

Introducing Tolerance

Strategies for Operating on the 'As Found' in Self-Built Settlements of Caracas

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As Found

International colloquium on adaptive reuse

5-7 September 2023

📍 Hasselt & Antwerp, Belgium

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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS



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IMAGE: Castelvecchio Museum Verona by architect Carlo Scarpa (cc) presso Archivio Paolo Monti

AS FOUND INTERNATIONAL COLLOQUIUM ON ADAPTIVE REUSE
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BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

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Fig. 1, Community kitchen in Caricuao, Caracas. Exterior view. Author: Edgar Martinez. Image rights: Incur-siones.

INTRODUCING TOLERANCE. STRATEGIES FOR OPERATING ON THE 'AS FOUND' IN SELF-BUILT SETTLEMENTS OF CARACAS.

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In Venezuela, the term 'rancho' designates dwellings built by the urban poor. The word connotes a precarious structure and the crudest material expression of poverty. However, ranchos are the result of adaptation to changing needs and networks of cooperation. Strategies developed around material scarcity and gradual change are relevant to critical discourses on adaptive reuse, as they show the value of affective infrastructures and flexible planning. Through a case study, this paper will describe project strategies for operating on the 'as found' in the self-built settlements of Caracas, pointing to other ways to engage with preservation and re-use strategies and consolidating local community values. Case study: Incursiones is an architecture practice based in Caracas, Venezuela. Between 2018 and 2021 the studio collaborated with a local NGO in the design of six community kitchens in some of Caracas' poorest neighborhoods. The precarious conditions under which these spaces were developed, including budget, time, material resources, technical expertise, and accessibility, demanded a fundamental reorganization of the architectural project as a territory of professional expertise and creative experimentation. "Introducing tolerance" became a conceptual strategy to explore and harness the possibilities of scarcity at three levels. First, the project inverted the length of conventional phases, extending conceptual stages to engage with fluid conditions while reducing final project phases. Projects were in flux until the last minute, incorporating collective knowledge and responding to the availability of expertise and materials. Second, tolerance was interpreted spatially as a 'slack' between new and existing construction. Intentional misalignments, overlaps, non-fitting details, and contrasts responded to a need to negotiate with the 'as found' on multiple levels, from imprecise construction to lack of coordination between teams. Finally, the projects relied on communities' affective infrastructures from design to construction. The 'as found' is underpinned by networks that make everyday life possible. Articulating these around concrete problems and tasks (from storing materials to feeding and housing construction crews) created a sense of ownership and belonging over the space. Contribution: By restructuring standard professional procedures, giving physical expression to limitations, and building upon intangible affective values, these projects introduce design methodologies relevant beyond the case study, particularly around issues of resource scarcity. In this sense, strategies that conceptually draw from development and behavioral economics can expand the literature and interdisciplinarity of adaptive reuse. Finally, as experimental spatial intervention strategies operating in fringe contexts dismissed by mainstream architectural values, these projects extend the range of the 'as found' and highlight relational notions of heritage value.

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Stefan Gzyl is a doctoral candidate at TU Delft. He holds a professional degree in architecture from Universidad Central de Venezuela and a Master's in Architecture from Harvard University. He is Assistant Professor of Design at the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism at UCV. He is also co-director of Incursiones. His professional work has been nominated for the Mies Crown Hall Americas Prize and selected as a finalist for the 12th Ibero-American Biennial of Architecture. He has presented his work at the London Festival of Architecture, Deutsches Architekturmuseum, The Bartlett School of Architecture, and the XII Rotterdam Biennale, among others.

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This colloquium is organized as an extension of the exhibition *As Found: Experiments in Preservation* by the Flanders Architecture Institute. Curated by Sofie De Caigny, Hülya Ertas and Bie Plevoets, the exhibition is on show at De Singel, Antwerp, from 6 September 2023 to 17 March 2024. The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue, available in English (ISBN: 9789492567321) and Dutch (ISBN: 9789492567338).

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