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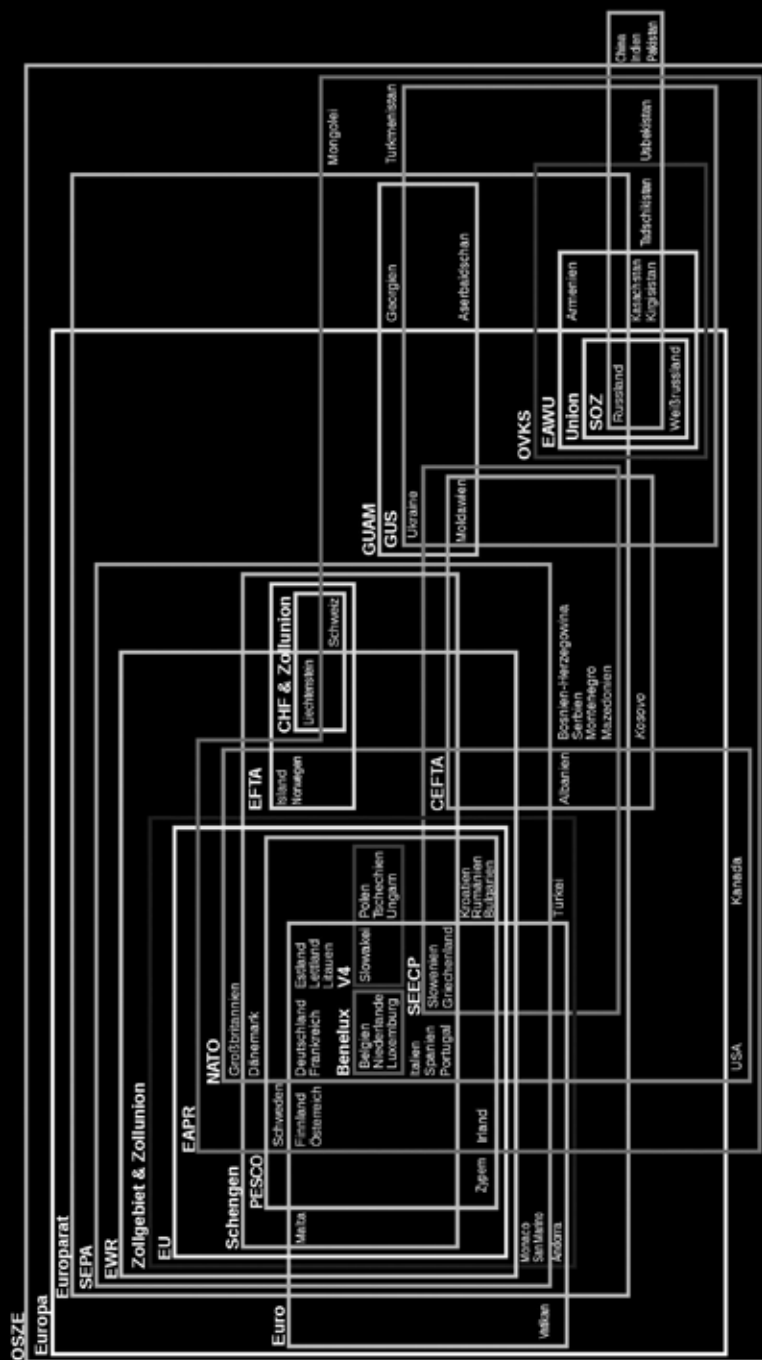
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**Cover image**

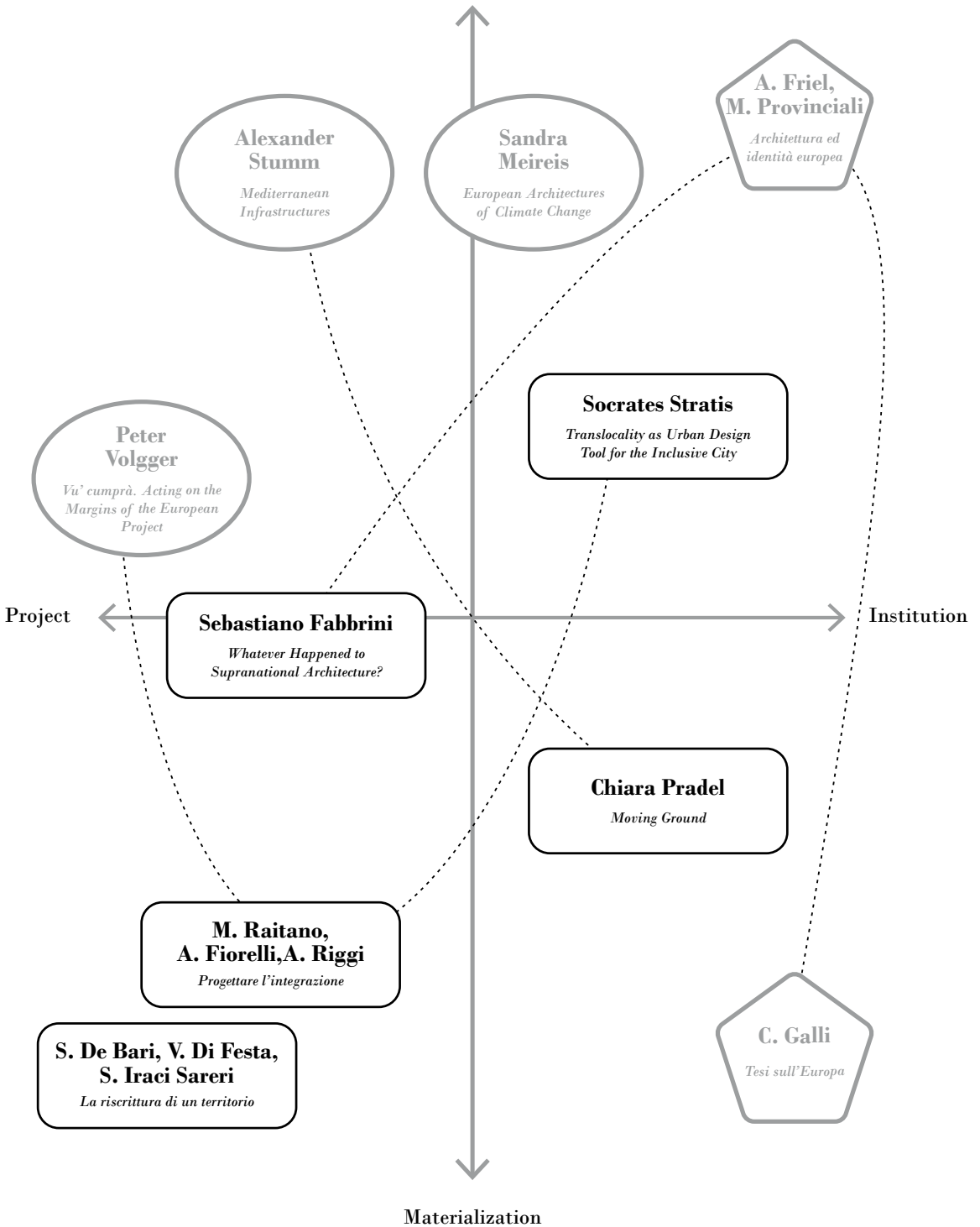
Relationships between various multinational European organisations and agreements.

# Ardeth #07

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Symbolization



Materialization

# Europe is Not a Tree

## L'Europa non è un albero

**The Editorial Board of "Ardeth"**

This issue of "Ardeth" comes out at a time when the material and institutional space of what we call "Europe" is undergoing a profound transformation, facing demands that in many ways would have been unforeseeable just a few months ago. The question of what might be the terms of the relationship between architecture and Europe – or more precisely between the architectural project and the European project – has also changed rapidly in the course of the making of this volume. We have gathered different perspectives, which consider Europe either as a (regulatory, institutional, value) condition of possibility for architecture, or as a result and effect of architectural operations. But we have also recorded substantial differences in the ways of considering the effectuality of the project, understood sometimes as a device for symbolising 'European' values and connotations, other times as a process of implementation and materialisation of geographical, political and socio-economic conditions.

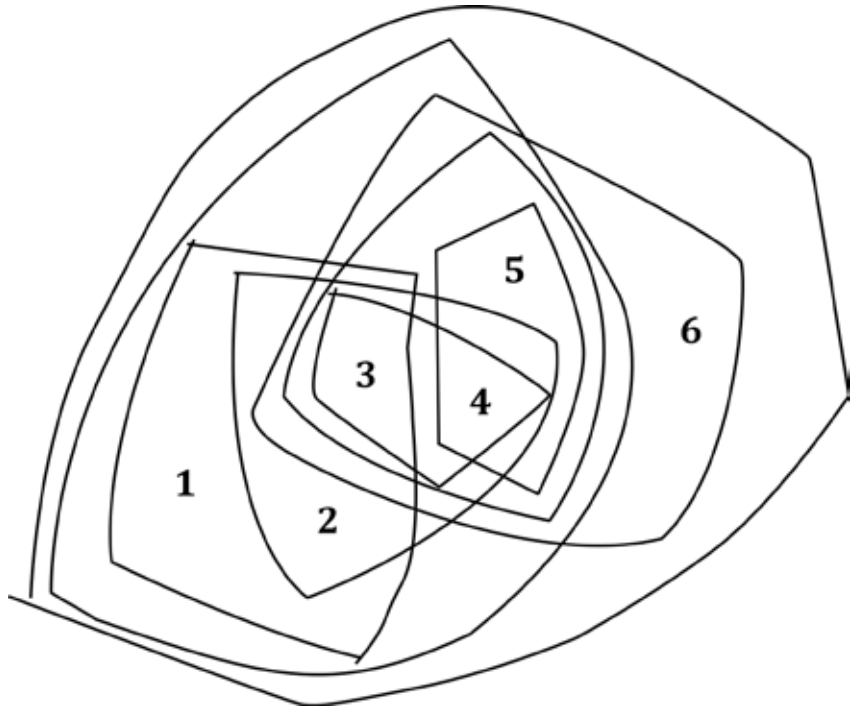
The image chosen by our guest editor to open the call for papers (even before the Covid-19 pandemic made its entrance on the world stage) uses a set diagram to

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**ARDETH #07**

Fig. 1 - Elaboration  
on the semi-lattice  
structure as in  
Alexander's diagram  
(1967 [1965]: 198).



outline the complex correlation between the institutions that make up a possible ontology of 'Europe'. The map of institutional entities, partly embedded and partly intersecting one another, is reminiscent of the 'semi-lattice' structure that Christopher Alexander used in 1965 to distinguish the 'natural' from the 'artificial' city in his famous article *A City is Not a Tree*.

Concluding that article, Alexander stated that "In any organized object, extreme compartmentalization and the dissociation of internal elements are the first signs of coming destruction" (Alexander, 1965: 61). "Trees" – projects of strictly hierarchical systems – would therefore be artificial and fragile constructions, reductions to a figure of order that is too schematic and above all detached from history, from its sedimentation and resistance. As is the case with the urban phenomena to which Alexander referred, any description of Europe, even the institutional one, is dense with overlaps and intersections: this is a fundamental requirement for its existence and resilience – although at the same time this hybrid reticularity is also the source of countless contradictions. In view of this diagram, we can certainly say that Europe, too, "is not a tree".

The topological correspondence between the institutional map of Europe and Alexander's urban diagrams is not just an analogy. The Europe that this issue of "Ardeth" attempts to deal with has some clearly architectural characteristics, at least as long as one considers geographical and political space as the inescapable territory of architecture. The 'European project'



to which the call for papers refers is an architectural project, insofar as it can be defined in terms of material and symbolic structures endowed with fragility and resilience, which presuppose processes of construction and transformation of space in the medium and long term. The eminently spatial problem that the concept of Europe is re-proposing at this time (once again and more literally than ever) is precisely the overturning of its definition as *terra continens*, which from antiquity reaches into the twentieth century (think of Carl Schmitt's writings on the 'Earth' as the foundation of the *jus publicum Europaeum*, in Schmitt, 1954 and 1950). Peter Sloterdijk has explored in depth the characteristics of those places that claim to be closed around a hearth, protected by walls, moats and concentric defences. The 'continent', he argues, aspires to this condition, at least if it is understood literally as 'the continent', an autogenous receptacle in which the content contains itself (Sloterdijk, 2014). But it is precisely the overturning of this autogenous container that we are now facing: a process that the inhabitants of the European space can take charge of, provided they recognise its scope and historical depth. Whoever reaches the homeland after circumnavigating the Earth – writes Sloterdijk – disembarks in a place that can no longer be transfigured into the domestic and native worldly cave that it once was. Those who are living in today's day and age, after Magellan, are obliged to consider even their hometown as the projection of a point perceived from the outside. Globalisation has been going on ever since, blowing off layer by layer the imaginary wrappings of indigenous collective life, lived closed in one's own house, self-oriented and endowed with redeeming power (Sloterdijk, 2014). Today, this condition appears so evident that it even goes beyond what Sloterdijk himself might have intended.

The impossible containment of Europe is the same as that of architecture: there is no absolute island on which to take refuge, to make a project without interference or intrusion. The contributors to this issue have established different and even mutually conflicting links between the European project and the architectural project. As usual, in this introduction, we have tried to bring together the terms that recur in the various papers, attempting to restore their proximity and opposition. First of all, it seemed crucial to ask ourselves what kind of relationship between Europe and architecture is envisioned by the texts collected here: do architectural projects play a constitutive role with respect to the existence of Europe, or is Europe – as an institution, a system of powers and legitimations – a necessary condition for the existence of 'European' architecture? Secondly, we have tried to establish what kind of effects the authors attribute to these projects of 'European architecture': are they effects of signification and symbolic representation, or are they material transformation effects, with their multiple repercussions?

The result is a double opposition, which we have arranged on two axes according to the 'Cartesian' system we usually employ as a reading guide. On the horizontal axis, there are two opposing modes of relationship

between Europe and architecture: the pre-eminence of the *project* on the left, and the prevalence of the *institution* on the right. In the first case it is assumed that the architectural project can act as a fundamental device for the inductive and incremental composition of Europe. The architectural project here precedes the institution. In the second case, the institutional framework is, on the contrary, a necessary condition for the establishment of a European architecture. If at the endpoint of the *project* axis we find the idea of Europe itself as architecture, we move in the direction of the *institution* we assume, conversely, that architectures can only exist in the name and context of Europe, under the aegis of treaties, agreements, funding and recognition.

On the vertical axis, we have distributed the opposition between those who emphasize the symbolic functioning of projects (*symbolization*, at the top) and those who give priority to their material and spatial effectiveness (*materialization*, at the bottom). In the first case the focus is on the project as a device of representation (of values, cultural contents, objectives of progress and innovation...) that produces mobilization and unification on the level of collective meanings. In the second case, on the other hand, the architectural project is mainly considered for its ability to bring Europe into existence as a concrete material space (in its urban forms, infrastructures, spatial practices).

In this way, four distinct quadrants emerge, to each of which we could refer different specific project effects.

In the first quadrant we find those cases in which institutional legitimacy is accompanied by a strong symbolic investment. One could say that this is the quadrant of monuments in the broad sense, but also of European awards and recognitions. In this perspective, **Socrates Stratis** retraces 30 years of *European* projects, highlighting how the institutional framework of the initiative strengthens the network relationships among young European architects, but is also capable of promoting a horizon of values and objectives, especially in terms of “common imaginaries for the inclusive city”. Adopting a dialectical approach with the institutional level, **Sandra Meireis** defines instead the European Union as a “utopian project that stands out against the background of a succession of crises”, up to the Covid-19 pandemic. In this framework, “the hope for renewed social cohesion” and the perspective of a Green New Deal should take concrete shape through the architectural project: the project proposal acts here as a manifesto, preceding the construction of the institutional conditions for it. But only by virtue of the realization of the “future European Republic” will it be possible to achieve the systematic implementation of architectural projects.

In the second quadrant, which combines *institution* and *materialization*, we could place the field of *transnational infrastructure and projects*. In her paper, **Chiara Pradel** tackles the impact of the large AlpTransit railway tunnel connecting Italy and Germany through Switzerland. Although the author tries to highlight the monumental and ‘poetic’ dimension

that might emerge from the project, the material impact of the process seems to prevail over the rest of the discourse. With its 13.3 million cubic meters of excavated material and 57 km of underground crossing, this ambitious transnational project presupposes the existence of an institutional reality so strong that it can even move mountains.

In the third quadrant (*project* and material effects) it is possible to include the operations of transformation of the urban fabric and even minor settlements, understood as contingent processes. The exploration of the *Quartier Européen* in Brussels between 1958 and 1992 allows **Sebastiano Fabbrini** to focus on the background of the ‘supranational architecture’, which was supposed to represent a “common European home”. The author concentrates on the hardware of these events, covering real estate, procedural and technical issues, with the aim of showing “How architecture contributed to shaping the EU”. Starting from another specific case, but with an approach more oriented towards a project proposal, **Manuela Raitano**, **Angela Fiorelli** and **Gloria Riggi** address the area of Termini station in Rome. From the particular they then shift to the general: from the Termini project they induce a “model for a welcoming architecture”. In this case, too, one could say that “the project makes Europe”, but compared to the previous article these authors embrace a stronger value proposition, which orientates the architect’s profession: “Through the disciplinary lens, we investigate the possibility of a direct, large-scale commitment on the part of the architect in the construction of a city which is already multiethnic, but must become inclusive and intercultural”. In their visual essay, **Silvana De Bari**, **Valerio Di Festa** and **Stefania Iraci Sareri** attempt to measure individual and collective “tourist practices” through the design of a combinatory system of “minimal units” and “architectural materials [...] that could be used to create new types of spaces, places and experiences”. This is a predominantly methodological attempt, proposing the development of a design strategy that can in many ways be generalised (provided that the same ‘materials’ and the same temporary living practices can be found in different places in contemporary Europe).

Finally, in the fourth quadrant we could place visions, manifestos and possibly decentralized projects, but oriented towards unifying principles (such as the *Urban Innovative Actions* legitimized by the perspective of sustainable development). **Alexander Stumm** repropose the theme of design utopia and its symbolic force through the case of the *Atlantropa* project, conceived by Herman Sörgel in the late 1920s. Almost a century later, the author finds the same rhetoric and hegemonic strategies between that project – based on a gigantic system of hydroelectric plants and dams – and the *Desertec* program, which envisages the installation of large photovoltaic systems in the desert areas of North Africa. With a strongly critical approach, **Peter Volgger** describes the socio-spatial practices of Mouride groups as an example of ‘migrating architecture’, able to face the territories of dispersion and alienation, “without waiting for

architects". Such practices are organized symbolically among groups that are always on the move, but which allow them to act materially on space. This case points in the opposite direction to that traditionally understood by the architectural project, considered a potential "instrument of hegemony and domination over marginalized people". This is a radically anti-institutional research horizon, in which the materiality of practices descends from the symbolic cohesion of social groups.

The issue ends with two authoritative contributions, which appear eccentric with respect to the architects' views and in many ways differ from each other. In the first, **Carlo Galli** dedicates an adaptation of his *Theses on Europe* to "Ardeth". The text does not take a position on the specific question of architectural projects, but allows us to better understand the reticular nature, the power relationships and the weaknesses of current European institutional arrangements – which nevertheless seem to remain the essential and necessary condition for any project, architectural or otherwise. In the second contribution, **Anna Livia Friel** and **Marco Provinciali** interview **Romano Prodi** on an exquisitely "symbolic" theme, namely the possibility of representing the identity of European institutions through architecture, in the context of the EUPavillion project.

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Questo numero di "Ardeth" esce in un momento in cui la dimensione dello spazio materiale e istituzionale di ciò che chiamiamo "Europa" è soggetta a un profondo cambiamento, e subisce sollecitazioni che sarebbero state per molti versi imprevedibili fino a pochi mesi fa. La questione di quali possano essere i termini di relazione tra architettura ed Europa – o più precisamente tra progetto di architettura e progetto europeo – è cambiata velocemente anche nel corso della costruzione di questo volume. Abbiamo raccolto prospettive differenti, che considerano l'Europa come condizione di possibilità (istituzionale, regolativa, valoriale) dell'architettura, o come risultato ed effetto di operazioni architettoniche. Ma abbiamo anche registrato differenze sostanziali nei modi di considerare l'effettualità del progetto, a volte inteso come dispositivo di simbolizzazione di valori e connotati "europei", altre volte come processo di attuazione e materializzazione di condizioni geografiche, politiche e socioeconomiche.

L'immagine scelta dal nostro guest editor per aprire la call for papers (prima ancora che la pandemia di Covid-19 facesse il suo ingresso sulla scena mondiale) traccia con un diagramma a insiemi la complessa correlazione tra le istituzioni che compongono una possibile ontologia di "Europa". La mappa di entità istituzionali, in parte incluse le une nelle altre e in parte intersecate tra loro, ricorda la struttura del "semi-lattice", che Christopher Alexander utilizzò nel 1965 per distinguere la città "naturale" da quella "artificiale", nel suo celebre articolo *Una città non è un albero*.

Concludendo quell'articolo, Alexander affermava che «in qualsiasi oggetto organizzato, l'estrema compartimentalizzazione e la dissociazione

degli elementi interni sono i primi sintomi di una prossima distruzione» (Alexander, 1967 [1965]: 230). Gli “alberi” – i progetti di sistemi strettamente gerarchici – sarebbero dunque costruzioni artificiali e fragili, riduzioni a una figura dell’ordine troppo schematica e soprattutto avulsa dalla storia, dalle sue sedimentazioni e resistenze. Come per i fenomeni urbani a cui si riferiva Alexander, qualsiasi descrizione dell’Europa, anche quella istituzionale, è densa di sovrapposizioni e intersezioni: e questo è un requisito fondamentale per la sua esistenza e resilienza – sebbene allo stesso tempo questa reticolarità ibrida sia anche la fonte di innumerevoli contraddizioni. Davanti a questo diagramma possiamo certamente affermare che anche l’Europa «non è un albero».

La corrispondenza topologica tra la mappa istituzionale dell’Europa e i diagrammi urbani di Alexander non è soltanto un’analogia. L’Europa di cui questo numero di “Ardeth” tenta di occuparsi ha caratteristiche chiaramente architettoniche, per lo meno fintanto che si voglia considerare lo spazio geografico e politico come ineludibile *territorio dell’architettura*. Il “progetto europeo” a cui la call for papers fa riferimento è un progetto di natura architettonica, nella misura in cui è definibile in termini di strutture materiali e simboliche dotate di specifiche fragilità e resilienze, che presuppongono processi di costruzione e trasformazione dello spazio nel medio e nel lungo periodo. Il problema eminentemente spaziale che il concetto di Europa ripropone in questo momento (ancora una volta e in modo più letterale che mai) è proprio il rovesciamento di quella sua definizione come *terra continens*, che dall’antichità giunge fino al Novecento – si pensi agli scritti di Carl Schmitt sulla “Terra” come fondamento dello *jus publicum Europaeum* (Schmitt, 2002 [1954] e 1991 [1950]).

Peter Sloterdijk ha esplorato a fondo le caratteristiche di quei luoghi che pretendono di chiudersi attorno a un focolare, proteggersi entro cinte di mura, fossati, e difese concentriche. Una condizione alla quale il “continente” aspirerebbe, per lo meno se lo si intendesse alla lettera come «recipiente autogeno nel quale il contenuto si contiene da sé» (Sloterdijk, 2014a: 229). Ma è proprio al rovesciamento di questo recipiente autogeno che siamo di fronte: un processo di cui gli abitanti dello spazio europeo possono farsi carico, a condizione che ne riconoscano la portata e la profondità storica. «Chi giunge ai patri lidi dopo la circumnavigazione della Terra – scrive Sloterdijk – sbarca in un luogo che non può più essere trasfigurato in quella caverna mondana domestica e natia che era. [...] Chi vive nell’oggi, dopo Magellano, si vede obbligato a considerare anche la propria città natale come la proiezione di un punto percepito dall’esterno». La globalizzazione procede da allora, facendo «[...] saltare strato per strato gli involucri immaginari della vita collettiva autoctona, vissuta chiusi in casa propria, orientata su se stessa e dotata di per se stessa di potere salvifico» (Sloterdijk, 2014a: 773). Oggi questa condizione appare così evidente da porsi anche al di là di ciò che Sloterdijk stesso avrebbe potuto intendere. L’impossibile contenimento dell’Europa è lo stesso che investe l’architettura: non c’è alcuna isola assoluta su cui rifugiarsi, per costruire un pro-

getto senza interferenze né irruzioni. Tra progetto europeo e progetto di architettura gli autori di questo numero hanno stabilito nessi differenti e anche vicendevolmente conflittuali. Come di consueto, abbiamo provato a ordinare i termini ricorrenti nei vari contributi, tentando di restituirne vicinanze e opposizioni. In primo luogo, ci è parso cruciale chiederci quale modo di relazione i testi proponessero tra Europa e architettura: i progetti di architettura hanno un ruolo costitutivo rispetto all'esistenza dell'Europa, oppure l'Europa – come istituzione, sistema di poteri e legittimazioni – è condizione necessaria all'esistenza di un'architettura "europea"? In secondo luogo, abbiamo provato a stabilire quale fosse la forma degli effetti che gli autori attribuivano a questi progetti di "architettura europea": si tratta di effetti di significazione e rappresentazione simbolica, oppure di effetti materiali della trasformazione e delle loro molteplici ricadute?

Ne è derivata una doppia opposizione, che abbiamo disposto su due assi secondo la costruzione "cartesiana" che usualmente utilizziamo come guida alla lettura. Sull'asse orizzontale si oppongono due modalità di relazione tra Europa e architettura: a sinistra la preminenza del *progetto*, a destra quella dell'*istituzione*. Nel primo caso si presuppone che il progetto architettonico possa agire come dispositivo fondamentale per la composizione induttiva e incrementale dell'Europa. Il progetto architettonico qui precede l'istituzione. Nel secondo caso la cornice istituzionale è, all'opposto, una condizione necessaria per la determinazione di un'architettura europea. Se all'estremo del *progetto* possiamo pensare l'Europa stessa come una architettura, procedendo nella direzione dell'*istituzione* assumiamo, inversamente, che le architetture possano esistere in nome e nel contesto dell'Europa, sotto l'egida di trattati, accordi, finanziamenti e riconoscimenti.

Sull'asse verticale abbiamo distribuito l'opposizione tra chi enfatizza il funzionamento simbolico dei progetti (in alto: *simbolizzazione*) e chi ne considera prioritariamente l'efficacia materiale e spaziale (in basso: *materializzazione*). Nel primo caso viene messo l'accento sul progetto come dispositivo di rappresentazione (di valori, contenuti culturali, obiettivi di progresso e innovazione) che mobilita e unifica sul piano dei significati collettivi. Nel secondo caso invece il progetto architettonico è soprattutto considerato per la sua capacità di far esistere l'Europa come spazio materiale concreto (nelle sue forme urbane, nelle infrastrutture, nelle pratiche spaziali).

In questo modo emergono quattro distinti quadranti, a ciascuno dei quali potremmo riferire diversi e specifici effetti progettuali.

Nel primo quadrante troviamo quei casi in cui la legittimazione istituzionale si accompagna a un forte investimento simbolico. Al limite, questo è il quadrante dei monumenti in senso lato, ma anche dei premi e riconoscimenti di rango europeo. In questa prospettiva, **Socrates Stratis** ripercorre 30 anni di progetti *European*, evidenziando quanto la cornice istituzionale dell'iniziativa rafforzi le relazioni a rete tra giovani archi-

tetti europei, ma sia anche capace di promuovere un orizzonte di valori e obiettivi, soprattutto in termini di «immaginari comuni per la città inclusiva». Mantenendo un confronto dialettico con il piano istituzionale, **Sandra Meireis** definisce invece l'unione Europea come un «progetto utopico che si staglia sullo sfondo di una successione di crisi», e che giunge fino alla pandemia di Covid-19. In questo quadro, «la speranza per una rinnovata coesione sociale» e l'orizzonte di un *Green New Deal* dovrebbero concretizzarsi attraverso il progetto di architettura: la proposta progettuale agisce qui come manifesto, precedendo la costruzione delle condizioni istituzionali. Ma soltanto in virtù della realizzazione della «futura Repubblica Europea» sarà possibile dare attuazione sistematica ai progetti di architettura.

Al secondo quadrante, che coniuga l'*istituzione* e la *materializzazione*, potremmo riferire il campo delle *infrastrutture* e dei *progetti transnazionali*. **Chiara Pradel** si misura con l'impatto del grande tunnel ferroviario AlpTransit, che collega l'Italia e la Germania attraverso la Svizzera. Sebbene l'autrice guardi verso la dimensione monumentale e «poetica» che potrebbe emergere dal progetto, l'impatto materiale dell'intero processo sembra prevalere sul resto del discorso. Con i suoi 13.3 milioni di metri cubi di materiali di scavo e 57 km di attraversamento sotterraneo, il grande progetto transnazionale presuppone l'esistenza di una realtà istituzionale così forte da smuovere anche le montagne.

Nel terzo quadrante (*progetto* ed effetti materiali) è possibile ascrivere le operazioni di trasformazione dei tessuti urbani e degli insediamenti anche minori, intesi come processi contingenti. L'esplorazione del *Quartier Européen* di Bruxelles tra il 1958 e il 1992 consente a **Sebastiano Fabbrini** di mettere a fuoco i retroscena della «supranational architecture», che avrebbe dovuto costituire la rappresentazione di una «comune casa europea». L'autore si concentra sull'*hardware* di queste vicende, attraversando questioni di natura immobiliare, procedurale e tecnica, con l'obiettivo di mostrare «in che modo l'architettura ha contribuito a dare forma all'Unione Europea» [«How architecture contributed to shaping EU»]. Sempre partendo da un caso particolare, ma con un approccio più orientato a una proposta progettuale, **Manuela Raitano, Angela Fiorelli e Gloria Riggi** prendono in considerazione l'area della stazione Termini a Roma. Dal particolare si risale al generale, e dal progetto a Termini si induce un «modello per l'architettura dell'accoglienza». Anche in questo caso potremmo dire che «il progetto fa l'Europa», ma rispetto all'articolo precedente è più spiccata una posizione valoriale, che dà orientamento al mestiere del progettista architetto: «Attraverso la lente disciplinare viene così indagata la possibilità di un impegno diretto, di larga scala, dell'architetto, nella costruzione di una città che, già multietnica, dovrà divenire inclusiva e interculturale». In un saggio visuale **Silvana De Bari, Valerio Di Festa e Stefania Iraci Sareri** tentano di dare misura alle «pratiche turistiche» individuali e collettive, attraverso il disegno di un sistema combinatorio di «unità minime» e «materiali architettonici [...] che potrebbero essere



impiegati per creare nuovi tipi di spazi, luoghi ed esperienze». Si tratta di un tentativo prevalentemente metodologico, che suggerisce lo sviluppo di una strategia di progetto per molti versi generalizzabile (a condizione di poter trovare gli stessi “materiali” e le medesime pratiche temporanee dell’abitare, in luoghi differenti dell’Europa contemporanea). Infine nel quarto quadrante potremmo posizionare le visioni, i manifesti ed eventualmente i progetti decentralizzati, ma orientati a principi unificanti (come per esempio le *Urban Innovative Actions* legittimate dall’orizzonte dello sviluppo sostenibile). **Alexander Stumm** ripropone il tema dell’utopia progettuale e della sua forza simbolica attraverso il caso del progetto *Atlantropa*, concepito da Herman Sörgel alla fine degli anni Venti. A distanza di quasi un secolo, l’autore ritrova le stesse retoriche e strategie egemoniche tra quel piano – fondato su un gigantesco sistema di centrali idroelettriche e di dighe – e il programma *Desertec*, che prevede l’installazione di grandi impianti fotovoltaici nelle aree desertiche del Nord Africa. Con un taglio fortemente critico, **Peter Volgger** descrive le pratiche sociospaziali dei gruppi Mouride come esempio di «migrating architecture», capace di fronteggiare i territori della dispersione e alienazione, «senza aspettare gli architetti». Si tratta di pratiche organizzate per via simbolica fra gruppi in continuo movimento, ma che consentono di agire materialmente sullo spazio, in direzione opposta e contraria a quella tradizionalmente intesa dal progetto architettonico, considerato un potenziale «strumento di egemonia e dominio su persone marginalizzate». Un orizzonte di ricerca radicalmente antistituzionale, che fa discendere la materialità delle pratiche dalla coesione simbolica dei gruppi sociali.

Chiudono il numero due interventi autorevoli, che restano eccentrici rispetto allo sguardo degli architetti e per molti versi anche divergenti tra loro. Nel primo, **Carlo Galli** dedica ad “Ardeth” un adattamento delle sue *Tesi sull’Europa*. Il testo non prende posizione sulla questione specifica del progetto architettonico, ma ci consente di leggere meglio la natura reticolare, i rapporti di forza e le vulnerabilità degli attuali assetti istituzionali europei – che sembrano comunque restare la condizione imprescindibile e necessaria per qualsiasi azione progettuale, architettonica e non. Nel secondo intervento, **Anna Livia Friel** e **Marco Provinciali** intervistano **Romano Prodi** su un tema squisitamente “simbolico”, ovvero la possibilità di rappresentare l’identità delle istituzioni europee attraverso l’architettura, nel contesto del progetto *EUPavillion*.



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# Editorial.

## Rites of Passage

### Riti di passaggio

Jörg H. Gleiter

“Change is avalanching upon our heads and most people are grotesquely unprepared to cope with it”, argued the futurist Alvin Toffler in his famous book *Future Shock*. Toffler wrote this in 1970, half a century ago. But how much more true today, when a political (Brexit), an ecological (climate change) and a psychological crisis – which is what the pandemic is – confront *old* Europe with a seemingly insurmountable mountain of problems. The question, however, is what exactly it means when Toffler talks about *preparation*. How can one prepare for things that change abruptly, that are then simply there, where there is no transition, perhaps only because one did not want to acknowledge the signs.

The first thoughts about the topic of “Ardeth #07” were still titled with the working title *Utopia Europe*. Together with the editors, the decision was made to dispense with the term utopia. For utopian thinking seems to be too one-dimensionally oriented towards the future only. In their totalizing claim, utopias do not take the present seriously, much less the past, insofar as for utopias the past is only the negative foil for their own promises.

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But it is also true that when utopias do come, they usually come as dystopias, as negative utopias, and they come unexpectedly and suddenly. Like now. The dystopia is perfect, borders are closed, new walls are raised and border fences are erected, freedom of movement and with it fundamental rights are restricted. Much more could be listed like the red zones or the lock downs. Everything is in a state of shock, standstill everywhere, life shrinks to the immediate present, no forward nor backward. The future is suspended, as is the past. And on top of this, there is the narcissistic injury that the virus does to man.

And yet the virus provides us with an experience we no longer hoped for: *Les rites de passage*. We are part of a huge rite of passage into a new time. One can also speak of an initiation ritual for something that no one knows how to name at the moment, but which announces itself with strong signs. Arnold van Gennep (1873-1957) used the term ‘rites de passage’ to describe the rituals, celebrations and festivals that give structure and rhythm to life and form community and identity. The lockdown, the race for the vaccine, and the mass vaccinations must be understood as a giant rite of passage. With rites of passage, we make an experience that modernity, with its secularization of life, and later postmodernity, with its dissolution of all differences and total simultaneity, deprived us of for so long. And no one can wish for a repetition of the rites of passage of the dark 20<sup>th</sup> century with its world wars and all that went with them.

### *Territory*

The 21<sup>st</sup> century has its century event. It is about to break the innovation logjam and become the catalyst for many small and big changes. This is where “Ardeth #07” comes in and poses the question of Europe, of its unity, multiplicity and multiplicity within unity. Given the plurality of its structures, its history and its multiple mentalities, is it not necessary to understand Europe as a great project of rites of passage, that is, as a project of thresholds and their rites of passage? Rituals structure the territory, they transform borders into thresholds and enable the passage from one side to the other. Thus, Europe could be described as a territory crossed by multiple thresholds. Like a tailor’s pattern that defines the cutting lines, but where the cutting lines equally mark the future seams that hold the individual parts together according to a new superordinate idea. When we speak of the European territory, we are dealing with kaleidoscope-like situations, where the individual elements combine again and again to form new, exciting constellations, but where the whole remains the same. Palimpsest-like, sometimes stronger, sometimes weaker, Europe is crossed by many borderlines and thresholds. It is not only the geological formations such as rivers, mountains, lowlands or deserts that form the borders, but also the legal and economic systems as well as the educational and university systems. In the background is the history of mentality and the history of domination and the traumas of the past. The question then is whether it is not precisely the phenomenon of

the territorial threshold that sharpens the identity of modern Europe. Here the psychological level comes to the fore, namely that crossing the threshold is always a stepping out of oneself. Thresholds and borders hold up a mirror to one's own self. Can Europe in its unifying power then be described as a great hall of mirrors?

Michel Foucault has pointed out the fantastic nature of rites of passage, where rituals always include "mask, tattoo, and makeup" (1966) that transpose the body into another space. Foucault also named this as heterotopias, or places of the mirroring Other, which are also places of the fantastic. Beyond this, however, heterotopia is always associated with heterochrony. Thus, in many layers and constantly new constellations, the stories to which the founding myth of Europe owes its existence overlap. These are spatial and temporal processes that the territory of rites of passage requires and that differ precisely in this from the vastness of America or Russia. Mirrors and thresholds are then places in which one's own self manifoldly overlaps with the other, amalgamates, and produces its very own mixture of the fantastic and the real. Can we understand Europe better, and what do we understand better, if we describe Europe as such a heterotopia, where the seemingly incompatible interpenetrates and identity emerges precisely from there.

### *Infrastructure*

In this sense, "Ardeth #07" asks about the Europe of rites of passage, concrete and fantastic, material or psychological, where, in an extension of architecture, infrastructure necessarily complements thresholds, where one cannot exist without the other. For by infrastructure should be understood that which runs across the thresholds, and which enables the thresholds to be experienced as such in the first place. This includes the flow of goods, of ideas, of tourists, of migrants and their traffickers, the pipelines and the power grids, but also the bicycle paths and long-distance hiking trails, the old towpaths, the pass roads, and the supply routes of the world wars. Today they include highways, canals, railroads, the great power lines and data highways. Isn't this where the real rites of passage take place, in the rest areas and gas stations or in the bistros of airports. Or do the rites of passage today take place only in the architecture of computers, in the typing of pins and passwords, in Google searches, and in the posting of messages on social media.

### *Architecture*

Insofar as architecture serves everyday rituals, very basic architectural experiences are connected to rites of passage. Often neglected today, architecture is associated with rites of passage on a small scale, the constant crossing of thresholds. Architecture is first and foremost a technique of the threshold that creates potential for rituals. Among the Northwest American Indians, it is the large totem poles that mark a place and thus introduce a difference for rituals. In architecture, this includes

the walls that create a front and back in the first place. Or four walls that separate an inside from an outside and then elevate the transition from one side to the other to a ritual by means of the door.

Connected to this, however, is a strong temporal component, but not only in the sense of physical movement, but in the sense of progressive time, of history. "Today we have basically lost the ability to think of a future. Most people do not want to go beyond their present - they do not like to see themselves as a link in the chain of generations", wrote the sociologist Norbert Elias (1987). He spoke of withdrawal into the present. One must interpret this as a sign of withdrawal from rituals. For rituals are those cultural practices in which, in the active ritual action, past and future are put into a relationship via the immediate present.

With the chain of generations, generational justice is thus addressed above all, that is, the self-understanding with which a time defines itself as a link between future and past generations. In view of the environmental problems, and the state of democracy, inter-generational justice must be at the very heart of the attention. It exists, however, only insofar as the present understands itself as a rite of passage, in which intergenerational justice includes past generations as much as future generations. That is what the European project means.

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«Il cambiamento ci sta travolgendo, e gran parte delle persone sono grottescamente impreparate a gestirlo», affermava il futurologo Alvin Toffler nel suo famoso libro *Future Shock*. Toffler scriveva nel 1970, mezzo secolo fa. Ma questa considerazione sembra ancora più calzante oggi, in un frangente in cui una crisi politica (Brexit), una ecologica (il cambiamento climatico) e una psicologica – perché questo è ciò che la pandemia è – pongono alla vecchia Europa una insormontabile montagna di problemi. La domanda, tuttavia, è che cosa esattamente intendesse Toffler a proposito dell'essere *impreparati*. Come ci si può preparare a cose che cambiano improvvisamente, e che a un certo punto sono semplicemente lì davanti a noi, senza nessuna transizione (o forse perché non se ne sono voluti riconoscere i segni premonitori)?

I primi pensieri a proposito del tema di "Ardeth #07" erano ancora identificati con il titolo provvisorio di *Utopia Europa*. Insieme alla redazione si è però presa la decisione di evitare il termine utopia. Perché il pensiero utopistico rischia di sembrare troppo riduttivamente orientato verso il solo futuro. Con le loro proposte totalizzanti, le utopie non prendono sul serio il presente, e ancor meno il passato, dal momento che esso appare soltanto come l'immagine al negativo delle loro promesse.

Ma è altresì vero che quando le utopie si realizzano, si presentano di solito come distopie, come utopie negative, giungendo inaspettatamente e all'improvviso. Come in questo momento. La distopia è perfetta: i confini sono chiusi, si erigono nuovi muri e recinzioni ai confini, vengono

ridotti i diritti fondamentali e le libertà di movimento. Per non parlare delle zone rosse e dei lockdown. Tutto è sottoposto a uno stato di shock, ovunque immobile, la vita si restringe al presente immediato, senza prospettiva né retrospettiva. Il futuro è sospeso, così come il passato. E, al culmine di tutto ciò, c'è la mortificazione narcisistica inflitta dal virus all'essere umano.

E tuttavia il virus ci fornisce un'esperienza in cui non speravamo più: *Le rites de passage*. Noi siamo parte di un grande rito di passaggio entro una nuova epoca. Si potrebbe anche parlare di un rito di iniziazione per qualcosa che nessuno sa ancora nominare, al momento, ma che si annuncia attraverso dei segni evidenti. Arnold Van Gennep (1837-1957) usava il termine "riti di passaggio" per descrivere i rituali, le celebrazioni e le feste che danno struttura e ritmo alla vita, formano il senso di comunità e di identità. Il lockdown, la corsa ai vaccini e le vaccinazioni di massa devono essere intesi come un gigantesco rito di passaggio. Attraverso i riti di passaggio facciamo un tipo di esperienza di cui prima la modernità, con la sua secolarizzazione della vita, e successivamente la postmodernità, con la sua dissoluzione di tutte le differenze e l'istituzione della simultaneità totale, ci avevano privato da lungo tempo. E d'altro canto nessuno potrebbe desiderare di ripetere i riti di passaggio dell'oscuro XX secolo, con le sue guerre mondiali e tutto ciò che hanno comportato.

### *Territorio*

Il XXI secolo ha il suo evento epocale. Si tratta di sbloccare l'impasse dell'innovazione e trasformarla nel catalizzatore di un gran numero di piccoli e grandi cambiamenti. Questo è ciò di cui "Ardeh #07" si vuole occupare ponendo la questione dell'Europa, della sua unità, molteplicità, e molteplicità nell'unità. Considerando la pluralità delle sue strutture, della sua storia e delle sue mentalità multiple, non è forse necessario intendere l'Europa come un grande progetto di riti di passaggio, o meglio un progetto di transizioni verso nuovi riti di passaggio? I riti strutturano il territorio, trasformano i confini in soglie e consentono il transito da un lato all'altro. Dunque l'Europa potrebbe essere descritta come un territorio attraversato da molteplici soglie: come un cartamodello da sarto, che definisce le linee di taglio, ma dove i tagli allo stesso tempo marcano le future cuciture che terranno insieme le varie parti, secondo un'idea sovraordinata.

Quando parliamo di territorio europeo abbiamo a che fare con situazioni caleidoscopiche, dove gli elementi individuali si ricombinano continuamente per formare nuove e stimolanti costellazioni, ma in cui l'insieme resta lo stesso. Nella forma di un palinsesto, l'Europa è attraversata da molte linee di confine e molte soglie, a volte più marcate, altre più deboli. Non sono soltanto le formazioni geologiche come fiumi, montagne, pianure o deserti a formare i confini, ma anche i sistemi economici e giuridici, così come quelli scolastici e universitari. Sullo sfondo di queste separazioni si stagliano la storia delle mentalità, la storia delle dominazioni e i traumi del passato.

Varrebbe allora la pena di chiedersi se non sia proprio il fenomeno delle soglie territoriali a definire più nettamente l'identità dell'Europa moderna. È su questo punto che il livello psicologico della questione si rende evidente, dal momento che attraversare una soglia è sempre un po' come uscire da se stessi. Le soglie e i confini compongono uno specchio per ciascun se stesso: può allora l'Europa, nel suo potere unificante, essere descritta come una grande sala degli specchi?

Michel Foucault ha messo in luce la natura fantastica dei riti di passaggio, dal momento che i rituali includono sempre «maschere, tatuaggi e cosmesi» che traspongono il corpo in un altro spazio (1966). Foucault ha anche definito questi fenomeni come eterotopie, o luoghi del rispecchiamento dell'altro, che sono anche luoghi del fantastico. Oltre a ciò, l'eterotopia è sempre correlata a una eterocronia. Dunque le storie a cui il mito di fondazione dell'Europa deve la sua esistenza si sovrappongono in molteplici strati e in sempre nuove costellazioni. Sono questi processi temporali e spaziali che il territorio dei riti di passaggio richiede, e sono proprio questi aspetti che lo rendono differente rispetto alla vastità dell'America o della Russia. Gli specchi e le soglie sono allora i luoghi in cui il sé si sovrappone all'altro attraverso molti ripiegamenti, si mescola, e produce il proprio peculiare amalgama di fantastico e di reale. Possiamo forse capire meglio l'Europa (e che cosa comprendiamo meglio in essa?) descrivendola come una eterotopia, dove ciò che è apparentemente incompatibile si interpenetra – facendo sì che proprio da quei luoghi di compenetrazione possano emergere caratteri di identità?

### *Infrastruttura*

In questo senso, "Ardeth #07" pone delle domande sull'Europa dei riti di passaggio, concreti e fantastici, materiali o psicologici, dove, estendendosi all'architettura, l'infrastruttura è complemento necessario alla soglia e dove l'una non può esistere senza l'altra. Per infrastruttura si dovrebbe intendere innanzitutto ciò che si estende attraverso i confini, e che consente alle soglie di essere esperite come tali. Ciò include i flussi di merci, idee, turisti, migranti (e loro trafficanti), i corridoi e le reti di energia, ma anche le rotte ciclabili e i sentieri escursionistici, le antiche alzaie, i canali, le ferrovie, i grandi elettrodotti e le autostrade telematiche. Non sono forse questi i posti in cui i riti di passaggio hanno luogo, così come nelle aree di sosta e nelle stazioni di servizio, o nei bistro degli aeroporti? Oppure i riti di passaggio oggi avvengono soltanto nell'architettura dei computer, attraverso la digitazione di pin e password, nelle ricerche su Google e nella pubblicazione di messaggi sui social media?

