Borgo Artistico Borgo Universo in Aielli (AQ) in Italy – credits of the photo Virto360.

In this regard, the offer of services for the third and the fourth age, such as assisted living facilities, clinics, and community spaces, encourages the habitability of inner areas on several intergenerational fronts. If, on the one side, these spaces could generate job opportunities for younger inhabitants and contribute to the economic growth of the whole territory; on the other side, non-institutionalized experiences of residential care for the elderly could lead to some community exchanges benefiting both the older and the younger population (Lacorazza 2022).

For example, the role of the elderly as caretakers of the children for a few hours a day, within a trusting educational community typical of inner areas, becomes a priority for the lifestyle choices of young couples in terms of both economic and educational aspects related to bringing up children. Moreover, the care of the elderly by young families, combined with territorial socio-healthcare assistance services, would promote active ageing in place, limiting the isolation of older adults and the migration to urban areas of those who are left alone (Rossi, Bramanti and Moscatelli 2014).

The role of proximity and community welfare

The recurring terms in this vision are proximity and community. Policies supporting the third and fourth age in inland areas, by their nature, do not have a single destination and involve different local actors in the implementation and management of physical-digital welfare services. Investments in these specific services, made by third-sector organizations, public entities, and private collaborations, address various aspects of the elderly's life, not limited to mere emergency or health prevention management but fostering social and cultural exchanges and relationships among peers and across generations, serving as support services in place for the younger population as well.

The concept of proximity service is based on three specific dimensions (Barcet 1997): geographic, relational and of everyday life. The issue does not have an unambiguous definition and generally involves public and private actors together with informal expressions of society in shaping community needs and fostering social cohesion (Horgues-Débat 2008). Therefore, they take on the role of 'new common goods' (Lorenzetti and Leggero 2024) based on the sharing and the provision of rights to each person that is guaranteed by accessibility to the same services through both the new forms of experimental mobility and the public-private partnership interventions at the inter-municipal scale.

Compared to institutionalized welfare practices, the generative and proximity ones (Bongiovanni 2017) draw attention to the active involvement of the citizen and the personalization of the service. Co-participation and proximity to the users allow a better adaptation of the proximity welfare to the specific conditions of both the elderly and the internal territory. Perceiving a person-based and place-based service it is, therefore, necessary to overcome the rigidities

of the institutional model by challenging new self-organized experimental forms (community cooperatives, limited liability companies) in which the public and private components interact to structure innovative practices of community welfare provisions in fragile territories (Osti 2016).

The spatial dimension of welfare devices and their architectural design

The proximity welfare devices and their spatial dimension in rural areas are traditionally and radically linked. In the past, the public services design and construction were mainly focused on the function to be performed; schools, ambulatories, and post offices were mostly located in pre-existing buildings often by sacrificing functional and formal considerations. Before the increasing of the depopulation and ageing phenomena, services historically had a community and proximity character but later, the auto-promotion and the efficiency associated with unique and specific service building led municipalities and private investors to build something iconic and recognizable characterized by specific functions like little schools and retirement homes. The more structured services, centralized in strategic locations, covered a supra-municipal catchment area and were configured as mere single-functional provisions that maintained a certain distance between provider, user and local community denying the pivotal role of welfare services in the spatial construction of social relations.

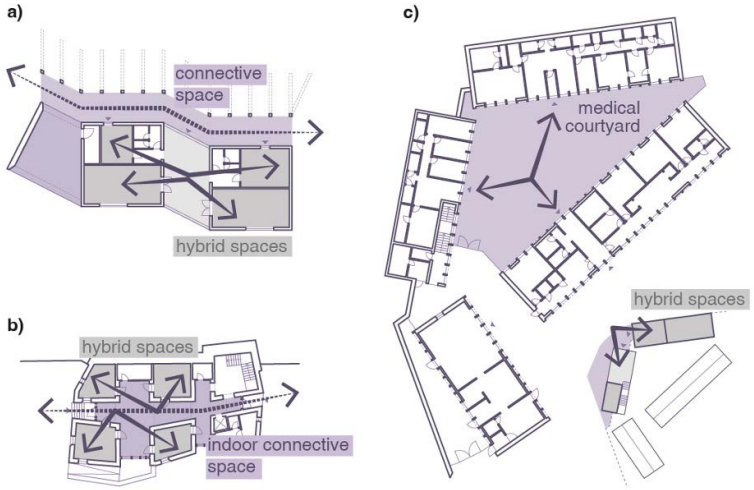
Nowadays, community services, especially those for the elderly, have rediscovered their local impact and the architectural project of these spaces takes on the role of a catalyst of social practices rooted in the local socio-economic fabric. The current design experiments in the inner areas mainly focus on the needs rather than the infrastructures and, therefore, the welfare devices acquire a sharing and community character. The overcoming of the segmentation and the functional specifications makes it possible to build two kinds of structures; on the one hand, some use destinations that require standard dimensions and building typologies, such as assisted living facilities and medical clinics, on the other hand, hybrid spaces where new practices can be experimented bypassing minimum user thresholds. These spaces, which integrate community, digital, and multigenerational components, could be configured as community kitchens, multifunctional rooms, and public green areas. In this perspective, the paradigm shift is crucial in those spaces where services are not merely tools for delivery and provision but also become devices generating local development and social innovation; therefore, their physical and spatial dimensions are not negligible (De Rossi and Mascino 2023).

Diverse experiences in small towns within the inner areas of Italy and Europe highlight how the built environment contributes heterogeneously to the development of intergenerational social and community practices related to welfare, which in various ways constitute a new habitability

of these places. In some cases, architectures, born out of emergency conditions, have become the centres of local development from which regenerative practices on a territorial scale were activated. A significant example on an international scale is the small municipality of Ostana, which between the 1920s and the end of the 20th century reduced its population from more than a thousand inhabitants to just six. Architecture in this context has been a driving force for the social and economic reactivation of the village, particularly thanks to the cultural centre Lou Pourtoun, designed by architects Crotti, De Rossi and Forsans. Throughout the year, the building takes on many forms of a community and aggregative nature (headquarters of the community cooperative, a rest area, event space, headquarters of associations) stemming from the internal distribution of the building and its design, which ensures functional multiplicity in isolated units but a connective tissue of a public nature suitable for informal and spontaneous activities by the entire community, which once took place in the open spaces of the different hamlets. Similarly, emergencies like the L'Aquila earthquake on August 6, 2009, led to the rethinking and reconstruction of new spaces for the community. In Poggio Picenze (AQ), the architects Burnazzi Feltrin built a community centre for young and old, replacing an old gathering structure that had become unusable in the centre of the village. In this case too, architecture reinterprets the conventional ways of using informal collective spaces, relating them to functionally undefined and adaptable spaces where different generations can engage in various activities in fluid environments with a constant connection to the nature and the surrounding landscape.

In other cases, the construction of new architectures for welfare, particularly for the elderly, has created new demands from the local population, establishing places where specialised services for a specific type of inhabitants are accompanied by other connective and informal spaces for the entire community. An example in this sense is the Maison De Santé in Vézelay, designed by Bernard Quirot Architecte + Associés. The complex of buildings, located in a municipality of about 500 inhabitants in the rural areas of central France, presents a spatial organization that alternates typologically defined spaces, such as medical offices and a pharmacy, with empty, multifunctional, and hybrid spaces serving as a civic centre. Once again, open spaces are fundamental for the relationship between the different functions, the surrounding landscape, and the historical city centre (Fig.4).

Moreover, the choice of locating these spaces in a specific place, within abandoned buildings, or in proximity to other catalysts, is a fundamental part of the territorial development process in which architects, by controlling flows and behaviours, play a fundamental role. Quality architecture, in fact, becomes a reference point for communities and, at the same time, a tool for cultural promotion and good local development practices (De Rossi and Dini 2020).



Castel del Giudice: A Virtuous Example

The chosen case study supporting the aforementioned thesis is the experience of Castel del Giudice, a small municipality in the province of Isernia in Alto Molise. The village perfectly fits into the definition of an inner area exposed in the previous pages; in fact, it experiences depopulation and ageing phenomena, and it presents a substantial distance from services, enough to be classified as an ultraperipheral municipality by Cipess.

In its historical evolution, Castel del Giudice started its development as one of the agricultural and pastoral villages of the Apennines even today traceable in the paths of transhumance (tratturi) still present in the area. The industrial development of the late nineteenth century has led to the development of the village, which reached the record of 1600 inhabitants, but since the twentieth century a progressive decrease in the resident population, with 301 residents in early 2024 (source dati.istat.it), led to a progressive abandonment of the municipality and a reduction in services.

[Fig. 4]
Planimetric schemes of
a) Multi aged community center. Poggio Picenze (AQ), Italy (Burnazzi Feltrin Architetti, 2015);
b) Cultural center Lou Pourtoun, Ostana (CN), Italy (Crotti, De Rossi e Forsans Architetti, 2015);
c) Maison de santé du Vézelien, Vézelay, Francia (BQ+A, 2014) – elaboration of the author.

Starting from the end of 1990s, in a critical context with reduced job opportunities and an increasingly elderly community, the municipal administration, led by the mayor Lino Gentile, initiated a local development process by courageously addressing one of the most critical elements: the elderly population.

The local government in 1999 carried out the first of a series of actions aimed at territorial regeneration: the construction of an assisted living facility (RSA) near the town centre in the former elementary school, closed for the lack of students due to the depopulation.

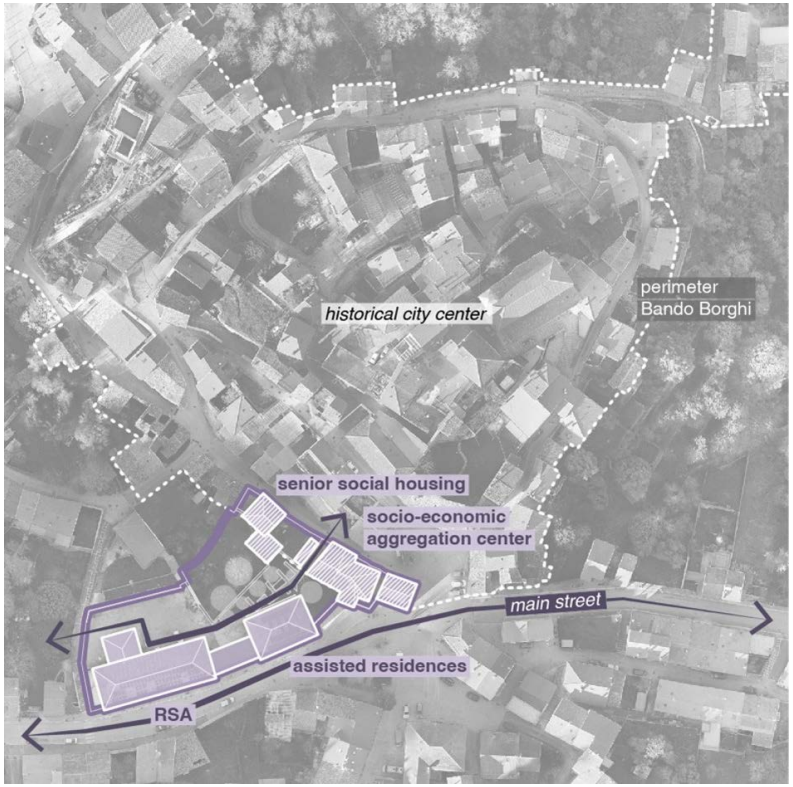
The success of the project, visionary due to the small size of the municipality, lies in the innovative management methods. If standard public procedures had been used to build an assisted living facility, bureaucratic obstacles for funding and time delays would have compromised the outcome on a first chance. Afterward, the establishment of a public–private partnership, composed of the municipality of Castel del Giudice, a local entrepreneur, and citizens interested in the development of the project as 'affective entrepreneurs', enabled the creation of a broader intervention that included the construction of both the assisted living facility and the assisted residences (RA) for self–sufficient elderly individuals.

The active participation of the population in the limited liability company, evident from the economic contribution of some residents with 18,23% of the equity (Bartocci and Picciaia 2020), allowed all citizens to envision a future for their town, overcoming nostalgia for the school's closure and opening up to new perspectives. Moreover, the participation in founding the company, named San Nicola s.r.l, as the patron saint of the village, represents an investment by some citizens in their future, preparing conditions to age in Castel del Giudice.

San Nicola s.r.l, has played a central role in the town's territorial development, alongside the other two community–oriented initiatives promoted by the municipality for agricultural and touristic development of Castel del Giudice (De Rubertis, Belliggiano and Labianca 2018).

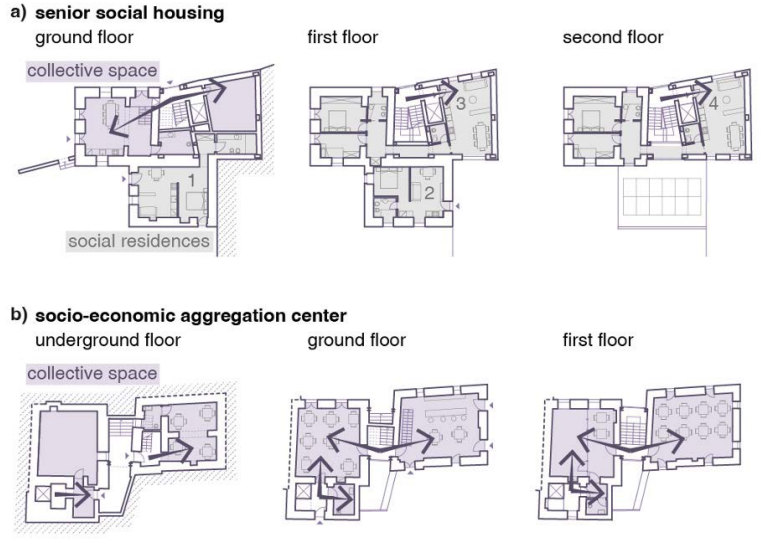
Regarding the impacts exerted by the elderly facilities on the context, some economic activities, such as the pharmacy and the grocery shop which were closed for years, were reopened. Moreover, approximately 20 healthcare professionals, mostly female, have been employed and, as a result, they relocated to the area with their families; among these workers, engaged in the elderly residences, there are also some Venezuelan nurses included in a specific repopulation action with migrant families. From the perspective of the elderly, the facilities represent an important reference point also for the inhabitants of the surrounding municipalities, who may need to be accommodated in later life in a homely and family–like context. Additionally, for those originally from Castel del Giudice but moved elsewhere for work, the facilities offer the possibility to return and spend their old age in the town.

Also the contribution of 20 million euros, granted to Castel del Giudice within the Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza (PNRR) – Bando Borghi, intersects with the strategic project axis related to the elderly population and the community. Among the interventions involved in the proposal it is evident the desire to continue to invest in the elderly as a tool for territorial development: within the defined perimeters of the project and in a close spatial relation to the RSA and the assisted residences a community socio-economic aggregation center and senior social housing were planned, as generating a district of community welfare devices (Fig.5).



[Fig. 5]
Castel del Giudice, the district of community welfare devices composed by exiting (RSA and assisted residences) and new PNRR facilities (senior social housing and socio-economic aggregation center) – elaboration of the author.

Especially in these cases, the role of architectural design of buildings and open spaces is fundamental as a tool for territorial enhancement. The job of the research group of the Department of Architecture and Design (DAD) of the Politecnico di Torino, composed by [reference removed to maintain the integrity of the review process], as consultants to the design of these spaces is experimental according to two dimensions: on the one hand as an innovative academic research activity in continuity with other design experiences of welfare spaces in the Alps and the Apennines (De Rossi and Mascino 2024), and on the other hand as a means to 'spatialize' political intentions of transformation (Fig. 6). The architect produces, with his practice, material responses to anticipatory and strategic inputs according to the practice of 'translating' into physical spaces not only mere functions but also ambitions, visions, and possible outcomes that are achievable only through quality architecture with civic and political responsibilities.



[Fig. 6]
Castel del Giudice, the plan of some of the new PNRR facilities (senior social housing and socio-economic aggregation center) – elaboration of the author.

On the other hand, imagining new forms of residential living and territorial welfare in inland areas leads to significant architectural and design challenges, in facts these experimental spaces are often located in pre-existing buildings situated in towns and villages that are frequently subject to historical and artistic constraints, with construction and formal characteristics that are historically consolidated. In Castel del Giudice, the buildings of the community socio-economic aggregation centre and senior social housing address contemporary architectural challenges re-interpreting the traditional typologies of welfare spaces in versatile and multifunctional spaces with a clear community-oriented imprint. The connection between spaces, whether in terms of internal layout or open areas within the 'district', is the key element of innovation through which are achieved gradients of privacy and inter-community and extra-community relationships. Although both projects involve the manipulation and/or expansion of existing load-bearing masonry structures, the chosen language—deliberately contemporary in the choice of openings and formal expressions—aims to enhance existing materials and technological solutions. It is crucial that the physical outcomes of local development interventions, aimed at fostering community-building, will be recognized by local inhabitants as part of their identity, even in the spatial and architectural forms proposed.

Conclusions

The presented case study fully embodies the concept underlying the term Antifragility, coined by Nassim Taleb in *The Black Swan* (Taleb 2008). Castel del Giudice is antifragile because, after experiencing the impact of an ageing population, youth migration, and economic crisis, the inhabitants absorbed the energy of the problems and converted it to improve its performance. Castel del Giudice has generated growth from a crisis condition, creating a new population from depopulation, a new economy from crisis, a new city from ruins.

In conclusion, starting from this example it is possible to argue that the development of marginal areas must increasingly be based on the factors that made them fragile, by converting the problems to advantages together with all the positive elements that characterize these territories. Perhaps, in a condition of progressive ageing, a new and young habitability for inland areas should be based on the third and fourth age as an initial development stimulus on which to build the entire strategy. In this context, architecture could accelerate and guide these experimental processes in which small municipalities in the inner areas become laboratories of good practices that, through the spaces of welfare and community, will condition their own future.

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Right to the City (photo)voices: participatory photography with children in Greater Lisbon

Rosa Arma, Camila Andrade dos Santos

Abstract

The study "Voices of the Right to the City" consists of two participatory photography actions conducted in 2018 and 2021 by members of the Group of Socio-Territorial, Urban and Local Action Studies (GESTUAL). These actions involved children of African origin and Roma ethnicity from the self-produced neighbourhood *Bairro da Torre* in Greater Lisbon, who experienced a rehousing process that began in 2007 and concluded in 2023. Through a description and comparative analysis of the two actions and the data collected and by focusing on the neighbourhoods, housing and play spaces, we aim here to discuss the participants' perceptions of changes in the places of their everyday lives before and after the rehousing process. Data collected includes the children's own photographs, which have been obtained through photovoices, and interviews about these photographs, which were conducted through photo-elicitation. We also seek to reflect on participatory photography as a research methodology. We argue that participatory photography can foster dialogue between researchers and research subjects, in our case children, offering an opportunity for the collective construction of knowledge. The results of this research highlight the urgent need to (re)think and (re)build cities in a way that ensures the voices of children and other vulnerable groups are heard and considered, thereby contributing to a just transformation of both the city and society.

Keywords: participatory photography; children; right to the city; greater Lisbon.

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Introduction

The study "Voices of the Right to the City" consists of two participatory photography actions conducted in 2018 and 2021 by members of the Group of Socio-Territorial, Urban and Local Action Studies (GESTUAL) at the Lisbon School of Architecture (FA.ULisboa). These actions involved children of African origin and Roma ethnicity from the *Bairro da Torre* (BDT), which was a self-produced[1] neighbourhood in Greater Lisbon. In 2021, the study included both the young participants still living in the BDT and those who had been rehoused in the meantime.

The study began with the seminar "Right to the City (1968-2018)", organised by GESTUAL in 2018. The first action, conducted under the seminar, aimed to understand the notion of the Right to the City through the eyes of the children. The second one was guided by the authors' (members of GESTUAL) PhD research objectives: one with a thesis in the field of Architecture on an interactive approach to intervention in the self-produced neighbourhoods of Greater Lisbon, and the other in the field of Design, focusing on participatory design with children for the creation of play places in public spaces in the urban margins.

In order to build more just cities, children were chosen as subjects of the study because of the importance of their active participation and unique voices in debates about space and rights to the city. Children also provide valuable insights into intergenerational and intercultural dialogue within their communities and the city. Several programs and projects centred on co-creation focus on placing children at the centre of decision-making processes related to transforming the built environment because of how those processes directly affect them. These initiatives encourage children to actively participate through diverse participatory methodologies that ensure their voices are heard and their needs and desires are addressed. Additionally, they promote mutual learning among researchers, technicians, and children. Notable initiatives in this area include the *Children's City* (Tonucci 2019), as well as the experiences detailed in the works of Parnell et al. (2018) and Khan et al. (2020), which explore the theory, audio, and visual practices of engaging with children to (re)think how we design cities.

Participatory photography was adopted as the primary methodology through which research was garnered because it is considered appropriate for research with children (Blackman 2007 and Derr et al. 2013). It uses interactive tools that allow research subjects to portray their reality through photographs guided by a specific research theme. In a photovoice or a photo-elicitation – which we choose as tools supporting our methodology – the perception and interpretation of reality occurs through the act of producing and discussing images, which stem from a series of choices reflecting the producer's imaginary (Meirinho 2016). According to Wang and Burris (1997, 369), "[photovoice] entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as recorders and potential catalysts for social action and change, in their own communities". Research

1 The notion of self-production arose from a debate among researchers of GESTUAL and refers to the notion of production of space as addressed by Henri Lefebvre (1974) rather than just to self-construction.

methodologies using photographs are diverse and can be found in the literature, especially in the social sciences, as photovoice (Wang and Burris 1997), photo-elicitation (Harper 2002 and Pink 2020), photographic studies or picture cards (Martin and Hanington 2012) each with specific characteristics. When based on images directly produced by the research subjects, the results are materially rich because they foster the agency of the participants in the research and enhance a dialogue between all agents.

In this research, the participatory photography (including photovoice followed by photo-elicitation) was conducted over an interval of three years. This process allowed for the comparison between two specific and different socio-spatial situations in Greater Lisbon: first, children's everyday life in self-produced neighbourhoods and second, rehoused children's everyday life in public housing estates. This comparison was made through the different (photo)voices of the same social group in both situations, collected between 2018 and 2021, before and after the rehousing process. The approach cannot be considered original since other studies with children as research subjects with the focus on their perception of the spaces in which they live their everyday life and that use participatory photography tools are widespread.[2] Still the "Voices of the Right to the City" research creates new knowledge due to the specific context it presents in relation to rehousing processes and access to adequate housing in Portugal of the most vulnerable groups. Through the adopted methodology, this research highlights the often contradictory relationship between the material quality of spaces and their perception, the latter frequently shaped by criteria such as family ties, bonds of affection and solidarity, and sociability.

