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Editor's Foreword

Tadeja Zupančič

There is a challenging difference between the Slovene and English versions of the AR 2021 title. This difference derives from the attempt to avoid a literal translation, which simply doesn't sound well. The title in Slovene emphasizes the ability to feel vulnerability. The English combinative phrase interpretively suggests a reaction to that feeling, an act that responds to vulnerability, and to the nature of that act. In the context of architectural design, in the broadest sense, including its urban and interior dimensions, we can discuss design decision-makers' awareness of socio-spatial vulnerability that enable them to detect the moments and places where redress is needed: an awareness that fosters the ability to critically enter into a dialogue with the exposed vulnerability and to define a form redress that can artfully reshape the situation. AR 2021 addresses questions concerning the sensitive gestures needed in vulnerable conditions.

There is a need to develop a strong individual and collective referential apparatus to detect the contexts and the nature of vulnerabilities in (co-)designing. How to sense these contexts and their dynamics, as well as the multifaceted nature of the vulnerability, immerse into the situations and react timely — and critically — to the delicacy identified? Where and when the situation is too fragile to be touched? When and where not-touching now would lead to future decay regardless of the vulnerable but flourishing situation at the moment of observation? Where and when not-touching would lead to immediate destruction? The development of this critical background requires personalized methods of defining a design-oriented awareness. This is not only about caring for vulnerable places and people, but also about nurturing and enhancing the sensitivity of those involved in dealing with vulnerable places, people, moments and processes.

The difficulty to sense these contexts may derive from the nature of their vulnerability. Often fragile and ephemeral, vulnerable situations are at times difficult to identify. The ability to intervene sensitively to the delicacy identified is conditioned by the ability to immerse into the situation. Rising awareness of and enhancing the personal and collective sensitivity of design decision-makers in relation to vulnerability requires the development of communication interfaces able to carry the messages of and about vulnerability. In architectural design, drawings, especially hand drawings, can assume such a role, where the potential of drawing acts to interface with personal mnemonic vulnerabilities and moments where the drawing is proposed as a boundary object to bind different beneficiaries. Another article situates the line as a starting point, a moment of becoming that identifies its own vulnerability as a holder of doubts and uncertainties

and as a representative of the liminal, dynamic condition of instability and ambiguity. The drawing line thus becomes 'a principal agent of spatial vulnerability', it enables 'spatial vulnerability to be preserved throughout the ambiguousness of drawing.' What about the design decision-makers, who cannot use hand drawings to detect vulnerabilities and respond to them sensitively?

There are processes of spontaneous, gradual decay, deliberate or accidental occurrences of ruination where restoration remains potentially impossible or irrelevant, and where construction and deconstruction processes may even lead to the reconstruction of ruins or suspension of ruination.

What happens in the cases of hypersensitivity and even ignorance of the design decision-makers? 'Občutek za ranljivost' (ability to feel vulnerability) is the key starting point for any socio-spatial intervention. In the case of the initial sensitivity weakness or ignorant design position, the artificiality of redressing may lead to the destruction instead of recovery and a refreshed energy. How to deal with situations, almost impossible to preserve and activate? What happens in careful redressing the irreversible? Are there circumstances when and where vulnerability is or can become a strength? An example of an alternative flow to the demolition projects of the vulnerable, ruined rural settlements indicates such a potential: reactivation of obsolete buildings is represented as a material anchorage point of personal memories of a place to strengthen the collective memory. To prolong, uphold, restore, rebuild that memory.

A failed attempt to shift the weakness of vulnerability into strength may lead to the understanding of the contemporary world wholeness as a fully ruined situation, where fragments, places, theories and mythologies are all in ruins. A 'radical re-foundation' before the world undergoes a definitive reset has been proposed in the idea of the architecture of expectation, a strategy of saving the fragments and values to be carried into the future. What may integrate those fragments and values, including the fragmentation of knowledge, remains an open question. Who can investigate the vulnerability of existence, deriving from irreversible traces of progress? Let us imagine a creative collective, inspired by creative figures of co-design, able to take care of the vulnerability discussed and to trigger the reinvention of 'more-than-human' worlds.

Uvodnik

Tadeja Zupančič

Med slovensko in angleško verzijo naslova tokratne revije obstaja izzivov polna razlika. Izhaja iz prizadevanja, da bi se izognili dobesednemu prevodu, ki preprosto ne zveni dobro. Naslov v slovenskem jeziku poudarja sposobnost občutenja ranljivosti. Angleška fraza pa se nagiba k odzivu temu občutenju, k dejanju, ki se odziva na ranljivost, in k naravi tega dejanja. V kontekstu arhitekturnega oblikovanja v najširšem pomenu, ki vključuje urbane razsežnosti in interierje, lahko razpravljamo o odločevalcih o posegih v prostor, ki se zavedajo družbeno-prostorske ranljivosti, in jim to zavedanje omogoča prepoznavanje trenutkov in krajev, kjer je potrebno poseči v situacijo, jo popraviti: to zavedanje jih usposobi za kritičen začetek dialoga s prepoznano ranljivostjo, in za oblikovanje popravkov, ki spretno preoblikujejo situacijo. AR 2021 izpostavlja vprašanja tankočutnih gest, ki so potrebne v ranljivih pogojih.

Za prepoznavanje kontekstov in narave ranljivosti pri (so-)oblikovanju prostora je potrebno razviti močno individualno in kolektivno referenčno orodje. Kako prepoznati te kontekste in njihove dinamike, kakor tudi mnogotero naravo ranljivosti, se popolnoma vživeti v situacije in se pravočasno – in kritično – odzivati na prepoznano občutljivost? Kje in kdaj je situacija preveč krhka, da bi se je smeli dotikati? Kdaj in kje bi odsotnost dotika danes vodila v prihodnje propadanje, četudi je trenutna situacija sicer ranljiva, vendar cvetoča? Kje in kdaj pa bi opustitev tankočutnega posega pomenila takojšnje razdejanje? Razvoj tega kritičnega ozadja zahteva personalizirane metode razvoja oblikovalsko usmerjenega zavedanja. Ne gre le za skrb za ranljive prostore in ljudi, temveč tudi za negovanje in krepitev občutljivosti vseh, ki se ukvarjajo z ranljivimi prostori, ljudmi, trenutki in procesi.

Težavnost zaznavanja teh kontekstov lahko izhaja iz narave njihove ranljivosti. Pogosto krhke in minljive ranljive situacije je včasih izjemno težko prepoznati. Sposobnost tankočutne intervencije v prepoznani občutljivosti je pogojena s sposobnostjo vživljanja v situacijo. Krepitev zavedanja in osebne ter kolektivne občutljivosti odločevalcev o posegih v prostor, ko gre za ranljivosti, zahteva razvoj komunikacijskih vmesnikov, ki lahko prenašajo sporočila (o) ranljivosti. V arhitekturnem oblikovanju so to risbe, še posebej prostoročne. V pričujoči reviji najdemo članek, ki se ukvarja z možnostmi risbe kot vmesnika osebnih ranljivosti spominov, in trenutkov, ko risba postane povezovalni objekt različnih akterjev. Nek drugi članek postavi v izhodišče črto, trenutek nastajanja, ki prepozna svojo lastno ranljivost kot nosilka dvomov in negotovosti, in kot predstavnica mejnosti, dinamičnega pogoja nestabilnosti in nejasnosti. Črta v risbi tako postane najpomembnejši zastopnik prostorske ranljivosti, le-tej omogoča ohranitev s pomočjo mnogopomenskosti risbe. Kaj pa tisti

odločevalci o oblikovanju prostora, ki ne morejo uporabiti prostoročne risbe za prepoznavanje ranljivosti in za tankočutne odzive nanje?

Obstajajo procesi spontanega, postopnega propadanja, namerni ali nesrečni pojavi rušenja, v katerih prenova ni možna ali ni relevantna, in kjer process grajenja in dekonstrukcije lahko vodi celo v rekonstrukcijo ruševin ali v prekinitev rušenja.

Kaj se z godi v primerih hipersenzibilnost ali, po drugi strani, ignorance odločevalcev o oblikovalskih intervencijah? Občutek za ranljivost je ključno izhodišče za katerokoli družbeno-prostorsko intervencijo. V primeru šibke izhodiščne občutljivosti ali ignorantskega oblikovalskega stališča lahko umetna sprememba vodi v uničenje namesto v popravo in obnovljeno energijo. Kako se lotevati situaciji, ki jih je skorajda nemogoče ohraniti in aktivirati? Kaj se zgodi v skrbnih poskusih popravljanja nepopravljivega? Ali obstajajo okoliščine, ko in kjer je ranljivost življenjska moč, ali to lahko postane? Primer alternative rušitvenih projektov ranljivih, porušениh ruralnih naselij nakazuje takšno možnost: ponovna aktivacija zastarelih zgradb ponuja sidrišče osebnih spominov na prostor, za utrjevanje kolektivnega spomina. Da bi ohranili, potrdili, obnovili, ponovno zgradili ta spomin.

Zgrešeni poskus preobrata šibkosti ranljivosti v njeno moč lahko vodi v razumevanje sodobnega sveta kot popolnoma porušene situacije, ker so fragmenti, prostori, teorije in mitologije vse v ruševinah. Eden izmed člankov te revije pred dokončnim ponovnim zagonom sveta predlaga korenito ponovno utemeljitev, z idejo arhitekture pričakovanja, strategijo reševanja fragmentov in vrednot, ki naj bi jih ponesli v prihodnost. Kaj naj bi intergiralo omenjene fragmente in vrednote, vključno z razdrobljenim znanjem, ostaja odprto vprašanje. Kdo je sposoben preiskati ranljivosti obstoja, ki izhajajo iz nepovratnih sledi napredka? Predstavljajmo si kreativno skupnost, ki jo navdihujejo kreativne osebnosti sooblikovanja, sposobne skrbeti za obravnavane ranljivosti in sprožiti ponovno odkritje svetov, ki presegajo antropocentričnega.

Owned Ruin Encounters in the Villages of the Turkish-Cypriots in Cyprus

Bahar Aktuna

- 1 Andreas Schönle, *Architecture of Oblivion: Ruins and Historical Consciousness in Modern Russia* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011), 7.
- 2 Catharine Edwards, "Imagining Ruins in Ancient Rome," *European Review of History* 18, no. 5–6 (2011): 647.
- 3 Marco Folin, "Transient Cities: Representations of Urban Destructions in European Iconography in the Fourteenth to Seventeenth Centuries," in *Wounded Cities: The Representation of Urban Disasters in European Art (14th-20th centuries)*, eds. Marco Folin and Monica Preti (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 12.
- 4 Andrew Hui, "The Birth of Ruins in Quattrocento Adoration Paintings," *I Tatti Studies in the Italian Renaissance* 18, no. 2 (2015): 328–329.
- 5 Baroque painters also "painted landscapes that were culturally rich, with historical narratives, where ruins and dead trees reflected the passage of time." Jacky Bowring, *Melancholy and the Landscape: Locating Sadness, Memory and Reflection in the Landscape* (London: Routledge, 2018), 19.
- 6 Nicholas Halmi, "Ruins without a Past," *Essays in Romanticism* 18 (2011): 10.
- 7 Alexander Cook, "Volney and the Science of Morality in Revolutionary France," *Humanities Research* 16, no. 2 (2010): 19.
- 8 Halmi, "Ruins without a Past," 19.
- 9 Andreas Huyssen, "Nostalgia for Ruins," *Grey Room* 23 (2006): 8.

Introduction

Places of dwelling are abandoned, destroyed, or disappear in time. This process can occur spontaneously, gradually, deliberately, or inadvertently. It can also transmute within the creative sphere of the imagination. There are many ways that the ruins of the built environment, taken as an end, acquire an afterlife and play into the constitution of a place in reverse. Sometimes, they remain, within the absence—the abandonment—of their contemporaneous world. This falling into ruins, or ruination, may remain in the open or it may become covered, rediscovered, maintained, preserved, repaired, recycled, or merely collapse into oblivion. Although ruining and building initially seem antithetical, they have a generative connection in place-making thought that is open to exploration.

Ruins can act as tropes of reflexivity.¹ Various cultures have articulated the ways in which the idea of ruin contributes to the understanding of place and place-making differently, sometimes explicitly and other times implicitly. A broad range of sources shed light on these variations in the unfolding experience and meaning of the ruin in comparison to a more mentally and emotionally distanced, commodified, or homogenized perspective of the ruin in the present. In Ancient Rome, ruins were sites of reflection on the finitude of communities and acted as signs of both warning and consolation.² In Medieval Europe, architectural ruins signaled amorality and corruption of societies and states.³ They were measures of morals. Ruins later became an indication of historical distance and a split from the past in the Renaissance, which developed various views of ruins ranging from anatomic perspective to reveries. For Renaissance thinkers, the architectural ruins of antiquity became sites to study structural, topographical, archeological, and historical precedents and to unlock the laws of weight, architectural principles, secrets of antiquity, and mathematical measurements.⁴ During the Baroque period, ruins became sites of transience and the objects of self-contemplation and mourning.⁵ They resonated with death as human finitude. In the Enlightenment, ruins became objects without a past.⁶ They were also celebrated as the collapse of hegemonic structures, thus giving hope to oppressed societies.⁷ Without a past, ruins further became aesthetic and joyful objects in the Romantic era. In this era, Piranesi's etchings of the ruins of Rome and the paintings of Robert Hubert illuminated "anachronisms and physically impossible arrangements," which paved the way for the popularization of ruin follies of sham ruins.⁸ As Andreas Huyssen states, "artificiality and the fake" as well as "decay, erosion, and a return to nature" form the central topics in 18th-century aesthetics.⁹ In the Romantic era, fragment, surface, and natural decay became central to the contemplation of ruin, continuing to influence

- 10 Winfried Georg Sebald, *On the Natural History of Destruction* (New York: Modern Library, 2004), 5–10.
- 11 David Gissen, *Subnature: Architecture's Other Environments* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2009), 134–135.
- 12 Antoine Picon, "Anxious Landscapes: From the Ruin to Rust," *Grey Room* 1 (2000): 66–67.
- 13 Wu Hung, *A Story of Ruins: Presence and Absence in Chinese Art and Visual Culture* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 18.
- 14 Ken Seigneurie, *Standing by the Ruins: Elegiac Humanism in Wartime and Postwar Lebanon* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2011), 14–15.
- 15 JoAnn McGregor, "The Social Life of Ruins: Sites of Memory and the Politics of a Zimbabwean Periphery," *Journal of Historical Geography* 31, no. 2 (2005): 320.
- 16 Christian De Cock and Damian O'Doherty, "Ruin and Organization Studies," *Organization Studies* 38, no. 1 (2016): 132.
- 17 Tim Edensor, *Industrial Ruins: Spaces, Aesthetics, and Materiality* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 2005), 162.
- 18 Małgorzata Nieszczerewska, "Derelict Architecture: Aesthetics of an Unaesthetic Space," *Argument: Biannual Philosophical Journal* 5, no. 2 (2015): 388–390.
- 19 Brian Dillon, "Introduction: A Short History of Decay," in *Ruins*, ed. Brian Dillon (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2011), 10.
- 20 Svetlana Boym, *The Off-Modern*, ed. David Damrosch (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 43.
- 21 Mohsen Mostafavi and David Leatherbarrow, *On Weathering: The Life of Buildings in Time* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 5.

more contemporary musings and thought. After the dreadful and moral ruin that pervaded postwar German cities,¹⁰ a celebration of ruins has re-emerged. From this rubble and debris emerged a new form of ruin that underpinned many European and Asian cities in the 20th century.¹¹ Whereas sham ruins served as follies in the eighteenth-century experience of natural landscapes, an inverted relationship between the ruin and its surroundings now marks contemporary landscapes: the ruin is appreciated as a locus for innate connection with nature, and the ruin as a locus of nature has become a celebrated phenomenon in the technological urban landscapes of our era.¹²

On the other hand, while it still guides thinking regarding place and place-making, the concept of ruin has unfolded introspectively in Eastern cultures. The idea of ruin appears in the Chinese poetic genre of *huaigu* (lamenting of the past).¹³ It also appears in the Arabic poetic genre of *qasida* and *nasīb* with a motif of *al-wuquf 'ala al-atlal* (lamenting the loss of forsaken grounds).¹⁴ In both genres, it appears with a sense of sadness and nostalgia and never as a mere visual depiction. Here, ruin-gazing is related to returning to the destroyed home, and ruins are “sites of memory.”¹⁵ This contrasts with the ruin as a ‘site of imagination’ as detached from the past. The latter may further take the form of “ruin-porn” in the devastated landscapes of war or other disasters.¹⁶ These multifarious horizons, lingering in historic records of various places and cultures, are reminders of an original sense of ruin—‘artifacure’—which has predominantly led to an existentially distant experience of ruins through the course of history.

The ruins of the built environment prevail in contemporary landscapes and their “inarticulacy” play into the everyday life of citizens.¹⁷ Attitudes toward ruins differ between like, dislike, or ignorance—essentially a ‘not seeing’ among the citizens.¹⁸ Undeniably fascinated with ruins, especially in urban contexts, contemporary literary scholars, poets, artists, and ruin-explorers nevertheless frantically pursue the sublime through the imageability of ruins. In non-architectural fields, reflective encounters seek “images of decay” as the thinking on ruins has progressively moved away from the actual site of the ruin in search of decay aesthetics through the weathering of surfaces as a reaction to dense urban conditions.¹⁹ The current “ruinophilia” is temporal.²⁰ As such, it comes from a longing for witnessing natural processes in our heavily built environments that eliminate weathering from their surfaces.²¹ The overwhelming experience of overbuilt urban settings condition a manner of seeing ruins as sites of resistance and relief.

Present literature on decay and the processes found in ruins communicates a perspective of ruin with detached ‘ruin-subjectivities,’ and as such is removed from the worldliness in which ontic categories take their meaning. A subjectivity that determines how ruin is encountered and revealed is ruin-

subjectivity. Detached ruin-subjectivity, which contrasts owned ruin-subjectivity, does not encounter the ruins from within the temporality and spatiality of originary ruin, and thus, does not really encounter the ruin as ruin but ruin as an object or artifact. This temporal distance lends itself to a kind of objective knowledge that remains at the surface of the ruin as formed-matter in its disintegration. Consequently, the path of thinking that overlooks the actual ruin as a relation produces knowledge on ‘ruins without bodies’ and ‘ruins without worlds.’ While non-architectural scholarship has discovered values of decay and ambiguity in intact ruins, architectural strategies seek to order, program, and stabilize these “vague” sites.²² This process of ordering and stabilizing unfolds as restoration when a building with historic significance is returned to its previous—intact—condition to ‘represent’ the past, and as recycling when the components of discardable buildings emerge within environmental discourses.

Existentially distanced modes of knowledge build up like dust upon primordial ruins and as such hinder the truth of origins. This essay argues that ruins can be fully understood in their origin, actuality, and potency from an architecturally-guided perspective, and by situating ruin in its worldliness, provides an alternative view of the immediate and expansive experience of ruins and the structure of ruin as it unfolds between being and becoming and between origin and project. This position frames a care-based theory of ruin.

Artifacture and Ruin-Time

Originally, ruin was a Western concept that had its origins in “the architectural remains of predominantly masonry structures.”²³ As opposed to the migrant and cyclical worldview and eternal return in the Eastern *topos* that embraces the perishability of building as material, the Western origin of building is charged with the “relative permanence of stereotomic mass.”²⁴ Thus, a will to endurance is already instilled into the artifacts of the built environment, which establishes the finitude and vulnerability of the built artifacts that may become “artifacture” as “uninhabitable remains.”²⁵ Collapsing into ruin occurs more readily when the structures have been built with an intention of material endurance as in the Western tradition of architecture. Stereotomic permanence, as in stone buildings, lets artifacture linger in its physical manifestation in a geological temporality. Endurance ruins, and ruin endures. In that sense, ruins are both objects and processes.²⁶ Intentionality is embedded in the relationship between materiality and ruin-subject who accesses materiality through embodied vulnerability that always already exists as a pre-condition of being.

- 27 Anne M. Wagner, "Splitting and Doubling: Gordon Matta-Clark and the Body of Sculpture," *Grey Room* 14 (2004): 26–45.
- 28 Owen Barfield, "'Ruin': A Word and a History," *The Living Age* 318 (1923): 164–165.
- 29 Florence M. Hetzler, "Causality: Ruin Time and Ruins," *Leonardo* 21, no. 1 (1988): 51.
- 30 Caitlin DeSilvey, *Curated Decay: Heritage beyond Saving* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 28.
- 31 Schönle, "Ruin Philosophy," 87.
- 32 Robert Harbison, *The Built, the Unbuilt, and the Unbuildable: In Pursuit of Architectural Meaning* (Singapore: Thames and Hudson, 1991), 10.

Through the course of history, the architectural ruin manifested itself in various ways, as a part of the present or a future project: ruin-as-destructive, ruin-as-dissected, ruin-as-constructed (i.e., sham ruin follies), ruin-as-generative (i.e., Splitting by Gordon Matta-Clark²⁷). There is a transhistorical and transgeographical understanding of the ruin: the ruin-as-destructive originates in a threat against the integrity of the human body. This sense of ruin is embodied and originary; it is related to the temporality of collapse and the finitude of the world and the demise of a body. In fact, Old French *ruine* in the 14th century refers to the “act of giving way and falling down.” And *ruine* comes from Latin *ruina*, which suggests “a collapse, a rushing down, a tumbling down,” and is related to *ruere* “to rush, fall violently, collapse.” In turn, Proto-Indo-European *reue* refers to “smash, knock down, tear out, dig up.” Owen Barfield further points out the origin of the word ruin in the Latin word *ruo*, which means to rush and fall with a sense of disaster. *Ruina* came to mean both falling and a fallen thing.²⁸ *Ruo* has a linguistic relation to the Ancient Greek word *oroúō* (ὀροῦώ), which also means ‘to hurry.’

This origin of ruin is hindered in recent scholarship by its focus on the natural agency of deterioration. Contemporary discussions commonly define ruins as entities between two eternities of presence and absence; the process of decay never ends within sight of human temporality. Florence Hetzler’s “ruin time” demonstrates this line of thinking.²⁹ In reference to an objective externality (geological time), the materiality of ruin is detached from the original subjectivity. Sometimes it is re-attached to a subjectivity as an after-experience of the ruined object, as with urban-explorers and ruin-tourists who remain external to ruin time and experience a ruin as an artifact or eco-fact.³⁰ On the other hand, there is another line of thinking in later thought that prioritizes subjective internality by suggesting, “the ruin is a cultural construct, more than a physical object [and] it is in the eye of the beholder.”³¹ Similarly, Robert Harbison suggests that ruin is “a way of seeing or a state of soul.”³² In this latter system of thought, a shared understanding of ruin is not reached and the determinacy of the material horizon of ruin is also lost. However, the ruin is both an intra-worldly entity with its concrete materiality (as a thing), and the relational context of the world (a horizon), against which the materiality of ruin as a thing comes into its presence, unfolds as experience and finds its meaning as artifacture. ‘Ruin-time’ denotes the time of collapse in which decay is not essential. Among various ruin relations (ruin-as-that-and-that), this primordial and eternal relation with ruin and a shared intuitive understanding of ruin (ruin-as-such) originate in potentially meeting the weight of collapse corporeally and emotionally, connecting with ‘ruin-as-destructive.’ Only when one steps into an origi-

- 33 Scott M. Campbell, *The Early Heidegger's Philosophy of Life: Facticity, Being, and Language* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 84.
- 34 Jonathan Lear, *Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 10.
- 35 Harbison, *The Built, the Unbuilt, and the Unbuildable*, 7.
- 36 Martin Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle: Initiation into Phenomenological Research*, trans. Richard Rojcewicz (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009), 104.
- 37 Campbell, *The Early Heidegger's Philosophy of Life*, 84.

nary ruin, rather than a structurally stabilized ruin, can one experience the disintegration of the referents. Ruin ruins in its embodied worldliness.

The World of Ruin — The World in Ruins

Ruin initially emerges within the horizon of inhabiting the world. The world is a vulnerable referential context, and the concept of ruin appears in the radical decay and collapse of the temporality of the referents of the world. Martin Heidegger introduces the concept of world-decay to refer to the dissolution of world and intra-worldly entities. Building on Heideggerian thinking, Jonathan Lear introduces the concept of world-collapse to define a moment of retrospective recognition of the end of the world. Human beings, in their corporeality, affectivity, spatiality, temporality, and communality are caught up in their life and “care-worlds.”³³ In caring for their way of life and its meaning, they also prepare for its collapse. “Protecting a way of life” is the potential for the termination of such life. Lear calls this situation a “peculiar vulnerability” or a “peculiar possibility” that comes with the care for a distinct way of life.³⁴ Human beings’ closest and most primary places of making, which in turn allow for a caring, precarious, and ruinous manner of living in and through, are their settlements or dwellings and the things they hold for a way of living. Harbison highlights the inherent force of intentionality in buildings by arguing that they are “more precarious than they ordinarily appear, because [they are] preoccupied with meaning something.”³⁵ Humanity has been living against ruins, out of ruins, for ruins, in ruins, and altogether, with ruins. Factual life, which is the living present, in its meaningfulness and purposefulness, produces self-collapse in the sense of “abolition of time” in which relations and their directionality and intentionality cease.³⁶ Contemporary scholars who see a sense of liberation in the ruin celebrate this ontological change in the artifact. Heidegger calls this ruinance: “the destruction of life’s temporality,” or the “concealing of temporality.”³⁷ Building on the concepts of world-decay and world-collapse, I introduce the phrase topo-tectonic dissolution. This is how I highlight ruin as the radical disintegration of the material joints that tie existential loci of the meaningful and legible context of inhabitation in contrast to the dissolution of form and matter of ruin as a mere object devoid of any prior horizon of being in the world.

It is possible and necessary to gain a genuine understanding and thorough insight into ruin through its worldliness and topo-tectonic constitution. Such understanding consequently frees the contemporary discourse on ruin from a surficial orientation. To gain this vantage point, the research must let

38 *Ibid.*

39 Robert Ginsberg, *The Aesthetics of Ruins* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2004), 3, 15, 33.

40 Heidegger, *Phenomenological Interpretations of Aristotle*, 98.

41 *Ibid.*, 104.

42 *Ibid.*, 108.

43 Sean Gaston, *The Concept of World from Kant to Derrida* (London: Rowman & Littlefield International, 2013), 83.

rality and spatiality of ruins. In order to expand the horizon of understanding on the structures and processes of building in ruins—how they are experienced, negotiated and projected from within, I mutually explore the original ruin in its worldliness and the originary ruin-subjectivity of the ruin-dweller through a hermeneutic-phenomenological method.

Fieldwork took place in the contemporary rural context of Cyprus where world-decay becomes extreme and allows a rare access to the ruinating temporality of artifacture. The context presents first-person accounts on the expansive decay and the immediate collapse, thereby shedding light on the topo-tectonic constitution of ‘artifacture.’ The ruin-owners, who have been long-term refugees in Northern Cyprus, remain both within and outside the ruin, and imagine place-making amid the impossibility of restoring both the world and the architectural ruin. The ruin-owners look for new temporal possibilities. The new openness to the world is “counter-ruinance,” and Campbell states that “[i]n a moment of insight, a *kairos*, [the] counter-ruinant structures point life back toward itself, and its original caring movement toward the world.”³⁸ The ruin, as uninhabitable remains, prepares for a new ethos of living in its ruinous mode—a vision of ethical action rather than of aesthetic pleasure. The ruin-horizon is the two-way relation between what it is and what is to become, i.e., a horizon in which the givenness and future possibilities of the ruin reciprocally inform each other.

While this essay does not celebrate the concept of ruination in any way, it is important to recognize the liberating sense attached to the ruin. Robert Ginsberg suggests that “the matter of the ruin is no longer matter in reference to form” while furthermore “the ruin liberates form from its subservience to function” and “function from its subservience to purpose” by implying a sense of freedom within ruins.³⁹ While the scholars pose liberating ruination as an extraordinary occurrence, Heidegger takes ruinance to be the “movedness of factual life.”⁴⁰ According to Heidegger, ruinance abolishes time; ruin has no time.⁴¹ This temporal nothingness is precisely what allows the “possibility that gives place ... for the accommodation and ordering of encounterable ... objects,” and thus a development of a new horizon of being.⁴² It is possible to understand ruin as an instance of world-disclosure, and in “finding itself at once in and beyond the world, [human being] discovers its projective possibilities and its freedom.”⁴³ The motivation of projective possibilities peaks in the case of the immediacy as well as the anxiety of the ruin, which has its essence of an embodied collapse that enforces ethical action. The immediacy and the anxiety of collapse is the source of a generative energy that wants to actively engage with ruin-horizon and artifacture, both in being and in becoming. Ruin, as a topo-tectonic idea, makes original action possible.

- 44 Rebecca Bryant, *Life Stories: Turkish Cypriot Community, Displacement in Cyprus — Consequences of Civil and Military Strife* (Nicosia: PRIO Cyprus Centre, 2012), 3–11.

The following fieldwork sheds light on the connection between the worldliness and intra-worldliness of ruin that unfolds in the rare socio-political context of Cyprus, which makes an ordinary discourse on ruins possible by engaging owned ruin-subjectivities. The findings of the fieldwork allow describing how the owned ruin-subjectivities encounter the collapse in ruins as topo-tectonic constructs in disintegration. The findings further display how the concepts of the materiality, intentionality, and value of ruins receive a particular inter-relational meaning in a context that, as a whole, further generates a vision of placemaking that entails extracting memento from disintegrating joints and grafting these to the new place of being.

A Case of Artifacture: Deserted Settlements of Turkish-Cypriots

Resonating with Heideggerian world-decay and Lear's world-collapse, the present context of Cyprus displays a condition of pervasive ruination and ruin-time embodied by owned ruin-subjectivities. The ruins I have studied belong to a politically charged conflict that redefined the ethnic territories preserved by physical borders. The Civil War of Cyprus, which took place between 1963 and 1974, led to the de facto division of the country by the Turkish side in 1974 and 1975. The mass displacement of people enabled the formation of two territories without physical access to each other; the northern territory controlled by the Turkish-Cypriots and the southern territory by the Greek-Cypriots.⁴⁴ While the ongoing inter-ethnic dispute between the Greek-Cypriot and the Turkish-Cypriot communities are still present, Cyprus remains physically and ethnically divided across the Green Line. After decades of exile, the first checkpoint between two territories opened in April 2003 and thereby many crossed the border to visit their former homes. Some encountered artifacture, embodied in the abolishment of time as the collapse of the world, and experienced the immediacy of world-decay and its irreversibility.

Currently, the rural landscape of Southern Cyprus has many derelict and ruined settlements that belong to the Turkish-Cypriot communities. These settlements are built of stone or mudbrick materials and built with traditional techniques that are no longer practiced. As such, they are the reminders of older ways of building and living. Despite the attempts to record these dead settlements in cultural heritage books or the travelogues of refugees revisiting their former homeland, this pervasive condition of artifacture has predominantly escaped the architectural discourse. By referring to the ephemeral accounts of the ruin-owners in Cyprus, I will describe how ruination — topo-tectonic dissolution — operates between the abolishment of

- 45 Hans-Georg Gadamer, "On the Circle of Understanding," in *Hermeneutics vs. Science*, eds. John Connolly and Thomas Keutner (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1988), 69.
- 46 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, trans. Joel Weinsheimer (London: Continuum, 2006), 389.
- 47 The horizon is "the structure of our world-view" based on "cultural and personal categories and values" and biases. Barry P. Michrina and Cheryl Anne Richards, *Person to Person: Fieldwork, Dialogue, and the Hermeneutic Method* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 28–29.
- 48 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 301.
- 49 Gadamer, "On the Circle of Understanding," 68.
- 50 Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 291.
- 51 Paul Kidder, *Gadamer for Architects* (London & New York: Routledge, 2013), 39.
- 52 *Ibid.*, 42.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 43.

time and generation of a living present in a context where restoration remains both largely impossible and irrelevant.

Research Design

Hermeneutic-phenomenology is the research method that guides this study. In this method, the goal of the inquiry is to interpret or retrieve meaning from that which is inquired, or “participation in shared meaning.”⁴⁵ The relation between the research and researcher is one of partnership, and “one partner in the hermeneutical conversation, the text, speaks only through the other partner, the interpreter.”⁴⁶ In hermeneutic-phenomenology, the search for meaning originates from within the horizon of the researcher.⁴⁷ The horizon is the “temporal, cultural context of our lives and meanings” as well as “the range of vision that includes everything that can be seen from a particular vantage point.”⁴⁸ The task of the researcher is to “expand in concentric circles the unity of the understood meaning.”⁴⁹ The researcher expands the meaning by moving from the whole to the part and from the part back to the whole.⁵⁰ In other words, the researcher studies the fragments towards obtaining a meaning of the whole, which further provides a horizon to reinterpret the fragments. A horizon is the whole of one’s prejudices that acts as a limit, but there are meanings beyond that horizon that one has never known until then. Thus, a horizon is a transitional ground that “functions both as a limitation and as an opening to everything that transcends it.”⁵¹ Paul Kieder states, “the nature of this horizon and the possibility of altering it can be fully realized only in the course of engaging with another horizon.”⁵²

In this research, my prejudices included the learned appreciation of ruin aesthetics. My horizon was limited by the distance to the worldliness of the ruins. The horizon was expanded through site-visits as well as through listening to what the former inhabitants of the ruined settlements had to say, which allowed a mediated access to ruin-time and a deeper insight into the topo-tectonic dissolution. The expansion of the researcher’s horizon through encountering another horizon is called the fusion of horizons, and the outcome of the fusion of horizons is understanding. While the fusion of horizons is a transformative process that never ends, the fusion is restrained “by the limits on our time and abilities, the finite scope and span of our lifetimes.”⁵³ In this case, it was also limited by the span of the research and fieldwork.

Locating Ruined Settlements: The initial knowledge on the ruined settlements studied here came from a ruin-tourism website. Consequently, several sources helped to identify the potential sites of the study. PRIO Cyprus Centre’s website contains an interactive map on the routes of displacement

54 Kemal Atay, *Güney Kıbrıs'ta Türk Mührü Silinmeden* [Before the Turkish Imprint Disappears in Southern Cyprus] (Ankara: Ertem Basım Yayın, 2010).

55 Hasan Sarıca, *Güney Kıbrıs'ta Yok Olan Türk Köyleri* [Disappeared Turkish Villages in Southern Cyprus] (Nicosia: Freebirds Yayın, 2009).

56 Michael E. Patterson and Daniel R. Williams, *Collecting and Analyzing Qualitative Data: Hermeneutic Principles, Methods and Case Examples* (Champaign: Sagamore Publishing, 2002), 47.

in Cyprus due to the Cyprus conflict. A travelogue by Kemal Atay contains Ottoman and Turkish-Cypriot settlements, districts, and architectural artifacts on the Southern side of the divide.⁵⁴ Finally, a book compiled by the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus Presidency Office shed light on the potential sites of the study.⁵⁵ Consequently, the study identified thirty-nine sites with different degrees of physical ruination.

Site visits: Site visits enabled a direct spatio-temporal experience of ruined settlements. I obtained data in the form of pre-reflective and reflective self-narratives. Pre-reflective self-narratives came through voice recordings that captured spontaneous reactions to the ruins. Reflective narratives came through the field notes written down after the visits. I took many photographs in the site visits, which capture the mediated perspective that moves between an immediate impression and an aesthetically focused framing.

Interviews: Multiple semi-structured, in-depth interviews allowed the former inhabitants of the ruined settlements to articulate the topo-tectonic experience of being in ruin. These informants were enrolled in the study through snowballing and were selected based on an adequate memory and experience of the deserted villages. The reflective interview questions focused on the flight from their settlements, the return to the settlements, and aspirations for artifacture. The interviews took place until the saturation of data. They were recorded with a tape recorder and transcribed afterward.

Interpretation: The analysis of the ruined dwellings started with my self-narratives. Reactive voice-recordings identified what matters in being in ruin. Reflective self-narratives helped me to move between the verbal and visual realms to establish the initially invisible associations and atmosphere of the ruins. Visual interpretation aimed to excavate the likely and unlikely stories of ruination discovered during the voice-recorded and sound-recorded data. The horizon of understanding of ruin was expanded with the integration of reflective narratives of the owned ruin-subjectivities. I indexed all data for their meaning units—the segments of the interviews that are comprehensible on their own. The focus was on the meaning units that “provide insight into the phenomenon being investigated.”⁵⁶ I developed thematic units by grouping individual meaning units. The presentation of the findings evoke the interrelationships among the themes that capture an expanded view of artifacture.

Retrieval of Topo-Tectonic Dissolution in Artifacture

The reactive recordings of the site visits indicated the embodiment of artifacture. As such, the anthropocentric convenience is increasingly fractured until

the ruin pervades the whole landscape. The meaning categories lent into ruin-images, ruin-processes, and ruin-events, which reveal the world-decay and embodied-collapse of artifacture as opposed to a romanticized perspective of rural ruin adorned by nature—as sought by the ruin-tourists. The categories shed light on the topo-tectonic constitution of artifacture: the dissolution of material and atmospheric joints and existential loci that were once held together in a living present. The findings present a range of experiential categories, and the totality of these categories guide thinking on placemaking amid the ruin with a sense of homecoming that diverges from the ideals of restoration. Presented below, the themes of ‘Fig Tree,’ ‘Desiccation,’ ‘Nothingness,’ ‘Heirloom,’ and ‘Inheritance Worth’ illustrate the interrelationships among memory, landscape, ground, value, and spatio-temporality that orient an original vision of placemaking out of the abolishment of time within the ruins. The findings point toward a vision of artifactual grafting which emerges as a stance against world-decay and an irreversible refuge away from homeland.

Thematic Unit: Fig Tree

Fig tree grows wildly in the semi-arid climate of Cyprus with the aid of wind and birds. This tree runs in the lived memory of Turkish-Cypriots as an image of the forthcoming collapse. An old saying on fig trees implies the collapse of dwelling: to plant a fig tree at one’s hearth. In Cyprus, the houses have outdoor ovens in addition to indoor fireplaces. Hearth is the place of fire and the place of gathering inside and outside the house, and it has come to mean the whole house itself. According to an old belief, when the hearth of a dwelling decays and collapses due to the lack of care, it signals death approaching the household. The saying, ‘to plant a fig tree at one’s hearth,’ holds the knowledge of the strong roots of the fig tree that spread horizontally to find more nutrition. When a fig tree grows near a dwelling, the roots threaten the stability of foundations and may eventually lead to a collapse of a home. Thus, the fig tree is already an image of ruin, and subsequently, one is not supposed to let a fig tree grow very close to one’s house. Fig trees emerge where no guards of a world pluck out the potential collapse.

Fig tree as a ruin-image forms the first ring of the expansion of my horizon from the celebration of nature in ruin aesthetics. In my site visits, the image of ruins juxtaposed or filled with large and lavish fig trees recurred as an indicator of lack of care of the former world of the settlements. The fig trees operate as recorders of the concealment of human temporality in artifacture. As a symbolic image of the expansive temporal decay, the fig tree reveals the potential future of artifacture as ground and figure. It

paralyzes the temporal imagination of the ruin-owners who afterwards would reflect on possible actions through artifacture.

Thematic Unit: Desiccation

While the Romantic view imagines ruins covered in vegetation and animals, narratives of various interviewees reveal desiccation as a central process of ruin. Altay Burağan, a poet from one of the ruined settlements of this study, recited the following poem on PIK News after revisiting his home in ruins: “And trees are losing blossoms; they are without leaves from now on /... / Water is flowing neither from the fountains nor from the runnels /... /The chimneys are quiet; the image is tarnishing.” As also recorded in my field-work, the most apparent image of desiccation are water fountains or animals’ water basins. In the image of a working fountain, one encounters several events: that which is built on a site at a specific time in history and connected to the water reserves in the mountain; that which gathers the villagers near it, where they greet each other as they fill up their jugs with water to take home; and that which the animals drink water after a long day of grazing in the fields. The essence of the fountain is to let the water stream and rest, but in the case of the ruined villages, there is an essential loss to the manifestation of the fountain; it is where life dries up. While touring the ruined villages, I have come across many broken and fallen fountains and many historic ones without water running in them.

Many former inhabitants of the current ruins encountered the threshold between a living ruin and a dead ruin in the images of desiccated fountains, and in more extreme cases, the desiccated rivers due to radical changes in waterways. The missing water contributes to an inability of action within ruin since a minimum engagement with former home, say through washing hands after a long drive was not even possible. An interviewee from Agios Sozomenos was very disturbed with the removed fountain that could allow minimum orientation amid the ruins. Artifacture denotes this lack of the most basic relation. As several interviewees shared, the loss of water triggers the loss of trees, and the loss of trees causes the loss of shadows, which—along with the gentle breeze—eliminates an ideal hapticity. The loss of trees also causes the disappearance of birds. This topo-tectonic dissolution removes body and worldliness from artifacture leading to a sense of radical alienation. In contrast to ruins adorned by nature, desiccation sets up the horizon through which artifacture is encountered by the owned ruin-subjectivity in the semi-arid context of Cyprus. Artifacture has no inside and no possibility of life or domesticized nature.

Thematic Unit: Nothingness

Ruin-owners encounter images of the desiccated fountains, blind wells, or missing building parts, and perhaps their imagination reverberates in these images of ruins. Places of childhood that are now missing or in ruins move the ruin-owners in various ways, but there is always an element in ruins that pushes them closer to and further away from the sight of the ruin-owners. The web of significant loci of memories, which could allow imaging and seeing, are no longer there. The expanse of the missing loci and referents reach a moment that the missing becomes nothing. The memories run deep into the ground of the ruins, and the underground world, where history and memory accumulate, is significant for ruin-owners. Interviewees who had a deep connection to the land as a place of burial and eternal rest of the ancestors expressed profound sorrow at the sight of lost cemeteries and any references to their location. Some even stated that they became ill after their first visit to the ruins. The hope of intercommunal reconciliation vanishes in the missing and broken graveyards as well as the lost places of childhood dreams. Association with the former site of dwelling has become impossible for many interviewees.

