



Delft University of Technology

## The Observers Observed: Architectural Uses of Ethnography Proceedings of the 8th Annual Conference of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre

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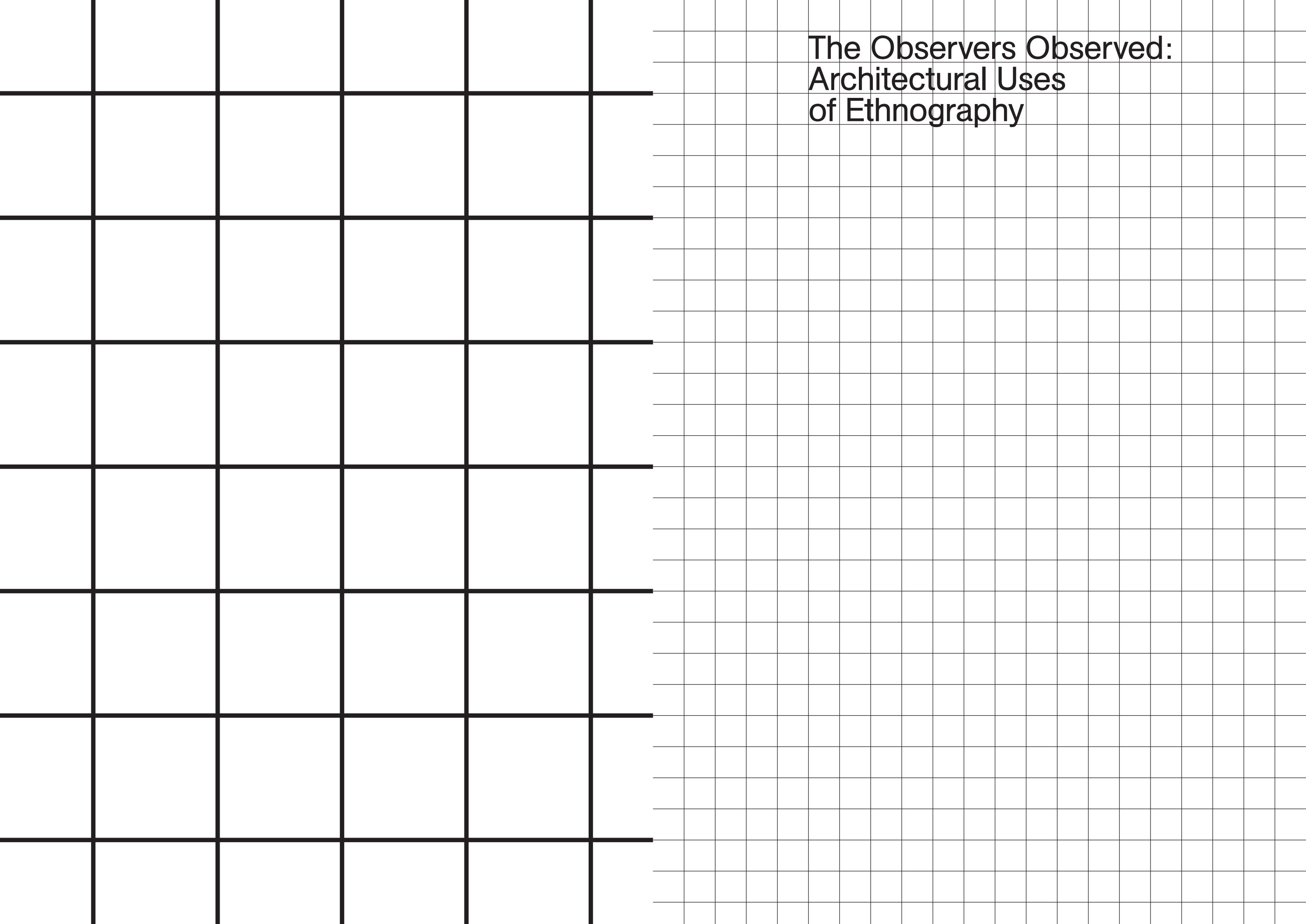
Jaap Bakema Study Centre

# THE OBSERVERS OBSERVED:

## Architectural Uses of Ethnography

Eighth Annual Conference  
November 2021

# The Observers Observed: Architectural Uses of Ethnography



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Dirk van den Heuvel (Head of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre)

# Ethnography in Architectural Education and Research

To put together the programme for our annual conference has always been exciting and challenging. Part of the process is to formulate the thematic and call for papers, to review the incoming proposals of colleagues, design the session panels, and invite special guests and keynote speakers. For the eighth edition of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre Conference, the question of ethnography in architecture was quite a natural choice in hindsight. It emerged from educational concerns at our university in Delft, just as it ties in with new archival research projects at Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam around questions of decolonising our heritage and architectural collection, and socio-ecological concepts in the current architecture and urbanism discourse. The conference also naturally builds on earlier projects realised by the Jaap Bakema Study Centre, TU Delft and Het Nieuwe Instituut, including the exhibitions ‘Structuralism’ of 2014 and ‘Habitat: Expanding Architecture’ of 2018.

The ethnographical gaze is firmly inscribed in the traditions of both Delft and Rotterdam through the legacies of Team 10 and the Forum group, it is the obvious thing to state here. The teachings of Aldo van Eyck and Herman Hertzberger, just as those of Bakema and – much lesser-known – Joop Hardy, have had an indelible influence on the formation of generations of students. Hertzberger, for instance, was a professor from 1970 until 1999 and would tirelessly introduce the students to his proposal for a humanist world culture, in which architects would work towards a relational and social idea of the built environment. Such a proposition for a relational understanding of architecture and its inhabitants was already made by Bakema in 1951 in the circles of CIAM, when he talked about the rebuilding of the European cities in the aftermath of the Second World War, and which was inspired by the pre-war ideals of *De Stijl* movement and Dutch Functionalism.

*Musée Imaginaire* – the term comes from André Malraux – was used as one of the unifying concepts for this new, idealist world culture, to move beyond nationalism and eurocentrism, even when an exoticist interest and orientalist fascination clearly speak from this post-war ideal of multiculturalism. Bakema, Van Eyck, Hardy, and Hertzberger formed the board of Forum in the years 1959–1963 as is well-known, together with Gert Boon, Dick Apon, and Jurriaan Schrofer, and in the pages of the journal, just as in the teachings of its editors, this *Musée Imaginaire* appeared as an almost purely visual language that could only be explained or recounted through poetry, as in the case of the ‘Day and Night’ issue compiled by Hardy, which presented a sheer visual documentation of the city with a contribution by Lucebert, the Dutch poet-painter, or the issue on ‘Door and Window’ in which a quote from The Pillow Book connected the vast selection of images.



Door and Window. Compiled by Joop Hardy. Double Spread from the Forum Journal, No. 3 (1960).



Such a *Musée Imaginaire*, almost as a surrealist machine of free visual association, served as a didactic tool. With its vast geographical and cultural references, Hertzberger's lectures served as such an inspirational tool – also for me being a TU Delft alumnus, this is a vivid memory. His lectures would take you from everyday street scenes in Amsterdam neighbourhoods to his visits to the famous, collective tulou housing in Fujian, China. Perhaps they were romanticising harsh socio-political realities, yet at the same time they also opened up a profound understanding of urban space as the outcome of human appropriation and interaction. Hertzberger's private collection of photos, which formed the basis of these lectures, is one of the recent and special acquisitions of Het Nieuwe Instituut, after he had already generously donated his office archive. Other archives with a strong ethnographic aspect and which should be mentioned here, include the one of Herman Haan, who served as a guide to North Africa and the Dogon region for many Dutch architects, including Aldo and Hannie van Eyck. Haan's archive was saved and donated to the institute by Piet Vollaard in 1997. Joop van Stigt, student and assistant to Van Eyck, donated an additional set of slides of Haan's work and travels. Van Stigt's own archive also entered the national collection in 2014, donated by the family, including his work and connections in Mali.

To only focus on the archives of architects of Dutch Structuralism when it comes to ethnography and architecture is probably too limited a perspective. Since modern architecture was born from and within a colonial reality, one could point to many more archives that are kept in the depots of Het Nieuwe Instituut, with Berlage's drawings and photos of his famous trip to Indonesia, then the Dutch East Indies, as one of the more iconic assets, and also perhaps problematic in that sense. The special quality of the archives related to Dutch Structuralism lies in the fact that here a project is formulated for a new social and relational paradigm, in which the encounter with the other and others, and the enabling of such encounters is at the core of a possible reconceptualisation of architecture itself.

The didactic aspect of ethnographic investigation and methods is also a driver behind today's interest in the interdisciplinary traffic between architecture and ethnography. During our preparations for the conference Nelson Mota spoke of 'sensitising' the students to social and relational issues of and in architectural design, while Marie Stender mentioned the need to be able to constantly 'shift' perspective and position as a designer, and also as a researcher. However, more than a photographic, associative visual language of a *Musée Imaginaire*, the focus today is often on drawing tools, to combine analysis and projection. The architectural drawing is not any longer exclusively about the designation of material and spatial structure, but also includes the traces and objects of everyday use and patterns, both real and potential.

Since the interest in ethnography today has become so prevalent, some have started speaking of an 'ethnographic turn' in architecture. From the many publications in the field, I wanted to highlight the ARCH+ issue devoted to *Architektur Ethnografie* of 2020 and compiled by Andreas Kalpakci, Momoyo Kaijima and Laurent Stalder, which was based on their

curatorial work for the Japanese pavilion at the Venice biennale of 2018. Next to painting the broad ramifications of ethnographic thinking in architecture, the drawing is celebrated here as a motor for new architectural approaches, not in the least because of Momoyo Kaijima's role, who with her office Atelier Bow Wow pioneered the architectural drawing to understand not only the formation of the built environment but in particular the interactive uses and appropriations by its inhabitants.

The conference would not be possible without the help of many people. It was organised by a working committee, which included my colleagues Nelson Mota and Vanessa Grossman who work with me in the Dwelling chair and develop the special Global Housing programme, postdoc researcher Alejandro Campos Uribe, and PhD-candidates Rohan Varma and Fatma Tanis, who is also the coordinator of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre. The Advisory Board and its members Tom Avermaete, Hetty Berens, Maristella Casciato, Carola Hein, and Georg Vrachliotis helped and supported the committee throughout the reviewing and selection process. In conclusion, I would like to thank everyone for their work, just as I want to express my gratitude to the participants, the authors of the papers included in these proceedings, and to the two involved institutions, the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment of TU Delft, and Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam, who enable the work of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre.





Batswana Indigenous Architecture in Bodibe Village built by Letsema showing Lelapa.

George Sedupane (North West University)  
Simeon Materechera (Indigenous Knowledge Systems Centre)

# Redeeming Ethnography by Enshrining the Philosophy of *Ubuntu* in the Study of Batswana Indigenous Architecture

Ethnography is a qualitative research approach in which the researcher investigates a particular culture-sharing group to understand their values, beliefs, behaviours and communal structures.<sup>1</sup> Such investigation is characterised by observation and sometimes participation in the culture over a prolonged period.<sup>2</sup> Since research methods are not politically neutral, ethnography has also been described as a method developed by the emissaries of European colonial powers between the 18th and 20th centuries to study and represent (quite often misrepresent) colonised people.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, Steinmetz asserts that the very policies designed by European powers to manage the colonised others were based on the characterisation of indigenous culture presented through ‘professional and amateur ethnographic texts and images.’<sup>4</sup>

Despite its complicity in the colonial project, ethnography has played an important role in the documentation of the material culture of indigenous people. As a case in point, much of what we know about the pre-colonial architecture of Batswana has come to us through these ethnographies.<sup>5</sup> Barrow gave a good description of the Batswana town of Dithakong, its layout as well as sketches and descriptions of typical dwellings.<sup>6</sup> His account was corroborated by other travellers (amateur ethnographers) like Burchell, Campbell, Holub and Lichtenstein.<sup>7</sup>

- 1 John W. Creswell and Cheryl N. Poth, “Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing among Five Approaches,” *Angewandte Chemie International Edition* 6, no. 11. (2018): 951–952.
- 2 Marie Buscatto, “Doing Ethnography: Ways and Reasons,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection*, ed. Uwe Flick (London: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2018), 327–43.
- 3 Bryan C. Taylor, “Ethnography,” *The International Encyclopedia of Organizational Communication* (2017).
- 4 George Steinmetz, ‘Sociology and Colonialism in the British and French Empires, 1945–1965’, *Journal of Modern History*, 89, 3 (2017): 619.
- 5 Franco Frescura, “An Introduction to Tswana Architecture”, *South African Journal of Cultural History* 3, no. 2 (1986): 148–64.
- 6 John Barrow, “A Voyage To CochinChina,” in *The Years 1792 and 1793: to Which is Annexed an Account of a Journey made in The Years 1801 and 1802 to the Residence of the Chief of the Booshuana Nation* (1806): 390–39.
- 7 These amateur ethnographers in their diaries, books and official documents gave descriptions of locations, settlement organisation of Batswana towns. Their records have been confirmed through archeological research and oral histories of indigenous peoples.

As indigenous scholars, we are confronted with the problem of ethnography. We appreciate its utility for answering certain research questions as no other method can. However, it is politically loaded with the unpalatable history of colonisation.<sup>8</sup> Critical ethnography is one of the solutions that has been suggested to deal with this dilemma.<sup>9</sup> Schwandt states that critical ethnography seeks ‘to criticise the taken-for-granted social, economic, cultural, and political assumptions and concepts of western, liberal, middle-class, industrialist, capitalist societies.’<sup>10</sup>

Critical ethnographers also seek to de-hegemonise knowledge creation and give voice to previously marginalised perspectives by legitimising among others, indigenous epistemologies and indigenous knowledge systems (IKS).<sup>11</sup> IKS include the scientific facts, skills, cultural beliefs and practices developed and acquired by indigenous people as an outgrowth of their observations, experiments, reflections, intuition, dreams and revelations within their natural contexts. IKS is based on the unique cosmologies and worldviews of indigenous people. Indigenous architecture is a product, an expression and a transmitter of IKS. To be rightly appreciated, it must be studied with a fuller appreciation of IKS.

In our study of Batswana indigenous architecture we use critical ethnography because it allows intimate proximity to the phenomenon and culture. The philosophy from which we draw the ‘critique’ in our *critical* ethnography is the Ubuntu philosophy.

UBUNTU AND INDIGENOUS ARCHITECTURE

Southern African Bantu cultures uphold the ideals of Ubuntu. Ubuntu is an Nguni word that has been loosely translated as *humanness*<sup>12</sup> and it is regarded as the philosophical basis upon which IKS is built including the very societies that espouse it.<sup>13</sup> Ubuntu, as a relational philosophy, asserts that being is dependent on community and relationship with others. This idea is captured in the saying ‘*unmntu ngumuntu ngabantu*’ (a human is humanised by other humans). This saying suggests that one cannot be or become a true human being outside communal, reciprocally altruistic relationships. By practising Ubuntu we are in the constant process of

8 Chidi Ugwu, “The “Native’ as Ethnographer: Doing Social Research in Globalizing Nsukka”, in *The Qualitative Report* 22, no. 10: 2629–37.

9 Mariolga Reyes Cruz, “What If i Just Cite Graciela?: Working toward Decolonizing Knowledge through a Critical Ethnography”, *Qualitative Inquiry* 14, no. 4 (2008): 651–58.

10 Thomas A. Schwandt, “Critical Ethnography”, in *The Sage Dictionary of Qualitative Inquiry*, 3rd Ed (Los Angeles: SAGE Publications Ltd, 2007).

11 Reyes Cruz, “What If i Just Cite Graciela?: Working toward Decolonizing Knowledge through a Critical Ethnography”, 651–58.

12 ‘Ubuntu’, in *The SAGE Encyclopedia of Action Research*, ed. by David Coghlan and Mary Brydon-Miller, 2014.

13 Maren Kristin Seehawer, “Decolonising Research in a Sub-Saharan African Context: Exploring Ubuntu as a Foundation for Research Methodology, Ethics and Agenda”, in *International Journal of Social Research Methodology* 21, no. 4 (2018): 453–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13645579.2018.1432404>.

becoming more human, approaching the ideal. Ubuntu is also viewed as a moral ethic with inherent values that are believed to build the ideal society. These values include interdependence, generosity, compassion, human dignity, respect, humility, familial connectedness, and communalism.<sup>14</sup>

Ubuntu and IKS underlie the constructive practices in Batswana indigenous architecture resulting in their materialisation. This is evident in the research sites in which we work. These are three villages (Bodibe, Lotlhakane and Matshepe) located 20 to 35 kilometres south of Mahikeng, in the North West Province of South Africa. These villages are occupied by a group of Batswana who continue to maintain their indigenous architecture characterised by building with earth and limestone. The villages are between 100 and 150 years old.

The earliest dwellings, between 60 and 90 years old, represent the strongest influence of Ubuntu. The Setswana word for neighbour *moagisani* means ‘one who builds with me’. Anciently when a person moved into the neighbourhood, the neighbours would form a community cooperative known as *letsema* to gratuitously offer their knowledge, skill and time to help erect a dwelling for the newcomer. Because of this practice and reliance upon building materials supplied by the environment, homelessness was never an issue among Batswana. In fact, there is no word for a homeless person in Setswana. The shift toward a reliance on manufactured building materials and building skills, that are not common knowledge, could be one of the reasons why homelessness has become an issue. The low-cost housing program devised by the government to address homelessness needs to be criticised because it has not taken into consideration the Ubuntu and IKS of the people.

One of the villagers in Bodibe stated that her house was built entirely by her brother-in-law who also apprenticed her in the process, to a point where she was able to make extensions to the dwelling on her own later on. In this way, the constructive process did not merely result in habitable space; it facilitated the building of relationships while it empowered the beneficiary. On the other hand, since there is no transfer of skills in the process of providing low-cost housing to the people, the houses often fall into disrepair because the owners have little know-how on how to maintain and repair them.

Traditionally, in front of the indigenous houses, there is a space called *lelapa* which is used for social gatherings and festivities. This space is often much larger than the house and is enclosed by a low wall to indicate an open and welcoming atmosphere. Any passer-by whose eye or ear was caught by the festive atmosphere of events was welcome to enter in and participate. The very architecture suggests an open invitation. The size and position of *lelapa* show the value Batswana placed on communal interactions and connections.

14 N.N. Mabovula, “The Erosion of African Communal Values: A Reappraisal of the African Ubuntu Philosophy”, *Inkanyiso: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences* 3, no. 1 (2011): 38–47. <https://doi.org/10.4314/ijhss.v3i1.69506>.



When one contrasts these indigenous dwellings with the matchbox-like low-cost housing lately imposed on the villages, it is easy to see the erosion of these values. These houses are built very close together, and the *lelapa* is completely absent. Thus the cultural or human element of the architecture is lost, and the dwellings become nothing more than biological habitats to escape inclement conditions. So, although these low-cost houses are apparently being provided for the benefit of the people, because the values of Ubuntu have not been upheld, the intervention may cause or exacerbate the problems of the villagers.

UBUNTU IN CRITICAL ETHNOGRAPHY

Having seen the ills of doing apparently benevolent things for the community without taking into consideration their philosophy and knowledge systems, we decided to adopt Ubuntu as a philosophical basis for our research. We followed the traditional protocols of community entry and were introduced to key informants by traditional leaders. In crafting our research agenda, we attempted to incorporate the research questions that the community members had and prioritise the stories that they wanted to tell. This initial step was empowering in that it made the research project something co-owned between the researchers and the participants.

We also realised that, due to colonialisation, Batswana had take-for-granted assumptions that needed to be challenged in the process of doing this research, hence the adoption of critical ethnography. Some residents questioned why academics would show such interest in their indigenous architecture since they do not regard it with pride, but as something, they would like to outgrow in the name of civilisation. What better shows a decline in valorisation of indigenous architecture is that the royal courts known as *kgotla*, in which communal meetings and celebrations are held, are all in a state of ill-repair in all three sites. Furthermore, in Bodibe village, they are in the process of constructing a new *kgotla* that features nothing reminiscent of their traditional form.

The conversations we have with the residents, probing them to tell about their architecture, is helping them; sharing what scientific research reveals about the benefits of indigenous materials and their processes is making them reconsider the value of their own architecture. We view these conversations as part of the process of decolonisation by confronting ingrained ideas of African inferiority and Western superiority. Since colonialisation involved the implantation of ideas and beliefs that alienated the indigenous people from their identities and knowledge, we hope that this process will reconcile Batswana with their heritage and identity. Thus one of our objectives is to design a community-based model for the protection and promotion of Batswana indigenous architecture. The objective is to support the community members not to view their architecture as a mere relic of their history but as a distinct feature that can be part of their future.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In this paper, we have argued that architectural research and practice done among indigenous people can be a means of either building or destroying their culture. When researchers and architects engage with indigenous communities with preconceived ideas without taking time to understand them, they limit their ability to benefit them truly. When indigenous knowledge and philosophies are not taken into account by researchers and architects, their products will tend to misrepresent and misshape indigenous communities. Critical ethnography is a lens through which the architecture among indigenous people can be analysed to identify ideas and practices that undermine the welfare of indigenous people, such as the negation of their cultural identity and suppression of the expression of their humanity. Through critical ethnography, the enactment and materialisation of colonial ideologies can be identified. We further propose that the Ubuntu philosophy and IKS should be used in both architectural research and practice to remedy the identified ills in Southern Africa. Furthermore, Ubuntu and IKS can play a vital role in the agenda to decolonise research and architectural practice. This will result in more empowered communities, with a stronger sense of cultural identity and an enhanced sense of self-efficacy and self-determination. Doing this is a way of humanizing, both the researchers and the researched.





Details of the material textures and arrangements around the Pentridge site. Photographs and compilation by Shanti Sumartojo.

Shanti Sumartojo and Naomi Stead (Monash University)

# Companion Practices: Interpreting Sites of Troubled Histories through Architecture and Ethnography

Despite its antecedents in colonial logics of control, ethnography's contemporary articulations are open, critical, progressive, and flourishing. Its treatment of spatiality and materiality (both of which are also, not incidentally, key architectural preoccupations) has expanded to enable a rich account of visual and sensory experience, to incorporate new digital modalities of both research and representation, and to entangle practices of making with new, participatory forms of knowledge – building through design. In the meantime, the social life of buildings continues to be a subject of disciplinary attention within architecture, in a tradition which attends to human occupation and inhabitation; everyday and experiential critique; and spatial narration and sensory apprehension – in and of buildings and places.

In this paper, we explore the multiple connections between architecture and ethnography by treating them as companion practices that were, and are, always already entangled. We demonstrate this through the case study of Pentridge, now a new suburb of Melbourne, Australia, but formerly the site of a historical prison, with substantial remnant heritage fabric, its complex contemporary use entangling an even more complex history of carceral punishment and trauma. Recently redeveloped into a major mixed-use residential, retail and leisure precinct, Pentridge raises pressing questions about the possibilities and overlaps between architecture and ethnography, especially in the re-use, understanding, and interpretation of sites with troubled histories. We will use an existing text – a work of architectural criticism about Pentridge – as an example of a 'thick description'. By crossing architecture, experience, and place, and recounting the liveliness of the Pentridge site in a way that helps the reader understand something of what it looks and feels like, we argue that this text demonstrates how new knowledge and insight can emerge from architectural critique and ethnographic research combined.

The paper examines such questions by thinking through three ways in which architecture and ethnography are intertwined. It argues, first, that both are fundamentally concerned with understanding embodied experience. Second, that both deploy modes of documentation that reach towards the experiential by way of the visual, such as drawings, video, film and photography. Third and finally, and perhaps most contentiously, we argue that both practices are forms of intervention in the lives of the people they touch.

In this way, we advocate for a better understanding of what is already ethnographic about architectural design, documentation, research, and critique, whilst also arguing for the embrace of the architectural in ethnography, by way of the spatial and material emplacement of experience.

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It's a bright and blowy Saturday afternoon and I am sitting in the central piazza of the recently-opened Pentridge prison redevelopment, eating a gelato, contemplating the looming bluestone facade of the Division B cell-block. A good smattering of people are enjoying the space –not a crowd, but enough to bring a sense of liveliness. A young couple arrives with a stroller and spreads a picnic blanket on the grass. A man pushes a trolley, stocking the bar for tonight's open air cinema. People lounge on new timber benches, brightly-dressed moppets run squealing through a water feature. It's all very agreeable – an urbane public space.

\*\*\*

EMBODIED EXPERIENCE

At its core, ethnography seeks to reach insights into how other people experience and make sense of the world. This has meant understanding people as imbricated in their everyday environments, including as active participants in cultures and practices of making, building and ongoingly modifying their built environments.<sup>1</sup> Practices of sensory ethnography, for example, treat the senses as a form of emergent knowledge about the world lodged in the body and connected to thoughts, feelings, memories and imaginative processes.<sup>2</sup> Such approaches are necessarily always embodied and spatially located. While researchers or research participants may not specifically name architecture in its sense of a professional creative practice, in fact, buildings, places, and the designed environment are inescapably part of the experience of their everyday lives. Architecture is ubiquitous in ethnographic practice because embodied experience must always be located, although it is also invisible because these locations are often understood in terms of setting and inhabitation rather than design – they are seen as the backdrop to life, the places where human things happen – buildings and places being both essential and unheeded.

In architecture, on the other hand, an understanding of how other people (clients, building users, 'the public') experience the world is directed at

1 Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays on Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London: Routledge, 2011).  
2 Sarah Pink, *Doing Sensory Ethnography* (London: Sage, 2015).

a specific use: in designing new places, with the intent to conduct and orchestrate new experiences. But there is always a gap that starts with the observation of how similar spaces have been used before, or similar people have used spaces before, or how the surroundings and context of the intervention are used. All of this must be taken up by the architect but then projected forward, in an imaginative and creative leap, to a possible future use, which is in fact unknowable.

Architectural form, therefore, must incorporate the practices and demands of inhabitation by means of what Pallasmaa describes as the 'empathic imagination'.<sup>3</sup> Embodied experience – of light, volume, proportion, acoustics, materials and more – is designed for, but usually in advance of actual inhabitation – the eventual and imagined occupation of a designed space is projected, and to some extent thus also speculative. It is for this reason that anthropologist Tim Ingold critiques architecture's conceit that 'all the creative work that goes into the fashioning of a building is concentrated in the process of design'.<sup>4</sup> In fact, and because buildings are part of an ongoing world, they live 'creative' lives of their own – continually swelling and shrinking, decaying and weathering, being eaten by insects and colonised by more-than-human users, and also being occupied, maintained or modified by people in ways that go far beyond the architect's 'design'.

These perspectives can be drawn together, and in recent decades they have been – by architects using detailed, ethnographic modes of observation, mapping, and documentation to record how spaces (both real or imagined) might be used and experienced. The modes of such documentation might be ethnographic, but the methods are specifically architectural – including new twists on conventional drawing types (plans, sections, and elevations, but also sectional and planimetric perspectives) and drawing styles. There has been a degree of subversiveness or even joyful perversity in this (mis)appropriation of the architecture of precision (as Francesca Hughes<sup>5</sup> puts it), to document lives and objects which are not precise – pets, dirty washing, pot plants, the messy detritus of everyday life.<sup>6</sup> Such drawings are both architectural and ethnographic in that they not only work to document the actual life of buildings, they also look ahead – to other lives not yet lived, and other places and buildings not yet designed.

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H.M Pentridge Prison was founded in 1851, and eventually closed in 1997. The complex is recognised by the National Trust as a place of State significance, and is listed on the Victorian Heritage Register. As 'the most well-known and used gaol in the State's

3 Juhani Pallasmaa, "Empathic Imagination: Formal and Experiential Projection," *Architectural Design* 84, no. 5 (2014): 80–85.  
4 Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, archaeology, art and architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013).  
5 Francesca Hughes, *The Architecture of Error* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2014).  
6 Jennifer Sigler, Leah Whitman-Salkin, Michael K. Hays, Yoshiharu Tsukamoto, *Architectural Ethnography: Atelier Bow-Wow* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Graduate School of Design: Sternberg Press, 2017).



history,’ it was also the largest prison complex constructed in Victoria in the 19th century. Over time, critics have protested the perceived overdevelopment of the site, including the number and height of apartment buildings and the puncturing of the bluestone perimeter walls. They complain that the dark history of the site has been sanitised and smoothed over, cheered up and trivialised as a place of ‘amusement frivolities’ including ghost tours, novelty overnight stays, and the glorification of celebrity criminals.

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VISUAL DOCUMENTATION

If ‘thick description’ can weave together the embodied experience of the built environment with official accounts of its history and use, then visual documentation can also pull together different scales of and perspectives of place.

In ethnographic practice, visual materials and methods have been growing in importance for decades, and are now central to how ethnographers conduct, analyse and represent their research. Indeed, the use of visual material goes beyond documentation, ‘[w]hen ethnographers produce photographs or video... these images, and the experience of producing and discussing them, become part of their ethnographic knowledge and imagination’.<sup>7</sup> Used as part of interviews, or to help the researcher make sense of research settings, images also provide materials to work with – that can aid reflection and analysis and spark insight. The details of the site, brought together in the opening image, show some of the textures by which a visitor might make sense of Pentridge. Chisel marks on stone, the reflective surface of a wayfinding sign, the rough mortar between bluestone blocks, and inlaid new timber all combine into an impression of materials at the minor scale. This image, and the visual ethnographic approach it exemplifies, can help the researcher reflect on the site and how she made sense of and experienced it.

Visual documentation in architecture necessarily focuses on the built environment. There are many tropes and cliches of architectural photography in particular – for example, a building should be photographed without people, but with a sense that they are just out of frame (the tap left running, the blur of a passing dog). Where people do appear, they are most often in the service of the architecture, highlighting its intended use, complementing its forms or materials, or providing a scaling device. But moving beyond the limitations of architectural photography proper (or indeed the central role of digital visualisations in designing and selling as-yet unbuilt architectural designs), the role that ethnographic visual documentation plays in architecture is also central. This is especially the case in the more process-oriented or vernacular practices of architectural documentation which

7     Pink, *Doing Visual Ethnography*.

happen before and during the design process – during site analysis and brief development, for example – where informational, illustrative, and evocative images (photographs, sketches, diagrams and so on) are made, attempting to capture place and experience – the experience of the architect her or himself, and the experience of other denizens of the place. In both practices, therefore, visualisation is not limited to just looking at the built environment in a range of different ways. Instead, the creation and use of visual materials can help researchers understand built form more deeply, and develop concepts to take forward into future research and design projects.

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Pentridge was an embodiment of the 19th Century model prison ‘separate system’ – which emphasised isolation and silence as instruments of moral reform. Later, when this approach proved to send a disproportionate number of prisoners insane, the institution moved instead toward labour as a source of redemption – including in rock-breaking yards, where ‘specially insubordinate or quarrelsome prisoners’ could be put to work breaking ‘biggies into littlies,’ rock into gravel.

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INTERVENTION

If visualisation helps to create a path to a new design in architecture – and new insights in ethnography – then this is only one form of intervention that the two practices share. Although earlier constructions of ethnography framed it as an abstract practice of distanced observation, with any intervention by the researcher regarded as an undisciplined failure of method – and something to be avoided – an ethnographic practice also intervenes actively in the world by inviting people to attune to and reflect on their surroundings in ways shaped by the presence and focus of the researcher. Indeed, contemporary ethnographic practice has developed purposefully interventional forms of research that invite participants to make or change things with researchers and use these processes to reflect on aspects of their lives. Design ethnography, for example, uses methods such as prototypes, workshops or experiments to participate alongside others to address specific research questions, including what participants anticipate for the future, and what they might aspire to or feel anxious about. Processes that ask people to speculate on the future, and that use materials or images to do so, are a form of intervention because they make possible futures actionable by asking people to imagine them.

In the case of architecture, a similar form of intervention has always taken place through drawing, models and visualisations that presage structures that are able to be imagined through the conventions of architectural design processes. This is a form of intervention that comes before the tangible and direct manipulation of the built environment by the architect.

CONCLUSIONS

In this paper, rather than solely explore the architectural uses of ethnography, we have sought to trace the entanglement of the two disciplines as companion practices. Across three strands, we have argued that one is not in the service of the other, but rather that they are complementary approaches to the built environment and the lives of all who inhabit it. The shared attention to the experience of the body in space, a commitment to similar means of investigating those experiences, and a recognition of the wide-ranging implications of intervention are clear intersections of practice. Both architects and ethnographers design new ways of conceiving, understanding, representing, and designing the place.

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Getting ready for the method of the instruction by the use of stand-ins.  
Photograph by Stéphanie Dadour, 2020.

Stéphanie Dadour (École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture Paris-Malaquais)

## Building on Ethnography, for Architecture: Private Hospitality and the Making of a 'Home' (France, 2019–2021)

In response to the migration crisis (or rather to the non-welcoming crisis), private hospitality, defined as the act of hosting – free of charge – migrants in one's own private home, has been ongoing in France for the past five years.

Homemaking becomes necessary for the hosts and the hosted, transforming domestic space and the set of practices allowing homing. By providing accommodation, the host makes room for the hosted: It welcomes his or her history, journey, condition and anxieties. And whether there is reciprocity or not, relationships are created, both in space and time.

Departing from these supposedly hospitable and welcoming situations, this paper looks at the spatialisation of private hospitality as a particular type of cohabitation. While many researchers have investigated the topic of private hospitality, focusing primarily on the host's discourse and without considering spatial issues, this research seeks to take into account the spatial environment with the dialogic process of homemaking between hosts and hosted. In the specific context of migration, one subject to a series of asymmetric relationships, how can we overcome the agreed narratives infused by authorities to ensure the migrant's good integration and legalisation? In a context of high vulnerability, how can we investigate the domain of the intimate and express the everyday? But most of all, how to break through intimacy?

This research uses feminist epistemology as a way of apprehending a reality that integrates the feminist political project, that is to say, that constructs a set of knowledge less blind to the experiences of dominated groups. Drawing from an ethnographic investigation, various methodological approaches have been necessary to make room for the hosted' and the hosts' narrations and grasp the socio-spatial negotiations. These approaches complement and overcome traditional methods of investigation (interview, ethno-architectural survey, mental map...) to question the place of the observer. By allowing participation, performance, use of stand-ins, role playing, self-giving and setting up protocols over time, they have made it possible to produce knowledge that subverts hegemonic scientific paradigms, collecting narrations and stories on cohabitation. Through invoking different disciplines, this paper unveils things that would be otherwise difficult to grasp, interpreting them and putting them at the service of architecture. As a study



case, it can inform us on homing in migration, but more generally on a poorly documented theme: investigating intimacy.

To understand the specific negotiations between hosts and guests, the relationships that are woven in these places and these moments, I will revisit the methodological adjustments that were necessary while interpreting some of the situations encountered.

HOSTING CONDITIONS OR MAKING ROOM:  
AN APPROACH THAT STRADDLES THE LINE BETWEEN  
ETHNOGRAPHY AND ARCHITECTURE

Deciding to host at home involves making space; for the person, of course, their life story, their experiences, and their daily life, but also and more concretely, to transform one’s abode. The degree of adaptability is different from one situation to another. It depends on several factors: the duration, the personalities, the presence or lack thereof of certain members of the household, the size of the accommodation, the notion of comfort, etc.

Out of the seventeen households I have visited, the first surveys were conducted in the cohabitation space.<sup>1</sup> They consisted of a moment of discussion with those present, at least one of the hosts and the lodger, followed by open-ended interviews with semi-structured questions. Everything was recorded. Then, we would tour the apartment, and the person would explain what they were doing in each of the spaces they identified. The point of this visit was to grasp the logic behind the parcelling out of the living spaces, the organisation, the uses and the words which corresponded to it. On the spot, I drew up an ethno-architectural survey of the place, which I enriched with photographs.<sup>2</sup>

But it was when sharing my pencils with the hosted that one of them, for example, started to draw and tell me about the gaps between his life in France and his home country. The house divided between male and female, back at home, offered a stark contrast with the basement he now shared with the two eldest daughters of the family. Even if the hosted men repeated, he was at ease in the house; the sexual division of space appeared as a structural element of feeling home yet was difficult to overcome. Drawing turned out to be a tool that allows one to speak, but above all and in the context of this particular type of accommodation, to go beyond words when

1 This research was self-initiated in 2019, when I entered the French Collaborative Institute on Migrations. Ten «Convergence Institutes» (collaborative institutes) exist in France; aiming to encourage a dialogue between science and society, mainly social sciences, human sciences and health sciences. I have been a fellow at the Institute since 2019 and during 2020–2021 member of the Migrations and Society Research Unit (URMIS), specialised in the study of migrations and interethnic relations.

2 The ethno-architectural survey is a floorplan of the living space, enriched with the furniture, the decoration, the arrangement of the space, and annotated with observations that make it possible to keep track of the appropriation of the space. It allows to understand where and how certain activities take place. See for example, Daniel Pinson, “The Habitat, Described and Revealed Through Drawing: Observing Constructed Space and its Appropriation,” *Espaces et sociétés*, no.164–165 (2016/1–2): 49–66.

they are lacking or to project oneself into particular situations and to express the conditions of a daily life far removed from its habits. Suppose the limit of this method remains in interpretation. In that case, these drawings can be used more generally to analyse the knowledge of a place filtered by experience and account for visions of the world and memories permeated through time. In most cases, they allow putting words in situations that are too internalised.

Rather than representing a situation, the ethno-architectural survey became an object of discussion and exchange: Where do you have breakfast? Where do you work or study? Where did you spend time on the phone? Nevertheless, the temporal dimension proved difficult to represent in drawing in such a short period of time: I had to find a method that would allow me to capture longer-term cohabitation, at least at different times or in a more natural way and with less distance.

THE SPACE-TIME RELATIONSHIP:  
PSYCHOLOGY AND PERFORMANCE

Intimacy is an ordinary, everyday thing. As a stranger, I had to blend in more with the surroundings of my hosts. I asked to stay for a longer time and to be shown where to settle. Assigning to myself a place spatially informed me about how my role was perceived. So it went, sitting on the sofa or in the kitchen while observing everything around me out of the corner of my eye and refining the drawings and surveys or filling in my notebook. If, at first, the hosted and the host performed their daily lives, often in a demonstrative manner, habits and habitus took over, and each went about their activities. This piqued my interest as I discovered unexpected uses, silences, parallel lives or, on the contrary, ideas and moments shared between hosts and hosted. Rather than imagining what might happen in a room, on a sofa or a bed, being there allowed me to experience it through observation, through the physical body and social practices – over time. It is thus that I could grasp the possibility of homemaking for either side.

It was then clear that I needed to create a setup that was more akin to daily life. Creating a sense of the ordinary in a space-time where I am intruding – with consent and by appointment, where my body is visible – is not the same as working in a camp or a slum, where traffic abounds, and visibility is more discreet. Therefore, it is in a more ‘ordinary’ context, more distant from that of the interview and the drawing, that I started looking. It was also at this time that in my readings, I discovered a method stemming from the field of occupational psychology: instruction by the use of stand-ins.

This method aims to reflect the lived experience of work involving two people: the professional and the researcher. It consists in asking the worker for instructions on the work to be done so that the researcher – his double – can replace him in his work. This method shows the importance of spatiality in focusing issues on visibility and invisibility of work and in

the workplace, in our place, and regarding the context at home. It's not so much the reasons for the behaviour that matter as the way things are done and said. The subject's identity is performative in nature: it is an act that has been rehearsed.<sup>3</sup> Thanks to the stand-in method, the guests performed this breakfast saying 'tea will have to be taken by the window to occupy less space in the kitchen; the kind of comment that is usually hard to extract from an interview.

For example, in another house, while the father explains that Y. never sat outside his room if he was not invited, the mother acts out a scene when walking around the house alone with her. Imitating herself at work, she said to me: 'For a year, I didn't quite know how he "named" us or considered us, how he designated the place where he lived, until one day I heard him tell his friend on the phone I'm at home. He was sitting at the table eating, always in his spot; I was seated opposite him on my desk. He looked up, just as I did: and I knew a threshold had been crossed. It's like he'd just accepted our pact... something we'd been trying to do work for a while despite all the obstacles – administrative, cultural, symbolic...'. Trust is woven unevenly between family members and the hosted. The latter, Y., explained that their relationship has been built over time and has changed spatially, in clearly identifiable phases tightly narrated around his relationship with the kids. For another hosted young man, it is by miming the act of rocking a child that he explained the beginning of the process of building a home, of a normal occupation that allowed him to forge a bond of brotherhood just like back home, to put into practice the things of ordinary life, thus redefining his status as a stranger.

Once again, as with drawing, the instruction by the use of stand-ins pleased the interviewees. The role-playing process was possible because it took place specifically in a private space, in view of no one, outside any possible judgment. It lightened the mood, made people laugh, and aroused the curiosity of the other party. Above all, it allowed identifying the spatial limits that each of the hosts and hosted assigned themselves. The action of performing daily life at home is not customary. In doing so, host and hosted become aware of certain choices, behaviours, and words that seemed trivial at first glance. Turning the ordinary into an extraordinary situation allows highlighting the complexity of cohabitation and clarifying what makes home – or not.

CONCLUSION: BUILDING A HOME

Given the nearly five hours I usually spend within the household, I suggested arriving around 11 am whenever possible. In this way, I was indirectly inviting myself to have lunch with them; but I still waited for the invitation to be extended by the host. From there, another relationship was established, one

3 Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 526.

where I participated in their daily lives: these moments with opportunities to understand each individual's role in a more organic way. Who does what? How to prepare the meal? What do we eat? What relationships? From the moment I was invited (until then, I had invited myself), I felt welcomed. I thus allowed myself to abandon the researcher's distance, relieve myself of this role, tend towards a subjective exchange, and allow myself subjectivity.

In this context, the migrant was no longer the point of interest. We were done talking about him when we had not yet begun the research work. I became the hosted and the object of curiosity. So it was that the moment I was invited, a different kind of relationship was established. The hosted lost his status as a guest. I was now the guest, and very often, hosts shifted their attention away from the lodger. Now people were interested in me: who was I? Why this topic? During these moments, the roles shifted. And that's what was getting interesting.

This is how solidarities were woven and how relationships were forged. M. and J.P., hosts, recently sent me an email saying: 'We have lived the month of Ramadan at "his pace". It was very peculiar. But always enriching ...'. Bonds of trust are created little by little by setting up a network of interlocutors, whether hosts or hosted. It is in this context that I managed to grasp what was left unspoken or invisible.

This research encourages methodological tinkering, combining the tools of architecture, ethnography or psychology, involving a collaborative mode of investigation to make minor practices visible. These reflect the agency of the hosts and the hosted, as the case may be. Through these in situ methodological shifts, this research – still in progress – looks at residential and social practices, crossing architectural tools with methods from the human and social sciences. It is in this in-between status – being at the same time an actor of this experience and a researcher – that I succeeded in capturing and confirming certain aspects of homemaking.

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At Summer Theater of Vyborg with cultural activist Alla, Russia. Photograph by Yue Mao, November 2019.

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# Reversing Ethnography: Decolonising Methodologies for the Observer

As Pels and Salemink point out, the discipline of Ethnography has been linked to the construction of colonial and neo-colonial societies through instituting representations of the observed by the observer.<sup>1</sup> The observer holds the exclusive rights to what is documented, while the observed is seldom even aware of the observation. If we look into how architecture and urban development operate nowadays, a similar division between the observer—being developers, sometimes designers, and the observed—the residents, is present almost everywhere.

Both ethnography and architecture face the necessity of rethinking this division. In ethnography, decolonising methodologies and reversed ethnography suggest a gaze on globalisation from indigenous perspectives.<sup>2</sup> However, for those who are recognised as observers, alternative methodologies are yet to be constructively explored. In urbanism and architecture, discourses such as collaborative planning and participatory design suggest a conversational turn to engage users in the process, but, sometimes, this practice is questioned for including voices of more external experts than actual residents.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, several common difficulties can be observed in both disciplines and are particularly visible when applying ethnographic approaches to the built environment. Firstly, we must admit that the major (institutional) support—funding and/or development agenda, still comes from the observer's side. Secondly, at least in cultural practice, the aim of such an ethnographic practice is no longer purely exploitative but often attempts to facilitate equal collaboration, reciprocity, and a critical rethinking of the observer's approach. But in a lack of clear methodologies, 'innocent' mistakes could happen, resulting in an incomprehensive understanding of the interests at play, the little actual impact on the observed, and problematic power distribution in the organisational procedure. In my opinion, such 'innocent' mistakes can be even more difficult to discover than exploitative actions. Thirdly, to look further into the validity of an ethnographic approach in urbanism and architecture, amidst planetary urbanisation, the intricate relationship between the observer and the observed becomes a default setting that we have to

- 1 Peter Pels and Oscar Salemink, "Introduction: Five Theses on Ethnography as Colonial Practice," *History and Anthropology* 8, no. 1–4 (1994).
- 2 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London and New York: Zed Books Ltd, 2013); Nathan James Smith, "A Balance of Perspective in Global Society: An Argument for 'Reverse Ethnography'," in *Documentary Film* (2011).
- 3 Maartje Bulkens, Claudio Minca, and Hamzah Muzaini, "Storytelling as Method in Spatial Planning," *European Planning Studies* 23, no. 11 (2015): 2310–26.

acknowledge, which arguably still inherits a considerable part of the colonial structures. This question is not only relevant cognitively and philosophically at an individual level, but also profoundly affects our collective (or exclusive) decisions concerning planning and the transformation of our inhabited environments, especially in the observed contexts.

In this article, I discuss two research projects to reflect on how to challenge the conventional relationship between the observer and the observed through rethinking the methods in which we apply ethnography into urbanism and architecture. Both cases are commissioned and/or evaluated by Dutch institutions. The first examines the indigenous Sami communities in Arctic Scandinavia. The second is an investigation of several peripheral communities in Russia, but the paper will focus mainly on one sub-project about Vyborg in the Karelian region.

THE WICKED UTOPIA: SEEKING COMMON GROUNDS  
FOR THE OBSERVER AND THE OBSERVED

The first research project, The Wicked Utopia, was conducted between 2017 and 2018 as my master graduation research for the Urbanism programme at Delft University of Technology. It was carried out within the studio Design as Politics, under the project framework of ‘A City of Comings and Goings – Design for Migration and Mobility’.

To challenge the conventional notion of migration as a temporary action, I turned my gaze to the semi-nomadic indigenous Sami people in Arctic Scandinavia. For Sami communities, reindeer herding is not only an essential part of livelihood but also of cultural and political identity. Reindeer herding involves a semi-nomadic lifestyle, leading to a social and economic structure that preliminarily facilitates autonomy, reciprocity, ecological thinking, and temporality.

An ethnographic approach was intensely used in this research, especially during the fieldwork in several communities across the Sami territory. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a variety of interviewees, including institutional researchers, local activists, indigenous cultural workers, as well as non-indigenous populations, to review the general societal awareness of indigenous issues.

Based on the indigenous voices I encountered, from the perspective of urban development, one major issue is the increasingly scarce space – spatially and culturally, for indigenous knowledge and livelihood. To redeem this space, the first methodological reverse is not to look at indigenous livelihood and knowledge as heritage phenomena, but to frame them in contemporary urban and social development. Through this lens, the influence of Sami movements can be observed in issues such as sustainable transformation, social inclusion – particularly LGBTQ+ communities, and social infrastructures for reciprocity and self-organisation. The consideration

behind this reverse is two-folded. Firstly, considering my non-indigenous identity, ethically, it is highly problematic for me to reclaim space for ‘indigeneity’. Secondly, it is no longer possible to define such space in our neo-colonial society. Instead, rethinking the observer’s society with an indigenous perspective might be a more feasible and realistic direction.

This shift of perspective stimulates a progressive rethinking of the relationship between the observer and the observed and leads to the second reverse in this research. This is further complicated by the condition of internal colonialism in Sami communities, referring to colonisation within the territory of the settlers’ and the indigenous’ common habitat.<sup>4</sup> This co-habitation creates a noticeable example where the dichotomy of the observer and the observed could be questioned, and the ‘shared’ development – with clearly imbalanced power relations, of infrastructures, economics and socio-cultural aspects should be considered.

Therefore, the second reverse swaps the initial observer and the observed to discuss how Western urban development could be challenged and enriched by aspects that are stressed in indigenous practice and largely remain problematic in the observer’s societies, particularly regarding migration, environmental degradation, and social exclusion. The referred indigenous practice does not form any representation of what indigenous knowledge or thinking is, but rather is an attempt to situate the observer and the observed together in a shared complex system.

With clearly defined observer and the observed, this research project represented, in the beginning, a typical case of applying ethnography to urban studies. However, the observer makes a deliberate choice to reverse the perspective on how urbanisation in the observer’s society can be conceptually challenged by the observed. Through reversing the subject and object of the observation, it was not the indigenous communities, but rather the observer who made attempts towards ‘decolonising’ the pre-emption of the self.

WHAT DO LANDSCAPES SAY: BECOMING THE OBSERVED  
AS A WAY TOWARDS PLANETARY SITUATION

The second case, research project ‘What Do Landscapes Say?’, is supported by the Creative Industries Fund NL between 2019 and 2021, under the 2017–2021 Dutch International Cultural Policy, titled ‘Inclusive Cities and Societies through Design’. Upon the open call, I initiated a collective of nine creative workers with multiple disciplinary and cultural backgrounds. In this project, we explored how art and artistic research can critically inform the development of diverse urban environments by looking at landscapes. Taking several peripheral areas in Russia as the case context, we shared nine landscape narratives through two exhibitions in the Netherlands and

4 Rauna Kuokkanen, “Towards an ‘Indigenous Paradigm’ from a Sami Perspective,” *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 20, no. 2 (2000): 411–36.



Russia, followed up by a seminar with seven groups of guest speakers to further develop the individual methods into collective methodologies. Our main collaborators include Het Nieuwe Instituut, Na Peschanoy Gallery, and Moscow Architecture School MARCH.

The overlap of ethnography and urbanism emerged during the research phase for the landscape narratives. To build on the reflections from the first case study, I would focus on my individual research project, *Entering, Knowing, Unknowing, Exiting*.

Vyborg locates in Karelia, a region with its distinctive landscape and indigenous culture. Being at the Finnish-Russian border, conflicts over authority have been constant, with the most recent one after WWII, when Finland had to yield parts of Karelia to the Soviet Union, including Vyborg. The division can be easily observed in the built environment, with the historical parts showing strong Karelian identities and the parts built after WWII displaying a typical Soviet atmosphere.

From an observer's perspective, it seemed logical to depart from this problematic division and try to bring healing and reconciliation. Together with Russian architect Maria Kremer and with support from several local cultural institutions, our initial plan was indeed to design a series of interventions in public spaces, to communicate about local histories in a playful way and stimulate local pride. If this plan went through, it would make a typical example of the observer 'helping' the observed. However, an initial critical reflection came passively, due to the cancellation of most international exchanges amidst the pandemic, soon becoming voluntary. For Russian residents nowadays, the fundamental barrier in their living environment is not ethnic identity, but structural issues of urban development. Planning in Russia is increasingly leaning towards market-driven approaches and, as a result, central urban territories accumulate more resources – many from places like Vyborg, while non-central territories become the exploited hinterland.<sup>5</sup> This phenomenon is rather universal and planetary. The observed is seldom in the power of confronting this issue, but often the institution behind the observer holds the decisive power. This realisation deeply challenged my position as the observer, especially considering the Dutch institutional support and agenda behind this project. If we exclude the rights of Vyborg to reveal its layered realities, aren't we also excluding our opportunity to realise and reflect on the hinterland of urbanisation?

When I looked into my collection of photos, footage and interview transcripts there again, I turned the original observer – myself, as well as the European agenda of inclusion, into the observed. What does Vyborg say? In comparatively compact areas like Vyborg, due to neglect by urban development agents, the complexity of historical layers, rural and industrial territories, political and economic powers, infrastructure and labour are still

5 Oleg Golubchikov, "Urban Planning in Russia: Towards the Market," *European Planning Studies* 12, no. 2 (2004): 229–47.

visibly intertwined. With my personal background from a third- or fourth-tier Chinese city in the 1990s and 2000s, perhaps what draws me to researching in Vyborg is a sense of belonging to a population in 'extinction', who still has the adjacent affinity and intuitive sensitivity towards the nowadays hinterland of our lived experiences. For the European agenda of inclusion, it is disturbing but meaningful to see that while a paradigm shift has been called worldwide to change the direction of values, interests and priorities in our engagement with landscapes, little do we know whether we are truly acknowledging the complexity of human-landscape relationship, or rushing again to pre-empt the narratives of a sustainable, resilient, and inclusive future.

In the end, my narrative of Vyborg resulted in a critical presentation of my first-hand research materials, an almost traumatising process of doubting my intention, my capacity, and my authenticity when approaching Vyborg. The institutional intention behind this open call indicates a universally acknowledged understanding of 'inclusion', to be facilitated in Russia with Dutch creative forces. However, in my research and many sub-projects of *What Do Landscapes Say?*, inclusion is deliberately interpreted in hyper-local contexts. By patching and weaving local tales, ecologies, and geologies with our own perceptions and memories, we move away from describing landscape through 'specifications', instead create intersubjective interpretations.<sup>6</sup> This reverse provides a foundation to critically observe our relationships with landscapes, from how we organise material environments on-site to methodologies of archiving and narrating landscape, informing what other factors we need to include in the spatial-temporal narratives. Attentively or intrusively, sensibly or bizarrely, landscapes unfold countless variations of spatial-temporal narratives of collaborative adaptation to human-interfered ecosystems – what Anna Tsing calls 'contaminated diversity'.<sup>7</sup> We turned ourselves, as well as the institutional understanding of 'inclusion' into the observed, which became the first step to situate ourselves in a larger-scale narrative with different humans and non-humans.

## GOING BEYOND AND BEHIND THE OBSERVER AND THE OBSERVED

The two above-mentioned cases both attempt to contribute to the pathways from methods to methodologies in reversing the position of the observer and the observed. Duality of the observer and the observed still exist in the first case, while in the second case, the reverse can be viewed as a starting point to destabilise the duality and situate the narrative in more complex systems of inclusion and diversity.

One limitation of this analysis is the definition of the observer. In this paper, the observer refers to the direct researcher, while institutional agenda as the indirect observer is only briefly touched upon. As a matter of fact,

6 Peter Callahan, "Inter-Subjective Qualitative Landscape Interpretation: A Contributing Research Methodology in the Exploration of the 'Edge City'," *Landscape Journal* 19, no. 1–2 (2000): 103–10.

7 Anna Tsing, "Contaminated Diversity in" Slow Disturbance" Potential Collaborators for a Liveable Earth," *RCC Perspectives*, no. 9 (2012): 95–98.

there are two aspects that might be further discussed. The first is to critically understand the observer’s position between the observed and the institutional agenda. In this case, my personal identity as a Chinese, to a certain extent, makes me entitled to be a ‘third agency’ in the observation. However, as Levi points out in his discussion of the ‘Grey Zone’,<sup>8</sup> the self-entitlement could also lead to the agency reinforcing the ‘innocent’ neglect and/or exploitation of the observed. The second aspect is the relationship between individual researchers and the institutional agendas behind them. The second case study suggests that, through collectively reversing the narrative, institutional pre-conception and agenda can be influenced. However, if and how much can institutions be reversed?

8 Primo Levi and GREY ZONE, “La Zona Grigia,” *I Sommersi Ei Salvati* (1986).

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Protest by housing advocacy movements to stop transfers of homeless from hotels to congregate shelters, City Hall, Manhattan, New York City, July 2021. How does urban life and urbanism meet in struggles for social justice?