In the context of the two participatory photography actions presented here, disposable analogue cameras were chosen due to their ease of use and to the limited access some participants had to digital technology (Fig. 1). Analogue photography has some disadvantages compared to mobile devices or digital cameras including the limited number of exposures and the irreversibility of taking photographs which cannot be deleted from the film. Therefore, the use of disposable analogue cameras required the children to be more mindful and deliberate in their observation. The very small viewfinder on these cameras, from which the process of capturing an image initiates, also encouraged the children to better frame their reality. In other words, it prompted them to select more carefully what they considered relevant for each shot. Additionally, using analogue equipment required the children to work at a slower pace throughout the process, as they had to wait for their photographs to be developed before seeing the results. They

2 We refer to the worldwide "Kids with Camera" program and Zana Briski's well-known experiences with children, reported in the book and documentary *Kids with Cameras* (2005) and in the documentary *Born into Brothels* (2004). We also mention the participatory action research *Olhares em foco* led by Daniel Meirinho (Meirinho, 2016) which serves as a reference for our study. Meirinho's research involved youths from another self-produced neighbourhood in Greater Lisbon, Alto da Cova da Moura, and focused on identity and self-esteem recovery through photography.

expressed great surprise at the outcomes and, in some cases, frustration due to errors they recognized in framing, lighting or obstacles (such as their own fingers) interfering with their intended subjects.

In the two participatory photography actions, we aimed to connect closely with the children from the BDT and their places of everyday life to understand their perceptions and perspectives through the medium of photography. We sought to explore the research questions: how does a child perceive their neighbourhoods? What does a child like, and what changes would they make, and how? What are a child's views on their houses and play spaces? Can a child produce their play spaces, and how? Which elements in the space does a child consider significant? How does a child interact with their community? What changes does a child identify in their places and everyday life after the rehousing process? Using these questions as drivers of the research, the two participatory photography actions allowed us to delve into each child's world, understood through the photographs they took and their responses collected in the interviews. In this study, children were regarded as co-researchers contributing to the understanding of their reality and points of view, towards a collective construction of knowledge through dialogue (Freire 1987).

Here we adopt both a narrative and an analytical approach, guided by data triangulation (Minayo et al. 2005). This involves an intersection between our position as researchers, the impressions of our interlocutors and the theories adopted. Starting from the narrative approach, we discuss

[Fig. 1]
Camila Andrade dos Santos, 2021. A young photographer with her disposable analogue camera. Personal archive.

the two actions of the study and compare them through a cross-analysis supported by the triangulation of theory, method and field, uncovering the data and the different interpretations produced over the two moments. The participatory photography actions were based on two key concepts guiding their interpretation: Paulo Freire's 'dialogicity' (Freire 1987) – or the knowledge constructed through dialogue –, and Henry Lefebvre's 'Right to the City'. Lefebvre (1968) presents the city as an *oeuvre*, and the "Right to the City" as the "Right to the *Oeuvre*" (or the "Right to Work"), meaning the right to "make the city" and transform it. Accordingly, Lefebvre understands the 'Right to the City' as the power to produce and shape urban space according to the needs and desires of its inhabitants. Building on Lefebvrian theories (1968), David Harvey (2012) argues that the type of city we want should reflect who we want to be. Harvey (2008) contends that the city should be based on a notion of the 'Right to the City' that connects the participation in the transformation of the city with the transformation of those who participate. Here we assert that the construction of the city as a place for the encounter must be a collective effort that prioritises use value and involves people in the process of building it. The 'Right to the City' "is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right, since this transformation inevitably depends on the exercise of collective power to reshape the processes of urbanisation" (Harvey 2008, 23).

Through a comparative analysis of the research and the data produced, i.e., children's photographs and the accompanying interviews, we aim to discuss two topics. The first, is the changes in the places of child participants' everyday lives, particularly in their relationship with the neighbourhood, housing condition, and play spaces and activities, before and after they were rehoused. The second is the use of photovoice and photo-elicitation as tools for data collection that foster dialogue between researchers and research subjects, in this case, children living in vulnerable contexts. The way dialogue emerged throughout the two interactive processes and how it served as an opportunity for co-produced knowledge and could serve for the collective imagination (and creation) of a different city will now be outlined.

The Bairro da Torre

The *Bairro da Torre* was a self-produced neighbourhood located in Camarate in the municipality of Loures, Greater Lisbon, Portugal (Fig.s 2 and 3). It resulted from the occupation of public and private land starting in the 1960s and was home to a community of families,[3] mostly of African origin from São Tomé and Príncipe and Portuguese families of Roma ethnicity.

3 According to the surveys carried out by GESTUAL between 2014 and 2016 as part of the research and local action project "*Ação-Investigação no Bairro da Torre, Loures. Extensão académica e experimentação metodológica e projetual*" (2014-2023, coordinated by Isabel Raposo), almost 240 people were surveyed in 2016, most of whom settled in the neighbourhood after 1994.

Throughout its history, the neighbourhood experienced a series of socio-spatial vulnerabilities, like other marginalised neighbourhoods neglected by public authorities in Portugal. It faced significant deficiencies in infrastructure including electricity supplies, access to piped water and basic sanitation that encompassed a shortage of sanitary facilities, lack or limited access to the sanitation network, and inefficient sanitation. In addition, public spaces were degraded and had accumulated waste, there was no facilities or equipment and housing conditions were extremely precarious. Most residents had low levels of education and high unemployment rates, particularly among Roma ethnicity families), relying on social income and other forms of welfare assistance. In 2007 and 2011, the Loures City Council rehoused part of the families under the *Programa Especial de Realojamento* (Rehousing Special Program). Residents who were not included in the program had their homes demolished although many managed to rebuild them in a more precarious way and continued living in the area. In 2016, the neighbourhood experienced an electricity outage, and in 2018, a major fire broke out due to a short-circuit in the precarious electricity supplies, leaving 35 people from 14 families homeless. Following this, the City Council resumed and intensified the rehousing of the families to other neighbourhoods or municipalities with the support of the *Instituto de Habitação e Reabilitação Urbana* (Institute of Housing and Urban Rehabilitation). The rehousing process continued until 2023 when the last family was rehoused and the BDT was officially extinguished. Even today, the *Associação Torre Amiga – Moradores do Bairro da Torre* (the residents' association), established in 2012, continues to advocate for the rights, access to essential goods, and improved living conditions for needy families over the whole municipality of Loures.

As Raposo (2012) and Pestana and Braga (2016) point out, in the Portuguese context, when land tenure is secure such as in Urban Areas of Illegal Genesis (AUGIs), Law 91/952 and its revisions allow for legal and urban reconversion. In neighbourhoods resulting from the occupation of

[Fig. 2]
Rosa Arma, 2023. The Torre neighbourhood. Personal archive.

[Fig. 3]
Google Earth, 2016. The Torre neighbourhood from above.

public or private land, which we refer to as self-produced neighbourhoods, such as the BDT, socio-spatial vulnerabilities tend to worsen because there is no provision for legal and urban reconversion. The approach to intervention in self-produced neighbourhoods, consistent with the Rehousing Special Program of 1993, remains largely technocratic and top-down focusing on their eradication and the rehousing of residents to distant public housing estates.

Although stigmatised and marked by factors of socio-spatial vulnerability, inequality and exclusion the residents of the BDT revealed: first, diverse and rich experiences of appropriating and (self) producing their space; second, personal and collective strategies of resistance in everyday life; and third, forms of community (self)organisation and practices of solidarity and mutual help as well as cultural manifestations that supported individual subsistence and the existence and resistance of the entire community. These experiences underscore the relevance and value of a participatory approach in the processes of rehousing for vulnerable groups, particularly children, as opposed to technocratic and top-down approaches to intervention that focus on the eradication of the neighbourhoods and result in non-participatory and inadequate, rehousing.

"Voices of the Right to the City"

Action 1, 2018: The photographic process of recording the 'Right to the City'

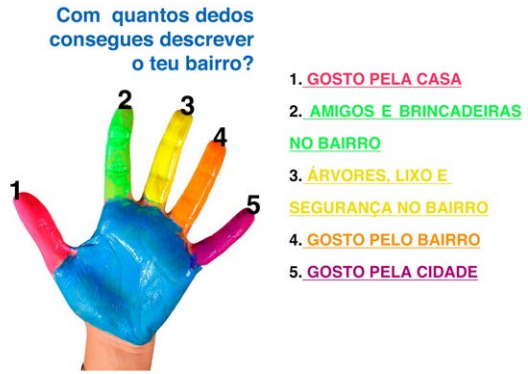
A collective exhibition of photographs, videos and graffiti titled "Voices of the Right to the City" was held during the seminar "Right to the City (1968-2018)", organised by the GESTUAL at the FA.ULisboa in 2018. The exhibition aimed to offer a plural perspective on the notion of the 'Right to City' (Lefebvre, 1968). It featured photographs resulting from a participatory photography process with children, conducted by four researchers from of the GESTUAL[4] in the BDT and Alto da Cova da Moura (in the Amadora municipality),[5] both self-produced neighbourhoods in Greater Lisbon.The process with the children in the BDT and its outcomes are briefly summarised below.

Nine children aged between 6 and 12 were involved: 3 girls and 6 boys, 2 of African origin and 7 of Roma ethnicity[6]. Each child was instructed on how to use the disposable camera provided to them and give basic photographic training. The children were also given a script with questions about five main topics: (i) their house, (ii) where and how they were used to playing and interacting with friends and family, (iii) green areas, trash, and safety in the neighbourhood, (iv) their perception of the neighbourhood, and (v) the city (Fig. 4). Children were asked to respond to these questions through photographs.

4 Including Rosa Arma, co-authoring this paper.

5 The second action of the study involved only the participants from the BDT. Therefore, for comparative purposes, only the actions related to the BDT have been considered here.

6 All the participating children obtained their parents' authorisation to take part in the study by signing an informed consent form. The signed children's consent forms were collected at the beginning of the activity. Their identities were anonymized.



The cameras were collected around two weeks later, and the photographs were developed, printed and returned to their creators. The images produced revealed freedom of interpretation of the provided script, with the children autonomously choosing what they wanted to photograph: different moments from their daily lives including gatherings with family, neighbours, and friends around the fire, their favourite places in the neighbourhood, places they dislike, and portraits of themselves and loved ones. Despite the limitations of the disposable analogue cameras, most of the children's photographs are striking, with some being particularly impressive in terms of lighting, composition, point-of-view and narrative.

A computer was used to facilitate a conversation between the researchers and the children on their photographs (photo-elicitation), conducted through semi-structured interviews. The children were asked to select the images they considered most significant to them, identify where they had been taken, and explain what they wanted to convey through them. The children's photographs and the researchers' recordings of the conversations – photographic, audio and video –, and of the entire process were collected and organised. Selected relevant parts of the conversations were transcribed, and their content was analysed.

The children were able to express their perceptions and points of view, engaging in a critical reflection about the places of their everyday lives based on the images they produced. During the interviews with the children, the notion of the 'Right to the City' (Lefebvre 1968) was introduced to the child participants. While complex to them, through their photographs and reflections, the research team was able to define how the children could understand the concept.[7] After the exhibition at the FA.ULisboa, the children's photographs travelled back to the BDT and were displayed at the local church. This returned the research to its participant community to stimulate public local debate, as advocated by Raposo (1999).

7 The way the child participants understand the Right to the City is explored further in the article.

[Fig. 4]
Cover of the script given to children in 2018.

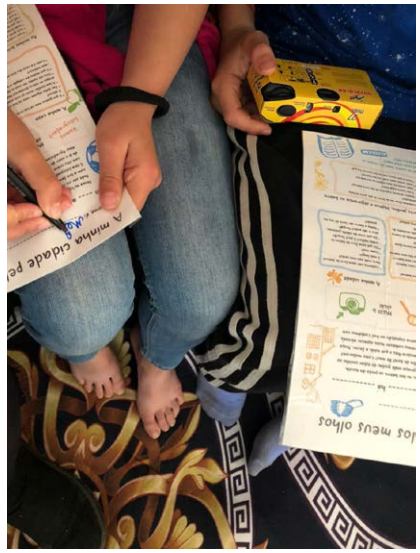
Action 2, 2021: The process of understanding "My city through My Eyes"

As a continuation of the study "Voices of the Right to the City", a second participatory photography action was conducted in 2021 called "*A minha cidade pelos meus olhos*" ("My City through My Eyes"). This action involved nine participants (including six from the previous group): two still living in the BDT and seven who had been rehoused in public housing estates. At the time of this new action, the children were aged between 6 and 14, comprising four girls and five boys. Among them, two were of African origin and seven of Roma ethnicity.

Three years later, the action was guided by two new objectives which were based on the participants' current place of residence. For the participants who were still living in the BDT, the research team sought to understand their perception of the changes in their everyday places, considering the rehousing process which involved demolition to their neighbourhood, the removal of families and friends, and fears and expectations over the years and, more specifically, the (self)production of their play spaces given the persistent lack of equipment for this purpose in the neighbourhood. For the children who had already been rehoused, the research team sought to understand the changes they had experienced in the places of their everyday lives, adaptation to the new neighbourhoods, new homes, and renewed opportunities for play. Through the dialogue based on the participants' photographs, their insights about what they missed and what they would change or add to the spaces they were currently living in were sought. The overall goal was to encourage the children to develop their skills in reading and interpreting the places that shape their everyday lives, and expressing their opinions, promoting an understanding of their rights, namely the Right to Housing and to the City as well as the Right to Play. This approach aimed to strengthen their sense of belonging to the city and give them the opportunity to practise active citizenship.

On a first visit to the homes of the participants, each of them was given an analogue disposable camera with 27 exposures, along with a child-friendly script that explained the challenge and suggested themes to possibly explore in their photographs, such as the neighbourhood, the house, play areas, green spaces, gathering places, social interactions in these spaces or their daily routes (Fig. 5).

> *Think about the place where you live, where you play, near your house, in your neighbourhood, or near your school. It could be a corner of your house, a street, a tree, or a square where you like to be alone or with your family and friends. Observe: What do you like about these places? What do you dislike? How have they changed? Take photographs. Talk to your family and friends and show them what you're doing. Think with them about what could be improved in your neighbourhood. We want to get to know these spaces through your eyes and hear about them from you. Your photos will be part of an exhibition! We're counting on you! Thank you for your participation.* (Script, photovoice, 2021)



As in the first participatory photography action, the children used the script as a guide but ultimately photographed whatever they wanted to capture. They chose to document their homes and daily journeys from home to school, portray families and family activities, and capture landscapes and the built environment including significant buildings around their homes and public spaces. Playing was a frequent theme with many photographs depicting both play and play environments, such as public playgrounds and their equipment in the new neighbourhoods. Images of play spaces and self-built facilities in the BDT were captured. Children also photographed community events they considered significant that took place in their neighbourhoods. Some photographs are remarkable for their storytelling intent and their quality in framing, composition, use of light and shadow, and colours, despite the limited equipment provided.

Based on a prior analysis of the children's photographs, a semi-structured interview to guide the conversation with the participants on the pictures they had taken (photo-elicitation) was prepared. Then the children saw their photographs after being developed and scanned, and analysed the images expressing their points of view. They were also shown the photographs they had taken in 2018 which helped facilitate a comparison between the spaces where they currently live and where they had previously lived. Finally, the children were asked to select their favourite photographs which were then printed and given to them.

[Fig. 5]
Camila Andrade dos Santos, 2021. Participants with their camera and the scripts.
Personal archive.

As a culmination of this process, two exhibitions were held featuring the selected children's photographs, and records of the research process. The first exhibition took place at FAUL as part of the Portugal Participatory Design Conference Place from 19th of August to 1st of September 2022. This exhibition served to both disseminate the research showcasing the children's imagery and their perceptions of space, expressed through their photographs and words to an academic audience. It represented an opportunity for the children's ''voices to be heard'' by future designers, architects and city planners. The second exhibition was held at the *Dia da Africa* fair in Parque Desportivo de Camarate (Fig. 14), organised by the Torre Amiga Association the 18th of November 2023. From there, the exhibition moved to the association's headquarters where it is currently displayed. Presenting the exhibition where the data was collected and for the people from the community from which the participating children come from aligns with the research team's approach of 'returning' the research. It also demonstrates that the research was embraced locally, and its objectives and outcomes were understood and valued.

The two processes in comparison: What has been learnt

A comparison of the two actions in ''Voices of the Right to the City'' study involves reporting on the children's own photographs, words and views. The purpose of this comparison is to discuss the results in two ways. The first is in relation to the children's perceptions of the changes in the places of their everyday lives following the rehousing process responding to the question: *What did the children and their photographs tell us?* The second is in relation to the dialogical exchange between researchers and research participants responding to the question: *Did participatory photography foster dialogue with children and a collective construction of knowledge*?

The photographs and children's words reveal their concerns, needs and desires about their neighbourhoods, homes, and play places both at an individual and community level. These insights highlight the socio-spatial exclusion they experience, their creativity and the bonds they share with these places. Through the use of both the photovoice and the photo-elicitation tools, the research team gained insights into their perceptions of the rehousing process, the changes it brought to their daily lives, the preservation (or loss) of bonds with family, friends, and former neighbours, and the new connections they formed in their new neighbourhoods.

In the 2018 action, almost all the photographs were taken outdoors due to the lack of light inside the children's homes, most of which had no windows or electricity supplies. In contrast, most photographs from the 2021 action were taken by the children inside their homes through their windows. This shift reveals the different access conditions and relationship with the outdoor spaces in the neighbourhoods where they were rehoused (Fig. 6).

[Fig. 6]
C4, 2021. The Sapateiras neighbourhood. Photovoice archive.

In 2018, when discussing the BDT, Child participant 3 (C3) stated ''nothing is lacking in the neighbourhood'' (C3, photo-elicitation, 2018). Siblings, Child participant 4 (C4) and Child participant 8 (C8) pointed out issues such as the presence of rats, rubbish, puddles and mud, while Child participant 1 (C1) and Child participant 5 (C5) highlighted the absence of a playground. To C4, his bike meant everything to him as it gave him a sense of freedom, making it the almost exclusive subject of his photographs (Fig.7). In contrast, C3 enjoyed playing by jumping over the wooden sticks used for the fire. The children expressed their desire to remain in the neighbourhood, despite acknowledging that it needed improvements. They wished to build new, single-storey brick houses in the area 'if they had the money'. Nonetheless, their own homes were their favourite places in the neighbourhood, and several children captured their front doors in photographs (Fig. 8). As C3 noted, ''I prefer to live in my own house because it hides me from the cold'' (C3, photo-elicitation, 2018).

[Fig. 7]
C4, 2018. The Torre neighbourhood. Photovoice archive.

[Fig. 8]
C9, 2018. The Torre neighbourhood. Photovoice archive.

In 2021, the photographs and children's reports revealed changes in their and their families' everyday lives following their rehousing to five different public housing neighbourhoods in Camarate, Loures, Sacavém and Almada municipalities. They identified improvements to the conditions of the public spaces, housing and play areas in the neighbourhoods in 3 areas:

I. They captured in their photographs "more 'walls' and pavement on the ground, (...) more movement and more light" (C1, photo-elicitation, 2021, rehoused in the Quinta do Mocho neighbourhood in Sacavém). However, when asked to compare with the BDT, C3 responded, "there were more plants (...), here it's just more houses, there's not so much vegetation" (C3, photo-elicitation, 2021, rehoused in the CAR neighbourhood in Camarate during the study – Fig.s 9 and 10)

II. To the children, the new houses are of better quality, although they mentioned not being used to living on upper floor levels. "We don't get as cold here as we did there, everything is closed", said C1 (photo-elicitation, 2021)

III. The play spaces in the new neighbourhoods including playgrounds and the football pitches, although a little damaged, were lacking in the BDT.

[Fig. 9]
C1, 2018. The Torre neighbourhood. Photovoice archive.

[Fig. 10]
C1, 2021. The Quinta do Mocho neighbourhood. Photovoice archive.

However, almost all the children said they liked living in the BDT the most ("despite the rubbish everywhere", said C1, photo-elicitation, 2021). They all cited the following reasons:

I. C1 (photo-elicitation, 2021) commented: "Since it's a building here, you can't run around and play, can you?" Because of this, she would often visit her aunt's house in another neighbourhood, which has a yard. She also noted she preferred the old neighbourhood because it offered more opportunities for free and independent play.

II. C4 (photo-elicitation, 2021, rehoused in the Sapateiras neighbourhood in Loures) said that "it was cooler there" for playing because you could "do everything there", whereas "in a house [flat] you can't". C2 (photo-elicitation, 2021) also mentioned that "there was more space there [in the old neighbourhood]". Despite being rehoused to the São Sebastião de Guerreiros neighbourhood in Loures with C2, C7 took most of his photographs in the old neighbourhood, where his grandmother still lived and where he kept his bicycle and enjoyed greater freedom to play (Fig.s 11 and 12)

III. In the BDT they had all their friends and family nearby. C4 (photo-elicitation, 2021) explains: "There were more of us, my cousins, we were a lot of people!"

[Fig. 11]
C5, 2021. The Torre neighbourhood. Photovoice archive.

[Fig. 12]
C8, 2021. The Sapateiras neighbourhood. Photovoice archive.

On the other hand, C6 (photo-elicitation, 2021, rehoused in the Vale Figueira neighbourhood in Almada), expressed a preference for the new neighbours and neighbourhood because "there's squalor there [in the BDT], not here. Here there's a football pitch, there [in the BDT], there isn't!". C3 (photo-elicitation, 2021) mentioned feeling "at ease everywhere, with his family". Similarly, when asked by the interviewer in the 2021 photo-elicitation: "So you wouldn't like to live in a building?", C5 (rehoused to the Sapateiras neighbourhood after the study) replied: "I would. If I had friends, I'd like to". Just like C3 in the photo-elicitation of 2018, C5, who was the last child to leave the BDT, stated "there's nothing lacking in the neighbourhood [BDT]!", but he also felt sad about the absence of his playmates and relatives who had already been rehoused. The analyses of the conversations with the children about their photographs in 2018 and 2021 showed that the word "family" was one of the most frequently mentioned, and most children chose images depicting family members and friends as their favourites. C8 (photo-elicitation, 2018, rehoused in the Sapateiras neighbourhood) liked being in the BDT because she had all her family there and felt safe around them. C6 (photo-elicitation, 2021) said that he would like to live anywhere if he was with the people he loves most.

In 2021, C3, who took his photos for the second photovoice action in the BDT and was rehoused shortly afterwards, recalled during the photo-elicitation his family's vegetable garden in the BDT with some nostalgia. He remembered taking care of the garden, the products that grew there, and animals he helped raise, which appear in his pictures. C3 (photo-elicitation, 2021) explained: "This is the vegetable garden (...). I am there... I was often there during the day (...). To help (...). I liked it, it was fun!". His favourite photograph, which he entitled "Friendship", depicts the van that the Torre Amiga association used for its activities. He chose this photograph as his favourite because the van and the mural painting "Welcome to all" in the background represents the spirit of solidarity and mutual help in the old community. C3 (Ibid.) explained: "(...). This van helped to make the moving, also the collecting [and delivery of foodstuff] (...). Everyone was welcome".