### *Architettura*

Nella misura in cui l'architettura serve a svolgere rituali quotidiani, alcune esperienze architettoniche fondamentali risultano connesse ai riti di passaggio. Anche se oggi questo aspetto è poco considerato, l'architettura è associata con riti di passaggio di piccola scala, quali i continui attraver-



samenti delle soglie. L'architettura è innanzitutto una tecnica delle soglie, che crea potenzialità per rituali. Tra i nativi del Nord Ovest americano sono i grandi totem deputati a marcare un luogo, introducendo così una differenza per i rituali. In architettura questo principio include in primo luogo i muri che definiscono un fronte e un retro. Oppure le quattro pareti che separano un interno da un esterno, e che elevano il semplice passaggio da un lato all'altro del muro al rango di rituale, per mezzo di una porta.

In stretta connessione con tutto ciò, tuttavia, c'è anche una componente temporale molto forte, non soltanto nel senso del movimento fisico, ma nel senso del tempo progressivo, della storia. «Oggi abbiamo sostanzialmente perso la capacità di pensare al futuro. Gran parte della gente non vuole andare al di là del proprio presente – non ama vedersi come un nesso nella catena delle generazioni», ha scritto il sociologo Norbert Elias (1987), parlando della ritirata nel presente. Si potrebbe interpretare questa considerazione come un segno di una più generale ritirata dai rituali, dal momento che essi sono delle pratiche culturali in cui il passato e il futuro sono posti in relazione attraverso il presente immediato, in un'azione rituale attiva.

Con la catena delle generazioni, quel che viene posto al di sopra di tutto è la giustizia generazionale, ovvero l'autocomprensione con cui un'epoca definisce se stessa come nesso tra generazioni future e passate. In vista dei nuovi problemi ambientali e dello stato della democrazia, è invece la giustizia intergenerazionale a dover essere posta al cuore dell'attenzione generale. Tuttavia, essa esiste solo a condizione che il presente comprenda se stesso come un rito di passaggio, nel corso del quale tale giustizia possa includere tanto le passate quanto le future generazioni. Questo è ciò che significa il progetto Europeo.

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*translo-*  
*cality •*  
*urban*  
*design •*  
*European •*  
*inclusive*  
*city*

# Translocality as Urban Design Tool for the Inclusive City: The Case of European

**Socrates Stratis**

## *Abstract*

In this article, I unpack the notion of translocality as an urban design tool that interrelates architecture, infrastructure and territory in Europe. The notion of translocality entails a strategic design tool to form specific relations between mobility and place towards the goal of a European inclusive city. Translocality involves mobility as an agent for co-producing locality as well as territories as hosts for place-making mobilities. I argue that European, a 30-year-old biennial urban design competition network for ideas and their implementation, has discreetly set the foundations for collectively addressing the inclusive city, offering many kinds of translocality. The article is based on the examination of diaries and notes of the author's reflective practice thanks to his involvement in the European network. In addition, it examines the documents produced by the reflective practice of European. The findings help us formulate a strategic framework for collaborative European networks of urban design that can instigate common urban imaginaries for the inclusive city.

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## Translocality as a design tool encourages urban design practice to profit from the interrelationship between means and ends.

### *Introduction*

Through this article, I unpack the notion of translocality as an urban design tool to interrelate architecture, infrastructure and territory in Europe, the topic of the current issue of “Ardeth” journal. Translocality is the opposite of globalization. It revolves around putting local issues in a global context, making them accessible. The notion of translocality can form a strategic design tool that creates specific relations between mobility and locality to enhance the inclusive city. Translocality as a design tool encourages urban design practice to go beyond the dominating visual and static aesthetics of the discipline. Moreover, it introduces design-based research to complement urban design research that focuses on temporal and perceptual dimensions of the urban environment (Wenderlich, 2014: 61). Translocality as a design tool encourages urban design practice to profit from the interrelationship between means and ends. In other words, it brings forward the correlation between the actorial ecology of the urban design process and the content of the design proposal.

Having said that, I argue that European has discreetly set the foundations for collectively addressing the European inclusive city, based on many facets of translocality. European is simultaneously a centralized organization based in Paris and a network spread out over 23 European countries. It is a 30-year-old biennial urban design competition platform for ideas and their implementation. Since 1988, it has mobilized 20,370 teams of young practitioners under 40 years old, who delivered proposals for 530 sites in 23 European countries (Vincendon, 2019).

So far, we have assumed that the inclusive city will emerge thanks to many bottom-up spatial practices based on the agency of participation. However, this is not enough. We may also need a strategic approach that will allow for isolated practices coming from small cities around Europe to ally, exchange ideas and share designerly knowledge. According to Michelle Provoost, the way we conceptualize, build and manage our cities determines their democratic content (Provoost, 2017: 81). Provoost suggests that after having mastered bottom-up initiatives and small projects, we actually need to construct bridges between civic institutions and public, democratic structures.

Collaborative networks aim at creating such bridges by investing in the intersection of design, social innovation and public policy (Manzini, Staszowski, 2013). The European network has the seeds to our cities' democratic content and can offer the aforementioned bridges and interrelations. Its network-like structure allows for a collective intelligence to emerge (Kalnis, 2016). It is true that the European organization does not deal with bottom-up initiatives but rather with local authorities' urban practices. Nor does it present itself explicitly as a collaborative network. Yet, the concept of translocality may make explicit such potential. It can offer a thread bringing together the fragmented urban design knowledge on relations between mobility and place produced by the network. Such a thread may be useful for constructing bridges to civic institutions and between isolated winning projects, European's practice and urban actors. It may also offer elements of innovation to urban design practice outside the competition.

The research methodology of this article is based on a qualitative method of inquiry with the support of some data I have collected over the years as well as data produced by the European network. I use two tracks of inquiry. The first one is the examination of diaries, notes and articles produced by my reflective practice thanks to my involvement in the network. The second track is the examination of documents produced thanks to the reflective practice of European (published projects and texts, exhibitions, fora and conferences, etc). The findings first demonstrate the multiple facets of translocality present in its activities as a network as well as in the winning projects. Second, they help us formulate a strategic framework by offering alternative futures for the European inclusive city through urban design practice.

### *Translocality*

The two central dimensions of translocality are those of mobility and place (Greiner, Kdapolrak, 2013). The notion of translocality is first used by Appadurai when he defines the effects of transnational processes on localities, especially addressing issues of migration. According to Appadurai, it is becoming increasingly difficult to produce localities devoid of such processes (Appadurai, 2005). Other scholars complement this

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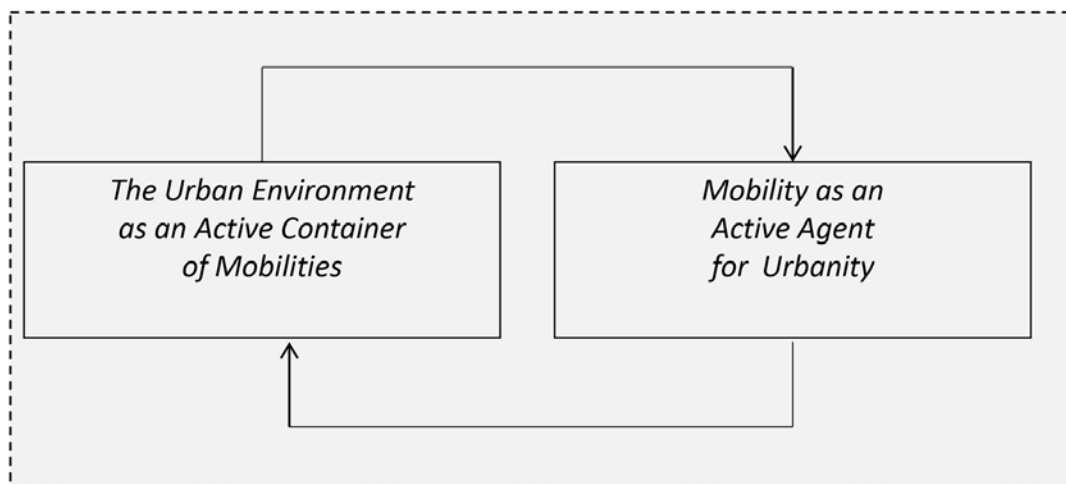
We see tension resulting from the conflict between the importance of social equity in mobility infrastructure (access and circulation) and unequal patterns of urbanization responsible for inequality and exclusion.

approach by emphasizing place instead of mobility, introducing practices of emplacement, of anchoring of migration flows (Smith, 2011). Some people call it “situatedness during mobility”, a sort of groundedness during mobility (Brickell, Datta, 2011). The notion of translocality was important to urban studies and later also to urban design, since it allows us to abandon binaries such as localism vs globalism and urges us to study how to insert local issues into the global context and investigate ways to make them widely accessible. Through the notion of translocality, we understand the connections of urban environments with the world. We understand the effects of all kinds of networks on urban territories, especially when we realize that the production of localities is difficult without the transnational processes based on such networks of mobility.

Translocality causes, however, unequal urban development. In the 1980s, Francois Ascher introduced the notion of Metapolis to explicate this pattern of unequal urbanization based on mobility infrastructure and logistics nodes (Ascher, 1995). We see tension resulting from the conflict between the importance of social equity in mobility infrastructure (access and circulation) and unequal patterns of urbanization responsible for inequality and exclusion.

What kind of translocality is needed for the inclusive city? In other words, what kind of relations between mobility and place should urban design champion? For the purpose of this article, I define translocality as the interrelationship between the urban environment as an active container of mobilities and mobility as an active agent of urbanity (Fig. 1). The article tackles two questions. The first is what kind of mobility has an elevated degree of active agency in the co-production with locality of place? The second question is how territories could be prepared to become equal agents in the co-production of place; in other words, to become active hosts to place-making mobilities.

*Mobility as an active agent of urbanity.* Mobility constitutes an undeniable mode of “urbanogenesis”. It is part of the fundamental practice that creates urbanity (Levy, 1999, 2004; Amphoux, 1999). Mobility is part of the means that generate co-presence. It constitutes one of the places where co-presence emerges. “Random



Multisensory Interactions on Contact” are central to the production of co-presence thanks to mobility. Levy unpacks how to maximize the aforementioned interactions by orchestrating specific relations between territories and networks of mobility (Levy, 2004: 159); in other words, by decreasing the dominance of “non-lieux” (Augé, 1993). Levy argues that since mobility plays such a decisive role in urbanity, it should not be regarded as a merely technical issue managed by experts. It should open up to democratic processes of decision-making (Levy, 2004: 169).

*The urban environment as an active container of mobilities.* The urban milieu is the agent of potential conciliation between all speeds of movement, modes of displacement and needs of the inhabitants and users. Donald Appleyard demonstrated how the expansion of our home territory is influenced by the amount of mechanized traffic crossing our streets. It showed, for the first time, the invisible impact of mechanized mobility on social relations in the urban environment (Appleyard, 1982). This kind of conciliation involves the use of mobility networks that introduce spatial, landscape and social relations to territories. Cities have many historical examples where mobility transcended its technical world to instill such relations in territories, from Moses’ park avenues to Haussmann’s restructuring of Paris, among many others (Degros, 2014: 36). Yet, the modes of action need to be redefined to enhance such transformations

Fig. 1 - Translocality as urban design tool for the inclusive city. Courtesy of the author.

Since mobility plays such a decisive role in urbanity, it should not be regarded as a merely technical issue managed by experts. It should open up to democratic processes of decision-making.

Fig. 2 - Visualization of the actorial processes for the Europan project during each session. Courtesy of the author.

Modes of action need to be redefined to enhance such transformations to creatively address the co-presence of different rhythms, yielding the inclusive city.

to creatively address the co-presence of different rhythms (Younes, 2012), yielding the inclusive city. Slow structure, alludes to the idea of slowness. It involves the socialisation of networks by introducing different rhythms. In other words, it is about modes of action that work to integrate mobility networks into the social context based on slow and environmentally sensitive transport methods (Degros, 2014: 40, 41). Rethinking mobility may engender reconnections between entities kept apart by functionalist modernist urbanism: mobility, urban tissue and natural environment (Rebois, 2013: 94; Ascher, Appel-Muller, 2007). In addition, rethinking modes of soft as well as public mobility regarding housing areas in rural areas and their connection to cities could support the sustainability of the urban environment, addressing issues related to climate change and social injustice (Degros, 2019).

*Europan, the most discreet city planning competition*  
“Europan: the most discreet city planning competition, (but the smartest one)” is the title of Sibylle Vincendon’s article in French daily newspaper *Liberation*, published on 9 May 2019. She had been following the French celebration of the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the biennial European Competition for young professionals (architects, urban planners, landscape architects). Vincendon’s article refers to the European dimension of the competition, which serves discreetly as a network platform for launching innovative design ideas on the reinvention of the European city, and encouraging their implementation in the competition sites. Vincendon goes on to tell us that Europan has become an important urban device thanks to on one hand, the competent participating teams in each session of the biennial competition and on the other hand thanks to the 45 to 50 challenging competition sites all over Europe and to the high-level national juries. I could also include cities’ authorities, sites’ owners and city developers, the national secretariats of the actual 12 country members and the Scientific and Technical Committees. The network is localized twice for each biennial session, thanks to some strategically designed Fora by the European and national secretariats. The first Forum is that of the Inter Sessions, which is about the latest session’s results combined with the



# 1. Theme Formulation: European Urbanities



## 3. Informing the Subthemes From the Sites' Specifics (grouping and comparing): ie. European 8



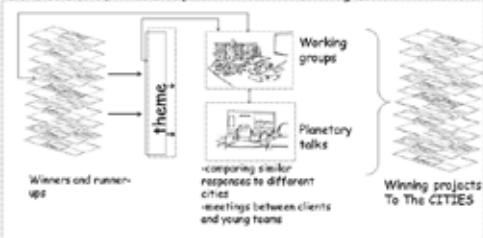
## 2. National Secretariats negotiate with cities with relevant sites to the theme.



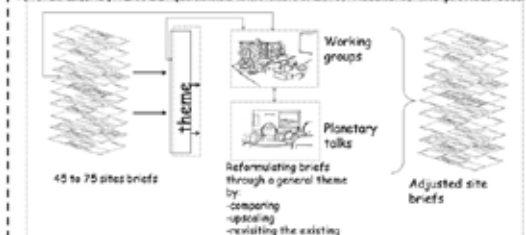
## 5. COMPETITION PHASE FOR ALL YOUNG ARCHITECTS, LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS, URBAN PLANNERS UNDER 40 YEARS OLD

## 6. NATIONAL JURIES - FIRST STAGE

## 9. Forum of Results (combined with the following Ecession Forum of Sites)



## 4. Forum of Sites (combined with the Forum of Results of the previous session)



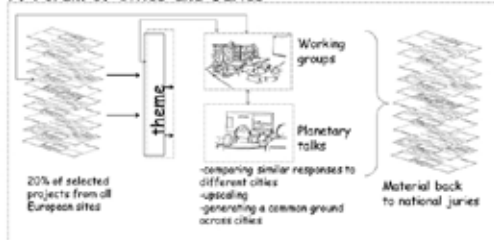
### An example: E8 Subtheme 4: What sort of Urbanity for the inhabitants?

#### E8 Subtheme 4 Sites

Antalya Kapez (Turkey)  
Ceuta, (Spain)  
Coimbra (Portugal)  
Funchal (Portugal)  
Istanbul/Zeytinburnu (Turkey)  
Larnaca, (Cyprus)  
Leinefelde (Germany)  
Livorno (Italy)  
Oldham (UK)



## 7. Forum of Cities and Juries



## 8. NATIONAL JURIES- SECOND STAGE

## 10. IMPLEMENTATION STAGE

A process of translation takes place, allowing local issues to reach a European level of discussion and vice versa.

Europan is an incredible place where young professionals could win by challenging the brief and reformulating the initial brief's questions.

following session's debate on the new sites. The second one is the Forum of Cities and Juries that allows for a European discussion based on a selection of 20% of submitted projects by each national jury (Fig. 2). Both Fora are active advocates for the sustainability of European as a collaborative network.

Europan started in 1988 thanks to an expansion of the French organization Pan (Programme Architecture Nouvelle – New Program for Architecture). The establishment of Pan in 1972 aimed to break away from the dominating architectural powers and to prepare the grounds for a new generation (Maugard, Younes, 2019: 9). European's objective, similar to that of Pan, facilitates practitioners under 40 years old in collaborating with European city authorities via innovative projects concerning the urban environment. The unique character of the biennial competition comes from a dynamic relation between innovative ideas and their implementation, between designed processes and projected physical objects. Therefore, it allows for experimentation, for the reformulation of badly posed questions, or for the formulation of new questions about the future of sites. Moreover, according to the mayor of Besançon, France participating in a working group of the 2018 European 14 Forum in Brussels, it enables the participating teams, cities and the rest of the urban actors involved to gradually construct common concerns and visions about the European inclusive city. A process of translation takes place, allowing local issues to reach a European level of discussion and vice versa.

The 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of European France in 2018 was celebrated through a film documentary, a conference, a book titled *Villes et architectures en débat – European* written by Chris Younes and Alain Maugard (2019), radio programmes and articles in newspapers. The last two addressed a wider audience, hoping to make European less discreet, at least in France. According to Alain Maugard, President of European France who was interviewed in Vincendon's article in *Liberation*, European is an incredible place where young professionals could win by challenging the brief and reformulating the initial brief's questions. The conference was part of the 30-year anniversary celebrations of European France and brought French-speaking urban actors together. The debate centred on the future of the network, its challenges, its practices regarding changes in professional practice and society as well as in urban governing institutions (Stratis, 2019).

### *Research methodology: European's collective reflective practice*

The article's research methodology is based on a qualitative method of inquiry with the support of some data I have collected over the years as well of additional data produced by the European network. I use two tracks of inquiry. The first is the examination of diaries, notes and articles I produced during my reflective practice in European, in which I have been involved in multifarious ways since 1996 (Stratis, 2019). The second track involves the examination of documents produced thanks to the reflective practice of the network, producing collective intelligence (Kalnis, 2016): catalogues of results with analytical texts and presentations of the winning projects, exhibitions catalogues and web archives of European Europe and the national structures. The European and national structures of the organization have established some exceptional moments of reflection along with their mundane role of organizing the biennial competitions, yet not in a systematic way. As I mentioned already, European France celebrated its 30 years in 2018 by establishing modes of reflection on the organization's activities and design output. European Europe has initiated a few similar events, inviting all participating countries to contribute. In 1996, there was the milestone event in Thessaloniki, Greece, regarding the implemented projects from previous sessions. In 2007, Didier Rebois, the General Secretary of the organization and one of its founding members, curated an exhibition in Cité d'Architecture in Paris and edited a book titled *Generation European*. In 2009, he initiated, together with the members of the organization's Scientific committee, a major event in Graz, Austria, titled "What Future for European Competition?" (Rebois, 2009), with a publication of the same title. Some of the winning projects that I analyse come from this publication.

In their turn, the national structures of the organization have managed to reflect on their practice a few times during the last 30 years (Stratis, 2019). The outcome of European's reflective posture is a valuable source of empirical knowledge about European urban design. Its reflective capacity has enabled me to further develop the notion of translocality as design tool. The relations between mobility and place that constitute the notion of translocality have been the

**The outcome of European's reflective posture is a valuable source of empirical knowledge about European urban design.**

Only 50% of winning projects of Europan's 10 to 14 sessions (E10-E14) are implemented. Even though the cities pay quite a lot to participate, they do not mind avoiding implementation.

The meaning of successful implementations changes when we include into urban design practice, activities that relate to processes and regulations, to strategic plans and tactful actions.

object of discussion by jury members, winning teams and cities' representatives during working groups of the various sessions. They have also been the object of analysis of winning projects in the literature (Amphoux, 1999; Degros, 2014; Hamfelt, 2004; Rebois, 2008; Stratis, 2006, 2016).

Further on, I will use the notion of translocality to revisit the Europan's activities. I identify two conditions of translocality that bound its activities. The first has to do with the placement of local issues of cities in European networks of urban actors during the process of each session of the biennial competition. The second one has to do with the envisioned relations between mobility and place by the winning projects, regarding the competition sites.

#### *Placement of local issues of cities in the Europan's many networks of urban actors*

Mid-May 2019, the national structures of the organization, together with the scientific committee, met in Stockholm and discussed the fact that only 50% of winning projects of Europan's 10 to 14 sessions (E10-E14) are implemented. Even though the cities pay quite a lot to participate, they do not mind avoiding implementation. Besides, young professionals continue to show great interest in the competition, despite increasing chances of non-implementation.

This meeting was part of the network's desire to systematize its reflective practice by bringing together local issues on a European scale. With the help of the national structures, Didier Rebois systematically gathers relevant data, both quantitative and qualitative, to help the network with a continuous readjustment. Part of this data formed the basis of the discussion in Stockholm, together with stories of successes and failures during the implementation of winning projects from all over Europe.

The meaning of successful implementations changes when we include into urban design practice, activities that relate to processes and regulations, to strategic plans and tactful actions. Then, we can move away from the idea of urban design as a sum of designed physical objects. This kind of debate among the network's actors was triggered by emblematic winning projects and relevant published articles about Europan. I coined the idea of revealing the "iceberg" character of the Europan project with Bernd Vlay in



2010 to celebrate the invisible aspects of the urban design project, which architectural culture tends to ignore (Vlay, Stratis, 2010).

After all, cities do not mind avoiding implementation because they gain considerably from the immaterial dimensions of the project concept as well as from the critical mass of the network. They publicize their cities through the competition site, both in their countries and across Europe. They get valuable ideas and insights on how space could be used for political programs and urban visions, plus they meet each other. The young professionals, on a similar note, get to test their wings and their ability to deal with complex urban issues. In some countries, like France for example, the winning teams enter into a *palmares* (roll of honour), of candidates, very attractive to other cities and public institutions.

In December 2018, in a radio broadcast titled *Europan the catalyst* (*Europan le catalysateur*) (Fig. 3) that was part of *Europan France's* 30<sup>th</sup>-anniversary celebration, city representative of Marseille Mrs Laure Portale talked with great enthusiasm about the city's experience with the winning teams regarding the Plan d'Aou area (*Europan 12- E12*). One of the three

Fig. 3 - View of the radio program debates, 2019. Courtesy of the author.

Cities do not mind avoiding implementation because they gain considerably from the immaterial dimensions of the project concept as well as from the critical mass of the network.

1 - excerpt from the E11 Forum of Cities, Istanbul, Workshop 3C From Place to Territory Report, 2010, written by the author.

2 - <https://www.europan-europe.eu/fr/project-and-processes/promotor>.

The “Promotor” project shifts the urban design project into a web tool that collects and produces data regarding a transnational region. It is a web archive that improves social accessibility to urban-planning decision-making.

winning teams, M. Hermansen, J.W. Frisk, R.W. Frisk, (Denmark), introduced an innovative participatory method, surprising the urban actors, who were rather accustomed to centralized French planning methods. “We were blocked! We had no idea about the future of the site before entering the competition”, exclaimed Mrs Portale during the radio discussion. According to her, all winning teams helped the city open up its horizons of possibilities. On a similar line, during the Forum of Cities for the 11<sup>th</sup> session of the competition, in Istanbul back in 2010, the urban planning director of Porvoo in Finland, Mr Eero Loytonen, had similar expectations from the network. He was hoping for new questions and programmes for his city, which were impossible to instigate by the city itself, to be produced by the participating European actors. Mr Michele Beaumale, the mayor of Stains in France, who participated in the same workshop, referred to the “possibility of Europan to become a facilitator of things to happen. To put the project actors around a table and discuss possibilities”.<sup>1</sup>

“Promotor” is the name of the winning project at Kleines Dreieck by S. Langner and M. Rudolph (Germany),<sup>2</sup> located at the eastern German borders (E8 session). It consists of an architecture of new actorial and programmatic proximities aimed at opening up regional planning to the Dreistadt region’s inhabitants. The “Promotor” project shifts the urban design project into a web tool that collects and produces data regarding a transnational region. It is a web archive that improves social accessibility to urban-planning decision-making (Stratis, 2009: 28). It becomes a device that situates local issues, which are fragmented both due to national borders and the mode of master planning, on a global scale.

#### *Envisioned relations between mobility and place in the winning projects*

In this part, I will refer to the relations between mobility and place envisioned by some emblematic winning projects. The first relation involves place-making mobilities, and the second is about urban territories as active containers of mobility.

Place making mobilities is the characteristic of the following three winning projects. We will briefly see what kind of mobility has an elevated degree of active agency as it co-produces place with locality.



“La ville de plus près” (“Bringing the town closer”) is the runner-up project for Bordeaux, France, by A. Bossé and N. Solenn, (France), (E9 session). The project “establishes a context within which the site can take time to grow in complexity and gain substance in terms of the building blocks of future practices and neighbourliness functioning at both local and city-wide levels” (from an interview published on [european.europe.eu](http://european.europe.eu)).<sup>3</sup> Soft mobility, in this case, obtains a situational character. In other words, the slowness of pedestrians and all sorts of non-mechanical flows becomes an agent of constructing situated shared knowledge among the users of the specific site. It is a sort of slow structure (Degros, 2014). It produces public space by populating the abandoned railway site where the city wants to build housing. In other words, the project offers alternative ways to develop the city through temporal uses and the establishment of sociability before the buildings arrive.

The winning project “Ambient Kerb” in Warsaw, Poland by L.G. Alfaya and P. Muniz (Spain) aims to preserve the existing atmosphere of the neighbourhood, part of the competition site, (E10 session). It employs interior furniture in the public space of the streets and the buildings’ courtyards. When the residents of Warsaw regained their private properties in the existing courtyard buildings from the state, the next step was to question the publicness of the courtyard spaces. “Ambient Kerb”<sup>4</sup> counters such privatization by offering temporal ways to encourage public flows through the courtyards.

The winning project by L’AUC (France)<sup>5</sup> in Villetaneuse, France, introduced the variability of the duration of network flows and its impact on the place-making of public spaces in transport hubs (E5 session). The team implicitly translated Levy’s approach to orchestrating relations between mobility networks and place to increase urbanity (Levy, 2004). Their brief or long duration depends on the type of programmes inserted in proximity to traffic nodes (Stratis, 2009: 28, 29).

Urban territories as active containers of mobilities is the aim of the following six winning projects that implicitly addressed the question: how could territories be “prepared” to become equal agents in the co-production of place? To become, in other words, active hosts to place-making mobilities. Their answer

3 - <https://www.european-europe.eu/fr/project-and-processes/bringing-the-town-closer>

4 - <https://www.european-europe.eu/fr/project-and-processes/ambient-kerb>

5 - <https://www.europeanfrance.org/projet/corridor-anti-potemkine-236>

Soft mobility, in this case, obtains a situational character. In other words, the slowness of pedestrians and all sorts of non-mechanical flows becomes an agent of constructing situated shared knowledge among the users of the specific site.

6 - <http://europan.no/ukategorisert/e11-skien-porsgrunn/>

7 - [http://archive.europan.at/wi\\_wien.html](http://archive.europan.at/wi_wien.html)

8 - <https://www.europanfrance.org/projet/bondy-s-count-593>

9 - <https://www.europanfrance.org/projet/on-the-road-318>

is twofold: by multiplying the hosting capacities of a place to urban flows and by strategically distributing those flows of network centralities over the territories in proximity.

Multiplication of hosting capacities: back in 1997, Villetaneuse was one of those territories not yet connected to transport networks. The winning project builds on the state's decision for a new train stop and a tram line by designing a public programme to be used by both passers-by and the neighbourhood. Another example is the runner-up project in Skien and Porsgrunn by N. Hack (Germany) and P. D'Acun- to (Italy), (E11 session).<sup>6</sup> The project offers four pedestrian bridges across the river to complete a soft mobility network and at the same time link the four isolated communities along the river. The bridges are populated with public programmes such as a spa and swimming pools. The teaming up of the cities of Skien and Porsgrunn for the competition helped increase their critical territorial mass, in a bid to multiply their hosting capacities for mobilities. Strategies of increasing the locality's resistance when the territories are overwhelmed by fast flows are the driving design force of the following projects.

In Kragan, Vienna, dominant flows are produced due to the presence of a large shopping centre. In Bondy, France, the flows are produced by the logistics area. The winning project in Kragan by B. Romanluc and D. Stupar, (Slovenia)<sup>7</sup> challenges the suburban function of the shopping centre by introducing a major public space and changing how it can be accessed from the nearby train station (E13 session). The winning project in Bondy by N. Barnavon and collaborators (France)<sup>8</sup> formulates a negotiation game (E13 session). It is an invitation for urban actors to support the infiltration of big box logistics areas by public spaces, street commerce and leisure activities. In Reims, France, the project brief has to do with urbanizing the 8km long downscaled highway. The runner-up project by N. Reymond and Agence Beau Bour (France)<sup>9</sup> proposes a series of micro-centralities along the downgraded highway to become part of a network of public spaces for the city (E9 session). In other words, it proposes integrating the mobility infrastructure in a social context.



The winning project in Sion, Switzerland, by E. Gronn and I. Lyngner, (Norway)<sup>10</sup> reorganizes the city's traffic by distributing the train station's traditional programmes along a city boardwalk, (E9 session). The team proposes to extend the soft mobility network to the other side of the railway by developing underground and overground connections.

10 - <https://www.european-europe.eu/fr/project-and-processes/boardwalking>

*Conclusion, or designerly translocalities for the inclusive European city*

Placing Local Issues on Europan's Network: Europan's activities and the aforementioned winning projects show us many facets of translocality that engender new actorial proximities, a prerequisite for co-producing the inclusive city. To allow for such proximities to take place, we need to redefine the notion of the urban design project itself. Besides, we need to accept the open character of the project. More precisely, we should include the following in the making of a project: the process of the initial formulation of each session theme, the choice of sites, the invitation of urban actors on different scales, the formulation of the brief and the collective discussion of 20% of submitted projects on a European level (the Europan Forum of Cities and Juries). The Europan project allows young competition participants to reformulate the relations between all the above: to reposition the relations that enhance new proximities between mobility and locality for place co-production. The "Promotor" project in Kleines Dreieck is emblematic in that sense.

Having in mind that cities are the faithful clients of the network, we need to confront the challenges that come with such a collaboration. The first one is the inequality between European cities in terms of available funds and tools to address such issues. For example, the burden of the socialist state legacy in former Eastern European countries disempowers cities' positions. It hands over their urban future to the private sector. Concerning the cities coming from the north-western part of Europe, they still have some support from the state, thus they get more chances to successfully undertake the winning proposals. The second challenge is to open up the process of interrelating urban actors to a European reach, including more than just those from local authorities. Since 1988, when Europan was founded, we have seen the emergence of many new

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They can all profit from the designerly approach of the network and vice versa.

urban actors who deal with the city's commons. Some of them are grouped in European networks (URBACT for example). Others are organized in local groups, consisting of well-informed and engaged citizens. In addition, there are public institutions that deal with ecological transition and the increasing inequalities in our cities. They can all profit from the designerly approach of the network and vice versa.

*Envisioned relations between mobility and place by European's winning projects*

Regarding the aforementioned winning projects, they adopt quite often, a double posture. They reconfigure the assigned territories as urban containers for mobilities by multiplying their hosting capacities. At the same time, they use soft mobilities, to encourage urbanities. Bridges across a river can act as a programmatic node between a new locality and a soft mobility network (Skien and Porsgrunn). In Ville-taneuse, it becomes clear that network flows can contribute to the locality if their duration of stay is extended in public spaces. In Bordeaux, the runner-up project questions the way we start a housing project. It employs soft mobility as an active agent to produce situated knowledge and encourage relations among users to reverse the urban development model by giving value to the public uses produced in the vacant site. It invites the city's inhabitants to claim an active role in the co-production of value for the project to come. In the Warsaw case, the project offers tools to sustain the public character of spaces.

To tackle such challenging issues, we should realize that the design decisions need to be addressed by urban actors who are sometimes trapped in nested scales and are thus not part of the usual processes of making urban design projects. I have examined, how the winning projects profit from design decisions already taken by such actors. Examples are the down-scaling of French highways in Reims, the building of a new train station and tram line in Villetaneuse, the collaboration of two adjacent municipalities in Skien Porsgrum or that of three neighbouring countries in the Dreistadt region. Rather often, however, European needs more effective actorial synergies. By inviting urban actors responsible for mobility networks to join the network, European may support Levy's urge to

open the debate about the contribution of mobility infrastructures to urbanity up to democratic processes.

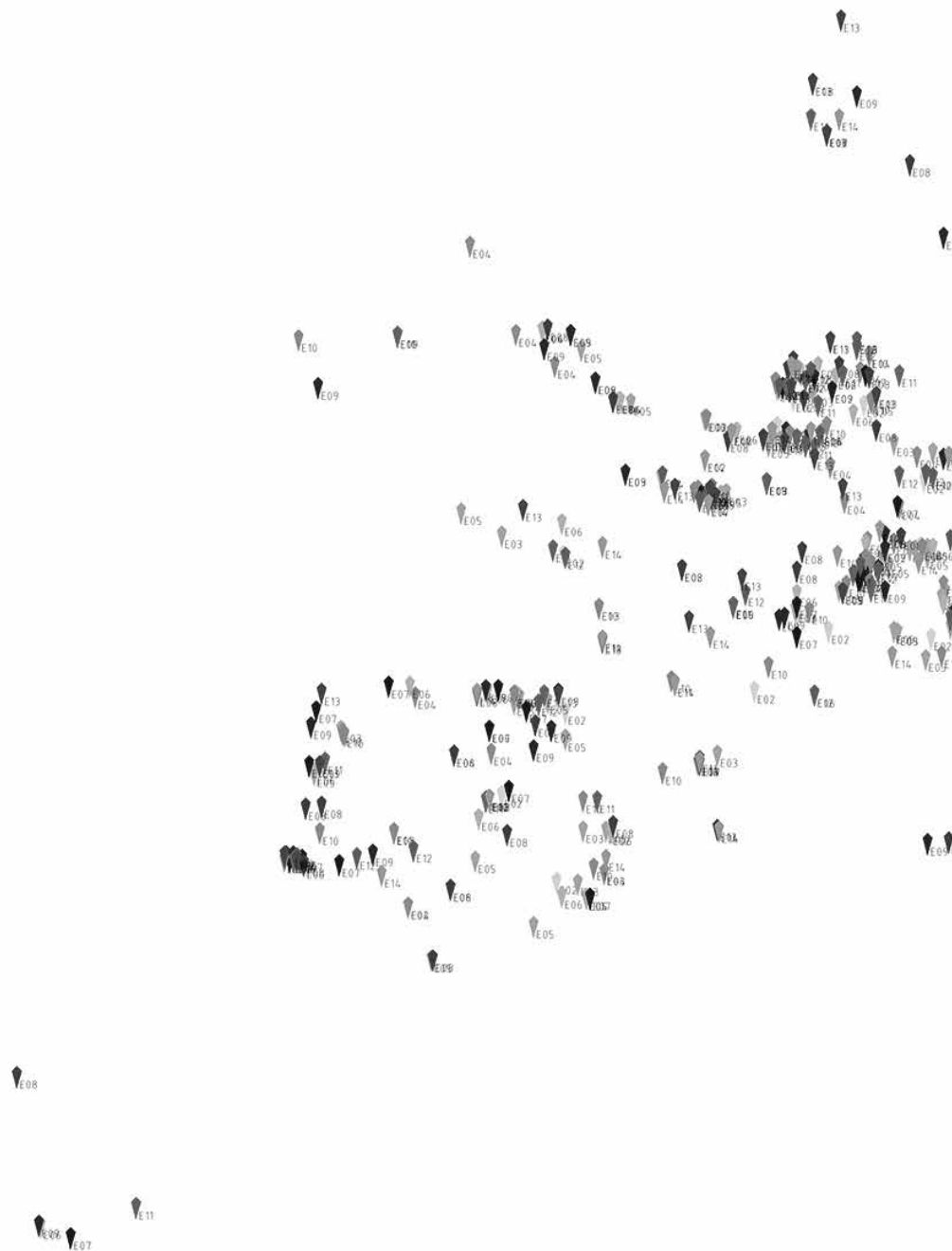
*Collective imaginaries for the European inclusive city*

European reflects, on the one hand, the changes taking place in Europe since 1988 as regards the diminishing urban role of the welfare state and the increase in private urban development. On the other hand, it continues to provide alternatives to the *laissez-faire* mode of urbanization propelled by globalization. I am aware that in this article, I am referring to design intentions instead of concrete transformation on the ground. That could be the focus of another article. However, urban design intentions, such as those of the European winning projects, are useful for creating collective images of what is possible that can assign a political role to urban design. Images of what is possible can trigger a change in the operative imaginaries of European urban actors who have been taken over by the *laissez-faire*, neoliberal mode of urbanization. European's challenge is to systematize the rich designerly knowledge and know-how regarding the active agency of mobility in the co-production of locality as well as the preparation of territories to become active hosts for place-making mobilities. They need to become more accessible to international debates on the city and urban design practice. It can support the process of democratizing decisions taken about mobility infrastructures and their relation to territories. The construction of bridges between cities and civic institutions can take place thanks to processes of translocality as an urban design tool. Thus, European can help determine cities' democratic content by impacting how cities orchestrate new relations between mobility and place through encouraging cities to continue to be part of a European collaborative network.

Over the last 30 years, European has built a ground reality that should be shared with the rest of urban design scholars and practitioners. It has investigated 530 sites from many European cities for the competition (Fig. 4). This ground reality manifests itself in implemented projects, cities' strategic urban plans, the mobilization of urban actors across Europe and the mediatization of new shared urban futures. The on-going public health crisis will inevitably influence European, since it will most probably affect the social

European's challenge is to systematize the rich designerly knowledge and know-how regarding the active agency of mobility in the co-production of locality.

Fig. 4 - The map of Europe formed by the cities participated in European since 1988. Courtesy of the author.





and economic features of its clients: European cities. At the same time, European provides a fertile ground to bounce back from the actual crisis by reflecting through design and formulating possible common futures for a Europe after crisis.

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*climate  
change •  
critical  
regionalism  
• European  
Union • Green  
New Deal*



# European Architectures in the Age of Climate Change

**Sandra Meireis**

## *Abstract*

As a reaction to worldwide calls for a change of the ecological consciousness, and a general overhaul of the global economic system, new movements and manifestos are emerging in connection with the construction industry, which is one of the sectors that can make a significant contribution to climate protection. In this article, European Architectures in the Age of Climate Change (EAACC) are being proposed as an idea that brings nature, society and architecture together, and has the potential to reshape the cities and regions of Europe into a cleaner and fairer tomorrow. A socially just, environmentally friendly, and economically productive Green New Deal (GND) implemented in the Urban Agenda of the European Union can pave the way for a sustainable urban and rural future Europe.

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**1 - Following the famous dictum: "Europe will be forged in crises, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those in crises" | "Europe will be established through crises and that the outcome will be the sum of the outcomes of those crises" by the French entrepreneur and mastermind of the European unification process Jean Monnet in his "Memoirs" (1978) (Ball, 1991: XXI); also see Altiero Spinelli (1941), "Manifesto di Ventotene".**

We, the people of the world, are in the midst of a crisis – the climate crisis!

I believe in the sacredness and dignity of the individual. I believe that all men\* derive the right to freedom equally from God\*. I pledge to resist aggression and tyranny wherever they appear on earth.

*Declaration of Freedom, 1949 - Berlin Freedom Bell, since 1950*

### *Introduction*

We, the people of the world, are in the midst of a crisis – the climate crisis! This is a problem that can only be solved globally, and for which political decisions made at supranational levels are of central importance. In the first chapter of this article, "The European Utopia was Forged in Crises", the history of the European Union (EU) is told against the backdrop of crisis developments, as a way to comprehend mistakes from the past, and to reflect on present values in the face of new emergencies. In the second chapter, "The Inevitability of a Global Green New Deal", the possibility that many aspects of society, especially in the sectors of energy production, agriculture, transport, and housing, can be changed at the same time is explored. In the third chapter "Towards European Architectures in the Age of Climate Change" the central idea is formed: Architecture, society and nature merge and provide a decentralized and regional supply of renewable energy and food production. The fourth chapter "Critical Regionalism Reconsidered" draws from architecture history and provides the ethical and aesthetic background of the EAACC. And the final chapter "Cities and Regions of a European Republic" draws from political theory and provides the structural and political background of the EAACC.

### *The European Utopia was forged in crises<sup>1</sup>*

Given the current environmental and political state of affairs, one cannot help but wonder whether the EU's ideals and economic objectives are sustainable. The utopian idea of a European community was born under the impact of the Second World War, as a path of pacification and communitarization in times of crisis. The communitization of coal, steel and agriculture was pushed forward in order to provide mutual assistance in the reconstruction of the destroyed cities and economies, and to ensure the food supply of the population. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC, founded in 1951) granted its member states

duty-free access to coal and steel; for the first time, individual European states surrendered their national sovereignty in certain areas to a supranational European organization. With this unification process a new political state order on the European continent was expressed. Central to the process of legalizing the European utopia was the preservation of democracy, personal and political freedoms, and the Rule of Law. This was followed and made legal by the signing of the Treaty of Rome (1957). A generation later, after the end of the Cold War and with the fall of the Iron Curtain, the founding treaty of the EU, the Maastricht Treaty (1992) was signed; with constant improvements (Lisbon strategy, monetary union, eastward expansions, and of particular interest for the further argumentation is the EU's Urban Agenda in the (New) Leipzig Charter and the Pact of Amsterdam) the European project finds its present form (European Union, 2021). Currently, the world is in the middle of a decisive turning point, and so is Europe and the EU (Assmann, 2018; Fischer, 2019). The time is ripe for a reflection and revision of dysfunctional political structures on the European level, not least for the sake of the survival of our planet Earth. It seems the climate crisis is merely acknowledged, but only ineffectually addressed, because the capitalist system as a whole would have to be rethought in order to combat the problem with real effectiveness – and this touches upon issues of redistribution of power structures not only in the EU but in the entire world (Mason, 2015; Lessenich, 2016). SARS-CoV-2 can also be understood as a sub-crisis of the climate crisis, i.e. symptomatic of a weakened ecosystem (Bernstein, 2019; UNEP, 2020).<sup>2</sup> It is a great challenge to make the post-pandemic reconstruction process socially just and ecologically sustainable, and it is only conceivable in connection with climate protection and justice (Martin, 2020). Rapid social change is of the utmost climatic urgency. In the past, global emissions have only fallen significantly in times of severe economic crises, e.g. during the Great Depression in the USA in the 1930s; the collapse of the USSR in the late 1980s; or the Corona pandemic in the short run. Moreover, rapid social changes can only be observed in times of war and the associated war economy, which, unfortunately, caused further humanitarian and ecological disasters. With

**2 - Additionally, find a comprehensive collection of articles on the relationship between Covid-19 and the environment [Online]. Available at: <https://www.genevaenvironmentnetwork.org/resources/updates/updates-on-covid-19-and-the-environment/> [Accessed: 28 January 2021].**

**The time is ripe for a reflection and revision of dysfunctional political structures on the European level.**

Severe economic crises in the 20th century were always countered with economic stimulus packages.

regard to the scale of the necessary changes, particularly because they have to be socially and economically sustainable, there is no documented historical model (IPCC, 2018; Klein, 2019: 76-77). Severe economic crises in the 20th century were always countered with economic stimulus packages. In Europe, after the Second World War, the suffering population was met with far-reaching aid measures through the US-funded European Recovery Program (ERP or Marshall Plan, 1948-52). And in the USA, under the presidency of F. D. Roosevelt, the Great Depression of the 1930s was countered by a broad-based New Deal for a liberal welfare state; including new laws on social security and minimum wages, the divestiture of banks, the electrification of rural areas, social housing in cities, the introduction of soil protection programs, the planting of two billion trees, and the investment in culture through the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). But these historical examples have contributed to the stimulation and expansion of a CO<sub>2</sub>-intensive lifestyle – urban sprawl, disposable consumption – and thus presumably bear some responsibility for the current climate crisis. However, these historical examples make clear that not all the details need to be worked out before one can begin to engage in dynamic learning processes with the GND today. All previous mobilizations contained multiple false starts, improvisations, and course corrections (Klein, 2019: 81).

#### *The inevitability of a Global Green New Deal*

In 2018, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) released a *Special Report* on the impacts of *Global Warming of 1.5°C* above pre-industrial levels. In this report, the urgency of reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions is directly related to strengthening the global response to the threat of climate change, sustainable development and poverty eradication efforts (IPCC, 2018). An inclusive and fair transition towards a decarbonized society is a great challenge, and thus the process of decarbonization is pivotally embedded in corresponding initiatives, economic stimulus packages, and comprehensive political transformation ideas and programs, such as the Global Green New Deal (GGND) (UNEP, 2009). The globalization critic and political activist Naomi Klein explains the basic idea of the GND as follows:

[I]n the process of transforming the infrastructure of our society at the speed and scale that scientists have called for, humanity has a once-in-a-century chance to fix an economic model that is failing the majority of people on multiple fronts. Because the factors that are destroying our planet are also destroying people's quality of life in many other ways, from wage stagnation to gaping inequalities to crumbling services to the breakdown of any semblance of social cohesion. Challenging these underlying forces is an opportunity to solve several interlocking crises at once.

In tackling the climate crisis, we can create hundreds of millions of good jobs around the world, invest in the most systematically excluded communities and nations, guarantee health care and child care, and much more. The result of these transformations would be economies built both to protect and to regenerate the planet's life support systems and to respect and sustain the people who depend on them (Klein, 2019: 55-56).

The European Green Deal, as officially presented by the EU Commission, has the goal of becoming climate neutral by 2050, but it has a strong economic and technological focus, and relies primarily on private investors; it neglects the widely-accepted sustainability triangle as the basis for a socially just, green and economically productive development. Although massive investments can help to reduce CO2 emissions significantly, we must not be content with "a New Deal painted green, or a Marshall Plan with solar panels" (Klein, 2019: 81). The end of environmental pollution at high speed is not achievable only with individual bureaucratic measures such as a CO2 tax.<sup>3</sup> In contrast, the European Spring Coalition presented a different approach to a GND for Europe in which they distinguish between technologically-driven climate protection and socio-economically oriented climate justice. In addition to investments for a global ecological transformation, their program contains decisive measures to eliminate tax havens, a humane and effective migration policy, a clear plan to fight poverty in Europe, a fair labor pact, and a European convention on women's rights (European Spring, 2019; DiEM25, 2019). Such demands can also be found in Climate or Environmental Justice movements, such as the Sunrise Movement or the Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC, founded in 1970). By combin-

**3 - This was particularly made clear by the French Gilets-jaunes movement, which was formed against price controls lacking a social policy program.**

In tackling the climate crisis, we can create hundreds of millions of good jobs around the world, invest in the most systematically excluded communities and nations, guarantee health care and child care, and much more.

Architecture and construction is a major part of the overall solution.

The world-famous and universally popular Bauhaus brand is used here for a social-romantic aestheticization of questionable political actions.

ing ambitious goals with powerful political methods, following scientific research, many aspects of society can be changed in the shortest possible time. This applies above all to the sectors of energy production, agriculture, transport, and housing, which means that architecture and construction is a major part of the overall solution. Public transport (subways, streetcars, light-rail systems and cycle paths) should not only be planned everywhere but affordable to everyone, and perhaps even free. Along those transit lines, energy-efficient and affordable housing should be provided, including smart electrical grids carrying renewable energy (Klein, 2019: 158), complemented with agricultural cultivation on the rooftops of buildings.