Jeroen Stevens (KU Leuven)

# Urbanism Justice as a Research Agenda: A Positioning on Critical Ethnography and Emancipatory Architecture

The history and contemporary practice of urbanism, as the architectural science and practice of city-making, is inherently bound up with questions of social justice. Whether mobilised as a colonial apparatus of control and oppression or honouring a utopic devotion instead to improve our shared urban environment, city-making is de facto a fundamentally ‘social’ concern, structurally amending the spatial contours of human life. Spatial transformations thus inevitably beget social transformations, directly intervening in processes of oppression or emancipation. History and ongoing debate show how difficult it nonetheless remains to assess and evaluate this social impact of urbanistic endeavours. Socially driven scholars recurrently urge for a broad investment in more ‘critical urbanism’ that is ‘radically emancipatory’, and ‘more socially just and ecologically sound’.<sup>1</sup> While the ecological weight of urbanism becomes increasingly measurable and subjected to thorough public deliberation, its social reverberation often proves challenging to gauge. If humankind is indeed remaking oneself by remaking its urban environment we need better and more accurately calibrated tools to appraise how spatial transformation interlaces with social justice.<sup>2</sup> Further advancing the methodological and epistemological borderland of architecture and ethnography will therefore be essential.

## FROM SPATIAL JUSTICE TO URBANISM JUSTICE

If ‘social justice’ relates to cities’ embodiment of struggles over fairness, freedom, liberty, equity, democracy and civil rights, and ‘spatial justice’ inquires the spatial geography of such concerns, how then can we mobilise ‘urbanism justice’ as a critical device to inquire the material architecture and the physical *making* of urban space?<sup>3</sup> In keeping with Harvey and Soja, such ‘urbanism justice’ would not so much be a matter of legal administration of reward and punishment but herald a concern with the embedment of

- 1 Neil Brenner, “What is Critical Urban Theory?,” *City* 13, no. 2–3 (2009): 204.; Colin McFarlane, “Assemblage and Critical Urbanism,” *City* 15, no. 2 (2011): 205.
- 2 Robert Ezra Park, E W Burgess, Roderick Duncan McKenzie, *The City: Suggestions for Investigation of Human Behavior in the Urban Environment* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); David Harvey, *Rebel cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution* (London: Verso, 2013).
- 3 David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City* (Oxford: Edward Arnold Publishers, 1973).; Edward W. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).



‘fairness’ in the built architecture of the city and the powers at play in its perpetual reconfiguration. It would critically scrutinise the rightfulness of power relations as they are firmly entrenched in the city, not only as a set of social relations or as an array of locational and geographical assets, but as a built ‘thing’. This renders the architecture of the city not as the passive background against which struggles for justice unfold, but as both a spatial informant from which justice struggles can be better understood, and a principal-agent, actor, or ‘actant’—in terms of Bruno Latour—that actively enacts ‘airness’, for better and for worse.

How, then, are struggles for justice inherent to the making of cities and vice versa? How does the architecture of the city both violate and effectuate human rights? Or the other way around: what does justice conceptually mean when inquired through the prism of architecture and urbanism? To genuinely respond to those questions, so holds the premise of this contribution, requires an ethnographic approach to urbanism that taps into and advances the rich legacy of architecture’s long-lasting affair with ethnography and the interdisciplinary fields of urban studies and critical theory more in general. It invites a mode of investigation that alternates from the tangible micro-scale of bodily human practices, over the physical layout of architectural objects, to the materiality of the city and territory, and back. Indeed, it calls for an interscalar approach that interrogates the city in an architectural-ethnographic sense: as an actor and informative interlocutor on its own terms. In what follows, I will first briefly touch on some of the historical links between architecture and ethnography through a social justice lens. In the second part, I will reflect upon some specific ‘urbanism justice’ research experiments with homeless movements in São Paulo, Brussels, and New York.

THE ETHNOGRAPHY-ARCHITECTURE ROMANCE

The architectural profession of urbanism holds no exclusive monopoly over neither the bettering nor the battering of cities, of course. Likewise, also the concept and notion of urbanism, haunted as it is by competing definitions, is far from limited to the privileged activity of architectural professionals and scholars. Louis Wirth’s ‘sociological’ definition of urbanism as a peculiarly ‘urban way of life’ comes to mind here as an early seminal reflection on the artificial separation of city-life and city-making.<sup>4</sup> Many adherents of the Chicago School of urban sociology to which Wirth belonged allocated considerable agency to the built environment as a decisive influence on social behaviour and regularly formulated their ethnographic findings as urgent calls to action for ‘planners and caretakers’ to intervene more cautiously.<sup>5</sup> Scholars of urban life – or ‘urbanity’ as many architects would have it – continue to eloquently call upon architecture and urbanism to engage in ethnography more sincerely to better understand the social

4 Louis Wirth, “Urbanism as a Way of Life,” *The American Journal of Sociology* 44, no. 1 (1938): 1–24.  
5 Herbert J. Gans, *The Urban Villagers: Group and Class in the Life of Italian-Americans* (New York: Free Press, 1962), 301.

use and meaning of space.<sup>6</sup> Regardless of their own colonial legacy, anthropological modes of research – ethnography, indeed – are time and again instrumentalised in architecture and urbanism to ‘learn from’ urban life and ‘popular’ modes of space-making, not the least in the highly complex and precarious metropolitan settings ravaged by poverty and conflict. Educational programs in architecture, urbanism and urban planning increasingly promote ‘immersive fieldwork’ and ‘ethnographic approaches’ to attune urbanistic studies and projects with the wants and needs of local communities. Nonetheless, the actual local appreciation and reception of impassioned promises of impact of such local engagements often remains questionable, and not infrequently lead to an outright and understandable research fatigue among over-exploited communities. Ethnography is, nevertheless, customarily mobilised as the paramount instrument to turn the tide of modernism’s avowed ‘failure’, (a recurrent anachronistic allegation that neglects the historical conditions in which modernism emerged) that is seemingly as lively among social scientists as among proponents of socially engaged architecture.

Such ethnographic enthusiasm across architecture is laudable and needed. It is nonetheless not without liability. For one, the long-term legacy of architectural commitment to social emancipation, advocacy and ethnographic field methods is easily overlooked in contemporary accusations of disciplinary misconduct. This widespread amnesia regarding architecture’s emancipatory history compounds opportunities for actual advancement of existing knowledge and expertise. For another, architecture often ‘borrows’ ethnography from anthropology as if it were a simple ‘plug-and-play’ tool, omitting to scrutinise social findings according to the critical and reflexive analytical and theoretical layers of meticulous anthropological scholarship.<sup>7</sup> Architects are most commonly not trained ethnographers, after all. Driven by social urgencies, however, architecture eagerly cannibalises interdisciplinary methods and theoretical frameworks from a variety of disciplines to compensate for its own averred shortcomings and cast off the yoke of colonial and oppressive inheritances. Such reductive anthropological engagement in pursuit of ‘emancipatory’ architecture risks to function as a mere instrument of ‘smoothing’ the social reception of spatial interventions, often raising fierce ethical concerns.<sup>8</sup> In other words, ethnographic commitment in itself does not guarantee a meaningful contribution of architecture to improved social justice. To assume or claim so, utterly denies the ethical challenges involved in ethnography on its own terms. A profound transdisciplinary confrontation of methodological, but also epistemological and ontological aspects of architecture and anthropology seems opportune if we want to gain a better understanding of the entanglement of social justice and the making of urban space.

6 E.g., among many others, Richard Sennett, *Building and Dwelling: Ethics for the City* (London: Penguin Books, 2019).  
7 Marie Stender, “Towards an Architectural Anthropology: What Architects can Learn from Anthropology and vice versa.” *Architectural Theory Review* 21, no.1 (2016): 27–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13264826.2016.1256333>.  
8 Markus Miessen, *The Nightmare of Participation: Crossbench Praxis as a Mode of Criticality* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2010).

A word on the deep-rooted romance of urbanism and ethnographic commitment. Urbanism is by definition a grounded ‘theory of practice’, whose advancement stems from real-life responses to immediate and tangible urban problems.<sup>9</sup> Paradigm shifts in urbanism have consequently always hovered between hands-on reformism, bound to rebuild the city, and more radical utopianism, speculating on the imaginative but potential future of the city.<sup>10</sup> When in the early, 1950s–1960s modern mass-housing projects were increasingly charged with causing more harm than relief, numerous architects took to the field to investigate the qualities and deficiencies of popular urban life and vernacular building. Proponents of the Team X movement increasingly rebelled against the ‘old-school’ functionalist zoning doctrine of CIAM, and Alison and Peter Smithson, Aldo van Eyck, Georges Candilis, Shadrach Woods, Jacob Bakema and others set out to carefully study popular urban environments and the patterns of urban life they sustained. Not much later, and although frequently mis-framed, John Turner became somewhat of an international celebrity by describing squatter settlements as ‘an architecture that works’.<sup>11</sup> In a remarkable study, Horacio Caminos, John Turner, and John Steffian took stock of growing squatter settlements in the Americas through detailed spatial analysis.<sup>12</sup> John Habraken meanwhile proposed to fundamentally rethink the division of labour (and thus of power) in city making by distinguishing spatial ‘supports’ and ‘infills’. Variations of this model found widespread implementation in numerous ‘sites and services’ projects in the ‘Developing World’ or ‘Global South’, which by lack of better wordings became now equally clumsy known as the ‘So-Called Global South.’ Resonating with the more general ‘advocacy turn’ in architecture, the *Arquitetura Nova* or New Architecture avant-garde formation in Brazil meanwhile sought to reconcile advanced modernist design with self-help building techniques.<sup>13</sup> *Mutirão* or mutual aid soon became a chief mode of ‘new’ social housing production in megacities such as São Paulo, drawing from the agency of collective self-help construction and architectural ‘technical assistance’ cooperatives.<sup>14</sup> Minga-practices of mutual aid in Ecuador and elsewhere in Latin America attest to similar complex coalitions between ‘civic’ movements and architectural professionals.<sup>15</sup> Suffice here to underscore that architecture has known some experimentation in terms of ethnographic engagement with disadvantaged communities. Whether implicitly or explicitly stated as such, they all strove to bolster broader struggles for social justice precisely by engaging with those social movements doing the groundwork. Yet, at

9 Peter Hall, *Cities of Tomorrow: An Intellectual History of Urban Planning and Design in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).  
10 David Pinder, *Visions of the City: Utopianism, Power and Politics in Twentieth-Century Urbanism* (Edinburg: Edinburg University Press, 2005).  
11 John F.C. Turner, “The Squatter Settlement: An Architecture that Works,” *Architectural Design* (1968): 355–360.  
12 Horacio Caminos, John F.C. Turner, and John A. Steffian, *Urban Dwelling Environments: An Elementary Survey of Settlements for the Study of Design Determinants* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969).  
13 Paul Davidoff, “Advocacy and Pluralism in Planning,” *Journal of the American Institute of Planners* 31, no. 4 (1965): 331–338.  
14 Pedro Fiori Arantes, *Arquitetura Nova: Sérgio Ferro, Flávio Império e Rodrigo Lefèvre, de Artigas aos Mutirões*. São Paulo: EDITORA 34 (2002).  
15 Giulia Testori, “Cooperation Reconsidered: the Case of Comité desl Pueblo in Quito,” in *VIII Seminario Internacional de Investigación en Urbanismo*, (Barcelona-Balneário Camboriú, June 2016).

the same time, architecture was central to these studies, and ethnography was mainly mobilised to better understand the relation between urban life and urban form. The question remains how architecture and urbanism can build on this historical accumulation of ethnographic experimentation to buttress social justice struggles in the 21st century and against a backdrop of exacerbating social and ecological crises, without falling into the eminent trap of turning into ‘pseudo-anthropology’.

Anthropological ethnography, in turn, has shown no less interest in architecture, heralded by famous ethnographers as the ‘artefact par excellence for understanding the nature and structure of human society’.<sup>16</sup> The ethnographic analysis of social organisation was often inseparable from the analysis of architectural form, with ‘dwelling space’ as the archetypical crystallisation of cultural norms and worldviews for scholars such as Marcel Mauss, Claude Lévi-Strauss or Pierre Bourdieu. Following the recent ‘spatial turn’ and ‘material turn’, anthropology (and social sciences in general) also developed a renewed interest in the city as an ‘infrastructure’ or ‘assemblage’ of human and non-human actors.<sup>17</sup> What is now frequently and fashionably called ‘space-making’ indeed plays a pivotal role in contemporary discussions in urban anthropology across the globe. This attention for spaces has furthermore proven to provide a ‘critical’ device to uncover and surpass otherwise hidden social injustices. In search of social justice, architecture incessantly draws from ethnography, while urban ethnographies repeatedly dwell on architecture.

EXPERIMENTS IN URBANISM JUSTICE

Building on this historical and increasing flirting between architecture and ethnography, I propose ‘urbanism justice’ as a critical concept to interrogate the interrelation between city-making and social justice. This proposes to specifically focus on the complex dialogue between urbanism as city-making and urbanism as social life. It entails an attempt to inquire about the architecture of justice, with the built environment as a politically charged interlocutor. Three ongoing experiments will be introduced below to highlight how ethnography can shed light on the political nature of architecture and share some principal questions this leads to.

In downtown São Paulo, hundreds of vacant buildings are squatted and reinhabited by homeless movements. Reclaiming space in the best-served and most exposed core of the city, these occupations directly challenge the distribution of rights in the city ‘as is’. While vacant buildings are often posed as debris of ‘failed architecture’, the crucial question from a social

16 Victor Buchli, *An Anthropology of Architecture* (London, New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 19.  
17 Barney Walf and Santa Arias, *The Spatial Turn: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Abington, New York: Routledge, 2018).; Christopher Tilley, Webb Keane, Susanne Küchler, Michael Rowlands, and Patricia Spyer, *Handbook of Material Culture* (Los Angeles: Sage, 2011).; Alex Schafran, Matthew Noah Smith, and Stephen Hall, *The Spatial Contract: A New Politics of Provision for an Urbanised Planet* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2020).; McFarlane, “Assemblage and Critical Urbanism.”



justice perspective would rather wonder about the particular role of vacant structures in (quite literally, in a ‘Habrakian’ sense) ‘supporting’ social struggles for justice.<sup>18</sup> How, then, do highly organised social movements capitalise on specific urbanistic and architectural traits of central São Paulo’s abandoned urban fabric: the vast availability of abandoned but qualitative buildings, an urban fabric imbued with historical symbolism, the vicinity of social and cultural amenities and dense access to public transport. In other words: how does the social struggle of squatter movements play out architecturally?

In Brussels, numerous homeless organisations are organised into a meshwork of service providers, shaping a complex homeless dwelling environment scattered throughout the urban morphology. Questions of social justice are deeply entrenched in this network of spaces; it is an ethnographic collaboration with these grassroots organisations that sheds light on a remarkably peculiar architectural urban dwelling environment. How can we recognise homelessness and its mode of dwelling as not only a social and societal challenge, but as an essential architectural and urbanistic question intricately bound up with the design and spatial form of the city?

In New York, hundreds of homeless shelters are fitted into old hotels, armories, prisons, warehouses, hospitals and the like. What emerged from a call for social justice and a ‘right to shelter’ in the 1980s turned into a highly disputed temporary housing typology for at least a hundred thousand New Yorkers. While ethnography is necessary as a method to gain a closer understanding of the social practices and aspirations underpinning these homeless groups, it is, in the end, their architectural presence and the impact on the city that is being interrogated as a tool for social struggles. So how are shelters concurrently spaces of care and control, compassion and violence? Which prevalent cultural norms on the factual distribution of human rights and qualities of urban life can be distilled from the architectural ‘space’ and urbanistic ‘place’ of shelters and their embedding in the urban tissue?

In each of the above cases, architecture is central to struggles for justice. Ethnography is mobilised to gain a closer understanding of architecture and how it ‘matters’ in the emancipatory and oppressive processes in which disadvantaged groups are enmeshed. This way, they all aim to set the scope for a further research agenda on the crossroads of architecture, ethnography and social justice.

18 Danny Hoffman, *Monrovia Modern: Urban Form and Political Imagination in Liberia* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2017).

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*Omawë Yanomami Indigenous School, painted with traditional patterns and mythic characters associated with the strength necessary for the struggle to improve political autonomy and counter-colonial resistance strategies. Photograph by the author, Pukima Cachoeira village, upper Marauia River (Amazonas, Brazil), 2020.*

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# Architectural Ethnography and Pragmatic Alliances with the Yanomami People

The world we want is a world in which many worlds fit.

Zapatista Army of National Liberation Mexico, Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle.

This paper proposes a reflection based on my Master's thesis at the Graduate Program in Social Anthropology at the University of São Paulo, combined with my<sup>1</sup> political and pragmatic work as an architect allied with the Yanomami people from the Marauia River in northern Amazonia (Amazonas, Brazil). The thesis is, in short, an ethnographic study of Yanomami architecture, that is, the Yanomami ways of dwelling in the 'forest-land' ('urihi'). By bringing together significantly different intellectual, poetic and architectural regimes, the research proposed to think with the potential meanings of indigenous architecture, a fundamental matter often neglected by anthropological and architectural analysis. It sought to reflect on the Yanomami spatial practices from a holistic perspective, attending to the relationship between buildings, people and the ideas that engender, build, conceive and dwell in these spaces: from the temporary camps in the forest, to the village-houses in the domestic clearings, the mountain-houses inhabited by the spirits and also the spirit houses built in shamans' chests during shamanic initiations. Nonetheless, the intent here is not to present a simple overview of this academic work, but to make explicit the onto-epistemic assumptions that guided the ethnographic methodologies and architectural practices of the fieldwork, foregrounding my perspective about the possibility of an engaged and situated intersection between ethnography and architecture.

Following the Yanomami categories proper to their own architecture, the research operated as an experiment with the proposal of an 'anthropology of architecture'.<sup>2</sup> However, this thought experiment assumes a series of onto-epistemic translation procedures that do not intend to transpose problems of our own thinking to those of others, nor to pursue Western philosophical criteria, nor to deal with Yanomami ways of dwelling from our own categories

1 Whenever I say 'my', 'me' or 'I' in the singular, I actually mean 'our', 'us', and 'we', as this engaged work and also the fieldwork with the Yanomami people have always been done together with my friend and partner, also architect and anthropologist, Daniel Jabra. The reflection presented here is mine, even though it is hard to distinguish what is exactly 'mine' in this whole process of 'working-with'.

2 Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones, *About the House: Lévi- Strauss and beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 2.



as a way of validating their practices. Instead, architecture is understood here as perspective, as a point of view and as a starting point explicitly situated in our thinking, but which points to another '*puhi*', that is, to another 'house of thought', as the Yanomami might say. Thus, the anthropology of architecture perspective provides grounds for a deeper reflection on ethnographic practice and its ethical and political parameters. As Bruce Albert summarises, it is with the emergence of ethnic movements and the empowerment of local indigenous communities that opens the ground to transform and redefine the traditional and canonical fieldwork practices of the anthropological discipline, including its main method of participant observation.<sup>3</sup> This changing situation implicates an urgent need to assume the responsibility that fieldwork research entails to indigenous resistance strategies, increasing and transforming the demand for anthropological –and why not architectonic?– involvement.

In my case, this demand for a deeper responsibility – or a 'response-ability' as Donna Haraway suggests<sup>4</sup> – comes directly from the Yanomami indigenous communities who conducted the fieldwork through a bifold method, combining the production of knowledge with pragmatic involvement, since we first met in 2016. As Adriano Pukimapiwëteri – a powerful community and political leader from the Pukima Cachoeira village in the upper Marauíá River – proposes, our form of engagement could be understood as the combination of two main ideas. First, the idea of '*aprender junto*' ('learning together' or 'learning with'), the conceptual implications of which, in my own understanding, resemble the idea of a 'situated knowledge' – as proposed by Donna Haraway –, in the sense that 'situated knowledges are about communities, not about isolated individuals',<sup>5</sup> that is, something that is only possible when truly 'becoming-with',<sup>6</sup> in this case, with those whom we share knowledge and expertise through ethnographic research experience. The second is the idea of '*lutar junto*' ('struggling together' or 'struggling with', with the meaning of political resistance more than a physical fight), in the sense that – as Albert has outlined, accordingly to my own reading – 'the social engagement of the ethnographer can no longer be seen as a personal political or ethical choice, optional and foreign to his scientific project', but 'clearly becomes an explicit and constituent element of the ethnographic relationship', in a way that 'the anthropologist's 'observation' is no longer merely 'participant'; his social 'participation' has become both the condition and the framework of his field research'.<sup>7</sup> This involves, in the case of my fieldwork, a combination of the two practices of 'mediation activities' and 'action-oriented research', both surrounding the demand for building

3 Bruce Albert, "'Ethnographic Situation' and Ethnic Movements: Notes on post-Malinowskian fieldwork," *Critique of Anthropology* 17, no.1 (1997): 53–65.

4 Following one of the arguments around this idea, Haraway suggests: 'Cultivating response-ability requires much more from us. It requires the risk of being for some worlds rather than others and helping to compose those worlds with others.' See the footnote no. 32 in Donna Haraway, *Staying with the trouble: making kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

5 Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (Autumn, 1988): 590.

6 Donna Haraway, *Staying with the trouble: making kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

7 Albert, "'Ethnographic Situation' and Ethnic Movements: Notes on post-Malinowskian fieldwork," 57–58.

indigenous schools in the communities – something that concentrates decades of struggle, discussions and misunderstandings with state agencies and local NGOs.<sup>8</sup>

Two important meetings between 2017 and 2019 were central to define this form of engagement with the Yanomami communities. The first was a biannual elective assembly organized by the local Kurikama Yanomami Association in which the topic of indigenous education and the demand for the construction of schools in several communities were central to debate. We were invited to contribute to the debate and, following their concerns about indigenous education, proposed, as a kind of experiment, to think about an alternative architectural conception of the schools in the same sense that the pedagogical materials of the indigenous education were being debated, that is, to think about a truly Yanomami school also in the architectonic sense, according to their own conceptions around this space and institution. In other words, our proposal – akin to the general perspective provided by the Yanomami leaders about politic-pedagogical matters – was to bring Yanomami conceptions around indigenous education closer to the construction itself. This led us to the second meeting – at the invitation of the Yanomami groups and political leaders of the upper river –, held at the Pukima Beira village on the upper Marauíá River, which was dedicated exclusively to debate and elaborate the alternative architecture project of the schools. In this event – fundamental to the continuity of our engagement and to the realisation of the constructions until today – our compromise was sealed in the form of a pragmatic and political alliance.<sup>9</sup>

The collective design process, in this context, consisted in listening systematically to all of the concrete demands of the Yanomami leaders, teachers and women involved in the second meeting mentioned above, which lasted several days. Our role as architects was mainly to mediate debate and to translate all the demands in a viable architectural project which was as close as possible to their own claims. It is important to note that this mediatory role is not an obvious position, especially because more than insisting on developing some authorial or fully 'innovative' project, our position consisted in a much more pragmatic posture, sensible enough to elaborate a viable and attentive architectural project. And also providing the financial resources to make the concrete construction of the schools possible, by weaving a network of partners able to contribute and donate, considering the complex context in which we are situated, not only culturally, but also financially and logistically. Thus, the mediation and translation process involved in the architectural design of the school, according to the Yanomami demands, must consider above all their own understanding of the 'school' (*hiramotima nahi*) translatable as 'house of the school' or 'house

8 Ibid., 57.

9 One school has already been built in the upper Marauíá River at the Pukima Cachoeira village (between 2019 and 2020) with the financial support of Foundation 3% Tiers-Monde. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the project was interrupted and in 2022 we expect to build the second one, also in the upper Marauíá River and with the financial support from the same foundation. Some of this process can be viewed in the following link: <https://vimeo.com/411999061>, accessed September 1, 2021.

of the teaching’) as a concept, involving not only its institution but also its construction. Simultaneously, the ‘action-orientated research’ fuses itself with ‘mediation activities’ as it is responsible for translating *worlds* –more than merely translating *words*– around the idea of the ‘school’, according to the perspective of the Yanomami communities.

This, for example, implies considering that, in the Yanomami perspective, the school is, essentially, something *foreign*, in comparison to the traditional forms of producing and sharing knowledge. In this way, if the school is conceived as foreign and originally associated with the non-indigenous (*‘napë’*), its physical constitution must follow this principle and should be built with durable and industrialised materials – different from the traditional Yanomami architecture made with natural and more ephemeral materials such as wood, vines and straw. However, according to the argument of Adriano Pukimapiwëteri (analogue to all of other Yanomami present in the meeting, and not exactly with our *own* perspective), this does not result in a damage of any form to the autonomy of indigenous education. In his own words, highlighting the materiality of the roof: ‘When the upper part of the house [the ‘house of the school’] is different, our body will remain the same that it is. When the [industrialised material of the] roof arrives, I won’t be different, I won’t keep the white man’s body, the way we are born continues. Even if the roof has changed, our body will not change. We will never, never change’. Thus, rather than a kind of a ‘fetishisation’ of what an ‘indigenous school’ would be, in its materiality and appearance, this translation process implies a deep understanding of the fundamental formulation of several political leaders of the upper Marauia river that the indigenous school is, essentially, ‘to struggle better’ (*para lutar melhor*, as it is spoken in Portuguese by the Yanomami). That is, the foreign state technology of the school –including its own foreign materiality– is subverted and reappropriated as a space oriented to learn the word-weapon of the coloniser (and also of its foreign allies, such as ourselves) to improve political autonomy and counter-colonial resistance strategies in order to deal with the many attacks against their rights, knowledge, land, health and autonomy. In this sense, we, as architects, function as translators of this perspective on the school and also as potential pragmatic and political allies, bringing together the principles of ‘struggling together’ with ‘learning together’ in a concrete aim: the construction of schools ‘to struggle better’. In this way, we also subvert our own architecture’s technologies of power in a way that is able to support the counter-colonial resistance of our interlocutors.<sup>10</sup> At the same time, it is through ethnographic reflection that we can also re-think the principles, practices and conceptions of our ‘own’ architecture, allied with the proposal of ‘learning with’ a radical otherness – other architectures; other politics; other worlds.

In this way, the anthropological fieldwork research goes beyond the schools’ construction itself, in the sense that it is not exactly *about it*, but

10 Michel Foucault, “Space, knowledge and power,” interview by Paul Rabinow, in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 239–256.

rather it is *with* this engagement in this particular and situated demand that the context and, essentially, the *meaning* of the ethnographic work is set up – opening a space to also re-think *about* and *with* architecture itself. Thus, it is in light of the convergence of these two methodological principles of ‘learning together’ and ‘struggling together’ that our alliance may be better conceived as the making of an ‘uncommons’, in the sense of a negotiation around the encounter of ‘heterogeneous worlds (and their practices)’, each one with ‘interests in common which are not the same interests’.<sup>11</sup> After all, this alliance is an interdisciplinary proposal for an architectonic and ‘ethnographic pact’ – in constant and mutual construction – which emerges from our embodied ‘experiences of worldings that fieldwork confronted us with’.<sup>12</sup> The fieldwork is better conceived, then, as the practice of a ‘crossroads’ involving the practices and the worlding tools of the anthropologist (and architect, in this case) and of those that he/she works with. Finally, it is through this heterogeneous way of worlding – ‘acknowledging the uncommons’ that brings us together – that our intellectual, political and pragmatic encounter can be capable of the necessary movement of ‘refracting the course of the one-world world’, by proposing – following the Zapatista’s call for ‘a world in which many worlds fit’ – the practice and the possibility of many worlds meeting, negotiating, dwelling, building, learning and struggling together.<sup>13</sup>

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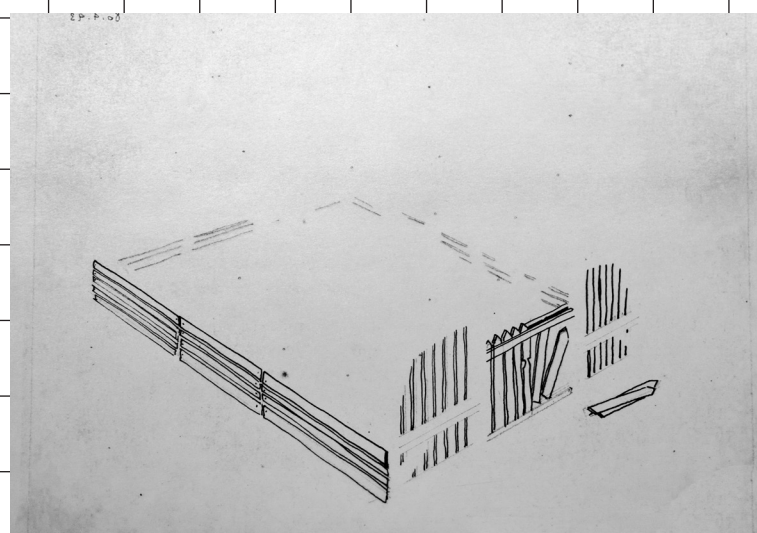
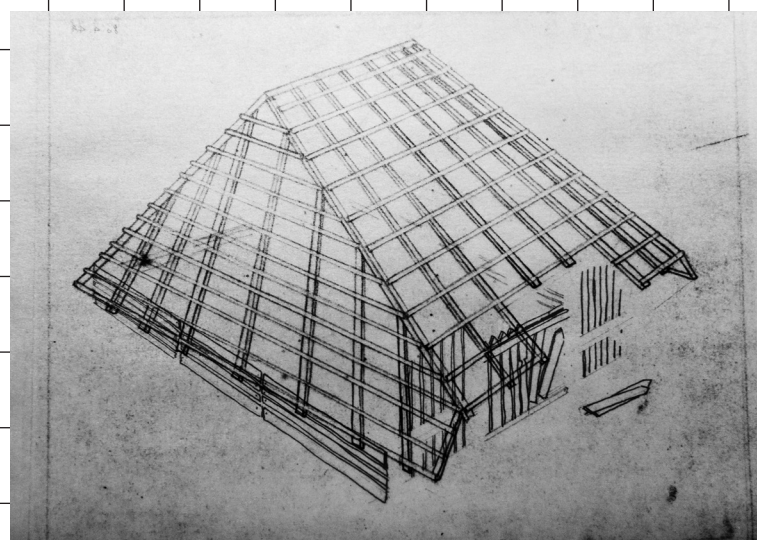
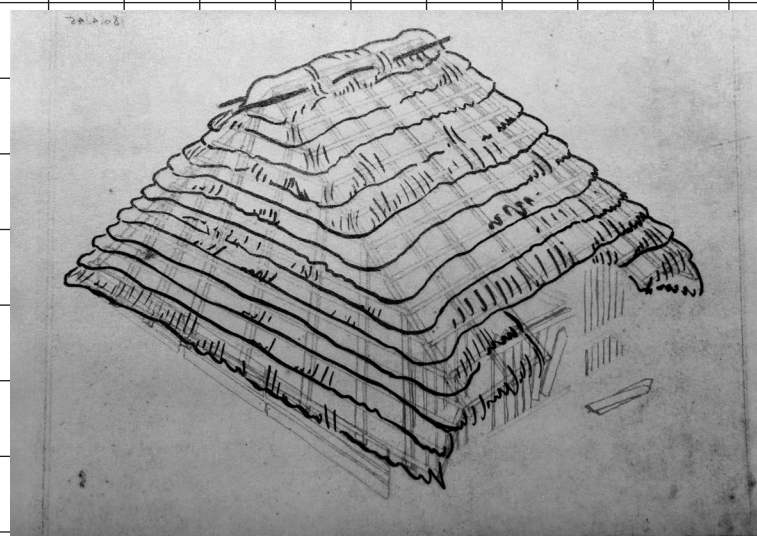
# Architecture in the Service of Ethnography: Habitation, Ethnography, and the Region (France 1941–1945)

‘it belongs to those turned towards architecture, and therefore towards synthesis, to study the traditional house; because such a study requires either a perfect knowledge of the art of building, or the means of being able to record the result of the investigations by drawing up plans, sections, and elevations.’<sup>1</sup>

In October of 1941, the reconstruction architect Charles Struys, employed in the ethnographic survey of rural architecture Chantier 1425, mapped out a research itinerary through the departments of Gironde, Landes, and the Basse Pyrénées. Assigned these regions in order to ‘maintain geographical and historical specificity’ within his work, Struys had undergone preliminary ethnographic training at the *École du Louvre* and conducted archival research in Paris.<sup>2</sup> This preparatory labour, however, was set apart from the fieldwork that he had been employed for: the graphic documentation of architectural plans, sections, and details. As his performance reviews noted, ‘Good investigator. Understands and is assimilated to his work. Draws well.’<sup>3</sup>

Nearing the end of his fieldwork, Struys visited a thatched-roof hut in Lencouacq and proceeded to enact an architectural *démontage*. Over three sheets of vellum, he dissected the shed’s primary tectonic layers. Treating its foundation, framework, and cladding as fragments of an organic body, in their layering, his sketches animated its construction while representing its deconstruction. However, to be so partitioned, each layer had to have been initially disengaged and extracted from the extant building. Not only was there an initial decontextualisation of form but there was a formal disarticulation in the unhooking of attachments between the layers of building.

Originating from a research committee that designed regional furniture series to stimulate furniture manufacturing under the Occupation, Chantier



Charles Struys, Vellum overlays disclosing the architectural structure of a thatch roofed shed in Lencouacq, Landes, France. 1943. 20130277/5, Musée national des arts et traditions populaires, Enquête Fonds; Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte sur Seine, France.

- 1 Déléation générale à l'Équipement national, *Service des chantiers intellectuels et artistiques, Enquête sur l'architecture régionale: Instructions pour les enquêteurs du Chantier 1425* (Paris: Bernard Brothers, 1941), n.p. All translations authors own, unless otherwise noted.
- 2 Urbain Cassan, “Compte-rendu de l'activité du Chantier 1425 du premier au trente et un décembre 1941” 2013047/277, 2; Musée national des Arts et traditions populaires: ressources documentaires et activités scientifiques. Archives Nationales, Pierrefitte-sur-Seine, France.
- 3 L'enquête d'architecture rurale,” Rapport sur l'activité du chantier 1425 pendant la première quinzaine de janvier 1942.” 2013047/277, 2; Musée national des Arts et traditions populaires: ressources documentaires et activités scientifiques. A.N.

1425 was the product of the Vichy's *Commission a la lutte contre le chômage*, a subsection of the *Délégation générale à l'Équipement national's Service des Chantiers* which established a series of worksites for intellectual and manual labour. Organised to provide the empirical material that would allow for a *reconstruction à l'identique*, the reconstruction of the countryside as it had been, the survey operated squarely within the central conflicts of the war years: between technological modernisation and cultural conservation. However, though supported by its administrative genealogy – emerging between Paris' institution of domestic ethnography, the *Musée national des Arts et Traditions Populaires*, and the Vichy's technocratic organ, the DGEN – this treatment of the survey's program occludes the implications that the survey had for both the human sciences and architecture. While the *Service des chantiers* saw their project as one which re-aligned intellectual labour, previously associated with the damaging 'irrealisms' of modern science and mechanisation, with the constitution of cultural patrimony, the ethnographers who directed the survey viewed it as an opportunity to formalise and modernise the processes of ethnography inquiry and representation.

At the centre of these operations were the forty architects – graduates of the *École des Beaux-Arts* and the *École Spéciale d'Architecture* – recruited primarily for their aptitude in architectural drafting and technical drawing to act as recording devices for the human sciences. Following the relationship between technical representation and disciplinary specificity, my paper elaborates on the rationale behind the recruitment of architects as ethnographic observers, before tracing the impacts of its representations on the operative ideologies that had engendered the survey to begin with.

GEOMETRIC DESCRIPTION AND TECHNICAL CULTURE

Struys' dissection of the shed was not a normative product of the architecture survey. A representative graphic monograph consisted of roughly twenty separate drawings devoted to a single structure. As example sheets illustrated, these began with geological, geographical, and political maps and cadastral and ground plans, before proceeding with a more traditional mode of architectural rendering: isolated facades, perspectives, sections, and plans. Each monograph concluded with a series of axonometric representations of the carpentry framework or masonry structure and detail sheets illustrating specific architectural elements, ornamentation, and construction methods: depicting processes, tools, and machines both as component parts of architecture, and in the same way that architectural form had been rendered.

The monograph's fairly staid structure had been established by the survey's graphic administrator, the ethnographer Marcel Maget, as part of an attempt to standardize the processes of ethnographic documentation. Both Maget and Georges-Henri Rivière, the MNATP's director, provided recommendations for how architecture should be documented, hewing towards a mode of analysis and representation exemplified, ironically, by Struy's departure from the survey's graphic standards. As Maget remarked,

architecture was to be understood as a 'machine for which the practice of *décrochement* is recommended'<sup>4</sup> and in Rivière's lessons at the *École du Louvre*, the introduction of *habitation* was immediately followed by the instruction to 'break them down into their main elements.'<sup>5</sup>

Maget developed a series of representational guidelines on the ethnographic use of *dessin technique* during the survey. Arguing for an abandonment of the '*effets de l'art*,' which rendered material culture illegible within 'an undergrowth of hatching, shadows, and washes,' Maget proposed introducing techniques of representation borrowed from modern architecture and industry: measurement and scale, symbols and legends, prescribed angles, and standardised sheets.<sup>6</sup> This was not only a stylistic demand to replace the rough, painterly, and the picturesque with the scientific, diagrammatic, and technical markings of what he termed 'geometric description.'<sup>7</sup> Both the codification of technical drawing and the analytic device of *décrochement* were to allow for methods of ethnographic 'capture,' what Marcel Mauss had termed its 'acquisition industry,' to be leveraged on architectural objects.<sup>8</sup>

Architecture had previously been the primary example of *monuments intransportables*, objects which could not be so customarily collected.<sup>9</sup> Its mention within ethnographic texts was often accompanied by a call for disciplinary expertise: that one 'proceed as an architect.'<sup>10</sup> In reifying this suggestion through the recruitment of specialised observers towards a single subject category, *Chantier 1425* collapsed ethnographic taxonomies of material culture within architectural objects themselves, positioning *habitation* as the origin and end of the analysis of material culture.

However, the legibility of architectural deconstruction functioned doubly as reproducibility. As Guy Pison, one of the two architect-administrators, remarked, the survey had been 'borne from the need for reconstruction' and 'placed under the sign of regionalism.'<sup>11</sup> The survey's research manual rendered this poetically, as a mandate to 'reweave the fabric of the territory.'<sup>12</sup> In Maget's instructions, technical representation would allow for 'the object to be reconstructed just as a factory blueprint allows the execution of an airplane part,'<sup>13</sup> while the survey's manual underscored its granularity, how representations must be 'precise enough to allow for the

4 Marcel Maget, "La Documentation graphique en ethnographie metropolitaine: le dessin," *Le Mois d'Ethnographie française* 2, no. 6 (1948), 84.  
5 Georges Henri-Rivière, "Cours des arts et traditions populaires de la France; les arts et traditions populaires des paysans français; cinquième leçon; la maison paysanne I. February 1, 1941." 2013047/212, 3; Musée national des Arts et traditions populaires: ressources documentaires et activités scientifiques. A.N.  
6 Marcel Maget, "La Documentation graphique," 83.  
7 Marcel Maget, "L'ethnographie française," April 1945; 20130452/26; Fonds Marcel Maget. A.N.  
8 Marcel Mauss, *Manuel d'ethnographie*, 1926, trans. Dominique Lussier (New York: Durkheim Press, 2009), 43.  
9 Marcel Griaule and Michel Leiris, *Instructions sommaires pour les collecteurs d'objets ethnographiques* (Paris: Musée de l'homme [Muséum nationale d'histoire naturelle],1931), 11.  
10 Mauss, *Manuel d'ethnographie*, 58.  
11 Guy Pison, "Perspectives sur l'Enquete d'architectur rurale du Chantier 1425; Causerie faite a l'Ecole du Louvre," April 11, 1944, n.p.; ; 20130277/3; Musée national des Arts et traditions populaires. Enquêtes réalisées par le musée; A.N.  
12 Délégation générale à l'équipement national, *Enquête sur l'architecture régionale*, n.p.  
13 Maget, "La Documentation graphique," 82.



construction of an analogous house, or its reconstruction.’<sup>14</sup> For his part, Rivière referred to this more simply as ‘re-making.’<sup>15</sup>

The reconstructive goal of ethnographic documentation was differentiated from the deconstructive process of representation that supported it. Their distinction was located, precisely, between the architect and the ethnographer. The employment of architects as ethnographic observers had initially faced resistance due to their perceived incapacity for ‘systematic observation,’ a judgement levied by representatives from both disciplines.<sup>16</sup> Yet these critiques were elided by positioning architects as possessing not only the necessary representational skills but, with them, an unparalleled epistemic access to ‘*technique architecturale*’ provided by their training and their ‘technical culture.’<sup>17</sup> These two positions also reflected an internal divide within ethnographic methodology; between extensive inquiry – supported by more properly ‘modern’ techniques of representation such as aerial photography and cinematography – and intensive inquiry, characterised by the operations of disarticulation which formed the central procedures of the survey.

DISARTICULATIONS: THE MAP, THE DETAIL, AND THE COMPOSITE

Three primary representational media structure the products of *Chantier 1425*, each representing a stage of architectural disarticulation that emerged from the architects’ fieldwork. The preliminary maps and itineraries acted to establish the field of operation, while the architectural detail sheets constituted the intermediary stage of deconstruction, intended to be used to repopulate the bounded areas of inquiry with typological forms. However, this cyclical process was interrupted by the production of composite collages of photographs, sketches, and statistical information. Though developed from the survey’s methodology, these composites disrupted its operation and the ideologies which supported it. This operated as a handoff between the regionalist approach, which utilised knowledge of the land to explicate architectural form, and the technical approach, in which architectural knowledge, writ large, became viewed as a means to unlock a new knowledge of the land.

Having been primarily the subject of human geographic study until the 1940’s as an object which was understood as being ‘geographical to the

14 Délégation générale à l'équipement national, *Enquête sur l'architecture régionale*, n.p.  
15 Georges Henri-Rivière, “Cours des arts et traditions populaires de la France; les arts et traditions populaires des paysans français; cinquième leçon; la maison paysanne I. February 1, 1941.” 2013047/212, 9.  
16 See Pison, “Perspectives sur l'Enquete d'architecture rurale,” n.p. And André Varagnac to Jacques Jaujard, directeur des Musées Nationaux et de l'Ecole du Louvre,” February 18, 1942; 20130277/4; Musée national des arts et traditions populaires. Enquêtes réalisées par le musée; A.N.  
17 Pison, “Perspectives sur l'Enquete d'architecture rurale,” n.p. This concept of ‘technical culture’ – disciplinary specificity within interdisciplinary labour – had been a latent concept in the human and historical sciences in France, developed through the Annalés school’s focus on technical specificity in interdisciplinary labour and had been most recently stated in André Leroi-Gourhan’s comment that ‘there are too few travelers who describe houses (and too few architects among the travelers) for us to depart from our generalisations’. See Lucien Febvre, “Réflexions sur l’histoire des Techniques,” *Annales D’histoire Économique Et Sociale* 7, no. 36 (1935), 535. André Leroi-Gourhan, *Milieu et techniques* (Paris: Éditions Albin-Michel, 1945), 246.

highest degree,’<sup>18</sup> rural architecture inherited a tripartite definition as a ‘creature,’ a ‘tool,’ and an ‘elementary workshop’ resulting from its proximity to nature, labour, and modes of production.<sup>19</sup> Within the regionalist practices of the interwar period, this geographical and ethnographic knowledge had been considered part of architecture’s ‘technical culture.’ The preliminary itineraries created by the worker-documentarists had mirrored this ‘ground up’ approach to documenting regional form. Created at a distance, they layered transportation networks and urban agglomerations over geological and geographical features. Though each differed in resolution and specificity, they all included bounded areas which represented locations of material and aesthetic homogeneity. However, from territory to tool, the survey’s worker-documentarists carried out a double operation. At the same time as they inscribed architectural forms into a dense nexus of geographical, technical, and cultural factors, they simultaneously de-contextualised the architecture they encountered.

Perhaps the most evident aspect of the relationship between the function of ethnographic synthesis and the analytics of disarticulation first emerged through unrealised design of ‘*maisons caractéristiques*’, representative architectural forms to be composited from a series of ‘constants’ identified through a stocktaking of a region’s characteristic forms and elements.<sup>20</sup> Though none were ever formally drawn up, halfway through the survey’s five year operation, the journal *Techniques et Architecture* attempted to illustrate this operation. In 1943, a few of *Chantier 1425*’s architects published a series of summary reports accompanied by striking mixed-media collages.

Ostensibly a taxonomic grid which included each of the survey’s representational stage, architectural forms, elements, and technologies cascaded down from the top of the collages leading down towards climatic and geographic conditions, themselves set apart in their smaller scale and simpler rendition than the diagrams, details, plans, and sections that filled the spreads. Loosely structured by regions, the graphics bled over the ‘grid’s’ demarcations. Representing the attempted re-inscription of architectural form within a network of geographic, ethnographic, and technological variables, in the face of such density of information, the pressure for accuracy in technical representation began to destabilise the survey’s foundational concepts and goals.

Though it was primarily the task of documentation that had impelled the survey’s organisation and the introduction of graphic standards, it was representation at the intermediary stage – at the level of regional architecture and the architectural object – that became the primary location for administrative standardisation and individual experimentation, creating a delta within which epistemic ambiguity and formal detachment proceeded hand in hand.

18 Jean Brunhes, *La Géographie Humaine: Essai de classification positive: Principes et exemples* (Paris: Félix Alcan, 1910), 32.  
19 Albert Demangeon, “l’Habitation Rurale en France,” *Annales de Géographie* 29, no. 161 (1920), 355.  
20 Délégation générale à l'Équipement national, *Enquête sur l'architecture régionale*, n.p.



Regionalism and reconstruction had been intertwined within the naturalistic rationalism of Vichy rhetoric. Yet, rather than expose bounded areas of homogenous character, the survey instead surfaced, in the words of André Hermant, an ‘unsuspected diversity and interpenetration of local techniques whose distribution is less than the size of the geographical or economic regions.’<sup>21</sup>

The territorial goals of the survey were rooted in the representation of the land. It was, as Guy Pison noted, in ‘giving the *terroir* an image’ that the survey’s records would become generative for shaping the forms of the reconstruction.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, the architectural benefit was seen to come from the finalised graphic dossiers, rather than the process of research itself. Architectural representation as visual ethnography was thus intended to function in a restricted sense as simply representation: a position which was reiterated in the limitation of architects as graphic, rather than intellectual, workers. As the manual noted, their ‘visual education will allow them to immediately benefit from...the exact graphical notation of all or some [architectural] elements.’<sup>23</sup> However, the published composites reveal how the visualisation methods of architecture acted against the systematised methods of ethnography. Utilising architectural elements and techniques, of organisation and construction, that they had encountered in the field, the researchers of *Chantier 1425* destabilised the ethnographic constitution of rural architecture, and the region, through the evidentiary foundation they themselves had produced and experienced.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, the question of technical representation opens onto considerations of disciplinary exchange that invert this conference’s byline. The recruitment of architects as technicians of ethnographic documentation was not as simple as the use of a technical apparatus or a representational device. Indeed, what ethnography lent to its architects was its own brand of systematisation and organisation. But what architecture offered to ethnography was much greater. As human geography had taught ethnography, architecture was a ‘materiali[s] ation of a mode of life.’<sup>24</sup> Accordingly, architectural labour offered ethnography the possibility of synthesising, in a material form, the myriad variables that culture was assumed to consist of, allowing not only for its inscription, but its portability, preservation, and reproduction.

Yet instead of illustrating the commensurability between the disciplines *qua* practices, *Chantier 1425*’s enchainment of architecture representation and ‘technical culture’ to the ethnographic project performed the shift between the two broad stages of disciplinary intersection of architecture and the

human sciences. Occurring between the fixative taxonomies of natural history and the diagrammatic flows of human action, the case of *Chantier 1425* affords the opportunity to probe two fallacies of ethnography and architecture, and of architectural ethnography. The first is the supposed symmetry between ethnographic method and architectural tours, ‘journeys’, and other reductive renditions of cultural exposure espoused by architectural history. And the second orbits the question of observation, both in what ethnography saw in the ‘culture’ of the architects it recruited, and what the architects saw in the cultures they encountered. For, despite being placed in the service of ethnography, it was architectural practice that was most impacted by the survey. Their experience and documentation resulted not only in the augmentation of human-scientific information but destabilised the regionalist regime of aesthetic and spatial control within the reconstruction, opening opportunities for the implantation of modernist and functionalist theories and practices.

21 André Hermant, “Techniques Locales,” *Techniques et Architecture*, no. 11/12 (1943): 275.  
22 Pison, “Perspectives sur l’Enquete d’architectur rurale,” n.p.  
23 Délégation générale à l’équipement national, *Enquête sur l’architecture régionale*, n.p.  
24 Paul Vidal de la Blache, *Principles of Human Geography*, trans. Millicent Todd Bingham (New York: Henry Holt, 1926), 323.

Claire Bosmans (KU Leuven)

# Listening to Corridor Chatters in High-Rise Social Housing

During the last decades, major competitions launched by public authorities have attracted and commissioned renowned architects to redesign the public spaces around social housing in Brussels without necessarily addressing the estates' condition.<sup>1</sup> In parallel, renovation of the post-war social housing stock directed by real estate companies has primarily focussed on the building's envelope (including thermic insulation, image and material upgrade), leaving in most cases the inner organisation as a private and management concern. Under-estimated in renovation projects, shared spaces in high-rise social housing estates have been the episodic targets of social cohesion initiatives, and participatory moments that have aimed with limited means at their 'activation', with questionable results. In-between these trends, this interdisciplinary contribution reflects on the present value and possible futures of shared spaces in social housing: How to connect the ethnography of distribution spaces with the spatial rehabilitation of a high-rise housing estate? The presentation of empirical insights collected in two sites unfolds on a design agenda for a modernist housing scheme.

## TWO ESTATES

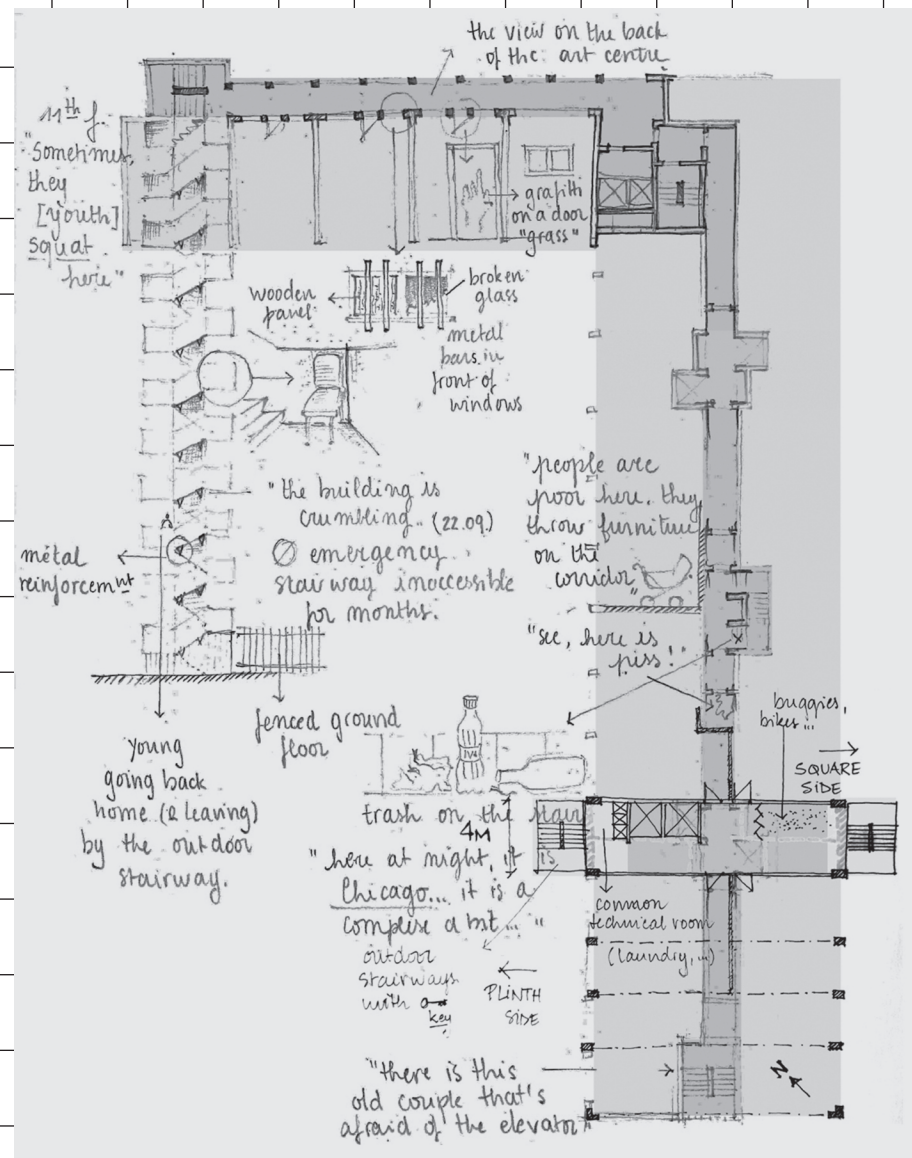
The estates under scrutiny are located in central districts and managed by two of the largest social housing companies<sup>2</sup> in Brussels: Héliport in the North Quarter belongs to the Foyer Laekenois, and Brigittines in the Marolles, to the Logement Bruxellois.<sup>3</sup> Both were built in the 1970s, as part of urban sanitation programs that caused the demolition of popular urban fabrics and the eviction of residents.

The largest central estate, Héliport, is composed of six high-rise buildings constructed on the same plan. Each building is 11 to 14 floor-high, and houses approximately 100 households. Inside, the distribution system limits the spatial impact of circulation. A wide corridor flanked by two large windows at its ends serves three floors: studios and one-bedroom flats with single orientation on the intermediate level, and two to three-bedroom apartments with a double orientation on the upper and lower floors. On the ground floor of the block under study, the space initially projected as a morgue accommodates a concierge's lodge.

<sup>1</sup> See 'Contrats de Quartier Durable'.

<sup>2</sup> In 2018, the fusion of the social housing companies in Brussels reduced their amount by half: from 33 to 16.

<sup>3</sup> Owning 9,75% (3800 units) and 10,25% of Brussels social housing stock (4000 units), respectively.



A corridor in Brigittines. Overlay of ethnographic notes and a projective scenario for the reconfiguration of shared spaces in a high-rise social housing estate. Image by Claire Bosman, 2021.

Brigittines is a L-shape building of 11 floors, housing 151 households. The main aisle (with one, two, three-bedroom apartments) is distributed by a central corridor interrupted by a series of fireproof doors; the secondary aisle (with studios mostly) is served by access balconies on each floor. Initially, the functional layout of the central corridor was counterbalanced by the provision of collective rooms on the ground floor: a concierge's lodge, common premises, a social centre with a meeting room for the elderly, a recreation room for young people and a nursery.<sup>4</sup> At the period of the fieldwork, only remained the concierge's lodge. The other rooms, previously used by associations or rented out as commercial spaces, were closed off.