The reflection with the children about the places of their everyday lives, as mentioned previously, was supported by the photo-elicitation tool (Harper 2002 and Pink 2020) which is based on the idea of using images to access symbolic representations through questioning (Coelho et al. 2024). During the conversations with the children, using their photographs as a starting point for reflection, the notion of rights was introduced, and we asked them what they understood by their rights, particularly the Right to the City, and whether they believed this right was being respected or realised as it should be. To the child participants, the Right to the City can essentially be defined as the Right to Play independently and safely in the city, having spaces supporting this. From their perspective, the Right to the City is the opportunity to do what they want while respecting others. Above all, it is the right to be and gather with family and friends.

The participatory photography and the dialogue between the participants

Despite the precarious living conditions faced by the participants faced, the children and their families contributed significantly to the progress of the participatory photography processes used in this research. During the actions, although it was not possible to hold an ideal collective discussion with all the children due to the families' choice in 2018 and the conditions imposed by the health crisis in 2021, a participatory family dimension emerged throught the research findings. The families collaborated with the photographic production and were present during the conversations about the images taken, contributing to the discussion, expressing their impressions, complementing information, and motivating the children to express themselves.

Participatory photography created an "assembly setting" for "designing things together" (Binder et al. 2015) with our young interlocutors also interacting with their families. Bridging different perspectives, it became a relational practice that brought the researcher team, children, and their families closer together in a collective construction of knowledge through dialogue (Freire 1987). Participants expressed themselves through their photographs and engaged in a dialogue with their families and the researchers, using their images as a starting point to articulate their points of view, needs, and desires on space (Fig. 13). It was essential to build bonds of trust with participants in order to foster dialogue and a genuine understanding of the places that shape their everyday lives, as well as their perceptions and perspectives on these places – a key goal of the research. Achieving this level of engagement often requires many years of relationship-building. Here, this has been made possible through the GESTUAL's direct and prolonged contact with families in the BDT since 2014 through action research. This established relationship has enabled the families to welcome the researcher team into their homes to conduct the study and gain insight into their representations and perceptions of the places where they live and have lived. The children showed great interest in and enjoyment of the participatory photography activities, reporting that they expanded their understanding of the places in their daily lives, also expanding their practical knowledge of photography and camera use.

The results of the study show that participatory photography was a valuable methodology due to its ease of application, participatory nature, and playful and engaging dynamic for the children. The two actions, as they were conceived and implemented, contributed significantly to strengthening the relationship between researchers and participants, stimulating children's participation and expression, developing their critical thinking, and practical and creative abilities. At the same time, it facilitated an understanding of their perceptions and points of view, promoting dialogue and joint critical reflection on the places they live in. On our side, we also learned to be flexible with participants' involvement, as the study's timeline depended on the children's time, their availability and willingness to participate. A middle ground of dialogue and inter-knowledge (Beaud and Weber 2007) was provided, mediated by photography, tracing paths with the children to '(re)think the city' in more interactive and inclusive ways.

[Fig. 13]
Rosa Arma, 2018. The photo-elicitation. Personal archive.

[Fig. 14]
Rosa Arma, 2023. Expo of the children's photos of 2021 action at Dia da África fair in Camarate. Personal Archive.

Conclusion

The study "Voices of the Right to the City" and its results have been presented here in terms of processes, children's perceptions of changes in their living and play places following a rehousing process, and methodology. Participatory photography was used as the primary research method to foster a dialogue between researchers and child participants.

The tools used for the study (photovoice and photo-elicitation), enabled the young participants to observe, capture and reflect on their everyday lives, revealing their knowledge, perceptions, and perspectives on space. These tools facilitated the co-production of valuable data and knowledge in a dialogue (Freire 1987) with the researchers, which could have informed the rehousing process for BDT's families by considering participants' points of view, needs and desires. This aligns with Lefebvre's (1968) definition of the 'Right to the City' as the right to actively participate in the transformation of the city, and Harvey's (2008) interpretation of it, which includes the right to transform individuals while transforming the city. However, the BDT has been demolished, and the top-down rehousing process has dispersed all its families throughout Greater Lisbon. This solution has deprived them of local support networks. Some have lost their sources of income and now face additional expenses, such as rent, water and electricity bills, and transportation. They have been left isolated, experiencing serious constraints and difficulty in adapting to their new neighbourhoods. While their housing situation has improved, their socio-economic situation has arguably worsened. In any case, this study, along with other participatory research practices in design, architecture, and urban planning within vulnerable contexts, can contribute to the creation of critical scientific knowledge about stereotyped views of self-built neighbourhoods and urban margins more broadly. The aim is to 'rethink' them to contribute to the imagination of new, more transformative intervention approaches, as alternatives to the technocratization of contemporary urban intervention in Portugal and globally. In this sense, the study results highlight the importance and potential of valuing and including the voices of children and other vulnerable groups' into the processes of transformation of the places supporting their everyday lives. This can guarantee their rights, especially the Right to Housing, Right to the City, and as children's Right to Play, and to imagine and build a more just city for everyone. Dissemination is considered a crucial stage of any participatory photography process, ensuring that 'the (photo)voices'' of the participants are heard and have an impact.

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Differentiated inhabitation of 'auteur architecture': photographing Álvaro Siza's Bouça housing estate

Marta Machado, Paulo Catrica, Ana Catarina Costa, Eduardo Ascensão

Abstract

This paper explores the different ways residents of famous buildings experience the architecture they live in. We aim at an architectural photography that seeks to portray architecture not as a visual phenomenon but rather a lived one. We have photographed residents of the Bouça housing estate in Porto, Portugal, designed in the 1970s by Pritzker Prize winning Portuguese architect Álvaro Siza to house the urban poor after the 1974 revolution. The estate has since become an architectural icon and is currently undergoing gentrification by architects, designers and artists who are drawn to the appeal of 'auteur architecture'. The differences in inhabitation between the original residents and the recent ones pertain to a complex yet dualistic stance between two distinct social classes on what architecture is and what it means, one that also raises the issue of housing for the urban poor becoming fashionable. We read such tensions while tracing back to Siza's early belief in a classless society, which later evolved into the belief in an 'interclassist city'.

Keywords: inhabitation; auteur architecture; residents' experience; Álvaro Siza; Bouça housing estate; architectural photography.

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Reinserting people into Architectural Photography

Portraying buildings which for any reason have become architectural icons is a complex process, yet one which still tends to focus on what the building was designed and intended to be rather than on what it actually is or how it is lived. A common trick is photographing residential buildings immediately after completion – before the resident moves in – or eliminating any piece of clothing or furniture that are out of place or do not fit an intended aesthetics, often to make 'the architecture stand out'. While visually appealing, the trick risks losing sight of the building's main purpose – to be lived in. Mainstream forms of architectural photography can thus be devoid of people, or even of an allusion to them through mundane objects in the image. In this paper we counter such state of affairs by trying to show how residents live in and experience 'auteur architecture',[1] how their flats reflect that idea and what may be their own sense of inhabiting a famous building.

These concerns are not new in photography debates. During the post-WWII period, a humanistic claim on architectural portrayal emerged and a 'documentary aesthetics' came to inform the debates over the reconstruction of many European cities. Nigel Henderson's portraits of children playing in the streets, for instance, were presented by Allison and Peter Smithson at CIAM X, in 1953, as an illustration of this new way of looking at and portraying architecture. Later, John Donat presented a lecture at the Royal Institute of British Architects titled "The camera always lies", in which he argued for the need of a less formal way of depicting architecture, proposing instead that architectural photography should include the lived and vivid experience of buildings or spaces, instead of reverting to the sterile photography of post-construction but pre-occupancy unlived spaces usually presented in architectural magazines.[2]

Recurrent calls for a more humanistic architectural photography had philosophical and theoretical backings. Martin Heidegger's concept of 'being-in-the-world' was often used given it underlines that our existence is inherently connected to the world, and that we experience these connections through our interactions with the surrounding environment and the things in it.[3] Architectural photography would in this vein at least attempt to catch, if only fleetingly, such connections of 'being-in-the-world'. A second theoretical stand revolved around Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus*, which argues that the built environment can be regarded as a spatial expression of class and ideology, thus that buildings can also be conceived as representations of

1 Ana Catarina Costa et al., "Inhabiting Auteur Architecture: Tracing the Residents' Experience of Álvaro Siza's Bouça Housing Estate," *Social and Cultural Geography*, 2025, https://doi.org/10.1080/14649365.2025.2464016.
2 John Donat, "The Camera Always Lies," *Royal Institute of British Architects Journal* 75 (1968): 62–71. See also Robert Elwall, *Building with Light: An International History of Architectural Photography* (London: Merrell, 2004).
3 Martin Heidegger, "Building Dwelling Thinking," in *Basic Writings: From Being and Time (1927) to The Task of Thinking* (1964), trans. and ed. David Farrell Krell (San Francisco: Harper, 1993).

their owners and users through class markers such as furniture, decoration and other elements.[4] Later, Homi Bhabha's 'un-homely' (following Freud's concept of *unheimlich*) came to destabilise such schematic meanings, and in the process blur the theoretical boundaries between private and public experiences of home.[5] Adding to such cumulative complications of experiencing home, some architectural offices now try to leave room for the inhabitants' future imprint on the buildings they design, as can be seen in atelier Elemental's half-built houses for low income populations or in the photographic series of the *Cité manifeste* complex in Mulhouse by Lacaton and Vassal.[6]

Recent research from human geography's sub-field known as the geographies of architecture has emphasized that buildings inhabit our lives as much as we inhabit them, and that they do so in multidimensional ways: from the interior to the exterior, from visual impression or iconography to the functional elements of housing and importantly to our physical and mental inhabitation inside the house.[7] The focus of these studies is thus to 'practising architectures', which include not only *material matter* (the physical architectural artefact) but also *human mattering* (meaning, judgment, affect and atmosphere).[8] Among them is for instance Mark Llewellyn's study on the reception and appropriation of early modernist apartment complex Kensal House in London. Llewellyn tells of in-movers in the 1930s making sure to bring or buy ornate, traditional furniture to 'help them feel at home' amongst the geometric, minimalist design of their homes.[9]

Contemporary architectural photography has in a way accompanied such understandings of 'what architecture is' and some of its strands try to re-insert people and inhabitation practices back into architectural depiction. This is not to be mistaken with folk aesthetics nor with things like 'home staging', the all-pervasive home visualities we can see in furniture catalogues, real estate websites and developer's prospectus, where an ersatz type of inhabitation, almost always consisting of a middle-class aesthetics, is performed to enhance the commodity being sold — furniture, a house or a whole neighbourhood. Regarding this, Beatriz Colomina has shown a possible archaeology of images of domestic bliss in the case of the technologies, initially developed for war that became central elements of post-war, American domesticity, such as microwaves and television (today added by the personal computer and the mouse,

4 Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).
5 Homi Bhabha, "The World and the Home," in *Dangerous Liaisons: Gender, Nation, and Postcolonial Perspectives*, ed. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 445–455.
6 Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal, "Cité Manifeste, Mulhouse," 2005, https://www.lacatonvassal.com/index.php?idp=19.
7 Kraftl, Geographies of Architecture; Kraftl and Adey, Architecture/Affect/Inhabitation; Lees, "Towards a Critical Geography of Architecture."
8 Jane M. Jacobs and Peter Merriman, "Practising Architectures," *Social & Cultural Geography* 12, no. 3 (2011): 212.
9 Mark Llewellyn, "'Urban Village' or 'White House': Envisioned Spaces, Experienced Places, and Everyday Life at Kensal House, London in the 1930s," Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 22, no. 2 (2004): 229–249.

not to mention the internet, which came later).[10] She had previously showed how modern architecture had been 'produced' not only by buildings themselves but by their representations in mass media, including those 'un-lived' staged domesticities.[11]

An example of architectural photography with a human presence yet clearly portraying an 'un-lived' and staged domesticity are Julius Shulman's photographs of mid-century modern architecture, in particular his images of Richard Neutra's and other architects' LA hills homes.[12] The human presence in such photographs is more closely aligned with the aim of projecting a specific lifestyle to be associated with the house — an elegant, bourgeois and modern lifestyle — as well as enhancing the architectural and property values of the houses depicted, than with the intricacies of actual inhabitation. As Joseph Rosa and Esther McCoy note, Shulman's 'method of "constructing" photographic views often transcend[ed] reality to capture the spirit, time and place of a work of architecture'[13]; but doing so, we add, with a great deal of poetic (and imagetic) license that was not interested in actual inhabitation but rather in iconic image producing.

Against this background, we aim our photographs to point to a more complicated, less staged process of inhabitation. In the rest of this paper, despite our images sometimes showing less human presence than Shulman's, we wish to provide glimpses of an everyday, un-staged domesticity and inhabitation. We aim to show the way the dwelling represents the dweller and vice-versa (how the dweller transforms its dwelling) as well as explore the contested process of living in a building charged with architectural meaning.[14]

Show us your home at Bouça

The images and interview excerpts presented below result from a series of interviews carried out at the Bouça housing estate. They were produced within the scope of a broader research project on resident's experience of Siza's architecture. Ethnographic fieldwork at Bouça lasted five months and included 15 interviews with residents of different age, gender, class and occupation, as well as different tenure status and date of arrival. During the interviews, inspired by Jane M. Jacobs's SUYH Show Us Your Home ethnomethodology, we asked residents to show us their flat and tell us how they perceived and interacted with architectural elements, photographing them as they spoke.[15]

10 Beatriz Colomina, *Domesticity at War* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2007).
11 Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996).
12 Pierluigi Serraino, *Julius Shulman: Modernism Rediscovered* (Cologne: Taschen, 2018).
13 Joseph Rosa and Esther McCoy, *A Constructed View: The Architectural Photography of Julius Shulman* (New York: Rizzoli, 1994).
14 Peter Kraftl, "Living in an Artwork: The Extraordinary Geographies of the Hundertwasser-Haus, Vienna," *Cultural Geographies* 16, no. 1 (2009): 111–134.
15 Jacobs, Cairns, and Strebel 2006; 2012.

Asking residents to participate in the photographic process aimed at engaging directly with their personal perceptions of their homes, hopefully shedding light on the way they had already adapted the space and how they might wanted to change it further. This interaction introduces an additional layer to common photographic practice, one where residents' self-perception and interpretation about their living environment is heightened, and gets at the idea that architecture is not static but continuously shaped by its users. By involving residents in the decision-making of what to show and how to present their homes, we not only documented their lived experiences but also captured their evolving relationship with the space. Such photo elicitation[16] during interviews was complemented by a supplementary session to photograph two specific apartments, which are among those featured in this paper. Instead of looking only at the conventional subjects of architecture such as walls, angles, perspective, volumes and light, we propose to look at the flats in Bouça in their multiplicity: as a representation of people's worldviews and experiences; as homes that are sometimes performed, sometimes dismissed; and as places of everyday inhabitation, taste and belonging. We turn to Bouça's history next.

The Bouça housing estate: revolutionary architecture, inhabitation and gentrification

The Bouça housing estate was commissioned in the early 1970s by the Housing Investment Fund (*FFH Fundo de Fomento da Habitação*) to develop land that belonged to Porto's Juvenile Court (*Tribunal Central de Menores do Porto*) for middle income residents.[17] However, it was redirected after 1974, during the post-revolutionary political atmosphere that lasted around two years, to be built through the assisted self-building and participatory architecture program *Serviço Ambulatório de Apoio Local* (Mobile Service for Local Support, from now on SAAL),[18] for the low-income population that lived in areas near the site. Having endured 48 years of a fascist dictatorship that had led to serious underdevelopment and poverty, the urban poor lived in precarious housing conditions such as Lisbon's shanty towns or Porto's tenement buildings known as *Ilhas* (Islands). The latter consisted of the small flats of about 9 to 25 square meters built for proletarian workers on the back of the bourgeois buildings that faced the street. Typically these dwellings had only one façade and were accessed by a corridor that occupied the entire lot, with a shared toilet at the beginning or at the end.[19] Although of very poor living conditions,

16 Harper, Douglas. "Talking about Pictures: A Case for Photo Elicitation." *Visual Studies* 17 (1) (2002): 13–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/14725860220137345.
17 Wang, Wilfried. "Bouça and Public Housing at the Beginning of the 21st Century." In *Bouça Residents' Association Housing: Porto 1972–77, 2005–06*, edited by Á. Siza, B. Fleck, and W. Wang, 65–70. Austin: University of Texas, 2008.
18 Eduardo Ascensão, "Interfaces of Informality: When Experts Meet Informal Settlers," City 20, no. 4 (2016): 563–580; Ana Catarina Costa, *O campo da arquitectura na construção da cidade democrática: o Processo SAAL/*Porto (PhD diss., Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto, 2022).
19 Manuel C. Teixeira, *Habitação Popular na Cidade Oitocentista: As Ilhas do Porto* (Lisboa: Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian, 1996).

[Fig. 1] *Ilhas* and similar poor housing in 1970s Porto: entrance to *ilha* at Avenida Fernão Magalhães, c. 1976 (Left) and the Travessa do Leal alley (Centre), November 1974. Photographs: Alexandre Alves Costa and Sérgio Fernandez (Centro de Documentação 25 de Abril). Newly-arrived residents at Bouça cook a meal, 1979 (Right). Photograph: Brigitte Fleck.

the *ilhas* typology in a way helped institute an idea of community and sharing in adversity. The SAAL housing program was initiated to address the housing needs of such populations, and Bouça – although initiated before – became one of its most prominent exemplars.

Today, the housing estate consists of four buildings anchored by a high wall that both connects them and blocks the noise coming from a railway line located immediately to the North. Between the buildings are courtyards with different characteristics: a tree-shaded area, a lawn and the central courtyard in which individual access stairs to the dwellings form a kind of bench for social gatherings or a scenario for ordinary life. In a way, Siza took *ilha's* corridors as social spaces and enlarged them to a much larger scale, with the intention of privileging social life in the estate. All the main buildings have four floors and include two overlapping maisonettes, where the lower floors are accessed directly from the street and the upper floors are accessed through exterior galleries (or 'streets-in-the-sky').

[Fig. 2] Bouça's central courtyard. Video Still: Author 2, 2024.

Bouça was not entirely built in the late 1970s. Due to different problems, including the winding down of the SAAL by central government (which deemed the program too revolutionary when the country 'normalised' into a parliamentary liberal democracy), the estate was built in two phases: 56 dwellings in the late 1970s, for the poor and poorly-housed residents of the area. They had to form a Residents Association, which according to SAAL rules and the revolutionary zeitgeist was the only type of entity that could be the recipient of funding through low-interest loans; and the remaining 72 dwellings in 2006, through a cooperative formed mostly by architects and designers — we detail this process in a different article.[20]

What happened was that the estate became famous in the intervening time, as an illustration of Siza's architectural talent and the qualities of participatory architecture as well as, to an extent, a nostalgic memento of architecture designed amidst progressive direct democracy. Currently, it is visited by many architectural tourists, ranging from individuals wandering around the estate to more organised international architecture students' visits (Fig. 3).

Coupled with its central location and the extremely competitive prices the cooperative managed to put the flats up for sale, it became a desirable place for the creative classes to move into when the second phase was finished. Some ended up buying more than one flat and

20 Costa et al., "Inhabiting Auteur Architecture."

[Fig. 3] An architectural tourist visits and photographs Bouça (Left). Photograph: Author 4, 2023. Residents on being subjected to the tourist gaze: "*I feel [like I'm living in an artwork] even more when I'm out there smoking: I'm on these stairs that everyone looks at, and near this stair-monument that everyone laughs at and says the craziest things about...*" (Interview, 2023). The stair-monument (Right). Photograph: Author 3, 2023.

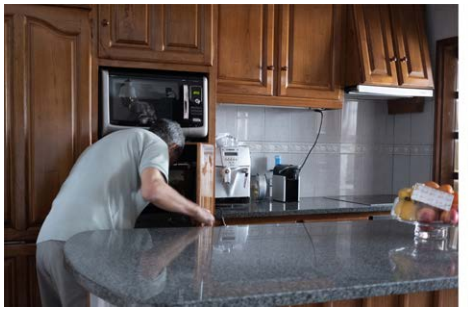
either rented them at market values or sold them at a higher value — e.g. flats bought from the cooperative for 80.000€ in 2006 were valued at 230.000€ in 2020. Some original residents, or their descendants, have also sold their flats. Overall, the process has similarities with the gentrification of landmark modernist estates by modernism aficionados like the Trellick Tower and Keeling House in London, among others worldwide.[21]

As a consequence, at Bouça there is a marked divide between residents belonging to each phase, and even if new residents make steps towards bridging the divide and fostering a sense of community, older residents feel the estate's original spirit is fading. The class divide and, in a way, distinct worldviews can be seen inside the flats, where furniture and reconfigurations are different and an overall attitude towards Siza's architecture is different too. Figures 4 to 6 reveal the way home interiors vary according to the different generations of residents. Taken at a very similar angle, they show that whereas recent, more educated and higher income in-movers make intense efforts to align the aesthetics of their flat with Siza's original design, sometimes regardless of everyday practicality, older residents reconfigure their flats to suit practical needs and their individual notions of inhabitation, including more ornate furniture and arriving at a more baroque outcome.

21 Maren Harnack, "London's Trellick Tower and the Pastoral Eye," in *Urban Constellations*, ed. Matthew Gandy (Berlin: Jovis, 2011), 127–131; James Boughton, *Municipal Dreams: The Rise and Fall of Council Housing* (London: Verso, 2018), 122.

[Fig. 4] Recent in-movers, many of them architects, bought flats that had been extensively altered by their original residents and re-did them back to Siza's original project: "*We knew that we would want to refurbish* (or. reabilitar) *in depth. During this research I realized that we didn't have to change everything, we just had to understand if we were in a balanced game. We are architects, we can put it in good condition.*" (Interview, 2023). Photo: Author 2, 2023.

[Fig. 5] First-phase residents' home interiors and renovations reflect the need for a visual transformation for a population for whom Siza's design is not determinant: "*It's not a flat with great aesthetics, it's a normal flat, like in any council neighbourhood, (...) it's nothing to be surprised about.*" (Interview, 2023). Photo: Author 2, 2023.



[Fig. 6] In the kitchen: "*I've made some changes in the flat. (...) I wanted to make a completely new kitchen, and the builder said to me: 'I'm going to make you an Algarvian kitchen.' An Algarvian kitchen, what's that? 'It's a big island, then there's a snack-bar type spotlight on top, the wife cooks on one side, then there are stools as if you were in a bar, what do you think?'*" (Interview, 2023). Photos: Author 1, 2023.

