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Editorial

Aesthetics and Politics Editorial

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The 20th issue of the ArchiDOCT e-journal presents papers that explore the theme of ‘aesthetics and politics’ in architecture and its connections with the built, material and conceptual environment as presuppositions of the architectural design process or as its implementation. The contemporary landscape of thought in aesthetics and politics has been enriched by significant contributions, notably the works of French philosopher Jacques Rancière. According to his work, politics has its aesthetics, its specific way of redistributing the sensible, of providing a new restructuring of the field of experience and ultimately of creating a new topography of possibilities. At the same time, we have seen the emergence of discourses with an ethical and stressed metaphysical tone such as the emphasis on the aesthetic category of the sublime and the questioning of the capacities for representation either in connection to imagination or in the irrepresentable of historical events.

Architecture is about forces, as are politics, which are not limited to ideology, committed art or even activism. In a meta-political sense, architecture has its own political function, its own way to create political content. By effectuating a re-modeling of social time and space, by establishing new relations or elaborating and interrogating the existing ones, architecture and design are already political – and they have always been.

Architecture is about forces, as is negativity: Theodor Adorno in his well-known aphoristic manner declared that “the beauty today can have no other measure except the depth to which a work resolves contradictions”. Massimo Cacciari emphasizes the importance of registering the leaps, the ruptures in history and how important is this form of negative thought for the production of innovation. Walter Benjamin as well worked on a historical project based on a dialectical aesthetic and political logic. From this standpoint it would be of importance to reflect today on the ways architecture (re)present reality along with the questioning of existing representational patterns.

Architecture is about forces, as is affirmation: Felix Guattari in his late work also conjures the notion of aesthetics – albeit from a different perspective – by pointing towards a new aesthetic paradigm with clear ethico-political implications that will replace the scientific paradigm. Creation in that context becomes an affirmative action where the engagement with the new is still something disruptive though not as an alternative to tradition. Innovation in that case is not the negation of the existing but instead is always the result of a fundamentally affirmative process. Not the negation of the known, but the affirmation of the unknown.

By re-stating the relation between aesthetics and politics in a more creative manner we expect to incite an interest on the ways fiction, narrative and story-telling can be considered as structures open to re-designs, with their own architectural, spatial, material and sensual qualities.

Against this backdrop, ArchiDOCT vol 20 presents papers that embark on, or present an exploration of the various manifestations of the aesthetical and/or the political dimension within architectural theory and/or praxis, as well as design practices and tools associated with them. They contain both insights and experimentations with contemporary conceptions of the aesthetic and the political, and propositions that address the becoming of traditional aesthetic concepts that have had already seen a substantial transformation in the context of the first generations of critical theory, notably the Frankfurt School. Having said that, several of the articles reflect on the domains of architecture and design from the point of view of inter-disciplinary tool-making and more creative understandings of policy-making to the extent of experimentations with the artistic domains. In fact, we could detect three broad categories of approach that complement each other offering thus a stimulating coverage of a vast area relating to aesthetics and politics along with an in-depth analysis:

1. Aesthetics and politics of dwelling and world-making in philosophy and contemporary art

The first approach is more theoretical, investigating the concepts of dwelling and world-making in philosophy and contemporary art. Maralina Lagou locates her analysis effectively in the field of tension and considerations arising from the confrontation of critical theory with ontology. The main question that guides her approach, *How dwelling is possible in the 21st century?*, summarizes essentially the basic premise for the development of an aesthetic and politics of dwelling today, with reference to the contributions of Theodor Adorno and Martin Heidegger. At the same time, in her analysis Lagou explores the possibility of contemporary art to contribute to the reflection on the question of dwelling, with reference to the practices of Gordon Matta-Clark and Rirkrit Tiravanija. On the other hand, Evangelia Danadaki explores the political dimension of art by mobilizing the aesthetic dimension of Cornelius Castoriadis’ political theory in order to examine the role and function of, on the one hand, the artist as an autonomous subject and, on the other hand, the work of art as a critical spatial practice with distinct architectural figures towards the radicalization of democracy and the re-conceptualization of soci-

ety. In Danadaki's approach, the practice of Laure Prouvost serves as a paradigm for the architectural approach to art and as a model for the interlinking of art, political theory and architecture.

2. Aesthetics and politics of fragility, pollution and apophatic space

The second approach combines solid methodologies along with an applied conceptual analysis. Stefania Strouza chooses the area of Elefsina to analyze the phenomenon of pollution through a non-anthropocentric approach with reference to the theory of new materialism in the work of Manuel De Landa and Jane Bennett. Methodologically, and in conversation with this materialist theoretical framework, Strouza deploys an on-site research. What guides her approach is the questioning of the basic moral attitudes towards material entities and the new aesthetic and political possibilities provided by the recognition of an underwater architecture and the spectral dimension of pollution. Giovanni Castellanos Garzon and Sandra Marcela Bustacara Panzza propose the idea of fragility, in its aesthetic and political perspective. Their goal is to come up with an understanding of architecture as a dynamic and flexible process that carries at the same time a distinct ability to respond to emerging ethical and aesthetic issues. In fact, it is this very ability that constitutes a form of political action for the authors. Based on an extensive literature review that documents the fragile dimension of architecture, Garzon and Panzza set out subsequently the distinct steps of a methodology with reference to specific architectural examples and tensions proper to relation between ethics, politics and aesthetics. Finally, Zachariadou Ioanna – Eleftheria focuses on the idea of apophatic space in order to explore possibilities for activating space in selected areas of Athens. The aesthetic dimension of her approach emerges through the investigation of the spatial experience which she chooses to concretize via theories of the event and the specification of the typical characteristics of an apophatic space. Accordingly, the politics of apophatic space can be traced to the type, duration and qualitative characteristics of the cohabiting relations that develop in what Zacharadiou calls micro-utopias.

3. Shifting paradigms in theory and history of architecture from an aesthetic and political point of view

The third approach revolves around the aspiration for delineating shifting paradigms in theory and history of architecture from an aesthetic and political point of view. Yannis Rigas and Chloe Koliri start from Felix Guattari's thesis that architecture is traversed by technological and industrial mutations in order to elaborate a background for deploying two interconnected questions: (a). Are post-modern aesthetic forms in built architecture perfectly subsumed to capitalist function or bear a potential to affect on their own, as actors and processes towards social functions and unconscious desires.? (b). Is it possible a reinvention of architecture via what Guattari calls architectural enunciation? The methodology for approaching these two questions is a rhizomatic one based on the relevant contributions of Gilles Deleuze and Guattari. Within this framework, architectural aesthetics emerges as the political issue par excellence. Finally, Dasara Pula and Valerio Perna base their approach to the consideration of architecture as a signifier of the ideology of the political power, embodying in itself the fundamental components of political will. Their research aims to discuss architecture's implication with political discourses, power and ideology, within modernity. If architecture has a signifying capacity, then in Pula and Perna's approach architecture is perceived as a metaphor that facilitates the communication between aesthetics and political power as presented in the city space. They focus on the Eastern Europe and particularly Western Balkans under the objective to trace parallels between countries that essentially shared very different ideas of architectural and aesthetics ideologies.

As an opening for this 20th issue of ArchiDOCT we have chosen a contribution by Jacques Rancière who, as always, have generously offered a text-version of his ground-breaking approach to the politics of space, aesthetics and architecture at the occasion of his conversation with the architect Farshid Moussavi, part of the 'Aesthetics and Architecture' series, held at the Royal Academy of Arts on 8th October 2018. In the 'Politics of space' Rancière summarizes concisely the basic concepts of his aesthetic and political approach to space, an approach invested with paradigms from the modern and contemporary era along with an expanded definition of architecture and a closing remark regarding the architectural design practice of Farshid Moussavi.

Essays

On the Politics of Space

Jacques Rancière^a

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This is Jacques Rancière's opening address in his conversation with the architect Farshid Moussavi, part of the 'Aesthetics and Architecture' series, held at the Royal Academy of Arts on 8th October 2018. Our thanks to Jacques Rancière for his permission to include this address as an introductory chapter to the current issue of ArchiDOCT.

I'll try to set up in my way the backdrop of our conversation by recalling some basic points about the relation between politics and space. Politics deals with the way in which bodies fit or don't fit in a space. This space is both material and symbolic. What I call police is the organization of a community where everybody is at his or her own place. This does not mean that they are immobile. This means that they move in the circle of activities defining their occupation – which means at once their job and the way of being suiting their position in the community. It is not only a question of being at the right place and doing the right thing: it also means having the body and the mind adapted to this place and occupation. What I call distribution of the sensible is not only a distribution of occupations and capacities. It is also a structure of the visible, a distribution of the bodies in a common landscape.

Politics starts with the disruption of that landscape; it starts with the dissociation of the 'normal' relation between the materiality of places and their symbolic signification. We know that the very word 'democracy' first meant a rearrangement of the relation between the material space of dwelling and the symbolic space of the city. A *demos* was a neighbourhood. By constructing an abstract space made of places distant from one another, to reduce the material power of the landowners, Cleisthenes created, in the sixth century BC, the symbolic form of visibility of a 'power of the people'. This is how politics is an aesthetic thing in its very principle and in its deployment. The power of the people is the power of people who are no more at their material and symbolic place and disrupt by that displacement the whole landscape of the visible. The artefact that best symbolized that disruption might be the barricade of the nineteenth-century revolutions. The barricade was not so much an instrument of military tactics as it was a political configuration of the space of the city. In a way, it was an anti-architectural construction. It blocked the normal use of the streets, which is circulation. It was built by workers who were no longer in their workshops, with the stones that paved the streets to ease circulation, the carts destined to transport goods, and the mattresses and furniture used for family life. The barricade undid the normal distribution

of the spheres – economic, political, domestic – which is also the normal set of relations between the inside and the outside, the private and the public, the utilitarian and the spectacular. It is this aesthetic subversion of a whole distribution of activities and a whole form of visibility of the city that created the insurgent people as a political subject.

This dissensual use of space was revived by the Occupy movements of the last decade. Those movements carried out a twofold form of dissensus: not only did they stay in a space destined for circulation by the police order, but also they broke away from the normal use of space in political protest, which is to move in the streets and shout slogans. Instead, the Occupy activists decided to stay, to discuss among themselves, and to build tents, creating thereby a redistribution of the public and the private.

From that point of view, the political situation of architecture appears to be paradoxical. Architecture normally does two main things: it builds houses for the everyday life of individuals and it builds monuments which symbolize the community and accommodate public powers. In a sense it appears to do exactly the contrary of politics. It separates the inside from the outside, the visible from the invisible; it gives to domestic life and to public life their location, apart from one another, it does all the more so as architecture has a very specific position in the realm of the arts, it is the art that, more than any other, determines the way in which its products will be used. This authoritarian anticipation of the use of a building has often been reduced by the functional principle 'form follows function' that has been harshly criticized during the last decades. But the functionalist formula is only a particular form of a more radical principle which seems to be the necessary credo of architectural practice: 'use follows design'. The design of the architect anticipates the way in which the built form will be used. This gave to architecture a very strange position both in the aesthetic regime of art and in revolutionary politics. On the one hand this principle of destination is quite far from the idea of the aesthetic experience as free play with a free appearance, torn away from the hierarchies of knowledge and propriety. On the other hand, architecture was in the first line to realize the dream of the aesthetic regime: the construction of a

a https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jacques_Ranci%C3%A8re

new form of community where freedom and equality would be incorporated no more in laws and institutions but in the sensory experience of everybody.

In such a way there seems to an original tension between two 'aesthetics': the aesthetic 'construction' of the forms of life of a new community and the aesthetic process of construction of political people. The common space that the architects build is a space that cannot be blocked. Such was the city dreamed by many architects in the twentieth century: a town in which the functions and the modes of circulation are clearly separated. Cars circulate freely at the lower level. Pedestrians circulate freely at the upper level. But what has become impossible is that pedestrians turn cars upside down to construct barricades and construct themselves as a new political people.

It is true that such dreamed cities were never built. As a matter of fact, architecture is not only about constructing buildings and cities. It is also about constructing images and forms of perception. And it often compensates for the solidity and the immobility of the buildings by creating images able to initiate a perception of the common space where they are located as a mobile space. This is the case with the architectural or quasi-architectural projects that blossomed after the 1917 revolution in Russia, whose most famous example is Tatlin's tower, a tower destined to both shelter the offices of the Third International and symbolize the movement of the revolution assaulting the sky. The striking feature of those architecture is the oblique line; a line of equality cancelling the verticality of the separation between low and high; but also a line of disorientation, cancelling the ordinary co-ordinates of perception, in order to teach people to dwell and act in a space that had become mobile, a space that had become time.

Building in space means at the same time playing with the representation of space. But the architects and urbanists are not the only actors on this stage. There are also the inhabitants of the city who invent forms of mobility that create another city in the urban space, another city which links differently dream and reality, past and future, mobility and immobility. In the 1920s, while the architects and designers of the Bauhaus set out to build a whole new style of life and the soviet artists imagined the forms of a new urban furniture, the surrealist poets invented a way of walking in Paris that prolonged the urban insurrections of the past by awakening a potential of desire and subversion ciphered in the signs or windows of outmoded shops or the architecture of the arcades, the *passages* doomed to destruction. In the 1950s and the 1960s the Situationists complicated the story by linking the mobility of the surrealist walk with that of modernist and utopian architecture. They first fond in the architectural utopias of Constant or in the new helicoidal building of American architects the models of places suited to the subversive practices of urban *dérive* through various *ambiances* before violently rejecting them and throwing the architects out of their international. Then they joined the action of the May '68 students who sent the ambiguous subversion of the urban *dérive* back to the clear line of separation symbolized by the barricade. But the barricade was not only a reminiscence of the past. It con-

nected its old symbolic function with the struggle against the planning policies of the State and the revival of the dream which links the political subversion with the aesthetic one: the configuration of a new sensory space of the community where the partitions of territories and activities that sustain social hierarchies have been abolished.

We are certainly far from this dream today. But it sometimes looks as though the architects and urbanists tried to integrate in their plans all the contradictory forms of mobility that have characterized the last century. Under the too easy critique of functionalism, there is an attempt to include the oblique lines of revolutionary drawings, the surrealist wandering, the Situationist *dérive*, and even the activity of the insurgents on the barricades, in a kind of polymorphous mobile architecture. I am thinking of the projects presented two years ago in the American pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale under the title The Architectural Imagination. Architects were asked to imagine projects for the transformation of some transitory spaces in Detroit – conceptual projects destined to create a 'new metaphor of the city'. What is fascinating in those projects is their obsession with mobility. There was the project of spiraling parking place which at the same time was a place for circulation and engendered out of its own movement, as it were, other spaces and notably cultural amenities on the top; there was the project of a bunch of pavilions an pergolas which were supposed to create porosity between the inside and the outside with the idea that the very distinction between inside and outside must be overcome so that people can move. And the book presenting the projects was introduced by a kind of credo which seems to transfer to porosity the revolutionary virtue of oblique lines: 'a city of porous walls is a city that promotes equality'.

This unverifiable equation seems to be a response to the criticism to which 'architectural imagination' is exposed today, the criticism that says that its obsession with mobility, porosity or flexibility is perfectly attuned to the requests of capitalism. Yesterday capitalism need masses of people fixed in big residential complexes to work in big factories. Now, in our countries at least, it needs mobile people who can change their job and move to other places and make their time flexible to adapt themselves to the rhythms of financial capitalism and turn this adaptation itself into a new form of subjective experience of time and space. Detroit of course is a symbolic place in this respect. Moreover, there is the criticism that says that this play with mobile architecture is derisory, if we take into account the new forms of mobility that characterize our present and are no play at all, I mean the migrations of millions of people rushing to our countries as they flee economic misery or political persecution.

It is always bad politics that capitalizes on the feeling of guilt and complicity. But the sense of this conflict of 'mobilities' sometimes entails more interesting forms of combination of architectural imagination and political activism. Since we are in London we can think of the enterprise of 'forensic architecture' which uses architectural knowledge and techniques to create evidence about forms of violence both inscribed and erased on a territory, be it

the evidence of land-grabbing in occupied Palestine, the re-constitution of the sensory experience of prisoners in a Syrian jail conceived to destroy that experience, or the itinerary of the forty-three students massacred in Mexico. Since we are close to the French coastline, we can think of the activity of a group of architects working with artists, writers and social scientists in the so-called *jungle* near Calais, where migrants stay while expecting to cross the Channel. The members of the group precisely questioned the separation of worlds entailed in the juxtaposition of spaces: a space where people live and a place where they survive. They questioned it in two ways: first, with a documentary work showing that even the makeshift barracks of the camp proved a sense of inhabiting a world; second, by elaborating a whole urban project, a cosmopolitan town of the twenty-first century erasing the separation between a decent provincial town and a muddy jungle. Not surprisingly, the project remained a project and the government razed the camp. Nonetheless, it is a significant case of displacement of the 'architectural imagination'.

Farshid Moussavi proposes another kind of displacement; from the micro-political level of the position of architecture in the global capitalist process to the micro-political level of the practice itself, where the architect can play with the temporality of the building process and the material specificities of its elements to bend the rules of the game and divert the ways of being mobile or immobile. As I conceive of it, that micro-politics takes on various forms and that variety might reflect the tensions that I have tried to sketch. When Farshid Moussavi deals with the construction of a residential unit in Nanterre, she underlines the role of affects allowing the dwellers to construct their own sense of inhabiting and to establish in their own way the

relation between inside and outside or privacy and community. In this case the micro-political intervention is intended to bring the neo-liberal 'free choice' slightly beyond or beside its normal standard. The dissensus is a deviation. Instead, in the case of the Yokohama Port Terminal, it becomes a clear conflict of 'mobilities': a place where normally you just go in a hurry at a precise moment in order to move to another place is turned into a place where people are invited to take their time, stay as long as they wish, and perform activities unexpected in this place, from strolling to sport or painting. In the case of the museum in Cleveland, she lays a significant emphasis on two elements: the stairs inside and the panels of stainless steel outside. Those two elements have a similar role: they offer a multiplicity of changing perspectives, making the museum a place for an aesthetic experience which is disconnected from the functional role of exhibiting art and polymerized into an infinite number of sensations provided by the building itself, which has been turned into a landscape that she describes in terms that sometimes remind us of those of the eighteenth-century landscape gardeners or travellers in wild lands. It is as though she perceived that the power of the architect is greater when she invites people to wider explorations in a common space than when she tries to influence their sense of inhabiting. The inhabitant of an affordable apartment where she has introduced materials foreign to affordable housing is also an economic agent who can make a profit by reselling it. Instead, the visitor of the ferry terminal or the museum enjoys an experience of equality which cannot be turned into an economic profit. The politics of architecture is located in this interval.

Architecture as Metaphor: Politics and Aesthetics in the Modernist City

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Architecture is not an isolated discipline but is one of the manifold manifestations of the human activity. It is effectively capable of transmitting different ideological and political meanings, using its formal and aesthetical modalities to participate in the organization of the city space and human life. Thus, architecture has always contributed as a signifier of the ideology of political power, embodying in itself the fundamental components of a political will. The organizational differences in left or right regimes are completely visible in the architectural discourse financed by political actions throughout the history. While in some cases there is a heteronomic component made possible by the openness and exchanges with the outside world, the main characteristic of architecture in certain states was formal and propagandistic autonomy, generating a strong self-referential style, outside the main stylistic debates of the time.

This research aims to discuss architecture's implication with political discourses, power and ideology, within modernity. We presume that there is a certain line of political thought, which is elevated to an ideological level and produces an architecture that is referential to that ideology. But more than simply being a product of political decisions, different architectures emerging in different historical contexts, are also used as instruments to signify and determine future politics. In this context, this research renders architecture as a metaphor that facilitates communication between aesthetics and political power, as presented in the city space.

The discussion is focused on the interplay of modern aesthetics and politics in the context of Eastern Europe, particularly Western Balkans. The objective is to trace in parallel the main architectural and urban peculiarities between countries that essentially shared very different ideas of architectural aesthetics and political ideologies. Using some key historical buildings of the respective regimes, the aim is to decipher the critical points where ideology marks alternative paths in such countries. Alongside historical studies we would question if the impact of these regimes, even after their end, still continue to determine the urban development and architecture of the respective cities.

1. Introduction

Architectural practice is not self-referential and autonomous, but it is conditioned by and conditions a political *and* ideological reality. Manfredo Tafuri's work enfolds

architecture – when it is most itself, most pure, most rational, most attendant to its own techniques – as the most efficient ideological agent of political planification (Hays, 1998). The political, as well as the ideological, are not an imposed function on architecture, but they are inherent to

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^b Valerio Perna (Rome, 1988) is an architect and PhD in "Architecture - Theory and Design", graduated from the Sapienza University of Rome. During this period, he has been a Visiting Scholar at AUAS Amsterdam and has taught at several universities in Iran, Sweden and Albania. He is currently employed at POLIS University, where he is the coordinator of the INNOVATION_Factory (IF) and Head of the Research Center in Architecture, Engineering and Design. His research agenda explores the role of games and game-based processes in contemporary architectural practice, aiming to address the complexity and behavioral phenomena in the urban fabric.

the very function of each architecture, in “*representing a symbolic and imaginary field of visibility of a society for itself and others*” (Šuvaković, 2014, p. 12). In this context, architecture has the function of a metaphor in the process of transmitting and materializing a political will into the city space. The utilization of the metaphor is based on Plato, who employed the architect as a metaphor in his attempt to define the philosopher. He introduces the term ‘*poiesis*’ – which means *creation*: a thing emerging from non-existence into existence (Karatani, 1995) – to imply an architectural work. In this line, this research deals with the emergence of political ideas creating or impacting the discourse on aesthetics through architecture as metaphor.

Architectural theory had consistently brought into question the fact that architecture, more than any other discipline, relates to politics and the exercise of power (Thoenes & Evers, 2015). In this research, the study on architecture’s ideological and political function is largely influenced by the Frankfurt School and the legacy of Walter Benjamin. It also denotes the philosophical tradition of Hegel and Marx, continuing with Tafuri, Benevolo, Giedion, Rancière and others. Within this discourse we have a co-existence at the same level of the key terms of this research, both in theory (i.e., the generality of concepts) and practice (i.e., the particularity of practices): *architecture, aesthetics, ideology, politics*. And, in order for this co-existence to be understood, we cannot refer exclusively to buildings, but we must include large-scale urban structures and socio-political contexts.

This research focuses on defining the political and aesthetic compatibility in *modernity*, and deciphering its implication with power forces. Bruno Zevi (1978) posited that modernity emerges when values are acquired from a state of crisis, a concept derived from Jean Baudrillard (1975). In this regard, modernity is inherent within the very notion of crisis, which, in order to engender values, must necessarily detonate and deconstruct codified languages. Deconstruction, at this juncture, entails resetting a language and advocating for a disruptive aesthetics vis-à-vis institutionalized paradigms (Baudrillard, 1975; Zevi, 1978). Thus, we can consider modernity as a manifestation in modern architecture in the sense that it has completely changed the previous coordinates, creating a new aesthetic. In this case it is interesting to explain in a critical way how this architecture became an ideological instrument and how the modern principles have been utilized by the political regime.