#### *Towards European Architectures in the Age of Climate Change*

Inspired by the worldwide youth movement Fridays4Future, more and more initiatives are being formed that focus on a new ecological and socio-economic ethic, such as Scientists4Future, or those that affect architecture, e.g. Architects4Future. The *Planet Home* manifesto, recently published by the Bund Deutscher Architekten<sup>4</sup> (BDA), also sets out positions “towards a climate-friendly architecture in city and country” (BDA, 2020). The construction industry is by far one of the most resource-intensive sectors of the economy, and thus can make a significant contribution to climate protection. A key measure in reducing overall energy consumption is the energy-efficient renovation of buildings. This resonates with the EU’s controversial call for a new European Bauhaus (European Commission, 2021), which can be understood as an attempt to aestheticize the technical and industrial focus of the European Green Deal; meaning the world-famous and universally popular Bauhaus brand is used here for a social-romantic aestheticization of questionable political actions (Holl, 2021). However, technical solutions solely cannot contribute sufficiently to shaping rapid social change, e.g. the use of ecologically certified building materials in architecture, or Smart City concepts in urban planning, or other greenwashing technologies, trigger rebound-effects,

i.e. false energy efficiency (Förster, 2013; Göpel, 2020)<sup>5</sup> which ultimately cannot be regarded as adequate critical sustainable architectural and urban practices. The sociologist Ulrich Beck contrasts his vision of greening cities in his book *The Metamorphosis of The World* with the attempt to limit urban climate initiatives solely to technological interventions, and refers to critics (e.g. Swyngedouw, 2010) who:

will be right in warning us against the post-political tendencies of 'sustainability', whereby urban climate initiatives are reduced to technocratic forms of infrastructural intervention, consistent with a neoliberal emphasis on the entrepreneurial city as a space of capital accumulation (Beck, 2016: 359).

In contrast, representatives of a socio-ecologically oriented GND point out that the most successful solutions for industrial planning systematically direct control to the municipal level, e.g. energy cooperatives and organic urban farming, which take the interests of the users into account (Klein, 2019). A decentralized supply of wind and solar energy is needed, again, in the hands of municipalities or cooperatives, and not the monopolies and giant power plants of the old New Deal, which use fossil fuels or hydroelectric power from dammed rivers (ibid.). Even today, 70% of the energy produced worldwide comes from small suppliers; decentralized micro-gridding could cover 90% of the future energy demand (Graaf, 2018). Every building could be planned as a small power plant producing sustainable renewable energy; a symbiosis of architecture and energy production could serve rethinking established building typologies. Moreover, in recent reports by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) and the International Assessment of Agricultural Science and Technology for Development (IAASTD) it is stated that the future world population can only be fed by relatively small-scale and locally controlled production units. According to Joe Nasr, an expert on food safety, urban agriculture will become routine for architects (Nasr, 2012). For example, building-integrated systems for urban food production open up solutions to the competition for space between the city and agriculture, e.g. the agro-urban architecture of Altmarktgarten Oberhausen.

As of today, decentralized diversity prevails over industrial monoculture (in agriculture and energy): 70%

5 - Economists like Amartya Sen or Maja Göpel criticize the inadequate basis for calculating GDP and thus the foundations of economic speaking and thinking habits. Damage to the environment caused by the manufacture or use of a product is not included in any economic balance sheet. Cf. The de- and post-growth-economy movement, e. g. the German initiative by Niko Paech or Christian Felber, who pleads for an accounting of the common good (economy), or the Cradle-to-Cradle principles conceived by Michael Braungart and William McDonough.

Every building could be planned as a small power plant producing sustainable renewable energy; a symbiosis of architecture and energy production could serve rethinking established building typologies.









of the food produced worldwide comes from small farmers, i.e. from rural and non-industrial agriculture (UNCTAD, 2013; IAASTD, 2018). Alternative forms of socio-ecologically sustainable living and solidarity-based economic activity are already being tested worldwide in countless local and regional experiments, such as in inclusive cultural projects, self-organized housing and neighborhood initiatives, (urban) gardening and agricultural cooperatives, (rural) permaculture collectives, the Transition town movement or energy cooperatives; in many approaches, new economic models such as the circular economy are being tried out (Meireis, 2021: 196-204). Although much of this is still prototypical, research-based, sometimes socially exclusive and/or only approved as a temporary project, e.g. the project R-Urban in Colombes, an urban-rural experiment including circular economy principles, such projects are important testing grounds for bringing nature, society and architecture together as equal partners.

Urban and rural EAACC could be implemented across the globe; ecological and socio-political aspects can have concrete effects on aesthetics, e.g. imagine appealing zero-energy residential buildings for all social classes and ethnic groups, built with democratic participa-

Fig. 1, 2 - Roof-top garden with greenhouse and closed circuits for urban food production on an administrative building, Altmarkt-garten Oberhausen by Kuehn Malvezzi - Atelier Le Balto, 2019. Source: hiepler, brunier.

**Urban and rural EAACC could be implemented across the globe; ecological and socio-political aspects can have concrete effects on aesthetics.**

Already around the time of the French Revolution the utopian thinker Louis-Sébastien Mercier included urban rooftop gardens in his utopian vision of the New Paris in the 25<sup>th</sup> century.

tion of the future residents (Klein, 2019). Pioneering sustainable buildings are already today equipped with energy and food production units on their roofs. This overlaps with considerations on post-pandemic developments in architecture and the city, where new concepts for living, working and public spaces are required. Today, it is quite urgent to think the future anew, or even at all, since late capitalism was not least constituted by the absence of utopian thinking in the cultural discourses of postmodernity (Jameson, 2005; Meireis, 2021). Already around the time of the French Revolution the utopian thinker Louis-Sébastien Mercier included urban rooftop gardens in his utopian vision of the New Paris in the 25<sup>th</sup> century. In his book *L'An 2440* the Parisian urban fabric remained essentially unchanged; the only difference being the streets free of traffic, lined with pedestrians and, as said, the houses equipped with rooftop gardening, or perhaps even rooftop farming (Manguel, Guadalupi, 1981: 240-241). Urban rooftop farming has multiple advantages: short delivery routes, often ecologically compatible cultivation, and thus a good climate balance. This resonates with a recent announcement by the Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo, who suggests that the French metropolis shall become a city of short distances for pedestrians and cyclists (*La ville du quart d'heure*), i.e. cities shall no longer subordinate themselves to cars, but cars to cities. This is no less than a paradigm shift which finds great approval in other cities too (Greenpeace, 2020).

The presented architectural examples and political ideas can be understood as a reference system that provides the basis for the conception of the EAACC as critical theory or practical philosophy of architecture that ties together socio-political, ecological, economic and not least aesthetical principles and values.

#### *Critical regionalism reconsidered*

The ethical and aesthetic background towards EAACC draws from architectural history and provides insight into a specific discussion on the environmental role of architecture in the early 1980s, when the authors Michael Andritzky, Lucius Burckhardt and Ot Hoffmann pleaded for self-determined living and ecological building with nature (Andritzky, 1981). In the same context, the authors Alexander Tzonis, Liane Lefaivre



Fig. 3 - Eco-Box by Atelier Architecture Autogerée (AAA) and the citizens of Colombes, Île-de-France, 2009-17. Source: AAA.

and Anthony Alofsin (Tzonis, 1981) refer to the architecture critic Lewis Mumford, and focus attention on the point that critical-regional architecture (as social art that satisfies human needs and advocates humane environments) is explicitly directed against nationalist, fascist, capitalist and colonial takeovers (ibid.: 126-127). They suggest that the idea of critical regionalism, albeit historically grounded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, is not a fact of the past but an unfulfilled promise that can create future identities (ibid. 133). The architectural historian Kenneth Frampton conceived a program for a critical regionalism, which is to be understood as resistance to the process of universalization and universality, and in favor of specificity and locality (Frampton, 2001; Avermaete et al., 2019). He conceives of deliberately *limited* architectures that emphasize less the buildings as free-standing objects, than as places that are created by the construction of the buildings; meaning, representing and serving *limited* societies in a critical-regional sense, in particular considering specific characteristics of the site, such as topography, light and climate. However, a new regional approach is not a matter of style imitation and limitation, but of sensitivity to local resources, which can include a reinterpretation of stylistic elements. Regional elements shall be reinterpreted without

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Fig. 4 - Lynar 38, multi-storey residential timber construction in Berlin-Wedding by Schäferwenningerprojekt, 2018. Source: Markus Löffelhardt.

Fig. 5 - Maggie's Centre, St. James's University Hospital Leeds by Heatherwick Studio, 2020. Source: HuftonCrow.





This line of thought provides the basis for a systemic, regional, and decentralized architectural thinking as part of a socially just, green, and economically productive GND.

sentimentality, but with a view to anchoring a world culture locally, which also regards the sensitivity to the spaces in between, where public life takes place and tells us about the political motivations behind the respective project. Ultimately, the quality of such a regionalism depends on the connection between the political identity of a society and its architects (Framp-ton, 2001). Following this, it can be reflected with the sociologist Bruno Latour, that it is time to reassert the importance, legitimacy, and necessity of belonging to a territory, but, paradoxically, without confusing this with the ingredients added to the local – ethnic homogeneity, museumization, historicism, nostalgia, false authenticity (Latour, 2018: 65) – as he writes in his book *Das Terrestrische Manifest*. The search for a sense of belonging and protection can go well with renouncing territorial boundaries in the name of identity, whether local/regional or national/global. Following these considerations, it becomes apparent that rethinking aspects of critical regionalism helps to redirect today's accelerated globalization processes in a humane way, on the level of architecture and cities. This line of thought provides the basis for a systemic, regional, and decentralized architectural thinking as part of a socially just, green, and economically productive GND. Material and energy efficient solutions can be applied to any building typology and function, be it for administrative, shopping or fairground purposes, private housing and cooperatives, or health care centers.

#### *Cities and regions of a European Republic*

The structural and political background of the EAACC draws from political theory and provides insight into rethinking the institutional and parliamentary design for Europe, promoting the civic commitment of the many (Guérot, 2019). That corresponds with the European guiding document for sustainable urban development entitled *New Leipzig Charter: The Transformative Power of Cities for the Common Good*. It is meant to be a strategic compass, focusing on empowerment of municipalities, to which municipalities, cities and metropolises in all EU Member States can align themselves (Deutscher Verband, 2020). As of today, EU policies are still shaped along national borders, which have long since ceased to exist in the

industrial sector and in value chains, and therefore no longer reflect the economic reality (Guérot, 2018: 156). The socio-economic imbalances in Europe are not between nation states, but between center and periphery, i.e. urban and rural regions (Guérot, 2018: 157). European cities can be imagined as cultural anchor centers – as nodes in a pan-European or even global network – in which transnational governance structures have long been established. Accordingly, Beck suggests world city alliances as the new spaces of climatic hope: no other form of organization is better equipped to experiment with, invent, and actually implement the new multi-sited architectures of political decision-making for the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Beck, 2016: 358). Thought-provoking impulses for this come from political thinkers such as the philosopher Jürgen Habermas or the political scientist and European politician Ulrike Guérot, who plead for a restructuring of the EU constitution in terms of citizenship. The continuing political fragmentation of the world and in Europe is at odds with the systemic coalescence of a multicultural world society, and blocks progress in the constitutional *civilization* of state and social relations of power (Habermas, 2014: 44, emphasis added translated by the author). On the way there, Habermas advises the *transnationalization of popular sovereignty* (ibid.: 51, emphasis added). The growing dependence of nation states on the systemic constraints of an increasingly interdependent world society has to be acknowledged as irreversible, ergo the political necessity to extend democratic procedures beyond the borders of the nation state becomes apparent (ibid.). The political idea of a European Republic originates from Guérot, who uses the term *republic* to refer to the original meaning of *res publica* (common good), and argues that states have only borrowed sovereignty from *us*, and now *we* shall take it back, and build the first transnational, representative democracy in Europe: decentralized, regional, post-national, social, and democratic. She suggests a network of approximately 50-60 European regions and cities, over which the protective roof of a European Republic is stretched, and under which all European citizens are equal in their civil and political rights. This could be the European claim of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: a new concept of citizenship (Guérot, 2019: 103-104), that is embedded in a decentralized politi-

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The political idea of a European Republic originates from Guérot, who argues that states have only borrowed sovereignty from *us*, and now *we* shall take it back, and build the first transnational, representative democracy in Europe.

Architecture has the potential to contribute to solidifying identification processes that these local and regional developments will experience in the face of climate change.

cal system, enabling small citizens' assemblies, or an upgraded regional parliamentarism, that functions as a network, with transnational constituencies and parties. In this way, many, especially rural regions, will be upgraded in the political system of the future Europe and have more participation in the European big picture (Guérot, 2019).

### Conclusion

Having taken a closer look at the history of the EU, we are led to a suggestion that past mistakes in crisis management will not be repeated; instead, reflections on present political values in the face of climate change were presented, displaying the inevitability of combining and implementing ambitious goals in the sectors of energy production, agriculture, transport, architecture, and urban planning with powerful political methods (under the legal umbrella of a supranational GND). Pioneering *European Architectures in the Age of Climate Change* are potential leaders and change-makers, creatively tying together law and policy-making processes, industry, and the will of future inhabitants, and mediating between economic and socio-political policies. Architecture has the potential to contribute to solidifying identification processes that these local and regional developments will experience in the face of climate change. The EAACC is a new type of architecture or architectural network, which is the potential realm where society and nature meet and merge, and the future of Europe is not only being represented, but fundamentally shaped and designed with the principles of critical-regional aesthetics, that provide a local supply of renewable energy and food production. The critical crossroads of the Corona pandemic, climate change, the fall of western dominance, the decline of capitalism, and the rising of a more heart- and earth-centered consciousness is the perfect time to get new architectural utopias for the 21<sup>st</sup> century accomplished.

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*moving  
ground •  
Alp Tran-  
sit • mon-  
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landscapes*

# Moving Ground.

## The Construction of AlpTransit Infrastructure and its Monumental Landscapes

Chiara Pradel

### *Abstract*

Infrastructures as high-speed railways are a contemporary debated topic with political, economic and environmental impacts. In the Alpine arc alone, located in the heart of Europe, as of today six HSR lines are planned or have been realized.

Within this framework, the article probes the case of the New Rail Link through the Alps that connects Germany to Italy through Switzerland. This “Infrastructural Monument” in fact produces a number of ground movements that are affecting and shaping the ever-changing Swiss mountainous landscapes: millions of cubic meters of excavated material arising from tunnelling and construction activities are spread among the railway’s nearest territories.

What could be the role of design and landscape architecture? This research is intended as an instrument to deepen the design meaning of moving ground actions, reflecting on how, millennia after the first ancestral earth mounds, these monumental earthworks could today become part of a continuously renewed poetic imagination.

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Even the etymology of the term “Landscape”, refers to the earth shovelled and shaped for human life.

*Moving ground: from construction sites to landscape, between memory and imagination*

The process of re-shaping the land with earth has had (and still has) great consolidated implications for metropolitan, urban, rur-urban and agricultural life: sacred, social, ecological, artistic, political and economic (Bourdon, 1995). Within the architectural field, the ancient act to shape and move the ground was mentioned by Gottfried Semper inside his *Four Elements of architecture*, along with the other first and original signs of human settlements: “hearth” (ceramics), “roof” (carpentry), “weaving” (walling) and, finally, “mound” (earthworks) (Semper, 2011: 102), where the latter refers not only to the planning of the basement of a building, but also recalls the deeper meaning of the founding ancestral contact with the earth and the penetration of the ground to dig or heap it. Even the etymology of the term “Landscape”, according to John R. Stilgoe, refers to the earth shovelled and shaped for human life (Stilgoe, 2015: IX). This interpretation of the meaning of the word gives an enlightening significance to a discipline, through which we unceasingly interact with the terrain, re-thinking and modeling our evolving and living ground.

Fig. 1 - Earthworks.  
Biasca, 2012. Photo by the author.  
The observation of the inert materials coming from the tunneling activity functions as a first act of critical recognition through an inductive approach, which starts from an interaction with the treated morphological phenomena and leads to an imaginative understanding of places.



An *observation* of landscapes affected by depots or by relevant ground modifications on the one hand easily leads to an initial recognition of both the physical and inspirational aspects of earthworks – between *retentissement*, memory and imagination (Bachelard, 1969: 19) – and of their powerful effects in the perceived intimate space (Kentridge, 2014: 69-98), as “this grandeur is most active in the realm of intimate space. For this grandeur does not come from the spectacle witnessed, but from the unfathomable depths of vast thoughts” (Bachelard, 1969: 193). Earthworks reinterpretation has indeed elicited a prominent redefinition of the ground movements meaning inside the expanded field of landscape, of sculpture, of architecture (Krauss, 1979).

On the other hand, the movement of materials that are dug, collected and deposited inside landscape is emerging as one of the most important and considerable secondary effects of building activity, which involves an increasing amount of earth and soil resulting from the construction and demolition of walls, houses, infrastructures, derelict edifices, roads or rails.

A huge number of landfills are silently entering the territories that one normally lives and perceives; depots are appearing and transforming valleys, natural areas, villages and urban peripheries.

This topic is relevant both on a local, site-specific scale – for example, in Tessin alone, a Swiss mountainous canton that measures less than 3000 km<sup>2</sup>, according to the 2019-2023 Waste Management Plan there are 31 depots already functioning or soon to be opened – and on a global scale – let’s consider policies such as the 7<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Program (EAP) and Waste Framework Directive (2008/98/EC) that have set the goal to recover 70 per cent of waste from non-hazardous construction sites –. As in Tessin, earth depots have given rise to an increasing controversial idea of landscape in many other contexts linked to recent great and impactful construction activities. Public debates – whether they are linked to a sense of beautiful picturesque panoramas completely ruined by the depots, to an idea of disrupted ecology that needs redemption (Iovino, 2016) or to a presumed original topography disturbingly altered by the building activities (Dixon Hunt, 2016) – often raise doubts about

A huge number of landfills are silently entering the territories that one normally lives and perceives.

The minimization of the amount of waste, don't seem to be enough and could be dangerously considered as adequate.

public health, carelessness of natural, cultural and historical heritage, inequalities in peripheral areas and contempt for landscape aesthetics. Very rarely are ground movements perceived as challenging opportunities inside an endlessly changeable nature or as places of flexibility, where there could be an attempt to relate the buildings or infrastructures construction activities with renewed ecological systems, avoiding any form of domestication or intransigent dialectical opposition between artificial and natural.

Moreover, even if the question of reconsidering ground-based actions is highly related to earth management practices, to soil resources assessments, to environmental and sustainability programs, the minimization of the amount of waste, or other similar attitudes like impact-reduction, limitation and camouflage, from an architectural point of view don't seem to be enough and could be dangerously considered as adequate, definitive solutions, leading to an acceptance of "poorly designed systems", while inducing an "ultimate failure of 'the be less bad approach': a failure of the imagination" (Braungart, McDonough, 2009: 43).

*Rethinking inert materials in architecture and landscape architecture, a synthetic framework*

Although the reuse of inert materials in a more organized and systematic way started around the 50s, up until now the major innovative researches on this topic have been primarily addressed to findings linked to technological advancements, or to the need to reuse inert waste for high-quality concrete production and shotcrete aggregates (Anagnostou, Ehrbar: 2013), to environmental practices for land reclamations along rivers, lakes and bays – in Cleveland, New York, San Francisco, Toronto and many other places –, or directed to meaningful artistic expressions, as in the works of Herman Prigann, Michael Hezier, Robert Smithson or John Latham, that still powerfully influence the architectural process.

Nevertheless, during the early 70s and in the 80s as well, the sample work of some architects especially engaged with ecological approaches and environmental problems – one may recall the Olympia Park by Gunter Grzimek in Munich and the Irchelpark in Zurich by Eduard Neuenschwander – or the informal



reappropriations of pieces of land by collective movements of citizens, inhabitants and activists – as in the Stettbacher Allmend in the Zurich outskirts – have contributed to emphasize the existing link between consumption of natural resources, landscapes and (infrastructural) construction activities. More recently the practice and the research of landscape architects like, among others, Enric Battle and Joan Roig, Paolo Bürgi, James Corner, Peter Latz, Christophe Girot and Martha Schwartz have made it increasingly apparent that to organize and to re-think inert deposits or quarry fills, to plan new outdoor temporary inert storage areas for sizeable to small building sites, to plan the conversion of an amount of rubble into soil, are issues that affect the landscape not only after the act of filling and moving inerts during a huge construction activity or on reflection and a posteriori, but, according to an ecological approach, should also precede and accompany the process itself, as a generative and creative complex strategy of intervention.

In spite of the increasing interest and awareness of the relevance of the topic, as one could easily verify through the study of small to medium building interventions, the fragmented nature of common construction and demolition practices, the standardized procedures and the lack of geographical and temporal overlap between different ground activities make it quite difficult to implement the rethink and reuse of debris at a significant design level. For this reason, it is interesting to consider, in particular, big scale infrastructural oeuvres, which should inevitably face relevant problems and clarify design approaches and policies in a concrete and strategic way, thanks to landscape design interventions closely coupled with the construction phase and the development of the infrastructural site. Exemplary in this sense are the approach of Bernard Lassus to accompanying the realization of the A11 autoroute or the attempt of the High Speed 1 landscape-engineering project team to improve the visual integration of the Channel Tunnel rail link in the English rural context through slopes made by reused soil or the creation of a wildlife reserve island made by the material excavated in the London's Crossrail train project. Especially in the Swiss context several road, railway and highway interventions have had to interact with different extreme topographies or

The fragmented nature of common construction and demolition practices make it quite difficult to implement the rethink and reuse of debris at a significant design level.

Fig. 2 - Landscape  
script along  
AlpTransit rail line  
and sections of  
Gotthard and Ceneri  
Tunnel. Drawings by  
the author.  
From top to bottom:  
Delta Reuss, Erstfeld,  
Amsteg, Sedrun,  
Faido, Bodio, Biasca,  
Camorino, Sigrino,  
Lugano Vezia. In  
these sites the NRLA  
construction process  
has become evident  
thanks to relevant  
ground movements  
inside landscape.

While the  
underground  
infrastructures  
imply, the  
protection of  
the overground  
territories and  
trans-national  
natural heritage.

The increasing  
tunneling activity  
is producing  
broad volumes of  
excavated earth.

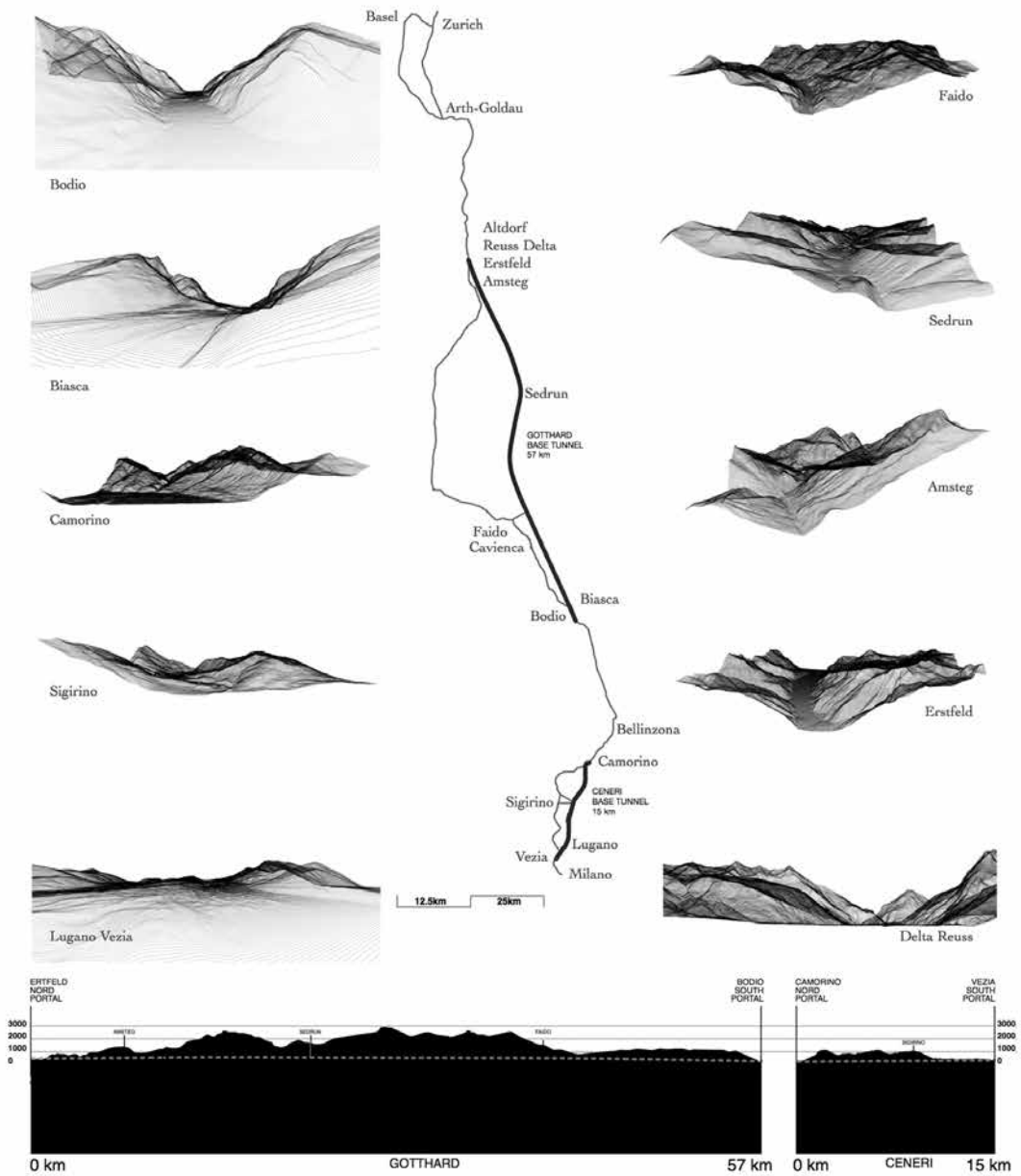
to fit into fragile landscapes; from the historical 62-km Abula Line, an early masterpiece of engineering and architecture in railway-building that climbs the mountain territory of the Canton of Graubünden through spiral tunnels and four valley-crossing viaducts, to the recent project to cover with spoils a long portion of the A2 close to the Gotthard Pass, in order to better camouflage the motorway in the valley floor.

The intent to study complex building sites, such as NRLA ones, is thus directed to the observation of great earth movements that fiercely affect the surrounding territories, pushing for the urgent and relevant quest on the extensive effects on landscape of the construction of new access points, tunnels, portals and, more importantly, on the role of landscape design in relation to these earthworks.

#### *AlpTransit landscapes*

According to the definition of *Infrastructural Monuments* (MIT Center for Advanced Urbanism, 2016) – like the highspeed networks that are currently planned and partially realized in Europe – infrastructures are conceived as open, inclusive objects, as both common spaces and *Megaforms* (Frampton, 1999) that, in addition to the realm of the transportation of goods and labor, synthesize surrounding landscape, public space and architecture. Moreover, if the first generation of infrastructure was for the greater part built in the overground space, now we are more and more able to drive them underneath: today in Switzerland alone there are around 2000 km of tunnelled traffic and water connections. While the underground infrastructures imply, as one of the claimed main priorities, the protection of the overground territories and trans-national natural heritage, thanks to tunnels that pass underneath mountains, valleys, cities, villages and natural protected areas, avoiding having to cross them by routes, bridges and overpasses and preventing a significant amount of overground traffic, as a downside, the increasing tunneling activity is producing broad volumes of excavated earth. In the Alpine region, just the tunneling work of the 57km-long Gotthard axis for the AlpTransit railway, for example, originated more than 13.3 million cubic meters of earth and rocks.

Therefore, during the last 20 years the AlpTransit spoil management has played a significant role in the



New grounds allow the reintroduction of specific, morphological elements of the environment, that cover an essential role in the functionality of the ecosystem.

A decision was made to create an artificial lake on top of one of the latest depots and to open it to the public, thanks to a landscape design intervention that took advantage of the new morphology of the hilly landscape.

research on the development of more environmental-compatible solutions, in the attempt to limit sound, dust, transport and environmental emissions, thanks to the creation of new water surfaces, new planted areas and ecological corridors near the railway line (Lanfranchi et al., 2019). On the one hand, indeed, “the construction of a large infrastructure project must include the sacrifice of extensive portions of territory and ecologically fragile spaces” (Lanfranchi et al., 2019: 405), while on the other hand, with a kind of compensative attitude, ground-based interventions such as the Reuss Delta renaturalization or the Sedrun intermediate attack location, reuse excavated soil on the basis of the fundamental codes of environmental phenomena and processes, triggering both natural and human transformation scenarios.

In Erstfeld, Canton Uri, about 3.3 million tons of lower quality aggregates were transported by train and then by ship to be used to fill the mouth of the river Reuss to promote the natural process of depositing the delta, which was in critical condition due to the strong erosion caused both by the deviation of the river route and the excavations for the extraction of gravel which occurred during the 80s. These new grounds allow the reintroduction of specific, morphological elements of the environment or recreate structures, like ecological corridors or wildlife passages that cover an essential role in the functionality of the ecosystem.

Similarly, the Sedrun intermediate attack location occupies about 375000 m<sup>2</sup> near a small touristic alpine village in the Graubünden Canton allowing for the realization of emergency stopping stations and the excavation of the Gotthard Base Tunnel during a remarkably long period of about 20 years. After the completion of the infrastructural intervention, the previous topography of the site resulted altered not only inside the installation zone – that is the one closest to the access tunnel – but also in some neighboring depots and temporary embankments areas. Moreover, since the tunnel construction generated more excavated soil than planned, a decision was made to create an artificial lake on top of one of the latest depots and to open it to the public, thanks to a landscape design intervention that took advantage of the new morphology of the hilly landscape.

But, over all the ground-based operations and some restorative landscape measures taken to improve the





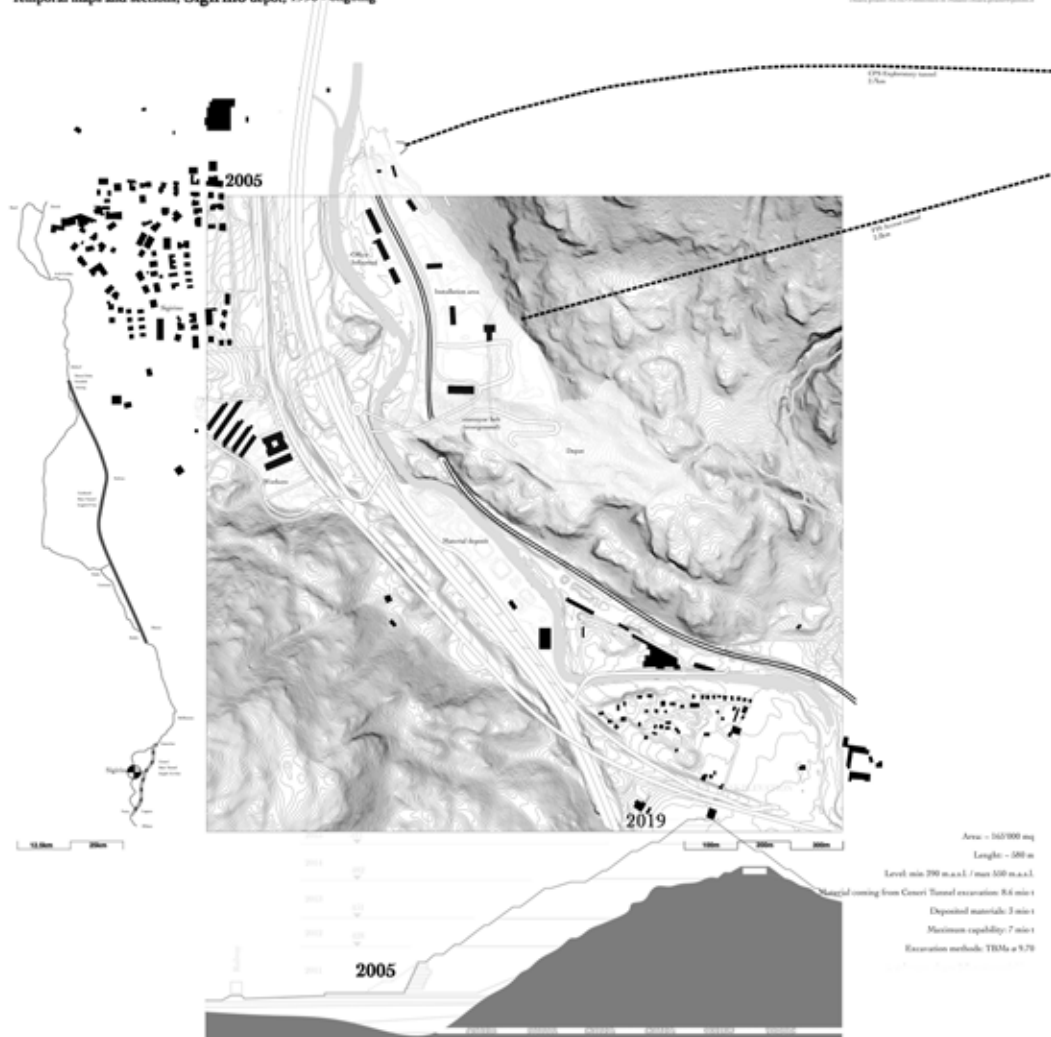
final layout of sites, as in Erstfeld or in Sedrun, only the Sigrino depot intervention has been the subject of a structured design research during the projectual and constructive phase more specifically framed within the Landscape Architecture field, thanks to an analysis conducted by Atelier Girot, together with ETH landscape students, based on geo-referenced point cloud models (Girot et al., 2013).

Nonetheless, it is still possible to affirm that the infrastructure construction is in essence “done by people other than landscape architects”, leaving little room for landscape spatial experience, reading or tactile involvement (Corner, Bick Hirsh, 2014: 162).

Fig. 3 - Biasca, 2020.

This site collects more than 3.2mn tons of material. The spoils form a sort of plastic extension of the dejection cone, from Mount Crenone towards the valley. Part of the area is in the process of reforestation, while another part remains open to subsequent deposits.

Photo by the author.



### *Temporal maps and topological drawings*

The need for a “landscape spatial experience” became clear not only during the first phase of the research, the *observation* of NRLA selected sites, but also during the following data analysis and the study of the official documents produced for the construction project. For example, while the engineering or geologic drawings are made by fixed, schematic and clearly defined geometric forms, spatial limits of the affected areas are, in reality, uncertain and unclear. Often disposal sites, especially when set against mountains, are partially open rather than clearly bounded and their constructed forms, after some time, appear as natural elements grown in the landscape, instead of artificially figured ground movements. The analyzed earthworks are, moreover, similar to ongoing settlements rather than pre-established, pre-organized constructions inside coherent places, not only during the construction phase, but also subsequently due to possible erosion phenomena, the settling of the ground or the frequent further deposits of waste material from different construction sites. These areas interact simultaneously with the anthropic presence while they engage with temporalities of geologic and landscape elements that are of quite different or out-of-human-scale dimensions. Therefore, there is an inevitable, strong disconnect between design documents that refer mainly to regional planning procedures, to land uses, to mobility, to the remarkable and powerful technical solutions adopted or to the environmental restoration but, for example, neglect to express how sites impact the imagination or trigger in term of sequential landscape experiences.

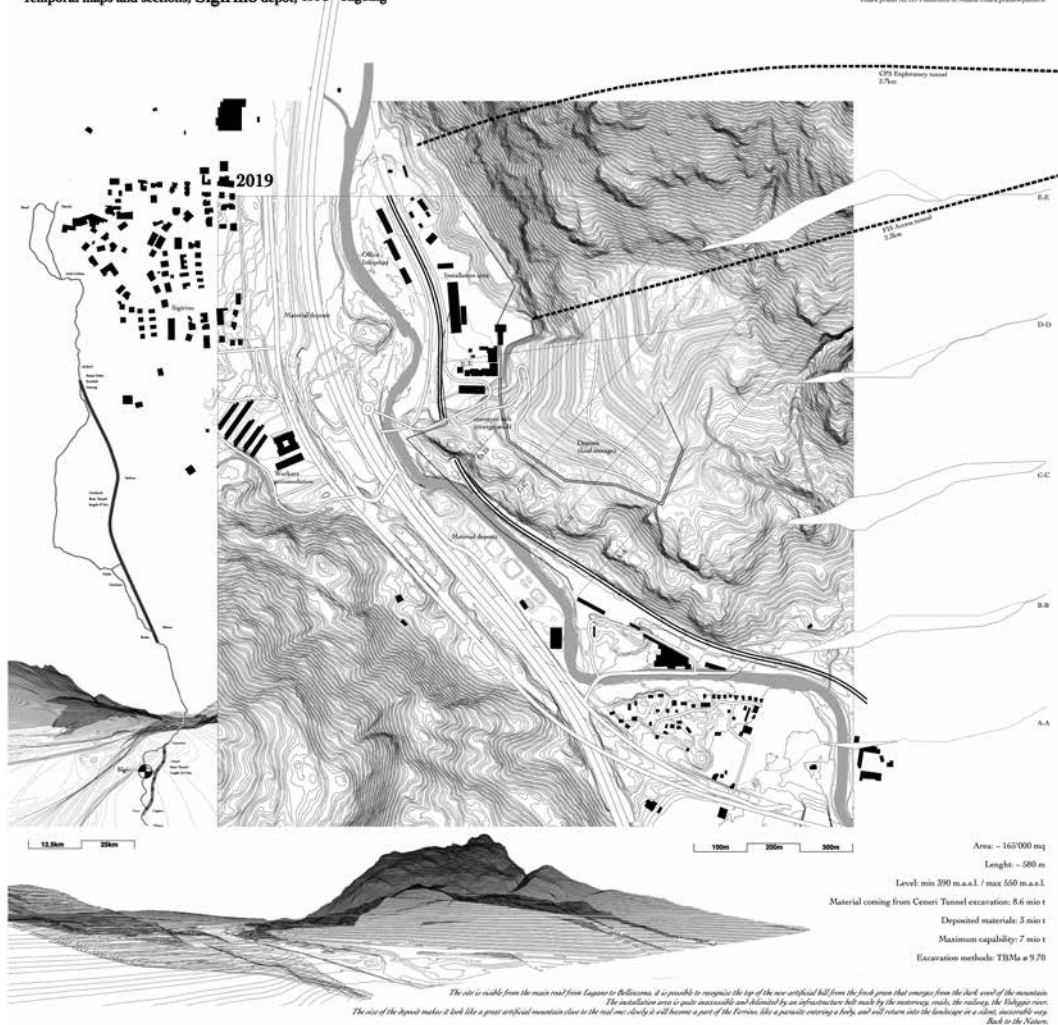
The excavated soil coming from the tunnels of the NRLA appears as a fluid material that follows the construction activities and is placed between the rigid geometries of the machines, the complex structures of the construction sites, the unavoidable needs of technical-engineering management and the evolving orography of the land that hosts them. Thus, it releases itself from the consolidated registers of formal evaluation of the architectural language or of the usual dimensional and structural definition of engineering work. Rather, it is more immediate to refer to a sort of arcane primitiveness of the gesture that shapes, tilts, distorts, throws and contains at the limit of the

Fig. 4 - Panel (4/16) from the Sigrino temporal map, intermediate stage, 2005. Drawing by the author. As in Biasca, in Sigrino as well there is an attempt to camouflage the huge earthworks, putting them near the mountains and seeking to restore, through a re-engineered forest extension, a kind of aesthetic of naturalness.

While the engineering or geologic drawings are made by fixed, schematic and clearly defined geometric forms, spatial limits of the affected areas are, in reality, uncertain and unclear.

There is an inevitable, strong disconnect between design documents.







dissolution of the figurative or the recognizability of the anthropic gesture.

The research process therefore uses *drawings* as a narrative, visual essays that work retrospectively, looking at the various intermediate stages of the disposal process, while also trying to evoke the “afterlife” of places (Dixon Hunt, 2004). They first act through a *critical de-composition*, that is an attempt to understand the structure of Landscape and the physiognomy of the ground far beyond the act of seeing. The sites are treated as texts that include the possibility of writing and geographically reading landscapes (Besse, 2000) as drawings could be considered as a sort of white writing, a primary zero degree (Barthes, 1990) that would make this decomposition a possibility for understanding the site and of a renewed creative process.

In particular, *temporal maps* made by plans, sections, pictures and schemes are tools that follow the constantly changing nature of landscapes and frame moments that clearly refer to an uninterrupted sequence. They become instruments to describe and to understand the dimensions (volume, surface, difference in level, etc.) of the new artificial grounds and to critically interpret their evolving relationship with the surrounding urban or natural settlements, with the pre-existing geographical conditions, with the human activities and practices (most of the time a spontaneous and informal way of re-appropriating spaces), with the environmental restorations and, above all, with topography.

Together with *Temporal Maps* and sections, *Topological drawings* behave as figurative tools that aim to express the figurative, intangible potentiality of sites. They serve as morphological instruments to “trace praxis” (Leatherbarrow, 2004: 251) of ground movements inside landscape before, during and after the realization of the infrastructure, focusing both on a territorial level and on a smaller scale while searching for a middle ground between the extremes of abstract interpretations and of contextual thoughts, between modes of seeing and objectivity.

These visual representations function as a form of research on the plastic substratum of landscape, of its hidden latencies and of its distinctive resulting shapes (Besse, 2000), focusing on a surface, where the intertwining of histories and geographies emerges and the depth of the soil is brought to light. Finally, drawings

Fig. 5 - Panel (5/16)  
from the Sigirino  
temporal map, intermediate stage, 2019.  
Drawings by the author. Non-hazardous material has been deposited against the Ferrino Mountain, several steps have been created and greened up. The depot will be the highest Swiss artificial mountain and will contain about 7mn tons of material.

The sites are treated as texts that include the possibility of writing and geographically reading landscapes.

*Temporal Maps* and sections, *Topological drawings* behave as figurative tools that aim to express the figurative, intangible potentiality of sites.

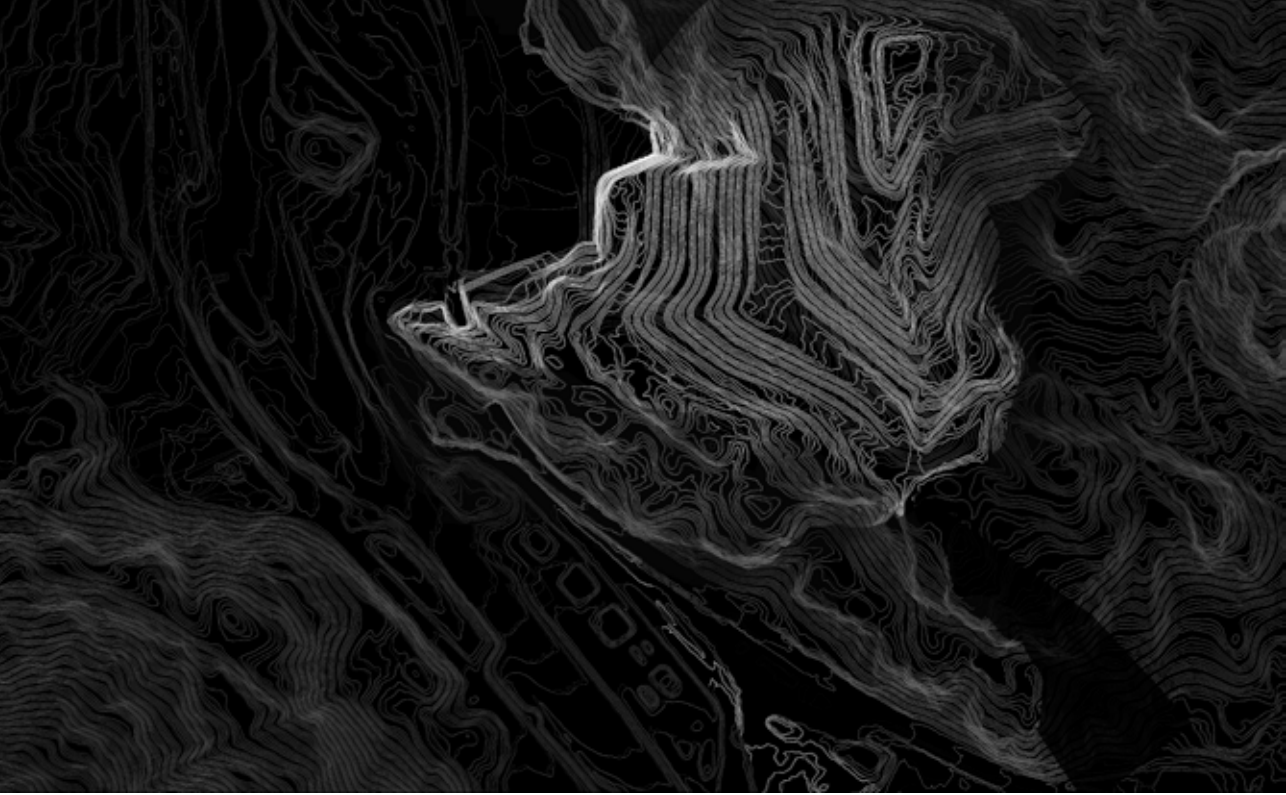


Fig. 6 - Panel (12/16)  
from the Sigirino  
topological drawings,  
intermediate stage,  
2016. These draw-  
ings aim to underline  
the indeterminacy (in  
their various forms  
and in their different  
instances) of ground  
movement processes  
and suggest possible  
patterns, imaginative  
interpretations and  
connections focusing  
on their inner latent,  
formal structures.  
Drawing by the  
author.

lead to a different kind of knowledge: an epistemological contribution that supplements and enriches our understanding of science, nature and architecture (Agrest, 2018) and introduces new compositional urgencies.

#### *Monumental Grounds, Open Conclusion*

The research, through the *analytic observation*, the *critical de-composition*, the *temporal maps* and *topological drawings*, fosters a critical attention to the understanding of landscape spaces resulting from ground movements during construction activities of infrastructures and interprets the effects of contemporary constructive actions on landscapes.

AlpTransit ground interventions could be understood as new states of space.

The analysis and drawings lead to possible interpretations of emerging landscapes in terms of figurative inventions and topological relationships, blurring their figuration within the dialogue among *ecology*, *technique*, and *culture*.

The design approach to the moving ground infrastructural sites indeed appears to be placed between:

A challenging *topological* site transformation, made by traces of construction activities, efficient earth management systems (linked to the excavation

system, the transportation system, the water management system, etc.) and high technological solutions linked to the infrastructures. The study of areas such as Sigirino highlights how landscape-oriented interventions could inspire (technical) changes in infrastructure construction fields and vice versa.

