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Journal for Architecture and Literature

Writing place

#7

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Reflections from the Fieldworker

Edited by

Slobodan Velevski

Luís Santiago Baptista

Aleksandar Staničić

Klaske Havik

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IN SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

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Taking Place
Reflections from the Fieldworker

Slobodan Velevski, Luís Santiago Baptista, Aleksandar Staničić and Klaske Havik

Writingplace Journal #07 investigates fieldwork. While the two preceding issues of the journal, #5 *Narrative Methods for Writing Urban Places*, and #6 *City Narratives as Places of Meaningfulness, Appropriation and Integration*, addressed methodological and theoretical interrelations between stories and cities, this issue moves into the field, exploring the moment when reflection turns into action, and questions how knowledge produced via research is appraised and applied on the ground. In the articles, authors reflect on their concrete experiences, where insights regarding the city and its narratives have been made operational. Understanding the urban as a complex expression of social, historical, material, spatial and temporal relations between people and their built environment, we argue that this comprehension of places demands and envisions action, by which active and transformative processes take place in the real world. Fieldwork is in this sense both research and event, both investigative process and performative project.

This issue of *Writingplace Journal* explores how various practices of making (such as crafts, technical know-how), in all forms of creative expression named above, have scrutinized, appraised and tested relevant theories. Each contribution testifies to the engagement of fieldwork with the specific site, through a variety of aspects related to its history, its architecture and its community, and reflects on the developed activities and the impact they

have on the particular place. The articles give insight into the encounter (and possibly confrontation) with the challenges of real conditions, communities and territories. What happens in the congregation of ideas with space? Who is involved as the action takes place? How can participants and communities share positions and concerns on site? What can we learn from the narratives intended to activate place?

We will try to answer these questions through the investigation of projects that take action in the world. To do this we focus not just on fieldwork, but on the fieldworker her- or himself, individually or collectively understood. All of the articles in this issue are first-person perspectives on fieldwork, indeed projects presented by their authors about the process of discovering and activating a specific site at a precise moment: fieldwork as an experience of space and time. But how can the fieldworker be defined as a character? What is their historical and disciplinary background?

Ultimately, the first personification of the fieldworker was the voyager of the Grand Tour, which emerged between this enlightened individual searching for knowledge in historical and archaeological sites and that romantic subject aiming at the experience of the ruins and remnants of places that built our civilization. In a sense, the voyager combined the rational and emotional dimensions of the modern subject, as well as assuming the centrality of place in the formative processes of material knowledge and aesthetic experience. The famous *Voyage l'Orient* of Le Corbusier in 1910-1911, with the curiosity and enthusiasm of a young Pierre Jeanneret, is the perfect manifestation of the Grand Tour by an architect.[1] Written notes, diaries, drawings, maps and photographs are the registers of this encounter of the fieldworker with places and monuments, traversed by the strangeness or uncanniness of the confrontation with the unknown or the exotic. This idea grounds the framework of the fieldworker as both an explorer and artist to this day.

In 1929, among the events that took place during the revolutionary process in the Soviet Union after 1917, filmmaker Dziga Vertov presented *The Man with a Moving Camera*,[2] in what we can interpret as the paradigmatic representation of fieldwork in modernity. The 'man with a moving camera' immerses himself in the present reality of the emerging industrial and metropolitan environment. On the one hand, contemporary society and not nature or history became the object of the revolutionary film, marking the emergence and affirmation of the social and human sciences. On the other, the work cannot be separated from the medium used to depict reality, in this case the new technological means brought by industrialization. But Vertov's film is relevant for examining fieldwork on yet another level. The representation of the fieldworker as filmmaker is multiplied: the invisible one who captures the images that compose the film, indeed Vertov himself; the filmed one we see in action filming the scenes included in the film, actually his brother as actor; and the exposed one projected to the public in the audience of the cinema theatre in the final scenes of the film, as the result of the *montage* done by his wife, as well presented in the film. With Vertov's film, the fieldworker acts on and documents the present in motion, embracing this expanded field of the humanities with new artistic and technical devices. In the end, the fieldworker assumes here the simultaneous roles of author, producer and mediator within an emerging informational and communication society that never stopped its accelerated course.

The aftermath of the Second World War framed new critical perspectives of the fieldworker. A fragmented subject and a chaotic reality disturbed the idea of discovery and emancipation that guided the idea of the fieldworker. The group and individual journeys of artist Robert Smithson to the anonymous and dilapidated sites at the end of the 1960s, along with their confrontations with his childhood memories, presented fieldwork as an entropic activity. The 'non-sites', places that have blurred or neuter identities, 'ruins in reverse', remnants that were ruins before they were ever finished, reflected the disarray of the world and the attention necessary to

capture the surreal in these landscapes.[3] With Smithson, the fieldworker confronted the raw and banal reality as the focus of experimental research, giving meaning to apparently irrelevant and innocuous landscapes.[4] The exceptionality of historical and monumental places is radically exploded, opening the field to all the real itself.

This expansion of the scope of reality in fieldwork is also present in architecture in the same period. The workshop with students from Yale in 1968 that led to the famous publication *Learning from Las Vegas* by Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour[5] used an extensive set of media and techniques, from cartography to photography and film, as ways to study the American Strip through an immersion in its commercial and motorized environment.[6] As they say in their Studio Notes: 'We are evolving new tools for understanding new space and form, and graphic tools for representing them [because the] representation techniques learned from architecture and planning impede our understanding of Las Vegas.' Combining material reality with signage, confronting the contemporary commercial environment with historical urban and architectural typologies, *Learning from Las Vegas* challenged what was understood as fieldwork, in both conceptual and methodological terms, strategically focusing on a repressed urban condition to destabilize a conservative discipline. In a more subjective way, Reyner Banham assumed the character of the personal fieldworker with *Scenes in America Deserta*, published in 1982, through the extreme journey to the confines of human colonization in the desert.[7] This is in a sense a journey of self-discovery to the end of the world:

> *Clearly the desert has done to me what it has done to many of us desert freaks – it has made me ask questions about myself that I never would have asked . . . I have not done what one is supposed to do in deserts . . . I have not found myself. If anything, I have lost myself, in the sense that I now feel I understand myself less than I did before.*

In all these artistic and architectural practices of fieldwork it is the traditional and conventional status of place that is questioned and displaced, opening up the gaze and inquiry to unnoticed and invisible territories. These incursions would increasingly approximate the wild, dangerous and feral realities that were becoming part of the field of the contemporary fieldworker.

In the early 1990s, another perspective on the fieldworker was manifested in Samuel's Mockbee work with his Rural Studio in Auburn University in Alabama, congregating learning practices with engaging local communities. As he said: 'Theory and practice are not only interwoven with one's culture but with the responsibility of shaping the environment, of breaking up social complacency, and challenging the power of the status quo.' The field becomes a situated political arena and the work a collective experience based on participation. Rural Studio's eagerness and respect for social consciousness relocates the understanding of fieldwork from the position of passive observation and context learning to an active participant engagement from which community-based design emerges as a collective endeavour. In doing so, a fieldworker becomes a participant in residence, a practitioner within a community, someone who works with the complex conditions of the 'real-world'. Mockbee's legacy as *Citizen Architect*[8] sees the fieldworker position as an ethical responsibility in which the interaction between activity and place must include people and communities (in the case of Rural Studio this relationship is between students of architecture and the impoverished people of Hale County, Alabama, USA).[9] With their involvement, fieldworkers focus on action and the transformation of reality, contributing to creating strong social innovation and impact.

More recently, the idea of the fieldworker assumed the framework of spatial practice, rereading in new terms *The Production of Space* by Henri Lefebvre of 1974[10] and *The Practice of Everyday Life* by Michel de Certeau of 1984.[11] On the one hand, Jane Rendell proposed the idea of 'critical spatial practices' as a new interdisciplinary field 'between art and architecture' that crosses

the humanities, introducing a new creative and aesthetic dimension in the activity of fieldwork as art criticism, that is, a term that 'draws attention not only to the importance of the critical, but also to the spatial'.[12] This definition would later develop into her idea of 'site-writing' as an 'auto-biographical' and 'performative' act that draws 'inspiration from this intensely creative and theoretically rigorous strand of speculative criticism', aiming at 'alternative understandings of subjectivity and positionality'.[13] Combining the reading and intervention in space with memories and representations, both documental and material, as well as biographical and fictional, Rendell turns fieldwork into a spatialized productive and poetic practice. On the other hand, Markus Miessen and Shumon Basar have defined the 'spatial practitioner' in political terms, as an 'enabler, a facilitator of interaction that stimulates alternative debates and speculations', advancing an 'alternative model of participation within spatial practice', against the 'culture of consensus' and the 'ethos of compromise'.[14] Thus the fieldworker becomes an experimental actor in the urban environment, engaging politically and collectively through the instigation of conflict and dissent in public space. Indeed, the spatial practitioner, both focused on art criticism with Rendell or architectural activism with Miessen and Basar, establishes the contemporary structural imbrication of subject and reality, the reversibility of fieldworker and fieldwork, activating space as an arena of interrogation and change.

What all these fieldwork characters share is that for them the fieldwork implies leaving the comfort of the theoretical and engaging with the complexity of the world through real-life objects.[15] The fieldworkers present in this issue demonstrate the wide range of object-human interactions that add new richness to, and produce unexpected results of, fieldwork investigations. As papers featured in this volume show, objects can have multiple functions when conducting fieldwork. They may serve as a tool for clarification and finetuning of abstract thoughts, as a medium for communication between the fieldworker and their audience (other fieldworkers or

research subjects), or as a recording device that transcribes external inputs and makes sense of them in the process. Below we offer a brief overview of the type of fieldworkers that are featured in this issue, objects they used to mediate/bridge theory and practice, and modes of engagement with the outside world.

In some cases, fieldwork can be materialized in cultural events, such as festivals, exhibitions and performative events, such as shown in the first two articles of the issue, which present a curatorial view to fieldwork. The contribution by Inês Moreira and Patrícia Coelho explains how curatorial fieldwork can be developed as a critical practice. After discussing a number of curatorial experiences from the Baltic region, the article shows how fieldwork becomes a situated practice and an investigative process for the comprehension of places, learning from *Post-Nostalgic Knowings*. Concretely, the article shares how such curatorial fieldwork offers a new reading of the urban landscape of Freixo, a marginalized territory of Porto, Portugal, by creating a dialogue with the site, its local community and the artistic interventions. Curatorial fieldwork as a critical practice navigates through shared experiences, proposing new expectations of a site and simultaneously revealing the strategies of its future.

The contribution by Diana Ciufo and Isabella Indolfi discusses the ten-year-old Biennial of Environmental Art *Seminaria Sogninterra*. It analyses how the regeneration of the small town in southern Italy – where the Biennial takes place – is happening through a programme of art residency and local production. Participation, ephemerality and addition are the strategies implemented in the site-specific and community-based approach that leads Seminaria to engage local people in the realization of the event. Through the Seminaria case study, the authors demonstrate that community-based environmental art can shape a unique idea of public space, to draw new maps and new relations, to encourage interculturality and to reinforce social cohesion.

The contribution by Hanna Baumann, Ed Charlton and Jill Weintroub, entitled 'Urban Atmospherics', dwells on the idea of the local story, as they reflect on cross-disciplinary fieldwork conducted in Johannesburg. For this they developed a digital StoryMap, containing written reflections about atmospheric attunement to place, developed during the lockdown caused by a global pandemic.

It is through stories that participants and communities share positions and concerns on site. In some of the examples of fieldwork presented in this issue, the role of local inhabitants is crucial, and sometimes they become active participants of the fieldwork. For instance, in the article by Matej Nikšič, focused on a neighbourhood in Ljubljana, Slovenia, the *photostory* is used as an object to engage local inhabitants in a process of participatory urban regeneration, stressing the need for experimentation with new tools for community-based involvement in planning decision making.

Eva Schwab's contribution also touches on the role of local inhabitants. Based on these experiences surrounding the development of a regional vision for 'more than housing' in eastern upper Styria, and playing with collective scales of engagement through *urban plans,* she presents a tailored participatory approach that links the local and the regional scale. In doing so, she highlights the challenges of working within fixed geographical and regulatory boundaries as well as within established planning goals and strategies.

In these articles, the need to establish a dialogue with local inhabitants comes to the fore as a key issue, grounding the fieldwork in its social context. The article by Fernando Ferreira, which focused on a textile complex in Coelima, Portugal, explores the performative qualities of collective hand-weaving practices, as invitation to dialogue with locals. In this project, the physical act of *weaving ensembles* with Coelima workers

and local agents became a mode of reconstructing stories and memories of the factory's life. In this case, it becomes clear how *practices of making* (such as crafts, technical know-how) can be used and adapted for the purpose of fieldwork investigations.

The contribution by André Augusto Prevedello brings us back to one of the very practices of architectural making: the sketch. In sharing his sketchbook of a fieldwork investigation in Thessaloniki, Greece, the author shows how architectural tools such as the sketchbook allow a researcher from abroad to engage with the spatial complexity of the city, and use a project diary containing sketches and photographs as a strategy of de-rationalizing the planning process and stimulating discussions.

Finally, fieldwork also entails being outside, on the ground, getting one's hands and feet dirty. The issue closes with a visual essay, 'Dirty Work', by Michael Hirschbichler, presenting visual material of a fieldwork project that literally engages with the soil. The artists uses *oil paintings* to raise awareness of environmental impact of land extraction in the world's oldest industrial oil fields in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The diverse takes on fieldwork by the fieldworker that this issue presents are all characterized by fading boundaries between scientific research, artistic experiment and site-based actions that make use of expertise from different disciplines – from literature to textile making and photography. In this way, we recognize a new kind of environmental and spatial 'praxis' that not only values the knowledge that already exists in local urban cultures, but also develops new urban narratives as a means to develop, foster and protect built environments that are meaningful for their inhabitants. Important in developing this praxis is therefore the collection of site-specific studies, in which narrative approaches have been used to analyse and create meaning, appropriation and integration in urban projects.

1 Le Corbusier, *Journey to the East* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1987).
2 Dziga Verton, *The Man with the Moving Camera*, 1929, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cGYZ5847FiI.
3 Robert Smithson, 'The Monuments of Passaic', *Artforum* 6/4 (1967).
4 Emily Scott, 'Group Pioneering: Robert Smithson's and Circle's Early Forays in the Field', in: Suzanne Ewing et al. (eds.), *Architecture and Field/Work* (London/New York: Routledge, 2011).
5 Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas: The Forgotten Symbolism of Architectural Form* (Cambridge, MA/London: MIT Press, 1977 [1972]).
6 Martino Stierli, *Las Vegas in the Rearview Mirror: The City in Theory, Photography, and Film* (Los Angeles: The Getty Research Institute, 2010).
7 Reyner Banham. *Scenes in America Deserta* (Salt Lake City/London: Gibbs M. Smith/Thames & Hudson, 1982).
8 Sam Wainwright Douglas, *Citizen Architect: Samuel Mockbee and the Spirit of the Rural Studi*o, Big Beard Films, 2010.
9 Andrea Oppenheimer Dean and Timothy Hursley, *Rural Studio: Samuel Mockbee and an Architecture of Decency* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2002).
10 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991).
11 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1984).
12 Jane Rendell, *Art and Architecture: A Place Between* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2006).
13 Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London/New York: I.B. Tauris, 2010).
14 Markus Miessen and Shumon Basar, 'Introduction: Did We Mean Participate or Did We Mean Something Else?', in: Markus Miessen and Shumon Basar (eds.), *Did Someone Say Participate?* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006).

15 Object-based learning is recently gaining significant traction both in architecture education and theory as a way to learn directly from the environment and fully engage with our senses when imagining and making spatial interventions. See, for example, UCL's Teaching & Object-Based Learning initiative (https://www.ucl.ac.uk/culture/schools/teaching-object-based-learning) and the publication by Helen J. Chatterjee and Leonie Hannan, *Engaging the Senses: Object-Based Learning in Higher Education* (London: Routledge, 2015). Another example is the Horizon 2020 project 'Communities of Tacit Knowledge: Architecture and its Ways of Knowing' (https://tacit-knowledge-architecture.com). Some recent publications that theorize about architectural research and design through objects are Harry Francis Mallgrave, *From Object to Experience: The New Culture of Architectural Design* (London: Bloomsbury, 2018) and Lara Schrijver (ed.), *The Tacit Dimension: Architecture Knowledge and Scientific Research* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2021).

Curatorial Fieldwork as a Critical Practice Learning from Post-Nostalgic Knowings in Freixo

Inês Moreira and Patrícia Coelho

The regeneration of urban areas and former industrial territories through the continuous activity, presence and investment of artistic practices and cultural projects has long been acknowledged as a significant strategy for achieving urban transformation. In addition to the better-known methods of architecture and real estate, other more immaterial and less permanent approaches to sites reveal the tensions, difficulties and resistances, and therefore can contribute to a deeper understanding of the city. Addressing the city through curatorial fieldwork as a critical practice can provide valuable readings of specific contexts, also contributing to the development of new narratives on site.

Curatorial projects operating directly in the fields activated by research have the potential to form temporary platforms and gather diverse agents around specific urban areas. Fieldwork is, therefore, central to curatorial

approaches that engage with unstable contexts, especially if we consider territories in the process of transformation, decay or abandonment. In this regard, the evolution of the relation of fieldwork to art and curatorial projects aligns with the experimental and context-specific approaches documented by Denise Scott Brown, Robert Venturi and Steven Izenour;[1] the new fieldwork methods collected by Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford;[2] the research strategies of fieldwork conceptualized by Irit Rogoff;[3] and the performative *derives* and bodily actions with communities that Francesco Careri[4] has described and that Grant Kester has further elucidated.[5] Other modalities of material/semiotic production in cultural events add the conditions and sense of opportunity to work on specific sites, such as those presented by *Manifesta 9*.[6] Far from a single stable methodology, fieldwork in curatorial projects is tentative and, as we will see, responds to the context, to the community, to participants and to artistic projects, therefore differing from other social sciences such as anthropology or ethnography, and from urban studies, which are more focused on the physical reality.

Curatorial Fieldwork as a Critical Practice

The relationship of the fieldwork with critical curatorial practices encompasses different possibilities depending on the sites they intervene in. Considering different performative and ephemeral practices *in situ*, we identify that some experiences are more oriented towards reporting on a field, while others are focused on knowledge production *about* a field. While some practices occurring in the field are more oriented towards an aesthetic or phenomenological experience of participants, we will focus on the intersection of the previous examples, reporting and contributing to knowledge *on* a site.

The present territory of curatorial activities, practices, and studies is a vast one, and the curatorial approach we are searching for relates to fieldwork as a critical practice, occurring outside the galleries and museum spaces and, as a result, embracing the urbanscape, its community and the site of

curatorial and artistic intervention. Therefore, in this essay, we learn from *Post-Nostalgic Knowings*, a platform that gathered international curators, artists, architects and activists from the Baltic and Iberian Peninsula, to look at Freixo, a post-industrial area in Porto, and propose a new reading through different lenses and by implementing field expeditions.

Fieldwork is a strategic curatorial operation to approach site-specific or context-specific projects, in order to achieve a deeper understanding of its problematics. Although curating may be a slow and subtle practice when compared with those of real estate and urbanism, fieldwork is a direct way to gain a better understanding of the territory, its conditions and the life cycle it inherits.

Post-Nostalgic Knowings was a multidisciplinary laboratory that gathered curatorial knowledge from around Europe as a collective critical strategy to embrace a forgotten area: the river slope zone of Porto's post-industrial waterfront, Freixo. Set up as a site-specific advanced platform, *Post-Nostalgic Knowings* was curated by tutors Inês Moreira and Aneta Szylak and presented the initiatives taking place on the new cultural panorama in Eastern Europe, which have long contributed to the social and political transformation of the territories in which they act.[7] When trying to understand how curating can contribute to the articulation of new narratives on the built environment and new perspectives of its future, different approaches were conveyed and collected, presented by self-organized collectives, single artists and commissioned institutional projects. Freixo is a territorial fragment located in the eastern part of the city of Porto, Portugal. Enclosed by a cemetery, railway lines, the Douro River and the Freixo metropolitan bridge, the successive interventions in this area ruptured the relations with the surrounding urban fabric, highlighting that Freixo is currently simultaneously a vernacular community and a metropolitan infrastructure marked by a transgenic, hybrid, multitemporal condition.



Fig. 1. Performative walk during Freixo Infrastructural Takeover, Participants in collaboration with artist Anton Kats, 2019, Photo: Renato Cruz Santos.

From *Post-Nostalgic Knowings* sprang the reflection: How can collective thought be promoted to resignify places and territories that have lost their identity, while avoiding nostalgia for the past and a feeling of *loss*? The programme proposed to collectively learn from curatorial experiments in Riga and Gdansk and by reflecting on the Baltic Region, to find the conceptual tools and tactics that allowed them to embrace specific sites.[8]

Free Riga resulted from a curatorial practice that paradigmatically changed Riga's territory.[9] Solvita Krese, curator and director of the Latvian Centre for Contemporary Art, proposed to investigate urban abandonment as a new opportunity and created 'Festival Survival Kit', which occupied ruins and empty spaces with new programmes and cultural projects. The grassroots campaign 'Occupy Me' operated during the night to identify derelict buildings in the city, bringing visibility to abandoned places that could potentially be used and appropriated by artists. This led to the creation of Free Riga, a non-governmental organization that manages and coordinates a system of temporary use of empty buildings. Fieldwork was a central part of this curatorial mapping and visualization, leading to negotiation.

The artistic and curatorial practices developed in the Gdansk shipyard, in Poland, are also examples of social and territorial transformation through fieldwork and engagement with the local community, highlighting the importance of artistic activism when connected to a specificity of context. The curatorial acts of Aneta Szylak, an experienced curator and art theorist, explore the shipyard in this 'in-between' post-industrial and pre-demolishment period, exploring the existing architecture, the ancient memories and new artistic narratives, contributing, over time, to the actual resignification of the site.[10]

Regarding curating context described as the 'field where the curatorial practice is extended beyond curating exhibitions into working with entire contexts',[11] it is important to grasp that cultural and artistic processes are

not responsible for material change of the context. The most significant contribution of context curating resides in the transformation of narratives, inscribing stories and, therefore, writing to posteriority. If the processes of ongoing urban transformation change territories, we can state that curatorial and artistic processes resignify the political history and its industrial past, bringing it back to the present by intersecting the young arts community with local inhabitants and workers from the area.