We are particularly dealing with the emergence of various architectural languages within the modern movement, in the case of former socialist states in Eastern Europe, after the Second World War. Taking into account the rapid political developments and the general economic, technological and cultural changes, we understand that the messages transmitted by the architecture of the time are more assertive, as we are dealing with signs that transform into clear and strong political goals. For comparative reasons we are using examples from non-socialist states in Europe, to analyze how specific architectural styles were used to express the premises on which the left or the right con-

structed their ideas regarding to the political as well as social, economic or cultural development.

The study is contextualized by comparing political conditions and modernist aesthetics in Socialist Yugoslavia and Albania. The two cases shared an intermediate political position between the East and West, and yet they represent very different socio-political developments occurring simultaneously in the same region and producing specific outcomes. In terms of morphology and aesthetics, due to regime changes, architecture was both a representation of the influences from the international debate on modernism, and of local and individual design principles, in line with those promoted by dominant ideologies.

Using methods such as literature review, discourse analysis, and typological and stylistic analysis, we will create a network of politically charged architectures, a catalogue that will present the similarities and critical differences of political contexts and their aesthetical product. The selected case studies present and aim to validate the hidden dimension of buildings and plans which used to express political and social values. They are used as clear reflections of the tensions and conflicts that existed within society around the issues such as power, identity and social justice, placing architecture on an influential level by showing its power in the context of a tool or instrument of social control.

2. Modern Architecture as Politics

Architecture was always used by the state as the most efficient agent of communicating its political power and its vision for the society. For illustration, the political tensions resulting from the arrival of the Nazi to power, created a new environment in which modern architecture and architects could not survive. This fact was taken as a demonstration *ad absurdum* that modern architecture was appropriate to the Republican climate, while the new fascist regime would choose Neoclassicism as their formal aesthetic language (Bonta, 1979). Thus, we can consider that specific architectural languages are adapted in order to address specific political programs, impacting our reading of the city space and the politics behind those buildings. In order to interpret this in the context of the modern movement it is interesting to refer to the German Pavilion for the 1929 International Exposition in Barcelona designed by Mies van der Rohe, particularly to Mies’ speech at a meeting of the Architectural Association in London in 1959:

“One day I received a call from the German Government. I was told that the French and the British would have a pavilion too. I said: “what is a pavilion? I have not the slightest ideas”. I was told: “We need a pavilion. Design it, and not too much class!...If the British and the French had not had a pavilion, there would have been no pavilion in Barcelona erected by German (Bonta, 1979, p. 151).

The function that the German Pavilion played was essentially political: it represented the political positioning of Germany on a peaceful competition of nations, and was its first entry into an international affair since the First



Figure 1. Mies van der Rohe, *The German Pavilion*, Barcelona, 1929 (source: <https://miesbcn.com/thepavilion/>).

World War, symbolizing Germany's appeasement in the post-war years (Bonta, 1979). The very first public interpretation of the pavilion came from the German *Kommissar*, Dr. von Schnitzler, who transmitted the intention of the state: "We have wanted to show here what we can do, what we are and how we feel today. We do not want anything more than clarity, simplicity and integrity" (Bonta, 1979, p. 156). In this case, *clarity, simplicity and integrity* (or *sachlichkeit*, to use the parlance of German architectural circles of the time) are means of the architectural concept conveying the political statement proclaimed by the Pavilion (Bonta, 1979). Here, architecture conceals nothing and is utilized as political metaphor. Everything is open both in terms of form, aesthetics and meaning, directly reflecting von Schnitzler's speech [Fig. 1].

In terms of urban scale, Leonardo Benevolo argued that there is a strong relationship between the practice of architecture and urbanism with that of ideology and politics. One of the fundamental thesis of Benevolo, introduced in his well-known work *The Origins of Modern Town Planning* (1963), emphasizes that it is important that reforms in city planning should be realized alongside general political and social reforms (Benevolo, 1963). From Benevolo, we understand that even the most technical attempts for improving the methods of modern city planning, bear an ideological charge, as they do not simply correspond with the beginnings of modern socialism, but they mirror modern socialist ideology (Benevolo, 1963).

From the works of Walter Benjamin, later Manfredo Tafuri (1979) and most recently Jacques Rancière (2018/2022), we understand that there exists a multiplicity of modernity that is related to different contexts and produces various types of urban products within modern architecture and city planning. Thus, modern architecture is not homogenous in the sense of perceived architectural and ideological rationality and functionality (Jerliu & Navakazi, 2018). In this context, different political programmes – based on the vision that different countries embraced after the Second World War – produced various approaches and solutions regarding architectural and urban aesthetics (Jerliu & Navakazi, 2018).

From the 1920s to the Second World War, the architectural proposal was interrelated with the urban model on

which it was developed, and the economic and technological premises on which it was based, the public ownership of the city soil and industrialized building enterprises (Tafuri, 1979, p. 114). Architecture and city planning were thus integrated to an ideological and political level and can be interpreted as their maximum expression. Ernst May's proposal of urban settlements and all his work in Frankfurt – for which Nazi propaganda would speak of as *constructed socialism* – can be taken as example (Tafuri, 1979).

Following Le Corbusier, the modern architect was not simply a designer of objects but an organizer and a mediator between the intellectual initiative and the *civilisation machiniste*. His task should be the rendering of the public as an active and participant consumer of the architectural product. In this context, it was the institution of CIAM that took, at a political level, the role of an authority capable of connecting the planning of building production and urbanism with the programs of civil organization (Tafuri, 1979, p. 126). Le Corbusier's architecture contained the level of social utopia that could support the reformist ideas regarding the city planning. As Tafuri suggests (1979), when such utopianism is present, the architect takes the role of the idealist and architecture takes the task of rendering its work "political", aiming the continual invention of advanced solutions at the most applicable level.

3. Communicating Between Architectural Works and Political Discourses

There are many examples in the modern history in which architecture gave concrete form to political ideologies, and many countries that have a tradition in developing action programs for architecture simultaneously with the development of new political agendas. The ideological and organizational differences in left or right regimes are completely visible in the architectural discourse financed by political actions throughout the twentieth century. While in some cases there is a heteronomic component, made possible by the openness and exchanges with the outside world, the main characteristic of architecture in certain states was formal and propagandistic autonomy, generating a strong self-referential style, outside the main stylistic debates of the time.



Figure 2. Karl Friedrich Richter, *Neue Reichskanzlei*, Berlin, 1939 (source: <https://www.zukunft-braucht-erinnerung.de/die-neue-reichskanzlei/>)

For instance, both in Italy and Germany in the pre-World War II period, architecture was the most efficient instrument of the state propaganda. The two countries shared the same Fascist ideological and political system, aiming at the production of an autonomous, *national*, architectural language characterized by monumentality. However, the aesthetic differences were fundamental. City planning and architecture in Italy contained premises of modernism represented by Italian Rationalism – as a relation of the technical, typological and aesthetic elements of European modernism, – combined with the regime’s need for self-representation (Therborn, 2017). It was an appeal to history that distinguished Italian architects of the time from other European modernists, but nevertheless their buildings were similar: strict lines, simple forms, flat roofs and no decorations. While in Germany the architectural programme was based on a classical revival and modernism saw its influence and dominance diminished (Therborn, 2017). Once the center of modern architecture strongly transmitted by the Bauhaus school, the German urban landscape was transformed into a field of neoclassical and eclectic architectural and urban models.

While Albert Speer was the key figure during Hitler’s regime, Mussolini was open to several architects with modernist inclinations such as Marcelo Piacentini, Giuseppe Terragni and Giovanni Guerrini (Therborn, 2017, p. 185). In Germany, the central buildings of power were transformed by the political regime. Here we have the case of renovated buildings in neoclassical style, such as the Palazzo Venezia, or extended-renovated, such as the new Reichskanzlei, both in Berlin (Therborn, 2017, p. 193) [Fig. 2]. In Italy on the other side, we have Giuseppe Terragni’s famous Casa del Fascio in Como, as an example of modernist architecture [Fig. 3]. Following the modern principles of transparency and open, continuous spaces, Terragni intended to show that “*fascism is a glass house that everyone can look into*”, rendering architecture as metaphor for a political will.

In the context of socialist states, in Stalin’s Soviet Union, modernist architecture first reflected the idea of improving



Figure 3. Giuseppe Terragni, *Casa del Fascio*, Como, 1932-1936 (source: <https://www.archdaily.com/312877/ad-classics-casa-del-fascio-giuseppe-terragni>).

the conditions of the working class, achieving social equality, etc., through uniform buildings within regular grids, characterized with minimal utilization of space. However, Constructivism’s inherent proletarian and rational spirit – an architecture made by the people and for the people – was soon to be replaced by Social Realism, as an instrument of propaganda aiming to the construction of a “national form of architecture” (Levine, 2018). Urban and architectural developments in the country were overseen by the USSR Union of Architects. With this, architectural production and planning were completely centralized and transformed into tools in the control of the state (Zubovich, 2021). The discussion of this implication of politics in architecture, was central even to the organization of CIAM. In a letter to Le Corbusier in 1933, Giedion, who itself was a socialist and believed in the spirit of the Russian Revolution, presented two alternatives for the public stand of the CIAM:

“Technicians or politicians? 1. Technicians: the only possibility to have an international influence at the moment. But when the true social development becomes really effective, we will be turned out instantly, without a doubt. 2. Politicians: impossible for us to have an influence with anyone important at the moment. Only means to have influence is a socialist situation” (Therborn, 2017, pp. 251–252).

4. Contextualization: Post-World War II Aesthetics in Western Balkans

The end of the Second World War marks a new condition for the modern movement to realize its objectives regarding formal and aesthetic developments. In Europe, this was in part possible for two reasons: 1) due to the defeat of fascism and with that the abandonment of neoclassical and eclectic forms, and the emergence of new socialist and capitalist states favoring the principles of modernist architecture; 2) the destruction of existing urban structures during the war, imposing the necessity of building new architectural works and carrying out new interventions within the city space. The first reason depends essentially on the complexity of

the political situation, i.e., the formation of Western Bloc and Eastern Bloc.

4.1. Background

With the emergence of Socialist states which adapted the ideology of Marxism Leninism, the dimensions of Communism – its working-class identity, its idea of the importance of the nation, its rule of inherited underdevelopment and its centralized internal power structure – provided a framework for architecture and urbanism (Therborn, 2017, p. 212). However these dimensions took different expressions between the states, ruling parties and different periods. Changes in domestic politics of socialist states and their positioning in the international arena (e.g. the distancing of Socialist Yugoslavia and Albania from the Soviet Union, the creation of the Non-Aligned Movement, etc.), impacted the architectural practice, opening way to the domination of different modernist languages.

In the years before the Second World War, particularly in CIAM's Charter of Athens, less attention was given to the identity of the city or to its central identification function (Therborn, 2017, p. 237). The CIAM leaders – Le Corbusier, Giedion and Sert – became aware of this lack, therefore, during and after the war they started discussing for a modern expression of “monumentality”. While the Eastern European Communists, who learned from the pre-war Moscow programme the relevance of the city center (its function, style and form), aimed to realize it in a political and social way in the post-war period (Therborn, 2017).

In the Soviet Union, the new guideline “socialist in content, national in form”, was asserted between 1949–50 (Therborn, 2017, p. 217). Monumentality was expressed through state-commissioned architectural programmes conveying the Soviet identity. An example is the 1947 project carried out by Soviet architects and engineers for the transformation of Moscow's cityscape through the introduction of the skyscraper typology [Fig. 4]. Through their architecture, the skyscrapers signified a shift in the way the Soviet Union positioned itself in the global scene (Zubovich, 2021). In transforming the skyscraper from the image of capitalist triumph into a symbol of socialism, Moscow architects conveyed the message of the message of Soviet supremacy beyond socialist borders (Zubovich, 2021, p. 20). At this point, the Soviet Union was the center of all developments of socialist modernist architecture and city planning, producing formal and stylistic models that would influence the building programmes in other socialist states, particularly in Western Balkans.

4.2. The case of Socialist Yugoslavia and Albania

First conceived as “satellites” of the Soviet Union, Socialist states such as Albania and Socialist Yugoslavia, followed the Marxist-Leninist ideological direction adapted initially by the Soviets, and the whole architectural programme was not so much about socialism as it was about finding a modern national style (Therborn, 2017, p. 216). Following the principles set up by Socialist Realism, the aim of new, monumental architecture, was the creation



Figure 4. Vladimir Gelfreikh, Mikhail Posokhin, et al., *The Leningradskaya Hotel, Moscow, 1953* (source: <https://www.rferl.org/a/stalins-seven-sisters-the-skyscrapers-of-moscow/29496621.html>)

of a “national form”. Albania promoted the programme for an architecture “national in form and socialist in content”, while architecture in Yugoslavia – where the “national form” was influenced by Byzantine, Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian early modernist elements – was spared by the *pastiches*, as Fredric Jameson would put it (Jameson, 1991). This happened due to the Tito-Stalin split in 1948 and Yugoslavia's positioning in the Non-Aligned Movement, and the aim of architecture became the construction of a modernist “Yugoslav Identity”, very different from the Soviet Social Realism.

Modern architecture was instrumentalized to represent the Yugoslav socialism, which, together with the country's intermediate place between the Eastern and Western Blocs, was conditioned by the need for symbolic differentiation from both state socialism and capitalism (Mrduljaš & Kulić, 2012). Thus, architecture signified a socialism “*oscillating tactically*” between East and West, with modernism and functionalism as the main *formal* and *linguistic* options that were never questioned (Mrduljaš & Kulić, 2012, p. 8).

An important phase of modernist urbanization for the cities in Yugoslavia occurs between 1960s and 1980s. Domestic decentralization, and the socialist orientation with emerging liberalist premises, created a condition in which architectural discipline was not centralized and controlled, but it was rather open towards the international debate and influences. The discipline of architecture during this period is characterized with an expression of different stages of modernity, from the *Existenzminimum* and the *Functionalist City* promoted by CIAM, to the emergence of other modernist languages such as regionalism, structuralism, functionalism, metabolism and brutalism. Examples of this phenomenon are the New Belgrade following in detail the principles set up by CIAM's Charter of Athens, Kenzo Tange's masterplan for the reconstruction of Skopje after the earthquake of 1963, or the masterplan for the University Center in Prishtina [Fig. 5]. In the city of Prishtina for in-

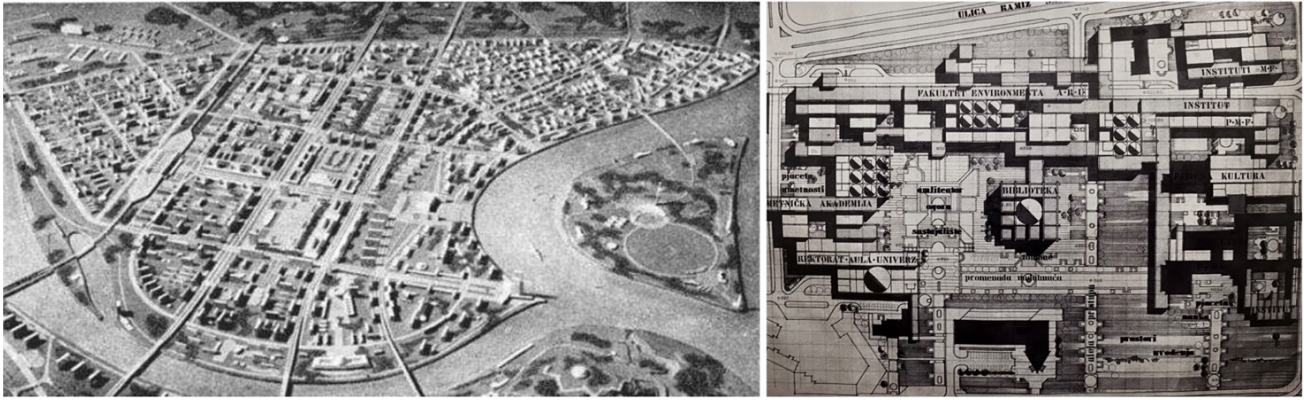


Figure 5. Left: Belgrade Institute of Urban Planning, *Conceptual Plan of New Belgrade*, Belgrade, 1948 (source: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331288730_Historical_Enquiry_as_a_Critical_Method_in_Urban_Riverscape_Revisions_The_Case_of_Belgrade's_Confluence/figures?lo=1). **Right:** Bashkim Fehmiu, *The University Centre*, Prishtina, 1971 (source: Sadiki, 2020, p. 35).

stance, architecture between 1968–1989 was an expressions of different modernist aesthetic and technological features, unfolding multiple layers of modernity. The National Library incorporated features of Regionalism by using the combination of cubes and domes, representing layers of Islamic and Byzantine architecture to be found in Kosovo and the region. The Palace of Youth and Sports is an example of Metabolist architecture and the idea of megastructures. The brutalist style is embodied in the Rilindja Publishing House, while the former Ljubljanska Bank is associated to the curved glass facades of postmodern architecture [Fig. 6].

Contrary to the case of Socialist Yugoslavia, in post-war Albania there was an ambivalence between the institutional approach which constantly dictated the method of Socialist Realism, as well as some individual attempts to incorporate elements of modern architecture within the framework of Socialist Realism (Llubani et al., 2021). In the first post-war years, the political relations with the Soviet Union were influential in Gani Strazimiri's urban plan of 1953 for the capital Tirana: a proposal in the form of a perspective drawing, based on the formal and aesthetical principles of the 1935 Moscow's plan [Fig. 7]. From the 1950s, to the 1960s–1970s and 1980s, in line with the developments in state's political affairs, the architectural discourse changed a lot. The distancing of Albania from the Eastern Bloc in early 1960s and the relations with China, imposed new formal and stylistic systems. In the following years, the state promoted its own programme for an architecture “national in form and socialist in content”. New buildings of power were positioned along the boulevard, and monumental modernist buildings were erected at city center convening the Albanian modernism and nationalism, represented through the cases of the National Historical Museum or the Palace of Culture [Fig. 8].

5. Conclusions and Further Discussion

Reflecting on modern architectural works as political instruments, offers the possibility of dealing with some fundamental issues on the discipline of architecture itself, such as its emergence from ideology and the ability to resist

it, the interplay with power forces, the import of international models and their adaption to local contexts. From the cases presented here, we are able to unfold multiple layers of twentieth century modernity, as well as dominant political discourses that are put in play in the processes of city planning and building production. As a result we have power forces such as fascism and socialism, emerging differently in different political contexts and producing specific architectures and urbanities, each conveying particular architectural languages occurring simultaneously.

From this research we understand that architecture operates as a political *metaphor* in the sense that it gives formal and aesthetic values to abstract political ideas. In fascist Italy, modern architecture was introduced within the frame of Italian Rationalism, oscillating between modernist European influences, abstract classicism and monumentalism, while in fascist Germany was completely rejected, and in the Soviet Union was the fundamental premise of constructing socialism and improving the conditions of the working class. In the post–World War II period, the Soviet Socialist Realism was in search of a national aesthetic model which was not influenced by foreign architectural theories and practices, but would rather compete with them. A similar development occurred in Albania, where the only stylistic exchanges with the outside world were those with the Soviet Union and China during short periods of time. While in Socialist Yugoslavia, the architectural discourse was open to the international debate, importing models from both the East and West, while generating an original and individual modern style.

The projects completed during these regimes remain evidence of the modernist city of the time, containing all the advantages and failures of the twentieth century architecture and urban planning. They have become an integral part of the urban identities which are no longer perceived through the frame of political ideology, but rather through the functional, spatial and aesthetic qualities of architecture, interrelating it to the urban environment, social context and users. We suggest that such architectural works evolve in time and can be brought back to autonomous



Figure 6. Andrija Mutnjaković, *The National Library of Kosovo*, Prishtina, 1971-1982 (source: Facebook page “Socialist Modernism”); Živorad Jankovic, Halid Muhasilovic and Srecko Espak, *Social and Sports Center “Boro and Ramiz”*, Prishtina, 1974-1981 (source: <http://hiddenarchitecture.net/sport-and-recreation-centre-boro-and/>); Georgi Konstantinovski, *Rilindja Publishing House*, Prishtina, 1972-1978 (source: <https://architectuul.com/architecture/priting-house-rilindja>); Zoran Zekić, *Former Ljubljanska Bank*, Prishtina, 1984 (source: <https://www.e-flux.com/announcements/31379/at-your-service-art-and-labour-at-the-technical-museum-in-zagreb/>)

facts, to represent a past we can still experience and reflect on, in order to develop new design approaches concerning the relationship between architecture, politics and the city.

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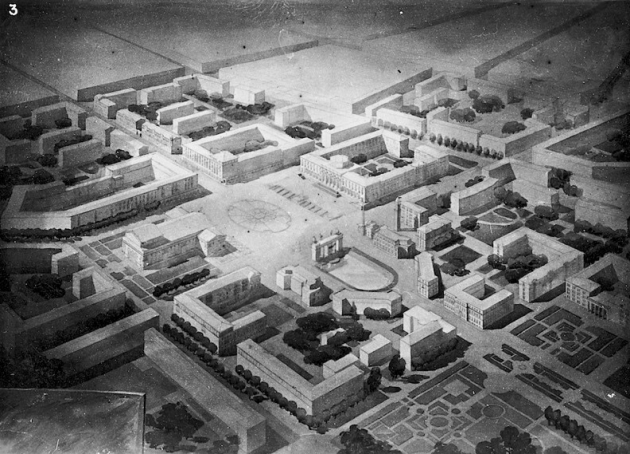


Figure 7. Gani Strazimiri, *Plan of Tirana's city center*, 1953 (source: Albanian Central Archive)



Figure 8. *Skanderbeg Square in Tirana and Socialist Landmarks, Tirana, 1960s* (source: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/316313873_Place_Attachment_in_a_Tirana_Neighborhood_The_Influence_of_the_Rebirth_of_the_City_Project/figures?lo=1)

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Searching for a Shift of a Paradigm in Architectural Ethico-Aesthetics With Felix Guattari

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Architecture is traversed by ‘technological and industrial mutations’ (Guattari, 2013) via a generalizing application of parametric design, 3D printing, algorithmic, and architectural projection, bio-aesthetics etc, that shift architectural production and the ways both architects and citizens think and experience architectural forms. Architectural diagrammatics through computer programming of the last decades were the first sign of this transposition, and the time of its materialization has already started. How much of it appertains to a qualitative transposition?

This paper is a theoretical quest that tries to implicate, explicate and complicate two questions, the first one is if postmodern aesthetic forms in built architecture are perfectly subsumed to capitalist function or bear a potential to affect on their own, as actors and processes towards social functions and unconscious desires. The second question brings forward Felix Guattari’s question about the reinvention of architecture via the recomposition of what he calls ‘architectural enunciation’ (Guattari, 2013: 232).

These two questions are approached through a rhizomatic methodology (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987: 3-25), which means that this array of problems touches areas such as temporalization, ecology, socialization of space, architects as actors and aesthetic forms as independent affective actors. The theoretical framework uses the ontology of Deleuze & Guattari, and the sense and terminology are given to readers implicitly and throughout the text.