Since the 1980s, the limited stock of Brussels social housing<sup>5</sup> barely functions as a security net for the most vulnerable residents. The socio-economic profile of tenants is comparable in both estates: a high representation of singles (43%), retired (23,4%), single mothers (37,5% of families), without (22,7%) or with a replacement income (>35%)<sup>6</sup>, the majority of which with an immigration background.<sup>7</sup>

## ARCHITECTURAL ETHNOGRAPHY OF CORRIDORS

Fieldworks in Héliport and Brigittines were conducted at different periods and rhythms: (1) intensively from February to May 2019 and (2) episodically in February, July and September 2020. Two approaches of observation (including informal interactions) were tested: (1) a three-month onsite living experience and (2) repetitive visits,<sup>8</sup> the former being more 'participant' than the latter. Empirical insights were collected and processed through drawings, methodological synthesis between socio-spatial prospection and projection.

As most collective amenities planned in the initial projects are either not in use or were never implemented, shared spaces in both estates are reduced to circulation:<sup>9</sup> entrance halls, corridors and stairways. The ethnography of distribution spaces interrogates insiders' lived experience through uses, symbolic meanings, and maintenance aspects. The following organisation of insights in a thematic order renders the sites' complexity and highlights keys for a design scenario.

## CORRIDOR: SUPPORT OF COLLECTIVITY, COLLECTOR OF VULNERABILITY

When first asked about their relationship with their neighbours,<sup>10</sup> all Héliport tenants encountered would systematically reply 'no': no interaction, no invitation at home. However, during my stay, I saw neighbours helping each other to move in furniture; I heard and was invited by women gossiping in

4 Habiter-Wonen, "Logements Sociaux Au Quartier Des Brigittines à Bruxelles," 1972.  
9 Open spaces surrounding the housing blocks including plinths are not discussed in this paper.  
10 'do you know your floor neighbours?'

the corridor on their way back from the market. On the occasion of longer discussions with female residents, I would realise how much they knew about each other, some having lived on that floor for decades, one of them having a family member living in the apartment next door. During an informal conversation in the wide corridor, a resident referred to an incident that happened there a couple of years ago: 'everyone knew who was responsible for it, but no one spoke [to the landlord], in *solidarity* with the family... it would be a disaster for them to be evicted from the social housing'. Sharing this collective secret – including me in the community – bound to the space in which we were standing, she expressed a form of solidarity that unites tenants living in precarity in the absence of affordable alternatives. Mutual care is implicitly written in the corridor. However, the balance is fragile. One building with an inner layout different from the five others was chosen as a night meeting place by a group of young men (living in the estate but not in that building): entering by the emergency stairways, they *squat* until the eviction by municipal workers (*gardiens de la paix*), leaving behind burned marks on the walls, damaging the space and scaring some tenants.<sup>11</sup>

In Brigittines, along with the uncomfortable access balcony – swept by a cold northern wind, the view blocked by the back façade of an art centre (since 2007), plunging on the tracks of the North-South junction – a series of indicators reveal how much the space is a stage of conflicts: a graffiti sprayed on a door accuses x of being a 'snitch' (*balance* in French), metal bars were added in front of (partly broken) windows, some being patched up with wooden panels and marble-like stickers obstructing the view, a tenant secures the door of her apartment with several locks, etc.<sup>12</sup> Concentrating precarity, high-rise social housing estates built in mutilated central districts attract additional layers of vulnerability and exclusion. A group of dealers 'coming from other neighbourhoods' would have elected the outdoor stairway overlooking the public space as a strategic place for their business. 'Here at night, it is Chicago,' reports an old resident; a caring lady provocatively warns me while heading to her apartment: 'don't stay here, they'll steal your bag'.

In contrast to Brigittines, the corridor in Héliport acts as the physical backbone of a community. The implicit infrastructure of care, its spatial generosity and qualities generate feelings of reciprocity and solidarity.<sup>13</sup> However, as porous in-between articulating precarious life trajectories, vacated shared spaces are also fragile to external intrusion: layering new projections, they breed insecurity among neighbours. The spatial quality of distribution spaces contributes to collectivity.

12 Les Brigittines Contemporary Art Centre.  
13 Emma R. Power and Kathleen J. Mee, "Housing: An Infrastructure of Care," *Housing Studies* 35, no. 3 (2020): 484–505



STAIRWAYS: FUNCTIONAL, FUNCTIONLESS

In Héliport, the emergency stairways are perceived as a gendered territory: it is *unexpected* for a woman to use them, as a tenant (father) told me. The outdoor stairways are further isolated by a socio-generational border: physically disconnected from the ground floor, they cannot fulfil their distributive function, and are reclaimed by few young men in their free time, alone or with two, away from the (often overcrowded) family environment.

In Briggittines, the outdoor stairway is occasionally used as a passage by young tenants living on the lowest floors. On the upper floor, it accommodates more static uses: a chair was either dropped or strategically positioned to catch the morning sunshine; on the last floor, a mother, surprised to see me sitting there, tells that youth likes *squatting* here.

In high-rise estates, stairways easily lose their distributive function in favour of elevators; despite episodic breakdowns. Vacated but necessarily accessible, they welcome extra-domestic uses in search of proximity and intimacy, mostly performed by the youth. Operating invisibly, re-signification practices on functionless distribution spaces layer new meanings and borders, acknowledged and tacitly tolerated by other neighbours, experienced when unintendedly over-passing them during the fieldwork. ‘Vertical practices’ reveal the fluctuating limits of home in functional schemes, stressing the value that spaces without function may add in high-rise collective housing estates.<sup>14</sup>

SHARED SPACES: PRIVATE MESSINESS, PUBLIC EMPTINESS

Occasionally, shared spaces accommodate the overflow generated by mismatches on the private domain: When a household or an activity does not fit in its housing,<sup>15</sup> members may look for space beyond the domestic sphere. Additionally, homemaking processes leave traces in shared spaces: Buggies and bikes are stored in the corridor despite the interdiction,<sup>16</sup> some old furniture ends up here anonymously.

Between top-down regulations and external (mis)projections, the value of shared spaces in collective housing divides outsiders. Non-resident stakeholders (social housing company employees) point at the difficulty of Briggittines’ tenants ‘to *feel at home* in communal areas’ and ‘to commit to’ these spaces. Moreover, a social worker considers that shared spaces are abundant but *un(der)used* perhaps because of a *design failure*. Most social cohesion projects and participatory moments that took place in the estate focussed on the *activation* of distribution spaces (e.g., ‘café-rencontre’, corridors wall painting to facilitate inner orientation), with debatable outcomes.

14 Richard Baxter, ‘The High-Rise Home: Verticality as Practice in London,’ *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 41, no. 2 (2017): 334–52.  
15 Despite strict allocation rules and recent adjustments, it is still frequent to encounter a single elderly living in a two to three-bedroom flat; or to the opposite, a couple with a young kid living in a studio.  
16 Collective storage was initially foreseen on the ground floor in both estates, but does not exist today.

Ambiguously, the corridor is regulated as an empty container where activities and traces of them are formally prohibited by a house rule charter that states what the space is not: ‘nor a playground, nor a toilet, nor a storeroom’.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, physical closure operates in the absence of a programmatic (or commercial) answer: collective spaces on the ground floor of Briggittines were closed off in 2020, after the end of a two-year participation process. The ‘loss of publicness’ in social housing has delegated maintenance responsibilities through external privatisation, and physically translated in the shrinking of shared spaces.<sup>18</sup> However, the corridor accommodates various uses in a fixed and finished (if not residual) setting. It gets occupied, crossed and vacated; damaged, decorated and cleaned. The cyclical changes question the rigidity and opacity of its physical boundaries.

MAINTENANCE: INSTITUTIONAL DISTANCE, MATERIAL DISTRUST

In Héliport, the maintenance of the corridor is the shared duty of the tenants, organised by a schedule pinned on the wall. As a source of recurrent complaints and frustrations given the unequal commitments and the uneven success from floor to floor, the coordination of a shared maintenance system would reduce extra costs for tenants and allow the concierge to dedicate time to other tasks including the mediation of conflicts. The maintenance of the elevators, stairways, and entrance hall is the duty of the concierge.

In Briggittines, the concierge is responsible for the weekly cleaning (including small fixes) of the eleven corridors. Here again, the maintenance of the shared spaces generates dissatisfaction among some tenants: they deplore the lack of means allocated by the social housing company to a building of *that size*, indirectly stressing the institutional distance from the site daily lived reality. Distance and neglect materialised a few years ago when a renovation plan for the surrounding public spaces ignored the decaying state of the building: The outdoor emergency stairway had been left inaccessible for years because of structural problems.<sup>19</sup>

In-between figures emerge from the ethnography of shared spaces: the corridor in collective housing (private-public), the alternative uses of emergency stairways in high-rise estates (inside-outside), the concierge as both social housing employee and resident, and the responsibility of maintenance referring indirectly to the relationship between landlord and social tenants. This non-exhaustive constellation associates pragmatic aspects with subjective ones, positing social housing estates as complex living environments continuously co-produced by various stakeholders, challenging the designers’ positionality.

17 See Art. 2 in the internal house rules charter (ROI) of the Logement Bruxellois.  
18 Nele Aernouts and Michael Ryckewaert, “Reconceptualizing the ‘Publicness’ of Public Housing: The Case of Brussels,” *Social Inclusion* 3, no. 2 (2015): 17–30.  
19 See the masterplan Jonction by Bureau Bas Smets as part of the ‘Contrat de Quartier Durable’ Jonction, 2014–2019.

A SCENARIO

This paper addresses the renovation project beyond the dominant technical requirements (energetic performance of the building envelope, fire safety evacuation, evolution of housing standards) and public space ‘revitalisation’, questioning the value of shared spaces in social housing through ethnography. Remotely regulated through emptiness or closure, these have been reduced to functional distribution. Their vacancy was pointed as problematic, symptomatic and a generator of unhomely feelings among residents. However, despite regulations, an implicit and uneven programming operated from within, tailored on local means and needs, and on spatial possibility is emerging where the (distributive) function fades away. In addition, conflicts tend to occur where space does not allow for more than its function. Altogether, the ethnographic observations challenge the role of the designer.

The scenario sketched for Brigittines attempts to tie the prospective ethnography to the architectural project, dealing with a housing system increasingly articulated around its residents’ precarity. Building on thematical tensions, it opens shared spaces to spontaneous yet unpredictable programmatic uses, improving the spatial qualities and flexibility of a more-than-functional in-between to stimulate care. More technical and pragmatic than intended, the scenario contrasts with the radical projects for affordable housing that struggle to land, the absence of intervention that ethnography tends to call for, or the acupunctural activations by temporary occupations. It deals with the specific and its complexity, spatialising ideas derived from empirical insights, aware of its partiality and imperfection. The exercise situates the ethnographer-designer in the constellation of in-betweens, as both mediator and generator of tensions.

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U.S. Army Compound at Honoiliuli National Historic Site. Photograph by Desirée Valadares, 2018.

Desirée Valadares (UC Berkeley)

# Place-Based Pedagogies and Participatory Action Research at Former Second World War Confinement (Internment) Landscapes

‘Take the back roads!’ we are instructed. We enter through three sets of yellow, padlocked gates and an agricultural fence propped up by rotting, wooden signposts. ‘NO TRESPASSING,’ ‘FEDERAL PROPERTY,’ ‘NO ACCESS TO PUBLIC LAND,’ ‘KEEP OUT! PRIVATE PROPERTY VIOLATORS WILL BE PROSECUTED.’ A low-flying, black Monsanto Company helicopter surveils overhead, but our convoy of three pick-up trucks continues undeterred. A swirling mass of red dirt is churned in our wake. We hop from the back of the truck into a thick growth of invasive guinea grass. It obscures our view and scratches our skin, puncturing our long-sleeved cotton shirts.

Covered from head to toe, we slather sunscreen, and walk-through thick mist clouds of insect repellent. Once adequately prepared, we load green wheelbarrows with machetes, sickles, axes, brooms, trowels, and rakes. The group proceeds single file down narrow paths that descend into a historic gulch nestled in the depths of O’ahu’s fertile central plains. It is the end of May 2018. I am one of fifteen participants enrolled in a six-week Forensic Anthropology summer field school offered annually, since 2012, by the University of Hawai’i West O’ahu (UHWO) in partnership with the U.S. National Park Service (NPS). With me are aspiring landscape archaeologists and forensic anthropologists who traverse a long track into the bowl of an overgrown concave landscape once nicknamed ‘Hell Valley.’ Steep walls obscure the sweeping panoramic views of the lush green fields and the island’s turquoise coastal water. The air is still and sweltering. As the rhythm of restless waters fades, an occasional high-pitched buzzing from a scourge of mosquitoes fills the air.

This is a chronicle of an entry into Hawai’i’s newest National Monument. It was legally designated public lands by the former U.S. President Barack Obama in 2015 using the executive powers of the Antiquities Act of 1906. The Antiquities Act of 1906 is a hallmark of federal preservation law in the United States. The Act allows a U.S. President to unilaterally declare sites of historic natural or cultural interest through Presidential Proclamation without Congressional approval.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On February 24, 2015, former U.S. President Barack Obama established Honoiliuli National Monument in his home state using the executive powers of the Antiquities Act of 1906. See: Presidential Proclamation 9234, Obama White House Archives Press Office, 2015. <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/02/24/presidential-proclamation-establishment-honoiliuli-national-monument> (Accessed: October 2021).

This landscape was deemed an ‘antiquity’ and named a National Monument, following a land donation from Monsanto Company to the U.S. federal government. The sunken landscape’s heritage designation is attributed to its significance as Hawai‘i’s largest and longest-running Second World War prisoner-of-war and civilian internment camp for select members of the Japanese community in Hawai‘i.

At first glance, there is nothing monumental about this newly enshrined National Monument in Hawai‘i. Honouliuli, as it is named, has no visible landmarks or built structures of extraordinary size or power. Instead, all that remains are the subsurface remains of a Second World War military installation in the Pacific Basin. To a careful observer, cracked concrete foundations, watchtower footings, rusty rebar, mortared retaining walls and stone edging hint at traces of a former U.S. Army compound. Drainage infrastructure, built prior to the war, attest to the site’s use as a ditch for nearby sugar plantations and its continued function for its most recent landholder, Monsanto Company, an agrochemical company. Each year, Honouliuli’s historic artefacts descend deeper into the herbaceous understory of invasive grasses as alluvial soils pour into the gulch after heavy rainfalls. A narrow stream that winds through Honouliuli carries erosion and runoff from agricultural, rural, and industrial activities in this watershed. This cycle of ebb and flow further obscures these historic objects and conceals them deep within an already subterranean landscape. So, why begin here in this overgrown gulch?

During my participation at the Honouliuli field school, I used photography as a method to study this landscape from a reflexive, embodied and engaged ethnographic practice. I drew on training in architectural documentation and landscape preservation to capture presences and absences in the landscape. Many of the ideas and arguments I explore in my dissertation can be traced back to the four weeks I spent handling Honouliuli’s residual material culture. I often came across deposits of ambiguous matter with unpleasant musty odours. Newly deemed historic objects were furred with mould, cloaked in cobwebs or rust scarred. Birds, insects, and other organisms, long accustomed to being left alone, had colonised excess matter. Conventional strategies for artefact conservation and historic preservation neutralise these natural and sensorial processes of decay. What are alternative ways to approach the archaeological record of Second World War internment in the settler states of the U.S. and Canada? How might embodied and engaged forms of ethnography such as place-based pedagogies and participatory action research intervene?

EMBODIED AND ENGAGED ETHNOGRAPHIC PRACTICES

I aim to imagine heritage politics attuned to competing and overlapping Asian settler war memories of unjust incarceration amidst unresolved Indigenous (Pacific Islander, Alaska Native, and Coast Salish) land claims in these disparate landscapes. I centre my research on the contemporary spatial and racial politics of war commemoration at three Second World

War internment landscapes in former outlying U.S. Territories in Oceania, Alaska, and western Canada. I focus on three main case studies that include: (1) Honouliuli Prisoner of War and Internment Camp in O‘ahu, Hawai‘i; (2) Tashme Internment Camp in Sunshine Valley, Interior British Columbia, Canada; and (3) Funter Bay Relocation Camp near Juneau in Southeast Alaska. Broadly, the project engages with debates in critical heritage studies, infrastructure studies, transpacific oceanic histories and carceral geographies in the Indigenous Pacific. This research considers distinct, but inextricably connected histories of colonisation, western imperialism, and militarism in Asia-Pacific and the Arctic that shape Asian migrant and Pacific Indigenous subjectivities and relationships to land in North America.

I use an ethnographic lens to track new sites of discursive, institutional, and material politics across national borders showing how national conflicts over heritage are intrinsically transnational in scope and content. The geographic scope of this study and its mixed methods approach makes an intervention in the discipline of architectural history, landscape history and material culture studies since it considers the ways in which intergenerational social movements and collective demands for tangible, physical reparations (monuments, memorials, historic sites) can often conflict with Indigenous land, water, and subsistence rights. I argue that these transpacific struggles reflect the ways in which complex minority identities, such as Asian North American populations and Pacific Indigenous peoples, who are radically different from each, negotiate claims to space, property and national recognition.

ALTERNATIVE STORYTELLING

In this project, I take inspiration from practices of dissidence, dissent and alternative knowledge production already practiced from within the U.S. National Park Service in the form of [dis]orientations, detours, pilgrimages and other unsanctioned or informal programs and workshops.<sup>2</sup> These unofficial events organized by ‘rogue’ park rangers, artists-in-residence among others, use tactics such as satire, camp and parody.<sup>3</sup> I also take inspiration from local activist and demilitarisation practices on O‘ahu, which rely on performance and storytelling.<sup>4</sup> These events employ a ‘DeTour’ format to tell Native Hawaiian histories, legends and stories of currently

2 I draw on own experience of working with the U.S. National Park Service from 2017–2020 in Alaska and California where seasonal staff such as park rangers, security guards, who policed subsistence practices on park grounds, artists-in-residence and writers-in-residence unknowingly and knowingly defy rules, bent orders, and re-shaped terms of engagement.

3 Shawna Dempsey and Lorri Millan, *Lesbian National Parks and Services. Field Guide to North America: Flora, Fauna and Survival Skills* (St. John’s: Pedlar Press, 2002); Catriona Sandilands, *Melody Hessing and Rebecca Raglon, This Elusive Land. Women and the Canadian Environment* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005); Nicole Seymour, *Bad Environmentalism: Irony and Irreverence in the Ecological Age* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

4 Kyle Kajihiro and Auntie Terri Keko‘olani, “The Hawai‘i Detour Project: Demilitarizing Sites and Sights on O‘ahu,” in *Detours: A Decolonial Guide to Hawai‘i*, ed. Vernadette Gonzalez and Hokulani K. Aikau (Dunham: Duke University Press, 2019). Also see: Demilitarize DMZ-Hawai‘i/Aloha ‘Aina. “DMZ-Hawai‘i / Aloha ‘Aina and AFSC Hawai‘i The Roots of U.S. Militarization of Hawai‘i: Invasion and Occupation,” [Available] [http://www.dmzhawaii.org/?page\\_id=1655](http://www.dmzhawaii.org/?page_id=1655) (Accessed: March 2021).



occupied and inaccessible U.S. military and navy bases, bombing ranges and artillery sites on the island. This local activist practice was adapted by UH Manoa academics. The resulting collaboration is an edited volume that masquerades as a tourist guidebook entitled *Detours: A Decolonial Guide to Hawai‘i*. This text, sold in gift shops at Waikiki, provides an alternate history of Hawai‘i’s popular tourist destinations.<sup>5</sup>

‘Counter-inventory’ as a method offers a new starting point for defamiliarizing the terrain of knowledge.<sup>6</sup> This tradition of undoing, retelling, and decentring requires that one question and subvert official and institutionalised forms of knowledge production. A focus on Honouliuli’s multilayered or palimpsest landscape pushes against current and accepted norms of studying and protecting national heritage sites. A focus on multiplicity (of significance, of actors, of time periods) defies the importance of singular event or stated period. The ‘detour’ method draws on land or place-based pedagogies, participatory action research and community storytelling as a form of engaged ethnography to unsettle landscapes.

LAND- AND PLACE-BASED PEDAGOGIES

Land and land relations are positioned as a source of knowledge, learning and critique. McCoy et al. offers a direction for land education: ‘land education calls into question educational practices and theories that justify settler occupation of stolen land or encourage the replacement of Indigenous peoples and relations to land with settlers and relations to property.’<sup>7</sup> Built upon Indigenous scholarship, land-based education is rooted in the notion that all places were once, and continue to be, Indigenous. It follows that Indigenous worldviews and cosmologies are ‘many times [the] most viable knowledge systems related to place-based goals of critical sustainability, community building, and addressing issues of territoriality.’ Land and place-based pedagogies draw attention to settler-colonial landscapes building upon indigenous epistemologies and other scholarly writing.<sup>8</sup> Methods such as the politics of naming, political analysis and addressing connections between land, dispossession, self-determination,

5 “‘De-tours’ offers a critical mapping of space with a goal to “re-story” or tell an alternate history of place’ in Gonzalez and Aikau, *Detours: A Decolonial Guide to Hawai‘i*.

6 For counter-inventories of place or detours see: Lisa Yoneyama, “Mnemonic Detours” in *Hiroshima Traces: Time, Space and the Dialectics of Memory* (California: University of California Press, 1999); Lisa Brooks, *The Common Pot* (Minneapolis: University of Minesota Press, 2008); Coll Thrush, *Native Seattle: Histories from Crossing-Over Place* (Washington: University of Washington Press, 2008). Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013); Katrina Jagodinsky, *Legal Codes and Talking Trees: Indigenous Women’s Sovereignty in the Sonoran and Puget Borderlands 1854–1946* (London: Yale University Press, 2016). Greig Crysler, “Groundwork: (De)Touring Treasure Island’s Toxic History,” in *Urban Reinventions: San Francisco’s Treasure Island*, eds. Lynne Horiuchi and Tanu Sankalia (Hawaii: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2017), 175–86.

7 Kate McCoy, Eve Tuck, and Marcia McKenzie (eds), *Land Education: Rethinking Pedagogies of Place From Indigenous, Postcolonial And Decolonizing Perspectives* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 8.

8 Leanne Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017); Leanne Simpson, “Indigenous environmental education for cultural survival,” *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* 7, no.1 (2002): 13–25; “Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 1–25.

and decolonisation articulate the connection between land as a source of knowledge to the practice of land-based education.

COLLABORATIVE FIELDWORK AND PARTICIPATORY ACTION RESEARCH

Collaborative fieldwork and participatory action research are research methods that are often associated with the work of Kurt Lewin in the 1940s.<sup>9</sup> And although Lewin did emphasise the importance of collaboration in some of the research processes, one of the central tenets of PAR is its participatory nature to include all stakeholders in all aspects of the research process. This participatory nature embodies a democratic approach to research in which participants work collaboratively in the co-generation of new knowledge to address a specific issue or problem. Typically, participant action research methodology rejects traditional positivist research paradigms and challenges traditional hierarchies between the researcher and those being researched. Architectural field schools and documentation programs, for example, fall into this category.

The geographic parameters of this study and its mixed methods approach make an intervention in the discipline of architectural history, landscape history and material culture studies since it considers the ways in which intergenerational communities (including members of Asian North American and Indigenous heritage) enact remembrance, mourning and resistance at these disparate landscapes. Ultimately, this project does not simply trace ongoing preservation politics around the material culture of the Second World War. Instead, it tracks new sites of discursive, institutional, and material and spatial politics in the non-contiguous U.S. over land and war memory. The project has policy implications and argues that the treatment of former internment camps is reflective of a larger transnational debate on the nation-state’s position toward the protection of cultural heritage associated with wartime injustice.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

This project relies on a mixed-methods approach that combines traditional archival research in legal, cartographic, and pictorial collections with land-based pedagogies and ethnographic methods such as photography, archaeology, gardening, and architectural documentation. In addition, unarchived, embodied cultural practices and non-English language sources of the Japanese North American diaspora and Indigenous (Native Hawaiian, Alaska Native, Coast Salish) peoples is used as evidence to reveal culturally specific modes of remembrance and ancestral and multiple, overlapping

9 Kurt Lewin, “Part One: Formalization and Progress in Psychology,” in *Studies in Topological and Vector Psychology I* eds. Kurt Lewin, R. Lippitt, S. K. Escalona & G. D. Stoddard (Iowa: University of Iowa Press, 1940), 9–42.

connections to place. These diverse sources, when analyzed together, reveal deep conflicts between land ownership and commemorative practice that speak to ongoing scholarly debates about archival erasure, authority, and ethnographic practice.

Ultimately, this project upends old ideas about war reparations, subsurface cultural heritage, and public land in settler colonial contexts. It unsettles landscape preservation discourse that remains object-oriented and predicated on regimes of property, ownership, and expertise. This project contributes to a growing body of work that addresses Asian-Indigenous relationality, land tenure, and environmental histories of Second World War prison camps in North America. It broadens the geographical parameters of wartime incarceration across a transoceanic circuit in the non-contiguous Pacific, fitting within trends in Asian American Studies that use a ‘transpacific’ or ‘hemispheric’ oceanic approach that landscape history has yet to consider. The project’s transnational framework exposes critical legal distinctions in U.S. and Canadian wartime histories and in subsequent movements for redress and symbolic reparations (such as memorials, heritage sites and markers) that shape the built and natural environment.

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The quaint Burra Bungalow stands reminiscent of its British inhabitant's struggles and adaptations to Assam's tropical environment and threats. Pictured here is the Burra Bungalow at Attareekhat Tea Estate, Assam.

Barsha Amarendra (Indian Institute of Technology)

# Manifestation of Socio-Cultural Identities in the Architectural Vocabulary of Assam's Tea Landscape

It has been more than 180 years since the first tea garden at Chabuwa commenced the transformation of Assam's vast tracts of wilderness into a meticulously pruned expanse of tea shrubs. It has also been 180 years of Assam's tea landscape being narrated exclusively from the standpoints of its history, economy and the livelihoods of the people it supports. While such a discourse stems from the tea landscape being a significant contributor to the state economy and employment, circumstances in recent years have necessitated conversations regarding the tea landscape's architectural heritage.<sup>1</sup> A heritage that serves as a memorabilia of the landscape's colonial past, along with being representative of its resident's lifestyles and socio-cultural dispositions. Although there have been a few endeavours in documenting the architectural heritage of Assam's tea landscape, there has not been any notable study on the dialogue between architecture and the ethnographies within the tea landscape. The present paper, thereby, bearing significance.

## THE PLANTER AND HIS WORKERS

The planters lived a challenging life in the tea gardens of Assam. Each day, their work spanned from the break of dawn to the onset of dusk, with work on most picking days extending well into the early morning of the following day. The planter's ascribed social standing as the garden's patriarch also required him to address the worker's myriad problems and ensure their survival round the clock. The planter's own survival was a constant struggle. Planters succumbed to a multitude of exotic diseases and few even died due to lack of treatment in the isolated locations of the tea gardens.<sup>2</sup> As such, the early planters were forced to live a rather isolated life, with little time for recreation. It was only in the early 1900s that planters began bringing their families to live in Assam, thereby heralding the creation of opportunities for social gathering and recreation.<sup>3</sup> The wives frequently organised dinner parties with dances and live bands for fellow planters on the garden premises. Many planters also created golf courses and swimming

- 1 Years of supply outstripping demand has resulted in stagnated prices leading to huge loses. The financial crisis has led to calls for diversifying the tea landscape, with many planters, tea boards and state governments placing their hopes on tea tourism as an alternate revenue stream.
- 2 William M. Fraser, *The Recollections of a Tea Planter* (London:Argus Press, 1997), 54.
- 3 Ibid, 76.



pools on the gardens to become an essential pivot for their social life during the weekends. While the recreational facilities continue to exist, traces of social gathering and recreation have largely vanished from the gardens. Lack of adequate facilities to raise children in the garden’s secluded setting, extremely strenuous work routines and the planter’s recent positioning as soft targets of workers and political parties, has once again compelled the planters to lead a solitary life.

Within the expanse of the same landscape lived the heterogeneous community of workers from Central India.<sup>4</sup> These workers were settled in close-quartered lines that functioned as critical sites for socialisation, ‘festivities’ and new occasions like ‘weekend drinking’.<sup>5</sup> Weekly or fortnightly markets arranged for the workers became supplementary sites for social interactions. In addition to native holidays and weekends, workers turned pay day into a ceremonious event. Entire families would line up wearing their best clothing and wait for their names to be called to receive their wages.<sup>6</sup> Within the policies of isolation and confinement, the multi-tribe, multilingual community unified under shared customs of socio-cultural engagements. Following India’s Independence, the tea community’s identity evolved further through the adoption of socio-cultural practices of the native population to reinstate a sense of belongingness to the greater ‘Assamese’ identity in the state and society.<sup>7</sup>

THE BUNGALOWS AND THE WORKER’S QUARTERS

The contrasting lives and social positioning of the planter and his workers is architecturally manifested by their respective residences; the bungalows and the quarters. The bungalows consist of two predominant types, the ‘*mati*’ bungalow at the ground level, or the ‘*chang*’ bungalows built on posts, about ten to fourteen feet above the ground.<sup>8</sup> The walls were made either with brick masonry or timber planking with plastered ikra reed panels. These were perched by steep, sloping roofs constructed with corrugated iron sheets. In spite of the difference in form and materiality, the bungalows shared a common plan – large rooms, spacious and well-ventilated; high ceilings, and long verandas skirting the main building.<sup>9</sup> Flanking the main buildings were the well-manicured lawns and bountiful kitchen gardens of seasonal vegetables, herbs and fruit trees that were tended under the memsahib’s

4 The tea workers community is comprised of more than a hundred aboriginal Indian tribes. They were brought by the British colonial planters during the 1860s–90s from present-day states of Jharkhand, Odisha, Chattisgarh, West Bengal and Andhra Pradesh.

5 Nitin Varma, *Coolies of Capitalism: Assam Tea and the Making of Coolie Labour* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 175.

6 George M. Barker, *Tea Planter’s Life in Assam* (Calcutta, Thacker, Spink & Co., 1884),176.

7 Jyoti Prasad Saikia, *Stories Behind a Hot Cup of Assam Tea: Listening to the Voices of Women Labourers in the Tea Gardens* (Dibrugarh University, 2017), 141.

8 Ayano Toki and Mamiko Miyahara, “Approaches to the Bungalow Beyond Time and Distance: Notes of Comparison Between India, the United Kingdom, and Australia” in *Proceedings of the Society of Architectural Historians, Australia and New Zealand* 36, *Distance Looks Back*, ed. by Victoria Jackson Wyatt, Andrew Leach and Lee Stickells (Sydney: SAHANZ, 2020), 407.

9 G.M. Kapur, *Burra Bungalows and All that: Glimpses of Built Heritage and Memorabilia of the Tea Industry in Assam* (Calcutta: INTACH, 2012), 27–32.

supervision.<sup>10</sup> The memsahib of the bungalow also put forth much effort to create an English Garden as a reminiscence of England.<sup>11</sup>

Far from the picturesque of the bungalows, lived the workers. Historically, the workers were housed in long, overcrowded barracks made of mud and thatch. Plinth was seldom provided; floor and cubic space were often inadequate, while light and ventilation were too frequently entirely ignored.<sup>12</sup> At present, however, the workers are accommodated by the tea estates in individual *Pucca* houses consisting of two rooms and a kitchen. These houses are designed with raised plinths, an entrance veranda and considerations for light and ventilation. Additionally, as a result of the ample space provided around each individual quarter, workers enjoy the liberty of making temporary additions based on their family’s spatial needs.

ARCHITECTURE AS A PRODUCT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL DISPOSITIONS

Bungalows in the tea gardens of Assam; like elsewhere in the Empire, were made to meet European’s cultural expectations while also becoming a sign of adjustment to the tropical climate.<sup>13</sup> As such, the Burra Bungalows were more than just homes; they were status statements.<sup>14</sup> In particular, the bungalow’s veranda illustrated the manifestation of social, spatial, and economic symbols.<sup>15</sup> It was on the veranda that tailors and carpenters stationed themselves to recreate products from the memsahib’s catalogues; it was from the veranda that the burra sahib and memsahib attended to occasional visitors; and it was also on the veranda that they would relax with their kids and pets. The materiality of the bungalows also exuded superiority of social position. All woodwork in the bungalow was crafted from only the superior quality Burma teak wood available in the region, while materials such as corrugated iron for roofing, tiles for flooring and at times, furniture being imported from far and wide. The bordering gardens and lawns offered the delicate finish to the bungalow’s impression of polished Englishness. In a region where land was either wilderness or agricultural fields, the encounter with designed landscape spaces amused both the natives and the imported workers alike. F.A. Hetherington recollects the fascination of the workers upon seeing the planters play golf for the first time on the lawns they had spent months sculpting, tending, and perfecting.<sup>16</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the worker’s lower social standing was at once apparent in the worker barrack’s materiality of mud and thatch. The absence of

10 The British planters were referred to, by the natives with colloquial terms. Burra Sahib refers to the tea estate’s manager, and Memsahib, to his wife.

11 Amelia Hope Spielman, “Cultivating an Industry: A survey of the Lives of British Tea Planters in Assam, India, 1860–1936,” (PhD diss., University of Wisconsin, 2009), 28.

12 Mukesh Kumar, “Coolie Lines: A Bentham Panopticon Schema and Beyond,” in *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress* 76, (2015): 344–355.

13 Anthony D. King, *The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 258–259.

14 Kapur, *Burra Bungalows and All that*, 10–15.

15 King, *The Bungalow: The Production of a Global Culture*, 258–59.

16 Frank A. Hetherington, *The Diary of a Tea Planter* (Sussex, England: Book Guild, 1994).

transitional space between the worker’s living areas and the road edging the barracks, exhibited the British management’s disregard for privacy of workers and their families. In contrast, the worker’s quarters of today are provided with front courtyard spaces that ensures family privacy and a transitional space between public and private social interactions. These transitional spaces are often times transformed by the workers into herding spaces of pigs, goats, and poultry, thereby attesting a rural cultural identity to their quarters.

ARCHITECTURE AS A PRODUCT OF SOCIO-CULTURAL EXPERIENCES

Although architectural entities are constructed at a certain moment in time as a rendition of its inhabitant’s socio-cultural dispositions, these entities undergo adaptations to incorporate the many socio-cultural experiences that it’s inhabitants accumulate over the years. As such, the architectural vocabulary established by the pioneer planters in the 1800s underwent significant changes in the following decades owing to the resident community’s ordeals of living in Assam.

Since their arrival, the planters were plagued by the region’s abundance of exotic diseases and wild animals. Malaria was a pertinent threat, with many planter’s and their families succumbing to the disease multiple times during their stay in Assam. Dangers such as snakebite from the many venomous snakes endemic to the region presented an incurable danger. As such, the British planters equipped their bungalows to create a safe haven. The plinths of the bungalow were designed to deter snakes, while the verandas were fully enclosed by panels of mosquito net. The initial use of thatch for roofing was abandoned due to its susceptibility to infestation by insects. Further, the experience of the bungalows getting damaged by 1897 earthquake prompted the planters to introduce standardised steel frames as structural materials for their bungalows.<sup>17</sup>

The workers also accommodated their experiences into their built fabric. Traditionally, houses in Central India had few or no openings for light or ventilation. As such, even when a planter allowed a worker to build his house himself, it was never provided with windows or ventilators.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, the exposure to the elegance of the planter’s bungalow has resulted in indications of acculturation amongst the workers based on the adaptations in their housing. The workers adorn their front-yards with flower plants and their backyards with seasonal vegetable gardens, mimicking the practices of the memsahib. The use of hedgerows as privacy screens and space demarcators in the bungalow’s landscape has also found its way into the worker’s quarters.

18 Kumar, “Coolie Lines: A Bentham Panopticon Schema and Beyond,” 349.

DISCUSSION

It has been a conventional approach to narrate the tea landscape as a shared territory inhabited by two disjoint communities; an approach rooted in studying lived experiences through notions of resistance. The fragmented, heterogenous tea workers resisted the British confinement and control by unifying their socio-cultural identity, while the British planters resisted Assam’s hostile environment by transforming their lived spaces into a safe haven from the climatic and environmental dangers that persisted. However, upon correlating ethnographic data with architectural studies, the parallel phenomenon of acculturation synthesising within the tea landscape begins to unravel. The incorporation of a veranda in a bungalow rested upon its explicit significance of enjoying the natural landscape and mediating environmental factors such as rain and sunlight penetration. However, in Assam’s tea gardens, the planter’s need to socially engage with certain people and yet, set limits to their association transformed the veranda into a liminal space where the workmanship of the native was fused with the aesthetics of the planters. Similarly, the use of verandas in the worker’s quarter manifests their experience of witnessing the planters’ use of it as a social setting. The planter’s practice of screening parts of the veranda to reduce the sun’s glare has also found indigenous ways of materialisation in the worker’s quarters.

Exploring architectural studies through the lens of ethnography further reveals the rationale behind elements of built spaces. While the veranda was seen as a tool to connect with the natural landscape, in most of the bungalows, it was enclosed with mosquito nets or French windows. The reasoning for this comes from an awareness of the planter’s continued struggle with the threat of malaria. Besides, acknowledging ethnographic data in architectural studies deciphers meanings attributed to spaces such as gardens. To the memsahib, the vegetable garden was just as important as the cellar for running the kitchen. The memsahib’s practice of running the household on fresh, seasonal vegetables has been sustained through generations of native planters, up until today. As such, the restoration of the vegetable garden to imbibe an idea of the planter’s life on the estate is just as significant as the restoration of the kitchen and its cellar. However, the vegetable garden is conveniently ignored due to the failure of analogising spaces with their lived experiences.

Furthermore, the method of studying architectural and landscape spaces in correspondence with ethnographic commentary helps in identifying patterns of architectural identity creation. In the case of the planters, the architectural identity of tea bungalows and their gardens had been a conscious, intrinsic development. In the backdrop of their socio-cultural positioning and experiences in the landscape, the composition of their lived spaces was essentially English, their materialisation indigenous. In the case of the workers, their architectural identity and evolution have been predominantly extrinsic. The workers had to accommodate their lifestyle according to the architectural spaces provided to them, with just enough

opportunities to weave into these spaces, their socio cultural exposure with the British planters and the natives.

The exploration of Assam’s tea landscape for the socio-cultural characteristics of its inhabitants and the architectural vocabulary of the residences that they have thereby crafted, validates the enriching bond shared between architectural and ethnographic studies. In order to fully understand built heritage in cultural landscapes such as the tea landscape of Assam, it is essential to ascertain how the architecture ties to the resident community’s lifestyle, their endeavours at socio-cultural expression and engagement. In absence of it, looking at the characteristics of existing architecture and present conditions would disregard the hidden meanings in them; meanings that enrich their status of being a significant element of a heritage landscape.

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Students pugging mud at the 'Building with Stabilised Mud' workshop, July 2019, Mjinnmayee office, Bangalore.  
Photograph by the Curt Gambetta.

Curt Gambetta (Cornell University)

## Making the Self through Mud: An Ethnography of Training in Stabilised Mud Construction in South India

In this paper, I discuss my ethnographic work in Bangalore, India undertaken in 2019 and 2020 with civil engineers and architects as they worked with cement stabilised mud and simultaneously reflected on their training and practice. I focus on training workshops and historical building activities conducted by civil engineers and architects associated with ASTRA, an erstwhile research cell at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) in Bangalore. Though local Public Works Departments and municipalities made use of what had earlier been called 'soil cement' for worker and refugee housing in urban areas after Indian Independence in 1947, the revival of cement-stabilised earthen construction during the 1970s reflected new ways of thinking about the role of architects and engineers in postcolonial development. Beginning in the mid 1970s, ASTRA, the Centre of Science for Villages, and architects such as Laurie Baker and Poppo Pingel experimented with different methods of building with compacted and stabilised mud to democratise access to housing in rural India.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, ASTRA and other purveyors of stabilised mud used it to create a space of self-reflexivity and observation of rural lifeworlds that they claimed existing paradigms of government-sponsored research and practice did not allow for.

My paper takes continuing education courses in stabilised mud technology as a point of departure for reflecting on the architectural historian's ethnographic observation of engineers and architects in the thrum of dissecting their training, practice, and personal histories. Workshops introduce participants to methods of stabilisation, showing them how to mix cement, lime, and other ingredients with red soil to make mud blocks and rammed earth walls durable and reliably load bearing. In tandem, they perform an embodied history of knowledge-making about mud and other technologies. Mud is not incidental to the stories they tell. Making and stabilising mud is a largely hands-on process of creation; its users narrate their personal histories and experiences by reflecting on their experiences of authoring it. By contrast, cement – the material that purveyors of stabilised mud hope to replace – does not permit intimate access to its fabrication. After focusing on ASTRA's research and building activities in rural Karnataka

<sup>1</sup> My comparison is based on recent published writing about Pingel, Baker, and the CSV, including, respectively: Mona Doctor-Pingel, *Poppo Pingel* (Ahmedabad: Mapin Publishing, 2012), Thomas Oommen, "Rethinking Indian Modernity from the Margins: Architectural Politics in Thiruvananthapuram in the 1970s," *Architectural Theory Review* 22, no.3 (2018): 386–409, and Venugopal Maddipati, *Gandhi and Architecture: A Time For Low Cost Housing* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2020).

during the waning years of Nehruvian socialism in the 1970s, I will then track the application of their research to housing and training workshops in urban Bangalore after the liberalisation of the real estate market during the late 1980s and early 1990s. In observing the changing mise en scène of stabilised mud making – from the village to the city, and from late socialist to post-liberalisation India – I am interested in showing how the promulgation of stabilised mud construction has been deeply intertwined with the cultivation of an ethnographic, self-reflexive consciousness about its use.

AN ENGINEER’S ‘SELF-EDUCATION’

ASTRA’s acronym, ‘Application of Science and Technology to Rural Areas,’ served as a scientist’s personal mission statement; IISc scientists Amulya Reddy, KS Jagadish, and their colleagues founded ASTRA in 1974 to redirect then industry-focused R&D in the Indian Institute of Science to rural problem sets that they claimed had been overlooked by development planning.<sup>2</sup> ASTRA scientists imagined that stabilised mud and other labour intensive technologies would unshackle rural populations from different forms of dependence that they claimed were caused by the use of ‘Western technologies,’ including dependence on urban, industrial economies and intensive use of ‘public resources’ such as water and soil.<sup>3</sup> Instead, ASTRA scientists envisaged that the widespread use of labour-intensive building technologies would foster self-reliance among rural subjects by generating employment opportunities. Potentially at least, the use of stabilised mud converted rural populations into workers; labour intensive technologies would draw them out of the doldrums of what Reddy and development economists of the time referred to as ‘shadow prices’ and ‘underemployment,’ incorporating them into a wage economy.<sup>4</sup>

At the same time, labour intensive technologies such as stabilised mud became vehicles for civil engineers and others to rethink their personal and professional commitments. As part of what Amulya Reddy had called a requisite phase of ‘self-education’ of Institute scientists in rural problems, ASTRA scientists established an extension centre in 1977 in Ungra, a village approximately 80 kms from the urban IISc campus, to understand the needs of the rural poor and test out low-cost building methods.<sup>5</sup> Research about building materials took several forms, including surveys of village construction and, in 1979, a government-sponsored survey of embodied energy in rural buildings undertaken by KS Jagadish and a team of IISc scientists.<sup>6</sup> Citing cost and the lack of ample electricity in rural areas as motivating factors,

2 “Presentation of the proposal for the Application of Science and Technology to Rural Problems to SCRAP,” *Mimeograph* (July 10, 1974): 1.  
3 K.S. Jagadish, “Generating Rural Technology: The ASTRA Experience,” *Mimeograph* (August 1988): 14.  
4 Amulya Reddy, “Choice of Alternative Technologies: Vital Task in Science and Technology Planning,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 8, No. 25 (June 23, 1973): 1110–12. For a relevant contextualisation of concepts such as underemployment, see Aaron Benanav, “The origins of informality: the ILO at the limit of the concept of unemployment,” *Journal of Global History* 14, no. 1 (2019), 107–125.  
5 K.S. Jagadish, “Generating Rural Technology,” 18.  
6 K.S. Jagadish, “Energy and Rural Buildings in India,” *Energy and Buildings* 2, (1979), 290–95.

Jagadish’s study scrutinised detailed comparisons between the extraction, production, transport, and manual labour required to use fired and industrially made materials such as cement and locally derived alternatives. Considering Jagadish’s findings and the still unattainable cost of cement for rural builders of limited means, ASTRA constructed buildings in Ungra that were made of cementless pressed soil blocks and other locally sourced materials; these included houses for villagers, a dormitory (1978), and a staff residence (1978) for the extension centre.<sup>7</sup> The block making process was well suited to ASTRA’s ideology; using a manually operated soil block press, labourers pulled a steel handle down with the full weight of their body.

Because ASTRA reports privileged the authorial voice of the engineer, it is difficult to determine what village residents learned from the successes and failures of ASTRA’s building activities in Ungra. In correspondence, Jagadish explained that they worked closely with several young men who gained competency in stabilised and compacted mud construction. But the intended learning outcomes likely went beyond skill development. The Gandhian economist JC Kumarappa, whose writings had directly informed Reddy’s thinking, argued in the late colonial period that growing distance between producers and consumers in an industrialising economy obfuscated their capacity to assess the moral consequences of exchange.<sup>8</sup> Though Jagadish’s study of embodied energy insisted on a conception of ‘local materials’ that was derived from the engineer’s calculations of distance, cost, and embodied energy, ASTRA’s affinities with Gandhian thought suggest that other conceptions of material ‘locality’ may have been at play in their work. The local marked distance but also moral consciousness: scientists may have imagined the manual use of soil from within a given locality as a moral economy with the labouring body of the rural builder at its centre.

The division of labour between manual work and technical, scientific knowledge placed upper-caste engineers and lower-caste villagers in familiar roles. As Ajantha Subramanian has recently written, colonial and postcolonial educational institutions played a significant role in separating manual craft from technical knowledge along caste lines, relegating hands-on work to lower caste artisans and workers, while associating upper caste groups with technical knowledge in engineering and the sciences.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, as articles and reports from the 1970s and 80s make clear, it was the engineer who served as the ultimate arbiter of material techniques. Informed by debates in development economics and appropriate technology discourse, ASTRA scientists envisioned that the development of stabilised soil would allow

7 K.S. Jagadish and B.V. Venkatarama Reddy, “The Technology of Pressed Soil Blocks for Housing: Prospects, Problems and Tasks,” *Mimeograph*, paper presented at the International Colloquium on Earth Construction Technologies for Developing Countries, Brussels, December 1984; K.S. Jagadish, “ASTRA, A Case Study in Generation and Microdiffusion of Appropriate Technologies,” *Mimeograph*, June 21, 1980, 4.  
8 Venu Madhav Govindu and Deepak Malghan, “Building a Creative Freedom: JC Kumarappa and His Economic Philosophy,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 40, no. 52 (December 24–30, 2005): 5480. Other building centres such as the centre of Science for Villages (CSV) in Wardha drew more explicitly Gandhian ideas about work and manual labour. See: Maddipati, *Gandhi and Architecture*, 141.  
9 Ajantha Subramanian, *The Caste of Merit: Engineering Education in India* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019).

engineers and builders in rural areas to choose alternatives to concrete.<sup>10</sup> But the choice was not unmediated; according to Amulya Reddy, choice was to be informed by economics, not emotion.<sup>11</sup> In his writings, Reddy envisioned a specially trained class of ‘rural technologists,’ in other words, engineers, who would mediate ‘choice’ by studying and determining the technological needs of the rural poor.<sup>12</sup> The choice thus ultimately referred not to the individual choice of rural builders, but to the choice as it was determined in advance by either the state or trained engineers.

URBANISING SELF-DISCOVERY

Jagadish had anticipated that compacted and cement-stabilised soil blocks would find broad commercial use with the prospect of automated, mechanised production in the late 1980s.<sup>13</sup> But as he and other ASTRA protagonists came to realise, economically disadvantaged builders aspired to the social ideal of concrete housing and urban life, showing little interest in improvements to mud construction in villages. In this respect, the enduring legacy of building in rural South India may have been the engineer’s ‘self-education,’ rather than the education of rural builders at large. As their work shifted to the city, ‘self-education’ gained new meanings and participants.

The content and structure of training workshops originated during the late 1980s and early 90s, as the cost-conscious middle-class, who built their own houses, started to make use of stabilised mud blocks. Instead of villagers, workshops in the city attracted urban middle-class residents eager to adopt a material that was identifiable with past building techniques, but durable enough to be a viable alternative to concrete. Yogananda M.R., a Ph.D. trained civil engineer who studied at ASTRA, built his house in exposed SMB technology in 1988, garnering significant local and national level attention from advertisements, manuals, and conferences sponsored by the Housing and Urban Development Corporation (HUDCO).<sup>14</sup> HUDCO promoted stabilised mud construction to address the enduring housing crisis among the rural and increasingly urban poor.<sup>15</sup> But the use of stabilised mud by middle class builders who were building their own homes signalled the appropriation of stabilised mud for a burgeoning private housing and land market in Bangalore in the wake of economic liberalisation during the 1980s and 90s.

Liberalising financial institutions formed the initial impetus to training workshops, laying the groundwork for a kind of self-making that centred

10 Robin Clarke, “Technology for an Alternative Society,” *New Scientist* 57 (January 11, 1973): 66–67; Joan Robinson, “The Choice of Technique,” *Economic Weekly* (June 23, 1956): 715–718.  
11 Amulya Reddy, “Alternative Technology: A Viewpoint From India,” *Social Studies of Science* 5, no. 3 (August 1975), 335.  
12 Reddy, “Alternative Technology,” 341. On choice and mid-20th century developmentalism, see also Ijlal Muzaffar, “The Periphery Within: Modern Architecture and the Making of the Modern World” (PhD diss., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2007), 64.  
13 Jagadish, “Generating Rural Technology,” 6.  
14 Yogananda is also the founder of Mrinmayee, a consultancy in alternative building technologies that frequently hosts single day workshops.  
15 *All You Wanted to Know About Stabilised Mud Blocks* (New Delhi: HUDCO, 1989).

on the individual’s acquisition of knowledge and skill. The first workshops conducted by Yogananda and Jagadish were held around 1989 for the newly formed National Housing Bank. As Jagadish recollected, the then Chairman of the Housing Bank made clear to him that the Bank had no role to play in constructing housing, seeing itself instead as a provider of loans and skills. Thus, from 1989 to 1992, ASTRA trained Bank-sponsored engineers in how to work with stabilised mud, so that Housing Bank engineers would train individuals in how to use it to build houses for themselves. The training workshop thus originated out of nascent structures of individual indebtedness, as the state withdrew from its already anaemic commitments to the production of housing.

The open workshops that I attended began in 1995, and continue to this day, ranging from one day training in stabilised mud, to more comprehensive multi-day retreats attended by a wide array of participants, including college students, masons, agriculturalists, middle class organic farmers, and architects. Workshop techniques and concepts reenact and subtly re-interpret the stakes of ASTRA’s research in rural Karnataka during the 1970s and 80s. The cultivation of technological choice, for instance, reappears in introductory lectures at each workshop. But what do self-reliance and choice mean to participants and organisers today, many of whom learn about stabilised mud for a vastly different set of reasons than those envisaged during the 1970s?

Participants that I spoke with conveyed a variety of sentiments and motivations for attending, much of which centred on self-betterment and reflection. Several attendees cited a sense of moral responsibility about the environmental and social impacts of materials and suggested that learning about techniques of stabilised mud construction gave them a sense of freedom from educational and professional institutions that limited their ability to make choices for themselves. But freedom cuts both ways; just as neoliberal institutions embraced training workshops to redistribute the risks and responsibilities of governance to individual home builders in the 1990s, participants in present-day workshops are encouraged to evaluate the moral and economic consequences of choosing particular building techniques and not others.<sup>16</sup>

The process of weighing and evaluating different consequences and risks may well be the ultimate horizon of hands-on learning. One of the organisers informed me that most participants do not end up making use of stabilised mud construction. Many individuals simply come away with a sense of self-discovery, indicating that skills and sensibilities, not buildings, are the workshop’s primary outcome. Much as ASTRA engineers used mud construction to rethink their roles as engineers and scientists, contemporary workshop participants learn about stabilised mud to build

16 Here I am reminded of Wendy Brown’s observation that “neoliberal subjects are controlled through their freedom.” See Wendy Brown, “Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy,” in *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 44.



consciousness about personal and professional modes of conduct, if not the capacity to build.

CONCLUSION

In lectures and demonstrations, organisers reflect on their past experiences of learning about stabilised mud, touching on different aspects of the history that I have recounted in this paper. At the same, they invite participants to learn and cogitate on what they have experienced in workshops. The reflections of organisers and participants on their learning process show us that ethnographic research in architecture can allow the architectural historian to observe an ‘ethnographic consciousness or curiosity’ at work in building pedagogy and research.<sup>17</sup> My interest in foregrounding the ethnographic sensibilities of my interlocutors is not only methodological; it is also historical. Tracing experiments in stabilised mud shows how the cultivation of a self-reflexive consciousness can serve different goals, as the dynamics between the state and market change. Whereas engineers initially used their newfound self-awareness to critique state-led development, contemporary workshop participants assert a distinctly entrepreneurial role in seeking to critique and improve themselves. But this is not to say that engineers have removed themselves from learning about stabilised mud and other alternative building technologies. As Yogananda often reminds participants at the beginning of each workshop, ‘we are here to learn with you,’ suggesting that the engineer’s education about mud continues.

17 Douglas R. Holmes and George E. Marcus, “Collaboration Today and the Re-Imagination of the Classic Scene of Fieldwork Encounter,” *Collaborative Anthropologies* 1, (2008): 82.



Soft material and methodological practices: An interview with the Bulbulia sisters in their curtain shop at the Oriental Plaza.  
Image by Amina Kaskar, 2021.

Amina Kaskar (University of the Witwatersrand)

# Insider Ethnography: Research Methods for Engaging with Soft Spatial Practices

This research explores the ethnographic knowledge of ‘soft’ spatial systems and material practices in migrant spaces. Spaces are shaped by the movement of people and objects through transitory spatial configurations, appropriating space in inventive and unassuming ways. The everyday and ritual practices of migrant and diasporic communities are created by material constructions that are representative of their identities and culture. The social life of the people and materials unfolds in a multi-layered set of inter-connecting networks through which ideas, practices and resources are exchanged, organised and transformed.<sup>1</sup> These cultural forms have interchangeable modalities, sometimes existing in fixed architecture but elsewhere as portable, mental and ritual, often existing within temporal and variable experiences. These ephemeral practices form a legitimate and valuable architecture of the city as they both mediate and disrupt architectural forms and practices tied to formal spatial parameters constituted in the rational governed world.<sup>2</sup> Soft spatial practices challenge the normative practices of architecture and explains the erasure of the unseen due to its non-normative materiality and tight disciplinary boundary. Soft architectures open disciplinary boundaries to embrace practices that are not conventionally perceived as architecture, shaped by people who are not formally architects but, nevertheless, play an important role in appropriating and creating their homes and social environments.

My great grand-parents travelled by ship via the Indian (African) ocean, crossing the ‘*kala pani*’ (dark waters) that brought them from India to South Africa. They created their new homes with values carried from a distant ‘homeland’ and new hybrid participatory cultures adapted to a local context. They brought jewellery and textiles stored in suitcases and ‘peti’s’ (Indian trunks). Misar scarves and gold embroidered shawls passed down generations from mother to daughter are now carefully stored in the homes of a younger generation. Heirlooms are covered in holes from over-use. Similar colourful scarves hang from the balconies of new migrant homes, hinting at the shared cultural identity that exist within multiple homes. These are collective stories shared by many families each contributing to a different piece of the tapestry.