Sorrow and anxiety remain in tension as nothing is revealed to ruin-owners. Nothingness brings a strong sense of disorientation in time and space as well as hopelessness for the future. Sorrowful subject clings to things and does not let go, whereas, in anxiety, things push themselves onto the anxious subject who turns away from them. Anxiety presses nothing onto the subject who wants to cling onto the past. In a discussion on Agios Sozomenos, the interviewee described the nothingness as having “no branch to hold on,” which led her to a profound existential crisis. Another interviewee from Alevga referred to a blank moment in her sight as a physical experience of not seeing after revisiting homeland for the first time after the opening of the checkpoints: “something happened to our sight, and we could not see.” The interviews altogether shed light on the phenomenon of nothing as a ‘non-image,’ which made sight and action impossible: “From now on, I do not want to see them; I do not want to go there... What shall I see?”

Nothingness is incomprehensible and unimaginable. There is nothing in artifacture. By recalling the experience of “nothingness in nothingness,” an interviewee from Agios Sozomenos described the ruins as a site of radical meaninglessness. Joint sites of material-memory-imagination are disassembled in the topo-tectonic disjoining in artifacture. Removed from their referential web, these fragments become replaceable: movable or transportable to new landscapes where they may be comprehensible again.

- 57 Rebecca Bryant, "Nostalgia and the Discovery of Loss: Essentializing the Turkish Cypriot Past," in *Anthropology and Nostalgia*, eds. Olivia Angé and David Berliner (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2015), 167.

Thematic Unit: Heirloom

In the sites of this study, people used to tend the same land as farmers and builders for centuries, and their bygone world was a product of agriculture and handcraft. A long accumulation of care is now embedded in ruins, and commemorative loci are now missing. For ruin-owners, the radical topo-tectonic dissolution in artifacture unfolds in sorrow and anxiety. The loss of centuries-long care and labor invested in building as well as maintaining the sites of dwelling also mark the loss of these sites that once held people's memories. This is a further sign to the ruin-owners that it is impossible to restore or revive a world that has both collapsed and decayed. The world-decay becomes a barrier to the restorative imagination of ruin, and these failed sites further pose an issue: the preservation of the heirloom.

Along these lines, the interviewees referred to *yadigâr* (heirloom), an expression that puts much emphasis on the ancestors who have long deceased, and to the responsibility to safeguard the care and labor of the ancestors whose memories now may live in heirloom objects. The ruined sites are where the heirloom goes missing. An interviewee from Faleia referred to the heirloom from her grandmother. She found herself at the end of history and living memory as nothing had remained in artifacture. Another interviewee from Agios Sozomenos referred to the missing olive trees and their significance for the intergenerational memory and responsibility: "I wish they ... did not uproot [them] because they were heirlooms of my grandfather. 500-year-old olive trees, they were memorials."

The cul-de-sac political conflict does not allow restoring the status of care in artifacture. In failing to safekeep an intergenerational world, the ruin-owners suffer under the weight of the ruined heirloom with a sense of guilt and anger. Due to the impossibility of restoring an old sense of care in the site of artifacture, some interviewees are searching for ways to safekeep sites of memory. An interviewee from Petrofani, who referred to the ruins of his grandfather's historic house, feels the obligation to preserve the heirloom despite the current circumstances and thus plans to have the house reconstructed in the northern state—like the owner of the Melandra Culture House, who had this simulacrum house built in the North.⁵⁷ He is aware that a replica is 'not real' but he has nevertheless collected some historic building elements and components from antique shops towards a new project that attempts to imitate the original house. He further referred to his desire of using the architectural components and elements from the original house if it were possible. The displaced reconstruction project illuminates a strategy of overcoming artifacture through a design thinking based on displacement which resonates with the original rise of the ruins.

Thematic Unit: Inheritance Worth

Inheritance worth is another thematic unit with an intergenerational focus; it entails the relationship between the ruins and descendants of ruin-owners. The ruin-visits had functions of reminiscence as the ruin-owners returned and kept returning to the ruins with family members. Ruin-owners took their children, and in some cases, their grandchildren to their former settlements. The ceremonial act of visiting the villages unfolds with a desire to transfer the knowledge of the former dwelling place to the next generation of relatives, even if this knowledge is objective. In these visits, the children and grandchildren in some cases were empathetic to the grievance after the ruins. In some other cases, the descendants had apathy. The interviewees tried to justify this apathy as ‘there was nothing to see or do in the ruins’ of the ancestral land. An interviewee from Prastio referred to her child’s reaction to her weeping by the ruins: “when we took the new kids there, they said, ‘why have you come and cry amid these piles of stone?’” Some respondents further stated that their children mocked the ruins during the visits.

The inheritance of the place with its visible, invisible, tangible, and intangible qualities requires the enthusiastic reception of the place by the younger generations who may sustain the world. The prolonged rupture in time and history has led to an inaccessibility to a historic world with its physical artifacts and the dissolution of communal ties among the younger generations. Along these lines, another interviewee focused on the unbridgeable historical distance between two generations. This distance renders the transmission of the settlement to the next generation as impossible even in the case of a physical restoration and a return to the ancestral land.

Inheritance worth is an intergenerational and intercommunal category that defines whether the potential actions of restoration, renovation, or restitution are meaningful enough. The worth of the ruins is limited by the ruin-owners’ lifetime. In the decay of a collapsed world, an irreversible loss of inheritance worth makes restoration inadequately meaningful. Artifacture is a non-site where devaluation extends beyond use and commodity value, but artifacture still urges for alternative actions to inherit mementos in a more meaningful way.

Conclusion: Toward an Artifactual Grafting

On the one hand, there is no hope for a community and inter-generational sustenance, no material references to memories, no sheltering of nature, nor is there any hope for the restoration of artifacture. On the other hand, ruin-owners feel the necessity to act and imagine alternative projects to move out

of present artifacture, which exists between what it is and what it is to become. The topo-tectonic narratives reveal a ruin-horizon with a vision of ethical action that emerges from actual encounters with artifacture.

Many ruin-owners probably walked among the ruins in their former homeland and lifted away, in imagination and practice, the excesses of rubble and of void. They searched for the past loci underneath this cover-up to extract and save the relics of the previous dwelling as souvenirs. The most frequently reclaimed souvenirs from the ruins of the dwelling place are the fruits, crops, seedlings and tree branches to be grafted to trees in the northern state. There is a relief in keeping the memory-loci in the form of rusted keys, building blocks, or broken tools. The persistent attitude of extracting loci from the historic rubble and their preservation display an ethical responsibility. This sensibility takes a more deliberate and architectural form for one interviewee who sees the potential of a profound architectural project to save the ancestral heirloom from disappearing. These temporal re-orderings, which take place in the imagination and actions of the ruin-owners, aim to bring artifacture to a living present in a new place.

The individually guided actions are small tactics that reveal the potential of grafting in place-making strategies after ruination. The accounts of ruin-owners reveal a possible direction in architectural thought in which the works of architectural craft are semantically translated to retain the invisible narratives of both exile and homecoming. The reclamation of memory fragments from artifacture as re-inhabitable memory-loci in a new place highlights a potential for 'artifactual grafting:' the insertion of material-memory joints to a new site with a new form and function so that the sentimental remnants of a bygone world are sustained with a use value. If the barriers against the moving of these joints could be overcome, a new place-making practice based on exile could emerge in Cyprus. This vision, of course, is limited by the lifetime of those who care about the world in ruins.

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A Reality of Rurality

Mo Michelsen Stochholm Krag

- 1 Mo Michelsen Stockholm Krag, "*Transformation on Abandonment, a new critical practice?*" (PhD diss., Aarhus School of Architecture, 2017), 59–96.

- 2 Johan Verbeke, "Research by Design Is up and Running" *Architecture & Education Journal* 5 (2011): 111–119.

- 3 Dylan Trigg, *The Memory of Place: A Phenomenology of the Uncanny* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2013), 53–65.

Introduction

Since the 1950s, the rural population in Denmark are abandoning their home villages and moving into the cities. This is part of a global tendency, in Denmark caused by a decline in food production and the attached industries. As a consequence, the social imbalance between urban and rural is growing and reflected in the market value of property. Especially the rural built environment of everyday life suffers, as the homes of the remaining rural population increasingly become unsaleable and later abandoned. Therefore, abandoned buildings in various states of repair have become a common sight in the Danish rural villages. Ruins have in other word become an inevitable condition of Danish rural¹.

The question is whether current large-scale strategic demolition projects, initiated by the government to counter the ruinous villages, are the best possible way to react to the growing numbers of rural ruins and if not, what is the alternative?

This was explored through a series of preservation experiments, undertaken as research by design, of which two: “The controlled ruin” and “The confectionary” are outlined and elaborated on in the following². These two Experiments have a temporary approach to preservation in common, in which the preserved object, here the abandoned building, undergoes continuous alterations subsequent to the initiating transformative intervention. They also share the preconditions of being based on subtractive architectural interventions not unlike mechanisms in decay, engagement of the local community, and finally the concept of forming a catalyst, linked to a specific place, for exchange of local place memory³. Despite their similarities, the experiments differ in their timespan. Hence, “The controlled ruin” was initiated in 2014 as a long-term preservation strategy and is still active. Conversely, the “The confectionary”, initiated in 2016, explored an event-based short-term preservation strategy and was deliberately demolished completely after a two-month period.

The following outlines how these experimental interventions were implemented and describes the responses and attitudes they gave rise to within the local communities. Further, notions of and attitudes towards ruins throughout history, in theory and practice, frame the two interventions enabling a discussion on possible new directions in (radical) preservation of the rural built environment.



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4 "Danish Statistics," Thisted Kommune, May 15, 2017.

1 The former sexton's abandoned residence prior to the transformation, January 2014 (photograph by author).

Thisted Municipality: The Field Lab

Thisted Municipality in the north-western part of Jutland constitutes the field lab and hence, host to all of the preservation experiments undertaken as part of what could be phrased as an emerging counter-practice of radical preservation. The municipality qualified as a field lab due to its isolated geographical location with several depopulating village communities in which strategic demolitions were already executed on a larger scale.

Furthermore, ongoing experiences of cooperation between the researcher and the municipality already existed, compounded by a great courtesy towards being part of further experimental research, and a desire to seek alternatives to the ongoing demolitions of abandoned buildings.

In the first quarter 2021, Thisted Municipality had a population of around 43,000 and covered 1,074 square kilometers. The main town within the municipality is Thisted, with a population of approximately 13,000 inhabitants⁴.

The Controlled Ruin: March 2014: A Long-Term Attempt of Radical Preservation

“The controlled ruin” was based on a neatly curated partial demolition of an abandoned building which subsequently allowed the remaining remnants to decay naturally. This precisely designed intervention transformed the abandoned building into a controlled ruin without a predetermined program.

The experimental preservation was implemented in a single-family house, originally the sexton’s residence, next to the medieval church, in the village Snedsted with approximately 1,200 residents. Most residents were exposed to the prototype on a daily basis, as it was located on a controversial site neighbouring the medieval church and the busy main road into the village.

The intervention reversed private and public, as the roof and major wall segment were removed in a horizontal split-level section, which deliberately exposed most eras of the building’s private history. The surrounding community was allowed to engage with the prototypical transformation, to re-inhabit it, or even to demolish it.

The building had throughout its more than 100 years lifespan undergone several alterations in the form of expansions. The exposure of these alterations was enforced by the intervention by pinpointing spatial-material intersections, through cutting and removal, in which the material stratification revealed the building’s different historic layers.



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2 "The controlled ruin," less than a month after the implementation, April 2014 (photograph by author).

The concept of making the private past become the public present was intended to catalyze an exchange of personal memories of the building, the place and the people who used to live there. This exchange of memories may have been enforced by some of the inherent properties of the ruin, as elaborated on later in the discussion on the ruin.

In addition to its intended purpose, an exchange of memory of place, the intervention also triggered a discussion of the merits of privacy among the local people. The central bathroom, including a bathtub covered with light blue tiles, was one of the most private spheres of the building when still in function. Now, the intervention made it a visible part of public space. This reversal proved to touch upon some crucial point to pay attention to, when introducing new heritage practices aiming for built environment of the recent past in a real-life setting. When vulnerable aspects surface, it becomes obvious that not all memories are good memories and not all memories are meant for the public.

The intervention completely exposed the blue bathtub to the public and it became visible almost from a kilometers distance. The reversal of private and public portrayed the blue bathtub as a focal point in the new interpretation of the former sexton's house.

On the landscape scale, the composition depended on the seasonal cycle. The previous sexton's house, positioned as an interpreted representation of its alter ego, held an extraordinary position amongst the surrounding landscape. The dualistic relationship with the medieval church was amplified as a consequence of the subtractive intervention that formed the preservation attempt, as the now exposed bright interior colors were contrasting the context.

When "The controlled ruin" was first implemented in the early spring 2014, visibility from the distance was particularly high, due to defoliation of the surrounding trees. This supremely visible appearance and the newly gained dualistic constellation between church and what remained of the sexton's house caused an increased public awareness, given that the medieval church was the landmark and the pride of the village. The triggered awareness fostered some skepticism towards the newly arrived and more visible element in the old village-scape, but subsequently this may have augmented the discussions and exchange of memories among the local residents.

Conversely, it appeared that when the surrounding trees came into leaf, they incidentally created an intimate space in the garden of the former sexton's house, as the public exposure decreased rapidly and the dualistic relation to the medieval church vanished. Furthermore, the intimate space may have created an opportunity for a different and more private kind of



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3 The blue bathtub, less than a month after the implementation, April 2014 (photograph by author).

4 The blue bathtub, scarred by frost erosions, March 2015 (photograph by author).

5 The blue bathtub, re-inhabited by the local community, August 2016 (photograph by author).

6 The blue bathtub, January 2017 (photograph by author).

5 Mo Michelsen Stochholm Krag, "The Controlled Ruin: Preserving Collective Memories through Building Transformation." *Future Anterior* Vol. 1, XIII (2016): 147-154.

conversations regarding the past of the place to the benefit of the overall exchange of memories.

Less than a year after the implementation “The controlled ruin” faced the consequences of its first Danish winter. The effects of frost erosions scarred the prototype, thus significantly softening the previously rigorous modernistic designed edges of walls. Some of the walls made of hollow bricks turned into piles of rubble, whereas walls of concrete and massive brickwork proved more resilient towards the climate. This was expected, as well as the immediate reactions from the local community.

Most of the reactions may be ascribed to the inherent properties of the ruin and thus, elaborated in depth later on in the discussion. To obviate increasing criticisms, a parish evening was organized by request of the researcher to equip the local community with a forum to address their questions and criticisms. It also aimed at providing the village community with insights into the research perspectives as well as the international context of the research project. The parish evening convinced the local community of the legitimacy of the changes in the village-scape caused by the intervention. The community was afterwards somewhat convinced that someone at a certain stage would take action and was allowed to do so. This actually happened on the initiative of the sexton and the Parish Council.

In spring 2015, the sexton affiliated to the neighboring cemetery cleaned up “The controlled ruin”, and began to add green plants. Moreover, the Parish Council furnished the prototype with two sets of tables and benches. From this point, “The controlled ruin” moved towards the concept of the classic ruin as known from the romantic period. In addition, at this stage the ruination process began to slow down. The added romantic cloak and re-furnishing, at the initiative of the local community, changed the status of the prototype. The remnants of the original sexton’s house were now re-vitalized as a recreational addition to the cemetery. This locally facilitated revitalization did not prevent an exchange of memories of the building and the place. Conversely, it increased the number of visitors and consequently the potential too, for further exchange. The local community’s attitude towards “The controlled ruin” at the church changed in a more positive direction, as the criticisms, according to the sexton, diminished following the local community-driven revitalization. The romantic cloak, initiated by the community itself, may have established a less intimidating situation for the local residents, softening the prosaic aspects of abandonment and contemporary decay within the rural village-scape. In short, an act of appropriation took place⁵.

However, years later some of the more sensitive problematics, related to preservation based on public exposure of private spheres, surfaced. Despite a positive attitude towards the research project in the beginning,



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- 6 Mo Michelsen Stockholm Krag, "Encountering Rural Transformation: A Catalyst for Exchanging Narratives of Place?" *Architecture and Culture* 5, 1 (2016): 135–156.

7 "Theatre installation" prior to the interventions, November 2016 (photograph by author).

close family members to the deceased previous owner complained about the decaying remains of their childhood home, and especially the fact that the place had become public. This added another dimension to the concept of long-term, however still temporary, preservation strategies building on partial demolition and subsequent integrated decay processes, especially when it comes to preserved objects belonging to the everyday environment of the recent past. Attitudes of emotional nature simply tend to changes over time dependent on impact of several visible or invisible, but unpredictable and very complex systems. In this case, the passing of a close family member may have swayed the attitude.

The fragility and diverging attitudes within rural village communities experienced through the age-long engagement in relation to “The controlled ruin” indicated on the one side an urgent need for further investigations, as the local identity proved connected to the physical anchorage point within the village context. On the other side, the radical preservation experiment revealed a potential element of vulnerability, as the privacy of those with the closest personal relations to these anchorage points risk public exposure⁶. Therefore, another preservation experiment was initiated. This experiment addressed, in contrast to “The controlled ruin”, a building which in the past played a more public role within its community. Further, the experiment was based on a concept of immaterial preservation. Hence, the intervention initiating the preservation was event-based and not leaving any spared physical remnants subsequent to the intervention.

Theatre Installation: Implementation March-August 2016.

The “Theatre installation” was in contrast to, but still learning from, the “The controlled ruin” entirely aiming at setting an example of immaterial preservation of a building. In short, the strategy was based on boosting a central public building which used to be a communal gathering point in a rural small town before its complete demolition. The preservation itself was based on creating a temporary on-site catalyst of an exchange of personal memories into the collective memory to substantiate the local identity and strengthen the community cohesion.

The “Theatre installation” was implemented as an event-based transformation of an abandoned confectionary into a theatre installation, focusing on engagement with the local community in the entire process from initial work prior to transformative intervention to the completion of the demolition. Section-based interventions were integrated as part of the Theatre installation in similar fashion as in the “The controlled ruin”. The confectionery was chosen, as it played a major role as a gathering point for the local community



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8 "Theatre installation", July 2016
(photograph by author).

9 "Theatre installation", July 2016
(photograph by author).

from the 1920s to the beginning of the 1980s. Up until 2011, the building was partly occupied by the widow of the last confectioner. In 2016, although abandoned for almost five years and now condemned to demolition, it still held a central position in the middle of the pedestrian street of the second largest town in the municipality. The “Theatre Installation” was implemented in cooperation with Teater Nordkraft, an experimental theatre, as well as local residents and Thisted Municipality.

The intention of the installation was to transform the abandoned confectionery into a peephole box and, through real-time streaming, to mirror the event to a minimal reconstruction of the confectionery in a black box at Teater Nordkraft in Aalborg. Apart from the local impact, the streaming also represented an attempt to increase public attention to the social inequality between rural and urban in Denmark. The transformed building was to become a mediator between the rural village environment and the city.

Furthermore, and more importantly, on location, the theatre installation aimed at catalyzing an exchange of local memories embedded in the confectionery to redeem these intrinsic immaterial qualities before the immanent demolition of the building. The concept was to generate increased attention to the confectionery through a two-month re-opening during summer 2016 before the building vanished.

Cyclical lighting and audio tracks orchestrated the physical interventions and the local community itself managed and maintained the installation independently during the daily opening hours. The reopening of the old abandoned confectionery as a temporary boost of the exposed memories of both the building and the place, proved strikingly appealing to the local community. More than 150 participated in the confectionery's grand reopening 4 June 2016. The local residents counted for a high percentage of the attendance throughout the most of the summer. Many residents from the city, who had visited the mirrored installation at Teater Nordkraft in Aalborg, supplemented this, and following they made the two-hour drive to Hurup to visit the confectionery.

In contrast to the “The controlled ruin”, the “Theatre installation” did not leave physical remains, as the intention was to create an immaterial impact. The confectionery remained open for almost two-months (4 June to 31 July) during the same opening hours as the other shops on the pedestrian street.

It was through the engagement with the local community the two-month of reopening was possible. During the entire period of reopening, the community itself facilitated and kept the installation running. Not only did they open and close the installation in accordance with the other shops on the pedestrian street, they also served coffee and pastry in the courtyard

every Sunday. The courtyard was furnished for this purpose, using a refectory table and benches placed underneath an old elder. The idea was to encourage the visitors to gather around the refectory table, providing an informal setting for dialogue and encouraging an exchange of memories of the place⁷.

The boost of the waning confectionery, before its inevitable destruction, proved to instill a greater awareness of the communal identity among the local residents that they themselves formed part of.

Boosting an endangered building before its foreseeable eradication places several demands on both the building and the environment. First, the impact is dependent on the location. Second, the importance of the building in relation to the community will most probably be reflected in the degree of local interaction. Third, being present on site is crucial to succeed in involving the community and thus, the success of the initiated preservation. In conclusion, when the intervention is running autonomously through total embedment in the local community, it can liberate itself and achieve its purpose.

The Properties of Ruins in the Contemporary Rural Built Environment

By introducing the concept of *age value* as a measurement tool based on the appreciation of age itself Alois Riegl did not only deviate from his predecessors in the form of Viennese academics who often ascribed the more intangible aspects of interpreting the past to divinity. Riegl did also, and more importantly in this context, expand the catalogue of what a ruin could be. Such expansion led to the concept of the *unintended monument* that would also allow previously neglected buildings of the everyday environment to assume value on the basis of the accumulated traces of their entire lifespan⁸. Whereas the intentional historic monuments over time through restoration is turning into copies of themselves and presenting a particular past as if it was the present, the unintended monument of the built environment is comprised of a spatial material palimpsest⁹.

The buildings of the everyday environment are as such unintentional monuments. Especially the existence of the buildings of everyday life are particularly contested in several ways as already outlined. In the context of the rural village, these buildings form part of an interwoven mesh of immaterial networks and relations between buildings, places, people and their memories that goes far beyond the physical boundaries of the individual building itself¹⁰. The buildings of everyday life do not call for attention, as they are part of the ordinary and thus, their disappearance goes easily unnoticed. This does not mean that they no longer are important to the surround-



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- 11 Andreas Schönle, *Architecture of Oblivion* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2011), 29–151.

- 12 Rudy Koshar, *From Monuments to Traces: Artifacts of German Memory, 1870–1990* (University of California Press, 2000), 15–80.

- 13 Maurice Halbwachs and Lewis A. Coser, *On Collective Memory* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 37–51.

- 14 Thomas J McCormick, *Ruins as Architecture: architecture as ruins* (Dublin: William L. Bauhan, Publisher, 1999), 21–46.

- 10 Interior of an abandoned building of the everyday environment, January 2014 (photograph by author).

ing community as they may, for instance, form anchorage point of the collective memory and therefore also still play a crucial role in maintaining local identity and community cohesion.

Throughout history the attitudes towards ruins have oscillated depending on their contemporary artistic movements as well as geographical origin. Obviously, romanticism in western Europe brought the ruin into focus and celebration. In contrast, the Russian and later Soviet view on ruins has a far more pragmatic position that may arrive from widespread poverty but also as a counter-position to the imposed west European romanticism¹¹. Similar tendencies are visible in the former east bloc. In Riga, the capital of Latvia the historic “layer” of the Soviet era, physically represented as Soviet modernist buildings, is currently being eradicated through demolition and subsequently replaced with contemporary re-interpretations of pre-WW2 art nouveau buildings. This consolidates a fast and irreversibly eradication of the recent past of a nation as seen so often before throughout history. The fast eradication of history of the recent past in the Danish rural built environment may not be as politically imposed as the case in Latvia although the result is the same. The greatest danger in such eradications may be oblivion, as forgetting may produce a risk of history repeating itself, when all the traces and physical remains of the unwanted recent past are erased.

In the late 19th century Germany, the national monuments were rebuilt and supplemented to substantiate the notion of the German empire. Until 1871 Germany was more bound together of “*a sense of a nation*” rather than being defined by territorial boundaries, as the latter was not rational due to Germany's construct of several kingdoms and unions as well as its unstable complex of borders as a result of war. This is what could be phrased as programmed oblivion or rewriting the past of a nation¹².

The question is whether a halfway deliberate programmed oblivion is taking place in Danish rural utilizing the strategic demolitions as method, when inalienable anchorage points of the collective memory, part of the foundation of local identity as well as community cohesion, rapidly are eradicated¹³.

To understand the properties of ruins in relation to radical preservation of abandoned rural buildings, it seems relevant to introduce notions of the ruin in romanticism, as the ruin was praised in western Europe during this period¹⁴.

In the romantic period the ruin was ascribed to have the ability of evoking emotional feelings. This is rendered visible in literature as well as in the arts and architecture of the time. The fragmented writings of the period resemble the broken entities of the physical ruin. In other words, the gap

- 15 Elizabeth Wanning Harries, *The Unfinished Manner* (London: University Press of Virginia, 1994), 56–121.
- 16 Jonathan Hill, *A Landscape of Architecture, History and Fiction* (London; New York: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2016), 91–124.
- 17 Naomi Stead, "The Value of Ruins: Allegories of Destruction in Benjamin and Speer." *An Interdisciplinary Journal of the Built Environment*, no. 6 (2003): 51–64.
- 18 Laurajane Smith, "All Heritage is Intangible," *Amsterdam School of the Arts* (2011): 133–142.
- 19 "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage," ICOMOS, UNESCO, October 27, 2003.

between the fragments stimulated an individual interpretation of what might have connected them in the past¹⁵.

Professor Jonathan Hill at the Bartlett describes the ruins as precursors of change, as they are bringing a particular past into present, a particular past that is lost. As such they also point towards an uncertain future¹⁶. This automatically leads to the discussion on attitudes towards ruins in the contemporary context of Danish rural. The ruin gradually reveals its private past to the public as the interior becomes exterior as part of the decay processes. Thus, the full history of the building is rendered visible as a material x-ray. The unleash of the private sphere into the public creates a disturbance of the atmospheres of the place or in the German art critic and philosopher Walter Benjamin's words "*a sudden shock of awakening*". This substantiates the romantic notion of the ruins as capable of evoking emotional feelings¹⁷.

Similarly, to the romantic notions of the ruin, the outlined interventions prompted a specific condition. It was as if the brokenness leading to the reversal of public and private through the section-like method proved an ability to instantly trigger latent personal memories linked to a specific building or place. In other word, the unleashed memories were filling in the missing parts of a broken entity. Memories that prior to the intervention had been concealed.

However, the overall positive attitude towards ruins in the romantic period are not necessarily shared by the people living in the rural areas today. First of all, the celebration of brokenness and fragment in romanticism was for the elite only and therefore not directly applicable to contemporary rurality in Denmark in which the everyday environment is dominating. Accordingly, it may not come as a surprise that brokenness in the rural village-scape is not appreciated by the local communities, as it, in Hill's view, is a symptom of an uncertain future. This may be the reason, why the strategic demolitions are welcomed by many village communities, as the demolitions on the short term provide a cleanup. Furthermore, when fragile and vulnerable heritage aspects important to rural identities, embedded in the brokenness, are immaterial and intangible of nature and thus, invisible, the rural village communities are not to be blamed.

More recently however, an awareness towards the immaterial and intangible aspects of cultural heritage has emerged, as stated by ICOMOS in the "Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage" in 2003 or by Laura-jane Smith in the paper "All heritage is intangible"¹⁸. In the aftermath of the ICOMOS convention, the definitions of what can qualify as intangible heritage remain extremely broad, resulting in a lack in development of new alternative methods to identify and preserve or activate the more ephemeral parts of built heritage¹⁹.

Conclusion

Ironically, vast amounts are used on the intentional monuments to prevent natural decay by turning them into copies of themselves over time, whereas other vast amounts are spent on the rural built environment of everyday life to prevent decay through strategic demolitions.

Throughout the last century, the combination of urban development and preservation practices has resulted in monuments being isolated as historic islands, frozen in time, and completely detached from their contemporary context. Today they appear as museum pieces on display, alien and artificial in their appearance.

The rural built environment on the other hand is challenged more than ever. ICOMOS has brought attention to the intangible and immaterial aspects of cultural heritage. Still, two decades later, contemporary heritage practices have failed in developing new methods to identify, preserve, or activate material, immaterial, and intangible aspects of the rural built heritage. Bearing the outlined radical preservation attempts in mind, the contemporary discourse on cultural heritage plays down the importance of engaging the rural built environment of everyday life in the discourse. Despite this, the preservation experiments unearthed several of unrecognized intrinsic immaterial qualities linked to buildings or built environment emptied of function. This reveals a gap, in research and in practice, that calls for new directions in cultural heritage. New directions being based on more dynamic and engaging approaches to the field. Approaches that are embedded in the rural communities themselves to the benefit of the waning identities of the rural villages and from which new rural identities can emerge.

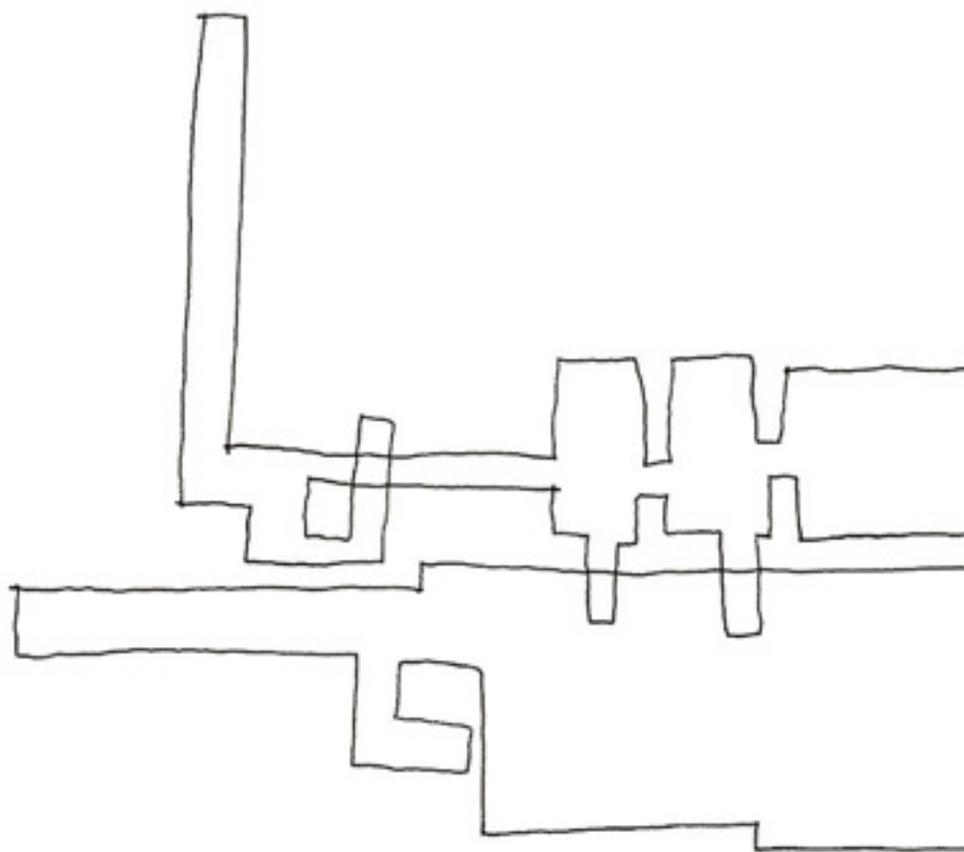
Rural villages exist in a fragile equilibrium of material and immaterial networks that is vulnerable to abrupt interventions imposed as for instance top-down governance such as the state funds for demolition projects. Learning from the counter-practice of radical preservation it seems crucial that Danish rural must be changed from within. Nevertheless, there may be one difficult precondition for a redefined cultural heritage apparatus that can obtain the unseen aspects of rurality. Namely, a broader societal reconciliation with the recent past.

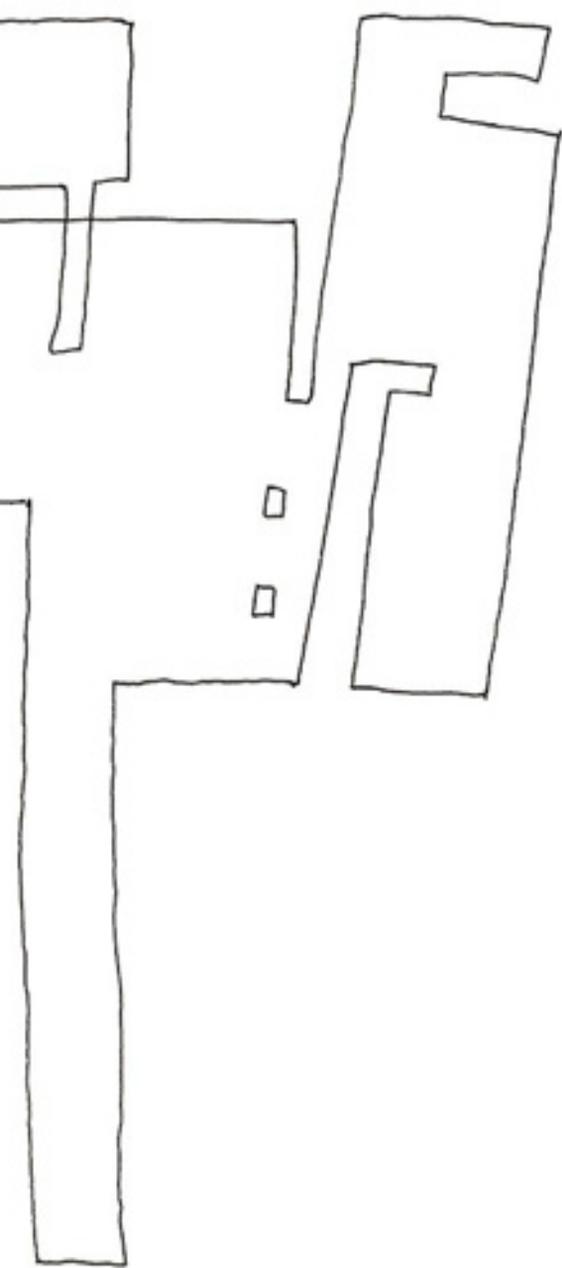
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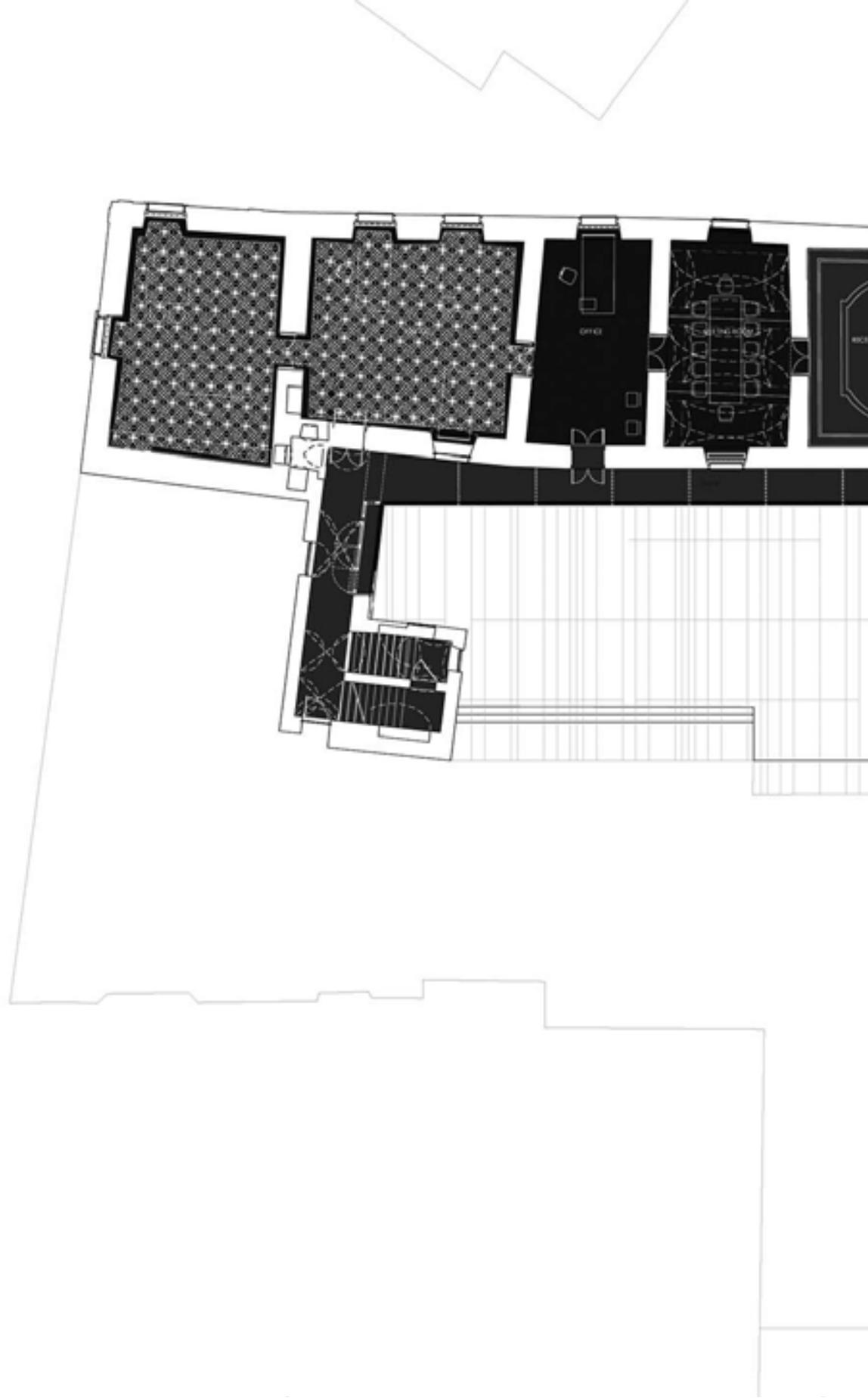
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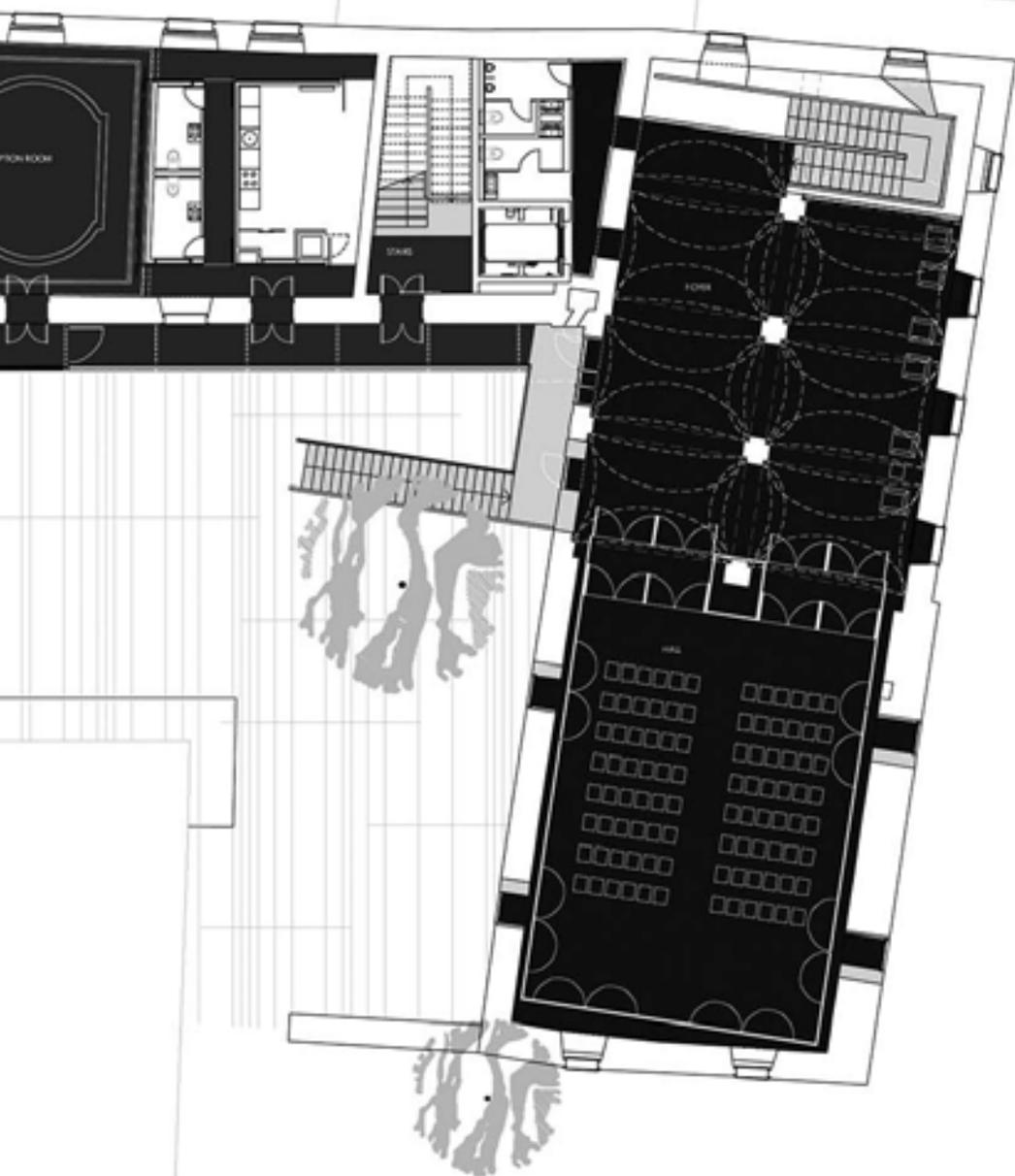
































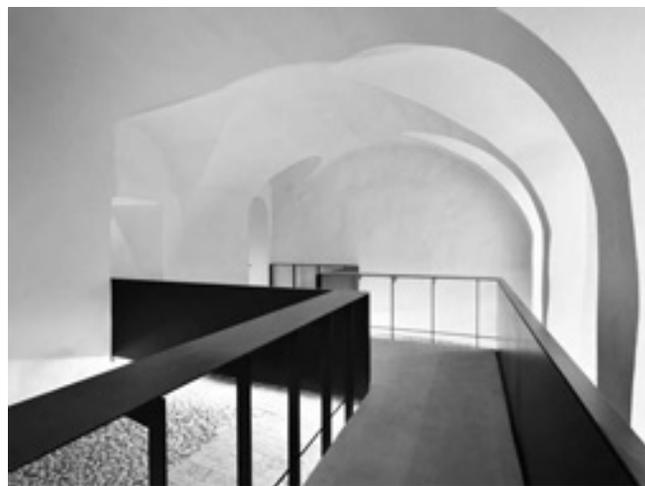
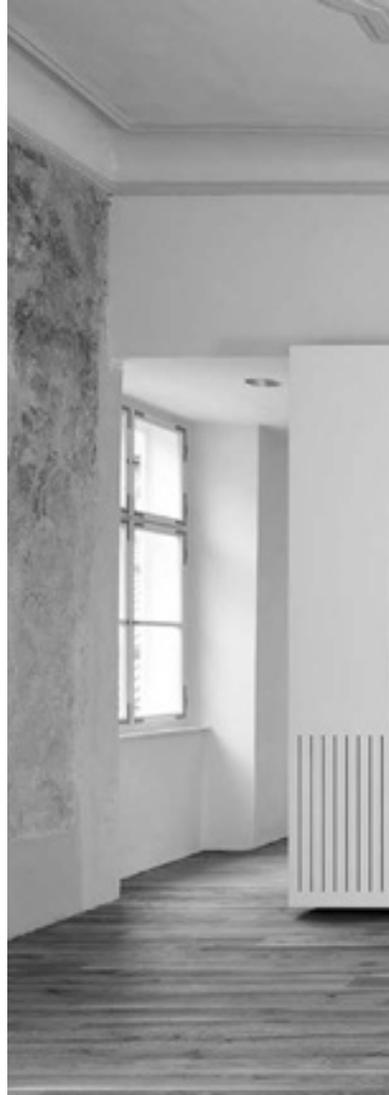














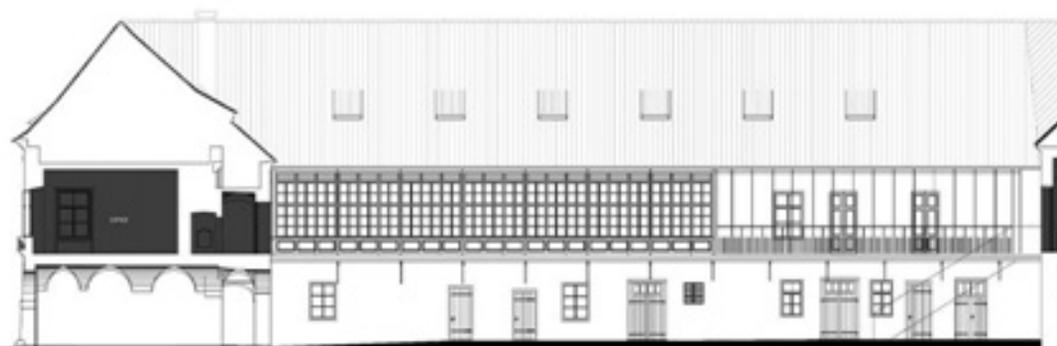




I don't have a special method of engaging with the extant. I let the space take over. With the resonance of its volume, with the light of the moment, which guides me through the space, with the touch of the washed-out walls or the smell that evokes stories from the past. This first contact is extremely important; it accompanies me throughout my explorations, stimulates my thought process, and stays with me while the first ideas are taking form. "Artifice" can only arise from this affection, understanding, and deep respect. On the other hand, thought is abstract; it brings a new time into the old and demands stepping back and forgetting. "Redress" can mean dismissing everything one has felt and comprehended from one's mind, so as to arrive at something new.