New *constructed ecologies* that, in a completely artificial environment, imply the creation of dynamic spaces which could extend the boundaries of infrastructural interventions to the multitude of nonhuman beings and generate the specific morphology, heterogeneity and performativity of natural environments. As in the Delta Reuss reclamation process, inert waste disposals are no longer conceived as a mere passive object inside a Kantian natural beauty to be redeemed, but rather elements that can nourish both the design meaning and the ecologic character of the landscape intervention (Braae, 2015; Rocca, 2006: 10). Constructed ecologies thus shift “from thinking in terms of a stable nature and a destabilizing humanity to work with an unstable and changing nature” (Grose, 2017: 13-14), New *forms* emerging from deep *cultural strata* made by strong symbolic presences and historical meanings, new virtual and real networks, altered relations between underground and overground landscapes, between human present time and geological past, human scale and natural scale. Finally, the critical analysis and the research by drawings on AlpTransit construction sites, access points and deposits lead to an haptical (De Sanna, 1976: 5) interpretation of landscapes, staging their irretrievably *unpredictable*, *fragile* and *monumental* aspect.

*Unpredictable*, because of the unpredictability of the material behavior, since, for instance, excavated soil properties could be known and fully understood only empirically, during the landscape construction process, and because of the varying amount of spoils that, especially during infrastructure realization phases, could easily change over time.

*Fragile*, as these ground movements temporarily disclose the casual, ephemeral beauty that sometimes arises in spaces where the absence of a standard project occurs, of a plan that follows the codified human management of architecture and landscapes.

*Monumental*, in the sense that there is evidence of a “no longer historical, but geographical” monumentality (Cache, 1997) of the moved ground, that powerfully emerges from the hidden, underground construction process and sculpturally shapes the surface of the Earth.

The study of areas such as Sigirino highlights how landscape-oriented interventions could inspire (technical) changes in infrastructure construction fields and vice versa.

The critical analysis and the research by drawings interpretation of landscapes, staging their irretrievably *unpredictable*, *fragile* and *monumental* aspect.

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# Whatever Happened to Supranational Architecture?

Sebastiano Fabbrini

## *Abstract*

The process of European integration is often described in architectural terms, starting with the metaphor of a common European house. This paper weights the ubiquitous rhetoric of a supranational architecture against the largely unexplored reality of the actual architecture that has been built to house the European institutions. The focus is on the place and time that have experienced the largest production of architectural hardware: Brussels between 1958 and 1992. Most of the *Quartier Européen* was built in this window, while the institutions did not have a permanent status and therefore struggled to gain agency over the transformations of the city. On the one hand, the goal is to question how operating for a new and unique structure of power influenced the production of architecture. On the other hand, this is an opportunity to start discussing how architecture contributed to shaping the European Union.

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Fig. 1 - A fonctionnaire inspects a maquette of the Berlaymont, headquarters of the European Commission, late-1960s. Source: Ministère des Travaux Publics de Belgique. Source: The author.

### *Europe / European Union*

To address the theme of this special issue of *Ardeth*, titled *Europe: Architecture, Infrastructure and Territory*, the first step has to be a clarification, pertaining to both language and content. The discourse on this topic has continuously been accompanied by an ambiguity, which has generated a multitude of misunderstandings, between two different terms: Europe and the European Union (along with its previous incarnations). This distinction refers to another set of terms that have often been confused: Europeanization and European integration.

In his essay, *What is so European about the European Union?* Peter Burgess has gone to the core of this rift, underlining the tension between “an understanding of Europe as purveyor of a certain kind of cultural identity and the more of less bureaucratic project of European construction undertaken in its name” (Burgess, 2002). Part of the confusion has to do with



the fact that these terms are difficult to define. One aspect that certainly sets them apart is their historical breadth. European integration is a recent phenomenon, with a specific start date: it formally began with the signing of the Paris Treaty in 1951, which established the European Coal and Steel Community. In the joint statement issued on that occasion by the foreign ministers of the six founding countries – Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands and West Germany – the new community was described as “the first supranational institution” in Europe (Haas, 1958). That being said, anyone willing to explore the vast literature on European integration will have a hard time finding a clear definition of this phenomenon. The one defining feature on which there is broad consensus is that European integration is a *process*. Historian Desmond Dinan has described it as a “voluntary sharing of national sovereignty in a supranational entity subject to the rule of law” (Dinan, 2006). So, it comes down to a group of states gradually agreeing to a common set of rules and institutions. Not to be confused with the age-old, elusive idea – started as a myth – of Europe.

Even though European integration has taken centre stage in a multitude of disciplines, from political science to law and economics, this is not the case when it comes to architecture and urban studies. In the introduction to his seminal book on the identity of European architecture, for example, Vittorio Gregotti prefaces his analysis by saying that it “prescinds completely from the dynamics of the European Union”<sup>1</sup> (Gregotti, 1999). The architectural discourse has often been considered too Eurocentric and too politicized: yet we have mostly ignored the political dynamic that, more than any other, has been transforming the European archipelago over the past seventy years.

### *Brussels's hardware*

Brussels is the most appropriate place to start exploring how architecture contributed to shaping European integration, not only because it has been the epicentre of the architectural projects for the European Union, but also because, due its particular history and internal power dynamics, it can be read as a microcosm of integration. In the early 2000s, the European Commission organized a conference titled *Brussels, Capital of Europe* to

The discourse on this topic has continuously been accompanied by an ambiguity between two different terms: Europe and the European Union. This distinction refers to another set of terms that have often been confused: Europeanization and European integration.



Fig. 2-3 - Brussels:  
aerial views of the  
Quartier Leopold  
in 1939 and 1999.  
Source: Centre Virtuel  
de la Connaissance  
sur l'Europe.

“discuss the needs and functions of a European capital and how Brussels could best express them” (European Commission, 2001). The core of the event was a debate between Umberto Eco and Rem Koolhaas on how to approach the question of a supranational capital. Eco’s argument revolved around the idea of a *soft* capital: “A European capital should deal with soft, not hard, business. So, allow me to smile when I hear that maybe we need to make a monument in order to give Brussels its character as the capital of Europe: an Empire State building, a Coliseum, or something like that – that is hard stuff”.

The Dutch architect, on the other hand, was asked by the Commission to present the other side of the argument. For the conference, his team elaborated a presentation titled *Communicating Europe*, exploring ways to represent the European Union effectively. This study constituted the basis for the development of the exhibition *The Image of Europe*, which took place in Brussels three years later. The debate revolved around issues of representation – the question



of Europe's image – conforming to a tendency to address the European district in Brussels as an immaterial entity. In the same period as the conference, Jean Baudrillard described it as “an abstract place” (Baudrillard, 2002).

However, the transformation of Brussels centred on the production of a massive amount of architectural *hardware*. In the most comprehensive study of this subject, Carola Hein underlined that Brussels was the city with the most significant increase of office space in continental Europe during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (Hein, 2004). According to the Atelier de Recherche et d'Action Urbaines, by the 2000s, the three major institutions alone – European Commission, Parliament and Council – occupied almost two million square meters of office space in the Belgian capital, spread among more than seventy buildings, inhabited by roughly fifty thousand employees (Arau, 2010). The opposition “soft capital versus hard capital” framed by the Commission responds to the same logic that informs the aforementioned dichotomy between

The opposition “soft capital versus hard capital” framed by the Commission responds to the same logic that informs the aforementioned dichotomy between the idea of Europe and the reality of the European Union.

When the new institutions of the Community were scheduled to begin operations, the representatives of the member states had not yet found an agreement on a common location and, therefore, decided to start by rotating the meetings in their national capitals.

the idea of Europe and the reality of the European Union. Overriding any speculation on what a united Europe ought to be or could have been, Brussels is the physical materialization of what the European Union actually is and has been so far. President Trump famously called Brussels a “hellhole” (Buruma, 2016). Steering clear of any value judgements, we shall approach it as a *topia*, as opposed to the utopias (and the dystopias) that are often associated with the integration process.

### *The impotent architect*

In addition to its magnitude and the fact that very little attention has been paid to it, the transformation of Brussels has two distinctive characteristics. First, the majority of the aforementioned *hardware* was built over a 34-year period during which the Belgian city was indeed a seat of the European institutions, but only with provisional status.

Immediately after the signing of the Rome Treaty in 1957, which transformed the European Coal and Steel Community into the more ambitious European Economic Community, Brussels emerged as the “executive capital” of the new system, joining Strasbourg and Luxembourg, which had already been identified as the centres of the legislative and judicial powers. The first group of European officials, roughly three hundred people, moved to Brussels at the beginning of 1958. Notably, this was not the result of a clear plan: on January 1<sup>st</sup>, when the new institutions of the Community were scheduled to begin operations, the representatives of the member states had not yet found an agreement on a common location and, therefore, decided to start by rotating the meetings in their national capitals.

The rotation was based on alphabetical order, so Belgium was first. After the Commission settled in Brussels, however, it would have been very inconvenient to move, and everyone agreed to stay put. In other words, we would not be talking about Brussels if there was another member state that started with the letter “A” (Van Parijs, 2014).

That being said, Brussels’s provisional status was due to more than this initial contingency. In fact, until the signing of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992, the process of European integration advanced under the assumption



that one day all the institutions would be grouped in a single site, a federal capital on the model of Washington DC. For almost forty years, this idea, first outlined by Jean Monnet in the early 1950s, impeded any settlement of the European institutions from being regarded as permanent.

The second defining characteristic of Brussels's expansion is that, until 1992, due to the provisional status of their presence, the European institutions were not allowed to finance and own their buildings. Therefore, they had very little agency over the development of the *Quartier Européen*. At the same time, the host country was barred from building any permanent installation specifically designed for the European institutions (Lenaerts, Vanvoorden, 2008).

A 1978 report of the European Court of Auditors explains the situation in unequivocal terms: "The budgetary authorities have so far refused to allow the Community institutions to become owners of the properties they inhabit. The argument put forward by the budgetary authorities is political in nature and concerns the lack of any final decision over the official seat of the institutions" (European Court of Auditors, 1978).

As a result, the European institutions had to rent office space in buildings owned and designed by others – an exchange that, by the way, continued to take place well beyond the 1992 turn, because at that point it had become difficult to restructure a system that had been solidifying for decades. As highlighted in the report of the Court of Auditors, this situation proved to be extremely costly for the institutions and beneficial for local real-estate companies: a diagram developed by the firm Healey & Baker shows a fivefold increase in the cost of rent in the *Quartier Européen* between the mid-1960s and 1990 (Healey & Baker, 1990).

On the one hand, this particular condition shines a light on the structural impotence or powerlessness of the European Community as it pertained to the production of architecture throughout more than half of its history. On the other hand, it raises the question of how the massive conglomeration of architecture for the European institutions was produced during that time. Who produced it? What logic did they follow?

It raises the question of how the massive conglomeration of architecture for the European institutions was produced during that time. Who produced it? What logic did they follow?

Fig. 4 - Letter concerning the “plan de cloisonnement” of the Berlaymont, 1969.  
Source: European Commission.

The Belgian government was initially very sceptical about making a significant investment for an institution that was in town on a provisional basis and might have left after a short period of time.

### *The Berlaymont*

The project that kickstarted and focalized the transformation of the Leopold Quarter, the area immediately south-east of Brussels’s inner ring road, into a European district was the Berlaymont, the headquarters of the European Commission – an architectural endeavour that spanned almost the entirety of the aforementioned 34-year period of provisionality and powerlessness.

The idea of creating a major office building on the site of the Berlaymont monastery was put forward shortly after the first group of *functionaries* moved to Brussels in 1958 (Sterken, 2009). Three entities participated in this endeavour: the Belgian government, represented by its Ministry of Public Works, which owned the site and organized the transfer of the monastery to another location; the Belgian Office of Overseas Social Security, a social security fund designed to deal with international matters (following the dissolution of Belgium’s colonial empire), which was brought in by the government to finance the construction of the new Berlaymont; and finally the local real estate company François et Fils, a powerful and very well politically connected company, which promoted the project, pitched the idea to the Commission and oversaw the construction process.

Even though François et Fils had approached the Commission as soon as the first officials arrived, the Belgian government was initially very sceptical about making a significant investment for an institution that was in town on a provisional basis and might have left after a short period of time. As noted in a report of the Council of the Brussels Capital Region, the solution was to develop the project on two levels: “Mais par précaution, le programme prévoit que le bâtiment puisse éventuellement abriter un ministère belge, au cas où les institutions européennes ne s’y installeraient pas” (Conseil de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, 2003).

When the maquette of the initial project – designed by local architects Lucien de Vestel, Jean Gilson, André and Jean Polak – was shown to the public in 1959, the presentation stated that the building could house *either* a national ministry *or* a European institution “éventuellement prétend-il” (De Beule, 2017). Although it had informally expressed its interest in

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Note à l'attention de Monsieur FREDDI  
Président de la Commission de contrôle

Ainsi que vous l'avez sans doute appris, le Conseil, dans le cadre du plan de regroupement des institutions européennes à Bruxelles, a décidé que les services de la Commission seraient regroupés dans les complexes Berlaymont et Joyeuse Entrée - Cortenbeeg - Loi, et devraient par conséquent abandonner tous les autres immeubles.

Ceci a donc pour conséquence que l'immeuble Archimède, où la Commission de contrôle est actuellement installée, doit être abandonné.

J'ai donc l'honneur de vous faire connaître qu'il vous est proposé de transférer vos services au 2ème étage du complexe Berlaymont, où 21 bureaux leur ont été réservés, ainsi que les salles d'archives H et I (voir plan ci-annexé).

Je vous saurais gré de bien vouloir me faire connaître quel plan de cloisonnement vous souhaitez voir réaliser.

Je vous signale à ce propos que le nombre de bureaux accordé par le Conseil a conduit la Commission à satisfaire d'autre façon deux obligations traditionnelles :

- d'une part, les services ne pourront plus disposer de salles de réunions internes, mais devront recourir à des salles mises en pool et gérées par la division IX/C/5, à laquelle elles devront être demandées ;

...

One of the key issues had to do with the fact that multiple departments needed to operate with a high degree of “autonomie” and therefore could not be placed in an open space where others could physically interfere with their activities.

occupying the Berlaymont from the get-go, the European Commission had no say over the design of the building. Suffice it to say that the initial project did not include appropriate facilities for translators, which are obviously essential to the functioning of a supranational institution. The architects, who had been single-handedly selected by the Belgian Ministry of Public Works (without a competition), were asked to design the interiors according to an open-plan layout, which aligned with the way work was organized and carried out in most Belgian government buildings. This layout, however, conflicted with the way the Commission operated. In 1968, when the building was completed, and the parties started to negotiate the lease, this issue came to the fore in a major way: the compromise came in the form of a sizeable discount on the rent.

Before the first *fonctionnaire* could start working in the Berlaymont, however, the entire interior had to be restructured. The correspondence between the Président de la Commission de Contrôle, the Directeur Général du Personnel et de l'Administration and the Chef de la Division Immeubles-Matériel-Service Intérieur during that time speaks to the tension that came with this process (European Commission, 1969). One of the key issues had to do with the fact that multiple departments, especially those that dealt with economic matters, needed to operate with a high degree of “autonomie” and therefore could not be placed in an open space where others could physically interfere with their activities. The solution was to implement a comprehensive “plan de cloisonnement,” which turned the initial open layout into a maze of enclosed spaces, characterized by long, dark corridors, leaving many offices without windows.

#### *From poison to symbol*

After a long series of further modification, shortly before Brussels was recognized as a permanent seat of the European institutions, the perspective changed again in 1990, when vast quantities of asbestos were detected in the Berlaymont. Notably, a significant percentage of the 1400 tons of poisonous materials found in the building was embedded in the partitions that had been added over the years to create separate offices.

The building could not be demolished because its foundations anchored the local road and metro net-



work, so the parties decided to embark on a long and expensive renovation process. The Belgian government did not have the resources to pay for this project, so it teamed up with a number of private investors, mostly banks and financial institutions (Citibank, CGER, BACOB, among others), which set up a company called *Berlaymont 2000* in order to fund and manage the renovation. In exchange for this investment, the company obtained from the government a long lease on the building, which was then sublet to the European Commission at a higher price.

When the asbestos crisis came up, several European officials proposed to take this opportunity to leave a building that had been designed for something else and never fit. However, the local authorities argued that the Berlaymont had become a “symbol” of the European presence in Brussels and therefore needed to be preserved (Shore, 2000).

By the same token, when the Commission decided to create a logo in the mid-2000s, the selected design centred on the silhouette of the Berlaymont (European Commission, 2017). In the end, a building that had been shaped by national agendas and private speculations, required constant modification and threatened the health of its inhabitants, ended up representing the “visual identity” of the supranational institution *par excellence*.

### *Bruxellisation*

As evidenced by the case of the Berlaymont, the private sector played a crucial role in the transformation of Brussels. As noted by Alex Papadopoulos, Brussels is an atypical Western European capital because it was never subject to a comprehensive urban regulatory regime and most of its changes were based on private financing, following models of development that are often found in the United States (Papadopoulos, 1996).

Four years after the arrival of the European institutions, in 1962, Belgium made its first attempt at introducing a national regulation and passed the *Loi Organique de l'Aménagement du Territoire et de l'Urbanisme*. This regulatory regime characterized all the period during which Brussels acted as a provisional seat of the European institutions because it remained in force until 1991 when it was replaced by the *Ordon-*

When the Commission decided to create a logo in the mid-2000s, the selected design centred on the silhouette of the Berlaymont.



*nance Organique de la Planification et de l'Urbanisme.* The “organic law” is well-known among planners because, rather than trying to guide the transformations of the city, it established a *laissez-faire* approach. The result was a process known as Bruxellisation – a term commonly used to indicate the demolition of large sections of the historic fabric of the city and the haphazard construction of high-rise office buildings (Kapplinger, 1993). Part of the problem was that Belgium, much like the European Union, is a federal system and, over the years, had to find ways to bring together a trilingual, tricultural population: any strict regulation imposed by the national government was unlikely to be easily accepted by these diverse communities, especially in the 1960s, a period of harsh confrontation between the Flemish and Walloon regions.

#### *Parliament in disguise*

Nowhere is the agency of private developers on the production of architecture for the European institutions clearer than in the case of the Spinelli building, the headquarters of the European Parliament in Brussels. If the vicissitudes of the Berlaymont speak mostly to the tensions associated with the early phases of the period under consideration, the Spinelli building relates to the other end of our timeline and shines a light on the turning point of 1992. In fact, the development of the hemicycle began in the mid-1980s and the complex was inaugurated in 1995.

As previously noted, the informal organizational structure of the EU indicated that the legislative branch was to be located in Strasbourg: the parliamentary assembly had been meeting in the French city since the birth of the European Coal and Steel Community. However, as more and more activities progressively coalesced in Brussels over the years, in the 1980s the European Parliament started to lobby in order to have a seat near the executive branch. The idea of moving to Brussels obviously clashed with the standpoint of the French government, which put its foot down to protect the Strasbourg headquarters. A 1987 *Le Monde* article titled *Bataille pour un Hémicycle* speaks to the level of tension that underlaid this discussion (Fralon, 1987). So how did the Parliament get around this obstacle?

A report of the Council of the Brussels Capital Region clearly states that, in 1988, “l’État belge a voulu

The result was a process known as Bruxellisation – a term commonly used to indicate the demolition of large sections of the historic fabric of the city and the haphazard construction of high-rise office buildings.

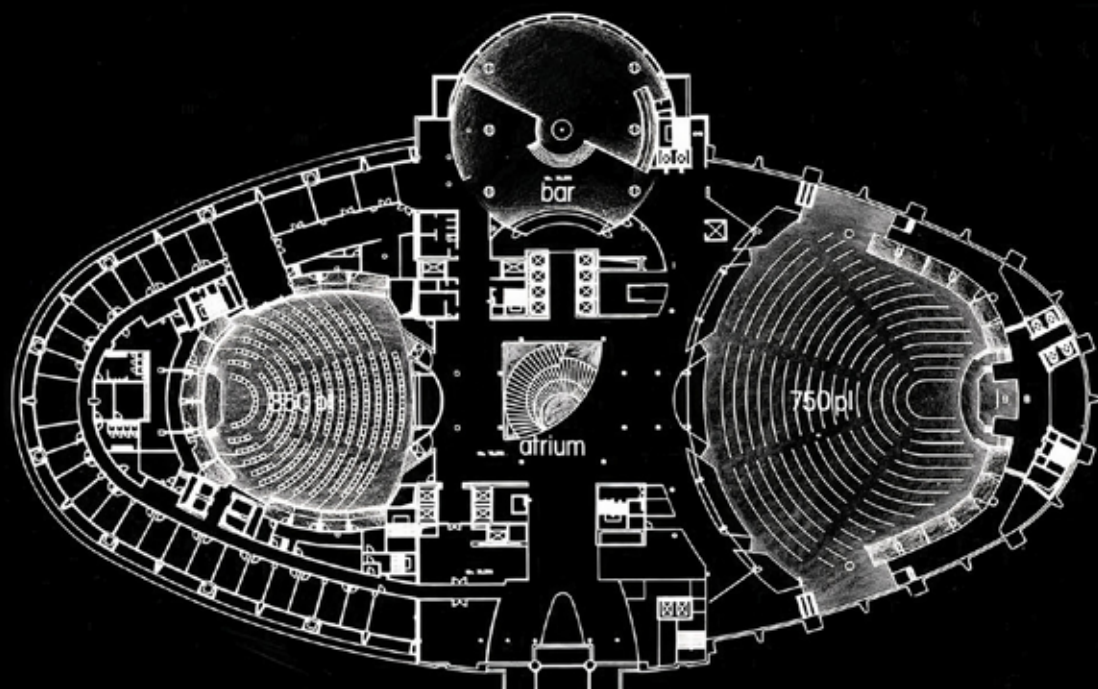


Fig. 6 - Plan of the  
"Centre International  
de Conférences,"  
1988. Source: Michel  
Boucquillon.

Fig. 7 - Report of the  
developers of the  
"Centre International  
de Conférences,"  
2001  
Source: Société  
Espace Léopold.



### L'aménagement du quartier Léopold : un projet qui remonte à 1987

Si les grands projets urbanistiques sont toujours des entreprises de longue haleine, l'aménagement du quartier Léopold en est un bon exemple. Pour remonter aux sources de ce chantier, il faut en effet revenir à l'année 1987. A l'époque, la Région bruxelloise qui n'existait pas encore dans sa forme actuelle ambitionnait d'urbaniser le quartier. Elle avait alors chargé un bureau d'études de réaliser un projet global baptisé « Espace Bruxelles Europe ». Il portait sur le site de la gare Léopold, les terrains environnants et la création d'un **Centre International de Conférences (CIC)**.

L'aménagement imaginé impliquait de construire une dalle de béton qui couvrirait les voies de chemins de fer. La dalle devenant une vaste esplanade flanquée d'immeubles. La philosophie de ce programme se fondait sur la mixité des fonctions. Il mariait en effet les ensembles de bureaux indispensables à la fonction de capitale européenne, les commerces, des salles d'exposition, des espaces publics et du logement. L'épure était séduisante restait à trouver l'amateur qui la concrétiserait.

C'est alors que le Groupement des Investisseurs entra en scène. Consortium formé de la COB et de la Société Générale de Belgique, le Groupement des Investisseurs signa (le 26 juin 1987) une convention avec la région bruxelloise. L'accord prévoyait que :

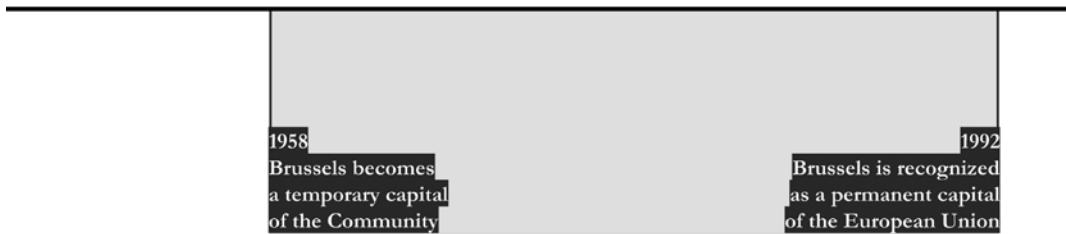
- le G.I. construirait simultanément la dalle et le CIC (futur D1/D2), en l'espace de 42 mois.
- Qu'ensuite, le G.I. construirait, selon le planning qu'il déterminerait, les autres bâtiments prévus dans le projet dans un délai ne pouvant dépasser 110 mois.

Les délais ne commençaient cependant à courir qu'à partir du moment où toute une série de conditions étaient remplies. Notamment la vérification de la faisabilité financière de l'opération, la délivrance du certificat d'urbanisme pour l'ensemble du projet, du permis de bâtir pour la dalle, pour les bâtiments à ériger sur cette nouvelle plate-forme, l'obtention du permis de bâtir pour le CIC et la cession de certains terrains.

## European integration



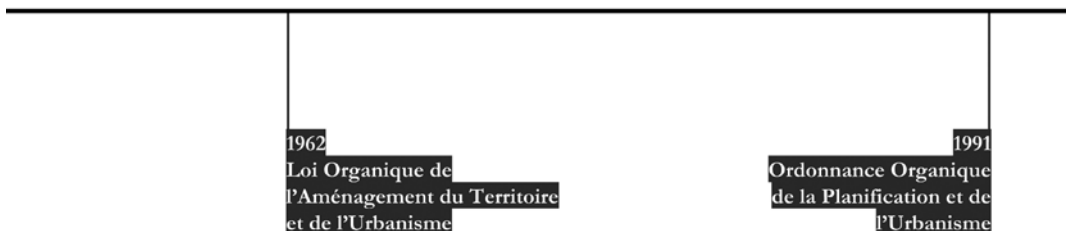
## Brussels as a provisional capital



## Buildings



## Regulatory framework



construire le siège du Parlement sans le dire officiellement; l'État belge trouve un groupement d'investisseurs, ou inversement d'ailleurs, et le groupement construit pour le compte officieux du Parlement et de l'État belge" (Conseil de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, 1991). This and many other documents point to the fact that Brussels's seat of the European Parliament was built *in disguise* (Lamant, 2018).

There was an informal agreement with the European institutions from the beginning but, as noted in another report of the Council, "la construction d'un hémicycle ont été formellement négociées avec les autorités européennes" (Conseil de la Région de Bruxelles-Capitale, 2003). The solution was to use a false name: instead of saying they were building a hemicycle for the European Parliament, the developers called it "Centre Internationale de Conférence", often shortened to the acronym "CIC".

The whole operation was promoted by a group of investors called *Société Espace Leopold*, led by two Belgian banks: Société Générale de Belgique and BACOB, which was involved in the renovation of the Berlaymont too. These financial institutions owned the site of the Leopold brewery, less than a mile away from the Berlaymont. In June 1987, they signed an agreement with the government of the Brussels Capital Region and, in July 1987, obtained a building permit to demolish the existing structure of the brewery and build an "International Conference Centre" on the site (Papadopoulos, 1996).

The way in which the design was selected and developed was in line with the overall *ethos* of this project. The aforementioned consortium of banks and investors teamed up with a consortium of Belgian architects, which called themselves *Association des Architectes du Centre Internationale de Conférence*. The architectural firms that composed this association, however, were not interested in elaborating a design and, instead, organized an informal competition, aiming to find a proposal that was ready to be executed. The design ended up being produced by Michel Boucquillon, a 26-year-old, recently graduated, local architect, who was selected as the winner of this unusual contest.

From an institutional point of view, the informal agreement between the developers and the European

Fig. 8 - Timeline.  
Source: The author.

The solution was to use a false name: instead of saying they were building a hemicycle for the European Parliament, the developers called it "Centre Internationale de Conférence".



Given its complexity, multiple theories have been developed over the years to interpret and explain how the process of European integration works. Architectural case studies, however, provide the unique opportunity to anchor these reflections to tangible objects.

European integration poses an existential question: once the possibility of a blueprint is negated a priori, how does a process produce architecture?

authorities was eventually legitimized by the 1992 decision regarding the status of the headquarters, which stated that Strasbourg would remain the primary seat of the Parliament and hold its monthly plenary sessions. However, all the additional sessions, as well as the meetings of the parliamentary committees, could take place in Brussels. Based on this arrangement, as soon as the “Centre Internationale de Conférence” was completed in 1995, the Parliament rented it and started to use the new hemicycle, ironically renaming it after Altiero Spinelli, whose idea of European integration had very little to do with this construction method.

#### *Whatever Happened to Supranational Architecture?*

Given its complexity, multiple theories have been developed over the years to interpret and explain how the process of European integration works (Wiener and Diez, 2004). Architectural case studies such as the Berlaymont and the Spinelli building, however, provide the unique opportunity to anchor these reflections to tangible objects. For example, Lennaert Van Heumen and Mechthild Roos’s theory of “informal integration” or Jack Hayward’s theory of “integration by stealth” can be juxtaposed to the unofficial, behind-the-scenes, hidden practices that made these buildings possible (Van Heumen and Roos, 2019; Hayward, 1996). It is hard to find a clearer example of informal, stealthy architecture than the “Centre Internationale de Conférence.”

Nonetheless, architecture has entered the discourse on European integration only on a metaphorical level. In one of the rare studies of this subject, Paul Chilton has highlighted the role of the metaphor of the “common European house” in the integration process (Chilton, 1993). However, there are many other examples: the publications on the “institutional architecture” of the European Union are too many to count. By the same token, Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman and the other founding fathers are constantly referred to as the *architects* of European integration.

Once we step away from this metaphorical dimension and start to look at the existing institutional architecture of the European Union – the one made of concrete, steel, glass (and occasionally asbestos) – we gain a different perspective. As in the cases of the buildings of the Commission and the Parliament, the



two institutions that, more than any other, represent the transition from a system of divided nation-states to one of the integrated member states, the rhetoric of a supranational institutional architecture clash with the reality of a process of architectural production that responds primarily to local, regional, national and at most intergovernmental dynamics, with a strong influence of the private sector.

On the one hand, architecture serves as a testing ground.

While most of the research on European integration deals with immaterial objects, architecture provides concrete case studies that can help us decipher how the European Union works. Being careful not to generalize and overreach, one may argue that exploring how these buildings are produced illuminates how things take form in this integrated system and how the European Union operates as a *builder* in other areas as well.

On the other hand, the way the system is structured seems to challenge the very possibility of architecture. As underlined by Joschka Fischer in his influential speech *Thoughts on the Finality of European Integration*, European integration operates as “a gradual process with no blueprint” (Fischer, 2000). Since its inception, this has been the *modus operandi*: as early as 1950, the Schuman Declaration clearly stated that “Europe will not be made all at once, or according to a single, general plan; it will be built through concrete achievements” (Krijtenburg, 2012).

We are used to thinking that the presence of a blueprint, a plan or some kind of outline regarding how things need to unfold is the *conditio sine qua non* for the production of architecture. In our field, every “concrete achievement” is preceded by plans, elevations, sections. From this point of view, European integration poses an existential question: once the possibility of a blueprint is negated *a priori*, how does a process produce architecture?

Exploring how these buildings are produced illuminates how things take form in this integrated system and how the European Union operates as a builder in other areas as well.

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***Rome •  
migrants  
places for  
inclusion  
• social  
condenser  
buildings***

# Progettare l'integrazione. Lo spazio dell'incontro e dello scambio nel futuro delle città multiculturali

Manuela Raitano (1); Angela Fiorelli (2); Gloria Riggi (3)

*Abstract / Design the Integration. The Space of Encounter and Exchange in the Future of Multicultural Cities.*

The phenomenon of migratory flows constitutes an emergency in Europe. At the moment, architects are not directly involved in technical and institutional boards, while we know that the quality of urban spaces is crucial, since it is starting from space – and its conformation – that one can manage the interrelations between the individuals. Our cities must be ready to absorb the impact of migrants, accepting multiculturalism as a resource and not a threat. In addition to the places for the first aid, it is now essential to introduce also new architectural models, aimed at assistance and integration of migrants in the host communities. Starting from the assumption that the “right to the city” must be universally extended – and taking the Termini station area in Rome as a case-study – we tried to prefigure new models for multifunctional buildings in which cultural pluralism can be developed, respecting and protecting each person's identity.

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L'antica ξενία – il diritto all'ospitalità che per secoli era stato garantito dalle leggi dell'antico Mediterraneo – non sembra oggi costituire elemento di riconoscimento comune per l'identità europea.

### *I flussi migratori in Europa e il diritto alla città*

Alcune recenti risoluzioni degli stati membri d'Europa sembrano assecondare un approccio divisivo e diffidente nei confronti dell'immigrato. L'impatto dei grandi flussi migratori ha infatti generato non pochi conflitti sociali all'interno dei paesi comunitari, alterando i già precari equilibri tra l'area mediterranea e gli stati del Nord e Centro Europa. Ne è conseguito, inevitabile, un diffuso sentimento di ostilità verso quanti non detengono il cosiddetto "diritto di cittadinanza", acuitosi a seguito della crisi economica mondiale del 2008 e degli attacchi terroristici di matrice fondamentalista. In questo quadro l'antica ξενία – il diritto all'ospitalità che per secoli era stato garantito dalle leggi dell'antico Mediterraneo – non sembra oggi costituire elemento di riconoscimento comune per l'identità europea. I migranti approdano così in un continente culturalmente impreparato ad accoglierli e a pianificarne la permanenza.

È qui *in primis* necessario specificare che con il termine "migranti" siamo costretti ad accomunare sotto un'unica parola una moltitudine di differenti persone e di esperienze: individui con status sociali, economici e culturali diversi, che vanno dai cosiddetti clandestini, non legalmente riconosciuti, fino ai rifugiati politici; o dagli extracomunitari in transito fino ai residenti in forma stabile, con regolare permesso di soggiorno. Tutti costoro rappresentano, nel loro insieme, un gruppo sociale multiforme ed eterogeneo di soggetti deboli, a cui le politiche dei vari stati dovrebbero rispondere in termini di integrazione, e non solo di prima accoglienza.

"Integrazione" è tuttavia parola che va anch'essa chiarita: da un lato, infatti, si può affermare che la contaminazione culturale sia una necessità primaria per una società coesa e multietnica; dall'altro bisogna ricordare che tale obiettivo va comunque raggiunto a partire dalla tutela delle singole identità di provenienza. Pertanto, l'integrazione non deve intendersi come l'attuarsi di un processo coatto di cancellazione delle differenze, quanto piuttosto come l'innescare di un processo bilaterale di scambio. E in tale processo l'architettura può e deve giocare la sua parte. Come scrive infatti Rosario Pavia, «non solo le città non sono accoglienti, ma il pianeta stesso diventa sempre più invivibile», al punto che «per molti versi l'accoglienza

pone una questione etica che investe pienamente la cultura dell'architettura moderna» (Pavia, 2016). In questa prospettiva diventa allora importante chiedersi se le città europee, e segnatamente quelle italiane, siano attrezzate per *accogliere*. Per quanto infatti si stia diffondendo l'idea che modelli multietnici siano più facilmente realizzabili in realtà medio-piccole come i centri minori (si pensi al caso di Rosarno in Calabria), non c'è dubbio che lo spazio tradizionalmente cosmopolita delle grandi città sia ancora da ritenersi il luogo deputato all'attuazione dei processi di integrazione. Le città sono sì purtroppo teatro di conflitti, vi proliferano fenomeni di intolleranza e razzismo, ma possono anche offrire opportunità di riconoscimento sociale a gruppi di individui differenti per provenienza e modelli di vita. Al punto che quasi potremmo affermare che l'immigrazione sia oggi «un fatto urbano totale, perché coinvolge ogni aspetto, ogni dimensione e ogni rappresentazione dell'assetto sociale, spaziale, politico, culturale e religioso delle città» (Urban@it, 2016).

A partire da questo assunto, la questione centrale diviene quella del “diritto alla città”; diritto che dovrà valere, in Europa come altrove, per qualunque individuo, comunitario e non, residente o “in transito” (Criconia, 2019). Va tuttavia considerato che tale diritto è in sé contraddittorio, poiché l'idea di città “per tutti” entra spesso in conflitto, nell'immaginario collettivo, con la percezione della sicurezza “del singolo” (Ago-stini et al., 2017), riverberando così dall'opinione pubblica alla risposta politica. Se da un lato, dunque, si dovranno garantire apertura e solidarietà, dall'altro si dovranno anche garantire, nelle città contemporanee, protezione e controllo (Bauman, 2016), ma scardinando il luogo comune che vede tale garanzia inficiata dalla presenza delle minoranze multietniche.

Nei termini della costruzione dello spazio urbano, i due concetti antitetici di apertura e controllo, per quanto schematici, ci aiutano a rappresentare i poli opposti della questione: l'apertura si progetta infatti per via di spazi permeabili, che attraversino tutte le gradazioni che vanno dal semi-pubblico al semi-privato, che involino alla scoperta ma che, allo stesso tempo, si comprendano intuitivamente. Il controllo al contrario richiede che sia chiara la distinzione tra il pubblico e il privato, tra il dentro e il fuori.

**Diventa allora importante chiedersi se le città europee, e segnatamente quelle italiane, siano attrezzate per *accogliere*.**



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I luoghi  
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occupano edifici in  
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removibili e  
temporanee.

Nel primo caso abbiamo la sovrapposizione dei flussi come valore, nel secondo la loro distinzione; e ancora: nel primo caso ci muoviamo nel campo della cultura dell'*et-et*, cioè nel campo della mediazione, nel secondo invece in quella dell'*aut-aut*, che prevede la separazione e la distinguibilità degli enti.

In questa cornice non univoca, definita da un quadro valoriale difficilmente riconducibile alla pacificazione, sarà dunque necessario operare per attrezzare spazi urbani condivisi *ma* sicuri, plurali *ma* identitari. Ed è sotto questo punto di vista che le competenze specifiche dell'architetto potranno rivelarsi dirimenti. Per questa ragione stupisce constatare come, al momento attuale, l'architettura non sia chiamata direttamente in causa nei tavoli tecnico-istituzionali, da un lato perché non viene capito come la costruzione dello spazio sia parte della soluzione del problema, dall'altro perché ancora scontiamo l'identificazione pubblica con una figura professionale sovrastrutturale, che si occupa di puro godimento estetico, identificazione di cui il sentire postmoderno si è reso evidentemente complice. Mentre, al contrario, il tema dello spazio per l'inclusione può rappresentare una vera occasione per rimettere la nostra disciplina, se non al centro del dibattito, almeno a lato dei tavoli istituzionali di livello europeo.

La presenza dei migranti nelle città impatterà infatti sul disegno degli spazi collettivi, sugli edifici scolastici, sulla qualità dei servizi ecc.; va pertanto predisposto uno scenario virtuoso in cui si auspica di superare l'ottica emergenziale, per lavorare in prospettiva a "progettare l'integrazione".

#### *I luoghi dell'accoglienza in Italia*

Entrando nello specifico, nel nostro paese i luoghi istituzionali dell'accoglienza, nella grande maggioranza dei casi, sono sistemazioni di fortuna che occupano edifici in disuso o strutture removibili e temporanee. Manca una programmazione, e non si è consolidata una ricerca tipologica sul tema.

La normativa, in particolare, non aiuta a definire nuovi modelli: essa tratta di strutture per "l'accoglienza", ma mai di strutture per "l'integrazione"; non definisce inoltre tipologie di ambienti né programmi funzionali, né tenta di stabilire minimi inderogabili né principi capaci di normare le relazioni tra i luoghi deputati ai migranti e la città stessa. Dal punto di vista



normativo vengono anzi incentivate, in Italia, occupazioni provvisorie di edifici dismessi, ovvero strategie di adattamento che, se da un lato risolvono l'emergenza, dall'altro non riescono a definire soluzioni *ad hoc*. Sono perciò riutilizzati, in molti casi, alberghi abbandonati, ex caserme ecc., senza tenere in conto le possibili dinamiche di emarginazione e l'innescarsi del cosiddetto "effetto-ghetto", laddove il termine è qui usato non nel significato (oggi riconsiderato) di struttura organizzata e comunitaria, ma nell'accezione comune di luogo della segregazione: «ghetto significa *impossibilità di creare una comunità*», afferma infatti Zygmunt Bauman (2001), riassumendo le parole di Loic Wacquant.

A lato di quanto detto finora, ancor meno viene valutato l'impatto che i migranti producono nel tessuto spaziale e morfologico delle nostre città. Conseguenza di ciò è che, a fronte di una mancanza di strutture dedicate, si innescano meccanismi di autoregolamentazione da parte dei migranti stessi, che allestiscono i propri spazi in forma autonoma, "espropriando" parti di città. Questi fenomeni non sono confinati nelle sole periferie, ma coinvolgono aree urbane anche non marginali: il quartiere Flaminio a Roma ne è l'esempio, con Piazza Mancini che si trasforma, ogni fine settimana, nel punto di incontro delle comunità latine

Fig. 1 – Il presidio di piazzale Maslax a Roma, gestito da Baobab Experience, sgomberato nel novembre 2018. Foto di G. Dal Bianco.

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**1 - Secondo la Road-map italiana del settembre 2015, redatta dal Ministero dell'Interno, dopo l'identificazione negli hotspot, i migranti richiedenti asilo vengono trasferiti nei vari regional hub presenti sul territorio nazionale, mentre gli irregolari sono trasferiti nei Centri di Identificazione ed Espulsione.**

**Locale e globale potrebbero così intrecciarsi e interagire in forme sconosciute nelle epoche precedenti, producendo per tutti, nelle città, inediti luoghi-sosta di radicamenti dinamici e mobilità multiformi.**

locali; in questi luoghi l'utilizzo spontaneo da parte delle comunità straniere, di per sé lecito, entra in conflitto con le regole di fruizione ordinaria; va da sé che l'assenza di un progetto tanto politico quanto urbano si traduce, nella percezione dei residenti, nella forma di un'appropriazione indebita che induce reazioni di diffidenza e intolleranza.

Numerosi sono, a Roma, gli esempi: tra questi è noto il presidio di piazzale Maslax, situato in un'area prossima alla stazione Tiburtina, gestito dall'associazione Baobab e sgomberato infine nel 2018; questi insediamenti, che pure rispondono a un criterio di necessità, non aiutano purtroppo a favorire la pacificazione sociale, essendo spesso avvertiti come atti di "spoliazione" illecita. Al contrario, attraverso lo strumento del progetto, si potrebbero predisporre tali spazi in modo da promuoverne l'uso condiviso tra extracomunitari e residenti. Locale e globale potrebbero così intrecciarsi e interagire in forme sconosciute nelle epoche precedenti, producendo per tutti, nelle città, inediti luoghi-sosta di radicamenti dinamici e mobilità multiformi.

Con riferimento all'assetto normativo, l'accoglienza in Italia è regolata dal D.Lgs n. 142 del 2015, che si basa sulle disposizioni proposte dalla Conferenza Unificata Stato Regioni del 10 luglio 2014, in ottemperanza alle Direttive europee e, successivamente, anche ai D.Lgs 13/2017 e 113/2018; tutte queste disposizioni, unitamente al recente D.L. del 5 ottobre 2020, definiscono alcuni importanti aspetti in materia di immigrazione, protezione internazionale, libera circolazione nell'Unione Europea e riconoscimento del singolo<sup>1</sup>.

Il sistema di accoglienza è articolato, in sintesi, in tre momenti: una fase "zero", che si svolge in strutture denominate *hotspot*, dedicata al soccorso e alla prima identificazione; una fase "uno" che riguarda centri in cui si attuano procedure di supporto psicologico, assistenza medico-legale e attività quotidiane di sostentamento; infine, una fase detta di "seconda accoglienza", in cui le strutture di riferimento sono quelle del sistema SPRAR (Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati). Questo sistema di accoglienza viene poi affiancato e supportato da altre strutture, in particolare i CAS (Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria), i Centri di Accoglienza per Richiedenti Asilo (CARA), i CIE (Centro di identificazione ed espulsione) e i CPR

(Centro di permanenza per i rimpatri). Molto spesso, si verifica che la maggioranza dei migranti venga accolta nelle strutture straordinarie (i CAS) piuttosto che in quelle ordinarie (gli SPRAR), poiché le prime funzionano con minori obblighi di controllo e di rendicontazione (Firouzi, 2018).

Per dare maggior ordine all'apparato sopra descritto, il Ministero dell'Interno ha inoltre redatto una *roadmap* dell'accoglienza, istituendo strutture di scala maggiore: i *regional hubs*, grandi centri a livello regionale e/o interregionale dove fare un primo screening dei migranti che abbiano formalmente espresso la volontà di richiedere protezione. In sostanza, essi rappresentano una sorta di centro di smistamento dove le persone dovrebbero risiedere per poco tempo (dai 7 ai 30 giorni) per realizzare le operazioni di identificazione e formalizzazione della domanda di protezione ed essere poi trasferiti nei centri di seconda accoglienza, vale a dire nelle strutture della rete SPRAR e CAS.

All'interno della struttura legislativa, il tema dello spazio architettonico è tuttavia il grande assente: nella normativa in materia sono infatti indicati i procedimenti da seguire e la definizione giuridica delle strutture deputate, ma non è riportato come fisicamente possa essere uno spazio per l'accoglienza. Le strutture non sono suddivise in base ai loro principi formativi e funzionali, ma in base al soggetto giuridico da ospitare (Urban@it, 2016), né la scelta della localizzazione di un centro all'interno di un territorio è considerata strategica, ai fini della riuscita dei processi di integrazione. Sotto questo aspetto la ricerca accademica può contribuire offrendo competenze specifiche, capaci di prefigurare strutture innovative all'interno delle comunità ospitanti.

*Verso un modello di architettura per l'accoglienza:  
il caso di Roma Termini*

Il lavoro che qui presentiamo intende soffermarsi sulla necessità di un'"architettura per l'inclusione", in un contesto, quello del quartiere Esquilino a Roma, dove è forte la presenza di una componente extra-comunitaria che richiede con urgenza una nuova visione sistemica, di programma e di azione. La tesi di fondo, su cui è articolato il progetto di ricerca<sup>2</sup>, è che gli spazi dedicati ai migranti possano (e debbano) essere pensati non solo per offrire servizi primari alle

**2 - Nel testo si fa riferimento, nello specifico, alla ricerca di Ateneo "Roma Termini. La piazza e la città, tra patrimonio e infrastruttura" in corso di svolgimento presso il Dipartimento di Architettura e Progetto, Sapienza Università di Roma, resp. M. Raitano, con A. Fiorelli, G. Riggi et al.**

**All'interno  
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tuttavia il grande  
assente.**

Fig. 2 – Roma, via  
Gioberti. Sulla  
sinistra l'isolato  
parzialmente demo-  
lito, prospiciente la  
stazione, nel quale si  
prevede di ubicare la  
"Casa delle Culture".  
Foto di S. Leoni.

**Si consideri che attualmente non esistono, nella città di Roma, strutture centralizzate in grado di fornire tutte insieme i servizi essenziali di cui il migrante necessita nei primi mesi di permanenza nel paese a lui straniero.**

minoranze, ma anche per offrire servizi aggiuntivi ai nativi locali. Attraverso la lente disciplinare viene così indagata la possibilità di un impegno diretto, di larga scala, dell'architetto, nella costruzione di una città che, già multietnica, dovrà divenire inclusiva e interculturale. Lo scenario è, come già detto, la città di Roma, ma il progetto viene impostato secondo un approccio strategico, virtualmente trasferibile altrove. Nello specifico, tale ricerca intende porsi a valle del processo sopra descritto, che regola la cosiddetta "seconda accoglienza". Non interessa perciò indagare nuovi modelli per i centri del sistema SPRAR, bensì nuovi spazi per rendere più facile – e integrata – la vita del migrante, una volta ch'egli è uscito dalla fase dell'accoglienza di base, quando ormai è inserito nel corpo fisico di una grande città che non conosce e che non lo riconosce.