- 1 Admire Chereni, “Positionality and Collaboration during Fieldwork: Insights from Research with Co-Nationals Living Abroad,” in *Forum Qualitative Social Research* 15, no. 3 (2014).
- 2 Tim Ingold, “The Textility of Making,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34 (2010): 91–102.

The lived experiences and spatial histories of migrants are framed through the situated knowledge of my position within the South Asian community in South Africa. As a researcher immersed in the community, with a shared background to some of the participants, there is an awareness of my role as an active participant in the narrative. There is a familiarity with some of the colloquial terms, cultural practices and emotions behind the stories. This familiarity allows me to be recognised by the participants as a grand-daughter, neighbour or confidant. These identities inform the manner in which the interaction with participants unfold/ The insider quality of the relationship establishes trust and initiates a string of further conversations with other families and their households or businesses. The collective accounts of multiple authors and agents formulate how the space is created and enriches the complexity of existing spatial and architectural information of different sites.<sup>3</sup> The oral histories speak of a temporally layered unfolding of space with a range of subjectivities influenced by intangible factors such as rumour, emotion and perceived atmosphere. The complexity of touch, smell, sound and memory add meaning to how people understand and experience space beyond permanent markers of occupation.

A day spent with the Bulbulia sisters in their shop at the Oriental Plaza seated on plastic chairs surrounded by organza and lace curtains eating ‘chevro,’ a spiced nut and cornflake mix, out of an ice-cream container and sharing a 2 litre Coco-Cola. The time is shared with stories of their family life and memories of assisting their father in the shop and playing in the streets with the neighbours’ kids. There is a short pause to perform the daily midday prayer, Dhohr Salaah, in a corner of the store. Their brother listens in from behind the counter. Later, women from neighbouring shops join the dialogue.

The physical and social act of conducting interviews serve as micro-scenarios that mimic the greater forms of soft spatial systems in migrant communities. For instance, rituals of gathering and being hosted are common practices within these communities. The discussion becomes more of a social interaction than an academic investigation. The process of enquiry is designed to help explore the mechanics of specific spatial arrangements and engagements through the immediate setting of the interaction. Spaces are temporarily arranged to accommodate the interaction and meaning is strategically assembled, ready to be revealed to the interviewer. The nature of these interactions, the behavioural expectations, obligations and norms of reciprocity, meet the conditions implicit with that of the insider. The interactions and conversations are intimate and personal, taking place around a table or on a plastic chair, over stacked blankets or spending hours with the participants within their homes and shops observing everyday routines and spatialities. People passing

3 Jesse Adams Stein and Emma Rowden, “Speaking from Inside: Challenging the Myths of Architectural History through the Oral Histories of Maitland Goa,” in *Speaking of Buildings: Oral History in Architectural Research*, ed. by Gosseye, Janina, Stead Naomi, and Deborah van der Plaat (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2019), 29–35.

through also participate in the conversation, either pulling up a chair and directly volunteering information, otherwise engaging with the subjects through their daily familial interactions.

Trust needs to be earned before people are comfortable and sociable, often offering tea, food and shared histories. In instances where the researchers’ position is obscured by conditions such as language, class or education, spaces can feel unfamiliar, closed-off and defensive. The process of being hosted distinguishes the researchers’ role as a guest and creates an environment of care and a power structure that is ambiguous. This shifts away from framing migrant communities as marginalised or vulnerable and instead displays their agency and value (knowledge) they offer. In this way, the usual model of ‘us’ helping ‘them’ is subverted. What is the researcher able to give back in exchange for the knowledge received? What incentive is there for people to participate, and how do they benefit from this process? Legacy.

It is common amongst 3rd and 4th generation migrants to compile family histories and biographies in an endeavour to document the legacy of their family. As a token of appreciation, drawings of their personal spaces are gifted to the participants as a testament to their family history. The gifts embody sentimental value as they depict personal spaces lost due to political displacements. The drawings capture the ‘soft’ systems layered onto space and serves as a powerful physical gesture in revealing parts of migrant histories that have been lost or rendered invisible. People are proud to share their life experiences coming from a place of agency, that is counterpoised by the migrant narratives of struggle. The enquiry process is made visible through graphic depictions, such as collages and sketches, illustrating the ‘manners’ and rituals of interviewing amongst the everyday spatial dynamics of migrant spaces.

The performative practices layered onto this ethnographical approach activate inclusive forms of gaining and representing information and the ethical obligations of self-other. It aims at being inclusive of new architectural narrators and honours the different lived experiences and environments built by migrants. It is important that migrant voices are viewed as productive and interpretive lenses and not hidden or erased in the work.<sup>4</sup> Siddiqi proposes a way of being and thinking together that disrupts forms of ‘othering’.<sup>5</sup> Migratory objects and methods can bring new perspectives through collaborative processes that enrich the writing of architectural histories. ‘Belonging’ to a community through being part of social and community networks allows for an embedded ethnography. In this way, there is potential for the researcher to negotiate, enact and perform multiple identities in relation to different spaces to achieve genuine collaboration. This enables things to become visible, not simply through

4 Nishat Awan, “*Diasporic Urbanism: Concepts, Agencies and ‘Mapping Otherwise’*” (PhD diss. The University of Sheffield, 2011).  
5 Anooradha Iyer Siddiqi, “Writing with: Togetherness, Difference, and the Feminist Architectural Histories of Migration” *Structural Instability E-Flux Architecture*, 2011.



observation but through the perception and interpretation by the researcher. The insider position shapes the conception and enactment of investigation through a ‘situated gaze’.<sup>6</sup> Subsequently, textile has been deployed as a lens for which material practices of migrant identities can be investigated within the built environment.

TEXTILE AS SOFT PRACTICE

Amongst the diverse materials that migrants have carried together with them, textile plays an important role in the material practices of migrant identities. Textile provides a valuable insight into the aesthetics and ethics of ‘everyday life’. Migrants often use soft materials, such as textiles and moveable objects, in the literal construction of their spaces. However, they also employ ‘soft’ spatial systems and practices with invisible qualities that are transmitted across locations and generations.

There is an important distinction in the way textile is framed within the architectural discourse that re-enforces insider/outsider, East/West, orient/occident narratives. Historically, textile in diasporic spaces has been somewhat orientalised, embedded in colonial narratives that controlled African, Indian Ocean and European trade. Edward Said established the term ‘orientalism’ to describe the West’s portrayal of the elusive ‘East’ as lesser than imperialist societies.<sup>7</sup> The tradition of Western views on Eastern cultures was used as a powerful political instrument of domination in both academia and worldview representation. The European power over the ‘orient’ system of knowledge mirrored the prejudices and ideologies of the colonial experience. This particularly pertained to gendered practices associated with the customs and conventions of communities. As a result, textile was classified within architecture as feminine, exotic, decorative, and pertaining to the interior. By challenging mainstream Western narratives, more enriched, inter-cultural practices of textile can be brought into architecture praxis. The portrayal of the vernacular narrative shifts away from the aesthetic and decorative, to something that is performative and spans multiple categories of human use. It is a form of power to re-think the ways of reading the city by unlearning colonial knowledge systems and reclaiming suppressed identities and indigenous practices. These epistemologies draw from lived experiences, intergenerational and inherited knowledge, embracing ritual and culture, to create new categories in which the city can be investigated.

It is intrinsically linked to specific social and labour networks, micro-transactions and community organisations. It has a tangible historic record that attests to the needs, desires, aspirations, behaviour and actions of the migrants who make, sell, use, celebrate, recycle and then eventually

6 Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988), 575–599.  
7 Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978).

throw them away. This is seen with the shops draped in textile merchandise, the hanging of tablecloths on washing lines, blankets laid out onto the floor for social gathering and the fabrics that adorn homes. Textiles are valuable items for recalling the customary daily rituals for people who have experienced dislocation and highlight the performative nature of cultural spaces.

Textiles are associated with rituals that promote culture, religion and social and political agencies. Textile is interwoven with the life of the migrant through their personal belongings; a dress or a special shawl. Textiles accompany their owners on their journeys carrying sentimental value and providing a testament to the experiences of their owner. The material is the biography, embodying knowledge of the personal experiences. The story of the textile, how it was made and used is part of the story of the person and their space. These material objects became meaningful as ‘meaning endowed objects’ that ‘bear within them emotional and historical sedimentation. It plays an important role in the spatial ordering of many key moments in life; birth, initiations, marriage and death rituals. It adds an intangible layer to the seemingly conventional nature of the material. There is an emotional closeness with the material as it is purposefully prepared and choreographed by its user. They are either hung on the wall, positioned on the floor, draped around the body or mounted as a turban. The flexibility of the fabric allows it to be wrapped tightly or draped loosely, woven to one shape or knitted to stretch and conform to changing shapes.

CONCLUSION

Migrants have prescribed an alternative script that disrupts rationalised and oppressive built forms In a world of re-location, practices of migrant spatiality begin to constitute alternative spatial languages and agency that exceed architectural boundaries and that are inclusive of non-normative materialities. There is improvisation and designerly speculation in re-assembling fragmented geographies or temporal events through textile. Spaces are formed through the forces and connections of the materials, as textile continuously opens up to contemporary culture and future speculation.

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Albania or Galicia? Photograph by Maria Novas and Dorina Pllumbi, 2020.

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# Observing the Architectural Stigma of *Ugliness*: The Cases of Albania and Galicia

## INTRODUCTION: A POINT OF DEPARTURE

Albania, located in the Western Balkans, and Galicia, in North-Western Spain, share striking territorial and social similarities. They have a similar surface area (around 28.000 km<sup>2</sup>) and population (roughly 2.8 million people), a peripheral position in Europe (southwest/southeast), a history of isolation due to their rugged geography and lack of efficient mobility networks. Politically speaking, both realities have experienced dictatorships, although they were ideologically rooted into opposing political poles: Galicia, as part of the Spanish State, was under a far right-wing dictatorship, whereas Albania was under a state-socialist one. In both places, emigration brings a decline of the younger population and, at the same time, outsider economic inputs have played a key role in boosting investments and shaping the built environment. Also, both territories have a unique landscape where mountains and rivers meet the sea. And finally, both places share the phenomenon of a widespread self-built built scene, all too often indicated as architectural *ugliness* in the everyday language.

Galicia, as part of Spain, is inside the European Union but still receives funds aimed to correct economic and social imbalances between the EU regions. Albania, in the Western Balkans,<sup>1</sup> is a candidate country 'working hard' politically and economically to show progress to be accepted as an EU member. Both territories have gone through a transitional period where the change of regimes and the absence of the role of the state in territorial management has resulted in the unfolding of the architecture of *laissez-faire*, when small scale self-building initiatives occupied the territory in a frenetic way. Construction companies, with their big-scale speculative developments, became the strongest influencers of building policies. Galicia and Albania, both transitioned from a centrally controlled situation to developmentalist and progress-oriented economies that influenced legal and illegal building practices.

*Shëmti* and *feísmo* are the two names given respectively in the Albanian and Galician languages to stigmatise this unruly built environment: It is considered a material expression of both constructed and internalised myth of being the underdeveloped peoples in the European periphery.

This paper aims to explore how this stigmatisation has been constructed and materialised in the built environment and the political and professional discourse. The paper presents a situational but also comparative analysis

of Albanian and Galician realities, drawing similarities and different local perspectives present in academia, media, politics and architectural circles. This multi-layered and hybrid observation seeks to further explore the relational, ethnographic narratives of resistance, that subverts the myth of what is commonly understood as ugliness. Did the media or the political rhetoric of beautification have had an impact over the years? Did the depreciation or demolition of heritage play a role in the production of identitarian stigmas? Are self-building practices at the root of this understanding of ugliness? We aim to see these architectural expressions differently, as playing a paradigmatic role in disrupting the hygienist industrialised models of European cities that are extensively promoted as the only way of designing the built environment.

GALICIA: AN INDUCED POLITICAL DEBATE

‘*Feísmo*’ (or *ugliness*) is the term used to identify a phenomenon highly mediatised in Galicia – mainly by *La Voz de Galicia*, the most read Galician newspaper – that started to take shape in the architectural public debate since the first decade of the 21st century. As pointed out by the Galician professor of sociology Manuel García Docampo, in 2007 Google data proved that 65% of references to *feísmo* were created since 2000, most of them after 2005, highlighting the role of *La Voz de Galicia* in which the word was used 300 times more than in any other media. The headlines from May 20, 2001 ‘*El feísmo urbanístico la agonía del paisaje gallego*’ (Urban ugliness the agony of the Galician landscape) and the extensive press report on the inside pages, seem to constitute the starting point of a series of surveys and opinion articles which had a considerable impact on Galician society and, consequently, in the political debate.<sup>2</sup> Years later, as an attempt to address the issue, Galician institutions, scholars and architects initiated an in-depth conversation in the first and the second International Forum on Ugliness that took place in 2004 and 2007.<sup>3</sup> In many cases, the adjective ugliness has been used to stigmatise the architectural productions of the people, who build themselves their own houses, sheds or closures, in some cases recycling or reusing materials. The stigma reinforces the disrespect for popular culture and its inherent practice of self-building. Nowadays, concepts like contemporary Galician architecture, vernacular or ordinary patterns, gained strength in the academic debate.<sup>4</sup>

2 Docampo argues that the term was introduced through the media due to the political interests of the Galician Counselor of Public Works and had effects in the following Galician elections. Universidade de Vigo, “II Foro Internacional del Feísmo. Construir un País: La rehumanización del territorio”, 2007, <https://tv.uvigo.es/series/5b5b3dab8f4208ae7f5a1916>.

3 Two years later in 2006, the proceedings were published thanks to the funding of public and private institutions – including the Galician government, the Galician Association of Architects (COAG), and the building company Otero Pombo. Xavier Paz (ed.), *Feísmo? Destruir un país. A fin do territorio humanizado: un novo intracolonialismo* (Ourense: Difusora de Letras Artes e Ideas, 2006).

4 The Galician Contemporary house has been studied by Plácido Lizáncos Mora. Please see: Plácido Lizáncos Mora, *A casa contemporánea en Galicia* (Vigo: A Nosa Terra, 2006). In the second Forum in 2007, he focused on the Galician rural sphere explaining that a total of 240.000 houses were built in the space of a generation, most of them allegedly ugly. The shelter and its parcels have been the most valuable material goods that Galicians could bequeath to future generations. See also works in process by David Pereira Martínez.

Yet, over the years, we can recognise a turning moment in the understanding of the ethics and aesthetics of these practices that indicates a potential to encompass a positive appropriation of a defiant way of proceeding. In Galicia, the independent collective of architects Ergoesfera has been pioneering the resignification of the concept itself. Already in 2011, they claimed ‘Yes, I do want ugliness in my landscape’, stating that there are qualities in the so-called *feísmo* that should be preserved. Among those, the promotion of reuse procedures, its incrementalism and uniqueness, the self-replication as opposed to hyper-consumerism, the material representation of citizenship in public space, or the relevance of the different degrees of manipulation in material outcomes.<sup>5</sup>

Meanwhile, in Galicia, cultural diglossia and identitarian stigmas continue to operate.<sup>6</sup> A governmental campaign released in the media in 2014 promoted the practices of beautification – interestingly paid with public funding to the same Galician media, *La Voz de Galicia*. Through visual collages and a short message, the campaign directly addressed to the audience: ‘we do not want to see it like this,’ and then on the following page, ‘we want to see it like this,’ accompanied by the slogan ‘Galicia, the right way’. In the following years, the Galician government has approved different guides, plans and laws, including a new Land Law in 2016. In present times, self-built structures are often considered outside regulation but not actively erased, even when not validated by the new municipal master plan (PXOM). As a result, demolition only occurs in exceptional cases; governmental institutions do not take formal action unless there are complaints or denunciations, after a long judicialisation process. Demolition is costly, and it would not be affordable for public institutions to take formal action. Meanwhile, the term *ugliness* continues to emerge in the media every now and then; a non-fortuitous word that perfectly describes the subjectivities behind a negative discourse of the Galician architectural past, which keeps haunting its present and future times.

ALBANIA: A RHETORIC OF BEAUTIFICATION

In Albania, the collapse of the regime in the 1990s was associated with a massive demographic movement towards the capital city and coastal areas. What followed was anarchy, a weak state unable to safeguard the public interest, and a run towards *westernisation*.<sup>7</sup> Self-building practices flourished; detached houses were rapidly constructed in the peri-urban territories, just as extensions of apartments and small business spaces in urbanised areas.<sup>8</sup> Although initially tolerated as a phenomenon, when state institutions were reconsolidated, self-building was banned, and a policy of legalisation

5 The image of the Bed Frame *Villa in Covas (Viveiro)* (*Villa somier*, or *metálico*, in the Galician language), became one of the most known examples of the virtues of ugliness. Bed frames (a usually reused ‘building’ material in Galicia) are often used to construct closures. Ergoesfera. *Eu si quero feísmo na miña paisaxe!*, 2017, [http://ergosfera.org/archivo/eu\\_si\\_quero\\_feismo\\_na\\_miña\\_paisaxe.html](http://ergosfera.org/archivo/eu_si_quero_feismo_na_miña_paisaxe.html).

7 ‘We want Albania like the rest of Europe!’, is the call that drove the students’ protests that toppled the totalitarian regime in 1991, implying embracement of westernisation.

8 Manfredo di Robilant, Gjergji Islami and Denada Veizaj, “*Shtesa, Tirana: An investigation of spontaneous elements of architecture*”, <https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/articles/issues/22/ideas-of-living/57488/shtesa-tirana>.



came into being, a process that still continues nowadays.<sup>9</sup> A considerable number of fortunate families could legalise their constructions, while many others experienced demolition of their buildings to make room for new infrastructure projects, or as part of campaigns to clean up these unruly constructions.<sup>10</sup>

There was a common belief that the phenomenon bears in itself chaos, un-organisation, un-regulation, and was aesthetically damaging. Meanwhile, the builder-inhabitants, especially of the houses in peri-urban areas, were convinced of the beauty of their own constructions. While these paradoxical subjectivities co-exist in the same space and shape collective aesthetical understanding, the common perception of ugliness was instrumentalised politically to introduce the notion of beautification. The current politicians in power declared war on so-called informality. A key figure in this process is the prime minister, Edi Rama, elected in 2013 and still in power, a renowned artist, and the former mayor of Tirana.<sup>11</sup> Right after he took office, he held a conference with celebrity architects in Tirana entitled 'Next Generation Albania'.<sup>12</sup> The word beautification entered the political vocabulary as a keyword, while a new aesthetic for an Urban Renaissance was propagated. *Rilindja Urbane* (Urban Renaissance) was a state project implemented in many urban centres in Albania with the narrative of change, of development and progress, of giving the cities a much wanted European image.<sup>13</sup>

While self-building was flourishing, local architects did not participate in the erection of these commonly considered ugly structures. This was seen as a phenomenon happening outside the architectural profession and even offensive to it.<sup>14</sup> In 2016, when the phenomenon expanded significantly with up to 400.000 self-built structures all over Albania, a first discussion on the topic unfolded within the elitist professional circles, which was concluded with an exhibition entitled 'Evoked'.<sup>15</sup> Facade intervention proposals by Italian and Albanian architects would be placed next to one another, forming *architectural diptychs*.<sup>16</sup> The main concern was to fix the assumed ugly look

9 In 2006 ALUIZNI – the *Agency for Legalisation, Urbanisation and Integration of Areas and Informal Constructions* – was created to manage this construction capital, mainly with the purpose of legalising buildings where they did not show hazard to public interest and when they were not placed in territories at high environmental risk.

10 There is a common belief that the process of legalisation was used politically. Waves of legalisation would happen during electoral campaigns, whereas usually right after elections several demolition actions would be undertaken: <https://www.reporter.al/nga-fushata-ne-fushate-saga-e-legalizimeve-mban-ne-pasiguri-mijera-familje-ne-shqiperi/>

11 Rama built his political career substantially on the project of beautification and development, as a way to feed the demand to 'have Albania like the rest of Europe'. As mayor of Tirana he became famous with the project 'Dammi i colori' where he engaged artists to paint facades of the grey socialist era in colours.

12 Star-architects have been invited to join his project in beautifying Albania: among others Stefano Boeri, BIG, Archea Associati, MVRDV, 51N4E.

13 *Rilindja* (Renaissance), is the political platform through which the Socialist Party came to power in 2013. Although it proclaims to be left wing, the party is actually implementing policies of a neoliberal line, which are reflected in the approach towards the city as well.

14 Co-Plan is a non-profit organisation operated by urban planning professionals that have worked extensively with these deemed informal areas, while in other professional circles this has been seen as a peripheral issue.

15 See Domenico Pastore, *Evoked: Architectural Diptychs* (Bari: Edizioni Giuseppe Laterza, 2016).

16 The idea was to pose next to each other the Italian, - therefore European, - and the Albanian approach. A form of a complex of inferiority is manifested here as well, where there is a concern to be accepted and validated by a western eye.

of the facades into something more aesthetically pleasing. Proposals ranged from adding mirror facades to reflect the surrounding landscape, – erasing this way the 'ugliness' and the human-material practice that shaped it, – to transfiguring the facade substantially, – to the point of no recognition, – up to a positive subversion of the narrative of ugliness, – where the architects elaborated on the idea of the unfinished.

In Tirana, the physical demolition of self-built structures fits a larger pattern of hygienicist policies: several actions have been taken by the local authorities towards the so-called informal, social-spatial practices, – like street vending, small manufacturing, and even rebellion underground street art, – with the purpose of 'cleaning the streets'.<sup>17</sup> Here we see how ugliness is associated with economic precariousness, which takes the form of the poor and unkempt.<sup>18</sup> Natural disasters, like the earthquake of November 2019 and the Covid-19 pandemic, have been once again used as political opportunities to continue with even stronger demolition actions, and violence towards the existing city. At this point, beautification has become an empty buzzword to justify the bulldozers' actions and hygienic cultural engineering policies that aim to facilitate big developments that change the face of Albania.<sup>19</sup>

## CONCLUSION: A JOURNEY

In both realities, narratives of resistance found opportunities in ugliness to subvert the myth of underdevelopment, up to the point of celebrating it, calling for recognition of the value of so-called architectural ugliness, advocating the need to be open to change our value system. In Galicia, the discussion on ugliness happened explicitly, and politics and media played a major role in its unfolding. Here we have observed a swing in the perception and aesthetical language. In Albania, a rhetoric of beautification was deployed by the state to justify demolition campaigns, generated as high pressure from external investors, as physical violence exercised towards the city. In the realm of the local architectural discourse, after decades of stigmatising and ignoring it, several voices have articulated the request for a renewed valuation of the assumed ugliness. In both realities, the stigma of ugliness was exhibited explicitly, but it was also challenged at the same time.

In this journey from stigmatisation to celebration, unfinished houses and incremental refurbishments may become important historical references.

17 Although self-building has been banned, softer deemed informal social-spatial activities still resist the city's hygienic policies. Although a survival source, they are persistently being expelled, through the confiscation of the merchandise, fines and expulsion of street vendors.

18 Artan Rama, "*Battle for the Tirana Streets*," 2016, accessed 1 September 2021, <https://kosovotwopointzero.com/en/battle-for-the-tirana-streets/>.

19 Construction developments are currently substituting Tirana's old town with apartment buildings, and business high rises. The National Theatre is the emblematic heritage building, which, after more than two years of collective resistance to save it, was demolished with the aim of public land grab while allegedly propagating the need for a new theatre (2/3 of the theatre land, as per BIG's masterplan, would go for the construction of high rises). Business towers are being erected in the city centre of Tirana, including the new Football Arena which has a tower as part of the new structure. All these investments are propagated as bringing about progress in the city, while there are voices that allude to their speculative character.



Although today self-building is officially illegal, the experience of how entire territories came into being through these practices in transitional times can be valued as an open process that can produce knowledge in the architecture field. It can well be related to burning questions that the discipline currently faces, like the incorporation of intuition, tacit making and user-oriented design processes.

Through close observation, these open self-built structures help us to describe the Albanian and Galician architectural cultures; they can be a heritage of situated knowledge that proposes a retreat from form-oriented design, the closed-circuit that has dominated the discipline of architecture from its very formation. In both cases, when discussing ugliness we seek possibilities for reconsideration, for an awareness of the need to expand the understanding of aesthetics. In this process, the stigma and the ugliness myth shall come to an end, but also its celebration shall not take the form of euphoria, of self-rediscovery, or even hipsterisation of a coolness that these structures would only be damaged from. They need to be recognised for what they are, for how they came into life, as being shaped by the sheer need of their human creators, as simple accommodators of struggles for a better life. As rewards to human work and desires.

As utmost aspirations for dignity.



A composition of Guedes's doors pictures extracted from the article "1001 Portas do Caniços, Maputo, Moçambique" appeared in *JA, Jornal Arquitectos*, Lisbon: Ordem dos Arquitectos, CDN, SSN 0870-1504, no. 241 (October-December 2010): 84-87.

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## Julian Beinart's 'Patterns of the Street' and Pancho Guedes's '1001 Doors of Caniços': Icono-Ethnography in Architectural and Urban Research from 1960s Africa

This paper recounts two pioneering ethnographic approaches applied to urban and architectural research between the 1950s and the 1970s in two particular geographies: South Africa during the Apartheid and Mozambique during the end of Portuguese colonialism. The early investigations conducted by respectively Julian Beinart and Pancho Guedes were products of participant observation applied to critical, urban realities employing visual means such as painting, drawings, and photography: typical architects' tools, yet ascribable to what now is called visual ethnography. Hence, I intend to draw a connection between these historised cases and what has been recently theorized as icono-ethnography in the framework of CIELab: the Critical Icono Ethnography Lab and its research work at the University of Basel and the Hochschule für Gestaltung und Kunst FHNW.<sup>1</sup>

Icono-ethnography consists of the study of the whole range of visualisations produced in processes of urban transformation, that often involve a communicative gap between the experts' (architects and planners) professional visualisations and projects' recipients or users: the 'non-expert' stakeholders. The method allows the analysis of this gap and the progressive involvement of all the actors during participative workshops. Collective drawing and model making thus come to constitute extra verbal communication tools for 'urban imagining and imagineering'<sup>2</sup> and the creation of participatory images: emancipatory practices and media that facilitate negotiations over urban futures among diverse audiences.<sup>3</sup> In light of this, Beinart and Guedes's early visual ethnographies represented innovative modes of detecting latent forms of agencies, disclosed through icono-ethnographic observations that, at the same time, provided an expressive ground to otherwise silenced actors. In Beinart and Guedes, Western architects who spent almost their entire lives in Africa, it is indeed possible to observe a particular anthropological gaze on rapidly evolving African urbanities, that is the outcome of self-reflection on their settlers'

<sup>1</sup> See the website for more info: [www.cielab.ch](http://www.cielab.ch).

<sup>2</sup> The term was coined by scholar Alexa Färber in 2018.

<sup>3</sup> For a lengthier definition, visit the webpage of the research project: [www.cielab.ch](http://www.cielab.ch).

position and colonial modernity. The acquisition of an anthropological sense of the social also coincided with their questioning of the architects’ role as observers of, and as participants in the political and social agency of space.

BEINART AND GUEDES, ARCHITECTS AND ANTHROPOLOGISTS

Julian Beinart (1932–2020), born in South Africa from Jewish parents, attended the University of Cape Town to later move to MIT and Yale, where he studied with György Kepes, Louis Kahn, and Kevin Lynch among others. After returning to South Africa, he applied the American lessons about users’ perception of the urban environment to the local socio-political circumstances. Beinart’s shared anti-Apartheid sentiments with fellow architects Rusty Bernstein and Arthur Goldreich, who played key roles in the African National Congress and its underground resistance, which eventually forced him to migrate to the United States in 1970. Alongside his teaching activities, he organised a series of two weeks-long design workshops in various parts of Africa. They were part of Beinart’s attempt to uncover the existence of a ‘shared urban culture’ between African art traditions and Western ‘modernity’ that could constitute a new popular visual language facilitating processes of Africans’ identities consolidation during the postcolonial transition.<sup>4</sup>

Equal to Beinart, Pancho Guedes (1925–2015) arrived in the Portuguese colony of Mozambique as a child, received his education in South Africa, and left after the independence in 1974.<sup>5</sup> Although he was never affiliated with the regime, nor with the *Frente de Libertação de Moçambique* (FRELIMO), he was persecuted by the Portuguese police due to his support for social projects such as education and healthcare buildings for indigenous people as promoted by Protestant Churches.<sup>6</sup>

Guedes and Beinart were humanist intellectuals belonging to a privileged social milieu, who reflected on a more inclusive society through spatial and artistic means.<sup>7</sup> The peculiar circumstances in which they lived demanded they develop an anthropological mindset to their profession: an evolution of the architect’s role that embraces an ethnographic lens, sensitive to artistic expressions in the urban space, tokens of indigenous resistance to Western episteme, in the sense of Michel Foucault’s use of the term.

4     Synonym of coloniality for Walter Mignolo.  
5     Although Guedes enjoyed the friendship of many African intellectuals in power positions after the 1974 independence, he could not find a place for himself and his family in the new society that he considered composed by few educated people capable of covering leading positions. Drawn by a growing disillusionment, he ultimately decided to move to first SA and later Portugal.  
6     Swiss Mission, Anglican and Methodist Churches carried on educational activities for natives in the colonies, neglected by Portuguese Catholics of the colonial regime.  
7     Guedes strived to direct the attention of the administrators toward the ‘informal’ city anticipating many post-war debates. Notably, his friendship with Alison and Peter Smithson brought him to take part in Team 10 meeting during the 1960s and 70s.

EARLY PARTICIPATORY ART WORKSHOPS

Beinart organised a series of art workshops during the 1960s to combine the Bauhaus’ pedagogical approach with already established pedagogy by missions and colonial educators.<sup>8</sup> The 1961 workshop saw the collaboration of Beinart and Guedes and took place in Lourenço Marques in an unfinished Guedes’ building.<sup>9</sup> Local participants who did not possess any technical art skills were invited to experiment with art practices in a non-hierarchical, interracial, and non-judgmental working environment.<sup>10</sup> Conceived to liberate the ‘authentic’ African art from Western influence, the workshop tells a lot about the architects’ romanticising outlook toward indigenous art that, according to the European debate of the time, was considered the origin<sup>11</sup> of all Western modern art. Beinart’s encouragement to use ready-made, waste materials,<sup>12</sup> named shock materials, led to expressive collages that broke artistic conventions: an invitation to return to African visual roots, what Beinart called folk art,<sup>13</sup> that, however, did not entail ‘re-tribalisation’ of what was gradually becoming urban Africa.<sup>14</sup> On the contrary, Beinart sought to facilitate a cultural formation accessible to everybody uncovering tacit forms of knowledge through pre-scriptural communication. Yet, this training in visual cognition was instrumental to the evolution of subjectivities ‘capable of participating in society as citizens’.<sup>15</sup>

BEINART’S ‘PATTERN OF THE STREET’ AND GUEDES’S  
‘1001 DOORS OF THE CANIÇOS’ GROUNDBREAKING VISUAL  
URBAN ETHNOGRAPHY

Scholar Setha M. Low noticed that urban anthropology is a recently established field, codified in the 1990s and based on ‘linking macro and micro analyses of urban processes through re-thinking the city as a space of flow.’<sup>16</sup> In this sense, Kevin Lynch’s mental mapping laid the foundations for the formation of urban anthropology as we know it today. Advancing Lynch’s

8     The missionaries played a crucial role in the development of material and immaterial educational infrastructures for natives.  
9     This happened simultaneously to the publication of the Beinart’s article on the colleague on *Architectural Review* (“Amancio Guedes, Architect of Lourenço Marques,” no. 129 (April 1961): 248), where at once he praised Guedes’ architecture and relegated his social cause to a mere disciplinary expansion, describing his approach as apolitical. Also, Beinart criticized the division of labor employed in his office and his omission of the African sources of European primitivism.  
10    Beinart’s Wits’ students, South African black artist and educator Sydney Kumalo, several of Guedes’ protégés, the painter Valente Goenha Malangatana, Guedes’ children, and the on-site builders.  
11    See the so-called Primitivism art and philosophical movement that idealised ‘primitive’ peoples as nobler than the civilised.  
12    Similarly to Kepes’ Bauhaus approaches.  
13    He used the term ‘folk’ or ‘popular,’ upgrading the African art status from the previous phrase ‘tribal’. He did not use the word ‘vernacular’ that instead would have frozen African societies into unchangeable local traditions.  
14    This would have entailed the affirmation of colonial and apartheid policies in both Mozambican and South African urban segregating contexts, which both tried to question in their work critically.  
15    Anna Valleje, ‘The Middleman: Kepes’s Instruments,’ in *A Second Modernism*, ed. Arindam Dutta (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1997), 144–185.  
16    For an exhaustive overview of the genesis of urban anthropology see: Setha Low, “Spatialities: The Rebirth of Urban Anthropology through Studies of Urban Space,” in *Companion to Urban Anthropology*, ed. Donald M. A Nonini (New Jersey: Wiley, 2014).



proto-urban ethnography, Beinart initiated a striking urban visual survey that inevitably assumed a political meaning in the Apartheid context, where cities were divided according to racialised policies of spatial segregation. Beinart was convinced that the key ‘to help Africans define what they want to say, and create a common culture’ relied upon the urban environment as a space where various African traditions coexist and meet Western culture.<sup>17</sup>

The urban survey was developed during a five-year research project<sup>18</sup> on the Western Native Township (WNT)<sup>19</sup> in central Johannesburg, where Beinart documented the ‘folk, popular’ decorations applied to the two-thousand standardised government housing units’ facades and the customisation of the front yard by native inhabitants who were facing eviction from the city centre. The district, a striking symbol of the racially-based policies of the regime, was declared in 1967 the only legal spot where Black people could live in Johannesburg.

Beinart’s research methodology was based on extensive photographic documentation, analytic drawings, surveys and interviews, archival research, and drawings made by tenants and builders. These were later collected in graphs, charts, and maps. The gathered data formed a body of entirely visual material: a novel map of the area that exceeded normative representations. The Western Native Township in Beinart’s analysis became a site of communicative patterns, ‘The Pattern of the Street’ that testified ‘evidence of people’s inherent sociability and their ability to cooperate and self-organise’.<sup>20</sup> WNT’s decorative signs’ communication appeared to express individualities and products of the community’s participatory practices.<sup>21</sup> Beinart interpreted the area as a *locus* for communicative potentials that triggered alliances between diverse political actors in the city capable of acting independently from the designer’s intermediation.<sup>22</sup>

To a certain extent, WNT research anticipated the European discourse on participatory design and social awareness that emerged after the socio-anthropological shift in post-war architecture. For example, Guedes was well aware of Team 10’s claims in favour of a deeper social reflection, because he participated in several of their meetings, bringing examples from Mozambique, where he built much more than the idiosyncratic architecture

17 Julian Beinart, “Basic Design in Nigeria,” *Athene* 2, no. 1 (Summer 1963): 23.  
18 Initially, he planned to turn the research into a doctorate and publish a book, but he published only some articles reporting the research findings.  
19 In May 1918, the Johannesburg Town Council established the suburb for Black residents and called it ‘Newlands Location’. The residents objected to this name, and in 1919 they changed it into ‘Western Native Townships.’ The area would undergo more name changes during Apartheid when it was declared a Black township in 1963 and where colored residents were forcefully moved. By 1967 it became ‘Westbury’: the first area where Black people could legally live in Johannesburg.  
20 Ayala Levin, “Basic Design and the Semiotics of Citizenship: Julian Beinart’s Educational Experiments and Research on Wall Decoration in Early 1960s Nigeria and South Africa,” *ABE Journal* 9–10 (2016). <https://doi.org/10.4000/abe.3180>, 15.  
21 ‘Decoration is a primordial form of participation.’ Julian Beinart, “The Environmental Game and Taking Part,” *Perspecta*, no. 12 (1969): 34.  
22 Beinart explains this form of communication also through more explicit forms of self-organisation developed in WNT, such as the first African cooperative store, an African Boy Scout unit, dance bands, a vigilance guard to combat juvenile delinquency, and a women’s organisation preventing women from throwing dirty water into the streets.

for which he is usually remembered by the critique. Guedes’s most known architecture, in fact, presents an eclectic, plastic use of cement and aims to liberate itself from the modernist standards, experimenting with anthropomorphic, dreamy shapes. Among the 22 families of architectures he created, this set of notorious buildings, built for the colonial bourgeoisie, belong to the families called *Stiloguedes*. Yet, the part of Guedes’s work that attests his social commitment is poorly credited by the historians: what I came to call his ‘social’ architecture. Two articles are crucial to understanding his position in terms of colonial urban policies: ‘The Caniços of Mozambique’<sup>23</sup> and ‘The Sick City’. Both the articles concentrate on the *caniços* (reeds), the unplanned city of colonial Maputo, as opposed to the colonial city of *cimento* (cement). Like Beinart, also for Guedes, the city was a ‘learning machine’, a site of resistance through artistic expressions that he examined through what can be referred to retrospectively as ethnography.

Whereas Beinart’s research was more scientifically structured, Guedes was drawn by a personal interest, visible in his intimate photos collection published only many years later in the 2015 book by Tavares, Magri, Lucio and Faria ‘*Pancho Guedes has never been to Japan: Journeys through the Photographic Archives of A.d’A.M.Guedes*’ that contains a series of home doors decorations by inhabitants of the *caniços*. The collection later named ‘1001 *Portas do Caniços*’<sup>24</sup> shows Beinart’s similar interest in decoration as a form of city appropriation, a platform for communities’ creation, negotiation, and reclamation of contested identities in the process of decolonisation.

In the article ‘The *Caniços* of Mozambique’, using an almost diaristic, ethnographic tone, the architect reports a walk in the outskirts of today Maputo where he examined auto-construction techniques and, above all, the affective meanings of these houses for people. Like Beinart in WNT, Guedes noticed that house ownership represented a status symbol, a form of mimicry of Western middle-class identity that opens up to the intricate question of land distribution in emerging African urbanity. In colonial Maputo, ‘individual land ownerships were possible and encouraged’, but only if inhabitants transformed traditional reeds and sticks houses into ‘permanent buildings in cement blocks and concrete’: middle-class imagery that ‘borrows forms and decoration from European suburbs’ houses, as Guedes argued in his text of 1971. However, the *caniços* described as not usual ‘slums’<sup>25</sup> were a reality that was disappearing, Guedes wrote, especially in big towns:

‘Rapid expansion attracts immigration from rural areas and encourages re-developments of the *caniços*. The land, therefore, acquires value and becomes unaffordable for the majority of newcomers.’

23 Amancio d’Alpoim Guedes, “The Caniços of Mozambique” in *Shelter in Africa*, ed. Paul Oliver (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1971), 200–209.  
24 Named as such by Guedes in a 2010 article on *JA Journal Arquitectos*.  
25 Pancho also refers to municipalities in Mozambique that collaborate to maintain hygienic standards, rubbish collection, and sanitary services that certainly help to avoid the ‘spirit of degradation and hopelessness’ perceived in other cities.

Guedes advanced a workable solution to prevent the object of his fieldwork from disappearing, namely to encourage more permanent dwellings through people’s autoconstruction. However, this would require ‘imagination: an attitude not usually held by bureaucratic town planners.’<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, architects’ visuals and ethnographic reports, were ‘sensory’ tools that allowed these architects to reveal tensions and latent forms of natives’ agencies of two nascent African metropolises.

ARCHITECTS’ ICONO-ETHNOGRAPHY IN 1960’S URBAN AFRICA

Most recently, scholars of the growing, yet still young, field of architectural anthropology described the ‘ethnographic turn’ in architecture as an attempt to grasp the socio-material dimension of architectural practice;<sup>27</sup> a shift from the description of artefacts to delineations of production processes: ‘an ecology of practices’.<sup>28</sup> Yet, architectural anthropology does not coincide, neither in scope nor temporally, with the post-war social critique and the advent of postmodernism mentioned previously in this text as a socio-anthropological shift. The new discipline appears methodologically focused on ethnography as a medium to analyse the promissory network of entangled actants behind architecture projects.<sup>29</sup> However, one discipline’s core challenge, stressed by Sascha Roesler, who cites Amerlinck, reconnects this new field discourse with Beinart and Guedes’s early experiments.<sup>30</sup> It is the challenge of ‘a renovation of the ethnographic description, where texts must be accompanied by graphic images, which may be authored both by the ethnologist and his or her informants’.<sup>31</sup> Thus, besides contributing to the post-war socio-anthropological shift from decentred geographies, Beinart and Guedes’ works are also historically pioneering ventures of alternative modes of doing ethnography via visuals and are worth recounting as historical prequels for contemporary challenges in architectural anthropology.

Nevertheless, to set the ground for an inclusive and decolonised architecture pedagogy and practice, figures as Beinart and Guedes need to be understood critically and within the heterogeneous socio-political context of 1960s decolonisation as exponents of a ‘third way’ beyond essentialising dualisms. The funding scheme of Beinart’s research, for example, and his access to municipal archives raises doubts concerning his ambivalent complicity with the apartheid regime, as much as Guedes’s prompt departure from Mozambique right after the independence. I advance that both are examples of intellectuals’ personal trajectories that neither partook in the colonial

26 Amancio d’Alpoim Guedes, “The Caniços of Mozambique,” in *Shelter in Africa*, ed. Paul Oliver, 200-209 (London: Barrie & Jenkins, 1971), 207.  
27 Albena Yaneva, *Five Ways to Make Architecture Political: An Introduction to the Politics of Design Practice* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).  
28 Isabelle Stengers, “Introductory notes on an ecology of practices,” *Cultural Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (2005): 183–196.  
29 Bruno Latour, “On actor-network theory: A few clarifications,” *Soziale welt* (1996): 369–381.  
30 Marie Amerlinck, ed., *Architectural Anthropology* (Westport, CO: Prager Publishers, 2001), 12.  
31 Sascha Roesler, “Visualization, Embodiment, Translation: Remarks on Ethnographic Representation in Architecture,” *Candide Journal* 8, (2014), 14.

regime nor were passive, and reactionary in these terms, struggle for resistance. Beinart and Guedes were what Clàudia Castelo et al. identified as the ‘others of the colonisation’.<sup>32</sup> What drove them was not an anti-modern desire but an ‘alter-modern resistance’ striving to propose a workable alternative.<sup>33</sup>

Their taxonomical photographic reportages may remind the normative use of photography employed by the state apparatuses. Still, the researchers’ gaze was not directed to understand ‘how inhabitants used the space in innovative ways, based on their rural traditions [thus entailing the doggedness of preserving the ‘tribal Africa’], but in how, as observed by Beinart, people transformed it according to codes of domestic bourgeois respectability.’<sup>34</sup> Beinart’s axonometric house drawings do not violate interior private spaces, respecting what inhabitants wished to exhibit off their homes. The same can be said for Guedes’ slums reportages and texts that, ultimately, wanted to acquaint colonial administrators on urban inequality issues and acknowledge *caniços*’ potentials.<sup>35</sup>

To conclude, I attempt to outline again the thought-provoking association – possibly far-fetched – between Beinart and Guedes’s research from the 1960s rooted in the spontaneous use of ethnography via images and participatory art workshops and the definition of icono-ethnography as intended by the CIELab research team, today. Icono-ethnography conducted on urban transformations in Basel allowed participation and cross-communication between diverse actors involved with varying power relations in the city. Participatory images produced during these workshops bridged the expert-non-expert gaps, similarly to Beinart and Guedes’s participative art gatherings with untrained Africans that were also directed to establish a communication foregrounding indigenous art practices. Although the temporality and the socio-political context of the two research are profoundly dissimilar, the employment of images as ethnographic data and enablers of emancipatory negotiation practices is resembling. Eventually, Beinart and Guedes’ ground-breaking, icono-ethnographic studies and their anthropological attitudes in analysing 1960s urban Africa may help in filling the gaps in the architectural history of colonial spaces, while simultaneously providing incredibly applicable teachings on topical themes as participation, future models of democracy, decolonising approaches to design, and a renewed awareness of the political role of built space.

32 In the book *Os Outros da Colonização*, Castelo et al. reported on late colonialism protagonists who exceeded the binary classification of colonizers and colonized amidst the paradoxical reality of the ‘assimilation’ and the luso tropical colonialism propaganda.  
33 In *Commonwealth* (2011), Hardt and Negri advanced a distinction between anti-modern and alter-modern resistance. The first entails a form of permanent struggle that nevertheless is passive and ultimately unsustainable. In contrast, the second has an agentive power to activate the multitude to resist through the collective construction of an alternative political project.  
34 Ayala Levin, “Basic Design and the Semiotics of Citizenship: Julian Beinart’s Educational Experiments and Research on Wall Decoration in Early 1960s Nigeria and South Africa,” *ABE Journal* 9–10, (2016): 13, <https://doi.org/10.4000/abe.3180>.  
35 In the same years, in the USA, Venturi and Scott Brown embarked upon their research on vernacularism, the everyday bourgeois American white suburbia, and the capitalist city of signs.

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An image of a plot. Photograph by Karoline Hjorth.

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## Bridging to Disrupt: On Transformative Dialogues and Exchanges of Site-Based Interactions

This is a story of continuing dialogue, of a struggle to articulate, to find use of each other, ourselves in each other. The landscape architect and the social anthropologist. The designer and the observer. The designer observing the observer designing for explorative methods of visual-spatial interaction and participation. We work transdisciplinary, collaborating to do participatory research on socially relevant issues with youth and young students, while also actively working to transcend and integrate our different disciplinary paradigms.<sup>1</sup> Are we searching for a unity of knowledge or is this endeavour about something else?

The meaning of transdisciplinarity is contested among different schools of thought, and our own idea of this is based less on other scholars' definitions and more on our practice of regularly conversing, teaching, and writing, in order to find something.<sup>2</sup> What is this something? Is it to develop a 'shared approach to the research, building on a common conceptual framework', that Rosenfield argues defines transdisciplinarity?<sup>3</sup> We discuss the literature, the definitions on inter- and transdisciplinary work, and realise that they put a lot of weight on the necessity of building a relation of mutual learning, trust, and collaborative self-reflection. How have we come to this?

The landscape architect: We have seen each other in action, as professionals. The anthropologist doing fieldwork in the architect office, observing teams work with ideas in competition phases of buildings and public plazas. Times Square Reconstruction. I was there. We did wonder, what is a bench?

The anthropologist: I remember, we sat on a multitude of benches in Oslo city centre, with the team of young landscape architects, to discuss and experience it. The hot, too hot, feel of the metal bars, the cladding, on our summer skirt legs. A bench to you was

<sup>1</sup> Christian Pohl, "From Transdisciplinarity to Transdisciplinary Research," *Transdisciplinary Journal of Engineering and Science* 1 (2010): 65.

<sup>2</sup> Pohl, "From Transdisciplinarity to Transdisciplinary Research," 65.

<sup>3</sup> Patricia L. Rosenfield, "The Potential of Transdisciplinary Research for Sustaining and Extending Linkages between the Health and Social-Sciences," *Social Science & Medicine* 35 (1992): 1343–1357; as cited in Pohl, "From Transdisciplinarity to Transdisciplinary Research," 66.

something altogether different than I as an anthropologist was used to. A bench for us is an enabler of social relations.

Transdisciplinarity encourages representatives of different disciplines ‘to transcend their separate conceptual, theoretical, and methodological orientations’.<sup>4</sup> Interdisciplinarity – meaning the collaboration between disciplines that is still challenging even though it is not intended to challenge each other’s paradigms into disciplinary transcendence – is increasingly central to research agendas.<sup>5</sup> Yet, its effective implementation in research projects remains the exception.<sup>6</sup>

THE POWER OF HOLDING THE PEN

In our collaborative work, we focus on young professionals and urban youth as users and designers of public spaces, those that can make a difference in the long run – simply by becoming. We introduce them to the insecurity of ongoing, open creative processes coupled with the harsh facts of materiality, authority, power, structure. We discuss, what is disciplinary authority? We talk with collaborating youth about the power of participating in planning – on youth’s own terms.<sup>7</sup> What are these terms? How can young people challenge the power dynamics and hierarchies within urban development, in public spaces? How will students of architecture later become ingrained in the power structures, be responsible for decision-making that have consequences for real people, real lives – and will their experience with youth participation inspire future revolt to systemic power structures? We talk about, with the youth and the students, the power of the one who holds the pen, of the one who draws the first line.<sup>8</sup> The line becomes physical, a representation that may lead to structures and buildings and landscapes that last for decades or even centuries. Structures that influence and structure people’s lives.

We wonder, are our respective disciplines enabling us with a high tolerance for ambiguity? Is that why we are able or maybe willing to challenge each other through this practical collaboration?

In the design studio course, the students in landscape architecture are on their own for the first time, they must make choices themselves, to find their

4 Patricia L. Rosenfield, “The Potential of Transdisciplinary Research for Sustaining and Extending Linkages between the Health and Social-Sciences,” *Social Science & Medicine*, 35, (1992): 1343–1357, as cited in Pohl 2010, 66..

5 A. L. Porter and I. Rafols, “Is science becoming more interdisciplinary? Measuring and mapping six research fields over time,” *Scientometrics* 81, no.3 (2009): 719–745, Sterling 2004, van Rijnsoever and Hessels (2011).

6 Susan Owens, J. Petts, and H. Bulkeley, “Boundary work: Knowledge, policy, and the urban environment,” *Environment and Planning C*, 24, no. 5 (2006): 633.; J. Fokdal, O. Bina, P. Chiles, L. Ojamäe and K. Paadam, “Setting the stage,” in *Enabling the City: Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Encounters in Research and Practice*, eds. J. Fokdal, O. Bina, P. Chiles, L. Ojamäe, K. Paadam, 3–15 (New York: Routledge, 2021).

7 Aina L. Hagen, (forthcoming) “Egalitarian ideals, conflicting realities: Introducing a new model for thick youth participation in planning,” in *Ung medvirkning: Kreativitet og konflikt i planlegging* [Young participation. Creativity and conflict in planning], ed. Aina Landsverk Hagen and B. Andersen, Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademiske, 2021.

8 Aina Landsverk Hagen and G. Rudningen, “Den første streken. Materialitetens makt i et arkitektfirma” [The first line – the power of materiality in an architect firm], *Norsk Antropologisk Tidsskrift*, no. 3–4 (2012): 274–286.

own style – and sometimes they do find their own voice, developing design in their own way. One day on the site equals one week inside, in the studio. The ‘being there’ paradigm of anthropology, where the body is your tool in the site or field, with the people interacting and engaging in their everyday lives, gives the students an immediate, experience-based knowledge. The students are important to us, they are at the centre of this journey, and like Verdini *et al.*, who point to the multi-fold benefits of students’ participation in interactive sessions, we encourage them to explore the life-worlds of young people of diverse cultures.<sup>9</sup> These encounters enable the students to learn from real-world challenges and the local community’s experiences.<sup>10</sup> The youth and the students meet at a physical location in Oslo, a park or plaza that will be undergoing development in the future. They do what we call ‘spotting’, which we will explain in more detail later on. They meet in the universal question of ‘Where do you feel good?’. They converse and interview each other about places, spaces, relations, structures, and the social. They continue and expand this dialogue by exploring the actual space as it is now, today, exploring how people use the space in their everyday lives, busy lives, calm lives, the routes these strangers take and the thoughts they have, the associations they make, from being asked that very same question: Where do you feel good?

Is this a two-way learning interaction? By doing this together, is the local community, meaning the youth in the Eastern part of Oslo, learning from the landscape architect students’ expertise? And vice versa? Hofmann-Riem *et al.* argues that transdisciplinarity is about grasping the complexity of a problem and questioning the normative nature of knowledge production.<sup>11</sup> It is also about recognising the gap between the perceived problem in science and practice, and as a result, producing knowledge for the ‘common good’.<sup>12</sup> Our exploration and recognition of this gap between science and practice can maybe best be described as a venture into the messiness of participatory action research.<sup>13</sup> How are we striving to find the transformational power of observational and participatory research – is it through our practical work, our dialogues, our interactions or interventions?

THE BODY AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

The anthropologist: So, what is a body?

The landscape architect: Our bodies, the bodies of our students, they are measurement tools for spatial understanding of the

9 G. Verdini, O. Bina, P. Chiles, P., P.M. Guerrieri, E.C. Occhialini, A. Mace, C. Nolf, A. P. Pola, and P. Raffa, “A Creative ‘NanoTown’: Framing Sustainable Development Scenarios with Local People in Calabria.” in *Enabling the City. Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Encounters in Research and Practice*, eds. J. Fokdal, O. Bina, P. Chiles, L. Ojamäe, K. Paadam, 65–80 (New York: Routledge, 2021).

10 Olivia Bina, J. Fokdal, P. Chiles, K. Paadam, and L. Ojamäe, “The inter- and transdisciplinary process: A framework,” in *Enabling the City: Interdisciplinary and Transdisciplinary Encounters in Research and Practice*, eds. J. Fokdal, O. Bina, P. Chiles, L. Ojamäe, K. Paadam, 17–33 (New York: Routledge, 2021), 20.

11 Holger Hoffmann-Riem *et al.*, “Idea of the Handbook,” 3–17.

12 Hofmann-Riem *et al.* 2008, 4.

13 Peter Reason and Hilary Bradbury, *Handbook of action research: Participative inquiry and practice* (London: Sage, 2001).



human scale. See this bench, and the wall behind us? The body helps us measure the distance and space in between. And the distance between us and ‘the others’ in public space is important for feeling safe and having enough ‘personal space’.

The anthropologist: Our bodies, the bodies of our students, in the field, they are sensory barometers for relational understanding of the human emotional range. The phenomenon observed is always embodied, integrated sensory experience, never detached from the physical. Yet, we don’t have the full vocabulary to describe, reflect, understand the materiality, the gravity, the physics of our surroundings.

The first impression you only get once. Yet, the site is a place you can return to numerous times. This is also true for transdisciplinary engagement. We strive for transformative articulation, as anthropology needs a language for the spatial, physical and architecture needs a language for the relational, social.

How can we describe our first impressions of transdisciplinary engagement? What were our questions to each other then? What are they now?

The anthropologist: There is a few, very strong, mantras or principles, in our discipline. Being there, is one. Few anthropologists feel complete about their own scientific work if they conduct surveys online or do telephone interviews with people – and that’s it. We are indeed instructed, some would say indoctrinated, into spending time in spaces, places, with people living their everyday lives. And when we are there, we observe. We talk with people. We listen. What is observation to you?

The landscape architect: In the start of any new project, we want to make a site visit, to better understand the context, the landscape, and the site, being there. The site analysis is based on registrations and understanding of structural layers as blue-green-structures, building morphology, mobility, views, program, connections, meeting places or lacking any of these.

Very often the plan programme is politically decided with a new development of the area, typically as transformation and/or densification. The public planning process shall include user participation and children and youths are mandatory to be included. But we wonder, how to create involvement and engagement and include their stories into the new design?

The landscape architect: How do we translate, transfer, the social and relational to physical form? How can we learn the meaning of these social and spatial relations to people, between people and between people and places? This is where the architects are just not good enough, yet.

The anthropologist: Can we develop a language with a broader access to information, more diverse, richer articulations, to be able not only to communicate with each other, but also communicate to expand our own disciplines? I wonder, what is a good place – to you?

