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HERITAGE CITIES AND EXCLUSION

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EDITORIAL

Edited by Elisa Boeri (Politecnico di Milano), Luca Cardani (Politecnico di Milano), Michela Pilotti (Politecnico di Milano) and Rosa Sessa (Università di Napoli Federico II)

Issue No. 4 of the *Journal of Architectural Design and History* addresses the theme of places of exclusion within cities and territories, in relation to architectural heritage and the built environment. Through a collection of essays and contributions, this issue explores the topic in its broadest interpretative sense, demonstrating that it cannot be confined to a single definition. It highlights how contemporary challenges call for a repositioning of our perspective on the concept of exclusion in its various forms – urban, social, political, ritual, and beyond.

The Essay by Images develops a narrative through an artistic photographic approach, focusing on a recent exhibition that redefined the role of architectural imagery produced by patients in former Italian psychiatric asylums. It reveals the imaginative power of a reality beyond the walls of confinement.

In her introductory essay, Giuseppina Scavuzzo draws attention to the relevance of the issue within architecture, emphasizing a paradigm shift in the conception of otherness – not as a condition of diversity, but as one of possibility. This shift opens up the field for critically designed values of disruption, precisely through the "deviance" of heterotopia in relation to the domain of technique.
The call for papers resulted in fourteen essays covering geographical areas across all continents, offering a selective yet global perspective on the topic. Approximately half of the contributions originate from Italian research, highlighting the strong relevance of the subject in architectural discourse, both from design and historical standpoints.

The architecture of "total institutions" plays a predominant role, beginning with articles on prisons by Gjiltinë Isufi and Gianfranco Orsenigo. Isufi reveals the hidden spatial dynamics within the architectural spaces of Gjilan Prison in Kosovo, while Orsenigo presents an applied research project on San Vittore Prison in Milan, aimed at transforming spaces of confinement into places of community engagement through the use of art.
Another important section, introduced by essays from Eliana Martinelli and Simone Barbi, focuses on ongoing research into the urban and architectural role of mental health facilities in Italy following the closure of psychiatric hospitals under the 1978 Basaglia Law. Martinelli's work aligns with the urban regeneration strategies inspired by the design theory of Florentine master Giovanni Michelucci. Barbi, on the other hand, explores the analogical reuse potential of an abandoned pavilion from a former mental hospital in Siena.

With regard to typological transformation, Ginevra Rossi highlights the value of continuity in the architectural form of the cloister, focusing on the policy of

repurposing convent buildings implemented under Austrian rule in Lombardy at the end of the 19th century. Continuing the historical analysis of how forms acquire new meanings over time, Amalya Feldman examines how the wall on Carrer de Vent in Palma de Mallorca gained commemorative value for the religious community during the transformation of a synagogue into a church.

Taking a different approach, Tara Bissett contextualizes the positivist role of female reformers, illustrating the relationship between living spaces and the educational objectives of the re-education process. Exclusion as a temporary space for learning is also the focus of Teresa Serrano Avilés, who explores the case of the Alami Farm School, founded in 1949 in Jericho, Palestine, to foster a regenerative and ecological landscape culture while providing a place of refuge for its community.
The controversial issue of temporary exclusion in the context of political asylum is examined by Giulia Furlotti, who highlights the critical shortcomings of spaces intended to provide refuge—places that often end up isolating individuals for extended periods rather than fostering integration. Luis Felipe Flores Garzón and Angela Person present another complex and ambiguous case, addressing the tension between protection and marginalization through the lens of traditional housing for Indigenous populations threatened by the industrialization of the Amazon rainforest. Turning to Brazilian cities, Eduardo Mantoan and Paulo H. Soares de Oliveira Jr. provide a precise analysis of the consequences of the 1964 dictatorship on the diminishing social role of architectural design. They highlight how this shift contributed to the rise of elite compounds in contrast to marginalized suburbs, while also asserting the continued relevance of architecture's democratic potential today.

Regarding Italian suburbs, Anna Veronese compares two projects by Mario Fiorentino which – despite aiming to integrate new neighborhoods into the expanding city – ultimately exemplify the marginalization of peripheral areas. In contrast, the unusual case of Villaggio Coppola-Pinetamare, analyzed by Giorgia Strano, reflects the aspiration to create a settlement for an elite community, introducing an unexpected model of tourism to the Campania coastline.

Finally, Fabio Gigone's article also addresses elitism and voluntary seclusion, examining living conditions in the Vatican during the Conclave and offering a reflection on the spatial and temporal pressures embedded in the ritual of electing the Pope.

Among the editorial contributions is a transcription of *Des Espaces Autres*, a lecture delivered by Michel Foucault in 1967, in which the French philosopher offers an in-depth reflection on the concept of heterotopias.

As part of the editorial team's Recommended section, we highlight three books. Beatrice Moretti revisits Allan Sekula's *Fish Story* (1995), an intense and multifaceted photographic research project that explores the global shipping industry and its implications for labor, capital, and the environment. Francesca Giudetti, questioning the place of women in cities designed by and for men, reviews one of the most influential feminist urban studies publications in recent years: *Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-made World* by Leslie Kern. Finally, *The Houses of Others: The Touristification of Naples' City Center and Public Policies in the Age of AirBnB* by Alessandra Esposito, introduced by Rosa Sessa, analyzes the issue of overtourism as a driving force behind the forced displacement and exclusion of local residents from the heart of their cities.

To summarize, drawing on categories proposed by thinkers such as Erving Goffman – who, in his seminal book *Asylums: Essays on the Social Situation of Mental Patients and Other Inmates* (1961), introduces the concept of 'total institutions' – and Michel Foucault – who, in *Des espaces autres* (1967), theorizes spaces 'outside of all places,' or heterotopias – the *ADH Journal* approaches the theme of exclusion from multiple and diverse perspectives. While not aiming to offer a definitive conclusion on the topic, the editorial team and the authors have sought to bring the issue of exclusion to the forefront of the debate, drawing attention to the urgent need to rethink contemporary urban paradigms, which remain, unfortunately, strongly tied to heterotopic prototypes.

ESSAY

DESIGNING THE OTHER: *CRITICAL PLACES, SHARED LEGACIES*

By Giuseppina Scavuzzo (Università degli Studi di Trieste)

This text is an invited essay, and we would like to thank Prof. Scavuzzo for agreeing to contribute to this issue of the journal.

THE OTHER

Who is the other, what form do they take, in what body do they incarnate, where do they appear and materialize? The title of this journal issue draws attention to a crucial dimension in the mechanisms of exclusion: the relationship with the other. Considering the architectural domain, this topic challenges the ways in which space is constructed, inhabited, and regulated with respect to those who deviate from the norm, the average, or the majority. Franco Basaglia, emblematic figure in the deinstitutionalization of the mentally ill, alienated (from the Latin *alius*, meaning "other"), the others by definition, described the above-mentioned majority as "deviant"[1].

This evokes what Michel Foucault termed "heterotopias of deviation". If heterotopy is the "other space", the heterotopias of deviation are spaces such as asylums, prisons, designed to contain those perceived as a threat due to their deviation from social norms.
By overturning the label of deviance, attributed to the majority, Basaglia aims to redirect attention to the system that exclude, to the collective, political, and social logics that enable, or even systematize, exclusion.
A powerful allegory of the heterotopia of deviation, proposed by Foucault himself, is the image of the *stultifera navis* — the ship of the mad— embodying the myth of those no land wishes to receive. Rejected and condemned to eternal wandering, the mad are surrounded not only by the sea but also by a symbolic boundary they carry like a brand.
This image resonated today with disturbing relevance. Ships laden with migrants, turned away in the name of national borders, remind us that the dynamics of exclusion which deny space and recognition to the other — are not at the margins of history, but rather at the heart of our present.
Another philosopher, Jacques Derrida, in *Plato's Pharmacy*, investigates the motives of exclusion, both in social and urban scale, by invoking the figure of the *pharmakos*.
The clear reference is to the ritual practice of scapegoating, present in ancient Greek cities, is expelled by the city to be purified and redeemed. The *pharmakos* is a man, chosen for his physical repulsiveness or perceived abject or uselessness, who is fed and kept by the city, only to be expelled or killed during ritual occasions or crises. The expulsion serves to assuage the community's anxiety in the face of contamination or looming danger. Hence, the *pharmakos* is, at the same time, an outcast and a savior, allowing the community to restore its equilibrium and safety.
The ritual, following Derrida's interpretation, has both a spatial meaning and implies oppositions such as interior/exterior, inside/outside:

> The *inner* body of the city thereby reconstitutes its unity, closing in upon its own security [...] by violently excluding from its territory the representative of threat or external aggression. This figure represents the alterity of evil that infects and infiltrates the inside. [...] The *pharmakos* ceremony thus occurs at the limit of inside and outside, which it must continuously trace and retrace. *Intra muros/extra muro*[2].

ARCHITECTURE

The central question guiding this issue is how architecture, through its history, in contemporary practice and in inherited legacies, has addressed — and continues to address — the seemingly inescapable issue of the other and of exclusion. Far from being neutral, architecture structures social life, guides the use of resources and shapes urban futures. Through its forms and tools, it reflects and enacts spatial policies and power relations, influencing access to heritage, culture, and care—ultimately shaping how society perceives and engages with alterity. This role and responsibility are often underestimated. Also Michel Foucault, while acknowledging the spatial dimension of power—especially in psychiatric settings—paid limited attention to the person who designs space: the architect. When questioned about the political potential of architecture[3], Foucault considered its influence minor, subordinate to that of physicians, priests, or administrators. He added, with disillusionment, that "there are no liberatory machines."Thus, architecture often remains relegated to a pre-political realm, its social and discriminatory effects ignored, even by law[4].

A rare exception, at least in Italy, is found in the 1978 Law 180, which explicitly prohibited the construction of psychiatric hospitals[5]: one of the few instances in which an architectural typology was outlawed due to its inherently exclusionary nature.

Although the abolition of some isolated institutions, the "wall" as a device of separation and segregation has not disappeared from our gaze or even from our relational landscape: it has only taken on new forms. In the field of mental health, invisible barriers still continue to divide the "inside" from the "outside," the so-called normal from the abnormal, in the form of stigma—a symbolic mark still borne by those with psychological suffering.

There is also a widespread form of invisible exclusion embedded in the urban fabric through hostile architecture: design elements and furnishings intended to discourage the presence of bodies or behaviors deemed inappropriate—particularly those of homeless individuals—thus pushing them out of public space.

INCLUSIVE AND EXCLUSIVE

Despite the celebratory rhetoric surrounding "inclusion" in public discourse, the term often risks becoming hollow when reduced to a slogan. Inclusion implies a complex set of strategies aimed at embracing and valuing difference, but it also necessitates concrete choices—about which differences to recognize. Herein lies its ambiguity. It is telling that "exclusive," that is, the antonym of "inclusive," often bears positive connotations—elegance, prestige, desirability. *Gated communities* exemplify this contradiction: contemporary heterotopias where privilege is preserved through segregation.

In architectural practice, another risk lies in outsourcing inclusion to narrow disciplinary domains—for example, relegating it to accessibility standards for people with disabilities. Reducing inclusion to a matter of technical

compliance reflects an overly simplified view of difference, stripping it of its social and civic implications. What is lost is architecture's deeper responsibility: to express, represent, and give dignity and visibility to differences and vulnerabilities in public space.
When the project engages with these issues, it may provoke fears of "disciplinary transgression"—of becoming "too sociological." But this remains—and must remain—architecture. The question is not whether these themes belong to architecture, but what role architecture can and must play in addressing them.
Key figures of the discipline, during periods of institutional upheaval, have assumed this responsibility, demonstrating that architecture cannot remain neutral or indifferent but must "keep pace with major social transformations" [6].
In 1978, the journal *Hinterland* devoted a monographic issue titled *Segregation and the Social Body*[7] to exclusionary spaces such as prisons, psychiatric hospitals, facilities for the disabled, and elder care homes, adopting a common and transdisciplinary lens.
In the editorial, Guido Canella identified three adjectives to describe architecture's potential stance toward these realities: *propositive*, *autonomous*, and *dialectical*. He called for dialogue across disciplines and institutions, asserting a central role for design in imagining alternatives to exclusion. Canella also spoke of *collective reappropriation* of spaces and themes of exclusion.
The term "inclusion" was not in vogue at the time, yet this concept closely aligns with what was then framed as collective responsibility toward conditions of vulnerability and dependence.
To architecture, and to its capacity to express and transmit values, falls the task of materializing and representing the collective act of care.

PLACES OF EXCLUSION AS HERITAGE

Today, in a vastly different cultural and historical context, the transformation of decommissioned exclusionary spaces—psychiatric hospitals, prisons, reformatories—into shared heritage is neither simple nor uncontentious. Yet this very difficulty can foster a new system of values capable of confronting contemporary exclusion without rhetorical detachment.
This is a complex legacy, since in these spaces the very idea of community has been negated. Such spaces reveal how communities define themselves—who they include and who they exclude, ostensibly in the name of the "common good." Reimagining them as common goods requires communities to interrogate themselves, their contradictions, and their ability—both symbolically and concretely—to make space for the other.
The regeneration of such sites differs from that of typical urban brownfields. It is not merely about reactivating built heritage or returning abandoned areas to the public. Here, the project must engage with a memory of exclusion inscribed into the place and with the imperative to resignify space.
Former psychiatric hospitals and prisons are emblematic spaces of separation—between a reassuring, normative "us" and a perceived deviant or dangerous "them." These are sites that reflect the past but in which current dynamics remain visible—especially the fragility of belonging to that "us": a diagnosis or a social origin is enough to forfeit rights and legitimacy.
Each prison reflects society's ambivalent and often contradictory relationship with its most vulnerable or troubling members. This produces a stigma that also taints the physical space, consigning it to symbolic contamination and urban oblivion (*damnatio memoriae*).

Yet such places can become shared heritage—if returned to the community not as neutral containers, but as repositories of critical memory and platforms for new social processes.
In this case, restitution is twofold: first, as the reintegration into the urban fabric of spaces condemned to marginality and oblivion by their own histories; second, as a *restitutio textus*—an interpretative act that reconstructs, reinterprets, and conjectures new uses. In this sense, architecture becomes a tool for reading and transformation: a scaffolding upon which collective practices and social experimentation can grow—practices capable of resisting the binary and pathological logic of "us" versus "them," which architecture itself has too often helped construct.
This is an opportunity to reimagine spaces whose institutional function has ended, closed in the name of hard-won rights and politics, and which architecture must now open to the community to safeguard rights never fully guaranteed.

HETEROTOPIA AS REFLECTION TOWARD A POSSIBLE UTOPIA

The pressing question today is how to design an architecture that counters exclusion, in a world still more inclined to build walls than bridges. Certain institutions—prisons, nursing homes, migrant centers—cannot simply be abolished. They require architectural approaches that sustain their highest aims: rehabilitation, care, and hospitality. Otherwise, they risk degenerating into spaces of segregation and marginalization.
The history of asylums shows how their descent from places of care to sites of abandonment and abuse coincided with the marginalization of the architect's role—reduced to mere executor of disciplinary psychiatric reasonings or bureaucratic logic[8].
This history warns us: architecture cannot retreat from spaces of exclusion. Rather, it must maintain the critical, autonomous, and propositive stance advocated by Canella. This means not relegating design to a purely technical or specialist function, but asserting a cultural and civic role, capable of questioning and transforming spatial dispositifs.
Mauro Palma, former National Ombudsman for People Deprived of Liberty, urges us to rethink the architectural device of separation—the wall—not as a "signal" of otherness or stigma, but as an "object" with a specific function, to be transformed through systems of connection with the outside. Heterotopias must also interrogate those who remain outside, destabilizing the certainties of the so-called normal world, and "sowing doubt within our unconscious, self-sufficient well-being." The outside, after all, is not innocent—it actively participates in constructing the separation, "it is the builder itself"[9].
Vittorio Gregotti, citing the philosopher Theodor W. Adorno, affirmed that "Architecture, while autonomous, is also bound to purpose; it cannot deny people as they are, even if, by virtue of its autonomy, it must"[10].
Architecture must engage with human reality as it is—without ceasing to pursue what it might become. For Gregotti, the discipline's task is to confront this tension and translate it into design[11].
If cities and societies still seek to identify their scapegoat—their *pharmakos* —to declare themselves "healthy," then we can envision an architecture of resistance to that logic. An architecture that refuses to be a merely technical or functional tool, and instead embraces its critical and cultural responsibility.
This also requires overcoming the misconception of disciplinary autonomy as detachment or individualism. Following Palma's call, we may imagine heterotopias—spaces of deviation and marginality— as thresholds of reflection, capable of opening fissures toward a possible utopia.

NOTES

[1] Basaglia, Franco and Basaglia Ongaro, Franca. 1974. *The deviant majority. The ideology of total social control*. Turin: Einaudi. **[2]** Derrida, Jacques. 1985. *Plato's Pharmacy*. Milan: Jaca Book: 115. **[3]** Foucault, Michel. 2001. "Spazio, sapere e potere". In Vaccaro Salvo (edited by). *Spazi Altri. I luoghi delle eterotopie.* Milan-Udine: Mimesis: 53-72. **[4]** Schindler, Sarah B. 2015. "Architectural Exclusion: Discrimination and Segregation through Physical Design of the Built Environment". *Yale Law Journal*, no. 124: 1934-2024. **[5]** Law 180/78, art. 7. **[6]** Rogers, Ernesto Nathan, quoted by Canella, Guido. 1978. "Sull'imputazione dell'architettura". *Hinterland*, no. 3: 2-3. **[7]** "Segregazione e corpo sociale". 1978. *Hinterland*, no. 3. **[8]** McLaughlan, Rebecca. 2015. "Corrupting the Asylum: The Diminishing Role of the Architect in the Design of Curative Enivironmrnts for Mental Illness in New Zealand". *Architectural Theory Rewiew*, no. 20: 180-201. https://doi.org/10.1080/13264826.2016.1146316 **[9]** Palma, Mauro. "Lessico Foucault. Eterotopie". *Doppiozero*, (July) 2024. https://www.doppiozero.com/lessico-foucault-eterotopie#:~:text=Le%20eterotopie%20di%20distinzione%20e,%C3%A8%20naturalmente%20quella%20del%20muro **[10]** Adorno, Theodor W. 1979. *Parva aesthetica*: 121. Milan: Feltrinelli. **[11]** Gregotti, Vittorio. 2014. *Il possibile necessario*: 5-20. Milan: Bompiani.