Emphatic understanding and forgetting bring about a combination of close connectedness and creative freedom and direct us towards discovering unknown worlds.

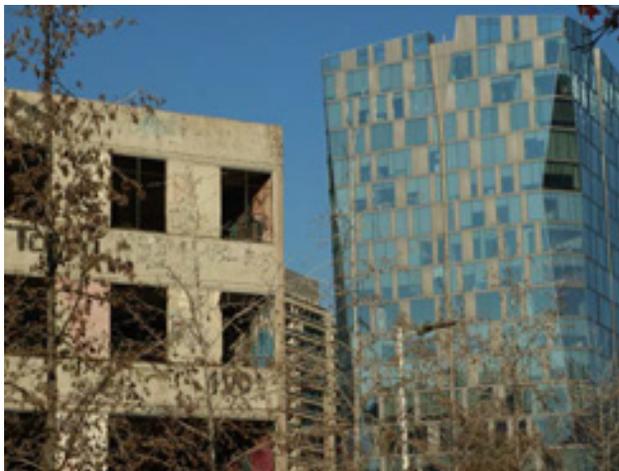
- Maruša Zorec





A Land or A Ruin

**Serena Dambrosio
Constanza Larach**



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1 *Villa San Luis 2021.* © Serena Dambrosio

2 *Villa San Luis 2021.* © Serena Dambrosio

Villa San Luis: Block n° 14 in the Remaining Plot 18

On April 28, 2021, The Ministry of Culture of Chile and the Presidente Riesco Construction and Real Estate Company signed an agreement to turn the remains of the last block n°14 of the Villa San Luis social housing project into a Memorial-Museum. This was the last event related to this project that was developed on a piece of land that has been constantly in dispute.

Villa San Luis was part of an emblematic urban social integration project designed in the late 1960s in Santiago, Chile, on a 153-hectare site in a neighborhood that—at the time—was absorbing the urban growth of Santiago de Chile. Today in ruins and half-demolished, the last vestiges of this social housing complex are located in what has become one of the most expensive real-estate areas of Santiago, currently characterized by its large office skyscrapers, luxury malls and apartments. These fragile ruins have focused debates around a disputed land where vulnerability has played a role both as a material and rhetorical argument in favor of the ruin's protection (searching for recognition of the historical events that took place within them) while simultaneously it has also defined the counterarguments that supports their demolition and appropriation by the real estate market.

The terms of the agreement which was approved by the National Monuments Council (CNM), was the result of a negotiation between Real Estate developers (today's owners of the land) and the Villa San Luis Foundation (representing the families that used to live there). The agreement includes an open call architecture competition financed by the private developers involving multidisciplinary teams and the same community of former inhabitants. The details of its development remain unclear, but the guidelines for the realization of this Memorial-Museum will be defined by the CNM during 2021–22.

Before this recent agreement, in 2017, the last four remaining housing blocks, located in plot 18 of Villa San Luis, began to be demolished by the private developers (before obtaining the building permits to do so). This generated deep controversy. A group of citizens, including previous inhabitants, architects and cultural agents, protested the demolition and requested their protection by arguing that the remaining ruins—in their extremely vulnerable condition—were an important moment in Chilean history. The contemporary ruins represented a testimonial to an example of social integration, and according to the former inhabitants also a place of human rights violations due to the violent evictions they suffered during a dictatorial government.

- 1 Servicio Nacional del Patrimonio Cultural. "CMN aprueba declarar Monumento Nacional a Villa San Luis." Patrimoniocultural.gob.cl, June, 28, 2017.
- 2 Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales de Chile "Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales Aprueba Construcción de Sitio de Memoria En Terreno de Ex-Villa San Luis de Las Condes." M monumentos.gob.cl, June 26, 2019.
- 3 In the Exempt Resolution N°2 of 26/08/2019, signed by the Secretary of the National Monument Council Emilio De la Cerda, it is reported that on June 13, 2018 that the Real Estate Company Presidente Riesco S.A. delivered a report with photographic annexes on the state of blocks N°15 and 14 of Villa San Luis, as a result of a major storm that affected the region, advocating for the need to demolish these buildings:

"The remains-debris of Building Block N°15, for reasons of force majeure caused by the weather, suffered additional damage to those already previously present. This structure is in a state of unstable equilibrium, and at great risk of total collapse, which could endanger pedestrians, security personnel, and even animals that are inhabiting the site.

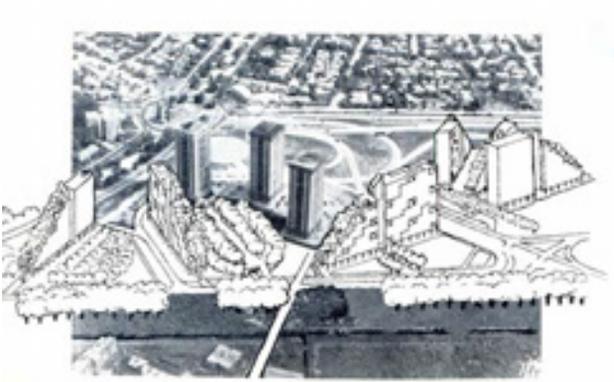
Although the remains of Building Block N°14 do not appear to have suffered additional damage this time, it cannot be ruled out, as they are in an identical situation of vulnerability, and with greater risk to pedestrians given their proximity to the perimeter of the site. In summary, it is concluded that these buildings are in fact totally collapsed and represent a serious risk if not completing their demolition in the shortest possible time...". (Original text consulted in Spanish. Translation by the authors).
- 4 Although the word 'vulnerability' does not appear literally in the demands for protection advanced by the Villa San Luis dwellers' groups, the arguments presented against the demolition of the buildings suggest certain analogies with the idea of the remains of Villa San Luis being associated with a vulnerable historical narrative. Specifically, the minutes of the ordinary session of the council of national monuments of 23/01/2019 report several reactions from the residents against the approval of the demolition of the remaining buildings of Villa San Luis: the residents identify the remains of Villa San Luis as the last existing testimonies of the process of eviction and abuse of human rights that they lived through. These arguments are associated in this text with the idea of a vulnerable historical narrative.
- 5 Different scholars and researchers recently explore this conflictual relationship between monument preservation and destruction: Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007); Lucia Allais, *Design of Destruction* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2018); the *Monuments* series produced by the e-flux platform in collaboration with the Het Nieuwe Instituut; among others.

As a result of these events, on June 28th 2017, Villa San Luis was declared a Historical Monument by the National Monuments Council for being “an emblematic project of integration and redistribution of urban space with criteria of social equity”, recognizing “the way in which the settlers were expelled and moved to different parts of the capital, even though they were the legitimate owners of the property.”¹ However, a year later, due to pressure from the real-estate industry, this distinction and protection as a Historical Monument faced critical modifications. By 2019, the CNM approved the demolition of the remaining housing block 14, considering, among other factors, a structural engineering report endorsed by the Ministry of Public Works, that stated the urgency of its demolition due to its structurally unstable and vulnerable condition: “this structure poses a high risk to the integrity of the people who pass through the place (...) it is not possible to recover or rescue of any of the lower floors, because of this, the demolition [of] the entire building is imminent to release all the mechanisms in unstable equilibrium”.² This report and the possibility of demolition would now allow the real-estate developers to take full advantage of the speculative potential of this site. However, because of the controversies generated by the real estate company's management of this process, the company committed to develop and fully finance the new Memorial-Museum on the footprint of the remaining block.

The request for demolition and the proposal to construct a new memorial building introduced a series of discussions in the public debate that have focused mainly on the material remains of the buildings and their vulnerability as architectural objects. The structural vulnerability of the block has been used to simultaneously support two opposite sides of the argument regarding how the ruins should be addressed. On one hand, the real-estate company argued in favor of the demolition of their remains due to the dangerous and precarious condition of its structure.³ On the other hand, the counterarguments proposed by the former residents defended the highly vulnerable condition as a reflection of the history of these buildings, thus arguing the need for their conservation.⁴

This debate highlights how the main discourses around monuments and their preservation are closely related to certain practices and narratives of destruction.⁵ Under this notion, how does the idea of vulnerability operate as seen from opposite sides of preservation arguments in the case of Villa San Luis? The answer seems to lie in the contradictory values seen in both the ruins of the housing complex and in the land within which they are located.

Villa San Luis is not only an architectural object, but above all a material testimony to a series of political, social and urban changes that have



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- 6 Ministry of Education, Government of Chile, *Declara monumento nacional en la categoría de Monumento Histórico a la "Villa Ministro Carlo Cortes" (Villa San Luis de Las Condes), ubicada en la comuna de Las Condes, Provincia de Santiago, Región Metropolitana. Decree n°0135, 29/06/2017* (accessed June 14, 2021)
- 7 Francisca Allende, Scarlette Olave, "La construcción de una utopía" in *El despojo de Villa San Luis* (Santiago de Chile: CEIBO Ediciones, 2018), 33–48; L. Eduardo Díaz Hidalgo, "La imagen de la Ciudad Moderna. La Utopía Crítica y la propuesta del Parque San Luis" in *Polaridades en la arquitectura moderna en Chile*, eds. Juan Pablo Fuentealba, Fernando Pérez Oyarzún (Santiago de Chile: Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, 1997).
- 8 Fishman, Robert. *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth century: Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright, Le Corbusier* (Cambridge, London: MIT Press, 1982).
- 9 Definition of utopia by Karl Mannheim quoted in: Françoise Choay, *El Urbanismo. Utopías y Realidades* (Barcelona: Editorial Lumen, 1965/1970), 20.
- 10 Françoise Choay, *The Rule and the Model. On the Theory of Architecture and Urbanism* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1980/1997), 8.
- 11 *Ibíd.*
- 12 Rodrigo Perez de Arce, "El jardín de los senderos entrecruzados: La remodelación San Borja y las escuelas de arquitectura," *ARQ* 92 (2016): 50–67.

3 Collage showing the insertion of the new housing typology in the area of Villa San Luis. Image extracted from the article: Baeza, A., Eyquem, M. "Edificios escalonados y en terrazas". *En C.A.*, 22 (1978): 30–32.

focused on the radical transformation of the urban landscape and a means to justify certain discourses and operations that rely on its materiality. The notion of vulnerable ruin and how this concept has been used, in the case of Villa San Luis, has enabled broader public consent on the management of the land.

An Urban Utopia in a Disputed Land

Villa San Luis urban housing project was initially conceived by the Frei Montalva government (1964–1970). However, the project was later developed and built during the "Unidad Popular" left-wing government of Salvador Allende (1970–1973), as part of a broader urban strategy and political project that sought to generate greater social integration and at the same time to address the problem of informal housing in marginal areas of the city, which was prevalent a crucial issue at the time.⁶

Some local authors consider Villa San Luis the most emblematic Chilean materialization of an urban utopia;⁷ it outlines a specific category of urban projects that have spread from the late nineteenth century as a deterritorialized, abstract and coherent "program of action"⁸ which aimed to radically transform the existing social-historical order.⁹ According to Françoise Choay, this category of projects has their origin in the literary genre of utopias—inaugurated by Thomas More in 1515—which offered a critical approach to "model a future reality in space" and, at the same time, they became an "a priori device for the conception of built space"¹⁰. Together with the architectural treatises, they constitute the basis for the establishment of urbanism as an autonomous discipline between the nineteenth and twentieth century.¹¹ Urban utopias, in this sense, represent new abstract models of urban organizations that use the technical and visual language of architectural knowledge together with the politics of social transformation of utopian literature. By incorporating design principles and spatial configurations that imply strong social changes, urban utopias opened the possibility to understand architecture and urban design as a powerful political tool. This is precisely what happened in Latin America during the twentieth century, where political utopias preceded and later defined urban utopias¹² manifesting in ambitious social integration housing projects.

The materialization of the utopian model of Villa San Luis was possible thanks to a series of architecturalized political actions operating on the land and in direct relation to those who would inhabit it. First, the site's location within the city was a determining factor: at the beginning of the 1970s Santiago's Las Condes borough contained a significant number of informal



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13 Maria Chiara Bianchini, Claudio Pulgar, "Villa San Luis de Las Condes: Lugar de memoria y olvido," *Revista de Arquitectura*, 18, (2008): 28-40.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 David Harvey, "Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 610 (2007): 22-44 (Accessed June 14, 2021).

4 The upper right image shows the future occupants of the project of Villa San Luis. Down-left a model of the whole complex and down right a single unit. Image extracted from the article: Collados B., A., Freund B., N., Leiva M., G., Loi K., I., Larrain, S., Covarrubias, I., Swinburn, J., Alemparte, L., Silva, A., Valdés, S., & Fernández, C. Planes seccionales San Luis Las Condes Santiago Sector 1, 2, 3 y 6. In *Auca: Arquitectura Urbanismo Construcción Arte* 21, (1971): 36-40.

ing for the informal settlers residing in the same area and, simultaneously, it aimed to guarantee their right to live in the very place where for years they had established effective labor, social, and economic ties.¹³

A second crucial point that the project establishes in relation to land is land ownership: 1,038 families gained access to property titles in Villa San Luis through mechanisms of savings and the subsequent payment of loans. These families moved into the flats in Villa San Luis between January and June 1972. In later interviews the settlers remembered that the President of the Republic himself attended the handover ceremony where the doors of each flat had a card inscribed with the surname of the family to which it had been assigned.¹⁴ This act was a powerfully symbolic rhetorical gesture in which the state appeared as the principal agent in charge of equally distributing land titles. But while reinforcing the material link with the site, this episode paradoxically promoted the idea of ownership as a means to get out of the condition of economic and social precariousness.

A third important point is that the inhabitants were involved from the beginning in the development of the project. Informal dwellers, organized in committees, participated in the design and construction of the housing units thanks to a housing pre-allocation mechanism: each family received an apartment that was specifically defined for them.¹⁵

With the coup d'état of September 11, 1973—and the installation of the military government of General Augusto Pinochet—the political utopia of the socialist government was abruptly interrupted and then buried. The dictatorship violently silenced any voice of political dissent to introduce a radical transformation of the economic system and social values. A series of plans, policies and programs, based on Milton Friedman's neoliberal theory were implemented; including the commodification of basic resources such as water, extractive materials but above all the land.¹⁶ In this way the dictatorial government turned Chile into a neoliberal dystopic laboratory for the most radical economic experiments in the world. This process not only transformed the economic system, but in turn the territory itself and, consequently, its social structures.

Naomi Klein argues that the neoliberal free market policies advocated by Friedman have developed due to what she called the "shock therapy" strategy. This idea was related to the experiments conducted by psychiatrist Ewen Cameron with the CIA, who was analyzing the possibility of deconstructing or deep cleansing the minds of his patients in order to rebuild them from scratch. Catastrophes and crises, and even totalitarian environments, are used to establish controversial and questionable policies while citizens are emotionally and physically unable to understand the situation and develop an adequate response or effective resistance. Klein demonstrates that the

- 17 Ibid.
- 18 Harvey, "Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction", 22-44.
- 19 Sergio de Castro, *"El Ladrillo": bases de la política económica del gobierno militar chileno* (Santiago: Centro de Estudios Públicos 1992)
- 20 Ministerio de Vivienda.y Urbanismo de Chile, *MODIFICA PLAN INTERCOMUNAL DE SANTIAGO Y SU ORDENANZA*, Decree 420, 30/11/1979. (Accessed June 14, 2021).
- 21 The Chicago Biennial installation "The Plot: Miracle and Mirage" (2019), curated by Alejandra Celedon and Nicolás Stutzin, highlights the current results of this process in the city of Santiago (See <https://vimeo.com/356292343>).
- 22 This process has been recounted by the Chilean Pavilion of the Venice Architecture Biennale 2018 entitled "Stadium" and curated by Alejandra Celedon. For more information see the exhibition catalogue: Alejandra Celedon, Stephannie Fell (ed), *Stadium. A Building that renders the image of a city* (Zurich: Park Books, 2018)
- 23 Sergio Rojas. *Políticas de Erradicación y radiación de campamentos. 1982-1984. Discursos, Logros y problemas.* (Santiago de Chile: Programa FLASCO, 1984).
- 24 The first definition of the concept of 'creative destruction' is due to the Austrian-American economist Joseph Schumpeter who defines it as a "process of industrial mutation which revolutionises the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one and incessantly creating a new one". See Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism & Democracy* (New York & London: Routledge, 2010), 83. Subsequently, British geographer David Harvey argues that in the last three centuries capitalist forces have been appropriating this practice to implement the possibilities of capital accumulation, through its use in the radical transformation of the built environment. See David, Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis of Capitalism* (New York: Oxford Press, 2010), 85.
- 25 Bianchini, Pulgar, "Villa San Luis de Las Condes: Lugar de memoria y olvido," 28-40.

traumatic experience of the military dictatorship installed in Chile was a specific strategy to implement the neoliberal economic system in the country.¹⁷ David Harvey also describes Santiago as one of the most extreme global examples of the dismantling of all market regulatory structures. From 1973 onwards, the way was paved for the more creative (but also prolific) expression of the free market that would develop in the following decades.¹⁸

The transformations produced by the implementation of the neo-liberal economic model in Chile were also put into practice through a total manipulation of urban land. In 1973, the military dictatorship drafted a document in Chile called *El ladrillo* (The Brick), which laid out the basis of the Chilean military government's economic policy.¹⁹ Through Decrees with the force of law, a series of urban policies radically transformed the physical shape of Santiago de Chile along with its social structures.

The central claim of the new urban development was to free the urban limits of the city of Santiago, which made urban land potentially limitless²⁰. Regulations that used to limit urban boundaries were now opened to an uncontrolled process of urban expansion that treated land as an infinite resource.²¹ As a consequence, land ownership was gradually settled as a social aspiration; this accelerated the transfer of land titles from state agencies to private individuals. Thus, the city's inhabitants were channeled into economic subjects.²² The increase in the price of land in central areas and the possibility of exploiting it for economic purposes eventually displaced the inhabitants of these areas to the periphery in new urban areas defined by the expansion of urban land.

Between 1976 and 1985, through the programs of *Operación Confraternidad* and the Eradication and Settlement program, more than 30,000 families were forced to move from central areas to peripheral sites, brutally disrupting the social relation between the land and its inhabitants.²³ As a result, the central areas of Santiago underwent a massive process of "creative destruction"²⁴ to open up strategic spaces to absorb new private investment possibilities based on maximum profitability with speculative spatial organization. The eradication of the inhabitants of Villa San Luis and the progressive demolition of their houses was emblematic of this process.

At midnight on December 28, 1976, a group of 112 families of Villa San Luis were by military command violently evicted and transported to various peripheral locations of Santiago: some of them were taken to a waste site in Pudahuel, others were left in a field in Santa Rosa, on a road in San José de Maipo, in a garbage dump in Lo Curro and the rest were moved to Renca²⁵. The housing blocks and the land began to be occupied by the military and their families. The eviction of the inhabitants continued from 1975 to mid-1980 (for various reasons 95 families were allowed to stay in Villa

- 26 Ministry of Education, Government of Chile, *Declara monumento nacional en la categoría de Monumento Histórico a la "Villa Ministro Carlo Cortes" (Villa San Luis de Las Condes), ubicada en la comuna de Las Condes, Provincia de Santiago, Región Metropolitana. Decreto n°0135, 29/06/2017*
- 27 Allende, Olave, "La demolición de un sueño", 59-95.
- 28 The Latin expression *tabula rasa*, literally translated as 'erased tablet', appeared in the field of architecture and urbanism during the twentieth century to identify a modern experimental attitude consisting of a series of urban operations aimed at materially and symbolically neutralising a certain ideological structure to make room for a new possible power configuration.
- 29 Genaro Cuadros Ibañez "Playground" in *Cancha: Chilean Soilscape*, eds. María Pilar Pinchart Saavedra, Bernardo Valdés Echenique (Santiago de Chile, 2012)
- 30 "Inmobiliaria reformula proyecto en la ex villa San Luis: tendrá cuatro edificios de 20 pisos... y 11 subterráneos", *Valuaciones News*, May 5, 2021.
- 31 Francisco Vergara-Perucich, "Villa San Luis: histórico espacio en disputa entre el capitalismo y el humanismo", *Documentos de trabajo espacial* 1 (2019).
- 32 Ministry of Education, Government of Chile, *Declara monumento nacional en la categoría de Monumento Histórico a la "Villa Ministro Carlo Cortes" (Villa San Luis de Las Condes), ubicada en la comuna de Las Condes, Provincia de Santiago, Región Metropolitana. Decreto n°0135, 29/06/2017*

San Luis).²⁶ In 1988, the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet came to an end by a popular referendum. Despite the transition to democracy, the influence of military power on the government's political choices was (is) still very strong. In 1991 the Ministry of National Assets transferred the property of Villa San Luis to the National Armed Forces, legalizing its military occupation. The occupation lasted until 1996, at which time the land value increased and was sold to a private real estate developer.²⁷

A *tabula rasa*²⁸ operation followed this episode: the whole city was considered an experimental field, an erasable surface where the traces of previous ideological experiments could be completely deleted and re-inscribed. The military government implemented a series of actions to materially and symbolically erase any trace of the socialist power structure, making room for future forms of ideological 'inscription'. A large number of existing buildings were completely demolished, clearing the land and leaving it open for future speculation. Urban land became an extremely profitable commodity.²⁹

In this context, the demolition of Villa San Luis began, opening the site to private investment. The whole area was gradually transformed into a business district and became part of one of the most expensive neighborhoods in the city. Today, only a small area of the site has been left untouched: the last remains of this site (plot 18-A), where the ruins of housing block 14 are located. In this last available area, a new office towers project is designed to be built. The "Presidente Riesco" real-estate company proposed a new project on the Villa San Luis site entitled "Conjunto Armónico Oasis de Riesco Ex — Presidente Riesco". The project involved an investment of 110 million USD for the construction of 61 commercial premises and 108 offices, with a total area of 201,664.82 square meters.³⁰ The programmatic choice in the context of an abundance of vacant office space in the area is evidence that the project is not intended to satisfy local demands, preserve the land as a common good or the historical relationship with human rights violation episodes, but is considered only a profitable investment venture.³¹

In 2017, the demolition of the remaining blocks led to protests that revived the public debate on the protection of Villa San Luis. The groups opposing their destruction argued that the buildings' historical value not only relies on the material testimonies of an exemplary social integration project, but also represents a dramatic episode of human rights violations. The San Luis Foundation, together with architect Miguel Lawner, Executive Director of CORMU (the public institution in charge of the construction of Villa San Luis in the 1970s) was able to negotiate the declaration of Villa San Luis as a Historic Monument.³² One of the most significant arguments in favor of this declaration emphasized that "this project, which contemplated in its first

33 Ibid.

34 Ibid.

35 Gonzalo Cáceres, Emilio De la Cerda "The Villa San Luis: a conflict of values," *ARQ* 97 (2017): 146-149.

36 Ibid.

37 Ministry of Cultures, Arts and Heritage *Aprueba en general la propuesta de intervención en el Monumento Histórico (MH) Villa Ministro Carlos Cortés (Villa San Luis), Comuna de Las Condes, Ciudad de Santiago, Región Metropolitana de Santiago, con observaciones, lineamientos y condición que se indica; Así como también, autoriza se complete demolición de block n°15 y se proceda a demolición programada del block n° 14, ambos del lote 18-A1, ubicados en el referido monumento. Resolución exenta n° 2 August 26, 2019.*

stage about 1,000 houses, was emblematic from the political and social point of view, for breaking with the socioeconomic segregation of the city, integrating the population of diverse socioeconomic levels in the same urban space."³³

Emilio de La Cerda, the current Undersecretary of Cultural Heritage of the Government of Chile (before being appointed to his current position) argued in 2017 that the declaration of Villa San Luis as a National Monument omitted any specific reference to the building, ruins and physical objects on the site. According to De la Cerda, this omission was not a mistake, but rather the representation of a particular desire to highlight the Villa San Luis site as the battleground of two divergent conceptions of the city's history and its development³⁴: "What is contested at Villa San Luis is not a set of ruined buildings but land. It is a conflict connected to a value system that operates on that specific urban plot stressed by the exchange value, the historical value and the social value assigned to it by different groups and members of society."³⁵ The existence of two opposing views on land—in the same place—is the key point in the debate on the heritage value of Villa San Luis. According to De la Cerda, the discussion on the value of the land exceeds the debate on the heritage value of the architectural object: the lack of reference to any architectural object in the decree of heritage protection would operate at the level of land value, avoiding the possibility of it being commercially traded.³⁶

Despite the above, on June 26, 2019, the National Monuments Council approved the demolition of the last surviving block of Villa San Luis. Paradoxically, the very absence of direct references to the protection of its buildings—in the Historic Monuments decree—was what allowed the real estate company to argue in favor of demolishing them. The decision was based on a report by the engineering office VMB which was hired by the real estate company *Presidente Riesco* and endorsed by the Engineering department of the Ministry of Public Works declaring the state of extreme vulnerability of the remains of the building.³⁷ Through the proposal for the construction of the new memorial museum, the real estate company managed to reduce the limits of protection — that in the decree were associated with the perimeter of the land — and concentrate them in the museum space. The original perimeter of protection of 4,329 square meters was reduced to a plot of approximately 800 square meters. The proposal to build a new monument that appears, in the first instance, as a form of compensation from the real estate company actually increases the area of land available for new construction and reduces the limits of the land protected as a National Monument.



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5 *Villa San Luis 2021.* ©Serena Dambrosio

6 *Villa San Luis 2021.* ©Serena Dambrosio

38 Alois Riegl, "Der moderne Denkmalkultus. Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung" (Vienna, 1903), English translation: "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin", *Oppositions* 25 (1982).

39 Alois Riegl, "Der moderne Denkmalkultus. Sein Wesen und seine Entstehung," (Vienna, 1903), English translation: "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin", *Oppositions* 25 (1982).

From this point on, a media debate was set in motion based on the image of the vulnerable ruins of Villa San Luis and the dispute over its protection or demolition. This debate centered in the buildings (and not on the land) is amplified by the construction of the new Memorial-Museum that must condense into one object all the material and immaterial values linked to the Villa San Luis project and generate an extended agreement between the opposing parties. However, this media debate conceals what has always been behind this plot and its historical value: the dispute over the land value and its potential for speculative real-estate development.

The 'Vulnerable' Ruins of Villa San Luis.

The ongoing discussions regarding Villa San Luis' preservation or demolition have mainly focused on the value of its remaining buildings and not on the land protection mechanism that gave rise to a social integration project and could be eventually used to implement this model once again; despite the fact that what was defined through a decree as a Historical Monument, was the area where the ruins are inserted without any mention to the value of the ruins themselves. However, aging buildings, as ruins, acquire a sense of power in society that enhances narratives and discourses around them, a given quality that the plot by itself could not obtain. Ruins are perceived as a melancholic object that through their visual aging qualities reveal the passing of time and produce a visual connection with the subject. This sense of identification that comes as the result of the relationship a viewer could establish with the building's presence is defined as a modern cult to monuments³⁸.

To understand the power of the ruins of Villa San Luis operating by enhancing an economic system that transformed them into obsolete buildings, it is necessary to understand the effect and the power that ruins have on people. At the beginning of the twentieth century, Alois Reigl in his essay "The Modern Cult of Monuments: Its Character and Its Origin" transformed the traditional notion of the monument by defining a new element that characterized them. This new notion does not necessarily have to do with the commemoration of historical events, but rather with the aesthetic identification that a subject could find within a building's presence that could evoke certain feelings; and how this subjective signification is mainly given by a building's age value.³⁹ This is the power obtained by what he defined as an *unintentional monument*. While the intentional monument's purpose is to commemorate a specific event, the unintentional monument, on the other hand, has not been erected for commemorative purposes. It corresponds to

40 Thordis Arrhenius, "The Fragile Monument: On Alois Riegl's Modern Cult of Monuments," *NA* 16, 4 (2013).

41 Arrhenius, "The Fragile Monument: On Alois Riegl's Modern Cult of Monuments."

a building that, due to its decaying and ruined state, acquires a defined aesthetic value.

In this sense, we can understand the ruins of Villa San Luis as romantic objects that produce nostalgia about an idea of the past that is no longer in the present, but also act as a reminder of that past. As ruins, without function in the present and in a state of decay, they are capable of absorbing the meaning that the subjects give them. If the blocks of Villa San Luis were still functioning today as a housing complex, the aesthetic qualities granted by their vulnerability would not appear and consequently they would not be the subject of debate to be recognized as monuments. This aesthetic relation between man and ruins, transforms them into objects of cult, where narratives are constructed defining a new aesthetic value that has to do with a nostalgic idea of getting closer to the past.⁴⁰

Following Alois Rigel arguments, Thordis Arrhenius stresses that in today's conservation practices, when an old building becomes a monument, its fragility and consequently the need for its protection, becomes its distinct mark. In this process, the use-value tends to conflict with the monument's commemorative-value. Use value requires a building to maintain its functions, while age value is given by a certain temporal distance and therefore the obsolescence of that building.⁴¹ This obsolescence, and therefore vulnerable state, is what is valued in conservation narratives, and constructs the notion of a cult of ruins.

The ruins of Villa San Luis, in a material state of decay and abandonment with its collapsed structure, are evidence that this condition is what mobilized actions in both directions: its physical appearance embodies the idea of vulnerability that led groups to seek its protection by their recognition as monuments but also justified counterarguments and discourses in favor of its destruction. The idea of vulnerability arises from these confluent conflicts. In this sense, the notion of nostalgia of ruins is inverted, thus becoming a receiving object that sustains the conflictive narrative, in which architecture and its artifice is used to justify particular discourses.

It was the very act of the attempt to demolish them in 2017, without a permit, that ignited the debate about their vulnerability and what this vulnerability itself represents, in their tension between preservation and destruction. The blocks appear then as anachronistic figures, representing a past and without a function in the present, becoming figures of cult due to a constant threat of disappearing that enhances its material uniqueness brought by its decaying and fragile existence. Their uniqueness value then lies not on their monumentality and the aesthetic qualities, but on the contrary on qualities such as fragility and the possibility to be disintegrated and destroyed. Furthermore, its perpetuated existence relies on the discourses that institutions,

42 Ibid.

43 Ibid.

44 Ibid.

45 Mario Carpo, "The Postmodern Cult of Monuments," *Future Anterior: Journal of Historic Preservation, History, Theory, and Criticism* 4, 2 (2007): 50-60.

international charters and organizations, professionals and media places around its continuation and its future.⁴²

Even though conservation and destruction are opposed forces, they are profoundly interrelated to understand the power of objects and their meaning in society.⁴³ Fragility and the idea that certain buildings could disappear, be destroyed and forgotten attribute them with a value that enhances their uniqueness in the narratives of conservation; it becomes its distinctive mark, and their vulnerability mobilizes their need for protection. Narratives of danger and fragility have always surrounded a monument's materiality, being able to motivate different actions—legal, physical or spatial—around its preservation. The discourses around the risks a monument could be subjected to, enhances their importance and their meaning to society, in the constant play between destruction and saving to mobilize actions and cultural significations.⁴⁴

However, once the real estate company succeeded in arguing that their vulnerable structure made their maintenance unsustainable over time, the arguments regarding the protection of their vulnerability and the conservation of Villa San Luis as monuments ended and were replaced by the idea of their transformation into a new Memorial Museum to be built in the area: from an unintentional to an intentional one. Such transformation was possible thanks to an agreement between the real-estate developers and the communities looking for the building's protection as a material witness of determined historical events. While it was agreed that the future museum will be defined by the results of an architectural competition, there is no certainty on how the project will look: if it will preserve certain aspects of the remaining building's structure or it will simply use the existing footprint as boundaries for a new building. However, this new intentional monument, like the ruins (as unintentional monument) emphasizes a nostalgic idea of a past and fails to address ideas of social integration that could have been implemented to construct a more equitable urban future.

Mario Carpo, in "The Postmodern Cult of Monuments"⁴⁵, argues that the words monument and memorial are often used as interchangeable synonyms without taking account of the semantic shift this reflects. He explains that monuments today do not stand anymore to be conceived as role models for a future nor do they celebrate historical achievements. Today monuments—that are designed as such or existing buildings transformed into monuments—are mainly created to remember a past, recording traumatic events or remembering victims of certain crimes: they are immediately conceived as memorials. Monuments are memorialized because they are not able anymore to point towards an ideal of the future because of the impossibility to construct a unitary ideal of one, or the existence of too many histo-

46 Ibid.

47 Foucault, Michel, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans: A. M. Sheridan Smith (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972).

48 Robert Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007).

49 Carla Pinochet Cobos, Constanza Tobar Tapia, "Formas provisionarias de conjurar el pasado. Ruinas e intervenciones artísticas en la Villa San Luis de Las Condes," *Sophia Austral*, 23 (2019): 57–80.

50 Bevan, *The Destruction of Memory: Architecture at War*, 16.

ries.⁴⁶ Today's tendency of cult of the past not only conceives monuments as places of remembrance, but often these same places and their meanings can be used as persuasive tools of cultural production. Documents of the past are transformed into monuments⁴⁷, where they gain authority by constructing narratives. In this recollection and selection of what is of value to be perpetuated and what is not, meanings can be shifted, histories can be reconfigured, and cultural significance can be transformed.⁴⁸

The memorial museum of Villa San Luis, in whatever form it materializes, will end up softening what was really in dispute, which would be the protection of land for social integration in an area with high economic surplus value. At least today's deteriorating materiality of the ruins of Villa San Luis acted as evidence that, before the corporate buildings, there was a popular residential space and urban integration project on that very block⁴⁹. Transformed into a museum, that resistance will disappear and the possibility of conceiving a different future in that plot will completely vanish. Although the ruins were approached in the debates from their aesthetic and nostalgic role, at least their presence still protected a piece of land that could have opened the debate into another direction. The Memorial Museum instead closed that possibility definitively by diminishing the protected area land. The land will not be contested and protected anymore but neutralized will participate in the logic of a city mobilized by economic growth. As Robert Bevan says: "only what is valued by the dominant culture or cultures in a given society is preserved and cared for; the rest may be destroyed, either carelessly or on purpose, or simply abandoned to its fate".⁵⁰

A Vulnerable Future

Much has been written and discussed about the case of Villa San Luis. These discussions have focused mainly on the violent historical events that took place in the recent past that define the current conflicts of preservation or destruction centered on these ruins as architectural objects. The remains of Villa San Luis install the idea of how the vulnerability of the ruins can act as a means to transform their material conditions (their vulnerable structure) and physical appearance (of decay) into romantic and nostalgic objects — appealing to a past and remembering it — yet avoiding to address the ideas of integration that could have been implemented to build a different future. By approaching this debate mainly from an aesthetic concern — that the architectural object possesses — this discussion has omitted a deeper reflection on the project's social contribution that consisted of a series of mechanisms which aimed to promote social diversity by acting on land use and value.

In an area of strong economic development and in a land of high capital gain, these blocks stand as a form of resistance to a district that has erased other traces of this history. The ruins of Villa San Luis appear today as uncomfortable objects that bear witness to an unsettling past. Despite the above, the discourses on their preservation have transformed them into nostalgic objects that end up acting in favor of the economic logic of this disputed land, instead of contesting it or at least containing its effects. In addition, both the ruins and the promise of a new monument have been used as a means to divert attention from the significant aspects of the project mainly connected to the social values of the land: such as its location and the construction of a socially diverse neighborhood.

This process is the reflection of a broader cultural tendency to ascribe that attributes symbolic meanings to buildings but cannot establish the same kind of sentimental value in a plot of land. The site by itself is not capable of producing the aesthetic identification that Riegl defined, since it lacks an aesthetic material condition that allows the construction of narratives around it. On the other hand, the ruins possess an architectural and a material value, and its artifice supports the visual choreographies and discourses are impregnated to its vulnerable structure and its lack of function (a cult of ruins). Due to the need to install ideas of value in certain material objects and their aesthetic conditions — which act as receptors of these — the ruins of the buildings in the plot of Villa San Luis took over the public debate. Their vulnerability became then the focus of different discourses regarding how their continuity in the future and how this permanence should be addressed.

This is further accentuated by the idea of the construction of the new Memorial-Museum, which appears paradoxically as an instrument that con-

tributes to increasing the commercial value of the land, helping to sustain the very value system that the original project was intended to contrast. In the agreement for the construction of this Memorial Museum, the land area will be significantly reduced in relation to the site now occupied by the last vestiges of Villa San Luis. This reduction means that the land can no longer be used in any other way and both the resilience of the ruins and the possibility of giving the site a social integration program is totally lost.

What seems to be in a vulnerable condition is the very idea of the future to build a different urban configuration — that could be informed by a past memory recognition — that the ruins installs today. Can heritage protection be a means to promote substantial changes on the use and value of a plot?? And how could the protection of a past ideal be a transformative force to protect the land from economic speculation and promote social diversity?

The case of San Luis reveals particular tensions that open the conversation about the role that monuments and heritage could play in today's cities. It also opens questions on how to preserve and expand narratives that could act in a way where the past can influence future transformations. A role where preservation could act as an effective tool that could limit real estate speculation and its segregating effects on contemporary cities.

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Letting Me Decay. Letting You Forget?

Savia Palate



1



2

- 1 Translated from Greek by the author. Claire Aggelidou, *A conversation with my sister Famagusta: Parallel Lives* [Συνομιλία με την αδελφή μου Αμμόχωστο: Παράλληλοι Βίοι] (Thessaloniki: Malliaris Paideia, 2003), 12.