‘It is up to the architect...at least not to mutilate the essentials of their virtualities in advance!’ (Guattari, 1989/2013, p. 238)

1. Introduction: In search of a paradigmatic shift in architecture

One might say that aesthetics offer a visible vector of a shift in paradigm. Forms, shapes, scales, colours, textures, (de)functions of spaces - all seem to signify a strong tendency away from the modernist minimalism and towards a more complex and plural aesthetic arrangement. For Guattari, though, an adoption of a new ‘style or school’ is not enough for ‘reinventing architecture,’ but ‘the recomposition of the architectural enunciation’ (1989/2013, p. 323).

Felix Guattari elevates aesthetics and equalises its function by arguing that all ethical values are synonymous with its specific aesthetics (Guattari, 1992/1995). In his late works he tried to overwrite the dominant scientific paradigm with an ethico-aesthetic one, because ‘ethics implies that something singular happens’ and share ‘this same con-

cern with singularity... in aesthetic creation (Guattari and Spire 2002: 13–14 in Guattari, 1989/2000, p. 12; Watson, 2009, pp. 125–126). If, following Guattari, ethical modes always-already expresses themselves into aesthetic forms, then aesthetic forms always-already mark ethical, thus political, arrangements of power. Let’s delve into the above elevation of aesthetics to ethics and politics.

For Felix Guattari, as for his counterpart fellow Gilles Deleuze, ethics are practices, modes of arrangements to be invented in order to relate, better and better, existing powers and not yet possible virtual forces. Let’s think the role of the virtual in architecture as a bunch of uses of a space that have not yet realised, as a surplus of uses and yet-to-be-invented functionalities. Later in the paper we will see how a process of virtualization involves and reshuffles our sense of time.

In terms of architectural aesthetics, power calculates and captures not only the already recognizable line of aesthetics, a trend such as bio-aesthetics, but also a form of a line that renders a building recognizable, exceptional, a sign. The power of each aesthetic sign in architecture is

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through affect, but there is something extra of such buildings, something surplus that this paper calls virtual force. An actualised aesthetic line is always traversed by unrealisable surplus.

Our reading of Guattari's thought is that each block of ethics results in its specific formed aesthetics, not as a passive referrer but an energetic one: aesthetic practices in the role of a *partial enunciator* (Guattari, 1992/1995, p. 13).

The ethico-aesthetical practices of every building works like a compass of relationality and territoriality: they are able to narrate the lived experience of the users, the accesses and prohibitions imposed on user's bodies, the stories of the flows of materials and workings used for its construction, the anticipation of its future deconstruction or reconstruction etc. An ethico-aesthetic analysis also speaks about these allowances and porous margins of a design that 'can never simply be a projected realization of certain given possibilities and predetermined functions' (Massumi in Porter, 2009, p. 80).

Guattari visited Brazil in search of an ethico-aesthetic paradigm in a process of its actualization, in times when everything there seems to be politically and architecturally in a nascent state (Rolnik, 1986/2007). The reinvention of architecture calls architects not to be in the pure service of Art or as critical observers, but to reveal 'the virtual desires of spaces,' to bring about the *conditions* for the 'contemporary productions of subjectivities' (Guattari, 1989/2013, p. 232).

Guattari's diagrammatization on contemporary architecture and architectural methodology opts for a re-singularization of desires and values and the activation of existential territories (processes of subjectivation) via cartographic assessments of actual powers and virtual forces of components (universes of reference and value) for both architects and inhabitants (Guattari, 1989/2013).

This goal puts architects and their aesthetic productions in the first line of our collective life; their position is on a polyvocal junction, themselves being catalytic actors and negotiators to elaborate consistencies of singularized, monadic and nomadic, architectural enunciations. This junction demands from them to bring forth, to test, a trans-ferential economy between their present clients demands and that of unpredictable users.

If, as Guattari held, aesthetics bear surplus affective powers that 'emits sense' (Abrahams, 2020, p. 612; Guattari, 1989/2013, p. 237) and not only an end product, then the new materialised aesthetic trends are needed to be analysed by both architects and non-architects in terms of what array of subjectifications allow for: of, for example, the pharaonic scales of Renzo Piano's or Patric Schumacher's buildings, or the coloured, sometimes alien, curves and textures of the parametric trend.

2. Aesthetics of built forms as forces

Architecture creates a corner in the world, a minimum territory for life, encompassing existing materials and incorporealities, calculating forces, enforcing powers; in other words the whole work stems from a diagrammatization of forces. The least territory emits as an attractor,

something like a point, a sign, initiating significations of each particular surrounding milieu and bodies (human and non-human). To put it simply, the goal is to hold the minimum – the side of the needs, and to allow the maximum – the side of desiring production. To form a territory one has to be engaged with multiple lines of problems accommodating the 'how to' create a natural artificiality, opening to processes of experimental negotiations between actual possibilities and virtual potentialities.

Buildings, like nests, are time machines, since they create ritornellos or rhythms of flows, the *giving* which becomes an unconscious given (Radman, 2017). To form a building somebody needs to empty a space, to exterminate previous flows, to cut trees and plants, hives, burrows and dens, to eliminate a surface of an earth, to neutralize soil, to create a new surface of homogenization. Each territorialization is a new use of light and shadow, wind and temperature, direction of movement to its milieu.

The question here is if aesthetic forms have on its own any power to affect and effect the users and those that surround the building forms, or if they can perfectly subsumed to the capitalist function.

Aesthetic forms are signatures, they mark time, they produce or reproduce metric time (chronos), but they carry something untimely, a co-existence of eternal forms or *eternal objects* as Whitehead would have it, of forms unactualised, un-captured, un-realized (Deleuze, 1988/1993, pp. 76–84). An aesthetic signature carries a singularity, are being selected, are arranged by *specific* tendencies of an arrangement; it is always a specific tendency, an organizing value that moves toward practical and actualised ethics.

Let's repeat it one more time: Guattari argues that ethical values are synonymous with its specific aesthetics (Guattari, 1992/1995). The question 'what are the ethics of a build form?' is equal with questions such as 'how they manipulate flows? What flows are cutting off? What sort of actions and passions they territorialize or promote?' Ethics are not morality, even if they seem to signify some (Deleuze, 1962/1983). In short, the main difference between them is that ethics are always open to new formations while morals are static images of how things must be related.

Ethical forms are forms of real relations that can never be given, but are enabling ways of relation to be experimented and arranged in specific bodies at the side of need and desire. If aesthetics are ethics, as two sides of a coin, then their common core is that of enabling the osmosis of new possibilities from the potentials, from collective enunciations to be formed and act in the here and now.

Aesthetics are part of the building function and not just a dispensable feature called ornamentation. Façades, for example, do not only mask capitalist functionalities but also expose them (a building with an inspired façade outside - to shot a picture with your phone when visiting a city - but with a common block of offices on the inside); they pertain to the undying effect of capitalization of minds and bodies. Aesthetic forms such as façades and other surfaces decontextualize the material, the embodied and the embedded histories, but mostly they enforce a re-territori-

alised vision of a continuous present onto the future. They are capturing the future into only one form of it, a default futurity.

But significant façades and other surfaces (for example unique tiles on walls and floors), the cutting edge of architecture, are unique marks in time, and if they reflect, as this article argues, the ethical procedures of the current works of power, then they are also in a position to put into question and to emit new problems that pertain to the ethical or unethical relations enforced not only by this or that specific building/mansion/apartment, but the whole bunch of such functionalities, or else the categories of capitalist capture.

Here we start adding a critical force of an aesthetic form (such as that of a façade) apart from its creativity or its function as a Signifier of power (money, social status etc). There is a dependency of an aesthetic form not only in the direction of decontextualization or its ahistorical fetishistic powers, but also toward its vectors of forming wholes and activating critical and clinical inquiries (Smith in Deleuze, 1988/1993: xi-III).

3. Built Forms: Time machines, Spatial machines, micro-political Machines

‘Eventfully: the boundary preserves an edge of time-likeness. The virtual line is the virtual whole as it edges, imperceptibly, into the actual.’ (Massumi, 1998)

A built form enforces the establishment of its rhythms through its affective powers, specific temporalizations of Aion (Deleuze, 1969/1990, pp. 162–168), specific rhythms of movement. This rhythmic function is established and captured through perceptions, pure perceptions such as atmospheres of texture, tactility, softness and hardness of built materials; the actualized is what triggers its surplus virtuality. A built form not only enforces the establishment of rhythmic time, but opens up glimpses of the whole of Aion- Time to be unfolded.

A space folds materials and unfolds immaterials supplementary in a co-emerging fashion. There are times before this one, and different spatialisations of this very space. A built form is a temporal machine (its overall capacity of visitors, its date of construction etc) but also a time-machine (a sign in a city). What happens when space and time are unfolding is no other than a becoming-architectural, a becoming-contextual, a becoming-political, since an aesthetic of a building carries with it, and saturates, all the real possibles of spatializations, opening up the history of architecture into its difference from the habitual presence and its current modes of movements and rhythms (for example the rhythm of consumption).

Architectural modes are signatures in/of time and space, invoking stability, but also expose what is left outside; the

‘eternal return’ of the outside not through lack, but its virtual co-presence¹. Following this point of view, it can be said that there are numerous micro-politics of architecture, all those involving humans, non-humans, materials, sounds and silences, lighting and shadowing, social and historical, environmental, processes of raw materials and its production, its mining, its toxic residuum, its entombment in landfills, no matter if these have already happened or are to be happen in the future.

In this way, past, present and future, all, become empty, fulfilled, as a whole, and it is this always-open politicization of each built forms: a return with a difference of forms, rhythms, accessibilities and barriers, aesthetics and ethics, the unfolding of forces or the capturing of forces into new powers. There are pharaonic built forms in the archaic world as well as in modern and current architecture - the sandy pyramids, the colour painted marbles of the ancient Greek temples, the sky heightened cathedrals of the transcendence or the oval ceramic Byzantium of the earth, the white-and-gray concrete Cultural Centres of the enforced continuity of the present; there is a theistic function in the past and present time - multiple Gods, one God, science God. Every form of one God seems to demand a pharaonic construction. This is a methodological example of how a real (but) virtual whole can be formed, how one virtual whole causes new problems, new ethics of forces and calculations of powers, in a line of time that is discontinuous, still reciprocally presupposing. It is from an actual spatialised time of a building that new temporalized proto-diagrams of spaces can be opened up.

4. Capitalist de-singularization vs architectural re-singularization

[...] ‘Architecture has always occupied a major place in the fabrication of territories of power, in the setting of its emblems, in the proclamation of its durability.’ (Guattari, 2009, p. 294)

‘Other institutional objects, be they architectural, economic, or Cosmic, have an equal right to contribute to the functioning of existential production.’ (Guattari, 1989/2000, p. 56)

Guattari analysed advance capitalist machine as the great homogenizer of values and references, be it ecological, economic, desiring, genetic coding, aesthetic, or any other kind and type of values, reducing them into one exchangeable, generalised equivalence (Guattari, 1992/1995, p. 55; Vandana Shiva in Braidotti, 2013). It is a machine that flattens difference and plurality making everything one of the same: de-singularization. The premium target of advanced capitalist mechanisms is the production of subjectivity in such a way that it loses its polyvocality and processual creativity by installing empty referents, relations of

¹ See, Porter, 2009: «Deleuze’s point...the outside does exist, and we can experience it in felt sensations...as he says, ‘actualize’ the outside...the concept of outside is always-already a temporal one, or is implicated in a particular conception of time; what the Deleuze of *Bergsonism* would call ‘virtual’ time.», pp. 77-78

representation, leaving them (us) with an unfathomable existential void ('Bifo' Beraldi, 2009, 2015; Guattari, 1992/1995, p. 29).

Paradoxically, Guattari and advanced capitalism put their effort on the same target, but with opposite vectors. Against this backdrop of impoverishment of the Universes of values, the utmost priority is to relay the possible and potential processual capacities of individualised, monadic, production of subjectivity: re-singularization. Processes of singularization means a pluralisation of the *Universes of value* and *reference* as well as a forming of *existential territories*, and speaking of territories, not many sciences know them better than architects and musicians.

More precisely, Guattari grouped 'architecture, town planning, public facilities' directly with the semiotic mechanisms of advanced capitalism that target subjectification (Guattari, 1989/2000, p. 48). Architectural aesthetics of buildings have nothing to do with ownerships and trademarks, its singular whole and its special traits emit sense and affective powers all over the space, like a radioactive material; offer signs of different natures in social, thus individual, unconscious; cast affects and then effect subjective and collective, emotional and existential, environments; capacitate or incapacitate affordances by invoking people to be even more subjected to normality (re-territorialization), or provoke new turns of their own processes of individualization and singularization to a becoming-something (deterritorialization).

The aesthetics of shared/common spaces were the first to be impoverished under the neoliberal rule in a synchronicity with the indirect imposition of sameness of the private buildings by the modernist minimalist schools of concrete and glass with the dominant neutrality of concrete gray, white surfaces, and transparent glass façades. It is this catastrophic capitalism that invents costly logistic solutions to its own demolitions: abandon public spaces and go to a copy-pasted aestheticized private ones and, finally, hire companies to recreate city-brands and logos that will make the city look and function like every other! Decades ago, modernism bear the promise of the new freedom against archaic-traditional rule of aesthetics and functionality of space, by providing empty (mass, inexpensively) spaces to the aesthetic world-wideness selectivity of the post-war subjectivities. Decades after, rooms, corridors, functions, colours, cityscapes seem differentness, with visitors and habitants frequently using *googlemaps* to orient themselves.

The Impoverished architectural aesthetic sense and sensations, this homogenising neutrality, freezes the perception of its users, the globalized citizens, in one linear time; it is the time of what already exists when processes stop. Contrarily, the times of processes take off from the common metric time into temporalities that signs and traits take

over and initiate new processes of their parts; it is the virtual and intensive time:

'Time is connected to an experience of the novel, a certain vitality or movement and change in the order of things.' (Porter, 2009, pp. 77-78)

What might be a radical move for architectural aesthetics is the undoing of the one linear time towards other temporalities, this affective *giving* of existential and collective potentialities, unprocessed, into new real possibilities of becoming-other. It might sound very abstract, very vague, but it is what people do every day across the world, they re/de-function, re-work, re/de-activate, re-appropriate space.

Re-singularization of spaces and built works means that architects leave the aesthetic forms and contents open, negotiable for the users-workers-visitors and architects to come, while offering a dated signature of becoming in the world, not the reproduction of emptiness and neutrality - which is really an obvious whitening and patriarchal spatiality. It is from somewhere specific - a territory - that a line of flight begins, and this line orients and operates itself towards somewhere else, a renewed territory. A re-singularization of space is through ways that a space opens up to unknown times, a territory that de-territorializes and de-temporalises, and this radical shift is what Guattari means by the *architectural enunciation* through an architectural concept.

Aesthetic interface

What Guattari applies to architectural work is an ecological function that he calls transversality. Transversality in architecture is a matter of methodology, a matter of a pluralisation of parameters during and after the design process, of enunciating all those distinct processes of building; carrying and caring not only about the given and desired functions calculated and decided at the present, but also of potentialities that may arise by the people and animals to come, that come to inhabit a building or a city.

There is no model for radicalizing architecture, but a matter of endo- and exo-consistency of an enunciation. Guattari adopts some types of enunciations², voices that help to establish a more polyphonic arrangement, a dynamic meta-model open to new complexifications, but here we will focus only to the aesthetic modality. As mentioned earlier, in Guattarian optics, aesthetic ordinates emit (affect) and trigger, something that transpose them more to the side of renewed functionality. Architectural aesthetics work as an interface, an intensive surface, which rearticulates to other lived and incorporeal components through affect, this is their ethical machinery. However, an ethico-aesthetic form does not mean that it is good for the people and animals to come. The criteria here is if it allows re/singularizations and ecologies to be invented.

² A geopolitical, an urbanistic, an economic, a functional, a technical, a signifying, a scriptural, and an enunciation of existential territorialization (Guattari, 1989/2013).

In architectural theory there is an interesting discordance about 'affect,' and more specifically about the so-called *autonomy of the affect* proposed by Brian Massumi (1995). Recently, Douglas Spencer restates the problematization of such a conceptual take:

'affect is highly amenable to capture within capitalism, of being put to work within its mechanisms of valorisation and its processes of subjectification.' (Spencer, 2021)

Guattari holds that the aesthetic ordinate as an affective interface could relate ethically the multivalent enunciations. This powerful machine, the aesthetic one, do works in the opposite side as well, as seen clearly in many historical circumstances, for example the fascist aesthetics. The critical discussions about the autonomy of affect, If we understand it well enough, argue that the powers of affect can be used for reactionary purposes. In short, the one side argues that affect can be fully captured, while the other that the products of the affective powers cannot be pre-figured.

Our understanding of affect is that it initiates processes of becoming, by breaking down the subjections and the measured timeline, that are unassimilatable and immediate, but something comes to be actualized, *but* that effect has directions that start from the actual and could work as organisational magnets of the unconscious processes. We argue that a specific emotional atmosphere, of fear/ terror/ reassurance etc, can be established through uses of affective powers. Specific triggers of affect could actually incorporate anchors that lead to specific fields of feeling and existential positionalities. The most common example is the non-tops of an airport or the emotional impositions in a movie by musical tricks (triggers). Affect (impersonal) always ends up producing effects (emotions).

The aesthetic machines of a building surface and its affective powers are not in the opposite side of functionality, nor it has to do only with the human phenomenological perception of it – thus with emotional effects and morals (pretty-vulgar etc). Massumi's view of affect does not erase emotions and passions, after all if we are to adopt the Spinozean political thesis, it is the joyful passions that relate us more and more to the others, and offer us an adequate form of knowledge (Deleuze, 1981/1988).

It might be argued that we have not seen yet what the aesthetic forces of a building can do, or, better, we have mostly seen - and felt - its normalizing function: buildings that animate estrangement with the living for both humans and non-human animals (functional modernism, brutalism) through specific materials, scales, colours, and shapes. These aesthetic tropisms signify something that current trends (parametric architecture, 3D printing, machinic-learning architecture) seem to encompass too: an eternal function of the current era, a false-changing but static character of the capitalist era, an undying era in which functions of productivity and value of capitalization stay unchanged, but aesthetics multiply: instead of living among quadratic building forms, we will be living among round-shaped or alien-baroque buildings and towns.

Having in mind this Spinozean politics of joyful relationality, and returning to Guattari and architectural ethico-aesthetics, the designing process of the aesthetic ordinates through a transversalist methodology could work to heterogenize further the polyphony of enunciations, it could work as threshold, as 'a catalytic operator triggering chain reactions at the heart of modes of semiotization that makes us escape from ourselves and open us to original fields of possibilities' (Guattari in Genosko, 2002: 138). So, aesthetics and its affective capacities could reactivate the perceptual fields of sensibility, revive the embodied selves, re-link parts and traits into new wholes, they could singularize the view one has for/ in our shared collective life.

What Guattari, Deleuze, and their conjoined work practice at once is a critical and creative response in the real present. The critical side exhausts the dominant forms of power, as their precursors such as Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Marx did, while the centrality of their machinic unconscious and virtual intensities reserve as an infinite reservoir of the creation of a new ethics and politics of space. The virtual is real and it is based, activated, and negotiate foremost by the actual, and this negotiation is problematic.

One question that arises through the critical conversations about the architectural theory informed by Deleuze/Guattarian philosophy with concepts like affect (Spencer, 2021), is if the creation of the new, alone, is adequately radical. Let us form the same question in a specific example: does the construction of luxurious mansions signatored by Zaha Hadid's singular aesthetic line, for example, offer a radical vision of the new in the territorialized mundane present architecture?

What is this very radical in front of the obvious tantamount privatized capital that invests itself by its axiomatics of valorization assimilating forms of architecture, just like it does in the art market? What a cartographic methodology does is that it captures lines of power and lines of flight that probably will engender un-present possibilities. In short, every 'new' built form definitely extracts capital investment and symbolic power; these are the power relations at work in the here and now.

One point that could be extracted via Guattari & Deleuze's political philosophy, as practical ethics, is that these assimilations and renewals of capitalism function in more than two sides: they exhaust the new line of aesthetics and all the conditions that actualise it (capital, materials etc) and all their possibilities (this specific style identified from now on). On the other side, the already constructed buildings of a particular aesthetic bears the potential to make a rupture with the whole foundations that enabled this line to come to exist from the very beginning (criticism of scale and utility, ecological critique of the usage of raw and processed materials and its production etc), lastly, it opens up a potential rhizomatic mutation in the direction of economic, ecological, collective and other tensions that may be raised.

These and other negotiations are to be made inside the science of architecture and with all the population, collectively, and are to be made and activated in and by our unconscious. The call to empty the present and its common

sense in order to find new conditions of creation is an indispensable movement 'to become worthy of what happens to us' (Deleuze, 1969/1990, p. 149), and without critical thinking as symptomatological evaluation, the new is unrealizable.

An Aesthetic form, for example of a building, are always-already ethical modes of relating bodies-forces and by the same time excluding potentialities, thus forming power relations in the actual world (the end product). The Aesthetic architectural forms are always-already political by carrying infinite particles of the historically embodied and embedded collective lives of human, animal, inorganic, energetic and spatiotemporal coordinates.

5. In lieu of conclusion

The way Guattari proceeds in relation to architecture and its aesthetics is neither of criticism, nor of fabulation of the previous, current and futuristic trends in architecture,

but indispensable symptomatological, critical and creative, processes that will capture other ethico-aesthetic paradigms of building and designing by activating singular existential and collective enunciations.

Guattari calls architects to occupy the position of the analyser of their *trade*, 'to become an artist and an artisan of sensible and relational lived experience' (1989/2013, p. 232). From the part of a single habitat to a whole of urbanism and its interrelated globalised flows, and from individual to collective, architectural aesthetics become today the political issue par excellence, especially since the tendency moves towards globalised city-states.

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Apophatic Spaces as Places of Emergence of Micro-Utopias: The Paradigm of Athens

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The changing rhythm of global and local economies can have a significant effect on the contemporary city's morphology. A result of these transitions can be the emergence of apophatic spaces that the observer encounters frequently within the urban frame. While the term 'apophatic' refers to the inability of language and words to express and describe something that is beyond them, in the urban grid an apophatic space is a space that is indefinable, indescribable, transitional, abandoned and ruined. The spatial experience, while being present at such places, becomes more conscious for the individual, in comparison to that occurring in functional structures, as the person who is in this uncanny context enters a mode of composition of various narratives that results in the creation of a strong bond between physicality and space. Supposing that apophatic spaces embody a latent memory that is waiting for the right opportunity to be restored and revived, this article aims to survey a sample of apophatic spaces found in three distinct areas of Athens (Exarcheia, Kypseli and the Commercial triangle of Athens) in order to analyze their qualitative properties that will instruct the designing of their spontaneous activation, through the practices of local communities. Therefore, the question that arises is whether the results of the study of such points of failure can instruct the designing of spaces that accept constant change and events, thus evental spaces. As the research continues and by using images as well as in-situ observations, an identity is attributed to each registered space. This identity derives from the synthesis of a threefold notional term composed for each example, consisting of: the interpretation, the meaning and the quality. Thus, the apophatic spaces that have been registered can produce several spatial categories, according to the results of their analysis, where every analyzed example holds more than one type of qualitative space. As a result, one can observe the co-existence of multiple qualitative types of space within one point of urban discontinuity. This fact could later contribute to a continuous visitation and active participation by the public. The newly formed network of co-habitable informal spaces has a distinctive social character that is further developed by human interactions and community-based practices. As a result, the above places activate social interactions and formations of new relationships between space and people. These micro-utopias are being created within the limits of permissibility of the current social paradigm and are therefore bringing out a global transformation.