A similar difference occurs in the way workspaces are arranged: while creative or professional occupations are strongly reflected in people's homes (as suggested by desks with desktop or laptop computers, design chairs and framed posters); in older residents that contamination is much less visible. (Fig. 7).

Living room decoration is one more case where recent in-movers try to make light and space distribution stand out, whereas older residents seek 'cosiness' or a homely feeling differently.

[Fig. 7] Workspaces: "*The modern people have another standard of living that we don't have, they have another position that we don't have, right? But our next-door neighbours were people who, from the first day, were always very friendly with us.*" (Interview, 2023). Photos: Author 1, 2023.

[Fig. 8] *I think it's important to be from Siza, but not because of the name. Living here, you can see the house is very well designed. It's very small, but it's very well designed. We are three people here and we are super comfortable. We are able to have dinners, do everything on this tiny table."* (Interview, 2023); *"We really like the light in the flat, it's not that intense, and the temperature is also very good."* (Interview, 2023). Photos: Author 1, 2023.

A final example of different modes of inhabitation regards the everyday use of what we term Siza's micro-technologies. These are the design pieces that contribute to everyday inhabitation such as door knobs and window pushers, towel hangers, bathroom faucets and so on. Siza has always devoted time to design such instruments, which he considers part of the architectural experience – he has famously mentioned how 'living a house' is a continuous struggle with things breaking up and needing repair.[22] At Bouça, the recent residents give much importance to these artefacts, either by maintaining original technologies (e.g. the window opening system) or by substituting the materials previous owners had bought to replace the original hardware, either with 'signed' pieces which are on sale in dedicated design stores or with similarly-looking 'un-signed' pieces (Fig. 9).

22 Álvaro Siza, "Viver uma Casa" (1994), in *Álvaro Siza: Obras e Projectos*, ed. P. Llano and C. Castanheira (Madrid: Electra, 1995), 94–95.

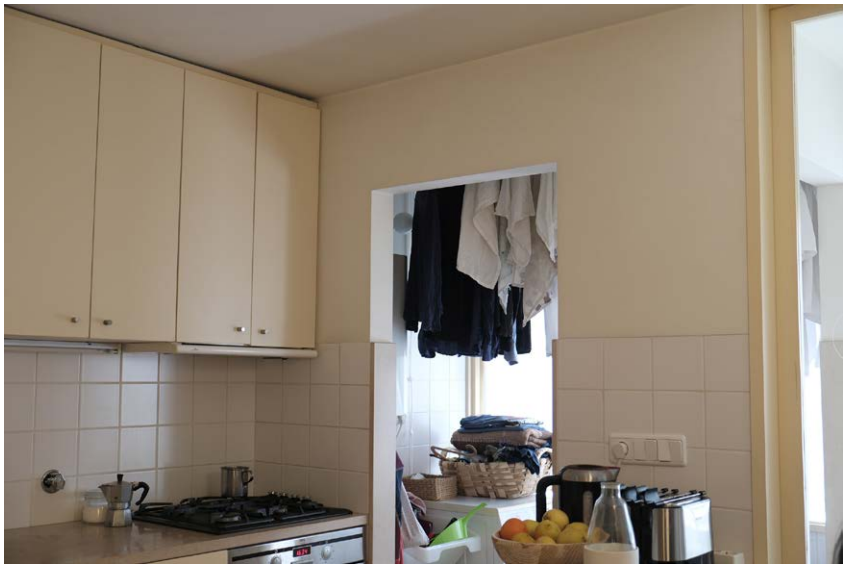
[Fig. 9] New residents maintain Siza's 'micro-technologies' in the flat, such as door levers and the window system (Left). In the bathroom, parts and external pipes are not original but were chosen by new owner-architects to match the original concept (Right). Photos: Author 1, 2023.

Such everyday modes of engagement with Siza's architecture suggests a form of sociotechnical entanglement between people and technologies in the built environment, much like Jane M. Jacobs' research on the science and technology of highrise housing estates, only regarding the smaller scale of auteur architecture.[23]

This is, in a summarised way, the reception of Siza's architecture at Bouça along class lines. For Siza himself, ideas concerning class and architecture have long been an integral part of his thought. During the revolutionary period, in a commentary paper on the role of SAAL's brigades, he expressed a strong belief in a classless society.[24] Bouça could be read as an architectural manifestation of this belief. However, in the nearly five decades since its inception, while the living conditions of the working class have significantly improved in Portugal, inequality levels have risen and gentrification has occurred in several areas of cities, including, acutely, at Bouça. In 2014, confronted with the increasing gentrification and *embourgeosiement* of the estate, Siza (in dialogue with architect-curator Nuno Grande) reframed his early belief and emphasised how the existence of new, wealthier residents at Bouça must be taken as part and parcel of living in an 'interclassist city'.[25]

23 Jane M. Jacobs, Stephen Cairns, and Ignaz Strebel, "Doing Building Work: Methods at the Interface of Geography and Architecture," *Geographical Research* 50, no. 2 (2012): 126–140; Jacobs, Cairns, and Strebel, "Windows: Re-viewing Red Road," *Scottish Geographical Journal* 124, no. 2–3 (2008): 165–184.
24 Siza 1976.
25 Mariana Duarte, "As Discussões eram de uma Sinceridade Absoluta," *Público*, November 9, 2014.

It is a compelling idea, suggesting a permanent dialogue and interaction between people belonging to different socioeconomic classes and merits further development. Siza and Grande, unfortunately, did not detail it. Still, the phrase hints at a city where the urban poor and better-off households can live in physical and social proximity, i.e. not in physical proximity that does not translate to social proximity, what Tim Butler and Garry Robson have termed 'social tectonics'.[26] In a way, middle- and upper middle-class individuals being in awe with flats that have relatively small areas is already a type of interconnection, a downward adjustment to live in a smaller flat than they are used to (Fig. 10).



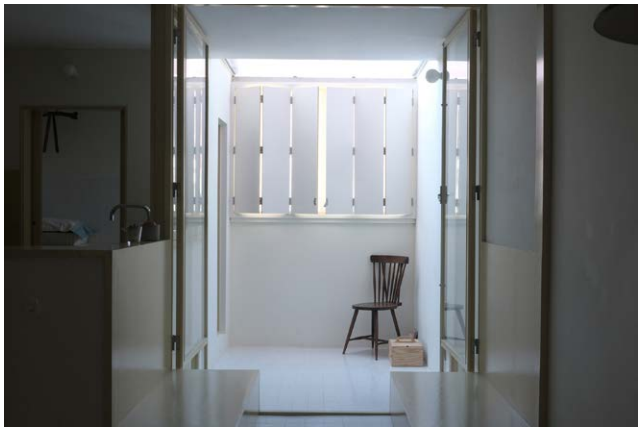
[Fig. 10] Flats are small and residents need to make good use of the limited space, such as by drying clothes in the laundry next to the kitchen: "*Our fridge is small. We've reduced the fridge area. (...) And the washing machine is a washer-dryer, we had to optimise the space. Not having a tumble dryer in this flat is challenging at certain times of the year.* (Interview, 2023). Photos: Author 1, 2023.

However, such adaptation has more to do with the Siza appeal than the wish for interaction with low income neighbours. Interaction, residents say, happens only sporadically, in particular during the Midsummer festivities of São João (Saint John, Porto's patron saint) (Fig. 11).

26 Butler and Robson 2001. See also Jackson and Butler 2015.

Fig. 11] 'Social tectonics' at Bouça: "I like the atmosphere here, in theory, because in practice there is no interaction, there is no feeling of companionship among the residents. Only in S. João..." (Interview, 2023). Video Still: Author 3, 2024.

Other, more contradictory moments of interaction relate to the feelings of middle-class individuals of seeing older residents moved out by their children to be able to cash in on their recently appreciated flats (Fig. 12).



[Fig. 12] *"There was a man who I really liked, he lived there (...). Now his wife passed away his son sold the flat. He took him to a care home, and he is there, he lives there. I think the son did wrong, but there you go, it's money moving on. (...) He could have let the man live here, everyone got along well with him, the man was living in his environment. I don't even know if he's still alive... When these people are taken from their environment, they sometimes pass away quickly..."* (Interview, 2023). Photo: Author 2, 2023.

The only problem of an 'interclassist city' is thus if it is merely a transitory phase of a revolutionary city based on equality becoming increasingly commodified and displacing the poor until it is fully gentrified. Such conceptual concerns can be seen very concretely at Bouça, with its seemingly unstoppable gentrification being exactly what the original residents are the most afraid of (Fig. 13).

[Fig. 13] Low income population worry about short-term rentals adding to the almost complete gentrification of the neighborhood:
"This thing now about having short term lets, this was not meant for that. The ideology was this was meant for poor people. Nowadays it is the complete opposite. And if they can, they'll take away the few that are still here. I can't get my head around it, and it pains me." (Interview, 2023);
"I'm not against short term rentals. If you buy a house and put it under the short term rental regime, look: the money is yours, the investment was yours, you had no state contribution, therefore it is perfectly logical that you make the most out of your money. Now, what is not logical is that you monetise what you have, which is yours, but which was in a way offered to you by the state. I'm against that. Therefore, there should be a law to forbid cooperatives, or anyone living in cooperatives, from transforming their flats into short term rentals." (Interview, 2023).
"She told me: 'I came because the price is attractive, and I like this place', and then she also said: 'this will be worth a lot of money in a dozen years, because it is under the architecture of Siza'. What do I care about Siza?" (Interview, 2023). Video Still: Author 2, 2024. Airbnb listing, 2024.

Conclusion

The tension existing at Bouça arises from a complex situation that we can summarise as a dualistic one, with the original residents, on the one hand, and the new inhabitants, attracted by the estate's architectural prestige, on the other. Despite risking oversimplification, our photographic evidence points to such a differentiated inhabitation, and images and residents' voices point to two typical interiors and inhabitation modes – with a third, a conceptual one, running in parallel.

The first is the typical interior of the original residents. This interior represents the organic development of spaces as used and modified by the initial inhabitants. It showcases their personal touch, adapting Siza's architecture to their needs, traditions, and lifestyles without the fear of betraying the architect's vision. This type of interior often reveals a blend of the architect's vision and the residents' everyday practices, leading to a unique and evolving space that reflects the lived experience – even if at a quick glance, or from an architectural purist's viewpoint, it may look uglier than other house interiors. Regarding inhabitation, there is a strong concern in this set of residents with practical aspects of living, such as stairs, as well as more political views of housing, such as being very proud of living in Bouça for what it meant politico-historically, i.e. as an example of a revolutionary push to house the urban poor in quality flats.

The second is the typical interior of the Siza followers. These interiors are strongly influenced by the practices of those who admire and follow Siza's architectural philosophy in their homes. Siza followers have tended to preserve the integrity of his design while incorporating contemporary elements that align with his visual language. This results in spaces that maintain the aesthetic and functional intentions of Siza, demonstrating a respect for his original vision while also reflecting the evolving nature of design practices among his followers. Regarding inhabitation, there is an emphasis by Siza followers to pinpoint where in their home Siza's brilliant design can be seen (the layout making for spacious flats, the window and door systems making for good ventilation and light) and subsequently how intangible qualities such as atmosphere can be preserved with their own adaptations to the original design.

The third inhabitation mode would be Siza's own imagined interiors, which would perhaps be more conceptual but also more elusive. In a way, they can be inferred from his drawings, writings and the principles evident in his completed projects. The interiors by Siza followers could hypothetically correspond to such an imagined interior and inhabitation practices. However, in Siza's own words, the architect's work finishes 'the moment buildings are delivered to clients', which for flats means the moment they start to be inhabited.[27] Siza may thus have an abstract,

27 Brigitte Fleck, *Álvaro Siza* (Lisboa: Relógio d'Água, 1999), 87.

conceptual and imagined version of what each space he designs can and should be for, how can and should it be inhabited; but he also knows architectural ideas are transformed by people, external influences and practical constraints. The photographs and the accompanying voices in this paper make such differentiated experiences explicit and point exactly to a truly heterodox appropriation of Siza's architecture.

One final note. Photography in this research, in a way, transcended mere documentation and became a tool for revealing the complex, evolving relationship between aesthetic ideals and social reality. It allowed us to portray not just parts of Siza's interior design and architecture but also how they are lived and modified, thus highlighting the ongoing dialogue between the built environment and its inhabitants. In this way, we attempted to reconcile the tension between photography as an aesthetic medium and as a social practice, using it to convey the full experience of architecture by inhabitants.

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Collective Housing by Collective Practice: The Inclined Condominium in Bergamo

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Abstract

In 1972 Bergamo municipality identified new areas within the city's fabric to build public housing developments. In one of these areas a few years later was built a housing project called *Terrazze Fiorite* (Flower Terraces). The intervention was designed by four architects who in those years had co-signed several significant works in the city: W. Barbero, B. Ciagà, G. Gambirasio and G. Zenoni. These architects during the 1960s and 1970s had worked side by side as a *group*. *Terrazze Fiorite* is the result of this kind of collaboration. The housing intervention draws a new portion of the city through a low-rise, high-intensity settlement model with L-shape housing units, arranged around patios. The apparent banality of the intervention, however, conceals an interesting spatial expedient: the settlement pattern is placed on an artificial sloping plane obtained by a continuous and slight staggering of houses arranged one after the other. The slope becomes an opportunity to develop a landscape of uninterrupted pedestrian paths characterized by continuous variations, thanks to excavations that host lush gardens and squares or flat areas near the house entrances. A complex scenery to allow inhabitants a neighborhood sociability in different degrees, where everyone is free to live the space without any kind of barriers. The essay aims to offer, through worlds and original photographs, a point of view on this housing project highlighting the spatial links established among citizens, buildings, landscape and city.

Keywords: built landscape; low-rise housing; courtyard; collective practice.

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Federica Mambrini (Mantova,1994) graduated in architecture (2019) at Politecnico di Milano and attended the master in Photography at IUAV Venezia (2021). In 2023 she obtained the Italian Council funding from the Ministry of Culture. She held two personal exhibitions, respectively at the Museo de Historia Natural de Valparaiso and at Mutty, Mantova. She has participated in various artist residencies in Italy, Austria and Chile; the most recent one in the Atacama Desert with LaWayaka Current. Her first photobook Come costruire un castello di carte (ISBN 978-88-946851-0-7) was published in 2022 with Giostre Edizioni, then selected among the best photobooks at European level in 2022 by Fiebre Photobook Festival, Madrid. She has also published architectural photographic projects in magazines and books. She lives and works between Torino, Milano and Mantova.

Bergamo adopted its urban development plan in 1969, driven by the post-World War II economic boom that radically transformed the country's urban centers.[1] This plan identified new areas for building expansion in the part of the city known as *Città Bassa* (Lower City); one of the designated areas was the Loreto neighborhood, on the outskirts of the previously built city.[2] The area is flat and traversed by a major road artery connecting Bergamo to other important urban centers and Switzerland, the Briantea route. Through a detailed plan for subsidized housing, the residential complex known as *Terrazze Fiorite* (Flower Terraces) was built in the mid-1970s. Covering an area of approximately thirty-two hectares, it accommodated around seventeen hundred dwellers with four hundred housing units, 40% of which were designated for social housing, while the rest were on the open market.[3]

The project was signed by architects Giuseppe Gambirasio (1930) and Giorgio Zenoni (1935) yet attributing the sole authorship of the project to these two individuals is difficult. In fact, for about fifteen years, the two collaborated intensively with two other architects, Walter Barbero (1941) and Baran Ciagà (1934). The four architects, starting from the second half of the 1960s, worked side by side, realizing numerous projects in Bergamo and its surrounding areas, including three schools, a convent, showrooms for furniture and tires, a multifunctional building for housing, parking, and artist atelier. Over the years, the four architects had established a rather unique and consolidated working relationship: each one of them had their own studio next to each other, on the same floor of a building in the center of Bergamo.[4] The professional offices were separated only by a door, which often remained open to allow to all of them to collaborate informally together on various projects. Although they never formed a single associated studio, their frequent collaboration soon made them known as a *group*.[5]

Their buildings, where different forms and solutions overlap, reveal the distinct inclinations and personal research of the four architects. The natural consequence of this collaborative way of working. However, a common trajectory pursued by the group of designers can be discerned: beyond the forms in which it manifests, architecture is understood as an urban phenomenon[6] that responds to the surrounding environment, enhances it, transforms it, even with actions in declared contrast, highlighting new relationships between it and the city's inhabitants. The claim of an unified formal research takes a back seat, to make room for reflections that translate these

1 Manfredo Tafuri, *Storia dell'architettura italiana 1944-1985* (Torino: Einaudi, 1982), 22-23
2 Andrea Gritti, "Lungo un Piano Inclinato", *ARK*, no. 33 (March 2020): 125
3 Fulvio Irace, "Complesso residenziale Terrazze fiorite", *Architettura in Lombardia dal 1945 ad oggi*. http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture900/schede/p4010-00297/
4 The information about the collaboration about the four architects were obtained during an interview with Giorgio Zenoni at his personal archive in Seriate (Bergamo) in January 2022
5 Walter Barbero, Baran Ciagà, Giuseppe Gambirasio, Giorgio Zenoni, "Eclettismo di gruppo. Architetture di Gambirasio – Zenoni – Barbero – Ciagà", *Casabella*, no. 361, (November 1972): 28-49
6 Paolo Vitali, "Architettura di gruppo: il coraggio delle cose nuove", *Lasciare tracce. Il viaggio di Walter Barbero*, ed. M. Cantamessa (Bergamo: Lubrina Editore, 2015): 28

intentions into shapes – always different. It happens that one of their multifunctional buildings in the center of the city of Bergamo is a collection of volumes arranged to create elevated horizontal connections, linking the building and the city;[7] or one of their showrooms is a collection of volumes arranged to create a covered promenade, an extension of the surrounding geography.[8]

This attitude towards the project as an urban device finds a clear expression in the Terrazze Fiorite complex. It is an intervention that utilizes the typology of the courtyard house as the foundational nucleus of the entire project. The predominantly single- or two-story apartments, in an L-shaped form, are arranged in pairs of two, forming a C around a south-facing courtyard. The low-density typology of the courtyard house continues the debate of those years on residential settlements. The architects take inspiration from the vernacular example of the *casbah*[9] which was studied during those years by Team X and became a key area of research in low-rise, high-density housing interventions carried out in the post-war period. This is demonstrated by examples such as the Unità Abitativa Orizzontale in Rome and the PREVI experiment in Lima. They adapt this settlement model with a structural system and a formal ensemble of pitched roofs, bricks – typical of Lombard architecture[10] – and glass panes oriented towards green courtyards. In this way, they achieve an intervention at a community scale, where the courtyard serves as a catalyst for social exchanges among the different residents. A radical response to the surrounding residential fabric consisting of single-family villas and apartment buildings. In addition to the chosen typology, the intervention has another characteristic element. The houses are situated on an artificial sloping plane made of reinforced concrete with a north-south orientation. The inclined plane has a dual effect on the urban scale of the intervention. On one hand, the void created beneath it allows for the accommodation of storage and parking at a level with the streets to the north and south of the plot, connecting the housing to the rest of the city at ground level. On the other hand, the inclined plane, by raising an otherwise flat topography, creates a sequence of stepped houses towards the north, establishing an explicit visual relationship with the hills of the *Città Alta* (Upper City) behind them. The topographic plane transforms the courtyard houses into an inclined condominium, a dual spatial and allegorical hinge, establishing urban continuity and a formal allusion to the upper city.[11]

Entering the internal circulation streets of *Terrazze Fiorite*, another effect produced by the sloping plane is noticeable: by concentrating vehicular traffic below the plane, the architects were free to arrange pedestrian streets at a higher level. These pedestrian streets overlap with an orientation along the north-south and east-west axes of the private house courtyards.

7 Fulvio Irace, "Edificio polifunzionale Duse", *Architettura in Lombardia dal 1945 ad oggi*. https://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/architetture900/schede/p4010-00295/?offset=2&q=
8 Giuseppe Gambirasio, "Seguendo il filo di Arianna", *Gambirasio*, ed. E. Pinna (Genova: SAGEP, 1987): 20
9 Gambirasio, "Seguendo il filo di Arianna", 28
10 Fulvio Irace, "Architetti e architetture a Bergamo nell'epoca della modernità", Bergamo e il suo territorio ed. G. Rumi, G. Mezzanotte, A. Cova (Milano: Cariplo,1997): 245-263
11 Gambirasio, "Seguendo il filo di Arianna", 28

The intersection generates walkways with sections that narrow and widen repeatedly, terraces that connect the interior of the complex with the hills of the upper city, flat portions to facilitate stopping and access to the housing units. In addition to this scenario, another level of spatial and sensory complexity is achieved through the arrangement of large granite tanks hosting lush shrubs while also serving as seating, making walks along the gently sloping paths enjoyable. The complex weave of visual landmarks and thresholds of bricks and sloping roofs then converges into the fundamental spatial element of the intervention: the entrance courtyards, which with their green landscape provide an intimate and peaceful image to the residents.

Indeed, it is the inhabitants of these houses who live in and bring life to this built landscape. They take care of the green courtyards, furnish the pathways with their everyday objects, with potted plants, with chairs in front of the house doors. They organize events, dinners on summer evenings with large tables invading the walkways while children play along the sloping ramps. In this context, the architecture of the houses in the inclined condominium assumes a secondary role, becoming a theatrical backdrop, a blank drawing board, ready to receive the ideas, care, and all informal collaborative gestures of its inhabitants.