Another Baltic transnational curatorial experience – taking place in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania – causes a broadening in the perception of interconnectivity and interdependence between community and territory, establishing relations among the city, architecture, infrastructure and national identities.[12] *The Baltic Pavilion* reflects on the Baltic region's profound transformations as a result of the economic and political processes that took place in the time of the Soviet Union. The curatorial proposal explored the relations among nature, culture, history, energy, heritage and transportation, through the diverse scales and materials that define the built environment and architecture. The idea of fragmentation present in the different scales in the exhibition (and its partial entrances), mimics the contemporary Baltic nations as territories segmented by their past.

While in the curatorial programme *Free Riga* the art community reclaims and devises conditions of access to urban buildings and revitalization of the urban tissue, in Gdansk's Alternativa, the curatorial proposal resignifies spaces and history, adding value to the present-day condition and contributing to the preservation of the site. Also, the curatorial project *The Baltic Pavilion* restores a vast and an indicative dimension, showing that urbanity implies a relation between people and their settlements, but also a deeper connection between the ecosystems and the techno-cultural systems that support them.

The diversity of perspectives presented by international curators in the site-specific advanced platform *Post-Nostalgic Knowings* were amplified by the community engagement, attracting a wide spectrum of agents operating in the field – architects, artists, geographers, curators, museum conservators and even okupas. Therefore, the fieldwork in Freixo was motivated by both the dialogue with the site and the shared experience of previous curatorial projects.

Acting in Freixo

When approaching Freixo's territory, aside from the curatorial shared references of projects in other post-industrial urban areas, we adopted a specific physical and epistemological notion of fieldwork, in a double sense: first a reconnaissance of the field/area and, secondly, the re-creation of the territory/field. According to Irit Rogoff:

> *'Field Work' connotes the convergence of fields of activity, intellectual disciplines, and methodologies with forms of artistic and other cultural practices, none of which can exist in discrete bounded isolation. Rather than interdisciplinarity which produces an intertextuality out of named and recognized disciplines, 'Field Work' suggests that if we focus our well-furnished attention on an unnamed something, it might constitute itself as a field.*[13]

From this double dare of fieldwork posed by Rogoff, we took the abandoned area in Freixo as a physical place of research and convergence to hold the *Freixo Infrastructural Takeover* workshop, guided by artist Anton Kats. The collective artistic takeover resulted in performative moments under bridges, in tunnels and along the railway lines of the hillside, exploring new meanings based on the problematics unfolded and underlining the artist's role as an enabler of social inclusion and new spatial meanings. A first collective sound analysis of the place allowed us to grasp the sounds that characterize Freixo and the activities that persist,

followed by an observation and a sensible reading of the urban issues and generations that subsist through routines, resistant to new proposals and disturbing changes.

Starting with a *cadavre-exquis* about the current context of Freixo occurring inside a deactivated tunnel, the takeover contributed to a physical activation of the space, using artistic devices that interfered with the vision and stimulated other senses, searching for different dimensions of reality and other ways of seeing and reading the territory. This analysis contributed to the notion of research in context and to a non-hierarchical positioning of different ideas, showing how new possibilities of transformation were amplified by the curatorial fieldwork as a critical practice.

Artistic practices display a key role in the process of territorial inclusion, when urbanscapes are marginalized and forgotten, suffering from an amnesiac status that renders them invisible. Even when economic cycles are most favourable and private investment reaches urban areas more distant from the centre, as is the case in the eastern part of Porto, territories such as Freixo are held hostage to isolated routines and actions, left without an urban or political strategy, and therefore lost between the collective imagination of this place and its potential future. By recreating the meaning of various terms and using its own lexicon, this collective action created a 'Post-Nostalgic Collective Glossary' reflecting on the Nostalghia, Toska and Saudade, which is now an instrument towards future actions.[14]

This urban area is increasingly alluring to private investment. However, the steepness of the slope, the difficulty of creating a connection between the higher part of the city and the lower side, and the presence of urban barriers justify the lack of action. Throughout the years it has been the object of artistic actions, from ephemeral and dispersed interventions such as the spatial and photographic analysis developed by the collective Os Espacialistas with art students in 2009,[15] who sought the performative and pictorial



Fig. 2. Os Espacialistas, Performative intervention with Fine Art School students, 2009, Photo: Filomena Nascimento.

potentialities on the abandoned architecture of the area; to performative routes *Espírito do Lugar 1.0: Bonfim – Campanhã,* staged by the collective Circolando, that revealed this territory through walks and derives that inscribed the expressions *Terrain Vague, Babilónia*, or *HoMo Ludens*.[16] Until now, no larger resignifications or deeper reinscriptions have emerged in an area that offers itself as terrain of potentiality for both real estate investment and for artistic and curatorial action.

As fieldwork engages with specific contexts, turning singular and non-prescriptive modes of operation into new understandings of the site, it also offers insights into how diverse voices, subjectivities and expectations towards a site reveal new perspectives and instigate other strategies to occupy it over time.

Curatorial fieldwork actions in the city and its territories can provoke different modes of engagement with the site, its many actors and expectations, contributing to the transformation of perceptions and eventually influencing the intentions towards and expectations of its urbanity. If the most recognized and popular cultural interventions in cities are still related to artistic activation of urban spaces through public art, music festivals and other urban cultures, we also acknowledge that strategic artistic/activist actions can counter-propose top-down urban projects: their engagement with local communities, peculiar stories and many singularities are firm modes of strategic intervention in urban transformation.[17]

In forgotten areas, the nostalgia and memories of what was lost often become inertial forces that influence, or halt, the construction of new urban narratives. Over time we recognize how different actions have been occupying this site, establishing dialogues between architecture and heritage, territory and communities, material and discursive dimensions. From the self-organized activisms that characterized Freixo in 2009, to the platform *Post-Nostalgic Knowings* presented in 2019, we recognize that curatorial



Fig. 3. Inscriptions by Circolando, 2022, Photo: Patrícia Coelho.

fieldwork as a critical practice allowed a continuous reading of this place that, through the years, displayed diverse and interdisciplinary actions. In 2022, returning once again to Freixo, we still find a territory stagnated:

> *When a specific territory, immersed in the city, becomes stagnant, in the final stage of a cycle, a state of amnesia and uncertainty is created between nostalgia and the uncertainty of the future. A gap is created that prolongs absence and fills the space with a void that repels movement. To stimulate the beginning of new cycles, it is necessary to open new opportunities that think and recycle the past reality of the place, in view of the moments and dynamics of its constituent urbanity.*[18]

Freixo continues to be inhabited by spontaneous actions that engage in dialogue with this territory and its remaining species, scientifically named ruderal vegetation. Departing from Freixo's site, PhD student Beatriz Duarte, former participant of *Post-Nostalgic Knowings* platform, developed a fieldwork approach to Freixo's many possible futures and coordinated the workshop Collective Mapping of Freixo.[19] This workshop reflected and experimented collectively on the potentialities and futures of this area and occurred during the Oblique Think Tank #2, promoted by the spatial cluster 'Curating the Contemporary: on Architectures, Territories and Networks'.

Also, the project 'A Recoletora', founded by photographer Alexandre Delmar and designer Maria Ruivo, aims to rebuild the reputation of ruderal vegetation by mapping it through performative walks in four green areas of Porto and Matosinhos.[20] One of these being the deactivated railway of Freixo's hillside, where botanists, artists and designers, among other specialists, collaborate to better understand these species and, inevitably, this place.

Wandering through forgotten urban territories is also the modus operandi of architect and professor Miguel Costa, founder of 'Micro Atelier de Arquitectura e Arte', which explores and speculates on ruderal species. The pro-

ject 'Vegetation Stories' results from a fieldwork collecting, involving Freixo and other abandoned places, aiming to catalogue species inherited by the European colonial project.[21]

In invisible territories and neighbourhoods in states of profound amnesia, such as Freixo, art and critical thinking offer crucial tools to expand their potential and hinder the eradication of pre-existent voices, materials and stories in the context. As a result, the marks of self-organized activisms, programmed takeovers and urban collectors are precisely what remains. Between the ruderal vegetations and the expressions marked in the concrete columns, Freixo remains a never-ending *terrain vague*.

Artistic projects resulting from curatorial fieldwork do not have the power to resolve the absence, abandonment or fragmentation of spaces and territories, but standing as critical practice they question their multiple possibilities. Fieldwork triggers new methods of analysing the qualities and possibilities of specific sites, relating heritage and local identities with new contemporary cultures, and contributing to alternative historical narratives and transformation of the urban space.

Developing curatorial fieldwork as a critical practice by learning from *Post-Nostalgic Knowings* demonstrates that curating may reveal new practices in the city, and its actions and interventions are open and multidimensional, presenting relational practices of care for urbanity and communities while acting beyond counter-practice to real estate interests. Following the thought of Suzanne Ewing on the distinction between site and field: 'Site is the place to practise in/on/with, and field is a place to learn from/in . . . "To field" is more contingent, responsive, and depends on flowing, pervasive conditions, cloud, indeterminate edges.'[22] We believe that Freixo has become a field of possible futures/actions that we can all learn from/in.

1 Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour. *Learning from Las Vegas*, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977).

2 Celia Lury and Nina Wakeford (eds.), *Inventive Methods: The Happening of the Social* (London: Routledge, 2012).

3 Irit Rogoff, *Field Work in Visual Culture*, Curatorial/Knowledge PhD Seminar, London, 2004 [Online] Available at: http://ck.kein.org/, accessed 27 May 2022.

4 Francesco Careri, *Walkscapes: O Caminhar Como Prática Estética* (Spain: Gustavo Gili, 2018).

5 Grant H. Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art, Updated Edition with a New Preface* (Berkely, CA: University of California Press, 2013).

6 Cuauhtémoc Medina, et al., *Manifesta 9: The Deep of the Modern, a Subcyclopaedia* (Milan: Silvana Editoriale, 2012).

7 The programme was commissioned in 2019 by the Municipality of Porto as a critical take on an industrial area of Porto and offered conferences, masterclasses, hikes and group work sessions where participants had the opportunity to learn about the research of the authors Elena Lacruz, Jonas Žukauskas and Solvita Krese; follow geographer Jorge Ricardo Pinto on a field visit; and produce the workshop '*Takeover* Infraestrutural do Freixo' with artist Anton Kats. An initiative by the PLÁKA platform, commissioned by the municipality of Porto, which took place between 28 September and 4 October 2019. In its second edition the project organized three courses throughout 2019 that promoted thought about contemporary artistic practices [Online] Available at: http://www.plaka.porto.pt/pt/colectivos-plaka/, accessed 27 May 2022.

8 The debate 'Post-Nostalgic Knowings' had the presence of the tutors: Inês Moreira and Aneta Szylak; the guests: Anton Kats, Elena Lacruz, Jonas Žukauskas, Jorge Ricardo Pinto, Solvita Krese; the participants: Almudena Martins, Beatriz Duarte, Beatriz Takahashi, Bruno Almeida, Carla Gonçalves, Juan Toboso, Leticia Costelha, Martín Molín, Miguel Teodoro, Orlando Castro, Patrícia Azevedo, Patrícia Coelho, Sérgio Magalhães.

9 'Free Riga' is a project that stimulates urban transformation and valorisation by implementing artistic processes, departing from crisis and emptiness as mottoes towards artistic creation with the potential power of urban and sociopolitical transformation. [Online] Available at: https://freeriga.lv, accessed 27 May 2022.

10 The continuous interventions in this political and social territory motivated the creation of *Alternativa*, an International Contemporary Visual Arts Festival that occupied industrial buildings and external spaces with the works and processes of contemporary art.

11 Magdalena Malm (ed.), *Curating Context – Beyond the Gallery and Into Other Fields* (Sweden: Art and Theory Publishing, 2017).

12 *The Baltic Pavilion* was produced for the 15th edition of the Venice Architecture Biennale (2016). The Pavilion was a pioneer, representing the three Baltic nations (Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia) for the first time ever and simultaneously celebrating the centenary of the Independence of 1918.

13 Irit Rogoff, *Field Work in Visual Culture*, Curatorial/Knowledge PhD Seminar, London, 2004 [Online] Available at: http://ck.kein.org/, accessed 27 May 2022.

14 Inês Moreira (ed.), *Post-Nostalgic Knowings* (Porto: Ágora – Cultura e Desporto do Porto, E.M./ Galeria Municipal do Porto, 2021).

15 'Architectural/artistic laboratory project of analysis and programmatic modification of the space. Through the use of photography and video as devices for drawing, thinking, perceiving and diagnosing natural and built space', in: Filomena Lopes Nascimento, *A Relevância do Estudo Sociológico do Lugar para o Desenvolvimento Projectual em Arquitectura*, Porto: PhD dissertation, Faculdade de Belas Artes da Universidade do Porto, 2011, 88.

16 Circolando, 'Espírito do Lugar 1.0: Bonfim – Campanhã' [Online] Available at: https://circolando.com, accessed 27 May 2022.

17 Aneta Szylak, 'Archived Communities in the Works of Cora Piantoni', in: Piantoni, Cora, *Buon Lavoro: Four Films on Workers* (Berlin: Archive Book, 2018).

18 Patricia Coelho, 'Lifespan/Lifecycle', in: Moreira, op. cit. 85.

19 Beatriz Duarte, 'Mapeamento Colectivo do Freixo', in: Inês Moreira (ed.), *Curadoria de Enigmas Territoriais + Incursões ao Porto Oriental* (Porto: Parábola Crítica, 2022), 258-275.

20 Alexandre Delmar and Maria Ruivo, 'A Recoletora' [Online] Available at: https://arecoletora.com/, accessed 27 May 2022.

21 Miguel Costa, 'Vegetation Stories' [Online] Available at: https://maarqa.com/vegetation-stories-research/, accessed 27 May 2022.

22 Suzanne Ewing et al. (eds), *Architecture and Field/Work* (London: Routledge, 2010).

Narrating the Living Town
The Case Study of Seminaria Sogninterra Environmental Art Biennial

Diana Ciufo and Isabella Indolfi

Contemporary art offers infinite possibilities to experiment with innovative ways of inclusion, to encourage intercultural dialogue, and to reinforce social cohesion by providing concrete tools and methods for the construction of common grounds among people and communities. Outside of traditional spaces of artistic production (such as museums, galleries and foundations), but within public and unconventional places, art can create new encounters and reach out to new audiences. Artists can play a real, active role in building new narratives in a town: through participatory strategies they can engage communities in active storytelling, helping them to project their own identity onto the environment.

How and why art has started a dialogue with the urban field is part of a slow historical process. Over the last few decades, contemporary art has increasingly moved out of the museum and its spatial rigidity, in order to establish a direct contact with the natural and urban environment, as well as with people and their traditions. Leaving the protected space of the

museum is indeed a challenge for the artist, who needs to face a dynamic space where landscape, architectural, human, social and sociological elements contribute to the meaning of art. It is also an act of liberation, aiming to expand the horizons of artistic research and to discover new forms of expression, new answers, and new inputs.

Seminaria Sogninterra: Empowering the Sensory Community

Seminaria Sogninterra (hereby only Seminaria) is a non-profit organization and a biennial of environmental art that has taken place since 2011 in Maranola, a small town in the south of Italy with a decreasing population. Seminaria is a community-based art project, with the declared aim to provide diverse ways to imagine the future of a place where even the present is hard to grasp. Curated by the authors of this article, Seminaria is a case study for those who practice art in small urban contexts and its results have been presented over the past years at La Sapienza Università di Roma, Goldsmiths University in London, Manchester Metropolitan University and the Residency Unlimited in New York.

Speaking of Seminaria, one cannot ignore the town in which it takes place: Maranola. It is a medieval hamlet, geographically nestled between Rome and Naples, and built on a natural belvedere overlooking the sea, between softly sloping hills full of olive groves and winding roads that climb the Aurunci mountains. The picturesque scenery surrounds a small and lively community, which is suffering from a heavy wave of depopulation. Following global trends that can be seen in the percentages of inhabitants of urban and rural areas,[1] over the past 30 years, most people have moved from the town to newly-built neighbourhoods in the surrounding hills, where anonymous but comfortable, terraced houses have been built. The approximately 1,500 people who still live in Maranola are mainly senior citizens, with some families and relatively few children. The life of the town revolves around three churches, a pharmacy, a primary school and a small grocery store; there are no theatres, no permanent cultural spaces, no concert

venues. Young people go to live and work in nearby cities and come back once a year, during summertime, along with a few tourists.

Nonetheless, the resilience of Maranola's residents is impressive: they are very active and busy in keeping their traditions alive and in organizing their own cultural and entertainment programmes. In fact, there are about a dozen local, non-profit cultural associations, self-organized according to a bottom-up model, one of which is Seminaria.

It is difficult to define Maranola's community, given how much it is connected to the town itself. Angelos Theocharis's definition of a 'sensory community' as a group of people who share a sensory experience, provided by a common environment, may well describe it best. Interestingly, instead of pointing at the community as a group of people held together by common stakes, beliefs and origins, as it is commonly understood, the sensory community gives credit to the place and its sensory stimuli as the main things that shape a collective identity.[2] This idea applies to Maranola's community, which gathers itself around the stimuli provided by the very particular architecture of the town, designed as a fortress.

When you pass through the large archway, the only entrance into the town, you have the feeling of entering a timeless and intimate dimension. First, you will meet some elderly residents sitting by the arch, enjoying the marine wind that blows through it. They will greet you, as they do everybody, almost as if they are the guardians of the town, keeping an eye on everyone who steps in and out. Once inside the fortress, you can enjoy the coolness of the narrow stone alleyways, where neither sun nor cars are allowed. You might feel overwhelmed by the tight proximity of the houses to each other and realize that there's a lack of privacy for the residents, who can see and hear everything from window to window. But you will never feel lonely in Maranola. You will be reassured by the smell of *ragù* (a red meat sauce) on Sundays or by the music of the *organetto* (the traditional instrument of the

town) drifting through some windows. You will always know what time it is by listening to the ringing of the church bells, calling people to Mass.

In spite of the fortress that encloses it, the community is open to telling stories and to listening to new ones. That is why Seminaria was founded: to provide new listeners and new storytellers.

Artists from all over Italy and abroad are called to join this dialogue with Maranola, to identify and to highlight the set of small things that make up this community, to perceive all the little marks, to collect the stories, to elaborate on them, and to return them in the form of works of art. At the core of this slow process is Seminaria Sogninterra international residency programme. Every two years, around 12 artists are invited to Maranola to develop a site-specific project according to Seminaria's guidelines. It must be a project that fits a specific place along the exhibition's predefined 1-km-long path that runs through the hamlet, the alleys, the public spaces and the private houses. Multimedia, relational and performative works, sculptures, videos and installations are Seminaria's favourite projects, especially if they incorporate local materials and elaborate local narratives.

The development of these projects takes months, until the artists return to Maranola for the production of the art works and their installation. Ten days before the opening, at the end of August, the 12 artists along with their families and a number of volunteers mixed with residents and summer tourists gather for the realization of what until then has only been imagined and collectively discussed. At this point, Maranola is busier and more crowded than ever: an explosive moment of creativity and joy. That is when the welcoming capacity of the town is put to the test and the dinner tables are always ready to be adjusted for unexpected guests.

The active participation of local inhabitants is the backbone of Seminaria: some host the artists in their own homes, others open their own, private

spaces to the visitors during the final event, young people who come back home for the summer holidays join the volunteers and help with the organization, and local artisans join the production process by sharing their own studio, tools and knowledge with the artists.
After about ten hectic days of preparation, Maranola is ready for the final event: the public opening. Three days of festival activities involve the whole town: its evocative corners, alleys, piazzas, private gardens and houses, abandoned basements and medieval towers. More than 1,500 spectators attend the event every day, doubling the population, swarming the town, which is temporarily transformed into a magical place, where art, environment, and foreign and local people bridge all gaps.

At the end of these three days, when the visitors leave, the works of art are dismantled, often destroyed, or sometimes left as permanent, small traces of what has happened. When the artists exit the archway for the last time, life in the town immediately goes back to its daily routine. Seminaria has created a wondrous, sensory encounter that contributes to the existing sense of belonging in the town and strengthens the identity of its community by building new narratives and cultural memories. The sensory community is expanded, empowered, acknowledged and sublimated.

After ten years of work and with the involvement of over 70 artists, Seminaria was heavily hit by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021. The lockdown became the occasion to reflect on the organization's strategies and methodologies in order to face the big changes that were happening within the whole of society as well as in Maranola's small community. It turned out that only a few elements were fundamental and unique for Seminaria's research: participation, ephemerality and addition. These were the main tools that allowed Seminaria to draw a map through which to navigate the sensory experience.

The Forms of Participation

For the first few years, Seminaria promoted interaction as the main way to draw people's attention and to actively engage them through sensory and participatory strategies. Through a seamless combination of media art, environmental art and relational art, rendered in life-sized, immersive and virtually or physically habitable installations, Seminaria's aim was to allow visitors to become inhabitants of the exhibition space and therefore to become meaningful activators of a communication process. In the urban space, it seemed necessary to break the wall of contemplation and to bridge the gaps caused by a museum's alarm system, which create a deep abyss between art and audience. So, Seminaria favoured works of art that should be experienced, that could envelop the visitors, and that would allow them to get closer and closer, letting them touch and even smell the works.

In 2011, artist Sonus Loci designed an interactive installation on the façade of a house in Maranola. Following a sound exploration of Maranola, the installation *Anelito* implemented sensory technologies that could detect the movements of the spectators in front of the house and would play recordings of the soundscape accordingly. The house felt alive, as if it was answering with its own voice to the input given by the people. *Mirror* (2016) by Alexandra Dementieva was an installation for one spectator at a time: through a complex system of a projector, cables and artificial intelligence, the viewer's image was processed by mirroring it and overlaying it with the images of people who had previously visited the installation.

Soon enough, though, the curators realized that technologically advanced, interactive research is good at developing relations between people and places, but not at bringing people in contact with one another. So, in the last few years, Seminaria's focus has moved towards a broader sense of participation, by developing projects based on an open-ended process in which people become social agents rather than just activators.



Fig. 1. Laura Cionci, *Valore Energetico*, Seminaria 2016, ©seminariasogninterra.



Fig. 2. Gianni Piacentini, *Maranola Città Etica*, Seminaria 2012, ©seminariasogninterra.