- 2 See for example: Costas M. Constantinou et al., "Conflicts of Uses of Cultural Heritage in Cyprus," *Journal of Balkan and Near Eastern Studies* 14, no. 2 (2012): 177-198; Gülgün Kayim, "Crossing Boundaries in Cyprus: Landscapes of Memory in the Demilitarised Zone," in *Walls, Borders, Boundaries: Spatial and Cultural Practices in Europe*, eds. Marc Silberman et al. (New York and Oxford: Berghahn, 2012), 211-233; Olga Demetriou, "Grand Ruins: Ledra Palace Hotel and the Rendering of 'Conflict' as Heritage in Cyprus," in *War and Cultural Heritage: Biographies of Place*, eds. Marie Louise Stig Sørensen and Dacia Viejo Rose (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 183-207; Panayiota Pyla and Petros Phokaides, "'Dark and Dirty' Histories of Leisure and Architecture: Varosha's Past and Future," *Architectural Theory Review* (2020): 1-19.
- 3 Susan Stewart, *The Ruin Lesson: Meaning and Material in Western Culture* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2020), 5.

1 Ghost town Varosha – view from the buffer zone nearby.

2 Ghost town Varosha – view from a boat.

- 4 Yael Navaro Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space: Affective Geography in a Postwar Polity* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 7.

She was born when the stars smiled and said: 'Glory to you!' They bent down to the ground, and in a small bay they saw small Famagusta, with blue eyes and golden braided hair. The world was filled with light. They closed their eyes for the dream and the beauty they saw not to go away.

Claire Aggelidou¹

In her book *A Conversation with My Sister Famagusta: Parallel Lives*, Claire Aggelidou personifies her hometown. Aggelidou, as a refugee, sits in conversation with Famagusta, reminiscing about life before the violent division that occurred in 1974 on the island of Cyprus along physical and ethnic lines. Since then, Cyprus has been militarized, with several areas being abandoned and undergoing ruination.² Famagusta is one of several towns on the northern part of the island that is occupied, but what distinguishes it from others is that a prominent part of the town—the Varosha area—has been fenced off by the Turkish military, prohibiting entry for the last 46 years. For Susan Stewart, “ruination happens at two speeds: furious and slow – that is sudden and unbidden or inevitable and imperceptible,”³ and both speeds were evident in Varosha’s case: an abrupt abandonment, yet gradual destruction.

When Cyprus gained its independence from British rule in 1960, the government identified potential areas that could boost tourism development across the country. The golden sand and the blue Mediterranean Sea breaking gently against Varosha’s shore fostered an area-wide construction boom. Luxurious, modern hotels appeared along the city’s coastline, transforming it into a cosmopolitan tourist resort. It was not long after the island’s independence, however, that internal turmoil between Greek and Turkish Cypriots threatened the nation’s peaceful future. While the Greek Cypriots were fighting for *enosis* (integration with Greece), the Turkish Cypriots supported *taksim* (the partition of Cyprus). Eventually, the Turkish armed invasion (‘intervention’ for Turkish Cypriots) in 1974 led to the physical separation of the two communities and consequently put an end to Varosha’s thriving period. The Republic of Cyprus lost the northern sector of the island—37 per cent of the island’s landmass—to the Turkish occupation. This led to the displacement of around 150,000 Greek Cypriots (who were forced to move from the north to the south) and 45,000 Turkish Cypriots (who moved from the south to the north). Although this was a situation that many inhabitants, especially refugees, perceived as being temporary, the conflict in Cyprus has remained unresolved ever since.

Varosha is now ‘temporarily stunted’; as Yael Navaro Yashin describes the situation in the northern part of Cyprus due to a lack of international recognition.⁴ The political and administrative complications that govern

- 6 Former Turkish President Kenan Evren had called Famagusta the 'trump card' in negotiations. Varosha was used by the Turkish government as a bargaining chip, given that it was not in the original occupation plan, but since its residents, out of fear, ran away, the Turkish found no resistance, and therefore it was wiser for them to maintain their hold over the area with a view to exploiting this in future negotiations. Since then, the term has been widely used by the media in articles about Varosha. See for example: Ayla Jean Yackley, "Ghost Town May Hold the Key to Cyprus Reunification Talks," *The Independent — Independent Digital News and Media*, August 11, 2012; "For First Time since War, Greek Cypriots Mark Epiphany in Ghost Town | Pictures," *Reuters: Thomson Reuters*, January 6, 2016.
- 8 Sharon Macdonald, "Is 'Difficult Heritage' Still 'Difficult'? Why Public Acknowledgment of Past Perpetration May No Longer Be So Unsettling to Collective Identities," *Museum International* 67, no.1-4 (2015): 6-22.
- 5 "UNSCR Search Engine for the United Nations Security Council Resolutions," UNSCR, 1983.
- 7 Rebecca Bryant et al., *Sovereignty Suspended: Building the so-called State* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2020), 87.
- 9 Sharon Macdonald, *Difficult Heritage: Negotiating the Nazi Past in Nuremberg and Beyond* (London: Routledge, 2009), 1.
- 10 See for example: Yiannis Papadakis, "The National Struggle Museums of a Divided City," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 17, no. 3 (1994): 400-419; Julie Scott, "Mapping the past: Turkish Cypriot narratives of time and place in the Canbulat Museum, Northern Cyprus," *History and Anthropology* 13, no. 3 (2002): 217-230; Theopisti Stylianou-Lambert and Alexandra Bounia, *The Political Museum: Power, Conflict, and Identity in Cyprus* (New York: Routledge, 2016).

a place also determines its status, with, or in the case of Varosha, without human presence. Its dilapidated buildings have stood suspended in time, ostensibly leading to the degradation of the area into a decaying ‘ghost-town.’ [1-2] Purportedly protected by a UN Resolution that “considers attempts to settle any part of Varosha by people other than its inhabitants as inadmissible and calls for the transfer of this area to the administration of the United Nations,”⁵ the area has been historically used by the Turkish government as a bargaining chip, and it has been consistently plagued by power games and political antagonisms.⁶ Varosha was, after all, a strategic area for the Greek Cypriots that once reflected modernization, nation-building, and prosperity.

However, the image of Varosha’s hotels as symbols of modernity and development was not a shared one. According to Rebecca Bryant and Mete Hatay, Varosha was mostly Greek Cypriot-controlled, while the Turkish Cypriots living in nearby villages lacked electricity. When, at some point after 1974, Bryant and Hatay conducted interviews with Turkish Cypriots living in houses that were once inhabited by Greek Cypriots living in Famagusta, “several women described to us collecting photographs, books, and letters in Greek and burning them in the streets or gardens.”⁷ Even more recently, Varosha’s reopening in October 2020, was paired with the removal of all Greek signage, and as such promulgated the eradication of any trace of the area’s past. The opening of Varosha shifts the focus to the area that Sharon MacDonald calls a ‘difficult heritage’, that is “atrocities perpetrated and abhorred by the nation that committed them.”⁸ Such acts, “threaten [...] to break through into the present in disruptive ways, opening up social divisions, perhaps by playing into imagined, even nightmarish, futures.”⁹ Even though she admits that such an approach cannot end a conflict or eliminate past tensions, there are nuances that may arise challenging the way collective identities are formed.

Across the island, and particularly after 1974, the proliferation of monuments as expressions of nationalism on each side of the demarcation line aimed to maintain the memory of conflict and division. The conflict in Cyprus and its effects on memory have been extensively discussed, as has the role of these museums and monuments in constructing a national identity and collective memory.¹⁰ Indeed, the institutionalization of a prevailing dichotomy in which two homogeneous identities are in conflict through museums and monuments is anticipated, especially if one considers that both sides have been the victims of war and ethnic struggles, unfolding at least two narratives of collective memory.

In contrast, the abandoned Varosha stands as an alternative form of memorization, oscillating between remembering and forgetting. For John



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11 John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1849), 162.

12 Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

13 Navaro-Yashin, *The Make-Believe Space*, 17.

14 Alan Weisman, *The World Without Us* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2007), 97.

15 Georg Simmel, "The Ruin," in *Essays on Sociology, Philosophy, and Aesthetics*, ed. Kurt H. Wolff (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 259–266.

3 Nature and the ruins.

Ruskin, architecture could be understood as a mnemonic device: “We may live without architecture, and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her.”¹¹ For Paul Connerton in *How Societies Remember*, however, material objects do not necessarily contribute to the perpetuation of memory compared to the potential that rituals and normative behaviors can have.¹² This argument stands in contrast to the Aristotelian tradition, which assumes that the decay and destruction of mnemonic objects occur in parallel with the process of forgetting. Varosha and its vistas, in a state of suspension for 46 years, have inspired initiatives and stories that have occurred both within and outside of the enclosure. Perceptually, as a mnemonic device, Varosha’s ruins have become blurred, not only with the emotions and feelings of its refugees, but also with the perceptions of the people who have lived nearby Varosha’s periphery, as well as the observations of passers-by and tourists. This essay assembles images that show the periphery of Varosha during its enclosure. Reminded of Navaro-Yashin’s conceptualization of ‘ghosts’—as ethnographically observed in the northern territory of the island’s capital, Nicosia—“the ghost is a thing, the material object, in itself.”¹³ The ghost that is Varosha is haunted by a human presence that comes from outside in.

Letting Me Decay

The muted, windowless and, almost ‘faceless’ hotels of the desolate Varosha enabled the natural world to take over. [3] Alan Weisman describes this ‘reclamation project,’—as he is one of the few people who have been granted permission to enter the enclosed, decaying area—in his book *The World Without Us*:

*Flame trees, chinaberries and thickets of hibiscus, oleander and passion lilac sprout from nooks where indoors and outdoors now blend. Houses disappear under magenta mounds of bougainvillea. Lizards and whip snakes skitter through stands of wild asparagus, prickly pear and six-foot grasses. A spreading ground cover of lemon grass sweetens the air. At night, the darkened beachfront, free of moonlight bathers, crawls with nesting loggerhead and green sea turtles.*¹⁴

Sentimentalizing Varosha in an almost post-apocalyptic atmosphere, the enclosure would radiate a feeling of enduring in ‘peace’: a latent condition that becomes possible solely because of human absence. In his seminal essay “The Ruin,” Georg Simmel suggests a process of ruination that is inherent and inevitable to the materiality of architecture.¹⁵ Through Simmel’s lens, ruined buildings hold the potential of no longer being the reminders and



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16 Ibid, 266.



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17 This was also claimed by a Turkish Cypriot who served his military service in Varosha. For him, the period of his service was 'a big shock and a big trauma'. Quoted in Paul Dobraszczyk, "Traversing the fantasies of urban destruction: Ruin gazing in Varosha," *City* 19, no. 1 (2015): 49.

18 See for example: Amy Woodyatt et al, "North Cyprus reopens 'ghost town' beach resort for first time since 1970s," *CNN Travel*, October 10, 2020.

4 From a protest on the buffer zone after Varosha's reopening, July 2020.

5 Camping tents were setup during a protest on the buffer zone after Varosha's reopening, July 2020.

remnants of a past life, but the creative force behind the genesis of another form of life growing in alignment with the landscape, despite the juxtaposition of meanings that this may embody. In a ruin,

*... purpose and accident, nature and spirit, past and present here resolve the tension of their contrasts—or, rather, preserving this tension, they yet lead to a unity of external image and internal effect. It is as though a segment of existence must collapse before it can become unresistant to all currents and powers coming from all corners of reality.*¹⁶

However, in the case of Varosha, this ‘peace’ can only be disguised: It was, after all, a militarized zone juxtaposed against a waterfront filled with luxurious modern hotels whose architectural typology now acted as watch towers housing soldiers and machine guns. The seemingly peaceful domination of nature over a militarized reality would suggest Varosha’s potential as “a ‘healing tool’ in the resolution of the wider conflict in Cyprus.”¹⁷

In October 2020, to everyone’s surprise, the area was unilaterally and injudiciously opened by the Turkish government—transgressing, once more, UN resolutions and inevitably attracting local and international reactions.¹⁸ The moment was a harsh reality check to those hoping that the reopening of Varosha would happen through a common agreement and, therefore, lay a path to reconciliation. At the same time, the reactions were not limited to the political agency of the area’s sovereignty. Instead, the reactions were also concerned Varosha’s current state: the abrupt reopening was a disruptor of the area’s second life as a ‘ghost town.’

The reopening was another form of ‘loss’ competing with the act of enclosure in 1974. The difference was that the latter left a feeling of ambivalence regarding Varosha’s future. The former involved clearing things out, metaphorically and literally: surrounded by bulldozers that were tasked to remove the filth and dirt from the decaying territory, the remaining high-rise hotels were now facing tangible losses, noting an end to the long-lasting process of ruination. Loss, however, is rarely shared. The reopening was celebrated in the presence of the Turkish president, who flew in especially for the occasion. There were flag raisings and picnics scheduled to take place in the ruins: a celebration amid decay. At the same time, Greek Cypriot refugees were able to reminisce by visiting Varosha for the first time in 46 years. Instead of a reopening that would lead to their right to return, this one was accompanied by mourning. [4–5]

19 Adrian Forty, "Introduction," in *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 2.

20 "Places of memory" as in Pierre Nora's *lieux de mémoire*. Pierre Nora and Lawrence D. Kritzman, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996). See also, Peter Carrier, "Places, Politics, and the Archiving of Contemporary Memory," in *Memory and Methodology*, ed. Susannah Radstone (London: Bloomsbury, 2000), 37-57.

21 Before they were officially formed as ABBA, the members of the group gave their first performance in Famagusta for a Swedish peace-keeping force. "And ABBA were Born! Constantia Hotel Beach," (April 1970), [«Και εγένετο... οι ABBA» Παραλία του ξενοδοχείου Κωνσταντία] *Ammochostos*, January 3, 2015.

Letting You Forget?

In his introduction to *The Art of Forgetting*, Adrian Forty questions how “one might start to think about the relationship between material objects and collective forgetting.”¹⁹ However, the category of the collective cannot be singularly defined in a ‘place of memory,’ which according to Pierre Nora is a potential instrument for collective memory, underpinning social cohesion.²⁰ For Nora, these ‘places’ in the French national identity demarcate a transition in the way national identity is formed, which was no longer attached to the history of those politically determined to construct it, but in those spatial elements that shape social memory. These ‘places’ would project a pluralist understanding of memory that, even though not collective per se, in various combinations could reflect the memory of the ‘French’ individuals. Even though in conflicted territories, the situation becomes more complex due to ethnic division: the enclosed Varosha would hold on both sides of the demarcation line, a constellation of memories beyond nationalist opposition.

Varosha’s topography and geography were filled with great economic value and potential. Similar to the debates that intensified after Varosha’s reopening about whether these hotels as modern ruins should be preserved or demolished—as for many, they are nothing more than debris—there were dilemmas concerning how, during its time of enclosure, this area was seen from afar. In 1974, two years after Varosha was fenced off, a hotel standing on the edge of the prohibited area received permission to reopen, suggesting, perhaps, how the degradation of one thing can mean the restoration of another. Initially named Constantia Hotel, it was one of the first on the coastline of Varosha in 1948. Constantia Hotel was a prominent building in the area; it was featured on tourist guide covers, including a Swedish guide with the members of ABBA laying on the Varosha beach,²¹ and in Hollywood films, such as Paul Newman’s 1961 film, *Exodus*.

Like the rest of the hotels in the area, Constantia was initially abandoned, but was eventually resold to a Turkish Cypriot owner who was eager for it to reopen. However, reopening necessitated refurbishment—not an easy task for a community sanctioned by economic embargo. Because of the persistence of the Turkish Cypriots living in the northern part of Cyprus to become a separate nation from the UN-recognized Republic of Cyprus, they became isolated, especially in economic terms, in the early years after 1974. The solution to refurbishment was to dismantle and collect any usable spare parts that could be found in the vacant hotels within the enclosed Varosha. To do so, the new owners granted a British electrical engineer living in



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6 UN prohibition signage on the border nearby Varosha.

Kyrenia permission to enter the prohibited zone with the goal of reinstating their hotel.

Weisman describes the ‘unbearable silence’ that the engineer had to endure for six months while disassembling air conditioners, kitchens, washers, and dryers: a man in solitude wandering in and out of vacant hotels suspended in time, looking to fulfill his assignment. Fragmentary traces of life haunted the presence of abrupt departures: keys were left tossed on hotels’ front desks; windows were left ajar; untouched place settings were left on tables with decaying linens; shredded laundry hung from clotheslines; cars remained parked along the street; personal belongings and photographs lay unceremoniously scattered upon the silent, yet resonant landscape.

Throughout the years of Varosha’s enclosure, very few people other than Turkish soldiers and journalists were allowed to enter the prohibited zone. Turkish soldiers constantly patrolled the area, carrying orders to shoot anybody who trespassed. Signage all over the barbed-wire fences surrounding Varosha prohibited not only entry but also photography, and anyone walking around the border would likely have been interrogated. [6-7] Driving slowly around the border would offer a glimpse of the inside; however, to stop and stare was forbidden. These prohibitions, combined with the area’s ruination, became the ingredients that composed Varosha’s mystical aura, shifting the internal human absence into an exteriorized temptation for the human eye. Locals and foreigners alike were curious, with many attempting to trespass, explore and look through the boundaries of the enclosure.

At the same time, Varosha’s ruination, entangled with conflict and memories of pain, would gradually turn into a spectacle. The Constantia Hotel was successfully refurbished and, subsequently, reopened. Known today as the Palm Beach Hotel, the broader area would juxtapose a luxury hotel with wealthy tourists and clean white umbrellas to the deserted Varosha: silent, empty, and ruined. The hotel adjacent to the Palm Beach Hotel would stand half-collapsed and with a machine-gun emplacement that had transformed it into a military post during the 1974 invasion. Amidst the debris of war and the atmosphere of relaxation, the area’s vistas were, somehow, voyeuristic.

The ghost town would become a major attraction. Over the years, many people have visited the adjacent Constantia hotel, not only to appreciate the Mediterranean views and relax on the silky coastline of Famagusta, but, strikingly, to get a closer look at this no man’s land:

We chose the Palm Beach Hotel because it was next to the deserted border ghost district of Varosha, a place that has fascinated me for years. Before 1974, this was THE place to stay in Cyprus, but now it’s



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22 Hotel review "North Cyprus Hotel and Holiday Guide," in *North Cyprus Hotels*, August 10, 2008.

23 Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 151.

26 Forty, "Introduction," 4–5.

28 William Logan and Keir Reeves, eds. *Places of Pain and Shame: Dealing with 'Difficult Heritage'* (London: Routledge, 2009), 1.

24 See for example: Slavok Žizek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology* (London and New York: Verso Books, 1989), 221.

25 See for example: Michael Rowlands, "Remembering to Forget: Sublimation as Sacrifice in War Memorials," in *The Art of Forgetting*, eds. Adrian Forty and Susanne Küchler (Oxford: Berg, 1999), 129–146.

27 See for example: J.E. Tunbridge and Gregory John Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage: The Management of the Past as a Resource in Conflict* (Chichester: Wiley, 1996).

29 See for example one of the first uses of the term: John J. Lennon and Malcom Foley, "JFK and dark tourism: a fascination with assassination," *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 2, no. 1 (1996): 198–211. See also: Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone, eds. *The Darker Side of Travel: The Theory and Practice of Dark Tourism* (Bristol: Channel View Publications, 2009).

30 Višnja Kisić, *Governing Heritage Dissonance: Promises and Realities of Selected Cultural Policies* (Amsterdam: European Cultural Foundation, 2017), 31.

7 UN prohibition signage on the border nearby Varosha. For photography, that was also prohibited from the street the advice was to use one of the improvised viewpoints that locals created on their rooftops.

*deserted and a military zone. The Palm Beach lies just outside the area, so it's got both a fab beach and easy access to old Famagusta too. You can walk up to the wire fence and look into the deserted streets. Don't let the soldiers see you take photos, though – better to get a zoom lens and do it from your hotel balcony...*²²

The role of the tourist in this experience is crucial. Detached from the emotional devastation of the national conflict and reminiscent of Peter Sloterdijk's suggestion that ambivalence between discomfort and aversion can, potentially, open other ways of knowing,²³ the tourist gaze becomes the trigger for a radical shift: despite the human absence within Varosha, the area from the outside was not abandoned at all. The emotional distance produced by the gaze of the tourists who enjoy the sublimity of the ruins can, according to philosopher Edmund Burke on the 'sublime,' generate feelings of both compassion and uneasiness in reaction to the sight of human tragedy embodied within ruination. At the same time, Varosha as a Lacanian 'sublime object' found itself in 1974 to be "the impossible-real object of desire." Placed in the threshold of two deaths, the sublime object persists only in this intermediary state, and it cannot be approached too closely as it endangers to become ordinary.²⁴

For some Varosha was a sacrifice, while for others it represented the spoils of war. In both cases, and even though not belonging to the categorization of a war memorial,²⁵ it was treated as an 'ephemeral monument', which according to Forty is constructed for memorial purposes, but which is "made only to be abandoned immediately to decay." These ephemeral monuments, even though not fully comprehensible in the Western culture, are confirmations that the mental form of memory cannot be overwhelmed by the object associated with memory.²⁶ On the other hand, Varosha is not solely a 'place of memory', but also an object of 'dissonant heritage,'²⁷ which raises a series of dilemmas in which various sectors of society intersect, including commercial and other interests and the "destructive and cruel side of history."²⁸ These attractions as manifestations of conflict, or, as otherwise known, dark tourism,²⁹ embody a dissonance, which, for Višnja Kisić, is conceptualized as "a tension and quality that testifies to the play among different discourses, and opens the space for a number of diverse actions."³⁰ Varosha's buildings, though no longer luxurious or touristic per se, still remain as containers of speculation and tourism endeavors, gradually blurring the area's meaning, which is no longer a site of suffering and disaster for its past inhabitants as refugees. Instead, for many others, the area was a site of opportunism.



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31 See more on an urban reading of these practices as dark tourism: Savia Palate, "Border Conditions: Sightseeing in Contested Varosha, Cyprus," *InForma: Site Conditions* 12 (2019): 204–215.

32 Jonathan Hill, *The Architecture of Ruins: Designs on the Past, Present, and Future* (London: Routledge, 2019), 296.

8 Fig. 8: Tourists looking at Varosha from a viewpoint.

This peripheral observation of Varosha was not, however, delimited to those living adjacent to the fence that would belong in the Turkish-Cypriot community. Instead, as another depiction of the world's plurality, those living on the southern part of the divided Cyprus would often identify for visitors the best spots from which to view Varosha from afar. Greek Cypriots living on the other side of the border, but still relatively close to the ghost town of Varosha, would turn their rooftops into viewpoints from which tourists could satisfy their curiosity, while others would initiate boat trips to offer a glimpse of the prohibited zone.³¹ [8] Both the improvised viewpoints and the boat trips included aspects that 'museumified' the experience of looking from afar, with locals showing photographs of events related to the conflict, as well as objects of Cypriot folklore. At the same time, the owners of these improvised observation posts and the captains of the boat trips would often take on the role of the narrator, reciting the story of the area, vaguely overlaying touristic voyeurism with memories of pain and loss. Despite the new layers of meaning and representation added by the tourist gaze, this act of 'looking from afar' was inseparable from the moment of enclosure, reminding visitors that Varosha's ruination was not natural, but rather, a dark political spectacle.

According to Jonathan Hill, "ruination can enhance the status of a structure, which may ever more resolutely resound as a monument in the memory, if its destruction has profound social, cultural, or political meaning."³² It is worth questioning here whether Varosha is an example of this interpretation. During the 1960s, there were many reactions to the environmental and social repercussions of the resort's development on the island's coastline. The hotels' vicinity to the beach, their height as a solid boundary between the beach and the rest of the city, as well as their development as sites serving foreign tourists but not the local population were criticisms raised in the 1960s regarding Varosha's development. Moreover, these hotels were carefully and skillfully designed to reflect modernization and quality in spatial and, therefore, cultural terms, however, little attention was given to their architectural value. The day Varosha became a spatial victim of the Cyprus conflict, those buildings, as modern ruins, were suddenly altered in their prominence—and their initial associations with 'financialization' were assumed to have disappeared.

The ruination of Varosha, a condition that was politically enforced in order for the life before 1974 to be forgotten, has been, in contrast, a process of remembering, even though other interests were intertwined. Indeed, Varosha's hotels are now ruins—for some, they are filthy structures requiring demolition, but for others, they are representations of conflict heritage. Both sides, ironically, are driven by touristic motives, either redeveloping

what came to be a 1960s cosmopolitan tourism resort, or a ‘live’ museum of modern ruins. In either case, they are a ruinous formation of a past.

Conclusion

Once a cosmopolitan tourism resort offering glimpses of modernity and the prospect of a prosperous future for the newly independent Cyprus in the 1960s, the enclosure of Varosha forever altered the meanings of the place: ruins of a glamorous past; ruins of war, occupation, and militarization; ruins of abandonment and human absence as well as ruins that can be profitable to a tourist’s voyeuristic gaze. For some, Varosha after 1974 was a source of hope—both tangibly, as its buildings having endured abandonment, and intangibly, as it has been used many times as a bargaining chip in political negotiations. After its reopening in 2020, which was followed by its occupation by the Turkish government, it quickly became a place of loss. In this plurality of meanings, there is always the possibility for the system to operate in contrasting manners, in which any ‘other’ world can rise and prevail.

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Neo-Romance: Ark Architecture of Expectation

Alberto Petracchin



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- 1 Massimo Scolari, "Hypnos. The Room of the Collector. XVII Milano Triennale 1986", in *Hypnos: Massimo Scolari, Works 1980-1986*, ed. Rafael Moneo (New York: Harvard University-Rizzoli, 1986), 72.
- 2 "Left to the dismal politics of the present, of course, cities of poverty will almost certainly become the coffins of hope; but all the more reason that we must start thinking like Noah. Since most of history's giant trees have already been cut down, a new Ark will have to be constructed out of the materials that a desperate humanity finds at hand in insurgent communities, pirate technologies, bootlegged media, rebel science and forgotten utopias." Mike Davis, "Who Will Build the Ark?" *New Left Review*, no. 61 (2010): 30.
- 3 About the figure of the flood in architecture see: Lebbeus Woods, *The Storm and the Fall* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004).

“Epilogue of an ancient planetary catastrophe, Noah’s Ark gathered together the most complete collection in history and possessed a quality which modern nuclear eschatology denies us: that of being first and foremost the ‘custodian of life’ (this was the name given to the Ark during the mid-Babylonian flood). The structure described in the Bible (Genesis, 9) was not a ship with a hull, stem and stern. The ark was not intended to navigate but to float upon the waters flowing from the ‘springs of the abyss’ and deposited from the ‘vault of the sky’.”¹

“Who will build the ark?” is the question Mike Davis poses to the contemporary world at a time when the only thing to do seems to be to save what is left of the old world and bring it into tomorrow.² All is lost. As we stand in the twilight of the old world we are confronted with fragments, places and theories in ruins; we inhabit neo-romantic spaces, times and architectures, defined by a nostalgia for what we are losing and by heroic explorations towards the unknown. Architecture, today, in theory and in practice, deals with ‘changes’ in a continuous cycle, a salvational attempt to bring life and our treasures towards the future. The contemporaneous loss of conditions of order calls for reasoning regarding strategies that, by acting in advance and working over extended periods of time, manage to save those materials that could be destroyed but at the same time could be useful for designing a new genesis, moving through a time of waiting: all architecture today is an ark in a ‘flood’.³ Assuming that existing contextual systems, intended both from the physical point of view of inhabited territories, urban and not, and from the ‘immaterial’ point of view of culture and knowledge, are shattered, the goal of the ark is ‘radical refoundation’, to ride-out a possible and announced reset. In this essay, where the idea of the ark emerges as both a theoretical and material ‘vehicle’, the first discussion outlines the return of ark from the *illo tempore*, its roots and its design strategy, and then considers the fragments to be saved through a time of expectation. The aim is to outline a sort of rite of approach to the figure of the ark, positioning its fundamental characteristics in relation to the design and theories of architecture.

The Return of the Ark

‘Ark’ is derived from the Latin ‘arca’ and from ‘arceo’, meaning ‘to hold within’, ‘to keep divided and sheltered’, and contains the root ‘arc’ which is Greek for ‘arkein’, meaning ‘to support’ or ‘repair’, and ‘arkos’, meaning ‘garrison’, ‘defense’, ‘strength’, and probably related to the root ‘raks’ from the Sanskrit ‘raksamm’ ‘to preserve’, ‘to protect’. In Latin it was a coffer or chest in which clothes, money and all manner of furnishings were stored; it

was also a cell that served as a domestic prison for slaves. Today it is more commonly known as a chest for storing valuables, grain or flour, and as a deposit for the dead in the form of an ark in a church or necropolis.⁴ The ark is also the bottom of wells paved to hold water.

The narrative from which the ark emerges—the story of the flood—is pan-cultural (European, Middle Eastern, Egyptian, Asian, Oceanic, American), and its value remains cross-culturally important even given the differences. There are two accounts to be considered: the Babylonian *Epic of Gilgamesh* and *The Bible*. Both texts belong to religious and geographical spheres that refer to spaces and architectures of the *beginning*.⁵ In fact, the ark appears in 4500 BC in the Epic of Gilgamesh and only later in sacred tales shared by other cultures. The text contains the epic story of the adventures of the king of Uruk— Gilgamesh. The story is not a foundation myth like the biblical Genesis but a journey of formation. The recounting of the flood is told by Utnapishtim to Gilgamesh, and is only one episode within the Epic, intended not so much to advance the general narrative as to convince Gilgamesh of the futility of his quest for eternal life. The story begins with a council of the gods who decide to exterminate humanity. The objective, unlike in Genesis, is not the planning of a second cycle of humanity but its total annihilation: the underlying motive is the “noise” produced by men, a confusion not appreciated by the gods who decide to “impose on the sinner his sin”. In the field, therefore, there are destructive divinities, Enlil and Ištar; a traitorous divinity, Enki, who secretly announces the flood to Utnapishtim, ordering him to destroy his own house in order to build an ark with discarded materials, telling him how to build it and what to put inside it in order to save himself. The overall structure is similar to the biblical story and is composed of “The flood story begins”; “Enki’s help”; “the construction of the ark”; “The flood destroys all life”; “the exploratory mission of the birds”; “sacrifices of the survivor”. The difference between the two narratives lies in the conclusions: in the Bible there is a covenant between man and the deity, but in the Epic the narrative ends with the absence of a covenant, with the gods “gathered like flies around the offeror”.⁶

In his essay *Noah’s Ark*, Hubert Damisch returns the figure of the ark to the discipline of architecture while investigating the implications of this return for design theory. Damisch considers ‘ark’ via the definition by abbé Edme-François Mallet within Diderot’s and d’Alembert’s *Encyclopédie*, considering it a space that precedes architecture: “The alphabetical order of the *Encyclopédie* that called for the entry ‘Ark’ to come just a bit before the entry ‘Architecture’ was, in the end, neither fortuitous nor arbitrary. Architecture could only find its place after the Flood – or rather, in its stead”.⁷ Having to deal with a world in fragments, architecture thus becomes a



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- 8 "Faced with these diagnoses of death, which reality has taken it upon itself to support with countless disasters and massacres, the search for a solution [...] can hardly be separated from the implicit or explicit return of a utopian-eschatological scheme." Nicola Emery, *Distruzione e progetto. L'architettura promessa* (Milano: Christian Marinotti, 2011), 87 (English translation by the author).
- 9 See: Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres II. Globes* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2014), 223 (English translation by the author).
- 10 See: *The Holy Bible* (Peabody: Hendrickson Pub., 2006), 6–8.
- 11 Francesco Dal Co, "10 immagini per Venezia," in *10 immagini per Venezia*, ed. Francesco Dal Co (Roma: Officina, 1980), 22 (English translation by the author).
- 12 In his posthumous book *La città e il territorio*, Giancarlo De Carlo invites us to read the territories as the writers have observed and sung about them. See: Giancarlo De Carlo, *La città e il territorio. Quattro lezioni*, ed. Clelia Tuscano (Macerata: Quodlibet 2019), particularly the chapter *Lettura e progetto del territorio*, 201–209. About the end of the city see for example the research Amo, Rem Koolhaas, *Countryside. A Report* (New York-Köln: Guggenheim-Taschen, 2020).

2 The Ark. Frame from *La mesure végétale*, 2015. Courtesy Fabien Giraud, Raphaël Siboni.

3 Fragments. Frame from *La mesure végétale*, 2015. Courtesy Fabien Giraud, Raphaël Siboni.

“promise” in a salvific-eschatological sense.⁸ Sloterdijk says: “The morpho-evangelical sense of the biblical and extra-biblical accounts of the universal flood, and of the fantasies of the ark that are linked to them, is that the form that allows men to be together “inside” themselves does not bring immunity and salvation only in a vague metaphorical sense, but can also be the condition of salvation and survival from a technical point of view [...] With this a new project is brought into the world: the idea of self-protection and self-circumvention [Selbstumgebung] of a group with respect to an external world that has become impossible.”⁹

Considering the biblical account of the flood,¹⁰ the figure becomes more precise and its relationship with time is outlined, thus defining its strategical actions. The figure of the ark and its strategy cannot be separated from the myth, where its theoretical foundations lie; as in the case of the project for the Danteum by Giuseppe Terragni, a spatial translation of the three cantos of the Divine Comedy. Recourse to the narratives of the beginnings, such as magical tales, myths and legends, is determined by the need not to succumb to a reality that has become unbreakable again (similar to a dense flood, in fact). As Francesco Dal Co says in *10 Immagini per Venezia* “reality often insinuates itself into architectural projects to the point of paralyzing their nervous centers and immobilizing their possible reactions”.¹¹ Reality is the sole author of the scene and to refound the discipline of architectural design we need to observe and read about forgotten and ancient worlds. We were too concentrated on listening to urbanity and its singers, but now that the city and the design cultures based on its logic is going through a period of crisis, perhaps we need to re-start by writing ‘mythical’ new stories¹².

In the Bible, the ark appears after an annunciation. Following the creation of the world described in the first moment of Genesis, there is, in fact, a second beginning, an episode of the flood divided into four moments: the causes; divine dispositions and preparations; the flood; the new beginning of creation. The story is well-known: God decided to eradicate mankind after its malfeasances by sending a flood to wipe the slate clean. The flood, however, does not spontaneously happen but is announced to Noah who is given instructions to build an ark and to select all the good that remains of humanity. The underlying project is that of a *re-foundation*, of the construction of a second humanity that succeeds the first one, planned by means of a selection of the treasures to be saved for the future (in the case of the Bible, animals, seeds and a few men), and of an ark within which to hold the worldly treasures until the flood subsides.

The story begins with a value judgement by the divinity regarding mankind. “The Lord saw that the wickedness of men was great in the earth”

- 13 There are many different interpretations of the 'real' form of the biblical ark. They are found, for example, in the treatises: Athanasius Kircher, *Arca Noë* (Amsterdam: Janssonium, 1675); Joseph Furtenbach, *Feriae architectonicae* (Ulm: Balthasar Kühn 1662); Bernhard Lamy, *De tabernaculo foederis, de sancta civitate Jerusalem, et de templo ejus, libri septem* (Parisiis: Dionisius Mariette, 1696).

- 14 There are different interpretations of the geography of the Flood. Athanasius Kircher, wondering how the waters had flowed off the planet, designed two different cartographies representing the earth before and after the flood. See: Athanasius Kircher, *Arca Noë* (Amsterdam: Janssonium, 1675), 158 and 194–195.

refers to a condition, in his eyes negative, for which eradication is necessary. Evil drives the divinity to plan a veritable *tabula rasa*, the instrument for achieving this had not yet been named, but it is announced that it will total... multitudinous: "I will wipe from the face of the earth the man I have created, and with man, also the cattle and the reptiles and the birds of the air." In this first part, both the things that will be eliminated and the treasures that will be saved are predetermined. Then the divinity orders Noah to build an ark, giving him real "instructions for use": materials, construction technique, shape and measurements.¹³

Once Noah has been warned, the flood is announced. It is not a sudden or unforeseeable catastrophe, Noah is given time to prepare and build the ark: "Behold, I will send the flood, that is, the waters, upon the earth, to destroy all flesh under heaven, in which is the breath of life; all that is on the earth shall perish. But with you I establish my covenant." In essence, architecture here takes on the value of the symbol of an alliance between God and a part of humanity chosen to travel towards the future, to explore another world: a misunderstanding wants the ark to be a conservative attempt, on the contrary it is an exploratory device, it is an architecture for exploring the territory and time ahead. The treasures to be saved are then defined, Noah and his family, the other living beings "to preserve them alive": "You shall go into the ark, and with you your sons, your wife and your sons' wives. Of all living things, of all flesh, you shall bring into the ark two of each kind, to keep them alive with you: they shall be male and female". Seven days later the flood begins, which will last forty days and forty nights, the temporal predictions are thus definitively announced, the duration of the ark and its "mission" are planned.

The flood lasted a total of one hundred and fifty days, sweeping away all living beings left on the earth. In the meantime, Noah waited inside the ark: "The waters were overwhelming and grew far above the earth, and the ark floated on the waters." The waters were all-consuming and covered the highest mountains that are under the whole sky. On the 150th day, God remembers Noah and the ark and brings the flood to an end, the waters recede until the ark rests on Mount Ararat, in present-day Armenia.¹⁴ Noah then sends two "explorers", a raven and two doves, to check whether the earth was habitable: the second dove brings back an olive leaf, the other, sent seven days after the first, does not return. The earth is again dry, and the dismantling of the ark begins, starting with the roof, "Noah took off the covering of the ark", and the exit from the ark ensued, ordered by the divinity.

The story ends with the construction of an altar and sacrificial offerings to sanction the alliance between man and the divine. In this case the ark is the epic of life, it carries with it what is life and not what is past, while the



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flood purifies the earth. When the ark finishes its task, the covenant is sanctified with a rainbow, the ark is always for a world larger than itself: it is men who inhabit it.

Within the sphere of the sacred Christian and Hebrew scriptures is found a second ark, the Ark of the Covenant, similar to Noah's ark formally, but different in terms of its mission: in this case the ark is a wooden box used to store a divine treasure, no longer animals and a few chosen men but the tablets of the law engraved by Moses under the dictation of the divinity. The text of Exodus 25,10–22 is aimed at describing the forms, materials and intentions of the Ark of the Covenant, while its 'adventures' run throughout the Old Testament, after its disappearance from the Temple of Jerusalem where it was initially contained. If Noah's Ark ferries the world from a primitive condition to a better one, the Ark of the Covenant crosses biblical landscapes preserving a treasure that must remain untampered – unchanged.

The experiments and projects adopting the strategy of the ark open a twofold reflection on the contexts with which they relate: on the one hand, they present themselves as a project of salvation and therefore as courageous symbols of survival; on the other, as they must deal with spaces, movements, and uncertainties of a gigantic order, they open reflections concerning their defenselessness, and finally on the possible failure of the architectural project. Therefore, it's not just a form of conservation, but also a search for the future, not so much an architecture of security but of recklessness and exploration. Noting that everything changes drastically within a continuous cycle, the strategy of the ark returns an idea of design that develops over an extended period of time, hence the reopening of the remote future as a further time for architectural design. The relationship that this strategy has with time proffers questions on the theme of predicting the future, its techniques and tools, and thus on the relationship between technology, magic and science within the architectural project. It is a question regarding the accumulation of unmissable treasures, of objects and lives, of gothic lines against the invasion of the outside or of escapes 'in search'.

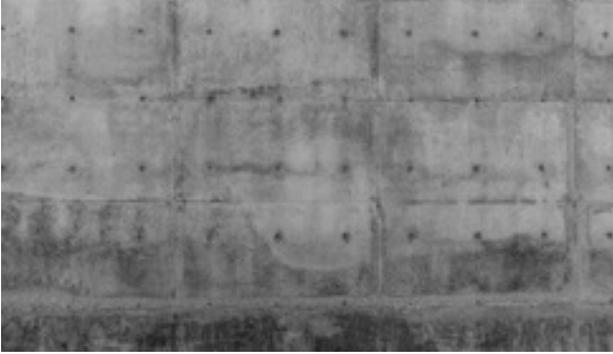
The strategy of the ark involves three moments that are organized in time and to which correspond different actions: the prediction of a catastrophe and the consequent accumulation of goods to be saved; the suspension of the interior and its closure through hermetic seal; the landing in the remote future and the liberation of the contents. In particular, the theme of the seal takes on a double form and argument in relation to the ark's strategy. On the one hand, it concerns the technique of architecture, that is, the ability of a space, through one of its elements and the material of which it is made, to be definitively closed and therefore able to leave the outside and the inside completely separated, guaranteeing the isolation of the content. On

- 16 See: Alberto Bertagna, Sara Marini, Giulia Menziotti (eds.), *Memorabilia. Nel paese delle ultime cose* (Roma: Aracne, 2015).
- 15 On the role of the future and prophecies in architecture see Charles Jencks, *Architecture 2000. Predictions and Methods* (London: Studio Vista, 1968); Sara Marini, *Future Utopia* (Venezia: Bruno, 2014); the scientific journal "Future"; Federico Campagna, *Technic and Magic. The Reconstruction of Reality* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018).
- 17 See: Rem Koolhaas, *The Story of the Pool (1977)* in *Delirious New York: A Retroactive Manifesto for Manhattan*, ed. Rem Koolhaas (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1978), 307-311.
- 18 "The forest is multiplicity. The sea, too, is multiplicity. The rising flood, the fire, multiplicity always returns. Forest; sea, fire, deluge, figures of the crowd. Of the crowd is the fury. The furious hero is the one of this multiple. The Greek word from which this fury arises means sacrifice. The furious hero is on the altar of sacrifice, he is in the theatre, on the stage, in front of the multiplicity crowd". Michel Serres, *Genesi* (Genova: il Melangolo, 1988), 138 (English translation by the author).

the other hand, it concerns the construction of the mystery or enigma as a possible armor of the ark itself, therefore its seal. Being defenseless against the flood that it is called to face, the ark presents itself as an ‘obscured presence’, it could be there but be invisible or go unnoticed: in some way its ‘hermeticism’ is designed to protect it and produce resistance to its interpretation, therefore to its opening. Considering this, thinking about the ark as an architectural figure, therefore as a strategy of re-foundation of space, has as its first movement a ‘de-foundation’. To set sail for other worlds means to untie the ties that bind us to the earth, to the city, to our ancient structures of thought but above all architectural structures (for example, the urban paradigm) that denounce an irreversible crisis: it is therefore a matter of saving some necessary and precious things and at the same time forgetting everything else.