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Captions

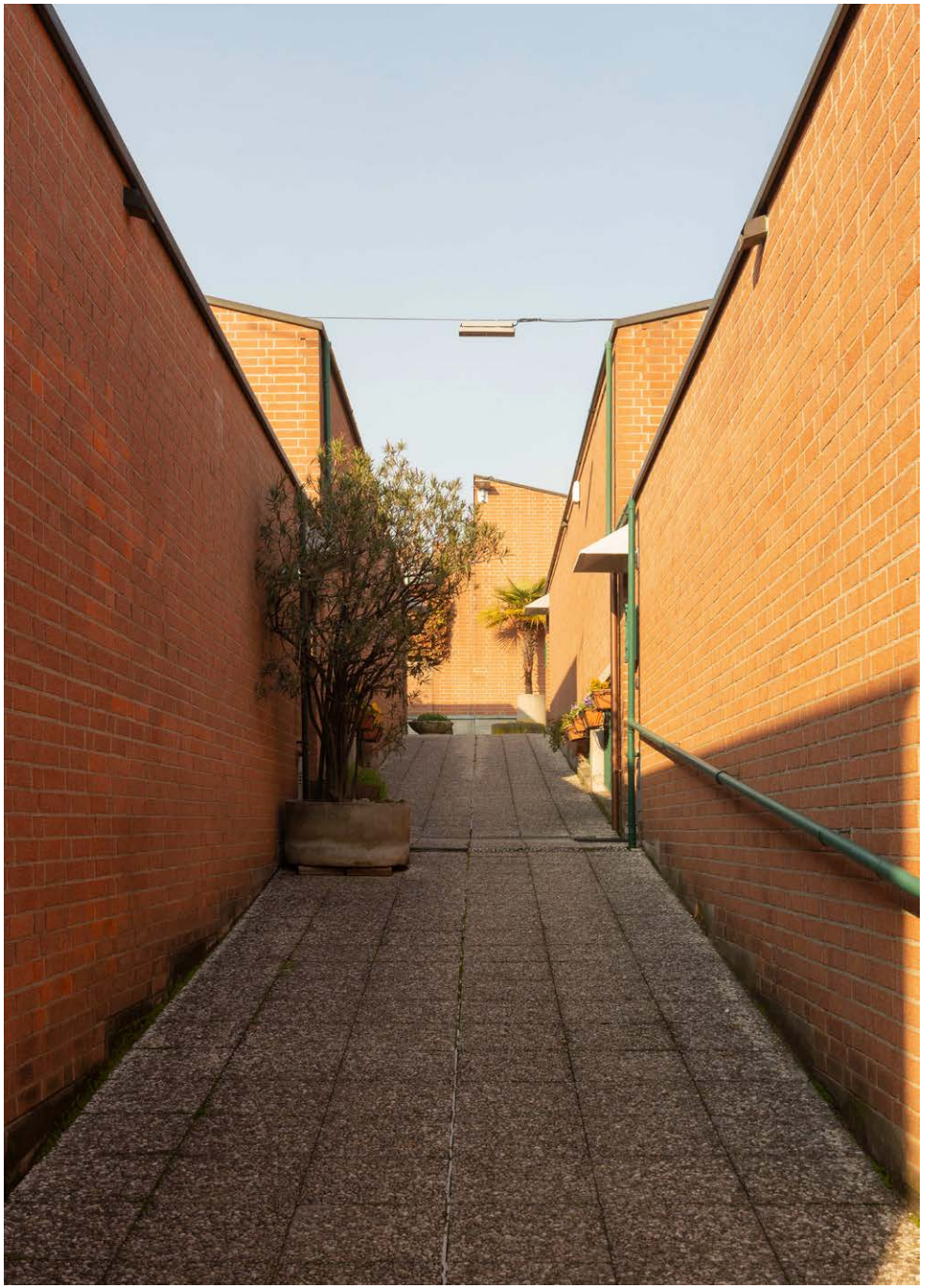
[Fig. 1]
Lower entrance to Terrazze Fiorite. Relationship between the housing and Città Alta

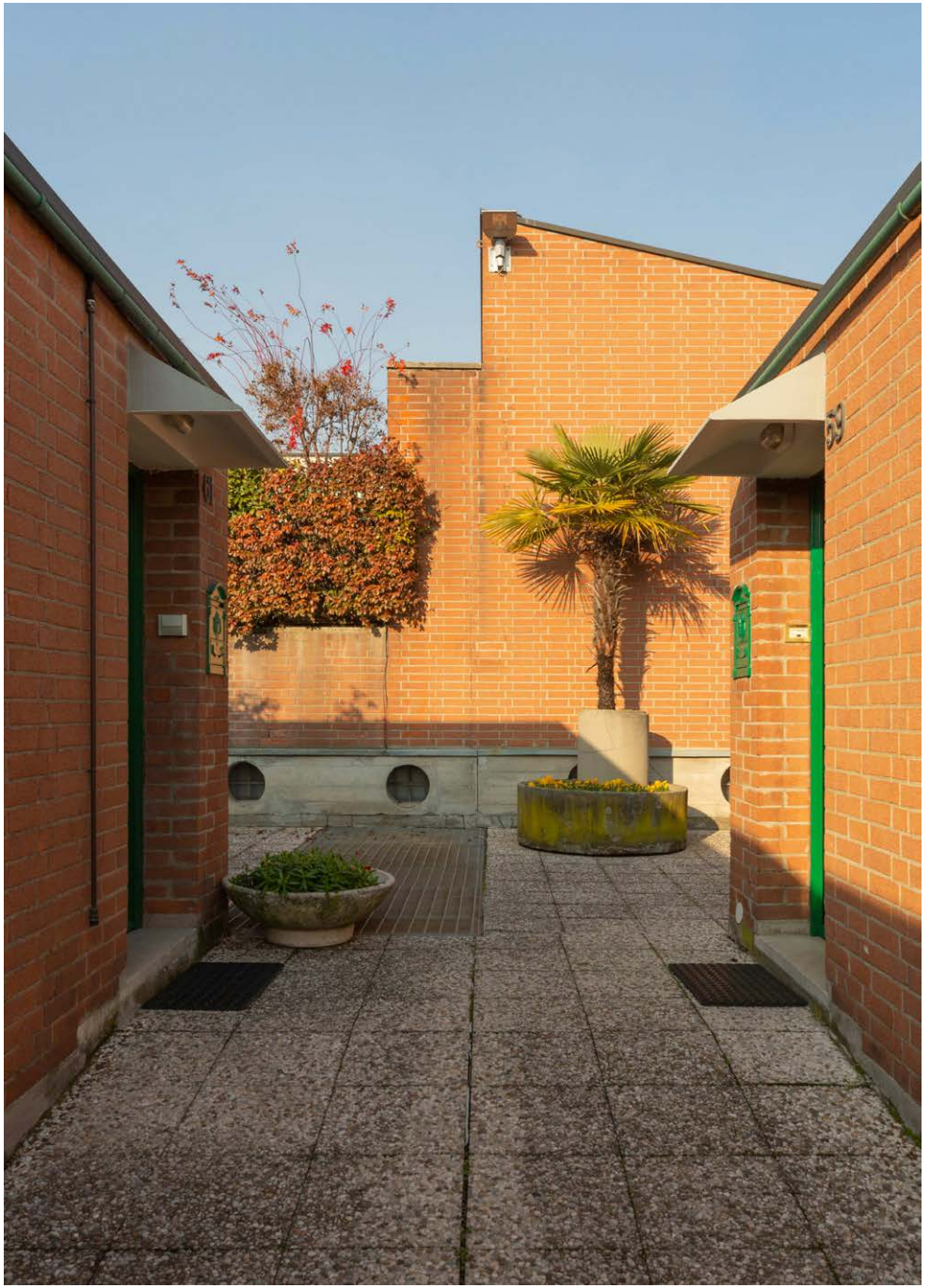
[Fig. 2]
Inclined slope connected to the ground with a system of ramps and reinforced concrete columns

[Fig. 3 – Fig. 4]
Interior pedestrian paths

[Fig. 5]
Entrance door with informal green

[Fig. 6]
Houses ensamble placed on the inclined slope





Public housing from within: childhood memories as a landscape of care

Chloé Darmon

Abstract

This visual and auto-ethnographic essay – through research in private archives and childhood memories – aims to reconstruct the history of a public housing building on the Place du Marché in a small town in the Paris suburbs, Viry-Châtillon, and to show the transformation of the ideal of public and social housing in the suburbs of the capital. Through amateur and family photographs, we will examine the organisation, construction and transformation of this site at three key moments: the 1950s, the 2000s and the present day. This method of photographic analysis, which is also intended to be artistic, brings together the personal archives taken by my grandmother, the photographs taken by the author in 2004, and the photos taken by my grandmother again, in 2024, whom I asked, using a disposable camera, to take a portrait of the public housing building in which my flat was located and the urban context in which it is inserted. The result is a mixture of photographs taken in different temporalities and geographies that create a multifaceted portrait of public housing as a landscape of care based on childhood memories.

Keywords: photography; grand-mother; childhood; memories; public housing; public space.

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Part I : *Banlieue stories*

Over the course of several family migrations, the grey Paris region became the meeting place for my parents. The first ten years of my life were spent in public housing, which became the place where our little family lived, fragmented across the country. From 1997 onwards, we lived in this flat in the centre of a suburban town. A very small town, so close to *Paris-Capitale*, but so far away at the same time. Public housing was one of the only solutions for young parents with a young daughter, then two from January 2000. All the memories of childhood, of daily life and care, of children's games and school, come from this flat in this building. Strangely enough, it is a social housing block, but it wasn't built away from the centre; it was built around the centre, around the *Place du Marché*, next to the secondary school and the primary school, next to the small Municipal Theatre. Which is strange, because many of the public housing blocks in this area are isolated from the basic facilities needed to maintain daily life – particularly when it comes to looking after children. The building and flat of my childhood were successful experiments, both architecturally and urbanistically.

Paradoxically, there is little or no information about the architect, the date of construction or the impact of this restructuring of the *Place du Marché*. Despite this urban 'success', there was a certain melancholy when we came back from holiday, even if we were lucky enough to be able to go away in the summer, unlike some of my friends and classmates. This melancholy perhaps comes from the generic nature of the place, all these towns look the same and the families from regional migrations are totally uprooted. We miss the south, the mediterranean sea and the sun, as if they've been torn away from us, and we have to gravitate around Paris, not because we have any particular attachment to the place, but because the workers in the capital need people to keep these dormitory towns going (social workers, policemen, nursery school teachers, etc.), the work of caring for and maintaining the lives of the workers rests on those who keep these satellite towns going. Through my personal archives, I revisit this scenario, which forms an important part of my development, and I find photographs that represent our life there.

And in this album, which I take with me wherever I go, I find my first photographs, imperfect perhaps, but already at the age of 7 (in February 2004), connoting a sensitivity for the details of the beauty of everyday life, the importance of the sun reflecting on the architecture, the presence of plants in the house, the views and the rain that glistens. The photographs presented in this visual essay reflect a first relationship with photography and the transition between being object/subject, being photographed/photographing, in a family where amateur photography has always been important. In these personal/private archives, we can encounter treasures that make us reflect on the landscapes of care and on public housing as a catalyst of history and memory.

Part II: how to make photographs talk?

Starting with Susan Sontag's writings in the book *On Photography* (Sontag 1977), and more particularly the essay "In Plato's Cave", my family album, which I had kept as a memento and thought was only sentimental, began to be transformed into an important tool for understanding an experience of social/public housing. Susan Sontag (1977, 8) writes: "Cameras go with family life. According to a sociological study done in France, most households have cameras, but a household with children is twice as likely to have at least one camera as a household in which there are no children." The presence of cameras in my family is not specific to my family, but a general trend in the democratisation of photography in households, and French households in particular. My photo album thus becomes a very specific portrait of my childhood and my life in this HLM (low-income flats) building, Susan Sontag (1977, 9) writes: "Through photographs, each family constructs a portrait-chronicle of itself – a portable kit of images that bears witness to its connectedness. It hardly matters what activities are photographed so long as photographs get taken and are cherished."

What remains for me in this album is a phantasmagorical presence in the photographs, the past remains a presence of a reality already lived and already past, but constitutes a childhood memory that materialises a memory - sometimes blurred, sometimes falsified, and allows us to rethink the childhood lived and the first gestures. The standardisation of photographic use is passed from generation to generation: from my grandmother to my mother, from my mother to me, from me to my grandmother. The family's photographic subjects are the members of the family, but the first test photographs I took were of the facade of our building, the flowers and my sister dancing. The photographic gesture is anchored – because it has become democratised – and so the HLM (low-income flat) becomes the playground for photographic experimentation, of the register of the memory of a place. According to Susan Sontag:

> "Like the dead relatives and friends preserved in the family album, whose presence in photographs exorcises some of the anxiety and remorse prompted by their disappearance, so the photographs of neighborhoods now torn down, rural places disfigured and made barren, supply our pocket relation to the past." (Sontag 1977, 16)

In this way, the photographs taken around the year 2000 in my childhood, which I took in 2004, and the portrait taken by my grandmother Bernadette Vol, in 2024, are documentation of a process of urban transformation that began a long time ago. In fact, the market square is already mentioned at the end of the 19th century, and in the post-war context of reconstruction in the 1950s, in 1948 the town centre was the subject of a development plan in which apartment blocks were already appearing around this square. For Susan Sontag (1977, 16): "A photograph is both a pseudo-presence and a token of absence. Like a wood fire in a room, photographs – especially those of people, of distant landscapes, and faraway cities, of the vanished past – are incitements to reverie." This reverie is the basis for reconstructing the history of this urban block and square, because the fragmented history of childhood memories and the gaps in the municipal archives leave room for interpretation. Drawing on my childhood memories from the photographs in the album and my time living in public housing, I asked myself what the *Place du Marché* was like in the past?

It is at this point that the historical dimension of the "landscape of care" that this square constitutes begins to make sense. The *Place du Marché*, already a long-established place, continued to be a place of socialisation, incorporating temporary/ephemeral practices of public space, a flea market, where you buy your clothes, a local public school, an ideal of access to education for all, the market where you buy your food and socialise, where women go with their children, where you gather, where you live, in blocks of flats. The market square, as it was in the past, is a major place for socialising and a "landscape of care" - an extension of domestic space into public space, where the mode of occupation of public space is between rural and urban. The use of the term *école communale*, which refers to the commons and the Paris Commune, evokes the construction of an ideal city.

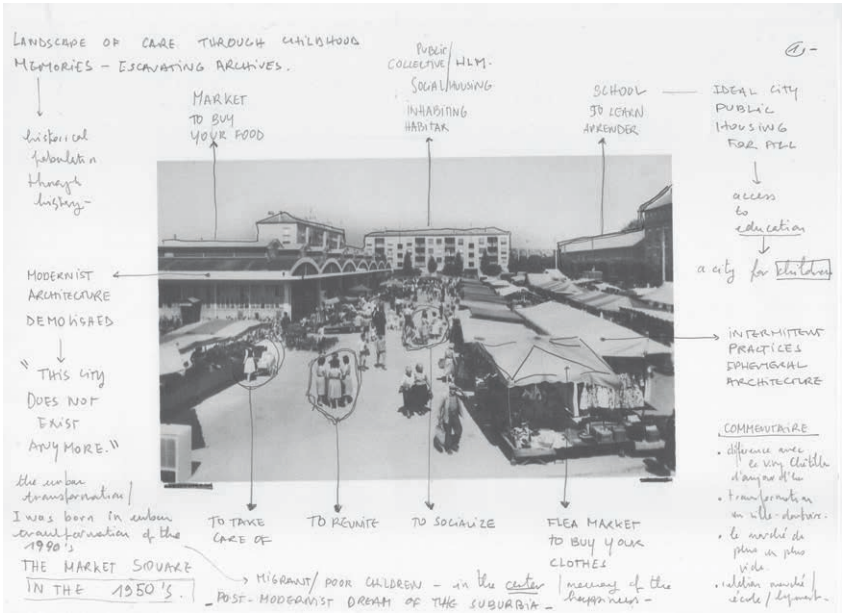

Figure 1: analysis of the Place du Marché, from a postcard from the 1950-1960.

In the book *Before and After: Documenting the architecture of disaster*, authors Eyal Weizman and Ines Weizman explain that "The juxtaposition inherent in before-and-after photographs communicates not a slow process of transformation over time but, rather, a sudden or radical change". And it was with this in mind that I asked my grandmother to take a portrait of the present day; in fact, you can see in her photographs that the public space is virtually deserted and all that remains of my childhood memories is the architecture of the market and the public housing. This challenge to my grandmother is also a way of getting her to revisit photography, a practice she loved so much when she was young, and when we were children, and of trying to understand her sensibility on this particular subject, another way of constructing a landscape of care from architecture, social housing and photography with shared memories.

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Captions

[Fig. 1]
visual essay by Bernadette Vol (author's grandmother)

[Fig. 2]
me and my mother at the public of our town (1997) author: my dad.

[Fig. 3]
me and my parents on the balcony of our apartment (1997) author: my grandmother.

[Fig. 4]
flowers on the balcony - 2004 (photograph of the author)

[Fig. 5]
visual essay by Bernadette Vol (author's grandmother)

[Fig. 6]
my sister dancing in the living room - 2004 (photograph of the author)

[Fig. 7]
facade of our public housing building after the rain - around 2004 (photograph of the author)

[Fig. 8]
living room of our flat, around 2002 (potograph of my grand-mother)


BRASSERIE

The right distance: Photographing the neighbourhoods built under the Carnation Revolution

Ana Catarina Costa, Francisco Ascensão

Abstract

In the preface to his book *Why people photograph*, Robert Adams mentions a recurring idea in his writings: "the effort we all make, photographers and nonphotographers, to affirm life without lying about it". This was the challenge for visiting today the neighbourhoods built under SAAL, a housing program implemented during the Portuguese revolutionary period that sought to improve the housing conditions of the poorest classes based on a collective effort and the aspiration for a more equitable life for all.

Photographing the neighbourhoods built under the Carnation Revolution required the openness to understand the life and the different fates that each neighbourhood has had, 50 years on since the 25th of April, in an effort to escape an outdated and nostalgic/melancholic gaze linked to the moment of its conception. Besides trying to understand the characteristics of the neighbourhoods in terms of its integrity, community life, conservation and ownership, this work also required a willingness to establish a link to affections, contributing to the multiplication of hypotheses in the construction of an imaginary, where ideas of time, restriction and freedom fit in. The construction of a dialog is fundamental for promoting an encounter, a negotiated proximity between the photographer and the depicted objects, similar to what John Berger suggests about the act of painting. Perhaps this negotiation, or the search for the right distance, can be an approach to the affirmation of life.

Keywords: SAAL; housing; documentary photography; architecture and photography; reality.

Ana Catarina Costa (Lisbon, 1985) is an architect by the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto and a researcher at Center for Studies in Architecture and Urbanism (University of Porto) and at Center for Geographical Studies (University of Lisbon). Her field of research focuses on housing and the relationship between architecture, city and politics, having carried out her PhD on the SAAL Process developed in Porto.

Francisco Ascensão (Porto, 1991) is an architect and photographer. In 2015 he graduated from the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto and in 2021 he completed the Master in Artistic Photography at IPCI (Porto). He collaborated with the architecture office "de Vylder Vinck Taillieu" (Gent, 2014–2016) and with Nuno Brandão Costa (Porto, 2016–2023). Since 2023, he works exclusively as a freelancer, both as an architect and as a photographer. As a photographer, since 2018, he develops personal projects and collaborates with architecture studios and institutions on commercial and editorial projects. His photographic work focuses on the territory, the city and architecture. In 2023, he won the 1st Prize of the Open Call "Photography and Territory", promoted by CEFT/Encontros da Imagem/IMAGO Lisboa Photo.

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In the preface to his book *Why people photograph*, Robert Adams mentions a recurring idea in his writings: "the effort we all make, photographers and nonphotographers, to affirm life without lying about it"[1]. John Berger also reflects on the false opposition between the real and the imaginary, and how reality, far from being something stable and taken for granted, must be continually sought out, maintained and rescued[2]. Finding coherence between everything that surrounds us – the set of events that we commonly call reality – is always, in essence, the construction of an imaginary.

Reality goes beyond the mere accumulation of facts or the stabilization of culturally produced ideas. Capturing reality or affirming life through photography is therefore an exercise that lies in an uncertain territory between non-fiction and fiction[3], where any misstep can upset a desired balance. With that in mind, we set out the goal of visiting the SAAL neighbourhoods built during the Carnation Revolution today.

The SAAL (Serviço de Apoio Ambulatório Local – Mobile Service for Local Support) was a housing programme aimed to support the most disadvantaged classes in transforming their neighbourhoods, advocating the appropriation of marginally occupied sites and self-management in the various stages of this process[4]. To this end, although coordinated at regional and national level, SAAL was a decentralised programme, involving the mobilisation of technical staff to provide local support to residents' organisations formalised as associations or cooperatives and collaboration with local authorities. The state was responsible for providing technical and financial support, land, infrastructure and assistance in the construction and social management of the neighbourhoods. Residents were responsible for taking the initiative and being involved and making decisions at every stage, from diagnosis to dynamisation, design, construction and management. However, the urgency of implementation and the limited funds allocated to this programme meant that only part of the costs were borne by the state, and the programme provided for the residents to bear the rest of the costs through their own resources, either by self-construction or by taking out loans collectively, differing in this respect from conventional public housing programmes. With a considerable experimental character in terms of the methods adopted, the legal uncertainty supporting the programme itself and the adaptation to the fluctuations arising from a period of constant change, SAAL was above all aligned with popular demands, assuming, in some way, a mobilising role[5].

1 Robert Adams, *Why People Photograph: Selected Essays and Reviews* (New York: Aperture, 1994), 9
2 John Berger, "The Production of the World," in *Steps Towards a Small Theory of the Visible* (London: Penguin Books, 2020), 66–75.
3 Gregory Halpern, *Documentary Sur/Realism*, Magnum online course, 2022, https://www.magnumphotos.com/learn/course/gregory-halpern-documentary-sur-realism/.
4 José António Bandeirinha, *O Processo SAAL e a Arquitectura no 25 de Abril* (Coimbra: Imprensa da Universidade de Coimbra, 2007);
5 Phil Mailer, *Portugal: A Revolução Impossível?* (Lisboa: Antígona, 2018 [1976]), 189

Despite the short implementation period (between August 1974 and October 1976), 75 SAAL neighbourhoods were built throughout the country, resulting of the commitment and persistence of the communities who live there, the technical teams who collaborated on their design and the various people and movements who organized themselves and fought to defend the right to a decent home, neighbourhood and city for all[6]. But they also bear witness to the different fates that each one of them has had, 50 years on since the 25th of April and immersed in a capitalist system that is increasingly controlled by global finance. The heterogeneity in terms of integrity, community life, conservation and ownership of the various neighbourhoods reveals the weight and pressure – and resistance – to which they, like other urban spaces, are subject.

The difficulty was, therefore, trying to escape an outdated gaze and what Fernández- Savater identifies as the old revolutionary "zombie-images", stuck in the past, which no longer stimulate desire and have become reactive and nostalgic/melancholic[7].

Photographing these neighbourhoods requires the openness to establish a link to affections, contributing to the multiplication of hypotheses in the construction of that imaginary, where ideas of time, restriction and freedom fit in. Approaching the life of each of these neighbourhoods through photography is not the result of observation, but of an encounter, of a negotiated proximity between the photographer and the depicted objects, similar to what Berger suggests about the act of painting[8]. There is a sharing, a collaboration, a tense and restless relationship in the discovery, at each moment, of the right distance that allows us to go beyond the surface, making the photograph come alive. The construction of this dialog generates *another* moment, which simultaneously integrates and detaches itself from that place. Perhaps this negotiation can be an approach to the affirmation of life.

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Captions

[Fig. 1]
Cruz de Pau, Matosinhos, SAAL neighbourhood, 2022.

[Fig. 2]
Contumil, Porto, SAAL neighbourhood, 2022.

