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End

"End" is ever the place that orients towards the new and the possibility of the new. If we take a close look at what is the end and that which ends everything that surround us, if we find the true End, what appears instantly is what has been and will be never more, as well as the limits of all our current activities and possibilities.

Prior to it being achieved and becoming an object or matter or even a mere nothing, the concept of "end"—ever before us and with us—should probably be thought of as ending, as preparation or clearing territory about and for architecture and philosophy. Perhaps all that ever remains to be done is the preparation of the end or to think the construction of the end of thought as we know it "between" architecture and philosophy.

The "and" or *and* that holds together architecture and philosophy necessarily transforms into and comes to an end, the end of the and, the end of any future and, and then the "end of the beginning and the end of the end" (Eisenman). How does "end" hold and break the connection between architecture & philosophy? Does "end" have its symbol and shorthand, does it have its time and space (end is perhaps the only, *briefest* possible concept in which space and time are inseparable and indistinguishable)? Does "end" have its own architecture and *its own* philosophy? Is it really a concept? Is it the final concept that abolishes any potential new concept? And what of the older meaning of the word "end" (*Ende*), equal in meaning to "place" (*Ort*), what is end as place (Gadamer)? What happens to the relation and connection between architecture and philosophy when they are mediated by an infinite "end"?

Architecture—End (Place)—Philosophy: what comprises the future of this tripartite order? Or, perhaps even of any future, any concept of the future and any concept as such? Forty years after the publication of a programmatic text by Peter Eisenman, "The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning, the End of the End," which sought and found in the word end a newness beyond any conceptual novelty ("an other 'timeless'

space of invention"), today we look for the attributes and models of this end (perfect end, absolute end, end of history, from Thomas Aquinas to Ed Ruscha), we protect the projective force of that which abolishes all future concepts; we call for yet another reconstruction of the event or re- alization of the concept of end. What we are interested in is the certainty of the most uncertain concept that has ever existed in the histories of the West or histories of writing, as well as histories of building in general. The end that really does not have an end, simultaneously closing everything finite and ephemeral, it operationalizes basic architectural protocols: the end as a projective end or projective motion or the ultimate incorpora- tion of the projective mind in the material; the transfer of the concept into something definitive and definite, into its own end and past (perfect, perfection); the transfer across limits and reach for the ultimate possible limit of the extreme and excessive; finally, the completion of the multi- tude into a whole, which paradoxically remains endless or unending. The end as movement beyond all destruction and termination.

What task is reserved for thinking at the end of architecture and phi- losophy? Is that "end," so ill-capable of truly being an end, able to be the beginning of anything (Hegel)?

Patrik Schumacher*

The End of Architecture

ABSTRACT: Architecture, as an autonomous, theory-led discipline, has ceased to exist. This paper posits the "end of architecture" not as rhetorical hyperbole but as a historically grounded assertion. The discipline has self-dissolved, eroding its intellectual and professional autonomy under the pressures of anti-capitalist politicisation and woke virtue signalling. Once defined by rigorous critical discourse, architectural innovation, and theoretical grounding, architecture has devolved into a fragmented practice now operating on the level of a mere craft rather than a science-based, academic discipline and profession. Academic institutions, biennials, and professional critiques have abandoned their roles as incubators of architectural thought, instead engaging with tangential sociopolitical issues that stray from architecture's core competency.

Although more pessimistic than optimistic for the immediate future, this paper posits the necessity of reasserting architecture's specific social function, of reclaiming agency, and re-establishing its critical discourse to foster innovation aligned with societal progress. It challenges architects, theorists, and educators to reject pluralistic complacency, reinvigorate constructive critique, and refocus the discipline on its core societal responsibility. Only through such recalibration can architecture emerge from its current dissolution and reclaim its role as a distinct and essential function system in the development process of contemporary society.

KEYWORDS: self-annihilation, theory-led discipline, mere building, function system, spatio-morphological framing, politicisation, woke take-over, discursive culture

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We are witnessing the end of architecture, the voluntary self-dissolution of architecture. The usurpation of the discipline by woke ideology is only one aspect of architecture's dissolution, not the full explanation. The self-destruction of architecture as academic discipline, as distinct discourse and as theory-led profession, is already a *fait accompli*. Architecture has ceased to exist. What does this even mean? What kind of statement is this? Is it mere polemic hyperbole? If not, is this meant to be an empirical statement of fact, or a statement stipulating a normative concept of architecture? Obviously, professional firms employing registered "architects" are still designing buildings. However, the resultant structures are no works of architecture, but mere buildings, because the design of these buildings is no longer informed and steered by a living, critical discourse.

A Pertinent Concept of Architecture

What underlies the thesis put forward here is neither a simple empirical concept of architecture—everything in ordinary parlance called architecture or everything designed by a registered architect—nor a normative stipulation like "we should only count as architecture works that meet a set of stipulated quality criteria." Instead, the thesis of the end of architecture is based on a historically grounded, rational reconstruction of a (functionally important) always already operative concept of architecture that will be elaborated upon below.

The term "rational reconstruction" was first put forward by the philosopher Rudolf Carnap, in the context of the philosophy of science. Carnap introduced the concept in his 1928 book *The Logical Construction of the World*, and defined the concept (in the 1967 edition) as follows:

> By rational reconstruction is here meant the searching out of new definitions for old concepts. The old concepts did not ordinarily originate by way of deliberate formulation, but in more or less unreflected and spontaneous development. The new definitions should be superior to the old in clarity and exactness, and, above all should fit into a systematic structure of concepts.[1]

The concept of architecture reconstructed here is based on the widespread intuitive distinction—as all concepts are distinctions—between

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[1] R. Carnap, *The Logical Construction of the World*, Routledge/Kegan Paul, London, 1967, p. v.

architecture and mere building. This distinction—works of architecture versus mere buildings—might be illustrated or exemplified by juxtaposing a prominent building successfully designed and built in accordance with an architectural competition as an exemplar on the side of architecture, with exemplars like a local garage, suburban supermarket, or run-of-the-mill terrace house on the side of mere building. The programme of rational reconstruction now asks for a set of explicit criteria that allow us to assign all buildings to these two categories, resulting in a partition that sufficiently matches our intuitive sorting.

The first aspect to make explicit is that architecture, as distinguished from mere building, is inherently connected to architectural discourse and theory. Theoretical treatises are essential components of the discipline and profession of architecture. Works of architecture therefore always link up with or relate to theories or manifestos of architecture. A second important criterion is that architecture, in contrast to mere building, is also marked by innovation. In the case of important works of architecture, these are original, pathbreaking innovations. For instance, Michelangelo's bold use of the so-called "colossal order"—first but very rarely introduced by Alberti—represents an advancement of architecture from the Renaissance (via Mannerism) to the Baroque. We must also include early adopters of such original innovations and all those who follow and spread an innovation with an awareness of the discourse of architecture. In all these cases, works of architecture are original creations put forward by architects claiming authorship. That all works of architecture are attributable to named (and educated) architects claiming authorship and responsibility is the third distinguishing feature of architecture versus mere building. Innovation questions tradition and requires an argument that transcends the mere concerns and competencies of building. Argument implies theory. In contrast, mere building—the vernacular—relies on tradition and well-proven solutions taken for granted, without authorship claims. The status quo does not require theory, nor a point of reference and responsibility. Beyond marking an important point of definition and distinction of architecture versus mere building, this reflection affords a functional explanation of the emergence of theory as a necessary ingredient of architecture as a discipline and profession with an inherent adaptive forward drive.

That only theoretically and historically informed building design constitutes architecture can be confirmed by every practicing architect who has undergone the rituals of architectural socialisation at university, where

history and theory were, until relatively recently, part of the architecture curriculum, and often enough feeding into design studio discussions.

A theoretically reflective practice can considerably accelerate its progress and its contribution to overall societal development. Innovation calls for theory to substitute for the assurances that were provided by adherence to tradition. Theory thus contributes to modernity's shift from conservation to progress.

Since innovation is a fundamental aspect of architecture, radical innovations that take root are most highly valued and mark out the respective works. Every great work of architecture offers a radical innovation. That is an empirical observation of the way the discipline evaluates itself. Many great architects, as valued within the discipline, are also important architectural theorists. This is another fact of communication. Virtually every architect who "counts" within the history of architecture was both an innovator *and* a theorist or writer. The most striking examples are Alberti and Le Corbusier, but we might also mention Palladio, Soane, Schinkel, Semper, Wagner, Wright, Gropius, as well as Koolhaas and Eisenman, among others. This immediate link between "great architecture" and significant theory is especially pronounced in the twentieth century: virtually all *modernists*, *post-modernists*, and *deconstructivists*, as well as the protagonists of *parametricism*, were theoretically articulate and in lively discursive exchange with each other, as well as with critics and academics. In recent years, however, practising architects are disconnected from architectural theory (critics and academics), as architectural theory has shifted its focus away from engaging with the work of leading architects.

Architecture versus mere building is constituted by virtue of architectural theory, innovation and original authorship claims. That is why architecture proper, as understood here, only begins with ancient Greek architecture, where both architect-authors (Ictinus, Callicrates, Hippodamus, fifth century BC) and theoretical treatises (the sources of Roman theorist Vitruvius) existed. With respect to ancient Rome, we might name Apollodorus of Damascus (second century AD), who is known for promoting innovations like the dome. After the demise of Rome, architecture disappeared and only returned in the Renaissance. The Romanesque is best understood as a *degenerate*, vernacular version of Roman architecture. The high point of achievement before the Renaissance—the Gothic cathedral—is indeed very impressive, but no complete designs prior to construction existed, and no individual authors can be named. In contrast, the names of Alberti, Bramante, Serlio, and Palladio are still

alive within the recursively reproduced memory of architecture's ongoing discourse. There are no equivalent figures from the Gothic epoch.

Most importantly, the essential ingredient that turns tradition-bound building into self-conscious architecture—a public, critical discourse that emphasizes creative innovation and demands arguments for those innovations—is missing in Gothic building practice. There is indeed a big difference between secret guild knowledge and the public circulation of treatises. It is this difference that motivates and justifies the thesis that architecture starts, or rather restarts, with the Italian Renaissance.

The differentiation of a dedicated theoretical strand within the discipline of architecture is one of the defining factors that contribute to the differentiation of architecture as an autonomous subsystem of societal communication. (The characterisation of architecture as function system within modern, functionally differentiated society will be elaborated in the following chapter). This tight link between the existence of architecture as a separate discipline/profession and architectural theory is also empirically evidenced by the historical coincidence of the emergence of architecture as a separate profession and the publication of dedicated architectural treatises. The theory of architectural autopoiesis[2] adds a theoretical explanation to this evidence—an explanation that construes the necessity of architectural theory on the basis of a functional exigency that acts as evolutionary attractor for the differentiation of this function system. This functional exigency is the need to accelerate the innovation of the built environment to an extent that contradicts the mode of evolution offered by the traditional system of guild-based handicraft organisation. In this context, theory replaces tradition. The necessity of architectural theory is thus asserted by the identification of its primary function. The primary function of architectural theory is to facilitate the rapid adaptation of architecture to an accelerated process of technological and socio-economic transformation since the advent of (early) capitalism. Theory must compensate for the lost certainty of tradition, where the appropriateness and functionality of buildings were guaranteed by the fact that new buildings consisted of nothing but the faithful repetition of long-evolved and surreptitiously corroborated models. The validity of traditional practice could be taken for granted and did not require a special

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[2] P. Schumacher, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture, Vol.1: A New Framework for Architecture*, Wiley, London, 2010; P. Schumacher, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture*, *Vol.2: A New Agenda for Architecture*, Wiley, London, 2012.

communicative effort to solicit their acceptance. The moment when traditional practice falters is the moment when architecture takes off.

Architecture is a discourse that is geared towards permanent innovation, keeping up with and promoting a dynamic society. The societal need for a permanently updated built environment—inevitably given in a society (since the advent of modernity) that expands and transforms relatively rapidly—is first the evolutionary attractor for architecture's crystallisation (as a theory-led innovation engine for the built environment) and then the selector for architecture's further historical evolution. Thus, the concept of architecture reconstructed here identifies *innovation* as a key criterion, alongside architectural theory explaining the benefits of the innovation, and alongside authorship taking responsibility for the innovative work. However, tragically, innovation at the frontier of our fast-evolving technological civilisation is no longer something that engages the "architectural" discourse in universities, exhibitions, conferences, and magazines. Here, topics like climate change, racism, Eurocentrism, decolonisation, degrowth, etc., abound. These are topics that, if at all, relate only negatively to contemporary architecture. To illustrate: the headline of a CNN article about the 2023 Venice Architecture Biennale was accurate: "Racism, activism and climate crisis are on the agenda at the Venice Architecture Biennale."[3]

Architecture's Societal Function

Above, we have focused on the distinction between architecture and mere building. This makes sense in the context of architecture's demise as understood here. However, both building and architecture address a fundamental societal function: the necessary spatial ordering of societal interaction processes. The problem is that under contemporary conditions of societal versatility, complexity, and dynamism, only an academically based, discursively empowered profession, developed via theory-guided research and experimentation, can fulfil, adapt, and progress this societal function of the built environment. When architecture "degenerates" back to a state of mere craft or tradition-bound building, the societal function of the built environment can no longer be fulfilled. Consequently, overall societal progress is thereby slowed down and stunted.

[3] M. Cerini, "Racism, Activism and Climate Crisis Are on the Agenda at the Venice Architecture Biennale," https://edition.cnn.com/2023/05/30/style/venice-architectural-biennale-africa/index.html, (accessed 20 December 2024).

Here is the author's definition of architecture's societal function as first provided in *The Autopoiesis of Architecture*[4]: "All social communication requires institutions. All institutions require architectural frames. The societal function of architecture is to order/adapt society via the continuous provision and innovation of the built environment as a system of frames."

There is no human community without an artificial built environment. It is the built environment—together with all artefacts—that provides cultural evolution with the cross-generational, material substrate it needs and by means of which an advantageous social order can persist and grow. In this respect, it is comparable to the DNA of biological evolution. Human settlements form and accumulate ever larger and more differentiated spatio-material structures as the skeleton for social structures, as it were, that without this substrate would not have managed to attain such a scale, which is indeed unnatural for primates. Moreover, the level of cooperation so important for human productive abilities would not otherwise have emerged, been replicated and advanced. What applies to the beginning of cultural evolution still applies today in relation to the developmental tasks currently facing us. Architecture's fundamental original achievement is not the oft-invoked protection from the elements but a structure-forming achievement: the achievement of order. The built environment organises social processes of interaction and plays a crucial role in the establishment and stabilisation of social order. It also involves ownership, spatial exclusion, and demarcation by means of physical barriers with corresponding rights of access. Yet above all, it involves the spatial distribution and functional configuration of types of interaction or communicative situations, by means of semiological codes, whereby relative spatial positioning is also a means of coding. The built environment structures social situations and provides orientation for the participants in the social processes thus organised, who then find their place of their own accord. It supports and communicates the social structure which is always a configured network of cooperation. While the social structure as a whole can hardly be made visible any longer, each of the local social structures, offerings, and options for communication can still be articulated and made transparent (although this requires a special, dedicated design effort). In short, spaces potentially communicate what is on offer and who can take part.

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[4] P. Schumacher, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture, Vol. 1*, p. 364.

The author's theory of architecture—the theory of architectural autopoiesis—is embedded in the wider theoretical edifice of Niklas Luhmann's social system theory[5] and theory of society[6]. That any comprehensive, self-reflective theory of architecture should make its underlying premises explicit and therefore must refer to a theory of society should, once stated, be uncontroversial. This has rarely been done, but Alberti referenced explicit conceptions of the good society in his reflections on city form and architecture. Some of the theorists of modernism—for instance, the authors of the ABC group (Schmidt, Stam, El Lissitzky, Meyer)—were firmly and explicitly based on a conception of society in line with Marx's theory of scientific socialism, augmented by an account of recent technological and socio-economic developments. The author's conception builds on Luhmann's theory of modern, functionally differentiated society, augmented by the insights from the post-Fordism debate[7] and integrating more current conceptions of the knowledge economy and network society.

That some coherent account of the technological, economic, and sociological conditions and developmental dynamics of society must underlie any pertinent formulation of architecture's societal task should be self-evident. The author's analysis of contemporary society, in the terms indicated above and further explicated below, should not be controversial. The author's libertarian political convictions are not presupposed here. What is presupposed is that architecture—as architecture versus mere building or craft—should be based on theoretical guidance for its design tasks, based on a broad theory of society that takes account of historically recent conditions, such as the momentous technological transformations (internet, computation, robotics, AI), resultant socio-economic transformations (from Fordism to post-Fordism), and the reality of historically recent neo-liberal privatisation dynamics. All these factors are spurring a further urbanisation drive and a new urban concentration dynamic to which architecture and urban design must congenially respond.

What is, in contrast, not conducive to the ongoing vitality of architecture as an academic field and theory-led professional practice, is the purely negative stance towards these recent and ongoing historical developments. This negative stance, however, has become increasingly

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5   N. Luhmann, *Social Systems*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1995.
6   N. Luhmann, *Theory of Society, Vol. 1*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2012; N. Luhmann, *Theory of Society, Vol. 2*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2013.
7   A. Amin (ed.), *Post-Fordism: A Reader*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, 1995.

prevalent not only in academic circles and architecture-related cultural institutions but also among architectural critics and, indeed, practising architects. OMA's Reinier de Graaf expressed this stance in an article published in *Architectural Review* entitled "Architecture is Now a Tool of Capital, Complicit in a Purpose Antithetical to Its Social Mission"[8] . Taken to its logical conclusion, the irreconcilable, anti-capitalist stance that judges all current urban development activities to be politically and morally compromised—and all architects participating as "sell-outs"—is a key factor in the demise of architecture, as it serves to cut the constructive link between architectural theory and architectural practice, leaving the latter intellectually adrift.

Within modern society, it is functional differentiation that becomes the pervasive and predominant mode of societal differentiation (in contrast to stratification as the formerly dominant mode of societal differentiation). The most striking manifestation of this general tendency is the emergence of the great "function systems" as the major subsystems of modern society: the economy, the political system, the legal system, science, the education system, and the mass media are distinct, autonomous systems of communication that have differentiated according to the indispensable societal functions they perform (emancipated from their former fusion and subjection within a top-down stratified order). An important insight of Luhmann is that these function systems operate via self-referential communicative closure[9], i.e., they evolve highly specialised discourses (systems of communication), each with its own categories, lead distinctions and evaluative codes. These communication structures are idiosyncratic to each function system which in turn implies a discursive incommensurability. These are separate discourses and professions. They are "autonomous" not in the sense of being insulated or unresponsive but in the sense that each is discursively self-steering its adaptation. The subsystems co-evolve, with each observing and adapting to all the others. There is no hierarchical command-and-control structure that could integrate these subsystems. There is no unified control centre in functionally differentiated society. The political system is not such an omnipotent control centre but just one of many autonomous function systems. The attempt to politically control the sciences, the capitalist economy, the justice system, etc., would just spell the destruction of

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8 R. de Graaf, *architect, verb.: The New Language of Building*, Verso, London, 2023.
9 N. Luhmann, *Social Systems*, p. 9.

science, capitalism, and justice. The totalitarian attempts by figures like Hitler and Stalin accomplished precisely this annihilation. The same logic of "control equals annihilation" applies to architecture. Both Hitler and Stalin did indeed annihilate international modernism—the discourse- and theory-led discipline/profession of architecture of this time—within their territory.

The premise of the author's *Autopoiesis of Architecture*[10] is that architecture is one of the great function systems of modern, functionally differentiated world society: a function system with its own exclusive and universal responsibility for an important societal function that demands independent treatment and promotion by an autopoietic communication system specifically differentiated to focus on this function. The differentiation of a function system, i.e., a specialised discourse and theory-guided professional practice, made functional sense under conditions of accelerated societal development and became part and parcel of this transformative development.

The advent of modernity, involving the spreading of capitalism with its unique dynamism, as identified by Marx and Engels in the *Communist Manifesto*[11], and the development of science manifesting an equally restless dynamism—first in parallel with and then in mutually spurning interaction with capitalism—implied an acceleration of societal progress and prosperity. All function systems—not only architecture but also the political system, legal system, economic system, and the system of the sciences—began to be accompanied and spurned on by what Luhmann terms "reflection theories"[12], that is, guiding treatises and, indeed, whole critical, theoretical literatures.

A first hint that architecture addresses an indispensable function is the fact that there is no human society without a built environment, just as there is no human society without political institutions, law, an economic system, a system of socialisation, or a knowledge base. As is the case with all the other autopoietic function systems of modern society, the societal function of architecture, in the sense of addressing an underlying reference problem, is much older than the differentiated function system itself, which only emerged as differentiated, autopoietic system

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[10] P. Schumacher, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture, Vol. 1*; P. Schumacher, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture, Vol. 2*.
[11] K. Marx, F. Engels, *The Communist Manifesto*, Merlin Press, Rendlesham, UK, 1998, originally published in 1848, p. 4.
[12] N. Luhmann, *Social Systems*, p. 457.

within the context of modernity. All function systems solve perennial exigencies in new, advanced ways, within the new, increasingly complex context of modern society.

In relation to architecture, we are therefore prompted to ask: What is the societal function of architecture? What is the *raison d'être* of architecture's origin and continuing existence as an autopoietic subsystem of society? The answer is that architecture's unique function is the provision of spaces that *frame* social communication. The societal function of architecture is thus to order (and re-order) society via the continuous provision and innovation of the built environment as a system of spatial frames.

Spatial framing is a necessary precondition of all social communicative interactions and collaborations. The built environment, as a spatial sorting system, distributes and relates activities so that they can concatenate, and it configures the participants in each activity so as to facilitate the purposes of the interactions. The framing system also allows the participants to first of all find one another, to recognise the specific social situation, and recognise each other in their roles. Framing is thus itself a form of communication. It is an important type of communication, as it determines a general set of constraining premises for all further communications that take place within the communicated frame. The author has adopted and adapted the concept of framing/frames from the sociologist Erving Goffman's *Frame Analysis*[13].

The implementation of this societal function demands two tasks that must be distinguished and correlated in the design effort: organisation and articulation. The concept of *order* proposed here—encompassing both social and architectural order—denotes the result of the combined effort of organisation and articulation. Architectural order—symbiotic with social order—requires *both* spatial organisation *and* morphological articulation. While organisation establishes objective spatial relations by means of distancing (proximity relations) as well as by means of physically separating and connecting areas of space, articulation operates via the involvement of the user's perception and comprehension of their designed environment. Articulation reflects the phenomenological and the semiological dimensions of architecture. Thus, to the extent that architecture operates through articulation (rather than mere organisation), it

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[13] E. Goffman, *Frame Analysis: A Essay on the Organisation of Experience*, Harper & Row, New York, 1974.

also relies on engendering an effective semiosis within the built environment. It is one of the fundamental claims of the theory of architectural autopoiesis that the semiological dimension of architecture is of central importance to architecture's capacity to successfully discharge its unique societal function.

Inasmuch as architecture is inhabited by culturally socialised subjects, the ordering effects of architecture rely on effective signification. The effective social utilisation of complex institutional spaces cannot be achieved purely by means of the physical channelling of human bodies. The effectiveness of the spatial order relies upon the active orientation of the subjects, on the basis of a "reading" of the territory. This, in turn, requires articulation over and above physical organisation. Current forms of differentiated office landscapes may serve as an example: The traditional physical demarcation of territory by means of walls is replaced by the subtle coding of zones and the articulation of legible thresholds. This means that the importance of the semiotic dimension of architecture increases.

To grasp the problem of communication and interaction on a deeper level, one might go to Talcott Parsons and his attempt to formulate a general theory of action. When Parsons theorises interaction—i.e., when the object towards which an actor orients their action is another actor—a fundamental theoretical problem is encountered, a "problem" that is nearly always already solved in everyday life. Parsons theorised the underlying problematic under the chapter heading "Interaction and the Complementarity of Expectations"[14]. Parsons describes the basic constellation of interaction between ego and alter—the actors that are oriented to each other—as follows:

> There is a *double contingency* inherent in interaction. On the one hand, ego's gratifications are contingent on his selection among available alternatives. But in turn, alter's reaction will be contingent on ego's selection and will result from a complementary selection on alter's part. Because of this double contingency, communication [...] could not exist without [...] stability of meaning which can only be assured by 'conventions' observed by both parties.[15]

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[14] T. Parsons, *Toward a General Theory of Action*, Harvard University Press, Harvard, 1953, p. 14.
[15] *Ibid.*, p. 16.

Parsons concludes that double contingency requires the normative orientation of action and poses the norms of a shared symbolic system as the means by which the problem of double contingency in interaction is solved. Parsons elaborates:

> A shared symbolic system is a system of "ways of orienting" plus those "external symbols" which control these ways of orienting, the system being so geared into the action systems of both ego and alter that the external symbols bring forth the same complementary pattern of orientation in both of them. Such a system, with its mutuality of normative orientation, is logically the most elementary form of culture.[16]

The theory of architectural autopoiesis proposes that architecture is a fundamental and indispensable part of such culture, and, in particular, that architecture operates and contributes to the coordination of "ways of orienting" as part of what Parsons refers to as "external symbols." The designed built environment thus acts as an anchor or frame that facilitates determination, that is, the definition of the situation, the termination of the indeterminacy and volatility implied in the inherent double contingency of every encounter. Over and above his identification of the problematic of double contingency, it is Parsons' reference to "shared symbolic systems" that makes his work relevant to the attainment of a theoretical formula for architecture's societal function. Luhmann picked up this notion of double contingency and made it a central problematic in his social systems theory[17]. The formula for architecture's societal function proposed in *The Autopoiesis of Architecture*[18] therefore posits architectural framing as a key contribution to solving the problem of double contingency by predefining the social situation.

Above it was stated that the core architectural task of framing communicative interactions can be broken down into two related sub-tasks: namely, spatial organisation (spatiology) and morphological articulation. Articulation, in turn, can be broken down into the sub-tasks of phenomenological articulation and semiological articulation. In each of these three dimensions—spatiology, phenomenology, and semiology—there has been some research-based upgrading of the discipline's and

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[16] *Ibid*.
[17] N. Luhmann, *Social Systems*, p. 103.
[18] P. Schumacher, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture, Vol. 1*.

profession's competency. The upgrades in terms of the organisational project started with the work of Christopher Alexander and were pushed forward with big strides by Bill Hillier with his 'space syntax' as configurational science, operationalised with computational analytical tools. The phenomenological project had been advanced by Kevin Lynch, Christian Norberg-Schulz, Kenneth Frampton, Colin Rowe, Peter Eisenman, and Jeff Kipnis. The semiological project has been advanced by Charles Jencks, George Baird, Geoffrey Broadbent, Umberto Eco, Mario Gandelsonas, and Peter Eisenman, among others.

All these efforts to advance the discipline's competency have been left behind for many years. Not even space syntax, the most straightforward and most developed of these competencies, has been spreading, nor has it entered the architectural university curriculum. Indeed, the absence of any shared curriculum within architectural education is one of the symptoms and factors of architecture's dissolution. Only the author has picked up these three discourses (spatiology, phenomenology, semiology), updating, integrating, and operationalising them in the context of a cumulatively advancing parametricism (tectonism), for instance, via the research project of agent-based parametric semiology[19]. However, these efforts take place in splendid isolation. The author is speaking into the void left behind by the disappearance of the discipline.

Architectural Semiology Operationalised

Architecture's social functionality includes its communicative capacity. The built environment orders social processes through its pattern of spatial distinctions and connections that in turn facilitate a desired pattern of social events. The functioning of the desired social interaction scenarios depends on the participants' successful orientation and navigation within the designed environment. The built environment, with its complex matrix of territorial distinctions, is a navigable, information-rich interface of communication. To order and articulate this interface is the core competency of architecture. This core competency accounts for users as sentient, socialised actors who use the built environment as an orienting matrix and a set of instructions within which myriads of nuanced social protocols are inscribed.

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[19] P. Schumacher, "Advancing Social Functionality via Agent Based Parametric Semiology," in H. Castle, P. Schumacher (eds.), *AD Parametricism 2.0: Rethinking Architecture's Agenda for the 21st Century*, Academy Press, London, 2016, pp. 108–113.

All design is communication. Before a specific interaction event can commence, relevant participants must find each other, gather, and configure into a constellation germane to the desired interaction scenario. Their respective expectations, moods, and modes of behaviour must be mutually complementary—they must share a common definition of the situation. It is thus the spatially predefined situation that brings all actors into a conducive position, with their respective complementary social roles. The built environment thus delivers a necessary precondition of determinate social interaction. For this to succeed, the built environment must be legible. The participant can then respond to the spatial communication broadcasted by the designed space, e.g., by entering a space and joining the accommodated social situation. As a communicative frame, a designed space is itself a communication that provides the premise for all communications taking place within its boundaries.

The designed spaces deliver the necessary predefinition of the respectively designated social situation, thereby reducing the otherwise unmanageable excess of action possibilities that exist in our complex contemporary societies. They "frame" social interaction. The organisation and articulation of these framing spatial communications is architecture's core competency. The social meaning of a space can usually be inferred from its location, shape and stylistic markers. The research programme of architectural semiology aims to analyse the active semiological codes that already operate within the built environment via spontaneous semiosis. There is also a design ambition to upgrade the communicative power of the built environment, project by project, through the design of information-rich systems of signification that aid navigation via wayfinding systems and facilitate interaction through the differentiation and nuanced spatio-visual characterisation of interaction offerings.

The success of such an endeavour depends on user uptake. This can be expected in large, complex integrated social environments, such as a university or a creative industry corporate campus, where life is communication-intensive, orientation is non-trivial, and where inter-awareness, knowledge transfer, and ramifying collaborations put a premium on social participation. There is thus motivation to pay attention to the clues and learn the spatio-visual language. The question arises: how might the communicative performance of large, complex designed environments be evaluated? The research project "Agent-based Parametric Semiology"

builds, investigates, and applies a new form of occupancy simulation as an answer to this question.

While every architect has an intuitive grasp of the normative interaction protocols that attach to the various designated areas that the design brief indicates and usually knows enough about the expected and desired user occupancy patterns, such intuitions cannot provide secure guidance on the relative social performance of alternative designs for large, complex environments. Intuition must here be substituted by occupancy simulations that can process thousands of agents interacting across an environment of hundreds of spaces. When quantitative comparisons and optimisation are aimed at, intuition fails, already in much smaller, simpler settings.

The simulation methodology developed under the research agenda "Agent-based Parametric Semiology" is conceived as a generalisation and corresponding upgrade of the crowd simulations currently offered by traffic and engineering consultants concerned with evacuation or circulation. These crowd modellers treat users as physical bodies and simulate crowds like a physical fluid. In contrast, the architectural design considerations of agent-based parametric semiology are concerned with socialised actors who orient and interact within a semantically differentiated environment.

These research and upgrading efforts are pointed out here *not* to claim that architecture comes to an end because these particular avenues of theory-led, research-based capacity development are not being pursued. These particular research efforts are meant to exemplify what this essay means by theory-led adaptive upgrading of the discipline. Another example could be the upgrading efforts spearheaded by the paradigm/style/movement the author named "tectonism," namely the full architectural, spatio-morphological utilisation of recent, computationally empowered advances in engineering science and fabrication/construction technologies.

We witness the end of architecture not because the author's upgrading efforts are not being picked up but because no capacity development whatsoever, with respect to architecture's core competency and societal function, is being pursued or adopted.

The engagement with carbon neutrality, biodiversity, social justice, and inclusion at the margins of society are no substitute for advancing architecture's contribution at the frontier of contemporary civilisation's development. Rather, the usurpation of architecture's internal

and external communication space and air-time by these tangential topics—which only concern the costs but not the benefits of urban and architectural development—is a big part of the problem, a major factor in architecture's disappearance, and certainly no remedy. Even an agenda like wellbeing, which seems to fit into architecture's societal function, in fact offers just another evasion. Is it, as Reinier de Graaf argues in his recent book *architect, verb.: The New Language of Building*,[20] part and parcel of the recently proliferating arsenal of hypocritical, self-alienating but obligatory phrases he calls "profspeak"? De Graaf coined the term "profspeak" in allusion to Orwell's notion of "newspeak," implying vague, euphemistic phrases that sound benign and competent but gloss over anything potentially controversial or difficult. Talking about wellbeing fits this bill and does indeed allow architects to communicate safely with their audience, in ways that allow them to evade that task of innovating within the key dimensions of architecture's societal function (spatiology, phenomenology, semiology), while also allowing them to avoid exposing their actual searching ideas and half-articulate ambitions.

In the Orwellian era of architects' "Profspeak," an arsenal of conveniently indisputable do-good agendas, like sustainability, community engagement, inclusion, liveability and human-centric placemaking, swamps architectural discourse. They sanitise and narrow the discourse by crowding out all difficult and controversial questions. Reinier de Graaf is right in his scathing critique of Profspeak. It binds precious attention unproductively and thereby contributes to the end of architecture.

While academics, educators, and critics altogether turn away from contemporary architecture, contemporary architects trivialise their work by means of the bland, routine euphemisms of Profspeak. The result is the degradation of the discipline of architecture to the status of a craft or vernacular, producing mere buildings, but no works of architecture.

The Politicisation of Architecture from Within

Political and moral issues are increasingly being drawn into our debates at architectural conferences, schools, and biennials. Political and moral issues are also starting to dominate architectural criticism as well as the awarding of architecture prizes. This is problematic, as it threatens to swamp our discourse, overburden our specific competency, and distract

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[20] R. de Graaf, *architect, verb.: The New Language of Building*.

us from our genuine, specific societal responsibility within the societal division of labour.

Politicisation cannot always be avoided, and is, indeed, not always unproductive. Architecture has been politicised a number of times in the last 100 years. The most prominent examples are the early 1920s and the late 1960s. These were revolutionary periods when all aspects of societal life had been politicised. Politicisation was very productive in 1920s and (to a much lesser extent) also in the revolutionary 1960s. Although a lot of energy and inventiveness was spawned in architecture in the 1960s, lasting innovations were not achieved. The revolution failed; it was a historical dead end. The clearest indication that this revolution and dream of a proletarian world revolution were misguided was its infatuation with Mao's disastrous "Cultural Revolution." Although some of the sixties' cultural transformations were progressive and lasting, politically, the project failed. Architecturally, it failed too, as became clear soon enough in the 1970s, as can be gleaned from Reyner Banham's ironic 1976 book title *Megastructures: Urban Futures of the Recent Past*. The real, relevant, productive, and lasting revolution or paradigm shift in[21] architecture happened during the 1980s and 1990s, starting with postmodernism, as the first intuitive attempt to respond to the post-Fordist socio-economic restructuring. This was reinforced by the decisive political reset and victory of neoliberalism in Britain in 1979 (Thatcher) and the in USA in 1980 (Reagan). The initial postmodernist gropings were radicalized by deconstructivism. Both postmodernism and deconstructivism were short-lived, merely transitional styles, paving the way for parametricism (since the mid-1990s) as a sustained architectural answer to post-Fordist network society and thus as viable candidate to become the epochal style for the twenty-first century.

A more recent (wholly counter-productive) wave of politicisation swept through architecture in the years following the 2008 financial crash. While no new real or positive socio-economic/political transformation of society took place, the politicisation of our discipline has festered ever since, with destructive rather than constructive effects.

In 2012, the author published Volume 2 of *The Autopoiesis of Architecture* and, for the first time, put forward the following thesis on the relationship between architecture and politics:

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[21]   R. Banham, *Megastructures: Urban Futures of the Recent Past*, Thames & Hudson Ltd., London, 1976.

To respond to hegemonic political trends is a vital capacity of archi-
tecture. It has no capacity to resolve political controversy. Political
debate within architecture overburdens the discipline. The autopoi-
esis of architecture consumes itself in the attempt to substitute itself
for the political system.[22]

According to Luhmann's theory of modern, functionally differenti-
ated society (adopted and extended here), the relationship between archi-
tecture and politics is the relationship between two autonomous, self-ref-
erentially enclosed systems of communication. Both politics, understood
as the system of political communications, and architecture, understood
as the system of architectural communications, are functionally special-
ised social systems. They both belong to the group of the great function
systems of society. Each is differentiated on the basis of taking exclu-
sive responsibility for a distinct, necessary societal function. The societal
function of the political system is the ordering of social communication
via the provision of collectively binding decisions. Architecture's socie-
tal function is the ordering of social communication via the provision
of spatial frames.[23]

The thesis of autopoietic, self-referentially enclosed systems of com-
munication entails the recognition of a fundamental incommensurabil-
ity between the different societal function systems. Each function sys-
tem sustains its own unique discourse on the basis of its own specialised
categories, questions, and types of arguments, each treating all the other
function systems (economy, legal system, etc.) as a constraining environ-
ment rather than as a contribution to a single, unified discourse.

The widespread conception of architecture as a site of political activ-
ism must be repudiated. Architecture is *not* inherently political. The slo-
gan "everything is political" was born and spread in the late sixties during
a general revolutionary period. In 1968, politics was no longer contained
within the boundaries of the institutionalized political system. Generally,
during a revolutionary period, all aspects of social life do indeed become
political. Nearly everybody becomes involved in a multifaceted political
discourse and struggle that questions all institutions, communication

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[22] N. Luhmann, *Theory of Society, Vol. 1*, p. 448.
[23] This is the author's, not Luhmann's thesis. Luhmann did not recognise that archi-
tecture—together with all other design disciplines—constitutes an independent societal
function system. He had not given architecture/design much thought and had falsely sub-
sumed it within the art system.

structures, and modes of interaction. However, revolutionary periods are exceptional ones and cannot continue for very long. They subside or escalate into a full-blown revolution. In any event, society must eventually move back to a situation where politics is contained within a separate political system that works through some but not all aspects of social life. The revolutionary period of the late sixties peaked in 1968 and receded in the following years. However, the slogan "everything is political" continued to circulate in intellectual circles that found it difficult to accept that the intoxicating ferment of the revolutionary situation had, in fact, vanished. (Revolutionary periods are the intellectuals' great moments of exceptional influence and power.) The slogan lives on but runs idle without any real meaning within architecture or anywhere else in society.