Si consideri che attualmente non esistono, nella città di Roma, strutture centralizzate in grado di fornire tutte insieme i servizi essenziali di cui il migrante necessita nei primi mesi di permanenza nel paese a lui straniero: egli vaga, pertanto, da un giardino pubblico alla sede di una onlus, dalla mensa al centro di volontariato e via così. In un certo senso, continua a migrare nelle città, non superando realmente quella condizione coatta in cui viveva prima dell'arrivo. L'obiettivo primario della ricerca è stato quindi, innanzitutto, capire come provvedere a fornirgli i servizi essenziali, evitando di disperderli sul territorio, ma concentrandoli in strutture ad essi deputate. Si è trattato pertanto di immaginare strutture complesse, che potrebbero essere gestite su base volontaria, come del resto già accade per gli *hub* la cui gestione, a oggi, vede in Italia, in prima linea, le associazioni umanitarie e le onlus.

Il tema della localizzazione è altrettanto centrale, in quanto la scelta delle aree dove insediare questo genere di servizi urbani andrebbe coordinata su scala nazionale, sulla base di dati incrociati. In particolare, sappiamo che nelle grandi città i flussi migratori investono principalmente le stazioni, e in particolare quelle di Milano Centrale, Roma Termini, Roma Tiburtina, Ventimiglia e Bolzano. Per questa ragione, il gruppo Ferrovie dello Stato, dal 2015, ha messo a disposizione diverse strutture dismesse adibite a centri di prima accoglienza, tutte limitrofe alle stazioni: il primo è stato l'*hub* "Migranti" della Stazione Centrale





**3 – Il centro potrà accogliere fino a 150 persone per notte, in 50 camere, e disporrà di un presidio sanitario, ma ancora non è stato realizzato (aggiornamento febbraio 2020).**

**Tutto questo comporta, il continuo rimpallo di questi soggetti deboli da un capo all'altro della città per mangiare, per ricevere assistenza legale, per socializzare, per dormire.**

di Milano (1500 mq, in via Sammartini) gestito dalla Fondazione Progetto Arca, che è stato attivo dal 2015 al 2018 e successivamente trasformato in un presidio per persone senza fissa dimora. Questo modello sarà forse riproposto anche a Roma, dove Ferrovie dello Stato ha in programma di concedere al Comune, in comodato gratuito, un ex ferrotel di 1100 mq, posto di fronte alla stazione Tiburtina<sup>3</sup>. In accordo con queste politiche di sviluppo, si è scelto pertanto di focalizzare il progetto sulle aree ferroviarie: i “porti” di approdo alle grandi città sono stati infatti ritenuti luoghi vitali, capaci di assorbire l'impatto della multiculturalità, valorizzandone la presenza.

Facciamo a questo punto un breve riepilogo dello stato dell'arte: *in primis* il sistema normativo, come si è scritto, non ci aiuta a definire le qualità architettoniche di queste strutture; *in secundis* molti servizi primari cui si rivolgono questi nostri concittadini “irregolari” sono attualmente ubicati in differenti parti della città, spesso in luoghi periferici dove si incontrano maggiori difficoltà di integrazione sociale; in ultimo, molte delle strutture provvisionali in uso non sono in grado di svolgere più di una funzione alla volta. Tutto questo comporta, come si diceva, il continuo rimpallo di questi soggetti deboli da un capo all'altro della città per mangiare, per ricevere assistenza legale, per socializzare, per dormire ecc. Accanto a ciò si generano, attraverso una miriade di insediamenti informali, pratiche adattive di trasformazione urbana per nulla virtuose.

Tenuto conto di tali condizioni al contorno, il gruppo di ricerca ha valutato l'ipotesi di studiare in astratto un nuovo tipo edilizio, e cioè un contenitore polifunzionale, posto in prossimità delle grandi stazioni (italiane ed europee) nel quale accentrare le funzioni dedicate all'assistenza, mescolandole con quelle legate all'integrazione e quindi alla dotazione di quegli strumenti, materiali e immateriali, che favoriscano l'autonomia degli individui nel paese ospitante. Segnatamente, si sono sviluppate alcune proposte riguardanti il principale nodo su ferro della città di Roma, costituito dalla Stazione Termini e dall'antistante piazza dei Cinquecento.

Il caso di Roma Termini viene da noi assunto quale palinsesto fisico per sperimentare l'idea di un nuovo tipo di “edificio-mondo”, dalla forte valenza urbana, capace di ribaltare la percezione del fenomeno soprattutto dal punto di vista dei cittadini residenti, che



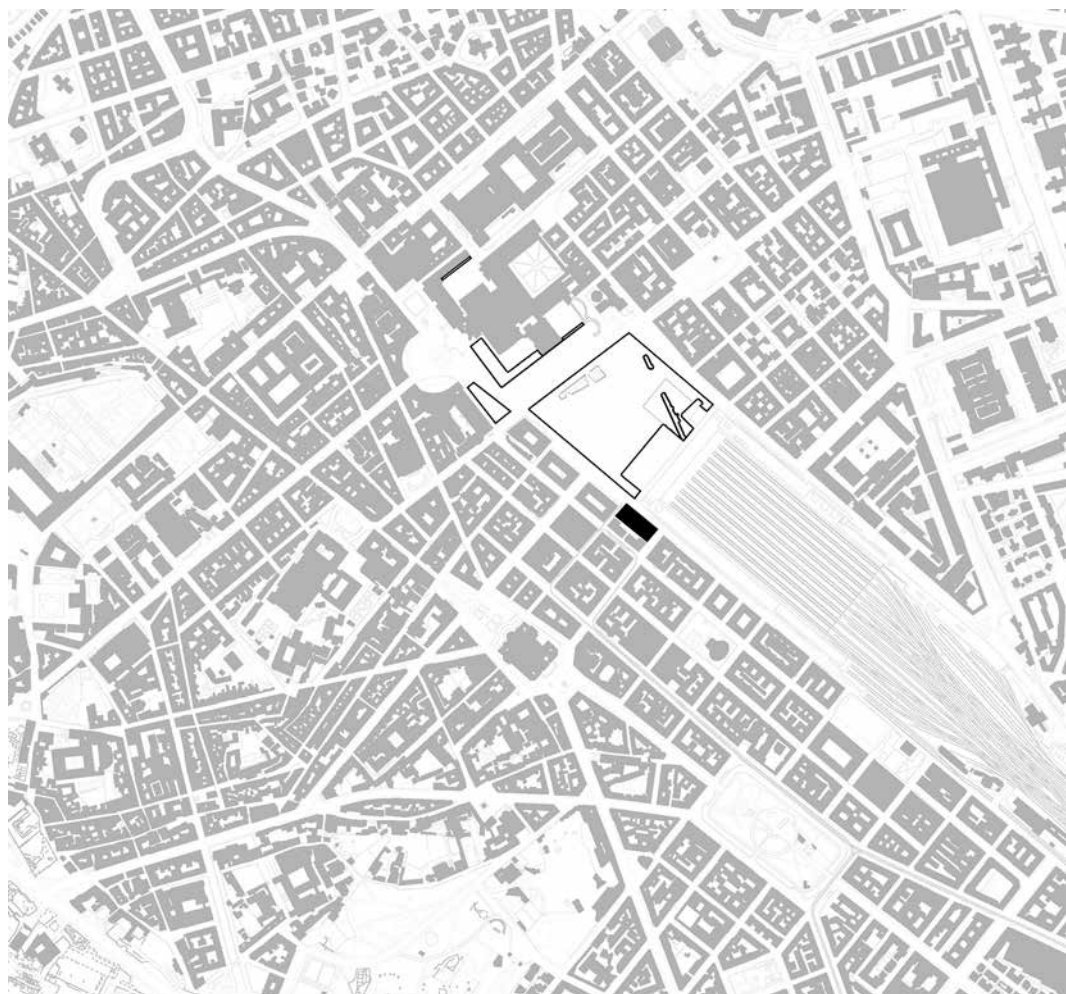
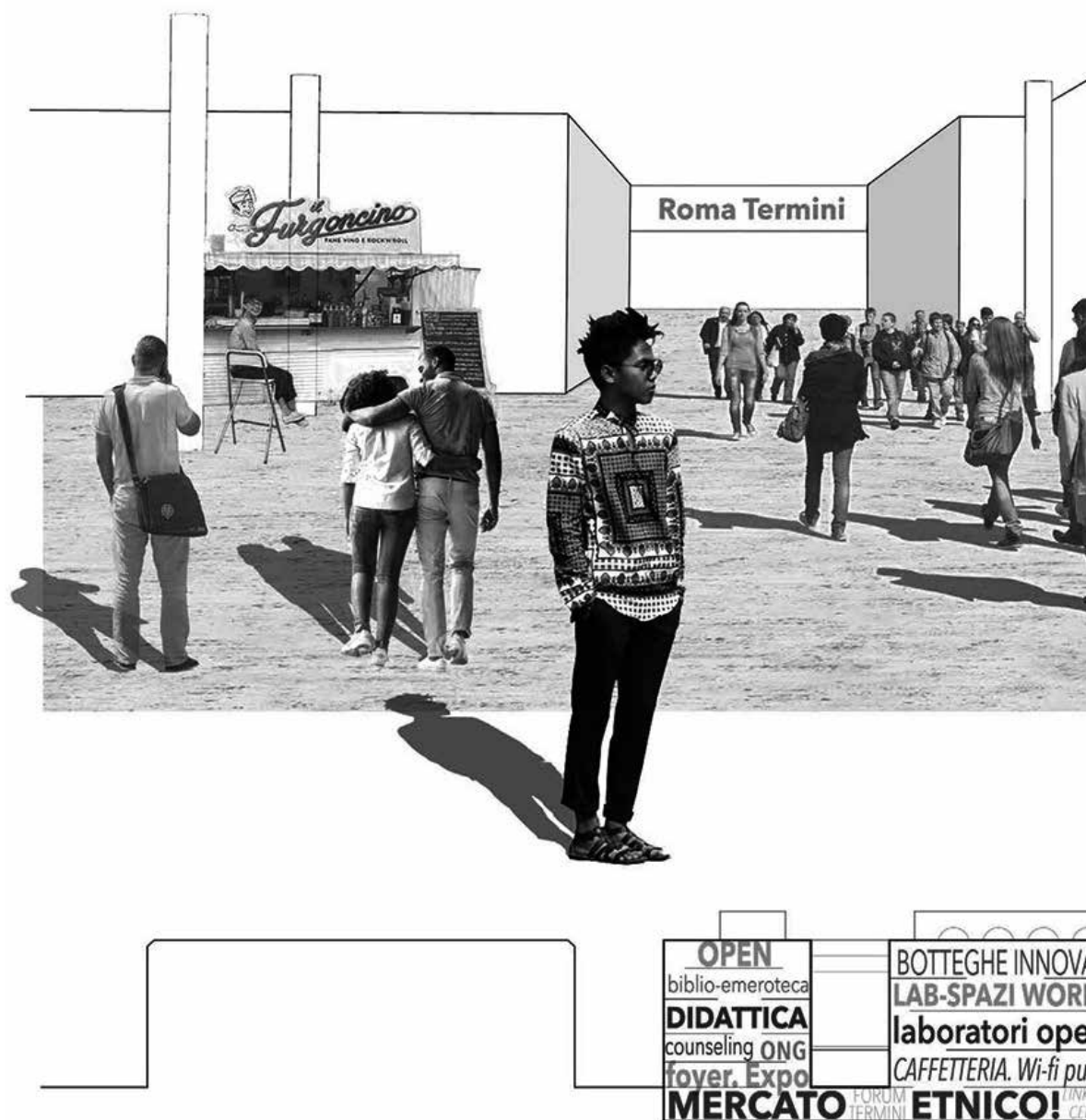


Fig. 3 - L'area della  
stazione Termini  
a Roma. In nero la  
localizzazione dell'in-  
tervento. Elaborato  
di F. Miele.

Fig. 4 - Studio delle funzioni per il tipo a corpi autonomi e ipotesi di connessione ipogea con il Forum Termini. Elaborato di S. Leoni.





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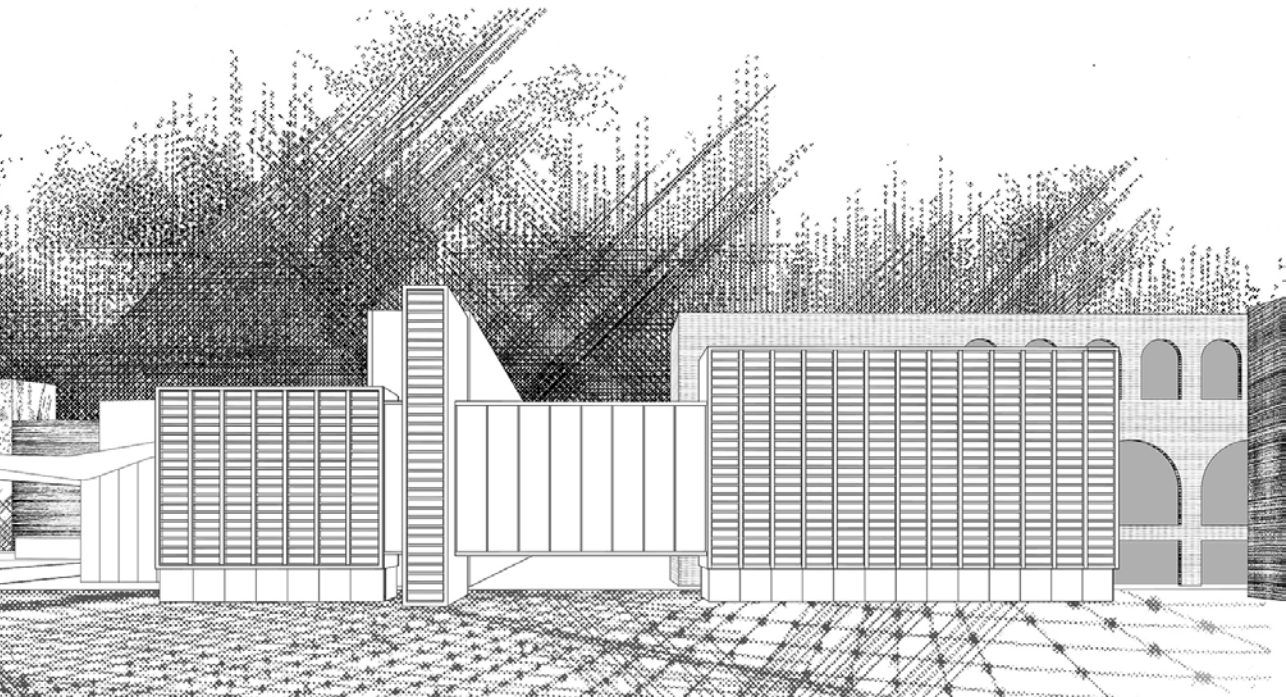


Fig. 5 – Studi sul tipo a ponte. La relazione urbana tra il grande fornice e la Galleria di Termini. Elaborato di F. Miele.

vengono direttamente coinvolti in qualità di potenziali utenti. La nostra ipotesi è dunque quella di accentrare in questi luoghi l'insieme delle funzioni di sussidio che sono oggi sparse nel corpo della città, per proporre un tipo urbano denso e stratificato, nel quale ai servizi per i migranti (assistenza medico-psicologica, assistenza legale, aule lingua, aule per corsi di apprendimento professionale ecc.), verrebbero associati una parte di servizi per i locali. Questo significa elaborare un tipo edilizio ibrido, all'interno del quale ci siano spazi privati in cui il migrante riceve ausilio, insieme a spazi pubblici in cui è il migrante a offrire un servizio culturale alla comunità che, in forma stabile o temporanea, lo accoglie: spazi espositivi, sale teatrali, spazi per lezioni di lingue, per corsi di cucina o di danza, ma anche *hub* per l'innovazione, laboratori orientati alla creazione di *start up* in accordo con le Università e gli enti di ricerca locali, e così via. In queste strutture le associazioni potrebbero infine operare, a rotazione, con programmi e attività che coinvolgano il migrante in prima persona nell'erogazione delle stesse funzioni ospitate nell'edificio, restituendo così a questi individui, quasi sempre nel cuore della loro età attiva - e di sovente anche ben istruiti - la sensazione di avere un ruolo produttivo nel tessuto sociale.

Fin qui, dal punto di vista architettonico, la questione potrebbe sembrare ridursi al tema dell'edificio poli-

funzionale, ma si tratta piuttosto di studiare un tipo specifico che pone problemi nuovi, quali per esempio la necessità di un doppio registro, tra funzioni molto “delicate” che richiedono un alto grado di privacy (per esempio l’assistenza psicologica) e altre invece aperte al pubblico, quali, per esempio, gli spazi espositivi. Questo genere di edificio, che a noi piace chiamare “Casa delle Culture” per mettere in primo piano il suo carattere plurale, funzionerebbe perciò da un lato da servizio assistenziale, dall’altro da “scambiatore sociale” nel quale attivare un dialogo bidirezionale tra soggetti stranieri (extracomunitari e non) e cittadini nativi. Meno *Cité de Refuge*, insomma, ma più *Cité du Monde*.

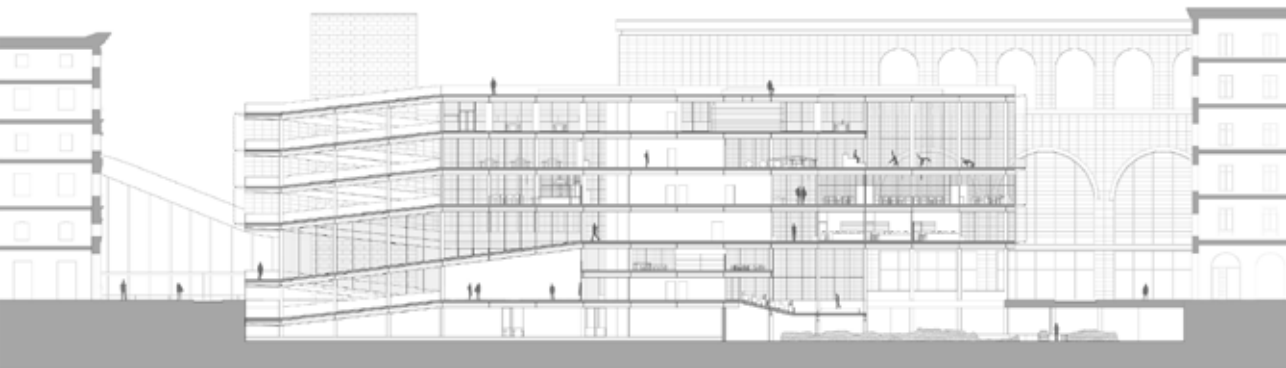
Con intento esplorativo, tale “condensatore sociale” è stato collocato a lato della stazione Termini, a completamento di un isolato parzialmente demolito negli anni Cinquanta, posto di fronte l’ala mazzoniana e prospiciente l’imbocco della grande galleria passante che collega via Giolitti con via Marsala.

La prossimità della stazione permette di realizzare il collegamento diretto dell’edificio, alla quota -4,00, con gli spazi del Forum Termini, consentendo di ubicare nell’interrato alcuni servizi come lavanderie e docce, che vanno considerati parte essenziale della dotazione di questo genere di servizio, poiché spesso i luoghi dove i migranti dormono sono sprovvisti delle strutture minime per ottemperare a una corretta igiene personale.

Negli schemi che sono allo studio, si stanno valutando tre possibili strategie di impianto: l’edificio unitario, organizzato per livelli funzionali, con le aree pubbliche poste alla quota stradale e con le funzioni assi-

Fig. 6 – Studi sul tipo a ponte. Ipotesi di corpo a rampa verso il fronte di Termini. Elaborato di F. Caparello.

Si tratta di studiare un tipo specifico che pone problemi nuovi, quali la necessità di un doppio registro, tra funzioni che richiedono un alto grado di privacy e altre invece aperte al pubblico, quali, per esempio, gli spazi espositivi.



Negli schemi che sono allo studio, si stanno valutando tre possibili strategie di impianto: l'edificio unitario, organizzato per livelli funzionali, il tipo per corpi indipendenti, infine il tipo dell'edificio-ponte.

stenziali e di supporto collocate in alto o nel basamento interrato; il tipo per corpi indipendenti, connessi solo alla quota interrata o per via di una piastra basamentale; infine il tipo dell'edificio-ponte, con due appoggi a terra distinti, sostanzialmente una variante del precedente, ma connesso in quota tramite un passaggio aereo.

Le ipotesi che qui pubblichiamo sono elaborazioni progettuali condotte dai dottorandi del Dipartimento di Architettura e Progetto che fanno parte dell'unità di ricerca. Queste sviluppano principalmente il paradigma dell'edificio a corpi separati; questo tipo di soluzione si rivela infatti ottimale nel peculiare contesto di Termini, poiché permette di specializzare le parti del complesso, consentendo a uno dei due corpi – quello orientato verso la piazza dei Cinquecento – di caratterizzarsi maggiormente per ospitare le funzioni di scambio attivo con la cittadinanza; inoltre, se sviluppato nella forma dell'edificio-ponte, questo tipo permette anche di definire un fornace urbano posto in diretta connessione con il fornace d'ingresso della galleria della stazione, lungo via Giolitti; infine, tale soluzione d'impianto risponde bene anche all'esigenza di gestione dei flussi, differenziabili attraverso l'innesto di ampie rampe che indirizzano ai servizi culturali, mentre verso via Manin sarebbero rivolti gli accessi riservati, dedicati alle funzioni assistenziali. La scelta di questo genere di soluzioni discende, però, anche da considerazioni del tutto specifiche, inerenti la morfologia del quartiere: qui, dato il tessuto a blocchi dell'Esquilino, gli impianti a doppio corpo ci sembrano assecondare una possibilità di collegamento trasversale verso sud, cioè verso piazza Santa Maria Maggiore, che altrimenti risulterebbe impedita. Non si esclude, tuttavia, che in altre realtà urbane il tipo del contenitore unico polifunzionale possa risultare altrettanto efficace.

*Conclusioni. Quale ruolo dell'architettura nell'Europa del nuovo millennio?*

In conclusione, ci permettiamo una digressione volta a ricollocare il tema finora trattato in una prospettiva più generale. Se infatti il Movimento Moderno aveva codificato una *koivn* su cui fondare un rinnovato linguaggio architettonico universale, gli anni Cinquanta e Sessanta, a seguito dell'affermazione di discipline

come la sociologia e l'antropologia (e conseguentemente alle riflessioni indotte dal grande tema della ricostruzione postbellica) hanno generato nuovi paradigmi del fare architettura. Paradigmi che hanno spostato l'accento dagli aspetti linguistici o puro-visibilistici agli aspetti fenomenologici e relazionali: gli spazi dell'abitare collettivo hanno così rappresentato il campo dove sperimentare l'avvento di nuove dimensioni politiche del progetto, che hanno riguardato tanto la ricerca sull'*housing* quanto gli studi sul tipo del grande condensatore sociale, che è quello cui si fa riferimento nelle proposte qui presentate di "edifici-mondo". Tali indagini sono state prioritarie fino a tutti gli anni Settanta del Novecento, fintanto che il postmoderno, nel quale siamo ancora pienamente immersi, non ha abbandonato l'impegno politico-sociale a favore della sperimentazione estetico-formale (o della celebrazione tecnologica): in termini generali, l'affermazione dei grandi ideali ha quindi ceduto il passo al disincanto, la condivisione all'individualismo, il futuro al quotidiano; mentre l'attenzione è ripiegata nell'esistenzialismo, avvolgendosi in una cornice più intima e soggettiva, meno pubblica e solidale.

D'altronde l'andamento sinusoidale della storia di ogni civiltà, che prevede l'avvicinarsi di fasi ascendenti e discendenti, non ha fatto eccezione per il Novecento, così come era accaduto nelle epoche passate. Ogni opera umana, da sempre, è stata espressione di questo altalenante dualismo. Se per esempio mettiamo a confronto il *Discobolo* di Mirone del V secolo a.C. con il *Pugilatore a riposo* di Apollonio di Atene del I secolo a.C., questo contrasto è già ben evidente. La prima scultura, di epoca classica, rappresenta la forza ideale del giovane atleta e l'azione è ritratta nel momento di massima tensione prima del lancio, in pieno contrasto con l'espressione del volto sereno e concentrato. Contrariamente all'atleta vincente, il pugilatore a riposo, di epoca ellenistica, è rappresentato durante una pausa del combattimento, con cicatrici e tagli sul viso, la bocca semiaperta quasi a far percepire il suono di un respiro affannato. A questa doppia faccia del sentire umano si riferisce José Maria Montaner, che così sintetizza tutte le contraddizioni del secolo breve:

Di fatto questa distanza [...] si può riassumere paragonando due immagini appartenenti paradossalmente allo stesso peri-

**L'affermazione dei grandi ideali ha ceduto il passo al disincanto, la condivisione all'individualismo, il futuro al quotidiano; mentre l'attenzione è ripiegata nell'esistenzialismo, avvolgendosi in una cornice più intima e soggettiva, meno pubblica e solidale.**



La difficile  
condizione che  
stiamo vivendo,  
potrà forse  
costituire la  
premessa per un  
cambio di rotta,  
come dimostrano le  
recenti disposizioni  
italiane in tema di  
regolarizzazione  
dei migranti nel  
lavoro dei campi.

odo [...]: l'uomo atletico perfetto e muscoloso alto 1 metro e 83, del maschilista *Modulor* di Le Corbusier ed i personaggi deformi e indigenti che appaiono sperduti sugli sfondi di sabbia e pietra dei primi quadri di Jean Dubuffet (Montaner, 1996).

Né l'uno né l'altro, da soli, basterebbero a designare l'esperienza umana, ma molto da imparare abbiamo da entrambi: dall'uno ereditiamo l'*homo faber* e dall'altro la fragilità dell'esistere *hic et nunc*; fragilità che ci riconduce al momento attuale, e alle conseguenze dell'epidemia globale che sta impattando sull'intero pianeta.

La difficile condizione che stiamo vivendo, che sta obbligando l'intera Europa allo sforzo di dimostrarsi qualcosa di più di un'unione solo monetaria, potrà forse costituire la premessa per un cambio di rotta, come dimostrano le recenti disposizioni italiane in tema di regolarizzazione dei migranti nel lavoro dei campi. Se dunque uno scenario virtuoso riuscirà a innescarsi nel prossimo futuro – come accade spesso a seguito delle crisi profonde – il tema dell'accoglienza tornerà ai primi punti dell'agenda europea non più come minaccia ma come opportunità. All'architetto spetterà allora il compito di progettare l'integrazione, nella cornice di città multiculturali nelle quali le persone dovranno avere il diritto di essere distinte, ma anche il diritto di essere indifferenti all'essere distinte dagli altri.

Se dunque riconosciamo alle città europee il compito di favorire tali processi, è necessario ripristinare la dimensione collettiva e politica di una disciplina, quella dell'architetto, che è anche disciplina sociale poiché prima di tutto osserva i fenomeni, e in seguito propone gli spazi del vivere umano, individuale e collettivo; abbracciando, da un lato, l'impegno civico, il ruolo innovativo, l'operoso sguardo verso il futuro del Movimento Moderno (sguardo che ci ha concesso di progettare – e credere – nella costruzione di un futuro migliore), ma tenendo a mente, d'altro lato, ciò che l'uomo di Dubuffet e le cicatrici del *Pugilatore* ci rammentano: la vulnerabilità del singolo individuo umano.

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***Atlantropa •***

***Desertec •***

***energy***

***infrastructure***

***• eco-***

***modernism***

***• Herman***

***Sörgel***

# Neo-colonial Continuities in the Mediterranean Infrastructure Projects of Atlantropa and Desertec

Alexander Stumm

## *Abstract*

Herman Sörgel's gigantic project "Atlantropa" is a prominent European project in terms of infrastructure and territory in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is an example of a modernity that is necessarily believing in progress through technology – as will be shown the first section of this essay, but it is also profitable in that it historically locates Europe's current energy policy infrastructure projects in Africa, to which the second section of the essay is dedicated. The vision pursued under the name Destertec envisages the large-scale implementation of renewable energy power plants, especially solar thermal power plants in Northern Africa. Both projects share an unshakeable belief in ecomodernist ideas, meaning the solution of socio-economic and ecological challenges through technology (Gall, 2014). Furthermore, argumentation patterns of the 1920s based in colonial ideology of a Pan-Europa or Eurafrica still serve to advertise development programs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The historical perspective with an overview about "Atlantropa" thus serves as a mean to question justifications of recent European energy projects in Northern Africa.

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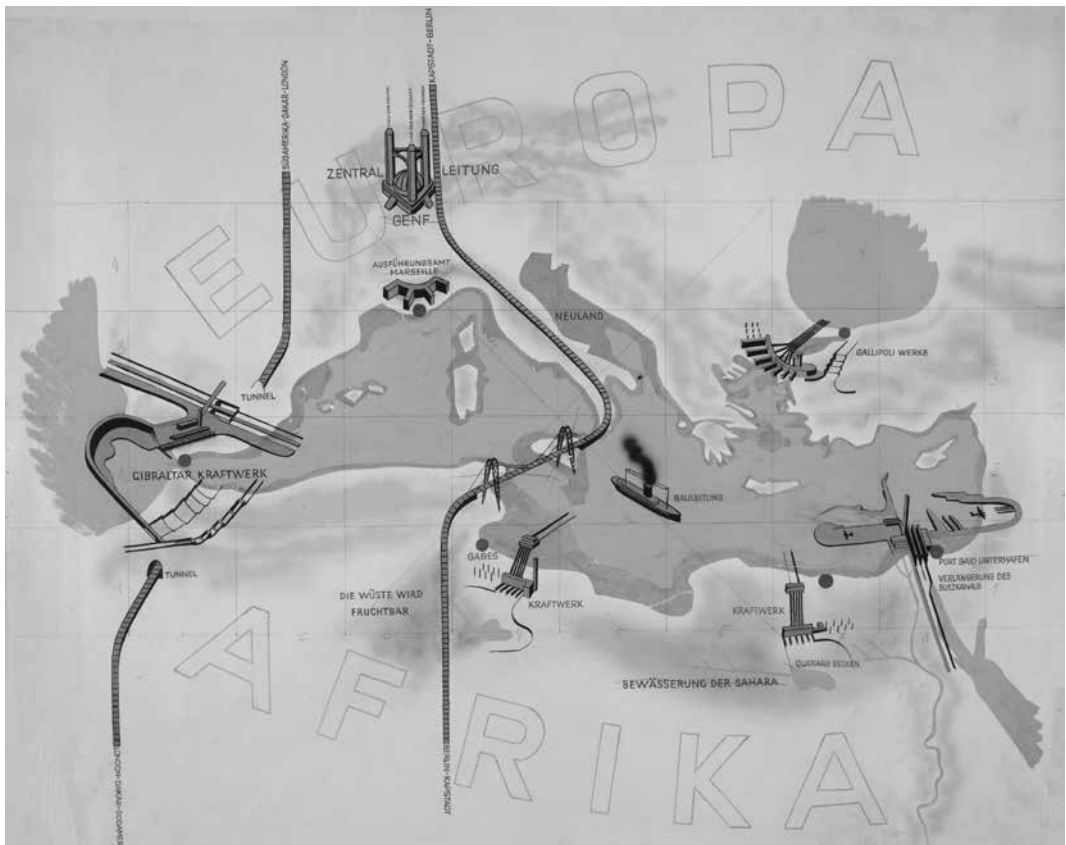
**1 - The original name Panropa (1929-32) was borrowed from the Paneuropa-Union founded by Richard Coudenhove-Kalergi in 1923. It aimed at the political unification of Europe after the First World War. For the colonial impetus of the Pan-europa-Union (Cupers, 2020: 24-32).**

### *Herman Sörgel's Atlantropa*

“Atlantropa” took shape from 1928 – first under the name “Panropa” (Cupers, 2020)<sup>1</sup> – and developed continuously in the 1930s, though it lasted until Sörgel’s death in 1952. The basic idea from the beginning was the lowering of the Mediterranean Sea by two enormous dams in the Strait of Gibraltar as well as the Dardanelles. By 1931 Sörgel revised the plan towards two separate subsidence areas of 100 and 200 metres respectively, which were to be separated by a third barrier between Tunisia and Italy. In 1932, he presented the project in an exhibition.

The vision of Atlantropa pursued two concrete main goals. The first was to gain new territory. Studies of marine geography allowed calculations that a total of 576,000 square kilometres of new land would emerge from the Mediterranean. In addition to the power plants, several gigantic infrastructure projects such as bridges, tunnels, railway lines (Cape Town-Berlin

Fig. 1 - The project of Atlantropa.  
Source: Deutsches Museum, München, Archiv CD 78659.

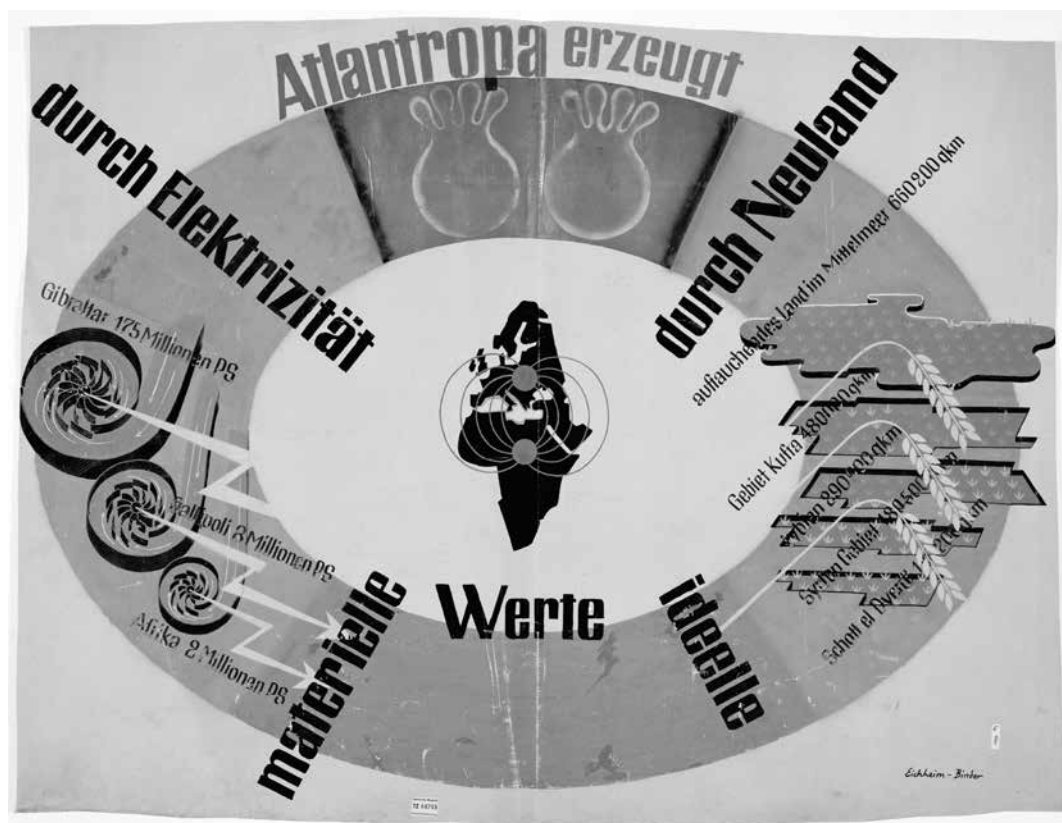


and South America-Dhaka-London) and ports were to be built. In addition, entire new cities and modern extensions of historic cities were planned. However, the final expansion of all facilities in the western Mediterranean was only possible after a 100-meter drop in sea level. As the lowering could only occur slowly through natural evaporation, the desired level of Sörgel's schedule would only be achieved after 120 years after the construction of the barrier near Gibraltar. It would even take 250 years to reach the final stage planned east of Tunis.

The belief that the growing peoples of Europe needed new land in the first place is ideologically based on the 'Lebensraum' concept, which emerged around 1900 and was later taken up by the National Socialists (but then as 'Lebensraum im Osten' with a different geographical orientation). More generally, Sörgel's efforts to gain land can also be placed in the imperialist thinking of the Eu-

Fig. 2 - Atlantropa exhibition poster  
Source: Deutsches Museum, München, Archiv BN 22039.

Studies of marine geography allowed calculations that a total of 576,000 square kilometres of new land would emerge from the Mediterranean.



2 - Translated from the original: "Was ist Atlantropa? – Mittelmeersenkung. Afrikakultivierung. Großkraftnetz".

The argumentation of the 'cultivation of Africa', which can certainly be understood in a broader sense, and the development of 'backward' population groups is a topos running through the centuries for the justification of colonial aspirations worldwide.

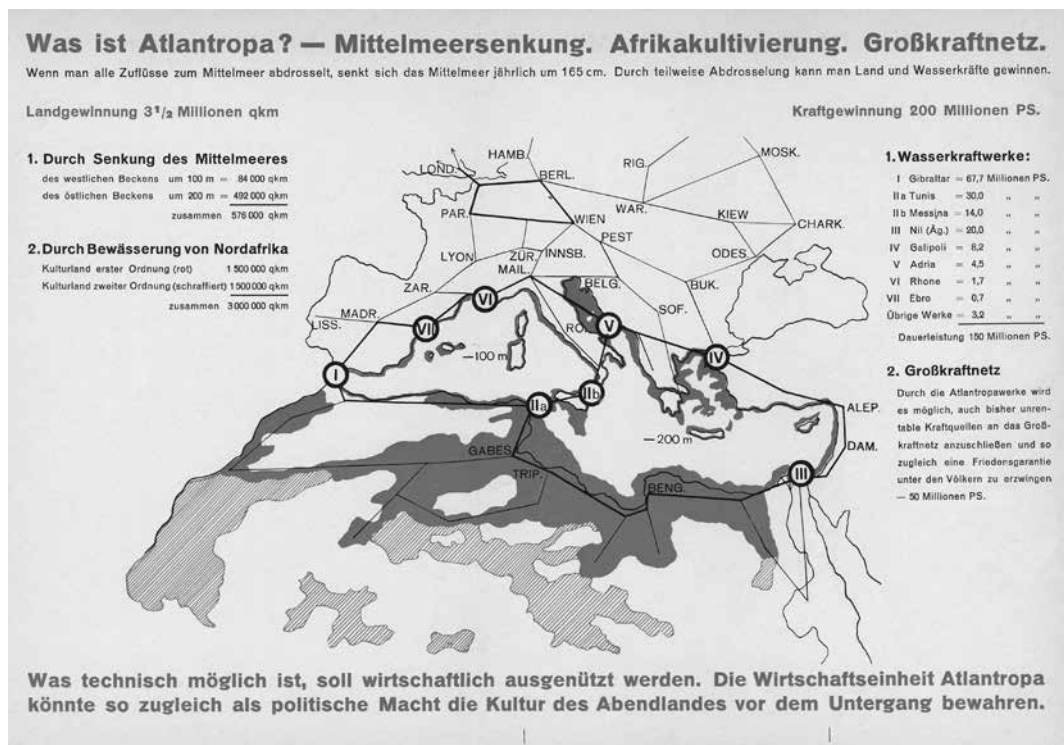
ropean powers. For the lowering of the sea level would also have reduced the distance between the continents of Europe and Africa to such an extent that a new 'supercontinent' – "Atlantropa" – would have emerged. Atlantropa was conceived by Sörgel as a geopolitical centre of power that could only successfully hold its own against the two emerging continents of America and Asia in a united effort. Thanks to the energy reserves, Atlantropa would be as good as certain of becoming the dominant world power, following Sörgel's argument in his publication *Die drei großen "A". Großdeutschland und italienisches Imperium, die Pfeiler Atlantropas. [Amerika, Atlantropa, Asien]* from 1938.

The second goal was the generation of electricity with a variety of energy infrastructure projects. They consisted of the largest, 35-kilometer-long hydroelectric power plant in the Strait of Gibraltar, the power station in Tunis, the Gallipoli plants at the entrance to the Black Sea, the Nile and the other hydroelectric power stations in Tunisia and Egypt. The latter would also fill large reservoirs and would thus also have the function of "irrigating the Sahara". Sörgel illustrated this idea 1931 in the poster "What is Atlantropa? Lowering the Mediterranean - Cultivation of Africa - Large power grid".<sup>2</sup>

Sörgel estimates that irrigation of North Africa would create 1.5 million square kilometres of "first-order cultivated land" and the same amount of "second-order cultivated land" (Fig. 3).

The argumentation of the 'cultivation of Africa', which can certainly be understood in a broader sense, and the development of 'backward' population groups is a topos running through the centuries for the justification of colonial aspirations worldwide. This may be traced back to the Valladolid Debate (1550-1551) between the Spanish Dominican and historian Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda and Bartolomé de las Casas, also a Spanish Dominican and the first archbishop of Chiapas. The former argued that the indigenous population in the colonised territories were barbarians and that their enslavement was justified. To justify this argument, he relied mainly on the paradigms of Aristotelian natural law thinking. Las Casas, on the other hand, described the indigenous population as rational – although he also called them barbarians. He considered it indispensable and a question of





ethics to bring them the Word of God. No clear winner emerged from the dispute, but the exploitation of the indigenous population and their exclusion from the category of ‘human beings’ was to have far-reaching consequences for Western thinking.

For instance, for the thinking of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. He begins his *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* with the ‘Oriental World’ and justifies this as follows:

China and India lie, as it were, still outside the World’s History, as the mere presupposition of elements whose combination must be waited for to constitute their vital progress. The unity of substantiality and subjective freedom so entirely excludes the distinction and contrast of the two elements, that by this very fact, substance cannot arrive at reflection on itself – at subjectivity. [...] We cannot go further into the minutiae of their annals, which, as they themselves exhibit no development, would only hinder us in ours (Hegel, 2001: 1822-1830).

This thinking is prevalent also in the texts by Karl Marx. In his article for the New York Daily Tribune

Fig. 3 - Was ist Atlantropa.

Source: Deutsches Museum, München, Archiv CD 70055.

The intervention of Western projects in ‘backward’ or ‘developing’ countries for means of ‘civilizing’, ‘cultivation’ or ‘development’ is always deeply intertwined with – unequal – power relations.

(1853), Marx notes the brutality with which British ‘civilization’ is introduced into India. Nonetheless he writes:

Sickening as it must be to human feelings to witness [...] we must not forget that these idyllic village communities [...] had always been the solid foundation of Oriental despotism, that they restrained the human mind, within the smallest possible compass, making it the unresisting tool of superstition, enslaving it beneath the traditional rules depriving it of all grandeur and historical energies. [...] England has to fulfil a double mission in India – he wrote – one destructive, the other regenerating – the annihilation of old Asiatic Society, and the laying of the material foundations of Western society in Asia.

It was Edward Said’s ground-breaking *Orientalism* from 1978 which deconstructs the discursive hegemony of Western thinking over the non-Western ‘other’. Neeladri Bhattacharya in his recently published *The Great Agrarian Conquest* shows, again in the context of the British colonization of India, how this cultural hegemony is also fundamentally related to territorial power (Bhattacharya, 2019). To sum it up: the intervention of Western projects in ‘backward’ or ‘developing’ countries for means of ‘civilizing’, ‘cultivation’ or ‘development’ is always deeply intertwined with – unequal – power relations. This argumentation has its roots are grounded in colonial patterns of thinking. Coming back to Sörgel’s project, the power grid would also have the function of “forcing a guarantee of peace among the peoples”. For the author, the explicit emphasis on the consolidation of the European power base is not contradictory to a peaceful coexistence of the European and African peoples: “What is technically possible should be exploited economically. The economic unit Atlantropa could thus at the same time, as a political power, save the culture of the Occident from destruction”. For Sörgel, the creation of large power plants lead to the creation of new cultivated land. Sörgel was able to win over a long list of renowned architects for cooperation. Hans Poelzig, Fritz Höger, Hans Döllgast and Lois Welzenbacher provided sketches and drawings for individual buildings, power plants and entire cities. The architecture teachers Peter Behrens and Emil Fahrenkamp drew designs themselves and awarded selected Atlantropa projects

to their students in Vienna and Düsseldorf. Erich Mendelsohn also participated with some enthusiasm, as did Cornelis van Eesterem; Mies van der Rohe showed interest, but ultimately did not deliver any material. Last but not least, a whole series of lesser-known architects made remarkable designs. In this respect, Atlantropa could be seen as an ‘open source’ project *avant la lettre*, a major joint project by leading architects of the time, which was certainly given a chance to be realised. Obviously problematic is that although architects from Germany and the Netherlands were involved, not a single representative of a European Mediterranean state, let alone one from Africa. In this regards Atlantropa clearly follows the well-trodden paths of the colonial way of implementing European ideas in colonised territories.

The project, which focused on Europe and North Africa, was completed in 1932, but in the following years Sörgel worked on an extension of the plan, which was eventually to encompass the whole of Africa. Together with his engineering consultant Bruno Siegwart, he visited the Oceanographic Museum of Monaco in 1934, where they were able to evaluate contour maps of the African continent. The two finally presented the expanded project, which by far outshone the previous plans of Atlantropa, in 1935 in the German architecture magazine *Baumeister*. They were particularly taken with the geographical formation of the Congo Basin, a plain almost completely surrounded by peripheral mountains 500 meters above sea level. A dam north of the capital Léopoldville (today: Kinshasa) was to create a huge freshwater reservoir with a surface area of 900,000 square kilometres, which would have flooded half of the country. Further north, in a second period, an equally large “Chad Sea”, fed by a branch canal from the future “Lake Congo”, should have been created, through which Sörgel wanted to influence the climate of the entire continent and supply the dry Sahel zone with rain. A third lake was planned in the area of the present states of Zambia and Zimbabwe, fed by the water of the Zambezi River which was to be dammed (Voigt, 1998). “The centuries have kept us and our technology Africa like a filled, untouched savings bank” (Sörgel, Siegwart, 1935: 37-39).<sup>3</sup> It goes without saying that these large-scale planning projects by Sörgel on the African continent were also carried

Further north, in a second period, an equally large ‘Chad Sea’, fed by a branch canal from the future ‘Lake Congo’, should have been created, through which Sörgel wanted to influence the climate of the entire continent and supply the dry Sahel zone with rain.

In the light of a colonial discourse, we clearly have to put in doubt Sörgel's humanitarian approach. His idea of a pan-European peace is embedded in a conceptual structure that oscillates between a longing for the Wilhelmine colonial heritage, the belief in the superiority of the white race and the Lebensraum-ideology taken up by the National Socialists.

out with complete disregard for cultural, social and ecological contexts. They use the topos of 'cultivation' for the exploitation of land and resources. In this sense, again, the technological implementations have to be understood as a means of colonization.

The almost infinite belief in the possibilities of the blessed technique are paired with a longing for meaningful sacrifices: "Atlantropa [...] is a fighting project, not a project of rest and stagnation, but a project of dynamics and development, of sacrifice and fighting spirit, of comradeship and cooperation, of production and creativity, of progress and movement (Geschichte, 1948: 3)". The Vision Atlantropa died in 1952 together with its creator Herman Sörgel.