BEYOND THE WALL: *AN EXHIBITION OF CREATIVE EXPRESSIONS IN FORMER ITALIAN PSYCHIATRIC INSTITUTIONS*

Edited by Elisa Boeri (Politecnico di Milano), Luca Cardani (Politecnico di Milano) and Michela Pilotti (Politecnico di Milano)

an exhibition curated by
Elisa Boeri, Luca Cardani, Davide Del Curto
with Giorgio Bedoni

with the scientific contribution of
Marta Colombi, Renate Karjavcenko, Michela Pilotti

exhibition planned and promoted by
Politecnico di Milano – Mantova Campus
UNESCO Chair in Architectural Preservation and Planning in World Heritage Cities

In Mantua, within the evocative setting of the former Church of San Cristoforo, the exhibition *"Beyond the Wall. The City Imagined from the former Italian asylums" curated by* Elisa Boeri, Luca Cardani, Davide Del Curto with Giorgio Bedoni, Marta Colombi, Renate Karjavcenko and Michela Pilotti was held in the month of May 2025. Made possible through the collaboration between *Mantovarchitettura* and the Mantua Campus of the Politecnico di Milano with the Associazione degli Amici di PalazzoTe e dei Musei Mantovani. The illustrated essay in this issue of the *Journal of Architectural Design and History* seeks to retrace, through photographs and words, the narrative of an exhibition intended as a starting point for new research and deeper insights into the role of architecture—whether real or imagined—within total institutions.

Source: View of the exhibition setup (photo by Giuseppe Gradella)

The exhibition focused on the timely and pressing theme of spaces of care, particularly those dedicated to psychiatric treatment. Such spaces have long reflected broader cultural attitudes toward mental health, institutional authority, and

society's complex relationship with the "other." Between the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the emergence of grand and monumental asylum buildings was observed, constructed according to principles of containment and order. These were spaces conceived not merely as places of healing, but as instruments of control—designed to separate, isolate, and even "correct" individuals deemed mentally ill, and therefore "different."

In Italian archives that—often with difficulty and great care—preserve memories in the form of correspondence, medical records, and black-and-white photographs, one frequently encounters flashes of acute visions of the "outside": utopian or strikingly concrete cities, landscapes, alien worlds, or starkly contemporary realities imagined by patients as possible forms of escape.
The San Lazzaro Psychiatric Hospital in Reggio Emilia, San Niccolò in Siena, the Volterra Psychiatric Hospital, and San Giovanni in Trieste are the main asylum institutions where the works on display were conceived: drawings, sculptures, and graffiti that represent a profound act of resistance—an assertion of identity in the face of the dehumanization inherent in spaces of psychiatric confinement.

IMAGINING THE CITY BEYOND THE WALL

Source: Perimeter Wall of the Lombroso Pavilion ("Pavilion for the Dangerous and Criminally Insane"), San Lazzaro Psychiatric Hospital, Reggio Emilia

Although the perimeter wall of the Lombroso section—the pavilion reserved for patients considered the most dangerous—was demolished several years ago, a number of photographs preserved in the Carlo Livi Library in Reggio Emilia partially reconstruct the image of this space. Isolated from the other pavilions of the psychiatric complex and itself enclosed by an inaccessible boundary wall, the Lombroso Pavilion was a site of profound segregation.

The photographic record reveals how the wall had become a surface upon which patients projected an imagined world composed of houses, buildings, and urban vistas—often anonymous—that reflect a deep, intimate longing for a lost sense of normality within the dynamics of the total institution. These images depict ordinary landscapes, suburban settings reminiscent of many Italian peripheries, envisioned as a hoped-for visual horizon. Among these views, a Renaissance-style perspectival scene adds a poetic dimension to the narrative.

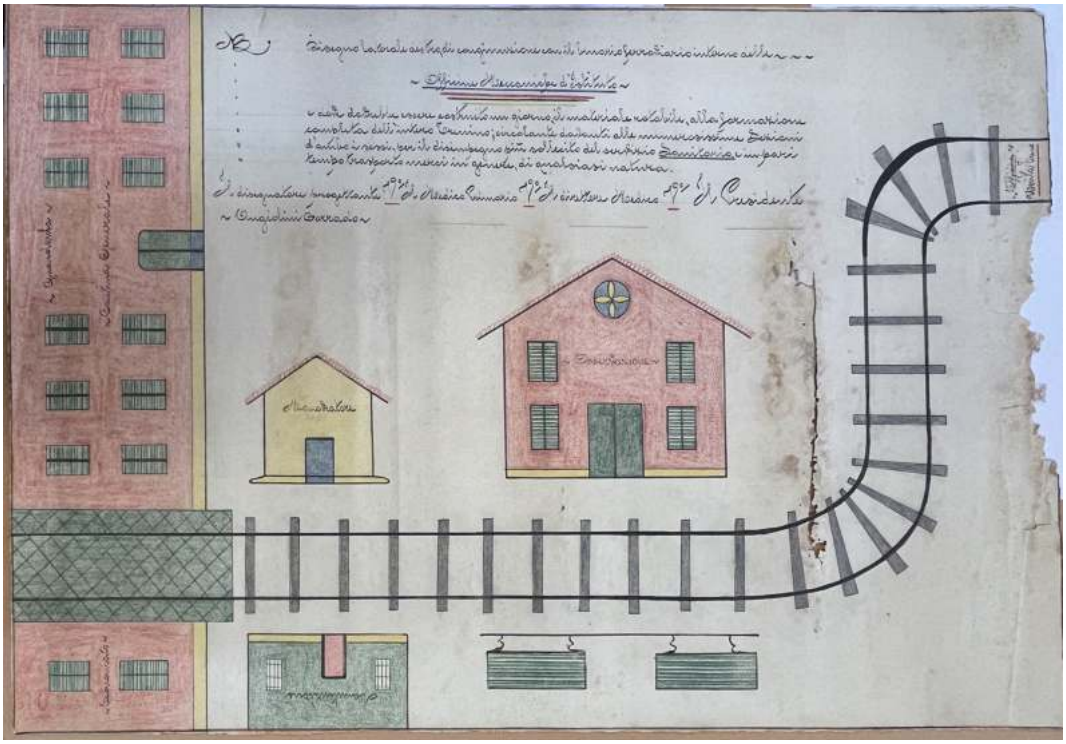
The authors of these mural drawings remain unknown. However, we do know the name of one patient, Vincenzo G., to whom many of these cityscapes can be attributed. His visions—echoing the urban landscapes of Italy's economic boom in the 1960s—were rendered on the outer wall of the most tightly confined ward of San Lazzaro using herbs, pigments, and brushes.

THE EXOTIC AND DREAMLIKE CITIES OF GIUSEPPE RIGHI

Source: Imagined architectural drawings by Giuseppe Righi (photo by Giuseppe Gradella)

Admitted to San Lazzaro in 1916, Giuseppe Righi (1876–1944) dedicated himself, between 1930 and 1940, to producing small- and medium-format drawings in black ink. In his visionary and imagined cities, Righi almost systematically excludes the presence of the human figure. Landscapes and vistas unfold in a rhythm of dreamlike tranquility, concealing miniature details and decorative elements. Decoration, in turn, is expressed through friezes and initials, which Righi patiently added to the correspondence he sent to his family.

A RAILWAY SYSTEM FOR THE SAN LAZZARO ASYLUM



Source: One of Corrado Angiolini's drawings

Born in Gonzaga (Mantua), Corrado Angiolini (1877-1943) was first admitted to the Roncati Psychiatric Hospital in Bologna on May 3, 1909. A few months later, he was transferred to the San Lazzaro Asylum in Reggio Emilia, where he was permanently institutionalized in 1914 with a diagnosis of "manic-depressive psychosis."

Angiolini never participated in the artistic activities of the San Lazzaro Atelier; instead, he worked in solitude on a single, large-scale project: a system of tracks for wheeled carts designed for the distribution of meals and linens within the pavilion-based asylum complex.

TOWERS AND SKYSCRAPERS OF THE CONTEMPORARY CITY: BETWEEN OBSESSION AND REPETITION

Source: Views of the Infinite Towers by Mauro Mazzinghi (photo by Giuseppe Gradella)

Mauro Mazzinghi (1956-) was admitted to the Morel 2, and later the Morel 1, pavilions of the Volterra Psychiatric Hospital, where he began an initial body of work focused on machines, turbines, bulldozers, and tracked vehicles. His experimentation eventually shifted toward the theme of skyscrapers, which became his artistic obsession.
His drawings were produced on improvised materials—scrolls, sheets of paper, old posters—and created using basic tools such as rulers, protractors, pencils, pens, or markers.
Mazzinghi's series of axonometric skyscraper drawings is characterized by repetition and an upward thrust, evoking a condition of liberation, as suggested by the title of his recent solo exhibition: *"Up... Up... to the Sky!"*

THE GRAFFITI OF FERNANDO ORESTE NANNETTI – N.O.F.4 (1927–1994)

Photographic installation by Pier Nello Manoni with fragments of graffiti by Fernando Oreste Nannetti, engraved on the wall of the Ferri Pavilion, Volterra Psychiatric Hospital (photo by Giuseppe Gradella)

In 1956, following an arrest for contempt of a public official, Fernando Oreste Nannetti was institutionalized at the Santa Maria della Pietà Psychiatric Hospital in Rome.
In 1958, he was transferred to the Volterra Psychiatric Hospital in Tuscany, where he would remain until his death in 1994. During more than thirty years of confinement, no one ever visited him, and the asylum effectively became his home.
At Volterra, Nannetti began a patient and utopian act of engraving the perimeter wall of the inner courtyard of the judicial ward in the Ferri Pavilion—a two-story building with a C-shaped floor plan enclosing a rear garden. By scratching the wall with the buckle of his vest—a part of the so-called "madman's uniform"—Nannetti inscribed an open-air book narrating the cosmogony of his imagined world: a 180-meter-long and approximately 2-meter-high graffito now regarded as one of the most significant examples of *Art Brut*.
Exposed to the elements for many years, the few surviving fragments—now detached—are preserved at the Volterra Asylum Museum. To fully grasp the scale and complexity of the work, one must rely on the remarkable photographs taken in 1980 by Pier Nello Manoni, a tribute to the memory of the artist Nannetti and to those "fantastical places of the mind, to madness, as a human response to marginalization, loneliness, and illness."

MARCO CAVALLO BREAKS THROUGH THE WALL

Source: The papier-mâché and wood sculpture Marco Cavallo, featured within the exhibition

In 1973, within *Laboratorio P*—housed in an empty ward of the San Giovanni psychiatric hospital in Trieste—staff, patients, and artists worked intensively for two months to create a large *papier-mâché* sculpture of a blue horse. Inside its belly were placed letters and personal writings, poems filled with hope, imagination, and fantasy.

Alongside the psychiatric patients, sculptor Vittorio Basaglia and theater director Giuliano Scabia coordinated an artistic action that would soon become the symbol of the asylum deinstitutionalization movement led by Franco Basaglia.

On February 25, 1973, *Marco Cavallo* crossed the boundary walls of the asylum for the first time. Accompanied by a jubilant crowd of patients, doctors, artists, students, and citizens, the sculpture triumphantly entered the center of Trieste—symbolically tearing down the wall that had long separated the asylum from the city, and moving *beyond* the wall of indifference that for centuries had divided life on the outside from the world "inside" the psychiatric institution.

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A SPACE OF EXCLUSION AND RESILIENCE *THE 'JEA' AS A COUNTER-SITE IN ACHUAR COMMUNITIES OF THE ECUADORIAN AMAZON*

By Luis Felipe Flores Garzon (University of Oklahoma) and Angela Person (University of Oklahoma)

ABSTRACT

The Amazon region remains a contested space between competing visions of conservation and development. While international organizations invest in biodiversity preservation, they also support governments that promote extractive industries, exacerbating environmental degradation and Indigenous marginalization. The Achuar people of the Ecuadorian Amazon exemplify this paradox, experiencing multidimensional exclusion through geographic isolation and externally imposed economic, political, and cultural frameworks that disregard their intrinsic connection to *nunkui* (mother earth).

Drawing on Michel Foucault's concept of heterotopias – counter-sites that reflect or resist dominant societal structures – this article explores the Achuar communities of Mashientz, Sharamentsa, and Pumpuentsa as sites of both exclusion and resistance. Their cultural practices, such as the construction of the *Jea* (traditional house), persist largely due to their spatial and ideological separation from external pressures. However, this vernacular architecture remains unrecognized as cultural heritage within Ecuadorian society, undermining local efforts to protect it from state-led development projects. Based on ethnographic fieldwork conducted from May to August 2024 and informed by Indigenous scholarship, this article centers on firsthand narratives that reveal the tangible and intangible structures of exclusion the Achuar navigate daily. Their marginalization is reinforced through dependencies on external actors, including NGOs and government agencies, where access to basic services is often conditional on compliance with external expectations. This dynamic forces communities to navigate a precarious balance between autonomy and imposed dependence. Limited access to healthcare, infrastructure, and education further defines their exclusion, reinforcing the fragile boundary between the "protected" and the "excluded".

One key focus is the shift from traditional Achuar housing to Western-style housing models, illustrating how spatial practices embody both exclusionary pressures and cultural resilience. By examining the physical space of the house, the social space of the community, and the surrounding forest as both a spatial and spiritual entity, this study uncovers how Achuar cosmology shapes their experience of landscape and belonging. We argue that these dimensions collectively foster a unique heterotopia where the Achuar's marginalization is redefined through Indigenous resilience and advocacy.

Ultimately, this paper argues that Achuar exclusion is not merely a consequence of physical remoteness but a broader societal positioning that pressures them to choose between cultural preservation and developmental inclusion. Rather than imposing external models of sustainability or progress, we encourage approaches rooted in Indigenous autonomy, amplifying Achuar voices and asserting that meaningful inclusion must emerge from communities themselves.

INTRODUCTION

Since European colonization in the 16th century and the rise of modernity as a developmental project in the 1960s, Indigenous groups in the Ecuadorian Amazon have faced systemic exclusion[1] . This exclusion, shaped by geography, government policies, and broader societal structures, manifests as multidimensional or "deep exclusion", impacting all aspects of life, from access to healthcare and education to political, economic, and cultural disenfranchisement[2]. As a result, Indigenous communities are both marginalized and, paradoxically, integral to the functioning of dominant societies[3]. The Indigenous Achuar people of Ecuador exemplify this condition. Their exclusion is first evident in their geographic isolation – until recently, most of their 91 communities could only be reached by boat or small aircraft. Additionally, access to their territory often requires approval from the Achuar Nationality of Ecuador, their governing body. The difficult navigability of their rivers, the dense tropical forest, and its associated natural dangers have historically blocked colonization and permanent settlement in these areas. Their remoteness and constant protests protecting their territory have enabled them to resist extractive industries and the encroachment of modernity, but it has also reinforced their social and political marginalization.

Achuar isolation extends beyond geography; they are also socially marginalized within mainstream Ecuadorian society. Ecuadorians living in urban areas know little about their way of life, with public awareness rarely extending beyond outdated school lessons on Indigenous groups. In the media, the Achuar are largely absent from mainstream discourse, appearing only once or twice a month in coverage focused on government projects, cultural traditions, or land rights conflicts – often in the context of protests[4,5]. However, their daily realities and aspirations remain largely overlooked. This limited representation in education and national discourse reinforces their marginalization. The Achuar also experience exclusion through imposed Western frameworks. Under these standards, they are often classified as "underdeveloped" or in "multidimensional poverty", alongside other Indigenous groups in the country[6]. This classification correlates with the poor condition of healthcare centers and educational units in their territories. However, the issue extends beyond infrastructure; it encompasses how these institutions function, interact with, and sometimes conflict with Achuar culture and worldviews. It also reflects an ongoing debate over whether road access should be granted to Achuar lands and the varied effects such agreements have had on Achuar communities like Pumpuentsa. There, road access introduced cheaper, mass-produced building materials, diminishing the value of traditional construction techniques. Additionally, the community lost benefits like emergency air transportation and became vulnerable to threats such as illegal logging, unregulated settlements, and uncontrolled agricultural expansion. While leaders like Governor Tiyua Uyunkar advocate expanding road networks across Achuar lands, elders like Julian Illanes worry

that this state-driven approach could lead to rapid cultural and material assimilation[7].

Furthermore, the Achuar face exclusion regarding their heritage. Vernacular buildings have historically been positioned outside of what is considered "architecture"[8], despite their essential role in heritage cities[9]. For the Achuar, their traditional dwelling, the *Jea* is far more than utilitarian – it is deeply embedded in their cosmogony, reflecting their knowledge systems, environmental adaptation, and intergenerational traditions. The *Jea*, however, lacks heritage recognition by institutions such as UNESCO, unlike colonial architecture found in Ecuadorian city centers. Historically, this bias exists because colonial authorities controlled what counted as heritage, prioritizing structures that reflected their own identity[10]. As a result, heritage preservation often reinforces dominant Western narratives of national history, marginalizing indigenous cultures such as the Achuar[11]. The lack of recognition further alienates them from national identity narratives.

FOUCAULT'S HETEROTOPIAS IN ACHUAR SOCIETY

Understanding Foucault's definition of heterotopias as "real" spaces that operate as "other" within dominant society, Achuar communities may be considered *counter-sites*, or enacted utopias that have existed since the very foundation of their society. In contrast to mainstream Ecuadorian society, the Achuar experience a parallel yet distant reality from the colonized, and thus Westernized spaces of the Americas. While the Achuar, alongside other Indigenous groups with linguistic ties to the *Aénts Chicham* language, have inhabited the Amazon region between Ecuador and Peru for centuries, they have largely remained outside the rapid, capital-driven development unfolding globally. Initially, this isolation was voluntary, reinforced by the lack of state resources and the inability of local governments to invest in the Amazon region. Over time, however, for some communities it has transformed into a struggle for Indigenous autonomy against Westernization and various forms of extractivism – a fight that is now well known[12].

However, the Achuar's isolation also presents an opportunity to consider whether their exclusion acts as a tool for protecting their culture, preserving their ancestral knowledge, and fostering autonomy and happiness. While this may seem paradoxical, fieldwork in more remote Achuar communities revealed a deep-rooted sense of happiness among their inhabitants – an observation commonly noted by anthropologists since the 1960s[13,14]. This isolation has never been an easy choice for the Achuar; it has been a struggle, fought across generations. In the past, they retreated deeper into the Amazon to avoid Western contact; now, they find themselves surrounded by a development model that, as seen throughout the region, is gradually consuming both the rainforest and the Achuar way of life[15]. For the Achuar, the forest and their *Jea*, exist in a state of symbiosis. They do not perceive themselves as separate from nature but as an integral part of it. This perspective challenges current conservation strategies that seek to "protect" the Amazon by modifying how Indigenous people live and interact with the forest. By analyzing the *Jea* as a space that fully embodies Achuar cosmogony, this research suggests that the consequences of altering these heritage environments, which for centuries have been the sole man-made structure in these communities, contribute to changes in Achuar cultural identity.