This article argues that apophatic spaces contain certain qualities that enable the designing of evental structures and therefore create a network of socially oriented spaces established by transgressing the current paradigm. The aim of this article is to analyze the qualitative properties of spatial discontinuities that are found within the urban frame of Athens so as to design accordingly generic spatial forms that allow the emergence of the event of free interpretation and appropriation of spaces. The urban fragments where the apophatic and ambiguous spatial conditions are ob-

served, are being studied as signs of a communicative language. Therefore, the methodology that is followed in order to design the generic evental spaces described above has three stages:

- first, the apophatic spaces of the research are studied as empty signifiers that obtain meaning through the comparison of similar types of spaces included in the survey
- second, these spaces are observed as places of different qualities, noted with different colors on the im-

ages of the spaces, in order to be categorized and allow different types of possible social interactions and unexpected events

- third, the apophatic spaces are analyzed as structures of interchanging notions and identities that create various interpretations and allow the emergence of social public space

As a result, the general qualities observed within the apophatic spaces become guides for the designing process of generic spaces that contain the same possibilities of emerging notional and pragmatic events.

1. Apophatic spaces as empty signifiers: the emerging event

Supposing that architectural space contains intentional functions leading to a predetermined spatial experience, we could assume that only in the context of a spatial and notional discontinuity one could have a spontaneous experience. Therefore, the question that arises is in which way apophatic spaces could contribute to the designing process of structures that allow free atomic and hyper-atomic interpretations and consequently become spaces of social and individual liberation. The apophatic spaces we observe in the city can carry a double meaning: they constitute a mnemonic mechanism of their abandonment and their previous condition, as well as a place of emergence of the new, the spontaneous and the unexpected. The description or the naming of such places comes with difficulty. They are ambiguous places where opposing notions emerge, such as emptiness and fullness, confinement and liberty, disappearance and appearance, probability and improbability, limit and transcendence. Many designations have been used, at times, to describe them, such as: abandoned, unused, residual, naught, no-name, deserted, dead, empty, uncertain, temporary, indefinable, delinquent, in-between, apophatic, etc. The indefinite number of designations that have been attributed to these places lead to the conclusion that they themselves obtain an infinite number of meanings and thus constitute places of infinite possible situations. Therefore, they become a version of space that can receive infinite potential fillings functioning as the innumerable possibilities of their qualities or as the interminable versions of unconscious events.

Production and attribution of meaning as a system of differences among similar types of spaces

In the same way that empty signifiers function within a text, spatial discontinuities can be approached as linguistic structures that receive multiple meanings. Every spatial structure emits a message that is interpreted differently by each subject, in the same manner that is happening with the words of a language. According to the linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, a system of signs receives meaning not from the objects or subjects that it is related to, but in accordance to their relationship with other signs of the same language (Saussure, 1959). Similarly, the totality of

apophatic places constitutes a system of equivalent spaces where every unit receives a meaning in comparison to the rest of the spaces. In this way, each part of the total can be notionally related to the rest and, at the same time, become an autonomous unit of notional production. The alteration of correlating similar spaces has, as a result, the emergence of complex meanings and ambiguities, something that is relevant to a non-verbal language of communication. Therefore, the apophatic spaces we encounter around the city constitute a significant total that is autonomous and independent from the rest of the functional city and is structured as a complete system that produces meaning, just like it is produced by a linguistic system.

Spatial discontinuities as places of emergence of the event

The dynamic situations that appear during the attribution of meaning within the empty spaces, determine their qualities and the morphogenesis of their potential structure. In the same way that linguistic slips in psychoanalysis project aspects of the unconscious, in spatial reality, spatial discontinuities, as absences of experience, constitute points of emerging events. The singularities that appear in every system become points of transformation of the system, meaning points of emergence of new creations. Accordingly, the structure itself contains the probable appearance of its qualitative alterations, as well as its morphogenesis. Therefore, the points where the apophatic spaces emerge are points of rupture of pre-existing structures, fostering the appearance of events as well as the creation of new structures and situations that radically overturn the previous paradigm. All these spaces are connected with each other within an immaterial network, where the event is the timeframe of transcendence and radical change of the current rules of a structure. These events occur unexpectedly and emerge due to an astounding causality. Thus, the event is the beginning of a new creation that occurs without logical continuity within the spatial reality.

More specifically, “the event is the place where the ontological field becomes dematerialized” (Badiou, 2005), something that takes place only within conceptual or spatial voids; it also appears within the rupture forming between two heterogeneous multiplicities. The abolishment of every cultural, political or social foundation which is observed in these places results in the emergence of the event, thus, the emergence of a truth that represents the need of introducing a new signifier. The event is meant as something that is impossible to happen in our perceived reality; nonetheless, it takes place as something unexpected. It is the multiple appearances of the impossible and its structure constitutes the infinite reflection of the possible capability of the present. Additionally, the place of the event is the void, or else, a structure that has the ability to receive, a reception. This structure lends its qualities to everything it receives and projects. Also, the event is delineated according to time; therefore, it has a beginning and an end and consequently gives its place to other events. The multiple, with common root, events, as is for example the appearance of apophatic spaces in the city, can motivate changes, as

they constitute places of dispute within the perception of our reality.

Production of new notional origins and creation of spaces

Therefore, while these points of discontinuity lack any notional foundation, appear, as results of the event, some arbitrary origins. Peter Eisenman, in his work “The End of the Classical” (Eisenman, 1984) examines the arbitrariness of emerging origins and distinctively mentions that every architectural work is created upon them. These origins do not have the characteristics of a stable point but those of a procedure. This arbitrariness is not to be understood as by chance, but can give someone the freedom to choose among produced notions leading to the procedure of the work. Consequently, the arbitrariness of the origin constitutes a model of descriptions through negations or absences of original terms, a feature that can create each time a new language of description. Thus, these arbitrary origins could be studied in order to lead us to the creation of new spatial structures; this can be realized by in-situ observations of qualitative properties of apophatic spaces.

2. Qualitative properties of apophatic spaces as means to activating social interstices

In his essay “Terrain Vague” the architect Ignasi de Solà Morales Rubio describes the qualities contained within these fragmented transitional spaces by using contradicting terms (Solà Morales Rubio, 1995); this is a way of revealing the conflicting, yet charming and promising, nature of such places. Apophatic spaces are linked to the appearance of urban wildness, meaning the spontaneous and uncontrollable growth of nature that makes these places points of liberation from motive driven urban planning. Hence, the existence of terrain vagues states that there is a transition from the current paradigm to the next, something that can happen in a transcendental yet unnoticeable way. Apophatic spaces can be compared to contemporary monuments, scattered within the urban frame and able to compose a narrative of historical events. Thereby, they function as the city’s memento mori; Aldo Rossi refers to these places, in his work “The Architecture of the City”, as points of transition, which are in need of re-designing (Rossi, 1982). In contrast, Michel Foucault in his work “Des Espaces Autres” presents apophatic spaces as places that escape controlled urban environment, and names them Heterotopias (Foucault, 1984). Heterotopias not only function with completely different rules than the rest of the city, but also are organized in a completely different timeframe, thus consisting a type of a traversable historical archive.

Collecting a sample of apophatic spaces within the urban frame of Athens

Prompted by the above, and driven by the fact that discontinuities are the only places where spatial experience is spontaneous and non-instructive, this research aims to register a sample, ninety-seven spaces in total, of empty,



transitional spaces found in the city of Athens. The sample contains spaces from various areas, such as Exarcheia, Kypseli and Psyri, in order to observe their qualitative properties. This selection of properties will contribute to the design of a structure that is open to constant change, or else an eventual structure. After the registration, an identity is attributed to each registered space; this identity is composed of three parts: the significant description, the notion and the quality. In the description, the apophatic space is being described by in-situ observations of the existing phenomena and the unexpected functions of the place observed. At this point, it is important to realize that apophatic spaces are independent works of architecture, just as they are observed in each moment, having no connection or bonds with their previous functional states. During the process of attributing an identity, several notions that refer to each abandoned place arise within the mind of the observer. These notions fluctuate metaphorically above the apophatic places, containing a total of substantial characteristics for each space and also comprising the principle and the purpose of their existence. Finally, the qualities of such places reflect their significant possible traits and also the probable situations that are embedded within them. Thus, each quality constitutes a new possibility or a new situation that can arise as an outcome for each particular space.

Creating spatial categories that arise from apophatic spaces’ qualitative properties

From each given identity arises a set of qualitative spatial categories or patterns that can be turned to active design proposals. The categories that arise are: Enclosed space, L-shaped space, Interior high ceiling space, Outdoor



(image-01, image-02): A sample of the registered apophatic spaces found around Athens.



(image-03): Example of the identity and category giving process, for an apophatic space found in Emmanouil Benaki 87, Athens.

accessible space, Divided structure, Side-entrance space, Trisected side space, Multiple cells, Diagonal Permeability space, Accessible roof and Outdoor transitional structure. Every apophatic space observed in the city can contain a set of these categories; this co-existence of different qualitative patterns can create a new paradigm of approaching space that is open to new types of sociability. The different qualities of each structure, as well as their shared interrelations result to the formation of a unique spatial entity. The way in which they are configured and spread within the urban frame, replacing the existing points of failure, can activate a new layer of social spaces. As a result, this new network of spaces has a distinctive social character that motivates social interactions. Such places of sociability and conversation have been named, by Nicolas Bourriaud, as “social interstices” (Bourriaud, 2002).

Enclosed space: The quality of enclosed space has to do with notions such as collapse, interiority, enclosure, introversion, protection, demolition etc. This type of space has been observed in many examples of apophatic space and it is mostly created due to the collapsing of a roof while the rest of the structure remains functional and could be used as a place of recollection or a patio.

L-shaped space: This quality of space is related to notions like transition, demolition, concentration, introversion and cessation. This type of space is mostly observed on the side or the back side of an apophatic space and could be used as a place of rest or a back garden.

Interior high ceiling space: The abandoned buildings found among the examples of apophatic spaces have certainly a greater interior height of the ceiling than recently built spaces. Therefore, these spaces could be used as staircases, exhibition spaces or libraries, allowing unexpected encounters and events. These places are linked to notions such as symmetry, verticality, flow, assembly, interiority, transition etc.

Outdoor accessible space: This type of space is observed in empty and abandoned plots where the public has immediate access and is usually found among two other buildings. It is related to notions such as surface, connection, openness, accessibility, transition, recess etc. It could become a place of gathering and conversation or an outdoor cinema, theater or music scene.

Divided structure: The type of the divided structure is observed in most of the examples that contain abandoned buildings. It is linked with notions such as habitation, interiority, reception, emptiness, division, etc. These types of spaces could be used as houses or as common spaces that suggest a new kind of appropriating a habitable structure.

Side entrance space: This type of space refers to an abandoned building that has side-entrance while the openings of the structure are parallel to the street. These spaces are characterized by notions such as connection, immediacy, seclusion and interiority and could be used for purposes that serve the community.

Trisected side space: This type of space concerns the structures that have a direct contact with the public space through their front openings. It is linked with notions such as gathering, directness, appropriation, communication etc. This type of structure could be used as a space of gathering for the local communities or an art workshop etc.

Multiple cells: The phenomenon of repetitive spaces is observed in many of the apophatic examples. These spaces are connected to the notions of repetition and order and therefore could accommodate functions such as education or any other program that demands multiple rooms.

Diagonal permeability space: This structure is characterized by notions such as permeability, connection, extroversion and directness. It is usually observed on the ground floor of abandoned buildings where there is direct visual connection between the individual and the inner part of the space. These structures could be used as places of commerce or local markets as they enhance public communication.

Accessible roof: The type of the accessible roof is quite common among the examples of apophatic space recorded in this research. This structure could become a meeting point for common public activities or just a place for relaxation. It is linked with the notions of accessibility, activity, connection and detonation.

Outdoor transitional structure: This type of space usually serves as an extension of public space or is either attached to private structures, functioning as an in-between space of transition. It is linked to notions such as connectivity, transitivity and accessibility. It could function as a common garden or an open public space.

3. Structures of the constantly changing connotative message: forming micro-utopias

Recognizing that the desires of a community can be expressed through the symbolic order, meaning through a system of significance that is culturally oriented, it becomes apparent that this procedure takes a totally different turn within a structure that accepts the event and therefore is empty of cultural signifiers. A social group that is present within a space where the historical and cultural foundations are missing, comes to term with the absence of connotative forms, thus is free to interpret the structure in terms of hyper-atomic expressions of desires. Therefore, in the context of a supposed social interstice within these potential structures, we could observe a connection between the real and the fantasy being established and growing. The French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan described this flux of signification among the real, the fantasy and the symbolic by using the symbol of the Borromean Knot (Lacan, 1972). The use of a topological symbol that expresses these interrelations signifies the importance of the alteration of meaning that is taking place within the structures where the canonical rules of experience are absent.

The newly created spatial systems are based on the development of interpersonal relations, as well as the expression of intent among the people who use them. Due to the absence of any pre-constructed identity, these systems are open to any functional change. Essentially, they constitute places of possible interactions, contrary to being places of predetermined functions. More specifically, Nicolas Bourriaud states: "The essence of humankind is purely trans-individual, made up of bonds that link individuals together in social forms which are invariably historical" (Bourriaud, 2002). Therefore, the relational structure is regarded as a form that bears the characteristics of a culture. Thus, the encountering of diverse and miscellaneous elements within this space, contributes to the creation of new structures and forms and therefore to the creation of new worlds. Moreover, the structures could be defined as constant intersections that result in the development of dynamic relations from one situation to the other.

Activating social interstices and creating social space

The acceptance of the constantly changing connotative message is a fact that contributes to the activation of

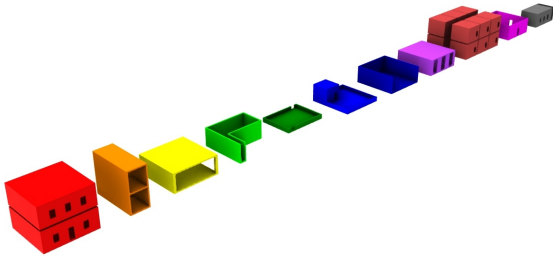
spaces, which are organized based on encountering, interacting and expressing freely individual intentions. This concept of social gathering is also connected to a possible de-materialization of the structures. Louis Althusser talked about this "materialism of encounter" by referring to it as a starting point of an unexpected world that doesn't have a pre-existing meaning or beginning, not even a purpose (Althusser, 1995). The cause of existence of such structures refers to a more conceptual level that is innate as a quality of this space and carries the possibility of a probable materialization of this state. As a result, the spatial structures go under a procedure of de-materialization and are reduced to a more theoretical level of existence. The resulting space introduces a new model of sociability by creating "free areas and time spans whose rhythm contrasts with those structuring everyday life, and it encourages an inter-human commerce that differs from the "communication zones" that are imposed upon us".

These gatherings of the communities function as relational mechanisms that contain a degree of randomness. Moreover, the formed micro-utopias are created within the limits of permission of the current paradigm and therefore promote changes. Felix Guattari talked about these strategies of creating social utopias by supporting the idea that microscopic changes, to the level of the neighborhood or the community, can play a significant role to the transformation of a society, rather than radical and grand-scale actions (Guattari, 1984). Therefore, everything depends on the capability of the social groups to define their collective reality in every level according to their will to transform. Consequently, the paradigms of the spatial categories formed in this article are based on the concept of human interactions and the creation of relationships that contribute to the acceptance of events occurring within the space, thus promoting social transformation.

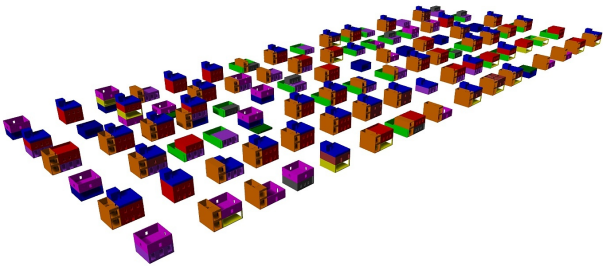
4. Designing the space of free interpretation: the evental city

Through the analysis of samples of apophatic spaces scattered around Athens and the study of their qualitative properties, derive eleven categories of qualitative spatial structures (Enclosed space, L-shaped space, Interior high ceiling space, Outdoor accessible space, Divided structure, Side-entrance space, Trisected side space, Multiple cells, Diagonal Permeability space, Accessible roof and Outdoor transitional structure). Consequently, these structures are being designed in 3D shapes as generic forms that contain the qualities of apophatic spaces observed in-situ. These eleven generic structures lose any given identity and remain as plain forms free from normative foundations. Though their forms have cultural roots, they function as empty signifiers, diversely configured and attaining meaning freely, according individual or collective intentions. These multiple structures are organized in a way so as to permit, as much as possible, the unimpeded attribution of meaning and interpretation, while promoting spontaneous meetings and emerging events.

In addition, the eleven generic structures are inserted in the city, in order to introduce a new paradigm of fa-



(image-04): Qualitative generic structures resulting from the study of apophatic spaces (From left to right: Divided structure, Interior high ceiling space, Diagonal permeability space, L-shaped space, Outdoor transitional structure, Accessible roof, Outdoor accessible space, Trisected side space, Multiple cells, Enclosed space, Side-entrance space).



(image-05): Replacing each registered apophatic space's qualities with the equivalent generic structure results in the evental city.

miliarizing with space, one that accepts and projects the events of free interpretation and use of space. Each sample of apophatic space that has been examined in this research contains a combination of qualitative properties that occurs after its analysis. More specifically, for the ninety-seven recorded apophatic spaces, result sixty-seven units of different qualitative combinations that are being introduced into the urban grid, replacing the existing points of discontinuity and failure. These spatial structures lose their initial identity and are regarded as empty cells with various properties and colors attained as traces of their design procedure. In this way, emerges a new network of spaces within the city that sporadically replaces its dysfunctional parts and therefore consist a place of free interpretation and action.

Generic spaces as places of open interpretation, meaning and transformation

Unlike the existing deterministic spaces that carry the design intentions of the historic period that has produced them, the occurring paradigm is open to new types of functions resulting as immediate needs. Also, these generic structures are capable of accepting indefinite transformations and redefinitions of their temporary functions. More-

over, they constitute spaces of social interactions and conversations that give place to new definitions and concepts manifesting in a constant mode. It could be concluded that these places are where the bergsonian notion of “duration” manifests, leading people to deeper psychic levels and liberating them from phenomenal and causal reality.

The evental city has the ability to accelerate social evolution as a whole, by managing space and events. As a result, the focus of the designing process escapes the static notions of function and program, while the attention either goes to actions that take place in the interior of the structures, or intentions, or movements of the bodies that act due to atomic and collective desires. The above procedure results in a more social and political dimension of the city's spatial structures. By replacing the empty and indefinite spaces, the evental structures constitute points of intensity, recollection and projection of collective intentions. These structures can accommodate temporary events as well as ephemeral occupations that accentuate the fluidity of space. The absence of a pre-determined program leaves space for the unveiling of unexpected situations, projecting till now unknown capabilities of the structures.

Re-appropriating apophatic spaces by creating spaces of unexpected events

By placing the evental structures upon the points of discontinuity, we can observe the creation of urban splices, which contribute to the re-appropriation of public space. Habitual walks, games, conversations and other entertaining activities are hard to take place when common spaces are limited, something that results in the alienation of the public and the raise of individualism. The lack of the citizen's participation to daily activities is overturned by the appearance of common places, the organization of which they can direct and assist themselves. Upon these points there is the possibility of random and unexpected encounters that can motivate other more inclusive and more essential forms of socialization. By meeting other inhabitants of the area, one can contribute to the creation of a community that is founded upon the notions of friendship and solidarity, as well as be involved to an essential dialogue concerning local problems and the way in which they could be resolved. Therefore, the points of placing the evental structures constitute places of intense social interaction and urban activity, resulting in the scattering of the city's axis of social activity to sparse points of interaction throughout the totality of the urban grid.

Within the evental field, geometric space gives its place to the liberation of expression of social space. As Henri Lefebvre mentions: “social space will be revealed in its particularity to the extent that it ceases (as defined by the philosophers and mathematicians) on the one hand, and physical space (as defined by practico-sensory activity and the perception of ‘nature’) on the other” (Lefebvre, 1991) and continues by saying that: “such a social space is constituted neither by a collection of things or an aggregate of (sensory) data, nor by a void packed like a parcel with various contents, and that it is irreducible to a ‘form’ imposed upon phenomena, upon things, upon physical materiality”

(Lefebvre, 1991). In the context of the evental city, space is produced unexpectedly and outside the frame imposed by the current social values. From the moment that space ceases to be a social product, it is possible for social truths to be revealed.

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Supplementary Materials

images files

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Aesthetic Fragility Between Architecture and Politics

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The objective of this article is to examine how the architectures that respond to ethical, aesthetic values, to human capacities, to the connection with its location in the conditions of the context and its inhabitants, are in itself a political act. In this sense, an aesthetic fragility is manifested, which enriches architecture in its transformation and at the same time evidence Forced polarity between aesthetics and politics in the considerations of architecture, since it interrupts the deep connections between the ethical and poetic values of the place where to inhabit. Therefore, to establish this aesthetic fragility of the architectures that transcend over time, the descriptive hermeneutic methodology whose theoretical-projectual approach suggests a review of the elements that contribute value to architecture was used, such as the will to serve social diversity, cultural and ethnic, as well as to interpret what the function of architecture in the contemporary context is. From this fragile and intermediate dimension in tension and faced with diverse ethical and political conditions, new architectures emerge open to transformation over time and permeable in all their processes. We refer to projects that know how to rechannel their character in their materials, structures, memories, trades, and traditions by reincorporating architecture into new cycles and spaces of community representation that are humanist and sensitive.

1. Introduction

This discussion, carried out in the research titled “The project as research, research as project,” considers not only architecture as the intimate representation of society but also our creative and technical knowledge: architecture communicates and teaches about 1) the social and artistic relations of a community and 2) how the human being relates to the world and transforms his reality. In this sense, this document considers that the being of architecture cannot be determined only as an object of aesthetic appearance, because in the first instance the architecture must offer a solution to the demand for utility; on the other hand, it must respond to a physical environment characterized by certain natural and human pre-existences, to which it adds its own symbolic value. In this way, doing architecture is a political act, in addition to being aesthetic and cultural

This intentionality establishes sensitive configurations projected empathically, where aesthetic fragility should not be confused with weakness or even with vulnerability, it is not a disadvantage for architecture, it is the ontological dimension that emerges from the political sense and that assumes the self-sufficiency and autonomy of the human condition, beyond the precariousness of the context in which it is inserted. This is the starting point of an ethical knowledge that refers to the reflective attitude of the individual and to the discernment about the limits or potentialities that architecture has to know how to integrate in a

coherent way with the place to promote social inclusion in empowerment processes.