Wolfgang Voigt's conclusion on Sörgel's project is ambivalent:

With cross-references to pacifism and the Pan-European movement, land reform, the philosophy of Oswald Spengler, cultural Americanism, Zionism and secular regimes from the 'Third Reich' to the UNO, Atlantropa proves to be a dazzling conglomeration of political strategies and trends (Voigt, 1998:6).<sup>4</sup> Dirk van Laak states: "Sörgel and his plan embodied in its purest form the confidence with which technical understanding not only claimed primacy over economics and politics, but also set about a global reorganisation, hoping to reconcile all international competition in the sense of a project for humanity (Laak, 2014: 246f).

In the light of a colonial discourse, we clearly have to put in doubt Sörgel's humanitarian approach. His idea of a pan-European peace is embedded in a conceptual structure that oscillates between a longing for the Wilhelmine colonial heritage, the belief in the superiority of the white race and the Lebensraum-ideology taken up by the National Socialists.

#### *Desertec and the consequences*

In July 2008, the then French President Nicolas Sarkozy founded the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) at the first Mediterranean Summit in Paris. The inter-governmental organisation is made up of 43 countries, including all 27 Member States of the European Union and 15 Mediterranean partners. As an extension of the Barcelona Process of 1995, the UfM was intended to act for the (security) political consolidation

and economic development of the countries bordering the Mediterranean and the countries of the EU. Decisive parts of the project were, on the one hand, the development of infrastructure, i.e. the expansion of shipping routes by means of modernised port facilities and the motorway and rail network, in particular the Trans-Magreb for stronger links between the countries of Morocco, Algeria and Tunisia. Secondly, a solar energy plan should implement alternative energy sources in the North African partner countries, which should produce electricity for export to the Mediterranean region and thus also guarantee Europe's energy security. Even then, there was criticism – not least from the then Libyan head of state Muammar al-Gaddafi – that Sarkozy had not consulted with the North African states in advance and with the UfM was seeking to divide already existing systems such as the African Union and the Arab League.

After a stormy, highly symbolic initial phase, things soon calmed down around the UfM and the consequences of the Arabellion of 2011 put the vision of a united Mediterranean region in the distant future. Despite the UfM's political failure, a number of projects based on economic cooperation emerged. In our context, the Desertec Foundation envisioned by German Gerhard Knies will be the focus. Its vision was the generation of green electricity using solar thermal power plants in the deserts of North Africa, which is transported to Europe via high-voltage direct current transmission. Desertec euphorically announced at its presentation:

The DESERTEC Concept shows a way to ensure climate protection, energy security and development by using the world's most energy-rich locations to produce sustainable electricity from renewable energies. [...] There is energy in abundance and we have the technologies to use it.<sup>5</sup>

Deserts rich in sunshine play a crucial role in the Desertec concept, because here, according to the Desertec self-representation, “in 6 hours more energy would be received from the sun than humanity consumes in a year”. The solar thermal power plants would be supplemented by other renewable energy sources such as wind power and photovoltaics.

The map published by Desertec in 2011 shows a network of renewable energy power plants covering

5 - <https://web.archive.org/web/20121019173335/http://www.desertec.org/de/konzept/> (24.06.20)  
(translation by the author).

6 - <https://web.archive.org/web/20121102062018/http://www.desertec.org/de/konzept/vorteile/> (24.06.20) (translation by the author).

7 - <https://web.archive.org/web/20121116045041/http://www.dii-eumena.com/de/desert-power-2050.html> (24.06.20).

The Sahara is described as a vast empty land, sparsely populated; constituting a golden opportunity to provide Europe with electricity so it can continue its extravagant consumerist lifestyle and profligate energy consumption.

Europe and North Africa, with the Sahel and West Asia to be integrated at a later stage. At first glance, it is astonishingly similar to Herman Sörgel's 1931 map. Like Sörgel, Desertec also stresses the developmental advantages of such a project for the North African region:

The generation of clean electricity offers the opportunity to create a basis for sustainable economic development: In the siting regions, not only jobs are created in the construction and operation of the power plants, but also opportunities for local companies to take over parts or even the entire value chain.<sup>6</sup>

The rhetorical consonance of Sörgel's "Afrikakultivierung. Großkraftnetz" has lost little of its radiance and persuasive power in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The continuity of colonial action is also obvious to the Algerian scientist and activist Hamza Hamouchene. He states:

This is a genuine concern given the language used in different articles and publications describing the potential of the Sahara in powering the whole world. The Sahara is described as a vast empty land, sparsely populated; constituting a golden opportunity to provide Europe with electricity so it can continue its extravagant consumerist lifestyle and profligate energy consumption. This is the same language used by colonial powers to justify their *civilizing mission* and, as an African myself, I cannot help but be very suspicious of such megaprojects and their 'well-intentioned' motives that are often sugar-coating brutal exploitation and sheer robbery (Hamouchene: 2015).

In 2009, the Desertec Foundation, together with companies from the industrial and financial sectors, founded Dii GmbH (Desertec Industrial Initiative) based in Munich. Its primary objective was to examine the economic viability and profitability of the Desertec vision in the EUMENA region (Europe, Middle East, North Africa). In June 2012, Dii published a study entitled "Desert Power 2050", in which Fraunhofer ISI examined further scenarios.<sup>7</sup> The Dii shrank from 17 to only three partners by the end of 2014, namely the German RWE, Saudi Acwa Power and China State Grid – the story of yet another major vision was thus buried by the media. Nevertheless, a number of solar power plants have been built under its aegis in recent years in Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria, which are worth a closer look.



Desertec praises the ‘Green Energy’ projects as important stepstones of an ecologically sustainable future. The reality on site is different, because the solar thermal power plants do not only work with photovoltaics but, as the name suggests, also with thermal energy. The advantage is that “desert electricity from solar thermal power plants [...] is available day and night thanks to heat storage and is therefore an ideal supplement for power grids with fluctuating renewable energy sources”.<sup>8</sup> The disadvantage is that the panels require an estimated amount of 2.5 to 3 million cubic meters of water to be cooled in the heat of the day.<sup>9</sup> Hamouchene illustrates the problems this creates for the local population living in water-scarce regions by using the example of the Ouarzazate solar power plant in central Morocco. Particularly during droughts, the supply of water for irrigating the fields and for drinking becomes a massive problem (Hamouchene, 2015). The MENA (Middle East, North Africa) region is already one of the regions most affected by climate change, which has a particular impact on the water supply – even though the global carbon emissions are generated there are rather marginal.

The Desertec Foundation has published a set of criteria to ensure that large-scale solar projects in desert regions are implemented in an environmentally and socially responsible manner. However, Hamouchene, who critically accompanied the development of solar power plants in North Africa, views the situation quite disillusioned, because “in the absence of democratic control, transparency and citizen participation in decision making in the MENA region, those criteria will remain ink on paper (Hamouchene, 2015)”.

The same problematics apply to Tunisia, which wants to increase its share of renewable energies in electricity generation from 4 percent today to 30 percent by 2030. Mansour Cherni from the Tunisian trade union federation Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail (UGTT) asked Desertec unpleasant, unanswered questions at the World Social Forum 2013 in Tunis: “Where will the energy produced here be used? Where will the water come from that will cool the solar power plants? And what do the locals get from it all? (Hamouchene, 2015)”.

With the last question, Cherni addresses a further problem, namely the extent to which knowledge, expertise

8 – <https://web.archive.org/web/20121102062018/http://www.desertec.org/de/konzept/vorteile/> (24.06.20) (translation by the author).

9 – [https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Environmental-and-Social-Assessments/Morocco\\_-\\_Ouarzazate\\_Solar\\_Power\\_Station\\_Project\\_II\\_-\\_ESIA\\_Summary.pdf](https://www.afdb.org/fileadmin/uploads/afdb/Documents/Environmental-and-Social-Assessments/Morocco_-_Ouarzazate_Solar_Power_Station_Project_II_-_ESIA_Summary.pdf) (24.06.20).



Decisions are made in Europe. Local people are neither heard, nor are their needs considered. The production of so-called green energy leaves unmentioned the environmental damage it causes in the region.

and the design and manufacturing processes of the technologies are actually transferred to North Africa. This is more than unlikely, given the usual technology policies of transnational corporations and the protection of intellectual property. In fact, the solar thermal collectors were all manufactured in Germany, and the patents for the glass tube receivers are held by German companies.

Without fair access to such technologies, MENA countries will remain dependent on the West and transnationals for future renewable development. [...] Whether fossil fuelled or renewable, energy schemes that don't benefit the people where the energy is extracted, that serve to prop up authoritarian and repressive regimes or only enrich a tiny minority of voracious elites and transnationals are scandalous and must be resisted (Hamouchene, 2015).

In November 2020, the "Desertec" project is being revived again under new prefixes. Instead of electricity, hydrogen is now to be produced on a large scale in North Africa and shipped to Europe via natural gas pipelines. However, electrolysis, as the production process is called (i.e. the splitting of water into hydrogen and oxygen), requires a lot of water. For every kilogram of hydrogen, 10 kilograms of water have to be fed into the grid. But as already mentioned, water is a rare commodity in the MENA region. The water is to come from desalination plants – also powered by wind and solar energy (Matthes; Aruffo; Retby-Pradeau, 2020). Critics, however, complain that the high costs would make production unprofitable. Herman Sörgel's historical transportation and energy infrastructure projects cast a glaring light on current projects in North Africa. The strategies used today must therefore be firmly placed in a colonial context: the exploitation of resources and the creation of energy is justified with cultivation and development. Decisions are made in Europe. Local people are neither heard, nor are their needs considered. The production of so-called green energy leaves unmentioned the environmental damage it causes in the region. Kenny Cupers therefore argues:

Infrastructure measures are thus key to understanding the different futures in the process of African decolonisation and the continued influence of Europe in this process. [...] As

in the colonial past, the infrastructure connecting Africa to Europe continues to support the transport of goods primarily for the benefit of Europeans (Cupers 2020: 29).

The neo-colonial continuities of Eurafrican or Pan-European projects like “Atlantropa” and current strategies are also highlighted by Peo Hansen and Stefan Jonsson: “Today, even as the Eurafrican project is largely forgotten, the content of current EU policy making towards its African ‘partner’ demonstrates that its influence persists under the surface. The only way to comprehend the deep structures of current EU-African relations is to bring this history to life again, or at least bring it into the history books” (Hansen, Jonsson, 2018).

While the unchecked flow of energy to Europe is a crucial component of the idea, this cannot be said for the migration of people. On the contrary, it goes hand in hand with an increasing sealing off of Europe’s external borders against refugees from Africa and Western Asia. This undermines the continuous assertion of humanitarian aid for the affected states. The primary reason for European infrastructure projects like “Desertec” is a different one: they are intended to provide access to cheap natural resources from the global South and channel them to the rich industrialised North, while maintaining the tradition of unequal (neo-)colonial power relations.

The primary reason for European infrastructure projects like “Desertec” is a different one: They are intended to provide access to cheap natural resources from the global South and channel them to the rich industrialised North, while maintaining the tradition of unequal (neo-)colonial power relations.

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*migra-  
tion •*

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*nature*

*• living*

# La riscrittura di un territorio.

## Le pratiche turistiche e la costruzione di un paesaggio abitato su un supporto naturale

Silvana De Bari (1), Valerio Di Festa (2)  
Stefania Iraci Sareri (3)

*Abstract / The Rewriting of a Territory. Tourist Practices and the Construction of a Domestic Model for an Inhabited Landscape.*

Temporary mobility phenomena are changing the consistency of European geographies and are among the processes that rewrite our territory. Hence a reflection that tries, through a design vision, to investigate the role of nature: can it be considered as a rigid and complex support for those non-permanent housing practices that more than others rewrite and change the territory?

Are infrastructures only elements of a pseudo-sacral hierarchy or can they still be reinterpreted as tools for rewriting inhabited landscapes?

This rough and heterogeneous landscape becomes, within this conceptual frame, the support of all practices related to the sphere of living.

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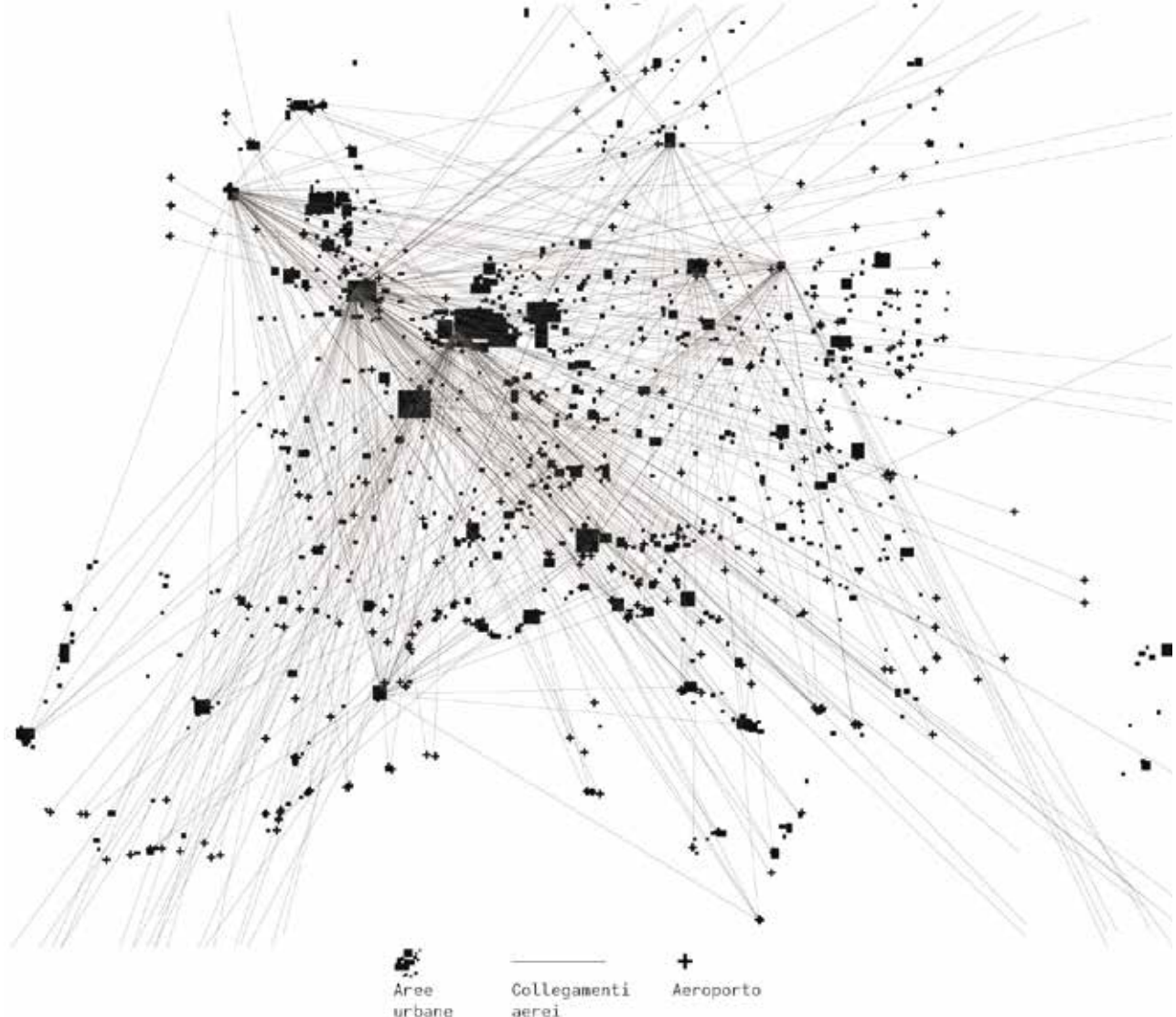
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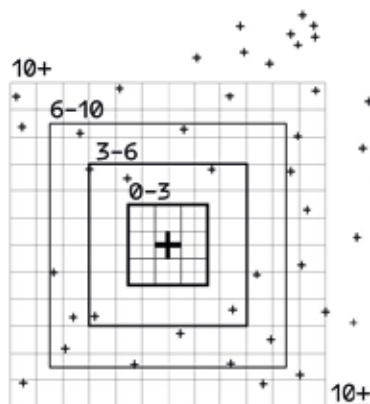


**Fig. 1 - Low-cost Europe** Le infrastrutture – fisiche e digitali – che supportano le pratiche turistiche hanno modificato il concetto di distanza: bus station e aeroporti in prossimità di grossi centri urbani incanalano flussi migratori che circolano con biglietti low-cost. Queste connessioni definiscono nuove polarità e diverse prossimità geografiche in termini di distanza spaziale e temporale.

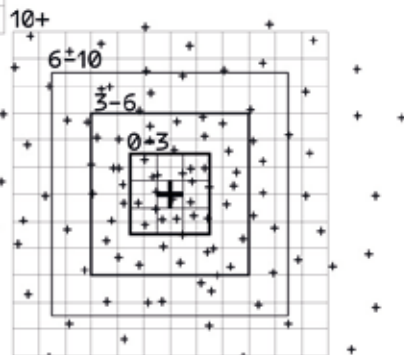
### *Bordi, confini e migrazioni*

Se fosse possibile leggere in chiave positivista la moderna separazione tra i mondi naturali e quelli creati dall'uomo, il nostro mondo fatto da geografie rizomatiche, da reti ibride e da assemblaggi annidati potrebbe essere chiamato, come è stato suggerito da Neri Oxman (2016), "età dell'Entanglement". La metafora quantistica dell'*Entanglement* è emblematica per descrivere le nuove geografie urbane e non-urbane che investono il territorio europeo. Uno spazio geografico sovrascritto dove tutti i confini sembrano sciogliersi e non esiste più corrispondenza polare tra ordine e disordine; dove l'attività umana diventa agente atmosferico e i paesaggi si trasformano in infrastruttura. L'Europa diventa il crocevia di reti globalizzate, hotspot di flussi di persone, capitali, dati e merci. Le migrazioni contemporanee di popolazioni non stanziali, di cui il turismo rappresenta l'espressione più deflagrante, riplasmano i territori, definiscono possibili ordini e confini, riscrivono nuove geografie.





**LONDRA**



**BRUXELLES**

Città e luoghi  
di interesse

10+  
— 6-10  
— 3-6  
— 0-3

Ore di  
percorrenza  
in autobus

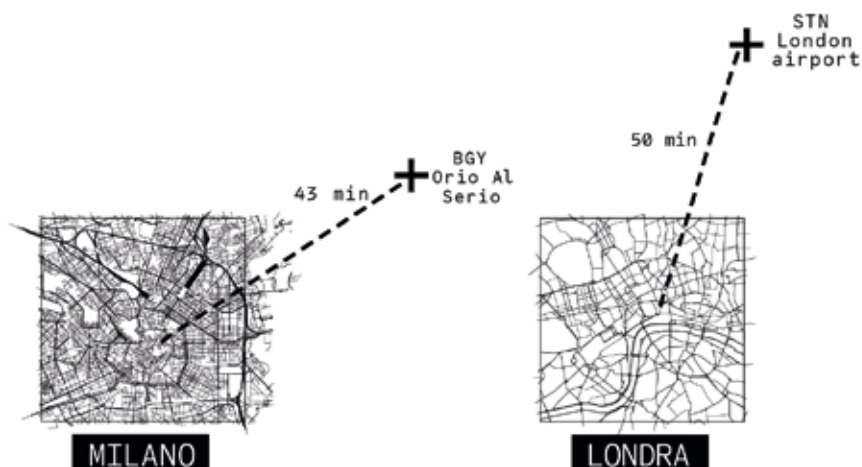


Aeroporto

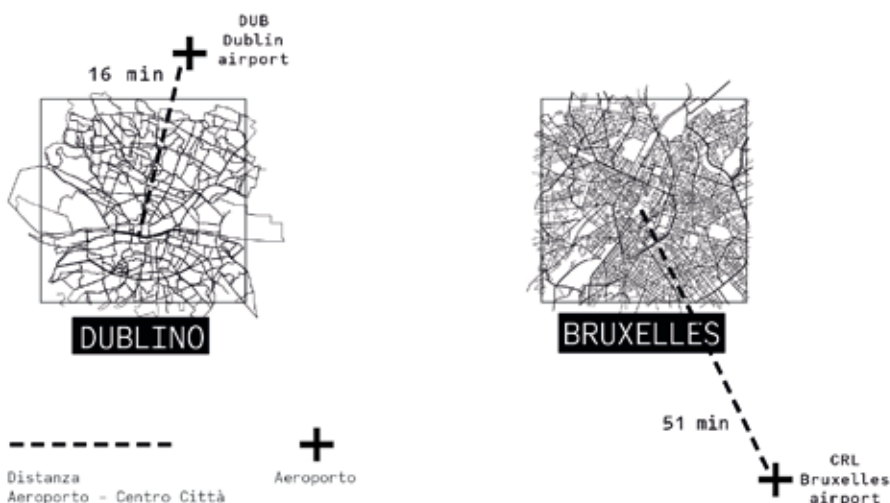


**MILANO**

**Fig. 2a - Il nuovo**  
concetto di distanza.  
I diagrammi analizza-  
no il nuovo concetto  
di distanza rispetto  
alle variabili di tempo  
e movimento. I nuovi  
sistemi di infrastrut-  
ture fisiche hanno  
cambiato le caratte-  
ristiche geografiche  
dei luoghi. Londra e  
Bruxelles non sono  
più separate dal Ca-  
nale della Manica ma  
da 8 ore di bus.

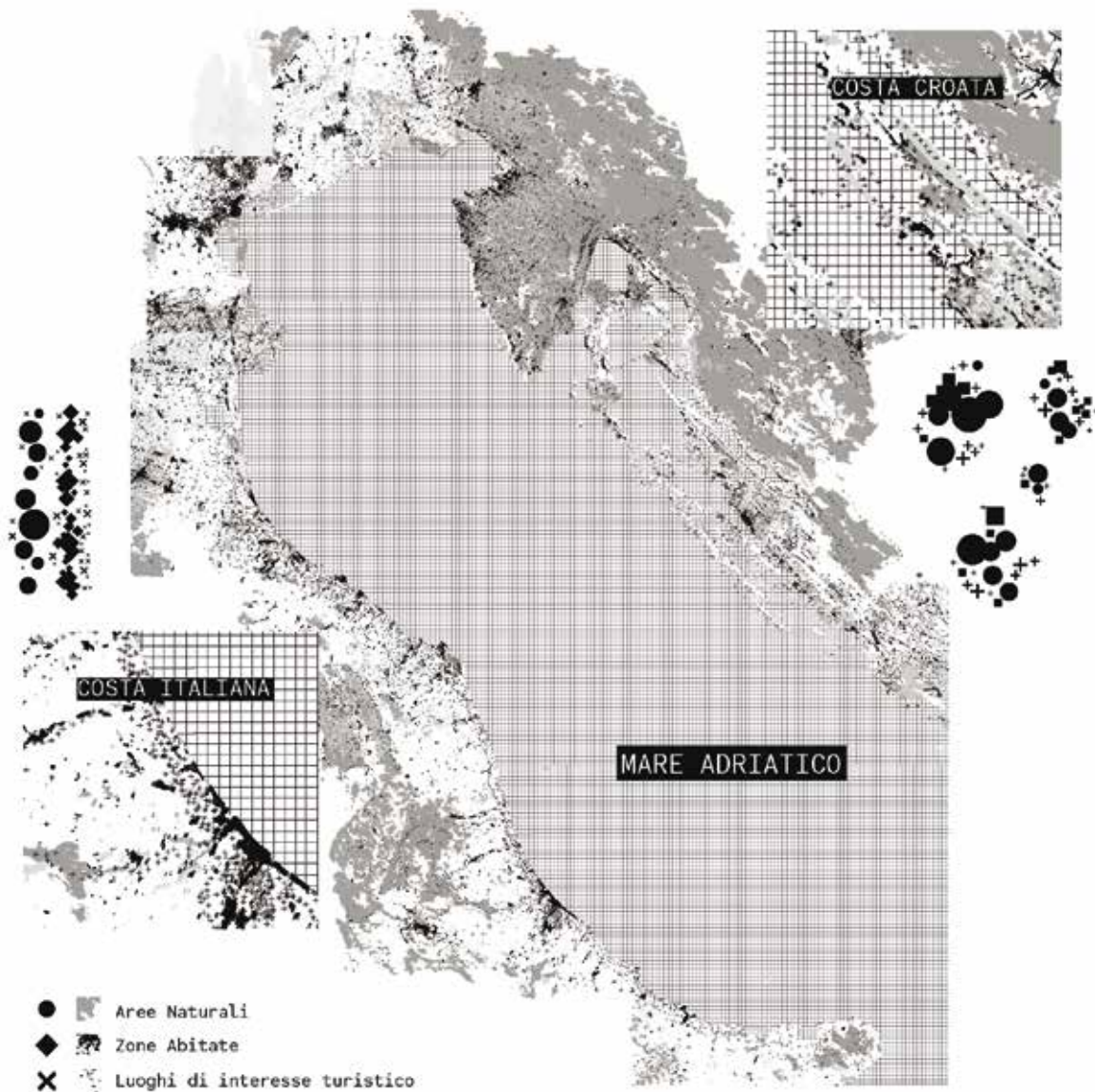


**Fig. 2b - Il nuovo**  
concetto di distanza.  
La rete backdoor  
city, costruita dalle  
compagnie low-cost  
attraverso il posizio-  
namento di piccoli  
aeroporti nelle vici-  
nanze di grandi città,  
sta ampliando i raggi  
delle aree facilmente  
raggiungibili in pros-  
simità di grossi centri  
urbani inglobando  
aree - urbane e rurali  
- di nuovo interesse  
turistico.



**Fig. 3 - Le pratiche**  
del turismo: flussi,  
insediamenti, aree di  
interesse.  
I flussi turistici che  
investono i territori  
adriatici si confronta-  
no con un territorio  
dalle differenti  
caratteristiche natu-  
rali che si relazionano  
con insediamenti  
urbani attrezzati  
in forme diverse  
per l'accoglienza  
turistica: gli sporadici  
insediamenti diffusi  
sulla costa balcanica  
si confrontano con  
l'edificato massivo  
che si srotola lungo  
la costa italiana,  
saturandola.

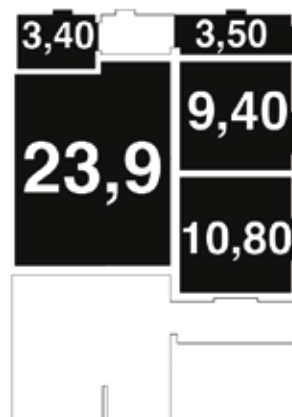
Il turismo, quindi, diventa il fenomeno spaziale per eccellenza, esso fa dell'osservazione del territorio la sua accezione più ampia (Di Campli, 2009). Una delle caratteristiche fondamentali del turismo moderno risiede nel bisogno di evasione da una condizione ordinaria per mezzo del viaggio. In funzione di questa necessità, questo fenomeno geografico costituisce dei veri e propri paesaggi turistici, scardinando i processi relazionali gerarchici tradizionali. In questo quadro è appropriato leggere il turismo attraverso uno scambio più chiaro e definito con le dotazioni naturali che contraddistinguono i luoghi. Queste naturalità evidenti e incontaminate; di riserve verdi, opache e luminose, rappresentano lo strato vibrante del territorio che, in quanto oggetto di interesse all'accoglienza turistica, è sincronico alle pratiche abitative temporanee.



Nell'epoca dell'Antropocene, lo spazio turistico presenta numerose sfaccettature. Nella maggior parte dei casi, è un'enclave separata dal contesto circostante; è uno spazio centripeto, circoscritto, che si richiude su se stesso alla ricerca di una configurazione esaustiva del mondo. In altri, quest'ultimo tende a diventare non-omogeneo e segnato da pratiche in gran parte oscillanti. È quello che succede sulle coste del Mar Adriatico, *milieu* della ricerca progettuale presentata; qui l'esperienza turistica, nella sua accezione nomade e complessa, ha andamenti stagionali, percorribilità diverse e sovrapposizione varie di obiettivi e desideri. La costruzione di immaginari possibili e l'avvio di un processo progettuale può essere lo strumento che permette un'estrazione di nuovi valori e la valorizzazione di caratteristiche intrinseche presenti nei *paesaggi* (turistici) *abitati*.



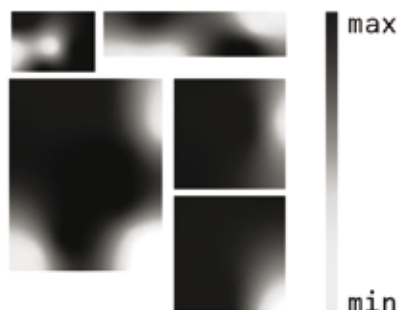
Abitazione per residenti



Dimensione spazi minimi



Arredi



Utilizzo degli spazi domestici

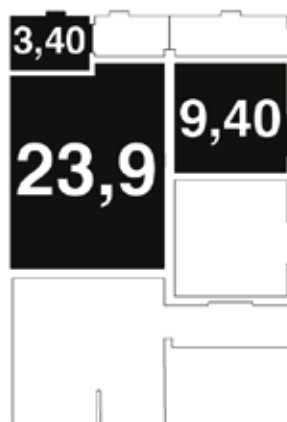
Fig. 4a - Il ridimensionamento dello spazio domestico. Il confronto analitico di diversi alloggi residenziali sulla costa balcanica, fatto sulla base di una ricerca diretta, ha portato alla definizione degli spazi e degli ambienti della residenza che vengono maggiormente utilizzati da parte dei residenti, considerando come questi vivono l'alloggio in modo dilatato nel tempo.

### *Il paesaggio abitato*

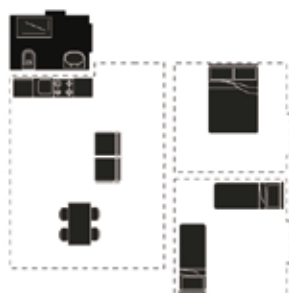
Leggere le infrastrutture attraverso una lente multiforme e transcalare ci sollecita a porre domande variegata e multidirezionali e a discostarci da una possibile lettura puramente funzionalista (Ballestero, 2016). Questa calibrazione ha la potenza per produrre nuovi scenari possibili, nuove figurazioni spaziali e nuove letture infrastrutturali capaci di riscrivere i particolarismi di infiniti territori. Territori in cui il naturale e il sociale si amalgamano e costituiscono una nuova entità. Nei bordi della “pianura liquida” di Fernand Braudel, natura e artificio condividono lo stesso piano, acquisiscono un ruolo preminente dove il loro potere spaziale affiora da diverse e mutevoli disposizioni di materiali, corpi, idee e agenti; è una trans-mutazione del paesaggio dove la natura non viene sostituita dall’ambiente costruito, ma dove quest’ultimo dovrà piegarsi a essa. (Helmrich, 2014).



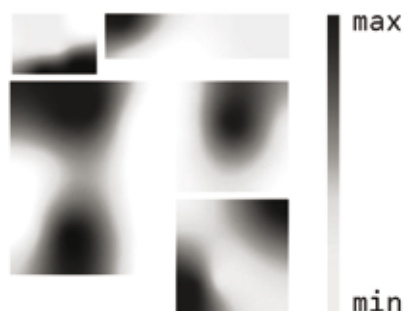
Abitazione per turista



Dimensione spazi minimi



Arredi



Utilizzo degli spazi domestici

La netta alternanza tra gli elementi urbani e le grandi placche naturali permette di percepire la natura come vuoto, sfondo della scena. Provando a invertire la gerarchia valoriale tra ciò che è pieno e ciò che è vuoto, la natura diventa materia di progetto e non più residuo e luogo di assenza, assume un valore architettonico, spazialmente determinato (Russett 2019). Ma allora in che modo il territorio e la natura possono accogliere pratiche temporanee dell'abitare?

Il fenomeno turistico incide su questo sistema attraverso la sua capacità di riscrittura. Vivere e fare esperienza di un territorio, nei suoi intrecci, nei suoi differenti tasselli, nei suoi spazi più confinati e descrittivi vuol dire modificarlo costruendo al tempo stesso un nuovo paesaggio: il *paesaggio abitato*. Il paesaggio abitato è un sistema di corpi, di relazioni con lo spazio quasi fenomenologiche, di conflitti e prossimità. Uno spazio che vissuto attraverso l'ingombro dei corpi (Bianchetti, 2020), acquisisce

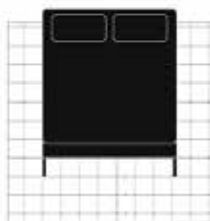
Fig. 4b - Il ridimensionamento dello spazio domestico. L'analisi sull'uso dello spazio dell'alloggio turistico tipico, spesso copia dell'alloggio dei residenti, ha evidenziato un sovradimensionamento e la overdotazione di spazi. Chi vive l'alloggio in modo temporaneo in questi luoghi necessita di pochi spazi costruiti, legati perlopiù a funzioni quotidiane specifiche.

Fig. 4c - Il ridimensionamento dello spazio domestico. Definire lo spazio domestico per turista significa quindi svestirlo di quegli ambienti poco utilizzati nel quadro delle esigenze di utilizzatori non stanziali. Lo svelamento dei soli ambienti della casa che necessitano di elementi di consistenza fisica diviene punto di partenza per ridefinire gli spazi domestici - aperti e costruiti - dell'alloggio turistico.

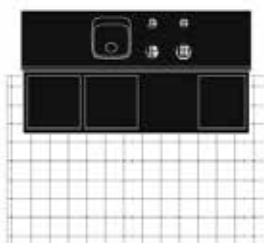
Fig. 4d - Il ridimensionamento dello spazio domestico. Le tre soluzioni progettuali sono unità minime che rispondono alle esigenze del turismo romantico contemporaneo, mosso dal desiderio di un territorio esotico da vivere temporaneamente, diverso dagli spazi del quotidiano. Queste configurazioni spaziali invitano il turista a considerare lo spazio esterno come ambiente domestico, suggerendone un possibile utilizzo.



Servizi



Letto

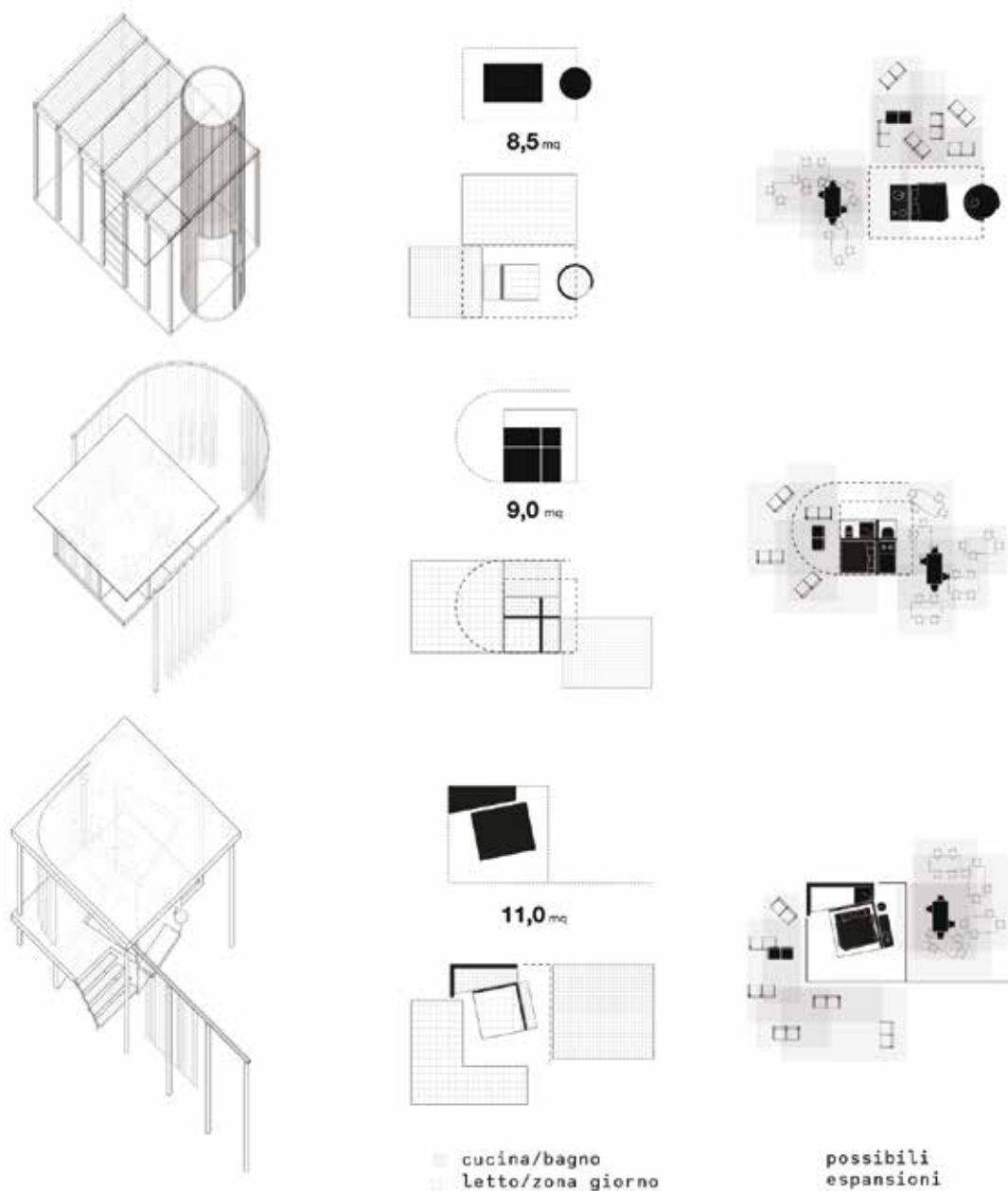


Cucina



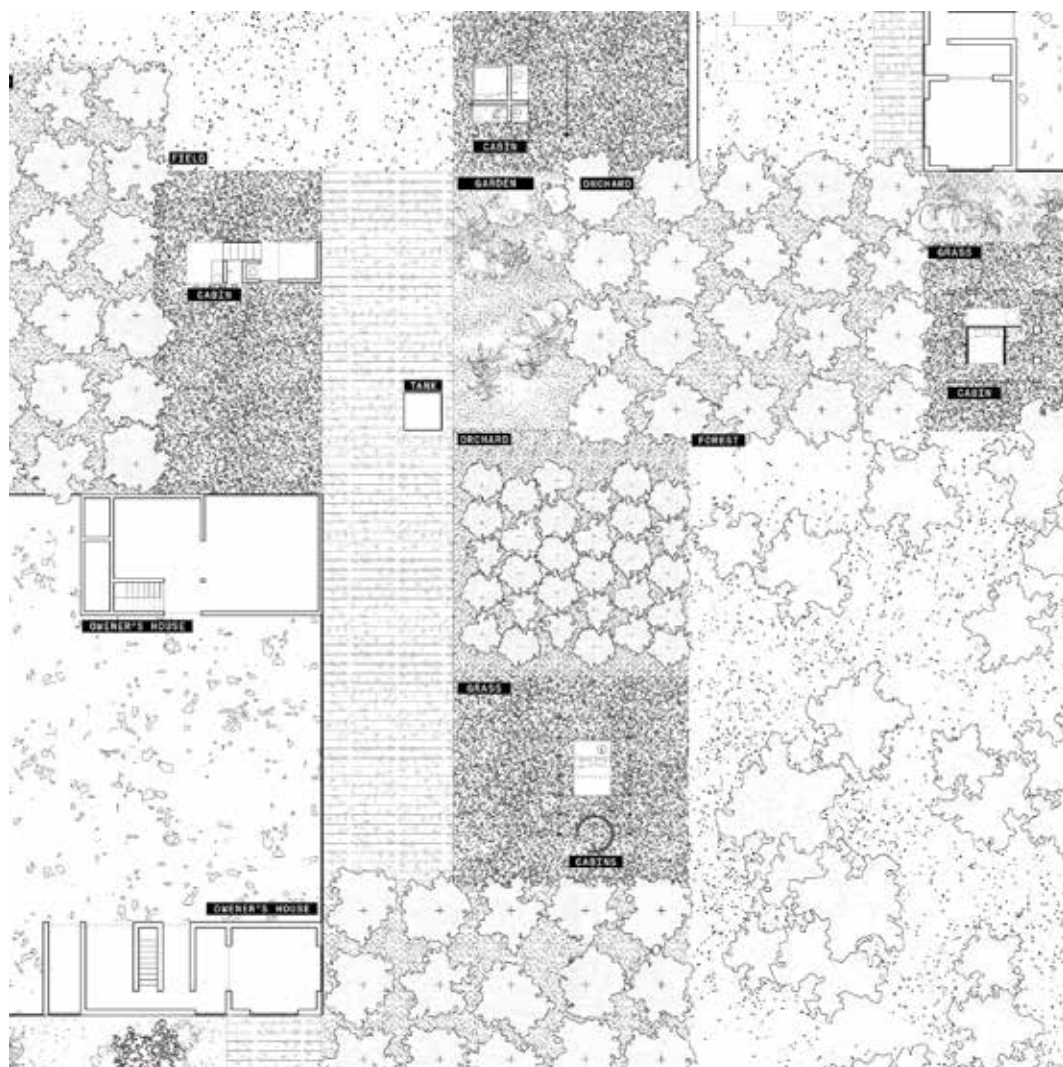
Doccia





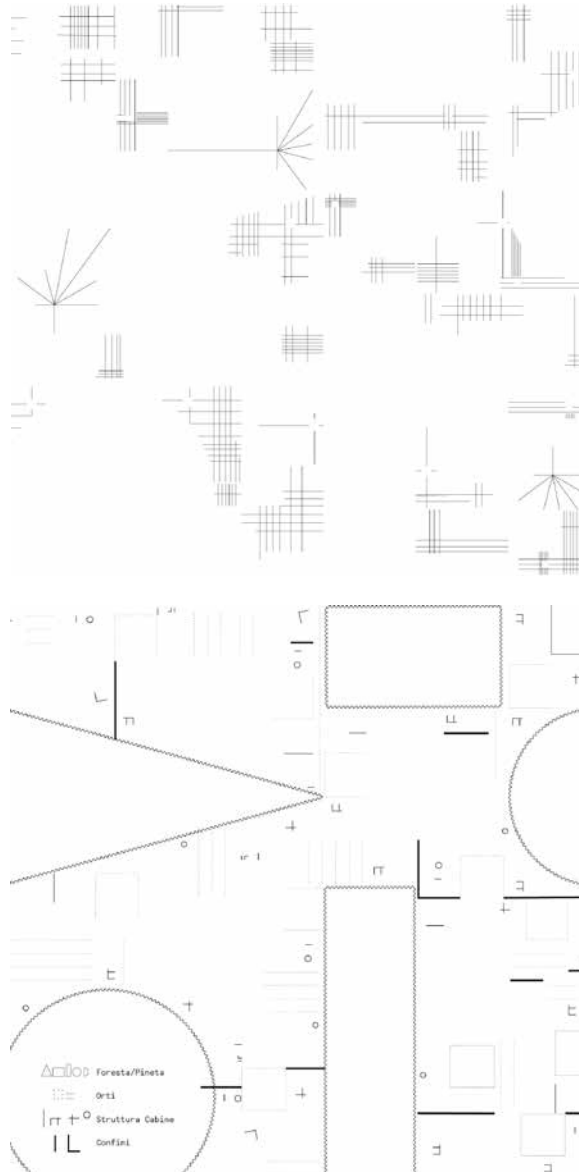
uno spessore più ampio, diventa volume. Il modello abitativo turistico necessita di un processo di minorazione e di asciugatura dello spazio domestico; di un *resize the oversize* della casa vacanze. La casa è diventata uno spazio chiuso, un contenitore introverso che lascia al di fuori la natura. Uno spazio in cui l'architettura rimane sullo sfondo adornata da una serie di oggetti e suppellettili inutili alle pratiche dell'abitare temporaneo. La natura diventa supporto delle pratiche collettive del turismo.





Lo schema compositivo proposto ipotizza l'inversione dei ruoli formali e strutturali di figura e suolo e ridefinisce la relazione tra l'uomo e il paesaggio. Lo spazio domestico viene disvelato, ridotto al solo spazio necessariamente privato. Unità minime, boschi, radure, spazi soglia, tasselli vegetali, reti energetico-idriche o di raccolta dell'acqua piovana sono tutti elementi di questa grammatica, che alla scala della costituzione della regola risulta fortemente isotropa. È, in realtà, un sistema formato da una varietà di elementi gerarchici che si accostano, si sovrappongono, si sottraggono l'un l'altro e si alternano nelle forme e nelle composizioni, in uno spazio in cui è continuamente compresso o dilatato l'equilibrio tra corpo, soggetti e sfondo.

La dimensione spaziale della prossimità e del conflitto è sovrascritta dall'istantaneità delle pratiche individuali e collettive e dai loro imprevisti. Dalle riflessioni espresse, le risposte progettuali in ambito turistico de-



**Fig. 5a - La natura** come supporto di pratiche dell'abitare. La vegetazione che si colloca tra le architetture diviene spazio dell'abitare, infrastruttura di supporto alle pratiche turistiche domestiche. Gli elementi naturali si impongono nel progetto a scale diverse: la loro articolazione schematica e strutturata si confronta con il suo assetto spontaneo, proponendosi in maniera complessiva come supporto alle pratiche dell'abitare.

**Fig. 5b - La natura** come supporto di pratiche dell'abitare. La mappa mostra le innumerevoli possibili direzioni di espansione dell'alloggio turistico, configurando un paesaggio isotropo, senza alcuna direzione univoca di propagazione.

**Fig. 5c - La natura** come supporto di pratiche dell'abitare. Il paesaggio naturale si presta come supporto adeguato alle pratiche dell'abitare che, nella loro organizzazione spaziale gerarchica, sono elementi di confine, spazi-soglia, elementi di ostruzione, tessuti opachi e radure luminose.

vono tener conto delle pratiche esistenti, disvelandole e chiarificandole, facendole convergere in un modello architettonico che mette in opera il rapporto sincronico tra natura e spazio domestico. Il territorio sollecita la trasformazione del supporto naturale in un tipo di *sottonatura* (Gissen, 2009) canalizzata: quel genere di natura selvaggia che spesso si pone come antitetica allo sforzo architettonico ma che potrebbe essere recuperata, riproposta, persino addomesticata (Helmerich, 2014). Le sottonature diventano materiali architettonici; materiali che se addomesticati potrebbero essere impiegati per creare nuovi tipi di spazi, luoghi ed esperienze. Esperienze in cui l'individuo riscrive una diversa condizione di privacy, di fuga dall'ordinarietà e ribalta le canoniche dinamiche urbane; è alla ricerca di un'unità minima dove poter coltivare, in una rivoluzione ancora dal sapore *pastorale* (Steyerl, 2016), un nuovo culto dell'io in profonda connessione con la natura. Un'idea di riflessione sull'abitare che si fa territorio.