LOCATING THE ACHUAR

The Achuar are riverine people – communities that live along riverbanks, relying on them for mobility, subsistence and cultural practices – who have habited the Upper Amazon region for centuries, across a vast territory that today spans across Ecuador and Peru (fig. 1). Their territory lies within a tropical rainforest – temperature between 18ºC and 33ºC, an altitude of 200-500 m a.s.l., characterized by its richness in terms of faunal and floral biodiversity[16]. The Achuar people are one of the 14 Indigenous nationalities recognized in the Ecuadorian constitution – 11 of which are present in the Amazon region. Administratively, their territory falls primarily within the southeastern Ecuadorian provinces of Morona Santiago and Pastaza. These provinces are some of the poorest in Ecuador, with more than 60 percent of their residents living on less than $3 per day[17]. Currently, 91 Achuar communities are spread across these provinces, with a total population of approximately 7,865 people managing 1,017,014 hectares of land[18]. Of this, 884,000 hectares are legally titled to the communities rather than to individuals[19]. Due to their geographical isolation, the majority of Achuar communities can only be reached by air or river.

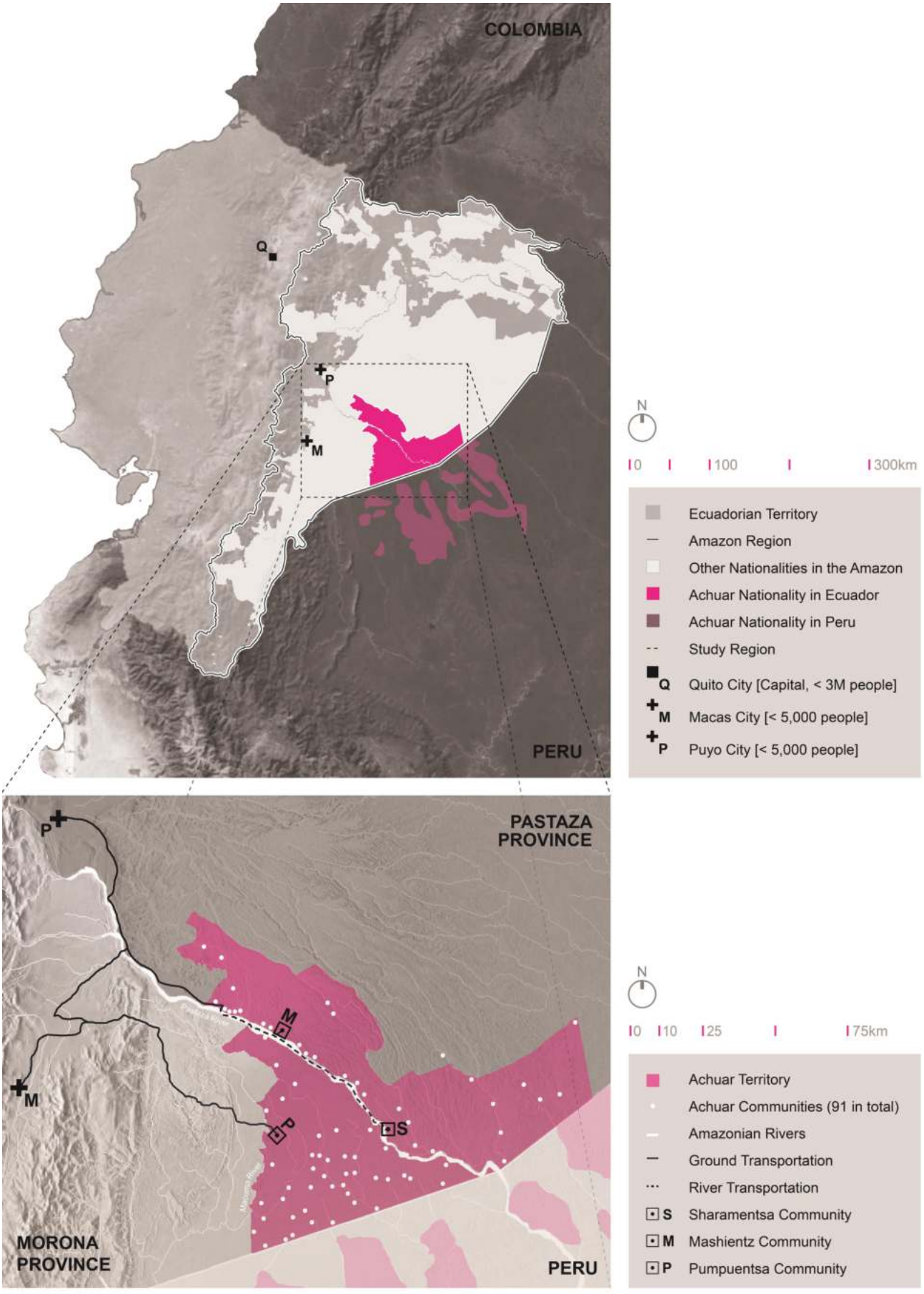

Figure 1. Achuar territory in the Ecuadorian Amazon, 2025 (maps by the author. Base maps by ESRI World Imagery)

ACHUAR & NON-ACHUAR ARCHITECTURE

The architectural landscape of Achuar people, particularly their *Jea*, is deeply embedded in their cosmology, social structure, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK)[20]. As the only known man-made structure adapted to dispersed-nomadic living and polygamous extended families, the *Jea* is more than just a shelter; it is a sacred space imbued with deep symbolic meaning[21]. Morocho Jaramillo et al indicate that Achuar settlements are closely tied to natural elements like *ajas* (family-cultivated gardens), rivers, forests, and waterfalls, shaping daily life and rituals[22]. Likewise, Garzón-Vera mentions that mythology provides guidance on subsistence practices, construction, and spiritual purification, reinforcing the *Jea* as a sacred microcosm where physical and spiritual existence intertwine, transforming it into a temple of daily life[23].

The *Jea*, a traditional thatch and pole house, is an inherently ecological structure, constructed entirely from biodegradable materials sourced from the surrounding forest. Its periodic reconstruction reinforces intergenerational knowledge transfer and strengthens kinship ties. As an Achuar family grows, they will witness the cycle of building and dismantling their home multiple times throughout their lives. During a conversation with an elder from Mashientz, he explained that a well-built house typically lasts between 10 to 15 years. Over a lifetime, a family may need to build a new *Jea* between four to five times. This process is a collective effort, with the entire household—typically four to eight members or more—participating in its construction, regardless of age or gender, except for infants. This generational involvement sustains and transmits TEK within the community[24]. Kroeger describes the Achuar's *Jea* as follows:

> Their houses were nearly oval-shaped with walls of *chonta* palm staves (*Gullielma utilis*), a roof of woven palm thatch (*campanaca or toquilla*), and a floor of stamped earth[25].

Due to material shortages for traditional housing, the erosion of TEK, and widespread poverty in Achuar territories, the state – through the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing (MIDUVI) – introduced affordable housing programs in 2007, implementing them in Mashientz in 2009 and Pumpuentsa in 2013[26,27]. The MIDUVI housing was developed without Achuar participation in the design or construction process[28]. Under the agreement with MIDUVI, households provided wood, land, and part of the labor, while the government supplied prefabricated materials such as zinc roofing, door locks, and nails – along with construction equipment and hired carpenters. While these standardized, Western-style structures have increasingly disrupted Achuar construction heritage, replacing traditional spatial practices and deepening socio-cultural exclusion, the *Jea* remains a symbol of resistance and continuity in most communities (fig. 2).

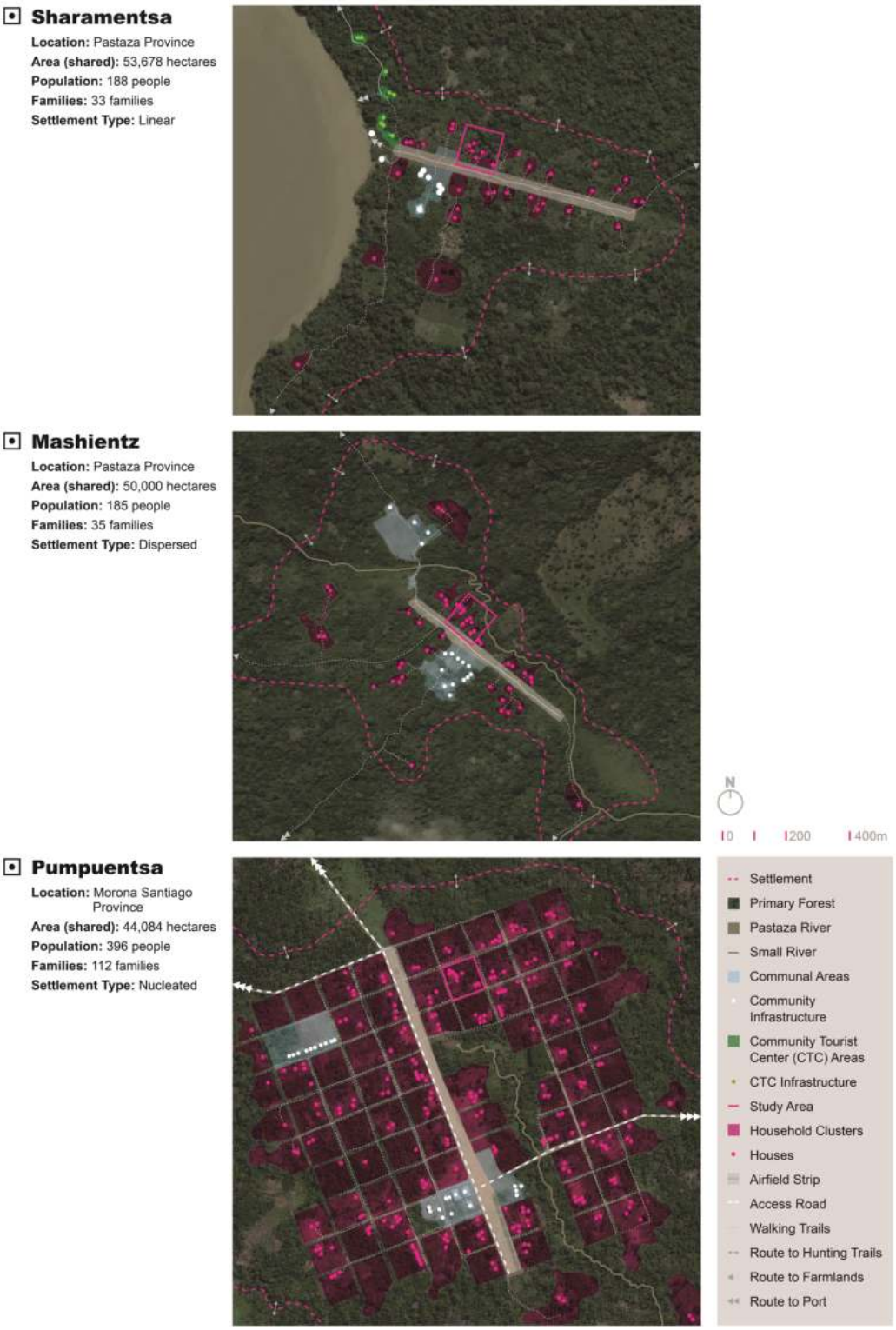

Figure 2. Achuar communities included in the study, circa 2024 (maps by the author. Composite satellite images from @Maxar, @Mapbox, and @OpenStreetMap)

METHODOLOGY

This research is based on primary data collected with the participation of the communities of Sharamentsa (S), Mashientz (M), and Pumpuentsa (P)[29]. To understand multidimensional exclusion over time, a literature review on the social and spatial history of the Achuar people in the Ecuadorian Amazon was also conducted. To collect primary data, between May and August 2024, the lead author conducted three two-week ethnographic visits in each community. These visits combined participant observation of hosting families (M=2, P=1, and S=5), in-depth interviews (M=3, P=3, and S=3), and walking interviews (M=9, P=8, and S=10). Fieldwork documentation included notes, ground-level and aerial (drone) photography, architectural sketches, and diagrams of houses. In the field walks, discussions focused on traditional houses (*Jea*) and MIDUVI housing, as well as environmental conditions, natural resources, the state of communal facilities, and both construction and socio-cultural knowledge systems. Staying with volunteer host families in each community offered opportunities to engage in daily activities such as farming, fishing, eating, bathing, and participating in rituals like *wayusa*. Following this immersion, field notes and interviews were transcribed and analyzed. Using the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns, we identified key consistencies and meanings[30]. Finally, the research findings were reviewed by selected community leaders, who provided feedback, leading to necessary adjustments before finalizing this study.

STUDY SITES

Initial conversations with Achuar communities and the Achuar Nationality of Ecuador (NAE) began in 2021, and this fieldwork took place three years later, in 2024. The three communities described below—Sharamentsa, Mashientz, and Pumpuentsa – chose to welcome us. Each of these communities presents unique perspectives as "counter-sites"[31]. Sharamentsa, the most geographically isolated, lies further along the Pastaza River in Montalvo Parish and directly manages 10,549 hectares within a broader collective title of 53,678 hectares shared with four other communities[32]. Mashientz, located along the Pastaza River in Sarayaku Parish (Pastaza Province), is the least visited by outsiders and shares a collective land title of 50,000 hectares with four neighboring communities under the name Mashientz-Kapawari[33].

In contrast, Pumpuentsa, situated on the Macuma River in Morona Santiago Province, is recognized as the oldest Achuar settlement and co-manages 44,084 hectares of communal land with four other communities[34]. Together, these communities illustrate the varied degrees of isolation, historical significance, and collective land governance among the Achuar. More detailed information about each community is presented below (fig. 3).

	SUBTOPIC	SHARAMENTSA COMMUNITY	MASHIENTZ COMMUNITY	PUMPUENTSA COMMUNITY
GEOGRAPHICAL CONTEXT	Location	Pastaza Province	Pastaza Province	Morona Santiago Province
	Forest Condition	Primary forest	Largely primary forest	Degraded forest due to livestock and monoculture
	Land Tenure	53,678 ha Collective title shared with four other communities	50,000 ha Collective title shared with four other communities	44,084 ha Collective title shared with four other communities
DEMOGRAPHICS & ECONOMY	Population	188 residents, 33 families	185 residents, 35 families	396 residents, 112 families
	Primary Economic Activities	Community-based tourism (CTC), farming, and employment with NGOs	Farming	Farming and employment with government institutions (education)
	Monthly Household Income Examples	$300 – $450 (farmers and monitors), $600 – $800 (teachers), $1,000 – $2,000 (NGO leaders)	$150 – $250 (farmers), $600 – $800 (teachers)	$250 – $500 (farmers), $600 – $1,000 (teachers)
	NGO Presence	Pachamama (conservation), Kara Solar (renewable energy), Nia Tero (renewable energy), WWF (tourism)	Conservation International – CI (forest conservation)	CI (forest conservation), Chankuap (farming)
SETTLEMENT & HOUSING	Settlement Type	Linear (around airfield)	Dispersed	Nucleated (state-regulated grid layout)
	Housing Type	Jeas (no MIDUVI houses)	Jeas, MIDUVI houses, hybrid houses	Jeas, MIDUVI houses, hybrid houses
	Household Plot Size	100x100m plot (near community center)	100x100m plot (near community center)	100x100m plot (near community center)
	Farm Proximity Per Household	30–min to 45–min walk	45–min to 1–hour walk	Within 1–hour walking distance
INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC SERVICES	Education Facilities	Primary school (2 classrooms)	Primary school (1 classroom), High school (2 classrooms)	Intercultural Bilingual Community Educational Unit (UECIB), Child Development Center (CDE)
	Health Facilities	None	None	Pumpuentsa Healthcare Center
	Tourism Infrastructure	Community-based Tourism Center (CTC), cabins, restaurant	None	None
	Other Infrastructure	Airstrip (good condition), communal center (good condition), laundry facility (good condition), port + solar panels (good condition), volleyball court, soccer field	Airstrip (poor condition), communal center (poor condition), volleyball court, 2 soccer fields, evangelical Christian church (good condition)	Airstrip (not in use), Autonomous Decentralized Government offices (GAD), covered sports complex (good condition), soccer field, synthetic mini-soccer field, evangelical Christian church
TRANSPORTATION MODES	Transportation Modes	Air (primary), river and ground (alternative)	River and ground (primary), air (limited)	Ground (road partially constructed)
	Travel Time to Nearest City	1 hour (air), 8–11 hours (river + ground)	4.5–6 hours (river + ground), 45min (air)	3–4 hours (ground)
	Cost of One-Way Travel to City	$105–$275 (river + ground), $300 flight	$25–$65 (river+ground); $300 (flight)	Approximately $13.50
	Energy Sources	Solar panels, solar-powered lighting	Solar panels (only two houses)	Gas-powered generator (< 10 houses)
UTILITIES & ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES	Water Access	Piped water	None	Piped water (natural spring project)
	Internet Access	High-speed Starlink internet (communally shared)	HughesNet Ecuador (only 2 houses own it and rent it to the community)	HughesNet Ecuador (3 houses owned and a 1 rent it to the community)
	Waste Management	None	None	CI-managed waste collection
	Sewerage	None (for community) and CTC (discharge to river)	None	None
	Road Acess	None	None	Yes

Figure 3. Spatial and social contexts of selected Achuar communities (table by the author, prepared based on information shared during participant interviews)

RESULTS

This section presents findings from this study of the *Jea* within the Achuar communities of Sharamentsa, Mashientz, and Pumpuentsa, focusing on its role in the Achuar cosmogony, construction practices, and its influence on social and familial dynamics. The results are organized around the Jea's significance in life, its role in key rituals, and the impacts of modern housing models on traditional practices.