The political radicalism of the late 1960s shook up all aspects of modern society, including architecture. Since then, however, no further exciting and plausible left political projects have emerged. Yet, ever since, the echoes of this shockwave return to inspire, haunt, and embarrass the discipline. Calls for a "political architecture" are raised again and again. An example might be Tahl Kaminer's *The Efficacy of Architecture: Political Contestation and Agency.*[24] The back cover reads as follows:

> Originating in a displeasure with the "starchitecture" system and the focus on aesthetic innovation, a growing number of architects, emboldened by the 2007–8 economic crisis, have staged a rebellion against the dominant mode of architectural production. Against a "disinterested" position emulating high art, they have advocated political engagement, citizen participation and the right to the city. [...] At the centre of this rebellion is the call for architecture to (re-)assume its social and political role in society. The Efficacy of Architecture supports the return of architecture to politics.[25]

The identification of the 2008 financial crash and the ensuing great recession is correctly identified as a turning point or trigger for the recent take-off of the politicisation of the discipline. However, the anti-capitalist outlook of this politicisation—endorsed and shared by Kaminer—implies a stance of refusal, as it hopelessly stands against the grain of history. The economic and political bankruptcy of socialism spells intellectual

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[24]   T. Kaminer, *The Efficacy of Architecture: Political Contestation and Agency*, Taylor & Francis, New York, 2017.
[25]   *Ibid.*, p. i.

disorientation with respect to anything beyond resistance or small local, inherently marginal projects.

These calls for a political architecture' characteristically fail to specify the desired politics with sufficient precision. Instead of offering a political position and programme, the respective authors are lamenting the lack of a vigorous political dimension within architectural discourse. This nostalgic lament is usually expressed via a series of vague phrases that serve as little more than non-committal gestures towards a vaguely progressive politics. They mark the absence of real politics rather than vigorous engagement. For instance, according to the Berlage Institute's theory teacher Roemer van Toorn, architecture should "project alternatives," offer "critical resistance" and "social directionality." Architects are to look for "radical democracies" and "aim at a systematic understanding of architecture as a political palimpsest for alternative social and political hypothesis while itself reanimating architecture as an instrument of social and political invention"[26]. The missing ingredient is the plausible, concrete, generalisable political project, backed up with sufficient political power. Architectural critics and academics can never themselves acquire and project political power. A political project that could give political meaning to architecture cannot originate within architecture itself (nor can it originate in mere political theory). Architecture itself cannot offer effective political direction, or project political alternatives. Here, powerful external stimulation is required—*powerful* in the most literal sense. A second precondition for a politically engaged architecture is the clear alignment with such a powerful political position. Vague anti-capitalist allusions obviously do not suffice to get this off the ground. Such phrases merely paper over the underlying political vacuum and disorientation. They stand in for the missing political dynamic. They symbolise the desire to be energised by a political position without risking the embarrassment of real political alignment. To offer an isolated, marginal political opinion, or an academic analysis from the domain of political theory does not help to inject political vitality into architecture. Architecture can only react with sufficient unanimity and collective vitality to political agendas that have already the real power of a tangible political force behind them.

The key thesis that must be emphasised here is that it is not architecture's societal function to actively promote or initiate political agendas

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[26] R. van Toorn, *Hunch 5*, Berlage Institute, Amsterdam, 2002, pp. 166 f.

that are not already thriving in the political arena (backed by political groups with a real chance to take power). Architecture is not a viable site for such initiatives. It cannot substitute itself for a missing political agenda.

The paradigmatic examples from the early 1920s and the late 1960s that give meaning to the notion of politically engaged architecture were born in the exceptional condition of political revolution (or pending political revolution). During such periods, everything is politicised: the law, the economy, education, architecture, and to some extent even science and technology. The autonomy of the functional subsystems of society is temporarily being suspended. It is during such a period that Le Corbusier's famous 1920s dictum "architecture or revolution" was coined: "It is a question of building which is at the root of the social unrest of today; architecture or revolution."[27] This kind of revolutionary condition can reoccur, but it is not the normal state of affairs. During normal times, the specialised, well-adapted channels of political communication absorb all political concerns and bind or direct all political energies. Art, science, architecture, education, and even the mass media are released from the burden of becoming vehicles of political action. The more this division of labour consolidates, the more false and out of place rings the pretence of "political architecture." Political architecture finally becomes an oxymoron—at least until the emergence of the next revolutionary situation. During normal times, architecture and politics are separated as autonomous discursive/professional domains. If architecture gives itself over to political debate, which is inherently interminable within architecture, then this spells the end of architecture, just as the political usurpation of architectural autonomy would spell the termination of architecture.

We must repudiate the false pretence of "political" or "critical" architecture. Instead, we must act within architecture's own specific competency. A constructive and effective critique of architecture within architectural discourse can only be architectural critique, on the *sui generis* terms of the discipline, not political critique. The stance of parametricism is sharply critical of current architectural and urban design outcomes, and the author's stance is doubly critical, as it is also critical of many of the shortcomings of "real existing" parametricism. However, the author's stance as architectural researcher and practitioner (as well as parametricism's stance in general) is implicitly affirmative with respect to the

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[27] Le Corbusier, *Towards a New Architecture*, Dover Publications, New York, 1986, reprint. Originally published: J. Rodger, London 1931, pp. 269–289.

general societal (social, economic, and political) trends that underlie the criticised current architectural and urban outcomes. This implicit affirmation of the legitimacy of the given societal order is a necessary condition of a constructive professional engagement with the architecture of society. Those who see the political system as the bottleneck for architecture's (and society's) progress and who feel that current socio-economic and political conditions are to be fought and overthrown, and who are therefore unwilling to fulfil architecture's institutionally allocated role, should consequently exit the discipline and shift their activism into the political arena proper. They need to test and win their political arguments within and against political groups rather than within architecture. The currently fashionable concept of a "critical" or "political" architecture as a supposed form of political activism must be repudiated as an implausible phantom.

It is undeniable that political and moral issues are increasingly being drawn into our debates and that this threatens to swamp our discourse, overburden our specific competency, and distract us from our genuine societal responsibility. However, there is another twist in the author's more recent relationship to politics within architecture: Architecture's politicisation has reached a pervasiveness and intensification that can no longer be ignored, contained, or rolled back merely via meta-arguments about architecture's proper domain of competency. The current historical conjuncture makes a head-on substantive political engagement with those who politicise architecture from an anti-capitalist position more and more urgent. The author concludes that political engagement can no longer be avoided. The conclusion is now to engage in this politicising debate with a double strategy:

1. To define the proper relationship between architecture and politics in order to set out the premises and the scope for a viable and productive architectural engagement with politics, argued for from within the framework of a comprehensive theory of society (social systems theory). This entails the task to define and defend a space for an autonomous architectural expert discourse and theory-led architectural design research—the autopoiesis of architecture which co-evolves with rather than being instructed by politics—and the repudiation of "political architecture," which attempts to pursue architectural design as an activist-critical political practice.

2. To engage in the current politicising architectural debate and repudiate what must be considered a regressive and unproductive (explicit or implicit) anti-capitalist bias in most of the political and moral positions drawn into architecture by architectural academics and critics, and to confront these critics with a vigorous defence of capitalism, pointing to the renewed advancement of the forces of production and the (nearly world-wide) prosperity boost its recent neoliberal reinvigoration (1980–2008) made possible.

Factors Contributing to Architecture's Dissolution

Architecture as a discipline and profession had long since evolved its specialist competency and responsibility within functionally differentiated modern society, entrusted with the societal function of the continuous, innovative upgrading of the built environment, in line with general societal and technological progress. However, in recent years, the protagonists and organs of the discipline have been refusing to focus their discourse on this societal responsibility and have become increasingly incompetent with respect to architecture's core competency and specialised societal responsibility. Instead, architecture's leading voices—architects, theoreticians, critics, professors, curators, etc.—are shifting their attention to general "do-good" themes like social justice, or marginalised communities, i.e., domains where architecture as a discipline has no decision-making powers and next to nothing to offer out of its own resources. What we are left with, therefore, is impotent virtue signalling.

Beyond the refusal of the theoretically-minded, politicised protagonists of academic architecture to own up to architecture's task of innovation—which can only be credibly pursued at the frontier of urban development in the most advanced centres of world society—architecture, in its mainstream practitioners, remains fragmented and self-indulgent, unwilling to absorb the innovations that have been achieved by the small and isolated avant-garde movement the author has identified and theorised under headings like *parametricism* and (more recently) *tectonism*. These two phenomena, the academics' refusal to engage with and lead contemporary architecture on the one hand, and the fragmentation and disorientation of mainstream practitioners on the other hand, are related. They are two interacting aspects of the same process of deterioration.

However, there is a further, independent factor: The incentive of mainstream practitioners to absorb the innovations (that have been worked out by a small, isolated avant-garde) is being killed off by politics via a highly restrictive/prescriptive planning permission practice. (Behind closed doors developers speak about "planning paralysis.") Urban and architectural progress in the mature, advanced centres is blocked by massive political over-regulation, indeed by political prevention of urban development. Where development is still permitted, it is stifled by prescriptive impositions, squashing architectural innovation. Developers and their architects cannot freely compete with innovative solutions and urban service offerings but are just called upon to execute politically preconceived plans. There is, therefore, no need or incentive to innovate. For developers, competition shifts to and remains confined to negotiations about constraints like the exact percentage of affordable housing. For architects, the competition shifts to the plane of political rhetoric. Banal, politically imposed solutions, are being sold back to the politicians via empty, euphemistic slogans like people-centred design, community engagement, wellbeing, inclusive placemaking, etc.

Because of this refusal or self-denial of architecture, society evolves without its evolution being accompanied by congenial or adequate architectural responses. The bulk of architecture designed in 2024 could have been designed in 1974 or indeed in 1924. It is not only stagnant but positively regressive. All styles, with the exception of parametricism (with Tectonism as its most recent and most advanced and sophisticated subsidiary style), are retro-styles: Minimalism, Neo-modernism, Neo-rationalism, Neo-classicism, Neo-historicism, Neo-postmodernism.

The intellectual atrophy within the discipline is by now so pervasive that those serious and sophisticated contributions that have been developed in a tiny but vigorously advancing network of researchers and designers can no longer even be more widely appreciated or absorbed. They are stillborn with respect to their ambition to move the discipline forward. Architecture, formerly an academic, discourse-steered discipline and innovative, theory-led and research-based profession, has contracted back into a craft, uncritically and unambitiously subjecting itself to pre-ordained routines and typologies. In effect, the whole apparatus of the academic discipline—architectural university departments, theoretical journals, conferences, biennals, etc.—might as well be shut down. What is their use if hundred-year-old recipes are the latest wisdom of the profession or craft? What is society getting in return for financing this

massive and costly apparatus? In any event, this apparatus, in its university incarnation, is distracting itself with all manner of woke studies, woke criticism, and woke polemical, artistic-symbolic illustrations standing in for the absent design projects. It is certainly no longer engaging with the task of discursively steering and innovating the built environment that is actually being realised.

Another factor contributing to the disappearance of architecture is a *detrimental tolerance* that destroys all learning in schools of architecture. Here, rigorous debate has been hollowed out in recent years. While criticising society is all the rage, criticising student work is increasingly avoided, seen as disrespectful and regarded as a feature of a now outmoded toxic culture. One underlying factor is identity politics. If ideas are understood to be tied up with identity, then criticism is perceived as attack on those holding these ideas. The response is then indignation, and often explicit *ad hominem* attacks on the critic, rather than argument. The result is a dysfunctional bifurcation into an unforgiving de-platforming of unrelenting critics and an all-forgiving tolerance of all who are communicating within and according to the rules of the "safe space." This logic violates a key principle of discursive rationality, namely, that ideas are to be appraised irrespective of their bearers.

The inhibition of frank critique is thus not only a matter of over-politeness or over-protection (confused with respect) but also a matter of historically motivated (but ultimately counterproductive) "postmodern" philosophical assumptions. At the heart of these assumptions lies a defeatist relativism that considers the human condition—in terms of circumstances, worldviews, values, and aspirations—as inherently fragmented, without any hope of discursive convergence. This theory contrasts with the factual universality of the aspiration for higher standards of living and individual liberty, evidenced by global migration pressures into countries where this universal desire is met better than in the migrants' countries of origin.

The historical experience that global modernisation-for-all is non-trivial and a much more fragile, complex, and uncertain endeavour than initially expected by mid-twentieth century modernisation theories (including Marxism) lies at the heart of the postmodernist "incredulity towards grand narratives." Poststructuralist philosophy injected some necessary loops of reflection into social theory, in particular the reflection on historically and culturally specific discursive formations. These reflections were later absorbed into more complex, subtle, and circumspect social

theories and theories of societal progress, such as Niklas Luhmann's "social systems theory"[28] and "theory of functionally differentiated society"[29] or Jürgen Habermas' "theory of communicative action"[30] and "discourse theory of law and democracy"[31]. These efforts, while engaging with and dialectically integrating poststructuralism's challenges, avoid relativism and re-establish "grand theory" on a new level of complexity. Simultaneously, the trajectory of postmodernism's own discourse mutated into a relativist, defeatist and indeed self-defeating intellectual culture that lacks the confidence to judge, project or steer societal developments. The poststructuralists failed to discriminate and judge the diverse discursive formations they charted and did not recognise the superiority (superior prosperity potential) of the unique lineage of discursive formations postmodernism itself was a part of—namely Modernity, with its unprecedented elaboration of technology and science, including critical social science. They failed to recognise the unique self-transcending thrust of this (lineage of) discursive formation(s) that actively refused and continues to refuse to remain tied to any historical origin, parochial social group, or particular set of societies. While German social philosophy—Habermas, Luhmann, and others—has moved dialectically from the modernist thesis via the poststructuralist antithesis to a new synthesis that recuperates the concept of progress on a new level of complexity, French poststructuralism (postmodernism)—and under its influence much of Anglo-American mainstream academic culture—got stuck with the antithesis to modernisation theory. Thus, unassailable "subjective validity" has replaced the regulative concept of objective (intersubjective) validity.

In architecture the impact of poststructuralist philosophy coincided with the crisis and breakdown of architectural modernism. Indeed, the phrase "Postmodernity" was first coined in architecture (by Charles Jencks) in 1976, and was soon generalised to art, literature and philosophy.

The crisis of architectural modernism was not due to inherent flaws of modernist architecture. Rather, modernism was a very meaningful and successful response of the discipline to the historical transformation

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[28] N. Luhmann, *Social Systems*.
[29] N. Luhmann, *Theory of Society*, Vol. 1; N. Luhmann, *Theory of Society*, Vol. 2.
[30] J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol.1: *Reason and the Rationalization of Society*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1986; J. Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action*, Vol.2: *The Critique of Functionalist Reason*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1987.
[31] J. Habermas, *Between Norms and Facts: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 1996.

from *laissez-faire* capitalism, based on many relatively small companies competing in each industry, to large-scale assembly-line production conducted by a few very large companies in each branch of industry. The result was the new era of Fordism. This technological and economic transformation, after the First World War, was also accompanied by political and social revolutions. Modernism—International Style architecture—was a well-adapted response. That is why it spread throughout the industrial world. However, by the 1970s, a new technological and socio-economic transformation was underway: the transformation from Fordism to post-Fordism. This new societal dynamic could no longer be contained within the strictures of modernist urbanism and architecture and was starting to break out. The well-settled, mature paradigm of modernism was in crisis. A period of search and experimentation ensued, a collective brainstorming. This was a revolutionary period. As in the previous transformation from historicism to modernism, art and philosophy were drawn into the discipline. Rationality was suspended, schools of architecture mutated into art schools, curricula were abandoned, and a new cast of characters—bold, intuitive—appeared on the scene. Rational analytic design discourses that could select from a prior, methodically elaborated solution repertoire, gave way to open-ended brainstorming and generative "artistic" processes of option proliferation, via mutation and recombination. Brainstorming tasked with generating new ideas can only work if the strictures of immediate rational scrutiny are suspended. The whole point of the crisis is that the given criteria of scrutiny and selection are no longer valid. The search is also a search for new values and goals. This atmosphere transformed the discursive culture of the discipline. This transformation was indeed necessary. Adhocism, postmodernist collage, neo-historicism, deconstructivism, etc., emerged from this freewheeling collective brainstorming process as new potential directions during the 1970s and 1980s. Some of these potentials were indeed built upon in the following period. By the early 1990s, a new paradigm started to crystallise out of the experiments loosely gathered under the label "deconstructivism." The new paradigm built on deconstructivism dialectically, by polemically contrasting its own approach, and drawing on the philosophy of Deleuze & Guattari. A whole generation of young architects studying or teaching in Anglo-Saxon elite universities (London, New York, Boston, L.A.) rapidly converged around a decisive new outlook, not unlike a generation of young architects in German-speaking Europe had converged in the 1920s, leaving Art Nouveau and expressionism behind.

As towards the end of the 1920s, towards the end of the 1990s, when the new paradigm had been firmly established as hegemonic within the avant-garde segment of the discipline, art and philosophy receded, and the cumulative development work took over. The 1990s and the first decade of the twenty-first century achieved a viable new paradigm, the paradigm which the author has since 2007 named and canonised as parametricism. The paradigm was spurned by the real estate boom leading up to the 2008 real estate and financial crash. While the leading protagonists of parametricism kept moving forward with upgrading the scope and effectiveness of the paradigm, the expansion of the movement was halted by the crash. The whole discipline was shaken up and became politicised and more susceptible to anti-capitalist sentiments. The culture of the schools of architecture was still in the mood and mode of the 1980s revolutionary period of brainstorming. Instead of re-adjusting to the new requirements of working through the implications of the new paradigm during the 2000s, the freewheeling model that had been spearheaded at the Architectural Association School of Architecture (AA) in London during the 1970s and 1980s proliferated throughout the Anglo-Saxon world and beyond, just at a time when reverting back to a more systematic, science-like, cumulative working through of the newly discovered solution-potentials would have been much more productive. Instead, art-school-like brainstorming and freewheeling experimentation continued alongside the disciplined, collective and cumulative work of the movement of parametricism. But brainstorming makes no sense if it continues indefinitely, instead of shifting to analysis, selection, and elaboration. While the Bauhaus had been able to shift towards disciplined, cumulative elaboration of the (modernist) paradigm in the latter half of the 1920s, leaving the mystics and artists behind, the AA, as well as Columbia and Sci-Arc, partially continued to free-float and then reverted back in full force to brainstorming, philosophy, art, and politics after 2008, leaving the agenda of a disciplined architectural research increasingly behind. The culture became one where every teaching studio or "unit" is wholly autonomous, operating outside any curriculum and beyond the reach of any effective external criticism. Non-judgmentalism and the repudiation of any shared criteria or agenda of convergence were again the order of the day, just like during the 1980s. This culture of hyper-tolerant "everything-goes discourse"—as long as the language of political correctness is being observed—spread throughout the discipline. This freewheeling culture took over once more, long after it had outlived

its purpose. There was no new paradigm to be discovered because there was no new socio-economic transformation to adapt to. (Post-Fordist restructuring was not exhausted and still is not obsolete today.) In any event, the spirit since then was, and is, a spirit of counterculture, of refusal, of protest, of symbolic resistance, a culture of the indiscriminate celebration of otherness and diversity, a spirit of non-judgementalism. This non-judgementalism lets everything pass, as long as the premise of the apodictic condemnation of contemporary neo-liberal society and all its real-world architectural expressions was not questioned.

During architectural debates the author therefore often feels compelled to shift to the meta-level of critiquing this discursive culture as a necessary preface to articulating positions on substantive issues. This is necessary because the author's quest—namely to ascertain the most promising direction architecture can take to contribute to prosperity and societal progress—is discredited and anachronistic within contemporary architectural discursive culture. Here are the meta-theses that are necessary to reset the discipline's discourse culture:

1. Imperative of convergence: the discipline must strive to define a shared paradigm as *the* (best) way forward. A shared paradigm is a precondition of cooperative, cumulative progress towards a global best practice. A coherent paradigm/goal is required so that simultaneous or sequential designs do not subvert each other and do not undermine the functional integrity of the built environment.

2. Rejection of pluralism: We must accept paradigm pluralism only as temporary historical condition during periods of paradigm shift. Divergences are dialectically productive only if the aim is to resolve and overcome them. We must reject the fatalistic acceptance of a supposedly unresolvable paradigm pluralism in architecture (just as we must reject the related, more general multi-culturalist presumption that all cultures are equally life-enhancing).

3. Benign intolerance: Ruthless criticism is a productive mechanism of convergence. The principle of indiscriminate tolerance makes sense only in a phase of post-crisis brainstorming. If made permanent, this principle denies the comparative evaluation of positions/paradigms and ultimately blocks progress.

The degeneration of the process and purpose of critical discourse is also undermining the important institution of the public crit in architecture schools. Here too, the lack (or denial) of any shared substantive paradigm that could furnish criteria of progress undermines the legitimacy of criticism and judgement. What regulates the crit instead is the principle of indiscriminate, pluralist tolerance. "Crits" no longer aim to critically appraise, debate, judge, and compare the relative validity and worth of projects/proposals, but regress to mere displays of unassailable subjective expressions, soliciting nothing but indiscriminate flattery. Nothing is either weeded out as inferior or marked out as superior. These very notions, and indeed any ranking and selecting, are anathema. But how can progress be made without rejecting failures and selecting successful contributions as exemplars to build upon?

This systemic institutional failure to promote progress does not only stunt the discipline's development but applies equally to individual students' learning curves. Worse, nothing stops the retrogression of students (and of whole academic design studios or entire schools) into ever more indefensible pursuits. Where no pushback is ever expected and no defence is ever required, the indefensible mushrooms. Rigorous critique must be reinstated.

Even the most ruthless criticism of a project, proposition, or even cultural tradition/identity, should never be taken as *ad hominem* attack. No set of ideas (nor any acquired or inherited cultural pattern or identity) represents an immutable characteristic that inherently defines or irredeemably limits any person. To rigorously criticise inferior ideas (or inferior cultures) means to emancipate and empower rather than to disempower the bearer. To politely "respect" ideas (or cultures) one recognises to be dysfunctional is the very opposite of genuine respect.

The Bonfire of Architecture's Self-Destruction: Venice Architectural Biennale

The Venice "Architecture" Biennale is mislabelled and should stop laying claim to the title of architecture. This title only generates confusion and disappointment with respect to an event that does not show any contemporary building designs. Assuming Venice to be not only the most important item on the global architectural itinerary, but also representative of the state of architectural discourse in general: What we are witnessing is the discursive self-annihilation of the discipline. The surreal

event of an Architecture Biennale without showing any contemporary building designs is the most striking manifestation of this self-annihilation, of the end of architecture. The 2023 Biennale further progressed and radicalised a manifest self-destruction which was already evident in several prior Biennales. The Venice Architecture Biennale is, in effect, exhibiting a historical spectacle: the public execution of the villain that is actual, i.e., "complicit," architecture.

Again, in 2023, most national pavilions, including all major European nations like Germany, France, Spain, the UK, Belgium, the Netherlands, Norway/Sweden, Finland, but also Japan, Canada, Australia, and the USA, refused to show the work of their architects, or any architecture whatsoever. The German pavilion contained construction trash (from the previous Biennale), and the Czech pavilion seemed closed, with a video screen in front of the closed entrance displaying faces talking about architects' low income and long hours of work. The author gave up looking for architecture after finding none in 12 out of 12 pavilions visited.

What does this tell us? That there is no noteworthy new designs or buildings in Germany, France, etc., or anywhere in the Western world? Is the design and construction of buildings only an occasion for bad conscience? Is this bad conscience the driving force behind the refusal (by now pervasive for more than a decade) to display any contemporary architecture whatsoever?

The German pavilion, as hinted at above, was filled with piles of construction material retrieved from the demolition of the previous installation. There was no point in spending more than two seconds in there. A single glance and you get the one-liner message (because this message had been reiterated for years): The message is the supposed moral imperative of material recycling. There was also a very similar one-liner message filling the space (and consuming the budget) a few years ago: don't build, re-use/renovate. In an earlier instance, the German pavilion was filled with documentation of current affairs issues like the refugee crisis. The obvious question of why we should look at documentations of the refugee crisis when coming to Venice for the Biennale, after we have been hearing about the refugee crisis on television every day for months, was apparently never asked. There always seems to be something more important and urgent than showing the most noteworthy designs or buildings being created in Germany. Is there nothing innovative or otherwise noteworthy going on there?

German architecture has been absent in Venice for years. The same applies to British architecture. Why the architects of these countries put up with this seems puzzling. Are they too shamefaced about their work to raise their heads above the parapet? In the case of the German pavilion, the current emphatic absence of architecture was explicitly endorsed by the president of the German Chamber of Architects, in a conversation in front of the German pavilion (filled with the rubble of the previous Biennale). One wonders: what are all these curators expecting an unsuspecting general public coming to visit an architecture biennale to make of this? Are they to witness the disappearance or castigation of a fallen, corrupt, and complicit discipline?

Only the Chinese pavilion showed architecture, plenty of architecture. In the international show, it was again only Chinese architects who showed work: Neru&Hu, and especially Zhang Ke (Standard Architecture), who was showing an impressive suite of projects. The only other exception was the suite of projects by Adjaye Associates, the only sizeable, leading firm invited, probably due to the African origin of its principal. Everybody else invited played along, using their allotted exhibition space for documentary-style intellectual-artistic allusions to moral issues, garnished with pretentious critical-speak, without ever taking the risk of really taking up an explicit position or offering a constructive proposal.

What is the point of all this? Is it meant to inspire conversations? Can we no longer assume that architects and architectural students want to talk about (and see) architecture? Do they now really prefer to learn and talk about decolonising the discipline? Perhaps architectural educators talk about such matters as decolonising the curriculum. Perhaps that is why architectural design has disappeared from most (especially the most prestigious) schools of architecture.

The author has been coming to Venice over and over again, witnessing architects' reactions to several of these anti-architectural biennales. At least the architects the author knows and came across at the Biennale tend to cling to the few exceptional instances of architecture and talk about those, and then about their frustration with the swamping of the Biennale with virtue signalling and conceptual-symbolic installations. Does this mean that there remains hope that the end of architecture is not yet final?

This show was meant to feature at least 50% architects from Africa (at least originally). Without David Adjaye's work—which I would suspect is the only display at this Biennale that would fill a visitor from Africa with pride—there would be no African architecture in the show.

This exhibit was a treat and an occasion to learn that such sophisticated, world-class buildings now exist on the African continent, a significant fact and signal of African development and aspiration. This display was a lucky exception in the Biennale. We owe this lucky exception to the coincidence that this successful practicing architect is of African descent, a fact which cleared his entry into the Biennale despite his success which would otherwise have disqualified him.

While Western architectural culture (and Western culture in general) seems shamefaced and guilt-ridden, excluding all its urban development from the "Architecture" Biennale, Chinese architectural culture, in positive contrast, was present in full force and self-confidence. Chinese architects and the Chinese national pavilion (including the Hong Kong pavilion) delivered virtually all the architecture (excepting Adjaye Associates) in the whole Biennale. Will architecture end only in the West, while continuing in the East?

No talk about "architecture as an expanded field" can convince us that we are still at an architectural event when the scene is dominated by documentaries, critical art practice, and symbolic installations, while contemporary building designs are nowhere to be seen in 99% of the exhibition space. The engagement with social issues per se is not the problem. Whatever social, political, or moral issues we want to address, the pertinent way to address them at an architecture biennial would be to demonstrate their relevance to architecture via projects that claim to respond to these issues. However, if everything lamentable, or unjust, or any urgent social or political problem in the world is now an urgent, overriding concern for architecture, then this is not only an absurd overreach, unhinged from architecture's competency, but it spells the very dissolution and disappearance of this discipline.

In academia, in Western schools of architecture, this process has been driven just as far as in the Venice Biennale, namely to the point of total usurpation. Of course, the professional work of "architects" continues, albeit without any support from academia, or without any representation and discussion in any Biennale, be it Venice, or Chicago. The professional work of architects seems to be beyond the pale, either too banal or morally too compromised, to receive a platform in the lofty realm of a critical cultural event. Even professional architects seem to reach this conclusion once they are appointed as curators. They leave their day job, their work and professional competence behind to become dilettante social critics/commentators.

By now the approach of thematising social ills has become the standard, the expected, unassailable, safe, indeed mandatory option. (For the national pavilions it is also easy to organise and cost-effective. Instead of the risky and difficult task of selecting 25 architects, explaining the selection, and deal with them, a single artist can be commissioned (or two to three) to interpret the theme, and be left alone to do so.) For the curators of the national pavilions, this is now the only way to discharge their curatorial burden. It is now not only the most predictable move, it is obligatory. It is a move that squashes the discipline. It is a move that both enacts and publicly displays the end of architecture. There is nothing in sight here that could fulfil the vital function the Venice Architecture Biennale used to fulfil for our discipline. There is a gaping societal vacuum and nothing, no one, to fill it.

The Intellectual Poverty and Creative Bankruptcy of Architecture

Architecture, in the sense of being distinct from mere building, is dead, intellectually and creatively, and has been so for over 10 years. Further, all schools, conferences, biennials, journals, etc., have ended in the sense of having altogether abandoned architecture's calling. They have become something else, something disconnected from the development of the built environment, something running idle. Urban and building development continues, hemmed in and micro-managed by planning bureaucracies, and without the benefit of a coherent disciplinary discourse. The profession remains fragmented, without even any sense that this is problematic, and without the slightest ambition to overcome this fragmentation through debate and discursive convergence. Instead, a non-committal pluralism of values and styles is celebrated. On the one end of the spectrum, the personal predilections of architects are not to be questioned. (How a cacophony of idiosyncratic "artistic" creations should add up to create a functionally integrated city remains a question that is not even posed, let alone answered.) On the other end of the spectrum, the discipline lacks confidence to lead and defers its decisions to lay-communities and politicians, thus denying the discipline's expertise and abrogating the discipline's responsibility.

If architects are no longer informed by a rich, resourceful and cumulative discourse delivering collective learning processes, then they become either (self-indulgent) artists or routine-bound craftsmen executing

client instructions or political instructions. However, neither political power holders nor clients understand how their intentions and interests might be most effectively translated into built form. Both types—artists and craftsmen—populate the ranks of the profession. Both types are incapable of fulfilling the societal responsibility of architecture and end up hollowing out the role and standing of the architect. This intellectual vacuity invites and emboldens both clients and politicians to step into the breach. Both types of usurpation spell the end of architecture.

The longer this post-architectural dilettantism continues and spreads, the more precarious the status of the remaining slivers of a vital and ambitious architectural discourse and practice become. They will soon wither altogether. After the inevitable interim loosening of the curriculum during the period of paradigm shift, a vigorous, searching debate over the direction of the discipline—in order to regain relevance in the new historical era—was required. The brainstorming, including the contestations concerning the curriculum, should have been advanced towards new shared conclusions and resolutions, unifying at least a vital critical mass of protagonists. This did happen during the 1990s and early 2000s. However, since 2008/09—since the prior boom had ended in the financial crash, great recession, and European debt crisis, implying the curbing of work opportunities and the re-emergence of anti-capitalism—these cumulative constructive forces have been swamped by the forces of disciplinary dissolution.

In particular, the transformation of architecture schools into art schools and political debating clubs implies an ongoing (and soon irretrievable) loss of disciplinary knowledge and expertise. While the ongoing, self-confident vitality of the discipline would have required the vigorous, collective rebuilding of a shared disciplinary curriculum, the opposite has taken place: the further loosening and indeed utter dissolution of any shared curriculum conception or intention.

This dismal state of the discipline, and the sinking standards (together with the prevailing woke culture) in schools of architecture, attracts a fitting (or rather misfitting) student population, while it repels students with intellectual ambition who are attracted by sophisticated, demanding, intellectually rigorous fields like economics, business administration, history, sociology, jurisprudence, or computer science. While some of these fields of study have also been softened by woke ideology, their core remains vigorous and continues to progress in exciting ways. That architecture could and should be an equally sophisticated,

demanding, intellectually rigorous field, with exciting innovation opportunities, might be faintly glimpsed within the oeuvre, writings, and research initiatives of the author. These opportunities have been accumulating during the last 15 years without the necessary take-up within a larger collective endeavour, due to the erosion of the discipline's capacity to live up to its societal responsibility. However, it seems unlikely that the ongoing intellectual poverty and creative bankruptcy of architecture—while it implies the further accumulation of untapped opportunities—might attract the talent pool required to overcome this bankruptcy. The continued inflow of a lesser talent pool, with lesser human capital, continuously subjected to an increasingly incestuous academic culture of dilettante distraction and pretence, will only further isolate and dry out the remaining strongholds committed to architectural innovation at the frontier. The works, writings, and research initiatives emanating from this surviving sliver no longer find a receptive audience within the discipline. (While successfully studying architecture one can by now get away without any specialized knowledge whatsoever.) In this sense, what remains of architecture no longer finds any resonance or audience. Architecture is dead because the remaining architects work and speak into a void, are closed into an ever-diminishing echo chamber, isolated by an ever more gaping abyss or suffocating vacuum. Architecture shrinks and becomes a mere message in a bottle, adrift in an ocean of ignorance, hoping to be picked up once more by a future generation.

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Extinction Fever

ABSTRACT: For the first time in human history, extinction has expanded into the common parlance of everyday life. Not only is it no longer special, but it has also entered into the vast machinations of the culture industry. The certainty of our extinction is, however, grounded in the paradox of the uncertainty of how it will all play out. And so, despite the seeming inevitability of extinction, its presumed factualities sound fictional and, indeed, science fiction has had a field day. The opening up of awareness of the vast time scales at play has also created a new temporal condition based on a basic truth: we, the human species, will not have time to "evolve" into something else. In other words, despite the long-drawn-out processes of our evolution, we are now stuck in the awkward fixity of our supposed "humanity" as something that is now both permanently endangered and permanently fragile.

KEYWORDS: extinction, evolution, *Schadenfreude*, deep history

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> As in a dream, the pursuer never succeeds in catching up with the fugitive whom he is after, and the fugitive likewise cannot ever clearly escape his pursuer. (Homer, *The Iliad*, book 22, lines 199–200)[1]

In past centuries, the project of our modernity found its grounding in the vexing socio-political encounter between human and machine. Today, that encounter is no longer as comprehensible or even critiquable since the two—largely because of data capitalism—have become co-dependent. AI will seal the deal for better or worse. What then marks the project of our modernity *now*? It is the encounter—or perhaps better, the re-encounter—between the human and its future, a future that might well end in its extinction. Up until now, philosophy has had more or less two imaginaries of the future, a theological one that focused on the afterlife, and a more recent secular one that emphasized a gradualist version of progress and development. The first is embodied in the notions of heaven, Judgment Day, and reincarnation, which are, of course, for many people still foundational to their worldviews. *Star Trek* is the perfect example of the second, with Starfleet, maintained by the United Federation of Planets, the model of a society organized around the needs for deep space exploration, research, defense, peacekeeping, and diplomacy within a multi-species universe. Despite all the dramas, things always seem to work out. There are of course any number of agencies and organizations that try to get to that magical place in real time, one of them being, for example, the Future of Life Institute, created in 2014.[2] Its goal is to steer transformative technologies towards benefiting life and away from large-scale risks.

There is now, however, a new "future" suited to the late Anthropocene that gives the human a more diminished place in the eco-fauna-physical world. We are now, or at least now partially willing to admit, that we are part of a vast natural continuum and not just its most superior manifestation. This more inclusive view was held by our distant ancestors and is now slowly making a sort of comeback. Increasingly, a wide range of animals are gaining legal status, and so too are trees, rivers and

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[1] Referenced in S. Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1991, p. 4.

[2] FLI was founded by MIT cosmologist Max Tegmark, Skype co-founder Jaan Tallinn, DeepMind research scientist Viktoriya Krakovna, Tufts University postdoctoral scholar Meia Chita-Tegmark, and UCSC physicist Anthony Aguirre.

mountains.[3] In New Zealand, the Te Urewera National Park was recently declared a legal entity. The Ganges and Yamuna Rivers are now also considered legal persons. If we add to that Paul MacLean's thesis from the 1960s that we all still have in our heads a "reptile brain," then suddenly our old security in the integrity of our being—critical to the very idea of our modernity—seems quite uncertain.

And to make things worse from the point of view of our normative exceptionalism, we now know that ninety-nine percent of the genes in your body are bacterial. Only about one percent is human. We are indeed mostly microbes. In fact, our planet is populated by at least a trillion species of microorganisms, with 99.999% of them remaining undiscovered. Every life form is sustained by these microorganisms, and they make the planet habitable. Some scientists have even postulated that "microorganisms demonstrate conscious-like intelligent behavior."[4] Why am I not surprised?

This new sense of self—one that "rides along" with nature—seems to see that same nature, in its outward manifestation at least, increasingly through the lens of cataclysm, turning nature into a planetary geo-political force all unto its own. Our diminished Self and our vulnerable Self are two sides of the same coin. The Weather Channel on Facebook captures the latest videos of hurricanes, tornadoes, landslides, and volcanoes. In the 1990s, we already saw the first popularization of weather disaster narratives. *The Coming Global Superstorm*, a 1999 book by Art Bell and Whitley Strieber, which became the backdrop for the film *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004), predicts the failure of the Gulf Stream, the melting of the polar ice caps, and the emergence of huge rainstorms. Art Bell, in case one is unfamiliar with him, was the founder and the original host of the paranormal-themed radio program *Coast to Coast AM*. Whitley Strieber is the author of vampire novels like *The Hunger* and *The Last Vampire*. On December 26, 1985, he was abducted from his cabin in upstate New York by non-human beings. The book he wrote about this, *Communion* (1987), reached the number one position on *The New York Times* Best Seller list for non-fiction. This is not to diminish the value of *The Coming Global Superstorm,* but to simply point out the symmetry

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[3] See: D. Takacs, "We Are the River," *University of Illinois Law Review,* 2, 2021, pp. 545–606.
[4] J. S. K. Reddy, C. Pereira, "Understanding the emergence of microbial consciousness: From a perspective of the Subject-Object Model (SOM)," *Journal of Integrative Neuroscience,* 16, 2017, pp. 27–36.

between end-of-the-world predictionalism and the populist aesthetics of alienation.

This is still only a small part of the story. Ever since the days of Charles Darwin, we have more or less bought into the principle that humans emerged as the end result of a long, painfully slow process that relied on species developing precise fits to their particular ecology. But in recent decades, we have come to realize that evolutionary theory, as important as it is in the short history of our interspecies realities, fails to account for the drama of planetary history. As it turns out, there were—depending on whom one asks—five major extinction events. They were, simplified here, Late Ordovician mass extinction (444 mya) 86%; Late Devonian Extinction (360 mya) 75%; Permian–Triassic extinction event (250 mya) 96%; Triassic–Jurassic extinction event (200 mya) 90%; The Cretaceous–Paleogene extinction event (65 mya) 76%. The causes vary: too much ice, too many volcanoes, rising sea levels, not enough oxygen, too much oxygen, and, of course, asteroids. In total, more than 99% of all species that ever lived on Earth—amounting to over five billion species (not counting microbes)—are estimated to have died out at one time or another *before* the arrival of humans some mere 250,000 years ago.