Therefore, the first moment of the strategy concerns the deployment of tools to anticipate reality. New utopias are needed if not real prophecies, maybe even a new pact with futurology¹⁵; on the other hand, we have to decide how much we need to save, to find what our new treasures and values are. It is perhaps necessary to save the last things¹⁶ and the ‘latest theories’: as in Koolhaas’ Story of the Pool.¹⁷ it is necessary to save theories and visions in order to anticipate reality, to steal its time, to foresee a possible world by transporting them into the future in order to affect the situation we will find.

The second moment sees the ark inside the “cataclysm”: its task is to retain its contents, to float on the existing, to take advantage of dangerous situations. The ‘flood’, or the context upon which the ark operates, is hereto interpreted through the double meaning of reality and metaphor: the flood is understood both literally, like the physical change of the territories, and like a spatial figure similar to an immersion in a multiplicity.¹⁸ In the pre-flood period, architecture was prepared: a pact had been broken between the divinity and man because the laws had not been respected, so a flood was announced through a prophecy and an ark was built to store the treasures to be saved. The ark thus emerges as a figure founded not so much on a certainty but on a prediction of a future that forecasts an imminent tragedy within which it will have to venture: the beginning of the ark forecasts its next ‘enemies’ lined up on the field. The confusion of languages, of which the flood is a metaphor and a figure, tells of a world that has become incomprehensible because it is crossed by chaotic and ever-renewed discourses. Through metaphor, today’s discoveries in science and astronomy, new research into virtual space, and environmental invasions of inhabited territories outline a context in which the old world gives way to a new one, announced of course, but for which we have few design instruments. Inside the flood, arks



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- 19 “The pact reveals the formal reason why the principle of the ark must subsist even after Noah and his family and the animal world have left the physical vehicle. It is not so much a material structure as a form of symbolic protection for saved life, a wrapping of hope”. Peter Sloterdijk, *Spheres II. Globes* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2014), 228 (English translation by the author).

- 20 See: Giorgio Agamben, *The Use of Bodies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), particularly the chapter *The Human Being without Work*, 3–24.

- 21 The theme of value was at the centre of the architectural debate in the 1970s and took shape for example in Superstudio’s work *Atti Fondamentali*. Return today with the book by Hans Joas, *Come nascono i valori* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2021). Today we are witnessing the definition of our new values, think for example of UNESCO’s endless lists defining contemporary ‘wonders’, or the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species of endangered animals and plants.

- 22 Some traces of these arks could be found in the world of folklore, especially in Bernard Rudofsky, *The Prodigious Builders: Notes Toward a Natural History of Architecture* (First Harvest: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), particularly in the chapters *Mobile Architecture*, which focuses on architectures capable of travelling, and *Storehouses, Cereal and Sepulchrs*, which deals with stores and reserves of goods useful for survival.

are needed to save the essential treasures that might be lost, and at the same time to explore the future, and therefore there are two instances of the ark: the first is radical preservation, the second is courageous exploration. Both instances speak of a space, that of the ark, which becomes the architecture of anticipation and the expectation of so-called 'better times'.

The third moment of the ark is in the distant future, centuries or millennia ahead of our time, and it is the 'release'. In the Holy scriptures and some treatises of the 15th-16th century, the journey of the ark ends at the 'frontier', in a land where the flood has ended and where everything is renewed and purified, essentially in a condition that could not be fully predicted. At first, the opening of the ark takes place; the contents, which in the meantime have been frozen or cultivated, and which therefore in turn have undergone changes in the course of the journey or the waiting, are freed and used to pervade the condition found, to change it again, to affect it, or to build a new city, in any case to do a new project. The ark itself, according to some manuals, serves at this time as construction material and is dismantled piece by piece, until it disappears completely. All that remains of it is its contents, its 'sense' that it has been saved.¹⁹ It is therefore a question, with this strategy, of suspending "the use of bodies"²⁰ in order to bring to the frontier those treasures, if not also life, which will serve to refund new worlds in the future.

Fragments

In the design of an ark, little importance is given to the body of the architecture: the real design, the sacred thing, is the content to be placed inside. The choice of the "treasure" simultaneously involves a universal and singular sphere, it is a mechanism of participation: through *choices* and *needs*, two terms that return today to the vocabulary of design, we build the future community and its new values.²¹ Throughout its history the architectural project has been concerned with saving cities, objects of affection, theories, food and seeds, life itself; man has relied on magical, divine places for his survival, in the dream of an imperishable existence. Populations have always used arks to store materials or to accumulate basic necessities, not only to set up new narratives of life. Granaries, storage cities, and iceboxes, for example, responded to a need for survival, to conserve what could perish; in other cases, however, the contents are sacred and are put on hold for religious reasons, as in the case of the Gaushala in India, the temples where sacred cows are fed and protected, or as in Jerusalem where the entire city is protected by the law on the status quo with respect to the use of monuments and relics that remain suspended and without use for years.²² For example, the fortress



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23 The project is documented in Salvatore Giannela, *L'Arca dell'Arte* (Milano: Editoriale Delfi, 2009).

24 Again, the project is preceded by a biblical quotation from the Apocalypse book. See: Superstudio, *Opere 1966-1978*, ed. Gabriele Mastrigli (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016), 322-347. The figure of the ark is used by Superstudio also in the project *Architettura interplanetaria, 1970-71*: "Ark as energy use, energy is the central point of the new architecture. The use of energy and its distribution is the new Ark. Which uses the cosmos as a reference. The interplanetary ark is not an architecture built with the known rules... but it is the use of the cosmos and its energy as a global ark." Gregg Lynn, Michael Maltzan, Alessandro Poli, *Other Space Odysseys*, eds. Giovanna Borasi, Mirko Zardini (Montréal-Zurich: CCA-Lars Müller, 2010), 67 (English translation by the author).

6 Entering the Ark. Frame from *La mesure végétale*, 2015. Courtesy Fabien Giraud, Raphaël Siboni.

25 9999, *Ricordi di architettura* (Firenze: Tipolitografia G. Capponi, 1972), 157.

of Sassocorvaro, designed by Francesco di Giorgio Martini in 1475, was used to rescue works of art from the advancing German Nazi army. The plan was to enclose major works of art from the Vatican and Venice within this space in wait of better times, the architecture was to save precious content while depriving cities and territories of their presence, essentially to make space and to simulate an untraceable disappearance. The fortress was specifically chosen because it was in a difficult to reach and unsuspected location. The works were sealed in a controlled atmosphere, for more than ten years, only to be released at the end of the war. In this case, the remoteness of the location contributes, together with the absence of an exit, to hiding the position of an architecture that must not be traced. The absence of use, or rather its suspension, rewrites the idea of preservation, taking it to its extreme: some architecture reemerges only to be forgotten again, their proposed mission—to serve as cavities housing precious objects until rescued, to make themselves available as reserve spaces.²³

With *Salvataggi dei centri storici italiani (Italia vostra)*, Superstudio is instead concerned with saving entire cities from the invasion of reality, understood both literally (the Florence flood of 1966) and as a metaphor unleashed by it (the end of rationalism): “To save in order to destroy, to destroy in order to save oneself; in times of apocalypse the extremes touch, the opposites are equal. Don’t you see how every effort, every attempt to correct errors, to repair disasters, to avoid destruction, inevitably results in more irreparable errors, in increasingly ineluctable destruction?”²⁴ The projects envisaged the construction of mega-structures: a dam encircles Florence, accumulating the waters of the Arno to submerge the city, a new Atlantis preserved by immersion; Venice is drained of its sea and replaced by a glass-concrete road; Milan is enclosed inside a capsule for the production of fog; in Pisa, the entire building is tilted like its Tower; Rome is submerged by its waste; Naples is boxed in order to stage a total and timeless Neapolitan character. The metaphor of the ark is therefore not used for its formal value, it is not yet a question of saying “architecture is a ship” or of building vessels stranded in the landscape, but to construct a strategy for rescue and refoundation. The fragment, in this case represented by certain cities, is not blocked but undergoes an upheaval that radically changes its sense and space. As in the salvific project for the M.O.S.E. in Venice, the efforts to save an object of affection can be superhuman; inside the long-awaited ‘freezing’ lies a real project that modifies the object of desire.

Group 9999’s project *Apollo 1971* sounds prophetically literal: “Finally, after the last happily ended Apollo Mission, but which hasn’t done any good, our project is re-proposed to take our objects of affection to the Moon.”²⁵ The short text accompanying the project, composed of photo-



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7 Inside a Mistery. Frame from *La mesure végétale*, 2015. Courtesy Fabien Giraud, Raphaël Siboni.

- 26 "The project finally brings our objects of affection to the Moon before its too late. The life, the air, the water, the green, the fire – an experience simulator – a womb, a man made out of water, a negative man, two cubes of sky, a historic temple, a green line. We truly like a lot those celestial pieces of architecture." 9999, "Progetto Apollo (1971)", in *Earthrise*, ed. Marco Scotini (Berlin: Archive Appendix, 2019), 105. The project is documented also in Marco Ornella, 9999. *An Alternative to One-Way-Architecture* (Busalla: plug_in, 2015), 114–123. The project has recently been taken up by a group of scientists from Arizona University with the intention of stowing the DNA of all terrestrial species on the Moon.
- 27 See: John Soane, *Crude Hints towards a History of my House in Lincoln's Inn Field*, ed. Helen Dorey (London: Archaeopress, 2015).
- 28 It is no coincidence that the only monographic book on the Svalbard Global Seed Vault focuses not so much on the architecture but on its valuable contents. See: Cary Fowler, *Seeds on Ice* (New York: Perspecta Press, 2016), 17: "This is a seed collection, but more importantly it is a collection of the traits found within the seeds: the genes that give one variety resistance to a particular pest and another variety tolerance for hot, dry weather". See also Pippo Ciorra, Alessio Rosati (eds.), *FOOD dal cucchiaio al mondo* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2015).

montages depicting the departure, voyage and arrival of a space ferry architecture, is a juxtaposition of the biblical story of Noah's Ark and a contemporary situation: the 9999s organize their project around the imminent end of planet Earth and choose a few things to take to the Moon, the place chosen for the rescue of the treasure. The list is short: a classical temple, symbolizing architecture; the four elements; an Italian-style garden; an experience simulator.²⁶ The Moon is seen not as a space of refuge or escape but as an aseptic ark whose absence of man allows the preservation of necessary things.

Dizzying lists of objects of survival can also be piled up in arks intended as 'collector's rooms' in paradigmatic cases of augmented domestic spaces. John Soane's house in London, for example, is an encrustation of original works and copies, to tell another story, to enhance an architecture that is completely introverted and to inhabit multiple times at the same time.²⁷

The closure inside, the collection of 'memorabilia', the selection of the last things in the world, remains at the heart of today's real arks, called upon not only to save things but to bring life itself into the future. In the Svalbard Global Seed Vault, a project launched in 2008, the most precious seeds are selected to be saved. They are deprived of their presence to be sent into the future. In this remote architecture the seeds are stored in three sealed chambers at the end of a 125-metre-long tunnel. The location was chosen with a temporal objective in mind: it is thought that for two hundred years the permafrost of which the earth is made up will maintain its properties intact and thus act as a natural refrigerator, keeping the contents at a constant -18 degrees. The project is therefore set up with a view to its possible failure or dismantling: it is not certain that the seals will hold, it is not certain that the seeds will survive. Unlike other arks, the Svalbard one is not designed as a literal time capsule, it will neither be permanently sealed nor hidden from view but is used periodically in case of wars and famines. In fact, the first opening took place in 2016, just eight years after construction. The strategy of the ark is used here as an incursion into the near future, but the fact remains that an architecture is used to save the existing by depriving itself of it for a given period and ferrying it towards a common destiny. It is therefore architecture in waiting, hollow spaces within the thick of the flood: by building an ark we design a world in a box, a prefabricated tomorrow with all its instructions, in essence a future community. The remaining fragments are our 'fundamental acts' with which we can design and write a 'Brand New Testament'.²⁸

29 See the definition of 'expectation', www.etimo.it, last visited 10.04.2021.

30 See: Kevin Lynch, *What Time is This Place?* (Cambridge Mass.: The MIT Press, 1972).

31 The project was presented by Massimo Scolari for The Milano Triennale 1986, entitled "Il progetto domestico" and curated by George Teyssot. See: George Teyssot (ed.), *Il progetto domestico* (Milano: Electa, 1986).

32 Franco Rella, "The Argonaut's Gaze", in *Hypnos: Massimo Scolari, Works 1980-1986*, ed. Rafael Moneo (New York: Harvard University-Rizzoli, 1986), 13.

Architecture of Expectation

The ultimate mission of an ark is re-foundation by crossing of a suspension of use. From the point of view of architectural design theory, the ark revises Vitruvian *utilitas* because, unlike the *status quo* of architecture, which is always designed to be put into immediate use, it is designed in advance to be suspended and used in the distant future: it is an architecture of expectation. According to its etymology, ‘expectation’ means ‘to aim’, ‘to incline’, ‘to aspire’. The notion therefore implies two primary meanings: the first is that of lying down, a sort of abandon without doing anything, waiting; the second is that of inclining, aiming, aspiring, basically going towards, referring to a tension and a hope.²⁹ If we needed space, for example, the ark could be filled to free it and make it available, in this sense it is a deposit and a reserve space in which the content is put into dormancy while waiting for the system to change. Like an enclave of time, the elements that are housed in arks undergo a ‘freezing’ or is ‘nurtured’ while waiting for the future.³⁰ The ark floats over places as they change, remaining ‘in suspension’, sealed but defenseless, holding its contents. The waiting that the ark imposes is therefore an active time, a real project because in that static time frame something happens, the content is marked by a change, the fragments inside the arks, seeding objects lives, are cultivated to arrive tomorrow in a renewed condition. As in Massimo Scolari’s project for his Arca or The Collector Room,³¹ the ark is still but in the meantime the flood acts and changes things. One drawing in particular depicts Noah’s Ark stranded in a decomposed terrain, bristling with rocks and excrescences that could break its shell, placed temporally a moment before the flood, waiting for its coming, or in the moment after its conclusion, waiting for the opening. The author speaks of this project as a reasoning between remembrance and amnesia, as an attempt to save something precious and at the same time to forget something no longer useful, as a space either of the expectation of a future that must come, or as an attempt to escape towards it. This ark will then give rise to two other figures characteristic of the Italian master's work, Glider and Turrus Babel, ‘daughter architectures’ composed of a wooden rib of the ark. The ark, then, as the construction of an inheritance, as the transmission of knowledge, “the messenger of new lands and new figures”.³²

But the theme of expectation as a design tool is also deployed by the ark to trigger possible celebrations of life at the end of time. In the last pages of his book *Dark Ecology*, Timothy Morton talks about a particular ark architecture to protect the world from radioactive substances without hiding them under the earth’s crust: “Maybe we should store plutonium neither deep underground with militarized warnings nor in knives and forks without any



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33 Timothy Morton, *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2016), 161.

34 See: Damien Hirst, *Treasure from the Wreck of the Unbelievable*, ed. Elena Geuna (Venezia: Marsilio, 2017).

8 The Treasure. Frame from *La mesure végétale*, 2015. Courtesy Fabien Giraud, Raphaël Siboni.

warning whatsoever (this was actually suggested in the late 1990s). Let's get small pieces of plutonium, store them in a way that we can monitor them, and encase them in a substance that will not leak radiation, above ground, so you can maintain the structure and so that you can take responsibility for it. You, the human, made the plutonium, or you the human can understand what it is—therefore you are responsible. Let's put these structures in the middle of every town square in the land. One day there will be pilgrimages to them and circumambulations. A whole spirituality of care will arise around them.”³³ The final image sketches a ritual in which a crowd of people dance around a large building containing radioactive material, placed in the middle of a town as a monument, causing real rites of adoration. In question is the possible failure of the project, the long-awaited prediction, if not also the arrival of the flood, might not come true, the ark and its waiting being ‘useless’. Damien Hirst's 2017 exhibition *Treasure from the Wreck of the Unbelievable*,³⁴ however, tells how even after a ‘shipwreck’, lost treasures can be collected and used to rewrite a new story, giving life to a new architecture and a new narrative. The ark is therefore not an architecture of extreme conservation of the fragment, but a strategy of exploration, a journey in search of the frontier that uses catastrophe to not lose the possibility of modifying reality. In this sense the ark appears as an architectural epic celebrating life, set against a horizon in which the literal end of the world is foreseen, or as an attempt to save the future, in any case a narrative between genesis and apocalypse towards a new rebirth. In the light of the ark, then, there remains perhaps a note for the architectural project: the possibility, at the dawn of the new world, of being an act of re-foundation.

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Between Construction and Deconstruction

Chiara Pradel



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- 1 Robert Smithson, "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Proposals," *Artforum* 7, 1 (1968): 45.

- 1 Ground movements in a construction site. Photo Chiara Pradel

“Excavations form shapeless mounds of debris, miniature landslides of dust, mud, sand and gravel. Dump trucks spill soil into an infinity of heaps. The dipper of the giant mining power shovel is 25 feet high and digs 140 cu. yds. (250 tons) in one bite. These processes of heavy construction have a devastating kind of primordial grandeur, and are in many ways more astonishing than the finished project—be it a road or a building.”¹

Creative De-Construction Processes

A direct and empiric observation of landscape architecture interventions, from private gardens to public parks planned and realized in southern Switzerland between 2009 and 2018, has presented an opportunity to think about ground movements linked with the construction phases of landscape and architectural projects.

To realize a new housing project with a vast garden on a steep terrain facing Lake Maggiore, more than 60,000 cubic meters of soil were excavated, of which approximately 40,000 were presumably deposited within another landscape. In a similar manner, to expand a museum in Chur whose greater part lays underground, almost all the excavated soil (225,000 cubic meters) was moved from the construction site through an expensive private waste management service. Indeed, inert spoil storage in Switzerland costs approximately from 25 (excavated earth) to 50 (slightly polluted inert material) Swiss francs for a single cubic meter of material. In some regions, such as the Canton of Ticino, the costs are even higher, considering the lack of deposits in the area and the consequent need to export across borders (for example by filling the numerous disused quarries in Lombardy, Italy) mixed waste deriving from construction and demolition. Conversely, to avoid the export of large quantities of material, an interdisciplinary design studio working on an urban park near Lugano investigated the possibility of repurposing unpolluted debris—approximately 2 million cubic meters—collected from the construction site of a nearby roadway as a critical component of the preliminary design process.

The empiric awareness of ground movements related to many building sites has led to the re-consideration of some basic actions that are often implicit in landscape and architectural practices like dredging, digging, mass grading, sloping, contour bounding, embanking and most importantly land-filling. Indeed, if we consider the construction or demolition phases of a building, a street, or even a park with attention to the secondary effects of the construction activities, what we might notice is a significant quantity of neglected earth (soil, stones or debris) movements that generate various

- 4 To title one of his most famous works, Robert Smithson re-interpreted the Brian W. Aldiss science fiction novel heading: *Earthworks*, where the author describes a future Earth wrecked by the effects of overpopulation and by heavy environmental repercussions of intensive, expansive, and destructive overfarming. Smithson used the same term *Earthwork* to name his installation made of materials such as crude soil, debris and sand, placed on the floor of the Dwan Gallery, New York. The exposition, curated by Virginia Dwan, took place in 1968.
- 2 The term "incidental space" brings to mind the exhibition *Making of Incidental Space* by Christian Kerez held at the 5th Architecture Biennale in Venice in 2016. Through this work, Kerez sought to create an imaginary, formless space, whose visual character cannot be something easily decoded.
- 3 Enlarging one's vision to an international context, things are not much better: in Europe more than 840 million tons of construction and demolition waste, the stark majority of which is made of concrete debris, are produced each year (EU 2018).
- 5 Suzanne Hall and Ricky Burdett, "Urban Churn," in *The Sage Handbook of the 21st Century City*, eds. Suzanne Hall and Ricky Burdett (London: Sage Publication, 2017), 1-5.
- 6 Smithson, "A Sedimentation of the Mind: Earth Proposals," 45.

“incidental spaces”² and that both provisionally and permanently affect the landscape. In particular, the “final” stage of earth movements in construction processes, namely the (uncontaminated) spoil disposals, from time to time, could be designated as “landscaping”, “environmental restoration”, “recultivation”, “filling for cultivation”, “land-filling” etc.

Due to the manifold variables involved in construction processes, it is difficult to quantify grounds temporarily moved, yet it can be generally estimated that a standard building site produces approximately thirty percent debris compared to the total weight of building resources. This implies that almost one third of the entire construction material provided in each building site is potentially wasted and partially spurned out. As evidence of this fact, in Switzerland alone one can count more than four hundred depots of inert waste spread over the entire national ground, that is already covered by “real” mountains on two thirds of its surface. At the same time, more than fifteen million tons of waste from construction activities have been produced each year³; this constitutes the major flux of generated waste.

A sequence of authorless, erratic earthworks⁴ made by spoils, gravel or aggregates are rising together with cities and their “urban churn”⁵, staging a sort of “creative destruction” paradigm —on one hand they bear witness to the main, “insatiable” construction activity, and on the other they embody what has been irretrievably separated and rejected from the process. Debris physically resemble the polluted, melted, tumuli of dirty materials produced by mining or industries rather than the smooth, polished concrete, steel or glass architectural super-structure from which they often come. Their pits, rough terracing and heaps allude to the usage of bulldozers and excavators rather than technologically advanced construction techniques, lacking features that might allow an attribution to a proper time and style.

Like a widespread replica of Land Art oeuvres that powerfully exhibit the result of disruptive anthropic actions in both natural and post-industrial landscapes—one thinks, for example, of the impressive Heizer’s *Double Negative* (1969), which displaces 240,000 tons of rhyolite and sandstone, or of the obsessive repetition of *Portfolio of Piles* by Iain Baxter (1968), where artificial mounds give form to a kind of “jumbled museum” of earth, staging “a heap of rubble tossed down in confusion”⁶.

A Neglected Design Issue

However, despite their material impact on landscape, and of the powerful suggestion of their forms and sizes, great tumuli from complex building sites are treated, as per standard practice, like outcomes to be handled as secondary concerns. There is a “relevant contradiction between how inert waste

- 7 Chiara Pradel, "From Infrastructural Construction Sites to Landscape," in *CA2RE. Strategies of Design-Driven Research*, eds. Claus Peder Pedersen, Tadeja Zupančič, Markus Schwai, Jo Van Den Berghe and Thierry Lagrange, (Aarhus: Aarhus School of Architecture, 2021), 89.
- 8 William Kentridge, *Six Drawing Lessons* (London: Harvard University Press, 2014), 88.
- 9 "Matter is always already an ongoing historicity. In the phenomenal world, every material is a becoming." Tim Ingold, "Toward an Ecology of Materials," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 41 (2012): 435.
- 10 The definition "immigrant rocks" has been taken up by an essay by Doren Massey: "It was hundreds of millions of years later that these rocks of Skiddaw crossed the equator on their way through this latitude, now, and later still that they were formed into anything we might call a mountain. What is important here is not the formal knowledge (such tectonic wanderings are now part of popular science) but what one allows it to do to the imagination. For me, initially, this dwelt upon the thought that these are *immigrant* rocks..." Doren Massey, "Landscape as a Provocation: Reflections on Moving Mountains," *Journal of Material Culture* 11 (2006): 34–35.
- 12 Directive 2008/98/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 19 November 2008 on waste and repealing certain Directives (*OJ L 312, 22.11.2008*), 3–30.
- 11 Jane Hutton, *Material Culture: Assembling and Disassembling Landscapes* (Berlin: Jovis, 2018), 18.
- 13 See the "EU Construction & Demolition Waste Management Protocol" (European Commission, 2016), the "Guidelines for the waste audits before demolition and renovation works of buildings" (European Commission, 2018), the report "Circular Economy Action plan for a cleaner and more competitive Europe" (European Commission, 2020).

depots affect everyday familiar spaces, urban settlements, small historical villages, nature protected areas and the fact that they are frequently concealed, and not designed.”⁷ As the South African artist William Kentridge evidences, describing the flat-topped mountains made out of rock excavated from the gold mines in Johannesburg, both their appearance (during the excavation of mines), and their slow disappearance (during extraction of fine residue of gold dust that remained in the dumps) and dismantling provoked “a first moment of shock at the reconfiguration of the landscape”, promptly followed by “a naturalization of the view, as if the mine dump had never been there”. According to Kentridge, “This adaptability is more than the flexibility to accept a new situation. It is stronger than that...” as these landscapes finally “...become an object lesson in provisionality,”⁸ undergoing continual modulation as they host transformative earthworks, mounds of debris, inert waste⁹.

While our buildings, neighborhoods, cities or infrastructural oeuvres insatiably and aggressively grow, the related ground movements and resulting waste materials are distanced from our sight and metabolized by our consciousness. Through anonymous trucks, ships or trains, becoming the final step of an unnoticed exchange of resources, labor, and material flows, spoils are more often merely dislocated in separate, neglected landscapes, like “immigrant rocks” arriving from an obscure somewhere else¹⁰. To make their presence evident “might contradict or conflict with the idealized ultimate oeuvre or, in some cases, unveil a strong discrepancy between the image of progress and the (regressive) practices that enable its making.”¹¹ It is not by chance that the project planning process, in its current form and in most countries, simply does not consider the production, the repositioning or the reuse of excavated soil as a topical landscape (design) issue. Even if the Waste Framework Directive¹² has set the construction and demolition (C&D) inert recycling threshold at 70 per cent, it has— together with the following EU protocols and guidelines¹³— mostly relied on technical aspects, deepening the need of soil management for great construction sites or identifying the legal responsibility beyond the material flow and the final spoil storage.

Thus, the major questions arising are: how these kinds of earthworks could be a part of the design-thinking and process? How is it possible to knowingly assemble and design a landscape out of landfilled construction ruins? And how these earthworks could change the present architectural (visual, technical, cultural) language?

- 14 To build the artificial lake at Petworth for the Petworth House garden (1753), the first major work by Capability Brown, it have been excavated and moved some 60,000 tons of soil, that was used to build an earth dam (15,000 tons) and to modify the topography of the estate (the remainder), thus creating heavily artificial landscape. See: Clarke Goldsmith et al., "Engineering the landscape - Capability Brown's role," *Engineering History and Heritage* 170 (2017): 21.
- 15 Jane Hutton, *Reciprocal Landscapes: Stories of Material Movements* (London: Routledge, 2019), 25–64.
- 16 Peter Walker, "Foreword," in *Grading for Landscape Architects and Architects*, ed. Peter Petschek, (Boston: Birkhauser, 2008), 9.
- 17 Pierre Bélanger, "Underground landscape: The urbanism and infrastructure of Toronto's downtown pedestrian network," in *Tunnelling and Underground Space Technology* 22 (2007): 272–292.

From the Local Scale to the Planetary Scale

Ground movements have always been generated by anthropic activities, and excavated waste materials have been knowingly used to shape unexpected, impressive landscapes, since the ancient Maya practice, using rubbish or inorganic refuses as the core of their massive terraced platforms, to the Inca construction systems which combined clean soil with discarded materials. In western culture, some of the best-known examples are the “engineered parks”¹⁴ realized by Lancelot “Capability” Brown (1716–1783), who shaped extended artificial topographies by digging and replacing *in situ* huge amounts of soil to create artificial lakes, or to allow land drainage. Notably visible from historical artworks, photographs or prints, there was a huge earth displacement for the construction of Central Park (1857–1876). Nevertheless, as Jane Hutton reveals in her book “Reciprocal Landscapes,”¹⁵ during the realization of Central Park—Frederich Law Olmsted’s masterpiece—quite-unknown transnational material movements took place and, literally, mountains of guano were shipped from Chincha Islands, Peru, to New York in order to fertilize the soil of the Park’s meadows.

These works represent (expensive) episodes, made in times when earthworks were done by hand and “only a small group of landscape architects and park builders were perceiving the aesthetic potential for shaping the land.”¹⁶ After the Second World War, together with the increased size of mechanical equipment, and, more widely, from the 70s, when environmental concerns became public fodder, together with the intensifying of the construction industry, artists, architects and landscape architects began producing meaningful and accessible landscape design solutions that explicitly reinterpreted volumes of inert waste from the construction field, placed between art, landscape design and land reclamation projects.

Consider, for instance, the Olympiapark in Munich by Günter Grzimek (1968–1972), the iconic Pyramid by Ricardo Bofill (1976) placed at the limit of the Catalan highway on the French-Spanish borders (1976), the Irchelpark project in Zürich by Edward Neuenchwander (1978–1985), the Portello Park in Milan by Charles Jencks (2012), the awarded Northala Fields Country Park by FoRM Associates near the A40 in West London (2008), or the Amager Strandpark in Copenhagen (2013), that contains 1.5 million cubic meters of raw material. In research published in 2007, Pierre Bélanger related the process of the underground construction of Toronto’s downtown pedestrian network with the making of a shoreline – Toronto Thommy Thomson Park: millions of cubic meters of concrete, earth fill and dredged sand were used to create a site that now extends about five kilometers into Lake Ontario, and is more than 250 hectares in size¹⁷.

The increasing extension and volume of these examples reveal how large-scale construction activities are increasingly leading to the manipulation of huge earth movements, passing over small to medium construction activities that fragmentarily work on relatively small excavations, fills and depots¹⁸. Contemporary infrastructural interventions are exposing extreme earth movements whose impact challenges current construction processes that, in turn, define meaningful public debates pushing for ambitious policies that sometimes lead to creative solutions.

The massive 2007 – 16 Panama Canal expansion reconfigured trans-American shipping and resulted in global economic and political transformations. During construction squadrons of excavators, trucks, tractors, and drills blasted, cut, dug, hauled, dumped, and crushed rock, sand, and soil. As pointed out by Brian Davis, “because the Panama Canal expansion has been viewed within a logistical frame, it has missed the opportunities that a landscape approach would have identified. Consider the 65 million cubic meters of material dredged from the approach channels and from the bottom of Gatún Lake. These sediments are removed by barge, hopper, truck, and train, or piped through floating pontoon pipelines to deposition sites located along the length of the Canal.”¹⁹

In the near future, this issue could exponentially expand: in Europe alone, more than 800 million tons of material are expected to be excavated during ongoing and planned large underground projects (such as the imminent Stad Ship Tunnel in Norway) by 2030, while on a global level people are becoming the earth’s primary agents of earth moving—through dredging, agriculture, mining and other anthropogenic activities—surpassing the natural erosive forces of wind and water.

At this stage, it is no longer possible to consider these construction ruins as delimited and local phenomena, since they are simultaneously affecting inter-connected open spaces throughout which earth-flows are broadly reshaping the landscapes all around us, on a planetary scale.

The AlpTransit Landscapes

Among several existing “contemporary earthworks scenarios”, considering the Alpine region at the core of Europe, one can count six major high-speed rails and eight base tunnels that are already completed or under construction and that will cross national borders, facilitating the mobility of goods and people, while preserving fragile and natural environments²⁰.

One hundred and fifty years after the realization of the 13 kilometers long Fréjus tunnel—the first of the large tunnels to pierce its way through the Alps—the construction of giant, advanced infrastructures still seem to

- 21 Armin Linke, dir. *Alpi*, based on a research project of Piero Zanini, Renato Rinaldi and Armin Linke, 16mm, transferred on Blu-ray/D-CP, 2011.

- 22 Christian Schubarth and Felix Weibel, *Land Use in Switzerland. Results of the Swiss land use statistics*, (Neuchâtel: Federal Statistical Office, 2013), 8–9.

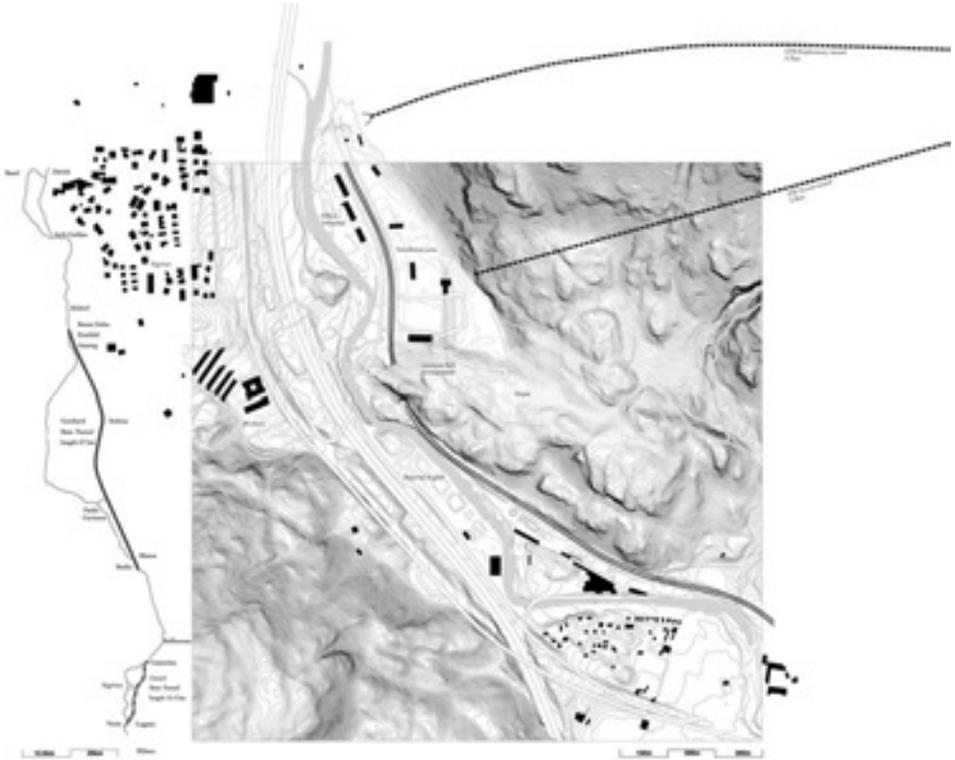
- 23 The BGG was composed by: Uli Huber, president (from 1993), Pierre Feddersen (from 1993), Rainer Klostermann (from 1993), Flora Ruchat-Roncati (from 1993 to 2012), Pascal Sigrist (from 1997), the AlpTransit AG representatives: Thomas Bhüler, Alex Regli, Walter Schneebeili, Peter Zbinden.
- 24 See in particular the planned mitigation measures described in: Paolo Lanfranchi et al., "Environmental reclamation for the Gotthard Base Tunnel, effects of spoil management on landscape," in *Tunnels and Underground Cities: Engineering and Innovation meet Archaeology, Architecture and Art*, eds. Daniele Peila et al. (London: Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 405–414.

fight against hidden tectonic systems and to conflict with a vast number of protected natural areas (more than 1600 in Switzerland). These contradictions, inherent in the contemporary landscape of the Alps, together with its immeasurable delicacy and mysteries, have been the subject of a seven-year study led by Armin Linke: in contrast with a nostalgic, glossy image often used to represent these mountains, Linke describes them as a key European autonomous satellite that is connected to global transformations and their powerful illusions²¹.

Within the specific framework of “contemporary avant-garde” and experimental landscape scenarios, and in particular focusing on the Swiss territory—where already one-third of the settlement and urban surface areas is taken up by transportation systems, namely roadways, railway installations, airports and airfields²²—the recent realization of the three NRLA base tunnels (Lötschberg, Gotthard, and Ceneri, 1999–2020) helps to better connect Southern Germany to Northern Italy and avoids further land consumption, while at the same time preserving several above-ground environments.

Since the beginning of the Gotthard Axis project, the constructor, Alp-Transit Ltd., consulted trans-disciplinary group “Beratungsgruppe für Gestaltung”²³, who promulgated the specific and recognizable architectural language used for portals, viaducts, ventilation funnels and retaining walls. However, as the NRLA tunneling work has progressed, the complexities between the challenges of construction and resulting monumental ground movements have become increasingly significant. Due to these issues spoil management engineers²⁴ have become involved to carefully plan the installations and storage areas, the timely building of processing plants and other handling facilities outside the tunnels and evaluating the raw material quality to convert it into a primary resource for tunnel concrete. If the entire excavation of the Ceneri’s two single-track tunnels (15 km long, 2006–2020) gave rise to a total of about 10 million tons of inert waste, the entire construction of the Gotthard Axis (57 km long, 1999–2016) originated more than 24 million tons of material, of which the 35 percent has been reused for producing concrete and shotcrete aggregates, while a considerable surplus has been destined for “recultivation requirements” or “environmental restorations”.

A constellation made of huge ground movements has followed the progression of the AlpTransit construction activities from Erstfeld to Vezia (Lugano): parallel to the advancement of this oeuvre, in a number of sites connected to the main high speed railway path, the earth crust has been broken, penetrated, excavated while, somewhere else, sites have been filled and altered by those same spoils. The resulted landmasses have never been fully mapped nor has the “redress process” of all the affected areas been thoroughly questioned. Although the strong—inspiring—relationship between



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25 Stan Allen, "Infrastructural Urbanism," in *Infrastructural Monument* eds. MIT Center for Advanced Urbanism, (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2016), 58.

26 "I've coined the term megaform in order to refer to the form-giving potential of certain kinds of horizontal urban fabric capable of effecting some kind of topographic transformation in the megalopolitan landscape." Kenneth Framton, *Megaform As Urban Landscape*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1999), 16.

27 Brandon Clifford, *The Cannibal's Cookbook. Mining Myths of Cyclopean Constructions*, (San Francisco: ORO Editions, 2017), 23.

2 Sigirino disposal site, 2005, early stage. Drawings by Chiara Pradel

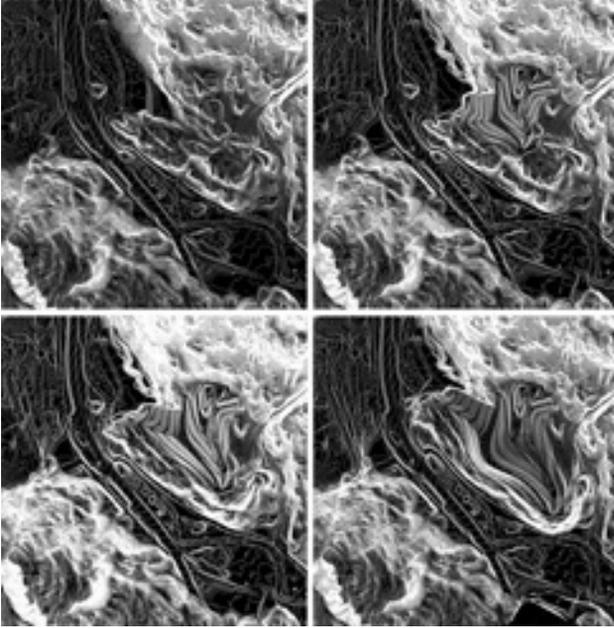
the Alps and streets or railways has been the object of various surveys highlighting the existing critical connection between the imaginary, mythical alpine landscape and its implications on the collective identity, or the connection between rough topographies and great engineering challenges or between infrastructure, territory and strong formal architectural interventions, an overall observation of the AlpTransit landscapes is still missing. In this respect, the relationship between high speed infrastructures, the so-called “Infrastructural Monuments”²⁵—huge infrastructures that are conceived as open, inclusive objects, as both common spaces and “Megaforms”²⁶ that, in addition to the realm of transportation of goods and labor, synthesize the surrounding landscape, public spaces and architectures—and their produced monumental ground movements is topical. The focus should shift from the “super-structures” and their immediately visible components to the inert leftovers dumped-out from the construction process, leading to the identification and the study of the portals, access points, construction sites and disposal areas: the above-ground elements of the NRLA tunnels should be inextricably linked with the broad excavated earth’s volumes spread as spoils in the nearest territories.

It is precisely in that moment, where the exchange between the flux of unshaped matter, the human or mechanical design and the landscape that contains it takes place, that seems particularly interesting. The earth-deposit indeed comes to life, as a kind of living organism confronted with the (engineers) design decisions, earth-moving machinery actions, open possibilities arising from what the landscape will become and from the earthwork’s own behavior.

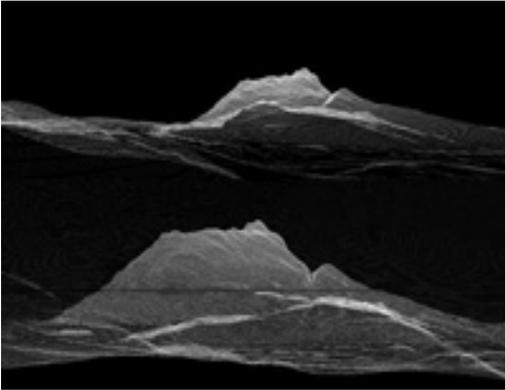
New malleable, changeable, non-deterministic and situational architectural languages are emerging right before our eyes²⁷.

An investigation through drawing and photographs made by an in situ survey of the Swiss National Cartography, the AlpTransit official publications and the interviews with members of the “Beratungsgruppe für Gestaltung” and of the AlpTransit AG (a subsidiary of the Swiss Federal Railway) has made it possible to graphically frame the physical state of the five main NRLA earthworks illustrating the amount of earth moved and ultimately relocated into a river delta, two wooded valleys, an alpine village and an urban periphery thanks to different disposal strategies, that urgently trigger, among other things, ecological, topological and formal design questions.