Figure 4. Multi-generational household cluster in Sharamentsa: grandfather, grandmother, their son, his wife, and eight grandchildren (map by the author, July 2024)

A1 ***Jea House-1***
Achuar Traditional House,
no palisade (*Tijiras* typology)
Built in 2019

A2 ***Jea House-2***
Temporary Traditional House
Chicken coop (*Waku typology*)
Built in 2021

+ ***Community Tourism Center (CTC)***
NGO-sponsored cabins
Built in 2014

A3 ***Jea House-3***
Jea with palisade and raised sleeping
platform (*Kanutai* typology)
Built in 2020 (after CTC)

Figure 5. Housing typologies in Sharamentsa (photographs by the author, July 2024)

Figure 6. Multi-generational household cluster in Mashientz: grandmother, two adult daughters, and six grandchildren (map by the author, May 2024)

A1 ***Jea House-1***
Achuar Traditional House
Built before 2009

A2 ***MIDUVI House-1***
State-sponsored housing
Typology 1
Built in 2009

A3 ***Hybrid House-1***
Self-built house following the
MIDUVI example
Typology 1
Built in 2012

A4 ***Hybrid House-2***
Self-built house based on
Kitchwa architecture
Typology 2
Built in 2022

Figure 7. Housing typologies in Mashientz (photographs by the author, May 2024)

Figure 8. Multi-generational household cluster in Pumpuentsa: grandfather, grandmother, son, daughter, her husband, and two grandchildren (Map by the author, July 2024)

A1 ***Jea House-3***
Jea with palisade *(Kanutai typology)*
Built in 2012

A2 ***Jea House-4***
Round *Jea* House *(Muntsu typology)*
Built in 2013

A3 ***MIDUVI House-2***
State-sponsored housing
Built in 2013

A4 ***Hybrid House-2***
Self-built house referencing
urban housing models
Built in 2016

Figure 9. Housing typologies in Pumpuentsa (photographs by the author, July 2024)

THE JEA IS ALIVE

In Western contexts, discussions about the *Jea* houses typically prioritize their morphological, conceptual, or historical aspects over their spiritual dimensions. Yet for the Achuar people, the *Jea* lies at the very heart of their cosmogony[35,36]. Descola, for example, indicates that the Achuar share an animistic relationship with nature[37]. Similarly, Duin explains that many Amazonian Indigenous communities perceive non-human entities as possessing their own subjectivity and the ability to form personal relationships, attributing social qualities to animals and spirits[38]. Building upon Duin's perspective, we find that, for some Achuar families, the house itself has a spirit and forms a relationship with the "organisms" inhabiting it. In addition, it is important to recognize that, before Western contact, the main and only built structure within Achuar communities was the *Jea*. This relationship was exemplified during a conversation with a 33-year-old Achuar man, head of a household in Sharamentsa. He explained: "For us, the house keeps us alive; without it, we could not survive in the jungle". Participatory observation further revealed that the *Jea* is not only considered "alive" but is also deeply intertwined with every stage of an Achuar individual's life, from birth to death.

THE JEA BRINGS LIFE

While visiting a five-member family constructing their *Jea* in Mashientz, it was evident that every stage of the process – extracting timber from the forest, transporting materials on the shoulder, assembling posts and beams, and weaving the thatch roof – was a family effort. Although the man typically leads the construction, his wife and children actively contribute by preparing food and *chicha*, collecting palm leaves, and weaving them into thatch. Additionally, this traditional building practice fosters long-term ecological planning: families reforest areas with hardwoods and plant palm trees to ensure future construction materials. In some cases, NGOs have supported such reforestation efforts as seen in Sharamentsa and Mashientz.

When a young couple decides to marry, they first seek their families' approval during the *Wayusa* ritual – a daily tradition held before dawn, where families discuss important matters after drinking *Wayusa* tea. The tea cleanses the body through vomiting. If both families reach an agreement, the groom is permitted to live with his wife's family for a few months before fully integrating into their community. During this time, he learns their customs from his father-in-law and assists in hunting and cultivating the land. However, once the young woman confirms her pregnancy, her husband begins planning the construction of a house for their new family, usually in an area relatively close to her parents' home, as explained by a community member in Sharamentsa.

Since building a *Jea* takes from six months to one year, the couple usually build a small house for themselves prior to having kids. However, during a conversation with an elder in Pumpuentsa, the man explained:

> After building a new house, we must first light the firepit and hold a chicha celebration before bringing in a newborn; otherwise, the *Jea* could take the baby's spirit, causing the child to die.

Stories like this illustrate the *Jea's* importance in shaping an individual's identity. In fact, several rituals are closely associated with inhabiting the *Jea*,

providing a sense of belonging and a feeling of being blessed or permitted to use it. For example, during an interview with one of the families in Sharamentsa, they mentioned:

> After building the house, we [the couple] are deprived of sexual activities as well as from making or eating certain types of food, like *chicha* or *chontacuros* [worms], to make the house last longer.

They later explained that the thatched roof, made from specific palm leaves found in the forest, deteriorates more quickly if these activities take place inside the house. This is because *comején* (termites) will nest in the roof, creating holes until the structure collapses.

Among the three visited communities, it became evident that the number of single-parent families was higher in Mashientz and Pumpuentsa, while virtually nonexistent in Sharamentsa, which maintained a more traditional lifestyle compared to the other communities. Participant observation revealed that single-parent families – primarily women – struggled to uphold the tradition of building a *Jea*, as male labor is crucial to achieving this goal. Consequently, most single-parent women in Mashientz and Pumpuentsa did not live in a *Jea*, but in houses offered by the Ministry of Urban Development and Housing, MIDUVI houses[39], (see fig. 2) or with their parents instead.

THE JEA IN DEATH

Death is an ever-present reality in Achuar families. The Ecuadorian Amazon, for instance, has one of the highest child mortality rates in the country, according to the 2010 Census[40]. A member of Pumpuentsa explained that when a family member dies, they are often buried beneath the *Jea*. He shared his personal experience, telling us that his two children, who passed away from an illness at a young age, are buried under their current home. He said:

> For us, family must remain close. Death is just another state of life, but they are still with us, in spirit. That is why we are not afraid of the dead, they protect us and stay with us.

This form of burial has traditionally been possible because *Jeas* were built with compacted earth floors, which facilitated the practice.

Previous scholarship has explored the relationship between death and the *Jea* [41]. Descola explains that in traditional Achuar households, when the father – who is typically the head of the family – dies, the house is burned, symbolizing its death alongside him. The remaining family members then relocate, constructing a new *Jea* nearby. However, as *Jeas* evolve and incorporate modern materials, such as concrete floors as seen in Sharamentsa and Pumpuentsa, this burial practice becomes increasingly difficult to sustain. The transition to new building materials not only alters traditional spatial arrangements but also disrupts deep-seated cultural practices surrounding life, death, and the spiritual presence of ancestors in the household. Sharamentsa, for instance, has its own internal law regulating what can and cannot be built within the community. This law was established to protect the vernacular architecture of the *Jea*.

THE JEA IS THREATENED

Among the three Achuar communities visited, only Mashientz and Pumpuentsa exhibited government-sponsored housing. MIDUVI houses are structured into four spaces: a balcony, a living area, and two bedrooms. While designed for four-person households, some in Mashientz accommodated up to ten occupants. To date, only two MIDUVI housing prototypes have been introduced in Achuar communities: a rectangular layout (Type 1) built in 2009 in Mashientz and an ovoidal layout (Type 2) constructed in 2013 in Pumpuentsa. Based on observations, 50 MIDUVI houses were built in Mashientz and 39 in Pumpuentsa. To qualify for this type of housing, Achuar beneficiaries had to be registered in the national census and classified as living in 'extreme poverty' according to international human development indices.

For many, the MIDUVI house is primarily used for sleeping and storage. During the day, it is mostly unoccupied as residents prefer to spend time in the *Jea*. When asked why they preferred the *Jea*, a family in Mashientz responded:
"We like this place because we can see each other, stay with the animals, and easily access the gardens and river". Unlike the MIDUVI house, the *Jea* has no interior partitions, creating a sense of openness and transparency – qualities that, based on participant observation, appear common among Achuar living patterns. The gendered organization of space in the *Jea* is not defined by physical barriers but rather by how household members perform specific activities in designated areas within the open layout. The arrangement and design of furniture – particularly the *tutan* (male or chief's seat) and the *chumpui* (female seat) – symbolize clearly defined gender roles. This gendered spatial dynamic is evident in the presence of outsiders. Women, for instance, avoid direct interaction and often turn their backs while sharing space within the *Jea*, maintaining a distinct yet subtle separation within the same open structure. Some families also construct palisades around the *Jea's* perimeter for minimal separation between indoor and outdoor environments. The structure, however, "breathes" through the gaps between vertically arranged wooden slats, ensuring constant cross-ventilation. Built directly on compacted earth, the *Jea* allows domesticated animals – dogs and monkeys – to share the living space. In contrast, the MIDUVI house, elevated on stilts with wooden floors, limits these direct interactions.
Today, some Achuar people still practice polygamy, despite missionaries' efforts to eradicate this way of life and impose monogamy, as recorded by Salesian missionaries[42]. Traditionally, men have resided with their wives and children under the same roof. An elder in Mashientz described in an interview:

> I used to live with my three wives in the same house. However, after the government offered those [MIDUVI] houses, all my wives wanted to live apart. That's why now I live one month with each of them, rotating between houses.

He disliked the MIDUVI houses and continued living in his own *Jea*, while two MIDUVI houses next to his Jea remained largely unused. After visiting each of his wives, we learned that, like many other families, each wife had hired a builder from the community to construct a *Jea* next to her MIDUVI house, primarily for use as a kitchen. While these housing changes have granted individuals in Mashientz – particularly women – greater independence, the elder's account suggests that the transition from *Jea* to MIDUVI housing has weakened traditional household structures. Many women, however, regard

the shift as a necessary trade-off for greater independence within a still patriarchal structure.

For many, the MIDUVI house is primarily used for sleeping and storage. During the day, it is mostly unoccupied as residents prefer to spend time in the *Jea*. When asked why they preferred the *Jea*, a family in Mashientz responded: "We like this place because we can see each other, stay with the animals, and easily access the gardens and river". Unlike the MIDUVI house, the *Jea* has no interior partitions, creating a sense of openness and transparency – qualities that, based on participant observation, appear common among Achuar living patterns. The gendered organization of space in the *Jea* is not defined by physical barriers but rather by how household members perform specific activities in designated areas within the open layout. The arrangement and design of furniture – particularly the *chimpi* (male or chief's seat) and the *kutank* (female seat) – symbolize clearly defined gender roles. This gendered spatial dynamic is evident in the presence of outsiders. Women, for instance, avoid direct interaction and often turn their backs while sharing space within the *Jea*, maintaining a distinct yet subtle separation within the same open structure. Some families also construct palisades around the *Jea's* perimeter for minimal separation between indoor and outdoor environments. The structure, however, "breathes" through the gaps between vertically arranged wooden slats, ensuring constant cross-ventilation. Built directly on compacted earth, the *Jea* allows domesticated animals – dogs and monkeys – to share the living space. In contrast, the MIDUVI house, elevated on stilts with wooden floors, limits these direct interactions.
Today, some Achuar people still practice polygamy, despite missionaries' efforts to eradicate this way of life and impose monogamy, as recorded by Salesian missionaries[42]. Traditionally, men have resided with their wives and children under the same roof. An elder in Mashientz described in an interview: "I used to live with my three wives in the same house. However, after the government offered those [MIDUVI] houses, all my wives wanted to live apart. That's why now I live one month with each of them, rotating between houses". He disliked the MIDUVI houses and continued living in his own *Jea*, while two MIDUVI houses next to his Jea remained largely un-used. After visiting to each of his wives, we learned that, like many other families, each wife had hired a builder from the community to construct a *Jea* next to her MIDUVI house, primarily for use as a kitchen. While these housing changes have granted individuals in Mashientz – particularly women – greater independence, the elder's account suggests that the transition from *Jea* to MIDUVI housing has weakened traditional household structures. Many women, however, regard the shift as a necessary trade-off for greater independence within a still patriarchal structure.

THE JEA IS ALTERED

The *Jea* has long been subjected to external forces of transformation – first through missionary intervention in the 60s, and more recently through state-led development policies. The arrival of Salesian missionaries marked the beginning of these disruptions, as they reorganized traditionally dispersed Achuar settlements into nucleated communities centered around boarding schools and airstrips – devices of both Christianization and administrative control[43]. In the 70s, Salesian missionary Arnalot reflected on this cultural imposition:

> In the mission, we [Salesian missionaries] forced them [the Achuar] to learn Spanish, to be at our service; the morality to follow was ours; the customs, ours; the life they had to imitate, what they had to think, the standards to follow to be considered normal... everything was ours[44].

Though the agents of assimilation have shifted – from church to state – the objective has remained the same: to fold Indigenous lifeways into dominant national narratives.

As Achuar families receive Westernized housing models like the MIDUVI home or adopt hybrid typologies that integrate MIDUVI with *Jea* construction techniques, TEK is increasingly being lost. Instead of building homes collectively with all family members and passing down elders' construction knowledge through a participatory system known as *minga*, communities now predominantly rely on external builders or a small group of local specialists for house construction. After the construction of the first MIDUVI house in 2009, most of the new hybrid houses in Mashientz began to feature modifications of the original model. When I asked residents of Mashientz why this happened, they explained that the new houses were cheaper, quicker to build, and more durable. However, when asked whether they enjoyed living in a MIDUVI house, they shared that it was "ugly", it was also too hot during the day, too cold at night, and unbearably loud when it rained – a frequent occurrence in the rainforest. Their response aligns with findings from past research on the poor thermal comfort of Westernized houses in Achuar territories[45]. Additionally, they mentioned that their family spent most of their day in the kitchen (an old *Jea*), because it remained cool in the morning and retained warmth at night.

Two significant interior spaces in the Jea that are changing are the *tankamash* (male space) and the *ekent* (female space). In more isolated communities like Sharamentsa, we still found a few houses without visible physical divisions or perimeter walls. However, when an outsider arrived at the house, women and children would move to the *Etsa Taamu* (east side), while men and visitors remained on the *Etsa Akati* (west side) of the *Jea*[46]. Similarly, the firepit for cooking is still located in the ekent, while a separate firepit for guests is situated in the tankamash, as observed in Sharamentsa. The house's layout further reflected these divisions, typically featuring a door on the east and another on the south, reinforcing its gendered structure as seen in Sharamentsa. Traditionally, the gendered divisions of space extended beyond the *Jea* itself, with the *ekent* connecting to the *ajas* (cultivated gardens near the house) and *chacras* (agricultural plots). Today, these divisions are softening, with more men working in the gardens.

In 2024, during visits to families in Mashientz, we observed that the *tankamash* was being used as a living or dining area, while the *ekent* was a dedicated cooking space within the morphed *Jea* by adding a partition wall between both spaces. In single-parent homes, particularly those led by women, the traditional spatial constraints were not observed – women spoke freely with us, as there was no husband present to mediate interactions. In Pumpuentsa, the gendered division within the *Jea* had largely disappeared, and women engaged in conversations with visitors at any time. However, in Mashientz and Sharamentsa, the principles of *ekent* and *tankamash* continued to shape how men and women moved and performed activities within their territories. This suggests that while spatial gender roles were loosening within the home, they remained relevant in the broader landscape. With the

introduction of Western education and employment, men and women began engaging in similar labor both within and outside the household. To some extent, Westernization has contributed to greater gender equality among the Achuar. However, this shift remains a point of contention, as elders strongly oppose the erosion of traditional gender roles.[47,48].

DISCUSSION

The *Jea* is a central element in Achuar culture, embodying not only a physical structure but also a spiritual and cosmological significance. For some Achuar, particularly elders, the house is considered alive, with a spirit linked to the divine playing a crucial role in the individual's life cycle, from birth to death. The construction of the *Jea* involves collective family labor, ecological management, and ceremonial rituals that reinforce the relationship between the people and their environment. However, the introduction of government-sponsored MIDUVI housing and roads has led to changes in traditional construction practices and social dynamics, resulting in alterations to the role of the *Jea* within Achuar communities. These shifts have led to a decline in the transmission of traditional knowledge, as well as changes in spatial organization and family structures, particularly in relation to gendered roles within the home. New building materials and forms, particularly in more Westernized communities like Pumpuentsa, are closely tied to identity and perceptions of progress – suggesting that one is modern, well-off, and progressive. In Pumpuentsa, which appears more Westernized, having a large *Jea* does not confer the same sense of honor upon a head of household as having electricity, appliances, and a house that resembles those found in urban areas. This was evident when visiting a community member who was economically better off than others in the community. This individual lived in a rectangular house with a pitched zinc roof, brick walls, and a concrete floor. As an authority figure, he explained: "I should set an example that it is possible to improve our living conditions. However, I still have my *Jea* for ceremonies and to drink *chicha*".

A growing use of modern construction materials – such as zinc panels, concrete blocks, and concrete structures – is driven by the scarcity of heritage materials needed for the *Jea*, like palm leaves for roofing and hardwood for structural elements, something often seen in permanent settlements[49]. Additionally, the short lifespan of traditional houses (10-15 years) compared to the time investment required to build them (typically 6-12 months), as noted by a community member in Mashientz, has further contributed to this shift. A similar shift is occurring in hunting and farming practices. Traditionally, Achuar families clear small plots (1-3 hectares) when relocating to a new home, allowing their previous land to regenerate naturally, ensuring a continuous reforestation cycle. But as houses become permanent structures, mirroring urban settlements, the heritage practice of temporary living and resource regeneration may fade. An Achuar community member from Pumpuentsa described the dilemma they face: "We feel pressured. The NGOs want us to preserve the forest to help us, while the government wants us to farm and raise cattle to help us". He added: "If we don't accept one or the other, they [the NGOs] just move on to another community in greater need". This tension highlights the conflicting external influences on Achuar communities – each imposing a different vision of "progress" that may ultimately erode their traditional way of life.

Furthermore, considering the *Jea* and MIDUVI houses reveals a dual form of exclusion: the Achuar are not only being displaced from their traditional way of life but are also excluded from decision-making regarding this imposed transition. As a result, some communities find themselves adopting this new

housing model without the opportunity to negotiate its adaptation, particularly given their economic constraints – an issue most pronounced in Pumpuentsa, which has road access (fig. 10). This suggests the urgent need for Achuar community participation in the design of their homes and territories – not merely as consultants or passive recipients of architects' and planners' ideas but as active agents in the conceptualization, design, and execution of these projects.

Figure 10. Transformation of the Jea into modern housing in relation to urban proximity (diagram by the author)

CONCLUSIONS

By exploring how Achuar identities interact with traditional and new forms of housing, this research contributes to broader discussions on Indigenous territoriality, cultural resilience, and the potential for alternative development models that may emerge from within Indigenous epistemologies rather than being imposed from the outside. This case study prompts larger questions about what "modernity" means for Indigenous groups like the Achuar: Does inclusion in Western modes of living require the abandonment of traditional practices? For example, will the Achuar be able to preserve their *chicha* tradition or *wayusa* ceremony without the *Jea's* fire pit? How long will they continue to build *Jeas* adjacent to MIDUVIs as a form of cultural survivance[50]?

The Achuar heritage cities of Sharamentsa, Mashientz, and Pumpuentsa have rapidly evolved since the introduction of the MIDUVI in 2009. The *Jea* –MIDUVI tension illustrates a paradox of inclusion: infrastructure projects aimed at integration of the Achuar into national frameworks often exclude their traditional living practices, encouraging communities to conform to external norms at the expense of cultural sovereignty[51]. This work suggests there is an urgent opportunity to integrate and honor the Achuar's TEK in

future housing development efforts.

COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES

The following community representatives reviewed this research and offered feedback prior to publication: Marco Mukuink (Community of Sharamentsa, President of the Association of Parents of the Sharamentsa School), Celia Chiriapa (Community of Mashientz, First Achuar Woman President of Mashientz from 2021 to 2023), and Pedro Tsamareint (Community of Pumpuentsa, Director of UECIB Santiak, First President of the NAE, and Former President of the Pumpuentsa Association).