However, ignoring that architecture is a political act is incongruous, since the decision processes to carry it out involve a dialogue between ethical and aesthetic values, in addition to taking into account the local culture, the specific opportunities of the site and the challenges of caring for the environment, ignoring this would lead to losing the innovative and socially conscious approach to architecture. Then the aesthetic fragility is the ability to integrate the knowledge of the inhabitants of a place in the construction of essential infrastructure of social integration, fundamental to solve the desires, needs and emotions of the communities that remain embodied in the poetic space of the construction by rescuing appropriate techniques from local traditional materials, which transcend time.

Thus, human experiences, generated from social behaviors and triggered by political (but above all ethical) issues are the process by which architecture is evidenced; This is the result of human thought. In fact and according to, Sudjic (2006) “on the other hand, architecture is a subject fraught with real conflicts, [...] ranging from the intensely personal to the vaguely political.” This refers to the dilemmas and tensions in relation to the buildings designed and built by the architects, where the least visible conflicts involved in creation are ignored, which leads to the formulation of atypical spaces in radically different forms of production, of social organization and political power; which

incites the rupture between the community being and the individual being.

Indeed, this external involvement of power systems in architecture makes it more visible due to the growing economic and media value, which use architecture as an instrument that provides its own representation, constantly ideologized: power uses architecture to establish it as iconic culture and consumer art.

Likewise, Montaner and Muxí (2017); Mostafavi (2017) express that architecture shapes everyday life in a broader sense of being itself, it is based on social signaling that turns the physical and material into a connotation of space, as a subtraction of qualified images based on ethical and political orders of the economic system. In other words, although it is possible a non-alienated dialectic between ethics and politics is possible in the effort of individuals to understand this union of association with each other, the search for relationships cannot start without previous experience and its possible contradictions.

In the same way, Harvey (2014) states that changing contradictions provide the evolution of capital and capitalism as a possibility for new architectures and alternative constructions. This is to differentiate the relationship that architecture maintains with the power from which it sustains with politics. On the one hand, power becomes visible with architecture, through a certain symbolic language that exalts political, religious or economic premises, in which precise alterations of scale, materiality and/or spatiality intervene. On the other hand, the relationship of architecture with politics rests in a structure in which architectural and political contents are made imperceptible. To be political, architecture must be part of public life and catalyst for political actions. A building of this nature must have the capacity to recreate social structures and enhance them, by transforming spatiality in terms of well-being, appropriation, encounter and participation.

So considering the descriptive hermeneutic methodology, an analytical tour is made in conjunction with various writings and architectural projects, which through positions and proposals, have originated political and social actions that promote changes in the face of the need for a sustainable world, societies with less inequalities and better development possibilities. However, this methodology allowed to find connections, ideas and arguments that are addressed in an expository way in three sections and that examine the aesthetic fragility between architecture and politics. In the first, emphasis is placed on the aspects of the representation of the architectural object, where the transposition of the moral law to the domain of aesthetics is given. In the second, architecture is used as a device to conceptualize and think about contemporary conditions at the intersection between aesthetics and politics. And finally in the third section, affinities are established between the action of thought and the processes of architecture.

In summary from this fragile dimension, the arguments will demonstrate that contemporary works become conceptual antagonisms from different senses (aesthetic and ethical), showing that architecture provokes sensations, effects, and affections, and is from the construction of possibilities

and of situations that this can deploy all its political potential.

2. Methodology

Given the need to think about the relational nature of architecture and its fragile condition, this article uses a descriptive hermeneutical methodology, in which intertextuality confronts various texts and authors that allowed in the first instance to establish three connections for reading the phenomenon of community architectures, which are: 1. The formation or empathy, 2. Common sense and 3. The critique of aesthetic consciousness, and in the second instance a narrative structure was built through the formal selection of exemplary projects and buildings whose architecture is community support space. So, the choice of collective and community equipment such as: schools, temples, community housing, cultural centers and memory center, evidence the hermeneutical process carried out from: 1. The interpretation of aesthetic aspirations through texts, 2. The reality that frames creative and collaborative developments that promote well-being, equity and human dignity from the actions of architecture, 3. The reflection contemplated from these contrasts and finally 4. The construction of the critical stance that manifests the interpretation, the recurrence of cyclic processes and the importance of the relationships between the parties and the totality (see [figure 1](#)).

Indeed, to give clarity to the methodological sequence it is necessary to decompose each of the constituent elements that resolve aesthetic fragility, in the first place the formation or empathy, is the culture that a community or individual has within its own historical and social context whose understanding is both ethical and aesthetic. It highlights the tectonic structure that contains the architectural work whose material support in relation to the context is within a mental process of symbolic consistency that recomposes the sphere of the usual life ethically. Secondly, common sense is the set of contents and interpretations on which a human group or collectivity and its will to act is founded, as opposed to the abstract generality of a universal reason. In this sense, the architectural work is a stratified complex that depends on the participatory intentional acts, understood as a correlation of statements and how these are reflected in the project within the temporal flow of experiences, and finally the critique of aesthetic consciousness, refers to architecture as an experience that produces a certain form of knowledge, which is the foundation of understanding and ability to judgment, since the architectural work is the harmonic conjunction that seeks to trace in the aesthetic properties, the potential that enables its concretion, not in the remembrance but in the active memory capable of connecting and building different emotions as parts of a single differentiated aesthetic experience.

This is why the connections of analysis identified ruptures and divergent paths between architecture and politics. In contrast to these two positions, the projects and works collected through the actions of the community, a historical-effect consciousness that is inserted in the particular history and culture that molds them is evident. So,

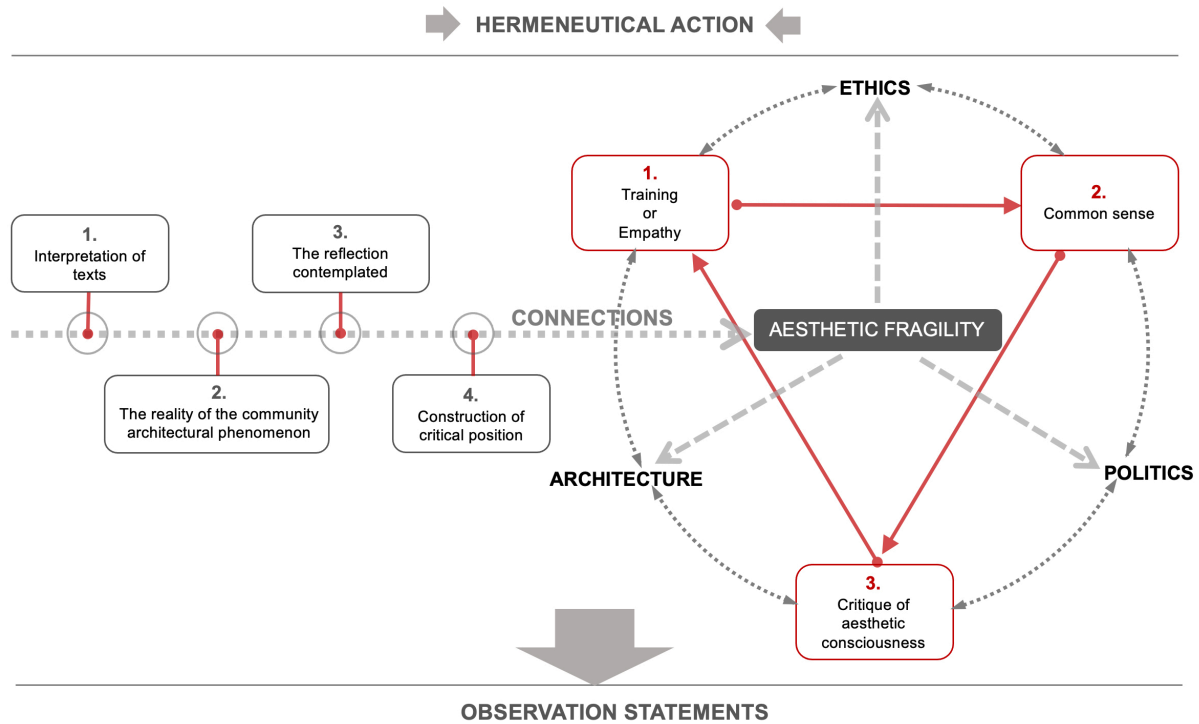


Figure 1. Descriptive hermeneutic methodology diagram.

Source: own work.

the interpretation implies a fusion of horizons whose mission is to make visible the contradiction and discontinuity where the history of the project interacts with its own aesthetic background.

In short, in the study of the buildings presented in this article, each work is intimately interrelated and depends on the concept of operational analysis at a given time that presupposes complementary and paradoxical readings, as a necessary condition of criticism, this facilitates describing the general aspects of aesthetic fragility in the understanding of a new form of interpretation. Designate the reciprocity between architecture and politics, in which the intellect of aesthetic fragility moves, not focused on the immediacy of the reading and interpretation of the visual and apparent aspect of architecture, but in the knowledge of the aesthetic character. Likewise, through the analysis and comparison of their processes, they enrich each other and assemble applicable project strategies by making aware that the design process in these works is mainly based on the interpretation of multiple factors to which they should be responded in a pertinent and responsible way.

3. Results and discussion

Three observational statements are identified in the study as determinants of the results of the hermeneutical action.

3.1. From the transitory image to the global image

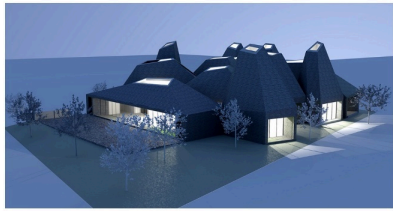
This section emphasizes the aspects of the representation of the architectural object, where it will be shown as architecture is perceived as a global image ignoring its local context, since in the contemporary panorama, projects with an established duration can extend their usefulness and roam in new spaces with updated programs that produce novel results. Even more paradigmatic, some projects and their works are carried out at the pace of the communities rather than according to the established schedules. Architectures that fight between the ethical and the aesthetic, where what is possible, adaptable, or manageable is outside the market protocols and official parameters.

Indeed, visualizing this panorama of the tension between the ephemeral and the enduring allows us to review architectures that adapt to various social needs with the least environmental impact and the greatest possible resilience. However, in [figure 2](#) certain contemporary architectures acquire their value thanks to the immanence with which they interact where the presence of emblematic objects that are difficult to classify acts as inevitable references whose transitory appearance is identified with the globally architectural image.

Likewise, the great empires of history marked their territories with a specific architecture that, over time, has promoted the power and imposition of the western model of culture and science, moving us away from the meaning and sense of architecture; because now it is not experienced but copied. For Chomsky (2003), this discretion manifests when

ORDOS 100 PROJECT

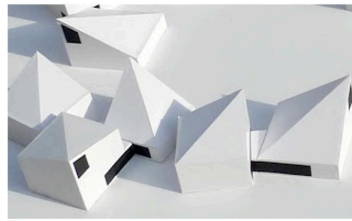
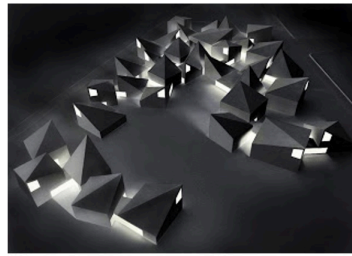
Michael Meredith & Hilary Sample, Architects
Mongolia, China
YEAR: 2009



<http://www.archdaily.com/11162/ordos-100-7-mos/>

VEGA BAJA MUSEUM

Mansilla & Tuñon, Architects
Toledo, España
YEAR: 2010



<http://afasiaarq.blogspot.com/2010/07/mansilla-y-tunon.html>

TIMAYUI KINDERGARDEN

Giancarlo Mazzanti, Architect
Santa Marta, Colombia
YEAR: 2011

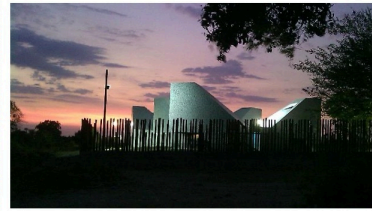


Figure 2. Reasonable resemblances in self-referencing architectures

Source: own work.

science only works to try to solve simple problems, which becomes descriptive, however, scientific analysis tells us about human problems and their relationships, this for him is a claim in other words, a technique of domination and exploitation.

Scientific laws, like current architecture, aggressively claim the territory of a globalized and dominant market economy, in which “a new smooth space is produced.” in which capital reaches its ‘absolute’ speed, based on machinic components, and no longer on the human component” (Deleuze & Guattari, 2012, p. 499). In effect, powerful image-making techniques seem to create a world of architectural fiction that neglects the existential basis and fundamental goals of the art of conceiving.

From this technocratic vision, the constructions are projected as a factor of development and apparent character of independence and object autonomy. In the words of Dominguez’s (2004) “[...] not to be seen in relation to, but to be used as true architectural voyeurs, [...] of which unfortunately only the most superficial and merely geometric-compositional aesthetic aspects are used” (pp. 18-19). It is clear that we are facing a new era in which architecture should redefine its own meaning and its system of relationships. Castells (2005) perfectly describes the future of the new scenario where: “[...] the arrival of the space of flows is overshadowing the significant relationship between architecture and society” (p. 452). For this reason, this continued lack of historical and cultural contextuality inexorably

leads to architecture towards a change of meaning that, in many cases, makes it design piece subject to the trends of itinerant foreign fashions; This is a transient image that aims to be global. Therefore, architecture must be located in the context of culture and its creations to think and promote a broad perspective, capable of finding a way out of the crossroads of reality.

3.2. Double identity and complementarity

The content of this section will show that architecture is used as a device to conceptualize contemporary conditions at the intersection between aesthetics and politics. In this sense, the production and commodification of architecture has relegated the concept of ‘image’ to a superficial form of representation and visual communication of social reality. However, in the field of architecture, spatial experiences are an inseparable part of the organization of people’s life and local identity in a global culture in many cases confused and deteriorated.

The architect’s influence on his peers’ lives is immense and long-term. See [Figure 3](#), the primary school of Gando, designed by Diébédo Francis Kéré, where the architecture was thought based on the plurality of the inhabitants and their ideas, who share a quality of responsibility, have the knowledge and social purpose and base a contingency link. In this way, it involves the local inhabitants in the con-



Figure 3. Cultural and architectural manifestations. Aesthetic and political interaction. Primary school, Gando, Burkina Faso (1999-2001).

Source: Erik-Jan Ouwerkerk (2023).

struction of the work, who combine political commitment, environmental efficiency, and aesthetic quality.

This interaction is able to consequently produce well-adjusted forms, even in the face of change. In the words of Toorn (2010) “[...] critical architecture opposes the normative and anonymous conditions of the production process and dedicated itself to the production of difference” (p. 297). Although the fit and mismatch between the form and the context trace a list of binary variables, which designate the reality of the facts and the possibility of carrying out a relevant architecture, there are new ways of living and feeling in which sensations and emotions merge humanism and materialism in people by seeing architecture as complementarity. It is valid to affirm that, a revealed knowledge whose indication leads to its own evolution, produces a natural architecture whose active system is functional, economical, efficient, aesthetic, and sustainable, capable of projecting the essential to take advantage of the multiple inherent possibilities.

3.3. Contemporary architectural fragility, the contradiction between ethics and aesthetics

In this fragment, the affinities between the action of thought and the processes of architecture are established, in which art as a means of representation and aesthetic expression transmits all kinds of sensations. Significant changes take place in architecture; according to Hegel “in its efforts to act towards the exterior and to represent the interior, art can lead to effects for which it uses the unpleasant, the forced, the colossal” (1981, p. 13); the author was interested in an unconventional topic for the time: how space could speak through the image, “nothing is more alien to the ideal style than the desire to please” (1981, p. 10). That pleasure that he manifests is generated by the impact of architecture, which leads him to think about how to do projects under the simplicity of feelings. Consequently, architecture builds the external material world at the same time that it builds the individual from his relationship with it.

What could a building symbolize? Furthermore, what does it mean for architecture and for people that this building exists? It is disturbing to see how relevance is given only to those buildings related to important events, “a

building intended to reveal a general meaning has no other purpose than that revelation and for this reason it is a symbol” (Hegel, 1981, p. 41); Furthermore, despite the fact that the image of the past seems to be the precise evidence to understand the events, that information that is received can be interpreted in multiple ways, to the point of blinding humanity. However, “it has tried to develop a multidimensional thinking, opposed to Cartesianism and rationalist simplifications, which is based on the construction of systemic and relational interpretations, through linking and verification” (Montaner, 2002, p. 12). Therefore, it is pertinent to look for new alternatives where the real needs have possible solutions; that space in which the avant-garde concept of architecture is not only sustained by a transcendent design, but one in which it gradually adapts to the culture through a series of adjustments of the form to the community and that is the result of adaptation and gradual improvement over time.

These transformations, projects, or prototypes should not be considered final designs, but as they are constantly changing, this makes them innovative. An example is the Great Mosque in the cubist landscape of the mud city of Djenné (Mali). It is the world’s largest mud building, rebuilt in 2005 by the Aga Khan Foundation on the ruins of an earlier temple probably dating back to the 13th century. It is all a matter of good design and maintenance; each year, the city is completely covered in mud, and the forms are rounded and rebuilt over time.

Even more, the so-called “troglodyte houses” in Matmata (Tunisia) and the tulou in China are shelters in the invisible field of architecture and society; only the display of appearance remains. Their spaces are no longer used for what they were intended. However, they continue to be part of the current time. These architectures testify to popular culture; they perpetuate materials and regional construction systems highly adapted to the environment. They constitute an enormous heritage that must be protected and conserved (Figure 4).

The building thus has a commitment to ethical function. If that commitment has brought a new freedom, it has also displayed a loss of place. The building can recover its ethical function only when it learns to preserve and articulate that tension. To do so, he first has to open himself up to the ambiguous language of space and place, as in Heidegger’s dream about The Black Forest Country House, expounded by Harries (1997) where he manifests as [...] today the thought the very nature of architecture, as an expression of ‘the deepest interests of humanity’ [...], is opposed to the spirit of the times, as the attribution of an ethical function to architecture (p. 356). Similarly, the aesthetic and political theme relates to the Cueva de Luz project (figure 5). This particular system is not born from architecture but from the genuine needs of its users. This community support space is located in the largest informal settlement in San José (Costa Rica). This project questions the limits of urban development, reflecting that citizen empowerment and the sum of public and private wills can go beyond the restrictions pre-established by development ‘codes’ that often contradict common sense and community aspirations.

The project has triggered a series of initiatives and collateral interventions that provoked urban regeneration from the root of human relations and active citizenship. A network of community referents, governmental and non-governmental organizations, and private companies that seek to improve the quality of the habitat through collective intelligence strategies as a design tool.

However, understanding reality makes it possible to legitimize the multiplicity of both ethical and aesthetic interpretations in the field of the creative process; In addition, it allows “[to do] a review of the elements that add value to architecture, such as ornamentation and the will to attend to social, cultural and ethnic diversity” (Montaner, 2007, p. 103). Architects, by materially organizing their relationship with the physical environment, can change architecture so that it has the potential to be deeply political. “His purpose remains to harmonize the material world with human life. Making architecture more human means making architecture better” (Aalto & Sust, 1982, p. 29). Thus, architectural constructions grant a horizon of judgment and aesthetic meaning to the world.

In the same way, in the Centro Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación project (figure 6), the ethical intention as an inherent desire for beauty and a better world is reconnected with the individual and sensitive values of aestheticization and architectural beauty. In the words of Pallasmaa (2014) “[...] both idealism and optimism, justice and hope are connected with the desire and passion for beauty”. (2014, p. 144). He affirms, therefore, that beauty coexists in the interaction between the ethical and aesthetic condition; For that same sensation, an exaltation is felt in the spirit that allows us to know the world and its evolution, “the role of architecture is not to embellish life, but to reinforce and reveal its essence, its beauty and its existential enigma” (Pallasmaa, 2014, p. 146).

In effect, the project is a memorial that makes visible the victims left by the internal armed conflict in Colombia and that highlights the values of respect for life, non-violence, truth, justice and reconciliation. A space endowed with material and symbolic atmospheres of meditation and silence, where the strategy is to build a threshold without barriers, a public, democratic and open space that establishes empathic relationships with users and exalts the unique conditions of the place. According to Harries (1993), this new way of seeing architecture as a transformative power seeks to provide the order and experiential meaning of a non-arbitrary thought of architecture, which we can call the ethical function of architecture.

Overall, the tension between the aesthetic and the political contributes to the reflection on how the manifestations of architecture determine certain fragile, ephemeral and lasting conditions, and how in the contemporary context architecture makes its own new democratic, social, cultural and environmental contexts; close to the great changes that define and characterize our time.

6. Conclusions

The aesthetic fragility allowed us to glimpse the way in which architecture promotes design processes and active



Figure 4. The invisible field of architecture.

Source: Own elaboration based on The Great Mud Mosque in Djenné in Mali, the Ksour of southern Tunisia, and the Tulou of southwest Fujian in China.

participatory research, in addition to the ability to manage and validate agreements for the social construction of the habitat, by providing the framework for political action that implies fair distribution and equitable use of resources, especially where they are most needed. Additionally, from the descriptive hermeneutics in confrontation with the analysis of the studied projects, conscious research is established from the critical perspective that generates knowledge, alternatives and experiences by identifying significant problems to develop proposals that promote new, more equitable and accessible scenarios for all. Therefore, in the potential transformation of the creation of socially valued spaces and opportunities, these require constant collaborations and reciprocity between the users and the designer within pluralism in action. These interactions and understandings are necessary catalysts for imaginative and unexpected design proposals and solutions that demand the spatial character of the rights to understand them aesthetically in their meaning, identity and in their contradiction.

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Figure 5. The ethical function of architecture. Cueva de Luz, Artistic Training and Social Integration System (SIFAIS) in La Carpio, San José (Costa Rica). Architects Among Us Atelier (2015).

Source: Gressi et al. (2015).



Figure 6. Individual and sensitive values of aestheticization and architectural beauty. Centro de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación en Bogotá, D. C., Architect Juan Pablo Ortiz (2013).

Source: Dávila (2015).

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Supplementary Materials

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From Heidegger to Adorno: Toward an Aesthetics of Dwelling

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Is dwelling possible in the 21st century? Has architecture found a way to provide a proper housing in the sense of ownership for people or does oneself have to come to terms with the idea of “not to be at home in one’s home” as Adorno had stated in his *Minima Moralia* in 1951? Although fragmentary, Adorno’s aesthetic theory could be relevant today and raise questions about the issues of subjectivity, freedom, community. On the other hand, Heidegger believes that dwelling in the sense of belonging is possible under certain conditions. Adorno’s idea that the utopian can be attained through the negative image of the work of art and the pessimism that predominates in his work (dwelling is impossible) might seem contradictory as opposed to Heidegger’s idea of dwelling and not simply sheltering. This paper aims to explore the affinities and convergences between the work of the two thinkers (from “*Minima Moralia*” to “*Functionalism Today*” and from “*Building Dwelling Thinking*” to “*...Poetically Man Dwells...*” respectively) and proposes a “close-reading” of the 2007 David Zwirner Gallery exhibition which sheltered the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija and Gordon Matta-Clark. We will see how the theory of Adorno and Heidegger can be applied to such artworks and suggest that the reinterpretation of existing architectural works can be a political act in terms of creating new ways of perceiving, thinking and occupying space.