[Fig. 3]
Cortegaça, Ovar, SAAL neighbourhood, 2022.

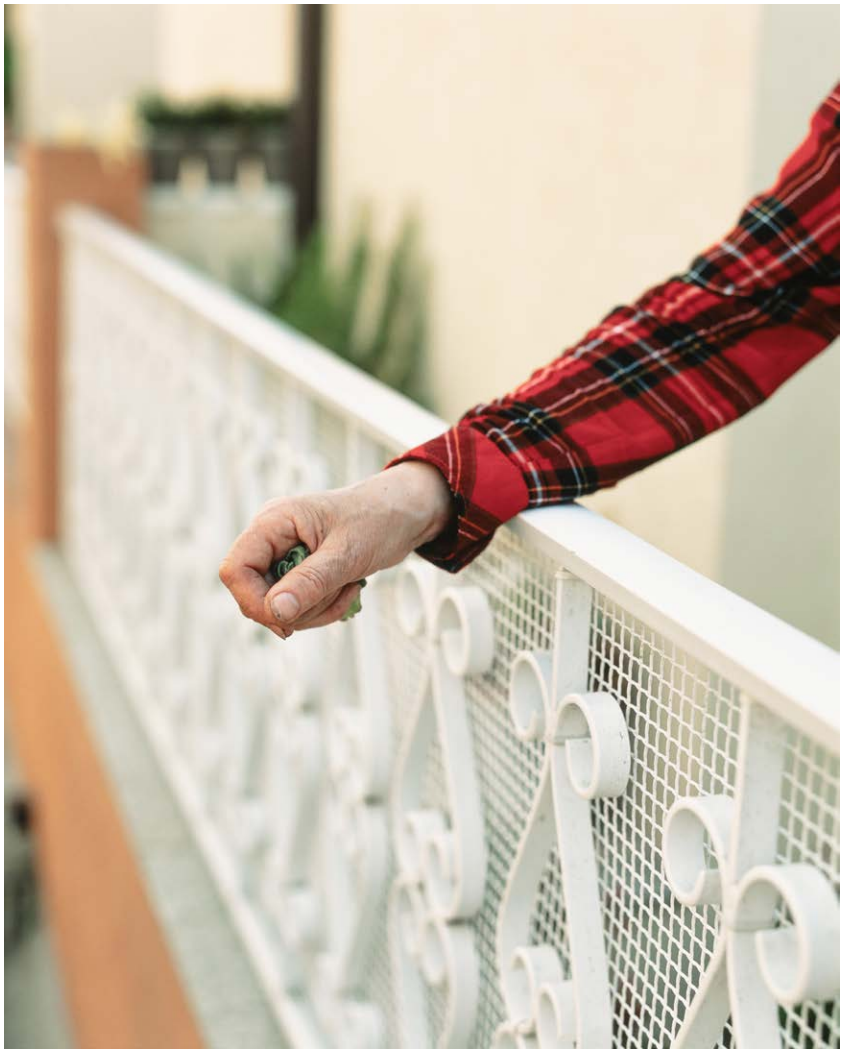
[Fig. 4]
Fonsecas-Calçada, Lisbon, SAAL neighbourhood, 2023.

[Fig. 5]
Fonsecas-Calçada, Lisbon, SAAL neighbourhood, 2023.

[Fig. 6]
Curraleira-Embrechados, Lisbon, SAAL neighbourhood, 2023.

[Fig. 7]
Meia Praia-Apeadeiro, Lagos, SAAL neighbourhood, 2020.

[Fig. 8]
Cabanas, Tavira, SAAL neighbourhood, 2022.

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Housing the basque country. Photography of the collective space

Asier Santas Torres, Luis Suárez Mansilla, Luis Asín Lapique

Abstract

In 2018, *Housing the Basque Country* (HBC) opened in Bilbao. The exhibition sought to expose the results of the housing policy achieved by the Basque Regional Government in the last three decades. HBC aimed to explain the different stories generated around public housing since this subject is, without a doubt, one of those that brings together the most realities around it: from politics to the architectural, going through the economic or productive, the sociological, historical and legal; setting at the center the inhabitant.

From the exhibition point of view, HBC started with the difficulty of highlighting for a non-professional audience a theme limited both by its geographical location and by its distance from spectacular architecture. It was decided to compile a selection of thirty projects that served to explain the evolution of public housing, taking into account criteria such as their date of completion, geographical distribution, location in cities or small towns, typological advances, and aesthetic values. But the projects were also selected for their potential to capture something that seemed essential to incorporate into the exhibition: the human dimension.

Thus, and during several trips to the thirty projects, it was possible to compile a valuable set of visual documents containing the ''vital substance'' that had grown in those environments. Various photographs in different formats explained aspects such as the current state of these residential complexes, their urban life, the physical traces of time, the dialogue with nature, the validity or expiration of their architecture and urban planning, and their social content. For better or for worse, the aim of that work was not to achieve an aesthetically striking photographic collection, but rather to bear witness to the literal and direct presentation of the urban – and therefore human – result in force in those inhabited environments.

In 2018, *Housing the Basque Country* (HBC) opened in Bilbao. The exhibition sought to expose the results of the housing policy achieved by the Basque Regional Government in the last three decades. HBC aimed to explain the different stories generated around public housing since this subject is, without a doubt, one of those that brings together the most realities around it: from politics to the architectural, going through the economic or productive, the sociological, historical and legal; setting at the center the inhabitant.

From the exhibition point of view, *Housing the Basque Country* started with the difficulty of highlighting for a non-professional audience a theme limited both by its geographical location and by its distance from spectacular architecture. Placing itself at the antipodes of any exhibition with attractive contents, it was decided to compile a selection of thirty projects —from among the hundreds built over thirty years— that served to explain the evolution of public housing, taking into account criteria such as their date of completion, geographical distribution, location in cities or small towns, typological advances, and aesthetic values. But the projects were also selected for their potential to capture something intangible that seemed essential to incorporate into the exhibition: the human dimension. To catch this was quite a challenge. In absence of references, the first aim was to materialize the life in and around the selected projects. Thus, it was decided to collaborate with a prestigious photographer to portray the social reality and the urban environment of the residential complexes.

The beginnings of our work were tentative. They began by visiting and getting to know the selected projects, their urban environments, and their inhabitants. The photographer and the curators applied the strategy of 'not looking', used by the Dadaists, or rather, the method of 'searching for the meaning of spaces through micro-experiences aimed at the construction of an aesthetic action to be carried out in the reality of everyday life' (Careri 2014, 59). That is to say, it was intuited that the horizon of our research could be found in the explanation of 'the city not from a geometric aesthetic point of view but from an experimental aesthetic point of view' (Careri 2014, 152).

The first approaches hardly gave results different from what it was already known. The photos portrayed the neighborhoods in their most literal version. They barely delved into the causalities agglutinated in the temporal layers of the housing complexes. Thus, the first tours of the thirty projects served to certify aged facades, inhabited dwellings, anonymous public spaces, consolidated landscapes and developing cities; epithelial appearances without depth that beyond the aesthetic contribution of suggestive photographs were not infused with the intuited contents.

The significant change came about by revisiting the San Sebastian neighborhood of Intxaurrondo. On a cold Thursday in February, bathed in the characteristic leaden light of northern Spain, an image emerged: four teenagers shared a moment in front of their mobile phones sitting with their backs to the camera, in a perfectly defined foreground. Converging in a virtual and immediate vanishing point, the portico that appeared before them in all its depth made the moment of the encounter possible under the protection of the rain. The photograph showed, and finally demonstrated, the essential thing that was being sought in the selected architectures: that their value does not lie in their beauty, but in everything that happens and can happen in them: in their contingency (Photography Intxaurrondo I)

The photo can be understood as a perfect balance between architectural concepts and social portrait. On the one hand, it contained the substance of architecture: depth, dimension, proportion and scale, structure, open and public space, light and even time. On the other hand, the image placed four anonymous lives in the center of everything, undisputed protagonists of the scene, as the beginning of the vanishing point that connects the inhabited area with the horizon that supports it. Without a doubt, the citation of other previous views such as those of the American photographer Vivian Maier (1926-2009), or the British Nigel Henderson (1917-1985) was foundational and opened the door to an specific search: the interweaving of daily life with architecture that was revisited based on aesthetic concepts built with the two realities.

From then on, photos went from literal to real. The architecture ceased to show the urban condition and became tainted with the human. Work continued to certify the inhabitants' connection to the everyday spaces in which their lives were being built. And, why not confess it, in the disconnection that in some cases was found among urban planning, the proposed city model, its public spaces and its neighbors —these are the cases of Zabalgana, Salburúa and Lakua neighborhoods in Vitoria-(Photography Zabalgana).

Thus, and during several more trips to the thirty projects, it was possible to compile a valuable set of visual documents containing the "vital substance" that had grown in those environments. Various photographs in different formats explained aspects such as the current state of these residential complexes, their urban life, the physical traces of time, the dialogue with nature, the validity or expiration of their architecture and urban planning, and their social content.

In addition, the photographic research sought to explore how everyday living also depends on the boundaries or layers between public and private space. Some documents explained the need for thresholds, passageways and covered courtyards, porches, balconies and windows: in short, residential architecture that contains open space and air. Because, as the poet and philosopher Gaston Bachelard said, `what you see from the window belongs to the house as well' (Bachelard 1965, 99). In some way, the exhibition vindicated all those types of spaces apparently unnecessary for the economy of housing but essential for life, in other words, fundamental for the colonization of the city by the human encounter and personal expansion. Photographs such as those of the Lakua, Loiu or Etxebarri complexes demonstrate the density of opportunities possible in these places, in many cases in danger of extinction.

And in the domestic interior, finally, it was possible to show a maxim that presided over the exhibition: how much the most important objective of any housing policy is not to build a house affordable for all, but to provide a home for everyone. Photographs such as those in Salvatierra's living room are psychological portraits or extensions of the inhabitant, like a third skin that is possible in the supports on which it adheres (the walls, floors and ceilings). Here the effectiveness of the furniture and the consequent order, the objects in the corners and the memories they treasure, and the possibility for the imagination to be activated by reading in silence during a quiet winter afternoon make sense. More than housing, a shelter. More than home, a universe.

For better or for worse, as if it were an exercise in contemporary neorealism, the aim of that work was not to achieve an aesthetically striking photographic collection, but rather to bear witness to the literal and direct presentation of the urban – and therefore human – result in force in those inhabited environments. The street or the square, the courtyard or the boulevard, the park or the garden, the corridor or the hallway, in short, the collective space –inhabited or uninhabited– created by this residential architecture, were part of that exhibition, and above all, its inhabitants.

Asier Santas Torres Graduated as an Architect from the University of Navarra School of Architecture (ETSAUN) in 1997. He received the Second National Prize of Completion University in 1998. Santas obtained a PhD in Architecture in 2003 with a doctoral dissertation on Urbanism and Housing. He has been lecturer of Urban Design until 2007. At present, he is Professor of Architecture and Director of the Department of Theory, Architecture and Urbanism at ETSAUN.

Luis Suárez Mansilla Graduated as an Architect with Honors and Special Distinction from the University of Navarra School of Architecture (ETSAUN) in 1999. He holds a Master in Design Studies from Harvard University Graduate School of Design since 2003. Suárez obtained a PhD in Architecture in 2010 with a doctoral dissertation titled *Strategies and Effects of Scale*. At present, he is Professor of Architecture and Director of the Master in Theory and Architectural Design at ETSAUN.

Luis Asín Lapique Graduated as a photographer from the San Francisco Art Institute in 1992. Between 1998 and 2003 he was an associate professor at the Faculty of Fine Arts in Cuenca. In 2003 he received the Villa de Madrid Kaulak Photography Award. He has had several solo and group exhibitions in the USA, Spain, France and Portugal. At the present, he is one of the most internationally recognized professional architecture photographers.

The work is the result of research carried out jointly by Asier Santas and Luis Suárez, but the photos are by Luis Asín Lapique.

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Captions

Author's work

[Fig. 1]
Etxebarri (Vizcaya)

[Fig. 2]
Basauri (Vizcaya)

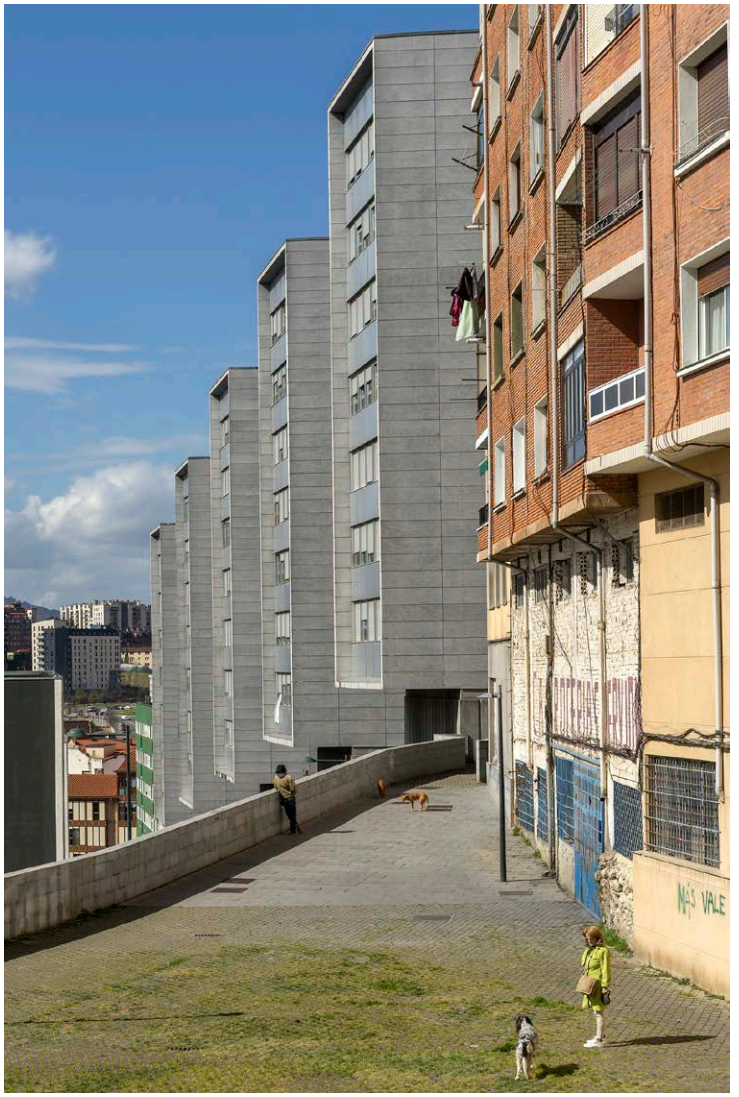
[Fig. 3]
Zabalgana (Vitoria-Gasteiz)

[Fig. 4]
Leioa (Vizcaya)

[Fig. 5]
Intxaurrondo I (Donostia-San Sebastián)

[Fig. 6]
Lakua (Vitoria)

[Fig. 7]
Bilbao


MÁS VALE

Close domesticity, intimate glances.

IÑAKI BERGERA

Throughout my artistic personal career, my projects have explored housing not so much as a collective phenomenon but rather in relation to the territory or the urban context, understood as a space for the exception, always conditioned by some kind of latency, transition or abandonment. Public housing would therefore serve very specific interests that, outwardly, escape the territories where my gaze has felt attracted and even comfortable.

Typologically, I have felt attracted by the "house" in its objectual condition, from its reiteration and seriation, as it already happened in the series "Twentysix (abandoned) gasoline stations". In 2021 the magazine AV[1] published the series "Collecting Homes" in dialogue with other somewhat analogous series such as "Typologies" by Bruno Fontana or "Free Architecture" by Adam Wiseman. However, that same article already put on the table other views that penetrate into the domestic sphere, into the interior of the dwelling, where the experience of collective dwelling really takes place: Todd Hido's work "House Hunting" illuminates the gloom of the anodyne American suburban spaces by illuminating the inhabited interior and, for their part, Bogdan Girbovan's "10/1" and Michael Wolf's "100x100" series delve into the relationship between the repetitive collective domestic space and the way in which the inhabitant and his objects shape and qualify it.

It is surely in this introverted territory where the reflection of contemporary photography is forged in relation to collective habitation, which in turn reflects a socioeconomic palpitation derived, on the one hand, from the radical experience of the worldwide confinement of the Covid-19 pandemic and, on the other, the unavoidable crisis of public housing as a political project, unable to respond in many countries to the housing urgency strained by real estate speculation and, consequently, by the high prices of sale and rent. In both cases, society has rediscovered a need that goes beyond the right to decent housing. It is in the home where the person, the individual and his immediate family nucleus, builds his genuine identity, the sphere of his intimacy. The house counts, I insist, not only at a satisfactory level of a basic need —for protection or shelter— but as a configurator of that which makes us truly individuals who then project that experience from the private to the public and collective, to the social.

The Spanish philosopher Josep Maria Esquirol has addressed in an essay[2] this need that human beings have for that close and intimate place that is the home, as an explicit spatial antidote to materialism, to virtual exhibitionism, to neoliberalism, to the vacuous nihilism in short that seems to invade contemporaneity. The house —hut, refuge, shelter and existential center— is thus and par excellence, the place to which one returns, the scene of the everyday and the close, the sphere for reflection and slowness. "The more explicitly reflective life, rather than being seen as going beyond, further away, can be understood as an attempt to return to proximity," Esquirol points out.

I like to think that the photographs taken by Magnum photographer René Burri of the interiors of the Cité Radieuse in Marseille in 1957, seven years after its construction, mark in some way the beginning of a humanist architectural photography that focuses on what defines inhabitation, which is none other than the theatricalized interrelationship between space, objects and the actors of inhabitation[3]. These images bring us closer to the intimacy of which Esquirol speaks, but also to the recovery of architectural realism, so closely linked to and dependent on its visual representation, as Jesús Vassallo[4] has analyzed.

This concern for linking the essence of the domestic space and its conceptual definition in visual terms has also been reflected in my teaching activity, enquiring architecture students to ask themselves, prior to the design assignment, how they would preview or define with images that which makes up something like the soul of the domestic space. The result of this experience[5] confirms, on the one hand, the analytical power of the gaze as a design tool and, on the other, the existence of a kind of vectors that underpin the perceptive and emotional richness of inhabiting, regardless of or parallel to its material or constructive definition.

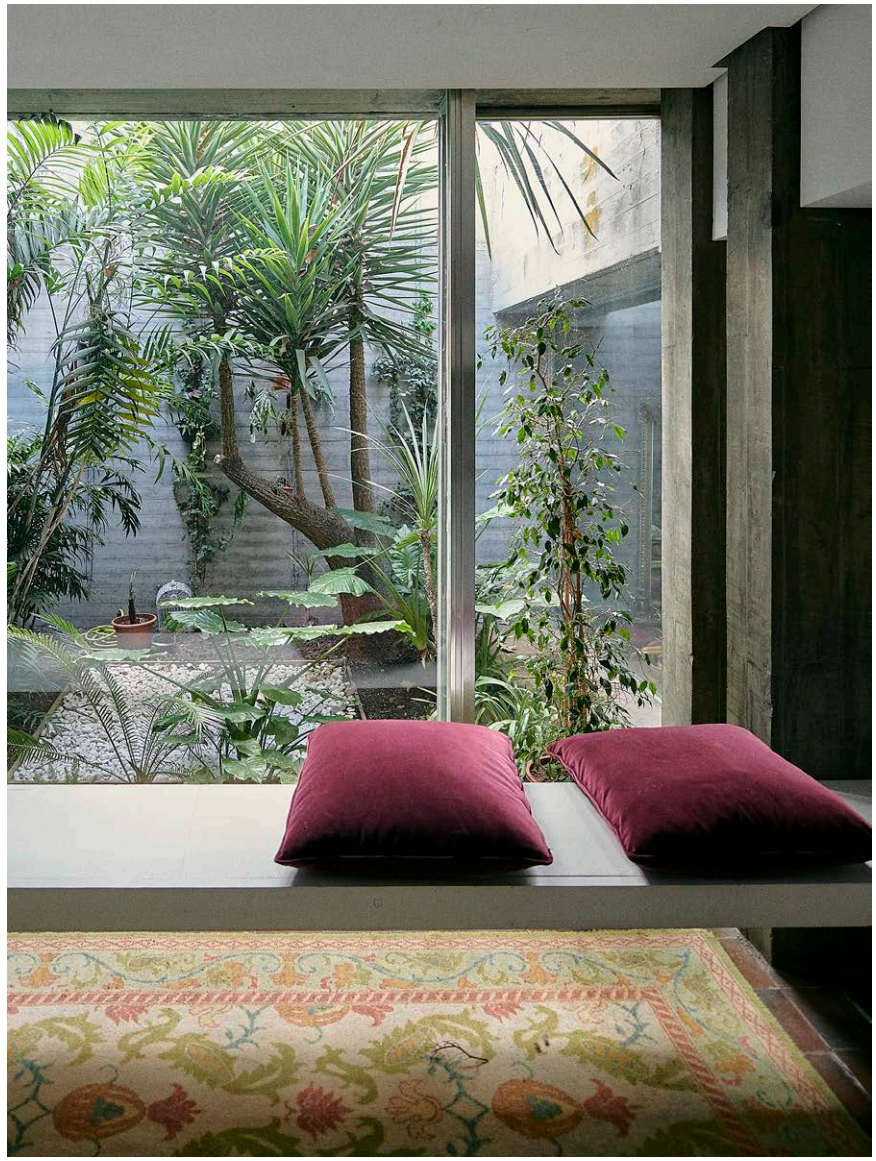
Questioned by these solvent premises, I go through my photographic archive with the interest of finding out —not a priori, but a posteriori— if I am able to discover something of that essence of the domestic dwelling as I conceive it here. I discover it perhaps in the interior richness and in the heterodox furniture of the Carvajal House (Javier Carvajal, 1969) that contrasts with the cold brutalism of its architecture, in the fiery mestization of the Kallis House (Rudolph M. Schindler, 1946), in the penumbral and bounded condition of the experimental Muuratsalo House (Alvar Aalto, 1953), as domestic as the glazes of reflections and transparencies of the Case Study House (Charles & Ray Eames, 1949) and the Glass House (Phillip Johnson, 1949), in the abstract material warmth of the Hunt House in Malibu (Craig Ellwood, 1957), also in the almost metaphysical asepsis of the Weissenhof-Siedlung (Le Corbusier, 1927) close to the narrative constructions of Thomas Demand and certainly in the programmatic Lemoine House (Rem Koolhsas, 1996), explicitly activated by its operative functionality.