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THE FORMER TOTAL INSTITUTION AS A POTENTIAL SPACE OF URBAN REGENERATION *GIOVANNI MICHELUCCI'S THEORETICAL AND DESIGN PROPOSALS FOR FLORENCE*

By Eliana Martinelli (Università degli Studi di Perugia)

ABSTRACT

The paper examines Giovanni Michelucci's theoretical and design contributions to transcending Florence's former total institutions and marginality in a broader sense, with a focus on the San Salvi asylum. Outlining the environmental issues that, according to Franco Basaglia and other psychiatrists of the time, have an impact on transcending the psychiatric hospital, the paper aims to demonstrate continuity between Basaglia's thought and Michelucci's design actions. Several issues of the journal *La Nuova Città* under Michelucci's supervision, particularly in the IV series (1983-85), bear witness to his research, thanks to the contribution of prominent personalities in Democratic Psychiatry, along with eminent architects and thinkers. Michelucci reflects on the architect's responsibility in conveying the indistinct boundary between reason and madness within architectural space. The contemporary city allows collective insanity but not individual madness, which is caused by environmental factors. Thus, the city, where the mentally ill inhabit, constitutes the focus for intervention.
In the case of Florence, Michelucci advocates for a reevaluation of some core components, avoiding the transformation of separate areas, and pursuing a new system of relationships between the urban structures representing confinement and isolation. The Santa Croce district is the focus of Michelucci's urban development proposals, which he drafted from 1966, the year of the Florence flood, until he died in 1990. The design highlights San Salvi and the Murate Prison as two significant points of an urban axis that can be regenerated through cultural initiatives, including new university facilities. Instead of zoning the city, the proposal envisions a "polyphonic" system that attracts cultural, recreational, and scientific interests. This vision pioneers culture-led regeneration, considering former total institutions as the poles for developing a new urban system.

TRANSCENDING THE TOTAL INSTITUTION: AN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

Italy has gained international recognition as the first country in the world to abolish psychiatric hospitals. The normative and cultural revolution happened with the adoption of the so-called Basaglia Law, No. 180 of 13 May 1978, which was drafted by the Christian Democrat politician and psychiatrist Bruno Orsini. This legislation institutionalized the closure of civil asylums and regulated the compulsory health treatment by establishing the public mental health services[1]. Nevertheless, the process of definitive closure was not uniform across the national territory and required several years because the 180 Law did not allocate public funding and delegated operational responsibility to the regions.
To comprehend the implications for architecture and the city, one must reflect on the Basaglia revolution in connection with institutional places. The decision to abolish asylums stemmed from the increasing awareness that mental institutions were not intended for care but rather for social control – tools to dominate the most impoverished segments of the population, who could express only survival-related suffering rather than existential distress. Basaglia believed that the essential issue involved going beyond "institutional madness" and acknowledging madness in its origin, which is inside life. However, this approach was insufficient for transcending the psychiatric hospitals, as "opening the institution" entails more than simply "opening the doors": the total institution persists in various contexts and places and is embodied by the political figure of the doctor[2].

If we shift the question to the environmental context and interpret Basaglia's thought from an architectural perspective, we might consider the asylum's building as the representation of institutional madness. On the other hand, the city must also be acknowledged as the original site of madness because, as Aldo Rossi writes, it is the place of the event and hence of life[3].
In her book *Il parco della guarigione infinita*[4], Giuseppina Scavuzzo conducts a thorough analysis of Basaglia's thought on architecture. The psychiatrist believes that closing the psychiatric hospital is the final step in the fight against mental illness segregation. The city itself should be regarded as the site of healing, embodying life. Basaglia strongly criticizes the actions of the architects, who had historically sought to define a place suitable for mental illness. The psychiatric hospital failed in its role as a *machine à guérir*, and only the community can rehabilitate the mentally ill. Basaglia's opinion about the architecture of psychiatric hospitals is radical: they must self-destruct to change. However, Basaglia does not intend "destruction" to mean "disappear"; rather, it is the outcome of an implosion process that begins within the hospital among the patients. Their actions must be supported by architectural modifications to the hospital's internal spaces, leading to subjectivation, in contrast to objectivation and the individual annihilation (institutional neurosis) induced by the asylum setting[5]. Daniele Calabi's project for Gorizia's psychiatric hospital demonstrates this possibility, as the institution is transformed into temporary residences for individuals lacking homes after the asylum's closure, while medical rehabilitation is carried out in a distinct diagnostic center.

The closure of psychiatric hospitals and the reintegration of individuals labeled as "insane" into society made the environmental factor crucial, since challenges related to integration and acceptance emerged for those who have spent their lives in asylums. These developments, on one hand, led to the establishment of alternative places where various forms of confinement or enforced residency are implemented, diverging from the desired regional

expansion of psychiatry; on the other hand, they contributed to the stigmatization of former psychiatric hospitals, which the city struggles to access.

During the 1960s, San Salvi psychiatric hospital began to show signals of reform, coinciding with the emerging renewal movements in Europe. The city of Florence developed a relationship with the asylum thanks to two key figures: the community of citizens and Carmelo Pellicanò, the last director of the institution and a psychiatrist close to Basaglia's thought. Pellicanò had already coordinated the deinstitutionalization process in the Volterra asylum, promoting theater activities and fostering artistic expression. For his will, San Salvi's dismissal – definitely reached in 1998 – was accompanied by a "germ of community": in 1997, he demanded the theater company Chille de la balanza to form a permanent cultural presidium, which is still operational today[6]. Pellicanò argued that transcending the mental hospital was fundamentally a cultural issue, focused on reclaiming mental illness as a concept intrinsic to both the individual and society. As the dominant culture did not accept madness, it ghettoized and removed the asylum structures from the urban context by situating them on the periphery. Consequently, it was imperative to adopt an interdisciplinary approach, involving architects and urban planners, to rehabilitate psychiatric hospitals and reintegrate them into the city. The ancient structures must be reused, ensuring the occupants remained in them during the transitional period[7].

THE THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION OF GIOVANNI MICHELUCCI

Carmelo Pellicanò, like other prominent personalities in Democratic Psychiatry – among whom Franca Ongaro Basaglia, Giuseppe Germano, Agostino Pirella, and Giuseppe dell'Acqua are included – participated in the debate on transcending the total institution through the journal *La Nuova Città*, supervised and edited by Giovanni Michelucci. The journal extensively examined the topic of transcending marginality in the urban environment, focusing specifically on total institutions and contexts of isolation. The IV series, released from 1983 to 1985, dealt with the subjects of "Prison and city" (no. 1, April 1983), "School and peripheries" (no. 2, November 1983), "City and madness" (no. 3, April 1984), "Order and disorder" (no. 5, December 1984), and "The unfindable city" (no. 6/7, December 1985). During the 1980s, Bettino Craxi's administration advocated for the establishment of hospital institutions, perceiving the psychiatric reform as a failure. Consequently, the discourse around the implementation of Law 180 and its implications for treating mental illness at a regional level remained relevant, with the editorial line of *La Nuova Vittà* seeking to adopt a decisive stance.
Michelucci considers the architect's responsibility in defining a fundamental principle: the ambiguous demarcation between reason and madness within the architectural space. The contemporary city allows collective madness yet provides no space for personal insanity[8]. Environmental factors contribute to mental instability; therefore, the city, where individuals with mental illness reside, constitutes the focus for intervention. He wrote:

> È apparsa, ad esempio, su un giornale di Firenze l'immagine di un uomo in pigiama, a piedi nudi, nel mese di febbraio, vagante per il parco del manicomio di S. Salvi. [...] Ciò che fa riflettere è soprattutto la complessità di situazioni che si possono nascondere dietro una foto inserita con intenti scandalistici. Un primario dell'ospedale, dopo avere sottolineato che in ogni

> caso è preferibile lo scandalo al disinteresse e all'abbandono, ha testimoniato la difficoltà di cercare di convincere quel paziente a calzare un paio di scarpe; alla fine si è giunti al compromesso che avrebbe potuto camminare a piedi nudi nel parco, ma non superare il cancello dell'ospedale, come se questo non stesse a indicare solo il luogo della reclusione, ma anche l'accettazione di un confine, tra la città e la follia, che si è rivelato assai difficile da valicare. Lo stesso confine invalicabile mi sembra riscontrare, in Italia, tra la elaborazione concettuale di ogni nuova legge riformatrice e le sue possibilità di attuazione[9].

Michelucci considers the conflict between madness and society as a criticism of the contemporary city, characterized by marginalities and disruptions that foster both collective and individual psychosis. The mental health services established by the 180 Law correspond to a functional urban logic that may result in a segregated urban setting reminiscent of those of asylums[10].
The only possible answer lies within the urban structure: rather than spreading asylum facilities throughout the territory, it is essential to envision an "educational city" capable of addressing health, cultural, and productive needs without weighing on families; a city focused not on the treatment of illness but on fostering environmental and interpersonal relationships that may contribute to mental health.

During the illness, one remains isolated from the city. The city should forgo hospitals and regard health as an integral aspect of urban issues, rather than comply with the distancing process through the hospitals' implementation. A city structured to function without hospitals can be characterized as an "invisible city" due to the absence of identifiable health facilities. However, the "invisible city" must not devolve into the "unfindable city", which acknowledges hospitalization as a model to avoid but is unable to provide an alternative[11]. In the issue of *La Nuova Città* dedicated to the "unfindable city" (fig. 1), Michelucci offers four examples as proposals for re-evaluating the interplay between society, public space, residential space, and urban form: the psychiatric hospitals of Como, Trieste, Pistoia, and the psychiatric services of Livorno[12].

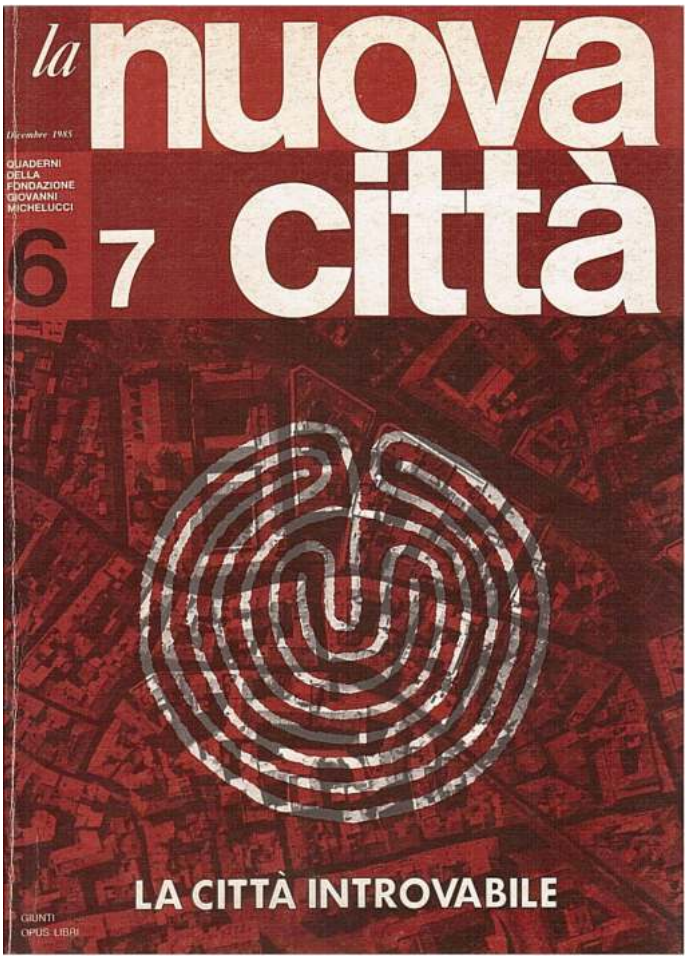

Figure 1. Cover of the journal La Nuova Città, no. 6/7, December 1985: La città introvabile (The unfindable city)

THE DESIGN PROPOSALS FOR FLORENCE

In the wake of the closure of the San Salvi asylum, the debate regarding the area's future and its incorporation into the urban setting increases. Giuseppe Germano's words highlight the primary question:

> E infine, deve questo spazio 'potenziale' essere in qualche modo omologato allo spazio della città (ma quale città?) o si può più ambiziosamente pensare che diventi lo strumento (o uno degli strumenti) per costruire una nuova città che si ponga concretamente alla ricerca della salute?[13].

Michelucci promotes a reassessment of Florence's fundamental components, avoiding modifications to separate areas, and pursuing a new system of relationships. The principal objective in this context is to transcend the limits of confinement and isolation. Among these, the former asylum of San Salvi represents the last outpost of exclusion.
Michelucci envisioned Florence as a polycentric city with three nuclei inside the historic area: the old town, Santa Croce, and San Frediano neighborhoods. This area, representing the city's core, should be devoid of vehicular traffic and focused on pedestrians. In the adjacent urban areas of the 18th and 19th centuries, new centers and connections for pedestrians and vehicles must be identified[14].

The Santa Croce district is a crucial component of Michelucci's urban development proposals that the architect drafted from 1966, the year of the Florence flood, until he died in 1990. In this district, Michelucci is particularly interested in the transformation of the Murate Prison, which will be carried out in the municipality of Florence with the contribution of the Renzo Piano Building Workshop in the early 2000s after its abandonment in 1984. Regarding the former Murate Prison, he considers the perimeter walls as an architectural feature to be conserved, wholly or partially, while emphasizing its potential for penetrability. He asserts that a spatial transformation must always retain the memory of its ancient form, in accordance with the principle of "insistence of the form", so allowing history to be integrated into the new design. However, it would be challenging to release the weight of the ancient function unless the new one has an explosive vitality capable of transforming the memory from restraint to an opportunity for the city to grow[15].
While examining the Santa Croce area, Michelucci drew sketches aimed at highlighting key themes. Three designs depict San Salvi as the endpoint of an Eastern urban axis for rehabilitation, crossing the ring boulevard established by Giuseppe Poggi. The centers along this axis can be merged due to their relationship with the Arno River, which is reassessed as the vital element that the city should face (fig. 2).

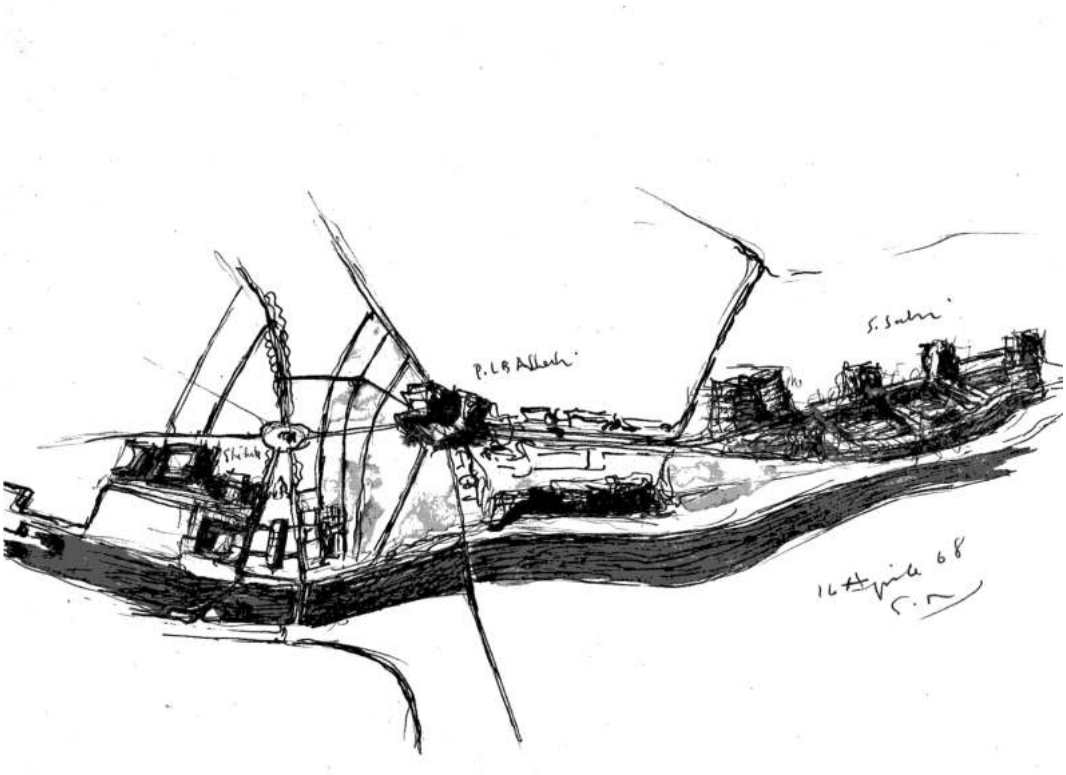

Figure 2. G. Michelucci, 16 April 1968, connection between the Santa Croce district, L. B. Alberti Square, and San Salvi. Archivio Disegni Giovanni Michelucci (AD0245 1968). Source: Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci. Property: Municipality of Pistoia

For Michelucci, the future of Florence depends on a substantial urban revitalization extending from the former Murate Prison to the former asylum, which cannot be considered as distinct urban zones, as such an approach would accentuate the division that the ring boulevard already creates. These two structures exemplified the old concept of order and social control within their respective areas, representing the synthesis of order and chaos,

rationality and insanity within confined spaces[16]. The resolution of the urban problems does not lie in suggesting diversified facilities for their respective districts: the former Murate Prison cannot address the issues of the Santa Croce area, nor can San Salvi handle those of the Alberti Square area. Architecture ought to regain the historic capacity to connect different episodes. Order means assigning significance to each space in relation to the next one, beyond the notions of limit and delimitation[17]. The proposals, indeed, provided Florence with the opportunity to transform its image as a city confined within old walls and to expand toward the periphery (fig. 3).