All of this took place in a span of 4.6 billion years, meaning that it took 4.59999999 billion years to produce humans out of the five extinction events. And it was really only the last such event, the Triassic–Jurassic extinction event (200 mya), that knocked off the dinosaurs and allowed mammals—and ultimately humans—to take over the planet. We are all children of the Chicxulub impactor, as the asteroid is called. In other words, we are the precarious end result of a set of violent planetary events that could have gone wrong anywhere along the way and not produced humans at all. From that perspective, we are lucky to be here. We could have remained diatoms, lock-jawed fish, bees, or even long tail monkeys.

One of the reasons scientists are studying these events is because they can give us a sense of the future. For example, the factors that led to a mass extinction at the end of the Permian Period, when some 96 percent of marine species were wiped out, remind Prof. Wolfgang Kiessling (University of Erlangen, Germany) very much of today. What separates us from the events of the past is the extent of these phenomena.[5] And yet the title of his article is: "Mass extinction with prior warning." And

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[5] W. Kiessling "Mass extinction with prior warning," https://www.fau.eu/2018/03/14/news/research/mass-extinction-with-prior-warning/, (accessed 3 November 2024).

indeed, using supercomputer, scientists now calmly predict "a new mass extinction that will wipe out humans and all mammals."[6]

If we look to the deep future, we know that in about three billion years the sun will expand into a red giant and swallow Mercury, Venus, and Earth. The survivability of our species for that long is statistically impossible. Most scientists agree that human life might not make it past the emergence of something called the "Pangea Ultima," a hypothetical supercontinent—first postulated in the early 1980s—that will form about 250 million years from now when the Earth's various continents collide.[7] The east coast of the United States would be squished up against the west coast of Africa. New York would be a stone's throw away from Namibia. But of course, we will not experience it. The volcanoes, earthquakes, sea-level changes and global warming will all mean that humans, regardless of their technology, will perish along the way. What will survive are the microbes, and it will all start all over again.

Should we not curse the "consciousness" that makes us seemingly special, especially since our so-called consciousness is incredibly short-lived and destructive? For three hundred thousand years or so, we lived in small, dispersed communities scattered across Africa, moving into Europe, Asia and then—much later—the Americas. We did not farm, but gathered resources from the sea and land, augmented by hunting. We talked to rocks, water, trees, the air, and of course, our ancestors. It was all just a part of the "nature of things." Living and dying with the plants and animals around us.

Today, we realize that we are indeed different from our ancestors, whom not too long ago we labeled as primitive and savage. The question might not be how we got this way, but how we—ever since the proverbial and much-ballyhooed "birth of agriculture"—so rapidly lost touch cognitively with our ancestral capacity to live within the world and not in opposition to it. Slavoj Žižek argued that the very fact that we are speaking creatures not only sets us apart but also means that "all attempts to regain a new balance between man and nature" can only yield a fetishistic disavowal.[8] Man is not the product of evolution, but an acciden-

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[6] E. Ralls, "Scientists predict a new mass extinction that will wipe out humans and all mammals," https://www.earth.com/news/scientists-predict-a-new-mass-extinction-that-will-wipe-out-humans-and-all-mammals/, (accessed 3 November 2024).

[7] A. Farnsworth *et al*., "Climate extremes likely to drive land mammal extinction during next supercontinent assembly," *Nature Geoscience*, 16, 10, 2023, pp. 901–908.

[8] S. Žižek, *Looking Awry*, pp. 36–37.

tal byproduct "evolving" from speech-makers to extinction-makers. It is not just creatures in nature that suffer from this. Our capacity to make something extinct applies to ourselves as well, especially when empowered through the auspices of civilization, colonialism, and modernization. How many languages and cultures have been lost over the years, centuries, millennia? In a sense, we are children of extinction perpetrators living in a multitude of after-extinctions. But not too long ago, we had little care for this since we thought that our civilizational perspective was the mark of our superiority, and in the 18th century we began to call ourselves *Homo sapiens*. Today, of course, no one is sure if this *sapien*-ness is the right word. If our so-called natural intelligence will not continue the processes toward self-annihilation, then AI will certainly do it. *The Terminator* (1984–1991) may indeed be our destiny. And we all know that science will possibly lead us to our doom. In a recent, nearly three-hundred-page technical report, scientists describe the horrifyingly existential risks posed by what is known as "mirror life": synthetic organisms developed in the name of medicine, whose DNA structures are a mirror image to that of all known natural organisms. "Scientists Horrified by 'Mirror Life' that could wipe out biology as we know it."[9]

The possible factualities of all of this are, of course, intimately intertwined with fictions. In fact, Walter Benjamin—should he be around today—would hardy have to change his adage from 1936 that "humanity's self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure of the first order."[10] But Benjamin was talking about life in the wake of a world war. Today, our aesthetic pleasure is made (mostly, at least) during peace. We no longer need war or nuclear bombs to imagine the worst. Benjamin, talking about the threat posed to democracy by fascism, pointed out that "[t]he tradition of the oppressed teaches us that the 'state of emergency' in which we live is not the exception but the rule. We must attain to a conception of history that is in keeping with this insight."[11] But as likely as it might seem that this "state of emergency" has now expanded to include the possibility of our extinction, it might not necessarily follow that extinction requires

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9   F. Landymore, "Scientists Horrified by 'Mirror Life' that Could Wipe Out Biology as We Know It," https://futurism.com/neoscope/scientists-horrified-mirror-life, (accessed 29 November 2024).

10   From the Epilogue to "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in: *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, Schocken Books, New York, 1969, p. 242.

11   W. Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, p. 257.

its own conception of history, largely because—very simply—there is no salvation, no repair, much less any utopian "out." Extinction possibility has become extinction porn as we experience it in cinema, in our sci-fi novels and on Fox Weather channel, live streaming from the inside of a hurricane, the planet being destroyed in one way or another.

Who can forget *The Blob* (1958) where an amoeba-like organism crashes to Earth and consumes everything in its path? Today, of course, it is all not enough. *Daybreak Zero* (2011) by John Barnes follows the destruction of Western civilization by plastic/hydrocarbon-eating bacteria. Industrial civilization rapidly breaks down, and tens of millions die in the U.S., with the global death toll measured in the billions. A current list of "Extinction Movies" is now up to forty-four, almost all from after 1990.[12] The cleverest deployment of our extinction fetish in the era of climate change was the film *Elevation* (2024). It is the story of bulletproof creatures that emerge from hibernation to whip out humans. They hunt them down by sensing their carbon dioxide emissions. Recent films have the advantage of software like Esri CityEngine. It is not just "an essential tool for urban designers, planners, architects," as it advertises itself, but also allows for "highly detailed fire and explosion simulations [...] to enhance the destruction, including smoke, heat waves, and realistic fire spread."[13] It was used in *Independence Day* (1996) to depict buildings and entire cities getting blown into smithereens by extraterrestrial aliens.[14] And for every film, there are dozens of page-turners. Put an invasion by aliens who have weaponized fungi to destroy the planet together with the American "dark state" that refuses to face new realities and that uses violence against its own citizens, billionaires who fund secret scientific projects and one gets the perfect storm of aliens, fungus, cataclysm, violence and paranoia. Read no further than *The Meteor* (2024) by Joshua T. Calvert.

Though all of these end scenarios are ambiguous, uncertain, and certainly hallucinatory, we are culturally in a position where the fictional imaginaries are no less powerful than the ostensibly factual ones. In fact, there is a strange and unmistakable, paradoxical attraction between fact

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[12] S. Sayeed, "List of Movies on Extinction," https://www.imdb.com, (accessed 3 November 2024). Leaving out the films about the *Planet of the Apes*, there are only 3 older than 1990.

[13] *Anon*., "How Hollywood Builds and Destroys Cities with 3D GIS," https://www.esri.com/about/newsroom/arcnews/how-hollywood-builds-and-destroys-cities-with-3d-gis/, (accessed 3 November 2024).

[14] *Anon*., "ArcGIS CityEngine" https://www.esri.com, (accessed 3 November 2024).

and fiction. The BBC, in an interview with Jane Goodall, considered the world's foremost expert on chimpanzees, just announced in no uncertain terms: "The sixth great extinction is happening."[15] And if we do not believe Goodall, then we can take the word of David Attenborough in his BBC "documentary" called simply *Extinction: The Facts* (2020), which walks us through the grim details of the ongoing, sixth extinction or, as some call it, the Anthropocene extinction.[16] And if that is not enough then we can take our cue from a headline in the *New York Times*: "She went for a Walk on the Beach and found a Rare 'Doomsday Fish'."[17] It was an oarfish that in Japanese mythology is the harbinger of earthquakes and other disasters. In another recent news item we read "Supervolcano [referring to the Phlegraean Fields near Naple Italy] shows signs of waking up, which would plunge the world into chaos."[18] If that is too ho-hum, a recent prepper expo in Minnesota billed itself as "a family-friendly event" that covers an enormous range of topics, "including zombie survival" as their logo hints at.[19]

The young at heart can, of course, play computer games like *The Last of Us*, a 2013 action-adventure game where players defend against hostile humans infected by a mutated fungus. In the more recent *Planetary Annihilation* (2024), you can engage in intergalactic mayhem as you take control of the forces of nature and unleash cataclysmic events upon various planets, moons, and celestial bodies. According to the advertisers: "Indulge your curiosity, and let your destructive instincts run wild in this visually stunning and immersive game."[20] Of course, not everyone seems to be attracted to the lures of *Schadenfreude* (a German word

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[15]   V. Gill, "'The sixth great extinction is happening', conservation expert warns," https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c93qvqx5y01o, (accessed 3 November 2024). See also: A. Barnosky *et al*., "Has the Earth's sixth mass extinction already arrived?," *Nature*, 471, 7336, 2011, 51–57.

[16]   For a good discussion of governmental and scientific uses of the word extinction, see: F. S. Tanswell, "The Concept of Extinction: Epistemology, Responsibility, and Precaution," *Ethics, Policy & Environment* 27, 2, 2024, pp. 205–226.

[17]   I. Kwai, "She Went for a Walk on the Beach and Found a Rare 'Doomsday Fish'," https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/21/us/doomsday-fish-california-oarfish.html, (accessed 3 November 2024).

[18]   E. Ralls, "Supervolcano shows signs of waking up, which would plunge the world into chaos," https://www.earth.com/news/supervolcano-italy-solfatara-crater-phlegraean-fields-shows-signs-of-waking-up/, (accessed November 3, 2024).

[19]   2nd Annual Minnesota Prepper Expo, https://www.mnprepperexpo.com, (accessed 3 November 2024).

[20]   Planet Annihilation 3D Smash, https://play.google.com/store/apps, (accessed 3 November 2024).

that means something like "destruction-giddiness"). The abandonment in the last decades of large swaths of the Romanian countryside, as villages have moved to the cities, has led some to envision "a rewilded Eden in the ruins of humanity."[21]

Basically, the responses are: 1) do nothing except perhaps for watching another season of *Naked and Afraid*; 2) lead a more "sustainable" life and cross your fingers; 3) get funding from a university to study the problem; 4) assume that the future is in god's hands; 5) move in with some alternative communitarians; 6) build an underground shelter, play computer games, and listen to dark, electro-industrial mayhem of *Lust For Extinction* by Yiannis Chatzakis, whose alias is *The Degenerated Sequences*;[22] 7) join a "prepper community," visit the annual *Be Prepared Expo*s and stock up on gold coins, bullets, whiskey and rice, or at least that is what one website recommends; 8) Wait for Musk to build a Mars colony for billionaires.

The paradoxes multiply: humans as cause, humans as salvation; science as cause, science as salvation; microbes as cause, microbes as salvation; computers and cause, computers as salvation; aliens as cause, aliens as salvation. Regardless of which scenario proves to be correct, there is no doubt about one thing: the ultimate void around which all this navigates. As we play out the agonies of our diminished and vulnerable selves, there is not enough time for humans to slowly "evolve" into something better. This means that the Anthropocene is not just the story about human impact on the environment. It is also the epoch where the *longue durée* of our evolution is over. Another *longue durée* is coming into focus, but one without us. The transition will not be smooth and will be drawn out possibly over centuries of agonizing wait, with ever more potent opportunities for scenario building. By the time we face extinction for real, we will be suffering from extinction desire syndrome. "Many Bay Area residents raced away from the ocean after a jolting cellphone alert warned, 'You are in danger.' Others raced toward it."[23]

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21   T. McCLure, "The great abandonment: what happens to the natural world when people disappear?," https://www.theguardian.com/news/2024/nov/28/great-abandonment-what-happens-natural-world-people-disappear-bulgaria, (accessed 29 November 2024).
22   https://degeneratedsequences.bandcamp.com/track/lust-for-extinction, (accessed 29 November 2024).
23   H. Knight, "Tsunami Warning in San Francisco 'Felt Like a Science Fiction Movie'," https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/05/us/tsunami-warning-san-francisco.html, (accessed 29 November 2024).

Back in less stressful times, Carl Sagan had an optimistic tone to his forecast. His famous 1977 film, *Powers of Ten*, gave us views of the world that went ever further out into the cosmos and then into the atom. Sagan hoped that seeing these perspectives would somehow make us more tolerant as a species. "Everyone one of us is, in the cosmic perspective, precious. If a human disagrees with you, let him live. In a hundred billion galaxies, you will not find another." To which he added: "Our posturings, our imagined self-importance, the delusion that we have some privileged position in the universe, are challenged by this point of pale light [our planet]."

Unfortunately, the shock of our precariousness has never had the desired effect; the salvation of the human species simply cannot transcend our evolutionary-induced—and much bemoaned—shortsightedness. Sagan's wonderful plea for tolerance sounds these days like liberalism's last hurrah. And so, in *Judgment Day* (1998), the cultist who tries to thwart the government from demolishing a threatening asteroid makes a claim that many might well adhere too much to. "He is a loving god, He is a forgiving god, but he has said enough." That, as it might be, no one really wants a story about us listening to our better side.

Extinction, even if it were today to involve something we call "nature," can no longer be natural for the simple reason that the classic ambition to lead a life worth living is irradiated by an extinction-philic culture where fact and fiction are no longer separable, where horror and normalcy seem to be found in equal measure, and where guilt and longing are one and the same. There is no way out. Perhaps Hegel was right when he claimed with wonderful ambiguity that "[t]he human being is this night, this empty nothing that contains everything in its simplicity— an unending wealth of many representations, images, of which none belongs to him—or which are not present."[24] For despite the ever-growing repertoire of endings, there is something about extinction that is and remains inaccessible to the imagination, the *post*-evolutionary Self where time basically stands still.

In the 1961 episode of *The Twilight Zone* called *The Midnight Sun*, the Earth is moving away from the sun. Mrs. Bronson, however, has a feverish dream of just the opposite, namely of the Earth moving toward the sun and burning up. "The place is New York City and this is the eve of the

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[24]   G. W. F. Hegel, "Jenaer Realphilosophie," in *Frühe politische Systeme*, Ullstein Verlag, Frankfurt, Berlin, Wien, 1974, p. 204; translation from D. P. Verene, *Hegel's Recollection: A Study of Images in the Phenomenology of Spirit*, Suny Press, Albany, 1985, pp. 7–8.

end, because even at midnight it's high noon, the hottest day in history, and you're about to spend it—in the Twilight Zone." Only at the end of the story does the truth come out that the world's inhabitants are freezing to death. In the closing scene, the narrator in his famous monotone voice says: "The poles of fear, the extremes of how the Earth might conceivably be doomed. Minor exercise in the care and feeding of a nightmare, respectfully submitted by all the thermometer-watchers—in the Twilight Zone."

At the time, it was clear that all of this was a reference not to climate change—which was not yet a thing—but to nuclear annihilation. On October 30, 1961, just two weeks before the release of *The Midnight Sun*, the Soviet Union detonated the Tsar Bomba, the world's largest thermonuclear weapon, in a test over the Novaya Zemlya archipelago in the Arctic Circle. In that same year, the U.S. saw a new generation of "push button" nuclear missiles, the Minuteman.[25] *The Twilight Zone* builds on the resultant anxieties, but also on the already rampant annihilation fantasies of the time. Annihilation was so immanent that the 1957 novel *On the Beach* by Nevil Shute was set in 1961. It contends with the last days of humanity after a cataclysmic nuclear war. In *The Midnight Sun,* however, the impending cataclysm is not represented in high definition, nor spelled out as some sort of protracted extinction-philic adventure, but written only in translation, so to speak, in the face of Mrs. Bronson. There is no moralizing here; no hidden message about our presumed "humanity," and no erotics of destruction.

A new paradox emerges, for we are well aware that the increasingly colorful epics of extinction are a story that is beyond comprehension in the same way that death itself is beyond comprehension. Just as the subject (in this case the proverbial human) can get close to the object (in this case, its extinction) but can never attain it, so too the object (our extinction) seems to enforce its distance, making it too as if it were a subject in its own right. No matter how graphic, horrible, or sublime, extinction simply cannot be told, since we have experienced it at best only through other species outside of our own time horizon. Following the thoughts of Žižek, this leaves us hanging in a dream world where teleology has been replaced by "the paradoxical element" that serves as a "place-holder of the lack," the point of the signifier's non-sense.[26]

25   D. McChristian, "Whiteman Air Force Base, Oscar-01 Minuteman Missile Alert Facility (MAF)," *Historic American Engineering Record*, No. M0-87, 1996, p. 15.
26   S. Žižek, *Looking* Awry, p. 53.

The film *Räumliche Massnahme* [*Spatial Intervention*, 2002] (Figure 1) by the Viennese artists Nicole Six and Paul Petritsch embodies this. It is a 28-minute video of a darkly clad person on a frozen lake, walking in a small circle and stopping every now and then to strike the ice with a pickaxe. The audience hears the constant, jarring cracks of the hits as the person obsessively and fruitlessly whacks away. The person seems to be on a mission, looking, so it seems, for a way out of this nothingness, looking for a depth under the shallowness of the ice. The title of the film is meant to be a clue. *Räumliche* means "spatial" and refers obviously to the circle, but it also suggests the spatiality of the planet in a forbidding cosmological nowhere. The figure has all the space in the world and yet seems to be stuck in a particular spot. *Massnahme*, a word difficult to translate into English, means literally "measure" but implies something like "actionable steps" and a purposefulness used to solve a problem. Here the "actionable steps" are those of a person who is literally stepping even if in circles that go nowhere, though perhaps we as viewers recognize that it is the downward spiral of frustration. When the video ends, the screen turns black, and we hear a cracking sound and a scream. There can be no doubt that the figure has finally plunged into the freezing water. The paradox of the "human all too human"—trapped between wanting an "out" and simultaneously an "in"—is broken. But there is no witness to it either. Extinction is, after all, without witness.

This asymmetry between the human as subject and human as (soon-to-be) object—though devoid of object-hood—is the collapse of the distinction between fate and destiny. We are doomed and even a fever dream—one in which there is no clear ending, or perhaps it is an end that has already ended—will only spell out the end in a different register. In the meantime, what was once thought to be a minor exercise in the care and feeding of a nightmare is now a major one.

Figure 1. Nicole Six and Paul Petrisch, "Spatial Intervention (1),"
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Dario Gentili*

The Use of the Project After the End of the Modern Project

ABSTRACT: Modernity has inextricably linked the idea of the project to the temporal dimension of the future. However, today the future is perceived as a dimension that is already exhausted in the present, either as the consummation of all novelty or as the threat of a catastrophic outcome. One thus ends up living in a kind of eternal present, which, referring to Reinhart Koselleck, is configured as a "space of expectations" without a time horizon. Such questions cannot but call into question architecture, which has made the project one of its fundamental categories. A genealogy of the architectural project is then proposed as it is connected to the political project, which already finds a spatial connotation in Plato, and "void" is identified as that concept from which different modes of projectuality are determined. It follows that, in today's ascertained end of the modern project, the possibility of a different conception of the project opens up, one that is not defined as an alternative to use as modernity intended, but rather is shaped from use itself, so that the present space of expectation can disclose its own horizon of the future.

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Space of Experience and Horizon of Expectation

"Every epoch appears to itself inescapably modern,"[1] argued Walter Benjamin in the *Passagen-Werk*. This implies for him that there is no epoch that "did not believe itself to be standing directly before an abyss. The desperately clear consciousness to be in the middle of a crisis is something chronic in humanity."[2] Modernity thus consists in conceiving the present in the face of an end that implies a moment of passage, as a condition of crisis that opens up an unknown: the future. The idea of the future as a radically different time, coming after the present and in discontinuity with it, is typically modern. Whether the future appears threatening or hopeful, whether the crisis is lethal or saving, depends on the present's perception of itself.

Before modernity, the future represented a prognosis that the present pronounced on the basis of the past. In Antiquity's circular conception of time, in fact, the future as conceived by modernity—as a time that, for better or worse, brings with it the new—was inconceivable. It is only with the emergence of modernity that the future presents itself as a time irreducible to the experience inherited from the past. Indeed, it is precisely the introduction of the idea of the future into history that is the distinctive trait of modernity; it is in fact the projection into the future that from then on makes every epoch, as "new time," modern in itself. Tracing it back to Kant's *Was ist Aufklärung*, Michel Foucault has therefore defined the modern conception of the present as "contemporaneity," thus distinguishing it from how previous epochs have thought of the present, i.e., in a certain way in relation to the past. With modernity, the future rather represents a "way out" from the present.[3] Instead, for some years now, it has been argued in theory and perception in Western society that our present has lost the future, that its crisis has become so chronicised that it has become permanent and endless, without a way out. This condition is called "presentism."[4]

Before analysing the contemporary condition, let us dwell further on modernity, to understand what has changed with respect to its idea of the

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[1] W. Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass./London, 1999, p. 546.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 545.

[3] See M. Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," in P. Rabinow (ed.), *The Foucault Reader*, Pantheon Books, New York, 1984, pp. 32–50.

[4] See D. Ingram, J. Tallant, "Presentism," https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2022/entries/presentism/, (accessed 15 November 2024).

future. With modernity, to use Reinhart Koselleck's terms, the margin between the "space of experience" and the "horizon of expectation" has progressively widened in favour of the second term, that of the future: "My thesis is that during *Neuzeit* the difference between experience and expectation has increasingly expanded; more precisely, that *Neuzeit* is first understood as a *neue Zeit* from the time that expectations have distanced themselves evermore from all previous experience."[5] This idea of the future as "new time" produces an acceleration to approximate the expectations that the present has on its horizon. The arrow of time finds its propulsive energy in "progress." Progress that was inconceivable until modernity; for example, in the Middle Ages, progress implied the approach of the end of the world understood as the "end of history." But the disillusionment that followed the non-fulfilment of eschatological prophecies removed the hypothecation with which the prognosis of the present burdened the future and freed its horizon of expectation: the space of experience—the space of the present—became too narrow and limited for the acceleration of time that technologies were beginning to produce with a speed unimaginable in the past. The horizon of expectation of modernity became indefinite and infinite in order to comprehend what could not be anticipated in the present. This is why modernity has made the category of project its own, its "throwing forward" (this is the etymology from Latin) takes on its temporal function precisely in modernity. The project ends up representing the way of planning and managing the future, its unknowns: the way of making the "horizon of expectation" a projection of the "space of experience" of the present.

Consequently, the conception of utopia also changes in modernity: it is no longer a spatial concept, but becomes temporal, and ends up coinciding with the future and its purely temporal dimension, which "has no place," which has no circumscribed space of experience, or at least not yet. Western utopian imaginaries could sometimes be alarming, insofar as they were marked by a dehumanising technological accelerationism; yet, the turn in the direction of a better future is for the present always possible, that is, it is always possible to expand the horizon of expectation to include alternatives.[6] Although this is not the best of all possible worlds, it can still become one: there is always an alternative.

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5   R. Koselleck, *Futures Past: On the Semantics of Historical Time*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2004, p. 263.
6   See F. Jameson, *Archaeologies of the Future: The Desire Called Utopia and Other Science Fictions*, Verso, London/New York, 2007.

The Western world had a future—a time to progress, to improve—as long as it could present itself as the best possible world, as long as it could oppose itself to "another" world. This other world, in the twentieth century, was represented by the Communism. After 1989, the idea of the future as a time of perfectibility opposing the static nature of the other world increasingly lost that political efficacy that had brought the dawn of the future to shine on its horizon, thus enabling the Western liberal world to win the Cold War.

Finally, it was the global market that united the world. And yet, what opened in the first phase of globalisation soon turned out not to be the era of the "end of history"[7] at all, but rather a new historical phase, a new configuration of history, where the relationship between "space of experience" and "horizon of expectation" is being articulated differently than in modernity.

SPACE OF EXPECTATION

What, then, is happening today in our future-poor and, therefore, post-modern times? The current perception of an acceleration of time has reduced the future to the present. If in Antiquity it was the past that reduced the present to its repetition, today it is the present that has reduced the future to its repetition. Reversing Koselleck's terms, it could be argued that our age configures the present as a "space of expectation"—which, however, having bridged the gap between experience and expectation to the point of consuming it, is without a horizon: "The horizon is that line behind which a new space of experience will open, but which cannot yet be seen. The legibility of the future, despite possible prognoses confronts an absolute limit, for it cannot be experienced."[8] Koselleck himself considered the possibility of a "space of expectation," but ruled it out: "it is more precise to make use of the metaphor of an expectational horizon instead of a space of expectation."[9] Certainly the spatiality that expresses the experience of the past is distinct from that which expresses the expectation of the future; however, the disappearance of a desirable horizon, of expectations to be approximated, makes this future, whose prognosis is increasingly to be averted (think for example of the ecological crisis), a present experience:

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[7]   F. Fukuyama, *The End of History and the Last Man*, Free Press, New York, 1992.
[8]   R. Koselleck, *Futures Past*, pp. 260–261.
[9]   *Ibid*., p. 260.

> Time, as it is known, can only be expressed in spatial metaphors, but all the same, it is more illuminating to speak of "space of experience" and "horizon of expectation" than of "horizon of experience" and "space of expectation," although there is still some meaning in these expressions. What is at stake here is the demonstration that the presence of the past is distinct from the presence of the future.[10]

It is precisely the suggestion that Koselleck provides the plausibility, albeit problematic, of a "space of expectation" that I intend to develop. In fact, our epoch, subsequent to the one in which Koselleck wrote, seems to be characterised precisely by the "presence of the future," by the disappearance of that "absolute limit" between experience and expectation. Ours is indeed the era governed by neoliberal reason—the era to which Margaret Thatcher, during the 1980s, said: "there is no alternative." After the fall of the Berlin Wall, this world—the globalised world—no longer needs to present itself as the best possible world by virtue of its perfectibility, its potential and the persuasive force of its "horizon of expectation." Rather, this world of ours is, though not the best, the only possible world—that is the rhetorical and ideological premise of the neoliberal art of government, which Mark Fisher has called "capitalist realism."[11]

Every expectation no longer requires a time for its own realisation, it is rather already present in this space: it is already now possible, i.e., it is already now "real." The prognosis of the future already corresponds to the diagnosis of the present. Whether the expectation of the future is marked by disillusionment or catastrophe, one remains in the present and expands its time. In modernity, the future also represented a limitation of the present, a possibility and an alternative to its reality. Today, reality tends instead to subsume possibilities and alternatives within its own imaginary and space. "Augmented reality" not only represents the most current frontier of information technologies, but also configures the idea of a present that spatialises possibilities and alternatives, subsuming the future within reality. Likewise, financial capitalism consists precisely in the neutralisation of the alternatives that the future might bring; speculation is in fact a form of prognosis of the future, an investment that

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[10] *Ibid*.
[11] M. Fisher, *Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative?*, Zero Books, Winchester/Washington, 2009.

consumes the horizon of the future and mortgages its expectation, reducing it to a mere projection and, hence, validation of the present reality.

Is it then true that we have lost the future today? Yes, it certainly is, if we understand the future in the modern sense, as that "time" that comes to allow the present to configure its own space of experience in a "new" way. Today, rather, the future is already now present in the space of reality. Questioning the future thus entails asking what is future in our present space; in short, we must conceive of the future in the way Benjamin conceives of history: not as "homogeneous, empty time, but time filled full by now-time [*Jetztzeit*]."[12] But to do so, one must change the order of discourse. We usually conceive of possibility, but also of alternative itself, as notions strongly imbued with temporality. What if instead we thought of them as spatial dimensions? Modernity has led us to conceive of spatiality in relation to reality and temporality in relation to possibility–what if we instead tried to relate possibility to spatiality? What if, then, we conceived of spaces that have lost their function and functionality—that have therefore lost a certain "reality"—as spaces of possibility and alternative? Are we in fact so sure that what is spatial is necessarily real? What if reality were modifiable—that is, had potentialities for the future–through our use of space?

Agora and Acropolis

These are all questions concerning the configuration and constitution of spatiality that cannot but call architecture into question. If with Foucault one can define the current, post-modern epoch as the "epoch of space," however, it must be made clear that the spatiality that characterises this epoch is that of the "space of expectation," the peculiar traits of which I have outlined. And this is precisely where architecture comes into play: has architecture not always declined on the spatial plane a concept as temporal as that of "project?" What is the project after all if not the projection of an expectation? However, now that the temporal horizon of any expectation has disappeared, the project in the modern sense has come to its end. Hence the now increasingly common and widespread impression that precisely those architectural works that still attribute novelty to themselves are already old; this is the fate of the project within the space

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[12] W. Benjamin, "On the Concept of History," in *Selected Writings, Vol. 4, 1938–1940*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass./London, 2006, p. 395.

of expectation: it is easy for any ostentatious novelty to be irremediably disappointing. And yet, this does not preclude that the project still has something to do with expectation; is it, however, able to renounce projecting itself towards the horizon in order to rather remain within this space? Which space of expectation, then, can the architectural project take on today–the one capable of configuring alternatives, thus giving space to expectations, or the one entrusted with the spatial representation of expectations produced by the same order of neoliberal discourse that governs in the name of the absence of alternatives? In short, who promotes the expectations—those who live and inhabit the space of the present or those who govern it?

But let us start at the beginning, from the moment when the philosophical and political project directly becomes an architectural project. I refer to the shift of the centre of political life from the *agora* to the *acropolis*, which, in describing the "new city," the ideal city, Plato decrees in *The Laws*. The peculiar space of politics from the "void" space of the *agora*—a non-architectural space, an open esplanade where buildings were scattered and random, without defining an order—becomes the enclosed space of the citadel overlooking the city, surrounded by walls and whose access is limited to those who are the repositories of exclusive and esoteric knowledge:

> the first thing to be done is to build the city as close to the center of the territory as possible, having chosen a spot which has also those other advantages for the city that can without difficulty be understood and enumerated. Then after these things there should be a division into twelve parts. First a sanctuary should be set up to Hestia, Zeus, and Athena, called the "acropolis," and surrounded with a circular wall. From there the twelve parts should radiate, dividing the city itself as well as the whole territory.[13]

The relocation of political life to the *acropolis* and the placing of the *acropolis* at the centre of the *polis* determines perhaps for the first time the coincidence of political utopia and "urban project", that is, the spatial definition of an urban and architectural order that can correspond to the ideal order that the legislator-demiurge-founder draws from looking

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[13]   Plato, *The Laws*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London, 1988, pp. 132–133 (745b).

downward: "when future courses of action are being considered, the most just thing to do in each case is this: he who presents the model of what should be attempted should depart in no way from what is most noble and most true"[14]. Jean-Pierre Vernant clarifies the significance of Plato's political-architectural revolution:

> The central position is occupied no longer by the agora but by the Acropolis, which is consecrated to Zeus and Athena, the patron deities of the city. Thus, in contrast to practical custom in all Greek cities, Hestia has her seat not on the agora but on the Acropolis. This shift in the center is significant. The Acropolis opposes the agora as the religious domain (the *hiera*) does the profane or legal domain (the *hosia*) and as the divine does the human.[15]

With Plato's last dialogue, *The Laws*, in which he appears disillusioned about the possibility of Athenian democracy overcoming its crisis, politics becomes a knowledge and practice for the few, close to religion, and no longer "common;" so much so that the *hestía koiné* (the city's common fireplace) dedicated to Hestia—not coincidentally, in addition to the house and the fireplace, also the goddess of architecture—is now housed in the Palace of the *acropolis* and no longer in the heart of the *agora*. The *agora* therefore ends up being defined by contrast as a "profane space," "lowered" to a place for the exchange of goods and opinions that are now excluded from the realm of "real" politics.[16] The entrenchment of politics in the Palace and the consequent attribution to the market of a disorderly—but also free, open and participatory—space has consequences of enormous significance,[17] the repercussions of which reach as far as today. However, I would like to emphasise here another effect of

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[14] *Ibid.*, p. 134. The coincidence of political utopia and urban project was also strongly present, right up to modernity, in the way in which the urban planner conceived his task and his role, attributing to himself a paternalistic if not—to put it in Foucault's terms—"pastoral" function. This is the case with Le Corbusier. See F. Choay, *L'urbanisme: utopies et réalités*, Seuil, Paris, 1965.

[15] J.-P. Vernant, *Myth and Thought among the Greeks*, Zone Books, New York, 2006, p. 258.

[16] In the *Politics* (VII, 1331a31–1331b13), Aristotle radicalises the Platonic urban planning approach and the spatial separation of politics and economics, distinguishing two types of *agora*: an *agora* dedicated "to leisure" (at the base of the *acropolis*), which he defines as "free," and a market *agora*, destined exclusively for "necessary business." See Aristotle, *Politics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass./London, 1959, pp. 593–595.

[17] This conception of market space remained so until the beginning of modernity. See D. Calabi, *Il mercato e la città: piazze, strade, architetture d'Europa in età moderna*, Marsilio, Venezia, 1993.

the distinction between *agora* and *acropolis*: I think that it also had decisive consequences for architecture, which, to the extent that it served political and religious power, has from then on considered disorderly space—the legacy of the "anarchitectural" spatiality of the *agora*—as an "empty space," hence as its negative: *tabula rasa* on which to draw and build. Rather, I follow the approach of Jacques Derrida, who defines as "anarchitectural" a mode, however architectural, that does not conceive of disordered and chaotic space simply as "empty:"

> The commitment, the wager: taking account of the architectural or anarchitectural necessity without destroying, without drawing only negative consequences from it. The without-ground of a "deconstructive" and affirmative architecture can cause vertigo, but it is not the void, it is not the gaping and chaotic remainder, the hiatus of destruction.[18]

The conception of the void is thus a discriminating factor in understanding which idea of architecture we are talking about: architecture as a self-representation of power in charge of creating order, or architecture as the production of alternative uses of space. The "void space" is in fact the architectural concept from which to start rethinking the terms, categories and dispositifs with which we conceive and organise space. It is, however, far from simple to demystify the ideological framework that leads us to conceive of "void space" as being "devoid of reality" or at least as a space whose reality we have lost or seems elusive. What is perhaps missing is an idea of reality appropriate to void, and not vice versa. But what kind of void are we talking about? Is it possible to conceive of a void that is not simply a space that can be filled with reality, but that is already real, that is, as it is, a "space of experience"? A starting point can be offered by the confrontation that Jacques Derrida and Daniel Libeskind had regarding the design of the Jewish Museum in Berlin, which—as is well known—is built around a void that cannot be accessed by visitors. Derrida's misgivings about Libeskind's project focus precisely on the concept of the "void:"

> This void which has to be made visible is not simply any void. It is a void that is historically determined or circumscribed; and it is not, for example, the indeterminate place in which everything takes place. It is

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[18]   J. Derrida, "Fifty-two Aphorisms for a Foreword," in *Psyche: Invention of the Other*, vol. 2, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2008, p. 126.

a void that corresponds to an experience which somewhere else you have called the end of history–the Holocaust as the end of history. You have said, again somewhere else, that architecture should start at the "end" of architecture. The "end" would mean a number of things exemplified here. The end could be a limit, but also the origin. Architecture starting from the end means that it has to understand itself and its practice by coming back to precisely what is its own limit; it must go to its limit in order to start from it.[19]

Leaving aside what most troubles Derrida, namely the spatial representability of the Holocaust even as void, what interests me here is Derrida's definition of "void" as a full space and not as "emptiness," that is, the geometric space of the *tabula rasa*. First, Derrida points out that this void has to do with the "end," with a "limit" that is also "origin." But if the void is not the emptiness as *tabula rasa* that the sovereign politics—that of Plato's legislator—makes available to *its* architecture, what politics can originate from the history-filled space of the void?

Void

"Void" is etymologically derived from the Latin word *vacuum*. In the course of time, the meaning of "vacuous" has come to coincide almost entirely with that of "emptiness." Yet, originally, "vacuous" indicated a particular quality of emptiness: to be "vacant," "devoid" of any determination and pre-established identity. And yet, "space." We are not so distant from the sense Derrida ascribes to *khôra*,[20] of which one of the possible etymological meanings (from *khéros*) is precisely "devoid of." Vacuity defines a peculiar spatiality, different from that of emptiness: the "vacuous" cannot be considered in itself, but its meaning always results from the reference to what it is devoid of. Therefore, the void cannot be reducible to the reality of a place, an identity or a function. Moreover, in English, "void" has a further meaning: "to void" is a transitive verb whose semantic spectrum is of the utmost interest. It means, in fact: "to free a

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[19] J. Derrida, "Response to Daniel Libeskind," *Research in Phenomenology*, 22, 1992, p. 92.
[20] "*Khôra* 'means:' place occupied by someone, country, inhabited place, marked place, rank, post, assigned position, territory, or region. And in fact. *Khôra* will always already be occupied, invested, even as a general place, and even when it is distinguished from everything that takes place in it. Whence the difficulty [...] of treating it as an empty or geometric space." J. Derrida, "Khôra," in *On the Name*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1995, p. 109.

certain place from something, to make room, to clear" and, furthermore, "to deprive (something) of legal validity." The original scope of the term "void" is thus the legal one: "having no legal force or effect; not legally binding or enforceable; legally null, invalid or ineffectual." Even the oldest ascertained usage (1290) entails: "having no incumbent, holder, or possessor."[21] Does invalidating the legal status of a space or denying the claim of possession or ownership over it therefore mean abandoning that space, simply leaving it empty? Certainly not. Rather, to void means to return a given space to its original condition, that of being available for use by the community.[22] It basically means making a given space available, whether materially full or empty, abandoned and disused or not.[23]

There is a verb that might suit us: "evacuate," which derives precisely from the term "vacuous." As with "to void", in the case of "to evacuate" we must emphasise its transitivity and active meaning: "to evacuate" also means "to make available."[24] It is interesting to point out how today the meaning of "to evacuate"—but more or less the same has also happened to "to void"—is exactly the opposite of its original meaning, while retaining its legal meaning. As the synonym "to vacate" indicates even more clearly, "to evacuate" does indeed mean the restoration of the

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[21] All these definitions of "void" as an adjective, noun, and verb are taken from the corresponding entry in *The Oxford English Dictionary*.