1. Introduction

What can the philosophical thought of Adorno and Heidegger have in common? The former’s criticism¹ of the latter (mainly for the obsolete character of the concept of authenticity), the latter’s complete indifference to the former’s work (stating that he has “read nothing of his”²), and the difference between Heidegger’s ontology and Adorno’s critical theory initially show that the distance between the two worlds is abysmal. If, however, we were trying to look beyond the obvious and seek a new key of interpretation and a new way of approach that would not focus on the socio-political and historical conditions of that time, but would be contemporary, then it would be useful this time to turn to whatever similarities and convergences³ the works of the two philosophers may present. By comparing the

texts of the two philosophers, we could thus answer critical and topical questions concerning the way we live today, the way we build, and the way we use existing architectural structures. The journey from *Minima Moralia* to *Functionalism Today* and from *Building Dwelling Thinking* to *...Poetically Man Dwells...* will lead us to a series of questions concerning architecture (such as those of ownership, subjectivity, freedom, and community). We will ask whether it is possible from the duality created by the positions of Heidegger and Adorno [dwelling is possible (under certain conditions) - dwelling is impossible] that some convergence can emerge in the sense that they both start from a common premise; that is, that the problem is located in the field of dwelling which has been challenged in the post-war period and is empty of meaning. Is, after all, what Adorno says not so different from Heidegger’s? Is the realization of

¹ *The Jargon of Authenticity* (1964) and *Negative Dialectics* (1966)

² “I have never read anything of his. Hermann Mörchen once tried to convince me to read Adorno. I didn’t”. Wisser, R. ed. (1970/1990). *Martin Heidegger im Gespräch*. Freiburg: Karl Alber Verlag. Trans. by Lisa Haries (1990). “Martin Heidegger in Conversation with Richard Wisser”, in *Martin Heidegger and National Socialism*

³ Many scholars have contributed to the discussion and some works on this topic are: Dallmayr, F. (1989). Adorno and Heidegger *Diacritics*, 19(3/4), 82–100., Roberts, D. (1999). Art and Myth: Adorno and Heidegger. *Thesis Eleven*, 58(1), 19–34, Ziarek, K. (2007) “Radical Art: Reflections After Adorno and Heidegger” In Macdonald, I. & Ziarek, K. (eds). *Adorno and Heidegger: Philosophical Questions*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, Bernstein, R. J. (1986). The Rage Against Reason. *Philosophy and Literature* 10(2), 186–210., Kilivris, M. (2010). *Elective Affinities: Heidegger and Adorno* (Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University). Also, Philip Goldstein places Adorno’s theory between those of Lukács and Heidegger: Goldstein, Ph. (2009). “Marxist Theory: From Aesthetic Critique to Cultural Politics” In Strathausen, C., & Connolly, W. E. (eds). *A Leftist Ontology: Beyond Relativism and Identity Politics*. Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press

the impossibility of dwelling perhaps the realization of our mortality and impermanence of which Heidegger speaks? Are we always visitors? Wanderers? Does the realization of the impossibility of dwelling liberate us and enable us to inhabit in another way?

Alongside these texts, this paper will explore a “close reading” of the 2007 David Zwirner Gallery exhibition which sheltered the work of Rirkrit Tiravanija and Gordon Matta-Clark. On that occasion, Rirkrit Tiravanija recreated his famous Untitled 1992 (Free) installation-performance act which was exhibited next to Gordon Matta-Clark’s 1972 Open House. Although these specific works of art are not architectural works per se various aspects of aesthetics, politics, or even ethics in architecture can be contemplated through their prism. Rirkrit Tiravanija through the 90s and 00s was inspired by the work of several architects and artists⁴ and tried to experiment with space, scale, and materials by reinventing and recreating architectural works in child-size replicas. Gordon Matta-Clark’s studies in Architecture led him to a series of site-specific projects in which existing buildings were used as material for his art. Those types of interventions through cuts to buildings that were about to be demolished are better known as “anarchitecture”. So in a way, the coexistence of the two works in the same gallery is not paradoxical. With his Untitled 1992 (Free) Rirkrit Tiravanija emptied out the gallery space and transformed it into an exhibition space where he prepared Thai food in a temporary kitchen and offered it for free to everyone. The concept behind this work was to invite the public to participate and to be active, thus becoming the performer of the show. People were forming a disparate group and yet by sharing food, experience and space they were able to create a so-to-speak ephemeral community. One might even say that a sense of belonging could also be achieved through the aforementioned process. Right next to this installation stood Gordon Matta-Clark’s piece that was originally placed in the street; a dumpster reshaped into a living space with rooms and corridors for the homeless. Could this architectural artwork be more than a shelter for a person in need? We will see how the theory of Adorno and Heidegger can be applied to such artworks and suggest that the reinterpretation of existing architectural works can be a political act in terms of creating new ways of perceiving, thinking, and occupying space.

2. Adorno on the impossibility of dwelling

Let’s first start with the atypical work *Minima Moralia* which was written between 1944-1947. With its “reflections on a damaged life” -as indicated in the subtitle- *Minima Moralia* is full of observations, remembrances, and different perspectives of a life that can no longer be considered autonomous. Had we sum up the main question of this philosophical work, we could simply phrase it as follows: How should we live our everyday lives and how are we supposed to live in a world that is fragmented? Since it is not possible to seek a different reality, Adorno seems to suggest that we should live in this world despite the condition. Hence, the negative approach that dominates his thought can liberate us and help us perceive the world while acknowledging the impossibility of a coherent whole. Having said that, we can now have a deeper understanding of the meaning that his theory on dwelling postulates. Within the first lines of Fragment 18 (*Refuge for the homeless*), it is stated that something that was once present is now lost into oblivion:

“Dwelling, in the proper sense, is now impossible.”

The *now* indicates that something has changed, something that was a certainty in the past or at least a contingency is now impossible. The following sentence not only confirms this alteration but reveals a distorted reality:

“The traditional residences we grew up in have grown intolerable: each trait of comfort in them is paid for with a betrayal of knowledge, each vestige of shelter with the musty pact of family interests.”

Fragments of a past life, kaleidoscopic images of a house and a home that no longer fulfills its purpose, there is no shelter in the “modern habitations” and no refuge in a “period-style house”. According to Adorno, the choice to live in between, and the preference for temporary housing (a hotel room or a furnished room) could be a plausible solution but not for everyone; what about the ones in need? This observation is still valid and resonates with current issues of our time, especially if one thinks of the new ways of living and emerging types of working, such as the need for housing for the hybrid population of the digital nomads, or the constant waves of migration that are fueled by war, climate change or any other type of crisis. “The house is past”, says Adorno, and the least that the owner can do, if anyone still owns a property, is to be aware of the impossibility to feel at home⁵. If we tried to project this concern into our century would we be able to say that contemporary architecture has achieved what modern architecture had failed to do? There is no simple answer to that question but if there

4 Gordon Matta-Clark was one of the first artists who transformed the food experience into a performance. In 1971 he founded the restaurant Food in Soho along with Carol Goodden and Tina Girouard and organized several acts and performances.

5 “It is even part of my good fortune not to be a house-owner”, Nietzsche already wrote in the *Gay Science*. Today we should have to add: It is part of morality not to be at home in one’s home.”: Adorno, Th. (1974). *Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life*. Trans. E.F.N. Jephcott. London, New Left Books

is still ambiguity as to whether or not architecture is capable of making us find our place, we could turn to certain pieces of -contemporary- art to find not only one of the “last refuges”⁶, but also a possible guide that provides ideas and suggestions that could lead into an autonomous architecture who defies alienation. We will see in detail how art and architecture are intertwined and how they influence each other, but before that, it is of great importance that we continue our analysis with the second text of the German philosopher— a speech he addressed to the German Werkbund in Berlin in 1965, to get a notion of Adorno’s effort to reconcile at some level two forms of estranged art; the so-called “applied” and “fine arts”.

In *Functionalism Today* (*Funktionalismus heute*), we are introduced to another part of Adorno’s criticism of culture in general and architecture more specifically. This time Adorno expresses his discontent vis-à-vis practical architecture, an architecture that is non-ornamental, where function comes first or, to put it in another way, where “form follows function”⁷. Functionalism’s adherence to materials, utility, and its inflexibility toward aesthetic experience had the opposite effect to that intended. It created a simulacrum of Functionalism’s authentic image. By drawing a parallel between the art of music and architecture, Adorno proceeds to critique Adolf Loos’ ideas on architecture and the ornament in order to elucidate some points and explain what true functionalism should stand for:

“This insight necessitates a correction of Loos’ thesis, which he, in his open-mindedness would probably not have rejected: the question of functionalism does not coincide with the question of practical function. The purpose-free [*zweckfrei*] and the purposeful [*zweckgebunden*] arts do not form the radical opposition which he imputed. The difference between the necessary and the superfluous is inherent in a work, and is not defined by the work’s relationship — or the lack of it — to something outside itself.”⁸

Functionalism doesn’t equal necessarily function. Moreover, in every artwork, there should be an equilibrium be-

tween high and low, purposefulness⁹ and autonomous freedom, imagination and handicraft, symbolism and objectivity. Adolf Loos’ ornament-free utopia, with its streets “like white walls” and the artist’s divine mission, “no longer holds” according to Adorno; nor do “the purely purpose-oriented forms” or the resurrection of the decoration. Adorno’s initial fear of the impossibility of dwelling is once more confirmed¹⁰, however, he is convinced that we have to keep trying and never give in to the threat of our society. Architecture can reconcile all those unbalanced forces by using imagination to turn purpose into space¹¹, as long as the architect has a certain sense of space¹², that is to say, that he doesn’t let the expression of his subjectivity be used to the detriment of space. What Adorno says in his lecture is essential both for the architect of the ‘here and now’ and the architect of the future. Architecture can create a space worth living in but when there is a deficiency in imagination and ideology, when architecture serves only profit and space is conceived as a product in a bourgeois, consumer society, then we become once again homeless. Instead, like in a yin-yang circle, all of the aforementioned pairs should fulfill one another; a work of art with no purpose should have a practical side and a purposeful artwork should be combined with creativity and imagination. Each artist, Adorno concludes, has to transcend his own craft and proceed in a way so that he creates firstly “with regard to social things” and secondly, in a purposeful art such as architecture to pursue a new kind of aesthetic reflection, beyond the principle of beauty. In *Functionalism Today* we see how subjects such as Art, Architecture, Politics, and Aesthetics, are explored in parallel -at times through subtle references- and how it is made clear that all of these fields are mirroring different aspects of the same concerns and problems that our society is suffering from and that were partly mentioned in *Minima Moralia*.

Adorno firmly believes that we have to cope with this damaged world and overcome the adversities without searching for alternate realities or utopias; we can’t em-

6 “Art is perceived by Adorno as one of the last “refuges” where real experience is still possible, experience of what he calls the “non-identical” that which does not conform to the existing system” Heynen, H., & Adorno, T. W. (1992). *Architecture between Modernity and Dwelling: Reflections on Adorno’s “Aesthetic Theory.”* *Assemblage*, 17, 79–91. See also Fred Rush who says that: “Art for Adorno is a refuge from overadministered rationality and, as such, is a promising vehicle for developing a “less false” access to experience that can yield new understanding.” Rush, Fred (2010). “Adorno After Adorno”, in Bernstein, J. M, Brodsky, C., Cascardi, A. J, de Duve, T., Erjavec, A., Kaufman, R., & Rush, F, *Art and Aesthetics After Adorno*. Berkeley, The Townsend Center for the Humanities University of California

7 “[...] form ever follows function” Sullivan, L. (1896). “The Tall Office Building Artistically Considered”, *Lippincott’s Monthly Magazine*

8 Adorno, Th. (2005). “Functionalism today” in *Rethinking architecture, a reader in cultural theory*. Neil Leach (Ed.). New York, Routledge.

9 “Even the most pure forms of purpose are nourished by ideas — like formal transparency and graspability — which in fact are derived from artistic experience. No form can be said to be determined exhaustively by its purpose.” *ibid.*

10 “My suspicion in the *Minima Moralia* that the world is no longer habitable has already been confirmed, the heavy shadow of instability bears upon built form, the shadow of mass migrations, which had their preludes in the years of Hitler and his war. This contradiction must be consciously grasped in all its necessity. But we cannot stop there. If we do, we give in to a continually threatening catastrophe.” *ibid.*

11 “Architecture inquires: how can a certain purpose become space; through which forms, which materials? All factors relate reciprocally to one another. Architectonic imagination is, according to this conception of it, the ability to articulate space purposefully. It permits purposes to become space. It constructs forms according to purposes.” *ibid.*

12 “A sense of space seems to demand more, namely that something can occur to the artist out of space itself; this cannot be something arbitrary in space and indifferent toward space” *ibid.*

phasize this enough. That's why he rejects any concept of a different reality, such as Adolf Loos' idea of Functionalism or Heidegger's concept of the hut in the Black Forest. And yet somehow Adorno's and Heidegger's divergent points of view seem to have some similarities. Heidegger admits that the modern man is homeless not because of a housing shortage but because he doesn't know how to be in-the-world. He has to learn how to dwell as a mortal to get a sense of belonging. Both of them try to re-establish the meaning that has been forgotten¹³ and to question our connection to the world, the former by accepting the loss of meaning and by inciting rebellion against capitalist society, the latter by acknowledging the "fall" of the *Dasein* and by putting forward a proposal on how to live 'poetically'.

3. Heidegger thinking dwelling

But what does it mean to be in-the-world, to live as a *Dasein* alongside other beings, in coexistence with them? Most importantly, how to dwell as a poet? In his 1951 lecture "...Poetically Man Dwells..." (...*Dichterisch wohnt der Mensch...*) Heidegger tries to find through language and poetry the 'measure' that could let people be aware of themselves and live authentically in the Fourfold. In the second paragraph, the philosopher refers to the reason why dwelling in the modern age is precarious and why it seems to be incompatible with the poetic most of the time:

"Our dwelling is harassed by the housing shortage. Even if that were not so, our dwelling today is harassed by work, made insecure by the hunt for gain and success, bewitched by the entertainment and recreation industry."¹⁴

Once again we come upon the same problem. Since dwelling has become dysfunctional the only way to grasp the meaning of the world that we live in is to resort to poetry which can give substance to all the things that go beyond our perception and vision thanks to metaphor, analogy, and poetical images. Language has the power to express and channel notions and ideas that can make us measure ourselves with our mortality and with divine entities. That's how we should interpret the relationship between dwelling and the poetic. Through poetry, a man can learn how to live 'full of merit', how to build, and how to

dwell. Heidegger explains that "poetry first causes dwelling to be dwelling." and that "Poetic creation [...] is a kind of building". In order to dwell we also have to understand how to live in between securely. We have a glance upward, toward the sky and at the same time down to earth because we are in the *Dimension*¹⁵ within which everything occurs. Of course, Heidegger concludes, authentic poetry is not available at all times and cannot be brought to light appropriately in every period. When *Kindness* does not inhabit our hearts we are not capable of taking the measure, thus we live *unpoetically*.

Again, Heidegger's analysis can redirect us in some way to Adorno's viewpoint. Heidegger's reference to the harassment that cause work and the entertainment industry to dwelling as well as his reference to temporary lodging¹⁶ can remind us of Adorno's critique of capitalism and his preference for temporary housing. No matter how different their conception of the world is or how different their philosophical backgrounds are, in many cases we cannot help but notice the interconnections between their texts. Even when comparing two ideas in which the contiguity is less obvious or less apparent we notice that they are "shockingly close"¹⁷ as Habermas would argue. Following that sequence, we can go even further by suggesting that Adorno's idea of the impossibility of dwelling could be close to Heidegger's claim that the realization of our mortality can set us free and help us dwell poetically. In both views there is a sort of common ground in the sense that both philosophers embrace the fact that we cannot change the current state of the world, we can only accept it as it is and live in a different way. Perhaps they refer to the same circumstance, only seen from a different perspective or by entering from different interpretive systems. Both of them are recognizing that there are some constraints and are looking for ways to make this world relevant. There is a world before and after the War, a diaeresis between two divided realities that cannot meet and the task of the philosopher is to help the individual think, find his identity, and make life bearable again.

To think is to be aware of our own existence and of the place it occupies in the world, to be conscious, to learn, to know; and it is by no accident that the verb 'to think' constitutes one of the three pillars of Martin Heidegger's 1951

13 "Adorno—like Heidegger and Bloch—grasps something true: namely, that we live in a culture of loss and oblivion, and that we thus shirk the responsibility for our own life—"The home no longer exists." Here, we encounter above all the task of a hermeneutic of the forgotten, which, in contrast to utopian thinking, does not develop the vision of a homeland and its future realization in a counterfactual way, and in contrast to romantic-restorationist thinking does not simply want to bring back the world of the past, but instead recalls what always was and what we always already have known, and thus brings with it the possibility of a new understanding and a new appropriation of what has been forgotten" Zaborowski, H. (2005). "Towards a phenomenology of dwelling", *Communio* 32, *Communio: International Catholic Review*

14 Heidegger, M. (1971). "...Poetically Man Dwells..." in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York, Harper and Row.

15 "We now call the span thus meted out the dimension" *ibid*.

16 "We work in the city, but dwell outside it. We travel, and dwell now here, now there. Dwelling so understood is always merely the occupying of a lodging." *ibid*.

17 "as opposed as the intentions behind their respective philosophies of history are, Adorno is in the end very similar to Heidegger as regards his position on the theoretical claims of objectivating thought on reflection: The mindfulness of nature comes shockingly close to the recollection of being" Jürgen Habermas as cited in Kilivris, M. (2010). *Elective Affinities: Heidegger and Adorno* (Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University)

lecture title: *Building Dwelling Thinking (Bauen Wohnen Denken)*. Although the word “thinking” is the third in line its importance is of great value in the process of the reveal of the essence of dwelling. Thinking can help us create, find meaning, build, and building allows our *being-in-the-world* and *being-toward-death* to dwell authentically in the four-fold. These three terms complement each other and are inextricably linked. The final purpose is to dwell, so building has to be thought of in such a way as to ensure dwelling. To build and to dwell is not to construct and give shelter. The equation is much more complex than that. Here’s another paradox that shows how complicated the relationship between the terms is: Building -that “cultivates growing things” and “erects buildings”- allows us to “letting dwell” and at the same time, only dwelling can let us build¹⁸. The three terms enter into a continuum where each one of them is a prerequisite for the other two to exist and Heidegger turns to a linguistic analysis so that he and his audience can have a thorough understanding of this correlation. Through language -and etymology- Heidegger wants to help us understand the true notion (and nature¹⁹) of these intrinsically linked terms, to remember what has been forgotten and restore their meaning. We see, for example, that the word *Bauen* (building) contains in its original version (*buon*) the meaning of the word ‘dwell’. The answer to how to build has been given to us through language and it’s been there since the beginning.

In looking back to find answers, however, Heidegger does not propose a return to a previous state or era. When he explains why the farmhouse in the Black Forest, close to Todtnauberg, meets all the criteria for dwelling²⁰, he points out that this reference to the farmhouse does not imply by no means that our society should use such houses as models in order to design and construct again similar buildings²¹. The farmhouse simply shows us what an authentic dwelling looks like²². Once more, Heidegger invites us to remember in order to think and gain access to truth. In this way, we will be able to comprehend that what we initially thought

to be the problem of the modern age -that is housing shortage and homelessness- can impel us to reflect on the real plight of dwelling:

“However hard and bitter, however hampering and threatening the lack of houses remains, the real plight of dwelling does not lie merely in a lack of houses. [...] The real dwelling plight lies in this, that mortals ever search anew for the nature of dwelling, that they must ever learn to dwell. What if man’s homelessness consisted in this, that man still does not even think of the real plight of dwelling as the plight? Yet as soon as man gives thought to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer. Rightly considered and kept well in mind, it is the sole summons that calls mortals into their dwelling.”²³

Homelessness is an eternal condition in the history of humanity. First, we are homeless and the realization of our homelessness is what motivates us to seek dwelling. This is a never-ending process. Heidegger draws our attention to the notion of homelessness and associates it with the concept of nihilism²⁴ and the question of Being. Just as we can distinguish between a positive and a negative turn of nihilism²⁵, we can as well venture a positive reading of Adorno’s concept of the Shelterless. Their approaches may differ but they both create a new aesthetics of dwelling that emerges from homelessness and through their writings they participate in a political dialogue that is broader than Adorno’s critique of capitalism or Heidegger’s discontent and mistrust toward modernism and technology. Their legacy has inspired not only architects but also artists²⁶ and we can claim that architects may be redirected to the concept of dwelling through contemporary art.

4. Contemporary art as a vehicle for dwelling

In the 2007 Rirkrit Tiravanija and Gordon Matta-Clark exhibition we won’t find any reference to the philosophical work of Heidegger and Adorno, but we shall see that the juxtaposition of the two artworks can create a dialogue

18 “Only if we are capable of dwelling, only then can we build”: Heidegger, M. (1971). “Building Dwelling Thinking” in *Poetry, Language, Thought*. Trans. Albert Hofstadter. New York, Harper and Row.

19 “It is language that tells us about the nature of a thing” *ibid*.

20 dwelling spares the fourfold and gathers all the elements that let things be in their *presencing*: In the farmhouse which is located on the mountain slope, the four elements of earth, sky, divinities and mortals enter in the simple oneness.

21 I do not think we should interpret Heidegger’s lecture as a nostalgic call to return to the past and I agree with Mario Wenning’s argument that we could benefit from Heidegger’s philosophy and use it to meet the current needs of our society: “Rather than using Heidegger in order to construct new forms of existential provincialism that are presented as a longing for rootedness in a harmonious small-scale community where being-in-the-world is still authentic, there is a need to rethink modernization from an intercultural perspective in order to address some of the most pressing tasks today: the integration of increasingly diverse urban populations within economically, environmentally, culturally and politically sustainable cities.” Wenning, M. (2023). *Hut Existence or Urban Dwelling?: Deprovincializing Heidegger from the East*. *Asian Studies*, 11(1), 51–68.

22 “Our reference to the Black Forest farm in no way means that we should or could go back to building such houses; rather, it illustrates by a dwelling that *has been how* it was able to build” *Building Dwelling Thinking* *op. cit*.

23 *op. cit*.