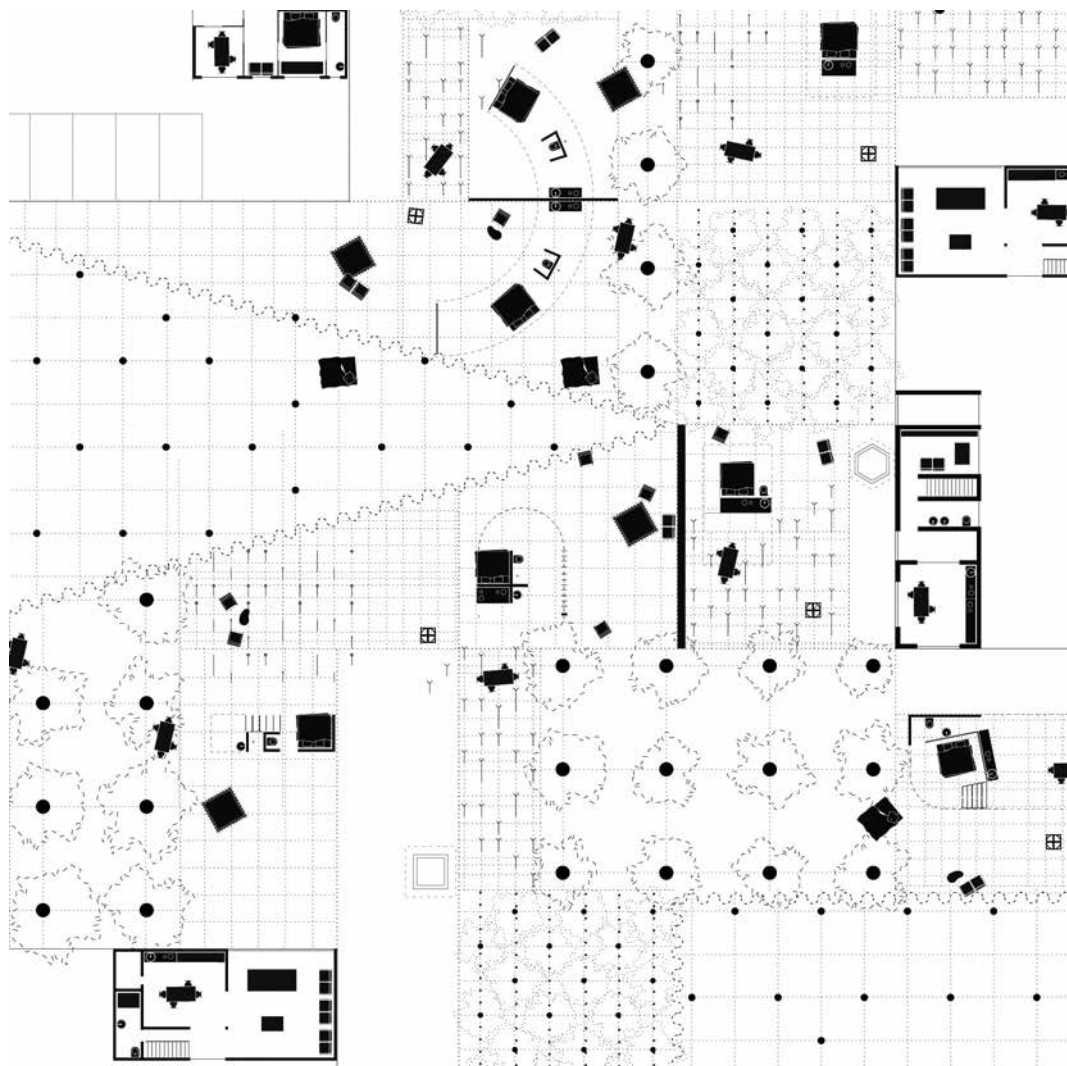


Fig. 6 - Abitare il territorio

Lo spazio esterno assume un'importanza centrale nella configurazione degli spazi di accoglienza turistica, in cui l'uomo è soggetto in cerca di una condizione di armonia con il territorio. Il rapporto edonistico tra uomo e natura si realizza pienamente quando il paesaggio si fa ambiente in cui l'uomo è immerso.

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*migration*

• *topology* •

*space-mak-*

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# Vu' cumprà.

## Acting on the Margins of the European Project

**Peter Volgger**

### *Abstract*

In the past decades, the status of territories and everyday urban experiences has been strongly bound with notions of globalisation and migration. In this critical discussion, the effects of migration are identified according to multiple dimensions in order to generate knowledge on 'space in transition' by exploring how Senegalese traders who belong to the Mouride brotherhood make claims on and use space during their time in Italy. 'Mourides' are groups with very high mobility and exemplify 'transmigrants'; they establish 'circulatory territories' by commuting between their land of origin and the host country – changing their whereabouts seasonally. At the architectural level, the key question raised by migration is how diversity can be acknowledged, valued, and accommodated by the built environment.

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The implications of migration are drastically changing our understanding of urbanism, a field traditionally limited to the architectural scale of the city.

### *Fictional urbanism*

Deterritorialized conditions created by migrants have led to an urbanism of artificial reterritorialization that may be called a ‘fictional urbanism’, being based on fragile mental constructions that are manifested in an archipelago of fragments, each of which establishes its own space and rules, provoking the European political centre (Clifford, 1998: 369). With respect to migration, the last few years have been characterised by reactionary policies and the outburst of populist discourses, the raising of fences, new border closures, and political division within the European Union (EU). Spaces within the EU and Schengen Zone promote what Alain Balibar in *Europe as Borderland* has called “translation” and a variety of encounters that can potentially engender transnational hybridity and new, flexible notions of identity (Balibar, 2009).

The implications of migration are drastically changing our understanding of urbanism, a field traditionally limited to the architectural scale of the city. Liminal spaces offer a new perspective on how space can be constructed and occupied. From now on, we will have to study architecture and urbanism on different scales and investigate the new territories that are emerging at their intersections. Recent literature deals with this abundantly: David Harvey’s “time-space-compression” is one key to the level of transnationalism we are experiencing today. Both Saskia Sassen and Doreen Massey claim that the penetration of new production technologies into the developing world disrupts customary livelihoods and traditional work structures. Peggy Levitt describes “heightened global economic interconnectedness” as the intensified circulation of global media and commodities while Arjun Appadurai (1996) calls deterritorialized spaces “scapes”.

Architects have to deal with migration as well. Alejandro Aravena’s Venice Biennale (2016) included architects “Reporting from the Front” in battles against migration-related challenges, among other issues. In *USE, Uncertain States of Europe*, Stefano Boeri shifted the emphasis from types to territories in which, as in a kind of Petri dish, spatial mutations take place on the basis of societal changes. Paul Virilio’s artistic work with architects Diller and Scofidio, *Exit*, explored global migration, translating statistics into graphic representation. Teddy Cruz and Fonna



Forman have pushed migration to the centre stage within the architectural community. Diego Barajas investigated how migrants of the Cape Verde Islands have reproduced their natural archipelago in Rotterdam (Barajas, 2003): they connect one “urban island” with the other through public transport, just like they did at home using their boats. By constantly adapting to new circumstances and creatively reassembling existing resources, migrants open up new perspectives on the local effects of worldwide dynamics. Hence, this essay pleads for an expanded understanding of “architecture to come”. Multiple identities and cross-border networks of migrant communities put our prior assumptions to the test as regards the nation state’s functioning as a stable and self-contained space (Glick Schiller et al., 1992; Pries, 1999); they also challenge our belief that architects can shape spatial practices. Today’s progressive discourses on urbanisation favour new territories, yet perhaps without nostalgia for any loss, in a world which is increasingly inhabited by nomadic actors flowing across networks and, as Saskia Sassen puts it, becoming “local villagers within the global cities of the world” (Sassen, 2004: 553). Dealing with migration might involve challenging contemporary conversations to shift away from notions of inclusion towards the anti-political project of unmaking a world that casts homeless people as problems for the nation state. In order to cope with territories of dispersion and alienation, we have to find new means and strategies. The key to finding these is hidden in the way people, without waiting for architects, are organising themselves.

#### *Mouride space-making*

This essay focuses on migration and its local effects on medium-sized cities in northern Italy, summarising some of the results of a research project carried out by the Institute for Architectural Theory of the University of Innsbruck between 2012 and 2015 in Bolzano, Duna Verde, Zingonia, and Porto Recanati. We found that the history of the ‘Muridiyyah’ offers a paradigmatic model for studying the impact of migration on the European territory. ‘Mourides’ from Senegal belong to diasporic communities that operate within an in-between-space through direct relationships between the global and the personal. As one Mouride

The history of the ‘Muridiyyah’ offers a paradigmatic model for studying the impact of migration on the European territory.

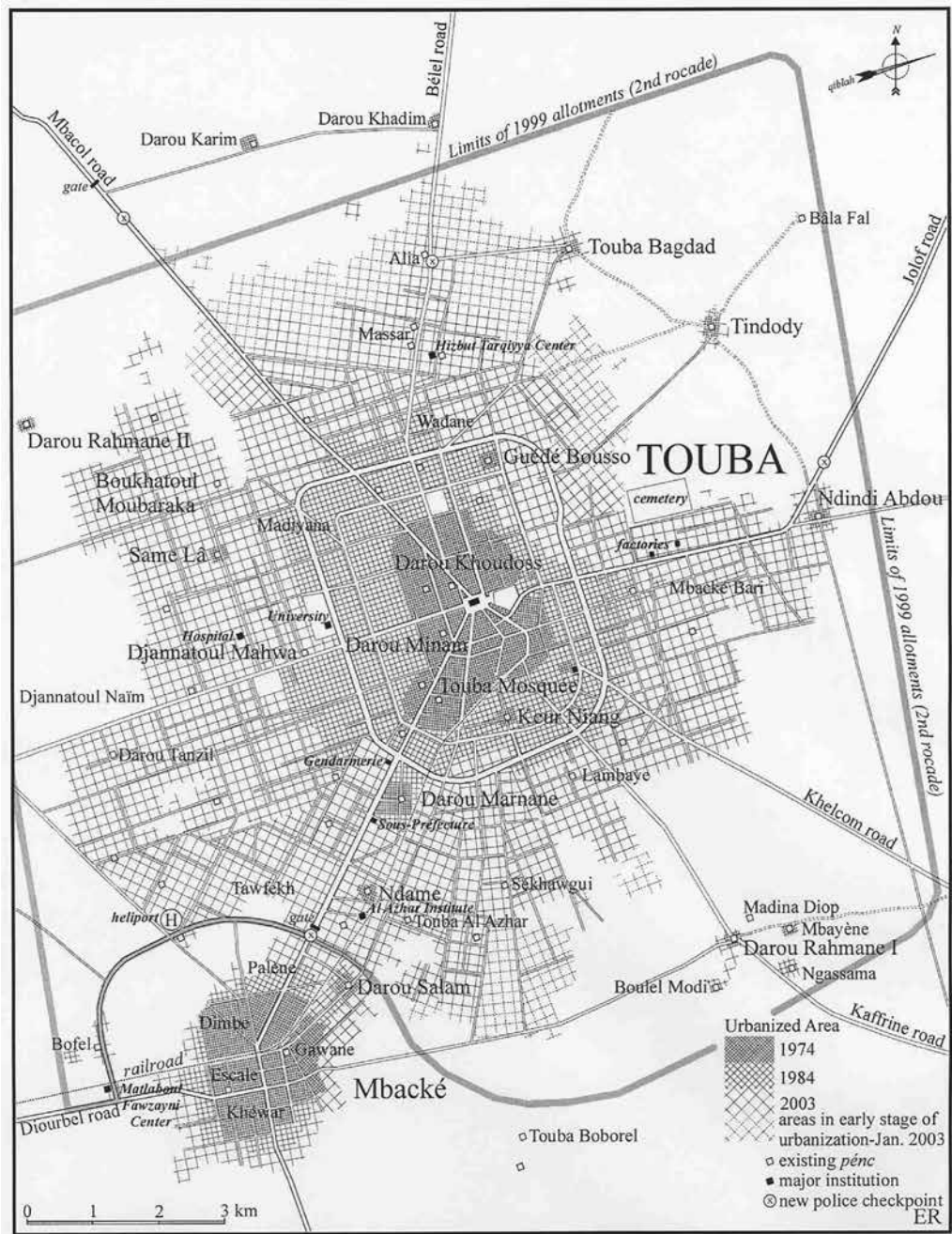


Fig. 1 - Map of Touba.  
Courtesy of Eric Ross.

put it: “Our homeland is built on sand, and, like the sand, we are blown everywhere!” (Ebin, 1996: 96). For the Mourides, “being mobile” is not an exception but rather a “way of life”. Interestingly, the idea of leaving is rooted in their agenda as one way of following one’s

submission to the religious path, inasmuch as “mobility is engrained in the history, daily life and experiences of the population” (De Bruijn et al., 2001: 1).

Transmigrants neither belong to their country of departure nor to the country of arrival (Grillo, 2000): they constantly move and stay with members of their group, consuming Senegalese satellite channels and “Radio Touba” only. They inhabit a space that exists not in one time but in many, at the intersection of other spaces and in juxtaposition with them.

The Mouride brotherhood, who seceded from West African Sufism (Schmidt di Friedberg, 1994), was founded by Ahmadou Bamba in rural Senegal in the late nineteenth century; ever since, it has experienced a steady process of transformation. The Muridiyyah have remained active in the holy city of Touba while becoming a global phenomenon.

The Mourides scattered around the world long to visit Touba, self-defined ‘capital’ of the Mouride Sufi order, which is increasingly thriving on its global connectedness. The diffusion of the ‘Touba’ toponym through names of expatriate associations and institutions reflects its status as a global city. Touba is the only place where worldwide Mouride networks materialise. It has grown exponentially and is now Senegal’s second city, with an estimated population of one million.

In the mid-1980s, Mouride immigrants were nicknamed ‘vu’ cumprà?’ (a malapropism of *vuoi comprare?*) in Italy. They were itinerant traders and nearly full-time travellers establishing ‘circulatory territories’ (Tarrius, 1994), constantly moving in search of new goods and clients. They had neither the time nor resources to transform their living quarters in any radical way. Groups are organised on the basis of ‘moving households’. Multiple ties – such as place of origin, friendship, kinship, and religion – create a closely-knit structure (Ebin, 1995: 328). In accordance with their religious beliefs, they work in order to cede their income to their spiritual leader. The ‘marabout’ (Mouride cleric) consecrates their ‘talibes’ and advises them in hard times.

On Italy’s beaches, the Mouride tradesman will sell nearly everything, but for practical reasons most of them specialise in fake ware (e.g., Asian-made watches, fantasy jewellery, sunglasses, umbrellas, and other

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Fig. 2 - Mourides in  
Duna Verde.  
Courtesy of the author.

As patterns  
of dispersion  
intensify, they  
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fragmented  
societies, but also  
a new territorial  
cohesion.

small items). While this occupation opened a way for the Mourides to survive, it is an arduous life even today. Nevertheless, about 70,000 Senegalese people are officially registered in Italy, over 90% of them Mourides. During the 1980s, most Mourides did not question the temporary nature of their time in Italy (Riccio, 1999). Various national policy frameworks, unable to address their transnational livelihood, confronted the Mourides with ever shifting socio-political conditions. In a second phase, Mouride workers achieved a measure of stable economic integration through employment in local industries. All the same, their life in Italy is neither a case of integration nor exclusion, but something new and different.

#### *The Mouride Archipelago*

As patterns of dispersion intensify, they not only generate fragmented societies, but also a new territorial cohesion. Migrants make the host countries their own.



Hence, the term ‘niche’ and the notion of ‘reterritorialization’ go beyond economic activity, although this is their *raison d’être*. The social infrastructure allows Mourides to detach themselves from their country of origin without actually cutting the umbilical cord and produce a new collective sphere in “so-and-so’s land”. Two spaces emerge, as Mahamet Timera (2014: 42) writes: The ‘interior’ (the country), and the ‘exterior’: the archipelago of niches that migrants create for themselves; these two spaces intersect and sometimes blend into one another.

Migration theory has long been aware that transformation is always, first and foremost, a matter of survival. Comprehending architecture as something global that includes both the material and immaterial qualities of space is of paramount importance to its evolution, survival, and endurance as a meaningful tool of transformation.

The Mouride territorial organisation presents alternative options for publicness and for a discourse on re-addressing relations in terms of a conception of architecture without architects that transforms ‘non-places’ (Marc Augé) into ‘places’. Because the grounding of one’s action within the polity concerns not just the body, but the social body as well, Mourides connect different places to ‘trans-localities’

Fig. 3 - The Mouride Territory. Courtesy of the author.

Migration theory has long been aware that transformation is always, first and foremost, a matter of survival.

Mourides connect different places to ‘trans-localities’ acting on more than one place simultaneously.

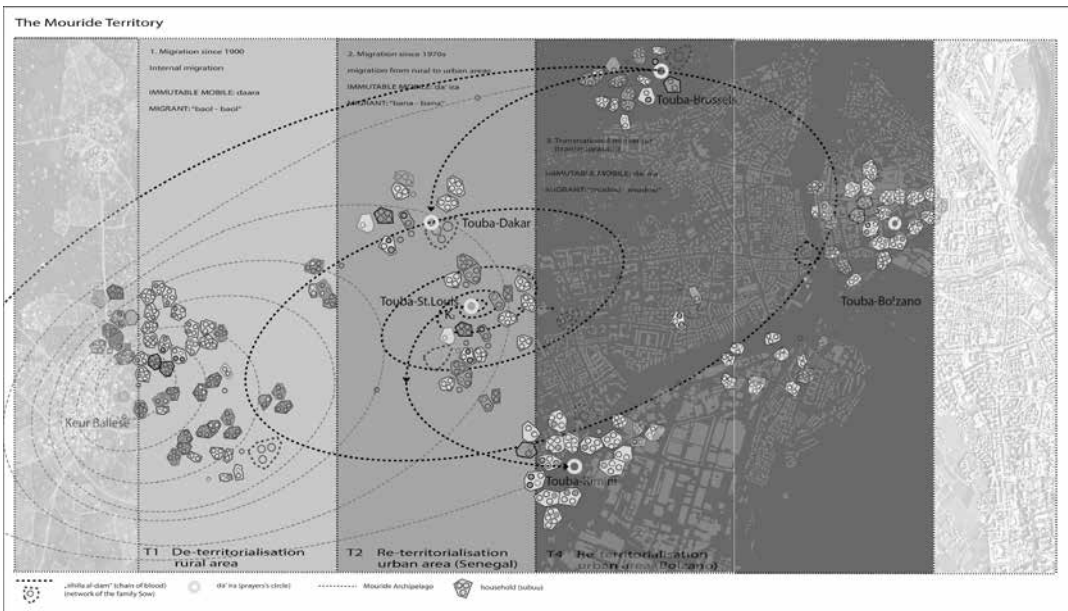




Fig. 4 - Da'ira in Bolzano. Courtesy of the author.

‘Migrating space’ and ‘space of migration’. The latter is the space occupied by migrants and marginalised people, whereas ‘migrating space’.

(*silsila al-baraka*) acting on more than one place simultaneously (Sinatti, 2006). They intertwine procedures from the land of origin with the current host country into a multi-local space. This complex connection of places works like a navigation tool (‘flying scaffolds’) in a foreign environment, turning ritual performance (speeches, prayers, or gatherings) into a new logic.

The Mouride archipelago can be investigated by observing its economic cycles and structures (*silsila al-dam*). Many travelling vendors currently living in Italy were tradesmen in Senegal and hence are still connected to their home country through their trading network. It is worth noting that, unlike a network, an archipelago always has a centre. To understand Mouride trading practice, we have to realise that it is an instrument for mutual support.

Before going any further, it is important to make a distinction between ‘migrating space’ and ‘space of migration’. The latter is the space occupied by migrants and

marginalised people, whereas 'migrating space' resists the use of architecture as a tool of oppression and reappropriates space as a tool for transformation. It proposes a subversion of the norm and a rupture in the social fabric. Because of this, any 'migrating architecture' must remain firmly anchored in migration and its radical roots, and be considered an 'an-architecture', that is to say, an architecture born of necessity and creativity that uses insignificant, liminal, and transient spaces.

Appadurai's 'production of locality' (Appadurai, 1995) can be used to show how Mourides build an autonomous layer – an 'African village' – within a given urban context. This African layer can be interpreted as an economic and spatial reconfiguration of Mouride territory. 'Home' can be both the physical place (the 'domestic household') and the symbolic 'space of belonging' to local, national or transnational communities within which people regard themselves as 'being at home'. Yet how can the Mourides maintain their identity over long periods of time and distances, while also adapting to changing local conditions?

This question can be answered by referring to a topological model. Under a simple, common definition, *topology* is the study of properties that remain invariant under deformation. All in all, the present interest in topological theory within architectural discourse merely results in piecing together dispersed settlement patterns. Similarly, the way in which transmigration space is accounted for in the dominant discourse is far too incomplete and static (in fact, trying to represent anything through a single model is preposterous). For Mouride space is constantly shifting, moving, evolving, thus reinforcing the profound disconnect between architecture and the space it occupies. As their setting shifted to a trans-urban one, Mourides brought along all their African itinerant trade practices, which are linked to the notion of 'circulating territories' (Tarrius, 1994).

In reality, the physical space in which Mouride places exist becomes secondary. What gives them a universality and a capacity to be reproduced anywhere and anytime are the Mouride people inhabiting them. As such, liminal spaces of Mouride migration are both unique and generic in nature. The Mourides have turned their culture into cocoons, while rooting these in, or transporting them to times and places in

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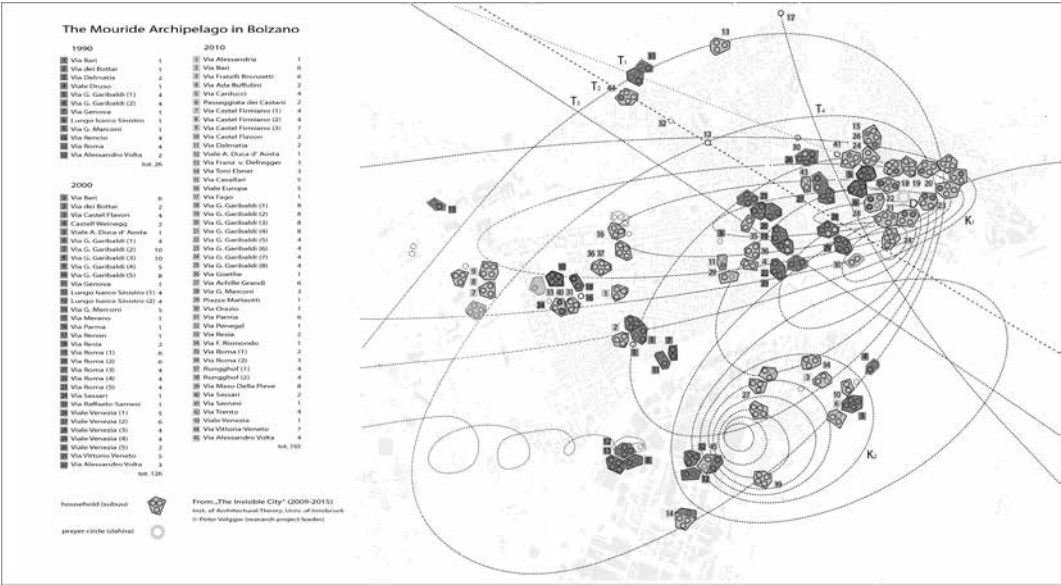


Fig. 5 - The Mouride Archipelago.  
Courtesy of the author.

which they felt they had a place. Their networks are composed of only two elements, which are constantly connected according to given rules: the ‘mutable mobiles’ (households) and ‘immutable mobiles’ (*da’ira*).

### Making room versus creating space

The first building block of Mouride networks, households (in Wolof: *subuu*), consists of groups of three or four persons and are positioned along migrational trajectories for strategic reasons. Their need for secrecy is deeply rooted in history: as a matter of survival, Mouride households needed to be adaptable, ephemeral, and anonymous. Mouride rooms are often perceived as weaving together elements that create impermanent frameworks for daily life and special events alike. For instance, the focus group in Bolzano was held in the kitchen area of a small apartment shared by Mamadou and Bayal, both working at car factories nearby. The apartment was tidy and sparsely decorated – a small picture of the religious leader was the only adornment on the white walls. Many migrant factory workers whom we interviewed in Italy reported little pleasure in their domestic life abroad. Few put much effort into decorating their spaces, choosing instead to spend that money and energy on living spaces in Senegal, either building or maintaining their own homes there.



Indeed, no matter how strongly architects believe in the home as a 'machine for living', people – rather than architects – modify their environments accordingly. Not only do the Mourides have different ideas about what a 'home' should be like, they may have more than one place they call home. Their more diffuse notion of family generates a wider range of places where to feel 'at home'. A Mouride may sleep, eat, drink tea, watch Touba TV, and spend time in different households; like any group of migrants, abroad the Mourides tend to stick together, creating a place of belonging and warmth that excludes the outside world.

For the Mourides in Duna Verda, home for most of the year is a series of hotel rooms. There, they have taken over a few residential hotels (more like boarding houses). Sleeping two to a bed, the room population is far above whatever the hotel initially intended. The Mourides in Bolzano and Zingonia live in groups in cheap apartments. Hotel space becomes differentiated according to Mouride needs: certain rooms are designated as kitchens, large rooms are meeting places. The capacity to adapt and change with minimal means constitutes a central aspect of Mouride space-making. The only constant is a black and white photograph of Ahmadou Bamba, which hangs in every apartment. The second building block of Mouride networks is the *da'ira* (urban prayer circle). Some marabouts have many of these scattered around the world and generally visit them once a year to collect gifts and money. The *da'ira* facilitates the operation of dispersed territories, acting as an interface between here and there; inside, it is undeniably more Touba than Bolzano. Mouride migrants take care of its decoration and its overall atmosphere in order to guarantee an immersive experience.

An analysis of the *da'ira* from a different perspective reveals that they are not marginal aberrations, but sophisticated urban models of increased mobility. The *da'ira* is an 'architecture of dispersion' that reveals the close, often intimate links between informal and spontaneous phenomena and the all-absorbing collective space of the brotherhood – in which globalised bodies are immersed and with which, with each visit, they increasingly become familiarised. The effects generated by the artificial environment of the *da'ira* on the subjects also produce a transformation.

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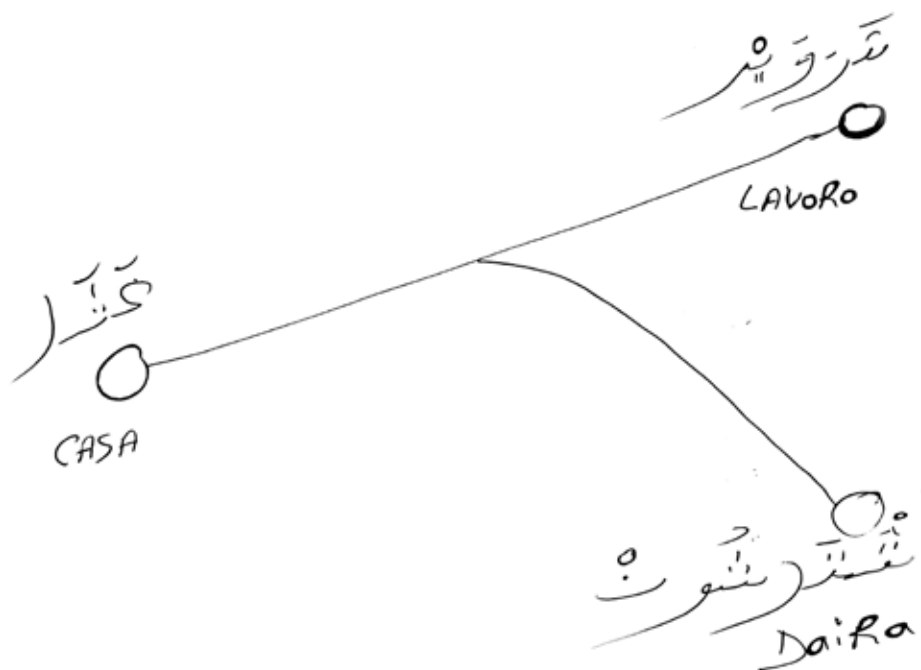


Fig. 6 - Bayal's Mobility Map. Courtesy of the author.



Fig. 7 - Mamadou's  
Mobility Map.  
Courtesy of the  
author.

When space is limited, people who cannot physically separate themselves, through rituals enter in another measure of time.

### *The African village*

In Bolzano, as in any other city in the world, Mouride residents inhabit an African village (Scidà, Pollini, 1993). As a result, “Touba-Bolzano” becomes part of a trans-urban nexus connected to Touba. Mobility maps allow the recording, comparison, and analysis of travel activity by different people within the community. They reveal patterns that might otherwise be hidden and highlight all contacts. Unsurprisingly, at least in the first phase of migration, these maps do not differ much from each other because of the strong emphasis placed on pictorial elements of the Mouride archipelago: household, work, and *da’ira*. Clearly, spatial confinement has a more complex explanation owing to cultural frontiers as well as the autonomous structure of a self-sufficient culture of migration.

To understand how the Mourides use space, we need to look briefly at the distinction between temporal divisions and spatial ones. For instance, synchronic time in the “African village” in Bolzano means that, under crowded conditions, spatial divisions between sacred and secular categories are non-existent: praying, eating, and watching TV all take place in the same rooms at the same time. For “When space is limited, people who cannot physically separate themselves, through rituals enter in another measure of time” (Ebin, 1996). Occupying rooms for a series of different purposes over time makes these separations in time just as effective as spatial divisions.

No physical barrier separates Mouride space from the outside nor is there a distinct spatial arrangement which identifies the space as Mouride. What does distinguish the space is the choreography, the way people move within at specific times (ibid.).

How the African Village really works becomes clearer when an important Mouride sheikh arrives in Bolzano and visits his followers. His presence reveals a more formal order, activating notions of hierarchy and centrality; hence, more attention is paid to separations within the community. The sheikh’s room is located in the innermost region of the Mouride village and in this spatial arrangement the holy man lives in the most protected location inside his apartment.

While the apartment design is purely European, the use of space is similar to a traditional sheikh's house in which an enclosed structure is built around a series of concentric circles or squares with the sheikh in the central, most interior, most protected space (ibid.).

### *Geographies of trauma*

A focus on topology as a simple arrangement of network elements would disregard a central aspect: trauma. Thus, topology has to be rooted in psychoanalysis. Migrants spatialise their trauma experience by asserting the ways in which material space (where they were physically located during the event) intersects with psychic space (where they remember being). Trauma practices work to translate (topologically) the geopolitics of crisis and displacement into a qualitatively different space of care and security (Blum, Secor, 2014). This place of relocation is in fact a 'safe location', a zone most proximate to danger and yet just beyond risk.

To understand this point better, in particular how trauma works to fold both space and time within migration, we must make a digression into the history of the Muridiyyah. Mouride networks are related to a very early case of deterritorialization. In the 1970s, drought afflicted the Sahel region and turned acres of the Mouride 'peanut basin' into wasteland. Many Mourides working in agriculture turned towards trade, eventually expanding to international commerce, and developed trade circuits stretching from Senegal to the rest of the world.

The Mourides have suffered traumatic experiences – a flood of intolerable stimuli that could be said to have happened out of place or sequence. The trauma is, in a sense, unlocalisable, yet it is nevertheless spatial. It is through 'repetition phenomena' that the spatiality of trauma can be better understood. The Mourides have learned to apply certain elements of their own rural culture to the urban context they now live in. This is the path followed when they set up the *da'ira* to conquer informal markets in Dakar or San Louis in Senegal.

### *Anarchitecture as a new home*

What are the spatial, territorial, and material strategies that could secure architecture's role as the most integral cultural technique shaping our lives? Mouride migration steers us towards an architecture that

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Migration may be conceptualised through the migrant's body as a mutable site for negotiating and articulating the transnational experience of mobility.

would not only modify the forms of buildings but also their very modes of inhabitation as well as the very nature of their inhabitants. The notion of permanent and uncontrollable change, multiple influences, etc., are fundamental parameters of Mouride practices. Their processual activities aim to initiate transformation and observe change, rather than manipulate space and its inhabitants through decisions regarding form. Migration may be conceptualised through the migrant's body as a mutable site for negotiating and articulating the transnational experience of mobility. While the body constitutes one particular challenge to ideas of physical coherence, all bodies pass through some version of building and un-building. Perhaps this is the point where we must deconstruct both notions: the "migrant in the building" and the "building in the migrant". Then the counter-architectural project will come to be known as an-architecture attempting to expose existing 'projects'.

Gordon Matta-Clark's 'an-architectural project' not only challenged Le Corbusier's saying: "Everything must hold together, or it will collapse!", but also emphasised the absence of some bodies (e.g. the disabled and the sick), the suppression or incarceration of others, and spatial segregation. He examined an-architectural 'practices of unmaking' in order to develop a new conception, 'anarchitecture', focused on the body (Halberstam, 2012). Looking at Mouride space-making, Matta-Clark's work can be used as the point where 'embodiment' shifts from a psychoanalytic (topological) to a materialist framework in which corporeality is understood with regard to 'matter' both as a living substance and as social 'mattering' (Wigley, 2018).

From here, one can move on towards the project of 'undoing migration' with the help of architecture. Indeed, Matta-Clark's 'interzones' can be found in the counter-capitalist landscape of 'vertical cities' around Italy. For example, "Hotel House" (Cancellieri, 2007) in Porto Recanati is a seventeen-floor building dating from 1970. It embodies the failure of a Fordist dream of space, safety, and consolidation, and has also registered the decline of the urban periphery from utopian enclave to left-over space. It is closely linked to the internal migration of Mouride people in and around Italy in the early 1990s, when they moved North owing to changed working conditions, ending up into partly overcrowded apartments in rundown



buildings (Ndiaye, Ndiaye, 2006). Having lost their initial function, these abandoned houses were modified by migrants, who turned them into self-referential systems – an example of how migration folds itself into an existing architectural structure.

However, these residents operate within a context of considerable constraint. They cannot truly appropriate household space. They can transform it to a very limited extent, because the buildings do not belong to them in any legal sense. Hotel House is a huge building that shelters more than 2000 people, mostly families, from 32 countries. Cut off from their surroundings by the police, some migrants built deep wells (as they would have done in Africa) and lift buckets of water up the façade using ropes.

Architecture as we know it must be undone to rebuild itself, as Judith Butler once stated: “We must be undone in order to do ourselves: we must be part of a larger social fabric of existence in order to create who we are” (Butler, 2004).

### *Conclusion*

Architecture and space are closely intertwined and constantly interact, but their relationship can never take the simple form of a fixed project. Dealing with Mouride territory involves a shift away from order towards a vision of proliferation and confusion, which compels the amalgamating power of architecture to take a new, unexpected path. Migration is a complex issue, whose many facets need to be weighed up.

From refugee camps to slums to housing crises in rich global cities, the message is clear: migration is a topic that architects must understand and respond to.

In this context, architecture is often perceived as a transformation of space – both in the sense of the physical and immaterial reality in which we live. This relationship is one that, as a society, we often have trouble understanding, because we do not acknowledge that environments also have a transformative power over architecture. Indeed, architecture cannot be reduced to an inhabitable building. It is a system: the physical infrastructure of space, intangible connections, and a medium and prerequisite for movement.

Architecture and space are closely intertwined and constantly interact, but their relationship can never take the simple form of a fixed project.

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*European*  
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# Tesi sull'Europa

## Commentary

-  
Carlo Galli

### *Abstract/ Thesis about Europe*

Europe, considered as a unitary (or so presumed) construction, has a hybrid and swinging nature. What it keeps the European Union together today is the Euro and its rules; but it is also what divides it, or at least what puts it in tension. The flower of the States' sovereignty lost a petal – the monetary sovereignty – but it didn't become anything else: neither a federal sovereignty, nor a set of institutions capable of producing a unitary political will, within the EU. The European Union is not a unitary subject, and it is crossed by multiple political spaces. There are the spaces of the States, marked by physical and juridical walls; there is the NATO space; there are different frontiers: frontiers of hospitality regimes, human rights frontiers, but also the frontier between Euro and the other monetary spaces.

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*L'Europa come costruzione unitaria o presunta tale ha natura ibrida e oscillante*

Nasce in teoria fortemente politica (il federalismo di Spinelli nel *Manifesto di Ventotene* prevedeva una superpotenza europea, capace di politica strategica, neutrale fra USA e URSS); poi diviene economica (con la CECA del 1951) per riproporsi come politica (con il tentativo della CED, abortita nel 1954 per il voto contrario del Parlamento francese – benché proprio dalla Francia fosse venuto il primo impulso); la reazione è stata di nuovo economica e funzionalistica (Jean Monnet, la teoria dello *spillover* e i Trattati di Roma, che hanno dato vita al MEC nel 1957). La fine del comunismo nel 1989 ha comportato per l'Europa un passo avanti – il Trattato di Maastricht del 1992 e la creazione dell'euro come prosecuzione dello SME – ma si è trattato di un passo insufficiente. Il fiore della sovranità degli Stati ha perduto un petalo – la sovranità monetaria – ma non si è trasformato in qualcosa d'altro: in una sovranità federale, in istituzioni in grado di dar vita a una volontà politica unitaria della UE (basti pensare alla politica internazionale, in cui ciascuno Stato gestisce il proprio interesse nazionale con piena unilateralità). L'Europa di Maastricht avrebbe dovuto essere politica ma è stata governata dagli eurocrati della Commissione e, dopo il fallimento della Costituzione europea nel 2005, dal Consiglio dei Capi di Stato e di governo, con il metodo intergovernativo. La sovranità è rimasta agli Stati, anche in seguito alla crisi del 2008 e al *Fiscal compact* del 2012. Ciò che oggi unisce la UE è l'euro e le sue regole; ma ciò è anche quello che la divide, o che la mette in tensione, e di fatto l'impulso politico della UE è costituito dalla continua opera di mediazione della Germania, lo Stato più forte, che ha tratto i maggiori benefici dall'euro.

*L'euro è un dispositivo tendenzialmente deflattivo che obbliga gli Stati dell'area euro a passare dalle svalutazioni competitive delle monete nazionali, o dalle oscillazioni del “serpente” dello SME, alle svalutazioni economiche e giuridiche del lavoro, e alla competizione sulle esportazioni, in una deriva neomercantilistica senza fine (ma, ovviamente, intrinsecamente limitata)*

Modellato su ipotesi francesi (culminanti nel *memorandum* Delors) in una previsione di egemonia politica della Francia, l'euro è stato “occupato” dal marco tedesco e dall'ordoliberalismo che vi è sotteso (la “economia sociale di mercato altamente competitiva” citata dal Trattato di Lisbona è appunto l'ordoliberalismo, con la sua teoria che il mercato e la società coincidono; che lo Stato è garante del mercato e del suo funzionamento; che l'economia è un sistema di equilibri da preservare senza gli interventismi dello Stato sociale, per scongiurare l'inflazione, il sommo male; che il debito pubblico è un problema grave). Il doppio cuore dell'Europa – la guida politica alla Francia, il traino economico alla Germania – ha qui l'origine dei suoi equivoci: la Francia ha un primato solo apparente, e la Germania traina soprattutto se stessa, le proprie esportazioni, e le

economie incorporate in modo subalterno nel proprio spazio economico. La stessa Germania ha dovuto, peraltro, orientare l'ordoliberalismo verso il neoliberismo, abbandonando in parte le difese sociali dei lavoratori, con le riforme Schroeder-Hartz fra il 2003 e il 2005. Quello dell'euro è un regime oneroso, socialmente e politicamente molto divisivo, che rende instabile la UE e la sua economia, oltre a rallentarla rispetto ad altre aree del mondo: gli Stati devono sopportare, ciascuno da solo oppure ricorrendo a strumenti europei assai costringenti (il Meccanismo europeo di stabilità, MES), il peso economico e sociale di una moneta molto ambiziosa e adatta alla Germania e alle economie *embedded* nella sua. Lo *status quo* benché complessivamente favorevole alla Germania presenta però per quest'ultima anche qualche svantaggio: oltre al contenzioso politico con gli anelli deboli della catena dell'euro, anche l'inimicizia americana, motivata dal fatto che l'euro è mantenuto debole per facilitare le esportazioni tedesche (prevalentemente).

*La UE non è un soggetto unitario, ed è attraversata da plurimi spazi politici*

Vi sono gli spazi degli Stati, demarcati da muri fisici e giuridici; vi è lo spazio della NATO, che individua una frontiera calda a est, e che è a sua volta attraversato dalla tensione fra Paesi più oltranzisti in senso anti-russo (gli ex Stati-satellite dell'URSS) e Stati di più antica e moderata fedeltà atlantica (tra cui la Germania); vi è la frontiera dei regimi di accoglienza, che contrappone i Paesi del Gruppo di Visegrád a quelli più moderati e a quelli su cui l'immigrazione maggiormente grava (Italia *in primis*, sia per la sua posizione geografica sia per il Trattato di Dublino); vi è la frontiera dei diritti umani, che parecchi Paesi dell'Est interpretano in modo disinvolto; e vi è la frontiera fra area dell'euro e le aree delle restanti monete nazionali; e soprattutto vi sono i *cleavages* interni all'area euro – che non è quella che in economia si definisce un'area monetaria ottimale –, cioè gli *spread*, e oltre a questi vi è la differenziazione cruciale fra Stati creditori e debitori, tra “frugali” e “Pigs”; vi è poi uno spazio economico tedesco, il cuore dell'area dell'euro, il che comporta una macro-divisione del lavoro industriale su scala continentale e un'inclusione gerarchizzata di diverse economie nello spazio economico germanico – ma è decisivo capire che lo spazio economico tedesco e lo spazio politico tedesco non coincidono (molti Paesi inglobati di fatto nell'economia germanica hanno una politica estera lontana da quella tedesca): è questa mancata sovrapposizione a impedire l'affermarsi di un IV Reich, che neppure la Germania desidera. A questa complessità spaziale si aggiunga il fatto che la NATO ora non è più la priorità americana, e che gli USA di Trump sono al riguardo più scettici e preferiscono concentrare gli assetti militari in spazi ben determinati, ad esempio negli Stati orientali confinanti con la Russia o nella stessa Italia (Aviano e Sigonella). Insieme a questa ridefinizione strategica, tuttavia, è stata posta parecchia energia da parte degli USA per far sostenere agli alleati un peso economico maggiore, e in ciò Trump è stato in linea con Obama.



*La possibile fine della UE nella sua configurazione attuale (resa visibile dalla Brexit, e dalla scelta inglese per un modello imperiale finanziario informale, il cosiddetto global England che coesiste con un marcato neonazionalismo e con il riflesso tradizionale di ostilità verso un forte potere politico che si affermi sul continente) sta insieme ad altre fini: della globalizzazione che la destra anglofona, seguita poi dalla sinistra, ha aperto e che ora chiude (oltre alla secessione del Regno Unito, la guerra economica di Trump contro chi ha guadagnato troppo dalla globalizzazione: Cina e Germania), nonché del doppio modello neoliberista e ordoliberalista imposto all'Europa dall'euro (che ha portato a stagnazione o forti disuguaglianze economiche e sociali, e che ha fatto nascere i populismi); e in prospettiva, come rischio, della stessa democrazia occidentale postbellica. Il quadro è aggravato dal Covid, che accelera e intensifica le tensioni e le contraddizioni già in atto.*

*L'epidemia di Covid-19, e la crisi che ha generato, ha prodotto nella UE modificazioni importanti ma non univoche*

L'approvazione del Recovery Fund è infatti ambivalente. Per la prima volta la risposta a una crisi non sta nella "austerità espansiva" o nella manovra monetaria della BCE: l'Europa si impegna in una sorta di macropolitica economica, orientata allo sviluppo, alla crescita, all'innovazione. Un *new deal* post-Covid, verso la Green Economy. Ma alla risposta all'emergenza del coronavirus – che peraltro tarda parecchio a essere operativa – si è giunti attraverso una defatigante trattativa fra Stati, sotto la regia tedesca, volta a mediare i conflitti e a equilibrare la UE, oggi molto divisa secondo le vecchie e nuove linee di frattura sopra esposte. Attorno all'asse franco-tedesco, in cui la Germania acquista sempre più peso, ruotano infatti costellazioni spaziali differenziate, per cultura, interessi, sistemi politici, modelli economici. Così le istanze più schiettamente comunitarie – la Commissione e il Parlamento – hanno subito un ridimensionamento del loro ruolo, a vantaggio del Consiglio dei Capi di Stato e di Governo, l'organo in cui gli Stati fanno valere ciascuno il proprio peso politico: è rinato il "concerto delle potenze europee", con le relative gerarchie (potenze, tuttavia, ancora sottoposte alla disciplina dell'euro, sia pure momentaneamente allentata). E questo "concerto" ha e avrà un direttore, la Germania, e un "primo violino", la Francia. La partita non si è chiusa né con la netta sconfitta né con la vittoria assoluta dell'una o dell'altra delle due logiche che oggi si confrontano in Europa, in instabile equilibrio: quella comunitaria e quella intergovernativa. La UE non ha ancora deciso che strada prendere per uscire dall'attuale impasse.

*In Italia la UE è stata pensata come vincolo esterno per superare d'imperio le debolezze della nostra democrazia e del ceto politico; il nostro passato europeismo è stato il sostituto compensativo della nostra scarsa efficacia politica sulla scena internazionale, diminuita ulteriormente da quando la fine del bipolarismo mondiale ci ha privato del ruolo di mediatori,*

nel Mediterraneo, fra Occidente e mondo islamico. Appendere l'Italia al *vincolo esterno* ha quindi significato partecipare a una configurazione di spazi politici plurali e difficilmente controllabili, e a un regime economico di difficile gestione, che ha generato una protesta sociale imponente (il voto del 2018 alla Lega e al Movimento 5 Stelle lo dimostra). Fino dall'epoca pre-Covid si era capito – tranne che negli ambienti dell'oltranzismo ordoliberista – che per rendere l'euro sostenibile era necessario porsi come obiettivo la crescita ma anche una rinnovata centralità dell'occupazione, far leva sulla domanda interna e non principalmente sulla esportazione, perseguire la rivalutazione economica e giuridica del lavoro, mirare alla redistribuzione della ricchezza e non solo all'aumento del PIL, alla giustizia e non alla indiscriminata diminuzione del carico fiscale (peraltro mai realizzata). La necessità di rivedere il paradigma economico, e di riconoscere che la rivoluzione neoliberista e la sua variante tedesca ordoliberista presentano limiti ormai raggiunti, ovvero immaginare un nuovo umanesimo del lavoro, è fondamentale per superare la contrapposizione tra ristrette élites economiche e massa impoverita della popolazione (ceti medi inclusi) a cui il paradigma vigente conduce. E per superare i rischi di populismo autoritario che la situazione, se degenerasse, comporta.

*Lo strumento principale per questa trasformazione – o, più semplicemente, per rimettere ordine in casa nostra, nella democrazia e non nel populismo –, è lo Stato e la sua rinnovata centralità*

Lo Stato non è intrinsecamente portatore di nazionalismo e di egoismo: è invece uno spazio politico potenzialmente democratizzabile (soprattutto se in parallelo i cittadini non si riconoscono più nella protesta populistica). Il termine dispregiativo *sovranista* non significa nulla in sé (tranne che non sia sinonimo di ciò che un tempo era “la destra”) se non un rifiuto di approfondire l'analisi del presente. L'epidemia di Covid ha dimostrato che lo Stato è l'orizzonte primario e indispensabile per la gestione della sanità, e per la gestione anche della ripresa economica.