## THE SPLOT METHOD AND THE CONTINUATION

We have developed this method, an approach we call ‘spotting’.<sup>14</sup> We ask people, where do you feel good? As a drawing exercise, a dialogue object for people to talk through and about, spot is a snapshot of people’s imaginative worlds, personal stories. It has an equaliser effect, as everyone must draw, share with the other, the non-professional other. It’s transferring power between the design expert and youth, at best.

To spot someone, provides an immediate gate opener into the subjective world of the other, it provides multiple layers of a site and an extracted story that can lead to insight you would not have gotten without spotting. The storytelling can ignite a new understanding of the site. It leaves an emotional imprint, performing as an almost comical opposite to the architectural rendering, where the messy realities of trash, crime, conflict, or poverty, are wiped out. It provides the youth with a repertoire of reflection on self, on the relation of self to spaces and places of meaning, on arguments towards people in positions of power – what can you do to make my sense of social belonging stronger, to strengthen the physical and material impact on social lives in my neighbourhood, in a positive way?

Transdisciplinarity is a time-consuming approach, and the aspect of continuation is crucial, like Bina *et al.* argues, as most researchers are faced with time-limited funding schemes. As we are. We are part of the increasingly project-oriented mode of research and practice that, ‘while offering efficiency and output-focus investment, risks reducing knowledge production to an almost industrial plant linear process.’<sup>15</sup>

Continuation in inter- and transdisciplinary research requires the development of more elaborate tools and trust, Bina *et al.* argues.<sup>16</sup> Trust comes from knowing each other’s strengths, but more importantly, the weaknesses. We therefore ask not only, what do our disciplines have in common, so that we can bridge our work and collaborate, but also: How can our disciplines disrupt and expand each other? How do we explore and clarify our differences so that dialogue and collaborative integration can occur?

14 Aina L. Hagen, (forthcoming) Egalitarian ideals, conflicting realities: Introducing a new model for thick youth participation in planning, in *Ung medvirkning: Kreativitet og konflikt i planlegging* [Young participation. Creativity and conflict in planning], eds. Aina Landsverk Hagen and B. Andersen (Oslo: Cappelen Damm Akademiske, 2021).

15 Bina *et al.*, “The inter- and transdisciplinary process: A framework,” 23.

16 Bina *et al.*, 23.



We look at the literature again, and recognise the arguments, the urge to reflect, like Bina et al. does, on ‘the potential gap that needs to be filled between the lofty claims and statements in favour of inter- and transdisciplinary processes both in local and global policy documents, and the more prosaic reality on the ground’.<sup>17</sup> We recognise that the way we work can and will be described in research applications, in the everlasting search for funds, as being close to what the funders crave for. But we are more interested in digging in the messiness of the ‘power exchanges’ that are going on, between the two of us, between our disciplines and also, more importantly, between our research practices and the people we meet.

Like Klein (2010) argues, transdisciplinarity is transcending, transgressing, and transforming, it is theoretical, critical, integrative, and restructuring.<sup>18</sup> ‘Where do you feel good’ is both a question for the site-specific user in the splot method, but also a question for us as professionals about expanding into a wider understanding of ‘the other’. We continue to discuss, how do we transcend and integrate our disciplines’ paradigms, in practice? We keep the dialogue ongoing by asking: how can we disrupt each other’s attachments to disciplinary backgrounds, exchange information, expand our thinking to better understand the complexity of belonging? This might be our best option at finding a shared approach. Questioning each other. Questioning our knowledge foundations. Questioning all but the continuing dialogue itself.

17 Ibid., 20.  
18 Julie Thompson Klein, “A taxonomy of interdisciplinarity,” in *The Oxford handbook of interdisciplinarity*, eds. R. Frodeman, J. T. Klein, and C. Mitcham, 15–30 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); as cited in David Alvargonzález, “Multidisciplinarity, Interdisciplinarity, Transdisciplinarity, and the Sciences,” *International Studies in the Philosophy of Science* 25, no. 4 (2011): 387–403.

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# Displaying the Event: The Architectures of Pop-Up Urbanisms

'The exodus is here  
The happy ones are near  
Let's get together  
Before we get much older  
Teenage wasteland  
It's only teenage wasteland'<sup>1</sup>

At the turn of the 21st century, Glastonbury became one of the largest greenfield pop festivals in the world, attended by around 175,000 people each summer and requiring an extensive architectural infrastructure that is equipable to that one of more conventional urban typologies.<sup>2</sup>

The event, that every year takes place at Worthy Farm, Pilton, started back in 1970 when its founder Michael Eavis organised its first edition inspired by the performance of Led Zeppelin at the Bath Festival of the previous year. The 'Pilton Pop Folk & Blues Festival', as it was named back then, took place on Saturday 19 September 1970 and it was attended by 1500 people paying a ticket fare of only one pound per person.

Gradually through the following decades, the attendance and popularity of the festival would increasingly grow, becoming a real milestone of Britain's youth culture and attracting world-leading bands. It would not be until the mid-1990s when the festival would establish itself as the main referent for massive-gathering cultural ephemeral events in the world.

In 2019, the latest edition of the festival so far, 135.000 tickets got sold out in 34 minutes with no line-up announced.<sup>3</sup> Fifty years after Eavis organised the first edition at his family 150-acre farm, the festival is worth 82 million pounds and a cost that reaches 22 million pounds per edition.<sup>4</sup> Glastonbury is an example of how Pop Festivals have dramatically changed our notion of urbanity and, more importantly, of how they have transformed the architecture that defines our public realm.

<sup>1</sup> The Who, Baba O'Riley, Who's Next? (London: Olympic, 1971).

<sup>2</sup> Music festivals: What's the world's biggest?- *BBC News*, July 4, 2018, accessed September 2021.

<sup>3</sup> Lanre Bakare, Glastonbury tickets sell out in 34 minutes, *The Guardian*, October 6, 2019 – accessed September 2021.

<sup>4</sup> Rewan Tremethick, on June 23rd, 2016, *Glastonbury 2016 – Money Facts from the World's Largest Festival*, accessed March 2018 <https://blog.torfx.com/general-interest/glastonbury-2016-money-facts-from-the-worlds-largest-festival/>.



This Greenfield is my Home: La Nuova Topografia di Glastonbury. London, 2017. Drawing by Pedro Pitarch.



During the last decades, a radical shift has been experienced within the contemporary city. ‘Urbanism’ has been multiplied into manifold ‘urbanisms’. And the symmetry between privateness and publicness that ruled the modern city for years is evidenced to be completely broken more than ever. Form does not follow function anymore. Instead, form follows experience. In the contemporary city, the practice of architecture is migrating from the design of spaces to the construction of experiences, to the performance of particular events within given contextual conditions, establishing the framework of a new metropolitan paradigm. Social events such as festivals, provided with comparable budgets to more conventional urban typologies, generate urbanity and co-construct our societies from that new paradigm. These events that could be considered ‘altermodern’ following Nicolas Bourriaud’s term; and while long-time rooted in our societies, they have not yet been included in the disciplinary apparatus of architecture or urbanism.<sup>5</sup>

Within short time frameworks, these massive gatherings formalise and materialise the fugue lines of everyday-life desires.<sup>6</sup> They construct ephemeral contexts where new temporary realities are possible. Within them, the construction of identity is as important as the definition of its infrastructures. They could be considered as ephemeral cities, contemporary architectural settlements assembled around an event. These pop-up urbanisms are catalysts for alternative societies, and communities whose belonging is dependent on ephemeral territories where ‘performance’ equals ‘construction’.

From the early tests of the Plug-in City (1962–64) to the later development of the Instant City (1968–70), the work of the Archigram group is crucial to understand how pop-up architectures became a direct response to the social and cultural agitation of 1960s post-war society, which was the cultural breeding ground of the festival as an urban typology. Projects such as the Drive-in Housing (1964), the Cushicle (1966–67) or the Moment Village (1967) explored the shift between the permanence ethos of modernity and an uprising desire for emancipation that settled down the bases for transgressive urban models.<sup>7</sup> Peter Cook’s statement ‘The pre-packaged frozen lunch is more important than Palladio’ sharply defined the ethos of Archigram’s project, which claimed the ephemeral as a catalyst of emancipatory territories for a whole new generation.

In order to understand the so-called ‘pop-up urbanisms’, first we have to seek for their backgrounds, histories and roots, to be able to contextualise

5 Nicolas Bourriaud, *The Radicant* (New York: Sternberg Press, 2009); Bourriaud uses the portmanteau word ‘Altermodern’ to refer to a new modernity based on translation and creolisation, emphasising on the connection of despair cultural groups and the possibility of creating singularities in a standardised society. As a consequence ‘a new type of form is appearing, the journey-form, made of lines drawn both in space and time, materialising trajectories rather than destinations’ (Bourriaud, 2009). The term ‘Altermodern Event’ (Pedro Pitarch, Archipelago Lab, Madrid, 2014) is an attempt to frame within that multicultural context a series of urban practices that, emerging from the ephemeral, have defined a new urban typology with expiration date and catalysed through pop-up architectures.

6 Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life* (London: Verso, 1991).

7 Archigram Group, *Archigram* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999).

them, to finally conclude that, within this new urban framework, the event performs as architecture.

## BACKGROUND

Massive gatherings around an ephemeral programme are nothing new. Although they have traditionally been attributed, articulated and assigned to particular buildings in our cities. Confined within particular architectures. Hence, sport matches have been taking place within the architecture of the stadium. Religious ceremonies have been developed inside temples, churches, mosques, et cetera. Concerts have been performed in auditoriums and plays have been staged in theatres. However, in the contemporary city this relation between architecture and programme has been reversed. It is not the programme which inhabits architecture, but architecture which inhabits the programme, and articulates it.<sup>8</sup>

Pop festivals are a clear example of this typological shift. They are arranged within our society as gatherings of many architectures that display the development of an event. Although there have been many other examples of these urban phenomena from medieval times, it has not been until the 90s of the 20th century when the event has become totally consolidated as an architectural typology. With many precedents from the medieval carnivals to the well know pop festivals of the sixties that took place in Woodstock and the Isle of Wight, new examples of these urbanisms can be nowadays found in gatherings like gamers cons, campus parties, gay parades or music festivals. If, at the end of the 1960s, Woodstock was the herald of a pop-up urbanism still to come, then, during the 1990s Glastonbury became the laboratory for its development. Woodstock was a prototype. Glastonbury defined a typology.

Furthermore, during the last decade of the 20th century and the first decades of the 21st, the intimate or personal realm has suffered from a process of widespread growth of its scale. Due to technological improvements and development of real-time communication tools such as the smart phone, the management of ephemeral, huge gatherings of programmes have been made possible in a much more efficient way. Although developed in the urban realm, the programmes that constitute a festival are an extension of emancipatory, intimate desires, gathered around the performance of a live event. Either musical, economical, political or transcendental, they blur the limits from what could be considered private and public. Therefore, the revolutionary ethos of the festival is crucial to understand them as ‘exceptional moments’ around which the everyday life is transformed.<sup>9</sup> In this sense, ‘Lefebvre’s revolution-as-festival proposes a

8 As stated by Bernard Tschumi: ‘Architecture is not simply about space and form, but also about event, action, and what happens in space’. The early work of Tschumi’s practice is critical to understand the complex confrontation between ‘spaces and their use, between the set and the script, between ‘type’ and ‘program’, between objects and events’ and the way their relation is staged in the contemporary city. Bernard Tschumi, *The Manhattan Transcripts* (New York, 1976–1981).

9 Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life*, Vol. 1 (London: Verso, 1991), 250.



thorough re-conception of social movements’ cultural forms of collective political participation.’<sup>10</sup>

FRAME

The event is ultimately an architectural frame. When performed, the event becomes an ‘imaginal geography’ confined within a temporary parenthesis.<sup>11</sup> A transformational playground where habits, practices, relations and experiences are tested, evaluated and developed. The architectural boundaries of the event are extremely important as they mediate the transition from ‘daily-self to festival-self and the alteration of consciousness that might accompany that passage’.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, queues, security control areas or the infrastructural hubs of connection perform as gradients of urban contexts. They build up the transition between two counterpointed urban realms. These portals act as performative spaces where the inner logics of the event context of the festival are introduced to the visitor. These architectural elements act as a scenography of the social, economical and cultural logic of the context that one is about to enter. They introduce the narrative and prepare the spectators for their transformation.

The perimeter of the event, its boundary, becomes a gateway for individual and collective expressivity and sets in motion a deliberate blur between the exterior and the interior that facilitates access to the gradual construction of the alternative play-world that the event constitutes as such.<sup>13</sup>

The access to the festival, its frame, is therefore not just a place but an architectural device. It builds up that very ‘process of letting go’, not only of the structures of the everyday world that has been temporarily left behind, but also of the spectators themselves and their ego as they ‘make the sacrifice’ in favour of the event.<sup>14</sup> The outside world recedes and the inner environment of the event provides the architectural apparatus to emancipate from daily routine. Once inside, ‘through a variety of technologies and practices, the context would allow the ‘liberation of the self’.<sup>15</sup> The event as architecture is transformational, as it has the ability to create a unique context where the liberation from everyday life routines is explored, while

10 Gavin Grindon, *Revolutionary Romanticism: Henri Lefebvre's Revolution-as-Festival, Third Text*, 27:2, (London: Routledge, 2013), 208–220.

11 Graham St John, Post-rave Techno-tribalism and the carnival of protest. In *The Post-Subcultures Reader*, David Muggleton and Rupert Weinzierl eds. (London: Berg, 2003).

12 Alice O’Grady, “Alternative Playworlds: Psytrance festivals, deep play and creative zones of transcendence,” in *The Pop Festival*, ed. George McKay (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

13 The notion of the Festival as a ‘play-world’ brings up the relevance of play as a transformational element of society, that can be traced back to Johan Huizinga’s play theory. The claim of play as a primary condition of culture that he defends with Homo Ludens was formative to both the Italian avant-garde like Superstudio and Archizoom, as well as to the Situationists, whose works had deep impact in the post-war counterculture that was the breeding ground for the first Pop Festivals.

14 Alice O’Grady, “Alternative Playworlds: Psytrance festivals, deep play and creative zones of transcendence.”

15 Graham St John, *Global Tribe: Technology, Spirituality and Psytrance* (Sheffield: Equinox, 2012). Alice O’Grady develops St John’s ideas further, stating that the Festival is a ‘playful arena’ that offers the opportunity to present a persona that exceeds the routine self to embrace the ‘ludic self’. The Festival performs as a transformational context for emancipation, lifting visitors out and beyond their immediate circumstances.

providing means of comfort. It is precisely around the blurring limits of that transformation where the architectural potential of the event as a urban typology is proved, displaying a ‘festivalisation’ within its framed reality. This festivalisation refers to the ‘process by which the boundaries between the festival event and its geographical and social context spill out beyond its temporal and spatial boundaries’.<sup>16</sup>

NUOVA TOPOGRAFIA

If we understand these events as architecture, wouldn’t it be possible to draw them as architecture as well? In fact we could use architectural tools to represent and design them. Hence, one of these events could be drawn as the plan of a building, as the plan of a massive architectural apparatus that is assembled once in a year. The plan of Glastonbury that accompanies this paper is drawn in the same way that Nolli drew ‘la Nuova Topografia di Roma’ in 1748. While Nolli used figured-ground representation to show how public space penetrated and pierced the privateness of urban framework, in the ‘Nuova Topografia di Glastonbury’, ephemeral domesticities venture into the urban realm to define a new public space.

In the festival’s plan, the limits of what seems to be urban and what seems to be domestic blurs all the time, and what is more important, public space is not defined by means of the right of property, but by means of the right of accessibility and use at a certain time. Glastonbury is drawn as a massive city of tiny scales. A gathering of architectures that appear and disappear at a tremendous speed. The more congested it is in time, the more efficient its urbanism performs. Programmes and uses are mediated by ‘protocols of use’, which are elaborated, designed and constructed with equal importance as the structures, which define the space for the stages, resting areas and accesses. The citizens of such a city are inhabitants of an architecture conceived as an event, which is not just built anymore, but displayed. The construction of the event becomes a task that is not completed until its architecture performs. Performance becomes as important as the form.

Understanding the event as architecture changes completely the hierarchy between the elements that have traditionally defined a project. Within such a new paradigm, features such as timelines, schedules, communication and performance are as significant as the physical elements that have traditionally defined architecture, such as structures, partitions, skins or openings. The production of a sequence of plans, that determinates the geometry, materials and process of construction are not more determining than the layout of the events, than the interrelation of actors or than the definition of a playlist that construct these architectures.

16 M. Roche, “Festivalization, Cosmopolitanism and European Culture,” in *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere*, eds. Giorgi, Sassatelli and Delanty (New York: Routledge, 2011); M. Duffy, The Emotional Ecologies of Festivals, in A. Bennett, *The Festivalization of Everyday Life: Identity, Culture and Politics* (Ashgate: Farnham, 2014); Joanne Cummings and Jacinta Herbon, “Festival Bodies: the corporeality of the contemporary festival scene in Australia,” in *The Pop Festival*, ed. George McKay (London: Bloomsbury, 2015).

Although developed in the urban realm, the programmes that constitute a festival are a recomposition of a fragmented domesticity, emancipated within the temporary framework of its infrastructures and gathered around the performance of a live event.<sup>17</sup> Either musical, economical, political or transcendental, they blur the limits from what could be considered private and public. Despite the apparent impersonal and massive scale of these events, their architectures are a direct expansion of the intimate domestic realm. They are indeed the materialisation of the massive scale of domesticity within the contemporary city.

Back in the year 1968, in the course the events that took place during ‘May 68’ in France within a context of political, social and generational claim for change, one of the most famous slogans that the students used for their protests was ‘Sous le pavés, la plage!’ (Under the Pavement, the Beach!), referring to a growing desire for transformation and emancipation from the old paradigms. The early editions of pop-music festivals emerged within such a cultural and political context. Ironically, after five decades, that emancipatory ethos from the late sixties has been capitalised and alchemised into a consumer product. And what is more important, it has been encapsulated in time, confined within the ephemeral pop-up frameworks of the event.

Now the beach is not concealed under the street, but displayed all over the city, although not necessarily all of the time.

‘Though I know that evenin’s empire has returned into sand  
Vanished from my hand  
Left me blindly here to stand but still not sleeping  
My weariness amazes me, I’m branded on my feet  
I have no one to meet  
And the ancient empty street’s too dead for dreaming...’<sup>18</sup>

17 George McKay, *The Pop Festival: History, Music, Media Culture, Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury, 2015). The festival performs as a context where the atomised domestic realm of the contemporary city is temporarily re-assembled around the notions of community and belonging. As George McKay explains: ‘In a digital era the motivation for the social gathering of festivals may be in part as compensation for the progressive atomised and privatised experience of contemporary media and technology’.

18 Bob Dylan, *Mr. Tambourine Man (in Bringing it all Back Home)* (New York: Columbia Records, 1965).

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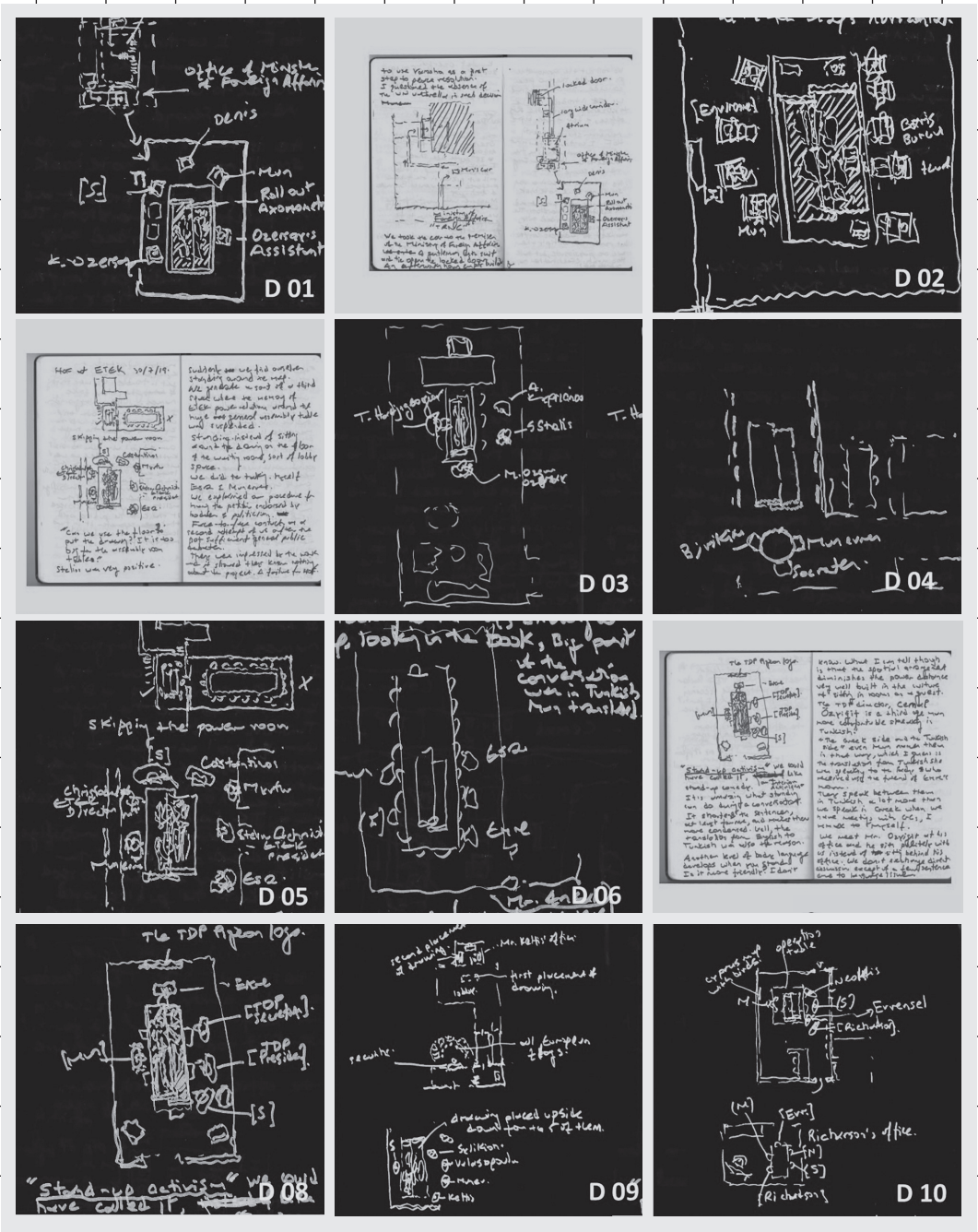


# A Guide for ‘Stand-up’ Activism: Performing a Counter-mapped Isometric Drawing

In the summer and fall of 2019, the ‘Imaginary Famagusta’ (I.F.) team met with politicians and professional bodies located on both sides of the Cypriot divide.<sup>1</sup> With the help of a counter-mapped isometric drawing depicting a multi-fragmented Famagusta, the I.F. team succeeded in getting the support of most of its interlocutors in creating a joint technical committee, consisting of Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and operating under the auspices of the United Nations. The committee’s agenda is based on the ‘Hands-on Famagusta’s’ project<sup>2</sup> values regarding the urban commons of a non-divided Famagusta in reunified Cyprus.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, the decision of Turkey and the Turkish Cypriot leadership to open the fenced-off part of Famagusta in October 2020, against the United Nations resolutions, has minimised any potential for such a committee and has reduced any hope for the island’s reunification. Yet, there are lessons to learn regarding the relational aesthetics engendered by the I.F. team members during their advocacy practice.

Through a practice of personal diaries and sketches, kept after each meeting, I have developed a posture of observing the observers, including myself.<sup>4</sup> Observation and action are entangled into a transformative engagement with the lessons learned thanks to the initial meetings to inform the tactics adopted in the meetings that followed.<sup>5</sup>

In the paper, I first discuss the relationships between ethnography, architecture and space. How spatial and architectural ethnographies may add a diffractive turn to ethnographic practices. Secondly, I briefly refer to the content and materiality of the produced isometric drawing thanks to a counter-mapping practice of the ‘Hands-on Famagusta’ project. Further on, I comment on the performative approach employed by the I.F. team during the ten meetings, and I make explicit my method of documenting the meetings. I present the



A guide for ‘stand-up’ activism: the performative aspect of a counter-mapped isometric drawing.  
Image by Socrates Stratis.

1 Imaginary Famagusta (‘I.F.’) is an activist Cypriot group comprised of architects and urbanists coming from both sides of the Cypriot divide. They are co-authors of the ‘Hands-on Famagusta’ project. The ‘I.F.’ team members are: Chrysanthé Constantinou, Emre Akbil, Esra Can, Lara Anna Scharf, Munevver Ozgur Ozersay, Socrates Stratis.

2 Hands-on Famagusta (‘HoF’) is a collaborative project, across the Cyprus divide. It is about the development of tools to support and encourage the civil society to establish common urban imaginaries for a reunified Cyprus, starting from Famagusta, (2015). (www.handsonfamagusta.org). ‘HoF’ project team is led by Socrates Stratis and comprises by Imaginary Famagusta (‘I.F.’), Laboratory of Urbanism at University of Cyprus (LUCY) and the agency Architecture, Art and Urbanism (AA&U).

3 Socrates Stratis and Emre Akbil, (forthcoming) “Architectures for supporting the Urban Commons of Federal Cyprus,” in “Cypriot Urban Form,” *Journal of the Cyprus Network of Urban Morphology* (2021).

4 Donald Schon, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York: Basic Books, 1987), n.p. and Albena Yaneva, *Made by the Office for Metropolitan Architecture: An Ethnography of Design* (Rotterdam: Nai 010, 2009) n.p.

5 Dana Cuff, “Lessons About Projecting the Metropolis,” *Journal Ardeth*, no. 2 (March 2018): 265.

major findings regarding the creation of instant third spaces thanks to the spatial arrangement of the meetings with the drawing becoming a non-human material agent with translation abilities. Concluding, I offer a short guide that might be useful to advocacy teams in suspending spatial power protocols during meetings. A ‘stand-up’ activism guide.

DIFFRACTIVE ETHNOGRAPHIC PRACTISE, SPACE, AND ARCHITECTURE

According to Donna Haraway, ethnographic practice, part of which I add, is the spatial and architectural ethnographies, is about ‘being at risk’ due to the unavoidable entanglement of the researcher and the researched, regarding their hopes and objectives. She goes on further to replace the metaphor of reflection employed in ethnographic practices with that of diffraction. She argues that diffraction entails a complex and dynamic process and implies the creation of ‘different patterns in the world’.<sup>6</sup> Seeing and thinking diffractively is about a dialogical manner of engagement that brings about unexpected and creative outcomes.

Visualising socio-spatial relations is the origin of spatial ethnography in urbanism, going back to Kevin Lynch’s Image of the City and William Whyte’s *Street Life Project* in the 1960s.<sup>7</sup> Spatial ethnography is one of the three fused practices of the emerging urban humanities field.<sup>8</sup> Architectural ethnography, which falls into spatial ethnography, is a hybrid form that results from interrelating ethnography with the quality of architecture’s own built means of critical evaluation that guides the project,<sup>9</sup> including the project actors, both human and non-human. Four related processes are behind the recent trend of an ‘ethnographic turn in architecture’ according to Yaneva.<sup>10</sup> Reflexivity in the architecture profession has become a legitimate posture in architectural research. Architecture as social practice and the social consequences of architectural production are in the foreground. Lastly, the collective character of design has gained a place in the architectural discourse.

The use of drawing in architectural and spatial ethnographies is a means to comprehend and share knowledge regarding processes that rapidly transform the urban environment. It is also a way to address how things ‘ought to be’ and not only ‘just about what exists’,<sup>11</sup> attributing a diffractive mode to ethnographic practices. The drawing becomes an active agent in employing relational aesthetics in architecture, thus shifting from predominant visual ones.<sup>12</sup> Relational aesthetics and encounter materialism were firstly part of the debate

6 Haraway cited by Lykke, N, “Anticipating Feminist Futures While Playing with Materialities,” in *Feminist Futures of Spatial Practice*, edited by M. Schalk, T. Kristiansson and R. Mazé (AADR, 2017), 30.  
7 Dana Cuff, Anastasia Sideris Loukaitou, Todd Presner, Maite Zubiaurre, and Jonathan Jae-an Crisman, *Urban Humanities: New Practices for Reimagining the City* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, 2020), 87–88.  
8 Cuff et al., *Urban Humanities: New Practices for Reimagining the City*, n.p.  
9 Momoyo Kaijima, “Learning from Architectural ethnography,” in *Architectural Ethnography*, edited by Momoyo Kaijima, Laurent Sadler, and Yu Iseki (Venice: Venice Biennale of Architecture editions, 2018), 10.  
10 Alben Yaneva, “New Voices in Architectural Ethnography,” *Journal Ardeth*, no. 2 (March 2018): 2.  
11 Dana Cuff, “Lessons About Projecting the Metropolis,” in *Journal Ardeth*, no. 2 (March 2018): 267.  
12 Momoyo Kaijima, “Learning from Architectural Ethnography,” 11.

in visual arts. Materialism depends on the contingency of the world. The human essence is created by connections that unite individuals in social forms.<sup>13</sup>

PERFORMING THE COUNTER-MAPPED ISOMETRIC DRAWING OF FAMAGUSTA

The isometric drawing depicting the deeply fragmented urban environment of Famagusta due to the Cyprus conflict may fall in that kind of drawing whose performance may enact relational aesthetics in spatial and architectural ethnographic practices. The city is represented by nineteen enclaves drawn like hovering rock-like pieces floating on a black background.<sup>14</sup> The isometric drawing embodies the *Hands-on Famagusta’s* project approach: with the representation of a multi-fragmented urban territory, one may bypass the dominant ethnically based binary divisive narratives that feed the actual conflict. The isometric drawing is one of the tools developed thanks to the ‘Hands-on Famagusta’ project, devoted to creating imaginaries regarding the urban commons of Federal Cyprus in a reunified island.<sup>15</sup>

The materiality of the isometric drawing is equally important. It consists of two long sheets of printed paper, 270cm long by 60cm wide; each one rolled out from a thin cut on a cardboard tube. The two pieces are placed next to each other, along their length. The drawing is easily transportable across the checkpoints of the Cypriot UN cease-fire zone thanks to the two tubes. It is too large to be placed on meeting tables, encouraging new forms of spatial arrangements.

The I.F. team members performed ten meetings, each documented in a diary by the author (Diary1–D01 to Diary 10–D10). The diaries comprise sketches of the spatial arrangement of the isometric drawing and the participants. They also document the discussion during the meetings and how the presence of the drawing altered its course. Two of the I.F. members participated in all ten meetings, coming from the Turkish Cypriot community (M. Özgür Özersay) and the Greek Cypriot reciprocally, (the author). Two additional ‘I.F.’ members from the Turkish Cypriot community participated in four of the meetings (E. Akbil, E. Can). All meetings took place in Nicosia: five of them took place in the north part of the city, four in the south part and one in the United Nations ceasefire zone.<sup>16</sup> The I.F. team was received in offices of politicians and professional bodies, (eight meetings). In addition, the I.F. team hosted two meetings, one in the collaborating AA&U office, in the south part of Nicosia, (D07) and a second one in the shop of one of the I.F. members, located in the north part of Nicosia, (D04).

13 Bourriaud brings forward Louis Althusser’s Marxist definition of encounter materialism. Nicolas Bourriaud, *Esthétique relationnelle* (Paris: Les Press du réel, 2001), 18.  
14 Socrates Stratis, “Architecture as urban practice in contested spaces,” in *Guide to Common Urban Imaginaries in Contested Spaces*, edited by Socrates Stratis (Berlin: Jovis, 2016), 35.  
15 www.handsonfamagusta.org.  
16 The meetings took place at the end of June 2019 (D01, D02), in July 2019 (D03, D04, D05, D06, D07), in August (D08) and in November 2019 (D09, D10).



The isometric drawing of Famagusta has been an ally of the ‘Hands-on Famagusta’ project team, since 2015. It was used as a background in consultation meetings or as a protagonist of events, placed on horizontal surfaces. The content and materiality of the isometric drawing have become active agents in enacting encounters and raising common concerns among the meeting’s participants.<sup>17</sup>

Yet, during the advocacy meetings of 2019, the I.F. team members employed a different approach. First of all, the drawing was not announced by the I.F. team to the hosts, as part of the meeting. Therefore, the hosts were unprepared to welcome an oversized, strange-looking drawing. The moments of unease and informality while waiting for the set up of the drawing either in the room the ‘I.F.’ team was received or elsewhere, created in-between time: the people in the room, coming from both ethnic communities, got the chance for small talk with each other.

Secondly, the I.F. team placed the drawing horizontally instead of vertically in the centre of the rooms where the meetings took place. This gesture turned the oversized isometric drawing into an additional actant, that has helped to suspend the spatial protocols of the receiving guests in the hosts’ offices. Using unplanned spaces, unrolling the drawing on table surfaces or the floor in a ritual manner, being around the drawing and discussing while being mostly in a standing position, keeping the content of the counter-mapped isometric drawing of Famagusta part of the conversation, have all helped to generate instant third spaces. The creation of such spaces was more successful in some meetings than others, depending on the contingencies emerging each time: personalities of the hosts, availability of time on their part, degree of improvisation and coordination among the I.F. members, degree of involvement of the content of the drawing in the discussion. In all cases, the drawing facilitated the I.F. team to support an alternative urban imaginary for Famagusta to the dominant divisive one and get the support of politicians and professional bodies.

A GUIDE TO A ‘STAND-UP’ ACTIVISM

The processes of making the project, including means of representation, such as drawings, ‘put to a different use’ ethnography, allowing for a diffractive approach.<sup>18</sup> The bringing about of the unexpected and the creative outcomes thanks to the active agency of the counter-mapped isometric drawing, during the ‘I.F.’ team’s meetings, touch upon the diffractive approach that I have freely called ‘stand-up’ activism, disrupting the host-guest existing relational aesthetics and encountering materialism.

17 Socrates Stratis, Emre Akbil and Chrysanthé Constantinou, “Counter Mapped Isometric Drawing: a Process for a Territorial Concern to Become Common,” in *Guide to Common Urban Imaginaries in Contested Spaces*, edited by Socrates Stratis (Berlin: Jovis, 2016), 119.  
18 Elias Mellander and Andréa Wiszmeg, “Interfering with Others: Re-configuring Ethnography as a Diffractive Practice” *Kulturstudier* 7, no. 1 (2016): 95.

Relational aesthetics and encounter materialism are part of the power relations, implicitly imposed on the guests, due to the host’s cultural, spatial protocols of hospitality. ‘Stand-up’ activism suspends the spatial power relations between the host: Politicians and professional bodies and the guest: The I.F. team members and the counter-mapped isometric drawing temporarily.

Thanks to its content and materiality, the drawing becomes an equal partner in the spatial arrangement of such encounters, contributing to the collective production of knowledge alternative to the dominant divisive narratives. The presence of the drawing and its engagement in debates may generate actants, according to the actor network theory,<sup>19</sup> that creates third entities capable of mediating the goals of action. Goals that the advocating team’s human members may not be capable of by themselves.

- Stand up!
- Ask for a room with a big enough table to unfold the huge counter-mapped isometric drawing.
- Use its size as an excuse to change rooms from the one you are received, or change place in the same room.
- If there is not such a space, even better! Place the drawing on the floor.
- Unroll the drawing’s sheets slowly, ritually! with the rest of the participants watching, while standing and often giving you a hand.
- You have just encouraged your hosts to suspend for a moment their predominant powerful spatial position.
- Stand up!
- Alternate standing positions with your team mates by moving around the drawing on the table or on the floor. You should be at least two team mates, coming from different backgrounds—ethnic, racial, gender. You are realising that while standing, the hosts’ sentences as well as yours are getting shorter and right to the point.
- Keep the counter-mapped content of the drawing in the conversation. Otherwise, it tends to become a table cloth, a background, allowing for the dominant narratives to prevail.
- Connect the drawing’s representational space with larger territories beyond its borders.
- It helps the participants to bring relevant issues in the discussion.
- Stand up!
- Even if you know you will fail!
- Stand up better!!

19 Bruno Latour, *Pandora’s Hope: Essays on the Reality of Sciences* (Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London: Harvard University Press, 1999), 179.





The practice of articulação territorial and the multiple networks it creates in Maré. Drawing by Bruna Montuori, 2020.

Bruna Ferreira Montuori (Royal College of Art)

# Neither Planning nor Improvising: *Articulação Territorial* as a Mode of Producing and Caring for the City

From September 2019 to January 2020, I lived in Maré, a set of sixteen favelas in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. I conducted the ethnographic work of my Ph.D., investigating and collaborating with the *Redes da Maré* (RdM) organisation.<sup>1</sup> As an outcome of qualitative research, I bring the fragment *Articulação territorial*, a spatial practice observed during that period and in further collaborations. I explore this fragment using ethnographic snapshots from fieldwork and reflections from interviews with RdM members. This practice is an insight from the territory of Maré to the fields of urbanism and architecture to recognise the multiple epistemologies embedded in planning and designing.<sup>2</sup>

Maré emerged upon the mangroves of Guanabara Bay with the arrival of Northeastern Brazilians who came in the 1940s to work in the construction of the highway Avenida Brasil. From the *laje*,<sup>3</sup> one may observe the five kilometres extension landscape of the second generation favelas.<sup>4</sup> They carry different rhythms and typologies of construction, including modified housing units, self-built homes, and housing estates, facing one another in the disputed space. The noise and movement of each favela reflect their histories of construction, with or without the State's involvement in their development.

RdM headquarters are based in Nova Holanda, a favela from 1962, first created as a provisory housing district, becoming permanent after residents' pressure and efforts to secure State interventions. As part of a long journey of social movements since the 1960s, the first RdM members litigated for residents' rights and access to public services within residents associations. Self-organised in the 1990s and born in 2007, the organisation emerged from pre-established territorial networks and currently works 'to ensure

<sup>1</sup> See more at: <http://www.redesdamare.org.br>. Accessed August, 25 2021.

<sup>2</sup> Faranak Miraftab, "Insurgent practices and decolonization of future(s)," in *The Routledge Handbook of Planning Theory*, eds. Michael Gunder, Ali Madanipour, and Vanessa Watson (London: Taylor & Francis, 2017), 276–288.; and Ananya Roy, "Urban informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 71, no. 2 (2005): 147–158.

<sup>3</sup> *Laje* is a domestic typology seen in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro. It consists of the roof of a house adapted and transformed into a terrace used for multiple uses. It is where favelas residents gather for celebrations, play music, smoke, eat, rest, exercise; where kids play on their inflatable pools and fly kites; where women tan under Rio de Janeiro's hot sun; a place hosting rituals and collectivity.

<sup>4</sup> Second generation of favelas emerged as a result of the industrialising period and development planning decisions taken to privilege the wealthiest areas of Rio de Janeiro in the second half of the 20th century. See Mario Brum, "Breve História das Favelas Cariocas: das origens aos Grandes Eventos," in *Rio (Re)visto de suas margens*, ed. Rosemere Maia (Rio de Janeiro: Letra Capital, 2019), 108–135.

the effectiveness of rights’ in Maré.<sup>5</sup> Developing projects in education, art, culture, urban and environmental rights, public security and access to justice, they engage in policy advocacy for public services, confronting attacks on human rights and tackling environmental racism.

The imperative of eradicating favelas has been deeply entrenched in Rio de Janeiro’s politics and imagination. Even before Maré, favelas were portrayed by the media as filthy, uncivilised, and where indolent populations, mainly from black ancestry, invaded public land.<sup>6</sup> The ascension of armed groups created another layer of stigma engendering ‘the political metaphor of war on drugs’ that blames favelas’ residents for the outcomes of public security policies in Rio.<sup>7</sup> The price residents pay are invisible borders established by armed groups and the impact of militarised power held in police operations creating dreadful experiences for locals.

Fighting stereotypes, RdM offers counter-narratives for the history, present, and future of Maré. Currently, members attempt to create a collective consciousness of rights, in which each and every resident is entitled to citizenship.<sup>8</sup> ‘This favela full of problems you’re describing is not my favela, the place I came from’ said Eliana Sousa Silva,<sup>9</sup> co-founder of RdM, and first female president of Nova Holanda Residents Association in 1984.

ETHNOGRAPHY AS MEANINGFUL EXCHANGE

I sought to understand how members explored these counter-narratives to affect residents’ experiences of belonging in relation to the built environment. Since 2016, I have been collaborating with members as a designer, exploring ways to support their ongoing work. In the Ph.D., ethnography was never a method to merely observe or immerse in that context. Rather, participant observation, a key technique of ethnography, was critical to highlight the appropriate moments for collaboration and meaningful exchange. Being introduced to Caroline Gatt’s and Tim Ingold’s approach of an ‘Anthropology-by-means-of-design’, the descriptive role of ethnography was not as relevant as adopting an open-ended, intuitive and engaged practice.<sup>10</sup> Allowing space for correspondence engendered collaborations that moved from problem-solving to critically reimagining the territory together.

Our correspondences derived from exchanging references and ideas, joining conversations, sharing notes, and sending messages to one another, enabling

5 See: <https://www.redesdamare.org.br/en/quemsomos/apresentacao>. Accessed September 30, 2021.  
6 Brum, “Breve História das Favelas Cariocas – das origens aos Grandes Eventos”.  
7 Eliana Sousa Silva, *The Brazilian Army’s Occupation of Maré: residents’ impressions of the armed forces’ occupation of Maré* (Rio de Janeiro: Redes da Maré, 2017), 22.  
8 James Holston, *Insurgent citizenship: disjunctions of democracy and modernity in Brazil* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008); Silva, *The Brazilian Army’s Occupation of Maré: residents’ impressions of the armed forces’ occupation of Maré*.  
9 Interview with Eliana Sousa Silva, recorded by Bruna Montuori on March 10, 2021.  
10 Caroline Gatt and Tim Ingold, “From description to correspondence: Anthropology in Real Time,” in *Design Anthropology: Theory and Practice*, edited by Wendy Gunn, Ton Otto and Rachel Charlotte Smith (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 139–158.

a sort of mutual affection based on our lived experiences. Being affected by this involvement required, as proposed by feminist thinkers,<sup>11</sup> accountability and an ethic of care, embracing values of compassion, solidarity, and the recognition of differences. Enacting solidarity opened space for growing relationships, mutual trust and reciprocity, especially in cases where I was not welcomed as an observer but as a design collaborator.

Working through a relational approach exposed the misconceived categories imposed on favelas, which homogenised their density, scale, form, programme, social dynamics, heritage, and ancestrality. The multiple epistemologies revealed the danger of dichotomies of formal and informal, margins and centre, asphalt and hill,<sup>12</sup> dismantling the romanticisation of the inventive character seen in favelas – often co-opted by development aid agencies, academia, entrepreneurship, and public power. Ethnography, in that sense, worked as a site of ‘meaningful contestation and constructive confrontation’ where space and lived experiences were entangled.<sup>13</sup> Since one constantly affects the other, the boundaries between theory and practice in planning and designing become blurred and redefined by the voices in the field.

THE SPATIAL PRACTICE OF ARTICULAÇÃO

Institutionalised as a community-led practice, *articulação territorial* disrupts the hegemonic production of space through the amplification of residents’ voices and insurgent citizenship.<sup>14</sup> Without a proper translation to English, the Portuguese word refers to the ability to approximate residents to their needs (demands, services, and complaints), establish partnerships inside and outside Maré, convince stakeholders, negotiate spatial disputes, and make collaborations that many times are not structured and calculated.

*Articulação* refers to the ability to deal with communal matters through dialogues, encounters, and exchanges of favours, reconfiguring spatial boundaries to form spaces of contestation. It supports and is supported by a network of favelas resistance formed by local leadership, residents associations, local institutions, and government agencies. Neither rigid as planning nor unstructured as improvising, it allows members to produce and affect the multilayered space of Maré whilst seeking social justice.

*Articulação* appeared from members’ everyday spatial tasks to planned events inside and outside Maré. In the local newspaper *Maré de Notícias*

11 Roy, “Urban informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning.” See: Bell Hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 2015), Maria Puig de la Bellacasa, *Matters of care: speculative ethics in more than human worlds* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).  
12 The dichotomy posits the asphalt, known as the regulated city, in opposition to the hill, symbolising the mainstream location of favelas. It fails to address the heterogeneity of favelas as well as it conceives the urbanised regulated city as a universal standard (Roy, “Urban informality: Toward an Epistemology of Planning.”).  
13 Hooks, “Yearning: race, gender and cultural politics,” 133.  
14 Miraftab, “Insurgent practices and decolonisation of future(s).”



(Maré of News), this practice emerged on multiple occasions. Based on a tradition of community-led journalism, the newspaper is designed and written by and for residents. Through the mobilisation of young people and drug users in rehabilitation as deliverers, members seek to not only distribute the newspaper but to use it as a tool to build rapport with residents.

Once a month, members meet with deliverers to read the newspaper collectively, creating awareness of territorial dynamics between the favelas. Deliverers learn to communicate with residents and seek to map current concerns to be part of the next editions accounting for residents' interests and complaints. Newspapers arrive in local schools, residents associations, cultural centres, local organisations, and emergency care units through partnerships within territorial networks.

After the delivery, members, deliverers, and the communication team co-design the agenda of the next edition, considering residents' views and challenges experienced during the distribution. *Articulação* is part of the entire process: creating space to mobilise residents, collaborating with residents associations, negotiating with armed group members to access certain areas, and later gathering with deliverers to co-design the agenda. As highlighted in one interview, the practice requires moving around and crossing borders deeply informed by the knowledge produced experiencing the space.<sup>15</sup> It requires breathing and living the dynamics and tensions, leaving space for feelings, whether in terms of affection or fear. By not trivialising feelings, it recognises them as part of learning from the territory and observing it through a critical gaze to dismantle stereotypes that normalise violence.

*Articulação* works on a purpose and it is entangled with other practices that allow members to take counter-narratives into residents' lives. When applied with the practice of mobilisation – i.e. engaging and sensitising residents of their rights – *articulação* makes space for it, giving conditions for members to interact with residents. Nonetheless, *articulação* can work as a product of a mobilisation process when collective action requires more resources (space, funds, institutional support, knowledge and expertise) to achieve its purpose. Based on evidence gathered on the ground and the accumulation of knowledge from local social movements, the practice is not linear, requiring skills transcending the boundaries of disciplines.

Challenging inequalities of power, *articulação* subverts the stigma imposed on the population of favelas through care, not judging them based on universal moral values.<sup>16</sup> One example is the support of members to drug addicts living in one street of Maré, where *articulação* entailed a long term process to access this population and understand their needs. This process

<sup>15</sup> Interview with Henrique Gomes recorded by Bruna Montuori on November 21, 2020.

<sup>16</sup> By universal moral values I refer to Joan Tronto's (1993) interpretation of heteronormative, racist and patriarchal standards that reinforce the exclusion and exploitation of peoples based on their race, gender, sexuality and class. Joan Claire Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (London: Routledge, 1993).

led to building a reference space for conviviality, dialogue and engagement with users, the house *Espaço Normal* (Normal Space).<sup>17</sup> The collective space provides this audience dignity through access to basic needs, including hygiene products, showers, toilets, clothing, an area to sleep, and circles of conversation and music.

The house is currently coordinated by social workers and residents working at RdM. Yet, as drug users (coined as *Normais*<sup>18</sup>) start to heal, they become mediators, welcoming new users, advising them, and supporting their needs. To give life to *Espaço Normal*, *articulação* unveiled the true reality of addicts and their experiences of marginality, informing members of the stereotyped gaze they needed to overcome in RdM as well as with external institutions and partners. Through *articulação*, this population accessed spaces they were often refrained from: beaches, museums, tourist attractions, and spaces of learning. Being mobilised for over three years, the more agency *Normais* gained within the space, the more they cared for it becoming aware of its potential.

The house's weekly activities included organising the space, Monday urgent meetings, and the assembly *roda dos normais* (*normais'* circle), which hosts conversations on chores and themes surrounding users' everyday experiences. *Normais* often joined other NGO activities, such as tile painting workshops and delivering newspapers, rendering our interactions possible beyond the scope of the house. While sharing various moments, it was worth noting values of respect and compassion were part of the daily interactions. After a few weeks as an observer, my role evolved into a design collaborator as house coordinators invited me to redesign the ground floor, sharing their ideas to improve the space.

I offered a collective experiment using the ground floor plan as a board game in which we could place the 2D furniture as a puzzle, considering *Normais'* spatial demands – to eat, sleep, read, watch TV, and play music. To make this gathering possible, *articulação* was enacted to get access to the building plans, find time in which the space was calm and staff could participate, and prepare an area for the activity to happen. Meanwhile, a few *Normais* mobilised the activity, checking who would be interested in joining, totalling eight people with the staff.

Although planned in advance, the workshop was postponed a few times because of imprevisibilities, including police operations, and days users were not feeling well to participate. When conceiving the activity, we discussed their priorities for the space, their everyday uses, and which changes could make it more comfortable. Through the plan, we spatialised their routine, addressing improvements for the washrooms and segregating the sleeping area to avert noises. Our reflections informed how the space would look like,

<sup>17</sup> More details available at: <https://www.redesdamare.org.br/en/info/14/normal-space>. Accessed on 27 Sep. 2021.  
<sup>18</sup> Users are called '*Normais*' (normals) in homage to Normal, a former crack user who supported the construction of *Espaço Normal* and passed away in a situation of police brutality.



guiding the new forms of *articulação* needed to implement those ideas, such as acquiring funding and technical support.

This occasion affected the ethnographic incursion, moving the researcher’s role from observing and interpreting to experimenting collectively, hence resignifying the perspective of ‘me and them’ to ‘us’. As we shared our experties, there was space for *Normais* to recognise their knowledge like the ones who experience the house every day while not obliterating myself or taking a position of expert. Forging a space democratised architecture conceived more intuitive interactions and correspondences between their uses and skills architecture could offer to support their ideas.

A MODE OF PRODUCING AND CARING FOR THE CITY

*Articulação* is built upon relationships, challenging the uncertainty of kinetic spaces like favelas. It is inherently spatial, as it cannot be detached from the territory and its particularities, including unexpected moments of police operations, boundaries between armed groups, authority of churches, the agility of local contractors to build houses, and the inventive capacity to make the ‘uninhabitable’ into home.<sup>19</sup> Whereas *articulação* cannot be reduced to planning practice, it is not based on improvised actions and ideas. Rather, it reflects knowledge gained from lived experiences of generations that struggled to survive the racist measures of segregatory urban policies. Insurgent and fluid, it works through the cracks of power and across hierarchies, affecting the ways residents recognise themselves in the territory.

Maré and RdM do not need to be inscribed into models of participation, formulas of problem-solving, and established methodologies. *Articulação* seeks change through the networks and layers of lived experiences, recognising marginality, described by Bell Hooks,<sup>20</sup> as a ‘site of resistance’ acting as a ‘location of radical openness and possibility’. Neither planning nor improvising, *articulação* offers an in-between: a perspective from the territory of Maré to the future of planning practices. Not for growth and control, it disrupts Western understandings of planning and design, consolidating resistance network that cares for the autonomy and affections of peoples towards more humane urbanism.

20 Hooks, *Yearning: race, gender and cultural politics*, 153.

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Pratt Weeksville Archive. Collage by Scott Ruff, 2020.

Jeffrey Hogrefe and Scott Ruff (Pratt Institute)

## Connecting to the Archive of Weeksville: The Pratt Weeksville Archive

If the African American experience emerges from the structure of slavery, what does an architecture whose main purpose is to fortify the state have to say to that experience? While Vitruvius' directive on architecture's role in fortifying the state may seem to apply to an earlier era, the much more recent expansion of public housing, the 'school to prison pipeline,' and prison-industrial complex (the latter resulting from the so-called war on drugs), and neighbourhood gentrification today challenge architecture to examine its role in fortifying the state; at a time of a renewal of violence toward people of colour and an emerging aesthetics that privileges Blackness as a politics of transformation, African American space is a world-making and shaping aesthetic and political operation that foregrounds the creative output of African American people in the wake of state and extra-state oppression.<sup>1</sup> At the core of African American space is a political form of experience, which can be expressed on sites that are appropriated from the status quo, resulting in destinations of refuge, delight and joy. This paper examines an African American space as it developed historically in Brooklyn, N.Y., and is currently activated as a potential agent of change.

Although generally associated with the southern U.S., slavery was legal in New York State for over two hundred years, and slave ownership in the state was only surpassed in number by South Carolina. When slavery was outlawed in New York State in 1827, a period of racial persecution followed that encouraged the formation of self-supporting Black communities. Weeksville was founded in 1838 by formerly enslaved persons and freed persons in Brooklyn, New York. Distinguished by its urbanity, size, and relative physical and economic stability, Weeksville provided sanctuary for self-emancipated persons from Southern slave plantations and free Black people escaping the violence of New York City's Draft Riots in 1863. The community supported at least seven Black institutions in its heyday, including *The Freedman's Torch*, an African American newspaper-cum-textbook since enslaved Africans were prohibited from learning how to read. The second-largest African American community in the U.S. was absorbed by the forces of anti-Black racism that undergird real estate development in New York City. Collective memory has kept this history alive and has also driven the effort to sustain Weeksville's legacy to evolve its narrative in a new era. After almost fifty years of community-led persistence and vision, in 2014, the Weeksville Heritage Centre opened on the original footprint to

<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey Hogrefe and Scott Ruff, *In Search of African American Space Redressing Racism* (Zurich: Lars Müller Publishers, 2020), 20.



preserve the history of the community and provide an exhibition space and interpretive landscape.

Connecting to the Archive of Weeksville – also known as The Pratt Weeksville Archive – a collaboration of Pratt Institute School of Architecture and the Weeksville Heritage Centre strengthens community development activities by connecting to the archive of the historic Weeksville to locate the collective memory among existing community members. Historic Black nineteenth-century self-supporting communities can provide a model for empowerment in twenty-first century Black communities. Central Brooklyn is arguably the largest African American community in the U.S., with a population that is shrinking in numbers due to the trauma of displacement that Mindy Fullilove characterizes as ‘root shock,’ ‘the crippling effect of decades of disinvestment in communities of colour and the urban renewal practices that destroyed those communities.’<sup>2</sup> Neighbourhood gentrification, resulting in the forced displacement of people who have become apolitical (lacking a sense of place), ahistorical (lacking a sense of the past) and afuturistic (lacking a sense of purpose), results in the further destruction of a historic Black community for affluent new residents who lack the appreciation of the community.

METHODOLOGY

Based on the multidimensional method of Edgar Morin, which emphasizes the role of ‘the observer in the act of observing,’ the Pratt Weeksville Archive empowers residents to utilise the archive through interviewing, storytelling, and appreciation of archival and critical ethnography and oral history methodologies.<sup>3</sup> The archive creates a place of refuge, delight, and individual and collective history as a counterforce to the economies that beset local community building through public-facing interviews. Working in academic partnership, students and faculty collaborate with the WHC’s staff and community members to preserve and add to the archive, provide access to the archival microhistory of community development and documentation activities that led to the formation of the Weeksville Heritage Centre.