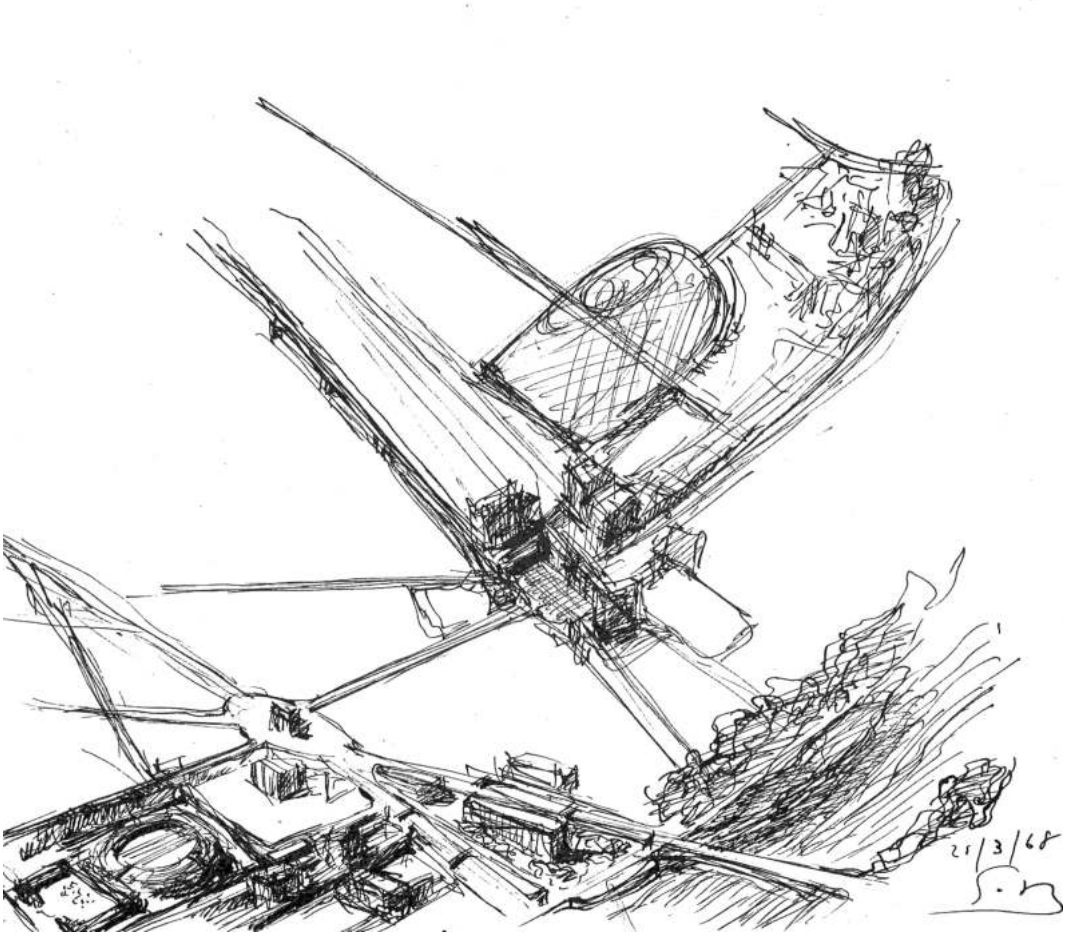

Figure 3. G. Michelucci, 25 March 1968, connection between the Santa Croce district and Campo di Marte. Archivio Disegni Giovanni Michelucci (AD0240 1968). Source: Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci. Property: Municipality of Pistoia

Rather than placing the university outside the city center, Michelucci advocates for integrating university services within these two urban structures, thereby using culture as a catalyst for the uniform and intensive use of the space: university research, pedagogical approaches, and the housing system for the academic community can embody the most dynamic aspect of the city. The architect referred to a “mobile center” that can adapt according to different circumstances and interests: the design should envision the city as a “polyphonic” system that attracts a multitude of cultural, recreational, and scientific pursuits, integrating the theater and the market instead of dividing the areas into distinct zones (fig. 4):

> Progettare oggi può significare anche progettare questa possibilità di incontri di attività scientifiche, sanitarie, artistiche, sportive, ricreative. Come se il territorio, invece di essere diviso in più centri di interessi separati, potesse essere visto come una compresenza, nello stesso luogo, di più sistemi. Tale tessuto polifonico, a mio parere, consentirebbe di poter continuare a parlare della città in termini unitari, rispettando contemporaneamente la specificità di ogni singola funzione[18].

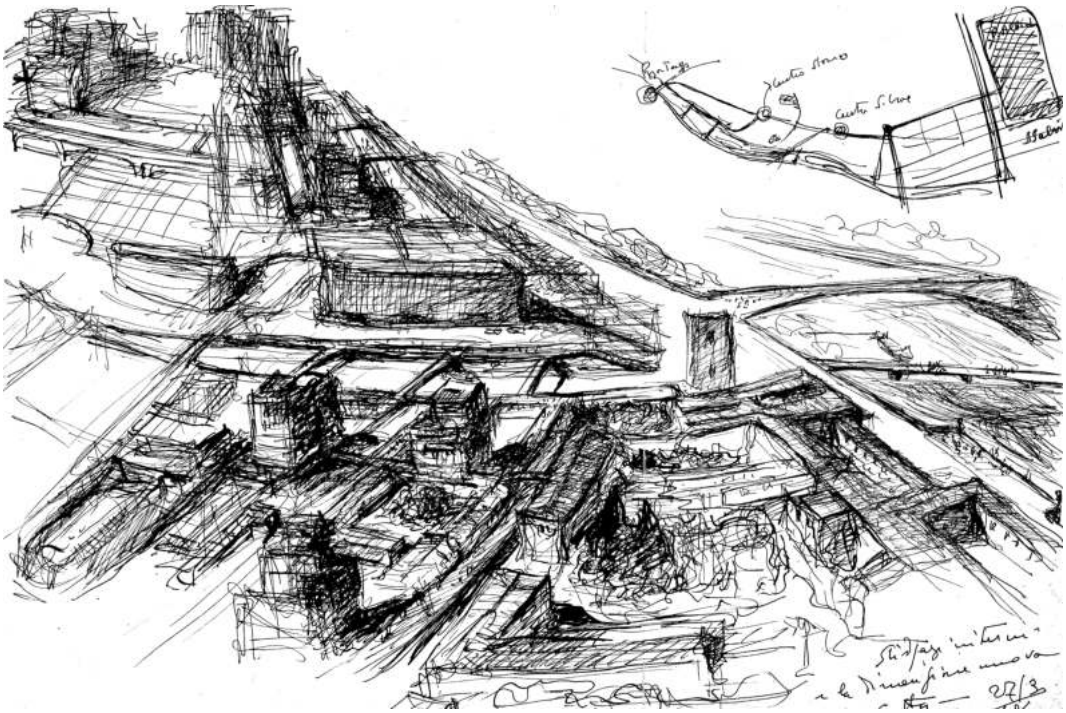

Figure 4. G. Michelucci, 27 March 1968, pedestrian crossings on the ring boulevard and Arno River. On the top right: a set of poles marking a unique urban pedestrian pathway that connects the historical center to the new San Salvi neighborhood. Archivio Disegni Giovanni Michelucci (AD0241 1968). Source: Fondazione Giovanni Michelucci. Property: Municipality of Pistoia

Beyond being a definite project, Michelucci's idea might be seen as a perspective on the city by identifying some leading themes[19]. Carlo Cresti[20] regards the proposal for the Santa Croce district as evocative visual exercises, wherein a visionary character is present in the river-facing squares-terraces and the internal urban areas to be revitalized, situated between the streets-trenches. The design seeks to restore a closer relationship with the river: walkways link the two banks, and interconnecting pedestrian pathways meander through the courtyards and internal gardens, including those of the former Murate and Santa Verdiana Prisons. Elevated walkways connect these former jail structures with other buildings across the boulevard, preventing interference with vehicle traffic[21].
Rejecting a deterministic approach, Michelucci proposed a "variable city"[22] that evolves through human action, perpetually rising and re-emerging in search of a "promise space". It may be a utopian vision; however, it is the only city where the marginalized and the ill can become citizens like all others.

CONCLUSIONS

Facing the problem of choosing between restoration and demolition of a crumbling architectural complex, Michelucci always opts for the preservation of the ancient form[23]. And this is valid for the former psychiatric hospital, too.

Apparently, this approach seems to be distant from that of Basaglia, who claimed for the self-destruction of the mental institution. However, as seen, Basaglia intended a sort of implosion started by the asylum's inhabitants. Therefore, the focus is on life inside the structure. In this context, Michelucci's stance aligns with Basaglia's views: he considers architecture as inseparable from its essential social dimension, which allows transformation. In a 1968 ministerial report[24], Basaglia asserts that architects should design hospitals as open places in continuous interpenetration with the exterior, with the aim of making them dynamic. He advocates for "elastic", polyvalent spaces that, like therapy forms, should adapt to the patient's needs. This approach also reveals elements akin to Michelucci's idea.
According to Basaglia, "freedom is therapeutic"[25]; for Michelucci, "the therapy is the space":

> Ho detto che lo spazio del manicomio era segregativo, ma sono arrivato a concludere che lo spazio della città non lo è da meno. L'uomo oggi è necessariamente portato ad usare la città più nelle sue specifiche funzioni che come libera successione di spazi. Mi sembra invece che l'ambiente più confacente alla malattia mentale sia quello arbitrariamente definito, momento per momento, attraverso un oggetto, un'associazione di idee, uno stato emotivo [...]. Costruire dunque la città a misura del folle è impossibile, ma continuare a costruirla così com'è conduce alle più svariate forme di psicosi collettive e individuali[26].

Through the criticism of the existing city, Michelucci envisions a new idea of the urban environment, conceived as a logical succession of spaces with different functions that are not isolated from each other. Consequently, the concept of limit indicates an essential aspect in the design-oriented approach. Although the city cannot be deemed limitless, the urban project should not pursue a definite form just by defining boundaries. Instead, it should explore the potential future of the city in its unrealized possibilities. The design process should search for a complex and dynamic order until it finds in something new and disordered an impulse to modify its form[27]. In conclusion, we could consider Michelucci as the precursor of a theory of the culture-led regeneration of places, beyond the constraints imposed by the presence of total institutions, which, instead, can represent the centers for developing a new urban system.

NOTES

[1] Prior to this, the Law of 14 February 1904 stated that the director had comprehensive jurisdiction within the asylum, encompassing admissions, which could be granted with merely a medical certificate, dismissals, and the potential for patients to connect with the outside world. The initial reform occurred in 1968 with the Mariotti Law, which aimed to improve living conditions in psychiatric hospitals by regulating hospitalization practices. **[2]** Basaglia, Franco. 2018. *Se l'impossibile diventa possibile*. Città di Castello (PG): Edizioni di Comunità. **[3]** Rossi, Aldo. 1981. *A Scientific Autobiography*. Cambridge, London: The MIT Press. **[4]** Scavuzzo, Giuseppina. 2020. *Il parco della guarigione infinita*. Siracusa: LetteraVentidue Edizioni. **[5]** Basaglia, Franco. 2005. *L'utopia della realtà*. Torino: Piccola Biblioteca Einaudi. **[6]** Martinelli, Eliana. 2023. *Stages of Memory. Strategie per la rigenerazione dell'ex manicomio di San Salvi a Firenze*. Roma: Tabedizioni. **[7]** Pellicanò, Carmelo. 1984. "Se parlo della città parlo anche dell'uomo." *La Nuova Città*, no. 3 (April): 113-114. Città e follia. **[8]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1984. "Dal diario di un architetto." *La Nuova Città*, no. 3 (April): 2-7. Città e follia and Michelucci, Giovanni. 2000. *Dove si incontrano gli angeli. Pensieri, fiabe, sogni*. Firenze: Fondazione Michelucci e Carlo Zella Editore. **[9]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1984. Op. cit. 2-7. "For example, in a Florentine journal, a photo appears of a barefoot man in pajamas in the month of February, wandering in the park of the San Salvi asylum. [...] The complex situation behind a photo with sensationalist intent prompted reflection. After emphasizing that the scandal was preferable to the patient's disinterest and abandonment, the head physician of the hospital observed the challenges he faced in persuading the patient to put on shoes. Finally, he reached the compromise that he could walk without shoes in the park but not overpass the hospital's gate, as it not only identifies the place of reclusion but also the acceptance of a boundary between the city and madness that reveals itself as difficult to cross. In Italy, there is the same unbridgeable gap between the conceptual development of each new reformer law and its potential for implementation". Translation by the author. **[10]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1984. Op. cit., 2-7. **[11]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1985. "La città introvabile." *La Nuova Città*, no. 6/7 (December): 2-7. La città introvabile. **[12]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1985. "Quattro esperienze come ipotesi di lavoro." *La Nuova Città*, no. 6/7 (December): 82. La città introvabile. **[13]** Germano, Giuseppe. 1984. "Dal manicomio di San Salvi una sfida per Firenze." *La Nuova Città*, no. 3 (April): 104-112. Città e follia. "Should we integrate this potential area into the city? (And so, what kind of city?) Alternatively, should we envision it as a tool (or one of the tools) for concretely building a new conception of a city in pursuit of health?". Translation by the author. **[14]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1968. *Il quartiere di Santa Croce nel futuro di Firenze*. Roma: Officina Edizioni. **[15]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1984. "Il crollo di un antico limite. Un'immagine di Firenze tra il carcere delle Murate e il manicomio di San Salvi." *La Nuova Città*, no. 5 (December): 9-13. Ordine e disordine. **[16]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1984. "Ordine e disordine." *La Nuova Città*, no. 5 (December): 3-5. Ordine e disordine. **[17]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1984. "Il crollo di un antico limite. Un'immagine di Firenze tra il carcere delle Murate e il manicomio di San Salvi." *La Nuova Città*, no. 5 (December): 9-13. **[18]** *Ibid.* "Today, designing can also mean projecting opportunities for encounters among scientific, health, artistic, sports, and recreational activities. As if the territory, instead of being divided into several centers of separated interests, could be considered a compresence of different systems in the same place. To me, this polyphonic system would permit continuing to dissert the city in unitarian terms, at the same time respecting the specificity of each function". Translation by the author. **[19]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1968. Op. cit. **[20]** Cresti, Carlo. 1991. "La città di Michelucci: l'immaginario del *genius loci*". In *Michelucci per la città, la città per Michelucci*, 23-31. Firenze: Artificio. **[21]** Marcetti, Corrado. 2011. "Come tracce di percorso". In *Giovanni Michelucci disegni inediti*, 13-21. Firenze: Centro Di. **[22]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1954. "La città variabile." *La Nuova Città*, no. 13 (January): 3-10. **[23]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1984. "Il crollo di un antico limite. Un'immagine di Firenze tra il carcere delle Murate e il manicomio di San Salvi." *La Nuova Città*, no. 5 (December): 9-13. **[24]** Basaglia, Franco. 2017. "Relazione alla commissione di studio per l'aggiornamento delle vigenti istruzioni per le costruzioni ospedaliere del Ministero della Sanità." In Basaglia, Franco. *Scritti, 1953-1980*, edited by Franca Ongaro Basaglia, 517. Milano: Il Saggiatore. **[25]** This phrase was written on the wall of the Trieste asylum. **[26]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1984. "Dal diario di un architetto." *La Nuova Città*, no. 3 (April): 2-7. Città e follia. "I said that the asylum space was segregating, but I concluded that the urban space is equally so. Today, individuals are compelled to utilize the city for its designated functions rather than as a free sequence of spaces. Rather, it seems that the more suitable environment for mental illness is one that is occasionally defined through an object, a collection of ideas, or an emotional condition [...]. Therefore, it is impossible to build a city lunatic-friendly, but perpetuating its current design has resulted in increasingly diverse forms of both collective and individual psychosis". Translation by the author. **[27]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1984. "Ordine e disordine." *La Nuova Città*, no. 5 (December): 3-5. Ordine e disordine.

RECEPTION OR EXCLUSION? *MASS ACCOMMODATIONS FOR ASYLUM SEEKERS AS SEGREGATION DEVICES*

By Giulia Furlotti (Università degli Studi di Parma)

ABSTRACT

The increase in the number of migrants and asylum seekers headed to Europe in recent years has put a strain on the capacity and organization of the EU reception system, invalidating the guarantee of adequate standards of living granted by the right of asylum. The peak in asylum applications in Europe reached in 2015 worsened the already existing problems and exacerbated the political and social debate on reception; the absence of a unified political vision has led to a problem-solving approach in which European asylum-seeker reception focuses more on provision of services than on the well-being and the effective possibility of integration of asylum seekers. In practice, the lack of stringent guidelines has left the specifics of asylum-seeker accommodations largely to national governments, whose policies often reflect explicit strategies of exclusion. Paradoxically, 'Reception' or 'Accommodation' Centers end up belonging, in both form and function, to the same category as Expulsion Centers: controversial spaces designed to seclude and control. This article attempts, following a concise analysis of European legislation and the structures it produces, a conceptualization of collective centers for asylum seekers as a contemporary manifestation of the camp-form.

INTRODUCTION

The migratory flows directed toward Europe in recent years, without precedent in the history of the European Union, have severely tested a reception system that is unprepared, relatively young, and structured according to emergency-driven logics. This situation, within the complex system of social, political, and economic factors that govern European reception, has fueled a growing attitude of resistance toward immigration, which has manifested both through increasingly restrictive legislative measures and through strategies of containment and deterrence. Some of the most explicit manifestations of this containment policy, bordering on propaganda, have materialized in the military protection of borders, such as the wall built by Hungary in 2015[1] to block the entry of migrants arriving via the Balkan route, or the wall built by Greece along its border with Turkey[2], or, more generally, the extensive use of maritime patrols and pushbacks at sea. Similarly, the European Union has implemented strategies to externalize the protection of its borders by signing agreements with third countries to delegate the management of migration flows, such as the EU-Turkey Agreement of 2016[3] or, more recently, the agreement signed by Italy with Albania in 2023.

Alongside these markedly political interventions, less visible but equally effective practices have developed in limiting the integration and rights of asylum seekers. Among these, the reduction of funding for reception programs and the reorganization of reception facilities, with large-scale accommodations having established themselves as the dominant response in Europe[4]. These buildings, large collective structures often obtained from former barracks or penitentiary buildings, are designed and managed as devices of exclusion, which simultaneously isolate asylum seekers from the local population and contribute to a broader process of criminalization in the public imagination, fostering an unfounded sense of threat associated with the entire category.

It has been documented several times how large collective buildings offer living conditions far below those established by the minimum European standards[5, 6] and raise numerous critical issues in terms of social, health and fundamental rights. They are buildings often characterized by overcrowding, infrastructural deficiencies, lack of privacy and in general by an insufficient presence of psychological, legal and educational assistance services (fig. 1). They cause a systematic marginalization of migrants and increase the risk of exposure to violence and precarious living conditions; yet large collective buildings continue to be the most widespread choice among the governments of European countries[7, 8].

Figure 1. Caltanisetta CPR, Caltanisetta (CL), aerial view (image provided by AltraEconomia and PlaceMark, "Chiusi dentro. Dall'alto"). https://altreconomia.it/chiusi-dentro-alto-progetto/

EUROPEAN LEGISLATION

The relevant legal framework is that of European legislation on the right to asylum, which is relatively recent and still evolving: the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) was established only in 1999 by the then fifteen Member States of the European Union. One of the main driving forces behind the creation of the CEAS, already discussed in the Dublin Convention of 1990, was the desire to harmonize reception systems, based on the recognition that,

in the absence of internal borders, asylum seekers would move from one country to another in search of better conditions or more favorable selection criteria. Since the establishment of the common asylum framework, there have been five multiannual programmes, each with specific objectives and instruments, including legal ones. The current programme is the New Pact on Migration and Asylum, proposed in 2020 following the European Agenda on Migration, the programme that was intended to respond to the period of highest migratory flows. The new programme was planned to reach full implementation by 2026, although many of its amendments entered into force in 2024[9]. The main tools currently in use are: Reception Conditions Directive (Directive 2013/33/EU), Asylum Procedures Directive (Directive 2013/32/EU), Qualification Directive (Directive 2011/95/EU), Dublin III Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 604/2013), and Eurodac Regulation (Regulation (EU) No 603/2013). These are almost exclusively tools inherited from previous programmes, or recasts of them, and, as indicated by their names, they are primarily instruments of management and control, such as the EURODAC fingerprint database. In fact, they focus almost entirely on the mechanisms that govern the granting of asylum rights and on determining who is responsible for managing asylum seekers, with very little attention paid to the places where asylum seekers are housed while the necessary bureaucratic procedures for granting international protection are carried out.