In this sense, *Valore Energetico* (2016) – meaning 'energetic value' – by Laura Cionci, has probably been Seminaria's best project (Fig. 1). The artist went from door to door, from kitchen to kitchen, and asked for local food recipes, taking notes and pictures and inviting everybody to join a big dinner organized in the alleys, with a very long, beautifully set table, ready to accommodate everybody. The only rule: every person was supposed to bring a dish of their own to be shared with the others. The collective dinner was so successful that it was necessary to replicate it two more times, in different neighbourhoods of the hamlet, in order to involve as many residents as possible. Not only did the residents look forward to participating, but they kept on replicating the action themselves over the following years, even without the artist. *Valore Energetico* soon became a tradition. This 'appropriation' by the residents might be what Seminaria was looking for.

Ephemeral is Eternal

In 1926, Michel Seuphor wrote 'L'éphemère est éternel', a theatrical piece with a scenography by Piet Mondrian and with many connections to the visual arts. From then on, ephemerality and eternity have been explored in different ways by contemporary art. As Lucio Fontana wrote in 1946 in his *Manifiesto Blanco*:

> ***Art is eternal, but it cannot be immortal . . . It can live for one year or for millennia, but the moment of its material destruction will always arrive. It will remain eternal as a gesture, but it will die as matter.***[3]

Seminaria has made ephemerality into its focus and strength, hoping that its actions will last in the memory of the community longer than any monument would. Despite the short-lived developments over the few days of the event, Seminaria is based on a slow process, a long-term effort of building relationships and exchanges that can last for months and even years. Seminaria's temporal dimension is measured by its ability to affect the town and its residents with just a small piece of exceptionality.

The life of Seminaria spans generations: the children that were playing around the installations in 2011 are now part of the organization. As they grew up, they became involved in the playful activities of Seminaria because of their parents and the artists, and they gradually found their place within the organization, in accordance with their age and abilities. Some of the oldest, now college students, are studying art, architecture, music or communication, and they will play an active and central role in Seminaria of 2023. For them it is a way to bring back home what they are studying abroad.

Seminaria does not only seek 'to invent possible relations to our neighbours', no matter how meaningful these can be, as Nicolas Bourriaud writes in his *Relational Aesthetics*, but also 'to bet on a happier tomorrow' and to question the present.[4] No 'utopias of social integration' within the privileged space of art are needed, only the exploitation of the ethical-political potential of art can call the community into action for a better future.[5]

Premio Città Etica (2012) – meaning 'ethical town prize' – by Gianni Piacentini was realized in the form of a touristic sign at the entrance of the town. The artist invented this 'prize' specifically for Maranola. The sign, dated 2014, but realized and set up in 2012, played on this discrepancy to challenge the residents to be ethical in the future, and at the same time to show them the trust that they undoubtedly would deserve the award. In 2014, the town decided to keep the sign permanently and some might feel that Maranola has become a more ethical place ever since (Fig.2).

Addition

Seminaria relates to the centre of Maranola with the dynamism of a living city, not with the typical veneration of a simulacrum, of a glorious but forgotten age. Each edition of Seminaria leaves behind positive, stratigraphic units, either engraved on the walls or carved in the memory of the residents and visitors, as a sort of shared, photographic gallery. In this way, a new

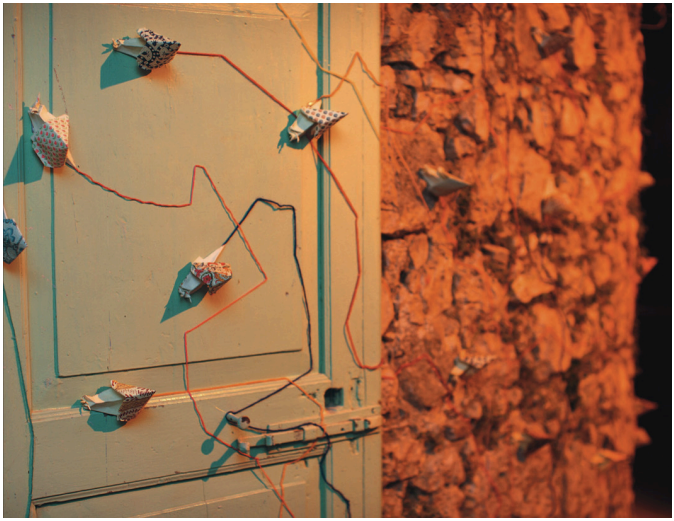


Fig. 3. Serena Piccinini, *Verso Casa*, Seminaria 2011, ©seminariasogninterra.



Fig. 4. Stalker, *In Cerca di Rifugio*, Seminaria 2016, ©seminariasogninterra.

collective experience is being written from year to year, strengthening the relationships between locals, artists and visitors, who are all encouraged to continue and explore the town, in order to build a new geographical and emotional map.

The narrative of the place has been growing and has enriched the commonly shared vocabulary over the years. In fact, walking with visitors during Seminaria's nights, you might hear someone say that 'this is the wall with the paper snails', citing the installation *Verso Casa* (2011) by Serena Piccinini, who covered a big, stone wall with dozens of paper snails, realized with the help of local kids (Fig. 3). You may also hear someone say: 'Come with me, behind that fence there's the ruin of a tower', or: 'This alley leads to Roberta's garden', which means that, once again, a new point of reference was added to the toponymical history of the town, citing normally inaccessible private spaces that have become part of the common and shared experience of the town. These are just a few examples of a broader process of layering, which can be understood as a logic of 'addition', meaning that new experiences are imposed on the urban landscape without affecting the foundations of medieval walls, but by relying on the realm of ephemeral and transient things.

Within this logic, Seminaria also goes beyond the public-private dichotomy, simply choosing both. Over the years, visitors have opened gates, entered kitchens, glimpsed underground cisterns and enjoyed all the kinaesthetic qualities of walking around a historical city's centre. The community watched the audience laugh and sing in the public square, whisper in private homes, lie down on lawns (Fig. 4).

This logic of addition also became very concrete when a bulky *Solido Virtuale* was added to the narrowest alley in town, as Giacomo Lion did in 2016 (Fig. 5). His massive work had to be set up and dismantled every day and every night, so that the normal life of the city could continue and a



Fig. 5. Giacomo Lion, *Solido Virtuale*, Seminaria 2016, ©seminariasogninterra.



Fig. 6+7. E. Gubanova and I. Govorkov, *Flood*, Seminaria 2018, ©seminariasogninterra.

small garbage truck had a chance to pass through every day at dawn. Such additions also play with the chronology and history of the village, altering the present, remembering the past, deceiving the future. In this sense the installation *Flood* (2018) by Elena Gubanova and Ivan Govorkov will be an enigma for archaeologists of the next millennium, who will find themselves wondering why there are plaques in Russian referring to the historic floods of Saint Petersburg in Maranola (Figs. 6+7).

The matching of past and future narratives that takes place in Maranola constitutes the alphabet of a new common language, through which Seminaria supports the understanding of a small but complex urban environment, proper to a living town. To consider the value of this historical site is to consider it as a whole, as a sum of different factors that the 'new' city has never achieved: a happy mix of urban density, functional variety, high social engagement, and symbolic and figurative references.

Acknowledgment

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1 According to UN 2018 data, the percentage of population living in rural areas in Italy has dramatically decreased over the past 50 years, and in 2050 it is expected to further augment the gap between urban and rural areas. https://population.un.org/wup/Country-Profiles/

2 Angelos Theocaris writes: '[A sensory community] is based on the common experience of the sensory environment. Along with the landmarks and soundmarks that often dominate an environment and have an essential role in navigation through space, other sensory stimuli, separately or jointly with vision and sound, are also able to acquire a symbolic dimension for certain groups of people.' See: Klaske Havik et al., *VADEMECUM: 77 Minor Terms for Writing Urban Places* (Rotterdam: nai010, 2020), 131.

3 Lucio Fontana, *White Manifest = Le Manifeste Blanc = Manifiesto Blanco = Il Manifesto Bianco* (Buenos Aires: Color, Sonido, Movimiento, 1946).

4 Nicolas Bourriaud writes: 'It seems more pressing to invent possible relations to our neighbours in the present, than to bet on happier tomorrows.' See: Nicolas Bourriad, *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon: Les presses du reel, 2009), 45.

5 In her essay 'Forms of Participation in Art', Juliane Rebentisch criticizes Bourriaud's relational aesthetics by arguing that Bourriaud's practice leads to an apolitical creation of 'utopias of social integration', without actually questioning the existing community. See: Juliane Rebentisch, 'Forms of Participation in Art', *Qui Parle* 23/2 (2015), 29-54.

6 Ludovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso et al., *Otto Aargomenti di Architettura* (Milan: Il formichiere, 1978).

Weaving Ensembles Remembering and Finding Stories for the Factory

Fernando Ferreira

Introduction

The recent use of oral history in architectural research has started to focus on the potential of using testimonies and spatial memories as evidence for architects when analysing and imagining places.[1] Many studies that engage with oral history have made efforts to voice and listen to the unheard. However, the topic of how acts of remembering and finding a place's stories can operate outside of the interview,[2] a sometimes constrained model, has yet to be thoroughly addressed in practices of architectural fieldwork.[3] For instance, oral historian Lynn Abrams states that the interview 'often receives the least attention in oral history theory'.[4] Many architects have used the interview as an analytical tool to examine a place's stories, and this essay does not intend to deny the validity of the interview as a suitable technique. Interviews are undoubtedly effective means of communication and valuable practices for finding narrative evidence in many interdisciplinary studies, including architectural fieldwork. Instead, this essay aspires to challenge and push further the performative aspects of the interview: from a short-

term and singular act enacted between the interviewer and the interviewee, where the interviewer often takes more than they give, to a more long-term, giving, messy and 'incorporated' practice of conversational making. Following these arguments, the essay builds on long-term practice-based research developed around Coelima, a textile factory complex founded in 1922 on the outskirts of Guimarães in Portugal, to explore the performative qualities of weaving ensembles as alternative practices of fieldwork that 'interview' through making.

Coelima: a Factory in Motion and a Missing History

Coelima is located in Vale do Ave, in the north-western part of Portugal. It is what one could call a 'factory in motion': an industrial complex that, despite being productively active, interacts with social and spatial processes of dismantlement. This definition includes a group of historical textile factories, built during the twentieth century in the Vale do Ave, that are in a precarious state due to a combination of global and regional economic factors, such as recent deindustrialization, cyclical economic crises in the textile industry and fragile systems of industrial management.[5] However, while the social sciences have been revealing and debating the new social challenges of the Vale do Ave region,[6] there is still little architectural fieldwork being done in such factories in motion that are spread throughout the area.

In this context, one may state that Coelima represents a compelling case study of a factory in motion. Not just because it is rich in historical and narrative evidence, but also because it has been undergoing processes of dismantlement over the past decades, under the passive eye of local citizens, governance bodies, planners and architects.[7] Although the factory was founded in 1922 by Albano Coelho Lima as a family company, in 1991 Coelho Lima sold the factory due to a deep economic crisis that affected the entire region of Vale do Ave. As a result, the factory has gone through several changes since then, including the progressive closure and sale of some productive buildings, the abandonment of its community buildings,



Fig. 1. Liliana Fontoura, Coelima, Pevidém, Portugal, 2020, Photo: Fernando P. Ferreira.

which were once an essential part of its workers' social lives, and the progressive dismissal of textile workers. Indeed, one could argue that Coelima is neither a post-industrial nor a highly technological site of production. Instead, it is a hybrid place, living between decay and production, an unstable socioeconomic present and an ambiguous future. Moreover, there are no written records of Coelima's history after the crisis in 1991. One may affirm that the factory's recent history appears only in the workers' memories, to be remembered through loss, contempt and uncertainty.

Following the absence of narrative evidence, this essay argues that if architects and local agents begin to engage with the factory's stories, it may be feasible to better comprehend Coelima's past, deal with its present and reimagine its future. Therefore, this essay proposes to explore weaving ensembles as a series of 'incorporated memory practices' to find and remember the memories of Coelima's workers, not only to fill the factory's historical gap but also to open up and imagine hypothetical possibilities for its future.[8]

Weaving Ensembles: Finding the Missing Stories of the Factory

The word 'ensemble' refers to the gathering of separate things, people and actions in one location to form a unified whole. In Coelima's context, I use the term ensemble to allude to a collective gathering of weaving with spatial, affective and temporal dimensions that is connected to the social and political life of its buildings. However, it is essential to recall that to investigate weaving as a practice in order to find the factory's recent stories was primarily, but not exclusively, site-specific. Although weaving is the driving force behind the labour performed at Coelima, weaving was also a means to recognize a practice embedded in the textile rituals, industrialized or not, in the Vale do Ave region. In addition, we should not forget that weaving is an ancient art practised by a wide variety of cultures worldwide that serves as a language and as a vehicle for humans to express, process and store information.[9] For instance, philosopher Kathryn Kruger argues that

textiles are one of the earliest forms of text, recalling that 'the written text is a recent form of textile, ancillary to those primary texts "told" or "tooled" in cloth'.[10] As such, one may affirm that textile practices have long been used as an 'art of memory', practised to remember stories.

The weaving ensembles around Coelima were created and organized collaboratively with a group of six retired women, former textile workers. From 2019 to 2021, the workers committed to learn how to weave by hand, while sharing their memories connected to the factory's life. The ensembles promoted acts where learning to listen effectively and how to discuss things with each other became the foundation for creating a 'cooperative' environment, as to remember and find stories.[11] In the following lines, I explain how two cooperative aspects of weaving ensembles – the exchange through which the craft is learned on a redesigned loom and the duration of the weaving process – can offer new insights to consider in finding places' narratives.

Weaving Systems to Find Stories: Loom, Exchange and Duration

More than promoting a conversational process without giving anything in return, the design of weaving ensembles seeks to galvanize a process of reciprocal giving through craft cooperation, an exchange process in which all participants of the ensemble – myself, the workers and others – could benefit from the encounter. Here, I use the term 'exchange' to recall that weaving ensembles promote spatial and temporal dynamics of giving and receiving skills, stories and tacit knowledge.[12]

Moreover, a specific tool was required to enact the weaving ensembles: the loom. A loom is a hand-operated or electronic machine of which the primary principle is to hold the warp threads in tension to enable the interweaving of weft threads, thus creating a weave. Although the loom has symbolic meanings related to domestic spaces in cultures that go beyond ancient Greece,[13] I do not wish to hold onto the loom's nostalgic pretensions.



Fig. 2. Pevidém, Portugal, after 2020. Photo: Fernando P. Ferreira.





Fig. 3+4. Pevidém, Portugal, after 2020. Photo: Fernando P. Ferreira.

Instead, and inspired by artist and weaver Anni Albers's teaching experiences at the Black Mountain College,[14] I returned to the ancient weaving modes on a backstrap loom[15] and redesigned it into a double backstrap loom.[16] One might say that this loom typology only operates with the bodily presence of another.

Nevertheless, it is vital to comprehend that weaving with the loom brought other rewards. First, the portability of the backstrap loom, in contrast to most looms that are difficult to carry, permitted moving the weaving ensembles into the public spaces around Coelima. Second, setting up the backstrap looms and weaving in public attracted more encounters beyond the pre-established group of female workers. Many local voices – workers, local citizens, agents and governance bodies – joined in a process where memories and stories did not always fit together as a group, but instead were dynamic as a 'polyphony', agreeing or clashing with one another.[17] For instance, when discussing the effects of recent successive changes in the factory's administration, workers contradicted each other:

> *RM: I didn't feel any differences at work after the change in administration, because we dealt with those in charge and had a good relationship with them.*
>
> *M: I don't agree with that. I noticed a lot of differences, even though I didn't know the administrators. Since we stopped knowing the bosses, I felt it was very different. For example, the work was much more demanding and under more pressure.*

Within this view, one might consider the loom as a 'dialogic' machine that enabled cooperative processes of communicating human stories, accepting confrontation, contradiction and agreement.[18] Furthermore, the double backstrap loom can be replicated and rearranged differently in any public space. In that case, one can argue that these looms can choreograph dif-

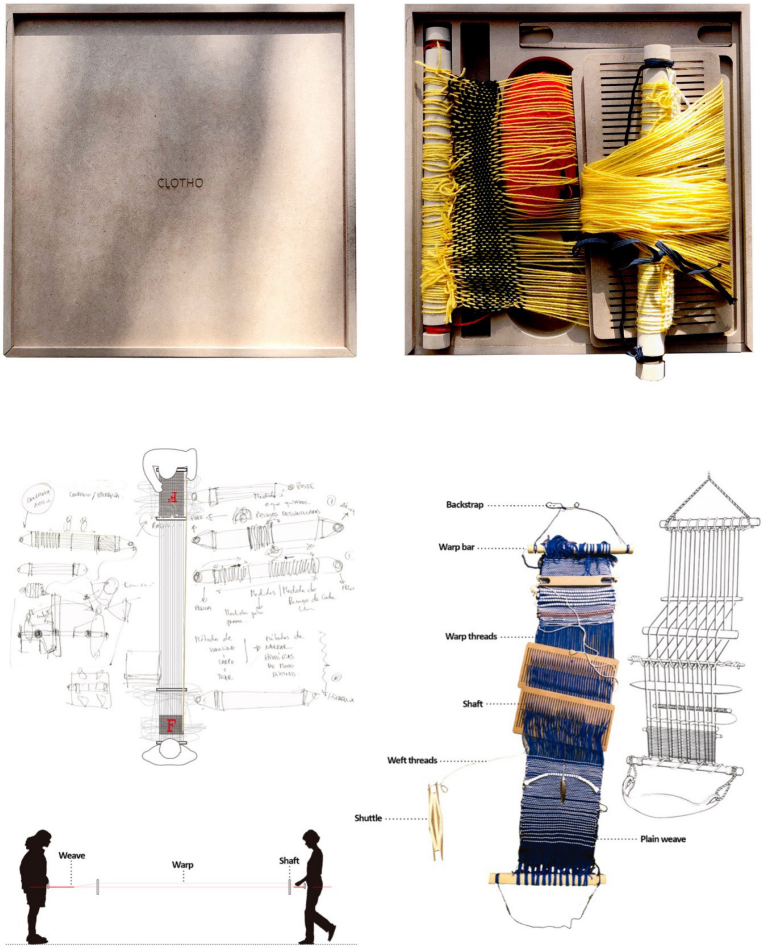


Fig. 5. Photo: Fernando P. Ferreira, 2020.

ferent spatial settings for various modes of public exchange, which may benefit architects and planners to enact creative ways of mediating and assessing local memories through making and storytelling.

All of the preparation and procedures for weaving need physical labour, devotion, patience, and time, in actions such as selecting the fibres, wrapping, setting up the loom and weaving. Here, I use the term 'duration' to allude to the timeframe, seriality and repetitive aspects of the weaving ensembles over time and space. The time-consuming nature of these acts of weaving may appear to be a drawback, especially in comparison with the fast pace of contemporary work.[19] However, I want to suggest that the durational aspects of the weaving ensembles can facilitate environments of trust for participants to remember and reveal occluded memories, related to buildings with complicated historical backgrounds. For example, during the first weaving ensembles, when asking a former seamstress how Coelima's 1991 crisis had affected her, the answer was vague:

> *Fernando: How were you affected by the Coelima crisis in 1991?*
>
> *RM: Hmmm. . . one strike or another. . . a few days of strikes, I guess. . . but the factory never stopped. . . [long pause] but I continued to earn my salary.*

In those situations, hesitations, trembling, pauses or extended silences would come to the fore through the workers' voices, denouncing what the speaker could be occluding, as suggested by medical sociologist Anne Karpf, who states that:

> *[The voice] belongs to both the body and mind . . . it bridges our internal and external worlds, travelling from our most private recesses into the public domain, revealing not only our deepest sense of who we are, but also who we wish we weren't.*[20]

If the voice is embodied in constructing the self's identity, as noted by Karpf, moments of silence while trying to remember can also be seen as a sign of repressed memories or self-censorship.[21]

Nonetheless, the duration of the weaving ensembles resulted in more time to learn from the silences, allowing workers to construct social bonds as a group. Indeed, duration and the repetitive rituals of weaving together granted opportunities for the workers to transform nonverbal pauses and omissions into active ways of verbal confession when remembering their labour life. For instance, when asking the same question related to Coelima's crisis to the same worker eight months later, a more unexpected answer was provided:

> *RM: When Coelima ended up as a family company, a new administration was posted by the bank. That's when things got a little more complicated. I went two months without receiving a salary.*

Although this is just a brief example of how the duration of the weaving process can become a space for revelation, one could argue that the ensemble's participants were more open and sensitive to disclosing buried layers within their memories while recognizing their political positionalities towards the factory.

Stories as a 'Pre-Condition' to Reimagine the Factory's Future

The emphasis of this essay has been on demonstrating the procedural benefits of weaving ensembles rather than their outcomes. Although the ensembles promoted actions of weaving freely without preconceived goals, it is essential to recall that different weaving techniques were explored while sharing collective and individual stories. For instance, at some point the ensemble's participants decided to select and write parts of their shared stories on paper and weave the written pieces of paper into the cloth. At the end, the outcome resulted in threads, paper and words entangled in six compelling, woven artefacts created by multiple hands.



Fig. 6. Photo: Fernando P. Ferreira, 2020.

Furthermore, the ensembles also resulted in transcripts that reunited a polyphony of recorded oral memories of many workers and local agents who participated in the ensembles. The transcripts revealed anonymous information related to the history of Coelima over the last 30 years, uncovering which productive buildings had been sold to other textile enterprises through a process of alienation and denouncing how former community buildings of the factory had fallen into neglect, while pointing out the difficulties for architectural design in imagining and programming the future of these spaces:

> *RP: The factory is being sold and divided into distinct parts. Look, this area was for finishing and printing, and now we sold it. That was the training centre on the first floor, which has been closed for about three years. Ah, that was the supermarket built in the 1970s. It was the first supermarket in Portugal. Now it is empty. It is for sale. (active male chief of the textile department, 14 August 2021)*

> *J: What has happened here in Coelima has happened in many other industries in Ave that have gone to the dogs. Local authorities don't have the resources to redesign all of these abandoned spaces. And, also, to restore them and then not to know what to put there . . . (former foreman of weaving department, 21 August 2021)*

Additionally, the transcripts revealed how certain workers still face social inequalities within the factory's spatial dynamics, which are promoted by labour hierarchies and relations of power:

> *E: We used to enter the factory and then move. I mean, we practically couldn't move freely, because we couldn't leave our workstation a lot, except to go to the canteen or the bar in our half hour off. If people we knew saw us in other departments, they could correct us. We couldn't do that. (active female seamstress, 21 August 2020)*

> *M: In the weaving department, there were the supervisors' offices that were next to the looms, and they had windows where they could see everything outside. We didn't have time to stop. We were always working. But behind us, watching, there was always someone, always. (active female weaver, 11 September 2020)*

It is certain that among the oral stories explained here superficially, memories are still lost or forgotten, which did not come up in the many ensembles enacted. Nevertheless, the woven artefacts and transcripts of stories helped to reorganize the complexity of Coelima's recent history while denouncing critical ethical issues in the workplace's dynamics that revealed the presence of surveillance and constraints of movement in the factory for certain positions in the labour hierarchy. Indeed, one may argue that the stories found through the performative features of the weaving ensembles highlight ambiguous and ethical dilemmas that were lived in the factory's life. These sorts of revelations are essential for architects and planners to deal with 'response-ability'[22] and for a critical perspective when reimagining scenarios for Coelima's future. Considering that, should these stories not be reconsidered by architects, planners and local agents as beginnings to reimagine the factory differently? Furthermore, should we not encourage more weaving ensembles as modes of storytelling in architectural fieldwork to expand agency?