Five sites—the Reuss Delta, Sedrun, Cavienna, Biasca and Sigirino—are hosts for the impactful inert deposit solutions arising from the tunneling construction activities. A series of temporal maps, topological drawings, short descriptions and photographs interrogate the sympoietic transformation of these sites—where vast ground movement operations lead to cross the



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3 Sigirino monumental artificial mountain, 2005–2050. Drawings by Chiara Pradel

4 Sigirino monumental artificial mountain, 2020. Drawings by Chiara Pradel

- 28 The current Alpine chain is the result of two opposing moving forces: an endogenous one that pushes the earth's crust upwards in a very complicated system of aquifers and massifs and an endogenous one that smashes the mountain chain. Ninety million years ago, as tectonic plates collided, mineral waves arose from the scorching waters of the Tethys Ocean: they stretched themselves, broke apart and merged together. During the Quaternary, these rocks were filled, carved, and smoothed by ice sheets, whose melting revealed a kaleidoscope of valleys with steep sides and flat bottoms. Still today, the Alps are rising and pushing North.
- 29 The drawings form a first "inventory" of the AlpTransit infrastructural/monumental main earthworks since these landscapes made by spoils have never been represented in their entirety, as a system of ground movements linked to the new infrastructure.
- 30 The visual representations [3-4] function as a form of research on the plastic substratum of landscape, of its hidden latencies and of its distinctive resulting shapes.
- 31 As in Biasca or in Sigirino, where the possible deposit of further C&D materials has already been discussed by local authorities. Sigirino in particular will grow up as the highest Swiss artificial mountain (about 160m high), containing up to 7 million tons of spoils.

borders between durability and transience of geologic elements, anthropic destruction and reconstruction of landscapes and could be perceived as challenging opportunities in the endlessly changeable Swiss morphology²⁸.

The first AlpTransit earthworks inventory²⁹ evidences how more than 3.3 million tons of excavated material from the Gotthard base tunnel have been transported by train and ship to the Delta Reuss and used to fill the Uri lake for the redesign of the previously eroded river mouth, or have been spread in different areas near the Sedrun NRLA access point (more than 4 million tons), or have been transported by a conveyor belt through a spoil tunnel and dumped in the Biasca disposal site (about 6,9 million tons) to recreate a talus cone. More recently, about 7 million tons of material originating from the Ceneri base tunnel excavation process have been dumped in Sigirino and assembled near the existing mountain to form a new, artificial mountain.

The inventory might itself become a reservoir for future projects. In this respect, a series of drawings³⁰ are blending real earthwork states with imaginary future solutions, continuing and, somehow, extremizing the existing ground mounds, starting from the assumption that these sites are not “finished”, but will rather evolve in the near future. Like in the Reuss Delta site, where the dump of inert waste arising from the Gotthard axis excavation has allowed to reshape the natural capital of the delta, but, at the same time, not too far from the river mouth resources and materials such as gravel are still dredged from the lake backdrop. In other deposit sites as well, materials will be probably added or subtracted³¹ in a cyclical process of disassembling and re-assembling spoils, of dismantling and reshaping the grounds. Less than merely deconstructive and disregardful, these earth-based practices that rely on the reuse of excavated materials are here provocatively considered as accretive and drawings are used to question if they might add opportunities to develop reflections, proposals, future design trajectories in the landscapes in which they take place.

Taking advantage from this open, fluid condition, the drawing research process finally allows to envision how the five depots could evolve over time as two artificial mountains (Biasca and Sigirino), a monumental wall (Cavienna), a re-shaped topography (Sedrun), or a re-naturalized river delta (Reuss Delta).

- 32 Lucius Burckhardt, "Dirt," in *Lucius Burckhardt Writings. Rethinking Man-made Environments. Politics, Landscape & Design*, eds. Jesko Fezer and Martin Schmitz, (Wien: Springer Verlag, 2012), 169.
- 33 In particular, the extraordinary vision by Dinocrates was chronicled by Vitruvius in the first century BC and by Plutarch in the first century AD. Subsequently Leon Battista Alberti in his '*De re aedificatoria*' (1486) explicitly criticized Dinocrates, considering his proposal to design a mountain as a negative model and an emblem of hubris and excess.
- 34 Jennifer Foster and Heidi Schopf, "Mineral Migration: Extracting, Recomposing, Demolishing, and Recolonizing Toronto's Landscape," in *Material Culture: Assembling and Disassembling Landscapes*, eds. Jane Hutton, (Berlin: Jovis, 2018), 47–63.
- 35 Wilhelm Krull, "Topology," in *Topology. Topical Thoughts on the Contemporary Landscape*, eds. Christophe Girod et al. (Berlin: Jovis 2012), 13.
- 36 "Constructed ecology" here refers to a man-made process that, in a completely artificial environment, implies the creation of dynamic spaces which could extend the boundaries of infrastructural interventions to the multitude of nonhuman beings and generate the specific morphology, heterogeneity and performativity of natural environments.

The Design of Monumental Grounds

“To plan for reality therefore means to plan projects that cater to the existence of such remainders, and that anticipate human behavior... Does this imply a return to a perfect world, you ask? On the contrary: it means we renounce any notion of an utterly perfect world being possible.” ³²

The need to reuse earth, to revise construction's and demolition's inert waste, to reduce soil consumption in order to preserve an essential and non-renewable component of the natural capital and to valorize, in general, new ecologies linked to the building activities that affect human and non-human environments urge us to better understand all aspects of architecture's contemporary narrative, even those considered marginal and residual such as architecture's debris, to investigate the possible role of reparative design and the redefinition of ground-related formal structures inside landscape.

Starting from the mysterious, primitive earth mounds passing through Dinocrates and the visionary project of Mount Athos for Alexander the Great or to Violet Le Duc's repeated attempts to design Mont Blanc or to Bruno Taut's gaze toward the entire Alpine arc, a drive as much ancestral as it is tendent to hubris,³³ accompanies human beings and pushes them to rethink, draw, and to plan monumental ground-works.

Even today we face, again, mountains and slopes, but they are monumental piles manifested by our monumental debris.

In a period of overall ecological decline, an acute understand of the complexity of these landscapes is paramount; this includes building knowledge derived from the natural sciences, natural history, and from social, economic and political processes in order to look beyond the surface of places or the celebratory postures concerning technologically advanced cycling of material displacements.³⁴ Above all, looking at the emerging accumulation of debris, “landscape architects should neither be satisfied with their role as decorators who spruce-up the leftover, open spaces around infrastructure facilities, nor with their role as conservationists who try to heal landscapes or defend them from interventions.”³⁵ Potential design approaches regarding monumental earthworks should rather start from the onset and be consciously directed towards challenging topological site transformations, possible constructed ecologies³⁶, new forms emerging from deep cultural strata made by strong symbolic presences and historical meanings, altered relations between underground and overground landscapes, between human present time and geological past, human scale and natural scale, that are staging the

- 37 Chiara Pradel, "Moving Ground. The Construction of AlpTransit Infrastructure and its Monumental Landscapes," *Ardeth* 7 (2020): 67–83.
- 38 Lucius Burckhardt, "L'intervento minimo," in *Il Falso è l'autentico. Politica, paesaggio, design, architettura, pianificazione, pedagogia*, eds. Gaetano Licata and Martin Schmitz, (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2019), 147. Translation by the author.

irretrievably unpredictable, fragile and monumental aspect of anthropic earthworks³⁷.

Bringing back to light and consciousness elements that are otherwise masked, presented as accidents or mistakes, we witness a reversal in which the ruins, the leftovers, even the dirt become the signifiers of the project process, since “if in particular the ruin is the bearer of the information that makes possible the profound elaboration of the present” the (landscape) project cannot escape from dealing with the “reconstruction of ruins.”³⁸

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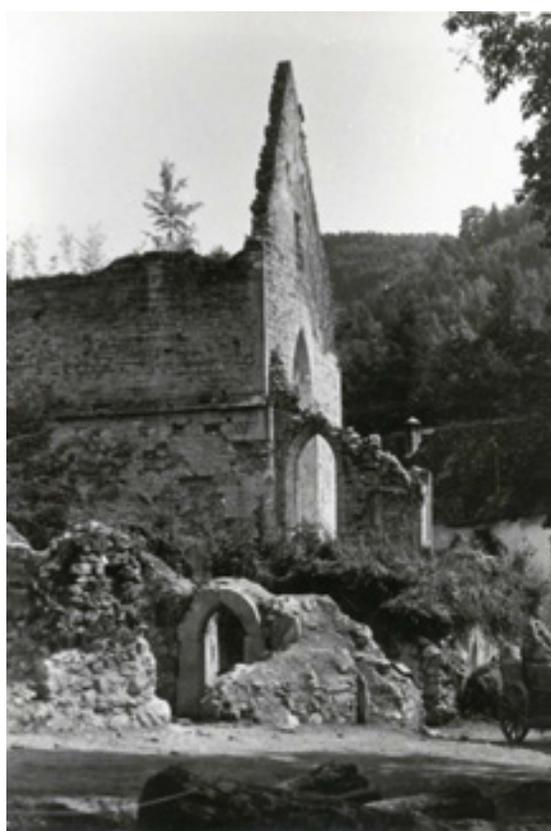
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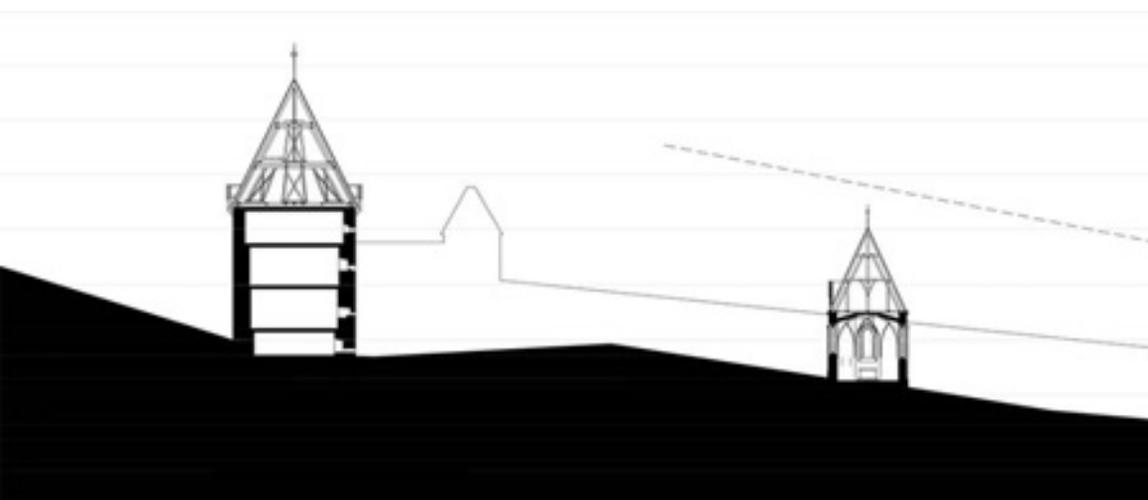


In reflecting on the words of German philosopher Ute Guzzoni, I feel that perhaps our attitude towards dwelling is most intensely reflected through reparation. Now that we understand that our planet has been transformed to such an extent that the Anthropocene is of central concern, it can be said that apart from rare exceptions, essentially all our interventions in space is renovation.

The question concerning *redress* is how much we are willing to adapt; it is through critical reflection infused with a willingness to adapt that we can most fully experience what we wish to preserve and define as meaningful heritage.

In our work *artifice* emerges a malleable means of defining—and constructing—balances between projected potentials and the existing.

– Rok Žnidaršič





The Drawing as a Boundary Object

**Thierry Lagrange
Johan Van Den Berghe
Moragh Diels**

- 2 Museums for example use it to find common agreement on what is exhibited between sponsors, historians, experts and other stakeholders. Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer, "Intitutional Ecology, 'Translations' and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley's Museum of Vertebrate Zoology," *Social Studies of Science* 19, no. 3 (1989): 387-420.
- 5 Carla Cipolla, "Designing for Vulnerability: Interpersonal Relations and Design," *She Ji: The Journal of Design, Economics, and Innovation* 4, no. 1 (2021): 144-145.
- 9 Research project of the second author: Moragh Diels, "De laatste weken," (Dissertation Master, KU Leuven, 2019), 0-160.
- 11 An academic overview and data of taboos was not available, this is an overview on the taboo about death in the Netherlands from the RU University: Sjors Van Der Heiden, "De dood in het leven: het taboe op de dood in Nederland," (Master Research, University RU, 2006), 4-6.
- 13 We deem it necessary to refer to the PhD of Eva Demuyck, funded by F.R.S. in the context of the Research Group The Drawing and the Space: Eva Demuyck, "The embodiment of Consolation: unlocking the interaction between mourning, drawing and space," (Dissertation Master, KU Leuven, 2018).
- 1 Geoffrey C. Bowker and Susan Leigh Star, *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1999), 283-326.
- 3 *Ibid.*
- 4 *Ibid.*
- 6 Thomas Binder *et al.*, *Design Things* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2011), 55.
- 7 Brené Brown, *Daring Greatly: How the Courage to Be Vulnerable Transforms the Way We Live, Love, Parent, and Lead* (New York: Penguin Group Inc., 2012), 32-58, 112-172.
- 8 Darian Leader, *The new black: Mourning, melancholia and depression* (London: The Penguin Group, 2009), 91.
- 10 Exploratory research into the reintegration of bereaved for example by AStri (policy research and advice in the Netherlands) indicates that approximately 500.000 people each year face with the loss of a relative and approximately 20% of the bereaved experience serious problems coping with the loss. Quirien H.J.M. van Ojen, "Rouw en werk: explorerend onderzoek naar re-integratie van nabestaanden," *Astri beleidsonderzoek en -advies*, P10.541. (2011): 24.
- 12 Dennis Klass, "Grief and Mourning in Cross-Cultural Perspective," *deathreference.com*. October 25, 2021.
- 14 This research is also familiar with Theory U, for more information see: C. Otto Scharmer, *Theory U: Leading from the Future as It Emerges*, first edition (United States of America: Berrett-Hoehler Publishers Inc., 2009), 23-377.

By reflecting on a specific research case, this article aims to explore the hand drawing as a boundary object for interacting with vulnerabilities through introspection and to facilitate initiating verbalization with the self and others. Observing the emergence, effect and after-effect of solidifying the self in a hand drawing uncovers the binding property of the boundary object between different beneficiaries, potential victims and enablers in the context of the grieving process.

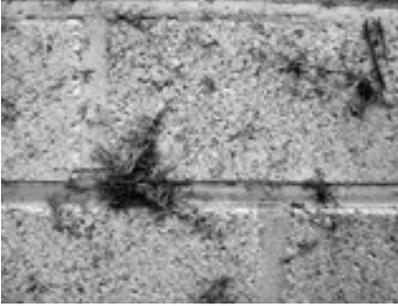
The concept of the boundary object has a wide range of potential applications, it is used as a facilitator between different stakeholders,^{1 2} as it represents a common construct and has a different identity for each beneficiary. The common boundaries of each are brought together in this object; it is a representation of the overlapping individual interests of each beneficiary and brings a coherency to the surface.³ Boundary objects are of a heterogeneous nature: without a fixed form and thus open to the interpretation of different beneficiaries but still have an intersubjective level that ensures their structure is preserved.⁴ Carla Cipolla, participating in the research about design for societal innovation, and Thomas Binder, an author regarding design research, have previously linked the designer to the boundary object.^{5 6}

According to Brené Brown, introspection inherently precedes practicing vulnerability.⁷ On the other hand, literature states that communication between mourners about their loss enhances the mourning process. A connection with memories, established through conversation, can place the grieving process in perspective.⁸ The following reflections are conducted from an auto-ethnographical research case, where a boundary object was developed unintentionally, leading to a series of insights.⁹ By reflecting on this case, one first encounters the formulation of a series of key characteristics: qualities and initial preconditions of the boundary object. This case was chosen because of the confluence of two levels of vulnerability:

1. A personal level: the research is conducted by the first author, who deals with the grieving process of her father's death and the difficulty within her family to talk about what happened. The boundary object became the main tool in the design research.
2. An international level: given the combination of a high number of bereaved people who go through the grieving process¹⁰ and the indication that death is a taboo subject in the Western world.^{11 12 1}

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Hence the drawing transformed into a boundary object, generating connections between different actors through openness and verbalization.¹⁴ The interaction between verbalization and the drawing was a tool to examine the



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15 For more information see research group The drawing and The Space, at KU Leuven Department of Architecture, www.thedrawingandthespace.info and <https://architectuur.kuleuven.be/departementarchitectuur/english/research/onderzoeksgroepen/the-drawing-and-the-space>.

1 The memory, excerpt research case

2 The solidified memory, excerpt research case

These photographs represent the subjectivity of the translation of a memory into a drawing. [1] shows the cladding of the house where the memories (explored in the research case) took place, while [2] shows how this material aspect of the building in the memory was translated into a material aspect of the design in the drawing.

16 Diels, "De laatste weken" 1-160.

interpretation of personal experience on three consecutive levels: *internal verbalization*, for verifying whether the interpretation of internal thoughts is accurate, *external verbalization*, for presenting these thoughts to friends and family in order to confirm them or not, and subsequent *mutual verbalization*, for making them debatable and thus more precise. Mapping the drawing process leads to pinpointing the four crucial steps where the boundary object is developed, activated and exposed, by conserving, radically reconstructing and possibly overcoming personal vulnerabilities. Reflecting on the drawing process leads to uncovering a series of operational properties for the boundary object. These statements are confirmed in the following research case, suggesting the exploration of boundary objects are important for preserving coherency between different beneficiaries in a grieving process and beyond. These insights and reflections have the potential to ultimately lead to societal benefits.

The Research Case

A boundary object was developed through design driven research in the context of the research group *The Drawing and The Space*.¹⁵ It did not lead to making physical space, but to creating drawn and mental space. The following text is a first-hand reflection on the potential of the architectural drawing. It references multiple actors who will be categorized for reflection as expert, enabler, potential victim and beneficiary. The first author is identified as the expert in drawing space (by being an architect) and the enabler of the drawing process (by initiating the process). The author and her immediate family are both potential victims and beneficiaries, since they have all lost a close relative and in differing ways benefited from the verbalization of the grieving process.

Drawing Stadia

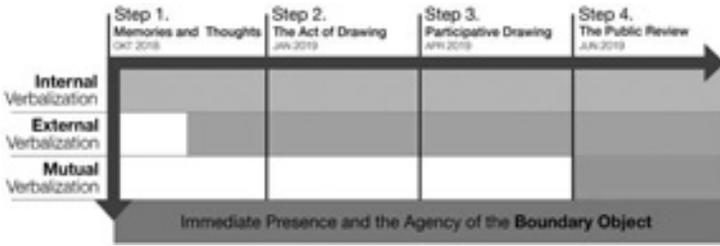
The subject of this research emerged as a drawing of an imaginary mnemonic house that remained unfinished as a precondition for its existence and was based on specific memories during the last weeks of the first author's father's life.¹⁶ This drawing is preceded by indispensable processual drawings that move through a number of cyclical stadia:

First, memories that took place in the childhood home were written down and analyzed. This led to a chronological sequence of rooms that had no resemblance to the family's physical home. During the design process the rooms were given names, memories and transformed into new forms by referencing a specific memory that took place in a room. This process embod-

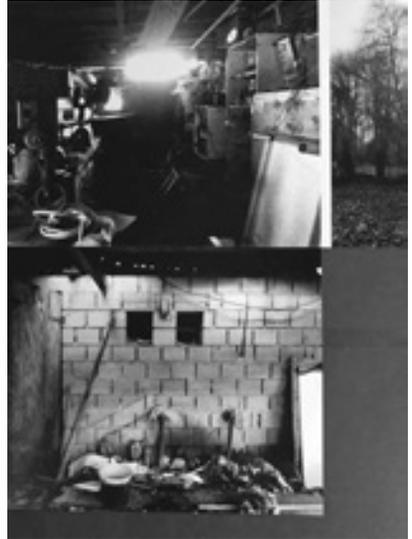
ied a conscious remembrance of spaces where the first author grew up by a cyclical switching between written memories and reflecting and reading in order to gain awareness about her unconscious thoughts and to rediscover a distanced mental space. This process of active remembering was accelerated by cultivating inspiration and aspiration at different steps of the design process from secondary activities e.g., listening to music, podcasts or lectures about loss and death while drawing and looking for vocabulary when reading to order thoughts. A notebook was routinely at hand while reading, the amount of time spent alternating between reading, listening, writing, and drawing without pause was directly proportional to an awareness of the subconscious. When a break occurred in this process—due to the physical need for sleep or food—access to this mental space was reestablished all over again.

The process of memo writing feeds the drawing process and vice versa. These *memories* were translated into annotated plans and sections that facilitated the generation and ordering of thoughts while serving as a constant overview resulting in a sequence of spaces—materialized memories. The aforementioned are considered ‘tools’ defining a first drawing without thinking about materials and details meant to be part of the final design. The drawing process contains a systematic switching between floor plan and cross-section, which is not exactly the section of the first plan. A vertical cross-section forces the drawer to design the spatial dimension, while the insights gained by drawing the section lead to a new plan and so on. This makes drawing an essential part of the research process. The last step, drawn at a scale of 1 to 10 (2700 x 2200 mm), tends more towards a draft. It is a structurally feasible design and therefore transforms into an intersubjectively relatable interior of leave-taking by guiding family members or other people grieving through the embodiment of memories of the last weeks of the first author’s father’s life. This process simultaneously triggers a kind of Janusian reflection and, while ‘walking’ through the spaces in the drawing, a mentally literal looking backward and forward through the drawn building: Why did he remain silent? Why did they remain silent? Should they have known? What signals did they miss?

The main construct of the drawing process preceding the final drawing was to process and counteract the avoidance of memories in order to contribute to the individual mourning process. In retrospect, it turned out that a reflection about the agency of architecture and drawing in the grieving process, and its therapeutic capacity, was imposed. The design driven research in this case study generated a number of personal insights, showing how loss not only leads to sorrow, but also to insights and new transferable knowledge through drawing. One of the key elements in this research trajec-



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3 Schematic overview of the mechanisms of the boundary drawing:

1. The Agency of Memories And Thoughts
2. The Act of Drawing
3. Participative Drawing
4. The Public Peer Review

In this case, the interaction between verbalization and drawing permitted to examine the interpretation of personal experience on three consecutive levels: internal verbalization, for verifying whether the interpretation of internal thoughts is accurate, external verbalization, for presenting these thoughts to friends and family in order to confirm them or not, and subsequently mutual verbalization, for making them debatable and thus more precise.

4 The space the memories took place in.

17 Johan Van Den Berghe et al., "Theatre of Operations, or: Construction Site as Architectural Design," (Doctoral Thesis, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, 2012), book 4: 4-37.

18 Koen Broucke, "Onder de roze duisternis van het slagveld: een artistieke zoektocht naar de atmosferische lagen van de geschiedenis," (Doctoral Thesis, KU Leuven - LUCA School of Arts, 2019), 202.

tory was dealing with vulnerability on multiple levels (see ‘2. The Act of Drawing’ below) during the hand drawing process, in the hand drawing and in the space activated by the drawing.

When analyzing and reliving the drawing process through observing the emergence, effect and after-effect of the drawing as a boundary object, henceforth referred to as “boundary drawing”, a number of turning points become clear. The drawing is classified as a boundary drawing since it is used as a facilitator of verbalization between participants by representing a common interest, facilitating three levels of verbalization: internal verbalization (with the self), external verbalization (to others) and mutual verbalization (with an audience). In this research case four crucial chronological steps—that in retrospect fuelled the research process—can be discerned by reflecting on how the boundary drawing is developed, (re)activated and eventually exposed. These steps are derived from the research case and thus not described here as a truth, but as an initial basis for further research:

1. The Agency of Memories and Thoughts

The research began by writing, with as much detail as possible, specific memories and thoughts of her father in her childhood home that were in turn arranged by the domestic space they took place in. Subsequently, these memories were chronologically sequenced and translated into a series of drawn spaces that could be ordered, thus making it possible to create associations, observe relations between spaces and project upon them the synthetic combination of written and drawn space that provides access to mental space. When memories are noted (memo-writing)¹⁷ and translated (drawing) into spaces they become explicit, hence they can no longer be avoided thoughts become sorted and allow for direct confrontations and verbalizations with the self which inevitably leads to introspection.

2. The Act of Drawing

*“The staging is a fake. It tries to replace what happened. The costumed re-enactor is a transvestite. He primarily pursues an external imitation, in which the present is erased. The inner, investigating re-enactor, who imitates the movement from within, represents an honest attempt to come to a deeper knowledge of what happened. This investigator is aware that this action never replaces the event, but gives a deeper understanding of it, that there is time between the imitated and the imitation.”*¹⁸

– Koen Broucke (translation of the first author)

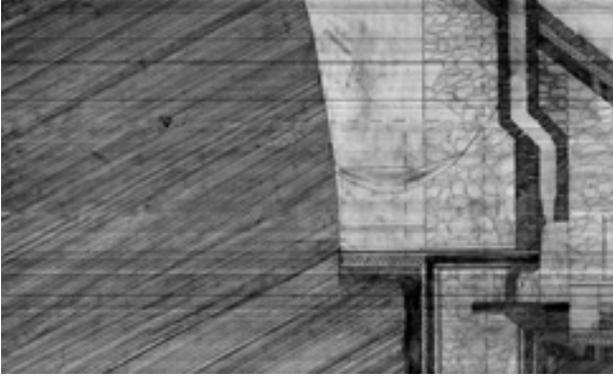
- 19 A safe space is a place where judgment is not based on personal background, where all can express themselves without fear of being judged for it, with the overarching objective of providing support. "Oxford Learner's Dictionaries," [Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com), October 25, 2021.

The memory of the weeks prior to and the moment of death itself re-emerged by engaging with the drawing process as a form of re-enactment. The act of drawing solidified memories and thoughts by translating them from emotion to matter. These tangible media were crucial to lower the bar for initiating verbalization about the invisible, intangible self. The drawn and written space allowed access to the mental space again and again driven by synesthetic perceptions. After applying a slow drawing method, a large drawing became an intermediary to verbalize personal vulnerabilities with the self and moreover facilitated connection with others through openness and verbalization.

In order to translate memory specific details and the inherent subjective nature of a memory, a slow drawing method was required to consciously observe and capture the embodied knowledge, hence the project was deliberately hand drawn at an enlarged scale. This large size activated both self-reflection and a more precise verbalization of memories and thoughts emerging from the drawing while instigating the participation of other beneficiaries, as the size allowed for sitting around and talking about the drawing with several actors through the—act of—drawing [6].

Both drawing and writing spaces are indispensable instruments that allow one to access, read, understand and materialize mental space while the activation of mental space precedes the creation of drawn space. Drawing and writing provide access to mental space through verbalization, eventually the drawn and written space become a first materialization of mental space. During the materialization of mental space—through the drawn space—new mental space emerges, as drawn space grants access to mental space again and again. The drawing process in this case requires several months. When time unavoidably interrupts different drawing sessions, re-entering this mental space feels more difficult and becomes repeatedly accessible after each interruption by continuing the drawing process, creating and activating mental and drawn space. This mental space allows for active thinking and reflecting on memories only accessible to the self —thus defining an inherently safe space.¹⁹ Later in the article the mental space involved in the drawing process is referred to as a ‘safe space of the first order’, a precondition for the existence of both mental and drawn spaces in the process of developing a boundary drawing.

Both mental and drawn space share overlapping properties that elicit synesthetic perceptions (smell, feeling, atmosphere) which keeps the drawing process operating. Upon reflection on the memories that are subject to the drawing process in this case, they often reveal themselves as a composite of sensory perceptions, evoked by other sensory perceptions. During the process of materializing a memory in the drawing new memories emerge.



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- 20 For further discussions: Alva Noë, *Strange Tools: Art and Human Nature* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2015) and Alberto-Perez-Gomez, *Built upon love* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2008)
- 21 Brian Arao and Kristi Clemens, "From Safe Spaces to Brave Spaces: New Way to Frame Dialogue Around Diversity and Social Justice," *From the Art of Effective Facilitation* (2013): 135-149.
- 22 S-K Banou, "Textual Cities /Working Drawings: Rereading the space of the Drawing" in *Writingplace. Investigations in Architecture and Literature*, ed. Klaske Havik et al. (Rotterdam: Nai010, 2016), 212-215.

5 Vulnerability reflected in the imperfect lines of the boundary drawing

A particular composition of lines during the drawing process may link specific locations within mental space.

Both spaces facilitate the translation of memory-specific details, from mental space to drawn space and vice versa, as well as the reading of both spaces. Only the self can read mental space, while both the self and the visitor can read drawn space. The drawn space is offered as a transferor of ideas to others because of its space-specific characteristics. The immediate experiencing of space by a human being leads to emotional stimuli and has an impact on one's consciousness. Mental space will later be crossed by other potential beneficiaries in the drawn space through verbalization, generating overlapping sensory properties that contribute to the drawn space as boundary drawing.²⁰

These consequential modes of drawing serve to create spaces imbued with the potential to transmute vulnerabilities—too sensitive to address mentally prior to this drawing process—into new personal understandings. During the public peer review the first author shares personal vulnerabilities through the drawing, this introduces personal insights that establishes a new type of space – ‘a brave space’²¹ The designed space never projects the verisimilitude of a memory, it does not have the same potential clarity as certain drawings. Yet the space, like the memory, can be experienced. Any hand drawn representation of a space is interpreted differently by each observer. Within the (inter)subjective conception of space, driven by a vulnerability through translating memories, lies the power of an activated mental and drawn space. Creating space is a tool to solidify memories. Drawn architecture becomes space from the moment you can walk through it mentally, thus the (non-)existence of this space in the drawing is subjective. The drawing can only become a space through mental space.

Most architects use drawing as a tool leading to the construction of a building (execution drawings). This article does not focus on this kind of drawing, rather, it focuses on the ‘working’ drawing as an ongoing process, which is the central research tool of the architect and therefore no less important than the built space.²² The working drawing brings the participants, the drawing and its creator together in a network (see ‘3. Participative Drawing’ below) in which vulnerability can emerge: vulnerabilities are understood herewith as potential strengths, developed through dealing with delicate subjects. Following ways to handle vulnerabilities are inherent to the working drawing in this case:

1. Belief in the drawing as a space to be visited, which is typically not evident in science-oriented milieus, where a separation between physical and mental health is assumed.



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6 Participative drawing during the research case

7 Participative drawing during the research case

2. The open mind of the author/drawer and by extension of the multiple drawers/participants in this process, which implies, fuelled by the drawing process, removing shielded personal vulnerabilities in the context of the safe space of the first order. An open mind also allows for memories to wander, to be shared and activated.
3. Translating emotion into matter so that a part of the self can solidify the drawing. The materiality of the drawing itself helps the drawing to evolve.
4. Looking for ways to grasp and solidify subjectivities and make them more transferable between stakeholders on an intersubjective level of understanding, i.e. the author's remembrances of things coming from an awareness of vulnerability of the self through verbalization with the self. This case demonstrates how drawing architecture has a bar lowering therapeutic potential as compared with a conventional verbalization through words.
5. This way of drawing activates space that also has the capacity to convert vulnerabilities into new understandings through reflecting on what is (not) drawn.

3. Participative Drawing

As previously stated, in order to capture specific details through the inherently subjective nature of memory, the project was deliberately hand-drawn at a large scale (1:10). The resulting drawing was 2700mm x 2200mm; this scale permitted the active participation of others who were also coping with loss, hence it helped to establish the boundary drawing and activated verbalizations of the drawing process by explaining the meaning of what was—or was not—being drawn, including the motives beyond the drawing.

1. As the deadline for the public peer review approached, it became clear that finishing the drawing alone within the given time frame was not possible. The first author requested drawing assistance first from friends and later family to complete the drawing. At first it was easier to talk about the drawing with friends than with family members, because of their direct involvement in her father's death. Asking for help in general was not natural, but transferring the subject from the self to the drawing—solidified memories—made this significantly easier. Initially help was requested to complete the drawing on time for the public peer review. During this stage it occurred that the critical construct was verbalization through developing and activating the boundary drawing.

- 23 A safe space is a place where judgment is not based on personal background, where all can express themselves without fear of being judged for it, with the overarching objective of providing support. "Oxford Learner's Dictionaries," [Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com), October 25, 2021.

2. As participants joined the drawing process, verbalization about the self through explaining the intention of the drawing by addressing solidified memories emerged. Understanding the subject of the drawing was crucial for friends and family who helped drawing to be more motivated to spend hours working, due to the feeling that they could finally help with something concrete in the grieving process of the first author. During these hours of repetitive hatching, diverse conversations took place about the drawing and its genesis, transforming the drawing into a boundary drawing.

Establishing a safe space is a crucial step in the drawing process before being able to allow involving others in drawing, this is where the boundary drawing is activated for the second time (after activating the boundary drawing for the first time by verbalizing with the self).²³ This part of the process can be dissected into the following two preconditions for the boundary drawing to emerge:

An Open-Ended Starting Point:

The boundary drawing was large, and as such completing it for the public peer review was too much work for one person. Its size emerged from the open-ended nature of the case. The drawing was large enough to situate memory-specific details into the totality of both memories and the drawing, and to invite additional participants around the drawing table. Consequently, there was also a need for modulating the architectural totality into fragments to separate memory-specific details [10] from the rest of the drawing in order to study them better and make the subject of verbalization easily accessible for discussion.

Intersecting Identities:

The motivation of the first author, friends and family for working together towards the boundary drawing indicated a number of overlapping interests. The first author was the griever, as well as one of the enablers and the beneficiary. She started this research to portray her memories that preceded this ‘sudden’ death on a public peer review in order to contribute to her grieving process. The participants in the research group *The Drawing and the Space* became enablers by providing a precondition—the safe space—²⁴ for the result. The friends (beneficiaries) helped the first author in order to help in the grieving process before, but did not know how. *The immediate family members (potential victims and beneficiaries) help drawing in order to*



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25 James Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing* (New York: Simon & Schuster, Inc., 1996), 17-237.

26 Paul Arthur Schilpp et al., *The Philosophy of Martin Buber* (Carbondale: The Library of Living Philosophers, 1967), 619.

8 Public peer review of the research case

9 Public peer review of the research case

understand the process that preceded this 'sudden' death and make it negotiable, but do not know how. The drawing was a tangible work tool to facilitate and share the grieving process. Overlapping interests of potential beneficiaries, victims and enablers instigated the creation of the boundary drawing. By transforming vulnerabilities into a physical drawing, insight into loss was developed, coming together around this drawing can be compared to ritual acts familiar to everyone.

4. The Public Peer Review

In retrospect, creating a time-frame for the presentation and justification of the case at the end of the process for an international panel of academics and peer reviewers in the context of a public exhibition had several advantages: While developing the boundary drawing the deadline for the public peer review was an incentive to ask for help with creating the boundary drawing, leading to new beneficiaries. Additionally, during the final public peer review new insights emerged. During a process of verbalization, it became clear that not only the direct family members had difficulties verbalizing what happened, but also the first author herself. Besides these first insights it became evident that, by showing the drawn space to others, more beneficiaries arose through experiencing the drawing.²⁵ Other beneficiaries recognized themselves in this space, reflecting a blurring of the barrier between the reader and the drawing. As Buber has stated: "*(the artist) ...for in exposing himself he can expose all men to themselves, by showing them subjectivity in all its profundity.*"²⁶ This case demonstrated how generating a boundary drawing led to a turning point in the grieving process.



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10 A memory-specific detail, excerpt from the research case:

“The two ladies disguise each other. The only link they have is a dead family member, which is the cause of this family drama. They both want to visit the urn in the middle of the building without meeting unexpectedly, therefore two unique doors are developed. They share the same rotation axis and each door has only one handle and one lock on the other side. Consequently the ladies have to walk through the same path, but they can decide whether the other one can enter or not. The lock is placed high above floor level (1m73), so locking each other out will not become a habit. They actively have to choose to handle that way, this makes locking each other out a conscious decision every time again.”

This etch contains unreadable words since it was created during the first stage of the drawing process, only the creator had to understand them for ordering thoughts.

- 27 Eszter Szép, *Comics and the Body: Drawing, Reading and Vulnerability* (Ohio: The Ohio State University Press Columbus, 2020), 185.
- 28 Joe Sacco and Mitchell W. J. T., “Public Conversation,” *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 3 (2014): 53–70.
- 29 This argument is supported by Pallasmaa, 2006: “We are in constant dialogue and interaction with the environment, to the degree that it is impossible to detach the image of the Self from its spatial and situational existence.” Juhani Pallasmaa, “An Architecture of the Seven Senses,” in *Questions of Perception: Phenomenology in Architecture*, ed. Steven Holl, Juhani Pallasmaa, Alberto Pérez-Gómez. (San Francisco: William Stout Publishers, 2006), 35.

- 30 Susan Leigh Star and James R. Griesemer, “Institutional Ecology, ‘Translations’ and Boundary Objects: Amateurs and Professionals in Berkeley’s Museum of Vertebrate Zoology,” *Social Studies of Science* 19, no. 3 (1989): 387–420.

Reflection on the Research Project

Defining the Boundary Drawing

“The drawn line, born out of an embodied engagement, is generative of thought and also facilitates rethinking and re-experiencing vulnerability. Drawing is a kind of thinking and a personal & embodied way of understanding the world, others or ourselves, during and by making marks on surfaces.”²⁷

“You kind of inhabit everything you draw.”²⁸

Joe Sacco, 2014.²⁹

In the first two steps, the boundary drawing was developed and activated for the first time through introspection and *internal verbalization*, with the self. During the third step the boundary drawing was re-activated, this time through *external verbalization* by drawing together. In the fourth step it was exposed and activated for the third time during the public peer review in the setting of an exhibition, through *mutual verbalization* with the audience. In order to come to define the boundary drawing, the following boundary objects are identified as:

1. The deadline of the public peer review (activating the incentive to ask for help and think about what had happened, the boundary drawing starts to develop)
2. The drawing (this is the workplace, the active part, where one verbalizes thoughts to the self through drawing, the foundation for the boundary drawing is developed)
3. The public peer review (reflection: when one verbalizes thoughts to an audience one also finds insights, the boundary drawing is exposed)

The boundary drawing does not express a truth, it is merely a tool for achieving a greater goal.³⁰ After reflecting on this specific case, we come to the formulation of a series of qualities and initial preconditions for the boundary drawing to operate, successively explained in the following paragraphs.

Only one drawing cycle (covering the four steps above) was completed when the stopping rule came into effect. This rule was indicated by the moment saturation occurred after step 4, i.e. when no substantial new information surfaced through this first drawing-conversation cycle. However, a next cycle could be initiated at any time, hence starting cycles of ‘Critical

- 31 Johan Van Den Berghe *et al.*, "Windows into an Architecture of Darkness and Depth," in *Des Traces et des Hommes Imaginaires du Château de Selles*, ed. Silvana Editoriale (Milan, 2020), 34–43.

32 Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing*.

33 Eszter Szép, *Comics and the Body: Drawing, Reading and Vulnerability* (Ohio: The Ohio State University Press Columbus, 2020), 185.

34 Elkins, *The Object Stares Back: On the Nature of Seeing*.

Sequential Drawing'³¹ in cyclical iterations, potentially allowing the verbalization of the first cycle to impact the next drawing cycle.

Qualities

The boundary object generates a unique combination of qualities. A reflection by the first author on the case above reveals the potential intersections between vulnerability and architecture. Drawing initiates verbalization with the self and others through conserving, radically reconstructing and possibly destroying personal vulnerabilities by developing, reactivating and exposing the boundary drawing. This case shows how interacting with personal vulnerabilities through drawing space can be healing.

Drawing can solidify the intangible self, instigate looking for ways to grasp and solidify subjectivities and make them more transferable between beneficiaries/stakeholders on an intersubjective level of understanding, i.e. the beneficiaries' remembrances of things coming from the vulnerability of the self. In turn, what is not drawn may be revealing to the self and others. Without verbalization the conception of space is different for each beneficiary. When the rationale of the drawing, driven by vulnerabilities through translating memories is explained to the participants of the drawing process, their conception of the drawing changes. Rationalization through verbalization is less open to interpretation than the reading of the drawing. The combination of the drawing and its verbalization prompts the visitor into a situation, initiated through the boundary drawing, where seeing becomes rather 'visceral'.^{32 33} In this case the ability to recognize oneself in a drawing is embedded in the interpretative difference between the drawing and the verbalized drawing. Elkins wrote about this concept: "*Readers make sense of drawn bodies in terms of their own body's sense of itself.*"³⁴

The drawing process benefits from *the verbalization of the memories* written down before, which results in solidifying the self in a drawing. It is more obvious to talk about a tangible drawing than about the intangible self. *The drawn and mental space both convey a safe space of the first order*, inducing verbalization with the self. This space evolves into a *safe space of the second order*, inducing verbalization with familiar beneficiaries. These spaces evolve into a *brave space*, inducing verbalization with unfamiliar beneficiaries. In this case these three levels of verbalization can only be attained through the process of developing a boundary drawing, temporarily activated, yet generating lasting consequences, and *therefore of a permanent character*. Even though these first extracted qualities need further investigation to be confirmed, this case indicates *the capacity of the boundary drawing to contribute to a personal and a societal well-being*.



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- 35 A safe space is a place where judgment is not based on personal background, where all can express themselves without fear of being judged for it, with the overarching objective of providing support. "Oxford Learner's Dictionaries," [Oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com](https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com), October 25, 2021.

Initial Preconditions

The enabler was unaware of her *intersecting identities* and therefore instigated the process of developing a boundary drawing (enabler/beneficiary/potential victim/...). The starting point was a *safe space* within the self and in the external circumstances. During this process the safe space transformed into a brave space from the moment the boundary drawing was activated, this was only possible with intersubjective support. Finally, both *drawing expertise* to develop the boundary drawing and an *open ended case* to activate the boundary drawing were part of the list of preconditions for the drawing to emerge as a boundary object.

Intersecting Identities

Feeling the need to explore certain memories was a trigger for initiating the process of developing a boundary drawing. The beneficiary/victim embodied intersecting interests by being both the potential victim and the beneficiary.