Among this body of legal texts, the only document that actually focuses on the physical conditions of reception is the Reception Conditions Directive[10]. The main objective of this text is to establish the minimum common standards of living conditions for asylum applicants, and to achieve this, it provides a very open framework to serve as a basis for organizing the various national reception systems. Housing provision is only one of the numerous topics it addresses, and consequently, the articles that directly refer to this aspect are extremely generic. Rather than being prescriptive and suggesting potential best practices, the text appears to describe, in an extremely broad and concise manner, the various solutions already adopted by different European countries, thereby effectively legitimizing them. The essentiality of the articles that refer directly to the housing provision is so illustrative that it seems relevant to report it in detail. Article 2 defines, in a rather tautological way, what is meant by accommodation centre, i.e. "any place used for the collective housing of applicants" (Art. 2, i). A more detailed explanation of the structures proposed for the accommodation of asylum seekers is given in article 18, and consists of only 3 groups: “premises used for the purpose of housing applicants during the examination of an application for international protection made at the border or in transit zones”, meaning the specific buildings where applicants are identified and registered (Art. 18, 1a); “accommodation centers which guarantee an adequate standard of living" (Art. 18, 1b); and “private houses, flats, hotels or other premises adapted for housing applicants” (Art. 18, 1c).

These two articles summarize all the information regarding the housing provision within the European directives. As anticipated, it is essentially a description of the current state of reception in various European countries, without any explicit division between the buildings that are used during the initial phases of reception, generally large collective structures, and those that instead presuppose a more long-lasting use over time, and which should have a less emergency-driven character. It emerges that Member States maintain a very high level of freedom, as long as a dignified life is guaranteed: what constitutes a decent standard of living and how this should be achieved, however, remains at the discretion of national systems.

It is also indicative that in defining the minimum requirements for a dignified quality of life, any architectural indication is completely neglected and, similarly, in the European reference texts a general disinterest in the physical and spatial organization of housing is noted. There is a lack of design references in terms of organizational typologies, and the specific dimensional standards, when provided, focus mainly on the minimum habitability requirements[11]. Yet, different types of housing have a very different impact on the quality of life of the inhabitants. Isolated buildings, both through extreme decentralization and through the use of physical barriers such as walls or road junctions, limit or prevent the possibilities of interaction with the local inhabitants and preclude the participation of asylum seekers in collective life, with obvious repercussions also on the future integration prospects of refugees, should their application be accepted. Paradoxically, one of the best practices at the European level was the Italian SAI system (Integrated Reception System), which had become the ordinary system before the last reform. After an initial phase of reception in collective centers, it provided for widespread redistribution across the territory, in apartments or collective buildings of limited size. The system was dismantled with the Cutro Decree (DL 20/2023), reducing its beneficiaries and abandoning the dispersed ordinary system in favor of reception based on large collective centers (fig. 2). Mass accommodations are the preferred solution of European governments, with officially different forms and functions, but in fact serving the same dynamics of containment and control, whether these buildings operate as first registration centers, as accommodation centers for applicants waiting to submit their asylum application, or as detention centers for forced migrants awaiting deportation. In addition to the obvious desire to save resources – reducing services, facilities and personnel to a minimum and in many cases offering a quality of life that is neither dignified nor safe – an evident desire for control emerges; as Milman and Frederiksen state, "it is safe to argue that these institutions are not politically neutral and not exclusively concerned with care for asylum seekers"[12].

Figure 2. Brindisi CPR, Brindisi (BR), aerial view (image provided by AltraEconomia and PlaceMark, "Chiusi dentro. Dall'alto"). https://altreconomia.it/chiusi-dentro-alto-progetto/

RECEPTION ON ITALIAN TERRITORY

In general, the Italian reception system for asylum seekers and beneficiaries of international protection remains fully within the limits defined by European legislation. This does not mean, however, that it is a stable system. The political charge inherent in these places becomes evident when considering how the structure of the reception system has been reorganized several times in recent years, changing modes, principles, and even beneficiaries with each change of government.

The decree that serves as the foundation for the Italian reception system is DL 142/2015, explicitly referred to as the "Reception Decree" (*Decreto accoglienza*) [13], which transposed into national law the recast Reception Directive of the European Union. The system, like the majority of national systems in Member States, is organized into phases, with an initial phase of reception and registration in large collective buildings located near the borders, known as hotspots, followed by a second, more long-term phase. Hotspots were introduced in 2015 by the EU's "Migration Management Agenda", although they actually already existed under different names. They are the first large centers for identification, photo-signaling, fingerprint collection, health screening and preliminary assessment of asylum requests. In Italy there are currently 6[14]: Lampedusa, Messina, Pozzallo, Trapani, Taranto and, from 2023, Porto Empedocle. They are positioned in strategic points along the migratory routes, and within the territory itself they are often located near infrastructures or ports, to make access easy even for migrants rescued by sea, and in almost all cases well separated from the urban fabric (figg. 3, 4 and 5).

Figure 3. Lampedusa Hotspot, Lampedusa (AG), aerial view (image by Google Earth)

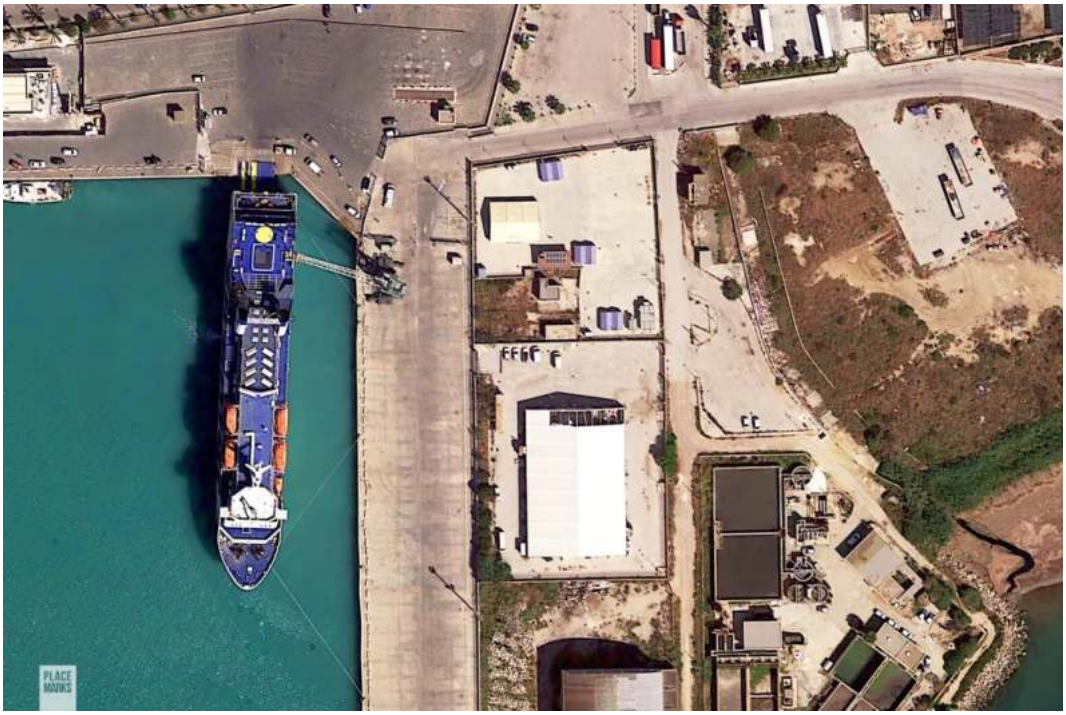

Figure 4. Porto Empedocle Hotspot, Porto Empedocle (AG), aerial view (image provided by AltraEconomia and PlaceMark, "Chiusi dentro. Dall'alto"). https://altreconomia.it/chiusi-dentro-alto-progetto/

Figure 5. Pozzallo Hotspot, Pozzallo (RG), aerial view (image by Google Earth)

The first reception phase has remained the most unchanged over time, as *bare life* is universal and biological needs are the same for all; the most significant changes have primarily concerned identification technologies. The same cannot be said, however, for what would be the more prolonged phase of reception, namely, it is important to remember, the phase in which a forced migrant has submitted their asylum application in the first country of arrival, which must process it to determine whether or not refugee status will be granted. Throughout the entire assessment phase of the application, an asylum seeker is not yet formally recognized by the state in which they reside, has no right to work, and is completely dependent on the accommodations and physical assistance provided by the host country. The arrivals in unpredictable flows, combined with the continuous emergency-driven

approach characterized by the understaffing and under-resourcing of a system that should be ordinary, lead the processing times for asylum applications to consistently exceed the prescribed limits (typically 3 months, with a maximum of 6 months), reaching critical conditions during peak influxes[15].

This leads to what is defined as "ordinary reception", first SPRAR, then SPROIMI and SAI, and now in a hybrid situation mainly based on the CPA (*Centri di Prima Accoglienza*, First Reception Centers), and, paradoxically, the CAS (*Centri di Accoglienza Straordinaria*, Extraordinary Reception Centers) and CPR (*Centri di Permanenza per il Rimpatrio*, Centers for Immigration Detention). If this plethora of acronyms is not enough to underscore the strong political character these structures assume, it is also necessary to highlight how the models that have followed one another, sometimes even in quick succession, have in fact applied two completely opposing models of reception, both in terms of objectives and types of structures used.

To clarify in an extremely complicated and ever-changing system, in which often equivalent structures have different official names or functions, it may be sufficient to follow the changes in the beneficiaries of the so-called "distributed reception model" over the years. The system based on decentralized and distributed reception, relying on accommodations consisting of apartments or small-scale facilities that are well integrated into the local area and located in close proximity to essential services and infrastructures, has shown a markedly positive impact on the integration process[16]. The system was established in 2002, building on the experiences of decentralized and networked reception initiatives carried out by associations and non-governmental organizations between 1999 and 2000[17] and was named SPRAR (*Sistema di Protezione per Richiedenti Asilo e Rifugiati*, Protection System for Asylum Seekers and Refugees). As the name suggests, it was open to all categories of asylum seekers without distinction, provided that there were available spaces. The issue of insufficient available places has indeed been a key feature of the decentralized system from the beginning, as it was based on voluntary participation by municipalities and associations. The shortcomings of the ordinary system have always been filled by organizational centers, until the increase in the flow of forced migrants made it necessary to institutionalize an Extraordinary System, based on CASs, in 2014.

In 2018, under Salvini's Ministry, the so-called Security Decree (DL 113/2018) severely reduced access to the distributed reception system, renaming it SIPROIMI (*Sistema di Protezione per Titolari di Protezione Internazionale e per Minori stranieri non accompagnati*, Protection System for Holders of International Protection and for Unaccompanied Foreign Minors); in fact, a different name but a system equivalent to the current one; those excluded were channeled into CAS, or equivalent government mass accommodations. Only two years later, it is important to underline how impactful it is for the reception system to return to a functional situation after heavy cuts in funding and personnel, the Legislative Decree no. October 21, 2020, n.130[18] extended the formal beneficiaries of decentralized reception, transforming SIPROIMI into the ordinary reception system and renaming it SAI (*Sistema di Accoglienza e Integrazione*, Reception and Integration System), although without proportionally increasing the number of places available. Finally, as anticipated, Legislative Decree 20/2023 has once again set a strongly restrictive and penalising approach towards asylum seekers, once again reducing access only to refugees and vulnerable categories[19, 20].

To address the need for accommodations for asylum seekers excluded from the distributed reception system, Law 50/2023 also introduced a new category of "temporary" centers: pending the identification of available spaces in government-run reception centers or CAS, the Prefect can order that accommodation take place in temporary structures, where only basic needs such as food, clothing, healthcare, and linguistic-cultural mediation are provided, excluding any form of psychological support or initiatives aimed at integration. Once again, therefore, the reception system is mainly based on the use of large collective centers and temporary structures, as also highlighted by the progressive shift of resources to the CPRs, real detention centers for asylum seekers who have been denied their asylum application, which in case of need can also serve as housing for asylum seekers still awaiting acceptance but considered “at risk of absconding”. Finally, with such a clear desire for externalization and exclusion that it would be almost comical in other circumstances, the Italian Government signed in 2024 (Law 14 of 21 February 2024) an agreement with the Albanian Government aimed at cooperation on migration matters. Of the three centers on Albanian territory under Italian jurisdiction, one should serve as an identification and screening center, one as a reception center with 880 places[21], and one as a repatriation center, presumably three successive phases of the same process, but in fact, buildings indistinguishable in structure and function.

It emerges that large collective centers are not places of poorly managed reception, or at least not involuntarily. The use of emergency structures and procedures is systematic: the continuous cutting of resources and the reduction of beneficiaries of widespread reception, the extreme decentralization of collective structures, and the forced separation of migrants from the local population are all extremely conscious choices, and loaded with political connotations.

CAMP-FORM AND TOTAL INSTITUTIONS

Mass accommodations for asylum seekers are hybrid spaces, still relatively young within architectural discourse, and situated conceptually between the *camp-form* and total institutions. In order to better understand their implications, a brief overview of these two concepts is necessary.
There is a rather conspicuous literature that describes internment camps in terms of exception. In the text “Zone definitivamente temporanee” Rahola[22], taking up the theories of many philosophers who before him have questioned the concept of camp, from Arendt to Bauman and Agamben, theorizes the existence of a *camp-form*, advancing the hypothesis of a common matrix that can explain all the phenomenologies, even distant from each other, with which camps emerge in the present. The idea proposed is that the camps were born as the only possible territory in which to segregate the Surplus, a humanity in movement between borders and univocal national belongings.
The reflection on the rights acquired through belonging to a state, and consequently their loss without such affiliation, is introduced by Hannah Arendt when, in The Origins of Totalitarianism[23], she defines the difference between "citizens" and "human beings". Since rights are not universally granted to humans, but rather to citizens as such, those who do not belong to any state have no rights or political protection; they are merely living bodies. Hannah Arendt’s theories are expanded upon by Agamben, who combines them with Michel Foucault’s concept of biopower. In his interpretation, the camp represents the physical materialization of the state of exception. When the political system, defined through the fundamental relationship between physical space, the established order, and government, enters a prolonged crisis, the camp space is born: at the moment when the nation-state is no

longer able to guarantee order within its territory and, by necessity, creates a space "other". The camp, therefore, is a device of segregation and exclusion, separating those who deserve a dignified and protected life from the "undesirables"[24]. Agamben's texts have strongly influenced subsequent studies on the camp form and its spatialization[25, 26, 27]. Kreichauf, in particular, speaks of the "campization" of asylum seeker facilities in Europe, analyzing them not only from a physical and spatial perspective and in terms of the lowering of quality standards, but also considering containment, exclusion and temporality.
Building on his work, this article underlines that campization should also be understood conceptually: like camps, mass accommodations for asylum seekers are devices of containment and control for those who do not belong, in this case, asylum seekers trapped in the limbo of bureaucratic waiting, forcibly excluded from the territory in which they find themselves (figg. 6 and 7).

Figure 6. Torino CPR, Torino (TO), aerial view (image provided by AltraEconomia and PlaceMark, "Chiusi dentro. Dall'alto"). https://altreconomia.it/chiusi-dentro-alto-progetto/
Figure 7. Torino CPR, Torino (TO), aerial view, zoom (image provided by AltraEconomia and PlaceMark, "Chiusi dentro. Dall'alto"). https://altreconomia.it/chiusi-dentro-alto-progetto/

The aspect of control, in particular, strongly aligns mass accommodations with another major theme of the twentieth century: that of Total Institutions. The term was coined by Erving Goffman in Asylums to describe those social structures in which individuals, physically separated from the broader society, live lives entirely regulated by a single authority. Such institutions – psychiatric hospitals, prisons, military barracks – are characterized by strict behavioral control, a clear separation between the inside and the outside world, and systematic practices of discipline and surveillance. Emphasizing isolation from the external world, omnipresent control, and the loss of individual identity, numerous contemporary scholars have drawn parallels between mass accommodation centers and total institutions[28, 29]. Like modern panopticons, they are not merely architectural forms, but rather expressions of a power structure – an apparatus of control embedded in spatial and social organization.

Fieldwork conducted by Minca reveals that asylum seeker compounds are tightly controlled spaces, characterized by surveillance, censorship, and custodial oversight (fig. 8). In his visit to the center in Gradisca, Italy, he describes it as a space entirely detached from the outside world, "a sort of grand space of exception, where time and social meaning appear as strangely suspended"[30]. It is particularly significant that the author, having been compelled to comply with the prison-like rules imposed by the structure in order to carry out his research, later reflected on his own complicity – acknowledging that, by accepting the ideological premise of such an artifact,

he had implicitly contributed to its legitimation.

The ideological dimension is, indeed, highly relevant. Kreichauff highlights how the use of spatially segregating structures – such as emergency facilities or converted military barracks and penitentiaries – conveys a message of necessary segregation, fostering an implicit criminalization of the individuals housed within[31]. It is also well documented that the operation of such centers is directly modeled on the logic and practices of carceral systems [32, 33, 34], fostering what is commonly referred to as "crimigration", the a priori criminalization of migration itself.

Figure 8. Gradisca CPR, Gradisca d'Isonzo (GO), (image provided by AltraEconomia and PlaceMark, "Chiusi dentro. Dall'alto"). https://altreconomia.it/chiusi-dentro-alto-progetto/

CONCLUSIONS

This article has sought to reaffirm the necessity of studying and conceptualizing mass accommodations for asylum seekers, hybrid spaces imbued with profound political and philosophical implications. Particularly emblematic is the rapid diffusion, within the discretionary space granted by European legislation, of diverse yet conceptually identical spaces of control and exclusion across Member States. This phenomenon, as argued throughout the paper, stems from the pervasive and systematic isolation of asylum seekers from the local population – an approach that draws upon abstract models of power, exclusion, and control which have historically resurfaced whenever nation-states perceived the need to segregate and exclude undesirable masses.

Asylum seekers are separated from the local population both through actual physical segregation in isolated structures and through extreme decentralization, preventing any relations with host communities. Yet, the way in which temporary accommodations for asylum seekers are organized – their spatial arrangement, their location within or outside urban environments, and the nature of interactions they enable – plays a crucial role

in shaping integration outcomes. Rather than facilitating inclusion, mass accommodations tend to function as urban enclaves of exclusion: they deepen social divisions, hinder access to the cultural, social, and economic fabric of the city, and, in doing so, contribute to reshaping the city's broader spatial and political dynamics.