To answer these questions, it is vital to recall that the weavings and transcripts produced should not be viewed as mnemonic or nostalgic fieldwork practices, in line with modernist conceptions of understanding memory as object-based processes. By doing so, the results could easily be forgotten.[23] Instead, I want to suggest that these outcomes can only become useful if they become a strategy of 'persuasive storytelling' for planners and architects.[24] One where found memories and story-based desires are studied and overlap, 'not [as] a passive depository of facts, but [as] an active process of creation of meanings', to imagine and to rethink Coelima's future.[25] If one

follows that vision, perhaps finding stories through weaving ensembles can create an innovative ‘prescription’[26] for architectural design: a story-based beginning that aspires to catalyse more and new stories in the architectural imaginatio.[27]





Fig. 7 and 8. Photo: Fernando P. Ferreira, 2020.

1 There is a substantial bibliography of oral history in architectural research. For example, see Naomi Stead, Janina Gosseye and Deborah van der Plaat (eds.), *Speaking of Buildings: Oral History in Architectural Research* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2019); Jesse Adams Stein, 'The Co-construction of Spatial Memory', *Fabrications* 24/2 (2014), 178-197; Janina Gosseye, 'Editorial', *Fabrications* 24/2 (2014), 147-155.

2 Earlier attempts to combine oral history with architecture often focused on interviews. Philipe Boudon, for instance, released *Lived-In Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969), a study of Le Corbusier's first housing project in the French commune of Pessac, based in part on post-occupancy interviews with tenants. Likewise, John Peter released *The Oral History of Modern Architecture* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1994), a collection of interviews with some of the most prominent modernist architects.

3 I follow architect Suzanne Erwing's vision of fieldwork as a tacit practice that works with the immaterial, the 'unfinished, the decayed, the abstract conditions of site', or, as I intend to focus on here, the place's stories. See Suzanne Erwing, 'Introduction', in: Suzanne Erwing at al. (eds.), *Architecture and Field/Work* (London: Routledge, 2010), 4.

4 Lynn Abrams, *Oral History Theory* (London: Routledge, 2016), 10.

5 For a complete understanding of how the Vale do Ave region has been socially affected by processes of industrial, read José Virgílio Borges Pereira, *Ao Cair do Pano: Sobre a Formação do Quotidiano num Contexto (Des)Industrializado do Vale do Ave* [At the Fall of the Cloth: On the Formation od Daily Life in a (De) Indistrialized Context of Vale do Ave] (Porto: Edições Afrontamento, 2012).

6 Esser Jorge Silva, *Fabricados na Fábrica: Uma Narrativa Operária do Séc. XXI* [Produced in the Factory: A Proletariat of the XXI Century] (Vila Nova de Famalicão: Edições Humus, 2012).

7 It is essential to recall the existence of the factory's monthly newspaper *O Miral/ Boletim Coelima*, which published institutional stories from 1963 to 1989. The factory's editorial staff produced the newspaper from top to bottom, and it promoted moralist and propagandist writings that discussed labour and cultural issues.

8 In his book *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), anthropologist Paul Connerton differentiated object-based memorials (inscribing practices) from physical acts of repetition (incorporating practices) as distinct practices of memory preservation. He argued that incorporating practices successfully extended memory because they may become part of the human's

consciousness. Architect Adrian Forty extended this study of memory in his book *The Art of Forgetting (Materializing Culture)* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, 1999), pushing these notions to the field of architecture, and arguing that modern architecture has been reproducing a model of crystallizing memory in buildings.

9 For example, philosopher Sadie Plant argues that 'the textures of woven cloth functioned as means of communication and information storage long before anything was written down'. See: Sadie Plant, *Zeros and Ones: Digital Women and the New Technoculture* (London: Fourth Estate, 1998), 65.

10 Kathryn Sullivan Kruger, *Weaving the Word: The Metaphorics of Weaving and Female Textual Production* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 2002), 33.

11 Richard Sennett, *Together: the Rituals, Pleasures, and Politics of Cooperation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

12 Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009).

13 Indra Kagis McEwen, *Socrates' Ancestor: An Essay on Architectural Beginnings* (Cambridge: MIT Press Ltd, 1993), 109.

14 Briony Fer recalls that 'Anni Albers described the college as a laboratory "where thought can be tested against action"'. See: Briony Fer, 'Black Mountain College Exercises', in: Ann Coxon, Briony Fer and Maria Muller-Schareck (eds.), *Anni Albers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 65.

15 'The term backstrap loom . . . refers to any loom on which the warp is stretched between some stationary object and the body of the weaver'. See: Eric Broudy, *The Book of Looms: A History of the Handloom from Ancient Times to the Present* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1993), 232-233.

16 The double backstrap loom is composed of two weaving shafts, two warp bars and two shuttles. To be set up to weave, it always needs two human bodies to put the warp threads under tension.

17 Polyphony is a musical concept that Mikhail Bakhtin used to describe Dostoevsky's work as containing several voices that are not subordinate to the author's voice. Bakhtin argues that each voice has its own perspective. See Mikhail Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984).

18 Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983).

19 Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2000), 323-338.

20 Anne Karpf, *The Human Voice: The Story of a Remarkable Talent* (London: Bloomsbury, 2007), 4.

21 Historian Luisa Passerini noted, for example, that Italian workers did not talk much about the Fascist era. Passerini argued that the silences are as essential to study as the individual voices in oral history research. See: Luisa Passerini, 'Work, Ideology and Consensus under Italian Fascism', *History Workshop Journal*, 8 (1979), 91.

22 Donna J. Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2016).

23 Forty, op. cit. (note 8).

24 James A. Throgmorton, *Planning as Persuasive Storytelling: The Rhetorical Construction of Chicago's Electric Future* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).

25 Alessandro Portelli, 'What Makes Oral History Different', in: Alistair Thomson and Robert Perks (eds.), *The Oral History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2003), 69.

26 Klaske Havik, *Urban Literacy. Reading and Writing Architecture* (Rotterdam: nai010 publishers, 2014).

27 Urban historian Dolores Hayden has suggested that a place's memories should be explored as a 'strategy to foster urban public history', arguing that 'memories of places would probably trigger more stories'. See: Dolores Hayden, *Power of Place* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), 47.

My Photostory, your Photostory, our Neighbourhood
Photography with Captions in the Participatory Urban Regeneration Process

Matej Nikšič

Introduction

The paradigm of sustainable development places special attention on minimizing the environmental impacts of urban development. It favours processes of urban regeneration over greenfield developments. The clear prioritization of improvements in already urbanized areas aims at improving and doing more with the things we already have.[1] The reuse of the existing urban fabric is a comprehensive task, not only because the new standards and expectations of the end-users need to be met, but also due to the complexity of the stakeholder networks involved and affected by the process. Contrary to greenfield developments, the urban regeneration process will always encounter some actors that already exist within the space of concern. Thus, one of the challenges is the inclusion of existing users in regeneration activities.

This inclusion is of crucial importance in older residential areas with long-time established communities, but of which the built environment and its functionalities do not meet the needs of contemporary life anymore. On the one hand, existing users have their own aspirations and an imagination of the possible futures of their places. On the other, they know the places from a user's perspective much better than any (professional) visitor from the outside and can thus contribute valuable insights to the different phases – from the analytical and planning phases to the implementation of the steps of the regeneration process. An additional issue is the variety of points of view within the diverse community of residents – each may have their own ideas,[2] and getting to know a shared understanding of the state of the art is methodologically demanding in the practice of urban planning and design.

This paper illustrates how an urban regeneration process can potentially be enhanced by the active participation of a local community by using photographs with captions as the main medium for the exchange of knowledge. In the present case study, the residents of an older residential neighbourhood in suburban Ljubljana were invited to share their perceptions of the place through a newly developed tool called 'Photostory of Our Neighbourhood' (PON).

Theoretical Background

Community-based urban regeneration (CBUR) has become a popular approach for improving the quality of life in older urban environments.[3] It addresses different aspects of sustainable development at once. Its participatory dimension makes it socially sustainable as it employs community activities and (re-)establishes the social ecosystems of a city.[4] By upgrading and enhancing the already existing physical and functional assets of a city (instead of exploiting new assets) it is resource efficient,[5] and by improving the urban fabric for the better it also makes the city more attractive and in turn more robust in economic terms.[6]

Despite its growing participatory dimension, however, urban regeneration also remains a professional activity situated between many disciplines. As a distinctively interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary endeavour, urban planning demands a great amount of coordination and harmonization between the involved disciplines to make them operational and reach the desired goals.[7]

One of the current issues of CBUR, which is being addressed extensively both in scholarly work and in practice, is the challenge of fully integrating the views of citizens into the urban regeneration process. Among other things, it is increasingly important to have the relevant, concrete methods and tools that actually work and can provide a shared basis for the different professional and community-based actors to contribute to. Since the 1990s, various attempts to achieve this can be traced in this field, of which many started as an experimental approach and only later became part of established practices.[8]

One such method is the photovoice, which was developed by Wang and Burris in their attempt to reveal people's needs in the improvement of health conditions.[9] Since then, the photovoice has gained popularity as a qualitative and practical method for research, which allows the visualization of an individual's perceptions of their everyday life.[10] The method is grounded in image-based material and its related narratives that offer insights into community issues. The use of photovoice accumulates community knowledge and, more importantly, can lead to the professional to better insights and to an understanding of a community's notions and perceptions of their living environment, which can lead to the development of effective and comprehensive strategies to address complex urban regeneration issues that will potentially not only be accepted but also be meaningful for the communities involved. For the community, the photovoice is an opportunity to share information with policymakers.[11]

Over the last years, and along with the development of digital technologies, the photovoice became even more used in urban planning processes.[12] The fast development of a digital literacy is making the photovoice a more common and well-spread approach, yet, some methodological questions remain. One of the key concerns in the practice of urban planning is the question of how to expand the framework and include the steps to analyse visual images at a deeper level, to meaningfully influence not only decision-making processes in concrete cases but also policymaking as such.[13]

In these endeavours, a school of thought is emerging that approaches the issue through the framework of the emergent property.[14] It is grounded in the assumption that even when the notions and perceptions of each individual member of a local community differ, there are also common characteristics of the community as an entity, where the community's characteristics are not simply the sum of the individual's characteristics – they are linked and act together. Getting to know such emergent properties of a local community can inform the urban regeneration process which in turn allows for the adaptation of the living environment to increase its likeability by responding to the residents' needs and desires, and thus to increase wellbeing.[15]

Methodological Approach

This paper presents explorative experimentation with the concrete tool within the range of the emerging photovoice approaches. The Photostory of Our Neighbourhood tool is based on digital photographs provided by the residents along with short captions of 200 characters at most. The development of the tool had the following goals: to establish an easy-to-use platform for revealing the assets of the neighbourhood as seen through the eyes of the residents; to establish a venue for public discourse where not only the negative aspects of the older environments would be discussed, but also where the positive characteristics would be promoted, thus making the residents aware of the qualities of their living environment and raising

their local pride; and last but not least, to activate the residents' participation in shared discussions on the possible futures of their neighbourhood. The final desired outcome of the experimentation was to test the possibilities of integrating some predefined, urban-planning-process-grounded elements into the tool that would allow an easier and more direct interpretation and integration of the gathered materials (photos and related narratives) into the urban planning process. In this way, the experimentation with PON differs from the previously developed photovoice approaches.

The Ruski Car Neighbourhood in Ljubljana: A Testing Bed for Reading the City through Residents' Participation

Between 2015 and 2018, a civil initiative called *Skupaj na ploščad!* (Together on the Platform!) and two institutions – the Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of Slovenia (UIRS) and the Museum of Architecture and Design (MAO) – joined forces to experiment with new approaches to participatory urban regeneration. The activities were organized within the Human Cities partnership established under the European Union's 'Creative Europe' programme.

The activities took place in one of the largest and densest neighbourhoods of Ljubljana, popularly called Ruski Car (in English: Russian Tsar), which was built on the outskirts of the Slovenian capital in the 1970s. The neighbourhood was thoughtfully planned with all of the facilities needed for daily life (such as local shops, sports facilities, a primary school and kindergartens). It has a distinctive urban layout, characterized by tall apartment blocks of up to 15 stories, which are attached to one another and have a clearly defined, street-like public space between them. In the decades after the construction, this open space functioned as a true social space in the neighbourhood and was, according to the memories of the locals, characterized by spontaneous encounters and children's play.[16] Nowadays, the neighbourhood distinctively shows a different image – due to changed patterns in everyday life (long working and schooling hours, digitization,

motorization, etcetera). The large, open space is rarely used for social activities in the open air and at best serves as a transition space between the different parts of the neighbourhood.

However, this central and open space was recognized by many, both by professionals and residents, as one of the spaces that are the most underused, but have the highest potential for local life. To address this issue and to open a wider discussion about its qualities and opportunities, a group of residents organized the civil initiative *Skupaj na ploščad!* and started organizing public gatherings. The starting activities were meant to be simple and catchy to attract other local inhabitants, which resulted in the organization of themed social activities such as neighbourhood walks, open-air street-furniture workshops as well as film screenings. These activities were meant to be a trigger for the development of a stronger and broader participatory approach to the urban regeneration of the whole neighbourhood. New actors joined the process along the way, among them the institutions from the field of participatory urban design. In a collaborative endeavour with the residents, the aim of such a joint approach was to develop a better understanding of the state of the older neighbourhood, seen through the eyes of the residents who live in the space and use it on a daily basis. Various new tools were developed to enable the residents to express their perceptions and points of view. Some of them were held in real time and on site, such as neighbourhood picnics and urban games, while others were developed online to include the residents who did not want or could not join the in-person activities.[17]

One of these tools was Photostory of Our Neighbourhood. PON is an online tool that invites any resident to express their own observations of the state of the neighbourhood through digital photography and a caption by contributing it to the common online database. Among other things, one of the goals of such observations of the neighbourhood was to be a starting point for a more active involvement of residents in conceptualizing the possible

improvements of the neighbourhood through a moderated participatory process in the long run, as well as building a database that is at the disposal to any professional that has to deal with the particular space and its users in the regeneration process.

Focusing on the Positive Attributes of the Neighbourhood and its Shared Values

The interdisciplinary team of professionals from UIRS that developed PON had various experiences in participatory urban regeneration from other older areas before they got involved in the Ruski Car neighbourhood. These previous experiences showed that residents often tend to focus on the negative aspects of their older living environments when they are asked to share their opinions.[18] Thus the point of departure of PON was rather specific: the tool aimed to encourage residents to reveal the positive aspects of their own living environment from the very start. Five thematic clusters were defined along the lines of urban regeneration objectives (see Table 1 for a detailed description): most pleasant place in my neighbourhood, professions in my neighbourhood, my neighbour, boundaries of my neighbourhood, shared values in my neighbourhood. These clusters aimed at encouraging the residents to seek out the positive aspects of their built environment, its social dynamics as well as its economic vitality.

Table 1: Five thematic categories of Photostory of Our Neighbourhood (PON).

Most Pleasant Place in my Neighbourhood
We usually spend a major part of our time in our neighbourhood, therefore its arrangements importantly influence the quality of our life. What are the spaces in the neighbourhood that I like, find interesting, and like to spend time in? What makes them pleasant? Is it because of the activities that take place there, the people that spend time there, street furniture, the presence of natural elements, or maybe the light and colours or details of the surrounding buildings? Try to show the places of your neighbourhood that you find pleasant and explain what makes them attractive through the photo and its caption.



Fig. 1. ‘A concrete block of flats and a field of buckwheat are flirting’ (category: Borders of my Neighbourhood).
Photo: Helena Lapanje.



Fig. 2. ‘Growing big from a small’ (category: My Neighbour).
Photo: Matej Vinko.

Professions in my Neighbourhood

Good neighbourhoods are not merely sleeping spaces, but places where different activities and programmes take place that cater to the needs of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood and the city. The bakery on the street corner, the sales person in a local shop, the driver of a bus that stops in the neighbourhood, the local gardener, etcetera. These are only a few of the more visible professions that importantly contribute to the quality of life in a neighbourhood. At the same time, there are many other professions that are more hidden to our eyes – people with different skills, abilities and knowledge. Present their activities through a photo and its caption.

My Neighbour

The fast rhythm of contemporary life and new ways of communication, supported by new communication technologies, are changing and often weakening contacts between people that live in the same space. With the help of a photo and its caption, capture the moments that show that neighbourhoods are inhabited by social beings who, despite changed ways of life, still come together, and still support and help each other. Street games, chatting on a bench in a local park, or ringing a neighbour's door because you have run out of flour while baking biscuits: these are examples of activities that join people together in a neighbourhood. Photos with captions in this category should show that lively neighbourhoods are inhabited by people who make good neighbours, instead of being complete strangers to each other.

Borders of my Neighbourhood

How far does my neighbourhood spread out? Where are its borders and what defines them? Are they physically, functionally, or symbolically defined? Borders may sometimes be clear and exact, sometimes blurry and fluid. Getting to know the borders is helpful to someone who tries to go beyond them, or to strengthen the distinctive identity of the space within. Present the borders of your neighbourhood with the help of a photo and its caption.



Fig. 3. ‘Golden ear of wheat’ (category: Most Pleasant Place in my Neighbourhood). Photo: Matej Vinko.



Fig. 4. ‘The image shows a man selling chestnuts. He makes people happy with chestnuts and good temper’ (category: Professions in my Neighbourhood). Photo: Domen Pukl Kopinč.

Shared Values in my Neighbourhood

What are the values that are shared by the inhabitants of my neighbourhood? What ideals unite us as a community? How are these reflected in space? And can they be a basis for common action by inhabitants trying to improve the living conditions of a neighbourhood? Values are an immaterial category, but are nevertheless often reflected in the physical and real environment. This category collects photos that show the state of the neighbourhood, reflecting the values of its inhabitants.

The residents were invited to share their own notions of their living environment through photography and short captions. In doing so, they expressed their personal notions in relation to the depicted environments within each thematic cluster. However, to better support the process of urban regeneration, besides the personal notions of each resident, the team of urban designers sought to learn what notions and perceptions were held in common by and shared among the residents. From previous experiences, the UIRS team knew that the synthetical interpretation of the submitted materials can only be partly helpful in this respect. In order to get deeper insights, the residents were therefore also asked to attach any number of predefined tags addressing the so-called shared values when submitting the materials to PON. These shared values were defined by the urban designers based on previous experiences in participatory urban design.[19] They were seen as just as important as the captioned photography itself, as they could possibly form the basis for the development of scenarios for the possible future of the neighbourhood. Table 2 shows the list of shared values from which the residents could select.

Table 2: PON's shared values with definitions. (1/2)

Shared Value	Definition
Empathy	The ability to understand and share the feelings of others, despite different backgrounds and life experiences. Empathy creates a bond between individuals that ends up becoming part of their shared identity.
Wellbeing	A state of feeling healthy and happy. It is a contribution o society through knowledge, culture, design, music, ecology, healthy food or the renovation of public spaces. The main goal of wellbeing is to improve living conditions so that people can achieve a better physical and mental health.
Sustainability	Sustainability is concerned with meeting the needs of the current population without compromising those of future generations. It includes environmental, social and economic aspects.
Intimacy	The possibility of feeling a sense of closeness with people, objects or places.
Conviviality	Living together and sharing ideas, activities, discussions, etcetera, to create a common spirit, a sense of belonging around which people can gather and that they find meaningful.
Mobility	The capacity of citizens to leave their private spaces and move into public ones.

Table 2: PON's shared values with definitions. (2/2)

Shared Value	Definition
Accessibility	Being open to everyone and easily reachable. It has both a geographic and a social meaning.
Imagination	The ability of the mind to be creative with new images, ideas, concepts, etcetera. The imagination is the main source of images and dreams of new solutions to our daily problems.
Leisure	Free time. To be away from the demands of work and duty, when one can rest, take it easy and enjoy hobbies or sports.
Aesthetics	A visual attribute aimed at beauty, creativity and innovation, which provides an identity to a place.
Sensoriality	The mobilization of a person's senses, whether hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling or touching.
Solidarity	Solidarity is a unity of people sharing the same interests in order to help each other.
Respect	Respect is showing due regard to people's lives, opinions, wishes and rights. It implies that there are no barriers or stereotypes that come between us.

PON was used for the first time in the autumn of 2016. It was promoted through local social media platforms, while some residents were invited to join through the on-site activities taking place in Ruski Car, too. However, PON was not limited to this neighbourhood, anyone that wanted to contribute to the online database was welcome to do so as long as the rules of the game were respected.

Within two months, 172 entries were received and an online exhibition was prepared, later accompanied by an exhibition in Ruski Car's central, public, open space. At the same time, a public in-person event was organized where all entries were presented to and debated on with the locals in the format of a discussion forum. The event was not only an opportunity to strengthen the social relations in the community, but also a moment for the professionals to directly get in contact with the residents and address urban regeneration issues through a moderated discussion. These conversations revealed the nuances in the interpretation of the PON materials, which are often hidden from an observer. The event was also an opportunity for the local authorities to get more directly involved.

Informed by the insights from the public forum, the UIRS professionals then further analysed the PON materials.[20] As already observed in previous scholarly work, one of the limitations of the photovoice is the rather open-ended interpretation of the materials provided by the participants.[21] In the case of PON this issue was intentionally addressed when the basic framework was set up, the five thematic categories were defined and the shared values were determined in advance, and the residents had to link them to their submitted materials when uploading photos to PON. There were new lessons learned in this process, as will be discussed further on.