The archive began with a grant from the Taconic Fellowship of the Pratt Institute for Community Development in 2020–2021 at the height of the Covid-19 Pandemic. The devastating effect of the Pandemic on the community was made evident by the quarantined and furloughed Weeksville staff and a large portion of the Crown Heights neighbourhood, during the initial part of the project. Following several months of archival preparation, the interviews began in Spring 2021 with members of the Bethel Tabernacle AME Church, one of the two historic churches that was integral in the founding of the original community and today hosts activities that support

2 Mindy Fullilove, *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It* (New York: New Village Press, 2004/2016).  
3 Edgar Morin, “The Multidimensional Method [1967],” in *Everyday Life Reader*, ed. Ben Hightower (London: Routledge, 1967/2001), 155.

the WHC. The African Methodist Episcopal Church was developed to provide places of worship for Black people who were, because of their race, prohibited from worshiping in the Methodist churches, and grew out of the abolition of slavery movement to acquire a powerful political force in the U.S.

The student-centred interviews provide an experience that benefits community members through intergenerational conversations. The methodology fuses oral history and critical ethnography by conducting interviews that privilege both a historical timeline and the formation of African American space as a culture. The interviews are conducted in a team composed of two or three students and two or three faculty members, in three sessions: a preliminary fact-finding session, a longer structured interview, and a follow-up interview to locate and explore the cultural dynamics. Under the direction of Obden Mondésir, the Oral History Manager at the Weeksville Heritage Centre, a detailed script was composed for the interviews that divided questions among the students; the faculty and staff take an advisory role. The five public-facing workshops allowed church members to create accessible historical records to strengthen their community. The interviews are housed on the WHC website: <http://5thofjuly.org/pratt-weeksville-archive>.

To decentre the privileged position of the ethnographer, interview subjects are encouraged to ask questions and follow up sessions demonstrate how the archive operates, and how they can access and add to the archive themselves. In this way, the process of conducting and processing the interviews is open to the community. The merging of oral history and critical ethnography engages existing cultural formation in the community. Students and faculty are invited to community events such as street fairs that encourage participation in an active Black community and demonstrate community development in African American space on the ground.

Taken together, the interviews provide a sixty-year span of personal experience and collective memory of a Black community in central Brooklyn in the shadow of a significant nineteenth-century community. In richly narrated personal anecdotes, they capture the everyday life of a tightly knit, self-organizing community that survives notwithstanding the effects of mounting anti-Black racism compounded by the Covid-19 Pandemic. The interviews reveal the value of a series of events that are conducted throughout each week and year to hold the community together, of the role of delivering and maintaining social services, such as food pantries, outreach for the elderly, voting registration, and combatting gun violence to protect the young.

For students designing projects that engage directly with the issues of community development in central Brooklyn, the Pratt Weeksville Archive provides a resource of oral history and critical ethnography interviews. The fifteen-week design studio that attempts to engage in community development with an oral history component is complicated by the logistics of oral history and critical ethnography and the work of the design studio:



due to the rushed nature of the interviews the interview subjects often feel exploited by an institution that they already see as exploitative. With the archive, students can access pre-existing interviews and reach out to prospective subjects to clarify statements in the public domain. The participants in the archive are invited to attend the studio reviews and participate in the community of the school. One of the subjects who grew up in the shadow of the school commented that he never thought of the school as interested in him or in his life until he began to participate in the archive. Like many Victorian universities and institutions in the U.S., which are located in historic Black neighbourhoods of the ‘inner city,’ Pratt Institute has only recently begun to engage in the Black community except as a source of maintenance support staff labor. The archive and the studio are part of an ongoing effort to decolonize the curriculum undertaken as participants in the Diversity and Equity Initiative in the Dean’s and President’s Office. An ongoing archive to build and draw on for design studios also provides a resource for community development and cultural practices outside of the design studio so as to encourage engagement in the community of the school as citizens.

For students accustomed to the abstraction of maps, plans and sections, the interviews present an affective experience in a community that they are studying from a calculated distance. In contrast to the rectilinear organisation of the logics of representation, the interviews provide critical insight into a culture that is supported through a rhizome of relationships that become apparent in the telling of the overlapping stories spanning decades. The effects of redlining, urban renewal and the failed revolutionary events of the late 1960s, led to a reduction in city services, compelling several of the church members to relocate outside of the historic Black community that had sustained their families for several generations. The Black church draws them to Brooklyn each week to continue a bond with the historic community of Weeksville. Ronald Johnson, the church historian, reports that he doesn’t mind the commute from the adjacent borough of Queens and speaks affectionately of the warmth, joy, and safety of the fellowship that meets regularly throughout the week in the church sanctuary, a utilitarian vernacular structure of the middle of the twentieth century, which is dignified by the warmth and safety that it provides to the congregation.

The interview with Vanessa Smith, a long-standing church member and a trustee, provides a glimpse of a structured church family in the shadow of the original Weeksville community. She was raised in the Kingsborough Houses, a public housing complex of New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA), which was built on land that was originally a part of the nineteenth-century Weeksville community. The nineteenth-century Weeksville houses were razed to make way for the housing project in the middle of the twentieth century as an urban renewal scheme known pejoratively as ‘slum clearance’. Smith was educated in P.S. 83, which dates to the nineteenth century founding by Weeksville residents as Colored School Number 2. In rich memories that span an era marked by generational

displacement of Black families through acts of state and extra-state violence, she presents an architecture that supports and encourages its members to engage in rituals and activities that are sustaining, joyous and celebratory. She possesses a phenomenological capacity to express the spatial organisation of the neighborhood and its impact on her, her family, and her community.

CONCLUSION

The Pratt Weeksville Archive opens the archive to community members who can participate in the recreation of a historic Black community that is still relatively unknown and provides a valuable resource for an engaged design studio. From historical documents and photographs, we can sense that the Weeksville community of the nineteenth-century covered a significant amount of land in Central Brooklyn. Yet, we don’t have an accurate map of the community. The memory of the historic Weeksville still lives in vestigial traces among the church members. As such, our interviews have the capacity to locate buried collective memory of a significant historical development that may act as a counterforce to gentrification since it instils a sense of pride of the past among the participants and residents. As the forced displacement of people who have become apolitical, ahistorical and afuturistic, gentrification moves quickly and quietly through communities that are unprepared for the consequences of real estate development in late state capitalism. The Pratt Weeksville Archive strengthens community development activities in central Brooklyn through several processes that centre around the ongoing development of archival and oral history collections held by the Weeksville Heritage Centre.



Recording with Super-8 camera attached to a wheelchair in the ethnographic studies developed by Ray Lifchez and Barbara Winslow with disabled individuals living in Berkeley, California. Included in Raymond Lifchez and Barbara Winslow, *Design for Independent Living: The Environment and Physically Disabled People* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), 140. Photograph by Raymond Lifchez (Courtesy Ignacio G. Galán).

Ignacio G. Galán (Barnard College)

## ‘Asked (Rather than Observed)’: Relocating Agency in and through Ethnography

Writing in 1979, U.C. Berkeley architecture professors Raymond Lifchez and Barbara Winslow explained the logics of what they called ‘interactionism’ – a research method for architects that both embraced and challenged the logics of ethnography: ‘[It is] not observing; it is being with’. Their goal was for the architect to build empathy with a group of people rather than remaining as an outside expert, and thus rejected the logics of what Lifchez called ‘technocratic paternalism’. Their work emphasized the role of informants and aimed to give them a voice through diverse techniques, including the ‘interview in place’ and the ‘performance interview’. Their methods built on the work of professor Galen Crantz, who joined Berkeley’s College of Environmental Design as part of the recently inaugurated emphasis on ‘Social and Behavioural Factors in Architecture and Environmental Design’—developed as a new curricular area in undergraduate and graduate studies and as a new Ph.D. program. Crantz insisted that participants in ethnographic studies needed to be ‘asked rather than observed’—a motto that guided her work evaluating public housing for the elderly in San Francisco developed at the time. This paper situates these methodologies in relation to the work of the Independent Living movement contemporaneously unfolding in Berkeley and the intellectual and academic context at Berkeley’s College of Environmental Design. It focuses on the way in which these methodologies were mobilised in a broad ethnographic study performed by Lifchez and Winslow with a number of Berkeley students, engaging a number of members of the disability community living independently in Berkeley with more than 800 interviews. With the methods of ‘interactionism’, Lifchez and Winslow aimed to give voice to the subjects being engaged in the ethnographic study, in ways that allowed them to expand an understanding of their needs ‘beyond meeting government regulations’. And, more importantly, the agency provided to the subjects during the study was accompanied by an understanding of their own role in the transformation of the environment, which the study highlighted by accounting for the specific designs and spatial interventions that each of them developed in their own spaces of residence. With this, the study did challenge the figure of the user, that many ethnographic studies aimed to observe and describe, and the understanding of disabled individuals as objects of needs; instead, the study regarded them as ‘experts and designers of everyday life’—to borrow Kelly Fritsch and Aimi Hamraie’s recent conceptualisation. The logics of ‘interactionism’ rejected mere observation as much as they highlighted the limitations of ‘simulation workshops’—by which architects could ‘try on’ a disability in order to understand the behaviors of disabled individuals—for they neglected ‘the weight of cultural and social prejudices and expectations’ which shape disability and failed to account for the expertise of disabled individuals that Lifchez and Winslow’s study aimed to highlight.





Buildings in Oventic Caracol, 2021, Chiapas, Mexico. Image by Tania Gutierrez-Monroy.

Tania Gutierrez-Monroy (McGill University)

# Building Ethnographies: Towards a Decolonial Study of Architectures of Indigenous Autonomy

Focusing on the landscapes that have cradled the almost thirty-year-long project of Zapatista autonomy, this paper discusses the ethnographic methods engaged by a study of the architecture and spatial practices of this Indigenous movement in Mexico. At the onset of 1994, Indigenous groups from the State of Chiapas started a rebellion against the federal government, whose neoliberal policies nullified the constitutional protection to communal lands established since the early twentieth-century revolution. For decades, such protection had been found wanting, but its now official revocation led the guerrilla army *Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional* (Zapatista Army of National Liberation, EZLN) to take into its own hands the promised redistribution of lands. While the uprising was a call for the liberation of all Indigenous peoples in Mexico, the EZLN concretely took over a third of the State of Chiapas, the poorest in the country. An autonomous territory emerged therein during years of unfruitful negotiations with the federal government, and the Tseltal and Tojolabal communities that supported the Zapatista movement consolidated administrative regions called today *caracoles* (formerly known as *aguascalientes*). Each *caracol* manages several municipalities and is also a point of mediation between Zapatista and non-Zapatista spaces.

Zapatista territories, struggles, and forms of organisation have attracted significant academic attention. Anthropology, sociology, and political science scholars interested in this project of autonomy have engaged ethnographic methods that have necessitated deep introspection, in a decades-long process of exchange with Zapatista communities that anthropologist Mariana Mora explains: In 2003, after almost a decade of the uprising, Zapatistas made public their decision to close off their territory to certain forms of research, some of which were found to be part of counterinsurgency strategies or to continue state initiatives of forced assimilation. Also aware of the othering perspectives of many foreign and Mexican scholars, Zapatistas determined that they would collectively scrutinize the research they would allow in their territories. Researchers would be welcome provided that their work would be beneficial to the communities and that it engaged counterhegemonic strategies and epistemologies. Indigenous people should not be subordinated in the process of knowledge production. Instead, this would be a process of co-production/co-construction of knowledge, with the communities critically analyzing the methods and development of the study, and establishing



horizontal relations with the researcher. A fundamental aspect to consider is that Zapatistas put the creation of knowledge at the centre of their project of autonomy, since, as a whole, it strives to transform the relationship between racialised people (Indigenous and Afro-Mexican people) and *mestizos*. A key definer of that relationship is the power-knowledge dyad.<sup>1</sup>

Leaders and members of the Zapatista movement as well as outside observers, have described the autonomy earned in it as being ‘built.’ The latter term bears a key relation with the mentioned principle of knowledge ‘co-construction,’ as they are both architectural metaphors used to describe the development of this Indigenous-led project. In spite of this, the architectural discipline has studied little of the Zapatista cultural landscape. My presentation at this conference discusses the methods of a larger study of the built environment of Zapatismo, and focuses on the decolonising process that demands that researcher and Indigenous subjects work through an ethnographic analysis that critically reflects on its own approaches. Addressing the spatial resources and practices that have made possible the Zapatista ever-evolving project of self-determination, my larger study examines architecture as a material and ontological practice through which an Indigenous people relate to the territories that they have reclaimed.

As it assesses the initial steps of such study, this paper also observes the very architectures where researcher and Indigenous participants first engage with each other. Advancing that spatial relations actively *build* ethnographies, I observe how the sites of my initial contact with Zapatista members as well as the dynamics of access to these sites shape a research process that productively re-frames traditional understandings of knowledge production. The COVID pandemic has converged with a political crisis where the years-long threat to Zapatista communities turned into (para)military aggression and into the forced disappearance of a number of their members. As a result, Zapatistas have recently decided to restrict access to their territories, with *caracoles* deepening their function as the sole sites of exchange with outsiders. Their architecture and the controlled movement through which scholars engage with Zapatista individuals therein become not only ‘backdrops’ to the research process, but material and dynamic shapers of the embodied knowledge of researcher and subjects.

1 Mariana Mora, *Kuxlejal Politics: Indigenous Autonomy, Race, and Decolonizing Research in Zapatista Communities* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2017), 39–50.





Ethnographic Museum of Armenia in Armavir, architect Rafael Israelyan, 1968–70. Photograph by Lev Kuczynski, 1978. Archive Artsvin Grigoryan, courtesy Ruben Arevshatyan.

Oxana Gourinovitch (RWTH Aachen University)

## Re-enchantment of the World: Soviet Modernisms and Durabilities of Colonial Pasts

In 1979, the Soviet architectural historian Elena Borisova pleaded to revise the ‘unjust’ and ‘historically biased’ reputation of the architecture of Russian Style: its early attempts to integrate ethnographic ‘Russian national’ elements into modern architecture, undertaken in the late nineteenth century, were considered the lowest stage in the development of Russian architecture.<sup>1</sup> Her effort was endorsed by other colleagues, and eventually took the form of several books and publications by Soviet architectural historians.<sup>2</sup> The willingness to validate the style, frowned upon for most of the century, had a reason: since the early 1970s, a public debate on the relationship between national and international in architecture of Soviet modernism had engulfed the profession; prominent architects were making a strong case for the return of ‘national’ features – the folklore – in contemporary architecture.<sup>3</sup>

The recent entanglement of architects with ethnography offered obvious means to those ends. The institutional networks were recovering from the devastation caused by the purges of the 1930s and the losses of the Second World War: in late 1950s, the Institutes of Ethnography and Folklore were (re)opened at the Science Academies of the republics to conduct studies of local folk architecture, traditional settlements and their types, along with planning, constructive and decorative features of traditional dwellings. Specialised magazines and publications in professional periodicals regularly informed architects on the results of this work. The Soviet claim of the international leadership in the post-war conservation and restoration of built heritage brought architecture and ethnography even closer together.<sup>4</sup> In response to the Venice Charter of 1964, which the Soviet representatives had not signed, the Soviet authorities initiated the most ambitious Register of Historical and Cultural Monuments (Svod Pamiatnikov Istorii i Kultury) in all Soviet republics.<sup>5</sup> Special departments at the institutes of Art History,

- 1 Elena Borisova, *Russian architecture of the 2nd half of the 19th century* [in Russian] (Moscow: Izdatel'stvo 'Nauka,' 1979); cited after <http://arx.novosibdom.ru/node/1690>, accessed September 1, 2021.
- 2 To name a few, besides the cited above, Kirichenko, Evgeniia et al. *Russian architecture of the late 19th – early 20th centuries* [in Russian] (Moscow: 1971); Tatiana Slavina, *Researchers of Russian architecture. Russian historical and architectural science 18th-early 20th cent.* [in Russian] (Leningrad, 1983); Elena Borisova, “Architecture in the works of artists of Abramtsevo circle” (at the origins of ‘Neo-Russian style’) [in Russian] *Artistic processes in Russian culture of the 2nd half of XIX century* (Moscow: Nauka, 1984); Evgeniia Kirichenko, “The problem of national style in architecture of 1970s” [in Russian] *Arkhitekturnoe Nasledstvo*, no. 25 (1976): 131–135.
- 3 Vyacheslav Orfinsky, “National or International?” [in Russian] *Zodchestvo, Sbornik Soyuza Arkhitektorov SSSR* 1, no. 20 (1975), 30–31.
- 4 On Soviet investments with ICOMOS see Dushkina, Natalia. ‘ICOMOS and Domestic Practice of Cultural Heritage preservation Observatory of Culture,’ *SIC Informkultura RGB*, no. 6 (2005), 68–72.
- 5 Eszter Gantner, Corinne Geering and Paul Vickers, eds., *Heritage under Socialism: Preservation in Eastern and Central Europe, 1945–1991* (New York, Oxford, 2021).



Ethnography and Folklore were created in order to fulfil an enormous task of documenting hundreds thousands of objects across the country. For the fieldwork, the scientists heavily relied on help from architects and thousands of architectural students, who absolved their practical curriculum surveying and documenting folk architecture. Architects also filled the ranks of the revived volunteer movement, which played a crucial role in recording and protecting the ethnographic material.<sup>6</sup> The most prominent of those are the republican monument preservation societies, assembled architects, historians, archeologists, ethnographers and anthropologists. Together they were looking for the cultural origins of the Soviet ‘quicksand society,’ where, to speak with Moshe Levin, ‘[n]obody was left unharmed and all the survivors became thoroughly disfigured’ by the modernisation attempts of the state-guided social transformation.<sup>7</sup>

The Soviet architectural scene of the 1970s found itself in a position apparently similar to that at the beginnings of Russian Style, which was distinguished by a programmatic resentment against the forceful departure into modernity, accompanied by a self-subjugation to Western cultural domination. Fifteen years had passed since the reforms of Nikita Khrushchev had ignited the West-oriented modernisation of architectural production – and already, the forbearance with its stern rationalism began wearing thin within large parts of the Soviet professional community. Elated by the global postmodernist shift, many architects felt courageous enough to challenge the imposed ban on architectural excesses, and demanded symbolic meanings to be reintroduced into architectural language. Traditionalists ventured into public conversations with internationalists, and, while acknowledging certain missteps of previous experiences with folklore, insisted on continuing an exploration of ‘roots, connecting us with the land’ in a ‘fight against the facelessness of functionalism.’<sup>8</sup> The atmosphere of the departure, of a possible victory over the western ‘virus’ of rationality, and a return to the primordial vitality of the native people was comparable to that of the late-nineteenth-century Moscow.<sup>9</sup>

ETHNOGRAPHIC DILEMMA

Albeit the prioritised focus of ethnographic observation shifted over time, the principles of the gathering of ‘national’ features persisted throughout

6 A most remarkable example is a salvage from oblivion of the suppressed Jewish folklore in Belorussia in the 1980s by a group of architects and restoration specialists from the group *Bastille* (f. 1969, Minsk, BSSR).  
7 Moshe Lewin, “Society and the Stalinist state in the period of the five year plans.”*Social History* 1:2 (1976), 139–175, DOI: 10.1080/03071027608567373.  
8 Vyacheslav Orfinsky, ‘National or International?’ [in Russian] *Zodchestvo, Sbornik Soyuza Architekturov SSSR* 1, no. 20 (1975), 30–31.  
9 Compare with Viollet-le-Duc’s comparison of the western culture, imposed by Petrine reforms, with a virus that contaminated the pure body of Russia. Eugene Viollet-le-Duc, *L’art russe: des origines, des éléments constructifs, son apogée, son avenir* (Paris, 1877) cited in Lauren O’Connell, “A Rational, National Architecture: Viollet-le-Duc’s Modest Proposal for Russia,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 52, no. 4 (1993): 436–52. doi:10.2307/990867, accessed September 1, 2021.

the entire existence of the discipline. Neither the affirmative measures of the Soviet state, which extended and endowed institutional networks of ethnography, nor the purges of the 1930s, which nearly obliterated it,<sup>10</sup> managed to dissuade its scientists from following the objectives, determined already by the imperial founders: to focus on the unique, the peculiar, the distinctive of particular ethnic groups, the nationalities (nationalnosti or narodnosti), rather than to appeal to a universalist idea of human nature.<sup>11</sup> Such hypertrophied attention to ethnicity remained a distinguishing feature of Russian and then Soviet science, setting it apart from the European discipline.<sup>12</sup> The continuing preoccupation with ethnical distinctiveness in ethnography climaxed in what prominent scholar of nationalism Ernest Gellner called a ‘minor revolution,’ during the period of Yulian Bromley’s directorship at the Miklukho-Maklai Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology in Moscow in the 1970s<sup>13</sup>: Invoking etymology, the Soviet ethnographers introduced terms ‘ethnos’ as a replacement for ‘people,’ and the nearly synonymous ‘ethnikos’ as a replacement for ‘nationality.’ They declared the basic distinctions in the sphere of culture – language, religion, folk art, rites, habits, etc. – as inherent in ethnoses.<sup>14</sup> They also came up with a universal typology of ethnic communities, and singled out a linear succession of their different developmental stages: tribe – nationality – bourgeois nation – socialist nation.<sup>15</sup> The suggested linearity of the development of ethnoses and ethnikoses implied their different location on the evolution timeline; the ethnographic evidence of distinctiveness became increasingly connoted with an assumption of cultural ‘retardedness’ (‘otstalost’).<sup>16</sup>

As a result, the relationship of Soviet architects with ethnographic material was a conflicted one: the source for the assertion of national primordality and distinctiveness, it also brought them in dangerous proximity to an association with backwardness. Neither did it help that the carrier of the folk culture – the Soviet rural population – remained one of the most discriminated groups in the socialist state, and the most despised one. This

10 A substantial amount of scholarship considers the troubled relationship of the Soviet State with ethnography and folklore during the interwar period: affirmative action politics of *korenisatsyia*, followed by purges of the ‘bourgeois nationalists’ the 1930s, accompanied by a folklorist revival along the lines of socialist realist doctrine in the late 1930s. See, e.g., Greg Castillo, *Orientalism, VSKhV. Gorky revival of the Folklore*.  
11 See N.I. Nadezhdin, “On Ethnographic Study Of Russian Nationality,” in *Notes of the Russian Geographical Society. Book 2* (St. Petersburg, 1847), 61–115.  
12 Sergey Alymov, David Anderson, and Smitry Arzyutov, ‘Etnos-Thinking in the Long Twentieth Century,’ in *Life Histories of Etnos Theory in Russia and Beyond*, eds. Sergey Alymov, David Anderson, and Dmitry Arzyutov (Open Book Publishers, 2019), 21–75. <https://doi.org/10.11647/OBP.0150.02>, accessed September 1, 2021; E.A. Vishlenkova, *Visual Study of the Empire, or not Everyone can See a Russian* [in Russian] (Moscow: New Literary Review, 2011); Francine Hirsch, ‘The Soviet Union as a Work-in-Progress: Ethnographers and the Category Nationality in the 1926, 1937, and 1939 Censuses.’ *Slavic Review* 56, no. 2 (1997), 251–278.  
13 Ernest Gellner, ‘Ethnicity and Anthropology in the Soviet Union.’ *European Journal of Sociology / Archives Européennes de Sociologie / Europäisches Archiv Für Soziologie* 18, no. 2 (1977): 201–20.  
14 Yulian Bromley, “On the Typology of Ethnic Communities,” *Perspectives on Ethnicity*, eds. Holloman, Regina and Arutiunov, Serghei (Berlin and New York: De Gruyter Mouton, 2011); Serghei Arutiunov and Yulian Bromley, “Problems of Ethnicity in Soviet Ethnographic Studies,” *Perspectives on Ethnicity*, ed. Holloman *et al.* See also Lev Gumilev, “On the term ‘ethnos’: Report at the meeting of the Ethnography Department on February 17, 1966,” [in Russian], *Papers of the Geographical Society of the USSR* 3 (1967), 3–17.  
15 Bromley, “On the Typology of Ethnic Communities.”  
16 David Anderson and Dmitry Arzyutov, “The Construction of Soviet Ethnography and ‘The Peoples of Siberia,” *History and Anthropology* 27, no. 2 (2016) 183–209, DOI: 10.1080/02757206.2016.1140159.

folklorist dilemma became especially poignant for the numerous specialists of peasant origins, for whom the distancing from the own ‘retarded’ rural culture was a condition for the social ascendance within the architectural field committed to the imperatively progressive Soviet modernism.

On the other hand, the well-articulated ethnographic technologies of separating social bodies into ‘us’ and ‘them’ became hugely beneficial for the construction of national narratives; the established phenomenological discourses, which asserted distinctiveness of nationalities, were conveniently adaptable for the notion of a nation. If Russian metropolitan elites preferred to dissociate themselves from folklore due to its connotation with cultural deficits, their counterparts on the periphery, often involved with local national projects, zealously reactivated the identity-shaping potential of ethnological knowledge.

### PERIPHERAL RAMIFICATIONS

In Lithuania, Khrushchev’s reforms brought to power a political elite with a strong national agenda.<sup>17</sup> The position of Minister of Culture was occupied from 1958 to 1967 by Juozas Banaitis, an ardent proponent of rural traditions and conservative ethnographic cultural realm.<sup>18</sup> During Banaitis’ reign, the republic with a population of four million was endowed with the largest ethnographic open-air museum in Europe, founded in Rumšiškės in 1966. Its exposition offered the most bucolic and painstakingly detailed vision of vernacular building traditions of different Lithuanian regions, and provided architects with an extensive range of ethnographic material. Numerous references to folk architecture and their derivatives adorned soon buildings in the touristic areas: in the seaside regions, visited by millions of tourists from all Soviet republics, as well as in objects of overtly popular inland tourism. The Lithuanian architectural ‘self-introduction’ did not miss any opportunities to manifest national ‘otherness’ and boast with an idealised patriarchal Lithuanian tradition. Decorated carved gables and eaves, thatched pitched roofs and folk art ornaments embellished the exteriors, while exposed wooden rafters, wood carvings, rustic furniture, handcrafted textiles and ceramics, wicker elements and black-smithed details filled the interiors of the recreational buildings. The images celebrated the peasant origins of the Lithuanian people. They also alluded to their historical affiliation with Nordic mythology, Germanic folklore, and traditions of medieval European knighthood – and its primordial alienation with Russian cultural realm. The proud use of ethnographic references along with keen geometric derivatives, such as exaggerated pitched roofs and pointed wooden detailing, deeply impressed the Soviet public, unaccustomed to such vernacular boldness, and became the distinctive feature of the Lithuanian modernist architecture.

17 On the ‘Generation 1930’, see, e.g. Violeta Davoliute, *The Making and Breaking of Soviet Lithuania Memory and Modernity in the Wake of War* (London: Routledge, 2016).  
18 Odeta Rudling, “The Cult of the Balts: Mythological Impulses and Neo-Pagan Practices in the Touristic Clubs of the Lithuanian SSR of the 1960s and 1970s.” *Region* 6, no. 1 (2017), 87–108. Accessed March 6, 2020. [www.jstor.org/stable/26377362](http://www.jstor.org/stable/26377362), accessed September 1, 2021.

In 1968, the Central Committee of the Lithuanian Communist Party established regional representations of the Council of Folklorist Traditions of the Lithuanian SSR, whose task was to determine ways of integration the rural traditions into the life of the urban population.<sup>19</sup> For those ends, ‘new traditions’ were synthesised by Lithuanian scientists on the basis of ethnographic material, and stretched from an extensive supply of ‘manuals’ about pagan rituals, to changes in the republican calendar.<sup>20</sup> During the 1970s, the neo-pagan interventions also entered the field of spatial planning. The modernist buildings staged elaborated ceremonial scenarios, which closely followed ritual guidebooks.<sup>21</sup> The iconic modernist Palace of Marriages (1968–1974) by Gediminas Baravykas provides a good example of the merging of contemporary forms with requirements of ‘new traditions,’ developed by ethnographers:<sup>22</sup> a suspended access bridge was designated to stage the ‘bride’s walk,’ as prescribed by a pagan ritual. Baravykas designed it remarkably long, starting from the middle of the square, to encourage, on his own admittance, a traditional voyeuristic rite.<sup>23</sup> A ritual walk brought the marrying couple to a registrar’s table with an open fireplace in its centre; along with a Soviet marriage certificate, the registrar passed the fire to the new family.<sup>24</sup> For another new tradition, Lithuania introduced a unique addition to Soviet Union building typology, Palaces of Mourning – places to bid farewell to the deceased.<sup>25</sup> Serially designed facilities sported archaic gabled roofs crowned with a pagan sun cross, which was customised for each location according to local traditions. While the medieval torches transferred the mourners into the pre-Christian times, the atmosphere of the interiors, illuminated with dramatically staged chiaroscuro effects, offered an exaltation of baroque religious mysteries.

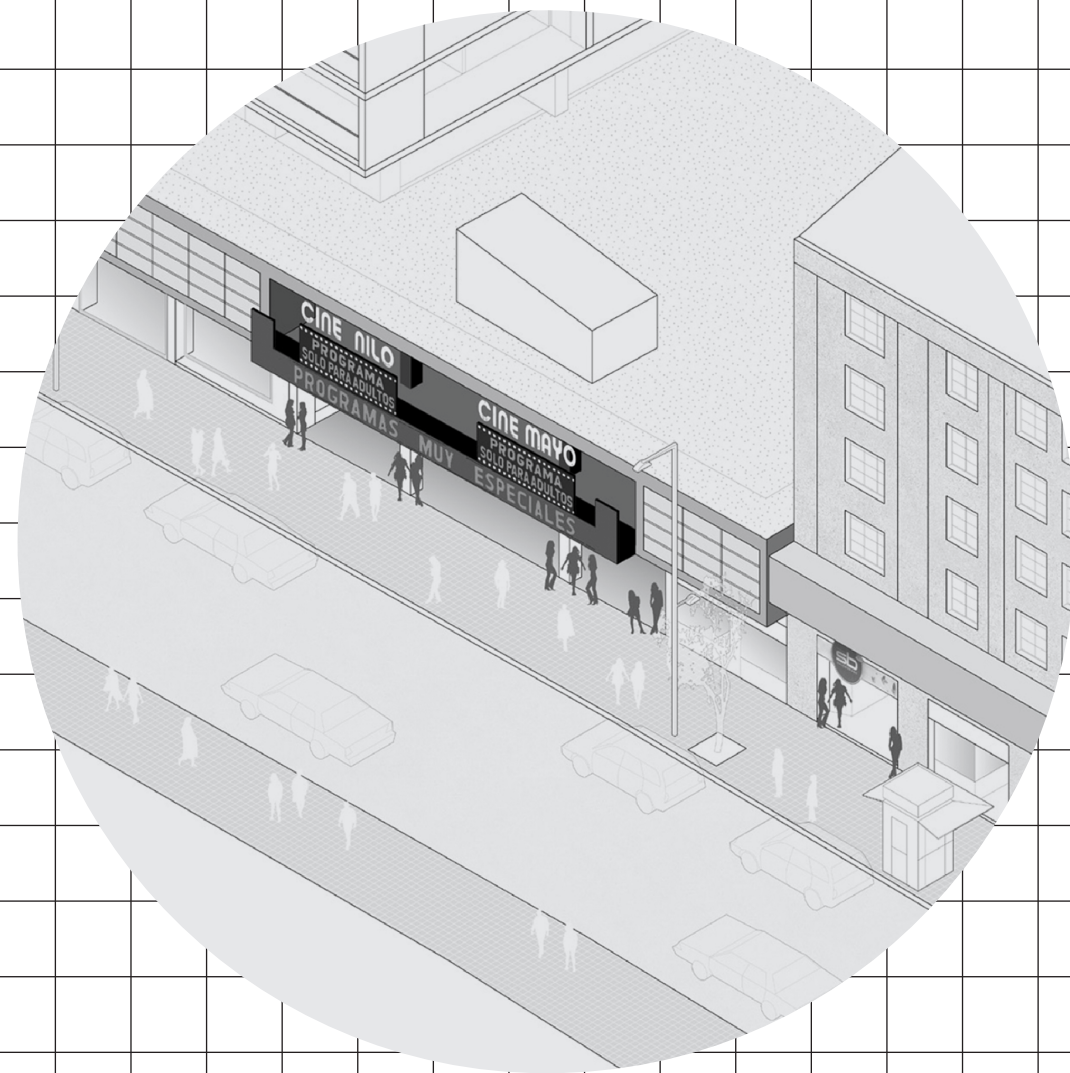
Methods of applying ethnography as a means of national self-representation, to which architects of various republics resorted, varied substantially. Armenian modernists emphasised the connection between their nation and the ancient civilisations of Mesopotamia, and alluded to its Aryan roots. To shelter the ethnographic evidence of their powerful origins, a majestic temple of Ethnographic Museum was erected in 1968.<sup>26</sup> Resembling some Ummayyad desert castle from outside, on the inside the museum design iterated half-circled arches, whose tradition went back to Sassanids’ temples. The counter-reliefs of Zoroastrian symbols, carved into the red tuff stone, reflected the preoccupation of the designer, architect Rafael Israelyan, with the craft of khachkars – the ornamented burial cross-stones of Armenians.<sup>27</sup> Meanwhile, Sharof Rashidov, the head of the Uzbek government, and the only republican leader who planned to build his own mausoleum, used its powers to create a singular Uzbek style for his dominion. In many cases, he was forced to engage architects from Moscow to achieve a desired level of orientalised, which local modernists refused to descend to.<sup>28</sup>

27 E.g., Israelyan, Rafael. ‘A Word on Stone Patterns.’ [in Armenian] *Sovetakan Arvest*, no.2 (1965); Israelyan, Rafael. ‘Cross-Stones. Brief Review of Formation and Evolution.’ [in Armenian] *Ejmiatzin*, no.7–8 (1977).  
28 Designed by the Central Planning and Research Institute for Buildings for Public Performances and Sport (*TsNIIEP zrelishnykh zdaniy i sportivnykh sooruzheniy*). See Boris Chukhovich, “Orientalist modes of modernism: Colonial/ Postcolonial/ Soviet,” *Études de lettres*, no. 2–3 (2014): 263–294.

Since the emergence of Russian Style, the architectural use of ethnography served the political projects of cultural and political elites of the Russian Empire and its successor. Initially it helped to redirect archaic traditions and beliefs of the rural population of Central Russia towards the political goals and visions of the Russian ruling classes. Khrushchev’s devolutionary reforms of the 1950s promoted political forces beyond the Russian metropolises, and introduced new grounds for an extended architectural use of ethnography: the non-Russian Soviet republics, and their ambitious elites. If Russian Style’s infatuation with folklore contested the Western modernity, the non-Russian practices usually opposed the Soviet version of that modernity. The hypertrophied attention to ethnical peculiarity, which endured in the Russian and Soviet ethnology, offered the republican elites a convenient conceptual background for assertions of their own national distinctiveness. Introduced as a means to celebrate Russian national uniqueness and superiority,<sup>29</sup> the ethnicism ultimately found its ways into Soviet modernist architecture – only to manifest cultural sovereignty of the Empire’s former subjects.

29 See the speech of one of the founders: N.I. Nadezhdin, *On Ethnographic Study of Russian Nationality. Notes of the Russian Geographical Society*, Book 2 (St. Petersburg, 1847), 61–115.





Calle Monjitas, Sex Workers Performative Space. ©ariztiaLAB.

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# Santiago Babylon: Spaces of Immigration and Sex Work in Downtown Santiago de Chile

Combining architecture and ethnography, this study considers the phenomenon of sex work and its effects, starting from the relations between immigration and spatial practices in Santiago de Chile's historic city centre. In recent years, increasing South-South migratory flows towards Chile have revealed an over-representation of immigrant women in commercial sex, seeking greater job opportunities and higher incomes.<sup>1</sup> The goal of this study is to make visible, analyse, and conceptualise the spatial production associated with immigration, with a special focus on female sex workers in the centre of Santiago, from an approach correlated to gender and the body, as productive efficiency, that is, as performative. To achieve this, we carry out ethnographic work in connection with graphical representations of space. Starting from drawings and diagrams, we document and analyse two observed dimensions: occurrences in urban spaces (streets, pavements, commercial galleries) and situations that take place inside the area's buildings.

Sex work is a part of the informal economy, where legality and regulation have existed in a dissociated manner.<sup>2</sup> Within this irregular context, the rights of people who work in this sector are usually non-existent, which consequently favours stigmatisation, vulnerability, exploitation, and violence. For this reason, this study attempted to answer the following question: What are the implications of the daily customs and practices of female sex workers in Santiago's historic city centre?

## IMMIGRATION AND SEX WORK IN NEOLIBERAL SANTIAGO

In the context of growing waves of immigration into Chile,<sup>3</sup> the female presence becomes more relevant and is mainly concentrated in the

- 1 According to the Institute of National Statistics (INE), the five main countries of origin of immigrants into Chile are: Venezuela (30,5%), Peru (15,8%), Haiti (12,5%), Colombia (10,8%) and Bolivia (8,0%), which make up 77,6% of the total foreign population resident in Chile.
- 2 Chilean legislation does not contemplate the legality or illegality of sex work itself, leading to a regulatory gap in the matter. Currently, the law does not penalise the practice of commercial sex, although the physical spaces where it takes place are indeed banned. This generates incentives for working outside the legal margins, creating irregularities.
- 3 According to the Institute of National Statistics (INE), by 31 December 2019 there were 1,492,522 foreigners living in the country, of which 728,746 (48.82%) were women.

Metropolitan Region.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, a landscape of phenomena related to gender intersectionality can be identified, insofar as both racial and gender-based exclusions and power dynamics seem to be at play. This particular landscape fuses the topics of migration and sex work, which are developed from a strategic production of spaces and through the spatial restructuring, which is always in dispute. This dispute is characterised by claiming a right to the city which ‘in its foundations, is the antithesis of urban neoliberal development’ characteristic of the city of Santiago.<sup>5</sup>

The area around the city block of Plaza de Armas (Santiago’s central historic square) and its surroundings is the zone within the city with a greater presence of international migration and sex work. The symbolic value of its location is circumscribed by buildings of heritage value such as the Cathedral, the Town Hall, and other constructions such as commercial galleries. In spatial terms, these sites are associated in people’s imaginaries with insecurity and delinquency. This is evidenced by the permanent police presence in the streets, the mobile police station installed in various streets that operate throughout most of the day as a deterrent device of the immigrant users of the space, and the realisation of raids as well as the detention of undocumented persons. The production of this scene, with its diversity of performances, becomes an object of frictions and contestations, not against the norms or power, but rather as a strategy of subversion.<sup>6</sup> As a vindictory act, this allows for the spatial practices of these collectivities to take place in sites where invisibility is usually sought.

SPATIAL PRODUCTION AND PERFORMATIVITY

The social relations established by the practices of social subjects in the space lead to diverse configurations of spatial production, as participation, use, and activation; they also allow for the appropriation and signification of places, defined as the social construction of space.<sup>7</sup>

The activities of immigrants in the space are configured in new territories, as part of a ‘new’ space that they inhabit and modify. This corresponds to the utilisation of a real, effective, and localisable space through which space-places of relations are produced, where ‘the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs’.<sup>8</sup>

The incorporation of gender into studies about places and spaces is founded on a critical reading regarding the link between the development of capitalist economy and the construction of space, developed by authors such as

4 The Metropolitan Region is the most populated and dense of the country’s 16 administrative regions; it encompasses the country’s capital, Santiago, and a few neighboring provinces.  
5 Francisco Vergara-Perucich and Camillo Boano, “El Precio por el Derecho a la Ciudad ante el auge de Campamentos en Chile,” *Revista AUS [Arquitectura / Urbanismo / Sustentabilidad]* no. 26 (31 May 2019): 4.  
6 Judith Butler, *El Género en Disputa: El Feminismo y la Subversión de la Identidad* (Barcelona: Paidós, 2001).  
7 Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).  
8 Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16, no. 1 (1986): 23.

David Harvey and Manuel Castells.<sup>9</sup> In this context, workers’ rights are habitually non-existent, which ends up increasing women’s vulnerability.

In the context of this study, performativity in relation to gender and the body is manifested through the exercise of sex work in the streets. In this case, the subversion and production of new bodies are determined by the productive efficiency of the act’s reiteration.<sup>10</sup> In this way, they appropriate the public space, and challenge the pressure exercised by the symbolic domination of urban planning.

METHODS

The environments where sex work takes place make data collection a challenge that involves experimental fieldwork, which is why in order to carry out this study, we used an inductive, exploratory, qualitative methodology. First, we carried out fieldwork around one block of the colonial checkerboard plan, through participant observation and semi-structured interviews, which was supported by the collaboration with the NGO Fundación Margen.<sup>11</sup> These tools were complemented by graphic documentation, including photographs, diagrams, and particularly drawing, an instrument that ‘can allow the viewer to perceive more, or see more deeply’ as put by Andrew Causey.<sup>12</sup>

Furthermore, we also carried out archival work in the *Dirección de Obras Municipales* (office for municipal works) of the Santiago city council. In these sessions, we consulted and reviewed the architectural planimetry of the proto-modern and rationalistic buildings that comprise the area under study. From this original material, we re-drew the architecture plans, in order to understand and corroborate the transformations that the space exhibits today, mainly as a result of two urban projects: *Plan Centro* (2014–2016), which was promoted by former mayor Carolina Tohá, sought to prioritise spaces for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport; the *Proyecto de Recuperación de Espacios Públicos de Santiago* (2016–2021) implemented by former mayor Felipe Alessandri, considered actions of tactical urban planning along Bandera street, and the recovery of galleries and portals.

In the third and final step of the methodology, we intersected the information obtained through empirical and archival work. This problematised the contextual and performative conditions that configure the professional practices of sex, through the spatialisation of the qualitative information, specifically the stories and narratives, through axonometric drawings, from

9 Carolina Stefoni, “Reconfiguraciones identitarias a partir de habitar el espacio público: El caso de los migrantes esquineros en la ciudad de Santiago, Chile,” *Chungará (Arica)* [online] 47, no. 4 (December 2015): 637.  
10 Butler, *El Género en Disputa*.  
11 The mission of *Fundación Margen* is to promote and defend the human rights of female sex workers to improve their quality of life. See <https://www.fundacionmargen.cl> for more information.  
12 Andrew Causey, *Drawn to See: Drawing as an Ethnographic Method* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), 38.

which one can visualise the intensity and frequency of the dynamics within the workers' space. This exercise of representation and graphical translation enabled an understanding of daily life and inhabitation both within and outside these buildings, as well as the eventual relationships or dissociations between urban morphology and architectonic typology.

URBAN ENVIRONMENT:  
PERFORMANCE, TERRITORIALISATION, VIOLENCE, AND CONTROL

The neighbourhood comprised of the streets Monjitas, San Antonio, and Paseo 21 de Mayo, in the centre of Santiago, conforms an area that, because of the presence of sex work, is located at the limits of what is tolerable. These emerging spaces reveal a series of situations and socio-spatial conflicts between residents, sex workers and customers, and local authorities. In this way, the street is configured as a performative space, where 'bodies' wander and are distributed, reappropriating the space of pavements, galleries, and building exteriors. These movements generate frictions between the passers-by, who react violently to the dark skin colour or the foreign accent of the workers, hurling insults such as '*Devuélvete a tu país, negra culiá*' [Go back to your country, black slut].<sup>13</sup> Because of this context of xenophobia, the sex workers re-group with colleagues by nationality as a protective strategy, gathering in small groups around bright commercial signage, or in the exits of the commercial galleries lining the block. All these movements are constantly monitored and controlled from the closed-circuit television monitoring rooms, devices installed by the City Council to increase safety, or the mobile application Sosafe (a citizens' social network) which is used to file complaints.

ARCHITECTURAL SPACE:  
REAPPROPRIATIONS AND SUBVERSIONS AS PROGRAMMATIC  
STRATEGIES OF SEX WORK

From a sphere defined by the transit from the public to the private, behaviours shift radically within the area's cafés and residences. In the city exterior, prior negotiations take place and actors agree upon different types of interactions. Within the buildings, and starting from reappropriations and subversions, the professional services of sex occur. Many spaces and commercial programmes within the block studied have been transformed, as their own users reconfigure them as part of migrant territorialities wherein economies that associate gastronomy, commerce, and culture are deployed. We observe these situations in three architectural typologies, which are characterised by physical decay and serve as venues for subaltern life projects: declining commercial premises at street level or inside shopping galleries, flats located in the upper stories of emblematic buildings, and adult movie theatres.

13 José Abásolo, Félix Reigada, and Nicolás Verdejo, *Santiago Babylon: Inmigración: espacio, prácticas y representación* (Santiago de Chile: ariztiaBOOKS, 2017), 18.

The first domain comprises the so-called cafés con piernas, literally meaning cafés with legs. These premises, which contrast with Santiago's traditional cafés, project a hermetic image through their closed facades. By using tinted windows, these sites maintain the secret of what takes place inside: scantily clad women serve coffee to office workers and clients in an environment marked by the effervescence and stridency of reggaeton beats. A little further in, the clients access a private room, which is only outfitted with a mattress above some wooden pallets, where the waitresses engage in transactional sex.

A second domain is constituted by high-density constructions such as the Capri building, originally designed as a hotel, but which currently operates with multiple residential flats. These units are economically managed by subletting speculators, who operate in these types of deteriorated buildings at a low cost and with minimum investment, due to the high probability of being inspected and closed down. The workers rent these spaces by the hour to deliver their services. The spaces are already sub-divided by cloth folding screens, producing in this manner a space of simultaneous sex.<sup>14</sup>

The third and final typology are the adult or 'triple x' movie theatres, also known as cines porno. Starting in the nineties, most of the movie theatres located downtown disappeared, becoming supermarkets, warehouses, or retail stores. The cinemas that survived geared their programmes towards adult entertainment. The patrons who visit these sites do so not in order to watch movies, but as a space where sexual encounters between men take place. Within the codes used within this space, one salient action consists in igniting a cigarette-lighter and holding it up, as a way to call attention to the action or disposition towards sex.

FINAL REMARKS

To conclude, one can affirm that, currently, the tension transferred to the urban and architectural space is intersectional to commercial sex work, coexisting with the ambiguity of laws, norms, and planning in charge of local governments. The public policy initiatives for intervention in the area, such as the aforementioned ones, are solely based on implicit and explicit suppositions aimed at increasing restrictions. In this context, the representations allude to the idea that daily life gives shape and support to the spatial practices of diverse collectives. In relation to this, the present examination of spatial effects allows an understanding of how the triangulation of factors impacts the forms in which central areas are reconfigured, and are in turn boosted by the multiplication of new uses and users.

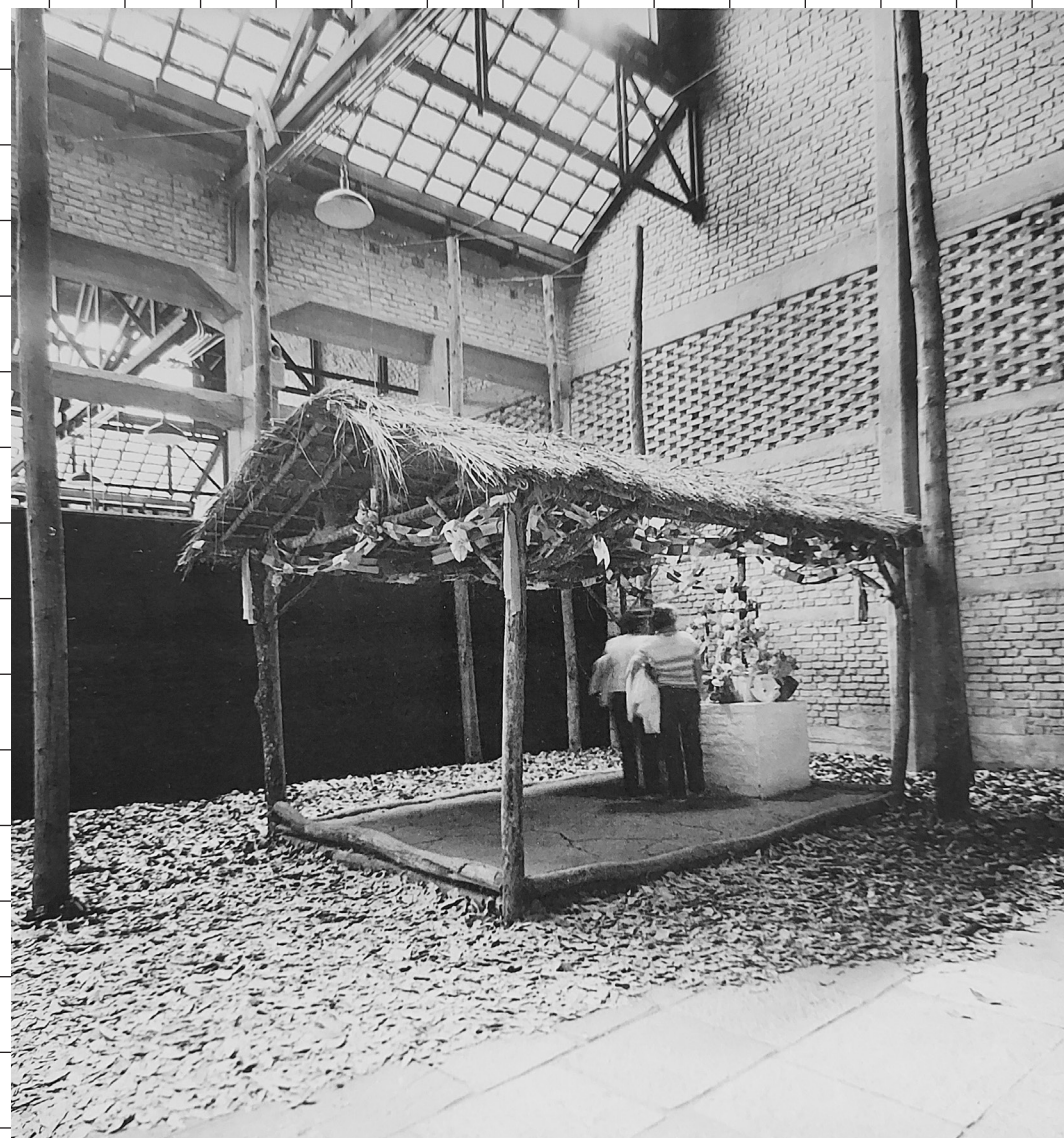
The October 18, 2019 '*Revuelta*' and the subsequent sanitary restrictions imposed as a consequence of the global COVID-19 pandemic have resulted

14 On 30 May 2019, two of the three adult movie theatres in the block, *Cine Nilo* and *Mayo*, were shut down.



in an extended state of exception in Chile.<sup>15</sup> This new scenario opens opportunities to carry out future reviews that can probe into the accelerated adjustments, both economic and spatial, as well as the demands associated with gender inequality and inclusion within spaces of sexual diversity. These disputes are all manifested in the dynamics of spatial practices within the neoliberal city.

15 This is the name given by several critical studies to the *malaise* that the Chilean people expressed through social mobilisations starting on 18 October 2019, as a response to the consolidation, since the return to democracy, of a neoliberal model that deprives much of the population of basic social rights.



Chapel at Caipiras, Capias: Pau-a-Pique exhibition at SESC Pompéia, by Lina Bo Bardi.  
Photograph by Arnaldo Pappalardo.

Frederico Vergueiro Costa (University of Campinas)

## Popular Refractions: Lina Bo Bardi and Marilena Chauí at the Crisis of the National-popular in the Re-democratisation of Brazil

Although many researchers have celebrated Lina Bo Bardi's anthropological interest and ethnographic perspective on popular culture, very few have aimed to problematise this theme or, at least, to verify how this issue was being debated in its historical context.

The use of the representations of the lower classes in the Brazilian artistic repertoire dates back to the 19th century, but it was in the 1960s that this practice acquired a particular political meaning, which is related to left-wing artists and intellectuals aligned with the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB). The sociologist Marcelo Ridenti called 'Brazilian (Romantic) Revolution' this political interest in popular culture.<sup>1</sup> According to him, this 'political atmosphere' coined in the ethnographic interest in the culture of the people, mainly called National-popular by critics of this idea as Marilena Chauí in the 1980's,<sup>2</sup> was 'impregnated by the ideas of the people, liberation and national identity – ideas that already came from far away in Brazilian culture, but brought the novelty of being mixed with leftist, communist or labour influences, especially from the 1950s on.'<sup>3</sup>

In the context of the Cold War, the Brazilian dictatorship persecuted leftist opponents but national-popular ideology remained as a cultural sensibility of political resistance,<sup>4</sup> during the process of Re-democratisation. Created in 1980, the Workers' Party (PT) represented the main political force of what the historian Marcos Napolitano called the 'New Left', which asserted itself in contrast to the now old political guidelines of the PCB.<sup>5</sup> Tensioned by this political reorganisation, that sensibility was criticised or reformed and this change also reflected the development of anthropology as a science and its generational ruptures in Brazil.

1 Marcelo Ridenti, *Em busca do povo brasileiro: Artistas da Revolução, do CPC à era da TV*, 2a edição (São Paulo, SP: Editora Unesp, 2014).

2 Marilena de Souza Chauí, *Seminários: O Nacional e o Popular na Cultura Brasileira* (São Paulo (SP): Brasiliense, 1984).

3 Ridenti, *Em busca do Povo Brasileiro*, 9.

4 Marcos Napolitano, *Coração Civil. A Vida Cultural Brasileira Sob o Regime Militar: 1964 a 1985. Ensaio Histórico*, 1a edição (São Paulo, SP, Brasil: Intermeios, 2017), 48.

5 Napolitano, 33.

Philosopher Marilena Chaui participated in the foundation of the PT and was the intellectual responsible for formulating the most elaborate critique of the National-Popular ideology in a Seminar called The National and the Popular in Brazilian Culture, in 1981. In 1971 she completed her master’s degree at University of São Paulo (USP) supervised by the philosopher Gilda de Mello e Souza, who was the wife of another important PT founder and professor at USP, literary critic Antonio Candido. A pioneer in Community Studies in Anthropology, Cândido wrote his book *Parceiros do Rio Bonito* in 1954, published in 1964. For historian Marcos Napolitano, this approach was also understood in 80’s as a critical alternative to the ‘nationalism and the dirigisme of the “orthodox” left, which did not consider the “concrete people” in search of a “generic and abstract people”’.<sup>6</sup>

Lina Bo Bardi’s anthropological interest in popular culture followed the political and cultural transformations of the New Left and the development of anthropology in Brazil. During the 1950s, this interest was mainly related to the visual anthropology present in magazines and exhibitions. Photographer and ethnologist Pierre Verger (1902–1996) was the main reference of the ‘anthropological look’ for the architect. Bo Bardi used Verger’s photos of Brazilian indigenous and popular culture in her own works, such as to illustrate *Habitat: Revista das Artes no Brasil*, the magazine that she edited since 1951, in parallel with the activities of the Museum of Art (MASP).<sup>7</sup> However, as historian Paulo Tavares has argued, although rigorous and well-intentioned, this visual appropriation privileged the aesthetic aspects of popular and primitive objects, which ended up disguising the arbitrary processes in which these objects were acquired and selected, without taking much into account their original contexts.<sup>8</sup> In the 1960s, this ethnographic interest acquired a new political meaning for Bo Bardi as she approached dissident groups of the Communist Party and counterculture artists. In the 1980s this gaze was challenged by a more realistic and scientific approach that privileged urban workers and emerging social movements.