1 "Documentos dobles", *AV Monografías*, n° 237, 2021, p. 8.
2 Esquirol, Josep Maria. *La resistencia íntima. Ensayo de una filosofía de la proximidad*. Barcelona: Acantilado, 2015.
3 Rüegg, Arthur (ed.). *Le Corbusier. René Burri*. Basel: Birkhäuser, 1999.
4 Vassallo, Jesús. *Epics in the Everyday. Photography, Architecture and the problem of Realism*. Zurich: Park Books, 2019.
5 Bergera, Iñaki (ed.). *Lo doméstico, narrativas visuales*. Zaragoza: Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, 2017.

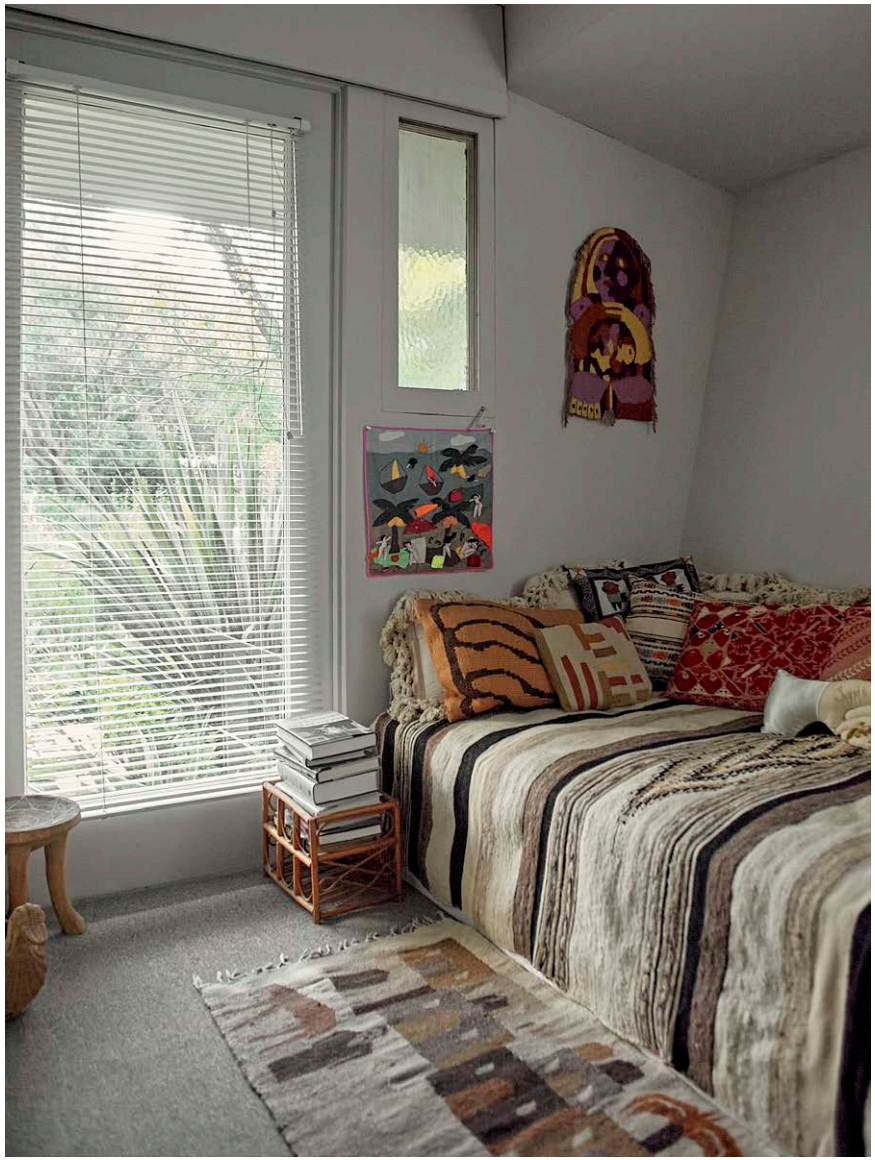
The domestic taxonomy of walls, floors, ceilings, doors and windows is completed by furniture, plants, carpets or curtains. The same light that activates all this towards the sensorial and the perceptive is the one captured by images. The gaze does not construct the domestic, but it preconfigures and appraises it, vivifies it, activates it and makes it real, tangible. Whether in the collective public housing or in the hunt, we inhabit because we build that "body of images" of which Bachelard speaks by looking at that vital and convergent center of coexistence that makes us individuals, family, and citizens.

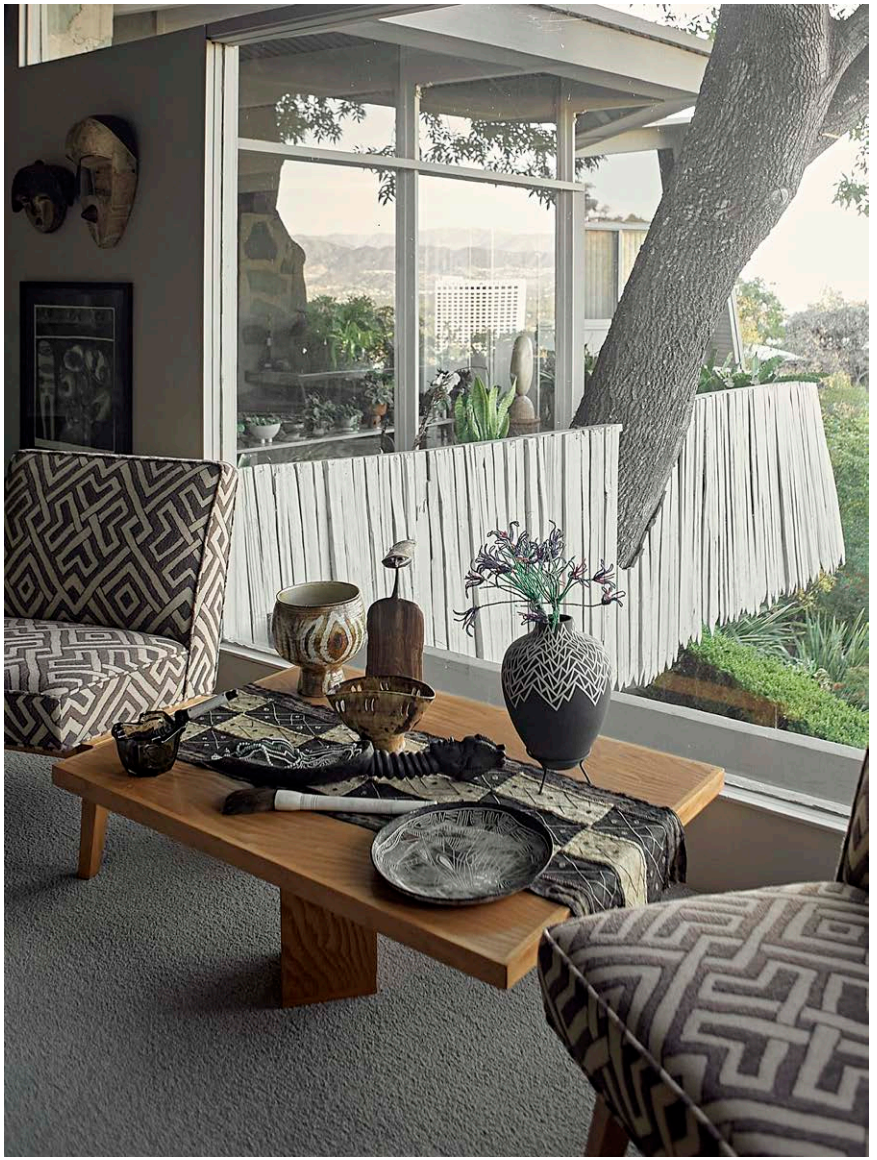
"For the house furnishes us dispersed images and a body of images at the same time. In both cases, I shall prove that imagination augments the values of reality. A sort of attraction for images concentrates them about the house. Transcending our memories of all the houses in which we have found shelter, above and beyond all the houses we have dreamed we live in, can we isolate an intimate, concrete essence that would be a justification of the uncommon value of all of our images of protected intimacy?"[6].

6 Bachelard, Gastón. *The Poetics of Space*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1994, p. 3.

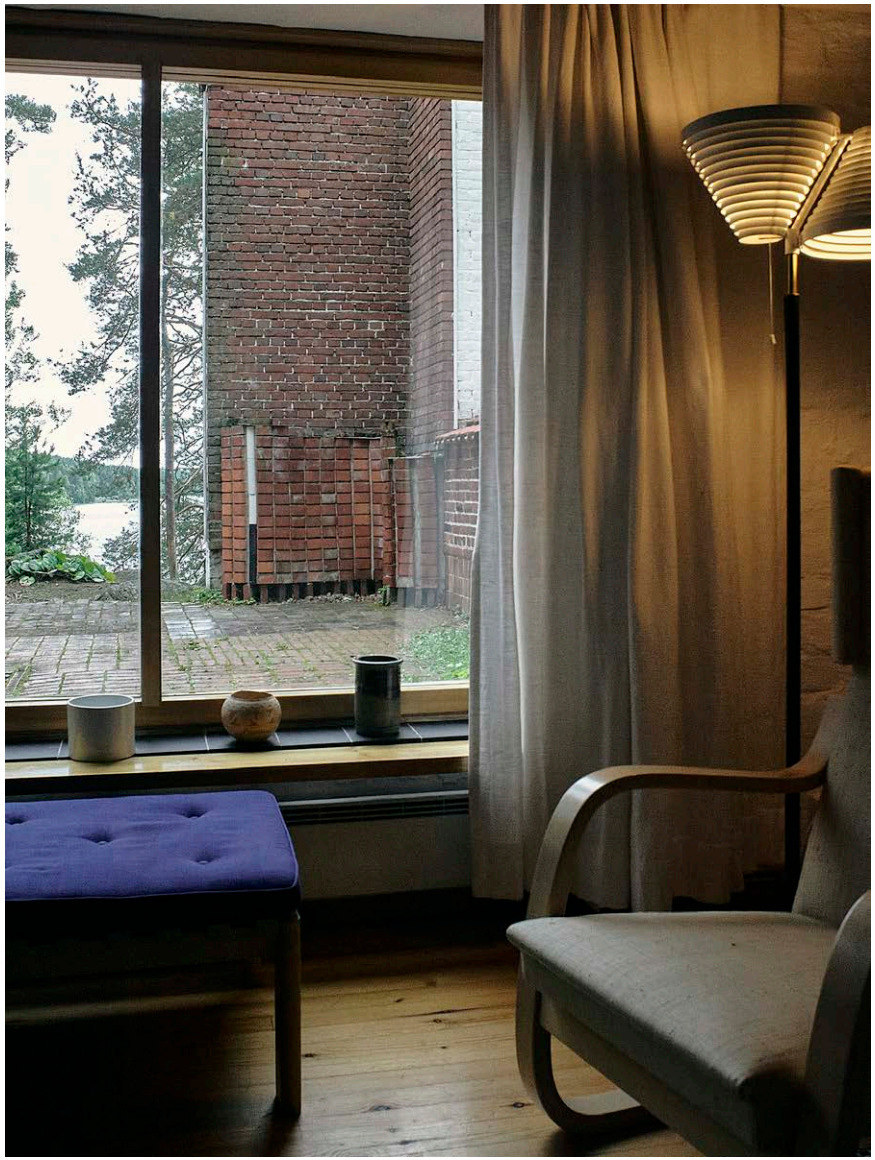


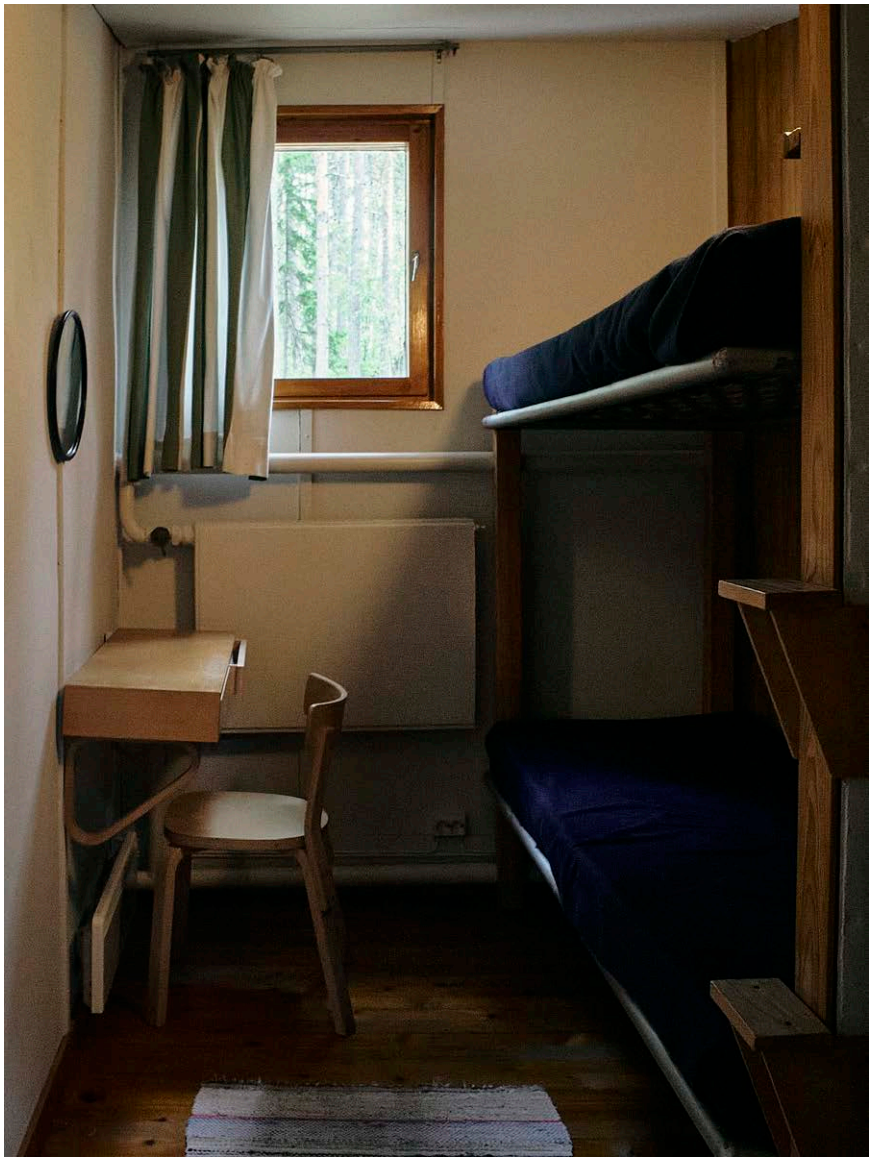
Casa Carvajal, 2019. Javier Carvajal, Somosaguas, Madrid, 1969



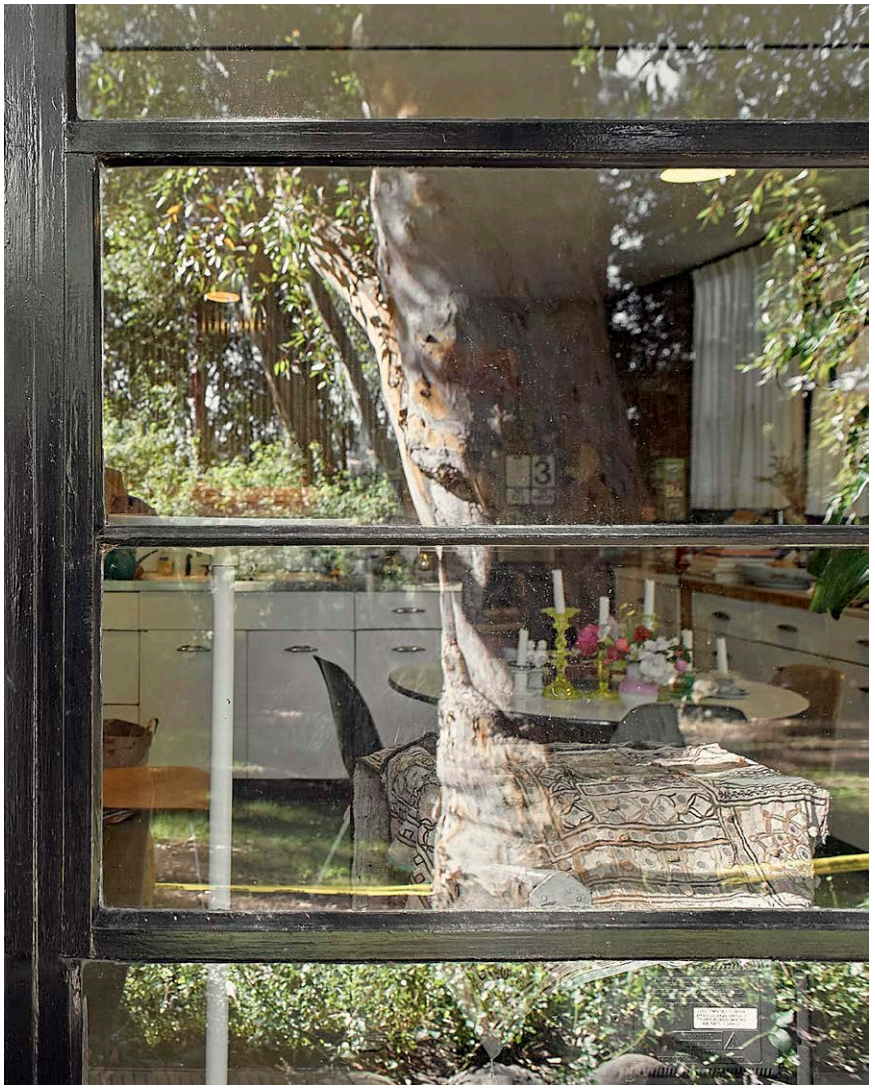


Kallis House, 2012. Rudolph M. Schindler, Los Angeles, 1946

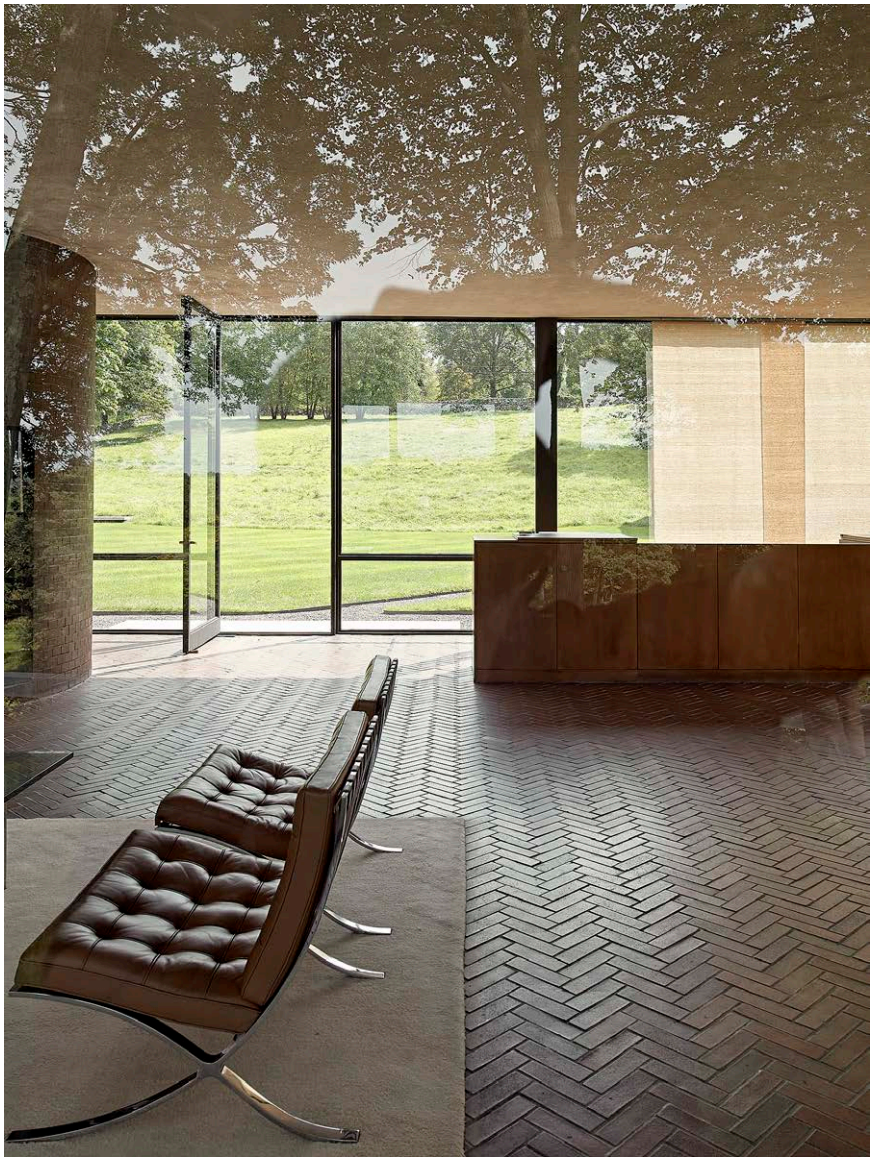




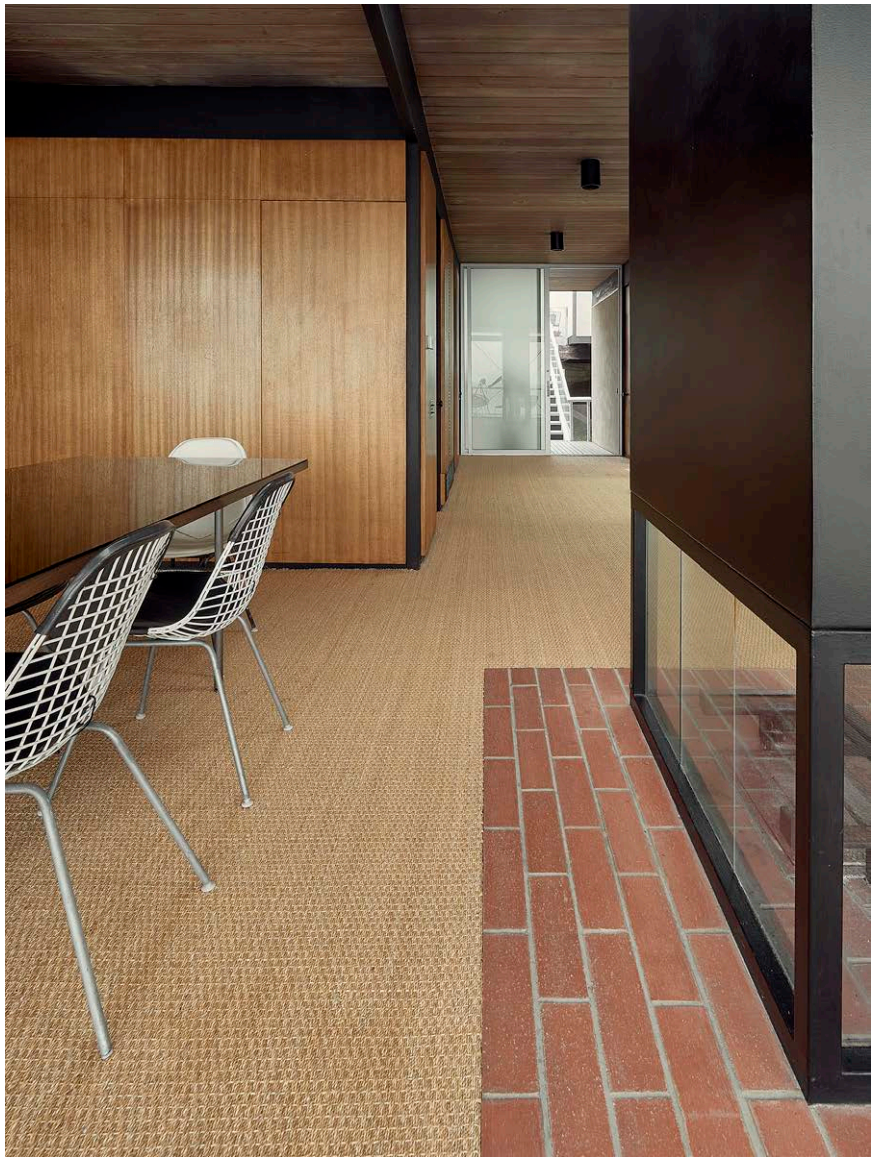
Muuratsalo Experimental House, 2011. Alvar Aalto, Muuratsalo, 1953