Personal Photostories as a Part of the Emergent Property

The PON database allowed urban designers to get insights into concrete places and their characteristics that mattered to the local residents in

general. The interplay between the visual material and the related, short descriptions was helpful to understand what the respondents wanted to communicate by the selection of a location as well as through the elements shown in the photographs. The first step of the analysis was done within the cluster of the five thematic categories. The images were qualitatively interpreted in terms of 1) mapping which places within the community they showed, 2) what kind of physical infrastructures they addressed, and 3) which activities and users appeared. As the visual scenes on the photos were usually rich in elements and possible interpretations, the captions were used as a support to define the intended meaning that the contributing resident had in mind. In this way, concrete places in the neighbourhood were recognized and the related issues that matter to the residents were listed. This influenced the further programming of participatory urban regeneration activities in the neighbourhood.

An additional layer of information that was embedded in the PON materials contained the tags of shared values, which characterized these places in the opinion of the residents and were attached to the images. The UIRS team analysed the frequency of each value for each of the five thematic categories and thus understood not only which values are the most common in each of the five thematic categories, it also hinted at what matters most in each of the urban regeneration focuses. The frequency of occurrence of certain shared values was also very helpful in the follow-up discussions with residents as a trigger to address shared points of view among them. Thus, in methodological terms, the predefined set of shared values proved to be useful as one of the possible foundations for the photovoice-informed, decision-making process.

Without a doubt, each of the submitted photographs with a caption and a number of tags listing shared values brought very valuable and deeper insights into different levels of urban regeneration considerations. However, some open questions remain.[22] One remaining question is central to the

everyday practice of participatory urban planning and design. Given that the photovoice only reaches a limited amount of inhabitants in the local population, how, then, can this kind of visual material inform the urban design strategies and concrete approaches in general? Additionally, even if the PON experiment showed the usefulness of the predefined categories as a common ground for evaluating and interpreting the gathered visual material, it still seems that the final interpretation of the (photo)story (with captions) potentially relies as much on the eyes of the 'resident-as-photographer' as on the eyes of the 'urban-designer-as-reader', or any other professional or member of the wider public that interprets it. So how can the contributed photographs with their captions potentially enhance the participatory urban regeneration at the level of a wider community and the city as a whole?

Let us very briefly refer to the conceptual framework of emergent properties at this point. The term is used in both natural and social sciences, where it was defined as one of the causal properties of social structures that appears only at a certain level of complexity and does not pertain to the elements out of which the social structure is composed.[23] Could the understanding of the characteristics of an urban environment through an appropriate amount of visual material with captions and predefined tags provided by residents, potentially become such an emergent property through the further development and general accessibility of digital technologies? This further leads to the question of the complex system, which, according to Herber A. Simon, can be explained as:

> *. . . one made up of a large number of parts that interact in a nonsimple way. In such systems, the whole is more than the sum of the parts, not in an ultimate, metaphysical sense, but in the important pragmatic sense that, given the properties of the parts and the laws of their interaction, it is not a trivial matter to infer the properties of the whole.*[24]

The previous experiences and the constant development of photovoice approaches, as well as the experience with the PON experiment, indicate that the optimism about making the residents heard in the urban regeneration process has a positive outlook. However, further methodological endeavours through more testing and experimentation without fear of failure must be encouraged.

Concluding Thoughts

The Human Cities initiatives in the Ruski Car neighbourhood illustrate that enhancing participatory urban regeneration tools based on visual material and produced by residents ultimately has the potential to produce a participatory reading of space and consequently influence the whole regeneration process. Such tools reveal the assets of the neighbourhood as seen through the eyes of a resident, or to put it more accurately, they reveal the assets of the neighbourhood as seen through the combined eyes of the residents. However, the question of an emergent property must be addressed instantly whenever such an approach is implemented if the urban regeneration process is to be truly community-centred. The ontological in(ter)dependence of a system's characteristics on individual characteristics may be asserted pragmatically in such cases and may allow for an explanatory independence in which the collective rises above the individual. As mentioned at the beginning of this paper, brownfield redevelopments will be more and more present on urban development agendas in the coming years and many actors will have to be involved in the processes in order to provide the environments that will fulfil the expectations and needs of the many and not just a few. The question of new participatory tools will thus become even more important in the future and approaches based on widely practised techniques such as digital, contemporary photography may gain importance. The methodological and practical issues exposed in this paper will have to be addressed further and many new experimental endeavours and fieldwork will be a welcome testing field

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From Planning for Rural Development to Planning for Deliberation: Reflecting the 'Mehr als Wohnen 4.0' Project

Eva Schwab

Scales of Engagement

Participatory processes and citizen consultations seem to have become a new orthodoxy in planning. The quality of these efforts (for example the issue of tokenism)[1] and the actual influence that participants have on these processes[2] (for example the issue of co-production),[3] however, are a source of much debate.[4] Looking at the spheres of influence in participatory practices shows the levels of engagement allowed in or supported by these practices.[5] It also reveals the range of actors involved and their differential rights, thus offering insights into structural moments of in- and exclusion.[6]

In this context, the question of scale is especially relevant. On the one hand, scale refers to the practicality of creating 'relevant' information on a regional scale. A lot of research stresses that the local is the preferred scale to engage both citizens and knowledge to create meaningfulness. Larger scales as the national or supranational, in contrast, tend to have a paralysing effect.[7] The territorial or regional scale, then, offers a possibility to connect these two ends of the continuum. It offers the opportunity for participatory processes that struggle with NIMBYism to not lose sight of bigger development goals. On the other hand, scale refers to the spheres of influence that are translated into spatial realities. Identifying two rationalities of participation, the inclusive and the substantive, Natarajan points out that even though both start from the idea of 'shared interests', which legitimize and motivate the involvement in participatory formats, they have divergent interpretations of scale.[8] Whereas the inclusive ideal starts from the construction of spheres of influence in terms of affected populace, the substantive rationale behind participation is that planning should be a site of social learning in which new understandings of certain problems can be constructed. While scale refers to a fixed dimension or geographical area in the first case, in the latter it entails the definition of a specific territory,[9] unearthed through deliberation[10] and dialogue,[11] that cannot be fixed in advance.

The Context

This fieldwork experience is the result of a project titled 'Mehr als Wohnen 4.0'[12] (in English: 'More Than Housing 4.0') in Styria, a province in the southeast of Austria, which has faced considerable structural changes since the decline of its steel industry. Graz, the province's capital, is Austria's second largest city after Vienna and one of the metropolitan areas with the strongest increase in inhabitants, whereas areas outside of the metropolitan dynamic are characterized by a rural exodus.[13] One of these areas is Upper Styria, which is adapting to the loss of its long-time established steel industry and the associated structural changes since the 1960s. However, an

important part of the industry remains and has successfully redirected its efforts towards high-tech and materials science, offering qualified and well-paying jobs. The region is also strong in alpine tourism, both in summer and winter. Yet, outsiders do not recognize it as a desirable place to live but rather as a place to commute to, which not only puts a strain on municipal budgets, but also has effects on traffic and associated sustainability issues. Over the years, there have been various regional programmes to bring back growth.[14]

Faced with this situation, the regional development agency commissioned the Institute of Urbanism at the Graz University of Technology to develop a 'more than housing' strategy for the region: a regional design vision based on locally specific projects that combine different forms of housing and social infrastructure. The brief asked to actively include decision makers and multipliers to create a shared vision for the municipalities, to render the region visible as a good place to live, and to promote more sustainable forms of housing as an alternative to the prevailing single-family homes.

The rationale behind the commission can be read as a 'planning for growth' approach[15] in the context of the shrinkage induced by deindustrialization.[16] In this approach, urban design as well as measures reagrding the housing industry play a major role, as they have for the last 20 years.[17] Often, these measures continue existing planning strategies, such as zoning law for new construction, without reflecting the actual challenges related to the resiliency of the concerned municipalities in the face of possible future crises.[18]

Methods of Engagement

A multi-layered and multi-stakeholder analysis was conducted on both the regional and local scale and in combination with diverse communication formats in order to, on the one hand, understand each municipality's position within the network of cities and villages in this region and, on the other,

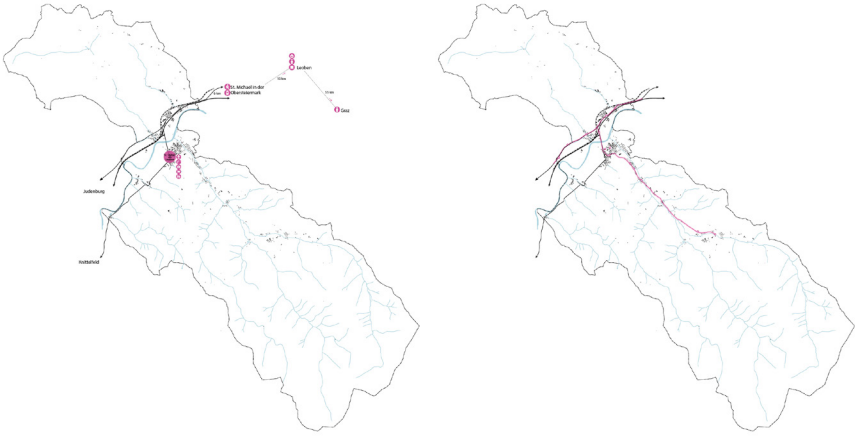


Fig. 1. Graphic analysis of public transport coverage and availability of social infrastructure in St. Stefan ob Leoben. ©Institute of Urbanism at TU Graz, Austria.

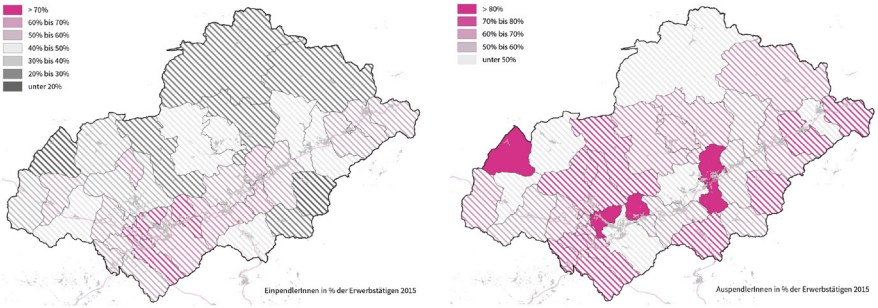


Fig. 2. Graphic analysis of inward and outward commuting in eastern Upper Styria. ©Institute of Urbanism at TU Graz, Austria.

to share the feedback and outcomes of this effort with stakeholders in the region. The first phase of the project was to develop a regional vision based on a comprehensive view, which was then translated in five municipalities into more detailed strategies and – through cooperation with local architects – preliminary designs for one specific building that should act as a catalyst or 'lighthouse project', to exemplify a new way of dealing with housing issues in the region.[19] The main target groups were municipal politicians and administrators, as well as real estate experts and housing cooperatives – the multipliers that can implement or promote the gained insights and ideas. In a second phase, the focus was on one municipality and the development of a transition plan together with students, incorporating the knowledge gained during the first phase to link research and teaching and to involve the inhabitants as stakeholders.

Fieldwork Experience

The initial statistical and spatial analyses that covered issues of mobility and accessibility, demography and density, land prices and building dynamics, and economy and tourism, at the regional scale in relation to the topographical conditions, gave the impression of extremely uneven preconditions for economic performance and mobility. The central cities are well connected by motorways and national rail services, while the more mountainous regions are served by highly infrequent bus connections and bad road infrastructure. There is also a high percentage of inward and outward commuters. This is a sign that the availability of local jobs is low, but also a proxy for the intense economic interweaving in the region and with the Graz and Vienna metropolitan areas.[20]

The (online) questionnaires and semi-structured interviews with mayors and the municipal staff helped to gain a deeper understanding of how these numbers play out in the experience of everyday life in the region. The interviews were also a means to detect locally relevant narratives that could influence and trigger ideas for the regional design vision. The question-

naires focused on the presence of (social) infrastructure related to education and childcare, public transport, gastronomy, medical care, digitization and shopping, as well as clubs and associations and the relevance respondents ascribe to these factors. This was done to get an impression of how the factual presence of infrastructure influenced the perception of the quality of life.

Judging from an overview of all 17 respondents, there were few discrepancies between the two layers of questions. Respondents ascribed most relevance to those infrastructures that were actually present in their municipality, except for public transport, digitization and gastronomy, which they found lacking. The overall impression was one of satisfaction with their living environment, with only a few issues that could be improved, but these were perceived to be largely beyond local influence (for example, public transport or digitization), because they either fall under national or provincial responsibilities or because they are the effect of global dynamics of economic development. This was a first moment to pause and reflect. Recalling Stumvol and Zech's plea for a 'mindful and attentive' way of thinking and talking about the countryside, of having a look without reading the statistics beforehand, the misalignment of ideas about the regions that had formed based on statistical and spatial analyses and the actual satisfaction reported became apparent.[21]

To get a more nuanced impression, this step was followed by semi-structured interviews with again either mayors or leading administrative staff of the municipal building authorities, enquiring into the specific qualities present in the municipality, how these had developed in the past, and what the respondents' vision for the future was. Housing, quality of life, population development and upcoming municipal building projects were touched upon in the further course of the conversation.

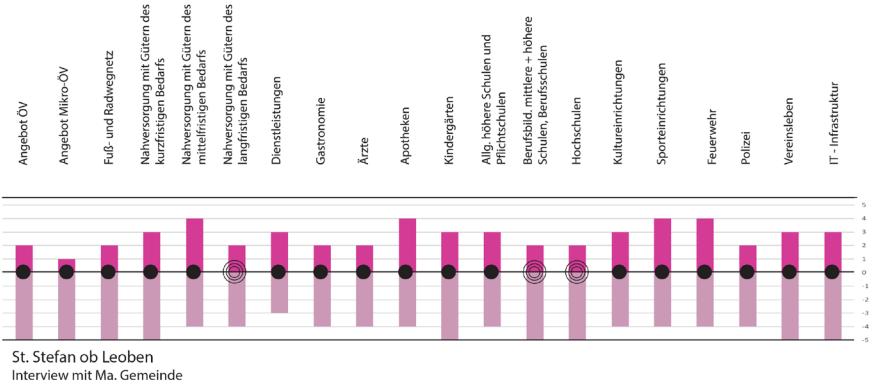


Fig. 3. Graphic analysis of questionnaire responses in St. Stefan ob Leoben. ©Institute of Urbanism at TU Graz, Austria.



Fig. 4. Sample from the collection of good practice examples. ©Institute of Urbanism at TU Graz, Austria.

Predominantly, the 28 interviewees started with statements pointing out the high quality of life in the municipalities. The longer the conversations lasted, the more the picture became differentiated, with two formative narratives becoming apparent: the narrative of rurality was a main source of identification and pride, used to explain the high quality of life in the municipalities with reference to a beautifully intact nature, intact social relations and intact family life – all in opposition to Austria's big cities of Vienna and Graz. This idea of rural quality was upheld even when introducing the second narrative: one of economic decline. This was used to describe not only the current job situation or past demographic changes, but also the past neglect of housing and municipal development issues, since these were partly taken care of or dominated by the steel companies.[22] In the end, it was then used to point towards the effort it costs to maintain the quality of life and a development perspective for the inhabitants. Behind both of these topics hovered the narrative of the periphery and peripheralization, expressed in accounts of a lacking accessibility and of a compulsory and individual automobility, of a lack of possibilities and infrastructure for personal and professional development (especially beyond the still prevalent, traditional gender roles).

And while the respondents presented a varied picture of their municipal environments and referred to diverse local contexts in contrast to an overall statistical representation, the idea of the periphery itself was left unquestioned, and it seemed to be accepted that because of static, geographical parameters such as topography and the distance to either Graz or Vienna, they lived on the periphery, accepting both the good and the bad of this situation. This was expressed most clearly in the understanding that – despite planning efforts – an equivalence in living conditions in urban and rural areas may be far from being achieved, but this is balanced by other qualities.[23] Especially the quality of the surrounding nature or the quality of social contacts are seen as compensation. The village is perceived as a resilient living space in the face of global transformations such as climate change, while the single-family home with a private garden remains a representation of social and financial stability.[24]

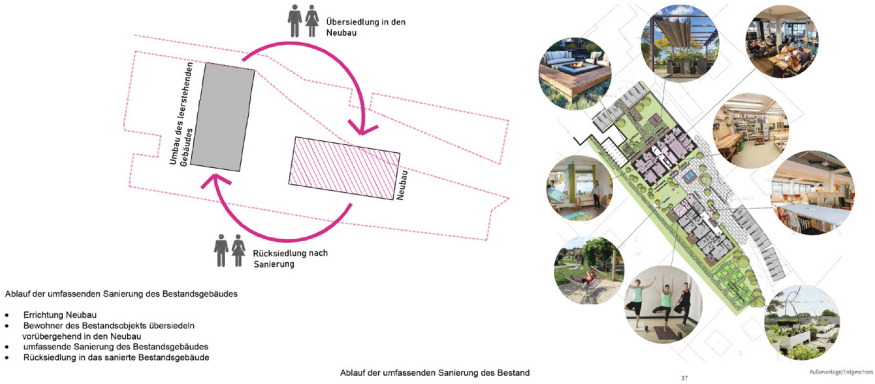


Fig. 5. Illustrations showing the preliminary design for the transformation and extension of existing housing in the centre of St. Stefan ob Leoben. ©röthl architektur zt gmbh.



Fig. 6. Impressions from the opening of the traveling exhibition in Trofaiach, 3 February 2020. ©Institute of Urbanism at TU Graz, Austria.

In these stories and explanations, a long-standing dichotomous conception of the city and the countryside was present – one could even call it an anti-urbanism that is part of the narratives and the basis for the qualities ascribed to the surroundings.[25] Only a few of the interviewees conceived their municipalities as being integrated into a network of specific locales in relation to one another and to the metropolitan areas of Vienna and Graz, and they had aligned their development goals with that position.

This was a second moment to pause and reflect. A dichotomous understanding of city and countryside negates the complex social, political, material, infrastructural and ecological links and interdependencies between cities and rural spaces,[26] which makes it impossible to comprehend the urbanization process that is actively supported by non-urban spaces.[27] The local, as presented in the accounts, however, was missing these links and could be understood as a manifestation of a 'local turn' and its associated challenges,[28] neglecting the (also global) interconnectedness of city and country, of nature and culture.[29]

In this situation, more attention was given to communicative formats such as roundtables, presentations and media coverage to engage more stakeholders, to gather more views and to start a discussion on the relevance of our findings. These findings were then shared in workshops with local real estate developers, housing cooperatives, politicians and experts of rural development. Additionally, a collection of good practice examples was used to contextualize the local experiences in the housing market.

In a next step, five municipalities were given the opportunity to receive a more detailed development strategy and a preliminary design for one lighthouse project by local architects. The aim was to strengthen collective services and alternatives to motorized private transport,[30] a consistent inner development and the conversion of existing buildings in central locations, as well as to activate the ground floor zone, both for housing and for

new forms of work.[31] Depending on the position of the municipality in the network of relations between territories, the uses of the ground floor zones would develop significance on a local level, such as a shop for goods of daily use, or on a territorial level, such as a medical centre.[32]

To communicate these concepts, a travelling exhibition brought together parts of the analysis and collected the good practice examples. The graphical means of working proved to be an accessible way of representing the analysis and, together with the work of the architects, it provided a good setting for discussion with local stakeholders.[33] While there was a general appreciation of the fact that the project dealt with rural areas, the focus on inner development and building renovations as well as mobility issues was controversially discussed with inhabitants, for whom it was the first time that they could engage with the project.

This was a third moment to pause and think. The critical evaluation of the project outcomes can be considered as an almost 'logical' response to a process in which inhabitants were only involved at the end. Beyond this, it also points to the share of problems that need supralocal solutions and cannot be solved within the limits of one municipality alone. Nonetheless, the (short-term) political dynamics as well as the current planning culture, which is established along the lines of the Austrian federal organizational structure,[34] continue to work within established administrative borders.[35]

Discussion

The activities in clubs and associations, the social ties and support within the family and the neighbourhood, and the continuation of longstanding traditions proved to be central to people's quality of life. In that context, the peripheral position of the municipalities was presented ambiguously. On the one hand, it was the basis for the difficulties within the municipalities and, on the other, it was the reason for their fundamental qualities. As such, interpersonal relations and local organization form part of a narrative that

places people's municipality at the centre of their considerations, suggesting controllability, while the larger context seems beyond their influence.

What at a first glance may seem to evade the challenges of a globalized economy and its local effects could actually form a new nature of the local, if an idea of territory could be established that both recognizes global interconnections as well as local ties and emotional connections.[36] Such an approach ascribes fluid borders and very different levels of scale to (individual) human territories – from global connections to local initiatives – that extend beyond established administrative and national borders. But how to understand and manifest these ideas in a municipal reality that is confronted with challenges in regional and intermunicipal collaboration, in an environment that limits innovation because of a lack of an institutional framework's conditions or rules (both formal and informal, so laws as much as customs and traditions), let alone in a global context?[37]

Pierre Veltz provides an important contribution to understanding the challenges of rural development. He claims that a discontinuous archipelago of poles and networks is a better representation of today's economic and cultural geography than traditional maps of nations (or of provinces and regions in this case), in order to represent associated and disassociated areas based on the nature of relations between them. This comes with the recognition that current planning laws and guidelines, focused on clearly delimited geographical entities (such as the municipality or the district), fail to address the fundamental issue, which Veltz describes in the following way:

> *It is as important to respond to this anxiety as it is to promote equality in terms of services, income and access to facilities. What our cities and territories need, first of all, is to re-invent co-operative forms that allow everyone to become actors of their lives, of the future, and of a shared future. This is not a matter of money or green space or public facilities or of planning in the ordinary sense of the term. It is a fundamentally political and cultural affair.*[38]

Conclusion

In the course of the project, the question of scales of engagement or influence kept appearing again and again. Generally, a cleavage became apparent between local problems or needs and their roots, which were often linked to spheres outside the given institutional context. A central issue was that of different levels of engagement with the project results and the willingness to implement them. This had several reasons. The programme was established by the so-called 'Regionalmanagement', a body of the provincial government to stimulate growth and economic development because they saw a need for it, not because the municipalities had asked for it. The format proved to resist the creation of co-ownership, for which a larger and broader deliberation would have helped, but that was far beyond the scope of the commission. The strong analytical focus of the project and the graphic means of representation, however, were able to engage interest. The view of the outsider on the region proved to be a great input for those municipalities in which a discourse and motivation already existed. It became apparent that the real value of the project did not lie in the quality of the strategy per se, but in the role the proposal could play as a discursive input for ongoing debates about municipal development. Through reflective moments during the project, a shift away from the initial brief occurred. With it, participatory prescriptions also shifted from an inclusive ideal to a substantive rationale, supporting the need for deliberation and dialogue.