[22] As Yan Thomas and other legal historians have pointed out, Roman law itself, to which a long tradition traces the proprietary and patrimonial character of Western law, contemplated goods that were "unavailable" to appropriation and exchange, and therefore invaluable. These *res* were therefore accessible to the "use" of each member of the *populus*. See Y. Thomas, "La valeur des choses: le droit romain hors la religion," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales*, 6, 2002, pp. 1431–1462. "Vacants" were also defined in Roman law as those properties whose inheritance cannot be accepted by anyone and therefore end up in the availability of the state.

[23] Spaces that are no longer functional and in disuse—urban drifting, discards, waste—often considered simply as "urban voids," take on an obvious exemplarity here, but the discourse being pursued is not intended to find its exclusive application in them.

[24] In "The Destructive Character," Benjamin provides an outline for conceiving such a practice of "evacuation" (he uses the German verb *räumen*, which literally means "to make space"—*Raum*, in fact, means "space"—but can also be rendered as "to evacuate"); this passage, moreover, acquires its own poignancy within the legal context we have outlined: "The destructive character knows only one watchword: make room. And only one activity: to evacuate (*räumen*). His need for fresh air and open space is stronger than any hatred. [...] The destructive character sees no image hovering before him. He has few needs, and the least of them is to know what will replace what has been destroyed. First of all, for a moment at least, void space—the place where the thing stood or the victim lived. Someone is sure to be found who needs this space without occupying it." W. Benjamin, "The Destructive Character," in *Selected Writings, Vol. 2, Part 2, 1931–1934*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass./London, 2005, p. 541 (translation modified).

original condition of a given space that someone has taken possession of, but what is restored is not the availability of that space for common use, but its legal condition—i.e., in most cases, ownership. In short, an idea of reality is thus affirmed that has come to correspond to the possession or ownership of a given space, implying that the space that is devoid of it is not "vacuous"—that is, available for use—but simply "empty." Devoid of reality.

Project and Use

This conception of "vacuous" space—we must now call it this, rather than "empty"—makes it possible to think of and configure a space of which any given present reality is not the presupposition but rather one among several realised possibilities. This can be a way of delineating the "horizon of expectation" of the future already here, in this "space of experience." Alternatives could then arise, a gap between experience and expectation could be produced: this is how this "space of expectation" could gain its "horizon." Obviously delicate questions open up at this point, especially if—as Derrida warns—one intends to make this space accessible to a politics. In short, based on the discourse so far, it is a question of thinking of a politics that abandons the *acropolis*—and thus its "state" realm—and descends into the disorderly space of the *agora*. And yet, the disorder of the *agora* is only such if observed "from above" and does not require a power, from outside, to bring order to it; the market, in fact, already expresses its own politics, often without regard for the projects of Palace politics, which has indeed already "lowered" itself to its logic. Market self-regulation represents precisely the undermining of the idea—especially in its political meaning—of "project." The space of expectation that configures an absence of alternatives is in fact the product of the irreversible crisis of that idea of projectuality that—on the basis of Koselleck's reading of modernity—drew its meaning from the widening of the horizon of expectation with respect to the space of experience.

Architecture, too, has long been involved in the phenomenon; its project no longer aspires to build the new city, but rather consists of "renderings," a mode of graphic design that fits perfectly within the logic of "augmented reality," since silhouettes are included that foreshadow the use to be expected of the people who will have to inhabit or pass through that particular architectural space. Sometimes it even happens, scrolling through some renders, that one is not able to distinguish whether they

are images of the realised architectures or just their designs. In short, reality and project end up coinciding; this reduces the horizon of the project or, in other words, its utopian dimension.

And yet, there is no lack of examples of conceptions of architecture that have proposed to think of the project as immanent to the space of the *agora*, but which, while operating in the same space, are also not reducible to the logic of the market as a principle of self-regulation without a project. One of these examples is Giancarlo De Carlo's "architecture of participation." During the 1970s, De Carlo theorised and practised[25] an architecture in which use by people is not expected by the project, as is still the case in rendering, but rather use is an integral and immanent part of the project:

> Participation implies the presence of users throughout the entire course of the operation. This fact generates at least three fundamental consequences: each moment of the operation becomes a phase of the project; 'use' also becomes a moment of the operation and therefore a phase of the project; the different moments fade into one another and the operation ceases to be linear, one-way and self-sufficient.[26]

In the architecture of participation, the space of design cannot but be "vacuous" if it is to give use a projectual value; this space cannot therefore be that *tabula rasa* and that "empty space" from which a certain architecture has designed its project. It is probably with reference to this idea of architecture that, not without a taste for provocation, De Carlo invites to "subtract architecture from architects" or, to put it another way, to make architecture after the end of architecture: "The perspective that actually seems very interesting to me is that of subtracting architecture from architects to give it back to the people who use it."[27] The essential aspect in De Carlo's proposal of an architecture of participation, which makes it irreducible to both the architecture that proceeds from the *acropolis* and the projectless architecture of the market, is the attribution of a

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[25] Examples are the project for the Matteotti Village in Terni, only part of which was realised (1969–1975), and the Detailed Plan for the Centre of Rimini, which was rejected by the administration of the Romagna city.

[26] G. De Carlo, *L'architettura della partecipazione*, Quodlibet, Macerata 2013, pp. 69–70. For a contextualisation and analysis of the architecture of participation—which also dwells on its difficulties and ambiguities—within related architectural currents, see Sara Marini's *Introduzione* to De Carlo's book.

[27] *Ibid.*, p. 60.

projectual character to use. Such a projectual dimension of use–where conflictuality plays a productive role that is far from being neutralised–defines for De Carlo a "realistic utopia:"

> If a counter-image of the organisation of physical space, without omitting any of the forces acting in the context and taking into account not only their current energies but also their potential energies, disrupts the image that derives from the present artificial situation, then that counter-image is a realistic utopia. It is a utopia that will become a reality when the latent energies have all been liberated and subvert the condition of overpowering that currently compresses them.[28]

Certainly, at the time when De Carlo was writing, although the crisis of Palace politics was already evident, the reduction of the *agora* exclusively to the market and its logic was just looming; yet, he had understood that the political task of architecture was there, in the *agora*, and not in the *acropolis* that had to be pursued, converting the economic exchange of commodities into the political exchange of opinions, taking care that such conversion did not reduce the latter to commodities. Today, it is apparent that the *acropolis* has lowered itself to the level of the market and it is illusory to think that it can regain its privileged position. This has resulted, among other things, in the separation of the political project from the architectural project. However, this does not detract from the fact that the architectural project can still become a political project, but a political project of the *agora* and not of the *acropolis*—that is, a project conducted from the use of space and the horizontal exchange of opinions. After all, it is in the conversion into politics of the space of expectations of the *agora* and, therefore, in its subtraction from the domination of the projectless logic of the market that the architectural project can consist today, after the end of the modern project.

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[28] *Ibid.*, p. 62. That De Carlo's position, although a minority one, is not isolated is shown by the fact that, in the same years, Yona Friedman also wrote about "realisable utopias." However, not only does Friedman speak of "consensus" and not of participation, but unlike De Carlo he does not intervene on the statute of the project. See Y. Friedman, *Utopies réalisables*, Éditions de l'éclat, Paris, 2000.

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Volkmar Mühleis*

The End as Emptiness: A Transcultural Reflection on Architectural Practices

ABSTRACT: The logic of the tetralemma, as interpreted by the Japanese philosopher Yamauchi Tokuryū, integrates space as an in-between sphere in thinking. In his understanding, the tetralemma allows for a combination of four relational operations: one of identity, one of contradiction, the complementarity of both, and even the negation of this complementarity. I will examine the notion of the end in these four parameters, regarding the relevance of this reflection for the architectural practice and theory in inter- and transcultural terms. To that end, one example from contemporary and one from traditional Japanese architecture is discussed. Because of the philosophical context of Yamauchi's research in the 1970s, his argumentation is compared to a critique on the metaphysical background of the idea of identity, by reflecting on conceptual contributions of Gilles Deleuze, Jacques Derrida, and Bernhard Waldenfels, to question the tetralemma in the horizon of differentiation.

KEYWORDS: emptiness, tetralemma, differentiation, responsivity, practice

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The End of Doing and Beyond: Hannah Arendt

A legitimate interest in practice from a theoretical viewpoint might be that activities shape disciplines. Historically speaking, innovative activities lead to correlative disciplines, subsequently institutionalized for long-term development in the practical field itself—as *métier*—or further expanded upon theoretical reflection.[1] The theoretical involvement depends on an idea of knowledge that differs from the practical understanding of knowing. In a functional sense, knowledge might be understood as serving the practice, as useful, while a theoretical interest in knowledge for the sake of itself establishes an indirect relation with practice by reflecting on it.[2] The benefit for theory and practice then can be the enlargement of both fields, creating an overlapping zone. In this way, we have knowledge for the sake of practice, for the sake of theory, and for the sake of both.

A modern classic to reflect on this spectrum of practice and theory is the political theory of Hannah Arendt. In her book *The Human Condition* (1958), she addresses four typical activities: laboring, working, acting, and contemplating.[3] They are characterized as follows:

Laboring serves the needs of our bodily life, it never stops as long as we live and forms a necessary cycle of everyday practices (like consuming food, digesting it)—its temporality is *endless*, and it knows no freedom, only the pleasure to live.

Working is producing objects we can use to create a stable world; it is something you can do on your own, in a studio, where you can decide when to start the process and when to stop it—so, there is a *means to an end*; its logic is utilitarian. In terms of freedom and pleasure, it is highly ambivalent: we can lighten our burden by transmitting needs to

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[1] Just think of building as an activity since human settlements have existed and its historical forms of organization starting with studio practices in antiquity to early modern guilds and academies through to institutional contexts today.

[2] Socrates advocated a form of knowledge that must be proven by practice, like virtue for example (cf. Plato, *Protagoras*, 349d–351b. See the comment of Lino Bianco in his article "The Unity of Courage and Wisdom in Plato's Protagoras" regarding Socrates: "[...] instead of saying that knowledge is a condition for 'manliness', he claims knowledge is 'manliness', practically realized in this virtue, for example. Published in Philosophia, Faculty of Philosophy at Sofia University, on https://philosophia-bg.com/archive/philosophia-11-2016/the-unity-of-courage-and-wisdom-in-platos-protagoras/, accessed 3 December 2024). Aristotle instead conceptualized knowledge for the sake of itself. From this point of view, he addressed explicitly fine arts in the first philosophical study on artistic practice, his book *Poetics*.

[3] H. Arendt, *The Human Condition*, Doubleday, New York, 1958.

objects—instead of using my fist as a hammer, the produced hammer works without feelings of its own, so I liberate myself via the thing from physical effort. Freedom in this sense means a partial liberation from something, a shift from bodily activity to shared activity with an object. The material we need for any physical object is again the result of working: by forming matter into useful units for production. Arendt emphasizes that this process always damages nature, either by killing natural life or by disrupting natural flow. In addition, pleasure is ambivalent in this case because our joy of getting the pieces we want is intrinsically connected with violence against nature.

Acting is something you do regarding others. It implies speech, a promise, or an excuse—for example, oral speech acts.[4] Acting is ambivalent in the sense that you cannot make it "unhappen" once it has been done, as you can do with a physical object by destroying it. It knows a beginning, then, but *no end*, being shared by others, carried on by them. Different to working, it is by definition pluralistic and open ended. Therefore, it is not just a liberating shift toward a means to an end, as in working—it is radically liberating in setting a process free between people. The pleasure here might be the shared experience of real emancipation, for example, a new chapter in political history.

Contemplating differs from the other three activities by not addressing a personal need, practical interest, or social engagement in the first place, but by taking distance from the self in opening up toward general observations of natural and cultural phenomena. This reduction from daily life interests follows its own purpose, a theoretical interest in knowledge as such or knowledge as indirect reference for practical activities. Contemplating can be done individually, experienced as a liberation from one's own focus, and as such constitutes a pleasure in enriching one's own horizon. As thinking, it might be embedded in daily practices, too, from early age until a person dies.

For certain reasons Arendt emphasizes acting in her reflection on these activities. The crucial one is her argumentation for our motivation to labor, to work, to act, to think. We are not born to die, she states—being born means to take initiative on your own, to take up your life, in laboring its needs, in working for objects related to it, in acting with

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4   On the notion of speech acts, see J. L. Austin, *How To Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures Delivered at Harvard University in 1955*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1975.

others in its favor, and in contemplating it profoundly. The diverse activities respond differently to the threat of death: the labor will stop, the resulting object stops the work, the thinking vanishes with your own consciousness—only acting has no end in yourself or a thing. For sure, it is not eternal, endless in a strict sense. Nevertheless, it always goes beyond yourself. The process it sets free is not only liberating in the fullest sense compared to the other activities—it also cannot be stopped by personal death. Your life must finish, though not what that life has done to others. Working can support this ongoing process via carriers of memory, objects such as books, buildings such as archives. Yet work cannot replace the action needed, to transcend endings, following a logic of means to ends. The same goes for the automatization of the carrier today, namely, by AI.

If we concentrate on architecture via this scheme of activities, the elements of working still seem to fit with its practice: in principle, designing, constructing, and building can be done by one person, getting from nature the materials one needs, beginning a certain day and ending the project after a certain amount of time, following the logic of means to an end.[5] And as activities shape disciplines, a utilitarian logic has become institutionalized, when we consider today's typical descriptions of architectural practices, such as those documented in regulations for the payment of architectural services, where clear periods within processes are defined, such as starting with first inquiries, adding pre-planning, continuing with the design, the phase of approval, then of execution, later of transmission to the client, and so on.[6] Architectural working in this sense is teleologically motivated by an end to means, which means are themselves understood as functional.

This sense is correct. Yet if it supposes to be the complete picture, then our understanding of architectural practice has not fundamentally changed since the teleological thinking in Greek antiquity. It is time, now, to compare a modern classic like Arendt with a contemporary philosophical position, especially one with an explicit interest in architecture.

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[5] Consider, for instance, the report by Henry David Thoreau on building a house in his book *Walden*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2009, chapter 1, "Economy."

[6] See, for example, the German regulation for conducting architectural services called "Honorarordnung für Architekten und Ingenieure (HOAI)," documented in English by the Federal Chamber of German Architects, https://en.bak.de/practical-guidelines-for-the-implementation-of-the-performance-competition/, (accessed 5 November 2024).

An Intercultural Comparison: Günter Figal

Utilitarianism is focused on human needs. While the example of a house is already central in Aristotelian physics, as the phenomenologist Günter Figal reminds us, it is never conceptualized within an existing space.[7] So, without doubt, human needs motivate architecture, and architecture is realized via certain ideas—yet this approach still says nothing about the concrete carrier of architecture itself: space. In our globalized, intercultural times, therefore, Figal refers to a different tradition of building as a telltale example, the Japanese one. Derived from the development of garden architecture in Japan, the word "*shakkei*" (借景) means borrowed scenery. This concept is not bound to gardening anymore, for it is used also regarding the coherence between already existing and new buildings, as Figal demonstrates exemplarily in his analysis of Tadao Ando's approach to design, in developing the project of a conference pavilion for the furniture and decoration company Vitra in Weil am Rhein, Germany, next to the Vitra Design Museum, designed by Frank Gehry.[8]

The idea of borrowed scenery in landscape starts with an understanding of the landscape, the surroundings, where and how the architectural intervention should take place—something evident for practical operations everywhere. The difference between traditionally Western and Japanese approaches is marked by a word that is less standardized in European architectural conceptualizations: "borrowed." What seems to be the same action is understood and in this way done differently by thinking of "*shakkei*." While Arendt has correctly addressed our highly ambivalent relationship with nature (our interrupting or destroying it for our own purposes), this conflict is contrasted here by the idea of borrowing, which implies taking, too, but includes a certain degree of responsibility for what is taken (which we lose by thinking in an opposition between nature and humans, in a rationalist Cartesian point of view, for example). In this sense, the first exploration of a landscape in finding a way to build there should concentrate on the landscape instead of one's own will and need. This perspective already differs from an anthropocentric approach. Respecting the carrier of architecture, a building should not fight its conditions in the landscape; rather, it should respond to it, be

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[7] "The Aristotelian house stands nowhere (...)." ("*Das Aristotelische Haus steht nirgendwo* [...])," translated by the author. G. Figal, "Entwurf mit geliehener Landschaft: Phänomenologische Überlegungen zum Möglichkeitssinn in der Architektur," in A. Grossmann (ed.), *Kreativität denken*, Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2020, p. 164.

[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 164–167.

carried by it, yesterday just like today.[9] The space of a landscape is not limited or fixed; it changes. Its evidence comes not from a break or pause in action, as resting from something; it is resting in itself, without being for something or somebody.

The task of the architect is, then, to design with respect for these characteristics. How can in a certain situation what is unfixed, *unlimited*, changing carry specific needs, intentions, actions, functions? Figal finds it astonishing that even "a building as functional as the conference pavilion on the Vitra campus is done in a way that you simply enjoy spending time there, regardless of whether you have something to do or not."[10] Part of the experience of this space is the way to the conference room itself: it is explicitly so narrow that everyone must enter it alone, that no small talk is possible between two people going toward it, as a moment of shared silence before the discussion, the presentation. Inspired by Japanese garden architecture, Ando designs paths as experiences of their own, in walking, not just as direct ways between point A and point B, but again: without fighting functionality, either. Distances are bridged, yet the bridges are never negligible—they are characterized by detours, by proportions of steps which shift from standards, and so on. A building that rests in itself like a landscape must be clear and evident in its appearance as well as in its function.[11] Movement has to be facilitated, but not encouraged for the sake of itself, as change demands a balance of movement and standing, sitting, lying still. And it is the immobile that marks a place, not only formally, but as a liberation of one's own physical and mental

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[9] In "The Question Concerning Technology," Martin Heidegger characterizes *pre-modern* technology as being built into the landscape, in contrast with *modern* technology, which addresses the landscape via its own conditions. This might be a question worth reflecting in addition to this aspect, thinking of a possible intercultural comparison between his differentiation in this case and the tradition of "*shakkei*," including the difference of a historical break as marked by Heidegger versus historical continuation as emphasized by Figal regarding the mentioned aspect of the Japanese tradition (cf. M. Heidegger, *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, Garland, New York/London, 1977, pp. 14–15).

[10] "*Selbst ein erklärter Zweckbau wie der Konferenzpavillon auf dem Vitra-Campus ist so, dass man sich einfach gern in ihm aufhält, unabhängig davon, ob man dort etwas zu tun hat oder nicht*," translated by the author. G. Figal, *Tadao Ando: Raum Architektur Moderne*, modo, Freiburg/Breisgau, 2017, p. 90.

[11] Here, a comparison of Figal's position and the one of Heidegger in his text "The Origin of the Work of Art" could lead to the very nuanced reflection of Fabian Heubel in analyzing East-Asian philosophies with regard to fundamental ontology (see F. Heubel, *Schlucht und Atemwandel*, Matthes & Seitz, Berlin, spring 2025) — especially in addressing the section "The work and truth," where Heidegger states that a Greek temple "portrays nothing. It simply stands there in the middle of the rock-cleft valley." (M. Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, Harper & Row, New York, 1971, p. 88.)

movements, so that *finally*, as Figal states, a place allows oneself *just to be*—which might be a definition for home, recognizing evidence within yourself in correspondence with the space you inhabit.

In this section, I contrasted the teleological approach mentioned at the end of the first part, with a very different tradition, as one example of possible intercultural comparisons. It led to the concept of "*shakkei*," and how it is cultivated still in the practice of contemporary architecture. Figal does not mention anything about its conceptual horizon, in order to understand better the principles he recognizes in the examples described. Therefore, I turn to a study by the Japanese philosopher Yamauchi Tokuryū, not only to recognize different traditions, but also to reflect on possibly comparable logical premises in Western and East-Asian conceptualizations, to find transcultural bridges in the context of our reflection on "the end" in architectural practice and theory.

To End, and Not to End, that is the Question: Yamauchi Tokuryū

In 1974, Yamauchi Tokuryū published his study *Rogosu to renma* ロゴスと レンマ, for the first time translated into a Western language in 2020, by the philosopher and orientalist Augustin Berque into French, under the title *Logos et lemme* (*Logos and Lemma*).[12] It is an exemplary analysis of logical principles in Western thinking compared to equivalent assumptions in traditions from India and China which have strongly influenced Eastern thought in general. This intercultural perspective on the basis of logical understanding is developed further by Yamauchi into a transcultural, contemporary conceptualization. It is this transcultural dimension which offers a promising model for a bridge regarding these different backgrounds.

Let me briefly summarize the main ideas of this voluminous and complex book. Central to Western philosophy, Yamauchi outlines the following elements:

4. The idea of *identity*, that A is A, beginning with Parmenides' concept of the being.
5. The idea of *contradiction*, that A is not A, departing from Zenon's reflection on movement regarding the being.
6. The idea of an *excluded third*, that identity and contradiction cannot exist at the same time, as formulated by Aristotle.

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12 T. Yamauchi, *Logos et lemme: pensée occidentale, pensée orientale*, CNRS, Paris, 2020.

The Japanese philosopher then analyzes in detail the relation of these premises with their modern reflection since the Enlightenment. Here, I will concentrate on the most telltale change, according to Yamauchi, namely, that Hegel put the second principle in the first place, to think via *contradiction* the development toward *identity*, with the dialectical modus operandi of the *excluded third*. So, in Western thinking, *identity* seems to be something to begin or to end with, in a metaphysical or historical dimension of development. Having studied with Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger in Freiburg/Breisgau, Germany, in 1920-21, the question of *identity*, linked to beginning and end, remained foremost in Yamauchi's retrospective view, reflecting a Western perspective.

The logical instruments in India and China, per Yamauchi, operate with comparable elements, but in different ways. He denotes their comparability with the Greek word *lemma* (λῆμμα, *lêmma*). It can be translated as premise, assumption, deriving from λαμβάνω, *lambánō*, "I take." In the West, the notion of the dilemma is familiar, as two parallel options excluding each other. We are less familiar with another notion, the tetralemma. The dilemma is a typical form of Taoist reflections in ancient China since the sixth century BC, while the tetralemma was developed by Indian thinkers like Nāgārjuna, who lived around 150-250 AD. Let us begin with the more familiar concept, the dilemma.

Yamauchi gives the example of Taoist thinker Zhuangzi (莊子 / 庄子) who quotes Confucius (孔夫子) in his response to Yanhui: "*La mère de Mengsun mourut. Or lui, sans pleur ni larme, restait équanime. Aux funérailles, il n'était pas triste.*"[13] (In the English translation: "Mengsun's mother died. But he, without weeping or tears, remained equanimous. At the funeral, he was not sad.") Mengsun, one might say, went beyond knowing, that he became sad without being sad, that he reached the bottom of sadness, that he even surpassed it. Departing from the dilemma, Taoist thinking accentuates movement not by contradiction, like Hegel did, but by emptying out, by changing movement, beyond direct, confrontative relations, toward regenerating mindsets. The difference between both positions lies in the fact that in the dilemma a third level of sublation is not included. Mediation, then, is understood as shifting

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[13] *Ibid.*, pp. 442–443. Cf. my reflection on a similar story collected in *Taoist Teachings from the Book of Lieh-Tzü*, London, 1912, pp. 102f., in V. Mühleis, *Girl with Dead Bird: Intercultural Observations*, Leuven University Press, Leuven/Cornell University Press, New York, 2018 pp. 127–128.

via dilemmas, not as a process directed by dialectical synthesis (cf. Figure 1 and 2):
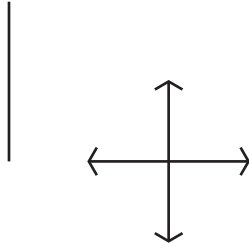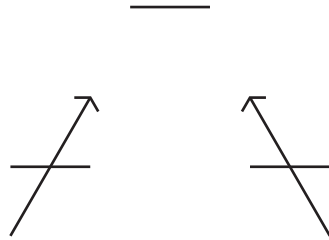
Figure 1. Dilemma   Figure 2. Dialectics

The nuance between the ancient Chinese and the ancient Indian tradition, in Yamauchi's terms, lies in the shift between a thinking of dilemma to tetralemma, as Nāgārjuna conceptualized it. A tetralemma includes four options. And these four options, with which Yamauchi focuses on his thinking, contain all three Western principles of dialectic thought, as well as the Chinese structuring of reflecting in multiple dilemmas. The four options are:

1. Something is what it is (A is A, *identity*).
2. Something is not what it is (A is not A, *contradiction*).
3. Something is what it is as well as not what it is (A is A and A is not A, the *complementarity of identity and contradiction*).
4. Something is neither what it is nor what it is not (the *denial of the complementarity of identity and contradiction*).

The third option is the one which defines the dynamic of the four levels: the tetralemma. Now, the excluded third is overruled by stating a possible *complementarity of identity and contradiction*. Regarding the example of Zhuangzi, Yanhui was irritated by the behavior of Mengsun, because he did not seem to be sad when facing his mother's death. First, he was not identical with the state he was expected to be in; second, he was neither contradicting it, nor was he happy, either. Moreover, third, (the important step of the tetralemma), he lived through the complementarity of being sad and experiencing its changing—not toward happiness, but toward surpassing even this complementarity, by reaching a state beyond just argumentation and knowing, a state of incorporation.

In both ways, the paradox is not overruled by harmonization via the excluded third—it is accepted as complementarity. Nāgārjuna systematizes what is addressed via the strategy of articulating phenomena in dilemmas. Indirectness remains a premise for thinking in dilemmas and the tetralemma. The process is basically a shifting movement, not a willfully directed one. It is more a spatial operation than a focus in time (cf. Figure 3):
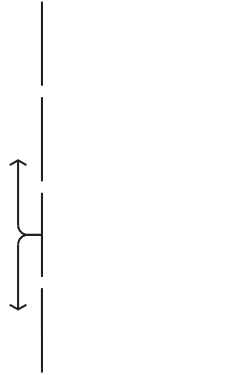
Figure 3. Tetralemma

This has fundamental consequences for thinking "the end" and for understanding practice. The spiritual link between India and Japan is Buddhism, via China, and with Buddhism previous traditions were partially combined in these regions, like Taoism in China or polytheistic forms of faith in Japan. One of the most striking counterexamples of a Western understanding of building in terms of means to an end is the famous Japanese temple Ise Jingū, 伊勢神宮, in the city of Ise, Mie prefecture.[14] It is the most sacred Shintō shrine (a religion that combines ancient forms of Japanese worship for gods with Buddhist ideas). For 1,300 years, the main shrine on the site has been replaced every twenty years; the next reconstruction will take place in October 2033. Therefore, an identical copy with the same materials and techniques is built over an eight-year period next to the predecessor. It takes four years to prepare the wood, and only hinoki 檜 cypress trees are used (some of them must be 200 years old for the correct height; the one for the entrance of the building as many as 400 years). Since the fourteenth century, the trees have been

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[14]   See: https://www.isejingu.or.jp/, (accessed 24 October 2024).

cultivated in other Japanese regions, too, to supply the continuous need. Every phase during the process is marked by ritual ceremonies. When the new version is finished, the materials from the old construction will be recycled in other shrines all over Japan.

In this conceptualization a tradition of perpetual rebuilding the same is started, by shifting periodically between two copies of previous versions. This process enforces the continuation of manufactural knowledge in service of a building that forms a medium for spiritual pilgrimage, the organization of materials over periods of even 400 years, the circulation of these materials in a network of sacred places all over the country. The *identity* of the copy does not depend on contradiction, but on shifting within parallels, in being next to each other, like a dilemma. Yet this in-between movement stimulates ritual practices, technical ones, such as planning, organizing, and distributing activities, involving whole communities and the country. The *complementarity* of being (*identity*) and not being (as *contradiction*) is developed through shifts within this parallelism.

The next dimension that Nāgārjuna addresses—the negation of this complementarity, in reaching emptiness—cannot be carried by a materialized building, as it signifies the dimension beyond birth and death, nirvana. Perhaps, however, it can be evoked via architecture, just as Figal mentioned was the principal characteristic of Ando's buildings and sites in his approach of emptiness as in-between space on its own, not as a distance to cross efficiently. While attention for beginning and end mark a room, it does not define the feeling of being in it. Something else must come into place: nothing. If we ask ourselves what Western architecture might learn from this approach, then it is the complete *complementary* dimension of action, namely: non-action—to what extent can I avoid intention, will, direct comprehension, in favor of non-defined in-between spaces, transitional spaces, responsibilities of others, invitations for co-creation, not only to overrule innovation by innovation, but rather by including sustainable "exnovation" too, for example. I have emphasized the complementarity of this aspect with action. Again, it is not a question of either/or, but of a subtle balance. This balance is not evident: not in the competence-driven curricula of architectural studies, the utilitarian demands of the professional field, or the competitive economic needs for production.

So far, then, the intercultural perspective. In transcultural terms, Yamauchi proposes a change of order in the logic of the tetralemma. In Buddhism, the main purpose is to liberate yourself from both *identity*

and its *contradiction* via the passage of their *complementarity* toward emptying out in the dimension of neither/nor. For transcultural communication, the Japanese philosopher aims for an integration of all four elements, instead of seeing them in a hierarchy toward emptiness. Therefore, he proposes to switch the third and the fourth elements, so that his proposal offers the following scheme:

1. Something is what it is (A is A, *identity*).
2. Something is not what it is (A is not A, *contradiction*).
3. Something is neither what it is nor what it is not (the *denial of the complementarity of identity and contradiction*).
4. Something is what it is as well as not what it is (A is A and A is not A, the *complementarity of identity and contradiction*).

This outline looks strange—how can one deny something before it is established? Remember, though, Yamauchi's emphasis on Hegel's modern switch of the first and second principle, to start with *contradiction* with regard to *identity*. With this in mind, the scheme is already different:

1. Something is not what it is (A is not A, *contradiction*).
2. Something is what it is (A is A, *identity*).
3. Something is neither what it is nor what it is not (the *denial of the complementarity of identity and contradiction*).
4. Something is what it is as well as not what it is (A is A and A is not A, the *complementarity of identity and contradiction*).

Now, the order of the first and second principle are echoed in the order of the third and fourth, in each case placing *contradiction* and *denial* in front of *identity* and *complementarity*. While *contradiction* is formed by two opposing sides and their mediation results in the unity of *identity*, the *denial* of *complementarity* opens the in-between space for the establishment of a parallel existence of what is there and what is not. To Hegel, mediation is a synthesizing process, depending on the third level of sublation (cf. fig. 2)—to Yamauchi, the medium of emptiness (neither/nor) allows for the viewpoint of the parallelism of *identity* and its *contradiction* in the same space (as well as [cf. fig. 1 and 3]). As such, he opens the logic up to genuine spatial thinking. This counts for architectural practice and theory in both ways. Figal points to the question of emptiness in Ando's work—Yamauchi shows how to think it.

4. Transcultural Potential Within Traditional European Thought

In his intercultural comparison, Yamauchi focuses on representative Western positions that differ conspicuously from Eastern thinking, with Aristotle and Hegel in the foreground. Both philosophers can be regarded as advocates of the maxim "knowledge for the sake of knowledge," grounded in the development of the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century, too. Their Japanese colleague taught us that this thinking lacks a spatial understanding in the core of its dialectical logic. That seems paradoxical, as this logic was established via Euclidian geometrical thinking, which is seen as a basis for spatial measurements. The main difference consists of whether we think existing space—as Yamauchi proposes it—or we construct in space via non-spatial units, points? In the West, the premise of being traditionally demands an introduction of defined elements in space—points, lines, surfaces, three-dimensional volumes, and so forth—to fill space with filled units.[15]

In the Western tradition, a critique of the aforementioned maxim started with Romanticism, with thinkers like Friedrich Schlegel in Germany and Søren Kierkegaard in Denmark. The bottom line of this criticism is the demand for existential meaning of conceptualizations that highly influence our lives. The phenomenologist Rudolf Boehm analyzed in detail the problematic differentiation of the maxim "knowledge for the sake of knowledge" in modern times, when the philosophical premise became one for the natural sciences and in the derivate form of "production for the sake of production" one for an industrialized, capitalistic society.[16]

Especially in Eastern Europe, this existential criticism of the Enlightenment was well received, in the context of also different Christian traditions in the Orthodox churches compared to the West. In his study *Kierkegaard and the Existential Philosophy* (1936),[17] the Russian philosopher Lev Shestov addresses the lack of a spatial understanding within Western logic, too, in comparison with the spiritual dimension in Kierkegaard's thinking:

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[15] Cf. the understanding of the point as smallest entity, unity in L. B. Alberti, *On Painting*, Penguin Classics, London, 1991, paragraph 2, p. 37: "The first thing to know is that a point is a sign which one might say is not divisible into parts."
[16] R. Boehm, *Ökonomie und Metaphysik*, Königshausen & Neumann, Würzburg, 2004.
[17] Cf. L. Shestov, *Kierkegaard and the Existential Philosophy*, Ohio University Press, Athens, Oh., 1969, p. 29.

When all possibilities come to an end for man's thinking, new possibilities are "revealed" for faith. An example from elementary geometry can serve to make somewhat clearer to us [...] the way in which Kierkegaard perceived faith. It is impossible to draw more than one perpendicular to a straight line from a point on a two-dimensional plane. And if any line occupies the place of the perpendicular, that privileged position is forever unattainable by all the other innumerable straight lines at large in the universe; the laws of contradiction, of the excluded third, etc., keep that fortunate and privileged line safe [...]. But what is impossible on a two-dimensional plane suddenly becomes possible when we pass from plane to solid geometry; when, enriched by a new dimension, we transform a flat surface into three-dimensional space: an infinite number of perpendiculars can be drawn to a line from one and the same point [...]. Every kind of understanding, every kind of knowledge, every *intelligere* takes place on a plane surface, is by its very nature in conflict with the new dimension and tries with all its might to compress and flatten the human—all too human, in its estimation—*ridere, lugere et detestari* into this plane. And conversely, the latter break away from the plane where *intelligere* has pressed them down, toward a freedom [...].[18]

At this juncture, Shestov makes use of a distinction formulated by Baruch de Spinoza that one ought not laugh (*ridere*) about the actions of humanity, nor cry (*lugere*) over them, nor detest (*detestari*) them, yet understand *(intelligere)* them instead.[19] Friedrich Nietzsche's critical commentary on that point, in the fourth book of his *Gay Science*, is somewhere in the background of Shestov's reading, when he designates cognition as two-dimensional and exclusive, opposing what is all too human to it, to the benefit of space and freedom.[20]

The step from two to three dimensions is evident for all spatial exploration. That is not the point. The difference that Shestov emphasizes is the question of how to reach three dimensions. From Aristotle to George Spencer-Brown, to draw a line marks the beginning of logical

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[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 223f.

[19] The quote comes from the first chapter of Spinoza's *Tractatus Politicus* (Introduction, Section 4): "*Sedulo curavi humanas actiones non ridere, non lugere neque detestari sed intelligere.*" (Cf. Benedict de Spinoza, *The Political Works*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1958, p. 262.)

[20] Cf. F. Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Random House, New York, 1974, Book 4, No. 333 ("The meaning of knowing"), pp. 261f.

and spatial operations in the West.[21] Here, the third dimension follows the second. Shestov instead claims the second within the third. The consequence for designing and constructing is that a harmonization of the third dimension ruled by only the first two dimensions is excluded for the sake of spatial freedom. This means, the flat plan is not the main reference, it is mere support. Again, this seems evident. Yet the fundamental difference becomes visible in the conceptualization of systemized linear perspective since the Renaissance in the West, compared to Orthodox icon paintings with a non-harmonized, multi-perspectival coherence and buildings designed with respect to purpose of those paintings. That purposeful design not only concerns churches, but also pertains to regular households in Russia, where a niche is reserved—called "krasnii ugol" (*красный уголь*), "the red" or "the beautiful corner"—for an icon. Is the plan a matrix for harmonization in service of an in-itself-not spatial thinking, operating via always already filled-in elements? Or is it embedded in a genuine spatial operation of constructing?[22]

With Yamauchi we understand that the answer to this question can be logically thought beyond dialectical limits, in framing the decisive factor of the excluded third by the enlarging operations of "neither/nor" and "as well as." The principal question is: how do plan and space correspond? And the answer was already suggested in the paraphrase from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* in the title of section three of this article: "to end, and not to end." The possibilities are the following:

1. The harmonization of plan and space—this approach demands the identification of both via one logic, as in dialectics, Euclidean geometry. The copy established in space confirms the logical assumptions and marks the *end* of the process (*identity*).

2. The response of plan to space—as in the idea of a "borrowed" scenery, how to participate with one's own needs in an already existing, durable, regenerative situation. In the most consequent

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[21] Cf. Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1979, book V, 1022a, part 17 on the notion of limit as beginning, and G. Spencer-Brown, *Laws of Form*, Allen & Unwin, Portland, 1969.

[22] For a nuanced analysis of the comparison between perspectival thinking of a systemized coherence – as in the design and depiction of space established since the Italian Renaissance – with theologically inspired concepts for spatial design and depiction in the Russian Orthodox tradition see C. Antonova, *Space, Time, and Presence in the Icon: Seeing the World with the Eyes of God*, Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, 2010, and W. Goes, V. Mühleis, *Reverse Perspective*, Grafische Cel, Ghent, 2020.

way, the renewal of this involvement leads to an *ongoing process* of reconstruction, as with the example of Ise Jingū (*neither identity nor its contradiction*).

3. The understanding of plan within space—as an open carrier for communicating principal decisions which in detail can be fine-tuned during the working processes in space themselves, as an integration of crafts in executing architectural design. In this sense, an end is foreseen that from the beginning allows reparation, restauration, bricolage, change. So, a *partial end* to the means (the *complementarity of identity and contradiction*).