24 See Chapter Four “Confronting Nihilism” in O’Donoghue, B. (2011). *A Poetics of Homecoming: Heidegger, Homelessness and the Homecoming Venture*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle upon Tyne

25 Between a “nihilistic nothing” and a “new turning of being”, *ibid*.

26 We can mention the exhibition *Machines à penser* that was held in Fondazione Prada in 2018 and presented an artistic interpretation of Wittgenstein’s, Adorno’s and Heidegger’s relation to exile and isolation mostly through the (re)construction of three huts.

that will let us reflect on various concepts that are interconnected with their thought. Matta-Clark's *Open House* somehow echoes Adorno's ideas²⁷ of temporary housing, homelessness, shelter and abandonment, and even his critique on capitalism, the exchange value system and consumerism. Considering the fact that the original work (1972) was conceived as an architectural piece - a dumpster made out of materials that were found in the Soho district, that was meant to be placed in the street outside the gallery space showing the struggle of real life and of the people that are in constant search of refuge as opposed to the protected and secured space of the gallery, we understand that this contradictory image produced a powerful statement against the capitalist system within which the art-world and Art Institutions see art as a product. The decision to exhibit the artwork in public space, where life is happening and not in a more "sterile" environment is one with aesthetic and political connotations. Everyone was supposed to have access to the container - from artists to homeless people- and everyone was at liberty to use it as shelter. Despite the site-specific nature of the original version, the 2007 recreation that was installed inside the Zwirner gallery preserved the concept of the artist. Anyone could still walk around in the corridors and rooms inside the container and find shelter for a moment. Gordon Matta-Clark's work was an empty, abandoned space that was transformed into a temporary living space that could be shared by everyone. In addition to remodeling an existing space, by choosing reused, recycled or discarded materials for his artwork Gordon Matta Clark was proposing a different approach to architectural planning, building and living in the city²⁸. *Open house*, like any of his other projects, shows how the artist expresses his concerns regarding the failure of society to let people think, move and act freely without any restrictions or limitations. Gordon Matta Clark saw that the impossibility of dwelling in the early 70s²⁹, especially in the deprived areas, and the alienation resulted from politics based on property, ownership, materialism, and capital.



Image 01- Matta-Clark 2007 Zwirner gallery

Through his art, he intended to create a community of solidarity people, to revolutionize the way we think and occupy space within the capitalist society and to help us find our identity. He chose to use architectural constructions as material for his art in order to redefine the image of abandonment and abjection.

The installation-performance of Rirkrit Tiravanija was the second work of art that was hosted in the Zwirner gallery and was in dialogue with Matta-Clark's dumpster. Tiravanija experimented with space as well but in a slightly different way. He rearranged the gallery space so that the visitors could feel they were in connection with themselves and with the other visitors. If we were to find an analogy between Tiravanija's work and Heidegger's theory we could claim that Tiravanija is creating the appropriate conditions to let people be as mortals, to show them how to be in their 'presencing', how to dwell. The artist let visitors be part of a unique experience where human interaction, free food, and a cozy space were generating different combinations each time and were producing unexpected, interesting results. The food sharing was leading people back to a for-

27 "Adorno's answer is that architecture must do what art did during the period of high modernism and what artists at its periphery (such as Gordon Matta-Clark) have intimated in their works. Architecture must become anti-architectural, not in the sense that it no longer plans, designs, and builds dwellings and dwelling arrangements, but that it does so in ways that feign an impossible standpoint (rather than blueprinting false solutions) by reimagining dwelling as no man's lands of exteriorized contiguity and dwelling's ideal social arrangements as alternative kinships." Waggoner, M.(2019). "How not to be at home in one's home: adorno's critique of architectural reason". *Architecture Philosophy*, Vol. 4 No. 1.

28 In the chapter "Declaring war on the Home: Gordon Matta Clark", Claudette Lauzon describes how Matta-Clark tried to decry, through his art, the failings of modern architecture and to propose a new way of thinking: "The circumstances surrounding the event [...] seemed to confirm Matta-Clark's suspicion of the architectural profession's willful indifference towards, as he puts it, 'those condemned to live in social housing projects designed by architects that never set foot in their neighborhoods.' Several of Matta-Clark's lesser known projects - from *Garbage Wall* (1970) [...] to *Open House* (1972), an impromptu dwelling constructed from a dumpster and savaged doors- were designed, on the contrary, to explore the improvised practices of those city dwellers described by the artist as living 'beyond, between and without walls, putting to waste the most presumptuous building plans'. [...] Matta-Clark's own strategy was to bring to light the conditions and effects of New York's housing crisis by etching them into the very material fabric of the city". Lauzon, C. (2017). *The Unmaking of Home in Contemporary Art*. Toronto, University of Toronto Press

29 Once more, in the *Unmaking of Home in Contemporary Art*, Claudette Lauzon, while referring to women, feminist interventions, and domesticity in the 1970's explains that: "Class-based feminist analysis would further call into question the presumption of a stable [...] dwelling [...] focusing instead on the concurrent onslaught of housing crises in cities across North America, especially New York City- where a fiscal crisis combined with poor city management saw parts of the city transformed into landscapes of dilapidated and abandonment tenements, and where rates of homelessness and inadequate housing seemed to multiply exponentially overnight. It was in this context [...] that Gordon Matta-Clark produced several acerbic critiques of the architectural establishment's failure to respond to the housing crisis unfolding literally under its feet". Ibid.

gotten place by reviving the gathering of the tribe around the hearth and by pointing to a group habitation. People were able to communicate, take a break from technology, feel their mortality, understand the common fate of humankind, and realize that we are not superior to the divinities. Even the materials used in every presentation of the work are meticulously selected and serve a specific purpose. The wood surfaces of the installation are another element that reconnects the visitors with nature and life on earth. We could even argue that the installation is Tiravanija's contemporary hut. Tiravanija understood the crisis of detachment that contemporary society was undergoing and he created an experience that would allow us to belong to a community and reevaluate our human needs. His work is characterized by simplicity, however, we enter a spiritual dimension where we can see the grid of human relations, think about the true nature of things, how to overcome our homelessness, and how to dwell.

5. Conclusion

These two examples of contemporary art show us that a building is a space of endless possibilities and the way we rearrange it, the way we imagine its function and its form from a different perspective can create new meanings. Our intervention in an existing place is an aesthetic and a polit-



Image02-Tiravanija 2007 Zwirner gallery

ical act in that it allows us to conceptualize it and reinvent its role within the urban space. Art proposes an efficient and creative way to deal with architectural problems that may occur and teaches us how to apply ideas to practice. And whether we decide to join Heidegger's call for unity or Adorno's philosophy of disruption, 21st-century architects can always rely on art for a renewed vision of the question of dwelling, based on rethinking existing space.

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The Politics of Art in Cornelius Castoriadis: Creating New Common Worlds

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The aesthetics of biopolitical capitalism promote the production of artworks that function as products for consumption or entertainment within the culture industry, undermining the essence of creation, self-reflection, freedom and political action. It is indeed urgent for practitioners in the field of art and design to act as political agents and set as their objectives the production of new subjectivities and common worlds. This is necessary in order to strengthen the political and critical capacity of art to foster new forms of social relations, and practices of living beyond competitive individualism and sameness. The overall objective of this essay is to explore the political dimension of art by mobilizing the aesthetic dimension of Cornelius Castoriadis' political theory to examine the artist as an autonomous subject and the work of art as a critical and spatial practice with distinct architectural futures towards the radicalization of democracy and the re-conceptualization of society. My contribution wishes to interlink art, political theory and architecture by setting as an artistic paradigm the practice of Laure Prouvost, which features spatial qualities, architectural constructions and immersive multimedia installations, suggesting her very distinct architectural approach to art.

1. Engaging towards autonomy: The paradigm of the artist

“Dance, architecture, and music do not imitate anything, they create a world.”
Cornelius Castoriadis

My analysis will follow Cornelius Castoriadis 'project of autonomy' to argue the political role of the artist as subject of action. I will emphasize the critical dimension of art to the predetermined and institutionalized meanings and choices moving away from repetition and sameness heading towards a different way of being. This 'different way of being' refers to Castoriadis' 'project of autonomy' opening possibilities for radical transformation through the transition from a static-passive practice of living (heteronomy) to another practice of living, which is under constant review-creation (autonomy). The assumptions that imbue this essay are: (a). contemporary art and can be a political practice of autonomy that can suggest new architectural approaches to art, (b). the artist can be considered a political-autonomous subject empowering democratization and social change, (c). the creation of an artwork can be linked to the emergence of new common spaces. I will begin by re-discussing the concept of autonomy in art to interlink politics, autonomy and contemporary art practice.

Castoriadis' 'project of autonomy' is identified with politics as 'a self-reflective collective activity' which does not focus on individual institutions and issues, but instead examines and continuously questions the institutionalized society (Castoriadis, 2007, p. 79). Castoriadis examines culture as a dimension of politics (politics in relation to the establishment of society as a whole and not in relation to

politicians, presidents, elections, etc.) and politics as a dimension of culture. The 'project of autonomy' having a broad aesthetic and cultural content, can be placed in time before the overall social change empowering the movement to this direction (Castoriadis, 2007, pp. 16–17). And so, the radical transformation of society cannot be realized without the contribution of culture.

The work of art, according to Castoriadis, is that which questions "the functional and the everyday" by offering access to a different world (Castoriadis, 2007, pp. 46–47). The artwork or the architectural design that can be linked to the 'project of autonomy' needs to be imbued with values compatible with those of an autonomous society, such as collaboration, creation and community-building in opposition to the instrumental and utilitarian character of societies linked to individual interest, consumption and sovereignty. Autonomy is a condition of true coexistence, which entails the value of 'positive sociability', a form of sociability based on the active participation of all through the formation of new networks of communication with others. (Castoriadis, 2007, pp. 18–26, 38–40). A social intersubjective relationship, which unfolds because of its collective dimension: "whoever wishes to be free must be interested in the freedom of others, must be interested in the collective dimension of politics" (Tovar-Restrepo, 2021, p. 62). Castoriadis suggests that we should approach culture and works of art as "new ways of socialization" and not as ornaments, and museums should be treated as public places of active participation and action and not as places of tourism and entertainment (Castoriadis, 2007, pp. 15–17). Accordingly, architects can exercise autonomy and contribute to the cre-

ation of new shared spaces and foster community-building through the design of engaging cultural spaces.

The logic that orchestrates the 'project of autonomy' is the magmatic logic. 'Magma' refers to a multiplicity of representations, a condition between structure and non-structure, changeability and stability, identity and non-identity. 'Magma' is characterized by a kind of fluidity, a continuous state of change that is opposed to the solidification of identity. The magmatic logic suggests "a simultaneous way of being, which implies a different logic" (Curtis, 1997, pp. 290–319, 364) allowing for a multiplicity of elements, parts, meanings to transconnect and shape a new form. That being so, a context of indeterminacy and ambiguity arises, not allowing for a full definition (Tovar-Restrepo, 2020, pp. 92–93). The work of art, in this context of vagueness, does not represent reality, but creates a new one, what Castoriadis calls 'a world'. Keeping a serious distance from teleological approaches, Castoriadis supports that the layers of creation are aesthetic appearances, that cannot exist separately, existing only through their interlinking. They are connected without being connected with any consistency and sequence, and its purpose (telos) is precisely the state of interlinking itself. Creation-as-multiplicity is characterized by an intermediate condition, which connects the 'magmatic logic' with the 'ensembistic-identitarian' logic that dominates the representational aspect of social reality. As a result, the disclosure of a new aesthetic world that can be considered political, in this manner, features a plural condition of being which connects chaos with order, non-meaning with meaning (Adams, 2011, p. 105).

The political dimension of art following Castoriadis' theory lies in the critical awareness of the malleable qualities of society. Art can stimulate the transition to a more open, changeable, and participatory paradigm of politics centered on the exercise of questioning, imagining and thinking. Art and architectural practices connected to the 'project of autonomy' stand for a new relationship of the self with the self and the world, which can emerge by combining 'reflection' with the liberation of 'radical imagination', that is, the continuous circulation of representations of the unconscious, to articulate-visualize-design a critical thought-concern for politics and social reality with the form of new images-spaces. By proceeding to options that are not recognized as available options, artists and architects can distance themselves from heteronomy highlighting possibilities for creating the new (Curtis, 1997, p. 62).

The activity of 'reflection' vitalizes the transformation of the social individual to what Castoriadis calls 'human subjectivity', a quality that empowers probabilities of self-and-world recreation. Autonomous subject, Castoriadis specifies the subject that participates in the life of society claiming detachment and liberation from dominant structures, relations of power and subjugation (Castoriadis, 1992, p. 213). In such mode, the artist, but also the architect, as paradigms of autonomous subjects, can claim levels of freedom resisting heteronomy. Autonomy in praxis, is the reconsideration of hegemonic forms of established and 'absolute' truths, encouraging different ways of being,

which contradict with the hitherto socialization and subject formation (Castoriadis, 2000, pp. 66, 24).

The 'project of autonomy' can be understood as a socio-historical rupture that rejects confinement and fuels creation: "it is a moment of creation", and a desire for freedom: "If we want to be free, we must make our own laws. [...] no one can dare to tell us what we should do and how we should think" (Castoriadis, 1978, p. 140). The heteronomous subject absorbed by the intensity of the social institution cannot realize their capacities to challenge and reform the social institutions, the meanings that motivate and determine their actions while remaining attached to a state of repetition and unconscious subjection. Heteronomy is approached as a condition of unfreedom that manipulates the individual towards specific choices (habits) that function as automatism and passivate the subject in a non-overt way. In other words, heteronomy is where reasoning and imagining are undermined, and individuation becomes a rare act of disagreement (Castoriadis, 1991, pp. 132–133).

In order to analyze the process of transition from heteronomy to autonomy, Castoriadis draws from psychoanalytic theory, where autonomy is an ontological openness, a possibility of the subject to stand critically towards the power imposed by heteronomy and create "another self in another world" (Castoriadis, 1995, p. 410). The crucial point of this potentiality lies on 'self-consciousness' (Castoriadis, 1978, p. 153). To act politically is a conscious act towards the creation of a new world. The work of art as an act of autonomy indicates the activation and liberation of the 'radical imagination' within a state of clarity and political awareness. However, autonomy is not an end to which one arrives, being a political action that arises through the emergence of a joint network, where subjects engage actively towards a shared vision: the radical transformation of society. The example of the artist and that of the architect, can be versions of autonomous subjects, if their practices disrupt the everyday, question conventional approaches of functionality and normality that have been established, activating a different logic based on community-organization, imagination and self-consciousness.

2. The image of 'absolute creation': presenting chaos

Artistic and architectural practices that can be linked to the 'project of autonomy' have a political dimension, which can be understood through the relationship that the works develop simultaneously with the world and chaos. This, according to Castoriadis, can only be possible with "absolute creation", the work of art which undertakes to present an unknown (until that moment) world (chaos) by imaging a new world (presenting chaos). The fact that Castoriadis uses the term "absolute" to describe the work of art which has a political dimension can be commented in connection to religion. "Absolute creation" is a "real presence", which, unlike religion, reveals and does not conceal chaos (Castoriadis, 1978, pp. 97–101). Religion, unlike art, conceals chaos by delimiting it. The concept of chaos indicates the human inability to prove everything and its reinvention

on a theoretical level expresses a distance from forms of ideology and theology (Castoriadis, 1978, p. 167). We could characterize Castoriadis' decision to choose the term 'absolute' to define a democratic version of creation, provocative and paradoxical as well since it is the exact opposite of certainty and absoluteness. Through the work of art, the artist can question established certainties-truths by giving form to the abyss, which has been absorbed by the appeared-as-absolute-and-fixed social significations. According to Castoriadis, the artist begins to exist when the link between society and religion is either broken or radically changed: "This rupture, or change, is the rupture of institutionalized heteronomy, the beginning of questioning society itself and individuals themselves" (Castoriadis, 1978, p. 101).

The institutionalized social reality constitutes a well-organized world covered with meanings. Beneath all meaning there is non-meaning, or differently chaos; what remained outside the formative forces of the institution of society, or what can appear when society is subjected to alteration ("αλλοίωση"), that challenges of their given meanings. The political dimension of art lies in the revelation of chaos or non-meaning, which in this way is invested with meaning and acquires a new meaning: "the meaning of non-meaning" (Castoriadis, 1978, p. 99). In heteronomous societies, there is a tendency to invent meanings to organize and delimit chaos. Artists find ways to reveal chaos and challenge this silencing tendency by creating spaces that form and image chaos and function as "a passage and opening to the abyss" (Castoriadis, 2007, pp. 137–142), which at the same time is an opening to a democratic autonomous society.

The work of art, therefore, presents dimensions of the world that have been lost or they are not visible on the everydayness of social life within heteronomy. The description or explanation of an "absolute" work of art is impossible for Castoriadis pointing out the impossibility of its translation to another language. The autonomy of the work of art lies, as well, in the formation of a meta-linguistic universe since language as a central element of the 'ensemblistic-identitarian' logic is called into question through the 'project autonomy' (Castoriadis, 2007, pp. 100–101, 143). The 'absolute creation' cannot be, thus, communicated (successfully) through language since "chaos lies beyond all meaning" (Castoriadis, 2007, p. 167), as it originates from the abyss of the human imaginary, a space of non-verbalized impulses and desires: "The significance in the highest moments of art is – and this is not a play with words – is the meaning of non-meaning and the non-meaning of meaning [...] art as a window to the Abyss, to Chaos, and as the shaping of Abyss – this is precisely the moment of meaning, the moment, that is, when art creates a world" (Castoriadis, 2007, p. 156). The political significance of art is indicated in its abilities for world-formation within a context that challenges the logic of absolute identity and is beyond conventional approaches of understanding as it is deeply grounded on imagination, desire, and emotion: "It is not a rational thing, nor is it proven. It makes sense to us." (Castoriadis, 2007, pp. 169–170).

Discussing the artwork as 'absolute creation', we are shifting away from the logic of representation in art. Art emerges as a place of new possibilities, spaces and images beyond imitation (mimesis). The 'absolute creation' is creation ex nihilo that contains the past, without representing anything. The work of art creates another world using materials of the given world by mediating alterations. This critical function works towards the revelation of what the institution of society has concealed, chaos, the source and power of emergence (*vis formandi*) of the 'absolute creation', which reveals its truthful qualities and essence, what it really is (Castoriadis, 2007, pp. 28–29). The artist as a paradigm of autonomous subject can introduce the spectators into a world they have not visited before. This disconnection from reality creates the necessary distance to enable speculation and cultivate a new culture of being infused by critical thinking and acting.

The image of art, to which I refer, serves as a critique to the logic of heteronomy and to that of representation. The politics of art in Castoriadis can be connected to practices that shape chaos by creating a new world: "Dance, architecture, and music do not imitate anything, they create a world" (Castoriadis, 2007, p. 138). Imitation is connected to reproduction and consumption and is approached as a "bad version of art" which cannot be connected to the constitution of a new world and the expression of emotions by limiting the gaze and thought to a familiar image. Art for Castoriadis is a living form, which produces meaning itself. Thus, the image of 'absolute creation' in art is a new living image and therefore not a representation, but a revelation-presentation: "Art presents without concealing" (Castoriadis, 2007, pp. 136, 29–30, 47).

3. From Cornelius Castoriadis' theory to Laure Prouvost's practice: Spatial and political dimensions of contemporary art

The political dimension of art is linked to a continuous practice of dialogue and critique; to question and create anew. The reference to a specific example of contemporary artistic practice will help at this point highlight the main axes of relational art and aesthetics in conversation with Castoriadis' theorization on the work of art. The example will be the practice of the artist Laure Prouvost (b.1978, France), known for her immersive and multimedia installations that merge the real with the imaginary, engaging with architecture, contesting conventional perceptions of things, while animating new relationships between subjects-objects-spaces.

Entering a world created by Prouvost feels like entering a sensorial imaginary environment, where we can suddenly disconnect from the urban landscape, come together and re-imagine our relationship with the city, nature, technology, ourselves and the others. Prouvost designs spaces, videos and installations that ask you to stay there, to contemplate. In that way, she manages to differentiate herself visually and spatially while connecting with the spectators, welcoming them/us into her shared space of subjectivity, where one can become curious and fascinated by the immersive spatial qualities of her installations with sounds,



Laure Prouvost. *Above Front Tears Oui Float*, The National Museum, Oslo, Norway, 2022.

Photograph by David Levene.

sculptures, paintings, text, and moving images. Playing with words and storytelling, Prouvost is, sometimes, performing herself, with her voice and hands keeping our attention awake (she often likes to tell us tales). Having no tendencies for domination or control, she energizes a condition of equality between her and the spectators. The role of the subject of action shifts from the artist to the viewer and spectatorship becomes an active participation within a playful architecture for and of art. The exhibition-space transforms into a small community, an intellectual playground, where the viewers are agents of an alternative morphic universe, and they are invited to connect with other subjects and objects. Examining the boundaries between the personal and the public space, Prouvost addresses to an unknown audience a radically new and unknown world introducing her distinct architectural approach to art.

Refining the political dimension of ‘absolute creation’, Prouvost has stated that the political element in her work is found in the liberation of imagination and the questioning of the institutionalized world: “The most important element in my work is to challenge the way the world is institutionalized, to question the norms, to try to understand why we think in a certain way.” She believes that activism in art lies in being able to activate imagination or simply gather people in a common space and ask them to respond to questions concerning the construction of the world. Prouvost (2018) links the ability of questioning dominant norms that structure thought and action with a sense of liberation. And so, she constructs narrative and spatial spaces that integrate structures of everydayness into a fictional context.

At the Venice Biennale 2019, Prouvost drove us below the surface, creating a hole underneath the French Pavil-

ion. ‘Digging’ seems to be a key feature of her practice: trying to get access to truths about the human, while looking for ‘an ideal elsewhere’. Reflecting on her videos I can remember hearing her voice, whispering, breathing. I could see images changing with an incredibly fast rhythm, a visualization of an unconscious magma presenting images between chaos and reality. Her images do not follow a linear logic; the images are connected without being connected and in this way, we are detecting bridges with Castoriadis’ ‘radical imagination’ and the way the autonomous subject critically relates to it. Beyond the visual images, Prouvost undertakes the creation of sound images by developing non-narratives that are driving us deep into a dark place inside us or outside us somewhere under or over the sea that is beyond architecture and reality. In her work “Swallow” (2013) she is calling us to “collect all these images and swallow all these images.”

Prouvost’s performative practice functions as “the transgression of boundaries, the joy of slipping over a fence and discovering a wasteland or an abandoned but wonderful garden in which the artist has discovered a forgotten dystopian biological laboratory”. Designing temporary communities that exist now and will never exist again, the spectators leave, others come, the audience changes and the space transforms each time, every day until the show is over. The dimension of mobility is characteristic in the body of her work, which most of the times is not limited to one space, following routes from space to space. Mobility as a key feature of the architectural design of contemporary art produces relational art and as a result, an unpredictable way of sociality. This participatory dimension that arises, encourages the practice of autonomy as artists and spectators constitute a new shared world (Bourriaud, 2014, pp.

62, 65). This is a quality which would not be possible unless there was a strong interrelation with architecture. Creating such immersive sensorial works can refine the significance of site-specificity and architecture in the field of art.

The work of art, under this spell, is not just an object, but a political action, which can invigorate a regime of equality between artists and spectators. Artists as political subjects can design new common worlds, where the real is questioned, rethought and recreated. This sui generis dimension of autonomy as political practice, for Castoriadis, is also activated the moment of spectatorship, when one “has no need of anything else”. To experience art (the paradigm of ‘absolute creation’) means, according to Castoriadis, “the end of desire”, a condition which can be considered ‘freedom in praxis’. Art can be associated with the exercise of freedom, world-and-community-making mediating the identity of architecture, the self and society. The absence of an evident meaning is a dimension of freedom that animates a culture of action, which challenges the hegemonic logic, the concept of ownership, and individualism, while challenging the distance between artists and spectators. (Bourriaud, 2014, pp. 14–15).