While it seems to be an accepted fact – both in research and everyday experience – that the provision of services in the general interest in peripheral, rural areas can only be guaranteed along minimal standards, it remains vital to question – through broad discursive processes – what these minimal standards mean for each locality. This also implies engaging with questions of how collective or cooperative action and effort can support or create them. Going beyond 'planning in the ordinary sense',[39] it must then be about strengthening people's capabilities to be able to contribute to this collective or cooperative action,[40] 'to become actors in their own lives', as Veltz says.[41]

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8 Ibid.
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10 John Forester, *The Deliberative Practitioner: Encouraging Participatory Planning Processes* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1999).
11 Judith E. Innes and David E. Booher, 'Reframing Public Participation: Strategies for the 21st century', *Planning Theory & Practice* 5/4 (2004), 419-436.
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13 Michael Höller, 'Neue Prognosen: Landflucht nimmt auch in Zukunft kein Ende', *Kronen Zeitung*, 31 May 2022.
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20 Rudolf Giffinger and Hans Kramar, 'Kleinstädte als Wachstumsmotoren Ländlich-Peripherer Regionen: Das Beispiel Waldviertel', *disP - The Planning Review* 48/2 (2012), 63-76.

21 Isabel Stumvol and Sibylla Zech, 'A Case for a New Image of the Countryside', *GAM* 15 (2019), 34-43.
22 'Böhler, from the cradle to the grave', was one of the phrases mentioned to indicate that when the industry was still going strong, it provided 'everything' for its workers and left a vacuum when it declined.
23 Pierre Veltz, op. cit. (note 7).
24 Stumvoll and Zech, 'A Case for a New Image of the Countryside', op. cit. (note 21).
25 Ibid.
26 Pierre Veltz, op. cit. (note 7).
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29 Pierre Veltz, op. cit. (note 7).
30 Eva Schwab, 'Sustainability and Justice in the Territorial Project', in: Aglaée Degros et al. (eds.), *Basics of Urbanism: 12 Begriffe der Territorialen Trasnformation / 12 Notions of Territorial Transformation* (Zurich: Park Books, 2021), 208-221.
31 Aglaée Degros and Eva Schwab, 'Relational Mobility: Alternative Mobility as Key to Quality of Life', *GAM* 15 (2019), 110-119.
32 Daniel Behar, 'Fracture Territorial: Le Frisson que Rassure', in: Esther Benbassa and Jean-Christophe Attias (eds.), *Nouvelle Relégations Territoriales* (Paris: C.N.R.S., 2017), 17-27.
33 The first two exhibitions took place just before the pandemic, while all further stops of the travelling exhibition and the accompanying press work and discursive formats were victims of the lockdowns. This came right at the moment when the engagement with one particular municipality in the second phase had to be reframed. But this 'challenge of real conditions' is not the focus of this article.
34 Markus Bogensberger, 'Instruments of Urban Planning Illustrated with Styrian Examples', in: Degros et al., op. cit. (note 30), 140-151.
35 In the municipalities, the mayors (without necessarily having the appropriate training) are the highest building authorities and their responsibility ends at the municipal border. The provincial and national level are underrepresented. Regional and territorial network solutions are only applied hesitantly, also because appropriate instruments are largely missing.
36 Latour, op. cit (note 9).
37 Giffinger and Kramar, op. cit. (note 20).
38 Pierre Veltz, op. cit. (note 7).
39 Ibid.
40 Amartya Sen, *Die Idee der Gerechtigkeit*, translated by Christa Krüger (Munich: Beck, 2009).
41 Pierre Veltz, op. cit. (note 7).

Urban Atmospherics

Hanna Baumann, Ed Charlton and Jill Weintroub

When trying to describe cities to others, we often talk about how they feel. We reflect on their moods, their atmospheres. For the most part, this relies on 'sensing out' cities, attuning ourselves to their atmospherics as a way of 'attending to what's happening', to follow Kathleen Stewart.[1] Discussion of this sort is always a little imprecise, more deliberative than declarative. Styled as 'vague' and 'elusive', atmospheres necessarily resist the pull towards empiricism. But they are not entirely without an empirical claim.[2] As Tim Choy insists, atmospheres contain material traces of the city's toxicology, its pollutants and allergens, just as much as they register those less than material elements of its social, political and cultural life. In this way, any act of atmospheric analysis depends on a form of 'condensation', to borrow Choy's choice term, aggregating the city's diffusions 'into something substantive'.[3] This is not a solution to the problem of an atmosphere's inherent instability. Instead, Choy prizes their relational character, the way atmospheres bring those sometimes insensible, often divergent and always kinetic traces of the city into a mutual, sensible structure of sorts. In this, he also follows Ben Anderson, who insists that atmospheres are 'good to think with'. As Anderson elaborates, this type of atmospheric thinking encourages us to hold 'a series of opposites – presence and absence, materiality and ideality, definite and indefinite, singularity and generality – in a relation of tension'.[4]

It is with this heuristic aim in mind that we began our own atmospheric fieldwork in Johannesburg in February 2020, just a few weeks before the pandemic collapsed many of these potentially generative tensions into stark, seemingly insurmountable rivalries. In retrospect, this week-long project provided a final, comparatively honeyed glimpse of the city in a time before Covid-19, a time before this viral atmosphere imposed impossible restrictions – not just on urban society, but on the very idea of the city as an open, relational space. But, in other ways, it also provided its own bitter foretaste of the dangers posed by those unseen and otherwise insensible elements of a city's atmospherics. For like many deindustrializing cities, Johannesburg is a place clouded by the toxic, if actively overlooked, remains of its industrial history. On a daily basis, carcinogenic particulates from its mine tailings drift with the weather across the city's residential districts, posing a risk to life that is, over the long-term, just as lethal as Covid-19.

Meeting in a leafy suburb to plot out five days of site visits and meetings with residents as well as analysts of the city, these unfortunate coincidences were still beyond any plausible imagination. We had convened with the wider, perhaps more quotidian aim of attending to the city's most stubborn, enduring feature: its racial exclusions. This malignancy is expressed most plainly in the many walls, barriers and infrastructural borders that pattern the city's built environment, even still. In attuning ourselves to the city's atmospherics, however, our aim was to think about the way these barriers also seep into its ordinary, felt experience. Put differently, we wanted to evaluate the relative porosity of the city's concrete form, aggregating the feeling of vulnerability that also passes through and over its defensive, exclusionary architecture. Johannesburg has been long described as a city ruled by fear and anxiety, including most recently by Martin Murray in *Panic City*, where he details some of the many defensive technologies, such as high perimeter walls, security barriers and controlled access points, as well as new ambient technologies like networked CCTV cameras, infra-

red detectors and smart security devices that track suspicious users, all adopted by the city's wealthiest residents in an effort to secure themselves against these fearful, largely divisive feelings.[5] But, of course, architectural and technological interventions can never eliminate these anxieties entirely and, in many ways, may even serve to enhance them. Our aim, then, was to target this emotional sphere in order to understand what else it may reveal about the city's stubborn defensive form.

This was, nonetheless, a tentative ambition. As a team of three, we understood the city with varying degrees of intimacy and wanted to enable each of our specific curiosities to direct our shared attention over the course of the coming five days. For while we are united by a relatively ecumenical interest in the urban sphere, we also retain relatively distinct disciplinary skills and ways of looking at cities, from the historical and infrastructural to the literary and cultural. In many ways, it was Jane Rendell who provided the broader methodological basis for our fieldwork. In *Site-Writing*, Rendell not only defends the general turn to emotion as a form of cognition or inquiry, but she also explores ways to unite ideas from literary criticism, art history and autobiographical reflection with spatial analysis, offering up a defence of specific disciplinary techniques like close and distant reading, or optical and tactile identification within the spatial arena. Ultimately, for Rendell, site-writing encourages us to analyse 'spaces as they are remembered, dreamed and imagined, as well as observed', blurring the distinctions that more often separate these ways of knowing a city.[6]

We took this as both a general guide to our own cross-disciplinary fieldwork and a more specific one, finding in the 'to and fro between inside and outside' that Rendell favours a suggestive echo for the atmospheric attention that we also wanted to promote.[7] As Niels Albertsten has it, atmospheres serve as 'border zones'.[8] And the 'double movement' at work in site-writing offered up exactly the type of threshold thinking we wanted to explore in this project.[9] For in our efforts to attune ourselves to the atmosphere of the

city by way of five very distinct sites, we knew that we would need to find ways to attend to its swirling, overlapping geographies and histories, from the deep, ecological time of the city's mines to the temporariness of its informal street trading, to say nothing of the many smaller, often exploitative histories that constitute the space between these poles. Rendell's model of site-writing encouraged us, therefore, to reflect on the city's simultaneity, to use our atmospheric attitude to uphold, rather than collapse, these contrary seeming pulls. As an extended form of fieldwork, this model also allowed us to give priority both to those narrow snapshots of thinking and writing that emerged on the day and the wide-angled reflections that developed as we each sat apart in our respective homes during the global shutdown that began in March 2020. Indeed, in many ways, this fieldwork is still ongoing within the *StoryMap* (Fig.1) we developed during these early months. For even as it captures one moment in Johannesburg's history, it also remains open to future layering as something of an evolving repository of the city through time.

Armed with a camera and a notebook each, our site visits began in the historical centre of the city, originally little more than a small parcel of surplus land when it was purchased in 1886 to serve the mining industry quickly growing at its border. Endlessly reimagined by city planners and business representatives, the Central Business District (CBD) has long been the target of projects designed to improve and restore its place in the city's urban ecosystem. In almost all of these recent initiatives, however, security has been the guiding principle – that is, making certain parts of the city available for safe use, at least by some. The result is a patchwork of improvement districts, where the municipality participates in a select series of strategic public-private partnerships, leaving other streets and blocks unmanaged. Here, highly controlled spaces are broken up by informal activities like open air markets. And these alternative geographies allow for some contradictory effects, with many private, corporate spaces feeling open while public spaces have been increasingly fenced off. We were

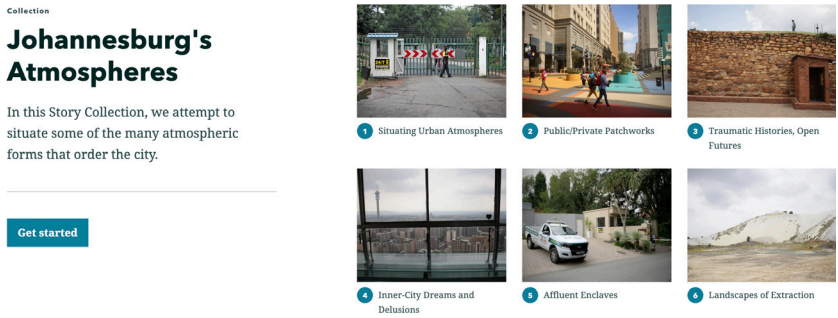


Fig. 1. The digital StoryMap we developed.



Fig. 2. The fences surrounding retail seem to undermine the principle of ‘active frontages’, leading to decreased business.

guided through these contradictions by a group of architects and designers who had recently helped to renew one of these public-private districts. They drew our attention to the soft edges that had been added to the corporate infrastructure in order to encourage office workers to make use of this securitized private-public realm (Fig. 2). But we also witnessed the fences that had been installed around municipal buildings, cutting off access. Our photographs are full of startling incongruities. Our field notes, which accompany these images, too:

> *To find the central library now secured by peripheral fencing is to query the fundamental values of the public realm, access to a sphere of knowledges and thinking that might challenge this model of urban development. Is it freedom of thought, rather than merely movement, that is now policed by this environment? Something similar may be said of the encamped magistrates court, which appears bent on defending the state from dissent, arguably anathema to any common law system of justice.*

In search of a more open, public environment, we moved a little north to Constitution Hill. Formally designated the Human Rights Precinct, the area retains the sturdy remains of the city's colonial Old Fort as well as the new Constitutional Court. In this way, it serves as a self-conscious palimpsest, where layers of history fold in on each other. And the entire precinct has also been imagined as a space without walls, an exemplary, open precinct in a city all too often barricaded against itself. It allowed for other, more expansive reflections, too, encouraging us to draw from our own experiences of other divided cities, as our field notes attest:

> *Reminded of the Reichstag building in Berlin – weighed down by nationalist and Nazi history, it was at first uncertain how it could ever serve as the seat of a democratic parliament. But as in Johannesburg, the re-definition of the space was made possible by setting its new character up in opposition to the site's history. Paint was stripped off and layers were exposed, rather than trying to cover them up.*

However, Constitution Hill's open status (Fig. 3) is not reflected in its ordinary use. It remains a stubbornly empty space. Not only is it heavily patrolled by private security, but somehow the colonial history of the site still overshadows its future potential. Perhaps it is the fact that the heritage complex, with its associated museums and art collections, appeals, ultimately, to international tourists, rather than the city's residents. Writer Mark Gevisser has described it tellingly as the city's 'absent centre'.[10] And our own route through this space felt equally hollow. Our images of the site feature suggestive works of art and symbols, each of which attest to the pursuit of justice and a more equal future, but they are almost entirely unpeopled.

Shuttling east to the adjacent residential district of Hillbrow, we alighted on a space transformed demographically and culturally since the arrival of democracy in 1994. Perched on the ridgeline that runs along the northern edge of the CBD, Hillbrow's natural elevation is further exploited by the many high-rise apartment buildings that populate the two districts. The residential blocks were built originally to house wealthy white professionals working downtown during the 1950s and 1960s, but were among the first to be abandoned with the retreat of many businesses to the northern suburbs in the 1980s. By the early 1990s, Hillbrow had become widely mythologized as Johannesburg's criminal heart. But the district is also the landing point for many migrants to the city, internally as well as from across the African continent. And today a black, largely professional class mixes with migrant workers in search of opportunity in one of the most densely populated square miles in the city. While it is certainly not free of the inequalities that afflict the city at large, we did discover a thick record of its relative hopefulness at the base of the district's most prominent building, Hillbrow Tower (Fig. 4), where hundreds of notices are plastered to a wall, advertising rooms, balconies and beds to rent on a daily, weekly or monthly basis.



Fig. 3. The original stairwells to the Awaiting Trial Block of the prison complex, since amended with striking lightboxes.



Fig. 4. Wall beneath Hillbrow Tower advertising rooms to let.

By contrast, the Northern Suburbs offered a contrasting, entirely alienating residential picture. Barricaded neighbourhoods, security townhouse complexes and gated residential estates are a distinctive aspect of Johannesburg's suburban fabric, but particularly here in the communities that grew up in the 1970s and 1980s around Sandton, the region's prime business hub popularly labelled the 'richest square mile in Africa'. Securitized living arrangements take several forms. For instance, so-called 'security complexes' tend to group townhouses around shared driveways, gardens and other amenities. 'Gated estates' are similar, but include freestanding homes, along with landscaped gardens and other leisure facilities, all bound by a large perimeter fence or wall topped with electric fencing, and round-the-clock access control at fortified entrances. Walking around these neighbourhoods (Fig. 5), we are regularly greeted by security officers paid for by residents, permitted to move freely through gates and around barriers, our whiteness enabling entry into this otherwise inhospitable, highly securitized environment.

Our journeying through the city eventually went full circle, taking us out to the former mines of the Western Rand and returning us to the material wealth that originally brought the city into being. To drive from Johannesburg proper to the gold and uranium mine dumps of Krugersdorp (Fig. 6), a journey westward of some 40 minutes or so, is to experience a sense of their plausible separation. Nonetheless, the nature and the scale of the tailing's toxicity quickly collapses this feeling, leaving us with a clear view of their ongoing and devastating proximity. We are led through this startling environment by a local activist, Mariette Liefferink from the Federation for a Sustainable Environment, who maps out for us the hundreds of tailings dams that surround Johannesburg. Containing elevated concentrations of heavy metals, including uranium, their fine-grained sandy constitution means that radioactive dust regularly blows onto informal settlements and planned residential developments nearby. According to the West Rand municipality, up to 42 metric tonnes escapes into the air every day.

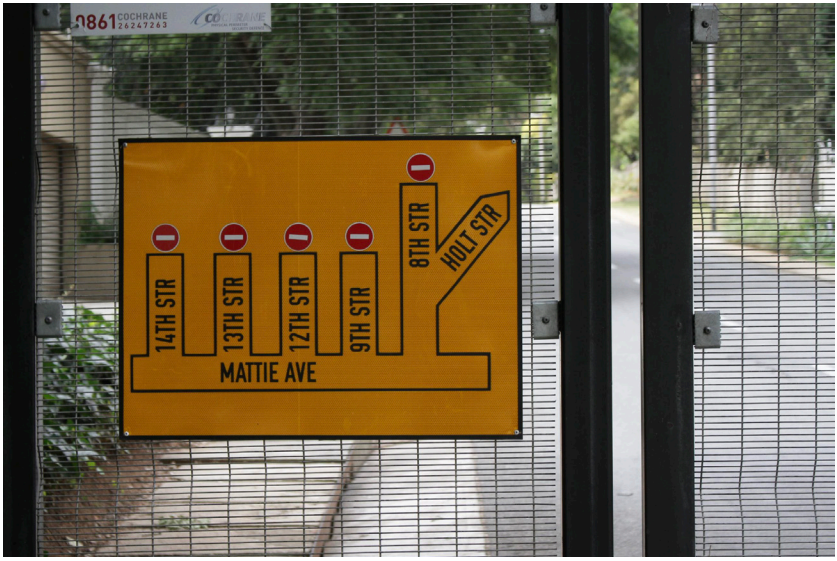


Fig. 5. Map of Parkmore Central's access-controlled streets.



Fig. 6. The radioactive metal sludge transported through these pipes remains even after the mining company's processing is completed, and valuable metal pipes deinstalled. The gold has been extracted, the profit has moved elsewhere, but the toxic fallout remains in place.

And it is not just their visible discharge, for these tailings also contain unseen, waterborne toxins that leech into the local aquatic ecosystem. 'Acid mine drainage' is a phrase that we hear again and again as we move through this landscape. Indicatively bitter in its staccato form, it is the principal poison that threatens to deform, if not destroy, life here and elsewhere downstream.

Downtown Johannesburg, just over the horizon, tries to claim a degree of immunity before these material toxins. But the measurable concentrations of contaminated water and radiation that encamp the city every day are hard to ignore when you are on site. Indeed, to hear of radioactive bricks, rendered from clay deposits in the area and now propping up walls across the city, is to recognize something of the way in which this toxicity breaches the city's imagined defences. Johannesburg may be a city built from the profits of gold mines, but it is also a city built out of their poisonous remains, and not just materially. The mines stand as the visible manifestation of a much longer, enduring, extractive history. We tried to gesture at this buried, toxic atmosphere as we photographed the area, capturing water foaming with heavy, ferric particulates and vast sandy dunes inhospitable to vegetation of any sort. But we were also abundantly aware of those less than visible elements in the air, namely radiation, that would require far more technical forms of observation and analysis.

In some ways, then, our fieldwork alerted us to the inadequacy or, at least, the partiality of our initial observations, which depended, for the most part, on photography and written notes, taken as we walked through the space. Reflecting on what we had documented over the preceding five days, we knew that we would need to supplement and enrich these initial findings with further atmospheric evidence. In setting up the principles of site-writing, Rendell takes seriously the 'spatial qualities of writing', insisting on the equality of form and content when it comes to 'conveying meaning'.[11] Rather than try to perform a kind of remote, scholarly account, we therefore

began to experiment with other, thicker, digital forms of writing and cartography in an effort to approximate our own atmospheric attention. Specifically, in turning to 'ArcGIS StoryMaps' as a way of site-writing, we found ways, in the first instance, to embed our photography and notes in the city itself, mapping the places from which they first surfaced. But this platform also encouraged us to draw other located ephemera into our atmospheric reflections, allowing us to juxtapose, for instance, descriptions of place from novelists and poets in an effort to complicate our own sensory attunements and feelings. Despite publishing a preliminary version, from which we have drawn in these notes, for us it remains an entirely provisional record, an open description liable to shift with the city's own unstable atmosphere.

1 Kathleen Stewart, 'Atmospheric Attunements', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 29/3 (2011), 448.
2 Gernot Böhme, 'Atmosphere as the Fundamental Concept of a New Aesthetics', *Thesis Eleven* 36/1 (1993), 118; Niels Albertsen, 'Urban Atmospheres', translated by Bülent Diken, *Ambiances* (2019), 2.
3 Tim Choy, 'Air's Substantiations', in: Kaushik Sunder Rajan (ed.), *Lively Capital: Biotechnologies, Ethics, and Governance in Global Markets* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012), 129.
4 Ben Anderson, 'Affective Atmospheres', *Emotion, Space and Society* 2 (2009), 80.
5 Martin Murray, *Panic City: Crime and the Fear Industries in Johannesburg* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2020).
6 Jane Rendell, *Site-Writing: The Architecture of Art Criticism* (London: IB Tauris, 2010), 18.
7 Ibid., 14.
8 Albertsen, op. cit. (note 2), 4.
9 Rendell, op. cit. (note 6), 14.
10 Mark Gevisser, 'From the Ruins: The Constitution Hill Project', *Public Culture* 16/3 (2004), 512.
11 Rendell, op. cit. (note 6), 11.

A Project Diary as a Strategy for Urban Apprehension The Case Study of Thessaloniki

André Augusto Prevedello

This contribution presents a reading of the urban fabric of Thessaloniki through a project diary composed of sketches, photographs and local research concerning the urban evolution of the city. It was produced during the months of January and February 2022, with the objective to support urban planning proposals for the Sustainable Open Solutions (SOS) of the European Urban Waterfronts Programme, directed by Professor Pedro Ressano Garcia. The programme aims to study and propose solutions for urban problems resulting from climate change in waterfront areas. It focuses on solutions for sea level rise, greenhouse effects, degradation of green areas and loss of heritage, and aims to produce resilient cities.[1] The working method of this research – 'in action investigation' – produced important results that de-rationalize the planning process and stimulate discussions with local experts, combined with traditional methods of thinking about the contemporary city and its representations.