In practice we know that aspects of these three basic assumptions may overlap in all regions, in building in the countryside, for example, away from rigid urban systematizations. Nevertheless, Shestov reminds us of a problem in departing from and focusing on linear, binary, two-dimensional conceptualizations. It is the basis for digitalization, too, the codification via 0 and 1, which structures representations today in communication, design, planning, and executing by way of technological devices. Every practice involves and inscribes a certain way of thinking, which was the thesis of Hannah Arendt I started with (giving the example of the practice of working in relation to utilitarian thinking). By in-forming analogue, material elements, one transforms something repairable into something which cannot be repaired anymore, just exchanged: you can replace a codification, but you cannot repair it, as the phenomenologist Bernhard Waldenfels puts it.[23] A digital structure has no force of its own, while materiality always embodies physical forces which allow responses like, for example, reparation. Software, animated by electricity, works via the exchange of elements—hardware by reparation, restauration too.

The digital shift, manifested by the global breakthrough of the internet in the 1990s, employed the logic of filled elements without spatial openness within itself on an unseen, international level. It allows for directness in transformation and communication, of an effectiveness that matches perfectly with the calculable needs of capitalism as well as forms of calculable domination, given its use in repressive regimes today, like Russia, Egypt, China, and so on. We stuff reality with controllable shortcuts, for better or worse. The lack of freedom which Shestov pointed to is part of its intrinsic logic, as Yamauchi explained.

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[23] Cf. B. Waldenfels, *Sinne und Künste im Wechselspiel: Modi ästhetischer Erfahrung*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2010, pp. 352–354.

The End as Motivation for Thinking Infinity

The ramification of the preceding section is paradoxical: on the one hand, striving for being and *identity* is carried by mathematical, geometrical, calculable, defined (filled-in) elements, in-formed today digitally—that is, carried by the only way to regard a positive notion of infinity, in endless numbers and combinations. On the other hand, this approach lacks positive emptiness, the promising potentiality of in-between space as cultivated, for example, by archipelagic thinking in the whole Pacific region, from Hawaii via Japan to Aotearoa (New Zealand).[24] Following the logic of the lemma, as di- or tetralemma, the notion of infinity is always contrasted by finitude, as the complement or the negation of it. The absolute infinity which mathematics offer is no part of this relationality—again, because of the premise of livable experience and thinking.

Rather than to be real, the notion of positively absolute infinity could be understood in a livable sense as a *formal* possibility of thinking, which still needs to be integrated in the relational complexity of situated, organic embodiment. This complexity confronts us with finitude in multiple aspects: existentially as death, in terms of perception with the limits of our sensual awareness (we cannot see or hear endlessly, not even with tele- or stethoscopes), in experiencing the limits of our imagination (being bound to three-dimensional impressions, with no images for abstract notions like freedom or eternity) or of our cognition (to be puzzled by unsolvable, logical dilemmas as in: "I cannot think my own end, nor can I think my own infinity, how could I argue for one of both options?").

Against a thinking defined by personal ending(s), Arendt showed how acting as shifts toward others allows for surpassing these limitations—in giving meaning to birth by taking initiatives, in sharing different perspectives in perception, communicating the possibilities of imagination, discussing philosophically crucial ideas. Our own limits provoke a search to overcome them. In this sense, endings are genealogical motivations for their counterparts. From this point of view, an end is embedded in differentiations—in contrast to overcoming limits or even to thinking formally the possibility of absolute infinity. Being genealogically integrated, the idea of absolute infinity can play a productive role in mathematical

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[24] Cf. for Hawaii: https://www.manoaheritagecenter.org/moolelo/kuka%CA%BBo%-CA%BBo-heiau/what-is-mana/, for Japan: https://www.columbia.edu/itc/ealac/V3613/ma/ and https://kyotojournal.org/culture-arts/ma-place-space-void/, and for Aotearoa: https://maoridictionary.co.nz/word/3424, (accessed 5 November 2024).

conceptualization. Yet this integration only works if one accepts the limits of it within the lived complexity mentioned above, instead of seeing it as an autonomous quality, to establish an artificial world of so-called endless possibilities, just to enforce a power play of calculable domination.

Because of the limits that constitute our human condition, one will never completely overcome the motivation to overcome limits—it might be that one gets tired, exhausted, and therefore we invent carriers which help us to carry ourselves, immobile as buildings or mobile as vehicles, for example. It is tempting to strive for lasting smoothness in our lives, to design and to build for it. Yet we should stay in contact with the real motivation for it, one which only is tangible if it is not fully neglected via a harmonized immanence. And the question in line with this argumentation is, if spatial thinking of emptiness can help us as inhabitants, users, and creators of architecture to maintain contact with this real motivation for ourselves as well as for other people, generations. Conceptually speaking, where and how is the tetralemma functioning within genealogical differentiation?

Differentiation and the Tetralemma

Logos and Lemma by Yamauchi was published in 1974. The most contemporary philosophers he refers to are Jean-Paul Sartre and Theodor W. Adorno, both representatives of negative dialectics.[25] In highlighting Hegel as the last decisive game-changer in Western philosophy, he declares negative dialectics indirectly to be derivative of the original innovation. Yamauchi studied with Husserl and Heidegger. Obviously, in his view, phenomenology did not seem to have enriched the logical canon as much as modern dialectics did. Neither in his book nor in available sources online have I found any information to indicate that he was aware of a critical logical discussion within phenomenology, taking as its point of departure the comparison of principles of Gestalt psychology with phenomenological ones, as initiated by Husserl himself and then developed further by Aron Gurwitsch and Maurice Merleau-Ponty.[26]

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[25] In the case of Adorno, Yamauchi explicitly mentions the book *Negative Dialectics*, published by his colleague in German in 1966 (cf. Yamauchi, T., *Logos et lemme*, p. 63 for Sartre and p. 280 for Adorno).

[26] Cf. E. Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, vol. 2, trans. from the German by J. N. Findlay, Routledge, London, 1970, A 231 on Christian von Ehrenfels' notion of Gestalt, as well as A. Gurwitsch, *The Field of Consciousness*, Duquesne University Press, Pittsburgh, 1964, and M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, Routledge, London, 2013 (the

Via Merleau-Ponty, this discussion is also closely linked to the rise of structuralism in France. And it is the younger generation of thinkers like Jean-François Lyotard and Jacques Derrida, who criticized phenomenology as well as structuralism sharply, addressing in their own way the general philosophical "linguistic turn" in this context, by claiming the premise of language in these fields, in service of what is subsequently called post-structuralism.[27] Differentiation as process beyond *identity* became the key issue, exemplarily analyzed in studies like *Difference and Repetition* by Gilles Deleuze or *Of Grammatology* by Jacques Derrida, in initiating his concept of permanent deconstruction as "*différance*."[28] Together with analytical philosophy in the Anglo-American world, they embraced the "linguistic turn" against metaphysical speculation. Phenomenology seemed to be ambivalent in this case—even if Heidegger tried to surpass traditional metaphysics via his idea of a fundamental ontology, his poetic and speculative approach to language was harshly opposed to analytical or critical theory, as developed by the Vienna Circle, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and his followers in Cambridge, and so forth. It thus required a very nuanced examination of post-structuralist and analytical criticism in order to revisit phenomenology from the 1960s forward. Bernhard Waldenfels, who studied with Merleau-Ponty in Paris, has carried out this work in his publications since the 1970s in the most consistent and coherent way.[29] It is his thinking that I would finally like to compare with the lesson I have taken from Yamauchi, so as to answer the question if and how emptiness and differentiation can be logically thought, including what kind of result this has for the topic of "the end," also in practical connotations. I do this because we cannot think space without our bodies, and we cannot think our bodies without the experience of them. For this complexity, post-structuralist and analytical approaches fall short in delivering adequate answers, as this question is not centered around language and metaphysics, but experience and physics.

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translator of Yamauchi, the philosopher Augustin Berque, mentions a possible link with Merleau-Ponty in footnote 2 on p. 178 in *Logos et lemme*).

[27] Cf. J.-F. Lyotard, *Phenomenology*, State University of New York Press, New York, 1991, and J. Derrida, *Voice and Phenomenon: Introduction to the Problem of the Sign in Husserl's Phenomenology*, Northwestern University Press, Evanston, IL, 2010.

[28] Cf. G. Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, Columbia University Press, New York, 1994, and J. Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, John Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, 2016.

[29] Cf. B. Waldenfels, *Antwortregister*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1994, regarding analytical philosophy, in addition to his *Idiome des Denkens*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2005, about main positions in post-structuralism, for example.

The main phenomenological concern of Waldenfels is not the philosophy of mind (Husserl) or fundamental ontology (Heidegger), but the support for the ability to stay motivated in orientating oneself in the world. Therefore, he adapts a notion by Kurt Goldstein from the theory of medicine for this ability: responsivity.[30] Agency in this case is part of the following differentiation: that someone can take initiative—as Arendt referred to it—is the result of a shifting process, which presupposes *being affected*, via the longing for responding to this affection, with the help of conscious elements to do so. These three phases are characterized by passivity, passion, activity, striving for owning up, regarding possible disorientation, alienation. An overwhelming affection—negatively as a trauma, positively in ecstasy–can block the turn from passivity to activity, by getting stuck psychologically. It is in the psyche, if agency is found or not, carried by helpful conscious elements, which are always established and shared socially, in terms of language, behavior, and so on. There is no private language, in which case Waldenfels would agree with Wittgenstein, and consciousness is not master in its own house, as Waldenfels refers to psychoanalytical insights from Sigmund Freud, Jacques Lacan, and others.[31] Agency is nothing of our own intention—it is a dynamic in the process of trying to respond to affection, something we cannot avoid as living, sensitive beings. Amorphous affection motivates us to find forms as responses, as well as to move via found forms on to different ones. We can create from what exists by derivates, variations, associations, dissociations, yet the motivation to create has a background in our fragile, human condition. Even so, we can forget or neglect this background in our functioning within a systemized world. How, then, do we avoid the psychological cost of going empty, losing our joy to create, to do something that matters? Only if we keep in touch with this motivating background.

In his reflections on space and its design through architecture, Waldenfels starts with an analysis of "place"—how can it be defined? Place is generally a relational notion. The question is, in what kind of aspects, references? If I speak of a place, I have to recognize the differences between addressing place in a communicative system, regarding my pointing to a place as appropriated embodiment—*I am here*—related to this place as being given in the objective, physical reality, for example.

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[30] Cf. K. Goldstein, *The Organism: A Holistic Approach to Biology Derived from Pathological Data in Man*, Zone MIT, Cambridge, Mass., 2000.
[31] Cf. B. Waldenfels, *Erfahrung, die zur Sprache drängt: Studien zur Psychoanalyse und Psychotherapie aus phänomenologischer Sicht*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2019.

Three levels must *here* coincide. The motivation to do so arises from stimulation or provocation *to appropriate*, because of an affection which demands a response (again, a three-fold process of being affected, longing for responding, and finding a response or not). What affects place are movement and space. Both are experienced in the phenomenon of depth. Referring to Gestalt psychology and its reception by Merleau-Ponty, Waldenfels thinks of depth as the simultaneous contrasting of back- and foreground, figure and ground, as the basic shift of differentiation, which establishes patterns of chiasmatic crossovers, a *relievo* we perceive in.[32] The basic shifted contrast of back and forth, figure and ground, allows spatially no strict parallelism of its two elements. This is a major difference to the thinking of Yamauchi, where the di- and tetralemma places elements next to each other. Shifting as establishing the experience of space differs here from a parallelism which includes spatial emptiness as crucial, non-specified element (Figure 4 and 3):

far

near
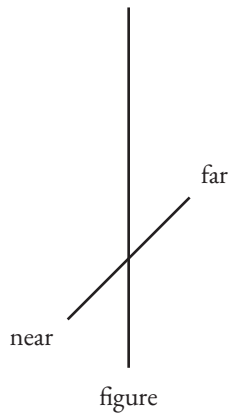
figure

Figure 4. Figure-ground contrast   Figure 3. Tetralemma
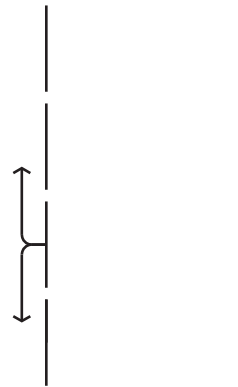
How, then, does Waldenfels think emptiness? In his most recent study from 2022, *Globalität, Lokalität, Digitalität (Globality, Locality, Digitality)*, he addresses emptiness in contrast to plenitude in the sense of a structurally operating emptiness, not as something of its own.[33] Fol-

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[32] Cf. B. Waldenfels, *Ortsverschiebungen, Zeitverschiebungen: Modi leibhaftiger Erfahrung*, Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 2009, p. 55.
[33] Cf. B. Waldenfels, *Globalität, Lokalität, Digitalität: Herausforderungen der Phänomenologie*, Suhrkamp, Berlin, 2022, p. 73.

lowing his logic of differentiation, the modus of this operation between emptiness and plenitude is a spatial shifting, which might only stop if we enter spatial orders where we cannot bodily appropriate places, as in technically codified networks of in-formed marks to associate with or not. We can then speak of a place and mark it, but we cannot own it up and live it (a fundamental condition since Aristotle for living beings in the world to find *their* places).[34] This profound human need is confronted with possible identifications of the communicative topology of speaking of places and the systemized topology of encoding places. A resistance supporting the need mentioned can be seen in heterotopical places as Michel Foucault defined them—places that break with daily life routines (like graveyards, gardens, museums, etc.), thus questioning places as such[35]—or in atopical spaces, a situation of mist or darkness, for example. It is this last aspect, I think, where a connection between Yamauchi and Waldenfels is possible, by including an atopical phenomenon in differential thinking compared to the logic of the di- and/or tetra-lemma. In thinking non-place and emptiness, connected to movement as shifting contrast or spatial parallelism, one attains the starting point for a possible transcultural exchange in this case, addressed from either a *differentiating viewpoint, dominated by time*, or a *spatial relation to an equally existing polarity*. Movement and rest can themselves be understood as contrast as well as polarity. Coming from different sides, the conceptualizations of Waldenfels and Yamauchi accentuate different preferences—movement or rest— yet *these aspects do not exclude each other.*

The End and the Tetralemma

In this article I compared four logical principles in the context of architectural practice and theory: dialectics, the dilemma, the tetralemma, and the figure-ground contrast. The difference between dialectics and the figure-ground contrast on one side and the dilemma and tetralemma on the other can be understood as follows: while dialectics addresses space via elements of modelling, the figure-ground contrast generates a relational, spatial shift—as an explicitly temporary move; the dilemma and the tetralemma instead stimulate thinking spatially via a single or even four modes of parallelism. Yamauchi stated that the four modes of the tetralemma allow for an inclusion of both dialectical operations and those of

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34   Cf. B. Waldenfels, *Ortsverschiebungen, Zeitverschiebungen*, p. 119.
35   *Ibid.*, pp. 113–115.

the dilemma. His emphasis on the Western accentuation of identity must be seen, I think, in the context of his writing during the 1970s. Therefore, I set his approach against the critique of the metaphysical background with regard to identity, referring to Deleuze and Derrida among others, focusing on the differential thinking of Waldenfels and the modus of the figure-ground contrast. This contrast opens a relation from within—together with something near, something far appears. This *opening from within*, again, is not genuinely thought spatially; it creates a spatial difference *as its effect*—space follows from this modus, and as different as the logic of contrasting is, it shares with dialectics the process *toward space*, however and wherever it opens up. In turn, the dilemma and tetralemma start with the condition of an always already existing spatial difference. Their limits are never defined by one side—as an end of a teleological process, for example—but function by definition as parallels of following parallel structures. An epistemological question, resulting from this comparison, might be to which extent *contrasting* can be understood as a genealogical impulse for establishing these parallel structures, even before dialectics come into play. Then the end of its effect—as marked by a process in establishing space—might play a constitutive role in the logic of the dilemma and the tetralemma as well. Where both sides start to shift conceptually, the transcultural dialogue begins.

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Mark Losoncz*

Architecture in the Shadow of Catastrophe and Collapse

ABSTRACT: Instead of discourses about specific ends, which Fredric Jameson wrote about in relation to the cultural logic of postmodernism, we are increasingly faced with discourses about the ecological catastrophe or civilizational collapse as a comprehensive end. The article raises the question of how this gives rise to a new way of thinking about architecture and the end (or the end of an architectural paradigm). Instead of greenwashing architecture, a stricter, systemic and truly holistic approach is offered, which takes into account, for example, the crisis of access to certain raw materials. With this in mind, the article analyzes the significance of the Colossus and the ruins. Special attention is paid to the role of architecture in discourses about collapse, and in the (neo-)survivalist and collapse-aware movements. Finally, it is pointed out that we tend to think of the end with the help of architectural metaphors (like when Greta Thunberg says "our house is on fire. I am here to say, our house is on fire").

KEYWORDS: architecture, ecology, collapse, end, deep adaptation, civilization, survivalism, greenwashing

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> "Noah had ample warning from a respected authority to build his Ark, and he used his time to good advantage. Skeptics laughed, ridiculed, and drowned—but Noah, the original prophet of doom, survived." D. C. Pirages, P. Elrich, *Ark II: Social Response to Environmental Imperatives,* The Viking Press, New York, 1974, p. v.

This article considers architecture from a special perspective. Taking seriously the predictions that our civilization may be coming to an end, it raises the question of what consequences this has for architecture, not just in a hypothetical future, but also for those who already view the building sector in a collapse-aware manner. The article proposes a holistic reconfiguration of the ecologically lean architectural thought, in such a way that it goes beyond greenwashing and the discourse on "sustainable growth," thus potentially leading to a change in both theory and practice. Instead of offering an easy solution, it proposes an alternative understanding of the question and the cause, encouraging us to be open to the idea of a radical end. As Jean-Pierre Dupuy put it in his book on enlightened doomsaying: "I have been guided solely by the conviction that from now on we must learn to think in the shadow of future catastrophe."[1] This way of thinking does not have to condemn us to passivity, helplessness, or indifference, but rather the opposite. In line with Dupuy's paradoxical argument, to avoid catastrophe it is necessary to think its future occurrence as being necessary.

Does the future have a future, or has it come to a definite end? In his postfuturist book *After the Future*, the Italian autonomist philosopher Franco "Bifo" Berardi writes that the idea of the future should be over:

> All along the modern times the myth of the future has been connected to the myth of energy; think about Faust, for instance. This idea that the future is *energy:* more and more and more. More speed, more strength, more consumption, more things, more *violence* [...] Everything has to be sacrificed to the growth—this abstract growth—of money, of value, *of nothing.* So, how can we withdrawal from this kind of craziness [...].[2]

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[1] J.-P. Dupuy, *How to Think About Catastrophe: Toward a Theory of Enlightened Doomsaying*, Michigan State University Press, East Leansing, 2023, p. xiii.
[2] F. Berardi, *After the Future*, AK Press, Oakland, 2011, pp. 13, 107.

It is no coincidence that this book is both about the urban territorial perception of Los Angeles, the pseudo-public spaces of our time and the "city of panic," and also about the way in which industrial architecture gives way to a Baroque perspective of simulation and fractalisation.[3] In any case, the book's editors, Gary Genosko and Nicholas Thoburn, write, both generally and closely related to Berardi, that the idea of the future has come to an end, and this end can no longer be avoided: "The point is not to revive the future in a new vanguard. The future was itself a highly suspect temporal form."[4]

Does this discourse, or tone, contain anything new compared to what we have been used to for decades? It is worth recalling what Fredric Jameson wrote in *Postmodernism,* which analyzed in general terms the way space becomes dominant in relation to time in postmodernism, and included a separate chapter on architecture, covering many aspects, from Venturi to Gehry, from the Westin Bonaventure Hotel to the Renaissance Center in Detroit. Jameson writes at the beginning of his book that we are witnessing an "inverted millenarianism, in which premonitions of the future, catastrophic or redemptive, have been replaced by senses of the end of this or that."[5] For Jameson, discourses on the end (of ideology, art, the welfare state, etc.) are the essence of postmodernism. One might argue that a kind of "apocalyptic tone"[6] was also present in the field of philosophy, either in relation to the end in general, or in (post-)Heideggerian or other ways of speaking about the end of philosophy.

However, does this analysis encompass only the end of a specific civilizational product, or also the desirability of and/or fear from the end of civilization itself? *Postmodernism* notes that this cultural logic implies "fantasies of sheer catastrophe," and "catastrophic 'near-future' visions of, say, overpopulation, famine."[7] Jameson understands catastrophe as belonging to the sphere of the imaginary, which is either purely fictional or always postponed. However, he has two insights that foreshadow a different approach. On the one hand, Jameson, speaking of catastrophe, observes that the formerly futurological science fiction "turns into mere

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[3] *Ibid*., pp. 74., 89.

[4] G. Genosko, N. Thoburn, "Preface: The Transversal Communism of Franco Berardi," in F. Berardi Bifo, *After the Future*, p. 3.

[5] F. Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism,* Duke University Press, Durham, 1991, p. 1.

[6] J. Derrida, "Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy," *Oxford Literary Review*, 6, 2, 1984, pp. 3–37.

[7] F. Jameson, *Postmodernism*, p. 46, 285.

'realism' and an outright representation of the present."[8] On the other hand, he writes that "if the atomic exchange has grown distant, the greenhouse effect and ecological pollution are, by way of compensation, ever more vivid."[9] Jameson thus senses that the style of perception and affectivity is changing. Nevertheless, *Postmodernism* oscillates between these two interpretations and Jameson does not, cannot, develop a thorough theory of catastrophe.

This article attempts to capture the end that is present tense and encompassing, with special attention to architecture, and as end in its various forms, in all of which the central motif is the possibility of irreversibility. This is different from the end that Jameson attributes to postmodernism. It is not an end which is an "end" in a series of many other ends. It is the ultimate radicalization of the end, an end that encompasses other ends and suspends the relevance of other "end times"[10] or "ends of the world"[11] discourses and apocalyptic tones. It is that a civilizational paradigm (or more precisely, a civilization or the civilization itself) may be coming to an end, irreversibly, that is, in such a way that the previous conditions will no longer be accessible to us, that we will not be able to return to them. It may be seen as symptomatic that this end is often expressed as an architectural metaphor or almost as an architectural metaphor. When we hear, for example, the term "collapse," who does not think of a building falling together, falling into an irregular mass through loss of support or rigidity? And of course, there are further questions: was the support really a support? To what extent should we describe "irregular mass" as disorder or chaos? Can it be used again to create a new building? And what does this mean for architecture in general? The etymology of "collapse" can also be illuminating, since "lapse" comes from the word *labi*, which means "to fall, slip" (e.g., "fall from a spiritual state"), and *collabi* means "to fall together," which expresses what has been said about the utterly all-encompassing nature of the end as collapse, and also raises the possibility that collapse is an event that might unite those who experience and witness it–making them a kind of community, a communion of collapse. And linked to this is the figurative meaning of "collapse," which became prominent from the early nineteenth century: "come to nothing, fail."

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8   *Ibid*., p. 286.
9   *Ibid*., p. 373.
10 S. Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, Verso, London, 2011.
11 D. Danowaski, E. Viveiros de Castro, *The Ends of the World*, Polity Press, Cambridge/Malden, 2017.

This article thinks of end and architecture first and foremost in terms of the present, that is, the extreme end that is perhaps already happening, in the sense in which we talk, often unreflectively, of ecological catastrophe or civilizational collapse. We start from the premise that a radicalized vision of the end necessitates a new way of thinking about architecture. *In medias res*, whether we acknowledge the necessary and/or desirable end of what we have come to call—not innocently—growth,[12] wanting its controlled cessation (for example, under the banner of degrowth), or believe in the inevitability of collapse, both imply the end of a kind of overarching paradigm of architecture.

The term "ecology," since its introduction in 1866, has primarily referred to harmony and equilibrium, which raises a number of questions, such as whether nature or the environment or living habitats are always like this, and whether we can thus think of the various forms of the end such as "ecological catastrophe" or "ecological collapse," or whether we should regard them as unacceptable oxymorons. Furthermore, when the term "environmental design" appeared in the United States in the 1950s (as in Chermayeff's Harvard program of the same name), the environment referred primarily to the socio-cultural environment, with only minimal connotations of nature. It was only later that environment began to refer to ecology in a prominent way, especially since the Club of Rome's famous 1972 landmark report on the limits to growth (anticipating "a rather sudden and uncontrollable decline"). The meaning became even more specific before the end of the century, when "ecology" was increasingly reduced to "climate." Another change, for example, is the term "ecological design," which we owe to Sim van der Ryn and Stuart Cowan's 1996 book of the same title.[13] Histories of "environmental architecture" or "ecological design" seek to consider continuities, narratives that offer a special kind of openness, so it is no coincidence that one of the books on this subject is entitled *Histories of Ecological Design*, in plural form, also containing *Unfinished* and *Cyclopedia* in its name.[14] A prominent role is given to architects who have taken more account of

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12 See e.g. J. Hickel, G. Kallis, "Is Green Growth Possible?," *New Political Economy*, 25, 4, 2019, pp. 469–486. Also: T.-L Vadén *et al.*, "Decoupling for ecological sustainability: A categorisation and review of research literature," *Environmental Science & Policy*, 112, 2020, pp. 236–244. G. Kallis, "Capitalism, Socialism, Degrowth: A Rejoinder," *Capitalism Nature Socialism*, 30, 2, 2019, pp. 267–273

13 S. Van der Ryn, S. Cowan, *Ecological Design*, Island Press, Washington, 1996.

14 L. Kallipoliti, *Histories of Ecological Design: An Unfinished Cyclopedia*, Actar, New York/Barcelona, 2024.

the symbiosis with the functioning of nature (e.g., Beverly Willis, Gernot Minke or Emilio Ambasz), or who have given much greater emphasis to "environmental concerns" in their work (e.g., Ant Farm or Ray Eames). But is it possible to rewrite this narrative or to write new narratives, with the motif of the end in mind?

One cannot fail to notice, for example, the inherent multiplicity of synecdoche in terms such as "green building" or "green architecture." What is more, different rhetorical devices are used when trying to describe a kind of overall economics, as in the case of "net-zero buildings" or "energy positive building" (as, for example, in the paradigmatic case of the ArchiBlox Positive House in Melbourne). Perhaps the boldest, most ambitious term of all is "sustainable planning," given that it allegedly refers to a whole or to global scales. "Green architecture" is quite possibly a synecdoche, in that the architecture in question is probably not entirely green in a literal sense, but how is green to be understood if it is not a color? Does it fit harmoniously into an ecology? Is the assumed balance even possible or desirable? And has it been determined in a systemic way, taking into account the complexity of diverse factors, that the building in question, for example, is "net-zero," or by some kind of cherry picking? Is the approach truly "holistic" or has a buzzword been misused again? Architecture, which sees itself as ecology-sensitive, very often commits itself to a specific way of talking about the end when it talks about mitigation, thereby committing itself to the idea that a certain end can be postponed or avoided—and thus, at the same time, the end is embedded in the speech in a haunting way, wittingly or unwittingly, implicitly or explicitly. This discourse talks about reduction or suspension in the context of certain verbs ("consume," "waste," etc.). It sets a target, for example, to reduce the number of over 220 million buildings (75% of the building stock) that are energy-inefficient and dependent on fossil fuels for heating and cooling in Europe, thus probably suggesting that the solution will be found in the future, and it only implies that a certain type of architecture must come to an end. It avoids any talk of a more general or comprehensive end, especially as the statement implicitly includes the 25%, i.e., the tendency to avoid a more severe end. This may mean emphasizing different materials or techniques (for example, low-flow plumbing and rainwater collection), and certain terms ("energy efficiency," "reuse of materials," "smarter design," "y-values," "thermal comfort," etc.) are given a prominent role. In this discourse, the emphasis is on comfort instead of the crisis or possible end

of comfort, on efficiency instead of the extraordinary challenge of energy (in)efficiency, on (re)use instead of the crisis (or impossibility) of use, on the future instead of the possible end (or ends). At the end of the twentieth century, the title of a book predicted the dominant attitude to the ecological question in the following years: *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution*.[15] In the context of architecture and ecological catastrophe, the question must now be asked: instead of another futurism masquerading as green, should we not rather confront the question of end (and ends)?

As a positive counter-example, it is worth drawing attention to a 2009 paper on the building sector by William E. Rees.[16] Rees clearly situates the discourse on architecture in the context of a "growth-related" ecological crisis that "could well undermine prospects for global civilization."[17] What allows him to rethink architecture is precisely that he considers it from the perspective of the end, the comprehensive and irreversible end, i.e., the possible collapse of civilization. He declares that "mainstream 'solutions'–hybrid cars, green buildings, smart growth, the new urbanism—are thus rooted in denial and delusional,"[18] because they only deal with the surface of the problem. When Rees describes today's consensual approaches as illusory, he implicitly criticizes existing strategies for greenwashing. He sees overconsumption as the fundamental problem, and the effort to maintain the current level of growth. Nevertheless, Rees approaches the problem radically enough to allow him to reconceptualize architecture and ecology. His boldness is particularly evident when he realizes that the "technoindustrial society is inherently unsustainable."[19] Rees suggests that civilization in its current version is coming to an end, perhaps that is why he mentions that it is unlikely that national or international mitigation policies will be able to deliver significant changes. He states that survival is at stake, not just in general, but also specifically in the building sector, adding that major lifestyle changes are inevitable. And in this spirit, he urges us to face up to the root of the problem: the futility of striving for "more efficient unsustainability." In this sense, he

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[15] P. Hawken, A. Lovins, H. Lovins, *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution*, Little, Brown and Co., Boston, 1999.
[16] W. E. Rees, "The Ecological Crisis and Self-Delusion: Implications for the Building Sector," *Building Research & Information*, 2009, pp. 300–311.
[17] *Ibid*., p. 300.
[18] *Ibid*.
[19] *Ibid*.

takes into account the illusions associated with the built environment by critiquing the universal myth of perpetual growth, taking into account the global nature of the problems and their specific contexts. Given all this, it is surprising that Rees raises the question whether "the [building] industry has the intellectual courage and practical momentum to assume a lead role in the sustainability campaign?"[20] It is even more surprising that Rees shares one of the illusions, in that he identifies "decarbonization" as the central issue, and within that, zero-carbon construction as the desired goal. However, it is noteworthy that he is realistic enough to acknowledge that significant reductions in carbon emissions cannot be achieved without a planned economic recession.

We who, 15 years after Rees' article, are thinking about ecological catastrophe and civilizational collapse, have the opportunity to think differently about the nature of the end. We can see more clearly which goals cannot be met, and what we must finally face up to as unsustainable. For example, the carbon load in the atmosphere has risen to over 410 ppm, the highest level in 800,000 years. Even though the discourse of transition to the green economy has gained momentum, compared to the official mainstream position that fossil fuel production and use should be reduced by at least 6% per year, at the time of writing the Energy Institute states that the share of energy used in the world still coming from fossil fuels is 81.5%. What is more, global energy-related CO2 emissions grew by 1.1% in 2023, increasing 410 million tons to reach a new record high of 37.4 billion tons. While the IPCC stated that the world's nations should limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels, otherwise, humanity will face mutually reinforcing whirlwind of catastrophes, in 2023, as the warmest year in the 174-year observational record, the global near-surface temperature was 1.45 ± 0.12 °C above the pre-industrial 1850–1900 average. However, these are only the best-known figures, which, even if we dare to confront them, can only give a narrow, reduced picture of the nature of the disaster. There is a kind of synecdoche at work when they use a kind of architectural metaphor, mentioning "greenhouse gas emissions" as the central problem. The architectural metaphor of the house stresses unity and a kind of intimacy, but this metaphor is undoubtedly misleading, since, for example, the greenhouse does not have the rise in sea level or the melting of ice sheets that are the defining elements of the catastrophe of our time. And at the

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[20] *Ibid*.

same time, the synecdoche distracts us from other aspects of the disaster, from the growing crisis of access to critical elements to the unimaginable scale of biodiversity loss, from acidifying oceans to the disappearance of forests, from the reduction of arable land to global water scarcity. From today's point of view, not only is there no sign that "decarbonization" and zero-carbon construction mentioned by Rees will be met, but we are even witnessing an increase in the absolute amount of global energy-related CO2 emissions. But, in fact, the one-sided slogan of "decarbonization," which has existed since 1992, is also a case of arbitrary selectivity, not only in that it distracts attention from other aspects of the systemic catastrophe, but also in that it even misdescribes the greenhouse effect, forgetting other factors such as nitrous oxide and methane. As Kenis and Mathijs say, "the focus on CO2 has narrowed the debate to ignore the human-societal root causes and processes of change and led to a focus on technical solutions that remain within the parameters of what currently exists and is convenient. Such discourses have depoliticizing and disempowering consequences."[21]

What would an authentically ecology-sensitive architecture mean, one that realistically and honestly confronts what is unsustainable and what has come to an end? First of all, it must be ruthlessly acknowledged that existing architecture and construction are an integral part of the problem, as this industry contributes 42% of all carbon dioxide emissions and is responsible for 40% of global energy consumption. Taking into account all the above, the conclusion is inevitable that the end of architecture and construction as we know it is not only desirable but inevitable. We are witnessing a growing realization that mitigation is no longer enough, but that we must adapt to the increasing number of disasters and to a kind of end, the end of the paradigm that has prevailed. In line with this, for example, there is increasing talk of the need for elevated foundations and advanced stormwater drainage systems. 80% of the world's major cities are near a coast, and the question now is less and less how to avoid floods, but how to adapt to a world of which they are an inevitable part. Even the modest slogan of "climate-responsive design" means acknowledging a profound transformation of the climate we have been used to, for example, by buildings that can withstand extreme weather. But again, it would be illusory to focus on the greenhouse effect

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[21] A. Kenis, E. Mathijs, "Climate change and post-politics: Repoliticising the present by imagining the future?," *Geoforum,* 52, 2014, pp. 151.

or decarbonization alone, while forgetting other factors such as the crisis in the availability of certain raw materials. The increased use of certain "natural materials" (hemp, timber, straw, loam or poured earth, rammed earth,[22] adobe, wattle-and-daub or "quincha," cob, etc.) in construction is not only because it allows us to replace carbon-intensive materials, or because some of them absorb and store natural carbon, but also because a decisive change has taken place regarding the accessibility of certain raw materials. For example, in a world where sand has to be transported from Australia to Dubai, we hear more and more about shortages of sand suitable for construction. The commodity's supply is dwindling, and the risk of a global shortage in increasing. Even according to a UN Environmental Program (UNEP) report,[23] sand is being extracted far more quickly than it can be renewed. According to UNEP's conservative estimates made in 2022, the world sand consumption is in excess of 50 billion tons a year, and that number is twice that of the annual amount of sediment carried by all of the rivers of the world. And sand is increasingly in demand for technologies such as hydraulic fracturing. What is more, not only is sand extraction often very damaging, but, for example, its transport is also environmentally destructive. A recurring feedback problem is that solar panel and wind turbine manufacturers also rely on sand. However, at the same time, there is also a tendency for sand to be increasingly used due to rising sea levels and increasing ocean storms, and there is a growing need for sand dams and sandbag installations. Taken together, this means that the overarching paradigm of sand use is coming to an end,[24] but it is an open question what a restructured one would look like.

What else would a critical, ecology-sensitive approach, with an end in mind, mean? First and foremost, a truly holistic systemic approach that rejects cherry-picking-based interpretations, bearing in mind all the constitutive factors. In the case of *Passivhaus*, for example, this approach breaks with the uncritical idealization of the model and instead draws attention to the fact that it is often based on products and techniques that are frequently derived from fossil fuels. Let us take a concrete example:

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[22] It is worth drawing special attention to this book: G. Minke, *Building with Earth: Design and Technology of a Sustainable Architecture*, Birkhäuser Architecture, Basel, 2009.
[23] P. Peduzzi (ed.), "Sand and Sustainability: 10 Strategic Recommendations to Avert a Crisis," UNEP report, https://www.unep.org/resources/report/sand-and-sustainability-10-strategic-recommendations-avert-crisis, (accessed 25 October 2024).
[24] *Cf*. T. Watari *et al*., "Growing role of concrete in sand and climate crises," *Iscience*, 36, 5, 2023, pp. 1–10.

Deloitte's 'The Edge' building in Amsterdam has often been described as one of the world's most sustainable office buildings. When we read, for instance, that it is equipped with solar panels and thermal energy storage, we need to ask some key systemic questions. For example, what type and amount of energy and raw materials were used to produce the solar panel? What were the wires, control units or mounting structures made of and how much energy did their production use? What role does aluminum play, which is very energy-intensive as it can only be produced at very high temperatures using complex processes? How much raw material was extracted and how much fossil energy was used to extract aluminum? Is it mono- or polycrystalline silicon solar cells or some other technology? Is it a solar cell with a short payback period or other, such as a cadmium tellurium cell? In how many years will the solar panels need to be replaced? In short, the mere statement that "The Edge" is equipped with solar panels tells us very little about the extent to which it is truly a "green building," i.e., about its environmental impact from a holistic, systemic perspective, and exactly what its energy consumption and relationship to renewable energy is, not just taking into consideration of the isolated individual building, but the whole process, from the construction of the building to the aspect of obsolete[25] equipment. Similarly, we can be sceptical when we read about "The Edge" being a smart building to help the transition to the digital age. We know that being digital is far from neutral and innocent in nature, but sometimes even extremely energy intensive (from bitcoin to artificial intelligence). How should we assess the ecological footprint of the digitality of the building from a truly systemic, holistic perspective? And when we read about "The Edge" that "if no one is there, there is almost zero energy use," or that the building "results in zero carbon emissions," the question arises: how much energy and raw materials (including carbon-emitting ones) were used to construct "The Edge" to subsequently renew the building's components (such as the 65,000 sq ft solar panels)? Is it not misleading to talk about "zero energy use?" And when we read that "The Edge" features a new LED-lighting systems, co-developed with Philips, do we not need a similar holistic questioning of how the extraction of gallium, the raw material most commonly used for LEDs, took place and what are the limits of its availability? In other words, it is also true of LED that an abstract

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[25] For a wider architectural analysis of obsolescence see e.g. D. M. Abramson, *Obsolescence: An Architectural History*, Chicago University Press, Chicago, 2016.

sentence about it reveals little about their actual environmental impact and as regards its status as a raw material.

So, in contrast to the greenwashing of architecture, we need a different type of discourse, one that is ruthlessly aware of what is unsustainable. We have to talk about the end of a paradigm, and face it, prepare for it, adapt to it. There are many ways to describe the paradigm itself, and one possibility is to use a metaphor, *homo colossus*,[26] which expresses the vanity of height and spectacle, but can also express the absurd scale of energy demand and raw material hunger, or simply the destruction of nature. The best-known historical manifestation of this trope, the Colossus of Rhodes, is instructive. It stood for only 54 years until an earthquake snapped it at the knees, and it fell onto the land, damaging the harbor and many buildings. It was a collapse, the collapse of a "miracle" that brought further collapses. The remains lay on the ground for 800 years, attracting many visitors. As Pliny the Elder writes bitterly: "even lying on the ground it is a marvel" (Plin. *Nat. Hist*. XXXIV, 18, 41).[27] (We could therefore ask what kind of collapse tourists will visit and admire the ruins of *homo colossus*?) But the story of the Colossus of Rhodes does not end there. In 2015, a group of European architects announced plans to build a modern Colossus, once again at the entrance to the harbor, which would have stood 150 meters tall and would cost an estimated US$283 million. The building would have consisted of several different sections, all powered by solar panels. However, no such plans were carried out. The plan was forgotten. But at least they even thought of greenwashing the modern Colossus.