In 1980, Chaui elaborated her critique of the National-Popular. She started the first of three seminars discussing the term by developing an argument against the ideological character of the avant-garde dirigisme, as follows:

People-popular and nation-national are positive and abstract entities whose existence, necessity, and movement are postulated by the texts, but not exposed by them. An essentialist language tries to pass as a dialectic of reality, at most, to the sphere of abstract understanding, not always succeeding because it does not come to formulating syntheses or the complete determination of objects and even less reflective judgments. In general, it remains between an image and a concept coming from Marxist theory, the relationship eventually becoming external and mechanical, since people, nation, state, revolution are set in motion by the action of a postulate: the avant-garde.<sup>9</sup>

9 Chaui, *Seminários: O Nacional e o Popular na Cultura Brasileira*, 84–85.

In 1986, these ideas were consolidated in *Conformism and Resistance*<sup>10</sup> in which Chaui highlights the fact that ‘the producers of this culture—the so-called ‘popular’ classes—do not designate it with the adjective ‘popular.’ She argues that this designation was used instead ‘by members of other social classes to define the cultural manifestations of the so-called ‘subaltern’ classes.’<sup>11</sup>

To sustain her argument, Chaui relied on the scientific rigour of anthropology and on the ethnographic researches of that period to demonstrate the contradictions between the popular representations of the avant-garde and a more realistic representation of the peripheral populations of São Paulo. She cited ethnographic works that were dedicated to social groups in the urban periphery, with different approaches: spatial practices (in the notion of ‘pedaço’ by urban anthropologist Luis Magnani); conceptions of religiosity (in anthropologists Alba Zaluar, Patrícia Birman and Zélia Seiblit ethnographic researchers), moral and family values (in ethnographic research of working-class families of anthropologist Eunice Durham); and organisation of social movements (with an emphasis on the women workers by anthropologists Teresa Caldeira and Verena Stolcke.) In those researches, it was possible to find conservative and authoritarian elements that challenged the romantic ideals of the avant-garde. On the other hand, Chauí privileged some themes relevant to the New Left ideology, that is, workers and social movements that were emerging at that time as important social actors. Thus, this interest gave less prominence to other groups, especially Afro-Brazilians, who became more marginalised during the emergence of consumer and control societies under neoliberalism thanks to the consequences of ‘incompletion of wage-earning’ in Brazil as noted by Machado da Silva.<sup>12</sup>

A few years before, Lina Bo Bardi still considered traditional popular culture as an essential element for a ‘true indigenous culture [...] which brings an indigestible, dry, hard-to-digest contribution’. In this sense, the role of the artist in contact with the people was still an indispensable aspect for her, as follows:

Collective awareness is necessary, any digression is a crime at the present time. The deculturation is ongoing. If the economist and the sociologist can diagnose with detachment, the artist must act, besides being linked to the intellectual, also as a part linked to the active people. The re-examination of the country’s recent history is imperative. The balance of the ‘popular’ Brazilian civilisation is necessary, even if poor in light of high culture.<sup>13</sup>

10 Marilena Chaui, *Conformismo e resistência*, 1a edição (São Paulo, SP : Belo Horizonte, MG: Autêntica, 2014).  
11 Chaui, 122.  
12 Michel Misse, *Crime e Violência no Brasil Contemporâneo: Estudos de Sociologia do Crime e da Violência Urbana* (Rio de Janeiro: Editora Lumen Juris, 2006).  
13 Silvana Rubino and Marina Grinover, eds., *Lina por escrito: textos escolhidos de Lina Bo Bardi, 1943–1991* (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2009), 138. There are two versions of this text that Lina published for the first time in *Malasartes* magazine, which brought together artists engaged in a critique of the modernist tradition in Brazilian arts. The second version appeared in the book *Tempo de Grossura: Design no Impasse*, published after her death, with the title ‘Um balanço dezesseis anos depois’.



The idea of national identity linked to popular culture is present in this 1976 text, although not explicitly through the term Nacional Popular. It is more common to find a distinction between National and Nationalism in her writings, inspired by the Italian Marxist philosopher Antonio Gramsci. Some authors argue that Bo Bardi was a pioneer in introducing Gramsci's concept of *Popular Nacional* in Brazil,<sup>14</sup> but the term only can be found in this exact way in a 1990 lecture, when she argued that: 'There is a big difference between the national and nationalist denominations. The national-popular is the identity of a people, of a country. The nationalist country is, for example, Fascist Italy, Franco's Spain and other examples.'<sup>15</sup>

If Marxist philosophy was her ideological foundation, ethnography was the appropriate medium for translating popular culture into national identity through architecture. In the aforementioned 1976 text, Bo Bardi opposed the 'anthropological search in the field of arts against the aesthetic search', arguing that the first would be a critical way of revealing reality:

The mistake is to want to eliminate collective reality in the name of aesthetics, whatever the cost. [...]. It is important to accept, to make anthropological use, when necessary, of aesthetically negative things: art (such as architecture and industrial design) is always a political operation.<sup>16</sup>

In this way, more than a political ideology or a scientific ambition, the anthropological search is a way to update her architectural language and try to correct or defend ideals that she attributed to the modernist avant-gardes now submitted to history and its contradictions. After all, the avant-gardes were getting old. Thus, Bo Bardi denied and corrected, defended and attacked, 'the great achievements of scientific practice (scientific practice, not technology fallen into technocracy)' that she mixed in her architecture with the popular repertoire, especially at SESC Pompeia where progress and backwardness combined in its best shape.

Without giving up this avant-garde dirigisme, SESC Pompéia was an experience in which Bo Bardi translated a dialectical contradiction of Brazilian development, updating 'poor forms' as positive (rural-traditional) representations, and historicising modernisation as a tragic (urban-modern) representation. São Paulo at that time was at the end of its expansive urbanisation cycle, which ended with an intense unlimited growth that now faced obstacles both in terms of territory or technical and social management. Gradually, the experience of the city and the optimism of modernisation turned into an increasingly frequent sensation of chaos and congestion. Optimism for progress and novelty gave way to a feeling of

14 Edite Galote Carranza, "Casa Valéria Cirell e o Nacional-Popular," *Pós. Revista Do Programa de Pós-Graduação Em Arquitetura e Urbanismo Da FAUUSP* 21, no. 35 (2014): 123; Silvana Rubino and Marina Grinover, eds., *Lina por escrito: textos escolhidos de Lina Bo Bardi, 1943–1991* (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2009), 37.  
15 Carranza, "Casa Valéria Cirell e o Nacional-Popular," 121.  
16 Silvana Rubino and Marina Grinover, eds., *Lina por escrito: textos escolhidos de Lina Bo Bardi, 1943–1991* (São Paulo: Cosac Naify, 2009), 141.

nostalgia. More than designing a new order, architecture had a new role in reinterpreting the forms of the past.

Finally, the effects of unequal 'social integration' caused by the process of 'urban spoliation' described by the sociologist Kowarick and cited by Chauí were also perceived by their anthropological dimension.<sup>17</sup> An immense population of (rural) migrants lost a condition of autonomy, subsistence, and solidarity, but also their knowledge and culture that were little or not significant for the new urban activities.<sup>18</sup>

In the exhibition *Caipiras, Capias: Pau-a-Pique* at SESC Pompeia in 1986, Bo Bardi developed a new ethnographic approach. The exhibition portrayed the popular rural culture of the southeastern regions of Brazil, the so-called 'Caipiras', through buildings and everyday objects. In this case, the influence of the book *Parceiros do Rio Bonito* is evident right at the introduction to the exhibition catalogue by anthropologist Carlos Brandão. Bo Bardi again reinforced the distinction between national and nationalism in her text, but his vanguard conviction seems shaken. 'This is a "piegas" Exhibition [similar to kitsch or naive][...] It is a farewell and, at the same time, an invitation to document the history of Brazil. It's a political exhibition, of course.' Despite the emphasis, the statement suggests more insecurity than conviction. The scenography of the exhibition dominated the space as an integral theatrical ambiance, unlike previous exhibitions in which she presented handcrafted objects in modern displays and rigorous museological organisation. She reproduced real-size models of some typical farm buildings inside the exhibition space, decorated with everyday objects collected during amateur field research. The realistic scenography allowed the architect to present popular objects, materially and visually, together with a 'traditional' and 'authentic' system of representations that could give 'original' meanings to these objects. However, despite apparently giving up an avant-garde attitude, it is curious to note the strange insertion of tributes to avant-garde artists. Typical masts (*Paus-de-Sebo*), common in popular festivals, were organised in a geometric arrangement as a visual installation at the entrance of the exhibition. Each of them was painted with colorful patterns designed by the architect. One, in particular, was colored pink, blue, and gold in reference to the painter Yves Klein (1928–1962). Disguised among the popular memory of a rural world that seemed to be disappearing, Bo Bardi embedded the memories and nostalgia of the modernist avant-gardes too.<sup>19</sup>

The architectural use of ethnography, in this case, served more for Bo Bardi to align herself with intellectuals who shared the same nostalgic political sensibility than for recognizing more complex transformations of uneven 'social integration'. The main blind spot of Bo Bardi and Chauí ethnographic

17 Lucio Kowarick, *A Espoliação Urbana* (São Paulo: Paz e Terra, 1993).  
18 Marilena Chauí, *Conformismo e resistência*, 1a edição (São Paulo, SP : Belo Horizonte, MG: Autêntica, 2014), 478.  
19 The exhibition *Arquitetura de Terra* (Earthen Architecture) was shown at MASP at the same time in which Lina Bo Bardi highlighted the pau-a-pique, also an earthen construction technique, implying a confrontation between exhibitions. In fact, the exhibition at MASP was not just a local production, but an original exhibition organised by Jean Dethier in *Center Georges Pompidou* in Paris, in 1981.

interest refers to the Left’s distrust concerning the emerging effects of mass culture and the critical capacity of cultural industry products. This distrust made it difficult to recognise the stigmatised correlation between urban violence and the subaltern classes, increased by the impact of new international drug policies, which has continually affected mainly Afro-Brazilians until today. These effects were already being noticed at the most important Punk festival held in São Paulo, at the same *SESC Pompeia*, in 1982, called ‘The Beginning of the End of the World’. Disregarded by the intellectuals of that time,<sup>20</sup> some lyrics from this festival reverberated in the production of one of the main national rap bands, Racionais MC, created in 1988. Recent studies in Brazilian anthropology have re-evaluated their ethnographic methods not only with the aim of perceiving the contradictions between an idealised conciliatory image and a concrete representation, but prioritising the recognition of the historical accumulation of social conflicts and the way they manifest themselves in the artistic production of groups marginalised.

Thus, the historical analysis of Bo Bardi’s work and Chauí’s critique exposes the risks of the architectural use of ethnography that will constantly be threatened by idealisation and compensatory representations that can contribute more to hiding conflicts and differences than to promoting a more complex portrait of the interrelationship of different social groups in contact.<sup>21</sup>

20 Napolitano, *Coração Civil*, 322..  
21 Gabriel Sanctis Feltran, “Sobre anjos e irmãos: cinquenta anos de expressão política do ‘crime’ numa tradição musical das periferias,” *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, no. 56 (December 18, 2013): 43–72; Leandro Silva de Oliveira, Marcelo Segreto, and Nara Lya Simões Caetano Cabral, “Vozes periféricas: expansão, imersão e diálogo na obra dos Racionais MC’s,” *Revista do Instituto de Estudos Brasileiros*, no. 56 (December 18, 2013): 101–26, 322.



Tuna harpooning at Tavira shore in the 1940's by Artur Pastor. Courtesy of Arquivo Fotográfico de Lisboa (A public archive on photography, Lisbon Municipality).

Diego Inglez de Souza (University of São Paulo)

## Of Tuna and Men: Ethnography, Fishing and Architecture

In the southern Iberian coast, *Thunnus thynnus* – or bluefin tuna, has been systematically caught since ancient times by traps known as *almadravas* (or *armações*). The history of tuna fishing is intertwined with the occupation of the Algarve coastline: many of the urban centres that today attract tourist activities were fishermen's villages, as suggested by their toponymes.

At the end of the 18th century, an important technological transformation in the tuna fishing took place: from the *almadravas de tiro*, that were popular across Andalusia, launched and collected from the shore, the *almadrava de copo* became widespread, combining fixed and mobile nets that concentrated the tuna in the death chamber. There, the fish were captured on board of the boats that served as a platform for the fatal blows of hooks and pikes operated by dozens of fishermen during the copejo. The fish was delivered from the boats to ports, where brineries and canneries processed the fish to export, mainly to Spain and Italy. The migratory movement of the tuna determined the position of the *almadravas* distributed along the Algarve coast, as shown by the cartographies and analysis produced under the auspices of King Carlos I (1899), which combine statistics of tuna catches with the oceanographic characteristics of the Southern coast of Portugal. In the Algarve, *almadravas* remained active until 1970s, when they ceased to exist until very recently, when the raw fish market associated with Japanese cuisine gave a new boost to tuna fisheries in the region.

Tuna fishing in the *almadravas* combines the dimensions of fishing gear with the built expression of the dynamics involved in capturing and processing a natural resource associated with a particular geography. When analyzing housing related to fishing, two main sources converge their attention on typologies associated with fisheries and canneries after its expansion fostered by World Wars. The radical transformation of fishing techniques propelled by the expansion of the canning industry during this period dramatically changed the landscape of the coast. These impacts on the built environment were differently perceived by Portuguese architects and ethnographers in the second half of the 20th century, focusing either on the forms of these 'primitive' or 'popular' constructions or in their relations with 'agro-maritime' activities and cultural habits. What about the fish? In this article, we propose to articulate these sights with marine biology on bluefin populations and fishing in order to draw a more complex understanding of the sea and the shore continuum through a *sui generis* perspective.



The remnants of the fishing villages that still exist today in Algarve, built in the first half of the 20th century, represent attempts to rationally organize housing and work involved in fishing and tuna processing. These attempts sought to overcome the deficiencies and precariousness of the primitive villages, which were fragilely built on the beach sand and frequently destroyed by coastal erosion, fires and storms. These new arraiais were built to replace the improvised agglomerations of shacks made of natural materials, tending to disappear, according to the books published by the Centre for Ethnological Studies on ‘primitive constructions’.<sup>1</sup> Their disappearance was a consequence of industrialisation that fostered transformations on fishing techniques, related to the expansion of canned fish exports. Architecture is, at the same time, an expression and a tool for the expansion of the fishing pressure that would eventually unbalance the trophic chains and marine ecosystems. The effects of these metamorphosis were perceived by Portuguese ethnographers and also by architects through their observations.

Fishing is indeed recurrently mentioned in the celebrated ‘Inquiry’ into popular architecture in Portugal, published in 1961, a product of a vast field research carried out by the National Union of Architects teams who recorded and analysed the multiple types of dwellings and constructions related to material and cultural conditions found on the Portuguese territory. However, there is practically no mention of the productive and marine biological chains associated with these ‘ecologically adapted’ architectures. Even if focusing on identifying roots and paths to modern architecture, underlining the shapes and expressions of formally elaborated constructions employing simple means, repetition of standards and embodying some kind of rationality on building, the transformation of the canned industry and fishing techniques was apparently ignored by the inquiring architects, converting these signs of inflections into ahistorical types.

The canning industry that flourished along North Atlantic European coast is a constant object of historical and ethnographical studies, mainly focused on specific ports or regions during a restricted period. The spatial arrangements that served as platforms for the launching and operation of the traps were radically transformed during the interwar period by incorporating industrial rationality, new materials and construction techniques to the premises of social and productive organisation arising from the tuna fishing economy. The primitive constructions described by ethnologists which were still part of the Algarve landscape in the 1960s were gradually substituted for row houses and support installations built in brick by the fishing companies over the sand dunes in eastern Algarve.

1 Ernesto Veiga de Oliveira, Fernando Galhano, and Benjamim Pereira, *Construções primitivas de Portugal* Lisbon: Centro de Estudos de Etnologia Peninsular (1969).

In Tavira Island, the complex system of nets, buoys, cables and anchors was set up on the beach during the month of April, between the *arraial* and the high tide line. In early May, it was carefully deployed at sea for the fishing season between May and June, when the fish schools head to the Mediterranean Sea to spawn. It was adapted for setback fishing between July and August, intercepting tuna’s movement towards the Atlantic, and finally dismantled and accommodated on the Arraial premises in September, often in the same buildings that served as housing for the fishermen during the season. Documentaries produced as result of ethnographic surveys or as propaganda sponsored by the nationalist fishing administrations in Spain and Portugal such as *Almadrabas* by Carlos Velo (1933) and *Costas del Sur* (1956) or *La pêche du thon*, by Leitão de Barros (1939), *Almadrava atuneira* by António Campos (1963), *Almadrava* and *Copejo* by Hélder Mendes (1968), are significant sources of information on the human aspects and cultural practices involved in tuna fishing, providing also clues to understand their transformations and coastal imprints. Mendes’ films follows one of the last seasons of tuna fishing in the last remaining trap in Algarve, describing in detail the fishing activities at the *Medo das Cascas*, one of the most productive and oldest of the Tavira’s *almadravas* until the epic and violent spectacle of the *copejo*.

The *Arraiais* of the Barril and Livramento, built around 1930 also in the Tavira Island dunes, seem to follow the logic of the company towns built around factories and mines in Europe after the industrial revolution. Specific fishing companies offered to their workers minimum infrastructure and services that were essential for work and a life dedicated to it. Among the latter are a single-family unit included in brick-built row, part of a complex comprising a well and collective sanitary installations; a small classroom for the fishermen’s kids; warehouses to accommodate the fishing gear and more comfortable dwellings for the owner, master foreman and clerk.

The destruction of the settlement associated with *Medo das Cascas almadrava* by coastal erosion and wind storms between 1931 and 1943 gave rise to the *Arraial Ferreira Neto*, which was designed by engineer José de Sena Lino in 1943 for the Algarve Fishing Company. The Arraial was conceived as a self-sufficient village idealised to house the families of 150 fishermen, fishing gear and fish processing activities, comprising a chapel, school, maintenance workshops and warehouses for the deposit of materials and boats between fishing seasons, in addition to facilities for staff involved in daily life of the settlement such as doctor, teacher, priest and barber.

Organised into ‘two squares and five streets’, it initially consisted of ‘52 houses, a warehouse for the collection of materials, the thread house, washing house, three cisterns and five warehouses in corrugated sheet metal’. A watchtower, a church and a school were later added. According both to the promoters of the initiative and to contemporary historians that focused tuna fishing in Portugal, the Arraial Ferreira Neto materialised an ideological, productive and social project designed to mediate conflicts between capital and labour ‘the two indispensable elements of national

production and wealth’.<sup>2</sup> The ‘constructive programme’ of the Arraial Ferreira Neto ‘allies the past to monumentality and joins the austere air to the classical plan, undoubtedly showing total empathy, whether ideological or artistic, with the architectural taste advocated by the *Estado Novo* regime’.<sup>3</sup>

Built by a private company and designed by the engineer Sena Lino, closely involved with emblematic Estado Novo realizations such as the National stadium in Lisbon’s outskirts and ports’ infrastructures, the Arraial Ferreira Neto is a pragmatic response to the the canning industry expansion, based on ancient and limited fishing techniques, but also to the political situation, defining precisely coordinates to the collective organization of work and sociability under state control in order to avoid class struggle.

Perhaps this identification with the fascist regime explains the lack of interest on the part of both architects and ethnographers, who largely ignored the venture. Although the Arraial Ferreira Neto was promoted by a private company, the settlement clearly expresses relations between fishing, politics and construction, despite the stereotypes it mobilizes. Beyond the ‘*português suave*’ style, the official architectural aesthetics of the regime that combined new building programs and techniques to regional and rural stereotyped architectures, the Arraial Ferreira Neto is a telling expression of the junction of a pragmatic construction and an rhetoric and nationalistic realization. One dedicated to the support of fishing, devoid of ornamentation, organized according to the sequence of activities related to the installation and maintenance of the *almadrava*. The other devoted to the temporary housing of the workers of this company, designed to materialise the hierarchies involved in the division of labour, according to strict political guidelines.

Despite its meticulously planned organisation in terms of the complex activities of preparation, installation and maintenance of the trap, as well as the copejo and transport of the fish, the Arraial Ferreira Neto was relatively short-lived, if the long duration of tuna fishing on the Algarve coast is considered. In 1971, its last season, Medo das Cascas caught a single tuna and some other smaller fish, symptoms of overfishing that confirmed the economic unviability of the enterprise. If we bear in mind the relations between the levels of the trophic chain and the impacts of the expansion of the canned fish industry, we can understand the effects on human activities, the work and sociability of fishermen and cannery workers, but also on their construction practices and the coastal landscape.

## TUNA FISHING ARCHITECTURE

After the Second War, with the introduction of freezing, the consumption habits reflected and promoted shifts on the ‘environmental baselines’,

<sup>2</sup> António Miguel Galvão, *Um século de história da Companhia de Pescarias do Algarve* (Faro: CPA, 1948),143.  
<sup>3</sup> Marco Lopes, ‘A longa vida da Armação do Medo das Cascas e o ‘Português Suave’ do Arraial Ferreira Neto,’ in *Tavira, patrimónios do mar* edited by Queiroz, Jorge and Rita Manteigas, 47–57 (Tavira: Câmara Municipal, 2008), 55.

related to new eating habits such as frozen and raw fish consumption, transforming bluefin into an expensive delicacy.<sup>4</sup> The quality of the tuna and the high prices it fetches at auctions on the international market propelled the recovery of Mediterranean and Atlantic tuna fisheries, now inscribed in a complex commercial network that connects Algarve and Andalusian fishing ports with Tokyo through logistics circuits and freezing infrastructures, depicted in a series of films and books produced by the North American artist Alan Sekulla such as *Tsukiji* (2001) and *Fish Story* (2002).

The materials and systems involved in fishing also became more sophisticated, preserving for marketing reasons the reference to the *almadravas*, mobilising a particular articulation between traditional and sustainable rhetoric. The coastal imprints of the tuna industry, following the dynamics of the fish, shifted from a local to a global scale, disarticulating its direct relations with urbanization of coastal settlements. If architecture and ethnography were important tools to grasp these relations on the built environment, another layers of information should be added over the ethnographical, sociological, historical, or political perspectives to understand these landscapes today, considering the environmental crisis, constant expansion of the fishing pressure and complex socio-technical logistics.

We coined the term ‘Fishing Architecture’ in an attempt to build a bridge between marine biology and architecture in order to provide a different picture of built architecture and landscapes. This concept derives from two research projects coordinated by André Tavares on Codfish and Sardines Architectures at the Lab2PT, Landscape, Heritage and Territory Laboratory at the University of Minho School of Architecture.<sup>5</sup> Instead of focusing on formal analysis, architectural theory or social history, the projects claim that architecture can be a useful tool to assess the ecological impact of architecture and look at fisheries as a way of observing building practices. The bluefin tuna seems to be, from this perspective, a *sui generis* species through which we can observe examples that confirm the hypothesis that a certain architecture derives from specific fish. If, throughout the 20th century, the gaze of architects and ethnographers converged on fishermen’s dwellings and constructions associated with fishing, providing a panorama that seeks to register types in the process of disappearing, today it seems fundamental to add new and transdisciplinary perspectives to seize the intrinsic relationship between what happens at sea, its effects on the coast and the socio-ecological imprints of architecture.

<sup>4</sup> Callum Roberts, *The unnatural history of the sea* (Washington: Island/ Shearwater, 2007), 242–257.  
<sup>5</sup> This work has the financial support of the project The Sea and the Shore, Architecture and Marine Biology: The Impact of Sea Life on the Built Environment (PTDC/ART-DAQ/29537/2017) with support from FCT/ MCTES via national funds (PIDDAC) and co-financing from the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER) POCI-01-0145–FEDER-029537, as part of the new partnership agreement PT2020 through COMPETE 2020 – Competitiveness and Internationalization Operational Program (POCI).

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BK Talks on Ethnography  
and Architectural Education

# The Observers Observed: Ethnography in Architectural Education

In his foreword to Erwin Gutkind’s 1953 *Community and Environment: A Discourse on Social Ecology*, philosopher Martin Buber claimed that ‘the architects must be given the task to build for human contact, to build an environment which invites human meetings and centres which give these meetings meaning and render them productive.’ Buber’s text stressed the importance of establishing a strong relationship between the social and the ecological. A similar claim to plan ecologically-balanced communities had been made by Aldo van Eyck and other architects from his generation, who in addition to Buber’s ideas was influenced by the work of anthropologists such as Franz Boaz, Margaret Mead and Ruth Benedict to recalibrate the importance of the cultural production of ‘other’ cultures to the same level as that of Western civilisation.

As historian James Clifford put it in his 1983 essay, ‘On Ethnographic Authority,’ the redistribution of colonial power in the decades after 1950 and the resonances of that process in the ‘radical theories of the 1960s and 1970s’ challenged the ‘activity of cross cultural representation’. ‘Now that the West can no longer present itself as the unique purveyor of anthropological knowledge about others, it has become necessary to imagine a world of generalised ethnography’. Drawing on Clifford’s analysis, art critic and historian Hal Foster argued in ‘The Artist as Ethnographer?’ that the protagonist of his 1995 essay emerged the previous decade as a new paradigm to replace Walter Benjamin’s old ‘Author as producer’. The committed artist, Foster claimed, shifted his subject of inquiry from one defined in terms of economic relation to one defined in terms of cultural identity. The problem, Foster continued, was that ‘often, this realist assumption is compounded by a primitive fantasy: that the other, usually assumed to be of color, has special access to primary psychic and social processes from which the white subject is somehow blocked.’

Foster was critical of the emerging figure of the artist as ‘pseudo-ethnographer,’ but art education scholars such as Dipti Desai saw in this interdisciplinary exchange an opportunity to introduce new approaches in art education that could be more focused on the social production of art, blurring the boundaries between high and low cultural forms and promoting a meaningful engagement with the artist’s cultural context. One could speculate if this penchant eventually triggered an ethnographic turn in architectural education when new pedagogical paradigms started to be created for students across the world. Among the opportunities that were promoted was an intensification of the student’s sense of place in relation to communities

and inhabitants within and outside the institutions’ national borders, through new experiments in ‘architectural ethnography’ such as local research activities, mapping, and the use of axonometric and isometric projections to describe patterns of human behavior and lifestyle. These also entailed new possibilities of encounter with difference and of being attuned to and even engaged with the culture of diverse communities.

In these new approaches to architecture education, the use of ethnographic methods have encouraged relationships spanning outside academia as an important component of pedagogical procedures committed with socially responsible design and civic engagement. Furthermore, they have also been instrumental in critical pedagogies inspired by postcolonial, gender and environmental studies, advancing possibilities for the decolonisation of the architecture education curriculum.

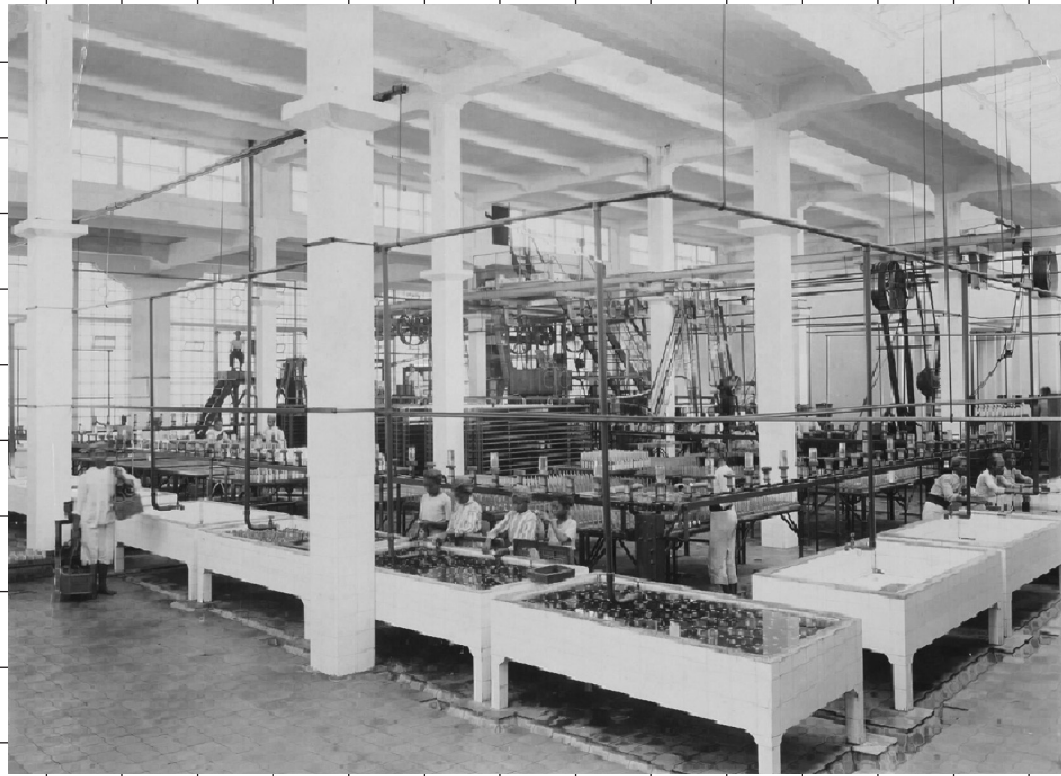
In this special panel, scholars with pedagogical experience in different European institutions will engage in a conversation on the use of ethnographic methods in architectural education. This session seeks to address some of the questions that hover over the growing interest in such methods.

PANELISTS

- Dick van Gameren (TU Delft)
- Stéphanie Dadour (École nationale supérieure d’architecture Paris-Malaquais)
- Aina Landsverk Hagen (Oslo Metropolitan University)
- Klaske Havik (TU Delft)
- Leeke Reinders (TU Delft)
- Aurélie Griveaux
- Sascha Roesler (Università della Svizzera Italiana)



# Performance Lecture



Interior Hygeia factory, 1924–1932. Tillema Collection RV-A440-z-2.

Paoletta Holst and Paolo Patelli (Research Centre for Material Culture, Leiden)

## (Resequencing) The Logic of the Tillema Collection

A native was in possession of a dove that once overheard a conversation between two evil ghosts. The first ghost said: ‘I spread sickness and death all around me by mixing my poison into the water. Anyone who drinks this water will die of vomiting and diarrhoea.’ The second ghost said: ‘I bring sickness and death by giving my poison to rats, who then pass it on to man.’ The dove passed this story on to its master, who in turn told it to the elders and wise men of the dessa. Long discussions took place on how to take measures to combat this evil, but no one knew what to do. Finally the oldest from the dessa came to the meeting and was asked for advice. His advice was: ‘Come into contact with water and rats as little as possible, as if you do, only fire can save you. So never take anything but boiled water, and burn any rats you find.’

H. F. Tillema, *Kromoblanda*, 45.

The above-mentioned saga was recounted in the region of Temanggoeng (today Temanggung) in Java, Indonesia, during the cholera outbreaks at the beginning of the twentieth century. It entails a practical and moral warning, aimed at containing the spread of epidemics, by limiting contact with rats and the use of contaminated wells. This and other sagas combine spurious storytelling, pseudo-ethnographic observations, scientific knowledge and medical prescriptions as bogus myth-making; medical recommendations blend with fear and awe for ghosts and wise men. The reported story was made up by the regent of Temanggoeng to promote the disinfection of wells with potassium permanganate among the population, and make them aware of their unhygienic habits.

Since the population is so underdeveloped [sic] and consequently so superstitious, there are great difficulties in taking hygienic measures. Sometimes they resist, become unruly, as I think happened in Bandoeng. To avoid such undesirable opposition, one sometimes has to resort to peculiar means.<sup>1</sup>

These means include the fabrication of sagas which, in the eyes of Hendrik Freerk Tillema (1870–1952), a prominent entrepreneur and amateur ethnographer in the East Indies, were just ‘very nice and innocent example[s]’ suitable to convince the local population to follow the colonial directives. The saga, which is mentioned by Tillema in his six-volume work *Kromoblanda*, illustrates a paternalistic and manipulative stance, and the establishment

<sup>1</sup> Hendrik Freerk Tillema, *Kromoblanda* (s-Gravenhage: self published, 1915–16), 45.

of a hierarchy of knowledge. Tillema deployed montage techniques – both visually and conceptually – to produce meaning and affect by the contrastful juxtaposition of observations and intentions, of primitive and modern, throughout his work. Significant stylistic differences emerge in communication materials of different kinds: from advertisements for his company’s bottled water and sodas, to reports destined to colonial authorities and the central government in The Hague.

THE COLLECTION OF HENDRIK FREERK TILLEMA (1870–1952)

Hendrik Freerk Tillema was a Dutch pharmacist, entrepreneur, self-taught photographer and amateur ethnographer, a lobbyist and an advocate for the improvement of hygienic standards in colonial Indonesia – the former Dutch East Indies. He lived for twenty years, up until the Second World War, in Semarang, where he owned a pharmacy with a water bottling factory behind it. He named and branded his bottled water Hygeia, after the Greek goddess of health, cleanliness and hygiene. In 1901, Tillema was the first in the Dutch Indies to build a new factory hall in reinforced concrete, where workers cleaned and filled the bottles on a conveyor belt.<sup>2</sup> Around 1910, 80 employees could produce 10.000 bottles of Hygeia water per day.<sup>3</sup> Hygeia made Tillema rich, and through the accumulated wealth, he directly supported his independent expeditions and many (often self-published) publications.

In 1914 he sold the factory and repatriated to the Netherlands, but he remained committed to the situation in the Dutch East Indies, and at the request of the 1915 International Housing Congress, he worked on a report on the housing and living conditions in the Archipelago. Due to the outbreak of the First World War, the conference was cancelled, but his work and efforts ultimately led to his best-known publication, *Kromoblanda* (1915–1927). He also returned three times to the Dutch Indies, travelled the entire archipelago, from Sumatra to New Guinea and deep into the heart of Borneo,<sup>4</sup> and reported these trips in several journal articles and a film, *Langs Borneo’s breede stromen*. It was his personal wealth that enabled him to make use of the fairly new and expensive medium of photography, and Tillema remained the only person in the Netherlands who recorded his critical view of the colonial world in an extensive photo archive. His work contributed to raising public awareness of the poor and neglected infrastructural conditions in the kampongs, increasingly seen as the origin of diseases and epidemics. He also devised spatial solutions, proposed as building typologies sensitive to the context as much as to the expected lifestyles of their inhabitants, either European or local. He conceived practical expedients for the adaptive design of colonial infrastructures

2 Ewald Vanvugt, *Een Propagandist van het Zuiverste Water. H. F. Tillema (1870–1952) en de Fotografie van Tempoe Doeloe* (Amsterdam: Uitgeverij Jan Mets, 1993), 24.  
3 Vanvugt, *Een Propagandist van het Zuiverste Water. H. F. Tillema (1870–1952) en de Fotografie van Tempoe Doeloe*, 25.  
4 <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn5/tillema>.

(notably motorways) and in a similar fashion, overall engineered the mutual coexistence of social groups, concerns and interests.

In 1938, Tillema bequeathed his library and archive to the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde in Leiden, including roughly 11.000 black and white photographs, of which 5.000 were taken by Tillema himself. Today the majority of the prints and negatives are located in the Museum voor Volkenkunde, organised rather arbitrarily in albums without thematic or chronological consistency. Some materials are held by the Tropenmuseum, and copies of his silent films are kept in the Eye film museum.<sup>5</sup>

ENGAGING OTHERWISE WITH THE COLONIAL ARCHIVE

‘Resequencing the Tillema Collection’<sup>6</sup> means unpacking the logics that structured the arguments and the propositions traversing the many and heterogeneous publications authored by Tillema in the first half of the XX century by exploring further the potential of the images and of the collection itself. Throughout Tillema’s published work, maps, graphics, statistical data and photography contribute to lines of argumentation for a socio-political agenda advocating for reform from within the colonial regime.<sup>7</sup> It is possible to recognise beneath his technical, hygienist stance, a specific way of looking. Our project asks if a mobilisation and a critical rearrangement of the Collection can challenge and break down such a look. In the words of Ariella Aïsha Azoulay: ‘how might we tell a story thought to be impossible? One answer is through the potentiality of photography’<sup>8</sup> – the potential for counter-readings and writings always-already-present in these materials. The archive is the site where we can unlearn and participate in producing the meanings of what is there, and of what might be missing.

URBANISM IN THE ETHNOGRAPHIC ARCHIVE

Until the introduction of the Decentralisation Act of 1903, the Dutch East Indies were centrally administered by the government based in Batavia.<sup>9</sup> The Act created local municipalities that were responsible for their own administrative, financial and spatial policies. The growth of the urban population, combined with the less-than-optimal sanitary and hygienic conditions of the existing settlements, pressed the state

5 The photographs and objects have been digitized and can be consulted in the online databases of the NMVW Collection and the Leiden University Libraries Digital Collections. The films can be found in the Eye catalogue and consulted on location. Other materials in the Tillema Collection are his ten self-published books, various pamphlets and contributions to several magazines, newspapers, yearbooks, of which many have been digitised and can be found in online archives such as *Delpher* and [colonialarchitecture.eu](http://colonialarchitecture.eu).  
6 ‘Resequencing the Logic of the Tillema Collection, Engaging Otherwise with the Colonial Archive’ is the title of the artistic research project by the authors, in collaboration with the Research Center for Material Culture (Leiden) and the institutions where materials belonging to the Tillema Collection are located.  
7 <http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/bwn1880-2000/lemmata/bwn5/tillema>.  
8 Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism* (London and New York: Verso, 2019), 370.  
9 Pauline K.M. van Roosmalen, “Ontwerpen aan de stad: Stedenbouw in Nederlands-Indië en Indonesië (1905–1950)” (PhD diss., TU Delft, 2009), 11.



authorities to plan new expansions and comprehensive housing projects. Semarang, the city where Tillema lived and served on the city council, was exemplary in this regard for other Dutch colonial cities. Tillema followed the urban developments in the Dutch East Indies closely and many of the photographs in the Collection are witnesses to such projects of expansions and improvement. For example, his publications *Riooliana* (1910) and *Van wonen en bewonen, van bouwen, huis en erf* (1912) review the urban developments and sanitary conditions of different areas in Semarang. In *Kromoblanda* (1915–27) and *Zonder Tropa Geen Europa!* (1926) his urban and hygienic research stretches out to all parts of the Archipelago. These publications form an important historical source, both architecturally and socially: they capture a specific spatial condition observed from within the colonial context, yet they maintain a considerable distance towards the colonial subjects.

POLITICAL LOBBYING AND ADVERTISEMENT LANGUAGE

Tillema used both his business instinct as an entrepreneur and his hygienic and medical knowledge as a pharmacist to lobby throughout his career. The themes he addressed, such as hygiene, sanitation, infectious diseases and urbanism, reflected the widespread concerns of the modern colonial society. In turn, his activities as a city council member of Semarang gave him prestige and his opinions more weight.

For his bottling plant, he studied French advertising methods and American manufacturing processes, aiming to replicate the stream of advertising campaigns responsible for the growing success of the bottled Coca-Cola in the 1890's.<sup>10</sup> He printed the Hygeia logo on ashtrays, put up an advertising sign on the busiest intersection in the city and distributed booklets with picture postcards of Semarang. He even hired a Hygeia-branded hot air balloon to let it fly over the city.

The cholera outbreak of 1910 prompted him to use the same marketing skills to advocate for public health.<sup>11</sup> Advancing hygienic standards and promoting clean drinking water meant lobbying for his own enterprise as well. In his publications, first-hand observations, staged photographs, tables, maps and surveys all ontributed to rendering his propositions scientific, objective. He made use of both visual and textual contrasts to construct his lines of argument. The images – as noted by Rudolf Mrázek – appear polarized, organised in clusters of ‘there’ and ‘here,’ ‘before’ and ‘after.’ ‘Before’ and ‘there’ is the primitive chaos of a ‘messy and smelly space, of kampongs, the native quarters’. ‘After’ and ‘here,’ is water tamed, dammed, canned; this is in the realm of the Dutch, of colonial pipes and dikes.<sup>12</sup> In Kromoblanda,

10 Vanvugt, *Een propagandist van het zuiverste water. H. F. Tillema (1870–1952) en de fotografie van tempoe doeloe*, 25.  
11 Vanvugt, 27.  
12 Rudolf Mrázek, *Engineers of Happy Land: Technology and Nationalism in a Colony* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 56.

for example, alongside photographs of stately colonial houses, he placed a series of wretched indigenous huts, and images of bright, clean bathrooms next to holes in the ground functioning as toilets. Advertisement-like captions accompany the photographs; highlighted text fragments enable the reader to quickly navigate through the publications for impressions.

The term ‘Kromoblanda’ itself is a neologism that combines the words ‘Kromo’ – how the Dutch called the natives – and ‘Blanda’ – how the Javanese called the Dutch. Kromoblanda was a dream and a plan, in the words of Rudolf Mrázek, envisioning how the two populations could coexist on the same land (the Indonesian Archipelago), living a well-equipped, modern, efficient future (modelled on Europe).

THE COLLECTION AS A PRISM

Twentieth-century art has made use of the archive in a variety of ways – as a bureaucratic institution, as an inert repository of historical artefacts, or as an active, regulatory discursive system.<sup>13</sup> In the course of our research we started looking at the Tillema Collection not only as a readily available source of materials – both raw and adulterated, often with controversial attachments – but as a prism, an obstacle through which categories and entities diffractively crisscross and interfere with each other.<sup>14</sup> This specific collection, spanning across colonial archives, is used less as the source for a colonial history than as an active, generative substance, with history and itineraries of its own, as the site of both ‘dreams of comforting futures’ and ‘forebodings of future failures’.<sup>15</sup> The illusion of intelligibility, constructed through an aesthetics of objectivity, was in reality fashioned from uncertain knowledge; the belief that everything could ever be in order was constantly unsettled, by the craft and trickery necessary to stage compositions and retouch photographs, in the memoirs and notes, and in the recommendations that Tillema himself collected on how to take photographs in the field, for the sake of classifying people, places, behaviours, resisting the effects of the heat, moist, insects, bacteria and molds.<sup>16</sup>

CRITICAL DOCUMENTARY / LECTURE PERFORMANCE

Our critical documentary is based on content from the Tillema Collection. It mobilises film and photography as much as classification systems and

13 Sven Spieker, *The Big Archive: Art from Bureaucracy* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2008).; Okwui Enwezor, *Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art* [in Conjunction with the Exhibition “Archive Fever: Uses of the Document in Contemporary Art”], 1. ed. Göttingen: Steidl, 2008.  
14 Much of the colonial film and photography footage used to be shown in the Netherlands as an illustration of the beneficial effect of the Dutch presence in the East Indies, but filmmakers such as Vincent Monnikendam (Mother Dao, The Turtlelike, 1995), Sandra Beerends (They Call Me Babu, 2019) and Rizki Lazuardi (Not a Light Touch, 2020) have shown – specifically through a critical use of montage techniques – that the potential for counter-readings and writings is inherent to ethnographic materials.  
15 Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009), 1.  
16 Ibid., 2.

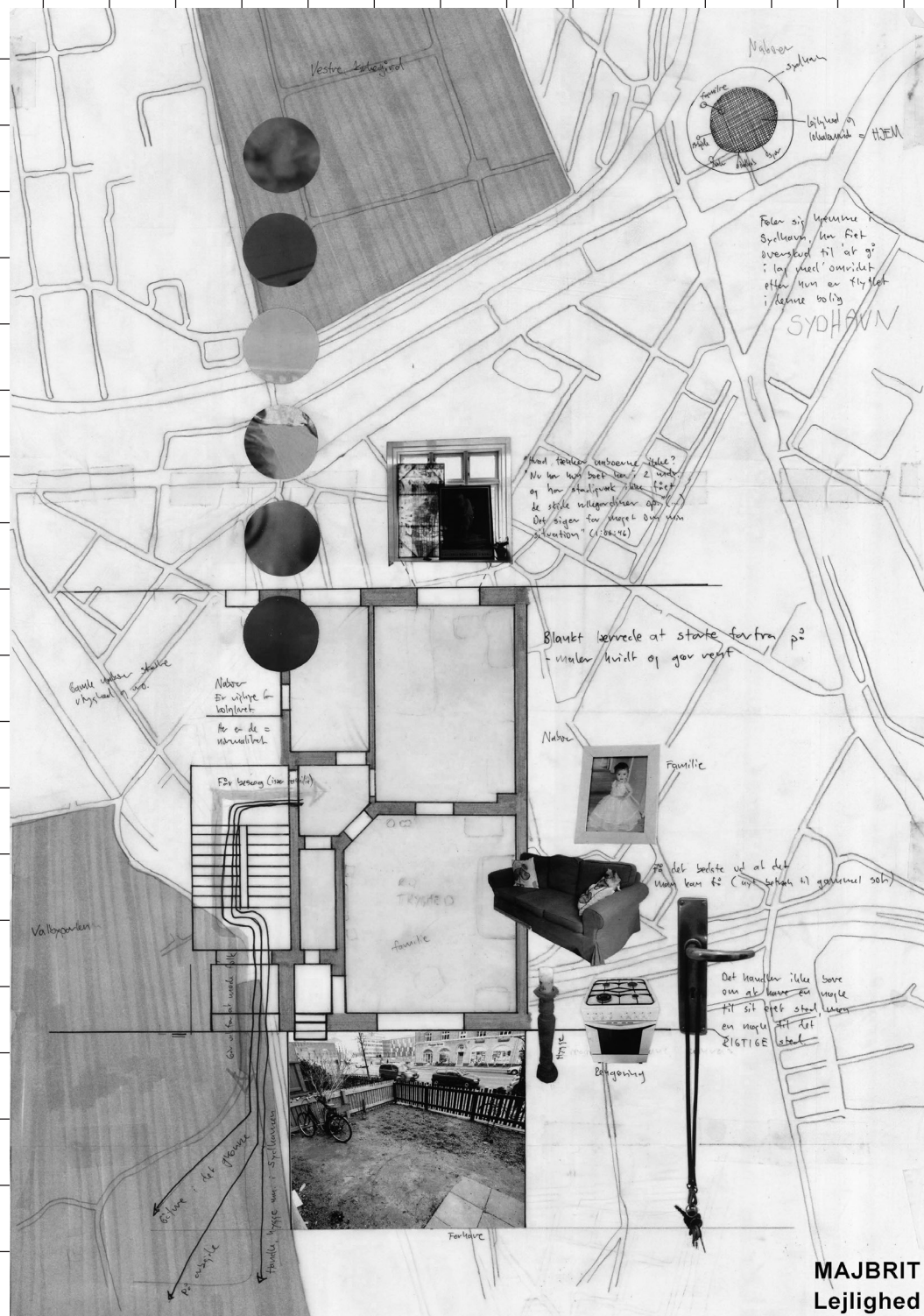
database structures, while revisiting the originals and the sites of their preservation and reproduction. Spurious materials that are not part of the collections are also included in order to address the ‘unsaid’ of, or ‘unfit’ for, the colonial archive. Objects like the iconic ‘Hygeia’ water bottle, for example, are not preserved in any ethnographic museum but can be purchased in antique shops in Indonesia. Working with digital objects, absent items and forged storylines reveal our intention to question what happens not only within the physical archive, but also in the absence of materiality, in the process of fabrication, between abstractions and archival cavities.

Our methodology is open and experimental: it is an investigation of the collection’s materials as much as a reflective look into the logic of the archive itself – a logic that extends further into the workings of contemporary classification methods. The digitisation of the Tillema Collection, in fact, introduced the possibility to use digital tools and methods, including Machine Learning models for computer vision, object recognition and automatic annotation. While digital tools are not free of built-in biases and preconceptions, they might have the potential to open up and challenge certain existing perceptions.

In collaboration with Melvin Wevers (Assistant Professor Digital Methods at the Department of History, University of Amsterdam) we deployed digital tools trained on the Collection itself to re-sort, re-categorise, re-sequence the digitised materials, using both manual and automatic annotation tools that were introduced and tested in workshops and participatory sessions. Such processes produced the scripts, storyboards and visuals that inform the performative lectures and video essays. Situating a technology that measures, quantifies and renders information as objective reality in a critical and experimental context allowed us to tentatively unpack potentialities from the materials themselves, to challenge modern categories and hierarchies by breaking through established distinctions, navigating in different ways – to establish speculative connections that make counter-readings possible.

Keynote Lectures





The development of new visual tools is an important contribution of current architectural uses of ethnography. Collage by Laura Helene Højring, who uses collage techniques as a way of exploring homeliness among former homeless people.

Keynote lecture by Marie Stender (Aalborg University)

# Ethnography in the Hands of Architects

There have always been overlapping interests between architecture and ethnography: ethnographers have studied local building techniques and socio-spatial organisation of villages and longhouses around the world, and architects have sought inspiration in so-called vernacular architecture.<sup>1</sup> Recently the two disciplines have, however, moved closer, experimenting with new ways of collaborating and combining approaches. Not just in places with ‘architecture without architects’, but also in the big cities, public spaces, institutions, workplaces and residential neighbourhoods that most architects are more familiar with.<sup>2</sup> They have come together around ‘architecture with architects’, one could say. The focus of this paper is such new ways of combining approaches in these contexts, but before I turn to this task, allow me just a few clarifications of concepts.

First, ethnography is the description of ‘ethnos’, a particular group of people, whereas anthropology is the scientific study of human beings, with social anthropology focussing on humans as social beings. As Tim Ingold writes: ‘Ethnography aims to describe life as it is lived and experienced, by a people, somewhere, sometime. Anthropology, by contrast, is an inquiry into the conditions and possibilities of human life in the world’.<sup>3</sup> Anthropology thus has a more theoretical aim, but often builds on ethnography. As I have elsewhere discussed and promoted the concept of architectural anthropology as a way for architects and anthropologists to think and act together, I prefer to use this concept and shall return later to how it may distinguish from ethnography for architects or architectural uses of ethnography.<sup>4</sup> Second: Vernacular architecture, or architecture without architects, is a somewhat problematic concept from an anthropological and an ethnographic point of view, as it rests on reductionist and romanticist representations of ‘the other’.<sup>5</sup> Whereas early anthropologists, in their descriptions of foreign peoples, implicitly or explicitly compared ‘them’ and ‘us’, current anthropologists aim to break with such oppositions and treat each empirical setting with equal rigour.<sup>6</sup> Hence, ethnographic fieldwork and anthropological theory is not just relevant to apply among ‘them’ but also among ‘us’, and many anthropologists today work in their own societies. This ‘turning home’

- 1 Victor Buchli, *An Anthropology of Architecture* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
- 2 Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture Without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1965).
- 3 Tim Ingold, “Anthropology contra ethnography,” *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 7, no.1 (2017): 21–26.
- 4 Marie Stender, Claus Bech-Danielsen and Aina Landsverk Hagen, “Architectural anthropology: An introduction” in *Architectural Anthropology: Exploring Lived Space* (New York: Routledge, 2021); Marie Stender, “Towards an Architectural Anthropology: What architects can learn from anthropology and vice versa,” *Architectural Theory Review* 21, no.1 (2017): 27–43.
- 5 Marcel Vellinga, “The noble vernacular,” *The Journal of Architecture* 18, no. 4 (2013): 570–590.
- 6 Stender, Bech-Danielsen, and Hagen, “Architectural anthropology: An introduction.”

makes their work more relevant to architects, and in the Nordic countries, architects and anthropologists today often collaborate around urban development projects, design of hospitals, schools, housing etc. In addition to this, junior architectural researchers often draw inspiration from anthropological and ethnographic methods. Conversely, the material, spatial and post-humanist turn in social science have prompted anthropologists to pay more attention to architecture, built environments and other non-humans.

There are obvious benefits of such cross-disciplinary endeavours in practice as well as in research: Ethnographers can draw inspiration from architectural approaches to spatial settings, built environments and material surroundings, whereas architects may turn to ethnography for new ways of involving users, exploring everyday life or studying social effects of spatial interventions. However, in such cross- and interdisciplinary approaches, the two disciplines are not just combined – they also transform and evolve by engaging with each other. In this paper, I reflect on how ethnography transforms in the hands of architects, and focus specifically on contemporary Nordic architectural research inspired by ethnography. I draw on examples from the activities in the Nordic Research Network for Architectural Anthropology and experiences from a series of PhD-courses in architectural anthropology, and point to both potentials and pitfalls in mixing disciplines. In the following, I outline and discuss three characteristics of current architectural uses of ethnography.

### THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW, POWERFUL VISUAL TOOLS

Aiming to develop a method of architectural anthropology, Albena Yaneva lists 6 suggestions with the fourth being ‘Visualise and amplify!’<sup>7</sup> To my perspective, this is the most important methodological invention. When I browse through papers and presentations from PhD-courses, conferences and workshops in architectural anthropology, the development of new visual tools appears as the most clear-cut contribution of current architectural uses of ethnography. Visual ethnography and anthropology has a long and vivid tradition, yet there is considerable potential in recent ways of combining ethnographic approaches to participant observation, interviews etc. with architectural skills in registration and visual communication. Diagrams, plans, drawings, photos and collages can help analyse and communicate the analysis of data visually and often more aesthetically and readily available than when analysing and communicating through texts and photos exclusively. If done well, such tools can bring dwelling practices, everyday routes, spatial relations, social exchange, networks and building processes to life in new and powerful ways.

As part of the material and post-humanist turns, anthropologists have discussed for the last couple of decades how to focus more on the agency

7 Marie Stender, Claus Bech-Danielsen and Aina Landsverk Hagen, “Architectural anthropology: An introduction” in *Architectural Anthropology: Exploring Lived Space* (New York: Routledge, 2021); Marie Stender, “Towards an Architectural Anthropology: What architects can learn from anthropology and vice versa,” *Architectural Theory Review* 21, no.1 (2017): 27–43.

of non-humans. As Holbraad writes: ‘Things do speak (...) but the problem is how to hear them past all the things we say about them.’<sup>8</sup> Part of this problem has to do with the ethnographic preference for words, and here the architectural use of images, plans, and diagrams may be one way to make things and material surroundings speak, especially when combined with ethnographic attention to how things take part in our social life. Of course, one could question whether these visual tools necessarily represent things better than what texts could do. Visual representations are still representations, but may – at least if well done – represent things in stimulating ways that can be easier accessible also for the layperson.

Thus, Yaneva is precise in connecting the verbs visualise and amplify, as the power of these visual tools lies exactly in their ability to intensify and make apparent certain things or socio-spatial relations. A picture is worth a thousand words, as the cliché has it, yet sometimes the picture may therefore also steal the focus from the words, leaving an over simplistic impression. I recognise this dilemma from some of my own research projects, where we have used diagrams and illustrations as part of the architectural anthropological approach. In some cases the diagrams were so successful for popular communication that they ended up overshadowing the more nuanced written conclusions. This stresses the need to consider visual tools not just as mere and innocent illustrations but to put effort into developing them as integrated parts of the analytical process and cross-disciplinary approach.

### THE DISCONNECTION BETWEEN METHOD AND THEORY

Architectural education and research are currently transformed to meet the standards of the universities, that also imply a stronger focus on academic research. Here some researchers in architecture, not least junior researchers as already described, have embraced ethnographic methods like fieldwork, participant observation, and qualitative interviews. Ethnography offers a way of studying architecture’s effect on social life that may be much more relevant and nuanced than pseudo-positivist attempts of providing evidence-based design. However, such cross-disciplinary approaches often disregard or pay less attention to the theoretical basis that originally informed such methods and hence the analysis of the collected data.

This particular point is something that worries researchers at anthropology departments. For this reason I was myself until a few years ago hesitant towards engaging in architectural anthropology, though I have been working with architecture since I graduated. When I was a student at Copenhagen University many years ago, we were encouraged to stick to our mother-disciplines, rather than involving in such new hybrids and hyphen-anthropologies that were regarded as something diluting disciplinary virtues.