In times of globalization and the virtualization of the living world, it no longer makes sense to speak of cultural colonization when a foreign architect works in an environment far removed from their own. It becomes important to work with an epistemological vision that is external to the place, such as the 'South to North' epistemological view – a view that Santos (2019) places against the modern 'North to South' position, that is deeply present in Western criticism.[2] To understand a foreign, urban fabric, already established practices such as hand drawing and photography can be used. My work can be described as that of a Brazilian architect in Thessaloniki, Greece, who works individually with the use of a project diary (drawings and photographs) to bring architecture closer to anthropological thought. As Darwin already stated in 1831:

> *The journey is the moment of insatiable collection, in which the discovery of the world reverts to the discovery of one's own experience of alienation to which only the misunderstanding of the unknown and the consequent effort of abstraction gives access.*[3]

This contribution will focus on the process of understanding the urban fabric, not on the proposals resulting from that analysis. It started from the preparation of a project diary by the researcher as someone from outside the local Greek culture who seeks to 'abandon the pretensions of universality, unity, and identity, of a unique discourse, of an autonomous work'.[4] The first step was to record all situations, interventions, research and discussions with the objective of capturing how the city developed and how it behaves today.

First Week: Initial Conflict

Arrival at the city's airport at 11:00 pm. A new infrastructure, without a jet bridge, but with contemporary and generic architecture. On the way to the hotel, I enjoy the city, full of bars, people and even ordinary Christmas decorations. The city has a regular layout, orderly, with good walkways.



Fig. 1. Photography Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello.

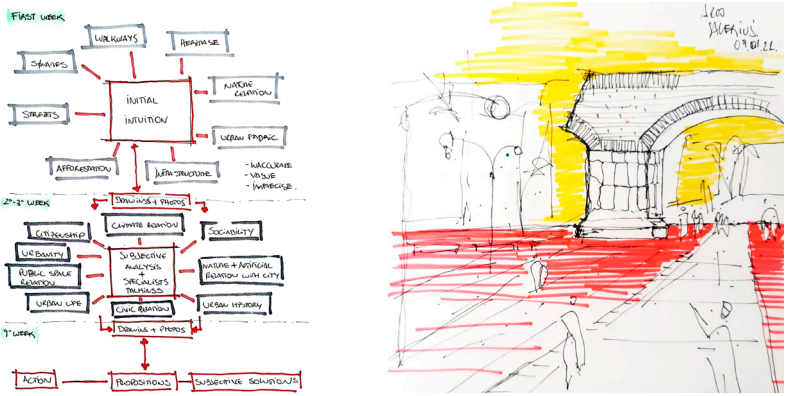


Fig. 2+3. Sketch Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello.



Fig. 4. Photography Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello.

It feels like an Eastern city that tries to compete in terms of quality with major European cities, but still suffers from poorly finished buildings, damaged signs, visible electricity wires and other urban problems. The city is exceptionally clean and the buildings, in general, are six to eight floors, with retail and office functions on the ground level, resulting in a continuous fabric of mixed-use spaces. Most buildings have continuous terraces with solar protection devices. The summer is hot and with plenty of heat waves coming in from the Mediterranean Sea to the south. It is noticeable that the winter is usually harsh and heavy snowfall a frequent occurrence.

On Sunday morning, looking for a café and a market, it is possible to explore several city streets, boardwalks and shops, which show a very lively and active city with very pleasant public spaces. The waterfront is very narrow and has a limited infrastructure of urban furniture. These impressions concern the waterfront near the most historical part of the city – the original part of the city, which has been continuously redesigned – that is situated between the sea and the buildings.

After a breakfast that turned into lunch (as a result of my adaptation to the time zone), it was possible to visit the Roman Odean of which traces still exist today as a set of lines on the ground and some ruins in the middle of a green area. The vestiges of the glorious past that confront the city reveal several historical marks, like a living calendar. The ruins reveal an imposing building complex, that is still geometrically perfect. A double colonnade or peristyle (of which some columns have been reconstructed in concrete, making it possible to perceive the differentiation in scale and time) reveals the symmetry of the entire composition, directed towards the discovered theatre. The foundations are impressive, with thick walls made of stone and bricks to support the construction of the Roman amphitheatre. The buildings reveal how the Romans aimed to change nature so that it would serve human purposes. A thought that is highly questioned by the Greeks, and which in the current world is not logical anymore. The goal is to reconcile



Fig. 5. Photography Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello.

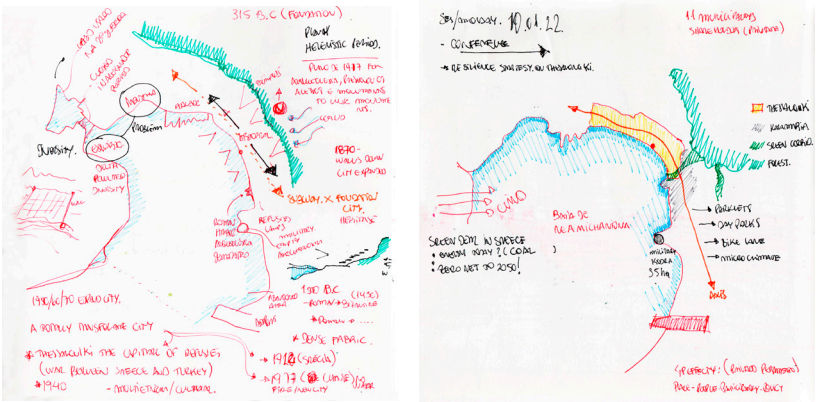


Fig. 6+7. Sketch Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello



Fig. 8. Photography Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello.

civilization with nature, to live together, as in Kengo Kuma's advertising phrases, written on the walls of a building under construction in the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon: 'We are in the age of nature, not architecture'.[5]

At the church of Saint Demetrius it is possible to recognize the reconstruction with Roman techniques, especially the wooden trusses and beams that support the floors. In the remaining, heavy stone walls, stucco and brickwork make up the main nave and secondary wings, always with plenty of granite and limestone coatings. Interestingly, the whole church has a tapestry covering the entire floor. It also has several guardrails with Moresque *muxarabis* and a clear byzantine influence.

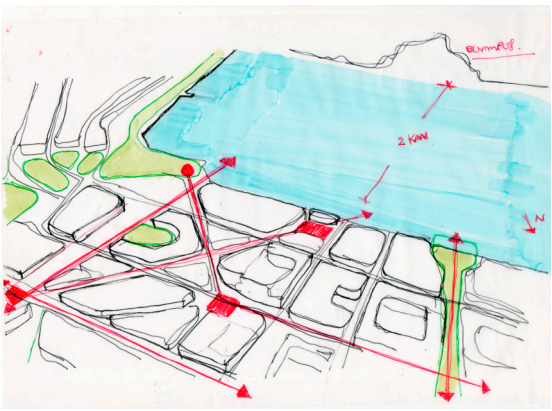
Finally, the imposing Arch of Galerius and the Roman Rotunda, both built in the fourth century, with the same construction technique of Roman arches and domes (a perfect arch without apparent keystone). Access to the Rotunda is made possible through a beautiful metal bridge that floats above them. The solution is one of not touching the ruin but making the new intervention visible, which is an attitude clearly applied to several of these heritage sites.

The city is structured by a series of interconnected architectural artifacts that function as autonomous objects. In Pier Vittorio Aureli's view, the city of Thessaloniki has been arranged according to a radical autonomy in relation to the forces that shape its own urbanization.[6] They are objects that have inflected the urban design according to the city's needs.

Founded in 315 BC by the son of Alexander the Great, Thessaloniki was a place of passage on the way to Persia. It was built following the typical Roman layout of a *Cardo* – a major north-south oriented street – and a *Decumanus* – a major east-west oriented street, which is here the most extensive horizontal axis to follow the waterfront. To the southwest of the bay, Mount Olympus protects the city from the winds from the west.



Fig. 9. Photography Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello.



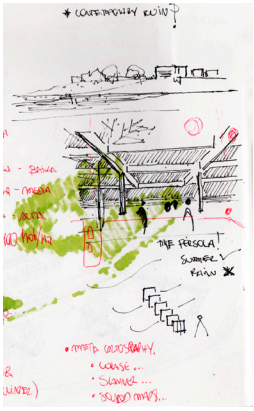


Fig. 10+11. Sketch Notebook, ©Photo: André Prevedello.



Fig. 12. Photography Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello.

It surprises and improves my temporal reference when discovering that the city, since the Romans, has been rebuilt several times and that the visible layers of ancient buildings are only a part of this rich, archaeological site. The historical buildings (the Forum, the Rotunda, the Arch of Galerius) are just the tip of the iceberg underneath the floor of the city.

The current urban situation includes the estuaries of several rivers that flow into the sea, the industrial area, the port area, the urban area of the original city with its walls, and the new areas of development, such as the seafronts and parks. Like multiple Brazilian cities, Thessaloniki has several master plans under development that seek to recover public space and green areas. Similarly, there are enormous difficulties in implementing these plans, to provide solutions for the improvement of urban mobility (which is quite chaotic in the city) while recovering green areas. The city had a major fire in 1917 that allowed for a restructuring of the urban fabric based on an orthogonal mesh, cut by diagonals that connected the archaeological constructions. From the drawings, it is possible to conclude that we are not talking about a single city, but about a cluster of several cities around the Gulf of Salonika.

Through the drawings, it is also possible to perceive that the city can be understood in two ways. First, the drawings highlight features of the evolution of the urban fabric, which help to understand a scheme of horizontal and vertical layers of historical periods acting together. Second, the drawings bring to the fore contemporary needs concerning environmental problems, mobility, land use and urban conflicts. This enables a possible discussion of and reflection on urban conceptions and ideas, shaped by the process of interpreting all the material collected and developed here.

Second Week: Attempts to Approach

The seafront is a kind of linear park in a completely urban area. The park contains large public areas with lawns, afforestation and sculptures in



Fig. 13. Photography Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello.



Fig. 14. Sketch Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello



Fig. 15. Photography Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello.

contact with the sea. It is continuously connected with Thessaloniki's ancient tower and landmark: the White Tower. This fifteenth-century element dates back to the Byzantine dominance of the area and acts today as a point of reference in the city's landscape. Thus, this sector of the city, by chance of history,[7] opposes the contemporary urban tendency towards a 'dissolution of plural and complex memory and simple and manipulated conceptions of the social'.[8]

The bus ride to the municipality of Kalamaria allows one to calmly appreciate the public areas (above the average of Brazilian cities), traffic, noise and visual pollution (Greek cities, in general, have a lot of visual communication). Camp Kodra Park is a large old military camp in the centre of Kalamaria and the coastline that connects the land to the sea. To the west, it is possible to walk along the entire coastline. Today, we find here a linear park, somehow abandoned. The slope creates a terrain on two levels, with beautiful views. Off the land, there are several marinas in deteriorating conditions, along with a lot of other human constructions in the sea. However, what is striking is that in several places it becomes difficult to differentiate between what is human and what is natural. After walking along the narrow strip of sand and stones, it is possible to climb to the Kyberneío, or the Government House, which is locally known as the Palataki, or Little Palace. Today, it is without use, but it still impresses, since the location and the architecture of the building are of great richness. I think of what kind of society we are becoming that builds a city of questionable qualities, but leaves a building like a palace to be eroded by time.

The drawings provoke some thoughts. They enable me to see the urban solutions and strategies based on positive actions, following lines of thought applicable to the local reality. In this urban context, the importance of the entire front of Kodra Park becomes clear as an area that supports intervention, as well as the interrelationship of the park with the waterfront. It is important to work with an integrated system that establishes physi-



Fig. 16. Photography Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello.



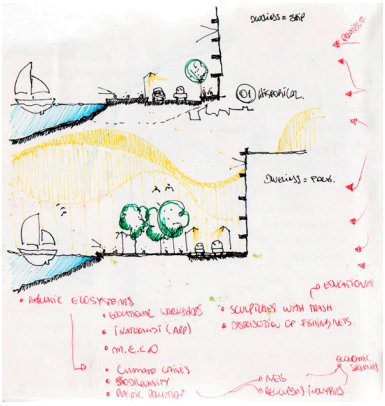


Fig. 17+18. Sketch Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello



Fig. 19. Photography Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello.

cal and conceptual connections between water and vegetation. The slope works as a linear park, with vegetation that accommodates the downhill slope in a completely different section when compared with the city section.

Third Week: Return to the City

The strategy this week was to get to know the west and north sides of the city, especially the public pier that today has restaurants, coffee bars and a photography museum. It is disappointing to witness the poor urban quality of the pier with its enclosed spaces, and the lack of urban furniture and vegetation.

To the north, there is the steep topography of the Acropolis and the old city wall, which amuses with its grandiosity and conservation. In the lower part of the city, there is the municipal market, composed of several open blocks. There is no closed, public building, as is common in various places around the world, such as London and São Paulo. The market is integrated with the city, which makes it very much alive. Cafés use electric heating devices in winter as well as glass panels to stop the icy wind from the sea. The prevailing wind comes from the west, transforming streets, such as an avenue called Egnatia, the city's main artery, into intense wind tunnels. Diagonal streets, which connect archaeological buildings, are good alternatives to escape the icy wind.

Walking along an avenue called Tsimiski, an interior gallery draws attention. It leads to an interior square inside of a building, characterized by a high-tech language. It is a large, multipurpose block with shops and offices that acts as a complement to the old buildings. The ground floor is fluid and open, leading to a central square with remarkable views of the built atrium.

Walking towards Aristotle Square, a large public space with variations of scale, surrounded by buildings of Arab and Byzantine influence (*muxarabis* and red colouring), which were built around the same time and have a





Fig. 20+21. Sketch Notebook, Photo: André Prevedello.

continuous colonnade on the ground floor that enlarges the public space and generates a covered area, I could notice a close similarity to the 'Mass Plan' of Curitiba in Brazil.[9] From the square, you can see the topography of the landscape to the north with its hillside buildings and the Mediterranean Sea to the south.

Something interesting in Thessaloniki is the lack of zoning regulations, and thus the urban fabric behaves as a mixed-use environment, both residential and commercial. This is related to the basis of Greek society that starts from the family unit and not from the community or the city-state. This, historically, also facilitated the domination of the Greeks by the Romans and the Ottomans.

Fourth Week: Conclusion

The SOS conference discussions with architects, artists and administrators, along with the methodology of active city apprehension, showed that there is a need to promote the connection between cities, green areas and the waterfront. It is also necessary that the architecture acts as a connecting infrastructure of buildings, spaces, green areas and streets, dynamically and simply connected with the natural environment. As part of the Greeks' own history, architecture cannot be thought of as isolated and closed objects. On the contrary, buildings must position themselves as open objects towards the city.

Visits to the sparsely urbanized waterfront induce questions on the dialectic between the natural and the artificial, and demand integrated solutions combining architectural gestures and everyday use, public and open spaces, inviting accesses, ramps, stairs and commercial spaces. It is essential for the city to connect parks with uses related to cinema, school, labour and cultural spaces as well as with the waterfront and structures such as floating pools, open cinemas, water sports, etcetera. It is important to note that the dualistic thinking of man versus nature no longer applies. We are in

an era in which we no longer distinguish between what is artificial and what is natural. We have become hybrid, with actions that generate hybrid results in what is the current landscape. This era is easily visible on the large scale: when you have a large ship and Mount Olympus in the background. But it is on a small scale that this intervention is perversely recorded.

An intervention in the city of Thessaloniki needs to celebrate the value of connecting private and public spaces with the natural environment and the sea. It could be thought of as sculptural and symbolic architecture, incorporating landscape, infrastructure and architecture that activates the landscape with paths and cross-connections with distinct types of functions and uses. Such an intervention must also redefine the perception of the city from the Guld of Salonika and the huge urban void that is Kodra Park, which divides the urban fabric between the Kyberneío-Palataki and the sea. It should promote the rehabilitation of existing buildings, such as the old military camps of Kodra, and promote profitable spaces with new functions such as vegetable market space, creative recycling spaces, new materials and other things.

While these photographs and sketches from a foreigner's point of view may function as mental maps of a certain naivety, during this process they showed an important way to apprehend the urban culture of the place and understand its evolution and current use, offering a high potential for the search for creative solutions to the city of Thessaloniki with all its diversity.[10] After all, in the face of unbridled globalization, how many languages can coexist in a single house?

1 The program supports multidisciplinary teams that include architects, urban designers, artists and administrators, among others. At this conference, researchers were present from Portugal, Greece, Sweden and Italy.
2 Boaventura de Sousa Santos, *The End of the Cognitive Empire: The Coming of Age of Epistemologies of the South* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018).
3 Charles Darwin, *Voyage of the Beagle: Charles Darwin's Journal of Researches* (London: Penguin Books, 1989).
4 Josep Maria Montaner and Zaida Muxí, *Architecture and Politics: Rehearsals for Alternate Worlds* (Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2011), 211.
5 This statement was painted on the protective walls of the restoration work of an existing building located on the site of the Gulbenkian Foundation in Lisbon. The ideas behind this statement can be seen in the video *Conferência Edifícios e Jardim Gulbenkian – Passado, Presente e Futuro*, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHYZKidqDuQ, accessed 28 October 2022.
6 Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).
7 A great fire occurred in 1917.
8 Montaner and Muxí, op. cit. (note 4), 159.
9 Curitiba's 'Mass Plan' is composed of a central avenue for public transport, two slow-traffic streets for vehicles, and a covered public gallery with commercial functions on the ground floor of the buildings.
10 All photographs and sketches were produced during the conference period, which took place from 8 January to 6 February 2022.

VISUAL ESSAY: *Dirty Work*

Michael Hirschbichler

There is a tradition in architecture and art – proclaimed by Leon Battista Alberti, Adolf Loos and others – to refrain from dirt.[1] According to such an understanding, architectural and creative thinking and making are conceived as an intellectual and pure endeavor – inscribing the human mind into matter – or a moral project of purity aimed at keeping unwanted matter out. Despite countless historical and contemporary concepts that run counter to such a position, this sort of renaissance-modernist idealist tradition still forms a powerful current in contemporary forms of worldmaking. Dirt, impurity, contamination are, however, inevitable aspects of life, and have to be taken into consideration when one thinks, acts, builds and so on.

Following one of the most well-known definitions of dirt as 'matter out of place',[2] in a literal sense, all extraction-based constructions – that is most of the objects, buildings, environments, art works and so forth that make up our world – are 'dirty'. They are made by taking matter out of a place and accumulating it somewhere (mostly somewhere else). This holds true, at least as far as the material aspect of out-of-placeness is concerned. When it comes to the immaterial aspect – to the social impacts of such redistributions of matter, and to moral, sociocultural and political definitions of what the 'right' place of matter is and what therefore constitutes its out-of-placeness when removed from there – things get more complicated. For dirt is connected to (and produced by) systems of categorization, linked to forms of power and order, while simultaneously offending that order.[3] Entangling

material and immaterial aspects, dirt is often situated in an in-between space, provoking reflections on the relation of 'order to disorder, being to non-being, form to formlessness, life to death'.[4] In doing so, dirt possesses a relational and processual character. It raises questions, such as: Where is something coming from ('out of' which 'place')? Where is it going or staying? Who is affected by it and in which way? And what are the necessary processes to clean, remove, transform or otherwise treat it? As a fundamental marker of difference, dirt brings to light the boundaries created by codes of purity and pollution.[5] And more generally, it can help to reveal the rules and ideologies of systems and create links to often unwanted or overlooked domains of reality.

This is why I advocate 'dirty work' as a modus operandi for understanding and remaking the world. Dirty work acknowledges and deals with dirt in its many forms. Instead of clean operations, of idealizations and abstractions from a distance, dirty work demands active material and bodily engagements with places and environments. It relies on fieldwork as a practice of working *in, with* and *through* the field, of ploughing through the thick textures of life and the myriad material-immaterial relations that each place is entangled in.

Roughly sketched, 'Dirty Work' can be circumscribed as follows:[6]

Dirty work attends to accumulated pasts and attempted and aborted futures. It grapples with the leftovers, fragments, debris of things, ideologies and lives, with the facts and fictions that haunt every spot on Earth, with the many ghosts that abound and demand engagement.

Dirty work is concerned with whispering phantoms.

Dirty work is carried out in and on wastelands, the territories of our time.

Dirty work acknowledges that all images and constructions are inevitably contaminated. It is – in the language of -isms – engaged with the impurism, contaminism, toxicism of matter and ideas.

Dirty work is yet another type of bricolage, a remix art, a kind of dumping ground magic. It requires painting, sculpting, building, thinking with degraded, second-rate (or rather third-, fourth- or nth-rate) material.

Dirty work is a searching process that consists of careful observations (uncovering, tracing, experiencing), interpretations (putting in relation to each other, ordering, collaging, montaging) and transformations (intervening, realizing, rewriting, transforming).

Dirty work tries to find the shadows of fairyland in the rough textures of life, to uncover strata of imagination beneath ruins of facts, and aims to build a world of beauty from the wastelands between dream and reality, between longing for the stars and everyday labour.

Dirty work necessitates both rationality and emotion, waking and dreaming.

Dirty work knows that we will endure less than most of the things we fabricate.

Dirty work builds up and deteriorates.

Dirty work demands pessimistic optimism.

Dirty work is not afraid to fail.

Dirty work is an accumulation of footsteps.

Dirty work is an attempt to make sense of history, to pick up and turn around and transform its splinters, piece by piece.

Dirty work is not imprisoned by novelty.

Dirty work cultivates a discipline of memory in a reality of neglected associations.

Dirty work exploits the glories of corroded time.

Dirty work constructs melodies against the darkening sky.

Dirty work adheres to a realism of the Earth.

Dirty work may cause headaches, allergies.

In *dirty work* the roaches come and go.

Dirty work spills like ice-cream dropped on concrete.