Contemporary art appears as an interlinking between art and architecture, artists and spectators through which new joint spaces are being produced, subjects are being interconnected with objects, subjects, spaces and autonomy is being practiced facilitating the realization of social change on all levels. Spaces of art are being transformed to spaces of dialogue and participation, where one can claim levels of differentiation and connection with the multitude. Following Prouvost’s critical and spatial practice, we can say that contemporary artists can suggest their very own architectures today bringing into existence their personal imaginary depths that are becoming inter-and-trans-personal in sharing-spaces. The dimension of the political emerges through the creation of common spaces, where the norms and meanings of the institutionalized world are being mediated with thought and imagination cultivating new relationships with the abyss of the ‘radical imaginary’. As a result, a new collective horizon of emancipation is being formed by artists, like Laure Prouvost, that are digging holes to uncover meanings, rediscover truths empowering an architectural approach grounded on togetherness, equality and contestation.

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Supplementary Materials

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An Aesthetics of Pollution. the Coastline of Elefsina Through the Lens of New Materialist Theory.

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In the essay, coastal pollution in the city of Elefsina is examined through a non-anthropocentric approach; one that explores how the soil and waters, archaeological, urban ruins and minerals along with anthropogenic substances manifest as flows and transformations of matter. In this framework, pollution is analysed in three case studies: 1. the underwater environment of the gulf, 2. the topography of the coastline and 3. Elefsina's hills in relation to the archaeological terrain and the quarry of the cement factory TITAN. Methodologically, this conceptual approach is informed by the recent theory of new materialism in the work of Manuel De Landa and Jane Bennett, and also by field research in the wider area of Elefsina. What the essay ultimately aspires to is a renewed notion of aesthetics; one that challenges our ethical disposition towards material entities and the world they compose of—even if this world is one of contamination and loss.

1. Introduction

Rocks and winds, germs and words, are all different manifestations of this dynamic material reality, or in other words, they all represent the different ways in which this single matter-energy expresses itself.

Manuel de Landa, *A thousand years of non-linear history*, 2000

Elefsina¹ (ancient greek: *Eleusís*) is a coastal city whose name originates from the ancient word *eleftho* (ἐλεῦθω) which means 'to arrive', thus symbolizing the arrival of the sacred. In antiquity, Elefsina was famous for approximately 2,000 years (1600 BC - 400 AD) as the center of the Eleusinian Mysteries which attracted pilgrims from all over the then known world. In modern times the city was the third and newest historical industrial center of Attica, following with a time delay of a decade the other two: Piraeus and Lavrio. The arrival of industry in Elefsina is located into main three periods: the first dates from the end of the 19th century and the early years of the 20th (1875-1906), the second during the Interwar period (1923-1939) and the third shortly before the end of the Civil War and until the middle of the Dictatorship (1948-1971). Currently, the two re-

alities of Elefsina—its sacred past and the industrial present—coexist in a despoiled landscape. The entire coastline of the city is inaccessible, occupied by factories, while the archaeological heritage is endangered by the expansionist policies of heavy industry. The environmental degradation of the coast is not, however, limited to the infrastructure but also takes the form of anthropogenic ruins and toxic substances. Man-made pollutants have affected the natural heritage, destroying nature reserves along the water, and endangered human and non-human lives as well as antiquities through the toxicity of the air and the sea. In Elefsina environmental degradation is not something contained in specific areas but rather the *leitmotif* that binds everything, from living beings to the soil and waters, in a state of dissolution.

Starting with the coastal landscape of Elefsina, what could, however, be a theoretical framework for understanding pollution as an all-pervasive phenomenon? If pollution is defined as "the introduction of harmful materials into the environment,"² it is through a renewed notion of *materiality* that such an inquiry must begin. In the essay, it is specifically through the lens of new materialist theory, that a non-anthropocentric interpretation of the contaminated

¹ The current essay is part of my PhD research "Medealaboratory. Mappings and survivals of the myth of Medea in contemporary times. Towards a redefinition of the relationship between Nature, Geology and Culture." that is conducted at the Architecture Department of the University of Thessaly. The dissertation proposes an aesthetic and cultural inquiry into the current geological epoch through the archetypal myth of Medea. In the research, the coastal landscape of Elefsina is re-examined in relation to Heiner Müller's 1982 play *Despoiled Shore Medea-material Landscape with Argonauts*. By relating Müller's text with the pollution encountered in Elefsina, new entanglements between natural, archaeological and industrial sites and diverse phenomena of coastal degradation are generated.

² <https://education.nationalgeographic.org/resource/pollution>

shore of Elefsina is explored. New materialism—an interdisciplinary theoretical field that incorporates philosophy, feminism, science studies, and cultural theory—focuses on the primacy of matter as a dynamic element; the latter animates not only human bodies but also nonhuman organisms, inorganic substances, natural phenomena, infrastructures and technologies. “Reworking received notions of matter as a uniform, inert substance or a socially constructed fact, new materialism foregrounds novel accounts of its agentic thrust, processual nature, formative impetus, and self-organizing capacities.”³ In the essay, this new understanding of matter focuses on the non-organic sphere, as highlighted in the writings of Manuel de Landa and Jane Bennett. For both authors, material bodies and forces are a means of creating assemblages, terrains of human and non-human relationality that have historical and political repercussions.

A complementary methodological approach, in dialogue with the new materialist theoretical framework, is on-site research. In the case of Elefsina pollution is examined through three case studies: 1. the underwater environment of the gulf, 2. the topography of the coastline and 3. Elefsina’s hills in relation to the archaeological terrain and the quarry of the cement factory TITAN. Field research in these sites traces transformations of matter that have taken place from antiquity to the present, that is in a period that spans approximately three millenniums. In this process, the term ‘matter’ encompasses a diverse set of things such the soil, water, antiquities, minerals as well as industrial and urban infrastructure. Through the introduction of Bennett’s and De Landa’s insights into the analysis, new entanglements between these different sites of Elefsina and diverse phenomena of anthropogenic waste begin to arise.

What the essay ultimately seeks to bring forth is a *non-anthropocentric* aesthetics—‘an aesthetics of pollution’—that pertains the analysis of the environmental degradation in Elefsina. Rather than a response to an art historical discourse that involves the contemplation of *passive objects* by *active subjects*, the essay takes a new materialist approach by focusing on the “sensuous stuff of earthly bodies” (Bennett, 2012, p. 230) and their morphogenetic and affective capacity. Such a notion of aesthetics highlights “matter’s inherent creativity” and its “potential for self-organization” (De Landa, 2000, p. 16), or what Bennett names the “thing-power”, “the curious ability of inanimate things to animate, to act, to produce effects dramatic and subtle.” (Bennett, 2004, p. 351). While both De Landa and Bennett do not directly formulate an aesthetic theory, they contribute to a renewed understanding of Nature in the era of the Anthropocene: instead of an *object* of aesthetic contemplation (or domination), Nature is the *material* manifestation of life *forces* and assemblages that extend beyond human agency. When viewed from the perspective of polluted landscapes—as that of the city of Elefsina—this affective

turn to the notion of *active materiality* has deep ecological and political repercussions; as Bennett argues, it “might help us live more sustainably, with less violence towards a variety of bodies” (Bennett, 2012, p. 232)—geological, non-human or otherwise.

2. The gulf of Elefsina

Lovely view of the sea: the gulf of Lepsina, surrounded by mountains, looks like a lake, we know not where its opening lies.

Gustave Flaubert, 1851, excerpt from the exhibition *Raw City - 2023 ELEVSIS*

An understanding of Elefsina in terms of its current environmental degradation begins first and foremost underwater. The gulf of Elefsina is a geomorphological embayment located in the northernmost part of the Saronic and is considered today one of the most environmentally degraded marine areas of Greece. As geological data show, the bay of Elefsina was affected by the Holocene sea level rise, turning within ~3,000 years from a fresh water environment into a closed lagoon, while around 10.5 thousand years ago the environment finally became marine. (Mavrommatis, 2018). Today it consists of a semi-closed basin whose oceanographic characteristics maintain a similarity to those of a lake. Its closed, shallow (maximum depth 33m) geomorphology favors the accumulation of pollutants. Additionally, the lack of strong currents and its anoxic conditions intensify the problem, by favouring the aggregation of sediments and inhibiting the natural decomposition of pollutants (Mavrakis et al., 2004).

The main source of the environmental degradation of the gulf is industrial pollution. In the Attica region, along the bay’s 15 km coast, 12 km are occupied by the harbour activities of industries. These consist of the industrial zone of Elefsina and Aspropyrgos. The region hosts some of the largest industrial compounds in Greece, including two oil refineries, two steel industries, two cement factories, and one industry of munitions. Large warehouses and oil distribution facilities, three units of used lubricant processing, one paper mill, a lot of chemical industries, industries and manufacturers of plastic products, quarries and a lot of smaller units also exist there (Mavrakis et al., 2004). Thus, the main source of pollution of the bay is from industrial waste and atmospheric particles from fertilizer companies, steelworks, refineries, dyers, etc. Other major pollutants are the expansive ship industry and specifically the handling, repair and construction of ships, as well as the central sewage pipe of Athens, the stream of Agios Georgios, which carries the liquid waste of the tanneries, and also the drains from the waste burial site in Ano Liosia.

Altered by urban and industrial pollution, the gulf’s geochemical composition contains what is a soluble combination of organic waste, oil residues, heavy metals and

³ *New Materialism*. (n.d.). Obo. <https://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/display/document/obo-9780190221911/obo-9780190221911-0016.xml>



Image 01. The coast of Elefsina © Stefania Strouza

microplastics, together with pebbles and soil carried by streams. How can these fluid, underwater relations be perceived, historicized and located within a wider environmental perspective? The process of *sedimentation*—that is the deposition of floating sediments in the bottom of the sea—is key to understanding the environmental history of Elefsina. While seawater samples provide a current, momentary image of the underwater environmental conditions, the material accumulations of sediments are solidified data, tracing histories that go way back in time. In the geochemical and mineralogical analysis of sediments from the gulf of Elefsina a strong accumulation of heavy metals and alunite is observed. The main, however, characteristic of its underwater environment is the black coloration of the seabed. Covering the entire area of the Gulf is a muddy black layer 12 cm thick which is connected to the increased deposition of organic material due to human activity (Kanellopoulou et al., 2004).

The toxicity of the underwater environment is more than evident in the sedimentary formations of Elefsina. But rather than interpreting these material entities as simple indicators of pollution, can the sedimentation of anthropogenic waste be also understood as a *morphogenetic* process? That is, can underwater sediments be viewed as historicized formations in interrelation to the urban structures of the city? Manuel de Landa describes sedimentation from a structural, or even *architectural*, point of view: “[Sedimentation] consists in *cementing* the sorted components together into a new entity with emergent properties of its own [...] This second operation is carried out by cer-

tain substances dissolved in water [...] As this percolating solution crystallizes, it consolidates the pebble’s temporary spatial relations into a more or less permanent “architectonic” structure” (De Landa, 2000, p. 60). The result of this process, that is sedimentary rocks, are “historical constructions, the product of structure-generating processes” (De Landa, 2000, p. 62), and also scientific data that allow for a view of the past. The water currents and the pollutants of the gulf—perceived as energy and matter respectively—compose, in the form of sediments, yet another structural layer in the geological section of the city. As natural history infiltrates human history, it is these underwater formations that compose the mirror *image* of the industrialised landscape above the sea surface, thereby connecting societies with the underwater terrain, “mountains and other non-living historical structures” (De Landa, 2000, p. 20).

3. Accumulations of matter

The most beautiful arrangement is a pile of things poured out at random.
Heraclitus, Fragment 124

In the documentary film “The Mourning Rock” (Agelastos Petra), Thodoris walks on the embankments by the sea of Elefsina. It is there where he searches for fragments of surviving antiquities, hidden among the rubble that covers the coastline. But what is the understanding of debris in an industrial city that has been founded upon the ruins of



Image 02. Agelastos Petra © Filippos Koutsaftis

an ancient one? Debris⁴ can be generally defined in three categories: 1) as ‘something discarded’, such as rubbish or waste, 2) as loose natural material, usually ‘an accumulation of fragments of rock’ and 3) as ‘the remains of something broken down or destroyed’, such as ancient ruins. In Elefsina all three definitions apply. Natural materials such as marble chiseled by the human hand centuries ago, merge with soil and rocks, as well as industrial ruins, such as fractured cement slates and plastics. Elefsina is a place where multiple *things* coexist in a fragmentary state; some valuable, some harmful and some simply as materials that have always been there.

But rather than passive or undifferentiated matter, debris can be understood in a different light through *stratigraphy*, the branch of Geology that deals with the succession of strata and their interpretation in terms of a general time scale. The field has been introduced in urban archaeology where “the contemporary city was investigated and studied as if it was an archaeological site, including in its *stratigraphy* different ideas of the city, autonomous from the previous historical ones.” (Caja, 2021, p. 45) In this framework the ancient ruins together with the abandoned industrial infrastructure are interpreted “as documents to be exposed.” (Caja, 2021, p. 44) In the case of Elefsina, therefore, the piles of rubble are not simply the accumulation of inorganic matter but can be rather understood as

a *material* archive of the city’s multiple *temporalities*. Seen from a new materialist perspective, however, stratigraphy moves beyond the rather static idea of the fragment as ‘historical document’ and towards its morphogenetic capacity. In this light, geological and historical forces contribute to the *ongoing* morphogenesis of natural and urban environments. Manuel De Landa explains this continuity between earth processes and human as well as non-human structures as follows: “reality is a single matter-energy undergoing phase transitions of various kinds, with each new layer of accumulated “stuff” simply enriching the reservoir of non-linear dynamics [...] available for the generation of novel structures and processes.” (De Landa, 2000, p. 21) Debris thus ‘petrifies’, or better, momentarily ‘friezes’ in different formations, each one embodying diverse *historical* strata: not only the archaeological but also those of urbanization, industrialization and ruination.

In the case of Elefsina, debris can be interpreted not only as historical formation but also as that which actively generates the *future*, in the form of embankments by the sea. Walking these days near the shore it is difficult to connect the current coastal topography with the flowing, idyllic shorelines in 19th century lithographs.⁵ The original landscape feels like a ghostly presence, underneath successions of material layers added throughout the 20th century in an effort of Greek industry to expand and capitalize the nat-

⁴ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/debris>

⁵ Another issue that arises here is the tension between the debris as material residue of the city and what Michele Caja refers to as the “iconographic image transmitted by history”. It appears that the shoreline of Elefsina belongs to those type of landscapes that “mostly remain as an image surviving in the collective memory of citizens who are still alive and through immaterial documents and testimonies.” (Caja, 2021, p. 41)



Image 03. Mounds of construction materials at Vlycha © Stefania Strouza

ural terrain. Elefsina's seaside contour is a historical and natural heritage that has been violently modified by the ongoing industrial development, with 1000 square meters of sea embanked with soil, rubble and cement since 1967. The embankments from debris along the coast are part of a larger network of material accumulations that have formed a new topography of the area. Approaching the area of Vlycha one encounters different types of practices, mostly unauthorized, related to rubble. There, the disposal of material into the sea consists of an illegal private activity. Large quantities of rubble, amounting to several tons, have been over a period of years been disposed into the coast, deforming Vlycha's natural environment.

A side-effect of urban and industrial development, these accumulations of matter constitute yet another form of environmental pollution in Elefsina. There is nevertheless a strange allure in these formless mounds of discarded matter; one that seen from a new materialist perspective consists in the sheer *'thingness'* of debris itself. In her essay "Encounters with an Art-Thing" Jane Bennett describes a 'thing' as follows: "The radically demoted object [...] floats on the surface of context and bobs over and shrugs off the grasp of established norms and judgments. As *thing* it paradoxically rises to a new status, that of a more active party in encounters. It becomes a body among bodies with the capacity to affect and be affected." (Bennett, 2015, p. 13) Viewed from such a perspective, debris constitutes a *condition of possibility* for encounters between human and non-human bodies, between persons and things. It forms the type of abandoned landscape that according to Cristina Casadei "tenaciously preserves traces of events that rarely disappear at all" resulting in "a rich, sometimes messy, and interrupted pattern" (Casadei, 2022, p. 139). Its capacity to produce affects might also interpret the obsession of the

protagonist of "The Mourning Rock" in searching among these piles of disposed matter. Perhaps the attraction lies not so much in the antiquities themselves but in the dissolution of subjectivity inside the raw, primordial materiality of these kind of sites; that "vein of *thingness* [...] that both enables and chafes against, overflows, or even breaks the mold of subjectivity into which most of us daily labor to cram it." (Bennett, 2015, p. 15)

4. Excavation and Extraction: from marble to cement

[she] syncs with the (unwhole) shape, the (jagged) edge, the (unintended) color, the (ragged) texture or, in other words, her "aesthetic" capacities are heightened.

Jane Bennet, Encounters with an Art-Thing, 2015

If the deformed coastal landscape and the artificial mounds of Vlycha are anthropogenic constructions, the products of an additive material process, there is also another side of the *matter*, that of excavation or extraction. The two processes, have run in parallel in Elefsina during the 20th century and relate to two distinct enterprises, the archaeological expeditions that have taken place in the area and the operation of the cement factory TITAN. In this case, it is the subsoil that becomes an object of negotiations, as a source of antiquities or mineral wealth. In this last section pollution is explored as it manifests in the *interior* of one of the city's most prominent geological and cultural formations, the hill range of Elefsina.

The landscape of Elefsina and by extension its cultural heritage is defined by an elongated *hill range* that extends to the southwestern end of the Thrasio Pedio, separating the plain from the sea. In an intermediary terrain, outside



Image 04. Kynodontes (Dogteeth) © Stefania Strouza

the confines of the official archaeological site, yet of archaeological value, lie two hills, named as “Polis” and “Hellenistic Fortress”. In the past, between 1882 and 1894 archaeologist D. Filios in collaboration with the German architect W. Dorpfeld will conduct excavations, followed by A. Skia. The research, however, did not remain unscathed by the industrial development of Elefsina. In 1902, the cement factory TITAN, the first production plant for reinforced concrete, was established on the south side of the “Hellenistic” hill next to the sanctuary of Demeter. The unit is until today located at the western end of the coastal front of Elefsina, next to the hill of the ancient city. By 1932, when the law N. 5351/1932,⁶ the most important legislative work to protect ancient monuments, was constituted, the factory had already expanded around and on the hills, its chimneys located within a radius of 500 meters of the ancient monuments.

Despite their archaeological and cultural value, the importance of the hills neighbouring the Acropolis was silenced and these natural formations eventually became the quarry of the cement factory, due to the area’s mineral wealth. Hidden inside the earth were not only marble fragments, remnants of a mythic past, but also high-quality limestone, invaluable for the successful operation of TI-

TAN. The area was thus rented from the municipality in order for the factory to extract the necessary raw material for producing cement. Instead of archaeological expeditions, it was now quarry operations that took place on the site. 50 years after TITAN’s opening, in the map of I. Travlos of 1953 a void appears on the saddle between the two hills on the western side of the archaeological site. It is the expanded quarry. Both hills gradually crumbled into raw material. What currently remains of them is three geological protrusions named by the locals as Kynodontes (Dogteeth), punctuated by a few cement structures. In the middle of the now abandoned quarry lies an empty space, resembling an open pit. The view of environmental destruction that the western hills offer the visitor seems to be an inverse image of the debris thrown into seafront. It is only through a leap of the imagination that one can imagine the vast quantities of material removed for TITAN’s use.

The now abandoned quarry seems to serve another use as a site for the disposal of rubble, domestic and industrial waste; that is the by-products of the city’s capitalist expansion.⁷ Rainwater drains have carried away with them the scattered debris, ‘sculpting’ a new stratum in the wounded landscape, one resembling a formless anthropogenic lava. Standing in the center of the site the visitor experiences a

⁶ https://www.culture.gov.gr/el/ministry/SitePages/archeol_law.aspx?iID=132

⁷ In the framework of 2023 Eleusis European Capital of Culture a public discussion arose on whether the site could be redesigned as an open-air theater. The scenario of its use as a cultural space was a means of overcoming an irreversible environmental and archaeological catastrophe through contemporary design. However, as Cabrera, Fenollosa & Lanzarote argue “meanings attached to the different urban scene actors are not always comfortable for everybody. Potential controversies might entail an additional difficulty in the design and management of public space.” (Cabrera i Fausto et al., 2020, p. 290) Dogteeth still remains in a state of suspension, its clandestine use as a dumping ground expressing yet another social group of Elefsina.



Image 05. The quarry © Stefania Strouza

certain unease but also a feeling of empathy and reciprocity towards this emptied out geological body. It might resemble to what Bennett describes as an *affective* experience that occurs in her encounter with the *broken thing*: “This stuff has no future to look forward to; the orphaned body itself has no past to which to appeal. But it is also a positivity: it is the shape of the *present as such*, an a-futural a-historical temporality-spatiality of just-here-just-now.” (Bennett, 2015, p. 15) What Bennett describes here in an indirect manner is an *aesthetic* experience occurring *between* bodies, geological and human, one that nonetheless has political undertones. The emptied-out hills of Elefsina—manifesting as an all-encompassing void—resemble the fractured object in Bennett’s description: “It is a shape that is both useless *and* capable of producing powerful effects, a combination that neoliberal capitalism tries to rule out in its attempt to turn everything into a useful means for making profit.” (Bennett, 2015, p. 15) The quarry is the ghostly afterimage of the hills. Its spectral presence ‘haunts’ the contemporary landscape just as its status as an archaeological space, industrial landscape or ruin of modernity remains perpetually suspended.

5. Conclusion

The exploration of Elefsina’s inorganic materials, ‘things’ (geological, ancient or contemporary), landscapes and anthropogenic substances implies a story of entangle-

ments, where pollution manifests itself as a central narrative thread. In the essay, the three main sections offer a spectral image of pollution while each of them reflects the specific materialities on site. What nevertheless appears as a constant is that in Elefsina—as toxic sediments construct an underwater ‘architecture’, shorelines disappear under the rubble and hills are emptied out of minerals—the “thing-power” comes forth in all its force. It is thus from this visceral non-anthropocentric perspective that the essay aspires to formulate an ‘*aesthetics of pollution*’. Such aesthetics challenges our disposition towards material entities and the world they compose of even if this world—in which we are also enmeshed as material bodies—is one of toxicity, catastrophe and loss. Such standpoint has profound ethical and political implications. As Bennett argues, “The self that acknowledges its thingness is, paradoxically, a body with newly activated sensory capacities—including the power to detect the presence of material agency. That activation can now filter into other aspects of our ethical lives, our relations with nature, our political sensibilities.” (Bennett, 2015, p. 15) In the midst of the ‘Anthropocenic drama’ acknowledging the creative power of bodies and forces while perceiving despoiled things and landscapes as “loci of affection and allure” (Bennett, 2012, p. 231) might be the path against human exceptionalism.

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