The subjective identities of different actors shifted during the process of developing and exposing a boundary drawing through personal insights. The initial enabler was only able to transform into a beneficiary because of the drawing process, during these first steps. During the public peer review it became clear to her that she was the potential victim all along. This realization would not have occurred without the activation of the boundary drawing. Because of the potential of generating mutual agencies with respect to the boundary drawing, the latter played a crucial role in achieving these insights.

Safe Space

A safe space was chronologically established on three levels:³⁵ (1) in the self, (the first order safe space) (2) in the external circumstances (the second order safe space), and (3) created by the self (the third order safe-space).

1. The first order was reflected in step 1. Noting memories and translating them into drawn space was a first step in the process of materializing memories. In order to transcribe these memories, the first author intuitively required the feeling of residing in a place where her memories would not be judged. This safe space of the first order was reflected in step 1. It was necessary so displaced memories could not be avoided but were actively evoked, ensuring (a) the awareness that no one would be able to read these notes without permission, and (b) the awareness that no one could exact-

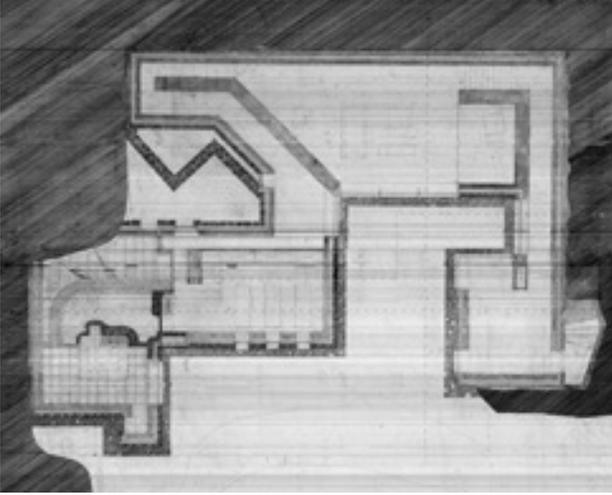
- 36 For more information see research group The drawing and The Space, at KU Leuven Department of Architecture, www.thedrawingandthespace.info and <https://architectuur.kuleuven.be/departementarchitectuur/english/research/onderzoeksgroepen/the-drawing-and-the-space>.
- 37 Van Den Berghe, "Architectural Drawing as Verb, not as Noun: Extending the Concept of Chronological Drawing and X-Ray-Drawing," in *Knowing (by) Designing Conference* (Brussels/Ghent: KU Leuven Faculty of Architecture, 2013), 664–673.
- 38 Van Den Berghe, "Windows into an Architecture of Darkness and Depth," 34–43.

ly deduct her specific memories from her drawing without explanation.

2. The second order was reflected in steps 2 to 3 and embedded in external circumstances created by the high-trust context of the research group The Drawing and The Space.³⁶ The participants in this research group did not judge, respected the time needed for the first author to open up and did not put pressure on what was or was not explained during the drawing process. This second order was a precondition for involving other participants in the drawing process. First the research group, later the friends of the first author and eventually the family of the first author became the participants in this safe space.
3. The third order was reflected in step 4 and was embedded in the ability to create an external safe space, first for oneself, later finding it in external circumstances and eventually creating the circumstances that made it possible to transform the safe space into a brave space (see definition below).

Drawing Expertise

Drawing expertise is one of the most important tools of the architect and has been essential in this case for translating memories. After the first stage of the research, an annotated plan and section were drawn directly from memory to maintain a constant overview of the multitude of memories during the drawing process. The drawing process consisted of ‘Critical Sequential Drawing’ (CSD),^{37 38} a constant alternation between drawing a plan and a section, both stemming from the previous one and leading to new insights. CSD will be addressed cyclically in the following research steps. While drawing a vertical or horizontal section, a solidification of the memory presented itself. This rendered the drawing expertise of the architect/enabler, owned by the first author (enabler/victim/beneficiary), a quintessential element for the boundary drawing to emerge. Without being able to create drawn space through mental space in the drawing, and thus translating memories, the consecutive Steps 3: ‘Participative Drawing’ and 4: ‘The Public Peer Review’ would not have occurred. The project emerged from ‘the experience’, a series of memories and thoughts and was explicated in a series of fragments/details linked together, in which the technical component of making architecture was present. Both the architectural drawing and the sensory experience of the drawn space were constitutive for this case.



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- 39 A brave space is a place where dialogue is fostered. By acknowledging each other's personal backgrounds and encouraging the sharing of experiences, new insights are achieved. This is often an uncomfortable event. Micah Salkind E., "Dancing in Brave Spaces," in *Do You Remember House?* (Oxford: Oxford Scholarship Online, 2019).

Open-Ended Case

The absence of a clear end goal at the beginning of the research was a precondition for the unintentional development of a boundary drawing, it was a tool to achieve an end goal, not an end goal in of itself. The public peer review was an incentive to ask for help. By going through the whole process —from the preparation over the working sessions with the boundary drawing to the public peer review in the setting of and exhibition—the actual beneficiaries, victims, enablers and even boundary objects became clear. The drawing (afterwards referred to as the boundary drawing) served a very different purpose at the start of the process than in the end. The open-ended nature led to a series of new insights, including the indication that after going through the first cycle, new cycles can be started based on this first cycle (see ‘Reflection’ above). This precondition was a trigger for further research.

In this case the drawing was large enough for accommodating memory specific details within a sequence of memories, and for inviting more beneficiaries around the drawing table.

Brave-Space

In order to create a boundary drawing with impact beyond familiar beneficiaries, a safe space evolved into a brave space,³⁹ in which one can speak freely without being afraid of being judged for vulnerabilities and mainly receive support. In this case the safe space was provided by the context of the research group *The Drawing and The Space* and by mental space constructed while drawing. From the moment more unknown beneficiaries started to enter the boundary drawing, the safe space transformed into a brave space through the verbalization of vulnerabilities. Once the brave space was reached it became easier to re-enter the safe space of the first order to start another drawing and verbalization cycle. In this brave space dialogue was fostered and differences between stakeholders were acknowledged in order to generate new understandings. Creating a safe space for the self and then, later, through external circumstance, transforming the safe space into a brave space made it possible to explain the drawing to peers and lay people during the public review. By handling vulnerabilities in the safe space, resilience was developed on an individual level, and later in the brave space on an intersubjective level. This provided a hopeful indication of the possibility to deploy individual vulnerabilities on a societal level through verbalization and drawing.

- 40 We deem it necessary to refer to the PhD of Eva Demuynck, funded by F.R.S. in the context of the Research Group The Drawing and the Space: Eva Demuynck, "The embodiment of Consolation: unlocking the interaction between mourning, drawing and space," (Dissertation Master, KU Leuven, 2018).
- 41 Leader, *The new black: Mourning, melancholia and depression*, 91.
- 42 Thierry Lagrange, *Look space!: A Story of Analogous Spaces* (Ghent: Grafische Cel, 2016), 80.

Conclusion

The drawing as a boundary object can play a crucial role in achieving verbalization in order to handle personal vulnerabilities. In order to understand its operational modes and possibly deploy it on a societal level, the purpose of this article is to seek an initial definition of the boundary drawing by observing the emergence, effect and after-effect through a first case study. This definition provides a basis that requires further research in order to observe how and to what extent these indications are confirmed or critically questioned.⁴⁰

In this case the boundary drawing is activated through conserving, radically reconstructing and possibly destroying personal vulnerabilities on three chronological levels of verbalization about the intangible self: verbalization with the self, verbalization with others and, eventually, verbalization with the unfamiliar. These levels are facilitated by the development of the boundary drawing, which in turn is activated by the retrieval of the safe and later the brave space. The drawing awakens intersubjectivities through visceral seeing that generate unambiguous and precise verbalization through providing access to individual and later shared intersubjective mental space, which is the central mechanism behind the boundary drawing. A recognition in personal memories, established through verbalization, instigated through drawing, provides notions and enhances the grieving process.⁴¹ This case demonstrates how generating an autobiographical boundary drawing leads to major insights. This spatial simulation of memories that are difficult to verbalize, fed by respectively the safe space and the brave space, turns intangible phenomena into tangible and visible ones. Architecture presents itself as an agent that has the capacity to bring people together and generate support.⁴² The process of developing the first author's research case raises the awareness of the capacity of architecture and architectural drawing to contribute to a personal and a societal well-being in processes of loss and mourning.

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Vulnerability of the Liminal

Anđelka Bnin-Bninski

Drawing is a fundamental medium in the architectural profession; it represents the principal outcome of the architect's work in the form of a project or building. On this point, the composition of drawn lines is viewed as a spatial statement and the finality of an architect's thought process as the formulation of an idea. This inquiry posits doubt and instability as a specific quality in the drawing as a work of lines. The line is considered an actional moment embodying multiple factors and circumstances included in the seemingly mere gesture upon a trace of paper or digital screen. The focus is on the precise moment of a relational chain between the architect's doubt—non-finalized decisions—through line-making and the unfinished drawing. This examination is developed as in-depth analysis of drawing processes and their possible after-effects.

Stemming from neglected values within the architectural drawing process e.g., doubt, fragility, intimacy, vulnerability and subjectivity, my argument considers vulnerability a modality within the drawing suggesting the potential for awareness, ethical positions and criticality towards both representation and concrete outcomes; and as such, the nuanced space of liminality, as an open and unstable condition of the line, is critically examined. The approach is largely based on my PhD dissertation "The role of architectural drawing in the dynamics of the living space partition" and is expanded through an inter- and multi-disciplinary platform with references to philosophy, art and architectural theory and graphical analysis in drawing. The first part is articulated through etymological, philosophical and anthropological interpretations of liminal, limit and line; the second part develops the main reasoning regarding the state of vulnerability within the liminal condition of the line; and the third part proposes an *Atlas of Liminal Line Dynamics*. The atlas is a form of open discussion on the liminal activity of specific lines, including theoretical and graphical levels anchored in drawing practices within art and architecture. Instead of definitiveness, the atlas suggests and encourages working with unstable and vulnerable states of lines, including mis-interpretational risks, in order to approach the critical potential in the act of drawing.

An Etymological Inquiry of the Liminal Condition

The relationship between liminality and line is founded on the etymological analysis of the Latin terms referring to limit, limen and line. Emphasis is placed on the spatial relations and nuances that these associations provide and is based on the contemporary philosophical interpretations on limit by the French philosopher Régis Debray and studies on limit and wall by Thierry Paquot and Michel Lussault. The construed definition of *line* is based on

1 Régis Debray, *Éloge des frontières* (Paris: Gallimard, 2013), 29.

2 Henri Mitterand, Jean Dubois, and Albert Dauzat, *Dictionnaire étymologique* (Paris: Larousse, 2014).

the anthropological and English etymological analyses by Tim Ingold. In this study Line is considered an agent of spatial relations in the practice of architectural drawing. The objective of such an approach is to search beyond binary spatial oppositions: opened-closed, divided-combined, private-public...as it aims to tackle the richness of the ambiguous meanings these Latin terms provide for spatial dynamics and dynamics in drawing.

Through his work on the concept of the limit in the book *Éloge des frontières*, Debray examines the *word* line and emphasizes the meaning of limen: “Limen, from where our *liminaire* and our *preliminaires* come from, is at the same time a threshold and a barrier, just as lime marks a path and/or border. Janus, the god of passage, has two faces.”¹ To explore the connotation of the sacred contained in the spatial limit, Debray examines the etymology of the term in ancient languages such as Hebrew and Arabic and concludes that the idea of separation in both languages is related to architecture—civil and religious—where the sacral and the sacred are always separate or the most hidden part of the building. He explains the connection between the idea of separation and the concept of the sacred via the etymology of the French word *sacré* (sacred) and its Latin ancestor *sancire*, which alludes to demarcation, enclosure, and prohibition.

Limen—liminis—is a close variation of the term *limes* which multifariously means house, dwelling, door, entrance, beginning, end, success, but just like *limes* it can also mean barrier. The Romans had two deities dedicated to the space partition and the dynamics of spatial relations: “Limentinus was the Roman god who guarded the threshold of the door (*limen*), while Janus was the god who guarded passages and crossroads—the god of change and transition. From the multiple and opposing meanings of these terms derives the meaning of the relation of connection, or binding *limier*, *liemier*.”²

From limit, limen and limier, we encounter the key terms related to the dynamics of spatial partition and habitation. Some meanings are related to particular spaces common for linear movements e.g., margin, passage, road, street, a river channel, or even territory—somewhat autonomous spaces—while other meanings are relative to the quality and character of spatial delineation e.g., edge, border, demarcation between two fields, line which signifies space, furrow, trace, separation, barrier, linkage; and finally, some meanings are closely related to spatial habitation e.g., house, dwelling, door, threshold and entrance. The complexity of the concept of linear partition is emphasized by the French philosopher Chris Younès. Younès discusses the study of limits and borders in the philosophy of Jacques Derrida: “This is why Derrida is so wonderful when he speaks about the question of limits: it is not to simplify the limits, but to complicate them (...) to complicate means

- 3 Milinkovic, Marija and Dragana Ćorović, "Interview with Chris Younès," in *AoD Interviews: Architecture of Deconstruction: The Specter of Jacques Derrida*, ed. Vladan Đokić and Petar Bojanić (Belgrade: University of Belgrade, 2013), 128–40, 139.
- 4 Thierry Paquot and Michel Lussault, eds., *Murs and Frontières*, *Hermès* 63 (Paris: CNRS, 2012), 9.
- 5 Tim Ingold, *Une brève histoire des lignes*, trans. Sophie Renaut (Bruxelles: Zones sensibles, 2013).
- 6 *Ibid.*, 59.
- 7 Michel Deguy, "Timberline," dedicated to the artwork 'Antidosis' by Paul O Robinson.
- 8 Kenneth White, *Limites et marges* (Paris: Mercure de France, 2000).

to be more complex, more creative, to be able to do something with it, not only to abstract. It is something much more mysterious, in a way.”³ This precise point, where the complexity of limit is highlighted in front of its definition as conclusive, is the point that applies to the qualitative constructs of the line: the complimentary force and fragility of architectural drawing within the creative mystery of line making.

Following the classification of Jacques Levi in the *Dictionnaire de la géographie et de l'espace des sociétés*, Paquot and Lussault propose three basic characters of limit: barrier, merger and territory.⁴ Rather than summarizing these characteristics' etymological nuances and ambiguities, I point out principal spatial relational processes: *separating, joining, spacing*. Focusing on these relational processes, line is considered an active graphical expression of dynamic, nuanced and polyvalent spatial partitions and delineations in architectural drawing (thick and thin, open and closed, curved and broken, textured and invisible, oriented and loose, geometrical and, un-precise etc.).

Liminality and Line

From the etymology of limit and limes, line is one of the meanings of the Latin term limes. Accordingly, line is one of the possible translations of spatial partition into an architectural drawing. This particular analysis of line is based on research by Tim Ingold,⁵ where he refers to an analysis by Samuel Johnson from the *Dictionary of the English Language*, also known as *Johnson's Dictionary* (1755), where he posits a line's manifold meanings: "... longitudinal extension, thin wire, tight thread that controls the action, thread that holds fisherman's hook, furrows on the skin (wrinkles), trace, sketch, contour, silhouette, everything written from one margin to another; verse, rank, excavation; trench, method, plan of action, extension, boundary, equator, equinox, descendants or ancestors of one family, one line represents the other part of an inch (unit of measure), a letter, an expression 'I read your line', a cotton or flax fiber."⁶ Following these connotations of the 'word' line, one notices that the meaning of limits, contours, borders and traces are common for the terms limit and line. Ingold states that the basic determinant of the process of drawing and writing is precisely a line that is the trace of a manual gesture at the time of the creation of a text or a drawing. We can find examples of meticulous engagement in the nuances of liminality, limit and line in the poem "Timberline" by Michel Deguy,⁷ and also in the work of Kenneth White in his collection of poems *Limites et marges*.⁸

The relationship between a drawn line and the architectural drawing is one of the key themes in the essay "The Preliminary: Notes on the Force of

- 9 Andrew Benjamin, "The Preliminary: Notes on the Force of Drawing," *The Journal of Architecture* 19, no. 4 (2014): 470–82.

- 10 *Ibid.*, 477.

- 11 Paul Emmons, "Demiurgic Lines: Line-Making and the Architectural Imagination," *The Journal of Architecture* 19, no. 4 (2014): 536–59.

- 12 *Ibid.*

Drawing,” by Australian philosopher Andrew Benjamin.⁹ Benjamin asserts that an architectural drawing is always preliminary and is therefore inextricably linked to the meanings inherent in limit and limen. He explains that a preliminary drawing is limiting and related to time because it always exists before and after in relation to the drawing. In this context, Benjamin uses the term line to clarify the preliminary virtue of the drawing and to further connect the terms line and limen via analogy: “In the context of the preliminary, the second line appears. No longer a drawn line but a threshold: in other words, limen. That is not just the limit.”¹⁰ He explains the status of the ‘preliminary’ in the drawing with the condition of the event that follows. The drawing is preliminary if the following event confirms it, this connects the finality of the completed drawing to the term limit, while this restriction, or ‘closing’ of the drawing, is simultaneously understood as *open* and therefore the term limen is attached to the drawing. From limen the author derives *preliminary* as a virtue of drawing, as Debray explained, it is precisely the limen at the root of the word preliminary (*préliminaire*).

Embodying the Line

Paul Emmons, an architect and professor of architectural theory, argues that “the line-making decision is the basic act of architectural drawing.”¹¹ Relying on the thesis of Alberti from Marco Frascari’s *Eleven Exercises in the Art of Architectural Drawing: Slow Food for the Architect’s Imagination*, Emmons reminds us that architects make drawings and not buildings, therefore drawing is a basic architectural craft. According to him, the practice of architectural drawing is an embodied activity that engages and informs the imagination of the architect. Thus, in the embodied drawing process the architect is expressing and formulating the finest creativity and is exposed to drawing pleasures, risks and failures.

In this dual process of engagement and cognition, Emmons distinguishes three aspects of architectural imagination that are important for decision making regarding the line: constructive imagination, inhabitative imagination, and material imagination.¹² ‘Constructive imagination’ emphasizes the role and importance of dashed lines, as hidden lines on the one hand, and texture lines that indicate the type of building material, on the other. Through the aspect of the ‘inhabitative imagination’ Emmons considers how an architect is projected into drawing using the different properties of a line in the drawing. While inhabiting a drawing, through the properties of line, the architect considers the experiences of future inhabitants of the projected space. The aspect of ‘material imagination’ emphasizes architectural drawing as a medium. The notion of materiality here refers to drawing tools and

- 14 Robin Evans, *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays*, AA Documents 2 (London: Architectural Association, 1997).
- 13 Benjamin, "The Preliminary," 470.
- 15 Benjamin, "The Preliminary," 476.
- 16 Thanos Zartaloudis, "Lines of Architectural Potency," *Architecture Research* (2020): 147–205, 171.

materials used for drawing—from different material qualities of the line (graphite, ink, chalk) to different types of drawing surfaces—and subsequently the focus is on the relationship between these qualities of drawing with the materialization of the building. Regardless of the type or purpose of the drawing, an architect inscribes and transmits visions, ethics and responsibilities that create an intimate permanence; hence the drawing, and the act of drawing, become an intrinsic extension of the architect's thoughts. Keeping in mind these personal and fragile aspects, the vulnerable exposure of a finished drawing is eminent while it continues its autonomous life open to interpretations and misinterpretations. In this light, the principal quest is how to maintain and preserve the richness, uniqueness and complexity within the act of drawing despite contemporary drawing habitudes and beyond professional conventions and architectural culture; would it be possible to disrupt the relational chain architect-drawing-building-inhabiting and to propose a slightly different, riskier and more personal architectural idea?

Benjamin discusses the complexity of the liminal relationship between engagement and the knowledge production contained in the activities of architectural drawing. He believes that this relationship contains the 'inherent fragility' of the architectural drawing. According to Benjamin, architectural drawing is more of a potentiality than a representation. He highlights the problematic position of architectural drawing in the history of architecture, as it simultaneously contains the safety and responsibility of architecture.¹³ Continuing Robin Evans's studies on the complex relationship between drawing and building,¹⁴ Benjamin believes that architectural drawing is actually a "liminal state in between potentiality and aporia."¹⁵ In relation to Emmons and Benjamin, we can see that the 'liminal state' of architectural drawing arises from a dual relation: drawing between the activities of drawing and cognition (Emmons) and drawing between potentiality and aporia (Benjamin).

The play between the potentiality and actuality in architectural thinking is one of the main points in the essay "Lines of Architectural Potency" by Thanos Zartaloudis. He argues that in this relation is the power of architectural thinking and claims that "the co-existence of potency and actuality has the effect of a radical equalization, a certain egalitarianism of existence's present futures, and this becomes the most visible in the open plateau that is thinking as an ethos, the contemplative way of being."¹⁶ On this matter Benjamin claims that drawing and line belong to the same part of the process. He sees the 'force of drawing' in the complexity of the drawing process and 'work of lines.' The complexity of the line, according to him, belongs to the dichotomy between the simplicity of the line and the multiplicity of elements that are connected to it; he considers the line an after-effect of drawing tech-

17 Benjamin, "The Preliminary," 476.

18 Jonathan Hale, "Critical Phenomenology: Architecture and Embodiment," *Architecture and Ideas* (2013): 18–37.

19 Jacques Derrida, *Mémoires d'aveugle. L'autoportrait et Autres Ruines* (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux, 1991).

nology and a place of ideas that contains the necessary question of possible actualization.¹⁷ In this analysis, Benjamin develops a thesis about the multiplicity of the line in architectural drawing and calls the line a ‘multiple event’ that is irreducible. He first explains that the line is the result of what is drawn by it and then adds that the line is not opposite to form and idea, nor is it defining and final, but is precisely in the space between potentiality and aporia because it is conceived as a set of relations; hence, for Benjamin, this situates the liminal, in-between condition of the line as an undefined, unstable and fragile state that project a unique strength and power to a drawing.

The Vulnerable State of Line-Limen

The intention now is to examine whether the specific act of line can position the object of drawing in a liminal state that preserves the vulnerability resonant within qualities of instability and ambiguity. Following Benjamin’s notion of the line as “a place of irreducible complexity” that can contain multiple events, one can separate the line from its historical determinants and emphasize the importance of its technological and geometric properties. This places a new light upon the inhabitative imagination and singles out the precise relationship between the drawer and the process of drawing-making. A drawing process that is founded on embodiment and inhabitative imagination and the contextual and political awareness of technological and geometric properties of line, opens the discussion concerning critical phenomenology in architectural drawing.¹⁸

Particularly important for this critical potential in the act of unstable drawing is the resonant activity of the liminal line: an activity supporting unstable and ambiguous qualities in its “irreducible complexity” that keeps the force of the drawing in states of openness and vulnerability. Regarding the philosophical component of this approach, it is important to highlight the influence of Derrida. The basis of the line problematization in Derrida’s work is the fundamental notion of ‘différance’ which denoting the activities of differentiation.¹⁹ Unlike difference (*différence*), seen as a final, completed process, the form ‘différance’ by changing the vowel ‘e’ to ‘a’ sets the term in a modality of permanent activity. ‘Différance’ makes it possible to maintain a distinction between active and passive, interior and exterior, visible and invisible, empirical and transcendental without the need for synthesis and ultimate decision as a result of this activity. In this way, potentialities, contradictions and aporias remain in a constant relational connection to dialectically placed opposites. In this sense, ‘différance’ provides a context for shifting from the motive of affirmation towards indecision, vulnerability

- 20 Jonathan Hale, "Critical Phenomenology: Architecture and Embodiment," *Architecture and Ideas*, (2013): 23.

and dichotomic activities. A line is a trace that distinguishes and creates a dichotomy. Derrida believes that the line is not in itself important, rather the way in which it achieves its effect. According to him, the line is what makes the difference and brings the divided entity into the relationship and is not in itself important. It is a condition for 'différance' as an activity of dialectics. The permanent, relational activity of an undefined liminal condition is where the state of a line's vulnerability, based on dialectical activities, exists.

Atlas of Liminal Line Dynamics

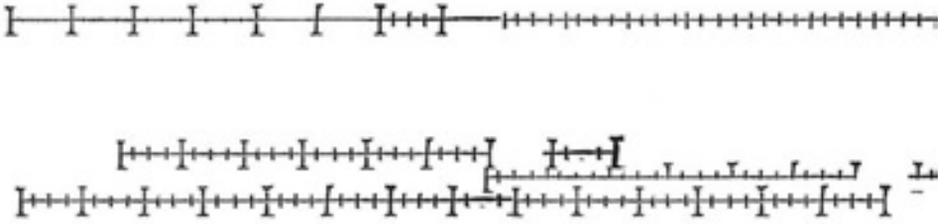
Rather than concluding the complexities of the line's liminality and the critical potential in line's vulnerability, I propose the discussion in the form of the Atlas of Liminal Line Dynamics. The discussion is curated as an unfinished sequence of lines conditions; open to further editing, it gathers key references derived from philosophy, theory of art and architectural drawing. The objective of this open collection is to propose multiple potential 'conclusions' as opportunities and suggestions to act towards criticality in the architectural drawing.

As elaborated earlier, the most sensitive and vulnerable aspect in the drawing act is the personal and intimate relation contained and expressed through embodiment. The initial hypothesis is that vulnerability embodies the richness, complexity and critical potential with possible influences regarding architectural thought processes and designed space. The underlying problems are enclosed in the common negation of drawing's instability and the reduction of its complexity in order to meet the needs of contemporary drawing culture, to fit into professional conventions and to define the drawing as a final spatial statement. As it is not my intention to romanticize the act of drawing or to mark its exclusivity, but rather to induce openings and possible questioning, I rely on Jonathan Hale's concepts of 'critical phenomenology' and 'critical poetics' of architecture. Hale emphasize the idea of embodiment while he declares a declination from phenomenology as "fundamentally conservative and backward-looking, apparently too preoccupied with nostalgia for a supposedly subject-centered world."²⁰ Instead, he points out the necessity for the link between the individual and the social world and investigates whether phenomenology can help in dealing with the wider social and political context. He proposes to break design habitudes and established professional conventions: "I would like to claim that this very inadequacy in our attempts to reproduce habitual behaviors is precisely what allows space for new forms and new meanings to emerge [...] New forms of expression suggest new levels of meaning, even though they initially risk

21 *ibid.*, 34.

being dismissed as meaningless. And by the same token I would call this ‘critical’ because of the way these new forms resist consumption. By blocking an unthinking assimilation into tried and trusted categories they challenge us to question the adequacy of our existing interpretive frameworks.”²¹ Hale points out the radical potential embodied in inaccuracies, distortions, imprecisions and risks as fundamental to the possibility of critique and transformation. In this perspective, the *Atlas of Liminal Line Dynamics* collects the unstable, fragile, sensitive and vulnerable states contained in conventional lines and thus, it invites states of vulnerability as essential for an ambiguous and open drawing process. Following Hale on criticality, Benjamin’s concept of the line as “a place of irreducible complexity” and Derrida’s notion of ‘différance’ as a permanent activity, the opening of the unstable and fragile—liminal—state of line initiates the potential for the ethical drawing act and societal engagement in architectural drawing.

The atlas is based on the relationship between notions of liminality and the line and underlines the nuances of an open line dynamic while merging architectural, artistic and philosophical views on spatial relations in drawing. Liminal line dynamics are defined through etymological analysis, the concept of drawing inhabitation and drawing force contained in line’s ambiguity and inherent fragility. The atlas introduces a change in perspective regarding the drawing as a primal architectural medium – from aspects of finality and conclusiveness towards qualities of instability and vulnerability as a potential for critical activity in the act of drawing. It collects essential points from the works of Derrida, Emmons, Frascari, Jacques Lucan, Joel Sakarovitch, Gilles Deleuze, Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky. Collecting the key points issued from different disciplines and historical periods, these line analyses enforce multi-faceted, ethical and complex attitudes towards the act of line-making. The atlas suggests nuanced and meticulous work with various relations while embracing vulnerability and fragility as the essence of the spatial drawing process. The atlas collects: the invisible line, scale line, dashed line, poché, lineamenta, trait, meandering line, texture line, broken and curved line, Klee’s line and fold. The vulnerability of the liminal is essential for criticality in the act of drawing because it preserves the ambiguity and the undefined—or less defined—state of line that is oriented towards questions instead of conclusions. The atlas is followed by a graphical study that aims to experiment and emphasize the un-precise, confusing, intimate and uncanny states of specific lines. Using collage techniques, historical and artistic line examples, I indicate their nuanced liminal states by exposing modes of search and doubt. Each line in the atlas is a specific, unstable and vulnerable output and provocation for critical action.



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22 Jacques Derrida, *À dessein, le dessin* (Le Havre: Franciscopolis, 2013), 11–12.

23 Laurence Simmons, "Drawing Has Always Been More than Drawing: Derrida and Disegno," in *Interstices 11: The Traction of Drawing*, ed. Laurence Simmons and Andrew Barrie, 2010, 114–25, 115.

24 Derrida, *À dessein, le dessin*, 12.

25 *Ibid.*, 13.

26 Paul Emmons, "Size Matters: Virtual Scale and Bodily Imagination in Architectural Drawing," *Arq: Architectural Research Quarterly* 9, no. 3–4 (2005): 227–35, 227.

1 Scale line liminal dynamics. Drawing collage in reference to Sebastiano Serilio (1537-1551) *Five Books of Architecture*

Invisible Line

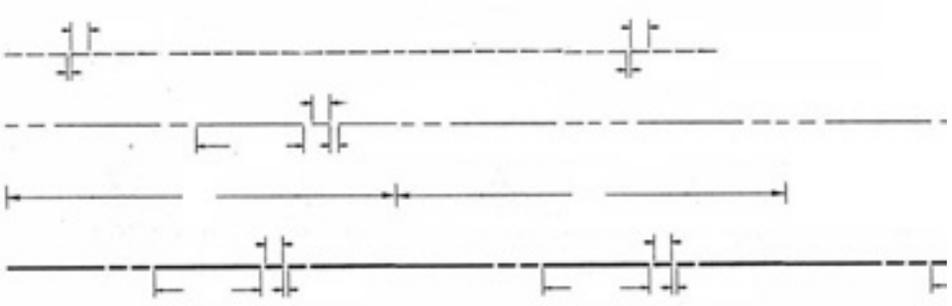
In his lecture “À dessein, le dessin” from *École supérieure d’art du Havre*, in 1991, Derrida emphasizes drawing above painting and work with color; he pays special attention to the line as a concept for researching the complexity of space partitions – margins, limits and borders. Derrida’s interests go beyond drawn marks, he searches for “what is outside the drawing, what comes to fill in or determine its [drawing’s] interior in some way.”²²

The highlight in Derrida’s work regarding the line is the tension he places between the drawing and its closeness to the project or plan (*dessein*).²³ Derrida explains that he has a somewhat problematic relationship to the drawing, and in order to open towards a line he tends to deviate from the concept of a project’s finality and completeness.²⁴ He declares the line itself invisible, and by virtue of this invisibility it determines all relations. The line is not what is important, but what it does and the way in which it achieves its action is. For Derrida, the line is ‘differential,’ it separates (surfaces, colors), it is ‘diacritical’ and opposes each other or else with another, it acts to differ. Derrida describes work on the line as working on the circumstances around the line, what surrounds it and refers to it and work with the activity of lines he names “the experience of blindness.”²⁵

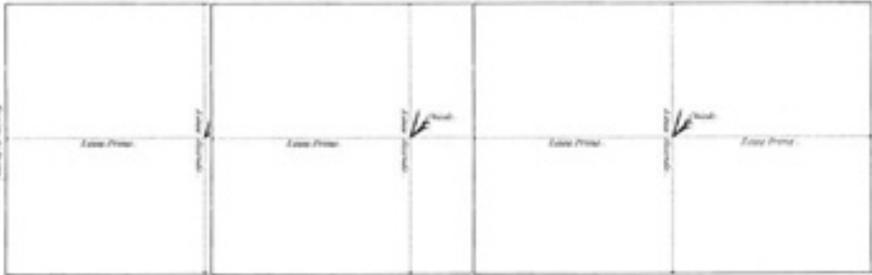
Scale Line

Emmons explains the nature and logic of the scale line through its origins on the Renaissance site: “Since early architectural drawings were made to represent procedures on the construction site, the scale lines derived from the knotted lines of ropes that were stretched on site to lay out the building in its real size. The procedure involved first stretching the rope along the main axis and then the secondary measures would be drawn from the center line. The graphics of the scale line were crossed out on paper as the rope lines were stretched across the construction site.”²⁶

When, in the nineteenth century, the scale was marked on paper and thus became part of the drawing, according to Emmons the scale was reduced to an “exclusively mental act of measurement” and lost its embodied relationship. In contrast, he emphasizes the value of contextualized scale relationships applied during the sixteenth century, through rod-shaped scales on flat plates of different materials, with a multitude of engraved dimensions from different locations. Emmons explains that these objects were used together with compasses and considered drawing tools. Following the elaboration of Emmons, scale line stands for the potential of constant, active relations between the imagination as the embodied drawing activity related to



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27 Ibid., 458.

2 Dashed line liminal dynamics. Drawing collage in reference to *Standard for conventional line symbols, American Standards Association Lines and Line Work* (1935)

3 Lineamenta liminal dynamics. Drawing collage in reference to Alberti (1755) *Ten Books of Architecture*

28 Marco Frascari, *Eleven Exercises in the Art of Architectural Drawing: Slow Food for the Architect's Imagination* (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), 99.

the specific context and its metrical precision necessary for adequate construction measurement.

Dashed Line

The dashed line is another interest of Emmons. He reveals a wide field its of use and the various meanings associated with it throughout the history of architectural practice and theory; as he explains, the essential quality of the dashed line is to signify absence. The specific properties by which the dashed line transcends its use in architecture are contained in the manner it is drawn. Emmons believes that the dashed line exists simultaneously on two levels: one trace is drawn on the surface, while the other level hovers above the surface of the drawing. “The pen, when ‘touching’ the paper, visibly releases ink; when skyward, it continues its linear trajectory but at a heavenly altitude making its trace invisible, transient and infinitely thin. In punctuation, a dash is a uni-vocalized physical presence indicating an omission or break in thought. Its denotative presence connotes an absence.²⁷ He emphasizes the meaning of the verb to dash (from the English term for dashed line) from Johnson's dictionary from 1755, which means “flying above the surface” and adds that a dashed line requires special involvement and concentration from the artist. The ambiguity and active condition of a dashed line is contained in its fundamental relations with absence and time, as it indicates spatial segments that are above, below, in front or behind the drawing surface, it can also imply the information about the previous or the future states of the drawn space.

Lineamenta

The Latin term *Lineamenta*, after which Leon Battista Alberti named the first book of his treatise on architecture, *De Re Aedificatoria* (1443–1452), is a source of various translations and interpretations. Marco Frascari seeks to analyze how this notion became the topic of numerous translations in architectural theory. He believes that interpretations of the *lineamenta* in the English language have distorted and simplified the meaning of the term. Translations into Italian (*disegno*) which, through the concepts of design and plan, bring the connotations of lineamenta closer to project and design (*disegno, progetto*), but the author considers them also inadequate.²⁸ He aims to reach the fine, oscillating nuances of this complex term. He points out that the notion of lineamenta arose from the relationship between the drawing and the building and according to the character of the lines used on the construction site. Frascari finds that the origin of the term, in addition to the



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29 Ibid., 101.

30 Василиј Кандински, Плати Јахач. *Изабрани Радови Из Теорије Уметности*, ed. Владимир Меденица (Београд: Логос, 2015), 352.

31 Ibid., 373.

4 Broken and curved lines liminal dynamics. Drawing collage in reference to Wassily Kandinsky (1926) *Point and line to plane*

5 Poché liminal dynamics. Drawing collage in reference to Victor Louis (1731-1800) *Grand Théâtre de Bordeaux*

term *linea*—which means line—also includes the designation of *linen* (*linum*), a material that was often used to make thread for construction sites. He concludes that the most adequate translation is the denotation line. Denotation lines are multiple, they mark, measure, design and plan and are in constant relation to the building while retaining their independence. Frascari emphasizes that a denotation line's use required great skill, awareness and the exceptional education of the architect (*sollertia*).²⁹ *Lineamenta* and its reference in denotation lines underlines the polyvalent nature, risks and necessities for constant interpretation and search for nuances.

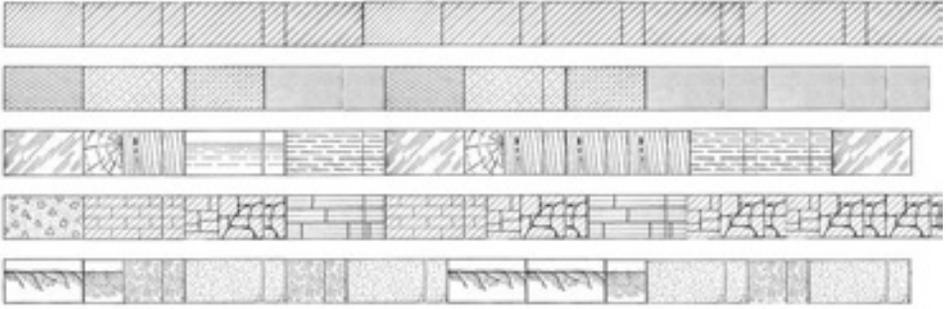
Broken and Curved Line

Broken lines in Kandinsky's theory belong to the group of straight lines on which, in addition to the basic force, another force acted. Voltage and direction are necessary for the movement of this line. In explaining voltage and direction, Kandinsky separates the point (which has only voltage but not direction) and the line along which a direction determines the movement of the voltage. The breaking of the base line (horizontal, vertical, diagonal) was caused by another force and thus formed an angle. Kandinsky argues that these lines can be simple—created by a single blow of force, or complex—created under multiple influences of force. Different angle degrees correspond to complementary stresses: sharp, straight, blunt, free; and then to different sounds and colors. The complex broken line in this constellation is polygonal and can represent an infinite series: “thanks to combinations of sharp, right, obtuse and free angles and thanks to connections of different lengths.”³⁰

Kandinsky takes the broken line as a transition state between a straight and a curved line, where the “passive” obtuse angle is closest to this morphological deformation: “The similarity of obtuse lines, curves and circles is not only external, but also conditioned by internal nature: passivity of an obtuse angle, his submissive attitude towards the environment leads him to large depressions which find their end in the highest self-indentation of the circle.” A complex curved line is shown as wavy and “may consist of geometric parts of a circle, or of free parts, or of various combinations of both”.³¹

Poché

Regarding its first usages in the *Beaux-Arts de Paris*, *poché* implies the technique of painting the surface of the walls in drawing according to established conventions. The hollowed walls, as well as the pillars, in place of their full



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32 Jacques Lucan, "Généalogie Du Poché. De l'espace Au Vide," in *Matières*, ed. Jacques Lucan et al. (Lausanne: PPUR, 2005), 41-54.

33 Emmons, "Demiurgic Lines," 544.

34 *Ibid.*, 545.

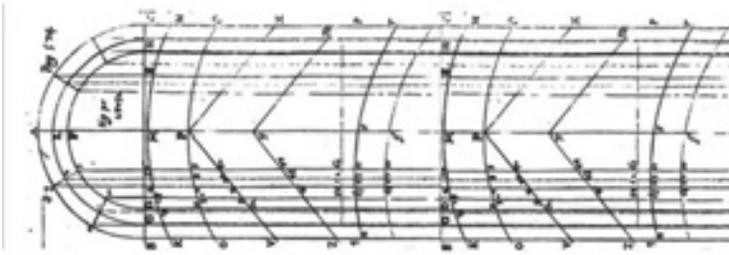
6 Texture line liminal dynamics. Drawing collage in reference to Thomas French (1918) *Manual of Engineering Drawing*

mass, gather and articulate service spaces in their volume: stairs, corridors, auxiliary rooms. Poché spaces can be smaller or larger and are entangled in the supporting structures of a building. While Jacques Lucan's starting point for contemporary interpretations of poché is a technique and methodology in architectural drawing, Robert Venturi points out the distinction into open and closed poché.³² The closed one belongs to the traditional understanding of interstitial spaces, communications and spatial chambers within a closed structure and the open poché further complicates this notion. Venturi first defines open service spaces that are covered or semi-closed under the connotation of openness, and then brings these spaces into the relation to private and public at the level of urban space. Venturi's procedure inverts poché space, where open and semi-open, public and semi-public spaces of the city are shaded and darkened in the drawing, while the enclosure of private spaces remains uncolored and bright. In the nineteenth century the concept of poché was developed from the technology of drawing into techniques for architectural and urban design. While poché can swallow and hide spaces inside the volume of the wall, it relativizes and triggers the notion of space partition and introduces the vibrating volume of the line.

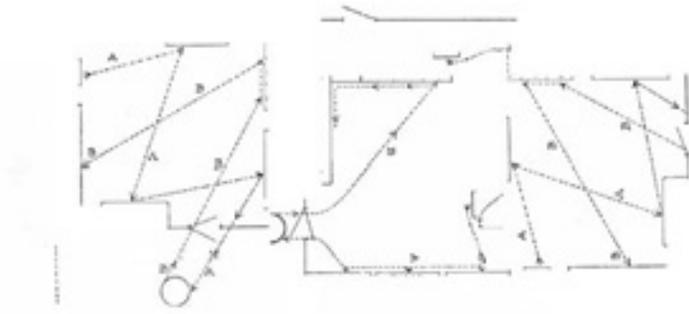
Texture Line

The importance of the texture line is not in the shape it outlines, but in the characteristics of the building materials it represents. Emmons shows that from the beginning stages of a drawing, Renaissance architects tried to show the character of the material intended for construction with various lines. This manner of drawing was free in the sense of representing subjective feelings towards certain materials until the adoption of the first conventions, which in the twentieth century, resulted in the use of symbols representing materials.³³ In addition to the symbols contained in the construction lines, in the nineteenth century, through the actualization of the blueprint process, different colors, types and thicknesses of lines were used to emphasize the characteristics and specific performance of materials. Emmons pays special attention to two material symbols of building lines: the symbol for glass (in the front view) and the symbol for thermal insulation (in cross section).