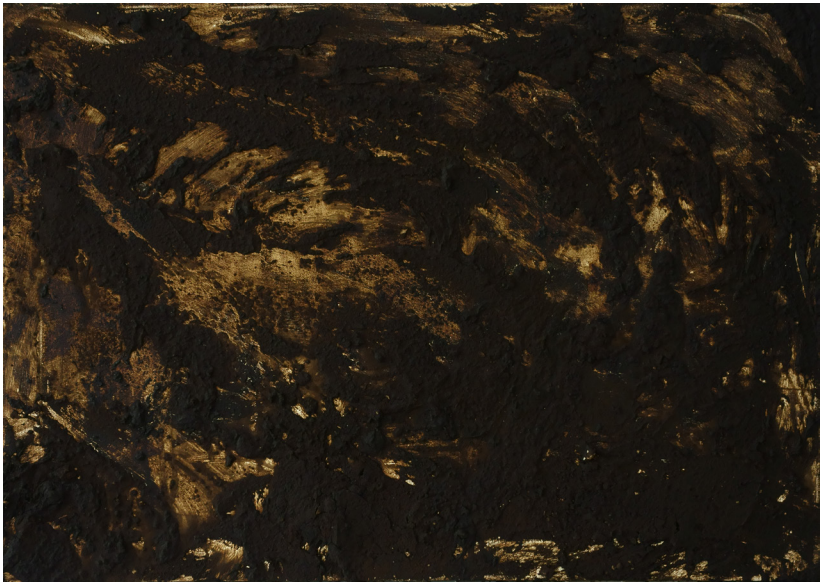
Dirty work offers no true liberation.

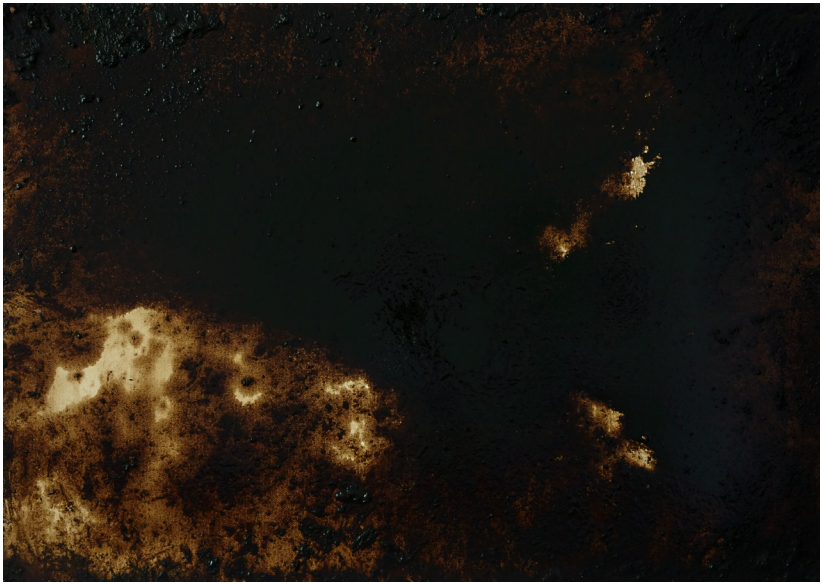
Despite the many misfortunes to which we are heir, humour is important – for hell knows no smile.

One must imagine the *dirty work*er happy.

Oil Field Paintings, 2017, Baku, Azerbaijan

In the painting cycle *Oil Field Paintings*, I was interested to trace our wealth of oil-based goods and ways of life back to its *urgrund*, the world's oldest industrial oil fields in Baku, Azerbaijan. In a kind of 'Plein Air' action, playfully engaging traditions of landscape painting as well as Abstract Expressionist techniques, crude oil is taken directly from oil spills in the landscape and carried onto white canvases. Applied in coarse gestures, the paintings are recordings of the different material characteristics and aesthetic qualities of oil – as a valuable resource and as dirt, taken from puddles in the contaminated ground, mapped out on canvas. The performance-like painting process was interrupted by the security forces controlling the oil fields, foregrounding the territorial power relations in which this resource is enmeshed.

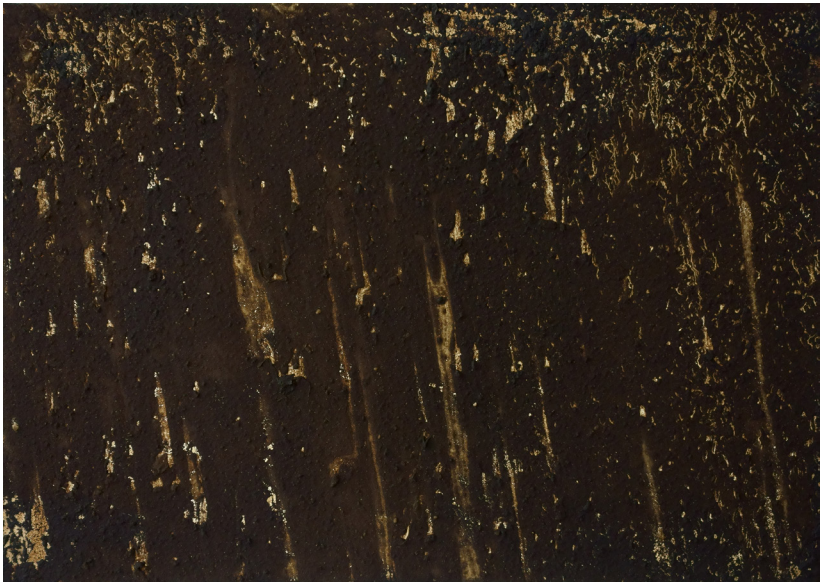























ETALON
SECURITY

1 Adolf Loos, 'Plumbers', in: Nadir Lahiji and Daniel S. Friedman (eds.), *Plumbing: Sounding Modern Architecture* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), 19.
2 Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London/New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), 36.
3 Ibid., 2, 36.
4 Ibid., 5.
5 Richard Fardon, 'Purity as Danger: "Purity and Danger Revisited" at Fifty', in: Robbie Duschinsky, Simone Schnall and Daniel H. Weiss (eds.), *Purity and Danger Now: New Perspectives* (London/New York: Routledge, 2016), 29.
6 The following is a slightly modified excerpt from Michael Hirschbichler, 'Drecksarbeit / Dirty Work. A Manifesto', in: *Review Summer 2022* (Vienna: IKA, Academy of Fine Arts Vienna), 20.

Taking Place: Reflections from the Fieldworker

This issue of *Writingplace Journal* moves into the field, exploring the moment when reflection turns into action, and questions how knowledge produced via research is appraised and applied on the ground. In the articles, authors reflect upon their concrete experiences where insights regarding the city and its narratives have been made operational. Understanding the urban as a complex expression of social, historical, material, spatial and temporal relations between people and their built environment, we argue that this comprehension of places demands and envisions action, by which active and transformative processes take place in the real world. Fieldwork is in this sense both research and event, both investigative process and performative project.

Keywords: taking place, fieldworker, fieldwork, operational knowledge, tacit architecture.

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Holding a PhD in Architecture and Urbanism, Slobodan is Associate Professor at the Faculty of Architecture in Skopje, N. Macedonia. Previously he graduated in Skopje and concluded his master studies at Dessau Institute of Architecture in Germany. In 2018 together with Marija Mano Velevska he co-curated the exhibition *Freeingspace,* representing the Republic of Macedonia at the 16th Architectural exhibition La Biennale di Venezia. His academic and design interests are mainly focused on research that explores the scale and complexities of architecture and urban design.

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Aleksandar Staničić
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Aleksandar Staničić is an architect and assistant professor at TU Delft Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment. Previously he was Marie Curie Postdoctoral Fellow at TU Delft (2018-2020), postdoctoral fellow at the Aga Khan Program for Islamic Architecture at MIT (2017-2018), and research scholar at the Italian Academy for Advanced Studies, Columbia University (2016-2017). His most recent work includes edited volume *War Diaries: Design After the Destruction of Art and Architecture* (University of Virginia Press, 2022), and numerous research articles in *The Journal of Architecture, Footprint, Architecture and Culture*, and others.

Klaske Havik
Delft University of Technology
Klaske Havik is Professor of Methods of Analysis and Imagination at the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment, Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands. Her book *Urban Literacy. Reading and Writing Architecture* (2014) proposed a literary approach to architecture and urbanism. The edited book *Writingplace. Investigations in Architecture and Literature*, resulting from the *Writingplace* conference held in Delft in 2013, appeared in 2016. Klaske Havik was editor of de *Architect* and *OASE*, and initiated the *Writingplace Journal for Architecture and Literature* in 2017. Havik is leading the EU COST Action Writing Urban Places.

RESEARCH ARTICLES

Curatorial Fieldwork as a Critical Practice: Learning from Post-Nostalgic Knowings in Freixo

Inês Moreira and Patrícia Coelho

As fieldwork is becoming a situated practice and an investigative process for the comprehension of places, the present paper proposes a new reading of the urbanscape of Freixo, a marginalized territory in Porto, Portugal. Learning from Post-Nostalgic Knowings and focusing on curatorial and artistic actions, we elaborate a new understanding of the invisibilities and conditions of this territory, by proposing a curatorial fieldwork. From context-specific approaches to new methods of fieldwork, we expand the reading of curatorial actions beyond the gallery and museum spaces, to create a dialogue with the site, its local community and the artistic interventions. 'Curatorial Fieldwork as a Critical Practice'

navigates through shared experiences, proposing new expectations of a site and simultaneously revealing the strategies of its future.

Keywords: Curating, postindustrial sites, fieldwork, artistic research, urban studies.

Inês Moreira
Lab2PT-EAAD/UMinho
Inês Moreira (b. Portugal, 1977) is a principal researcher in Visual Arts, Lab2PT-University of Minho. She completed a postdoctoral project at Universidade Nova de Lisboa (2016-2022) and created the research cluster *Curating the Contemporary: On Architectures, Territories and Networks* (2018-2021). She has a PhD in Curatorial/Knowledge (University of London), a Master in Urban Culture (Universitat Politécnica de Catalunya/CCCB) and Architecture (FAUP). She is an active member of cultural and academic European projects, such as *European Forum for Advanced Practices*, and *Press Here, a Living Archive of European Industry*. Since 2001, she has curated, edited and programmed events such as the Bordeaux and Gdansk biennials, and Guimarães 2012.

Patrícia Coelho
Independent researcher
Patrícia Coelho (b. Portugal, 1992) is an architect, curator and independent researcher. She has a Master in Architecture from the Department of Architecture of the University of Coimbra and a Master in Art Studies-Museum and Curatorial Studies from the Faculty of Fine Arts of the University of Porto. She does research on the disciplinary intersection between the expanded field of architecture, curating and experimental artistic practices. She is the co-founder and curator of ŌILHA, an independent curatorial project that explores spatial and

artistic micro-practices in a direct dialogue with the local community. Since 2020, she works at the Municipal Gallery of Contemporary Art in Porto.

Narrating the Living Town: The Case Study of Seminaria Sogninterra Environmental Art Biennial

Diana Ciufo and Isabella Indolfi

Contemporary art offers infinite possibilities to experiment with innovative ways of inclusion, to encourage interculturality, and to reinforce social cohesion by providing concrete tools and methods for the construction of common grounds among sensory communities. This paper focuses on the ten year old Biennial of Environmental Art named *Seminaria Sogninterra* (a poetical name that stands for Seeds-in-air Dreams-in-ground). It analyses how a program me of art residencies and local art production is regenerating the small town of Maranola where the biennial takes place. Its site-specific and community-based approach uses strategies of participation, ephemerality and addition, to engage local inhabitants in the realization of the event. The case study of Seminaria Sogninterra demonstrates that community-based art can shape a unique idea of public space, and can draw new maps and relations, through which people can build their own identity.

Keywords: community-based art, participation, installation, temporary, ephemeral, sensory community, addition, layering, common space.

Diana Ciufo
University Sapienza of Rome
Diana Ciufo is an independent architect and set designer, she studied Architecture both in Porto (FAUP, PT) and Rome (Sapienza, IT) where

she graduated with honors in 2012. As a Leonardo Da Vinci recipient she moved to the Netherlands in 2013 where she started a long-lasting collaboration with several offices as a freelance architect. During the past Academic Years she has been at first student tutor in the Sapienza Design and Technology Department (PDTA) and then Adjunct Professor in the field of "Performing Arts and New Media Studio". Currently she is enrolled in a PHD course at the same Department in the field of Urban Studies. Her projects stand mostly in the field of temporary architecture and scenic design (her installations have been set at: Teatro Biondo Palermo, Les Halles Schaerbeek, Bruxelles, CSS Udine, TPE Torino, Ventura Lambrate pavilion Milano, and in contemporary theater and dance festivals like: Pergine Festival, Oriente Occidente, Romaeuropa Festival). The relationship between people, inhabitants, spectators and space is the main point of her personal research.

Isabella Indolfi
Independent researcher
Isabella Indolfi is an independent art curator living between New York City and Maranola (Italy), and working between Europe, United States of America, Russia, Armenia. Since 2009, she has been working in collaboration with artists, institutions, festivals, galleries and museums. With graduate training in Sociology and Cultural Studies, and with a second Master Degree in Human Rights and the Arts at Bard College in New York, her curatorial research is focused on public art through site-specific and community-based practices. Isabella Indolfi is currently holding multiple positions: independent researcher for Opere Vive; curator for public programs at the Embassy of Italy in Armenia—commissioned by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy; member representing Italy in the Manager Committee of "Writing Urban Places" in COST European Cooperation in Science and Technology; founder and art director at

SEMINARIA Biennial Festival of Environmental Art; co-curator for Cyland Media Art Lab. With a research focus on the impact of communities and environments on media art projects, Isabella Indolfi gave lectures at the Goldsmiths University of London and at the Manchester Metropolitan University School of Art. She curated exhibitions at museums such as the MACRO Museum in Rome (Italy), the Youth Center of The Hermitage State Museum in Saint Petersburg (Russia), the Cà Foscari University in Venice (Italy), the Cafesijan Museum in Yerevan (Armenia), and the New York Media Center (USA), among others. She has also collaborated with international festivals such as Romaeuropa Festival (Rome, IT), Festival dei Due Mondi (Spoleto, IT), Cyfest (St Petersburg, RU - Caserta and Venice, IT - New York City, USA), Media Art Festival at the MAXXI Museum in Rome (IT), among others.

Weaving Ensembles: Remembering and finding stories for the factory

Fernando P. Ferreira

This essay builds upon long-term practice-based research developed around Coelima, a textile complex founded in 1922 near Guimarães in Portugal, to explore the performative qualities of collective hand-weaving practices, or weaving ensembles, as collaborative practices of architectural fieldwork. The essay is structured into three parts. First, it draws on anthropologist Paul Connerton's argument that memory resides more in 'incorporated memory practices' (Connerton, 1989) rather than objects, to argue that weaving with Coelima workers and local agents can become an innovative mode of remembering and finding memories of the factory's life. The ensembles are explored as 'events of the thread' (Albers, 2017) to re-build the factory's unwritten and unsettling history since its deep economic crisis in 1991. Second, it discusses how two

weaving capacities enacted in the ensembles – such as exchanging weaving skills on a re-designed loom and weaving's duration – can benefit architects: to mediate memories and tacit knowledge while evoking long-term and ethical modes of 'constructing' stories rather than simply collecting them. Third, the paper suggests that weaving ensembles might be re-evaluated as creative practices of architectural fieldwork, which allow architects and planners to discover and use found stories as starting catalysts to reimagine the future of Coelima, and other places.

Keywords: Factory, weaving ensembles, remember, stories, reimagination.

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Fernando P. Ferreira is an architect, artist, and creative researcher based between Porto (Portugal) and London (UK). His practice interacts with urban research, activism, art, storytelling, and textile practices. Fernando has collaborated with public institutions and architectural practices based in Porto (Portugal) and London (UK), and has taught urban studies at EAAD - Escola de Arquitetura, Arte e Design da Universidade do Minho. He is the co-founder and director of Space Transcribers. This Portuguese non-profit organisation works between art and architecture under a socio-political perspective through workshops, exhibitions, and editorial projects. Currently, Fernando is a PhD candidate at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL in London. He is developing practice-based research that explores archival, textile and writing practices, as site-specific, poetic, and ethical architectural methodologies, which together purpose an alternative story-based design brief that reimagines the future of a Portuguese textile factory under current dismantlement.

My Photostory, Your Photostory, Our Neighbourhood: Photography with Captions in the Participatory Urban Regeneration Process

Matej Nikšič

Comprehensive urban regeneration pays special attention to the needs and aspirations of the users that are already present in the spaces to be regenerated, however new participatory tools are needed. The paper illustrates concrete fieldwork in an older neighbourhood in Ljubljana, Slovenia, where the photovoice was used to experiment with new ways of integrating residents' notions of spaces. The paper describes the experimental process that aims to develop an operational approach to integrate the opinions of residents into the regeneration process. It discusses the methodological approach and issues of the interpretation of the individual points of view expressed through the photography and the captions. The shared values of the community are pointed out as an important base to interpret the individuals' notions within the broader context of the non-homogeneous community where the opinions differ among its members, but a common ground is anticipated for the needs of urban planning. The paper addresses the issue of emergent property and its role in community-based neighbourhood renewal. It also encourages further experimentation with new and innovative tools for participatory urban planning where different voices must not be lost but nurtured.

Keywords: urban regeneration, participation, photovoice, neighbourhood, community, having a say.

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Matej Nikšič is an architect and urban designer, he works as a researcher at the Urban Planning Institute of the Republic of

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From Planning for Rural Development to Planning for Deliberation: Reflecting the Mehr als Wohnen 4.0 Project

Eva Schwab

This article is a twofold reflection. It narrates the reflections going on during the first phase of a project within the wider context of shrinkage and pro-growth regional planning and in the course shows the little shifts in action and adjustments of attention that happened in consequence. It presents a tailored participatory approach that links the local and the regional scale and, in doing so, highlights the challenges of working within fixed geographical and regulatory boundaries as well as within established planning goals and strategies. Based on these experiences surrounding the development of a regional vision for “more than housing” in eastern upper Styria, the article offers a critical analysis on the reach of the project.

Keywords: regional, scale, sphere of influence, participation, rural exodus.

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Eva Schwab trained as a landscape architect in Vienna and Barcelona, and after some years in practice developed a career in research - focusing on the politics of public space production and use, spatial justice and urban development, especially at the urban periphery. Her doctorate won both the Landscape Research Dissertation Prize and the Talent Award of the City of Vienna in 2016. She has been teaching and researching in interdisciplinary and international teams at TU Wien, BOKU Wien, Uni Kassel and FH Nürtingen. She joined TU Graz in 2018, where she is deputy head of the institute of urbanism and is responsible for the institute's research agendas. Recently, she co-edited the books *Basics of Urbanism* and *Territorial Justice* (GAM 15).

Urban Atmospherics

Ed Charlton, Hanna Baumann, Jill Weintroub

In this article, we consider how an atmospheric attunement to place enables new ways of writing place. Specifically, we draw on fieldwork conducted in Johannesburg and reflect on the outcome of a remote, collective writing process pursued during months of lockdown, when our attention was dominated by talk of air and virality. We think about how our fieldwork provided us with an unsettling preview of the atmospheric anxieties to come, of a time when the very idea of the urban harboured an unseen and largely uncalibrated threat. Having developed a digital StoryMap as a way to host our written reflections, we also assess the importance of our cross-disciplinary method, especially when it comes to sensing and responding to these atmospheric circulations in less anxious, more critical terms.

Keywords: Atmospheres, Johannesburg, toxicity, anxiety.

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Project Diary as a Strategy of Urban Apprehension: The Case Study of Thessaloniki

André Augusto Prevedello

Abstract: This article is part of the strategy of understanding the urban fabric of Thessaloniki through a project diary composed of sketches, photographs, and local research of the urban evolution of the city. It was produced along a whole month with the objective of supporting urban planning proposals for the S.O.S. – *Sustainable Open Solutions for European urban waterfronts programme,* in January/February of 2022. The working method (in action investigation) produced important results de-rationalizing the planning process and stimulating new ways of thinking about contemporary urban problems. In a time when authors talk about the death of humanism,

because there are no more ties that can keep society united, the article propose here an exercise in which progressive and rational thinking for urban planning methodologies are not the protagonist.

Keywords: Thessaloniki, sketches, photographs, urban, society.

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Architect, Urban planner, and Musician. Founder and director of the Brazilian studio AP Arquitetos with projects and awards in Brazil, South America, and Europe. He holds a bachelor's and master's degree from the Federal University of Paraná, and a postgraduate degree in hybrid arts from the Federal Technological University of Paraná, Brazil. He currently develops a Ph.D. at the Lusophone University of Lisbon analyzing the architectural production between Brazil and Portugal from the 1940s. Since its formation, it has always sought to maintain practice and research walking together. Believes deeply in art as a critic responsible for revealing the way society develops. Works constantly in lectures, conferences, reviews, and exhibitions.

Visual essay:

Dirty Work

Michael Hirschbichler

There is a tradition in architecture and art – proclaimed by Leon Battista Alberti, Adolf Loos and others – to refrain from dirt. According to such an understanding, architectural and creative thinking and making are conceived as an intellectual and pure endeavor. Dirt, impurity, contamination are, however, inevitable when firmly grounding architecture and other ways of worldmaking in our complex reality. I therefore advocate "dirty work" as

a modus operandi that is more suitable for the enormous challenges that we are facing. Dirty work demands active material and bodily engagements with places and environments instead of idealizations and abstractions from a distance. It relies on fieldwork as a practice of working in, with and through the field, its materiality and the immaterial relations that it is made up of.

Keywords: Dirt, dirty work, fieldwork, worldmaking, matter, impurity, place, environment, debris, phantoms, bricolage, remix, oil, oil field, painting.

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Michael Hirschbichler works on the threshold of art, architecture and anthropology. Moving between research and its speculative transformation and employing a wide range of media, he explores how cultural, social, political, religious and scientific narratives, mythologies and ideologies materialize and shape the spaces we live in. Michael was a lecturer at ETH Zurich and HSLU Lucerne, the director of the Architecture Program at the Papua New Guinea University of Technology, a visiting professor at the Academy of Fine Arts Vienna and is currently a postdoctoral researcher at TU Delft, Goldsmiths and Aarhus University. Moreover, Michael was an artist-in-residence at the German Academy Villa Massimo in Rome, YARAT Contemporary Art Space in Baku, the Cité internationale des arts in Paris, Binz39 Foundation in Zurich, Villa Kamogawa (Goethe Institut) in Kyoto and SACO (Goethe Institut and Institut Français) in Antofagasta. His work has been shown, among others, at Martin-Gropius-Bau (Berlin), artQ13 (Rome), Kunstverein Ingolstadt, House of Architecture HDA (Graz), Helmhaus (Zurich) and Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg.

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#7 Taking Place: Reflections from the Fieldworker

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