One possible way to think about architecture and the end is to conceptualize ruins differently. The ruins that do not "suggest a future" and that are not a "stimulus to the imagination,"[28] that we no longer fantasize about reusing (and recycling, integrating...), that we may never visit, that we may lose forever. The ruins that may not be for us. Radical ruins, where we will really be able to give up or will have to give up. Will we be able to do so? And how will we experience it when it becomes inevitable? For example, those who think about post-civilization architecture and post-apocalypse design, write that a whole city might "fall silent"

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[26] See e.g. T. Lepage, *Eye of the Storm: Facing Climate and Social Chaos with Calm and Courage,* Open Door Communication, Irvine, 2023, p. 19.

[27] Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 9, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass./William Heinemann Ltd, London, 1961, p. 159.

[28] J. Hill, *The Architecture of Ruins: Designs on the Past, Present and Future*, Routledge, London/New York, 2019, p. I.

and be "without pulse," and that we will have to adapt, that there will be "scarcity of resources" and that "we may not have full protection."[29] The motifs of confrontation, adaptation and resignation are clear. But perhaps it is primarily by coming to terms with the ruins that we can demonstrate that we are ready to face the end, the end of a paradigm. Cal Flyn in his work *Islands of Abandonment: Nature Rebounding in the Post-Human Landscape* writes about no man's lands where ruins and rewilding (natural reclamation) form a disinterested alliance. For him, it is, among other things, an opportunity to "transcend the present," and "offer us a glimpse into a future in which climate change [...] come[s] to create a very different world."[30]

We can also draw on an essay by G. M. Tamás, which offers a typology of ruins: 1. romantic ruins, which are signs that "gods have fled;" the passage of time destroyed them so that they lost their aura and original contexts and became non-beautiful beauties, 2. "human settlements laid waste by natural catastrophes," which show human designs'

> vulnerability to anonymous forces without malice, indifferent to the human predicament, disproportionately larger than anything that the deliberately planned human cosmos can possibly muster. Those human dwellings wiped out by impassible nature will illustrate the futility of human will and the inborn weakness of the species.[31]

3. the ruins of war that bear witness to human violence that, for example, show incineration and pulverization by conscious choice; a sign that superior forces are punishing those allegedly belonging to the enemy, 4. the ruins of deindustrialization, such as abandoned factories, which can change the face of an entire city, 5. the ruins created by contemporary political art, through which art expresses that "it is not allowed to build anything," because otherwise it would be embedded in the logic of power and its symbolic order; the representation of these ruins is also a betrayal, art is only authentic if it is itself a ruin. (Tamás adds that, for example, the artificially created ruins in the English gardens of the Romantic period

[29] Overstreet, "Architecture After Civilization: Design in the Post-Apocalypse," https://www.archdaily.com/998267/architecture-after-civilization-design-in-the-post-apocalypse?ad_campaign=normal-tag, (accessed 29 October 2024).

[30] C. Flyn, *Islands of Abandonment: Nature Rebounding in the Post-Human Landscape*, Viking, New York, 2021, p. 15.

[31] G. M. Tamás, *Innocent Power / Die Unschuldige Macht. 100 Notes - 100 Thoughts*, *No. 013, dOCUMENTA (13)*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Berlin, 2011, p. 3.

were a sign of a freshly discovered sense of history.) If we interpret this typology in terms of the radicalized idea of the end, the question arises: is it not possible that these forms are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but can be closely related? Tamás' typology sees nature and society as a binary pair of opposites. The natural passage of time and natural disasters are rigidly separated from the processes of war and deindustrialization. And is the idea that natural disaster is the result of "anonymous forces" that are "disproportionately larger" than the "futility of human will" an adequate description of the disaster that has probably already begun, and whose next horrific stages will unfold for us in the coming decades? Should it not be stressed that there are many feedbacks and interconnections between nature and society? Should it not be emphasized that one factor (the Anthropocene, techno-industrial society, capitalism, etc., depending on how we want to describe it) can have a disproportionately large impact (with some futility and with the seemingly unlimited strength) on the environment as a whole, and that this can even lead to its own destruction? Imagine, in the context of a thought experiment, that a series of ecological catastrophes occur on our planet (that heat waves will eventually exceed those optimal for human flourishing, that sea levels will make many cities unlivable, etc.), whereby, in the struggle for resources, a multitude of wars break out, entire industrial sectors and cultural contexts disappear, and "not building anything" becomes not an artistic practice but a universal, necessary, self-evident principle. Does not the idea of a radicalized end confuse typology and make it desirable to think differently about ruins? They would remind us not only of the transience of architecture, but also of the transience of civilization, from which a certain paradigm of architecture has grown.

It is worth paying particular attention to the end as collapse, which we have already written about as functioning in large part as an architectural metaphor. Today's collapse-aware discourses have a number of inspirations, several of which are directly intertwined with the problem of architecture. Beyond the "classics" (from Ibn Khaldun to Gibbon, from Toynbee to Spengler), it is worth highlighting first Joseph Tainter, who, in defining the collapse of civilizations in his *The Collapse of Complex Societies*, emphasizes that one of the characteristic epiphenomena is less investment in complex products such as monumental architecture.[32] In *Collapse*,

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[32] J. Tainter, *The Collapse of Complex Societies,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988, pp. 4, 55.

Jared Diamond specifically discusses the Easter Island chiefs and priests who sought to impress the masses with monumental architecture, and how the Chaco residents saw the disappearance of the woodland, one of the symptoms of which was the disappearance of the pinyon beams from Chaco architecture.[33] While *Questioning Collapse*, a volume dedicated to Diamond's critique, disagrees with Diamond on a number of points, it agrees with him that one of the defining features of civilizations is colossal monumental architecture, and one of the signs of the collapse of civilization is its fall into disrepair.[34] Ugo Bardi analyses the narrower meaning in the context of architecture, the collapse of engineered structures, in his *Before the Collapse*. In this spirit, he describes the collapse of the Morandi Bridge in Genoa, or the collapse of Rana Plaza in Bangladesh, which was the result of criminal negligence.[35] The basic model for the work is the Seneca curve, with Chapter 1 offering a science of doom and the rest of the book describing the strategies that allow collapse to be managed. Finally, Guy D. Middleton's *Understanding Collapse*, which describes the "crisis architecture" of post-eruption, societal stressed Crete, is a case in point.[36] Middleton's description contains subtle details, including limiting access to buildings, dividing up large rooms (and turning them into storage), creating new enclosures, localization (emphasis on local mansions instead of palaces), etc. These are all symptoms of Minoan collapse.

It is also worth considering contemporary discourses that use an eminent meaning of the concept of the end. The collapsology developed by Pablo Servigne and Raphaël Stevens (and Gauthier Chapelle) emphasizes that the extraction of building materials increased by a factor of 34 during the twentieth century, and they talk about "the emergence of new livelihoods built on the ruins of capitalism." They also revive Jean-François Nouvel's concept of invisible architectures.[37] At the top of their book *Another End is Possible*, there is a wooden house, surrounded by

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[33] J. Diamond, *Collapse. How Societies Choose to Fail or Suceed*, Viking, London, 2005, pp. 119, 157.

[34] P. A. McAnany, N. Yoffee, *Questioning Collapse. Human Resilience, Ecological Vulnerability and the Aftermath of Empire*, Cambridge University Press, New York, 2010, p. 170.

[35] U. Bardi, *Before the Collapse: A Guide to the Other Side of Growth*, Springer, Cham, 2020, pp. 87–92.

[36] G. D. Middleton, *Understanding Collapse: Ancient History and Modern History*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2017, pp. 120–121.

[37] P. Servigne, R. Stevens, *How Everything Can Collapse: A Manual for Our Times*, Polity Press, Cambridge/Medford, 2020, p. 32. R. Stevens, G. Chapelle, P. Servigne, *Another End is Possible: Living the Collapse (and Not Merely Surviving It)*, Polity Press, Cambridge–Medford, 2021, p. 22, 287.

a mountain, with moss and grass on top, and some pine trees. Is it not self-evident that the metaphor of the house shows what it means to "live" the collapse? The deep adaptation introduced by Jem Bendell should also be mentioned here, which inspires architectural imagination as well,[38] and which moved from the "collapse inevitable" position to the "collapse has already begun" opinion. As a result of the concept of deep adaptation, architectural and urban planning discourses have been created that think differently about the end, that is, they keep in mind that certain harmful, negative effects are inevitable.[39] A kind of duality characterizes the post-doom thinking introduced by Michael Dowd, since on the one hand it emphasizes the resigned acceptance of the inevitable collapse of civilization, but on the other hand it talks a lot about how to "prioritise what is pro-future and nourishing."[40] These discourses significantly influence the way we think about the end today.[41]

It is important to see that these discourses prevail regardless of the scale of ecological catastrophe or civilizational collapse. Social movements (survivalists, doomsday preppers, retreaters, preppers, etc.) are becoming more and more common, which transform architecture in such a way that, above all, they have a specific way of end in mind. Of course, this view has been around for a long time. For example, the official U.S. 1950 government booklet *Survival under Atomic Attack* wrote that "inside a shelter or building there is little or nothing to fear from this resource. But if caught out-of-doors, try to grab hold of something to cover yourself with when you fall to the ground," and it also answered in details the question "what about radioactivity in the house?"[42] However, the idea

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[38] J. Bendell, *Breaking Together: A Freedom-Loving Response to Collapse*, Good Works, Bristol, 2023, p. 422.

[39] E.g. Z. Hercig, P. Szatzker (eds.), *Adaptációs utmutató az éghajlatváltozás hatásaihoz önkormányzatok számára*, https://vizmegtartomegoldasok.bm.hu/storage/dokumentumok/Adaptacios%20utmutato.pdf?fbclid=IwY2xjawF6CH5leHRuA2FlbQIxMAABHUkmKS2n8AFaQophTKp-qPPEtiG0UjUv9lV9Ur4aeeM-vGf5OwM5XjzNhg_aem_qNi5cpiFaTaQvhtPuTcb1A, (accessed 02 November 2024).

[40] Postdoom, https://postdoom.com/, (accessed 02 November 2024).

[41] For a comprensive analysis, see e.g. J. Monios, G. Wilmsmeier, "Deep adaptation and collapsology," in F. J. Carillo, G. Koch (eds.), *Knowledge for the Anthropocene*, Edward Elgar Publishing, Cheltenham/Camberley/Northampton, 2021, pp. 145–156. See also: P. Servigne *et al.*, "Deep Adaptation opens up a necessary conversation about the breakdown of civilization," https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/oureconomy/deep-adaptation-opens-necessary-conversation-about-breakdown-civilisation/, (accessed 02 November 2024).

[42] *Anon.*, *Survival under Atomic Attack*, *The Official U. S. Government Booklet*, https://orau.org/health-physics-museum/files/library/civil-defense/survival-under-atomic-attack.pdf, (accessed 02 November 2024).

of the collapse of civilization caused by an ecological disaster is shaping architecture differently today, given the way bunkers, bug-out locations, survival retreats, underground shelters, etc. are built or the way existing structures are fortified. Bertrand Vidal, who was one of the first to systematically grasp the phenomenon, describes the strategies of accumulation and buildings in his chapter entitled "A Small House on the Prairie … and Zombies" in his book *Survivalisme*, for example the francophone BAD *(Base Autonome Durable)* which conceptually originates from Hakim Bey's Temporary Autonomous Zones.[43] Compared to fallout shelters and blast shelters, contemporary survivalist architecture has become incomparably more complex, since polycrisis (and polycollapse?) requires the consideration of many more factors. From today's perspective, books like Mike Oehler's *The $50 and Up Underground House Book*, which has sold nearly 100,000 copies,[44] Jeff Cooper's *Notes on Tactical Residential Architecture*,[45] or Joel Skousen's *The Secure Home*,[46] may seem too naive for contemporary survivalists. In the 2000s, after the 2004 Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, survivalist architecture was still too specialized and focused on special problems compared to today's trends. For example, James Wesley Rawles' book *Patriots: A Novel of Survival in the Coming Collapse* also reveals the limits of imagination, which insists too much on a kind of securitarian discourse (although it introduces, for example, the mantrap foyer at survival retreats and an architectural element that he calls a "crushroom").[47] However, as Gerald Celente pointed out, since 2009[48] neo-survivalism affects ordinary people, and it can be implemented in different areas (urban, sub-urban, ex-urban), and compared to the previous paradigm, it is much more characterized by cooperation (for example with the neighbors)–it embodies the etymological meaning of collapse that was already discussed, that is, community, "being together." The individual aspects (safety-preparedness,

[43] B. Vidal, *Survivalisme: etes-vous prêts pour la fin du monde?*, Arkhé, Paris, 2022, pp. 123–128.

[44] *Anon.*, "The $50 & Up Underground House Book," https://undergroundhousing.com/book.html, (accessed 2 November 2024).

[45] J. Cooper, "Notes on Tactical Residential Architecture," Issue #30 of P.S. Letter (April, 1982).

[46] J. Skousen, *The Secure Home*, Swift Publishing, Utah, 1999.

[47] E.g. J. W. Rawles, *Patriots: The Coming Collapse*, Ulysses Press, New York/Berkeley, 1998.

[48] J. Puplava, "Celente 2010 Trends: Economics and Neo-Survivalism," https://web.archive.org/web/20220213153636/http://www.youtube.com/das_captcha?next=%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DD9cPNu6tUjg, (accessed 2 November 2024).

wilderness survival, self-defense-drivenness, etc.) are no longer separated from each other, and the individual issues (such as peak-oil) fit holistically into a whole, so that they might be increasingly prolonged, even indefinitely or multi-generationally. In May 2024, the British government launched a "preppers" website (https://prepare.campaign.gov.uk/) warning families to gather an "emergency kit" of tinned food, batteries and bottled water for use in a crisis. According to experts, however, quite a few important elements were left out of the recommendations that could help you survive in the event of a flood, fire, a new health pandemic or even a nuclear war.[49] Neo-survivalists seem to be ahead of governments.

There are many symptoms of the tendency of deep adaptation in architecture. Such is the case of the insight that housing in Alaska cannot survive climate change. Waskey's home in Mountain Village is replaced by the Cold Climate Housing Research Center (CCHRC), and in this regard says Aaron Cooke, the architect who leads the Sustainable Northern Communities Program, that "if we cannot predict what the climate is going to do, then all of our architecture should be adapted. Your building has to be able to change."[50] It is clear from these words that Cooke does not think that the civilizational collapse is inevitable, but that we should act knowing that certain radical changes will take place, and not just partially, but comprehensively ("all of our architecture"). The idea of holistic change itself signals the end of a paradigm. Of course, the trends are not homogenous as they range from collapse aware initiatives (such as the Croatian "Održivo," which also has permaculture informed designs) to authentic self-sufficiency experiments (such as the "Naturvillan" in Sweden) and to Earthships, in which adapting to extreme conditions adaptation has a distinguished role. Various aspects of the environmental disaster, such as the theme of the wall and border militarization,[51] or the power supply,[52] make people reconsider contemporary architecture.

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49   M. Howe, R. Tingle, "Supermarkets urge against panic buying as Government launches 'preppers' website - warning families to start a national crisis 'emergency kit' of tinned food, batteries and bottled water," https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-13446219/emergency-survival-kit-floods-cyber-attacks-power-cuts.html, (accessed 2 November 2024).
50   C. Quackenbush, "Housing in Alaska can't survive climate change. This group is trying a new model," https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-solutions/2021/09/24/alaska-housing-climate-change/, (accessed 2 November 2024).
51   T. Miller, *Storming the Wall: Climate Change, Migration, and Homeland Security*, City Lights Publishers, San Francisco, 2017.
52   E.g. R. Heinberg, *Power: Limits and Prospects for Human Survival*, New Society Publishers, Gabriola Island, 2021.

For us, it is important to see how often the end is thought and imagined with the help of architectural metaphors. Perhaps the most well-known is Greta Thunberg's speech in 2019, in which she said that "our house is on fire. I am here to say, our house is on fire."[53] The metaphor can also be found in the dictionary of collapsology, in the discourse of Servigne and others: "if the fire brigade tells you that there is a possibility that your home could go up in smoke and kill your family, you do not silence them by calling them alarmists."[54] It is very exciting that Servigne and his coauthors use the metaphor once again in the same article, but in a slightly different way: "So what do we do? The house fire isn't certain, but because you take it seriously (it certainly can happen) you act accordingly. And if you act, then it is less likely to happen. In other words, we better take societal collapse for granted to have any chance of avoiding it or, at least, reducing its worst effects." Accordingly, it seems to be uncertain whether there is a fire (are we not supposed to see clearly?), however, it must be reported and pretend that there is already one. The nature of the change is therefore not clear (and to what extent it should be considered an end), however, the metaphor remains the same, as if an architectural-alarmist ethics for the end should exist. There is a close connection between architecture and the end, that is, architecture seems to be the most suitable for metaphorization, since it helps the imagination of collapse the most.

According to many, the most important thing is that infinite expansion is not possible in a finite system–and this should lead to an awareness of the limits (which is also a kind of end). The discourses of growth and sustainability are not satisfactory because by focusing on maintenance, they are not able to move beyond the status quo in meaningful ways and they are inherently incapable of seeing the end of a paradigm. Instead, perhaps the catabolic system will bring about its own end. According to some, we are experiencing the extreme present even today, according to others "we are already deep into the trajectory towards collapse,"[55] and others sharply criticize "collapse porn"[56] or, for example, find it incompat-

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[53] G. Thunberg, "'Our house is on fire': Greta Thunberg, 16, urges leaders to act on climate," https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jan/25/our-house-is-on-fire-greta-thunberg16-urges-leaders-to-act-on-climate, (accessed 02 November 2024).

[54] P. Servigne *et al*., "Deep Adaptation opens up a necessary conversation about the breakdown of civilization."

[55] A. Moses, "Collapse of civilisation is the most likely outcome," https://voiceofaction.org/collapse-of-civilisation-isthe-most-likely-outcome-top-climate-scientists, (accessed 2 November 2024).

[56] P. Leigh, *Austerity Ecology & the Collapse-porn Addicts*, ZerO Books, London, 2015.

ible with the goals of anti-capitalism.[57] While the debates are becoming more intense, an increasing number of people think that adaptation is the right responsive change. However, this time it is not about regular adaptation, which would mean only small changes with conventional risk management tools and methods, and not even about transformational adaptation, which would entail large structural changes, but about deep adaptation that "can be defined as adaptation predicated upon collapse, where current systems collapse in a short timescale in chaotic and unpredictable ways."[58] In February 2020, an opinion poll on collapse conducted by IFOP on 5,000 people found that 56% of British people and 65% of French people think that Western civilization as we know it will soon collapse.[59] Some of them expect the collapse in the near future, while others think that the catastrophe is already going on. Although they are willing to combine mitigation with adaptation, they are not willing to put up with "transition" (and its positive connotations) and similar terms, because it would divert attention from the topic of the end. They are the ones who really take seriously the IPCC's suggestion that we must immediately institute "rapid, far-reaching, and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society."[60] They are the ones who act like our house is on fire. And as this article is being written, the extreme U.S. hurricane season is coming to an end, but in the meantime, catastrophic flash floods have appeared in Spain. The images we are confronted with show collapsed or flooded houses. Perhaps no one will ask us if a paradigm of architecture is coming to an end.

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[57] B. Bohy-Bunel, *Une critique anticapitaliste de la collapsologie*, Editions L'Harmattan, Paris, 2023.

[58] J. Monios, G. Wilmsmeier, "Deep adaptation and collapsology," p. 148.

[59] M. Rossman, "More than Half of the French Believe in the Collapse of Their Civilization," https://www.mbs.news/a/2020/02/more-than-half-of-the-french-believe-in-the-collapse-of-their-civilization.html (accessed 2 November 2024).

[60] IPCC, "Summary for Policymakers of IPCC Special Report on Global Warming of 1.5ºC approved by governments," https://www.ipcc.ch/site/assets/uploads/2018/11/pr_181008_P48_spm_en.pdf, (accessed 2 November 2024).

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Pippo Ciorra*

Until the End of the Word

ABSTRACT: Thinkers of the Architecture world, and of the arts in general, love to play with the notion of the "end," often associated with death, which in turn is easily reflected in the modernist concept of *tabula rasa*, fueling the avant-garde spirit of twentieth-century architecture. From Duchamp to postmodernism, art—and architecture—seems to sustain itself and its social function by playing with the progressive disruption (an "end") of every representational code, continuously questioning the very possibility of existing and having agency in the world. In the middle decades of the second half of the century such permanent condition of de-construction was embodied by a leading architecture tendency, gaining most of its allure and authority by the close dialogue/collaboration with philosophers. This essay discusses how such design attitude has also come to an *end*. The reasons for this shift are to be found in two main areas. The first is today's *Weltaanschuuung*—the cultural and anthropological condition we live in, compared to the final decades of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first. This can be examined by looking at how philosophy and its sister disciplines are reacting to these new conditions, gradually distancing themselves from architecture. The second is the loss of a set of protocols that once governed the relationships between theory, practice, and representation, as well as the loss of philosophy as the main partner in defining these protocols—an arrangement that had existed since Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790).

KEYWORDS: representation, theory, image, technology, art, activism, science

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Archisophie

Thinkers of the architecture world, and of the arts in general, love to play with the notion of the "end," often associated with death. As Massimo Cacciari reminds us,[1] it all begins with Hegel,[2] who argues that art exhausts its original role at the time of his writings (the early nineteenth century), overwhelmed by both the spiritual power of religion and the density of philosophical thought. With modernism, Hegel's early influence on the theory of rational architecture and the aesthetics coming with them appears to bloom into the anxious *modernist* need for an endless tabula rasa, fueling the avant-garde spirit of twentieth-century art. The "short century"[3] is, in fact, an unbroken sequence of revolutions, "fractures,"[4] crises, breaks, turns, apocalypses, and collapses. From Duchamp to postmodernism, art—and architecture—seems to sustain itself and its social function by playing with the progressive disruption (an "end") of every representational code, continuously questioning the very possibility of existing and having agency in the world.

After WWII, architecture's cathartic meta-suicide seems to repeat in roughly decade-long cycles. In the late 1950s, it takes the form of a drama: Team X declares the death of modern architecture as it had been proposed by the masters thirty years earlier.[5] In the same years, in Italy, Ludovico Quaroni proclaims the death of the neo-realist approach—a design aesthetic he himself had launched just ten years earlier as a solution to the Italian post-fascist dilemma between modernism and classical architecture.[6] In 1961, it is Jane Jacobs' turn to explore *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, expanding the idea of the "end" (death) from architecture to the Western city itself. Ten years later, however, the implosion of architecture looks more like a celebration than a funeral. In

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[1] Massimo Cacciari, lecture at the Philisophy Festival, Parma 2017 (title of the festival: "Fine dell'arte"), published on https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=do5sbINO1n-c&t=1273s. See also an interview from 2020 on the same subject: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67_mQ2coewU.

[2] A good start in order to navigate the redundant, nearly chaotic, literature about the subject could be E. Geulen, *The End of Art: Readings in a Rumor After Hegel*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2006.

[3] E. Hobsbawm, T*he Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914–1991*, Michael Joseph, London, 1994.

[4] See F. Menna, *La linea analitica dell'arte moderna*, Einaudi, Torino, 1975.

[5] D. van der Heuvel, M. Risselada (eds.), *Team 10: In Search of a Utopia of the Present 1953–1981*, nai010 publishers, Rotterdam, 2005.

[6] L. Quaroni, "Il paese dei Barocchi," *Casabella-continuità*, 215, 1957, p. 24

fact, the international network of radical architects engages for a decade with a spectacularized version of the "death of architecture," a conceptual stance not far from Gordon Matta-Clark's "anarchitecture."[7] In 1971, at an event in a Florence nightclub, Superstudio presents *Life, Death and Miracles of Architecture*, a catalog of an exhibition involving the many anti-architectural teams of the Italian "radical" avant-garde.[8] Two years later, art theorist Jack Burnham publishes *The Structure of Art*, which pushes toward an approach to conceptualism that implies the disappearance of the object, and thus of art itself.[9]

Another decade on, in 1980, Paolo Portoghesi introduces the book published in coincidence with the opening of the [first] architecture Biennale *(La presenza del passato)* with an essay bearing a sounding title "*La fine del proibizionismo*" ("The End of Prohibitionism"[10]), celebrating the victory of nostalgia and decoration over minimalism and the historical tabula rasa of modernism. It would take just another decade before Francis Fukuyama epitomizes postmodernism with *The End of History and the Last Man* (1992)? Between the two, a major essay—widely quoted as a fundamental reference by the editors of this issue—"The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning and the End of the End" by Peter Eisenman.[11] We could go on much further, maybe all the way to include the inevitable personal contribution to this periodic tendency toward "archicide,"[12] but for the scope of this text—and of this issue of *Khōrein*—it would probably be more interesting to stay in the conceptual space between Jacques Derrida's *Writing and Difference* (1967) and a memorable installation by Eisenman and Frank Gehry at the US pavilion in the 1991 Venice Architecture Biennale. Derrida's book, alongside some of Eisenman's writings and other post-structuralist

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[7] M. Wigley, *Cutting Matta-Clark: The Anarchitecture Investigation*, Lars Müller Publishers, Zurich, 2018.

[8] *Aa.Vv.*, *Superstudio presentano: vita, morte e miracoli dell'architettura*, G. & G. edizioni, Firenze, 1971.

[9] Vered Maimon develops a seminal reading of Burnham's idea of the relations between arts and science in "Communication as a mental touch: Jack Burnham and the end of art," *Res: Anthropology and Aesthetics*, 79–80, 2023, pp. 255–269.

[10] P. Portoghesi, "La fine del proibizionismo,", in *Dopo l'architettura moderna*, Laterza, Roma/Bari, 1980, pp. 9–14. In the English version (Rizzoli international, 1982) the title of the essay is changed into "The Trail of Ashes".

[11] "The End of the Classical: The End of the Beginning and the End of the End" is published in *Perspecta*, 21, 1984, pp. 154–173.

[12] P. Ciorra, *Senza Architettura: le ragioni di una crisi*, Laterza, Roma/Bari, 2011, is an essay focused on the "disapperance" of Italian Architecture at the end of the 20th century.

gospels (especially Jean-François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (1979) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) by Deleuze and Guattari), marks the golden age of an alliance between philosophers and architects—a collaboration that will define both design and theory for nearly two decades.

Starting in the late 1970s, under the cultural umbrella of postmodernist theory, a number of collaborative experiments involving Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi, Rem Koolhaas, Jacques Derrida, Paul Virilio, and others opened the way for a progressive approach to postmodern architecture. This approach meant to move beyond the ethics and aesthetics of both modernism and nostalgia, in order to achieve *la condition postmoderne* through the development of "conceptual" design and an exasperated focus on the power of language.[13] Eisenman and Gehry's performative dialogue in Venice,[14] orchestrated by Philip Johnson in the early 1990s, likely marks the (beginning of the) end of that era—a moment when the fragile balance between lògos and form[15] is broken in favor of the latter, in line with a social culture increasingly devoted to the *screened* image (versus the text). This was initially signaled by a building— the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao—that made "dreams come true."[16]

Johnson's narrative was explicit. In the play staged in the American pavilion, Eisenman's character was the philosopher-architect, devoted to a process where the project was much more about the dialogue between the designer and the intellectual than the building itself (which rarely materialized).[17] Gehry, "obviously" from the West Coast, pushed

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[13] The exchange between Derrida and Eisenman documented in J. Kipnis, T. Leeser, *Chora L Works: Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman*, Monacelli, New York, 1997, is generally considered the manifesto of the productive collaboration between architects and philosophers in the last decades of the twentieth century.

[14] Gehry and Eisenman's work were displayed in the US pavilion at Giardini di Castello as part of the Fifth International Exhibition of Architecture at the Venice Biennale. Commissioner was Philip Johnson. The design of catalog was strongly influenced by the editorial format of the *ANY* magazine. The oversized publications features excerpts from a conversation between Peter Eisenman and Frank Gehry and a text by Sanford Kwinter and Thomas Hines. P. Johnson, *Peter Eisenman & Frank Gehry*, Fifth International Exhibition of Architecture, Venice Biennale, Rizzoli International, New York, 1991.

[15] P. Ciorra, "No-lògos," in E. Costantopoulos (ed.), *The Significance of Philosophy in Architecture Education*, Panayotis & Effie Michelis Foundation, Athens, 2012.

[16] "Dreams come true" was a recurring slogan in the series of articles written by Herbert Muschamp for *The New York Times* at the time of the opening of Gehry's Guggenheim in Bilbao. See for instance "The Miracle in Bilbao," *The New York Times*, 7 September, 1997, p. 54.

[17] The old seminal essay written in the form of a report between 1978 and 1982 by Jean-Louis Cohen about Italian architecture and to the figure of the "*architetto intellettuale*"

architecture towards a direction mostly defined by art: visual, glamorous, sculptural, surprising, installative, mesmerizing—a "work" to be judged phenomenologically by aesthetic and emotional means, and hardly a "text" for philosophical speculation. The main argument of this essay is to show how both design attitudes—the philosophical and the sculptural—that dominated the architecture scene between 1970 and 2010, have now come to an *end*. Or, more precisely, we could say that while the tendency to turn the main generating idea of a project (*diagram*[18]) into some unexpected and "uncanny" form, even after losing much of its groundbreaking allure, still finds an audience and wealthy clients in specific areas of the world (especially the Middle and Far East), architecture research and production based on philosophical depth and the hybridization of linguistics and spatial geometry seems to be out of place—or at least attracting much less interest—in the contemporary context.

The reasons for this shift are obviously many and varied, but they can probably be found in two main areas. The first is today's Weltanschauung—the cultural and anthropological condition we live in, compared to the final decades of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first. This can be examined by looking at how philosophy and its sister disciplines are reacting to these new conditions, gradually distancing themselves from architecture. The second is the loss of a set of protocols that once governed the relationships between theory, practice, and representation, as well as the loss of philosophy as the main partner in defining these protocols—an arrangement that had existed since Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* (1790). For argumentative clarity, we will start with the latter.

Problem 1: *The End of Representation*

On February 9, 2012, the Yale School of Architecture (YSOA) hosted a symposium titled "Is Drawing Dead?" Organized by Victor Argan, the event featured a number of renowned speakers, including Massimo Scolari, Juhani Pallasmaa, and Peter Cook. It was accompanied by the

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may be useful to understand how the NY based cell of post-structuralist thinkers/designers developed a mutual interest with the area of scholars and architects gravitating around IUAV, Aldo Rossi and Manfredo Tafuri. See, J. L. Cohen, *La coupure entre architectes et intellectuels: ou les enseignements de l'italophilie*, Mardaga, Bruxelles, 2015.

[18] For a clear definition of the diagram in architecture see G. Corbellini, *Exlibris: 16 Keywords of Contemporary Architecture*, LetteraVentidue, Milano 201, p. 40.

exhibition *Massimo Scolari: The Representation of Architecture*, whose contents served as a bold statement and a clear negative response to the symposium's provocative title. However, the defense of traditional drawing offered by the speakers, alongside the artistic aura of Scolari's work, seemed insufficient to ease the concerns of Yale's faculty. Seven years later, in February 2018, the same institution hosted another exhibition—*The Drawing Show*, curated by Dora Epstein Jones and previously displayed at the A+D Museum in Los Angeles. This exhibition revisited many of the unresolved arguments left in the wake of the 2011 symposium.

"We now find ourselves," said Dean Deborah Berke in her opening statement, "entering a new phase of representation as the fear of losing authorship, identity, and control to the computer subsides."[19] Epstein Jones joined the conversation, passionately observing: "The practice of architectural drawing has changed dramatically over the past twenty-five years. The traditional pro forma of the sketch (or *parti*) that would eventually lead to a plan, section, and elevation has given way to exploratory forms of representation."[20] Berke, along with Scolari, makes a wise step by moving the conversation from the concept of "drawing" to the deeper and more comprehensive one of "representation."

From Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* (1452) to the end of the twentieth century, representation is what defines architecture's identity as the space of ideas (*lineamenta*) versus the obvious space of construction. Representation is also where a grammar of signs and images defines a language of communication and consequently a platform for the dialogue between spatial concepts (architecture) and abstract ones (philosophy). Together with the concept of representation, such a platform has been denied in the last decades not only by the fast growth of technology, but by at least three main changes that took place in the architecture environment.

The End of Representation / The Digital and the Tech Utopia

The first and more obvious change, well pictured by the Yale story, is the one provoked by the evolution of technology and design tools. Albeit from opposite positions, two books brought the Yale debate on

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[19]   Deborah Berke's remarks on the exhibition on YSoA website, https://www.architecture.yale.edu/exhibitions/14-the-drawing-show, (accessed 5 December 2024).

[20]   Dora Epstein Jones' presentation of the exhibition on YSoA website, https://www.architecture.yale.edu/exhibitions/14-the-drawing-show, (accessed 5 December 2024).

representation to an end: David Sheer's *The Death of Drawing* (2014) on the side of the technophobes and Mario Carpo's *The Second Digital Turn*[21] on the side of the technophiles. Both agree that architecture is moving from the field of representation to that of simulation. Simulation is intended as a space where the design and representation processes are synthesized in a no-stop sequence of automatic actions, going from the data feedback to the final product.[22] In this space, the designer/user has no room for interaction with the single phase/element of the design and therefore no chance for interpretation (*hermeneutics*), which is deeply founded on *representation* and which is the base for any dialogue between architecture and disciplines like philosophy that are searching for meanings, ideologies, and concepts.

The End of Representation / Artistic Practices

While the domination of digital culture has a major and growing impact on both the theory and practice of the design world, there are other aspects of the crisis of the idea of representation that have a strong influence on how spaces and structures are manufactured and communicated today. The one discussed in this paragraph is the relationship between architecture and art.[23] Indeed, it is widely clear how this relationship has changed over the past 60 to 70 years. From the fifteenth century till the 1970s, this relationship was mainly epitomized by the production of drawings and aesthetically autonomous images—exactly the aesthetic and hermeneutic condition we find in Scolari's drawings (and paintings) referenced earlier. For more than five centuries, architectural drawings (and representation in general) created an exchange with the world that was autonomous and independent from the building process,

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[21] "Today, at long last, the demise of projected images may be happening for good—this time around, however, not by proclamation, but by sheer technological obsolescence", in M. Carpo, "The End of the Projected Image," in *The Second Digital Turn: Design Beyond Intelligence*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2017, p. 99.

[22] "The divorce of design from construction, theorized by Alberti and realized in modern practice, is being overthrown by the replacement of drawing by simulation. Whereas drawing is based on a clear distinction between the two, simulation strives to eliminate any space between them. Whereas architectural drawings exist to represent construction, architectural simulations exist to anticipate building performance". D. Sheer, "Introduction," in *The Death of Drawing; Architecture in the Age of Simulation*, Routledge London, 2018, p. 9.

[23] Literature about the mutual relations between architecture and art is virtually endless, with infinite ramifications and a multiplicity of approaches. To limit this reference to a recent and productive contribution we may refer to some publications by Sylvia Lavin, starting with *Kissing Architecture*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 2011.

embodying Alberti's idea of the creative process of design. These drawings were an essential component of the dialogue between architects and philosophers,[24] highly contributing to the development of the discipline, defining the legal boundaries of the profession,[25] and creating a market for drawings and other forms of bidimensional representation, similar to the art market.[26]

Today's architecture, following again the path traced by art, is increasingly influenced by non-formal, processual, non-iconic artistic methods. Three pivotal moments in this evolution were the introduction of collage, then installation, and later, performance. Collage, starting from some of the Bauhaus heroes—László Moholy-Nagy, Josef Albers, and El Lissitzky—then entered the world of architecture through Mies van der Rohe and the growing presence of photography. It challenges the traditional relationship between image and paper, becoming the first betrayal of the two dimensions of drawing. Collage moved from regulated lines to the freedom of materiality, potentially embracing three-dimensionality.[27]

For architecture, the focus on installation has a clear and acknowledged point of spatial and historical radiation in the exhibition *This is Tomorrow*,[28] the first event where artists and architects collaborated as peers to define a common three-dimensional idea of the display. Performance, particularly in the 1960s, represented the artists' desire to transcend the boundaries of the museum and directly impact the physical and political space of the city. The United States—with Hanna and Lawrence

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[24] In the quoted publication testifying the collaboration between Jack Derrida and Peter Eisenman (see footnote 15) there is the iconic proof of this interchange, with the famous couple of white pages with only the footnotes and no text visible, something completely *in between* a drawing and a text.

[25] In Italy, the first *Manuale dell'architetto, dell'ingegnere e del capomastro*—defining through drawings and measures the minimum "legal" requirements for architecture components – rooms, windows, stairs etc.—was published in 1830. The most recent version published by the Architects' chapter in 2000 is based on the version curated by Bruno Zevi and Mario Ridolfi in 1946 and funded by USIS (the information department of the US Army) and CNR (National Research Agency).

[26] See P. Ciorra, "The 'No Nonsense' Fountain Pen," in B. Penner *et al.* (eds.), *Extinct: A Compendium of Obsolete Objects*, Reaktion Books, London, 2021, pp. 202–216. The focus of this short text is on a particular drawing tool, however it bears a number of bibliographic suggestions on the subject.

[27] See M. Stierli, *Montage and the Metropolis: Architecture, Modernity, and the Representation of Space*, Yale University Press, New Haven, 2018.

[28] *This Is Tomorrow* is a well-known exhibition in August 1956 at the Whitechapel Art Gallery in London. The core of the exhibition was the ICA Independent Group. The catalog was published by the Gallery and contained texts by Rheiner Banham and Lawrence Halloway. See also A. and P. Smithson, "Architecture and Art," *Le Carré Bleu*, 1, 1960, p. 8.