Emmons notes that the symbol for glass in front view is widely known and consists of straight diagonal lines whose segments vary in length.³⁴ He explains that the origins of the marks for glass emerged from the ancient's belief that the sun's rays illuminate the earth in parallel, at certain angles. Emmons considers the texture symbol for thermal insulation especially important given the insistence of the convention that the winding line should be drawn freehand in a technical drawing, as opposed to all other lines



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35 Ibid.

7 Trait liminal dynamics. Drawing collage in reference to Guarini, *Tractatus XXXII* (1671) in *Euclides adauctus et methodicus mathematicaque universalis*

8 Meandering line liminal dynamics. Drawing collage in reference to Christine Frederick (1913) *Efficiency studies in home management*

36 Joel Sakarovitch, "Stéréotomie et Géométrie," in *Mathématiques et Art*, ed. Maurice Loi (Paris: Hermann, 1995), 79–91, 81.

37 Joel Sakarovitch, "Stereotomy, a Multifaceted Technique," in *Proceedings of the First International Congress on Construction History*, ed. Santiago Huerta Fernández (Madrid: Instituto Juan de Herrera, Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura, 2003), 69–79, 72.

38 Sakarovitch, "Stéréotomie et Géométrie." 85.

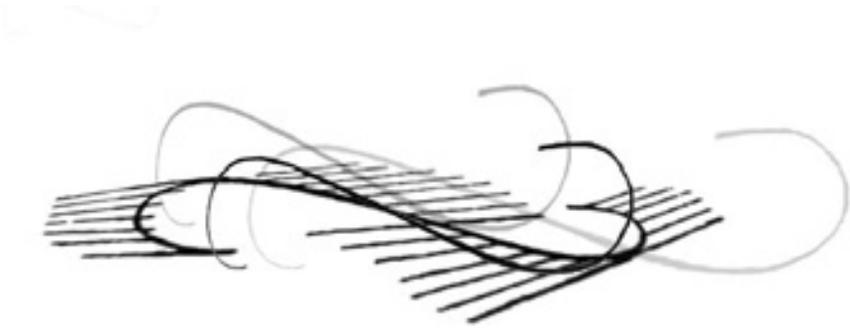
drawn with a straight-edge or other mechanical drawing tools. As he shows, this line contains numerous “irregular pockets of space that separate the two sides of the line.”³⁵ He closes his study in reference to Renaissance studies in which such a line denotes air or clouds. This perspective on a textural line emphasizes the imaginative inhabitation of drawing and its subjective and emotional connotations; it empowers personal interpretations of the fine structural and tactile relations between drawing and building material.

Trait

In the introduction to the essay “Stéréotomie et Géométrie” Joel Sakarovitch presents the relationship between drawing and stereotomy.³⁶ In researching the word’s etymology, due to the intensive development of stereotomy in France, the author concentrates on French vocabulary from 1691, in which the definition includes the popular expression *art du trait*: “the art of line drawing of shapes given to stone (or brick) for the purpose of their assembly.”³⁷ Sakarovitch translates the term *art du trait* as “the art of line drawing” line drawing. Unlike other crafts that work with the surface and for which projective geometry (carpenter, blacksmith) was suitable for work, stereotomy required a geometric construction that includes the volume or “mass” of the stone. The author believes that through specific stone cutting techniques and through lines that mark the paths of the notches, the idea of orthogonal projections and their manipulation in geometric construction was developed. A significant part of the stereotomic process by which such a geometric construction developed was *équarrissement*, which Sakarovitch claims is one of the first techniques of displaying space in two dimensions.³⁸ The *trait* is a line drawing on the stone that links directly drawn and built environments, thus it contains a specific finality. Consequently, and in difference with other drawn lines, *trait* is deprived of the possibility for multiple interpretations, it embodies responsibilities and risks of errors in lines for cutting the piece of stone while the imagination remains in the domain of geometrical construction.

Meandering Line

Emmons points out the lines of movement with the notion of meandering line. He explains that movement through space is fundamental to the general disposition of space and is inextricably linked to the built structure. Marking the lines of flow in the architectural plan, he connects first with the movements of the game in the works of Alberti, and then with the studies of efficiency through movement in space. He highlights the remark of Charles Day



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39 Charles Day, *Industrial Plants, Their Arrangement and Construction* (New York, 1911), 109 in Emmons, "Demiurgic Lines," 548.

40 Paul Klee, *Pedagogical Sketchbook* (London: Faber & Faber, 1968), 9.

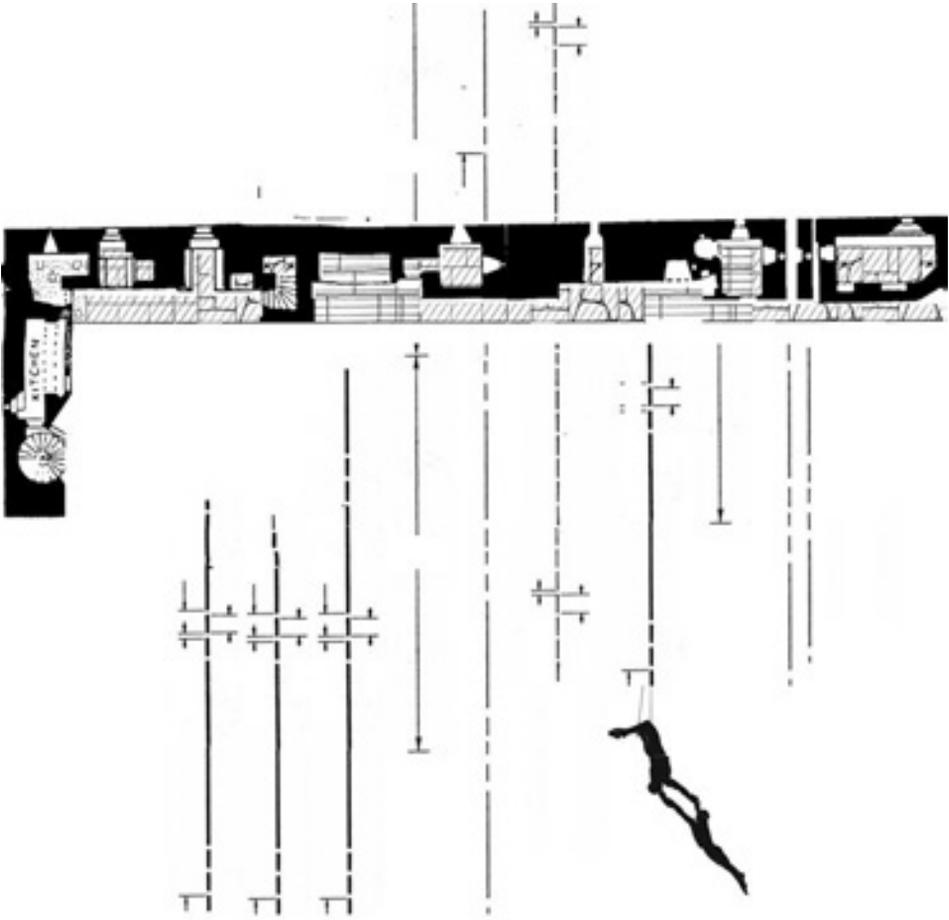
9 Klee's line and fold liminal dynamics. Drawing collage in reference to Klee (1921-1931) Active line, *Pedagogical Sketchbook*

(1879–1931), an efficiency engineer, who believes that after successful drawings of the organization of movement, “a building should hardly be drawn around them.”³⁹ The lines of movement in Emmons’s study are marked by analyzes of the movement of space users, but the author uses these lines to suggest the movement of the architect-draftsman through space and to develop the empathy of inhabitation. Although these lines are not often present in drawings, they are the key to spatial organization, as they mark and predict ways of staying in space. However, Emmons notes that the drawn lines of flow through space do not intend to be determinative, they most often show movements that are crucial for the conception of space, to which other movements and activities are related or not. He connects the line of movement through space to the concept of a point in motion in Klee's theory of art. Meandering line as an unpredictable line of body movement is relying on the emphatic engagement of an architect and the process of drawing embodiment. It tends to foresee the dynamics of future space usage or to analyze existing movement in built space, thus it permanently stays in the stage of doubt, between the definition and uncertainty.

Klee's Line and Fold

The line of the active point that “walks freely” is one of Klee's basic concepts. However, this line is almost never in unhindered movement, but is accompanied by events in the form of “complementary forms”, “secondary lines” or “described around itself”, and other lines move around the “imagined” main line. The movement of the active line can also be “restricted to fixed points.”⁴⁰ When such a line rounds one surface during its movement, it ceases to be active and becomes flat. The second type of line are passive lines created by surface activation, which Klee calls “line progression.” Passive lines become active as integral parts of the surface. Klee defines various nuances and states of line activity regarding the relationship between line and surface.

Through the dynamics of Klee’s line, Deleuze develops and clarifies the fold (*pli*) – one of the basic concepts of his philosophy, which inspired significantly architectural theory and practice. In explaining the fold, Deleuze insists on the difference between a point and a line: “Therefore, the labyrinth of continuity is not a line that would split into independent points, like sand spilling into grains, but like a fabric or sheet of paper that is divided into folds in infinity or to decompose into curved motions, each determined by a consistent or persuasive accompaniment [...]” The space of the Deleuze’s line is represented as a permanent movement – by bending inwards or strati-



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41 Anđelka Bnin-Bninski, "The Role of Architectural Drawing in the Dynamics of the Living Space Partition," (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Belgrade, 2018).

42 Roland Barthes, *Fragments d'un Discours Amoureux* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1977), 38.

10 Towards the practice of vulnerability. Drawing collage based on the Atlas of Liminal Line Dynamics

fying into curved trajectories. The line of fold never settles, it is in permanent state of definition and re-definition.

Towards the Subliminal in Drawing's Vulnerability

The Atlas of Liminal Line Dynamic opens manifold questions regarding liminal drawing and its entwinement with vulnerability. While pointing out specific line studies and suggesting their graphical interpretations, the atlas proposes a trans-disciplinary framework for further engagement in critical drawing practices.

Dwelling on the etymological analysis (line, limes, limen) and the concept of preliminary drawing—interstitial drawing activity and cognition (Emmons) and potentiality and aporia (Benjamin)—the line is introduced as an unstable and ambiguous “place of irreducible complexity.” According to Benjamin this complexity is embodied in the relationship between engagement and knowledge production and results in the ‘inherent fragility’ of the drawing. Hale’s concept of critical phenomenology enabled further studies on the critical potential contained in the ‘inherent fragility’ of liminal as vulnerable drawing state. He proposed work with inadequacy and the risk of being dismissed as meaningless in order to disrupt and break established norms and habitudes and thus opening spaces for new levels of meaning. As the atlas aims to indicate, the disruption tactics and the break with conventions are embodied in drawing’s vulnerability. The vulnerability within the act of drawing is the act of exposure of the most sensitive and fragile, more intuitive and less rational, spatial attitudes. The exposure of personal doubts and ambiguities of spatial reflections, combined with sensations of embodiment and interpretational risks, initiate the potential for the ethical drawing act and societal engagement within the drawing. This drawing attitude can be defined as the practice of vulnerability.

The trans-disciplinary framework of the atlas exposes the essential matter of the subjective and personal (beyond disciplinary) in relation with conventional and habitual drawing acts. As a particular critical drawing tactic,⁴¹ the atlas emphasizes the activist engagement with lines as a passionate entwinement with vulnerability founded in drawing pleasure and followed by possible agony and resentment. Elaborating on vulnerability and intimate exposure in his discourse on affection and love, Roland Barthes relies on Winnicott and finds ways to acknowledge the inevitability and necessity of agony: “Do not worry anymore, you have already lost it.”⁴² Yet, Jean-Luc Nancy in his book *Le Plaisir au Dessin* further elaborates the explicit complexity of drawing pleasure and its essence of ambiguity. “Ambiguity seems to be constitutive of pleasure—if it pleases and if, in pleasing, it satisfies, it

43 Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Pleasure in Drawing* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2013), 82.

44 *Ibid.*, 88.

45 Jean Baudrillard, *Seduction* (Montreal: Ctheory Books, 2001), 22.

46 *Ibid.*, 82.

borders on dis-pleasure. If it stimulates, it's very excitement, its tension is displeasurable."⁴³ Nancy further refers to drawing as an open, unstable and vulnerable [*œuvre*] in difference with the finished character of accomplished work [*ouvrage*]. "But the work [*œuvre*] undoes itself by itself [*se défait d'elle même*]—it makes demands on itself; it reopens the desire from which it has arisen [...] All its force resides in what makes it sorrow over itself, its idea or form. In sorrow—lacking relief, suffering, in suspense, in desire for what it knows can only satisfy though repeated excitement."⁴⁴ In the line with Barthes's and Nancy's thoughts, the finality in liminal drawing is absent, suspended, displaced. As open and vulnerable, liminal drawing remains ambiguous as it is always in the state of becoming. This state of pleasure in reversibility and displacement, Jean Baudrillard defines as a very essence of seduction: "There is, above all, a strategy of displacement (seducere: to take a side, to divert from one's path) [...] To play is not to take pleasure. Seduction, as a passion and as a game at the level of the sign, acquires a certain sovereignty; it is seduction that prevails in the long term because it implies a reversible, indeterminate order."⁴⁵ The practice of vulnerability, as a very particular force in the act of drawing, is the matter of sovereignty, of another kind of precision, beyond professional habitudes and disciplinary principles, with particular self-referential order and rigor of reversibility.

The Atlas of Liminal Line Dynamics is a proposition for extensive, active and engaged work with line's ambiguity; it suggests that vulnerability is necessary for sophisticated and nuanced accuracies embodied in drawing as a personal act of exposure and mindful expression of ethical and cultural positioning of spatial doubts. Drawing with the vulnerable, ambiguous line dynamics is the performance of pleasure and seduction. As an accuracy, this drawing is beyond conventional precision – through the work with liminal states of the line, it disrupts conventions and develops its own field of action beyond the liminal, in the sublime (etymologically: sub-liminal). Relying on Kant and the relationship between the pleasure and ambiguity, Nancy underlines that "the sublime sentiment carries a mixture of pleasure and displeasure, as well as a contagion of form by the formless."⁴⁶ It is the pleasure from the act of drawing that reveals its inherent vulnerabilities and imbues the line with critical potential; within the potentiality—as a resonant form of displacement and reversibility—the drawing strays from the conscious, working field of liminal into the fragile demarcations of sublime.

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Three Creative Figures to Codesign with Vulnerabilities

Céline Bodart
Chris Younès

- 1 Joan C. Tronto and Berenice Fisher, "Towards a Feminist Theory of Caring" in *Circles of Care. Work and Identity in Women's Lives*, eds. Emily K. Abel and Margaret K. Nelson (New York: State University of New York Press, 1990), 36-54.

- 2 We speak of "codesign" in order to emphasize that any spatial design activity involve a multiplicity of agents (human and non-human, social and political, in long- and short-terms). Codesign is both "design with" and "design for".

Taking the vulnerability of existence seriously places the concern for *care* at the heart of spatial design. As Joan Tronto and Berenice Fisher argue, the practice of care can “be viewed as a species activity that includes everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our ‘world’ so that we can live as well as possible. That world includes our bodies, ourselves, and our environment, all of which we seek to interweave in a complex, life-sustaining web”¹. In the 21st century, another civilizational policy is announced within the uncertainty and disorder: the advent of ecological sciences based on the recognition of the interactions of living organisms and their environment, as synergistic or symbiotic ecosystems, participating in the awareness of the toxic character of the nature-culture division and of unlimited exploitation; also of the awareness of a community of the terrestrial destiny of the living. Climate change, loss of biodiversity, precariousness, misery, exclusion – so many challenges to be faced that call for diversification and locating new common grounds. These are far-reaching issues, since they involve considering political changes that combine environmental, social, economic, cultural and mental dimensions. The changes to be made are crucial. It is a question of not blindly pursuing the will of *arraisonnement* (*Gestell*) but of sparing and rethinking the community meaning of an earthly destiny. Regarding such awareness, how can we politically and poetically open the possibilities of a world based on vulnerabilities? How to revive the urgency of the common between human and non-human by mobilizing individual and political responsibilities? What new forms of ecological and solidarity *codesign*² can work to make the Earth habitable? Such are the questions concerning our contemporary condition. Every day they press a little more upon our manner of living and working, but also on our habits of thinking, doing and designing. This essay will not pretend to answer these questions *directly*. Rather, it is a question of looking at them from a bias angle; of seeing how today they stimulate the partial and situated reinvention of other ways of being, of co-living with vulnerability.

First, we propose to look at the history of what makes us vulnerable today, insisting in particular on the devastating effects of conceptual and political figures of progress; then, we question the possibility for new figures of change to emerge, enabled to eradicate old hegemonic figures and to care for the diversities and uncertainties of our contemporaneous condition; and finally, we present a sketch of what could be three creative figures of code-sign, named here the Smugglers, the Totem-performers, and the Punk-sowers. With these new figures, and tracking how each of them can be involved in spatial design practices, we propose to set forth a sort of common imaginative ground to (re)think how to live with our vulnerabilities.

- 3 Post on the IPCC Website, entitled "Climate change widespread, rapid, and intensifying", 9 August 2021.
- 4 Emilie Hache, "Introduction - Retour sur Terre" in *De l'univers clos au monde infini*, ed. Emilie Hache (Paris: Ed. Dehors, 2014), 11–25.
- 5 Starhawk, *Dreaming in the Dark : Magic, Sex and Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982). Our reading of Starhawk is based on a recent French edition : Starhawk, *Rêver l'obscur: Femmes, magie et politique* (Paris: Ed. Cambourakis, 2003), 60–65.
- 6 Starhawk differentiate three kinds of power : "power-over", "power-from-within", and "power-with". See also Starhawk, *Truth or Dare: Encounters with Power, Authority and Mystery* (San Francisco: Ed. Harper, 1988).
- 7 Anna Tsing, "Imaginons un art de vivre dans les ruines du capitalisme", an interview with Nastasia Hadjadji, published in *L'ADN* 23, October 14, 2020. Translated by the authors.

Looking Back: What Makes Us Vulnerable Today

On 9 August 2021, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released its latest report. The experts' predictions were more alarmist than ever: “Many of the changes observed in the climate are unprecedented in thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of years, and some of the changes already set in motion [...] are irreversible over hundreds to thousands of years”³. Looking ahead, the threat is indeed as critical as acute. Nevertheless, in order to realize the full extent of such a worldly change, we need to look back: how did it happen? How to apprehend the changes to come in a way that considers the past?⁴ In other words: how to apprehend the change within the exhaustion and devastation of our existing situations?

In this essay we examine the questioning of what makes us vulnerable and, above all, the questioning of what we inherit. More precisely, we want to support the idea that the devastation of our living milieus and the resulting vulnerability are the product *and* the vector of the exhaustion of our thinking patterns.

In *Dreaming in the Dark* (1982), Starhawk argues that what shapes the modern Western culture can be understood as a set of narratives that we tell ourselves over and over: narratives that engender our expectations and actions, creating in each of us structures of thinking that condition our ways of being and acting. Starhawk addresses four of these narrative figures: *The Apocalypse*, a narrative that shapes a structured and structuring sense of time, a unique and unidirectional becoming targeted at a catastrophic grand finale; *The good boys/girls versus the bad boys/girls*, a narrative that from the earliest age infuses a dualistic pattern, that which founds the entire Western value system; *The Great Man receives the whole truth and transfers it to some elected ones*, a narrative that authorizes the source of a universal truth, locating itself outside our embodied experiences, both individual and collective; *The Rise/The Fall*, a double narrative spread deeply within our cultural imagination, serving like the *mise-en-scène* of our value systems and power structures, staging all of our everyday expectations⁵. The four are “power-over narratives”⁶, ensuring some human groups control over others, but also allowing humans to dominate natural milieus. From another perspective, the anthropologist Anna Tsing posits that these kind of narratives shape not only our modern culture, but more specifically what could be called the figure of progress. She describes some of the narratives that forge this figure: “The economic growth must be perpetual”; “The biodiversity loss will make room for new spaces”; “Only very large-scale developments enable our systems to be more efficient”⁷. While the belief in a better life is at the core of these narratives, we are now realizing how they have made our living conditions

8 Ibid.

9 Isabelle Stengers, *Résister au désastre* (Paris: Ed. Wildproject, 2019), 18. Translated by the authors.

10 A term borrowed from Anna Tsing, and also Isabelle Stengers after her: *learn to live in the ruins of capitalism*.

11 See Chris Younès, Benoît Goetz, "Mille Milieux – éléments pour une introduction à l'architecture des milieux". *Le Portique 25* (2010); Chris Younès, *Métamorphoses vivifiantes des milieux habités*, in *AlterArchitectures Manifesto*, eds. Thierry Paquot, Yvette Masson-Zanussi, Marcos Strathopoulos (Paris: Infolio, 2012).

on earth vulnerable. That is, Tsing argues that we live in a time of collapse: the collapse of all great narratives that shaped the figure of progress, a collapse going hand in hand with the very awareness of “the fundamentally precarious dimension of human life, but also of the life of animals, of plants”⁸. The devastation of our milieus (natural, social and mental) has been made in the name of progress, “enforcing a property right that is, above all, a right to exploit, extract, abuse and destroy all forms of interdependency”⁹, and it is within these ruins¹⁰ that we must learn to think and design new ways of living.

What we inherit from history is a devastating illusion forged in the figure of progress and held by the armed arm of domination. It is in this mirage of progress that we still find today what makes us vulnerable. The mirage, forged in Promethean certainties, conceals that any human settlement is *always already* vulnerable, which means intrinsically exposed to damage. A vulnerable world is a world threatened by its own exhaustion, or its very dissolution, whether it is an ecological, social and/or political world, even a human, non-human and/or more-than-human world. But if vulnerability is an inherent condition of inhabited territories, vulnerability can also be understood as a fertile terrain for political imagination and the collective invention of others modes and forms of living. In that sense, learning to codesign with our own vulnerabilities is first learning to turn away from the figure of progress in order to open other ways to compose alternative figures, both pluralistic and partial. Such multiple figures are needed to eliminate the modern narrative figures who claimed to have all the answers, at all times and in all places. As designers, it is about choosing other figures to orientate our ways of thinking and acting; other figures enabled to blur all the certainties that the encompassing mirage of progress relentlessly proffers.

Call for New Figures of Change

In these times, facing the expanding vulnerability of our *inhabited milieus*¹¹, we are called to create forms of rebirth defining new ways of living with the exhaustion of our milieus: a call for a metamorphosis that favors both the autonomy of peoples and the establishment of a common ground allowing the sharing of our capacities to create, imagine, and relate. What is at stake are synergies and synchronies: active ways to forge new—or to renew—alliances between humans and non-humans, local and global, rural and urban, feminine and masculine, material and spiritual, profane and sacred. Synergies and synchronies are matters of both sociopolitical and ecological dynamics; they form attachments and arouse entwinements between the

- 13 Starhawk, *Dreaming the Dark: Magic, Sex, and Politics* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982).
- 12 Donna Haraway, "Le rire de Méduse. Entretien avec Donna Haraway, par Florence Caeymaex, Vinciane Despret, Julien Pieron" in *Habiter le trouble avec Donna Haraway*, eds. Florence Caeymaex, Vinciane Despret, Julien Pieron (Paris: Ed. Dehors, 2019), 81–82.
- 14 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2016).
- 15 Emilie Hache, "Introduction: retour sur Terre" in *De l'univers clos au monde infini*, ed. Emilie Hache (Paris: Ed. Dehors, 2014), 11–25. Translated by the authors.

whole and the parts, taking into account what is visible and invisible. To reconsider how to live and create synergistically involves a vivid diversity of practices and knowledge that take part in the reversal of extant models, imaginaries and value systems, engaging together with other perspectives of solidarity and frugality. Such a paradigm shift, disturbing all dualisms (nature/culture, thinking/making, etc.) while taking measure of our vulnerabilities, leads one to question *figures* of another kind. According to Donna Haraway, a figure “is never purely visual, nor purely textual, nor purely auditive, a figure is a mode of materiality which can be multi-sensorial”. Furthermore: “The modality of figuration is not fixed, it is an open modality, an open set of possibilities of figuration”¹². Figures at stake creatively work within or around consolidated systems to explore the possibility of alternative becomings.

Potentialities of such figures are our core concerns, but further precision is needed regarding the naming of the “figure”. The figures are conceptual frameworks. They sketch the outlines of ways of thinking, acting and designing, yet without fixity. The definition of “figure” refers to what is relatively characterized, more or less defined, and thus never completely determined. We then consider that figures operate as some sort of compass: they allow one to orientate ways of thinking and acting without ready-made paths.

Most importantly, figures are constructed using words. Language is our most potent tool proffering the real in both form and structure¹³, and words are formidable weapons in (re)shaping modes of representation¹⁴. Today more than ever, it is about forging words to relearn how to say and see, grasp and feel, but also to imagine and engage other ways of living with and within what makes us vulnerable. As Emilie Hache suggests in facing what is happening to us all: we need “new narratives, new metaphors, and new concepts to support such a world transformation”, calling for “a new aesthetic, in the sense of a renewal of our modes of perception, of our sensibility”¹⁵. Whether ordinary or extraordinary, the necessary subversions of our ways of living, acting, and designing go along with the subversions of our ways of speaking, naming, and describing. A social life, made of accelerating paces and lull periods, of multiple bodies and minds involved, of heterogeneities and pluralities, unfolds beyond any sense of total control to better adapt to circumstances and unfolding situations. It requires words then to apprehend the meaning and powers of this social vitality, to learn from its creativity, as well as its possible exhaustion. We must readjust our conceptual frameworks to pursue new naturo-cultural alliances above and below illusionary dualisms. In that sense, we propose to sketch out the features of what

16 See Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*, op.cit.

17 Isabelle Stengers describes this triple devastation following Guattari's argument. See Isabelle Stengers, *Résister au désastre* (Paris: Ed. Wildproject, 2019); Félix Guattari, *Les trois écologies* (Paris: Ed. Galilée, 1989).

18 The idea of "smuggling" has been mentioned by Vinciane Despret, during a public talk with Philippe Descola, as part of the cycle of international encounters entitled "Les dialogues du contemporain", moderated by Laurent de Sutter, at the Institut français and Odéon – Théâtre de l'Europe (2015–2016).

appears to us as three emerging figures that suggest other ways to see and feel, to tell and to think how to codesign with vulnerabilities.

Sketching Out Three Creative Figures of Codesign.

The figures we propose are built as conceptual characters — not fictive ones but ones enabled to produce fictions; to initiate, generate and cultivate new types of narratives. Also, our figure-characters account for the multiple stories that are crafted through actual discourses and practices; killjoy-stories which trouble the way things are and all forms of hierarchies that support them¹⁶. Of course, our actual discourses and practices are already inhabited by various figures-characters – for instance, the Benjaminian figures like the *Flâneur* and the *Storyteller*, also Lévi-Strauss' *Bricoleur*, or Agnès Varda's *Gleaners*. And we propose the possibility of three others: three modest figure-characters that inhabit today's spatial design practices, operating as compass in order to orientate designers towards the invention of new ways of working in uncertain times.

The aforementioned figures are the Smugglers, the Totem-performers, and the Punk-sowers. Their specific features are almost falsely — *artificially* — dissociated, whereas they would rather tend to merge, to complement and enrich each other like a synergic common work. But apprehending each apart from the others, the idea is to question and track how these figures can be involved in spatial design practices.

To give the figures substance we lend them our words crossing with words from many others. These figures should be understood not like some leading ones, such as the figure of progress, featured as the warrant of any human conquests over decades, which led to today's ecological devastation; a devastation of natural milieus and social and mental devastation¹⁷. Instead, the three figures tend to be gatherers, setting a sort of common imaginative ground to (re)think how to live with our vulnerabilities.

Smugglers – those who redesign living milieus by passing through all the borders inherited from the 'Great Division', mainly the division erected between nature and culture.

At the borders traditionally erected between theoretical and practical, intelligible and sensitive, nature and culture, various ways of rethinking our practices are contemporaneously emerging. Speaking about borders is also to insist on the importance given to what it would be like to pass through them. In other words, it is because there are borders that smuggling is possible¹⁸.

- 20 This may echo the features of another figure; the cyborg figure as defined by Donna Haraway. See: Donna Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Routledge, 1991).
- 19 About interactions between natural elements and spatial design thinking, see Chris Younès, Thierry Paquot (eds.), *Philosophie, ville et architecture: La Renaissance des quatre éléments* (Paris: Ed. La Découverte, 2002).
- 21 For further readings, see Daisy Hildyard, *The Second Body* (London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2018); Nathaniel Rich, *Second Nature: Scenes from a World Remade* (Stuttgart: Macmillan, 2021). We thank to Paul Robinson for those suggestions.
- 22 See Céline Bodart et Chris Younès, "Synergies naturo-culturelles et agencements de projets" in *Villes et architectures en débat. European*, eds. Chris Younès, Alain Maugard (Marseille: éd. Parenthèses, 2019).
- 23 Referring to Bruno Latour's works, calling for shifting from matters of facts to matters of concerns. See Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run out of Steam? From Matters of Fact to Matters of Concern". *Critical Inquiry*, Volume 30 (2004): 225-248.

ern thought-police, ideas flow. The figure of the Smugglers draws attention to anything happening at the borders enforced by the geography and hierarchy of knowledge; both are inherited from the legacy of modern scientific thought.

Urban milieus appear as fertile experimental fields for Smugglers. Cities are like quasi-organisms that in a sense escape from human mastering and any radical and hermetic divisions between natural and cultural components. The question is to imagine how human establishments can be developed in interaction with other living beings to initiate interfaces in coevolution and cooperation and between the wild and the cultivated. The work of landscape designer Kongjian Yu, founder of Turenscape (1998) is evoked. Yu's urban projects deploy a stimulating eco-aesthetic integrating both the living and the elements dynamics of the site¹⁹ in large parks where the human is delicately present. At stake are multiple new alliances between living organism and machine, human and animal²⁰, always based upon a necessity to question the heterogeneous encounters of natural and cultural matters²¹ while disturbing their traditionally established borders.

What the Smugglers (re)invent always traverses transgressive ground. This doesn't mean that they act solely on the impulse of subversive pleasure. The will to transgress established borders is not animated by the illusion of being able to definitively eradicate them, but instead it opens the possibility of thinking them afresh. The Smugglers shake-up the usual ways of doing and thinking more than they knock them down. They (re)compose with their experienced failures in order to smuggle other doing-thinking practices into manifold identified breaches.

Such design attitudes can be particularly observed within the frame of the European competition, open to architects, urban planners and landscape architects under 40 years of age²². A broad range of these young designers engage the urban project through the experimentation of new forms of hybridization between cultural and natural, tectonic, atmospheric and biological elements. With a continuous reciprocity between scales ranging from the ecosystem to the neighborhood or the urban block, the Smuggler project reconsiders the processes of transforming inhabited milieus by paying critical attention to the multiplicity of its agents and components – because they are natural and artificial, social and political, human and non-human – and more specifically to their modes of relation, collaboration, articulation, and exchanges.

The Smugglers invent new alliances. They assemble *facts* with new *concerns*²³, contradictory interests with divergent intuitions, and yet without seeking ways to settle them too quickly—once and for all. Because the Smugglers care for the difference they can make, the inventions are held

24 We borrow this idea of "Totem Thinking" from the research work of Florence Taché, architect and student of the Post-Master "Recherches en Architectures", ENSA Paris La Villette, Gerphau-lab. (2020–2021).

25 Donna Haraway, *Staying With the Trouble*, 55.

open in order to explore the pluralistic becomings of existing institutionalized situations.

As a conceptual figure, the Smugglers address new ways of thinking, doing, and feeling, moving from the realm of oppositions and secured borders to the care for multiple interdependencies.

*Totem-Performers*²⁴ – those who renew our attention to living by crafting symbiotic alliances with selected animal species.

Learning alternative ways to apprehend inherited vulnerabilities matters. It is about crafting new conceptual frames within which to consider them, which means frames that are “made up of ongoing multi-species stories and practices of becoming-with in times that remain at stake, in precarious times, in which the world is not finished and the sky has not fallen–yet²⁵”. This is what Donna Haraway proposes as the Chthulucene in seeking a more speculative and creative distance from normalized terms such as Anthropocene or the Capitalocene. Such a call for “multispecies stories and practices of becoming-with” can be found in contemporaneous forms of thinking and artistic practices. The need for multi-specific stories spreads and multiplies to the point where the animal question itself seems to be reshaped as a sort of Totem embodied in beings of reference from which they engage other modes of thinking and interactions with exhausted ecosystems.

In contemporary literature, for example, we can refer to the writer Jean Marie Gustave Le Clézio. Throughout his work, Le Clézio describes regenerative forms of existence in which humans live in a nature-culture symbiosis connected by multiple links to a milieu not perverted by the separations manifested in a frantic race towards profit. The creative resistance that runs through his work takes a double form: on one hand, a call for the destruction of the “*immonde* spaces” (the filthy places of the world; the non-world), misery and distress spaces produced by dominations and exploitations of bodies and ecosystems; on the other, a quest for saving another, more animistic, way to reconcile and cohabitate the Earth. “*I am not looking for a paradise*”, he explains, “*but for a land*”. Le Clézio dedicates his novels to the pursuit of the bearers of light, the old men, women and children of nomadic peoples. His heroes, or rather anti-heroes, are in their beauty a testimony to the precariousness and capacities of biotic and poetic communions with the mineral, the vegetable ... the animal.

Such revisions of the animal question echo like an acute need, progressively interfering with the design issues inherent in human settlements. It is to question “the spatial and material place we give to animals in domestic or natural space: how, on a planet with increasingly visible limits, can we

- 27 See Vinciane Despret, *Habiter en oiseau* (Arles: Ed. Actes Sud, 2019); and Vinciane Despret, *Autobiographie d'un poulpe et autres récits d'anticipations* (Arles: Ed. Actes Sud, 2021).
- 26 Excerpt from the presentation of the seminar day organized by the EHES at the Mucem (Marseille) in November 2018: "L'architecture et la question animale - le geste technique": <https://lafabriquedesecritures.fr/larchitecture-et-la-question-animale-12-novembre-2018/> (Excerpt translated by the authors).
- 28 See Baptiste Morizot, *Sur la piste animale* (Arles: Ed. Actes Sud, 2017).
- 29 Vinciane Despret, "Politics of territories", in *Multispecies Storytelling in Intermedial Practices*, (Växjö: Linnaeus University, 2019).
- 30 Emerging in the mid-70s, Punk is a cultural movement, both anarchist and protester, supported by the creation of a new musical genre. As a motto, "no future" expresses the punk world view, the losing faith in what the future could still offer for young generations.

cohabit and make all forms of life cohabit?²⁶”. It is through ethology, philosophy and anthropology that the animal question entered ongoing architectural debates. Such extra-disciplinary encounters offer fresh thoughts regarding normalized architectural and territorial issues. We can refer here to the philosopher Vinciane Despret. Despret invites one to think about how to inhabit territories as a bird or as an octopus in order to revisit what makes a territory and to reconsider how living beings compose their territorial coexistences²⁷. Regarding the territorial approach to the animal question, we can refer to Baptiste Morizot's works²⁸: following the animal trails, he observes the modes of diplomatic relations in play in their living territory and questions how such relations require adjustments and reciprocal shaping with larger predators such as bears, wolves or snow panthers to be able to find mutually beneficial forms of cohabitation between living beings.

Considering that “each animal is a way of inhabiting the world” and that observing them is also a way of “learning with them how to multiply [worldly] stories”, ethological studies may provide rich perspectives to learn how to codesign with our vulnerabilities. According to Vinciane Despret, “the study of the multiple ways of living and inhabiting could open our imaginary to other ways of conceiving what it means to find a place in the world and make this place a home with others who have themselves found a home”²⁹.

As a figure, the Totem-performers are those who weave a creative fabric for cultivating new narratives with animals, multiplying dis-anthropocentric stories. They are performers because their decentered narratives must be performative. Breaking away from any dominant narratives, they necessarily proceed via contamination and collaboration.

***Punk-Sowers** – those who relearn to live in uncertain times by cultivating new kinds of earthly bonds, growing new senses of the communities and other ways of living together.*

No Future! Although with differing concerns, the penetrative punk motto still resonates through the challenging times we're facing³⁰. If we propose to reflect on the punk figure, it is to posit how contemporary concerns about the future can stimulate the reinvention of our relations to places, to shared lands and common resources, to all what offers a ground connection (*prise de terre*) to our collective becomings. In this sense, the punk is today one who sows, cultivates, and regenerates our human and earthly bonds. The exhaustions of natural and social milieus are indeed extremely interconnected. As Isabelle Stengers states: “It is not only the Earth that is poisoned, pol-

- 33 Murray Bookchin, *Essays on Dialectical Naturalism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1990).
- 35 Chris Younès, *Architectures de l'existence* (Paris: Ed. Hermann, 2018).
- 31 Isabelle Stengers, "Un autre visage de l'Amérique ?" Postface in *Starhawk* (ed.), *Rêver l'obscur: Femmes, magie et politique* (Paris: Cambourakis, 2015), 361-380, 377. (Translated by the authors).
- 32 Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place* (New York: Paragon House, 1989).
- 34 Christophe Hutin (ed.), *Les communautés à l'oeuvre, catalogue du pavillon français de la biennale d'architecture de Venise 2021* (Ed. Dominique Carré, 2021).
- 36 Following the expression of *Encore Heureux*, which launched this challenge on the occasion of the 16th Architecture Biennale (Venice, 2018): Nicola Delon, Julien Choppin, *Lieux infinis. Construire des bâtiments ou des lieux?* (Paris: B42, 2018).
- 37 Éric Lenoir, *Petit traité du jardin punk : apprendre à désapprendre* (Mens: Ed. Terre vivante, 2020).

luted, over-exploited, it is also how our communities are built³¹". The Punk-sowers represents those who want to answer for this double devastation.

Through his political ecology works, Ivan Illich leads a radical criticism of the industrial production-oriented societies alienated by the gigantism of their tools and bureaucratic institutional processes. Such a critique suggests the reconsideration of society as "convivial". Nowadays, in opposition to the totalitarian and ideological vision of capitalism, libertarian and democratic devices are emerging as self-managed and cooperative places; third places³²; places and zones to defend; vacant places, metamorphosed into intermediary ones, propitious to contemporary artistic creations³³ and practical collective actions³⁴ and so on. Quests for justice, emancipation, and mutual solidarity are intertwined in anyplace. In such political and existential experiences³⁵ – which are at once sensory, cognitive, emotional, and civic *finite* places are becoming *infinite*³⁶. The Punk-sowers proceed via situated immersion: they immerse themselves in the ordinary experience of situations in order to relearn how to see and feel them. They invent new rituals to collectively engage other forms of attention and discussion; they imagine new dynamics of gathering to open alternative ways of creation and negotiation.

From one situation to another, the Punk-sowers reinvent what it means to build a concerned community by the transformation of its milieu. *How to learn to unlearn* is always at stake. It is to learn to unlearn what a place is in order to experiment with new ways of inhabiting exhausted living territories (both in urban and rural areas); it is to learn to unlearn what a natural environment does (or does not) in order to enrich the possible cohabitation and interactions between humans and non-humans. *Learn to unlearn*, it is the subtitle of *Petit traité du jardin punk*, written by the landscape designer Éric Lenoir. His book is akin to a handbook on learning how to punk his/her own garden, or more precisely to "learn to unlearn" what a garden is: "Before being a reflection, the punk garden is an epidermal reaction, a riposte against concrete and the intolerable rectitude of living spaces. It invites us to discern the potential of any place to invest it, to improve it, to reclaim biodiversity and to move nature from a derisory, even non-existent, status to a remarkable one"³⁷. The figure of the Punk-sowers disturbs any status quo; it troubles every seemingly innocent question—what a garden, a place or the nature is—and open them to renewed and always situated issues—what a garden, a place or nature-culture interactions can be and still could become.

The Punk-sowers figure defines a decisive turning point for the earthly community, insisting on the necessary intersections of ethical, aesthetic and political issues to act together with troubling times. The Punk-sowers engage themselves with uncertainties, while reclaiming places to reinvent multiple

- 38 Hannah Arendt, "De l'humanité dans de "sombres temps": Réflexions sur Lessing" [1959], in *Vies politiques* (Paris: Tel/Gallimard, 1974), 19.
- 39 Marilyn Strathern quoted in Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble*.
- 40 Émilie Hache, "Where the future is" in Starhawk (ed.), *Rêver l'obscur. Femmes, magie et politique* (Paris: Cambourakis, 2015), 20. (Translated by the authors)

ways to “make world”³⁸, caring for what arises between humans, and non-humans.

“It matters what matters we use to think other matters with; it matters what stories we tell to tell other stories with; it matters what knots knot knots, what thoughts think thoughts, what ties tie ties. It matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories”³⁹ .

Crafting with words, the figures tell stories in which conflicts and struggles are tangled with optimism; angers and fears forge new alliances with the need to believe in other vivid becomings. These proposed characters-figures are three different ways to translate what it means to codesign with vulnerabilities. That is, every figure holds only part of the story. None of them are in themselves a totality. They are bound together by what makes them diverse. Their narratives are about multiplying becomings, sketching a plural portrait of ways to care for what makes us vulnerable.

Their given names – the Smugglers, the Totem-Performers, and the Punk-Sowers – may conjure a smile or a raised eyebrow. And this is how it should be. Above all, let them not be unanimous. We wish these figures to generate debates just as serious as amused. We wish them to take part in “the collective invention of apparatus enabled to preserve ourselves from despair and cynicism, such as words that suspend the usual course of things and (re)create the possible”⁴⁰ .

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