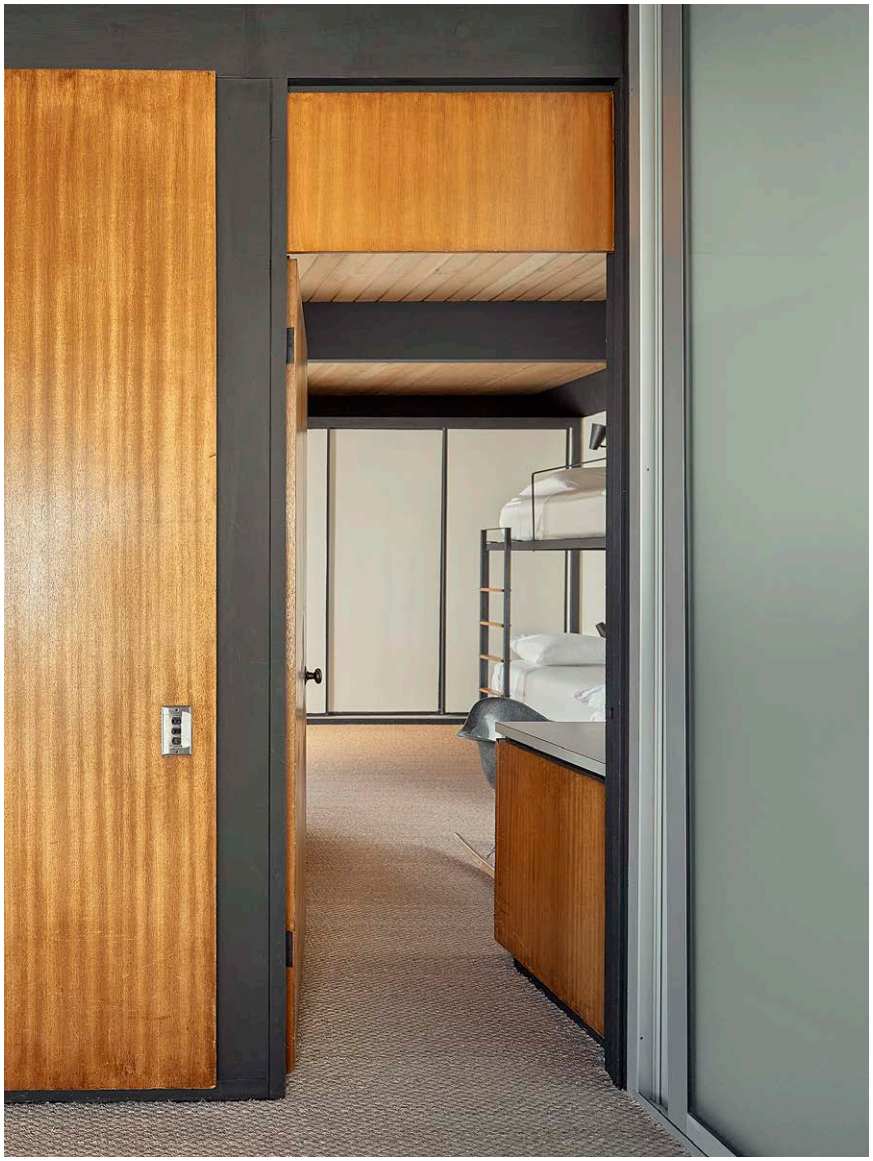


Case Study House, 2012. Charles & Ray Eames, Los Ángeles, 1949

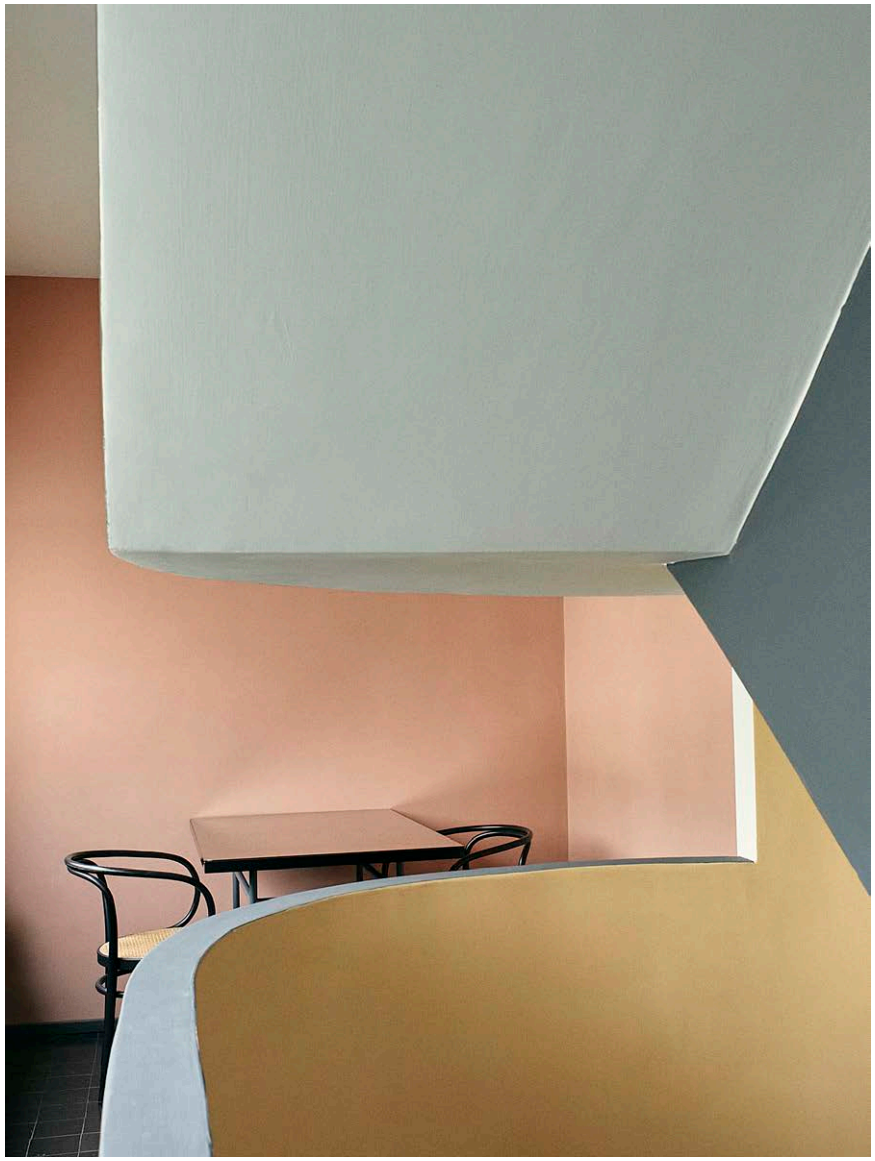


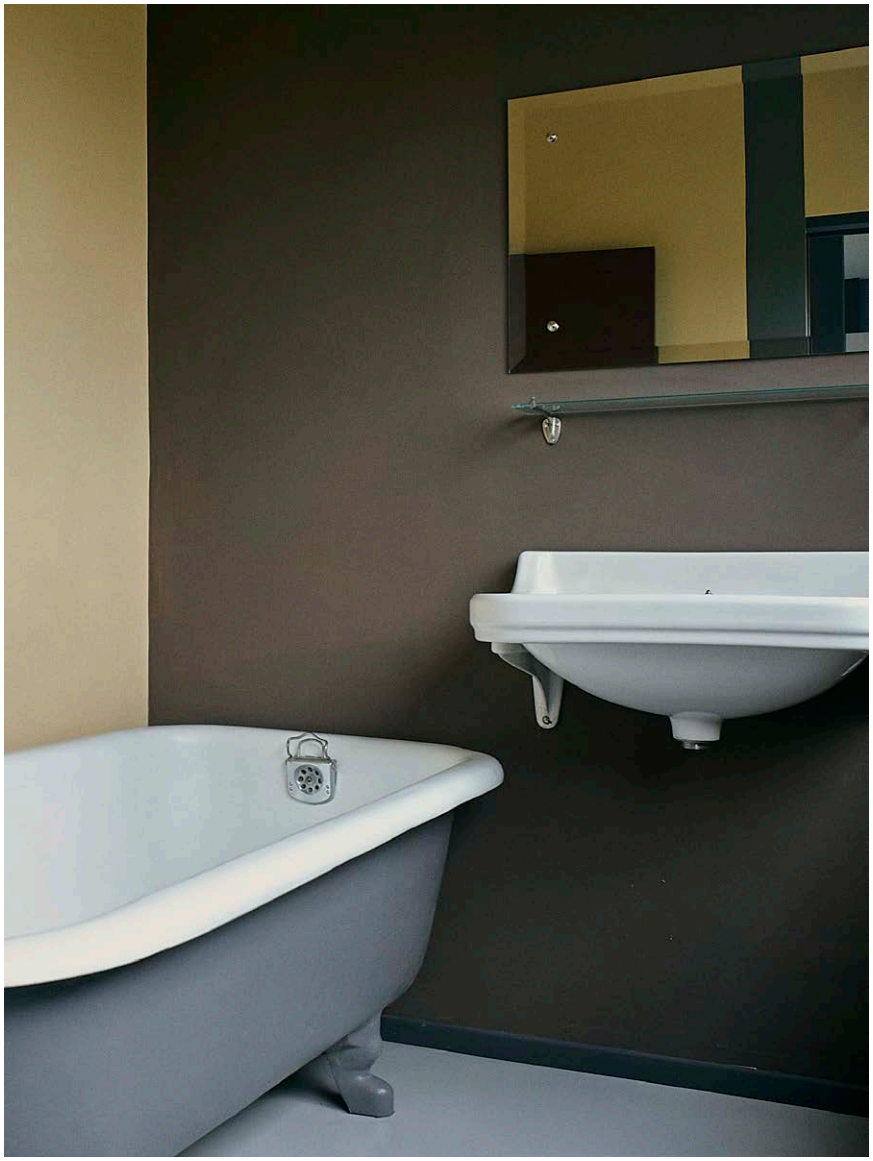
Glass House, 2012. Philip Johnson, New Canaan, 1949



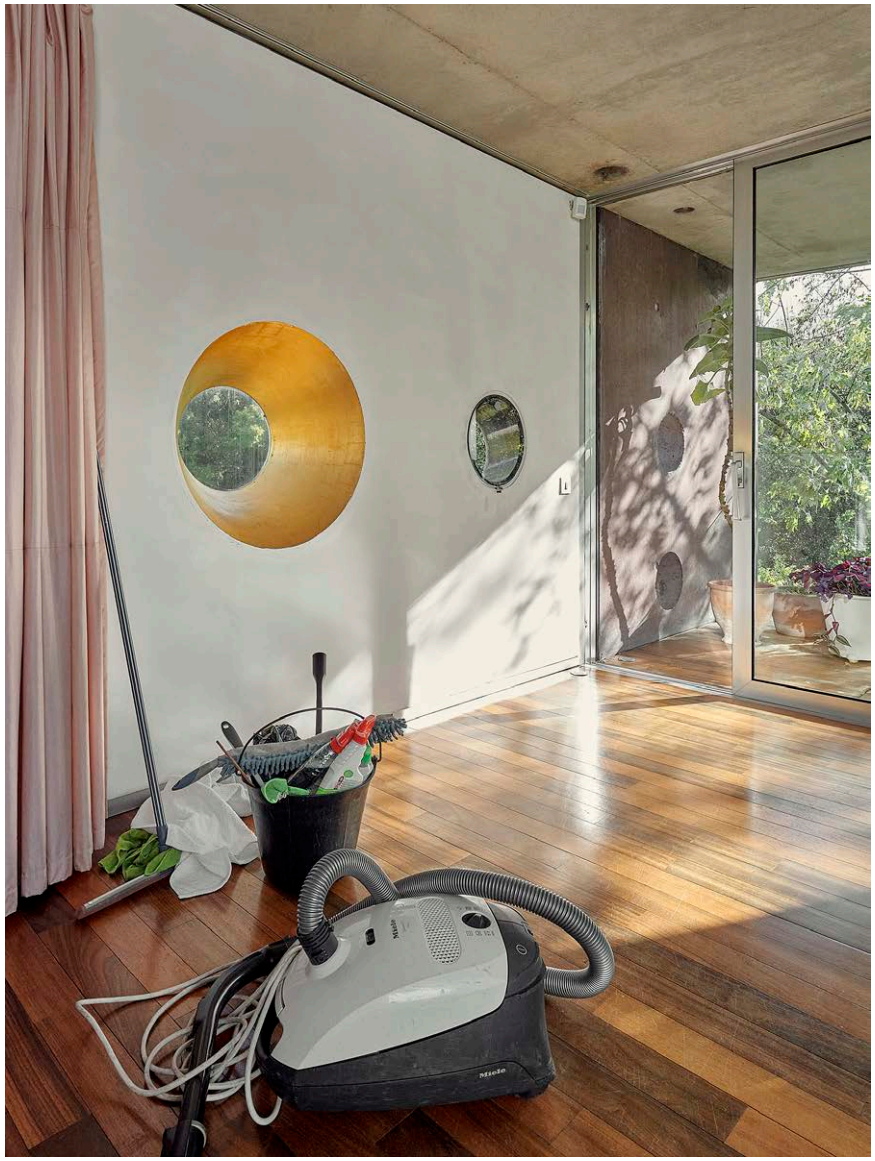


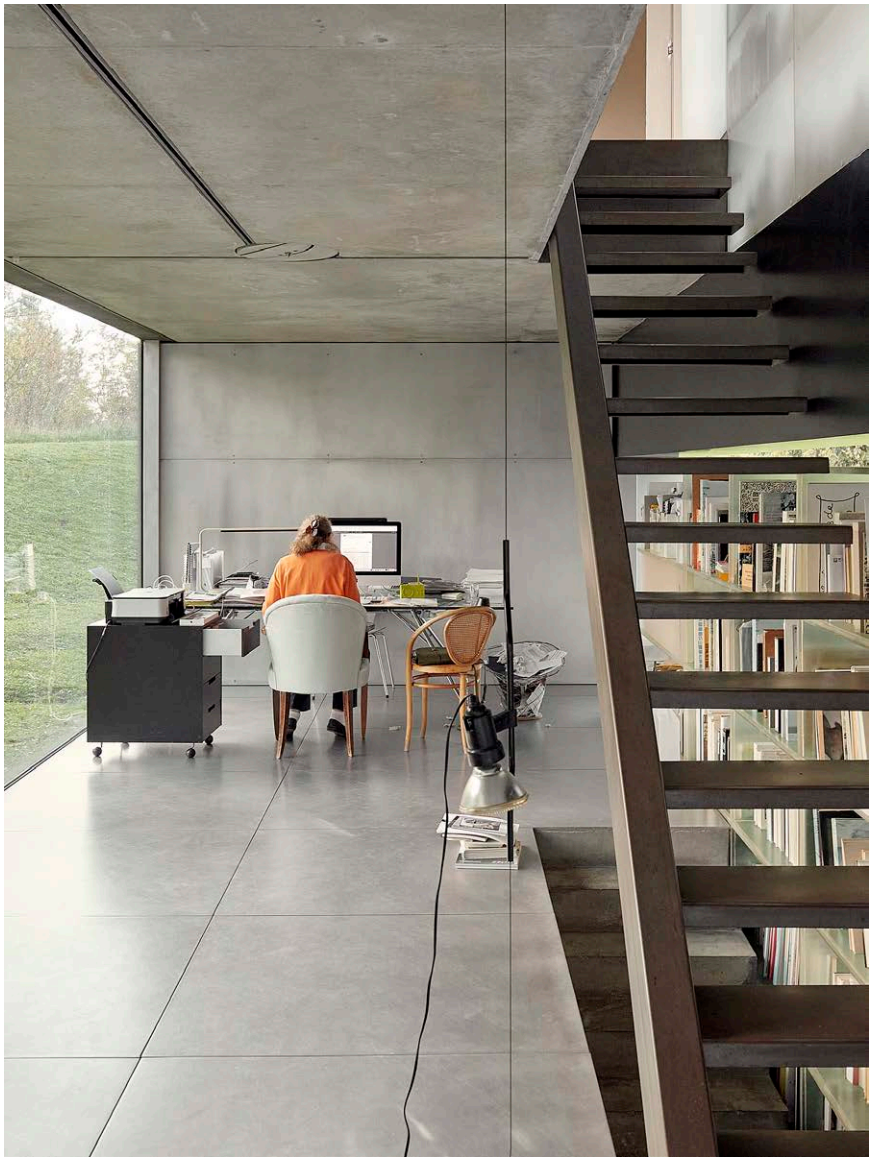
Hunt House, 2012. Greg Elwood, Malibu, 1957





Weissenhof–Siedlung, 2013. Le Corbusier, Stuttgart, 1927





Casa Lemoine, 2023. Rem Koolhaas, Burdeos, 1996

Biographies

Igea Troiani (PhD) is a Professor of Architecture and Head of the School of Architecture and Planning 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).

Iñaki Bergera holds a PhD (2002) and a professional degree in Architecture (1997) from the University of Navarra and teaches architectural design as Full Professor at the University of Zaragoza since 2008. Supported by Fundación 'la Caixa', he obtained an MDesS with Distinction from Harvard University in 2002. He has been main researcher of the national project "Photography and Modern Architecture in Spain" and curator of two major exhibitions on the same topic held at ICO museum in Madrid (PHotoEspaña 2014 y PHotoEspaña 2016). Author and editor of over twenty books (for publishers such as Abada, Turner, La Fábrica or Arquia), he has written numerous scientific articles in journals and has participated as a speaker in over twenty-five international conferences. In 2001 he studied photography at the Harvard School of Visual Arts with the British photographer Chris Killip, and since then he has carried out a personal photographic work around the same research topics embodied in various individual exhibitions such as America, Urban Landscape (2006), In the Landscape (2010), Twentysix (Abandoned) Gasoline Stations (Scan Tarragona 2014, PHotoEspaña 2015 and MUN 2018) and Empty Parking Spaces (Madrid-Zaragoza 2020); as well as in collective shows such as The Creation of the Contemporary Landscape (DKV- Alcobendas, 2016), Unfinished (Venice Biennial, 2016) or Motion, Autos, Art, Architecture (Guggenheim Bilbao, 2023). www.bergeraphoto.com

Joan MacDonald is an architect and expert in housing and urban planning, especially in vulnerable contexts. She was the first architect to head the Housing Department at the UC School of Architecture and the first woman to assume the position of Undersecretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (1990–94). Throughout her career, she has fulfilled different urban and housing management leadership roles. Among them, she was a consultant for the Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division of ECLAC, and between 2000 and 2014, she directed the Latin American Service, African and Asian Popular Housing (SELAVIP). From there, she promoted the execution of more than 500 housing and neighborhood improvement projects for poor urban communities in the developing world.

Jorge Tárrago Mingo, registered Architect. PhD. University of Navarra (2005). He is a Professor of Architecture and collaborates in research and editorial initiatives. He is Director of RA, Revista de Arquitectura. He has published articles in ARQ, Future Anterior, Bauwelt, Rita, PPA, Revista 180, Arquitetura rivista, ZARCH, and he is a regular reviewer for some others. He is author, co-author or editor of several books and book chapters, the most recent being Aguinaga, Echaide, Sobrini. Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura (Pamplona, 2020), awarded at the XV BEAU, and the chapter 'A Certain Praise for Drawings' in Approaching Architecture. Three Fields, One Discipline (New York & Oxon, 2023). In 2015 he co-chaired the internacional conference Inter: Photography and Architecture (2016) and the four volumes with the proceedings that were awarded at the XIV BEAU. He founded alcolea+tárrago in 2005. His work has been awarded in more than 20 national and international competitions, published in many magazines and books, and has received several architecture prizes for built work.

Maria Neto is an architect, invited assistant professor at DECA-UBI, and researcher at CEAU-FAUP, CIAUD-UBI, and ICHaB-ETSAM. She holds a PhD in Architecture (EA-UAH + ICHaB-ETSAM, 2022), a postgraduate degree in Development of Human Settlements in the Third World (ICHaB-ETSAM), and professional certification in Humanitarian Shelter Coordination (IFRC/UNHCR/Oxford Brookes University). Her academic and professional work focuses on housing, public policies, participatory processes, and architecture in contexts of vulnerability. She collaborated with the UNHCR in Kenya and the British Red Cross in the United Kingdom, supporting refugee and asylum seeker populations. She was awarded the Távora Award, invited to represent Portugal at the 17th Venice Architecture Biennale, and selected for the anthology of the Lisbon Architecture Triennale Universities Award 2024. She was also one of the six finalists of the 7th edition of the Lisbon Architecture Triennale Millennium bcp Universities Award, in the research category (2025). Currently, she coordinates the project Landscapes of Care and Domesticity, funded by Fundação La Caixa/FCT, and leads the project for the construction

of 23 housing units under the National Urgent and Temporary Housing Grant (BNAUT) – PRR program. Alongside her academic and research activities, she co-directs her architectural studio with architect Jorge Marum. She has collaborated with the IHRU (Instituto da Habitação e da Reabilitação Urbana) on the program Da Habitação ao Habitat, within the framework of the New Generation of Housing Policies (NGPH), and currently integrates the team of the Direção de Programas de Apoio à Habitação (DEPAH) at IHRU.

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