Halprin[29] in mind—and then Italy were perhaps the first places where the idea of architecture as performance took root. These multidisciplinary experiences, from urban art to groundbreaking political experiments such as *Estate Romana* (1975–1988), focused on ephemeral projects and an extremely successful form of "action design."[30]

Today, a broader range of art practices and performative actions are becoming part of architects' toolkits, moving away from traditional drawing processes. The ever-expanding range goes from the still rather conventional choice of designing by "making models" (as in Frank Gehry's practice) to performative actions, choreography, video-making, textiles, programming, and sound production.

The End of Representation / Activism or the Eco-Utopia of the Unbuilt Space

The third, perhaps more obvious, area of resistance to the centrality of *disegno* (in Alberti's sense) comes from those advocating for the (more or less) complete subordination of architecture to political engagement in global struggles such as ecology, resource management, inclusion, race and gender equality, post-humanism, and decolonization.[31] This attitude often produces two distinct types of agencies. Individual "authors" tend to view this form of engagement as a theoretical tool, developing it into editorial or institutional projects. Teams, or more accurately, "collectives," instead adopt a hands-on approach, merging the concept of "radical" collective design, popularized in the 1960s, with direct, politically performative involvement in the creation of "events" within the social context.

While this approach, very popular among younger generations, literally denies Alberti's separation between design and construction, it implies a couple of contradictory conditions. Firstly, it limits the conversation between designers and the community to politically relevant actions, potentially excluding exactly the younger and more committed

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29   See: S. Massimo, "The Performative Power of Architecture: Anna's Halprin's Dance Deck as the Source of her 'Transformational Dance'," *Itinera: rivista di filosofia e teoria delle arti*, 25, 2023, pp. 105–125.

30   There are not many thoroughly documented studies about the history and legacy of Estate Romana, a very important chapter in the urban and political history of Rome. The only serious contribution we can think of—F. Fava, *Estate romana: tempi e pratiche della città effimera*, Quodlibet, Macerata, 2017—still leaves wide space for further research and elaboration.

31   See J. Till, A. Nishat, T. Schneider, *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture*, Routledge, London, 2011.

generations from a design conversation with their expected "clients," leaving the solution of their spatial problems to larger and more "cynical" firms. Secondly, it paradoxically creates a new form of acknowledged "authorship," as in the case of teams like Raumlabor, Assemble, Recetas Urbanas, and Lacol, all awarded as "best architects (or artists)" in various awarding projects around the world.

The End of Representation / Drawing Nostalgia

When analyzing the attitudes of contemporary self-conscious architects, we must acknowledge the presence of a fourth, different stance concerning the relationships between design, meaning, and representation. Since the early 2010s, numerous publications, exhibitions, and theoretical projects have sought to display a design attitude aimed at resisting the three tendencies discussed above, considering them enemies of the architectural discipline, undermining its very foundations (or "fundamentals"). The "absolute architecture"[32] discussed by Pier Vittorio Aureli stands as an uncertain manifesto of this stance, drawing much of its energy from attempting to resuscitate the biunivocal relationship between ideology and form that marked a very successful season of (mainly) Italian architecture between the 1960s and 1970s.

It is clear that this proposal to revive the focus on the autonomy of architecture and to bring back power to "language"—especially the language of representation—has achieved relevance and visibility (particularly in academia) and evolved into a solid network among architects born between the late 1960s and the mid-1980s.[33] Among the strong arguments used to proselytize this stance are political opposition to the digital revolution in architecture, considered an obvious tool for the hegemony of techno-capitalism, and disciplinary opposition to artistic and activist attitudes, which, while politically correct, are seen as threats to the discipline.

However, this inclination toward the centrality of a very twentieth-century idea of language, coupled with the benevolent sympathy of some old "conceptual" masters—Eisenman, Zenghelis, and partly

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[32]   P. V. Aureli, *The Possibility of an Absolute Architecture*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2011.
[33]   A very visible manifestation of this approach, and a reference for a large group of young designers and thinkers, has been the journal *San Rocco*, produced by the groups Baukuh and Salottobuono, published from 2010 thru 2019 and then evolved in a wider program of books production.

Koolhaas—did not seem sufficient to bring philosophers back to sit at the same table and cooperate as they did in the 1980s. Perhaps the old protocols of the relationship between form and ideology no longer work in today's completely changed social and political context. Or perhaps, as we plan to discuss briefly in the next paragraph, philosophers are now drawn to other audiences and fields of speculation.

PROBLEM 2: *LA PHILOSOPHIE DANS LE BOUDOIR VERT*

In 1984, Jean-Louis Cohen published an essay titled *La coupure entre architectes et intellectuels, ou les enseignements de l'Italophilie*. The scope of the book was clear: a comprehensive comparison between the French and Italian architectural scenes in the first decades after WWII. Cohen's argument was equally clear: in Italy, architecture's openness to dialogue with related disciplines—philosophy, sociology, linguistics, political theory, etc.—had been the reason for the emergence of a generation of "intellectual architects," equipped to produce both hegemonic theories, often in written form, and powerful projects. Cohen wrote his report between 1978 and 1982, perhaps too early to register the impact Italian theory was having on the conceptual scene in the U.S.,[34] particularly around Cooper Union and the IAUS in New York.[35] However, he makes it clear that the common ground for the development of such productive interdisciplinary conversations in Italy was mostly ideological, based on the complex interchange between post-Marxist ideas developed within the Italian political-academic environment (and among France philosophers),[36] an *engagé* version of [post]criticism, and the powerful imagery produced by a leading generation of designers.

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[34] For a long time, the house organ of this exchange was the journal *October*, founded in 1976 by Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, Rosalind E. Krauss, and Annette Michelson. Many of the ideas and interests that were feeding the first decade of the journal's issues can be found in H. Foster, *Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Bay Press, Washington, 1983.

[35] Founded in 1967 (and active till 1984) by Peter Eiseinman, Emilio Ambasz, Diana Agrest and Mario Gandelsonas and a few other New York architects interested in urban studies as an independent institution, IAUS has been the hub for the most interesting experiences and exchanges led by the group of designers we tend to identify with the post-structuralist ideology of the time. Most of all IAUS was the promoter of the collaboration with the Venice crowd from IUAV. The most recent and comprehensive study on the history of IAUS is K. Förster, *Building Institution: The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies 1967–1985* by, transcript Verlag, Bielefeld, 2023.

[36] Cohen makes clear how French philosophers received much more attention and proposals for collaboration among foreign architecture communities. especially Italy and US— than in their own country.

It is relatively easy to say that such a triangle of political ideas, critical thinking, and design attitudes (or *Kunstwollen*) is no longer present today. All three components have radically mutated.

Ideology is certainly a much less popular word today. The most powerful ideologies—such as late capitalism or tech hegemony, or the horrifying combined version of the two—are the ones that never present themselves as such. A similar shift has occurred in what we once would have called counter-culture: social opposition is now seen as a constellation of single issues that fiercely resist being comprehended within a general political or ideological framework. Eco-fairness, gender and race agendas, migration, even the housing crisis or the struggle for workers' rights, are often presented as individual issues to be addressed by distinct groups or, at times, by individuals, within a power-society framework largely informed by social media. This is far removed from any possibility of uniting under a singular political project.

The boundaries of critical thinking in the last century were also strongly defined by ideological frames: utopian thought on one side and post-criticism (or an updated version of historical materialism) on the other. Philosophy was mostly philosophy of language, because the structures of language were seen as the space where the conflicts and contradictions of the social structure became visible—whether in the written language of literature or in the geometry of urban blocks and architectural façades. By the end of the century, philosophers' curiosity shifted away from hermeneutics to focus on two more timely directions: the power of the screen,[37] where the image loses one of its spatial dimensions in favor of the temporal dimension granted by movement, and the redefinition of the relations between human and non-human beings—animals, plants, and other elements of nature.[38] The former would fold into neo-iconology, an abstract discourse on visual culture, while the latter would aim toward a non-mediated, non-academic dialogue with the public, something that often comes under the definition of pop-philosophy. It is not

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[37]   Also in this case the literature is virtually endless. As immediate references we can quote the exemplary works of two very successful writers: A. Pinotti, *Alla soglia dell'immagine: da Narciso alla realtà virtuale*, Einaudi, Torino 2021, A. Pinotti, "Self-Negating Images: Towards An-iconology,", *Proceedings* 1, 18, 2017, pp. 45–68, G. Bruno, *Surface: Matters of Aesthetics, Materiality, and Media*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2014.

[38]   The (rather easy) reference is, among many others, to authors like Emanuele Coccia (*La vita delle piante: metafisica della mescolanza*, Il Mulino, Bologna, 2018), or Slavoj Žižek (*Too Late to Awaken: What Lies Ahead When There is no Future?*, Allen Lane, London, 2024).

hard to understand how challenging it would be for philosophers to view architects—those who inevitably continue building the world—as allies in their present speculations.

The third pole of this conversation—the changing modalities and tools for design—has already been discussed in the previous paragraphs. Here, we can only reiterate how the presence of advanced digital tools, A.I., virtual spaces, robotics, and even simple BIM, inevitably removes the possibility of representation, i.e., the primary matter that once allowed for productive exchanges between architects and philosophers around the creation of meaningful design. To reconnect with today's philosophy, designers and architectural thinkers must venture into territories whose rules they scarcely know—fields like neuro- and natural sciences, advanced technology, anthropology, bio-chemistry, and so on. However clumsy and immature, the early results of such "cross-pollination" may be interesting, but they certainly do not encourage us to expect a revival of the previous, language-based protocols of collaboration between architects and philosophers.

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On the End of Authority:
Interview with Peter Eisenman

Since writing his PhD thesis at Cambridge until today, Peter Eisenman has thematized "End" several times, which is why he was the logical choice to be the editor of this issue of Khōrein. *Initially, he agreed to this without hesitation, which would have made this his* de facto *'fourth stadium' of reflecting on "End" (although certainly not the last, as he feared). However, in conversation with the editorial team of* Khōrein, *his role and contribution to this issue changed. We can say that we attempted to imitate in one way or another his possible activity of editing an issue, evoking texts on 'End' from the eighties ("The End of the Classical") or his variations on "End" from 2016 (The End of Authority... Theory or End of Author). There is probably no position on "End" among architects and philosophers that has not been influenced by Eisenman's thinking on the matter.*

The interview before you sat ready on Eisenman's desk at Eisenman Architects Office (450 Seventh Ave); he provided us with a copy in the spring of 2017, and then he reworked and edited it for publication in Khōrein *late last year, removing some answers that we nevertheless found interesting. We do not know who conducted the interview, nor whether it is a transcript of questions and responses from one or more of the lectures Eisenman gave in 2016 across architecture departments (the most famous of which was at Princeton, entitled "The End of Authority," held on September 19, 2016). Finally, this interview has nothing to do with the interview entitled "The End of Authority: Peter Eisenman with Julian Rose," published in 2020.*

QUESTION: You distinguish between a project and a practice by arguing that while "project defines the world, practice is defined by the world." Yet, haven't powerful practices shaped the world?

PETER EISENMAN: I believe that there are two avenues to power in architecture. One is through design; the other is through the intellect—that

is, thinking. When I finished school in the United States in the fifties, I thought that power was gained through design, and so my models were Corby and Mies. I went to work with Gropius because I thought he was a designer—it turned out that Gropius was not a designer. After six months I left and met Jim Stirling, and showed him my work. He said to me: "Peter, you are a really good designer, but you don't know anything about architecture." Which was true—I was innocent. Jim advised me to go be with Colin Rowe in order to learn about architecture. Being with Colin Rowe for three years, I learned about the other power; the knowledge of the discipline. It was very important lesson that power comes from knowledge, just as much as design. I am convinced that all the students downstairs [at IIT] can design well, but can they think? If there is anything a school can give students, it should be the capacity to think. Practice can only become powerful if you can think and have knowledge of the discipline; which is gained in studio, not from history classes. Studio is also about teaching project, namely, the power of ideas. Some of that involves going to the library. That's how you teach project—by reading and thinking in the design studio; you can't just have a history-theory sequence. That is why it is great to have a library in this building [Crown Hall]; integrating theory and history into studio. This is the way to achieve a powerful practice.

Q: The question was not about how one can have a powerful practice, but how a powerful practice defines the world.

PE: At the present time, most practices in the world are power practices that don't have a project. I believe it is a minor form of power. There is not a single Mies or Loos among them. So in order to attain the kind of power you refer to, project and practice must be integrated in a studio, which isn't the norm in most schools. I remember when I was a student at Cornell, one of my teachers was Romaldo Giurgola. Perhaps he is not known anymore, but he was an important Italian architect. Every Friday morning, I was in his 9:00 a.m. class, having returned from party night on Thursdays. He hardly spoke any English, and I didn't really care either because the class wasn't studio. But I appreciated afterwards that he was teaching us project. Until we bring project into the studio as an attitude, we are not going to have power, because practice doesn't ever become powerful by itself. I don't know any architect who has power that does not have a project, and their practice becomes powerful through

that project. Rem Koolhaas, Greg Lynn, Rafael Moneo, Tadao Ando, and Oswald Mathias Ungers have all understood that, and they have a project. Gropius had a powerful practice but not a powerful project, he disappears when we discuss Mies, Corbu, Wright, and Loos. Gropius does not exist. Today, Bjarke Ingels is not powerful. He's just a designer. There is a big difference between Ingels and Koolhaas, and that difference is important.

Q: But people like Bjarke Ingels do have some kind of authority because of their practices?

PE: Bjarke Ingels is so successful because his clients do not want an authority, which speaks to the times we are in. That's the trouble with our society—we no longer have the need for authority. We want crowdsourcing and bottom-up thinking instead. What kind of surgeon would ask his client about how he should operate? What kind of lawyer would ask a client which way to argue a case? What writer would ask the readers to tell him how to write? So why should an architect listen to bottom-up opinions? When authority is no longer looked upon with respect, we end up with someone like Donald Trump in public life. He builds bad buildings and hires uninteresting architects who don't care about the project. He just wants to make money! Not only is he a person without morals, he is a person without scruples. I know, because he hired my firm once to do a schematic design for a high-rise in New York City. We signed a contract and agreed on a hundred thousand dollars fee, yet when we took the schematic to him, he said, "This is shit. I am not going to pay you," and walked away. This is emblematic of our time, which is why I don't want practice to be powerful. Radical Italian thinkers like Bramante, Brunelleschi, and Borromini were powerful because of their ideas. Do you think that anybody would care about Venturi's practice if he hadn't written *Complexity and Contradiction*? Or, that anybody would care about Palladio's villas if he hadn't written the *Quattro Libri*? I have always said that books last longer than buildings.

Q: How relevant do you think a project can be without being practiced?

PE: Manfredo Tafuri once told me that nobody will care what you think, if you don't build. Conversely, he also told me that if you don't think, nobody will care what you build. That is so important to understand.

We are currently doing the construction documentation for a 450,000 square-foot museum in Istanbul [the Yenikapi Museum]. I have realized how lucky I am: at the age of eighty-five, I am doing a big museum, I have just finished two books, and I am teaching. I am doing exactly what I think an architect should do, which is to do both. In other words, it would be a mistake to step practicing and concentrate solely on a project. Since most people in this world are just practicing without a project, however, my recommendation would be to worry about project more than practice, as it is easier to go into practice than it is to have a project.

Q: Do your clients defer to your authority, and what compromises, if any, do they make when they choose to work with you?

PE: My clients know the difference between Peter Eisenman and Frank Gehry: Frank has lots of buildings and I do not. I believe that clients generally don't want architects with projects. I think that project is a contradiction to practice, which is why it's so difficult to do both; they stand opposed or oxymoronic. Frank has a great practice, which sustains his project. I believe that I have a good project, but not the practice that sustains this. This is why I am excited to do a large museum like Yenikapi. I don't get my projects from clients; I get them from competitions. One of the marks of an architect with a project is an architect shunned by clients. I can't tell a client why they should build a project, because they would not understand. A client often doesn't understand why we do what we do—but that is not important, as long as the architects understand. Any client who chooses to work with me compromises. Doing something that the client wants is compromising, too! Last week we changed something on the east facade of the Yenikapi museum, and the client said to me, "Peter, you have six hundred drawings and the changes you wish to make will change a hundred drawings! We are hoping to go out to bid tomorrow, do you still want to do drawings or do you want to go out to bid?" That is my compromise: the east facade is not going to be how I want it to be. I still want to tweak things and the clients want to build! What's interesting about this client is that they have never set us a budget, allowing us to draw for them what we wanted. So the compromises are coming. At my stage of life, I want to see the building built, I am less interested in the six hundred drawings that are going into the archive.

Q: Can you define your project?

PE: No, that's for you to do. I don't need to define it, because I do it. I am not a historian. I can define Koolhaas's project, or Moneo's project, but I can't define mine.

Q: In projects such as the City of Culture at Santiago de Compostela or the Yenikapi Museum in Istanbul, you interpret ideas from the site that you arbitrarily use to generate the figure. Can you talk about the notion of the arbitrary in your work?

PE: When ideas come from a site they are no longer arbitrary. So I object to the term arbitrary. Unless you are arguing that the site has no relation to the building, I would say that we are on a different page. Moneo always argues that my work is arbitrary—my response has always been that I do not think so. The module for the Yenikapi project comes from the modulation of the Hagia Sophia that we discovered in our studies. No one from the city administration knows that, but it is clearly identified in the grid, and so it is not arbitrary at all. The former harbor walls of the site were used to define the figure, so the building takes the form of the old harbor whose archaeological ships it houses. You might think that's arbitrary, but I cannot think of a better way to do it. So, I stand categorically opposed to the arbitrary.

Q: In a panel discussion with Preston Scott Cohen where you spoke about the superimposed grids in Santiago, you said yourself at one point that it is arbitrary to some degree.

PE: Let's take the example of this table. Why is this table this shape in this room? Is it arbitrary? No. Would it be an equally effective table in this space if it were square? I don't know. So I think a degree of arbitrariness plays a role in everything we do, where there is no extreme logic being applied. Our Berlin Tower was against phallocentric architecture. Phallogocentrism, which was a strong feminist idea from the eighties and nineties. It made us decide that we shouldn't be building phallic symbols anymore. We had female architects working with us, and we thought that there should be other kinds of tall buildings. So we made a Mobius strip, which can never be interpreted as a phallus as it is always twisting in on itself. Unfortunately, my client died, so the building didn't go ahead:

Yet I am still wondering about the shape of the tower. It is an important question. But none of my projects, whether in Istanbul or Berlin, are arbitrary—they are absolutely thought out and related to the site.

Q: You talk about the idea of lateness, both as a critical moment in time and a late moment in your practice. Are you trying to evaluate your project in relation to the conditions of the present zeitgeist?

PE: Beethoven wrote the Missa Solemnis a few years before his death. If you look at the Missa Solemnis, it is a completely different take on music. I would argue that the Missa Solemnis was Beethoven's late moment—that is to say, it is a piece that breaks away from the work that had led him towards the nine symphonies, and is completely separate. Had he lived beyond the Missa Solemnis, I believe he would have done something different. I am eighty-five. I am already playing against time. So what can I do? I read Edward Said's book *On Late Style*—"late style" was the phrase Theodor Adorno used to describe Beethoven's third hit period in his own book—because I am trying to find out what is my being. I am in "late style" whether I like it or not. You cannot do things until you die, because we have to put a capstone on our existence. I don't think I am eighty-five, but I am! I have to keep up with young people with the energy and ideas. It could be said that I am out of touch with the present *zeitgeist*: the millennial project, crowd sourcing, and object-oriented ontology are not my game. I am not interested in many things that are being worked out in the present, since there is nothing that I can teach of the present. I have recently completed a Palladio book, and I am working on an Alberti book, for which I learn something new every time I give a lecture. I just assigned an article by Rudolf Wittkower about Alberti written in 1938. It's a fantastic article with a different view on Alberti. But I can't teach Jeanne Gang or Zaha and parametric software because I wouldn't know I how to; nor would I want to. So I teach Alberti and Bramante, and I take my students to Vigevano by Bramante. Now I would propose that only five students out of the six hundred here at IIT have been there, but to me it is the best square in all the world. There is a church there by the Polish cardinal, Juan Caramuel y Lobkowitz, it has a facade with four openings. The fourth opening is where the cars and secular people enter from, while the other three are standard entrances into the church. Massimo Scolari wrote a book on Lobkowitz, *Oblique Drawing*, as he

was both a Polish cardinal and a practicing architect. I cannot talk about today because I am still learning about yesterday!

Q: You have predicted an epistemic paradigm shift in the next twenty years, which will create space for the development of a new meta-project. What do you believe will drive that shift?

PE: I can't answer futurist questions. I believe that there will be a paradigm shift, but I don't know what it will be or what will drive the shift. I am not sure, but it is not global warming. That will happen and we will deal with it, but that is not going to be the main driver of the architectural shift. To be honest, I don't think democratic capitalism as a project works anymore. It cannot afford security, healthcare, or sustain infrastructure. Capital, as a system for politics and economics, is on its way out. Towns like Flint, MI, don't even have money to purify their water. People are being poisoned by infrastructural systems. What worries me is that we could see authoritarian politics and economics, which will be a real problem. Don't forget, the major built accomplishments of the Modern movement occurred during periods of fascism, communism and Nazism. In other words, under repressive authoritarian governments. So it could happen again. I can't tell you any more than that, but we will probably see a shift in the socio-political economic structure that will affect architecture in a big way.

Q: In your opinion, what will be the three buildings that Peter Eisenman will be known for?

PE: I would argue that the most known project would be the Berlin Holocaust Memorial. It is a complete outlier that has more to do with my practice and less to do with my project, yet it will exist for five hundred years and I can't do anything about it. The same could be said for the University of Phoenix Stadium. It is in the public eye and everybody knows of it. For me, the most important projects are Santiago de Compostela, Cincinnati [Aronoff Center], and Wexner Center, or any one of the house series—probably House II, as it has more theoretical development than any of the others. The CCA in Montreal has over three hundred of my development drawings for this house. House II dealt with the dialogue between column and wall, which is an Albertian project. Alberti said that the column is not structural but a residue of the wall. The project followed the idea that the columns are not structural, rather the walls

are. The columns were ornamental. This was not the case for any of my other projects; the theoretical message is very much tied to the Albertian theory. For me, the didactic nature of that house is very important. Jeff Kipnis has just written a great book, *By Other Means*, where he talks about the conflict within myself: I'm the typical American bourgeois kid, who runs into philosophical discourse and fights against himself, for which there is a struggle and an eventual return to the values within me. It is a beautiful essay which is absolutely true. It was just published in the Palazzo Bembo at the 2016 Venice Biennale.

Q: A few years ago at the Berlage, you presented on a conversation you had with Jacques Derrida, and why you saw him as an idealist. You went on to mention that architecture cannot exist without idealism. Could you elaborate?

PE: Rosalind Krauss wrote an essay called "Death of the Hermeneutic Phantom," in which she said that modernist sculpture and painting really are more radical than modernist architecture. In her opinion, modernist architecture wanted to idealize technology, structure, new materials, and new ideas of the social—it was the continuation of a Kantian project of the late eighteenth century. Ali of the early nineteenth and twentieth century architects whom we admire had this idealist streak that remains unacknowledged. This situation is the hermeneutic phantom of modern architecture according to Rosalind Krauss, and she talked about the unspoken idealism of modern architecture as a project of the modern. This project of idealizing new techniques and materials did not have the radicality of modern painters and sculptors, because it did not aim to estrange or defamiliarize as they did. So I would argue, as Jacques Derrida did, for the moral idealization of philosophy, namely, the deconstruction of ideas. I would say that Derrida was a moralist and idealist; Jeff was ultimately saying that I was too. Students should understand what that means, or at least make sense of it as an open problematic, as it is the latent idealism—in terms of modern architecture—which we all teach in schools.

Q: I wonder if you could expand on your intriguing analysis of Giuseppe Terragni in your dissertation, The Formal Basis of Modern Architecture?

PE: I was travelling with Colin Rowe in 1961, and had been given a book six months earlier by Sir Colin St John Wilson. In the book was

the Terragni building. I said to Colin, "We've got to go see this." So we left Bernhard Hoesli, who was then dean of ETH, and drove down from Zurich to Como. Colin used to tell the story that when we came upon this certain square in Como, I had an apocalyptic revelation. I had never seen a building like that, and even now I still see it as an amazing thing. When you come upon this white half-cube in the sunlight it is incredible. So, I decided I wanted to write my thesis partly on this building. It was really important to me, even though I had never wanted to be a teacher; I had always wanted to be architect. Eventually I wrote the dissertation at Cambridge. I could never do another book quite like that one. It was a little over the top; there were hundreds of drawings. Rem used to say to me, "You and Terragni are both B-movie architects." I would say to him, "Well, I love being a B-movie architect, because I love B-movies." But I don't think about Terragni today, and I have never taught Terragni. *Ten Canonical Buildings* did come out of a class that I taught, but it was Koolhaas, Libeskind, Moneo, and so on. Terragni was a moment in my life in which I am not in anymore. I am not sure I know how you would teach Terragni in today's climate anyway.

Q: What was Judith Turner's importance to the New York Five?

PE: Let's not talk about Judith Turner. She did not do the original book, *The Five Architects*. The problem with The Five Architects was my inability to be me. I was always inventing institutions and projects that I could appear in, such as the Institute of Architectural and Urban Studies (IAUS), the Conference of Architects for the Study of the Environment (CASE) group, and P3. With *The Five Architects*, I didn't know what I was doing it for. It began when I went over to see George Wittenborn, who published the first edition, and told him that I had the tapes from a meeting we had had at MOMA, CASE 7 and 8, which was the basis for The Five Architects. I had been ready to announce the book with the title *Cardboard Architecture*, which was the title of my essays, but the group said, "No! That was not our idea, we can't call the book that." When I asked them what they would like the book to be called, they said, "We don't want it to be called anything! We don't like each other's work, we just happen to be doing this book together." After that, we just named it, "Eisenman, Graves, Gwathmey, Hejduk, Meier." The final title came from Paul Goldberger, who published a story about the book calling it The New York Five. We were all different. We published five hundred

copies of the original book, as we were not interested in publicity. All we wanted was to make a nice book, and it turned into an ideology. Getting out from under the association with The Five was difficult for me. That's another period of time, like the Terragni period, that I am always trying to get away from.

Q: What is the book you want to be remembered for?

PE: I haven't written that book yet. Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction* was the first book of American theoretical practice. Rem's *Delirious New York* is a very important book and will be remembered long after any of his buildings. I believe that I haven't written the book I want to be remembered for yet. I don't know what it will be about, but that is my late project. It's not Palladio, Alberti, *Ten Canonical Buildings*, Terragni, or *The Formal Basis*.

Q: When will this book come out?

PE: I am still trying to understand what it will be about. It could be about anything, even soccer! I once did a book, *Contropiede*, which is Italian for counterattack. They bring the enemy very close and then they attack with their libero, or defensive players. I took the term and I published a book. I think I will do something really unique. When I work with students or when I work in the office, I want to do something that no one else does. I don't know how to theorize what that is, but nobody that I know understands what it is.

Shifting to Historical Ends:
Interview with Sylvia Lavin

This interview was conducted two months after the seminar dedicated to Khōrein, *held at The New School in New York on September 27, 2024. The seminar brought together architectural theorists, historians, critics, practicing architects and philosophers to discuss past and future thematic issues of the journal. As a participant, Sylvia Lavin reflected on the theme of "end" through the lens of her research. The following interview starts from Lavin's presentation, aiming to unpack some of its specific observations and discuss them through the lens of her broader work.*

KHŌREIN: You began your short presentation at The New School with an ironic take on the notion of "end," particularly motivated by the pervasive anxiety about "the end" today. How does this idea of end times shape the architectural present?

SYLVIA LAVIN: I was not being ironic. I think people are authentically afraid of the end today. And I think this shapes how architects think about their work in ways that seem to me novel and unprecedented. When I was a student, one understood architecture to be a problem of projection of the future or at least a problem of very long periods of time—monuments, preservation, archives, histories... Architecture understood itself to be something of the *longue durée*. At least its historiography was linked to these ideas of long, interminable periods of time. Over the course of the second half of the 20th century, as American capitalism and modernity overtook the historiography of the field, time shrank to the period of real estate mortgage. It went from "forever" to 30 years in a relatively short amount of time. And in the last ten years, the future has shrunk to two degrees in the change of the temperature of the oceans, which is now 1°. Therefore, the end (of something) is very present. I think that architecture is no more or less than any other field confronting a new way of thinking about time.

KH: In your talk, you centered your reflections on the "end" around what you termed the *radiation episteme*. Although you linked this historically to the aftermath of atomic bombings, you didn't adopt an eschatological tone. Your point seemed to be that radiation destabilizes the very concept of the material. It makes the material an unreliable means to an end. To what extent does this disrupt architecture's fiction of stasis?

SL: My answer here must relate to something that has already ended: the human-centered focus of most architectural fictions of the future. If we accept that human survival is not the point of narrating a future, then ending has no beginning against which to measure itself. Therefore, I don't take an eschatological tone. For me, the radiation episteme is one that thinks a lot about endless chains of mutation. I was thinking in architectural terms about how radiation didn't so much make material an unreliable means to an end because it produced more of an end than had ever been imagined before. It was very good at turning material into a reliable means to an end. But it had other byproducts. It is perhaps the material regime that produced the most unintended byproducts. Of course, all material regimes produce unintended byproducts, but the radiation episteme did so to the point that the difference between byproduct and intentional goal became unstable.

KH: Your research on trees seems to directly address this uncertainty of nature. How does the abstraction of trees into timber, as raw material, reflect a broader shift toward reducing nature's temporal and dynamic qualities into static systems of representation?

SL: I think abstraction is never fully realized. It's not that nature is uncertain. Nature doesn't have certainty. It has operations, and its abstraction is very difficult—I would say impossible—to realize. Maybe today it's interesting to think about architecture not in terms of representation, but rather as a continual effort to maintain the idea of abstraction in the face of concreteness of various forms. I think that's what my work on trees is trying to suggest. Trees are just a kind of stand-in for an obvious thing that architecture engages with on multiple levels at the same time—proportion, anthropomorphism, material, plays, geography, etc. In that sense, trees are a very handy and highly charged heuristic device. What I'm trying to do is explore the extraordinary amount of work that needs to be done, again and again, to keep them contained within the category

of timber in this case. In the United States, to own a piece of property entailed a long history of taking a tree and turning it into a point, and turning the point into a measurement, and having the measurement turn into a line, and having the line go on a property map—and then having the property. This is an incredible chain of what Cornelia Vismann calls substitutions via analogy. The minute you stop that operation, the tree somehow reappears and the whole operation needs to happen again. That's architecture's work, I would say, today.

KH: Architectural processes of "denaturing" are frequently discussed in your writings, often through the semantic duality of the Italian word *pianta*, which captures both the Latin *planta* and the meaning of the plan. Both meanings involve the idea of the *ground* as a plane where seeds are implanted and plans are traced. How do you see this duality in relation to the ideas of beginnings and ends, founding and projection?

SL: I am absolutely fascinated by the process whereby the "ground plane," as we might say in English, lost track of the ground that gave it planarity in the sense that an architectural plan became a legal fiction. What it has been agreed to mean is some abstract horizontal plane, some number of feet off the ground plane. That's what makes it a plan. And if that plan hits the surface of the earth, it can no longer operate as an architectural plan. It stops being a plan. So, somehow the implanting that gave rise to the idea of making a plan lost sight of the ground that gave it its authority. This probably has a kind of long prehistory in forms of magical thinking. I'm not enough of an anthropologist or mythologist to know about that, but it's an extraordinary operation. It's deeply fascinating to think of the way architects have managed to overlook this magic that happens every time they draw a plan. You think of the most hardheaded secularists, for example, Muthesius or somebody like that, drawing a plan and somehow not realizing that he's pulling a white rabbit out of a hat. It's an total act of magical thinking.

KH: Speaking of exploitation and modes of production, we should mention an important subject in your work: *plastic*. The essence of this material lies in its artificiality—its capacity for endless transformation, unconstrained by moral imperatives of "truth to materials." On the other hand, to what extent can the lack of resistance of this material lead to the idea of imposing form onto matter?

SL: If I can answer your question in historical, rather than theoretical terms, I would say that plastic became artificial in the era of a specific chemistry regime. In other words, the idea of the plastic arts long predated the idea of plastic as an artificial material that required chemistry and technology of a certain kind. All it meant to say that plastic was an artificial material was that it escaped ideologies that had grown up around traditional materials. It is also interesting to think historically that materials didn't have truths until the very late 19th century. They had behaviors, origins, economies, and so forth. But, truth they did not have until certain kinds of systems of production intervened in them. Therefore, it was at the moment of the collapse of some material regimes that truth had to be invented. And let me add that truth to materials became an important issue to architects right around the time uranium was detected for the first time at the end of the 19th century. Suddenly, truth to materials had to be invented at the very moment when materials were beginning scientifically to be understood as behaving in ways that were novel, not explained by traditional forms of science. I would say it's important to think about these things in those historical terms.

One notable aspect of plastic—if by that we mean certain chemical polymers—is that it is a material that is the most sensitive to time of any material used by architects. When you extrude a piece of plastic, it remains plastic only for a short amount of time and then hardens to become something that behaves like a different material. So plastic has a shelf life, both in its shaping and in its persistence that might make it an interesting material to think about if one is concerned with the question of time. Moreover, one of the ways that plastic entered the architectural regime was as an agent of fixing together other materials. Plastic served as a kind of glue, and that triggered a retrospective redefinition of all kinds of other materials, such as mortar, certain types of concrete, etc. In this way, plastic became a medium, a kind of in between one thing and another. And then if we look at those median strips, part of what is interesting about them is that they often served historically as weak points, forms of porosity, maybe we could also call them welcoming doors, where various forms of life and elemental matter entered architecture. One of my pet interests now, for example, are these 19th century books on weeds growing in "ancient monuments." I am not talking about ruinology as such, but rather about 19th-century horticulturalists who were interested in plants that adapted their own organic lives to reside in forms of material that they had not

resided in before. For example, weeds moving from places in the ground into the plastic joints between stones in buildings, finding a new form of implantation. For me, plastic is interesting insofar as it unleashes such operations tied to forms of life and connection that do not relate to ideas of truth and falsehood but are rather outside normative models of material.

KH: Speaking of normativity, perhaps we should look back to your writing about "confounding mediums" in *Kissing Architecture*. It is very thought-provoking to trace how you discuss disciplinary boundaries here through the longstanding preoccupation with the "confusion of mediums" and medium specificity, particularly because you focus on thresholds that somehow mobilize these delimitations but still do not abolish them. As you say, "limits can make good politics," which you call "good entanglement." How do you see architecture engaging in this way with other disciplines or fields like media studies, for instance?

SL: Certainly, I was arguing against a kind of video fixation of the world in *Kissing Architecture* that everything was on its way to becoming video and video was becoming a kind of master field that absorbed everything into its intoxicating immateriality. In that sense, I thought entanglement was a way of trying to manage the movement forward and kind of super disciplinarity without collapsing into *meta*. I guess, *meta* didn't exist yet, but we were anticipating *meta*. So good entanglement is a kind of critique of the emergence of meta.

Media studies have, in part through the influence of German cultural technique work, importantly moved away from being itself dominated by questions of film, video and image making. Without media studies we don't have elemental philosophy, we don't have attention to certain forms of material practices in scholarly production and dissemination. I think that media studies is a key place to look for the operations involved by the deployment of matter in the world for ideological purpose. Architecture does that and media does that. Media has a lot to offer architecture, in that sense, precisely by the degree to which it has left behind a traditional definition of media. If you were to compare media studies, say, in the 80s, looking at a film, and the way a media studies person today might look at the cloud or an underwater cable, and how a media studies discourse links them together—that is an extraordinary expansion of thought and power. The question I would be asking is, has architecture

expanded its own self-understanding in ways that are equivalent in scale and power as that. I am not saying it has or it has not. I'm only saying it is a good question to ask.

KH: The metaphor of kissing becomes particularly compelling when thought of not so much as a non-discursive touch, but as an act that implies a political relation between the two. How did this simple idea of "corruption" by another provoke your reflections about the state of the discipline in its tension between autonomy and engagement?

SL: I do not necessarily describe kissing as non-discursive act. I know that there is a lot of literature that does that kind of work on it. I just took it to be an extraordinary statement made by a person in relation to a project she was commissioned to do, and I simply thought: what is that? I clearly fail, but I try to resist ontological, historical, essential arguments about what a kiss is. Rather under those circumstances—the reopening of the Museum of Modern Art, an institution in the throes of the most megalomaniacal expansion and confidence in its first world, first city, first borough status—what did it mean to not be able to resist saying yes to MoMA? And yet, wanting also to produce a kind of disdain. I think that when Pipilotti Rist said she wanted to kiss it, it was—though I don't know this, but I read it—meant to be an almost castrating act. I thought this was a critical strategy she was trying to deploy and develop at a moment in which the advertising universe was taking over cities and museums as such were coming to an end. Their cultural status as autonomous objects were coming to an end. I think of it as a historical reflection on thinking about architecture and its accoutrement in that period of time.

KH: Another installation you mention in the same book is Diller + Scofidio's *withDrawing Room*. You seem to introduce it almost as a counterexample of radical avant-gardism, talking about its dismemberment as a way of intentionally precluding intimacy. Were you employing such a mode of detachment as a form of criticality?

SL: I certainly think that the *withDrawing Room* succeeded in producing a critical response to the idea that there could be something like public intimacy, in its refutation of the spectacle of intimacy. Maybe there is a word missing here, which is *privacy*. In the period the *withDrawing Room* was made, there was a lot of interest in the problem of privacy

and where privacy and the public realm intersected. I think that was part of the strategy. Certainly, I think they were equally interested in private forms of design. Without Walter Benjamin's writings on the interior there wouldn't be the *withDrawing Room*. It is an intimate meditation on Walter Benjamin's reading of the Parisian interior and the forms of drawing that it inadvertently produced. There are these fabulous passages in Benjamin about how when you sat down on a Victorian sofa your ass made an imprint on the voluptuous velvet upholstery, and when you stood up a kind of ass drawing was left behind you. I suppose in the era of the Victorian prude there could be nothing more weirdly intimate than asses all over the place in a proper parlor. But I think that was the kind of soft, ironic inversion that Diller + Scofidio then explored.

KH: Your reflections on the context of this project are accompanied by expressions like "tragedy of isolation" and "tough love." What do you see as the "tough loves" that shaped architectural discourse back then (or continue to shape it today)?