*Dall'attuale situazione di precario equilibrio e di probabile squilibrio si deve uscire: il vincolo dell'euro – che prosegue nella gestione “controllata” del Recovery Fund – rischia di essere solo un atto di forza*

Ora, in politica la forza conta, ma sono necessarie anche le idee: di forza l'Italia ne ha poca anche da prima dell'euro (il nostro rapporto privilegiato con la Germania, non alla pari, è una costante della nostra storia, nel bene e nel male); l'Italia è sempre stata la più debole delle Grandi potenze europee. L'euro ha ribadito questo destino. Al quale non ci si è veramente voluti sottrarre, e che si deve invece superare, nei limiti del possibile, con qualche idea, nutrita però di realismo: riconoscendo cioè che la UE esiste, e l'euro anche; che uscirne è difficile, e spezzarlo controproducente. E che si deve utilizzare il Recovery Fund per rafforzare l'ossatura fondamentale del Paese: base produttiva innovativa, infrastruttu-

re materiali e immateriali, scuola, università, pubblica amministrazione, così che la società oggi sfaldata dagli effetti negativi del paradigma economico e dal Covid si possa ricucire intorno all'ossatura dello Stato. In parallelo da parte dei cittadini si deve richiedere una qualità della politica molto superiore all'attuale (e qui la legge elettorale può fare qualcosa), e ci si deve impegnare in tal senso: i cambiamenti non avvengono senza una spesa d'energia. Un'Italia risanata e rafforzata potrà poi cercare di far valere nel contesto europeo il proprio peso politico ed economico per spostare gli equilibri complessivi verso quell'obiettivo di nuova centralità del lavoro, cioè di nuovo umanesimo, che resta il più ambizioso e il più importante.

*Il principio storico essenziale dell'Europa era il pluralismo delle forme politiche e la capacità di innovazione, cioè di immaginare futuri alternativi. Oggi, quale futuro per l'Europa? Gli Stati Uniti d'Europa – una vera federazione – sono un modello solo teorico ma non realistico (dove sta il popolo europeo col suo potere costituente, che dica “we the people”?); del resto, nessuno in Europa li vuole veramente: non i sovranisti e neppure le élites mainstream*

In ogni caso, sarebbe un'impresa titanica, dato che si tratterebbe di trasformare un insieme di Stati sovrani di lunga tradizione, e ancora disomogenei per molti aspetti non secondari, in un soggetto federato di scala continentale, capace di interagire con gli altri grandi attori della politica mondiale (che certamente non hanno interesse alla nascita di un'Europa unita e forte). In alternativa, l'Europa avrebbe potuto configurarsi come una cornice di libero scambio economico e scientifico, e di culture politiche democratiche, che contorna Stati sovrani liberi di allearsi e di praticare modelli economici convergenti ma non unificati. Non si poteva pensare che finite le *cornici* delle due superpotenze vittoriose, che davano forma a due Europe, la nuova Europa libera dalla cortina di ferro dovesse essere a sua volta una “gabbia d'acciaio” tecnocratico-economica. E invece si è ottenuto il risultato di avere un'Europa al tempo stesso troppo unita (dall'euro) e troppo disunita (da sovranità statali a cui tocca adattarsi alle difficoltà economiche, e a ogni altra crisi).

Nel duro mondo che ci si prepara – fatto di nuove confliggenti aree di influenza politico-economica di potenze grandi e medie – l'Europa attuale corre il rischio di lacerarsi lungo le sue molteplici linee di frattura, trascinata qua e là da USA, Cina e Russia. In linea di principio, ci sarebbe bisogno di un'Europa più forte proprio perché meno rigida e meno fragile, di un'Europa più articolata dell'attuale, a più centri, a più poli: si tratterebbe almeno di trasformare l'asse franco-tedesco in un triangolo, in uno dei cui vertici stia l'Italia, con una propria capacità aggregativa. Così, una parte dell'attuale pluralità degli spazi politici potrebbe tramutarsi da debolezza in forza; senza che i singoli Stati vadano in ordine sparso in un mondo troppo vasto per loro, un'Europa composta da Stati uniti non primariamente da una moneta, che mentre unisce indebolisce,

ma dalla convergenza graduale ed elastica di soggetti politici ed economici, avrebbe forse qualche *chance* di non scomparire dalla storia e dalla politica mondiale. Ma chissà se la UE ha ancora il tempo, e la volontà, per una simile impennata.

*Brussels •*

*European  
identity*

*• European  
Union*

*• Romano  
Prodi*

# Architecture and European identity.

## A conversation with Romano Prodi

### Commentary

Anna Livia Friel (1), Marco Provinciali (2)

Note: this interview have been collected in March 2020.

#### *Abstract*

The authors of this contribution are participants in a project, the EUPavilion, that investigates the relationship between European institutions and architecture with the aim to rekindle the debate on Europe as a cultural entity as opposed to a mere political-economic union. Particularly lively around the year 2000, at the time of the introduction of the single currency and the Eastern enlargement of the European Union, this debate came to a halt with the failure of the European Constitution project, and was permanently put to rest by the arrival of the 2008 economic crisis. Now, with a view to restarting the process twenty years on, we thought it could be useful to revisit some of the key events of the time with Romano Prodi, the Italian politician who more than any other contributed to the European integration process.

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The EUPavilion study started taking shape in 2018, when it was proposed to set up a European Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. The pavilion, an architectural object capable of disentangling itself from any specific function, was seen as an ideal testing ground to investigate the possible features of a (new) European architecture as well as to examine the language of the institutional buildings of a supranational structure such as the European Union.

At a time such as this, when the nation-state and its crisis are at the centre of the public debate, and national identities are once again an instrument of political conflict, the national pavilion appears as a dated concept, no longer capable of reflecting the society's artistic and cultural achievement. For its part, the European Union, which established its headquarters in the Quartier Léopold in Brussels and has promoted significant property developments in the area, seems to have adopted planning indeterminacy as a programmatic manifesto. Over the years, this lack of planning has been the object of criticism, both by Brussels citizens committees and by a broader academic/cultural community. In particular, the former have complained about the systematic negation of a real public space, the missed opportunities to build structures fitting in with their surroundings, and the inability of the entire European Quarter to take on a cohesive role within the city. Criticisms were also voiced against the formal qualities of the buildings, pointing the finger at aspects such as their anonymous bureaucratic drabness or their unjustified façadism.<sup>1</sup>

Because of this, two themes addressing a substantial issue converge in the EUPavilion study: can architecture change the image of a great institution, and can it contribute to the definition of a new international identity?

Romano Prodi, President of the European Commission from 1999 to 2004, played a key role in furthering European integration and promoted major initiatives centring on the theme of Europe's image. Of considerable significance in this connection were two symposiums organised in collaboration with the then Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt on the theme "Brussels, a Capital for Europe". Various leading figures<sup>2</sup> in the European cultural scene attended the meetings, including Italian writer and philosopher Umberto Eco and Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas, who were asked to open the first and second conferences, respectively. Two different approaches to the issue in question characterised their interventions and the discussion that followed, i.e., the idea of a *soft capital*, as put forward in Eco's address, and that of a *hard capital*, as voiced by Rem Koolhaas. This antithesis fuelled the debate on Europe's image, but a clear-cut contraposition between the two viewpoints was blurred by the complexity of the issues at hand.<sup>3</sup> The session inaugurated by Eco addressed the matter of Europe's capital in broad terms and underscored the need to absorb the different identities without imposing a dominant narrative, while evoking the different structures that power had assumed in the course of history to assert itself across the lands of Europe. Opening the session dedicated to Brussels, Rem Koolhaas insisted on the representative role of the institutional buildings and proposed two possible paths towards making Brussels into the capital of the European



Union: one consisted of adding new buildings and redesigning the conceptual framework of the European Quarter, the other consisted of moving away from the current district and inaugurating a brand-new site, an 'idyllic campus' for the European institutions in the Tour et Taxi area on the Brussels canal. Looking back at this lively, and perhaps somewhat circumscribed debate, what the Léopold Quarter puts centre stage today is the translation into spatial terms of a highly complex political project implemented in 'short steps'.<sup>4</sup> A backward glance through the eyes of one of the protagonists of the transformations highlights the close relationship between the political project and its architectural manifestation.

1 - The most recent example is the project for the recovery of the Eastman building in Leopold Park: built in 1935 to house a dental clinic – a function it retained until the mid-seventies –, in 2009, the building was chosen by the Presidency of the European Parliament to be the "House of European History". The design of the new exhibition halls imposed significant changes to the building's layout, while retaining and restoring the art deco façade. As was the case with the small nineteenth-century station facing Place du Luxembourg, which serves as a link between the Léopold Quarter and the complex that hosts the European Parliament, the conservation of some of the historicised elements of the city often ends up being solved by 'façadist' operations with caricatural implications. The scale of the spaces required for

contemporary uses and the solemnity imposed by their functions clashed with the desire to conserve parts of the art deco façade, almost as though the intention was to mitigate or partly conceal the real impact of the operations (another eloquent case of this tendency is Philippe Samyn's Europa Building project).

2 - The first symposium was held in Brussels on 30 May 2001 with a view to discussing the city's future form and character as Europe's capital. In addition to Romano Prodi and Guy Verhofstadt, other conference participants included French scholar, Michel Crozier, Umberto Eco, the former Polish foreign minister, Bronislaw Geremek, Swiss entrepreneur Nicholas Hayek, French director Agnès Jaoui, Rem Koolhaas, the former mayor of Barcelona, Pasqual Maragall, British anthropologist,

Maryon McDonald, Salzburg Festival director, Gerard Mortier, Belgian comic book artist, François Schuiten, Belgian journalist Geert van Istendael, and the director of the Guggenheim Bilbao Museum, Juan Ignacio Vidarte.

3 - For further information, see the final report drafted by the European Commission: European Commission and Belgian Presidency, Brussels capital of Europe. Final report, Oct. 2001.

4 - This expression is frequently associated with the so-called functionalist approach inspired by Jean Monnet, as clearly set out in the famous Schuman Declaration of 9 May 1950.

5 - For Vittorio Gregotti's considerations on European architecture, see Gregotti V. (1999) *Identità e crisi dell'architettura europea* ("Identity and crisis of

European Architecture"), Turin, Einaudi.

6 - The polyhedron evoked here is one of the many images used to describe Europe's multifaceted identity. It is worthwhile recalling the definition proposed by Rem Koolhaas in USE, *Uncertain States of Europe*: "It is very difficult to represent diversity. Basically, there is the model of the mosaic: a mosaic is a larger whole that is composed of a series of smaller fragments. But a mosaic in itself is a meaningless thing. A mosaic becomes significant if it represents something, whether it be an idea or a value, or, at least, an image. Perhaps we could compare the European mosaic to a kind of digital screen, which shows incredible tonal richness yet resists congealing or cohering into a single image." See *Multiplicity* (2003), USE, *Uncertain States of Europe*, Milan, Skira, p. 226.

Fig. Photograph by  
Hans Werlemann.  
Courtesy of OMA.



- 1 *We would like to reflect with you on the role of architecture in the European project.*

**Romano Prodi:** It is certainly something I have thought about several times: great changes have always expressed themselves with their own architectural originality. Europe has still not done so.

- 2 *Perhaps it is worth starting from what we view as one of the most effective descriptions of the European identity. According to Vittorio Gregotti, the identity of Europe as a cultural entity lies in its ability to accept and absorb outside influences, transform them into cultural material of its own, and use them constructively for its own growth<sup>5</sup>. Thus, Gregotti is thinking of an identity in continuous and rapid transformation. What is to you the fundamental character of the European identity?*

**RM:** A difficult question indeed. Gregotti's words can be easily endorsed. The real problem is that the European identity is an ongoing process of construction. We have a European ideal, that of constructing a unity in the continent that can play a role in this changing world, and this is the goal. European identity, on the other hand, rests on a huge number of factors, including individual cultural identities as well as political traditions and the innovations brought about by modern political developments, such as welfare and the tensions to overcome the concept of nation, putting in place effective integration measures in a world that is becoming global. Above all, the nature of identity is always multiform and never has an exclusive character. Identity is composed of many facets and many aspects: it is a polyhedron<sup>6</sup>.

*We would like to take a look with you at two experiences that marked a moment of reflection on the image of Europe and its capital – a moment that unfortunately has remained isolated. In 2001, you and the then Belgian Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, promoted the organisation of two meetings that brought together European intellectuals of various provenances for a reflection on Brussels as Europe's capital. Where did you get the idea that a reflection of this type was necessary?*

3

**RM:** I remember it well, because I was passionately in favour of it. We knew that it was necessary to make an iconographic effort. Clearly, I would have liked to see the birth of a European iconography, but in five years (author's note: of presidency of the European commission), I was unable to even inaugurate the restored Berlaymont building, though I signed off on it. Precisely because everything is an adaptation in progress, not even the Berlaymont can be used as an example of European iconography – even though it is shown in all television broadcasts and was adopted as a symbol of the European Union in Brussels. Though obviously the Berlaymont is dear to me, it represents Europe only because all the flags are in front of it. Would you ever consider flying the papal flag to signal St. Peter? Yet you can put all flags you want in front of the Berlaymont.

*It is no accident that the Berlaymont has the same shape as the building that houses the UNESCO headquarters in Paris, and UN institutions are international' global by definition.*

4

**RM:** Thank you for the comparison, it had never occurred to me. It is quite true, there is a certain similarity.

*Getting back to the round tables on Brussels as European capital: at those meetings, the position shared by nearly all the participants in the debate was that Europe needed a 'soft' capital, in an attempt to give a voice to all the differences at the core of Europe's identity.*

5

**RM:** Certainly. Brussels will never be Washington, that is obvious.

*Architect Rem Koolhaas maintains that it is necessary to build a hard capital even if this were to require the extreme option of rebuilding the European Quarter.*

6

**RM:** Even if I thought so too, unfortunately it was not possible. It was no accident that we called Koolhaas: it was because he was a strong supporter of this idea. The result, however, was the one you yourselves can see now. You can say in a certain sense that the problem was that the European Quarter actually 'worked'. This is also what is blocking the development of alternative proposals: the fact that 'it works'.

**7** *OK, let's say that from a strictly functional standpoint, it fulfils its role, but, as you said, it needs flags in order to become a recognisable backdrop.*

**RM:** Without a doubt. However, perhaps, in a few centuries...

**8** *Among other things, both the debate on Brussels Capital of Europe and the project "The image of Europe" are experiences that developed in a context of great optimism and faith in the European project, and this is why they are fatally dated.*

**RM:** Exactly. Because let us remember: it is no accident that they were accompanied by the introduction of the Euro, the establishment of the Commission, the great enlargement that was supposed to bring peace in Europe. And note that people love Europe when it accomplishes great projects, which may even be misguided but are the sign of a political journey. When the tensions, the fragmentations and divisions that have occurred over the last ten to fifteen years started to thwart the great political objective people began to love Europe less.

**9** *Do you think that now, at a distance of almost twenty years, a fresh examination of this theme would be useful, or do you feel that the results achieved then were satisfactory?*

**RM:** No, it would have to be accompanied by political objectives. Capitals, projects for capitals, materialise at the time when an idea, a power, an identity, a common force affirms itself. So, I would not repropose it today, but I hope it can be reconsidered in the future.

**10** *You could say that those experiences were possible specifically as a result of the positive atmosphere prevailing in Europe at the time.*

**RM:** Exactly. We were convinced that an institutional building should have cultural implications. We felt that we had a duty in this regard. During those same years, we had established a cultural identity commission which worked for two years. It was challenging. Some of the commission members were not of European descent, others were Muslims, and I had hopes that the commission could become the reference point for the cultural transformations sweeping across Europe. The rejection of the constitution put a great brake on this cultural process. If you work on a constitution that is then rejected by the French and the Dutch people, it is all over. Rem Koolhaas being Dutch is almost a paradox. Some say I am the one to blame for the enlargement of the European Union [editors' note: that started with optimism and was then left unfinished]. I have thought about it a lot, coming to the conclusion that history's trains only pass once. If the shards left behind by the Soviet Union had not been put back together again rapidly, we would be facing an even more fragmented scenario today.

*To return to Brussels: it seems to us that the fundamental problem with the European Quarter is not the individual buildings but the absence of relationships between them – from a spatial and a symbolic perspective. We feel that the desire to represent oneself in the urban space is a fundamental expression of democracy: just think of the urban structure of our old cities, in which the square was the place where the various powers were represented (church, town hall, etc.), or the perfect correspondence between the institutional architecture of American democracy and the Washington city project.*

*It should be noted that since the 2000s various competitions have been held for the design of public buildings and spaces in the European Quarter (Rue de la Loi, Place Schuman, the Europa Building, the renovation of the Berlaymont), but those involving the public space have never seen the light of day.*

*Is it no longer possible to conceive a project for a radical renewal or a refoundation of Europe's capital? Can you think of alternative models? Can the public space on which they rise still play a fundamental role?*

**RM:** By now, these buildings have acquired their own history. True, they are not buildings that 'sing in chorus' according to their initial design, but by now they are here, and I cannot see any alternative. I do not see Brasilia, I do not see Astana on the European horizon.

Adjustments will be made without any doubt because they always are. What I mean is that the Parliament has its own great identity and so does the Berlaymont – they are close to one another. There is no square that unifies it all, but this is the new world and that is the way it is. There is no Mall like Washington, there is no Champs-Élysées. I imagine that there will be a somewhat closer link between them, there will be pedestrian areas, and there will be footbridges, connection ideas.

*Is the lack of a place tying together the relationships between these buildings one of the key factors in what Koolhaas specifically defined as the European Union's iconographic deficit?*

**RM:** Yes, that is correct, but it was also a consequence of the efforts required to push the process forward, and the result of the disagreements and the adversities.

Indeed, I believe that, from a certain standpoint, the city of Brussels was one of the most flexible places in which these things could be done. In Paris, or in some other capitals, it would have been impossible. So, it is true that there is no overall picture, but at the same time this enormous European Quarter embodies the scale, the strength and the importance, as well as also the fatigue, with which Europe made itself. The Parliament built itself on its own, the Council went its own way and the Commission scattered buildings and skyscrapers – mini skyscrapers – popped up here and there, all over Brussels. What I am trying to say is that it

was history that meant we did not get the strong iconography advocated by Koolhaas. When we inaugurated *The Image of Europe* exhibition, the central question posed – though in a provisional manner – was specifically that of the iconography.

- 13** *You have pointed out several times that because of its democratic nature the process of European integration is inevitably a slow process that takes place one step at a time. A process whose fundamental nature is like that of a building in continuous evolution. If you wish to establish a parallel with architecture, your image invokes the Gothic cathedrals, built over the centuries, whose meaning actually lies in their construction. Identity is built along with the building itself. What could be the European Union's cathedral in your view?*

**RM:** The Gothic buildings, the cathedrals, took a long time to be built, especially because the money ran out, but nobody was trying to destroy them while they were being built.

Building Europe, on the other hand, hinges on the continuous dynamics between those who want to build and those who pull back' It is a completely different purpose, there is never a condition of uniformity, a common goal fully shared by all the builders.

Perhaps, at the beginning of both post-war periods, there was a moment when this equilibrium existed, but now the political aspects have to be taken into account: the European Commission represents those who build the cathedral, while the European Council represents the interests of those who must invest the money in the building and oftentimes they pull back to prevent the cathedral from being built. Not everyone is going in the same direction in this interaction.

What I hope, and what I see, is that all things considered there is a sort of long-term instinct that ensures that the building process goes on, albeit very slowly. This is what consoles me, let's say, what makes me confident that the process will go ahead. But you have seen how slow it is, haven't you? How the European Constitution was rejected, how more power was given to the countries and not to the Community structures, and how the Parliament struggles to obtain strong autonomous power. In short, it is true that the comparison with the Gothic cathedral can work if you think of construction time and complexity, but paradoxically the European Union is also hampered by the difficulty of the relationships between the various parties.

- 14** *You rightly promoted the introduction of the single currency as an event of enormous political importance. For us, this is all the more interesting because the Europe of the single currency decided to use buildings to depict itself. The structures reproduced are not real but are lifelike, and constitute a catalogue of the styles we can find in most European countries. We believe that the current circumstances in which we all find ourselves,*

*confined within private spaces – domestic and otherwise – are once again highlighting the role of our public spaces, monuments and parks – not only in building identity, and with it the sense of belonging to a community, but also in bringing about social cohesion. It is no accident that during the last two centuries national states have built and represented themselves through architecture. Obviously, we are not only thinking of the monumental structures of the 19<sup>th</sup> century or of totalitarian states, but also of more successful experiences with the use of architecture as a fundamental expression of the democratic character of the European democracies, as in the cases, for example, of the Grands Travaux in Paris or restoration of the Bundestag in Berlin. In your view, could architecture and the design of spaces with a powerful symbolic charge still play a role in the construction of a renewed European image?*

**RM:** There are two different aspects to this question: first of all, the architectural images that appear on the Euro banknotes were at the centre of a very long debate in which I took part personally, and from which some aspects clearly emerged. On the one hand, the symbolic importance of the architecture was evident, on the other, it was essential to avoid the portrayal of specific national identities on the notes. Mediation was achieved by depicting on paper money architectural images that acted as an abstract symbol, which could be accepted unanimously by all the countries, without offending anyone or evoking identities other than one's own, elements that could take on a highly abstract form. In contrast, coins showed the national symbols: from the German eagle, to Leonardo's euros, or even the sovereigns for some countries. It's interesting that paper money depicted a step forward into the future, while memory was impressed on the metal coinage. What you say is true – architecture was used as an instrument of unity – but it is an architectural symbol that can hardly be traced back to any specific model of reference. There are arches, bridges, and elements we can all recognise as familiar and unifying, but, at the same time, they have to be abstract because – and here I am coming to the second part of your question – the monuments you have referred to are all profoundly national and strongly represent a national identity.

The Pompidou Centre is the pride of France, not of Europe: personally, I think we have not got there yet. When Koolhaas addressed the theme of Europe's image, he started to think about flags: it is much more difficult to describe the European features of the monuments. Certainly, we have now adopted the European Commission building in Brussels as the symbol – it is a fine example of modern architecture –, but in cultural terms it cannot be said to have a different, exquisitely 'European', design.

*Perhaps, with reference to some of the experiences we mentioned as examples, it is not possible to speak of a European character, but in them you can discern a tension towards an international language, conveyed first of all by modernism.*

15



Well, the Brussels building could very well be in Beijing. Koolhaas himself designed the headquarters for China Central Television: a building that could just as easily be in Beijing as in Brussels. The Shard could be in Shanghai. And honestly, the skyscrapers of Pudong could be in London.

- 16** *In fact, the aim of our project, which takes the form of research, and especially of research by design, is to understand whether there is a possibility of overcoming this sort of overlap between the generic nature of the architecture of globalisation – the most evident manifestation of the ‘archistar’ phenomenon – and localism that degenerates into nationalism.*

**RM:** As I am not an architect, you can have my reaction as an economist. Globalisation has not only resulted in all television stations being identical, but also all the skyscrapers. Today architecture is part of a globalised world. Accordingly, it is difficult to imagine a European architecture, other than by means of a specific analysis of the individual buildings, in which you architects can provide your views. We jokingly called the first part of the Council of Europe building (*author’s note: the Justus Lipsius Building*) Tutankhamen’s tomb, it was so gloomy [for us without an architectural background]...

- 17** *Two distinct approaches have been at play in the evolution of the European integration process: Jean Monnet’s so-called functionalist approach, which has exerted great influence since the 1950s, and the constitutionalist approach inspired by Altiero Spinelli. Following the failure of the European constitution project in 2007, the hypothesis of a ‘founding experience’ seems to have been temporarily set aside. Over the last ten years, following the 2008 crisis, the European conversation has inevitably concentrated on the economic aspects, ignoring perhaps the cultural aspects that we have examined together. Do you believe that culture can and must find a new space in the indispensable reformulation of the European project?*

**RM:** I must make an initial consideration. You have rightly said that Monnet’s functionalism was the guiding principle, and was the salvation: because of the great differences, progress is made step by step. Could architecture have followed a different path?

- 18** *This is what has emerged very clearly from this conversation...*

**RM:** Today the future is uncertain, and it cannot be otherwise when facing the risks, the crises and the challenges that trigger certain transformations. Just like the war triggered the spring that created Europe – this Europe, however imperfect – in the same way other crises will set other mechanisms in motion. I am talking for example of the excessive American-Chinese power we are experiencing, of the sudden fear of being marginalised from the world scene.

Without a doubt, there can be a great many different occasions, but in my opinion the thrust for a real leap forward can only come from a crisis. I'm certainly unable to describe what type of crisis it should be, for example, I never would have thought that a new crisis could be brought about by an epidemic. In any case the European Union has made more progress during the two months when the pandemic was most severe than in the previous fifteen years. I would have more readily thought of a globalisation crisis, of tensions associated with the economy. I am thinking, for example, of the extraordinary power of the new means of communication, of the new networks as it were. They are practically all American or Chinese and are dominating the world: for example, in a single day Alibaba made sales amounting to 38 billion dollars, and the first billion in 14 seconds. Well, once matured, won't these reflections trigger that identity thrust we are talking about? Perhaps the consolidation of nationalisms that has occurred in recent years has inhibited this thrust, but I believe that world events can still trigger it.

You work in Venice, which was a cradle of civilisation for a long time: think of the Renaissance, think of when the European nations were the leaders in everything: from finance to the art of war, technology... The first globalisation process coincided with the discovery of America, and, after that, none of the small Italian states was able to build the great galleons that crossed the oceans. The Venice Arsenal could only make small vessels: it is stupendous, but it is small. The big ships were built only by the great kingdoms of France, Spain and England. Look, now we are in the middle of a second globalisation process, in which the great galleons are Apple, Google, Alibaba, eBay and Amazon: not even one of them is European. If Europe keeps on this way, we will end up like Renaissance Italy and will no longer exist for five centuries. If Europe takes a leap forward, we too will build the ships of the future.

*RE: femi-  
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# RE: Theorizing Vulnerability

## Commentary

-  
**Bryony Roberts**

### *Abstract*

This commentary considers the relevance of theory in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and protests against racial injustice. The events of 2020 have called attention to the visceral, lived conditions of illness, poverty, and injustice and the systemic conditions that perpetuate them. As the limitations of existing institutions and bodies of knowledge are exposed, it becomes urgent to cultivate alternative ways of knowing and practicing. This commentary builds on the recently edited volume Log 48: “Expanding Modes of Practice” to discuss how theories and practices of intersectional feminism can bridge the scales of personal, visceral experience and systemic analysis to think outside of existing frameworks and imagine change.

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**ARDETH #07**

The COVID-19 pandemic has made palpable for even the most fortunate the vulnerabilities of physical, financial, and psychological uncertainty. For those less fortunate, the everyday struggle to meet basic needs is reaching frantic desperation. In the United States, recurring instances of racial violence are compounding experiences of disparity and igniting protests around the country. What, then, could be the relevance of theory in the face of bald physical suffering and heightened social inequity? A cerebral domain of word-play and intertextual references, the medium of theory itself is aligned with *logos* rather than the tangible realm of physical need, suffering, and relief.

Certainly, theory cannot solve a global health or economic crisis. It can, potentially, lay the groundwork for the societies and economies that are rebuilt in the wake of these crises. Theories capable of addressing tangible experiences of poverty, illness, and oppression – that illuminate conditions of everyday lived reality and their connections to systemic inequities – are essential to thinking alternative futures. Fortunately, there are many lineages of critical thought that have challenged mind/body dualities in western thought and have developed languages – often slippery and personal – of addressing the relation between corporeal experience and systemic conditions. This lineage offers a door to theory capable of addressing the depth of suffering now, and capable of stitching theory back into the world.

Throughout 2019 and early 2020, at the invitation of editor Cynthia Davidson, I developed a guest-edited issue of the architectural journal *Log* titled “Expanding Modes of Practice,” which was published at the end of March 2020, just as the pandemic was accelerating globally. At its core, this issue is exploring the implications of intersectional feminism for architectural practice – asking how attention to the overlapping inequities of gender, race, class, and sexuality opens up alternative modes of thinking, working, and being. A common theme throughout the contributions by historians, theories, and practitioners, addressing both historical case studies and contemporary practices, is the simultaneous consideration of both the concrete specifics of everyday experiences and the large-scale political, social, and economic systems. This mixing of the personal and the systemic, the specific and the abstract, the messy and the categorical intentionally breaks down hierarchies embedded in established theories and historiographies, making room for individual experiences overlooked by institutionalized canons. While intended to confront how architecture can address social complexities, the issue themes became tragically more relevant to the crisis of the pandemic. If there was ever a time when architectural theory and practice needed to find ways of addressing personal, physical, and embodied needs, it is now.

Women, communities of color, and populations in the global south are hit hardest by COVID-19 through the compounded burdens of care

work, precarious working conditions, and underfunded health systems. Addressing their experiences requires expanding ways of knowing. There are parallel lineages of theory that have explored how attention to specific, embodied experience can offer resistance to established patriarchal, capitalist, and colonial systems. Phenomenology has long been the dominant discourse on experience, producing a range of positions over time that alternatively destabilize and reify the concept of a universal subject. In contrast, theoretical work in feminist, queer, and critical race theory (sometimes reworking phenomenological methods) has offered frameworks for analyzing the specific, embodied experiences of individuals and producing modes of situated solidarity and resistance. As Judith Butler articulated in *Gender Trouble*, the mind/body duality that has been pervasive in western philosophical discourse, beginning with Plato and continuing through Descartes, Husserl, and Sartre, supports a hierarchy of reason over corporeality and maintains the fantasy of escaping physicality into a transcendent realm of abstraction. This duality is not merely a philosophical trope, but has profound implications for conceptions of gender. She states, “the cultural associations of mind with masculinity and body with femininity are well documented within the field of philosophy and feminism. As a result, any uncritical reproduction of the mind/body distinction ought to be rethought for the implicit gender hierarchy that the distinction has conventionally produced, maintained, and rationalized” (Butler, 1999: 17). This mind/body distinction has been central to not only justifications of unequal gender roles but also large-scale projects of colonialism. As Maria Lugones describes, “coloniality” depends on conceptualizing colonizers as rational beings and indigenous populations as primitive, sexualized beings, thereby justifying the dehumanizing actions of slaughter, rape, and the destruction of cultures, as well as ongoing contemporary exploitation through the disparities between the global north and global south. But there are nonetheless important moments of friction when the “logic and efficacy [of coloniality] are met by different concrete people whose bodies, selves in relation, and relations to the spirit world do not follow the logic of capital” (Lugones, 2010: 754). The collision of conceptual systems with specific bodies enacts both the moment of oppression but also the opening for resistance. The inexact and individual realization of a system offers a moment of interpretation and possible subversion. Attention to the physical realm is therefore not only informative for mounting critiques of existing philosophical systems but also for finding modes of expression and liberation that emerge from physical and material practices.

While feminist, queer, and critical race theories and their activist counterparts are significantly distinct, and by no means collapsible into easy unity, the last few years have seen notable moments of solidarity both in theory and in activism. More than 30 years since Kimberlé Crenshaw first coined the word ‘intersectional’ in 1989 (Crenshaw, 1989: 140),

the idea of intersectionality – of seeing the overlapping oppressions of gender, race, class, sexuality, and ableness as inextricable – is mobilizing both thought and action, perhaps in response to the rise of populist extremism and inflammatory leadership across multiple nations. Common themes are emerging: the tendency to probe both the macro systems and micro social interactions that produce interlocking oppressions and to articulate both individual subjective experiences and structural critiques. If theory since the early 20th century has wrestled with the question of how to proceed when there are no objective universal truths, this multi-scalar elision of the personal and the systemic opens up alternative answers to these recurring questions.

What are the implications of these theoretical and activist projects for architecture and urbanism? As discussed in the earlier issue of *Ardeth* #05, edited by Andres Jaque, innovation is no longer seen as a neutral endeavor, but rather one entangled in specific social, political, economic, and ecological contexts. The writings of Bruno Latour and Donna Haraway, both referenced frequently in the issue, offer theoretical foundations for imagining invention as a compromised but still valuable endeavor—one achieved by wading knee-deep through one’s contextual limitations, reaching for commonalities and solidarities with others who are themselves mired in their own biases. The assumption that we are all compromised, all limited, all entangled is an invaluable starting point for alternative epistemologies and practices. Brutal honesty and self-reflection create the possibilities for profound coalitions. As Haraway describes, “we do need an earth-wide network of connections, including the ability partially to translate knowledge among very different-and power-differentiated-communities” (Haraway, 1988: 580).

“Expanding Modes of Practice” gathers practitioners, theorists, and historians who are finding ways of practicing from their own entanglement. Bringing their own narratives, cultural contexts, and relationships, they approach all of their collaborators as complex embodied individuals with their own cultural histories. They integrate community engagement methods from urban planning, heritage studies, and social practice into processes of research and design to address the complexity of social conditions – using interviews, workshops, oral histories, and collaborations. Writing humorously personal critiques of patriarchy, organizing intergenerational workshops to gather oral histories, leading collaborative design processes using piles of 99-cent store objects, working with individual small business owners to navigate regulatory legislation, contributors such as Deborah Garcia, Paola Aguirre, LA Mas, Hector, Mabel O. Wilson, and Ana Miljacki show that both theory and practice can be deeply personal and also work towards large-scale systemic change.



This moment calls for a capacity to bridge between abstraction and specificity, to create bodies of knowledge that emerge from the brutal realities of bodies in social and economic disparity. A future that builds from this present has to start with unabashed, honest looking.

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***Il pianeta in mare*, directed by  
Andrea Segre (2019)**



Porto Marghera, one of the largest industrial areas in Italy, and one of the most important European chemical hubs, was founded in 1918, just 5 km from the centre of Venice. The city had no more land, so they decided to fill the swamps of the lagoon: an area of 2000 hectares was created, with 40 km of roads, 135 km of railway lines and 18 km of navigable canals.

This is the century-old heritage of Marghera explored by Andrea Segre in *Il pianeta in mare* [A Planet in the Sea], where contemporary and images of the past reveal the contradictions of such a peculiar microcosm. The film, which was presented at the 76th Venice Film Festival in 2019, is part of a research that Segre has dedicated to the lagoon for twenty years through documentaries and fiction films. The last effort is *Molecole* (2020), a view above the water level of a still

Venice, during the pandemic age of 2020. The lagoon is a closed and secure place that pushes man outside, in a circular destiny that lets Segre make an uninterrupted and dialogical comparison between himself and the other. The other, in *Il pianeta in mare*, is represented by the crowd of workers from more than sixty different countries, managers, truck drivers and the cook of the last local restaurant.

What is the legacy behind the Italian industrial progress? Which future does Marghera still have in the plans of the global economy? If Europe dies in Lampedusa, as we saw in *Fuocoammare* [Fire at Sea] by Gianfranco Rosi (2016), what does Europe represent here? Marghera is a metaphysical place that embraces the whole world, a gate through which we can go further and further north, towards a Europe that even Italian businessmen prefer to Marghera. An archaeology of myths has layered itself in the dreams of Italian migrants at first, and then in the various “souths of the world”, erupting in the global flow of people and capital.

The multilinguism of the film creates a centripetal force, which contrasts with an opposed one that converges in a strong unity of place: the magnetism of the story always takes us back to the steel and engineering plants, to the food silos, to the shipyards, to the big cargo port and to the petrochemical settlements. Traveling through this labyrinth creates an audiovisual map where stories overlap in a living archive made of memory and orality traces. The writing process of the

documentary is attached to the psychogeographical approach and finds its main detour in the “architectural belly”: it is the steel belly of the big ships under construction, one of most debated problems in recent years, as shown in *The Venice Syndrome* by Andreas Pichler (2012). The territory of Marghera is fragile, having already witnessed demolitions, abandonment, and continuous change in its vocation. The deaths by vinyl chloride, the strikes and trade union struggles drown in this cycle. What is left of the fragmented human capital of this planet is the search for a mean of community, for a shared and sustainable future, symbolically represented by two fishermen who filter the seabed trying to save the species which survive pollution, the last resource for the sea.

Alessandra Lancellotti  
Politecnico di Torino







Matheus Cartocci

**Eurafrica.**  
Political Design for  
a historical utopia:  
Atlantropa 2.0



## Ardeth #09

### RACE. Exploring the Modern-Colonial Legacy in Contemporary Architecture

Nota: con questo numero Ardeth apre a un campo di studi che non ha una immediata definizione nella lingua italiana e, presumibilmente, neanche nel dibattito architettonico. La decisione redazionale di mantenere il titolo in inglese riflette l'assenza di una conversazione fondata nella nostra lingua.

**Felipe Hernández**

Theme Editor / Curatore

Architecture is an inward looking discipline. Its history conveys the norms of the discipline to an audience composed mostly of architects, who are familiar with the work of their predecessors – from whom they learnt, or for whom they worked. As such, architecture singularises the multiple processes through which space is produced, excluding difference in the pursuit of coherent narratives to sustain its authority, and does so mainly through the figure of the architect. For a long time now, critics like Beatriz Colomina, Diana Agrest, Mary McLeod, Jane Rendell (to mention only a few) have shown how that figure is principally male. However, little has been said about the fact that the figure of the architect is also white; a racial classification that refers not only to epidermal characteristics, but to their national origin, education, and in most cases their class affiliation.

The history of architecture in general, and modern architecture in particular, is constructed on a very narrow basis: a handful of European and North American architects whose work influenced others



around the world generating an international movement. As such, there is an apparently clear origin that also establishes a hierarchy and has a colour of skin. Contributions by African Americans in the United States of America, Afro-descendants in South America, Aborigines in Australia, have not been registered in the architectural history book with the same prominence, as revealed in the recent volume *Race and Modern Architecture. A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present*, wonderfully edited by Irene Cheng, Charles L. Davis II and Mabel O. Wilson. Recent books, especially in the United States of America, are beginning to explore the significant contribution of Black architects to the construction of modern cities in their country. The impact of these studies is enormous, even though the focus remains on 'blackness', reducing the complexity of 'race' as a socio-cultural signifier to one group. Therefore, it is absolutely necessary amply to explore the concept of race, so as to include other terms that have been deployed as, or along with race in recent years, for example Arab, Indigenous, Jewish, or Eastern European. It is equally important to explore other contexts where race continues to play an enormously divisive role, like in Europe, as well as the implications of race in countries like China, Japan or Indonesia to mention only a few.

The recent announcement that, for the first time in its 173-year history, the RIBA Gold Medal was awarded to an African-born British architect, Sir David Adjaye, was met with celebration. But it also drew attention to the fact that the number of black registered architects in the United Kingdom has dropped to 1%, while in the USA, only 2% of all registered architects are African-Americans, and of those only 0.3% are women. Similar statistics are found in countries with large Afro-descendant populations like Brazil or Colombia, and even South Africa where only 65 women were registered as architects in 2017. These figures demonstrated the lack of diversity in architectural practice, and urgent need to review access to the profession. And while these statistics refer to the absence of black architects, little is known about Indigenous Australians, Aymara in Bolivia, or First Nations Peoples in Canada, and their contribution to architecture.

As such this issue of *Ardeth* intends to expand discussions about race in architecture, intersecting a broad range of ethno-racial groups, while simultaneously displacing the debate to include regions where it needs more and urgent attention, like in Europe and Latin America, as well as in countries like China and Japan. Thus, for this issue, we seek articles that explore diversity in the profession as well as in education. We also invite papers that embrace multiple methodological agendas to study the contribution of ethnic minority architects around the world, and articulate the potential inherent in the notion of non-white architectures in an attempt to decolonise the discipline. Authors can use race as a lens to explore a broad range of issues including, but not limited to:

- Expand the narrow margins of current debates about race in architecture.
- Explore the intersections between race, ethnicity, class and gender in contemporary architectural practice.
- Explore the impact of these intersections in the materialization of cities and architectures around the world.
- Explore the contemporary geography of the profession, engaging academic and first-hand experiences by professionals.
- Revisit the history of the profession in specific regions of the world, providing architectural grounds for a more inclusive debate.
- Investigate the extent to which architectural education perpetuates colonial principles therefore reinforcing ethno-racial boundaries in the so-called non-West.
- Examine critically the construction of inherent 'classes', from technologies to forms, related to instrumental use of the locale, as well as national and indigenous styles of work and construction.
- Investigate the possibilities for the existence of non-white architectures through the study of specific buildings.

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L'architettura è una disciplina che guarda a se stessa. La storia dell'architettura trasmette le norme della disciplina a un pubblico fatto soprattutto di architetti, che devono conoscere il lavoro dei loro predecessori – dai quali hanno imparato, o per i quali hanno lavorato. In questo modo, l'architettura rende singoli i processi multipli attraverso i quali lo spazio viene prodotto, eliminando le differenze alla ricerca di narrazioni coerenti che possano sostenere l'autorità della disciplina – e lo fa, soprattutto, attraverso la figura dell'architetto-autore. Da tempo ormai autrici come Beatriz Colomina, Diana Agrest, Mary McLeod e Jane Rendell (per nominarne solo alcune) hanno mostrato che questa figura è, di norma, maschile. Tuttavia, ancora poco è stato detto rispetto al fatto che questa figura è anche bianca; una classificazione razziale che si riferisce non solo a caratteri epidermici, ma anche all'origine geografica, al tipo di educazione ricevuta, e nella maggior parte dei casi alla classe sociale di appartenenza.

La storia dell'architettura in generale, e dell'architettura moderna in particolare, è costruita su un orizzonte di riferimento ristretto: una manciata di architetti europei e nordamericani il cui lavoro ha influenzato altri e generato un movimento internazionale. In questo senso, c'è un'origine chiara che definisce una specifica gerarchia ed è connotata da uno specifico colore della pelle. I contributi degli afroamericani negli Stati Uniti d'America, degli afrodiscendenti in America Latina, degli australiani aborigeni, non sono stati registrati nelle storie dell'architettura moderna con la stessa forza, come rivela il recente *Race and Modern Architecture*.

*A Critical History from the Enlightenment to the Present*, curato magistralmente da Irene Cheng, Charles L. Davis II e Mabel O. Wilson.

Libri recenti, specialmente negli Stati Uniti d'America, stanno iniziando a esplorare il contributo significativo degli architetti neri nella costruzione della città americana moderna. L'impatto di queste ricerche è enorme, anche se l'attenzione rimane concentrata sul concetto di "blackness" riducendo la complessità della "razza" come significante socioculturale a un unico gruppo. Per questo motivo, è urgente ampliare il concetto di razza a includere altri termini che sono stati utilizzati al suo posto, o al suo fianco, in tempi recenti: come arabo, indigeno, ebreo, o est-europeo. È altrettanto importante esplorare altri contesti nei quali la razza continua ad avere un ruolo sensibilmente divisivo, come in Europa, così come le implicazioni della razza in nazioni come la Cina, il Giappone, o l'Indonesia – per nominarne solo alcuni.

Il recente annuncio che, per la prima volta nei suoi 173 anni di storia, la RIBA Gold Medal è stata assegnata a un architetto britannico nato in Africa, Sir David Adjaye, è stato molto ben accolto. Ma ha anche attirato l'attenzione sul fatto che il numero di architetti di colore iscritti all'ordine professionale nel Regno Unito si è ridotto all'1%, mentre negli Stati Uniti solo il 2% di tutti gli architetti iscritti all'ordine sono afroamericani, e di questi solo lo 0,3% sono donne. Numeri simili sono riscontrabili in nazioni con ampi segmenti di popolazione di discendenza africana come il Brasile o la Colombia, e addirittura il Sudafrica dove soltanto 65 donne erano iscritte all'ordine nel 2017. Questi numeri dimostrano la mancanza di diversità nella pratica, e la necessità impellente di rivedere le modalità di accesso alla professione. E se queste statistiche se riferiscono all'assenza di architetti neri, molto poco si sa degli indigeni in Australia, degli Aymara in Bolivia, o dei Popoli delle Prime Nazioni in Canada, e riguardo al loro contributo all'architettura.

In questo senso, questo numero di *Ardeth* intende allargare la discussione sulla razza in architettura, intersecando una varietà ampia di gruppi etnico-razziali, e spostando il dibattito in luoghi dove è necessaria una maggiore attenzione, come l'Europa e l'America Latina, e nazioni come la Cina e il Giappone. A questo scopo, in questo numero cerchiamo articoli che esplorino la diversità nella professione e nella formazione. Cerchiamo anche articoli che utilizzino prospettive metodologiche e agende diverse per studiare il contributo di architetti appartenenti a minoranze etniche in luoghi diversi del mondo, e articolare le potenzialità di architetture non-white nel tentativo di decolonizzare la disciplina. Gli autori possono usare il concetto di razza come lente per esplorare una varietà di questioni, che includono le seguenti, ma non solo:

- Espandere i confini stretti del dibattito corrente sulla razza in architettura;
- Esplorare le intersezioni fra razza, etnia, classe e genere nella pratica contemporanea di architettura;

- Esplorare l'impatto di queste intersezioni nella produzione dello spazio delle città e delle architetture in luoghi diversi del mondo;
- Esplorare la geografia contemporanea della professione, nelle esperienze dirette dei professionisti e nel dibattito accademico;
- Rivisitare la storia della professione in regioni specifiche del mondo, fornendo materiale per un dibattito più inclusivo;
- Investigare la misura in cui la formazione architettonica riproduce principi coloniali e rinforza confini razziali ed etnici nelle regioni cosiddette non-occidentali del mondo;
- Esaminare criticamente la costruzione di "classi" intrinseche, dalle tecnologie alle forme, che sono relative a un uso strumentale del locale e a stili di lavoro e costruzione identificati come indigeni e nazionali;
- Investigare le possibilità dell'esistenza di architetture non-bianche attraverso la ricerca su oggetti ed edifici specifici.

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### Submission guidelines

/ Linee guida per l'invio di contributi

Articles should be written in standard English or Italian. Only original work will be considered for publication, i.e. outcomes of research conducted by the author/s which have not yet been published anywhere else and are not currently under review by any other journal. Ardeth accepts manuscripts in different submission types. Submitted Manuscripts and Solicited Manuscripts are primarily text based (length 3,500÷4,500 words including notes, captions, and references). Essays should be grounded in relevant discourse, offer an original and critical contribution of a theoretical or a more empirical nature, and be supported by appropriate visual apparatus. Visual Essays are primarily image/ scheme/diagram based and Images have an argumentative and not illustrative nature. Submitted Manuscripts, Solicited Manuscripts and Visual Essays undergo a process of double-blind peer review prior to acceptance for publication.

Submitted Manuscripts, Solicited Manuscripts and Visual Essays undergo a process of double-blind peer review prior to acceptance for publication.

All contributions should be sent to the Editorial Board specifying the call for papers the manuscript answers to (i.e. Ardeth #7\_Europe):

**redazione@ardeth.eu**

Detailed guidelines are available on the magazine website:

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## Reviews:

Andrea Segre,  
Il pianeta in mare

What are, if any, the active components of culture in the present process of reconceptualization and restructuring of the European project that purposely revolve around spatial features? Looking back at the past 30 years after the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989, the following question arises: what role has architecture fulfilled? Did it effectively contribute to the construction of a united Europe? After all, the great virtue of the architectural project lies in its ability to combine the political with the aesthetic, the rational with the emotional, and the local with the national. A consequence of postmodernity was the desire to separate the political and the aesthetic realms; might this legacy be preventing architectural projects from actively engaging in the political process of Europe?