8 Martin Holbraad, “Can the Thing Speak?,” *Open Anthropology Cooperative Press* (2011): 11. <http://openanthcoop.net/press/2011/01/12/can-the-thing-speak/>.



Yet, I have come to realise that working with architecture and writing for architects inevitably affects the anthropology you conduct. Furthermore, numerous architectural researchers are inspired by anthropology and ethnography already. So rather than trying to avoid that, I suggest that we try to develop and qualify this cross-disciplinary field. However, this also means stressing that anthropology – or ethnography for that matter – cannot be reduced to methodological tools like fieldwork, participant observation and qualitative interviews. It also implies at least some acquaintance with anthropological theory.

One characteristic of many architectural uses of ethnography is thus a rather different take on ‘the social’. There seem to be a preference for studying either crowds (or even human beings in general) or alternatively individuals rather than identifying and studying social groups, communities and relationships. Some turn to auto-ethnography, documenting their own routines or experiences as representing ‘users’ in general, building on the architectural tradition of making judgements based on a ‘first-person perspective.’<sup>9</sup> Others wholeheartedly engage in fieldwork, interviews etc. to gain valuable insight in other people’s practices and lived experience, yet sometimes seem to miss ‘the social.’ They register, analyse and pile up routes, experiences and statements but may still lack the tools to grasp the social relationships that unite and divide them. One cannot reject that there is also innovative potential in such approaches – or disregards of the social, yet it appears that there is still further potential in exploring sociality among humans and non-humans as part of the architectural use of ethnography.

THE URGE TO CHANGE THE WORLD, RATHER THAN JUST EXPLORE IT AS IT IS

Though ethnography is no innocent discipline, current ethnography rests in contrast with architecture on the ideal of a non-normative approach to any social setting: the virtue of the anthropologist or ethnographer is to learn from the people they study, rather than to impose their own values and ideas on them. Architects, on the contrary, typically bring about a firm sense of quality and an ambition of adding to a setting, rather than just describing it. This can also be seen as a matter of different temporalities, as noted by Jamer Hunt: ‘The ethnographer works in ever greater detail to ensure that she has got the present just right (...)The designer uses the present – and uses it often imperfectly – as a provisional leaping off point for re-imagining possible futures.’<sup>10</sup>

His characterisation of the designer’s future-focus goes for the architect as well, and for architects ethnography is typically not a means to describe, but rather to qualify their ways of recreating and improving a given setting.

9 Linda Wang and David Groat, *Architectural Research Methods* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2002), 229.  
10 Jamer Hunt, “Prototyping the social: Temporality and speculative futures at the intersection of design and culture,” in *Design Anthropology*, ed. A. J. Clarke (Vienna: Springer-Verlag, 2011).

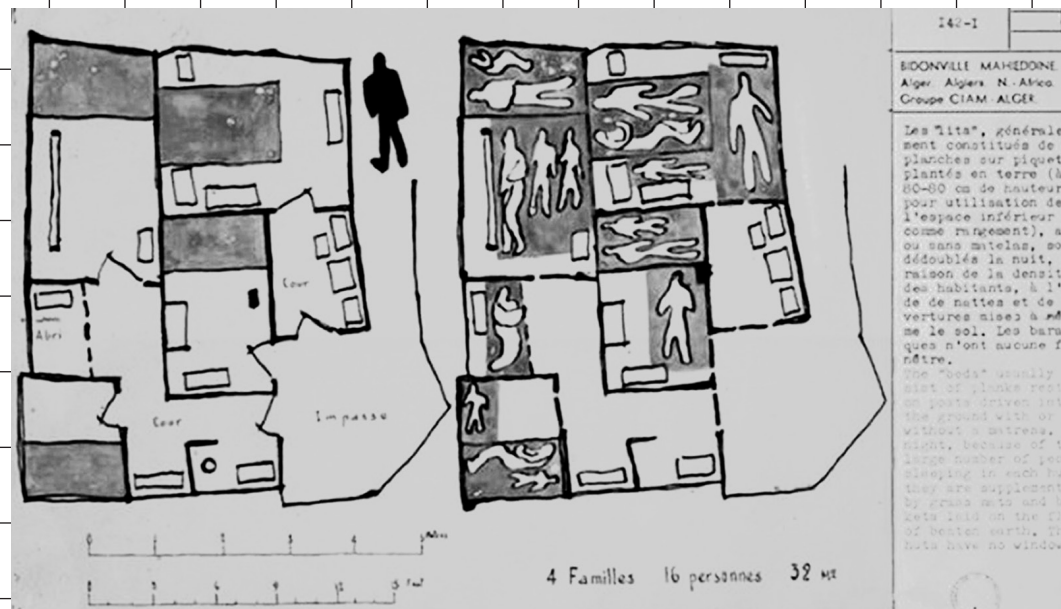
Architects are not afraid to talk about quality and whether something is good or not, whereas anthropologists trained in a paradigm of cultural relativism are more comfortable in questioning such values: Quality according to who? Good in what perspectives etc.? The architectural concept of quality might seem slightly elitist from an anthropological point of view, and anthropologists often like to think of themselves as a friend of the native, the people, even the underdog. Yet, we need not uphold this distinction between anthropology as that which describes, and architecture as that which changes. The important contribution lies in combining the questioning of given values with the creation of something new. As suggested by Ingold, this may in fact be the fundamental difference between ethnography for architects on the one hand side, and architectural anthropology on the other: That the latter regards architecture not as mere buildings but as a mode of inquiry, and anthropology not just as a way to collect data about people, but also an inquiry into current conditions and future possibilities of life. In Ingold’s words: ‘Anthropology and architecture, in opening to a more-than-human world (...) are also opening to one another, even melding with one another, in their common bearing on the design of environments for future collective life’ (ibid.)<sup>11</sup>

CONCLUSION

Though praised and promoted in many contexts, cross-disciplinarity holds the risk of starting at the lowest common denominator. Combining architecture and anthropology may lead us to something that qualifies neither as proper architecture nor as proper anthropology. Yet, as I have argued in this paper, there is also remarkable potential in exploring and further developing their overlaps and common bearings. It is in overcoming the differences between them, or in navigating consciously between them, that we can develop new and productive ways of approaching not just built environments but current and future conditions of life. I have outlined three characteristics of current architectural uses of ethnography: the development of new, powerful visual tools, the disconnection between method and theory, and the urge to change the world rather than just explore it as it is. These characteristics hold both potentials and pitfalls, but a key point is that ethnography transforms in the hands of architects. We have to be aware of these alterations to turn them into potentials rather than pitfalls. In that way, mixing disciplines can promote a more engaged, active and visually, materially and spatially oriented ethnography, and a more sound, explorative and socially critical architecture.

11 Tim Ingold, “Foreword” in *Architectural Anthropology: Exploring Lived Space*, eds. Stender, Bech-Danielsen and Hagen (New York: Routledge, 2021).





Roland Simounet, *Grille de Groupe CIAM Alger*, CIAM 9, 1953–1954.

Keynote lecture by Hilde Heynen (KU Leuven)

## The Vernacular as Counterimage: Why Modernism Needed Ethnography

In the postwar period, it became increasingly clear that architectural modernism was not really able to charm the masses and to become popularly adopted. Modernist architects blamed commercialism, which embraced kitsch and pseudo-styles rather than the purity of avant-garde aesthetics. Searching for a way out of this dilemma, many architects became interested in vernacular architecture, which they saw as a more authentic version of an 'architecture for the people'. Especially the vernacular of non-industrialised people was of interest to them – hence the need to study this folk culture through ethnography.



# The Observers Observed: Architectural Uses of Ethnography

This year’s conference of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre investigates the many ways architecture has taken an interest in ethnography to realign and expand its disciplinary scope and societal roles. Historically, ethnography is not an innocent discipline though, as it is firmly embedded in colonial and capitalist logics and their eurocentric knowledge production. At the same time, ethnography provided, and offers still, new insights and inspiration to help improve people’s everyday lives, and to innovate planning practice for the benefit of the greatest number. To paraphrase James Clifford’s words, ethnography today also offers the conceptual tools to break up and redistribute colonial power, to expand communication and intercultural exchange, to embrace ambiguity, diversity and multi-vocality. Between architecture and ethnography, what might be the lessons from the past and for today?

Ethnography, and its related fields of archaeology, anthropology and sociology, have consistently accompanied the development of modern architecture, its manifold re-conceptualisations and its innovations, from the days of the Grand Tour to Gottfried Semper’s Caribbean Hut, to the interest in street life in the work of Alison and Peter Smithson, the playgrounds of Aldo van Eyck or Lina Bo Bardi’s interest in folk arts. Today, ethnography is part and parcel of architectural thinking as we can witness from design and teaching approaches to thematic books, journals, conferences, exhibitions and international architecture Biennales, including, more recently, the São Paulo Biennale of 2019 dedicated to the theme of the Everyday, and the 2021 Venice international architecture exhibition devoted to the question ‘How will we live together?’.

The consistent interest of architects in ethnography comes with a taste for exploring new media and methods for visual communication and representation. Especially, the proliferation of new drawing methods is striking, as exemplified by the work of Atelier Bow-Wow and their proposition for an Architectural Behaviorology. On the other hand, the Office for Political Innovation of Andrés Jaque pioneers social media to understand the emergence of new sexual-social configurations and the coexistence with other living beings in different environments. In the meantime, photography of urban scenes and domestic interiors, and the deep mapping of territories belong to the standard tool box used in architectural research and design.

Ethnography is deployed to understand emerging patterns of appropriation and use, and configurations of social and symbolic meaning, to understand others and differences, while it simultaneously produces others and



differences. The ethnographic methodology is also turned around, and works as a mirror for self-reflection and transformation. As a reflective and exploitative practice, ethnography disrupts and expands architecture, as so many fields of knowledge outside of the architectural discipline.

For this conference, we seek contributions that highlight the transformative power of observational and participatory research in architectural design and its education. We are interested in contributions that look at new interdisciplinary methodologies building on ethnography and anthropology, which highlight such disruption and expansion, to move beyond universalist abstraction and essentialisms, to make visible the polyphony of practices that make up the everyday fabric of our multiplicitous lives.

To open up our conversations on ethnography and architecture, and its potentials, we suggest the following directions to explore by prospective conference participants:

- Ethnography and ecology, beyond the human, post-human, more-than-human
- Ethnography and polyphony, intersectional approaches, feminist, queer, and crippling
- Ethnographies of care
- Urban ethnographies, the festival and the everyday
- Relational ethnography and dynamic communities of change
- Migrants, colonial histories, Black criticism and interrogations of whiteness
- Ethnography and the impact of technology, especially social media
- Ethnography and the decolonisation of the architectural curriculum
- And in a Latourian turn, the ethnography of ethnography, the observers observed

Where is architecture in this broad and multi-layered field, as a designed space or gesture, intervening, generating, interacting, regenerating, hybridizing, conditioning, still accommodating? As a discipline of othering, control and surveillance, as a regime of hygiene, but also as a gesture of care and repair, as a tool for economic redistribution of opportunity and emancipation of the people, as an environment for chance encounter and a playground or stage for socializing, as a transformative practice creating communities that may thrive and grow? And most importantly, to once again reference Aldo van Eyck: for whom and by whom?

# Biographies

## AINA LANDSVERK HAGEN

Aina Landsverk Hagen, Senior Researcher, Work Research Institute, Oslo Metropolitan University. Ph.D. in social anthropology from the University of Oslo on collaborative creativity among architects in Oslo and New York. She researches topics like urban development, youth participation, freedom of speech, innovation and idea development, and is the co-editor of *Media management and Digital transformation* (2019) and, *Architectural Anthropology: Exploring lived space* (2021).

## ALEJANDRO CAMPOS URIBE

Alejandro Campos is an Architect (TU Valencia + TU Eindhoven, 2013), Ph.D. in Architecture (Awarded *Summa Cum Laude*, TU Valencia, 2018) and a student of B.Phil in Philosophy (UNED Spain). He is currently a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Individual Fellow (Postdoctoral Researcher) at the Department of Architecture, Delft University of Technology (Netherlands) and Research Associate at the Research Centre for Material Culture (Netherlands), where he works on his project *Multiculturalism in the work of Aldo and Hannie van Eyck. Rethinking universalist notions in architecture*. He is also a Lecturer at Escuela de Arquitectura FAD, Universidad Finis Terrae (Chile) where he teaches History of Postwar Architecture, and Visiting Researcher at Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam. His research focuses in the history of post-war architecture, particularly the work of Team 10 and Aldo van Eyck, while his most important contribution to the field is his Ph.D., *Aldo van Eyck: le Musée Imaginaire*, an exercise of architectural anthropology that explores the Van Eycks family house in the Netherlands.

## AMINA KASKAR

Amina Kaskar is a South African architect, having obtained a Masters in Architecture from the University of the Witwatersrand in 2014 and completed a Masters in Human Settlements in 2018. She was awarded the Global Minds scholarship in 2020 to complete a Ph.D. research at KU Leuven. Her proposed Ph.D. is entitled *Afro-Indo Agendas: South Asian female migration to South Africa and the shaping of urban space*. Her work is predominantly formed with ideas towards gender and migration, exploring new categories in which the city can be investigated. She co-founded Counterspace, a collaborative architectural studio dedicated to architectural projects, exhibition design, art installations, public events curation, and urban design. During her time at Counterspace, 2014–2020, Counterspace was commissioned to design the Serpentine Pavilion 2020 and was listed in the top 100 architecture firms in the world by Domus Magazine.

## AURÉLIE GRIVEAUX

Aurelie is a French Architect, she completed her masters in Architecture at the TU Delft in January 2020. Her academic work focused on gender concerns in India. After graduating, she co-founded MOR studio, an architecture and engineering office focused on sustainable architecture. As an architect, Aurelie focuses on user-centred design, inclusivity and on the power of sketching as design and communication tool.

## BARSHA AMARENDRA

Barsha Amarendra is a Doctoral Candidate at the Department of Design in the Indian Institute of Technology, Guwahati. For her doctoral studies, she is working on the project of *Creating a strategic framework for the development of heritage-based tourism in the tea landscapes of Assam*. Her interest in the project stems from her previous experience of working with heritage estates during her graduation thesis under the Chair of Landscape Architecture at the Delft University of Technology, the Netherlands. Her research seeks to unveil the making of Northeast India's diverse cultural landscapes and the built heritage therein, focusing on aspects of lived experiences in spaces and architectural vocabulary creation through ethnographic engagement. Notable amongst her previous work is the publication 'Role of cultural sustainability of a tribe in developing a timeless cultural landscape: a case study of the Apatani tribe' in the *Archaeologica Hereditas Journal*.

## BRUNA MONTUORI

Bruna Montuori is designer and Ph.D. Candidate at the School of Architecture, Royal College of Arts. She holds a Master degree at Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo da Universidade de São Paulo. Bruna is postgraduate research at the Participatory Geographies Research Group and is co-founder of the research group Por um design relacional at FAU-USP. She currently works as a designer for the organisation Redes da Maré in Rio de Janeiro. Her recent publications are *Decolonial Perspectives for a Pluriversal Design* (2021) and *Towards Relational Practices in Design* (2019). Her work engages with decolonial and feminist theories in relation to design, social movements, insurgent planning and representation.

## CLAIRE BOSMANS

Claire Bosmans is a PhD Candidate at the OSA urbanism and architecture research group, International Centre of Urbanism. As part of her interdisciplinary research, she is affiliated to both the Department of Architecture and the Department of Anthropology of KU Leuven. She holds a Master's in Architecture from the Brussels based LOCI Faculty of UCLouvain and a post-Master's in Urbanism and Strategic Planning

from KU Leuven. Under the co-supervision of Viviana d'Auria, Bruno de Meulder (OSA, Department of Architecture) and Ching Lin Pang (IMMRC, Department of Anthropology), her research focuses on post-war social housing estates in central Brussels and the lived experience of their residents in the context of urban renovation, combining architecture, urbanism and ethnography through visualisation methods.

## CURT GAMBETTA

Curt Gambetta is a historian and designer. He is currently a Visiting Critic at Cornell University and is completing his dissertation at Princeton University, *Mold House, Mud House, Marble House: an anthropology of substitution in postcolonial India*. Synthesising ethnography and historical research, the project considers how material substitutes have been used to translate new social and technical ideals about the modern home to situations of technological delay and economic constraint in India. In parallel to this project, he is writing a book about histories fieldwork in architecture, *Fieldwork After Modernism*, which considers different examples of fieldwork in the Global South and de-industrialising North during the 1970s and 80s. Prior to joining the Ph.D. program at Princeton, he was the Peter Reyner Banham Fellow at the University at Buffalo School of Architecture and Planning and a teaching fellow at Woodbury University in Los Angeles. Curt is co-editor of *Attention Audio Journal*.

## DESIRÉE VALADARES

Desiree Valadares is a researcher and heritage practitioner trained in landscape architecture and architectural history. She writes about land, territoriality, and empire in Canada and the US. with a focus on the aftermath of Asian migration (wartime forced relocation) and indigenous intersections in the Pacific. Valadares is a Ph.D. Candidate in the Architecture: History, Theory and Society Program at UC Berkeley. Her dissertation was awarded the 2019 Carter Manny Citation of Special Recognition in the Research Category from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts. From 2019–20, Valadares was a Guest Editor at *The Avery Review* and her writings appear in *The Funambulist*, *Places Journal*, *The Avery Review*, and *Aggregate: Architectural History Collaborative*. Valadares is an incoming Assistant Professor of Geographies of Settler Colonial Canada and an Affiliate Faculty in Asian Canadian and Asian Migration Studies at the University of British Columbia.

## DIEGO INGLEZ DE SOUZA

Diego Inglez de Souza (São Paulo, 1978) is an architect and urban planner by the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism of University of São Paulo



(2003), Ph.D. in History and Architecture by the same institution in cotutelle with the Université Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne (2014). Assistant curator of the X International Architecture Bienal of São Paulo (2013) and of the exhibitions Infinite Span – 80 years of Brazilian architecture (Casa da arquitetura, Matosinhos, 2018–19 and SESC 24 de Maio, São Paulo, 2021) and The sea is our land, (Garagem Sul/ Centro Cultural de Belém, Lisbon, 2020–21). Teacher of Catholic University of Pernambuco between 2015 and 2019, fellow researcher at Laboratory of Landscape, Heritage and Territory (Lab2PT) of the University of Minho (2019–21), working on the *The Sea and the Shore, Architecture and Marine Biology: The Impact of Sea Life on the Built Environment* research project, coordinated by André Tavares. Author of the book *Reconstruindo Cajueiro Seco: arquitetura, cultura popular e política social em Pernambuco* (1960–64), published by FAPESP/ Annablume (2010), chapters of books and several articles and papers published on Brazilian, European and American journals, magazines and exhibition catalogues.

#### DIRK VAN DEN HEUVEL

Dirk van den Heuvel is an associate professor at Delft University of Technology, and co-founder and head of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre at Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam. Van den Heuvel received a Richard Rogers Fellowship from Harvard University in 2017, and was a Visiting Scholar at Monash University in 2019. He was curator of the Dutch national pavilion for the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2014. Other exhibitions include *Changing Ideals. Rethinking the House* (Bureau Europa, 2008), *Structuralism* (HNI 2014, with H. Hertzberger), and *Art on Display 1949–69* (Calouste Gulbenkian Museum 2019, with P. Curtis). Publications include *Habitat: Ecology Thinking in Architecture* (2020, with J. Martens and V. Sanz), *Jaap Bakema and the Open Society* (2018), *Architecture and the Welfare State* (2015, with M. Swenarton and T. Avermaete), *Team 10: In Search of a Utopia of the Present 1953–1981* (2005, with M. Risselada), *Alison and Peter Smithson: From the House of the Future to a House of Today* (2004, with M. Risselada).

#### DORINA PLLUMBI

Dorina Plumbi practices postcolonial and feminist thinking in relation to the field of architecture. In her doctoral studies at the Faculty of Architecture, at TU Delft, she explores the theme of collectivity as material and spatial engagement in realities of political transition. Her aim is the learning from non-canonical realities and discourses, starting from her lived experience as born and raised in a country going through drastic transformation like Albania. Her writings have appeared in several Albanian press and cultural journals, at the Danish journal *Politiken*, and at the *Architectural Review*, and at the peer reviewed journal *Architecture and Culture*. In press is a critical article to the coming issue of Architectural Design, and her forthcoming chapter contribution at the book *Design Commons: Practices, Processes and Crossovers* (2021).

#### FATMA TANIS

Fatma Tanis (Dalyan, 1990) is a Ph.D. candidate and tutor at TU Delft and the coordinator of Jaap Bakema Study Centre at Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam. Tanis trained as an architect in Istanbul and Stuttgart. She holds Master's degrees in Architectural History (ITU) and Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage (MSGSU). After living in Bodrum, Izmir, Porto, and Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, where she deepened her interest in port cities, she has started her doctoral research on port city culture in Izmir at the Department of Architecture, TU Delft. Tanis has been a guest editor of Spool, the journal for Architecture and the Built Environment. Her publications include 'Space, Representation, and Practice in the Formation of Izmir during the Long Nineteenth Century,' (with C. Hein) in *Migrants and the Making of the Urban-Maritime World: Agency and Mobility in Port Cities, c. 1570–1940*, eds. Christina Reimann, Martin Öhman (New York, London: Routledge, 2020); and a themed Issue "Narratives# 1: Mediterranean and Atlantic cities" (2021, with F. van der Hoeven and L. Schrijver).

#### FÉLIX REIGADA

Félix Reigada (1972) Architect, Universidad Central (2016), Master in Urbanism Universidad de Chile (2021). In 2010 he was co-founder of aritziaLAB in Santiago de Chile, developing various investigations and exhibition. He is co-author of the books *Neoliberalism and Urban Development in Latin América* (London, 2017) and *SANTIAGO BABYLON Inmigración: espacio, prácticas y representación* (Santiago, 2017). *REATICULATED DIASPORA. Power, Economy & Politics. 13th Biennale Cairo "Eyes East Bound"* (Cairo, 2019). *Otrxs Fronterxs – Histories of migration, racism and (dis) rootedness, Museum of Memory and Human Rights*, (Santiago 2019–2020) He is currently a teacher at Universidad de Las Américas, in Santiago de Chile. He is also part of the consulting team in the *Study of Night Dynamics of the Matta-Madrid polygon* in the city of Santiago. Belonging to the Neighbourhood Revitalisation Program and Emblematic Heritage Infrastructure (PRBIPE) – Inter-American Development Bank.

#### FREDERICO VERGUEIRO COSTA

Frederico Costa is an architect and doctoral candidate at the University of Campinas (UNICAMP) in Brazil. Master from the University of São Paulo (USP), with research in the areas of theory, history and criticism of architecture and urbanism. He has worked in cultural institutions in architectural events and curation activities.

## GEORGE SEDUPANE

George Sedupane is a PhD candidate at the North West University studying Batswana Indigenous Architecture. He has a BSc in Complementary Health Sciences, Bachelor of Phytotherapy and a Masters in Child and Family Studies. George also lectures in the Indigenous Knowledge System Centre.

## GREGORY ELIAS CARTELLI

Gregory Cartelli is a researcher and PhD Candidate in the History and Theory of Architecture at Princeton University and a consultant-at-large for the design firm Studio Ghraawi. He holds a Certificate in the History of Science from Princeton University, a Masters of Environmental Design from Yale School of Architecture, a BA in Photography from Bard College, and is based in Princeton, NJ and New York City. He works at the intersection of the histories of architecture, media, and the human sciences. His dissertation, *Disarticulations: Architecture, Technique, and the Ethnography of Habitation: 1941–1955* examines the architectural consequences of methodological and discursive practices of analysis developed between architects, designers, and ethnographers in mid-century France.

## HILDE HEYNEN

Hilde Heynen is a professor of architectural theory at the University of Leuven, Belgium. Her research focuses on issues of modernity, modernism and gender in architecture. In *Architecture and Modernity: A Critique* (MIT Press, 1999) she investigated the relationship between architecture, modernity, and dwelling. She also engaged with the intersection between architecture and gender studies, resulting in the volume *Negotiating Domesticity* (co-edited with Gulsum Baydar, Routledge, 2005). She co-edited the 2012 Sage Handbook of Architectural Theory (with Greig Crysler and Stephen Cairns). More recently she published an intellectual biography of Sibyl Moholy-Nagy (Bloomsbury, 2019; Sandstein, 2019).

## IGNACIO G. GALÁN

Ignacio G. Galán is a New York-based architect and historian. He works as Assistant Professor at Barnard College, Columbia University. His scholarship addresses the relationship between architecture, politics, and media, with a particular focus on nationalism, colonialism, and migration as well as questions of diversity and access in design practice and education. He has published in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, *The Journal of Architecture*, and *Architectural Review* among others and has co-edited the volumes *After Belonging* (Lars Muller, 2016) and *Radical Pedagogies* (MITP forthcoming). His work expands the reach of architectural history through diverse media and collaborative platforms, and has resulted in

installations at the Venice Biennale 2014 and 2021, the Lisbon Triennale 2013, and the Centre for Architecture in New York in addition to co-curating the Oslo Triennale 2016. His work as a designer is part of the permanent collection of the Pompidou Centre.

## JEFFREY HOGREFE

Jeffrey Hogrefe is Professor of Humanities and Media Studies, the co-founder of the Architecture Writing Program and In Search of African American and Indigenous Space Research Collective, and Affiliate Faculty in the Graduate Program in Performance Studies at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, N.Y.. As an Oglala Lakota Sundance person and a transdisciplinary scholar and creative practitioner, he works on a collective pedagogy in aesthetics and politics in emerging, discrete communities. With Scott Ruff, he is the co-editor of *In Search of African American Space Redressing Racism* (Lars Müller, 2020) and he is the co-creator of *The Abolitionist Landscape Project*, a cultural remapping of the Potomac River Valley that reveals the memory of the African and Indigenous diaspora.

## JENNY B. OSULDSSEN

Jenny B. Osuldsen, Landscape Architect, Partner in the architectural firm Snøhetta, Professor of Landscape Architecture, Norwegian University of Life Sciences. She is a Guest Professor at the Sustainable Urban Design Program at LTH, Lund University. Her practice, research and teaching focus are on the intersection of landscape architecture, urbanism and architecture looking for strong concepts in conversation with humans, context, and environment.

## JEROEN STEVENS

Jeroen Stevens is an architect and urbanist, currently engaged as a post-doctoral researcher in the OSA Research Group at KU Leuven and as Fulbright & BAEF Visiting Scholar at the GSAPP of Columbia University, New York. He holds a PhD in architecture and urbanism from the KU Leuven and the Mackenzie University in São Paulo. His research sounds out the particular agency of myriad and miscellaneous urban movements, as they drive the worldwide quest for more socially just cities. Drawing from active engagement in complex and challenging metropolitan environments, his work dwells on the theoretical and methodological nexus of urbanism and urban anthropology and is contingent on close collaboration with social movements, cultural collectives, human rights associations and governmental as well as academic institutions. Jeroen teaches courses in Urban Studies, Crisis & Urbanism and Architectural Theory at the KU Leuven, and his work has been published in edited book volumes and journals, including the *Radical Housing Journal*, *GeoForum*, *Journal of Urbanism* and the *Routledge Handbook on Informal Urbanisation*.

## JOSÉ ABÁSULO LLARÍA

José Abásulo Llaría (1975) Master in Architecture ETSAB (2006), and PhD candidate in Advanced Architectural Projects program Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Madrid, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid. From its beginnings in 2008 to 2012 it was part of URBZ with research in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Mumbai. In 2010 he founded ariztiaLAB in Santiago de Chile, developing various investigations and events. He is co-author of the books *Neoliberalism and Urban Development in Latin América* (London, 2017) and *SANTIAGO BABYLON Inmigración: espacio, prácticas y representación* (Santiago, 2017). His latest article is titled *The Architect as an ethnographer. Fieldwork and representation in Kon Wajiro's research, 1917–31*. He is currently Associate Professor and researcher, at the Universidad de las Américas, Chile, where he organizes Arquitectura & Etnografía Seminar.

## KLASKE HAVIK

Klaske Havik is Professor of *Methods of Analysis and Imagination* at Delft University of Technology. In her book *Urban Literacy. Reading and Writing Architecture* (2014), she related architectural and urban questions about the use, experience and imagination of place to literary language. In recent years, Klaske Havik has worked with her students on social-spatial topics such as the commons and urban narratives in both European and Latin-American contexts. Her editorial work includes the books *Writingplace, Investigations in Architecture and Literature* (2016) and *Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere* (2009) and multiple issues of architecture journal OASE, such as *OASE#98 Narrating Urban Landscapes* (2018), *OASE#91 Building Atmosphere* (2013), and *OASE#85 Productive Uncertainty* (2011). Klaske Havik initiated the Writingplace Journal for Architecture and Literature, and is chair of the EU Cost Action Writing Urban Places.

## LEEKE REINDERS

Leeke Reinders is an anthropologist who explores ways of thinking, sensing and doing the city. In his research, writing and education he focuses on the intersections between ethnographic fieldwork and practices of urban and architectural design. His primary interests lie in the anthropology of urban space as it relates to meanings of home and community, narrative cartography, the architecture of everyday life, and notions of re-use and bricolage. Reinders works at the Chair of Urban Architecture of TU Delft. He teaches design studios at KU Leuven in Brussels and Ghent, Design Academy in Eindhoven, Royal Academy of Art in The Hague, and the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture. He is currently preparing the book *Mapping the City* (on fieldwork, notation and visual storytelling) and on the (extra)ordinary of Coney Island. His recent publications are on visual anthropology (*Het gemankeerde (t)huis, Homing the Dutch and Hard city, soft city*).

## MARÍA NOVAS FERRADÁS

María Novas Ferradás is a Galician doctoral researcher in History of Architecture and Architectural Theory at Universidad de Sevilla, a lecturer and guest researcher at the History of Architecture and Urban Planning Research Group at TU Delft, and a senior lecturer at the Academy of Architecture, Tilburg. She holds an MSc in architecture from the Universidade da Coruña in Galicia, Spain. In addition, Novas holds post-master's degrees in Applied Research in Feminist Studies (UJI) and Urban Regeneration (USC). Novas has experience in publishing and editing, as well as teaching architectural history seminars (master history thesis), and research and critical thinking courses in architecture at Dutch and other international universities. She has been invited lecturer in Argentina (UBA, UNT), Brazil (UFBA), and Spain.

## MARIE STENDER

Marie Stender is an anthropologist and senior researcher in the Department of the Built Environment at Aalborg University, Denmark. She is the head of the research group Transformation of Housing and Places, the Vice Chairman of the Board at the Danish Town Planning Institute and the founder and project manager of the Nordic Research Network for Architectural Anthropology. Her research focus on architectural anthropology, disadvantaged neighborhoods, urban life, place-making, social sustainability, and the relationship between social life and built environments. Stender has organised PhD courses in Architectural Anthropology and she has edited the new Routledge anthology *Architectural Anthropology – Exploring Lived Space*. The book prompts architects and anthropologists to think and act together and includes a broad range of examples on how the two disciplines can be combined in new and productive ways.

## NAOMI STEAD

Naomi Stead is a Professor of Architecture at Monash University, Australia. She is an award-winning and widely-published architecture critic, presently architecture critic for *The Saturday Paper*. Her recent co-edited books include with Janina Gosseye and Deborah van der Plaats, *Speaking of Buildings: Oral History in Architectural Research* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2019); with Hélène Frichot, *Writing Architectures: Fictocritical Approaches* (Bloomsbury, 2020); and with Tom Lee, Ewan McEoin, and Megan Patty, *After The Australian Ugliness* (National Gallery of Victoria and Thames & Hudson, Melbourne, 2021). She was the leader of the Australian Research Council funded project *Equity and Diversity in the Australian Architecture Profession: Women, Work and Leadership*, which led to the co-founding (with Justine Clark and others) of Parlour, an activist group advocating for greater gender equity in architecture. Her current research explores the work-related wellbeing of architects and architecture students,



under the title *Architectural Work Cultures: professional identity, education and wellbeing*.

#### NELSON MOTA

Nelson Mota is associate professor at the Department of Architecture of Delft University of Technology, where he coordinates the Global Housing educational program and research group. His current pedagogical and research interests are focused on the reproduction of vernacular social and spatial practices in housing design and architectural education. He has been editing and publishing on history and theory of housing design, architecture education and visual ethnography in several formats and media outlets, including the books *A Arquitetura do Quotidiano* (2010), *Global Housing: Dwelling in Addis Ababa* (2020), the doctoral dissertation *An Archaeology of the Ordinary* (2014), *Footprint, The Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, *The Journal of Architecture*, and *Urban Planning* among others. He is production editor and a member of the editorial board of the journal *Footprint* and the book series *DASH*.

#### OXANA GOURINOVITCH

Oxana Gourinovitch, PhD, is an architectural historian, architect and curator; currently a senior researcher at the RWTH Aachen University. Trained as architect at the University of Arts in Berlin, she worked in Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Berlin; often in cooperation with artists, she contributed to exhibits, among others, at the Rotterdam Biennale and Witte de With Museum, Schering Stiftung in Berlin, Zacheta National Art Gallery in Warsaw, Contemporary Art Centre in Vilnius, and at the Biennale in Shanghai and Karachi. She conducted her PhD-research as a fellow of the Graduiertenkolleg *Identity and Heritage* at the TU Berlin and the Bauhaus-University in Weimar. Her book *National Theatre: Architecture of Soviet Modernism and Nation Building* is currently in preparation with Spector Books.

#### PAOLETTA HOLST

Paoletta Holst is an artist, architectural researcher and writer based in Brussels. She investigates the social, historical and political dimension of architecture and the urban environment. In 2016–2017 she was a Jan van Eyck participant. In 2019 she participated in the 900mdpl biennale in Kaliurang (Yogyakarta, Indonesia). Recently she published together with Mira Asriningtyas and Brigita Murti the book *What Bungalows Can Tell* (Onomatopée, 2021). She teaches history and theory of architecture and urbanism at the Rotterdam Academy of Architecture and works part time as editor for *Archined*. Paoletta Holst and Paolo Patelli are both Research Associates at the Research Centre for Material Culture (Leiden). Together, they are working on an independent artistic research project, whose

outcome will be an essay documentary as a refraction of the Tillema Collection, explored through the use of digital methods in participatory settings, to be released in 2022.

#### PAOLO PATELLI

Paolo Patelli works at the intersections of spatial practice and artistic research. He holds a PhD in Architecture from Politecnico di Milano. His work is research-based, empirically scaffolded in ethnographic observations, media excavations and archival mediations. He is a 2020/2021 Fellow at the Akademie Schloss Solitude; he was a Research Fellow at Het Nieuwe Instituut in 2019/20 and artist-in-residence at the Jan van Eyck Academie in 2017–2018. He teaches at the Design Academy Eindhoven and at the Sandberg Instituut.

#### PEDRO PITARCH

Pedro Pitarch, is architect (ETSAM, UPM) and contemporary musician (COM Caceres). He has been Steedman Fellow (Washington University, St Louis, 2017), Extraordinary Honour End of Studies Prize at the ETSAM (UPM, 2014), Archiprix International (Hunter- Douglas Award 2015) and Superscape · Future Urban Living Award (Wien, 2016). He is currently Associate Teacher at the Architecture Faculty of the Polytechnic University of Madrid (ETSAM-UPM). He has been a Teaching Fellow in Architectural Design at the Bartlett School of Architecture (University College of London). He has also given lectures at different universities in USA, UK Spain and Austria. His work has been exhibited at the 17th and 16th Venice Architecture Biennale, Seoul Biennale 2021, 2020 Triennale of Milan, 4th Lisbon Architecture Triennale, Architectus Omnibus, 9th EME3 and 2016 Vienna Design Week. He has received Prizes in several Architectural Competitions such as First Prize for the Restoration of the Central Cinema of Cartagena (Spain, 2020), Fifth Prize in 'Berlin Brandenburg 2070 – 100 Years of GrossBerlin' (Germany, 2020), Second Prize in 'Dom Competition' (Russia, 2018), Second Prize for 'New Cyprus Museum' (Cyprus, 2017), First Prize for Clesa Building Restoration (Madrid, 2015). He has been shortlisted for the Debut Award of the IV Lisbon Triennale of Architecture.

In 2015 he founded Pedro Pitarch Architectures & Urbanisms, an architectural office based in Madrid. He previously worked for OMA, Federico Soriano (S&Aa) and Burgos+Garrido. His projects and writings have been published in several magazines and platforms such as *Monu*, *e-Flux*, *Domus*, *Arquitectura Viva*, *Pasajes*, *El País*, *Archdaily* or *Bartlebooth*. He wanders in a somewhat tangential position to architectural practice, focusing on the interrelations between contemporary culture production and the construction of societies.

## ROHAN VARMA

Rohan Varma is an architect, tutor, and researcher based both in Mumbai and Amsterdam. He studied at the KRVIA, Mumbai, and worked for Charles Correa before receiving his Master's in Architecture with honourable mention from the TU Delft as a Tata and Mahindra Scholar. Currently, Varma divides his time as the Principal Architect of REP with his work at the TU Delft where his doctoral research and teaching activities focus on affordable housing design in the rapidly urbanising cities of South Asia. He regularly engages with both academic and public writing and has contributed papers and essays to a variety of publications such as *Learning from Mumbai* (2013), *Delft Architecture Studies on Housing* (2015), *Archdaily* (2016) and *The Routledge Handbook on Informal Urbanization* (2018). In 2018 he co-authored the book *Living Ideals* and co-curated an international travelling exhibition on the housing designs of the Indian architect and activist Charles Correa.

## SASCHA ROESLER

Prof. Dr. Sascha Roesler is an architect and theorist, working at the intersection of architecture, ethnography, and science and technology studies. Since 2016, he is the Swiss National Science Foundation Professor for Architecture and Theory at the Academy of Architecture in Mendrisio, Switzerland (Università della Svizzera Italiana). Roesler was appointed by SNSF to set up a new special research field on “architecture and urban climates;” within that framework, he leads a group of doctoral and postdoctoral researchers.

Roesler, who holds a doctorate from the ETH Zurich, has published widely on issues of global architecture, sustainability, and relocation. His articles have appeared both in international and national journals such as *Architectural Theory Review*, *Candide – Journal for Architectural Knowledge*, *ABE Journal – Architecture Beyond Europe*, *Les Cahiers de la recherche architecturale urbaine et paysagère*, *Future Cities Magazine*, *arch+*, *Stadtbauwelt*, *Forum Stadt*, *tec21*, *werk bauen + wohnen*, *archithese*, *Kunst + Architektur in der Schweiz*, and *NZZ*. His books comprise the first global history of architectural ethnography: “*Weltkonstruktion*” (Berlin 2013), and “*Habitat Marocain Documents*” (Zurich 2015), a volume on the transformation of a colonial settlement in Casablanca.

## SCOTT RUFF

Scott Ruff is Adjunct Professor of Architecture at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, NY, and has held academic positions at Syracuse University, Tulane University, Yale University, and Cornell University, among others. His scholarly work has been supported by grants from the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, and he has received awards for diversity, inclusion and community outreach from the American Institute

of Architects and Association for Collegiate Schools of Architecture. Ruff's articles include “Signifying: An African American Language to Landscape,” and “Spatial ‘wRapping’: A Speculation on Men's Hip-Hop Fashion,” and “Creative Practices in Afrosurrealism.” He is the co-editor of *In Search of African American Space Redressing Racism* (Lars Müller, 2020).

## SHANTI SUMARTOJO

Shanti Sumartojo is Associate Professor of Design Research in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture at Monash University (Australia), and a member of the Emerging Technologies Research Lab. Grounded in human geography, and with a strong commitment to interdisciplinary and collaborative scholarship, her research explores the entanglements of the spatial, digital, sensory and affective in people's experiential worlds. This includes investigations of how people experience various forms of design and technology in their surroundings, particularly in shared, public spaces and events. She has published and taught on digital, visual, sensory and design ethnographic methodologies, approaches that she uses in her research. Her recent books include *Geographies of Commemoration in a Digital World: Anzac@100* (With Danielle Drozdowski and Emma Waterton, 2021), *Atmospheres and the Experiential World* (with Sarah Pink, 2018) and *Uncertainty and Possibility: New Approaches to Future-Making in Design Anthropology* (with Yoko Akama and Sarah Pink, 2018).

## SILVIA BALZAN

Silvia Balzan is an architect, designer, and Ph.D. candidate at the Institute of Social Anthropology at the University of Basel. She was part of the SNSF-funded research project *Visual Communication in Urban Planning Processes* (2018–2021). She is co-founder of CIELab: a collaborative research and action lab focused on critical icono-ethnography.

Silvia holds a MA in Architecture from IUAV University of Venice, Italy, TU Delft, Netherlands, and an MA in Visual Communication and Iconic Research from Basel HGK FHNW, Switzerland. She was recently a research assistant for teaching institutions such as HGK FHNW and ETH Zurich, Chair of Architecture and Urban Design.

Silvia's current research focuses on analysing the social, cultural, and political aspects of the built environment as conceived during colonial modernity and today's role of this legacy through the disciplinary lens of architecture history and theory, and visual anthropology. Her current regional focus is Mozambique, Africa.

## SIMEON MATERECHER

Simeon Materechera is a Professor at the Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) Centre, involved in teaching and learning of IKS. His research interests include the use of Indigenous epistemologies in research and the integration of African Indigenous and Western knowledge systems. Simeon has various publications in the agriculture, soil sciences, climate change and indigenous knowledge systems.

## SOCRATES STRATIS

Socrates Stratis is a Ph.D. architect, urbanist, and activist for the urban commons, Associate Professor, at the Department of Architecture, University of Cyprus. He is a Fulbright Visiting Scholar at Parsons, New School of Design for the Fall 2021. His research focuses on the political agencies of architecture and urban design. He studies the strategic value of urban design, as well as the social dimensions of architecture plus, the ways they both transform into critical urban practices. He oscillates between diffractive practice and practice-based research, thanks to entanglements between teaching, practicing, curating, and writing. He enriches his research by operating in a highly contested territory, such as the Cypriot one, plus by having an active contribution to the becoming of young European urban design practices through my scientific position in EUROPEAN Europe. He is one of the main founders of the critical urban practice agency AA & U, Cyprus. The *Guide to Common Urban Imaginaries in Contested Spaces*, jovis. 2016 is one of his main editorial works. His curatorial and activist work involves the Cyprus participation in the 15th Venice Biennale of Architecture, ([www.contestedfronts.org](http://www.contestedfronts.org)), as well as the *Hands-on Famagusta* project ([www.handsonfamagusta.org](http://www.handsonfamagusta.org)).

## STÉPHANIE DADOUR

Stéphanie Dadour is an associate professor at the ENSA Paris-Malaquais. She is a member of the Architecture Culture Society (XIXth-XXIst centuries) laboratory at Ensa Paris-Malaquais and fellow at the French Collaborative Institute on Migrations. She is a member of the editorial team of Métropolitiques. In 2018, she co-founded Dadour de Pous architecture. Interested in domestic space and the societal projections associated with it, her early research allowed her to historicise the intersections between feminism and architecture. More recently, she mobilises feminist theories and epistemologies in her work, thus taking a critical look at architecture and its systems of ideas: histories, canonical texts and theories. Her publications include *Des voix s'élèvent : les féministes s'expriment* (Éditions de la Villette, 2021), *The Housing Project. Discourses, ideals, models and politics in 20th century exhibitions* (with G. Caramellino, Leuven University Press, 2020), and *Le Pôle Molière aux Mureaux*, (Archibooks, 2015).

## TANIA GUTIÉRREZ MONROY

Tania Gutierrez-Monroy is an architectural historian who recently completed a Ph.D. in architecture at McGill University (Montreal). Her research interests include spatial negotiations of identity, intersectionality in architecture, ephemeral architectures during conflict, and landscapes of Indigenous resistance. Gutierrez-Monroy's dissertation, *Domestic Landscapes at War: Women Transforming Space during the Mexican Revolution, 1910–1917*, examines how women of diverse social strata inscribed their active roles in the Mexican Revolution in the overlap between domestic and war spheres.

Gutierrez-Monroy received an Honors Bachelor of Architecture from Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México and a post-professional Master from McGill University. She is currently a Scholar-in-Residence (Emerging Scholar Fellow) at the University of Houston Gerald D. Hines College of Architecture and Design. Gutierrez-Monroy has practiced as an architect in Mexico and has taught architectural history, theory, design, and research methods at the University of Houston, the University of British Columbia, Louisiana State University, and Université Laval.

## THIAGO MAGRI BENUCCI

Thiago Magri Benucci is an architect and anthropologist working on architecture's intersections with indigenous knowledge and social anthropology. He is a professor at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at the Associação Escola da Cidade (São Paulo, Brazil) and holds a Master's degree in Social Anthropology from the University of São Paulo. Benucci has published in *Thresholds* (MIT Press Journals), *Piseagrama* (Belo Horizonte, Brazil) and *Cadernos de Campo* (University of São Paulo, Brazil).

## VANESSA GROSSMAN

Vanessa Grossman, is Assistant Professor with the Chair of Architecture & Dwelling at TU Delft Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment. She is an architect, a historian of modern and contemporary architecture, and a curator whose research focuses on architecture's intersections with ideology, power, housing, and governance, with a special focus on global practices in Cold War era Europe and Latin America. Her forthcoming book with Yale University Press, entitled *A Concrete Alliance: Communism and Modern Architecture in Postwar France*, examines the remarkable burst of architectural activity that resulted when the French Communist Party (PCF) became a patron for the designs, discourses, and organisational efforts of a distinguished circle of modern architects, which found their most fertile terrain in the formerly industrial peripheries of France's major cities, the banlieue. Prior to TU Delft, Grossman was a postdoctoral research fellow at ETH Zürich's Centre for Advanced Studies in Architecture. Grossman holds a Ph.D. in History and Theory of Architecture from Princeton University.



YUE MAO

Yue Mao is a doctoral researcher at CORAL- ITN, a Marie Skłodowska Curie Innovative Training Network (2021–2024), hosted by Leibniz Institute for Regional Geography in Leipzig, Germany. CORAL aims to unpack latent dynamics and impacts of collaborative workspaces in rural and peripheral areas in Europe, while her contribution focuses on new imaginations of the rural with cases in Central and Eastern Europe.

Prior to this, she obtained a Master in Urbanism from Delft University of Technology in 2018. Between 2019 and 2021, she initiated a multidisciplinary Dutch-Russian research collective Nomaos to explore how artistic narratives can inform more inclusive urban development in Russia and beyond. Their project “What Do Landscapes Say?” is supported by Creative Industries Fund NL, resulted in exhibitions and seminar with Het Nieuwe Instituut, Na Peschanoy Gallery Moscow, Moscow School of Architecture, and is awarded a fellowship from Future Architecture Platform, co-funded by the Creative Europe Programme.

Programme

24.11.2021 Het Vakwerkhuis	Reversing Ethnography: Decolonising Methodologies for the Observer Yue Mao (Leibniz-Institute for Regional Geography)	15.00–15.30 Coffee Break	24.11.2021 Oostserre/ Orange Hall, TU Delft
10.00 Doors open	12.30–13.30 Lunch	15.30–17.00 Material Culture Moderated by Fatma Tanis (TU Delft, Het Nieuwe Instituut)	17.30–18.00 Drinks
10.30 Opening words Dirk van den Heuvel (TU Delft, Het Nieuwe Instituut)	13.30–15.00 Dwelling and Patterns of Habitation Moderated by Nelson Mota (TU Delft)	Place-Based Pedagogies and Participatory Action Research at Former Second World War Confinement (Internment) Landscapes Desirée Valadares (UC Berkeley)	18.00–19.30 BK Talks on Ethnography and Architectural Education
10.45–12.30 Ethnographic Methods in Architecture Moderated by Alejandro Campos Uribe (TU Delft)	Urbanism Justice as a Research Agenda: A Positioning on Critical Ethnography and Emancipatory Architecture Jeroen Stevens (KU Leuven)	Manifestation of Socio-Cultural Identities in the Architectural Vocabulary of Assam's Tea Landscape Barsha Amarendra (Indian Institute of Technology)	Chaired by Nelson Mota and Vanessa Grossman (TU Delft)
Redeeming Ethnography by Enshrining the Philosophy of Ubuntu in the Study of Batswana Indigenous Architecture George Sedupane (North West University) and Simeon Materechera (Indigenous Knowledge Systems Centre)	Architectural Ethnography and Pragmatic Alliances with the Yanomami People Thiago Magri Benucci (Associação Escola da Cidade)	Making the Self through Mud: An Ethnography of Training in Stabilised Mud Construction in South India Curt Gambetta (Cornell University)	With Dick van Gameren (TU Delft), Stéphanie Dadour (École nationale supérieure d'architecture Paris- Malaquais), Aina Landsverk Hagen (Oslo Metropolitan University), Klaske Havik (TU Delft), Leeke Reinders (TU Delft), Aurélie Griveaux, and Sascha Roesler (Università della Svizzera Italiana)
Companion Practices: Interpreting Sites of Troubled Histories through Architecture and Ethnography Shanti Sumartojo and Naomi Stead (Monash University)	Architecture in the Service of Ethnography: Habitation, Ethnography, and the Region (France 1941–1945) Gregory Elias Cartelli (Princeton University)	Insider Ethnography: Research Methods for Engaging with Soft Spatial Practices Amina Kaskar (University of the Witwatersrand)	
Building on Ethnography, for Architecture: Private Hospitality and the Making of a 'Home' (France, 2019–2021) Stéphanie Dadour (École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture Paris-Malaquais)	Listening to Corridor Chatters in High-Rise Social Housing Claire Bosmans (KU Leuven)		



25.11.2021  
Het Nieuwe  
Intituut

09.30  
Doors open

09.45–11.15  
(Re-)Claiming  
the City

Moderated by Dirk van den Heuvel  
(TU Delft, Het Nieuwe Instituut)

*Observing the Architectural Stigma  
of Ugliness:  
The cases of Albania and Galicia*  
Maria Novas  
(Universidad de Sevilla)  
and Dorina Pllumbi  
(TU Delft)

*Julian Beinart's 'Patterns of the Street'  
and Pancho Guedes's '1001 Doors  
of Caniços':  
Icono-Ethnography in Architectural and  
Urban Research from 1960s Africa*  
Silvia Balzan  
(University of Basel)

*Bridging to Disrupt:  
On Transformative Dialogues and  
Exchanges of Site-Based Interactions*  
Aina Landsverk Hagen  
(Oslo Metropolitan University)  
and Jenny Osuldsen  
(Norwegian University of Life Sciences)

*Displaying the Event:  
The Architectures of Pop-Up Urbanisms*  
Pedro Pitarch  
(Polytechnic University of Madrid)

11.15–11.30  
Coffee Break

11.30–12.30  
Intermezzo:  
Archival  
Interactions

*(Resequencing) The Logic of the  
Tillema Collection*  
Paoletta Holst and Paolo Patelli  
(Research Centre for Material Culture,  
Leiden)

*Selections from the Collection*  
Alejandro Campos Uribe (TU Delft)  
and Suzanne Mulder  
(Het Nieuwe Instituut)

12.30–13.30  
Lunch

13.30–15.30  
Architecture  
and Activism

Moderated by Rohan Varma  
(TU Delft)

*A Guide for 'Stand-up' Activism:  
Performing a Counter-Mapped  
Isometric Drawing*  
Socrates Stratis  
(University of Cyprus)

*Neither Planning nor Improvising:  
Articulação Territorial as a Mode  
of Producing and Caring for the City*  
Bruna Ferreira Montuori  
(Royal College of Arts)

*Connecting to the Archive of  
Weeksville:  
The Pratt Weeksville Archive*  
Jeffrey Hogrefe and Scott Ruff  
(Pratt Institute)

*'Asked (Rather than Observed)':  
Relocating Agency in and through  
Ethnography*  
Ignacio G. Galán (Barnard College)

*Building Ethnographies:  
Towards a Decolonial Study of  
Architectures of Indigenous Autonomy*  
Tania Gutierrez-Monroy  
(McGill University)

15.30–16.00  
Coffee Break

16.00–17.30  
Architectural  
Representation

Moderated by Vanessa Grossman  
(TU Delft)

*Re-enchantment of the World  
Soviet Modernisms and Durabilities  
of Colonial Pasts*  
Oxana Gourinovitch  
(RWTH Aachen University)

*Santiago Babylon:  
Spaces of Immigration and Sex Work  
in Downtown Santiago de Chile*  
José Abasalo Llaría  
(Universidad Politécnica de Madrid)  
and Félix Reigada  
(Universidad de las Américas)

*Popular Refractions:  
Lina Bo Bardi and Marilena Chaui  
at the Crisis of the National-Popular  
in the Re-democratisation of Brazil*  
Frederico Vergueiro Costa  
(University of Campinas)

*Of Tuna and Men:  
Ethnography, Fishing and Architecture*  
Diego Inglez de Souza  
(University of São Paulo)

18.00–19.30  
Buffet

19.30–21.00  
Keynote Lectures

Moderated by Dirk van den Heuvel  
(TU Delft, Het Nieuwe Instituut)

*Ethnography in the Hands  
of Architects*  
Marie Stender (Aalborg University)

*The Vernacular as Counterimage:  
Why Modernism Needed Ethnography*  
Hilde Heynen (KU Leuven)

CONFERENCE

Conference team:

Dirk van den Heuvel (convenor of the conference, and head of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre)

Fatma Tanis (coordinator of the Jaap Bakema Study Centre)

Sun Ah Hwang, student-assistant (TU Delft)

Organising committee TU Delft:

Alejandro Campos Uribe

Nelson Mota

Rohan Varma

Vanessa Grossman

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PROCEEDINGS

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Dirk van den Heuvel

Fatma Tanis

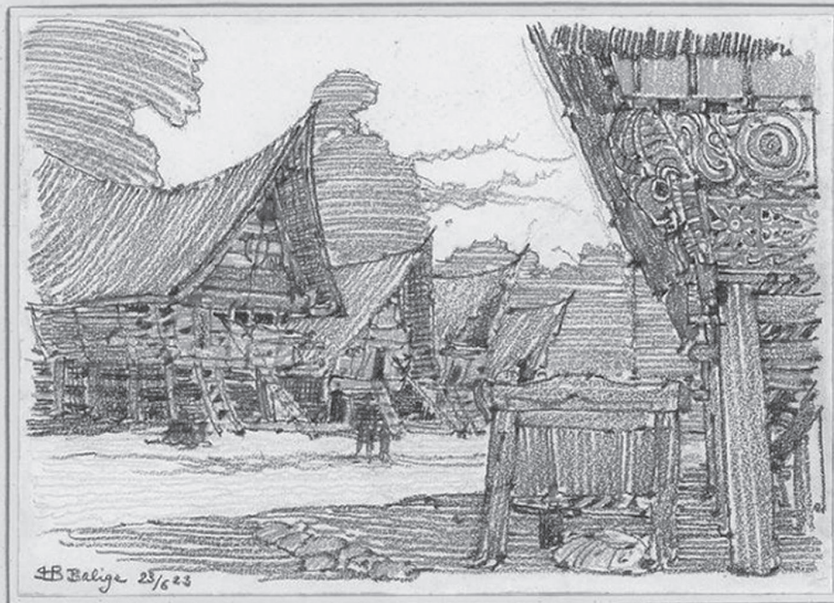
Sun Ah Hwang

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Instituut

architecture  
design  
digital culture

**TU**Delft  
**BK**Bouwkunde