SL: I suppose I would say that in the now decades that I've been thinking about architecture, I have become increasingly uncomfortable with the ahistoricity of the philosophical position. Not that I don't wish philosophers to continue to occupy it, but I am not comfortable there. It is very tough for me not to assume that what one person thinks of as philosophy, another person experiences as hegemonic in position. I don't know how to navigate that except by shifting to, let's call it ends, historical ends, because it means that whatever mistakes I make, which will be inevitable and profound, I do not spread them into the world with universal ambition. It is a kind of shrinking of the amount of fuck-up that I can produce. So, in the period in which I was thinking about this problem, architecture as a field was really going through the renunciation of its identification with drawing and representation. That was the problem in the field of western modern, Euro, American architecture—insofar as there was a field we're talking about. For 25, 30, or even 50 years—whatever the exact span—this was, in the context of human history, just a blip. Yet during that period, we came to believe it represented "architecture itself." It was a time when architecture identified the purity of its own purpose, its morality, and all the ideas we've been discussing in relation to drawing. The drawing served as a kind of filtering device through which architecture filtered out the toxins it was otherwise deploying around the

world, while simultaneously defining what it believed itself to be. In that particular moment, I felt that fantasy world was coming undone. And writing then as a critic, as opposed to an historian, I was thinking: how do you make sure this crazy false world does come undone? It must collapse, but perhaps if you accompany it on this journey of collapse, it will have a softer landing and be able to find other ways of moving forward. I think that's really what I was saying. I felt that the field had to go through a kind of mourning because it really believed in this myth that it had produced for itself. And I felt sympathy with its loss.

Interview conducted by Sara Dragišić and Marko Ristić.

Choral Architects and Collective Intelligence: Interview with Carlo Ratti

KHŌREIN: One of the key terms in your statement for the 19th Venice Architecture Biennale is "End." You ask whether it is too late to avoid the end of life on Earth. Is there a way out of this end-times scenario if climate change continues at this pace?

CARLO RATTI: The *Biennale Architettura* 2025 will seek to convey a message of hope. There is no doubt that we are now entering the era of adaptation to climate change—and architecture is the key discipline that can contribute to it.

KH: From another perspective, your question resonates with the ideas of the theory of Dark Ecology and the claim that the world has already come to an end with the invention of the steam engine. Can technology that caused the climate crisis now be used to reverse this process?

CR: I believe it can, but only if we shift our approach. While technology has been used as a tool of exploitation, it is not inherently destructive. The pivotal issue is not the technology itself but the intentions behind its use. Richard Buckminster Fuller once warned that "how we approach urban development today will determine our destiny—utopia or oblivion." This sentiment holds true for technology as well. If design and technological innovation are narrowly focused on consumerism or superficial aesthetics, we risk being distracted from the pressing challenges of our time.

However, if we deploy these tools with a broader vision—using design to tackle the climate crisis and social inequality—they could be forces for transformative good. We have seen examples of this in architecture and design, where the conversation is shifting toward addressing global challenges. For instance, Lesley Lokko's *Biennale Architettura* marked a significant step in bringing the industry closer to addressing both ecological sustainability and social justice. It demonstrates that the solutions we

need are already within reach, but the way forward requires us to rethink how we use technology and design.

I don't consider myself an optimist but a realist. The tools we need to address these crises exist. The real barrier is not a lack of technological capability but a collective failure to prioritize the common good. The future hinges not on whether technology can be used to reverse the damage—it absolutely can—but on whether we have the collective will to deploy it as an instrument of healing and transformation.

KH: Your work in urban planning and design could be summed up as an agenda to bring the natural and artificial worlds together. How do you propose the creation of this symbiosis between natural and artificial intelligence? Finally, how does the third notion of the collective add to this "trialectics?" Where do you position the issue of commoning in this equation and your practice?

CR: The search for a balance between the natural and artificial worlds is a central theme in today's discussions on urban planning and design, especially as we navigate the complexities of the Anthropocene. This era, marked by significant human impact on the planet, reveals that the lines between "natural" and "artificial" are increasingly blurred. As Nobel laureate Herbert Simon pointed out, even a plowed field is not just a product of nature; it reflects human intervention and design. Such insights challenge our traditional definitions of nature, showing how human activity has long shaped the biological world, making it more artificial than we often acknowledge.

This raises an important question: If we can shape the natural world to suit our needs, can we also make our cities and built environments more attuned to nature? This merging of the natural and artificial suggests a shift in how we think about cities, transforming them from concrete jungles into vibrant ecosystems where built environments coexist with nature.

At the heart of this vision is the idea of collective intelligence, which becomes increasingly vital as the distinctions between human design and organic existence fade. Addressing the challenges of urban environments requires more than the vision of a single architect; it calls for a collaborative approach that embraces the adaptive nature of collective intelligence.

Historically, architecture and urban planning have relied on collaboration, drawing from local knowledge and shared experiences. Before the rise of the "starchitect," cities were shaped through the efforts of communities responding to their surroundings, creating spaces that were functional and in harmony with nature. This form of collective intelligence allows for solutions that work with ecological systems rather than against them.

KH: When defining collective intelligence, you start from the idea of "architecture without architects," echoing Bernard Rudofsky's exploration of vernacular architecture. How might we define collectivity or collective intelligence beyond the idea of the vernacular? How do you see the role of academics in this collective intelligence?

CR: While vernacular design is deeply embedded in local environmental and cultural contexts, I believe collective intelligence today embraces a broader, more interconnected framework that recognizes the influence of global networks and collaborative processes. Paul Ricœur's critique of global homogenization serves as a cautionary tale against a world inundated with standardized products and ideas, leading to cities that risk becoming indistinguishable from one another. Meanwhile, Kenneth Frampton's concept of critical regionalism underscores the significance of place-based architecture, striving to balance global influences with local realities. Yet, as the complexities of globalization continue to unfold, architectural discourse must adapt and evolve.

A few years ago, my colleague from Harvard, Antoine Picon, and I proposed the framework of Network Specifism—a contemporary lens for understanding collective intelligence in architecture. This approach recognizes that architectural and urban practices are increasingly shaped by dynamic global networks and collaborative efforts. Building on Christopher Kelty's idea of the "recursive public," it posits that these networks not only facilitate interaction but also actively influence the shaping of community and space.

The concept of collective intelligence in architecture today should marry local specificity with global connectivity, empowered by digital tools and interdisciplinary collaboration. I believe Network Specifism offers a promising framework for crafting spaces that resonate with local

identities while simultaneously engaging with the broader, interconnected world.

As to what you ask about academics, in a parallel sense, I think they ought to learn to shed their insular tendencies and engage more openly with the wider world. Their ideas—and the broader community—would benefit from it. I am not pointing fingers—architects are often just as guilty. And I should know—I am both an architect and an academic.

KH: Perhaps one of the most provocative terms in your writings is "choral architect." If we understand it well, a choral architect would be someone without a specific finished object in mind, that is, whose end goal is rather to orchestrate the very process of collective work. You use an interesting expression in this context, "design-curation ecosystem." Where do you find the relevance of this metaphor of curation? Could it replace the idea of authority with some more ecological approaches in the architect's work?

CR: The concept of the "choral architect" could redefine the architect's role, moving away from sole authorship toward facilitating a collaborative process. Rather than dictating outcomes, the architect curates and steers the design process, much like a curator arranges an exhibition, allowing diverse inputs to shape the project. I would not say this diminishes the need for vision—if anything, it calls for an even more expansive imagination to guide the process toward something remarkable.

KH: What do you see as the role of architecture in the future world, whatever this concept of the future implies? Are we living at the end of architecture, and would you agree with Jean Nouvel that the future of architecture is not architectural?

CR: Jean Nouvel's assertion that "the future of architecture is not architectural" isn't entirely new. Le Corbusier, decades ago, claimed that "the future of architecture is an engineer," hinting at a shift where architects might become peripheral figures in the broader realm of design and construction. If Nouvel's point is that architecture should embrace collaboration with other disciplines—engineering, technology, urban planning—we are on board. But if his statement implies architecture should devolve into mere philosophical speculation or virtual representations, disconnected from practical solutions, we disagree. The profession still

holds a vital role in addressing today's key challenges, as we were discussing before.

KH: You have stated that the digital and physical worlds are converging. In your formulation, the concept of a "real-time city" advances new dynamics in human interactions with urban spaces. You envision cities where physical and social networks are engaged in continuous interchange, mediated by sophisticated communication networks, digital sensors, and big data. Could we say that these complex networks of smart environments are turning our real surroundings into virtual ones?

CR: In a way, yes, but I am more interested in the fact that these smart environments are making our artificial spaces feel more "natural." As our cities evolve, they begin to mirror the complexity and adaptability of natural systems—reacting to us, learning from us, and even anticipating our needs. Sensors, AI, and actuators are turning our buildings and cities into hybrid entities that resemble the natural world—fostering the convergence we were discussing before…

KH: Félix Guattari's suggestion to think transversally in finding solutions for the eco-social crisis can be seen in your approach to the set of problems you would like to address from the position of different disciplines, discourses, or "intelligences." You underline that you intend to "explore a definition of 'intelligence' as an ability to adapt to the environment with limited resources, knowledge, or power." How do you intend to use all the available knowledge to challenge the position of power that, if you would agree, is inherent to the role of the curator of such a major global exhibition? How would you "exercise" this power?

CR: I plan to share power by including diverse voices—architects, scientists, urbanists, philosophers, and even non-human intelligences. While architects should still steer the ship, it is essential to recognize that others need to be on board with us. For that, next year we will challenge the traditional notion of authorship—moving from the autocratic approach architects have been favoring to a more democratic system inspired by what happens in science.

KH: We see environmental issues increasingly frequently becoming the theme of exhibitions and biennales. Your work and the concept you

proposed for next year's *Biennale Architettura* tackle this problem as well. However, a concern raised by T.J. Demos is how the exhibitions that deal at the theoretical level with environmental issues are actually being produced and realized. According to him, instead of finding solutions, major exhibitions tend to contribute to the problem in various ways. How do you, or how does one, practically address the problem of mounting a huge exhibition such as the Venice Biennale in an ecologically conscious way? How would this be implemented in practice?

CR: T.J. Demos raises an important critique, and I fully acknowledge the paradox inherent in large-scale exhibitions that claim to engage with environmental issues while simultaneously contributing to the problem. Exhibitions, conferences, and biennales often, albeit unintentionally, perpetuate environmental harm through resource-intensive setups, international travel, and temporary structures. This concern extends even to the COP conferences focused on climate change.

This irony is not lost on me, and it raises profound questions about the legitimacy of such events in the context of sustainability. In response to this, I find greater inspiration not from exhibitions but from impermanent cultural gatherings like Burning Man in Nevada or the Kumbh Mela in India. These events provide a compelling framework for understanding temporary, large-scale gatherings that function with minimal lasting environmental impact. Both Burning Man and the Kumbh Mela involve the construction of entire cities and ecosystems that are dismantled without leaving a significant trace, embodying principles of circularity, temporary stewardship, and ecological mindfulness.

Our upcoming *Biennale Architettura* 2025 aims to be the first of its kind to adopt a circular approach. The Circularity Manifesto, which we recently released at Climate Week NYC, details how the *Biennale Architettura* 2025 will actively minimize its ecological footprint by employing sustainable construction methods, reusing materials, and integrating the infrastructure into local ecosystems in a way that reduces waste and energy consumption. Our aim extends beyond solely discussing environmental transitions; we intend to implement these principles within the exhibition framework. This means incorporating renewable energy sources, prioritizing carbon-neutral travel options, and post-exhibition recycling plans for installations. Through these efforts, we aim to shift the

Biennale Architettura from being a contributor to environmental degradation to a model of sustainable cultural production.

It is not an easy path and next year will not be perfect yet—but we want to start to walk the talk.

KH: Given that innovation plays such an important role in your architecture and design practice, do you find that the global phenomenon of "biennalization," and in general the format of the biennale, offers much in the way of innovation? Otherwise, are the biennales and other major cultural and artistic manifestations just reproducing the dominant, often market-driven, socio-economic system? Finally, is the concept of national pavilions—which survives only in Venice, the oldest of all the biennales—still viable, or does it need to come to an end?

The term "biennalization" conjures images for me of a global elite—curators and a select group of artists and architects—moving from one Biennale to another in a self-congratulatory, exclusionary circuit. From Venice to Berlin to Chicago, the same names appear, raising concerns that these gatherings offer little room for fresh voices or innovative ideas. I would argue this critique falls short when it comes to the *Biennale Architettura*.

Take, for instance, Lesley Lokko's exhibition last year, which made space for architects who had never before appeared on such a stage. Placing them alongside more established figures, it created a genuinely dynamic, diverse platform. This year, our "Space for Ideas" initiative continues in that spirit, inviting participants discovered through open submissions—individuals who might never have had the chance to showcase their work otherwise. The democratic and inclusive nature of this approach, I believe, offers a strong counterpoint to the notion of biennales as closed, elite clubs.

Regarding the concept of national participations, I believe they still hold relevance. They can be platforms for addressing global issues through local lenses, where the national becomes a starting point for broader, interconnected conversations about architecture, culture, and society. This year we are trying to foster a common conversation on the theme "One place, one solution" in a way similar to what Rem Koolhaas did in 2014, albeit in a more bottom-up way (we are holding regular workshops with

all national curators and are rejoicing in the wonderful interconnectedness that is emerging).

Finally, there is the "biennalization" of Venice itself, a city some critics argue has become an open-air museum, where art installations are parachuted into the urban landscape with little regard for its rich cultural and historical fabric. The charge is that these exhibitions serve more to enhance the market value of the artists than to enrich Venice's local ecosystem. In our vision, the Biennale should not "mummify" the city; rather, it should reinvigorate it. We see Venice first and foremost as a living laboratory—a site for experimentation in architecture and urban design, not a static museum piece. Biennales that merely showcase existing knowledge are outdated and of little use (the Internet does that much better!). However, a biennale can be essential if it aids in developing new knowledge. This is our ambition for 2025!

Interview conducted by Zoran Erić, Snežana Vesnić, Željko Radinković, and Marko Ristić.

André Patrão*

Kim Förster, *Building Institution: The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, New York 1967–1985*, transcript Verlag, Bielefeld, 2024.

The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies (1967–1985) holds a quasi-mythical place in architectural culture, in that it endures as something both incredible and seemingly intangible. The IAUS' reputation has been passed on by its Fellows, who came to occupy influential positions at prestigious East Czoast academic institutions in the United States and beyond. Its legacy lives on through its plentiful publications, which redefined the methodologies and the canon of architectural history and theory. But until recently, for four decades since it closed its doors, no comprehensive retrospective study of its extraordinary history had been published. This is not to say that it was absent from academic writing, and indeed some of its output received much scholarly attention, none standing out as much as the 26 issues of the IAUS journal *Oppositions* with its iconic Super Warm Red Pantone cover and Helvetica title.[1] Just a few years after the journal's last issue came out, Joan Ockman—former associate director of the journal and fellow at the Institute[2]—authored a piece with the self-explanatory title *Resurrecting the Avant-Garde: The History and Program of Oppositions*—in *Architectureproduction* (1988). A decade later, highlights from several issues were reproduced in *Oppositions Reader: Selected Essays 1973-1984*, edited by K. Michael Hays—one of the editors of the journal's heir, *Assemblage* (1986–2000), published

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[1]   K. Förster, *Building Institution*, p. 393.
[2]   *Ibid*., pp. 406, 482.

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by MIT Press as were many of *Oppositions'* issues. Only in 2010 were oral histories of some of Institute's former members collected and printed, 27 of them to be exact, in IAUS*, the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies: An Insider's Memoir,* edited by Suzanne Frank.

These fragments and recollections built up the Institute's aura not just through what they said, but also by repeatedly stressing the difficulty of truly explaining what it was all about. The legendary penthouse at 8 West 40th Street in New York City, home of the IAUS for most of its existence, is described as space of design, education, lectures, exhibitions, and publications, a stage for rising scholars and architects, a meeting place for curious people from a breath of academic backgrounds, a think tank, a tastemaker, a social hotspot, a site for experimentation, a stimulating, transformative, prolific environment, unconventional and ever-shifting as its aims mutated and the people who formed it changed. It relied on fickle funding and creative management to stave off its debts, including unpaid utility bills and salaries. However, the perpetual looming threat of bankruptcy too was part of its identity, which further romanticized the IAUS as an alternative space, surviving and thriving in the breaches of the establishment. To pin down such an immense, intricate, multifaceted, and chaotic history appears to be, like the Institute itself, "an almost impossible undertaking,"[3] as Kim Förster said at the end of a book where he does just that.

Building Institution: The Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies, New York 1967–1985 embodies the enormity of the task it is meant to accomplish, in its sheer numbers: 584 pages with 940 footnotes and 137 figures summarize 99 novel oral histories and a list of countless bibliographical references at the end of 15 years of research that extended from ETH Zürich to the Canadian Center for Architecture and across many other libraries, museums, universities, and archives. The book is efficiently organized into 4 main chapters, each one telling the story of the IAUS through different thematic but chronologically concurrent dimensions of its primary activities: design, education, events, and publications.

The first chapter, "Project Office," documents the early design-related works realized at the Institute, such as the "Streets Project" (1970–1972), the construction of the Marcus Garvey Park Village housing project (1972–1976), and the Roosevelt Island Housing Competition (1975). The second, "Architecture School," shows the Institute's ambiguous

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[3]   *Ibid*., p. 528.

position as a self-professed alternative learning place which, because not accredited, was reliant on universities, colleges, and other institutions for the success of its Internship Program, High School Program, Undergraduate Program, the Evening Program, and of the short-lived IAUS Advanced Design Workshop in Architecture and Urban Form. The third chapter, "Cultural Space," lays out the tremendous quantity and diversity of topics addressed in the "Exhibition Program" and especially in the "Architecture" lecture series, such that, at one point, the IAUS hosted well-attended events every night of the week. The fourth, "Publishing Imprint," exposes the forces and constraints behind the production of the Institute's notable publications, namely *Oppositions* (1973–1984), the still ongoing contemporary arts journal *October* (1976), the newspaper *Skyline* (1978–1980, 1981–1983), the popular *IAUS Exhibition Catalogs* (1979–1983), and the long-delayed *Opposition Books* (1982–1987).[4] The "Coda" points at the generational shift that occurred at the IAUS in the '80s, namely with the Young Architects' Circle and their revival of socio-political concerns in architecture, through events such as the ReVision event series (1981) and the symposium on "Architecture and Ideology: Notes on Material Criticism" (1982). It also includes an overview of the Institute's rapid decline and demise after Eisenmann's sudden resignation as director in 1982, a comparatively brief account given that the whereabouts of the Institute's documentation for this period remain a mystery.

A "study of the Institute qua *institution*,"[5] Förster says of the aims and approach of the book. As its title suggests, among the architectural and urban *building* realized at the IAUS—in a figurative sense, and in one exceptional literal case too—there was also its all-important *building itself* as an institution where its intended activities could take place. However, this study by no means amounts to a mere compilation of archival documentation on the administration and operation of the Institute. *Building Institution* reveals to what extent its mode of functioning enabled, framed, and conditioned its activities, which exerted such tremendous impact in architectural history, theory, and practice to this day. The Institute's defining lofty ideal of thinking architecture was shaped by individual interests, commitments, and the networks of its members—with Eisenman at the center—and successively reshaped by its varying means of financial survival, through grants, subscriptions, sponsorships,

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[4] *Ibid*., pp. 26, 526–527.
[5] *Ibid*., p. 17.

philanthropy, and a great deal of free labor. The intellectual discussions it opened and the polemics it triggered were simultaneously spaces of promotion and career advancement for its Fellows and funders.

Förster parses through reams of previously unpublished material, patiently contextualizing and critically interpreting it, and knitting it into well-articulated narratives. This is nothing short of an extraordinary feat, and readers who have ever conducted similar investigations will likely see through the polished text and discern the tremendous editing process behind it. He recurrently depicts the institute as postmodern, in the sense that the penthouse and its publications gathered an abundance of distinct and even competing modes of thinking—from Frampton's combination of phenomenology and Marxism to Agrest and Gandelsonas' structuralism and semiotics; or Eisenman's claims of architectural autonomy and Tafuri's direct rebuttals of it. Förster's close analysis of the Institute's everyday operations also brings forth specific dynamics of the Institute, from its programmatic responses to external circumstances—such as the global recession of the mid-1970s, and the Nixon-era conservative turn of the U.S. with its consequential policy changes to welfare and economic regulation—to its stances on issues then emerging in the architectural profession—like the economization of culture, glaring gender and racial inequality, and the power dynamics behind the IAUS' own gatekeeping and canon-making.

The result is not the kind of book one reads avidly from start to finish, and this is only in small part due to its big size. *Building Institution* is an abridged archive, to be *consulted* rather than *read*. Other than the exclusive group of scholars highly committed to or formally part of the IAUS' history, or researchers working on the institutionality of similar organizations, the potential broader readership of the book will most likely go through its contents in a targeted way. Doing so, they will find an abundance of detailed information, rendered accessible and insightful, and carefully framed within the institution's bigger picture. This selective mode of reading attenuates the book's occasional repetitiveness, which seems to be the side-effect of an understandably challenging editorial process where blocks of texts were moved around and hammered in until the book took its final form. One of the most explicit examples of these disorienting recurrences is Philip Johnson. After his role at the Institute is rightly and extensively examined,[6] Johnson is then reintroduced

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6   *Ibid*., pp. 242–246.

in the following pages, over and over again, always as if for the first time. However, in a book that one consults rather than reads, this repetition allows the target-oriented reader to land on any subchapter and find the necessary framework to grasp it.

One interest that may drive readers of *Khōrein* to the index pages of *Building Institution* is the Institute's influential relation with philosophy. Many Fellows shared the *modus operandi* of assimilating philosophical insights into their work, albeit drawing from radically different sources. The impact of publications like *Oppositions*, where many of the Fellows' most groundbreaking works appeared, not only infused these specific philosophical ideas and references into architectural culture, into the bibliographies of architectural research, and into the syllabi of emerging history and theory courses, but also normalized the architectural-philosophical exchange as such. While the Fellows' thinking and ideas *per se* and their links to philosophy were not the primary scope of the book, Förster nevertheless acknowledges them. Adorno, Arendt, Barthes, Baudrillard, Benjamin, Bloch, Cacciari, Chomsky, Derrida, Foucault, Heidegger, and Jameson all play a role in the narrative, while Förster himself explicitly cites some of them as guides for his analysis, with Bourdieu as his main reference.

The most significant contribution of the book to philosophy, however, is to place it among the rest of the intellectual and cultural production of the Institute. These philosophical sources now *instituted* in architectural discourse were not comprehensive reading lists of the academic *episteme* of their time. They too were dependent on personal interests and networks, on what was or was not possible within the Institute's challenging financial conditions, and sometimes, on its potential when instrumentalized for intellectual self-legitimation and promotion. In other words, the architectural-philosophical exchange was also a production of the Institute *qua* institution. In this regard, readers ought to take several cues from *Building Institution*: to ask what other philosophers and ideas were left out of these circumstantial picks, what the biases behind these choices may denote, and what missed opportunities should be revisited; to reconsider the ways in which these architectural-philosophical conversations are conducted, as today, they generally replicate the models that came out of the particular conditions of the Institute between the 1960s and 1980s; to reassess conceptions of institutions not solely in terms of their inevitable prejudices but also of the historical singularities the may enable; and perhaps most importantly, to take these

personally-driven and circumstantially-conditioned readings of philosophy in architecture not just a crystalized history of ideas of characters—that so often turns "history and theory of architecture" into "history *of* theory of architecture"—but as an encouragement to embrace *our own* personal drives and conditioning circumstances in the pursuit of daring new modes of philosophically-inspired thinking in architecture, perhaps even aspiring to yield the impact that the Institute's publications, still so carefully studied today, exerted back then.

Whichever interests may motivate readers to consult this book, they will find a massive work on the IAUS unlikely to be rivaled any time soon. *Building Institution* is an essential source for studies on the Institute's history and its legacy, as well as a prime case-study on the formation of institutions in general. Förster's abridged archive of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies fills a wide four-decade-old gap in university library shelves.

Book Review

Emine Görgül*

Chris L. Smith, *Architecture After Deleuze and Guattari*, Bloomsbury Academic, London/New York/Oxford/New Delhi/Sydney, 2023.

In the book *Architecture after Deleuze and Guattari*, Chris L. Smith provides the reader with a multi-faceted discussion by focusing on the contemporary condition of architecture and place-making practices in resonance with the Deleuzian-Guattarian perspective. While exploring the diverse notions and concepts of Deleuze and Guattari's philosophy, the author develops a manifold and cross-disciplinary discussion on spatial ontology in relation to the shifting architectural and socio-political discourse. Thus, by winding back the spool to the progress of the 20th-century architectural practice and to the extensive discussions on late 20th-century architectural theory and criticism—which had been exploring new pathways for the upcoming century—Smith scrutinizes the ecologies of 21st-century architecture. The book aims to trace "the entwining of the philosophy with contemporary architecture and explore how the relation between the two generates that which is new."[1] The novel discussion that the book puts forth reverberates from the architectural discourse and practice and the emerging spatial landscape as its tangible domain towards the mental landscape of the user through the affective qualities of space and its perception.

Smith dismantles the global socio-political landscape of the late-modern and late-capitalist condition by deploying Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical approach and their conceptual framework. The book is

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[1] C. L. Smith, *Architecture After Deleuze and Guattari*, *s.p.* ("Foreword").

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structured into four parts—*sympathies, exploration, experimentation*, and *minor architectures*—through which the author provides pathways for readers to acknowledge, explore, and in-form their understanding by offering an easily accessible language and clear definitions of complex philosophical concepts and terms. In this way, the discussion of abstract philosophical terms is supported through multi-dimensional assemblages of architectural cases' concrete presence and tangible materiality. The author develops a simple framing of the key components and conceptualization of the Deleuzian-Guattarian take on architecture while stitching their philosophical thinking with minor and niche cases of contemporary architecture and place-making practices. This framework identifies the position of architecture in relation to micro- and macro-political re-contextualization of the individual and the society.

In the first section of the book, Smith focuses on the essential notions by dismantling the precursory linkages between the Deleuzian-Guattarian philosophy and its penetration into the discussions of the communities of architecture and architectural theorists. Then, in the following section and its sub-sections, the author explores the ways and means through which architectural discourse and practice have borrowed the "regimes of thought" developed and utilized by Deleuze and Guattari, and how architecture has adopted and implemented them. The third section and its sub-sections focus on the experimentation in the field of politics and space, and the potential of architectural embodiment and place-making practices in conveying micro- and macro-political statements. Finally, in the fourth section and its sub-sections, Smith spotlights "minor architectures" to reveal the offspring of Deleuzian-Guattarian thought—their philosophy as "'dark precursor' of an architecture to come"—by tracing the remote, minor, but impactful cases from architecture that "have extended or exceeded definitions of architecture itself."[2]

In the sixteen sections of the book—*fold, geophilosophy, sense, assemblages, constructivism, transversality, schizo-analysis, transcendent empiricism, islands, micropolitics, war machines, ethico-aesthetics, syntheses, cosmic artisans, new materialism, affect*—the author utilizes the structural motif of introducing the spatial pattern, the context, the design rationale, the concept, and the ambient characteristics of the place in a possible bodily experience, identifying the statements regarding the existing architecture and art history discourse, and the linkages with the philosophical

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[2] *Ibid.*, p. 141.

discussions. The book furnishes references from art history and design culture, literature, journalism, and psychoanalysis while borrowing diverse methodologies and techniques to amplify the discussion.

As the book refers to a considerably rich readings of diverse spatio-temporal cases from multiple cultures and geographies, it sometimes appears as a travelogue or a book of travels. The author not only reflects the transforming path of architecture and place-making practice in time, showcasing and dismantling the selected cases, and chronicling the internal journey of an architect who confronts the architectural paradigm shift from the 20th century to 21st, but also moves between destinations, narrating the spatial-temporalities through cognitive and bodily experiences. This book also invites us to a minor journey by helping us to question our current spatial positions and attachments, while enabling us to develop our space-making practices with respect to our socio-political existence.

Book Review

Peter J Baldwin*

Patrik Schumacher, *Tectonism: Architecture for the Twenty-First Century,* Images Publishing/The Arts Bridge, Melbourne, 2023.

> It is the thesis of this book that parametrism in general—and tectonism in particular—is the most viable candidate to become the unified epochal style for the twenty-first century. Implied in this thesis is the subsidiary thesis that the current unresolved pluralism of incompatible styles is something to be overcome rather than to be celebrated.[1]

Tectonism: Architecture for the Twenty-First Century might best be understood as a companion to Schumacher's earlier work *The Autopoiesis of Architecture, Volume I: A New Framework for Architecture*.[2] Comprising 176 pages, this publication furthers Schumacher's original thesis, positing Parametric design as an architectural panacea of the coming digital age. Through the augmentation of designerly intelligence and creative praxis with computational cleverness and generative information modelling techniques, Schumacher posits *Tectonism* as a paradoxical silver bullet that will heal fragmentation of disciplinary discourse and the pluralism of architectural intent(ions).[3] Organised around the "Four Premises"—Parametricism, Computational Engineering, From Engineering Inspiration to Architectural Style, and the Expressive Utilisation of

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[1] P. Schumacher, *Tectonism*, p. 6.
[2] P. Schumacher, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture, Vol. 1: A New Framework for Architecture*, Wiley, New York, 2011.
[3] P. Schumacher, *Tectonism*, p. 20.

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Engineering Logics—the book presents Tectonism as the next stage in our digitised disciplinary (r)evolution.

The first premise, "Parametricisim," foregrounds the evolution of Parametric design as a theoretical response to the intellectual and social demands of a post-Fordist society. Introduced as an opposing force to contemporary pluralism, this section espouses the need for an epochal architectural style, primed for the emerging socio-cultural conditions of the information age, whilst pitting parametric design as an opposing force against the purportedly defunct Postmodern and Deconstructive ideologies that were themselves radical reconceptualisation of architectural thought that attempted to address the social conditions of the later decades of the twentieth century.

Simultaneously, the first premise also leverages a timeous and compelling call for the revaluation of a highly conceptualised notion of "Style," as a means of iterating established architectural ideas and ideals as a "research methodology" that can accelerate the development of architectural enquiries. In spite of this adoption of a scholarly approach to stylistic sophistication, a number of key questions and issues are glossed over, leading to obvious questions around the lack of overt and coherent social purpose, societal relevance, and self-criticism. Indeed, whilst the author identifies these concerns himself,[4] the text offers little to assuage them.

The second premise, "Computational Engineering," charts the ongoing ontological and methodological shift, from typological to topological logics, within the field of engineering, through the development of more and more sophisticated computational simulations. Challenging prior practices and preconceptions, the formal logics that have dominated engineering thinking have begun to shift away from a reductive approach to finding basic geometric forms for the transfer of loads, to a more integrated particle-based system where wholistic modelling can offer more dynamic approaches to load transfer, offering a freedom of form and a resolution to the traditional tensions between architectural aspiration and engineering practicality.

The third premise, "From Engineering Inspiration to Architectural Style," develops this idea, offering "Tectonism" as a stylistic heightening of these engineering processes. Returning to the earlier discussion of styles, this section of the book presents Tectonism as the most "mature and potent" substyle of the parametric movement, arguing for its

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[4] *Ibid*., p. 25.

engineered rigour, plurality of form, and its capacity to address programmatic and contextual contingencies,[5] and yet, despite this and overt references to both the phenomenological and semiotic capacities and concerns of architecture, we are offered little in the way of explanation as to how this style can engage with these complex, multifaceted matters. Indeed, much of the work offered serves to undermine these suggestions, with a conspicuous lack of contextual variance and formal variety, despite radically different programmes, functions, and socio-cultural contexts.

The last and by far the largest section of the book (comprising approximately 100 of the 170 or so pages of the book) is dedicated to the fourth premise, "Expressive Utilisation of Engineering Logics," exploring examples of this typology primarily through the work of Zaha Hadid Architects (now ZHA).

Whilst Schumacher's assertions that—in the wake of the post-postmodern fracturing and fractalisation of disciplinary discourse as a reactionary position—we have lost a degree of coherence and forward momentum are not without validity, this nostalgia for a globalised era defining style might be seen as a failure to learn from, or at the very least an overlooking of the concerns and criticisms levied against modernism's machinic modus operandi. Indeed, despite the well-intentioned call for disciplinary cohesion and the adoption of emerging technologies and design philosophies, concerns and considerations of degrowth, ecological and socio-cultural accountability, that have become increasingly dominant themes within our disciplinary discourse over the past decade, are scarcely discussed. Moreover, tendencies towards specificity and responsiveness are met with a disappointingly dismissive disposition.

Presented in perfect isolation(ism), these proposals appear to insist that, with the coming of the digital age, the architectural edifice is formed a new, the palimpsestuous slate of prior ages, swept clean, offering sterilised *tabula rasa*. Through this dissociative dislocation-ing, a strange form of object-ification occurs, presenting these proposals as precious objects rather than active, engaged, and occupied spaces and places. Beguiling and beautiful, we cannot help but be fascinated by them, and yet for all this seductive power, they leave us bereft. Lacking clarity of social purpose and semiotic meaning, these complex geometries take on all the exquisite strangeness of the antediluvian relics and ruins of some other, perhaps alien race.

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[5] *Ibid*., p. 50.

But, perhaps, it is neither the point nor the purpose of this text to answer all the questions that might be raised by the emergence of a new architectural style. Perhaps it should be seen as a call to action—a call to act on, to engage with, and address the pressing socio-cultural questions that face practices and practitioners of this emerging design paradigm. Not seeking to offer answers, *Tectonism* should instead be considered an invitation for critical introspection, a way of moving tectonism beyond its emergent typology of fluid form-finding, towards its identity as a fluidic architecture for the future.

Book Review

Marko Icev*

Dana Cuff, *Architectures of Spatial Justice*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass./London, 2023.

Architecture today is in crisis. What is architecture for? Who is it for? Who gets to participate in design, and who gets to enjoy well-designed spaces? Rarely do architects really examine their role in the society in which their profession operates, and even more rarely do they question how their industry has an impact on that world and the effects of their work within a broader socio-economical context. During the last few decades of neoliberal capitalism, the construction industry at large has been responsible for over 40% of carbon emissions, and ever-larger populations have been facing houselessness, displacement, and lack of basic infrastructure. Meanwhile, architecture has become an introverted "discipline" of formal speculations and not the place where the future is envisioned, debated and worked on. The idea that architecture and good design can contribute to a better society—and that this is the expected responsibility of anyone in the larger field of the built environment—has been mostly ignored.

Once in a while, thankfully, a book comes along that breaks through established barriers of thinking and proposes new possibilities for theory and work. Dana Cuff's *Architectures of Spatial Justice* is one of such books and comes at the right time. Architecture, as a form of a struggle for spatial justice, has been functioning in many different ways and in different locations. *Architectures of Spatial Justice* examines what architects can do to create a better society by leveraging their design, organization, collaboration, and research skills. It shows how architecture can be done differently—outside of capitalist expectations though still within the current system—and how it can produce beneficial spaces

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that provide some form of spatial justice. Through personal stories and case studies, Cuff presents a plethora of projects or examples of socially responsible architecture.

Through the lens of the 21st century, and in the tradition of Edward Soja, David Harvey and Henry Lefebvre, as well as bell hooks and Cornell West, the book maps out a trajectory of architectural work based on spatial justice and provides guidelines for practicing it. Cuff examines architecture as a product of work that has a responsibility to provide not just shelter but also quality, equity, and dignity for the most marginalized and excluded populations within society. The search for spatial justice and the definitions of it span decades of scholarship in urban planning, architecture, geography, and the social sciences. While belonging to that tradition of scholars, Cuff provides a fresh take of what spatial justice is through examples from work done by the cityLab research laboratory at UCLA, as well as works of other architects and activists from around the world.

This book is organized and framed around several concepts that outline how architectural projects push the boundaries of work that is beneficial for groups of people usually marginalized by mainstream architectural practices within a capitalist system. These concepts are *leveraging design, radically public architecture, partnerships of difference, generative demonstrations, legible policy* and *critical junctures*, each of which is elaborated in separate chapters with projects serving as case studies that illuminate these ideas. Leveraging design refers to architects using their design expertise to provide quality architecture to spaces and projects typically overlooked by the industry, in combination with the skills of other parties involved in the search for strengthening the commons and outside of the typical capitalist relations of a client–servant. This leveraging of design toward serving the commons inevitably becomes a search for ways of building "radically public architecture" in the sense that these spaces provide access to good design to populations rarely taken into consideration in many architectural projects. This way of working requires the creation of partnerships of difference between architects and the public, where an agonistic approach is not only accepted but sought after by designers and the broader public. A lot of these projects are not typical "finished" projects in the sense that an architect delivers a set of drawings, and their job is done. Rather, these projects, as proposed by Cuff, should be taken as design initiatives, projects that can keep going and that keep reevaluating their scope and deliverables. Such projects sometimes result in, and derive from, generative demonstrations, which can be applied

at different scales, locations, and contexts. This type of working is then expected to provide a legible policy that is inclusive of its agonisms and differential requirements, as well as possibilities for further proliferation of similar proposals that sometimes become critical junctures in design and architectural thinking, acting as catalysts for further development.

> Design is the lever that architects will use to create a more just built environment. The buildings most effective at advancing social goals will be designed to be radically public in that they are fresh, adaptable and equitable. To suit this greater public, the design process and outcome will depend on partnerships of difference, within which debate and contestation are upheld. In turn, those partnerships will aim to create generative demonstrations that are intended to proliferate.[1]

The book gives us a pathway to thinking about architecture and practicing architecture as a working process—a labor process that is involved in society's evolution, and reestablishes the much-needed analysis of labor in architectural discourse. Architecture is the result of a societal process in which labor plays a key role and results from multiple kinds of labor forces coming together. As such, architecture needs to recognize its broad implications and repercussions and work towards expanding its capacities of incorporating multiple agencies and populations into the process, as opposed to excluding them and relying on the architect as the "master-builder" who always knows best. The book re-centers the work of building professionals as work that depends on, and is for, the society at large, rather than a select elite, and so it needs to show its potential for providing a better society through its built work.

Architectures of Spatial Justice comes in a long line of exploration of architecture as work for the public good and, as such, it furthers ideas and concepts mentioned by Marx and Engels, Bernard Rudofsky, Rosa Luxemburg, Henri Lefebvre, and many others that explained how the environment that we create is the result of the relationships that we create. This book is quite needed at this moment because it shows how architecture can and does operate beyond the stale debates of formalism and autonomy. It also shows how architecture can function through the cracks of the oppressive capitalist system, and recenters the core of architecture where it should be: serving the commons.

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[1] D. Cuff, *Architectures of Spatial Justice*, p. 202.

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