NOTES

[1] The wall is essentially a double barrier of barbed wire, approximately 4 meters high and 175 kilometers long. Over the years, it has undergone various maintenance and reinforcement works, with the latest section, 10 kilometers long, added in 2023. Asylum Information Database (AIDA). 2025. Access to the territory and pushbacks - Hungary. https://schengenvisainfo.com/news/hungary-extends-reinforces-border-fence-with-serbia-to-tackle-irregular-entries/. **[2]** The greek wall was conceived as a deterrent to migratory flows along the Aegean Sea route. It was constructed in several phases, with the first 12.5 km completed in 2012 in the Evros river valley, followed by an additional 40 km in 2021. In 2022, the Greek government announced plans to expand the fence by 220 km. The barrier consists of a double fence made of galvanized steel panels approximately 5 meters high, equipped with watchtowers and regular patrols. Part of the surveillance technologies are provided or co-financed by Frontex, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency. Like the aforementioned wall promoted by the Hungarian government, the one along the Greek-Turkish border is part of a broader process of national border fortification: a report by the European Union highlights that from 1990 to 2022, the number of physical walls within the Schengen area increased from zero to nineteen. European Parliamentary Research Service. 2022. "Walls and Fences at EU Borders". **[3]** The purpose of the EU-Turkey Statement was to reduce irregular migration from Turkey to the European Union. It envisaged the return to Turkey of all migrants not eligible for international protection, through a measure defined as "temporary and extraordinary," as well as Turkey's commitment to adopt "any necessary measure" to prevent the opening of new maritime or land routes of irregular migration towards the European Union. In support, the European Union committed to financially support the operations, starting with the disbursement of €3 billion at the time of the agreement, followed by another €3 billion in 2018. Subsequent agreements led to the allocation of an additional €3 billion in 2023. European Council. 2016. EU-Turkey Statement, 18 March 2016. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2016/03/18/eu-turkey-statement/. **[4]** European Migration Network (EMN). 2014. *The Organisation of Reception Facilities for Asylum Seekers in different Member States*. EU - European Commission. **[5]** Asylum Information Database (AIDA). 2023. "Asylum in Europe in 2023". *ECRE – European Council on Refugees and Exile*. **[6]** Actionaid and Openpolis. Report 2024. "Centri d'Italia: Accoglienza al collasso". https://migrantidb.s3.eu-central-1.amazonaws.com/rapporti_pdf/centri_ditalia_accoglienza_al_collasso.pdf. **[7]** Kreichauf, René. 2018. 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FITZCARRALDO OR A FORM OF ISOLATED TOGETHERNESS *ACCOUNT OF THE CONOLLY PANOPTIC ON THE HILL OF SANTA MARIA DEI SERVI IN SIENA*

By Simone Barbi (Università degli Studi di Firenze)

ABSTRACT

For many years, asylums served as vast repositories for society's perceived imperfections; individuals deemed useless, strange, or frightening. Conceived as alternatives to prisons, they were built on the outskirts of cities, in peripheral locations where contact with the outside world was deliberately minimized.

The San Niccolò complex in Siena was the last psychiatric hospital in Italy to close permanently, on September 30, 1999. Like most Italian asylums, it was established outside the urban center, in a condition of calculated self-isolation, on the southern slope of the Santa Maria dei Servi hill. Beginning in 1858, under the direction of Carlo Livi, the Sienese asylum village was organized according to a pavilion-based model. Most of the buildings were designed by architect Francesco Azzurri and carefully distributed along the hillside to take advantage of the topography, giving the impression of a self-contained citadel.

Within this complex, the Conolly Ward — intended to house the so-called "clamorous" patients, that is, those who were the most difficult to manage — is, together with the prison on the island of Santo Stefano, the only realized example of a panopticon in Italy. This typological invention, conceived in 1791 by English philosopher Jeremy Bentham to maximize the surveillance of a space — be it carceral, medical, educational, or industrial — by a single observer, finds its Sienese transcription in a structure now in a state of total abandonment. Completely excluded from the life of the city despite its *intra-moenia* location, it stands awaiting a paradigm shift in its relationship with a landscape that observes it, yet fails to truly see it.

> *[...]*
> *mi guarda Siena*
> *da dentro la sua guerra,*
> *mi cerca dentro con gli occhi*
> *addannati dei suoi veliti*
> *percossa dai suoi tamburi*
> *trafitta dai suoi vessilli*
> *e non vede me*
> *non vede in me la mia infanzia*
> *che di lei fu piena.*

Mario Luzi[1]

In this excerpt, included in Per il battesimo dei nostri frammenti and published in 1985, Mario Luzi evokes the moving relationship between a city and what can confidently be assumed to be one of its own inhabitants. The city that sees everything: yet it does not see him, not his childhood, nor his memories. It does not perceive the substance of that generous bond which, according to a necessarily one-sided logic, connects the memory of a city to those who have lived within it. It does not see him because, perhaps, he is hidden or removed, confined, and thus rendered invisible.
This powerful and melancholic image has been chosen to describe and introduce a particular form of exclusion that took shape in Siena between the city and the psychiatric hospital of San Niccolò. A coexistence which, following the harsh logic that "the insane must be treated well, but kept locked away"[2], acquired from its very origins the characteristics of a deliberately orchestrated urban confinement, a condition of being together, yet isolated.

ANTECEDENT OR CHRONICLE OF INTRA-MŒNIA MIGRATIONS

Among the oldest and most prestigious institutions in Siena, the Compagnia della Madonna operated in the underground spaces of the Santa Maria della Scala hospital, directly opposite the cathedral, since the early 13th century. Born from the merger of pre-existing confraternities, it was granted legal personality by the Republic of Siena in 1363, thereby enabling it to receive inheritances, bequests, and donations. By the end of the 14th century, the Compagnia had become the most active, wealthy, and powerful among all confraternities in the Sienese state.
Over the centuries, this institution engaged in a wide range of activities: those directly or indirectly connected to religious worship, social interventions, and welfare initiatives such as the administration of hospitals, the awarding of scholarships and study prizes, and even the management of prisons. After the fall of the Republic of Siena, the Compagnia della Madonna managed to survive successive governments, remaining intact even during the Napoleonic era. Following the abolition of lay confraternities ordered by Grand Duke Pietro Leopoldo in 1785, the Compagnia changed its name to Società di Esecutori di Pie Disposizioni, a name still in use today, transforming itself into an organization dedicated to charitable works.
From the second half of the 18th century, under the reformist policies of the Grand Duchy, many aspects of civil life were restructured, including the treatment of the mentally ill. Until then, madness had not been considered curable in any meaningful way, and thus there had been no real practice of administering therapeutic care. Moreover, prior to this paradigm shift, in the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, as elsewhere in Europe, so-called ‘madmen,’ and

particularly those classified as ‘violent’, were handled in much the same way as criminals: through confinement. The asylum functioned essentially as a prison.
In 1757, the Florentine government ordered Siena to identify a suitable location for housing the mentally ill, and five years later, a temporary facility was established in a house owned by Santa Maria della Scala near Porta San Marco[3], at the city’s southwestern edge. The operational costs of this small Ospedale de’ pazzerelli were covered by the Monte dei Paschi bank and partially by revenues from the grain flour tax. Following the bank’s financial difficulties and the abolition of the grand ducal tax, the hospital’s management was taken over by the thriving Società di Esecutori di Pie Disposizioni[4]. From that moment and well into modern times, the connection between the ‘custody of the insane’ and the Pie Disposizioni remained constant in Siena.
A decree dated August 31, 1803, issued by the government of the Kingdom of Etruria, required the Società to open a second facility on Via della Fontanella, known as the Ricovero del Bigi, to temporarily house the ‘alienated’ from the provinces of Siena and Grosseto, for the purpose of confirming their mental illness and selecting patients for transfer to the Bonifazio Hospital in Florence, established in 1788. However, due to the congestion of the Florentine facility, the Sienese Ricovero was soon converted into a small residential asylum itself.
Determined to find more suitable premises for the care of Siena’s mentally ill, Marquis Angelo Chigi, then Rector of the Società di Esecutori di Pie Disposizioni, in 1815 secured the transfer of the former convent of the Clarissan nuns of San Niccolò[5], built between 1346 and 1363 and recently suppressed by the French. The asylum was inaugurated on December 6, 1818, and initially accommodated 34 patients from the provinces of Siena, Arezzo, Livorno, Pisa, Grosseto, and Massa.

Under the direction of San Niccolò’s first administrators — Giuseppe Lodoli (1818–1823), Gasparo Mazzi (1823–1833), and Pietro Tommi (1833–1857) — no significant innovations were introduced in patient care, aside from the abolition of chains and a partial introduction of agricultural labor. However, with the arrival of Carlo Livi — the undisputed protagonist of the new Italian psychiatry[6] —, who directed the institution from 1858 to 1874, the asylum became a site of experimentation in patient management, with direct implications for the role of architecture in this process.
In a 1858 letter, Livi — newly appointed as the asylum’s medical director — described the facility as a “hive bristling with narrow corridors and more or less gloomy cells” [7]and wrote: “It did not take me long to realize that what the asylum most needed was an asylum itself”[8]. With these words, he outlined a clear programmatic shift aimed at investing in a substantial redesign of the intra-mœnia structure of the complex.

ON THE HILL OF SANTA MARIA DEI SERVI

From the words of Titus Burckhardt we learn that

> In the ‘sacred’ construction of the city of Siena, two stages or phases can be discerned: the first is evident in the image of the old city gathered around the Cathedral [...] the second is reflected in the placement of the convents and their churches, which, isolated like outposts on the extreme edges of the city’s three districts, stand guard: San Francesco to the east, San Domenico to the west, Sant’Agostino to the south, and Santa Maria dei Servi to the southeast. The presence of these monastic churches at the city’s outermost edge, though still within its walls, bears witness to a time

> when monastic asceticism, previously kept deliberately distant from urban life, was brought into the heart of the city[9].

While most Italian asylums were typically built outside urban centers, in open countryside not far from cities, allowing for future expansion of the facilities, San Niccolò seems to have confirmed the intra-mœnia settlement logic typical of Siena, as described by Burckhardt.
Located on the southern slope of the hill of Santa Maria dei Servi, within the city's defensive walls and near Porta Romana, the asylum first occupied the former convent and, through nineteenth-century expansion efforts, came to saturate a significant portion of what has been known since the Middle Ages as the Valle di Montone. This name refers to an area included in the urban expansion of the late thirteenth century, just beyond the now-disappeared Porta all'Oliviera, and bordered to the south by the late-thirteenth-century city walls.

BREAKING THE VOLUMETRIC UNITY OF THE ASYLUM, OR THE STRATEGY OF THE VILLAGE

Beginning in 1858, under the direction of Carlo Livi, work commenced to expand the facilities of the hospital, with the dual aim of introducing new therapeutic practices and addressing the increasingly diverse needs of the patients. The asylum district inspired by Livi's principles[10] was organized according to a model that emphasized the distribution of buildings in the area downhill from Via Romana, set on various elevations and predominantly oriented westward, toward Porta Tufi. This arrangement deliberately avoided symmetry to lend the impression of a self-contained village, interwoven with internal roads connecting medical pavilions, workshops, laboratories, a library, and a pharmacy. A small, enclosed world, positioned at the margins of the city and excluded from its civic life, where the community of patients was to become economically self-sufficient through agricultural and artisanal labor performed by the inmates themselves.
Most of the new buildings erected during Livi's tenure were designed by architect Francesco Azzurri[11] between 1865 and 1893. Appointed by Count Angiolo Piccolomini on behalf of the Società di Esecutori di Pie Disposizioni, after gaining recognition as the designer of the Santa Maria della Pietà in Rome, Azzurri, even if not in the initial plan presented[12], it eventually aligns with Livi's vision entirely. He summarized his design philosophy for the Siena project as follows:

> As a result of some of my studies, I proposed a plan for an asylum which I called a Village, as it was based on the apparent complete freedom of the patients in the open countryside and on the scientific distribution of the various sections in the manner of a village. I had become convinced that an asylum should have nothing in common with a hospital for ordinary illnesses[13].

In the 'multiform'[14] urban fabric of Siena — "a city that unfolds along the ridgelines of three hills that branch out like the veins of a leaf, so that from any panoramic point one looks across to what seems an entirely different city"[15] — the hill of Santa Maria dei Servi, now burdened by the new volumes of the San Niccolò asylum complex, accentuates this sense of estrangement.

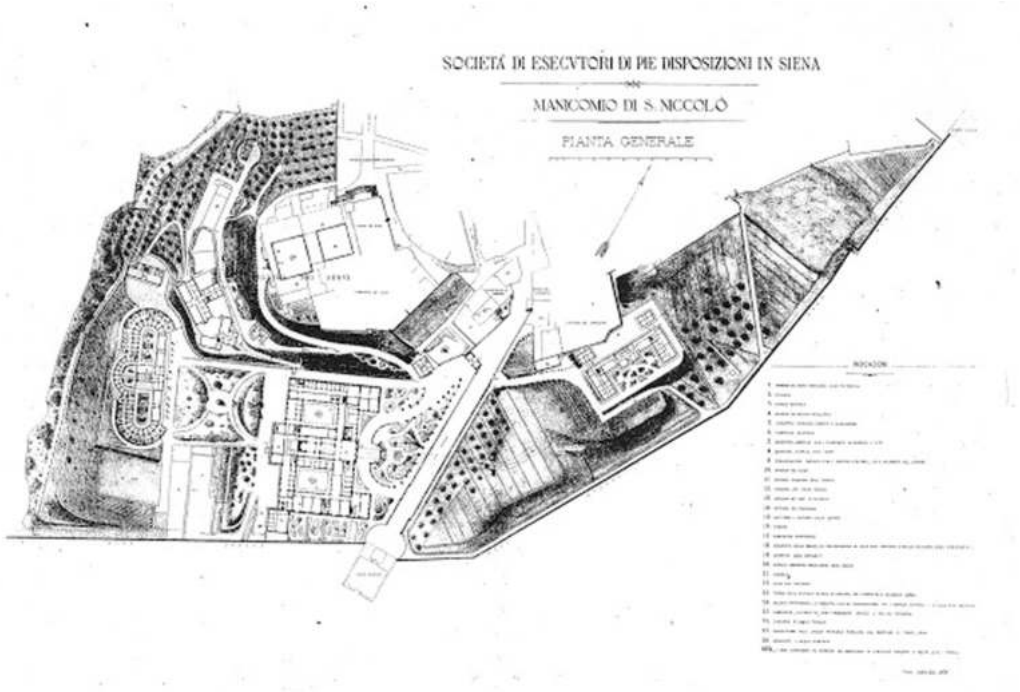

Figure 1. San Niccolò Asylum, General plan, Società di Esecutori di Pie Disposizioni in Siena, Manicomio di San Niccolò

Set at the highest point, the most prominent structure in both scale and symbolic weight is Palazzo San Niccolò. This is the only building clearly visible from the city, as it aligns in elevation with both the city walls and the monumental complex of Santa Maria dei Servi. This imposing structure — designed by Azzurri in a neo-Renaissance style that appears out of scale with the surrounding district when viewed from the opposite ridges — underwent three distinct phases of transformation. The first phase, from 1818 to 1870, involved the acquisition and adaptation of the pre-existing San Niccolò monastery without major volumetric increases[16]. The second phase saw the new building extend toward the Servi complex, beginning in 1870 under Azzurri and Livi. Finally, the third phase marked the definitive spatial relationship between the old and new constructions. According to Azzurri,

> the building, with a façade ninety meters wide and wings extending sixty-two meters, composed of two upper stories above a ground floor, was designed to accommodate, alongside all general services, five hundred patients of both sexes.

He envisioned it as "bearing the appearance of a grand villa palace [...] with its front opening onto a garden park," to avoid reproducing "the melancholy character of a lunatic asylum"[17].
In 1873, construction began on a road linking the asylum's inner courtyard to the convent of the Servi, which had been partially deconsecrated and was already being used for medical purposes. This intervention marked the first step in the broader urban reorganization of the asylum complex, which over the years under the leadership of Ugo Palmerini (1874–1880) and Paolo Funaioli (1880–1907), both disciples and continuators of Livi's vision[18] — expanded further with new buildings and roads, creating a space where patients could lead lives nearly indistinguishable from those of the "sane", with ample freedom of movement across the various facilities.

All patients were housed in the central building, with the exception of the ‘agitated’ individuals, for whom the Conolly Pavilion was built in 1877. Though less imposing than the Palazzo, this single-story pavilion with three courtyards and a raised central section[19] is arguably the most distinctive and original structure within the entire asylum complex. Its spatial logic is understood as a mediated transcription of Bentham’s Panopticon[20] and its placement, perched above the Orto de’ Pecci, the Porta Tufi hill, and the southern valley stretching toward Mount Amiata beyond the city walls, gives it a strikingly isolated character. The pavilion was explicitly designed to accommodate the ‘clamorosi’, the most agitated and difficult-to-manage patients.
A synthesis of functional design and adherence to the typological canons of psychiatric detention facilities of its time — both in the layout of detention cells and service spaces, and in its unusual form — the Conolly, at the time of its construction, was a critical “alien” element in the larger project of expanding and diversifying the functions of the asylum’s self-contained village [21].

THE CONOLLY, A DISCRETE PANOPTICON

> There are so many things that I don't understand
> There's a world within me that I cannot explain
> Many rooms to explore, but the doors look the same
> I am lost, I can't even remember my name[22].

The structure designed by Azzurri represents one of only two examples of the Panopticon model ever built in Italy, a typology conceived in 1791 by the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham in the form of a circular ring-shaped building, intended to maximize spatial control by a single individual. Defined by Michel Foucault as a “utopia-program"[23] the Panopticon was originally not intended solely for prisons, but also for hospitals, schools, factories, and poorhouses. Its purpose was to maintain constant surveillance over its occupants, who, aware they were always being watched from a central control tower, were themselves unable to see the observers. Looking out from within the detention cells, with their identical, inaccessible doors radiating in fan-like symmetry — often multiplied on several levels — was meant to induce in the inmate a deep sense of disorientation and powerlessness. The underlying principle was a repressive mechanism, aimed at a total reform of society by conditioning behavior and optimizing control through architectural form, accomplished by a single gaze.

Order was insured in this system through the lateral division between the cells, which eliminated communication between the confined and therefore rendered the possibility of an uprising impossible. The overseen lived in a form of isolated togetherness. In the Panopticon model, there is no seeing-being seen dyad; the periphery is clearly the observed and the center the observer. This is proved not only by the size of the openings which permitted an unobstructed view of the cells while maintaining the central tower virtually opaque, but also by the fact that the tin speaking tubes that were devised by Bentham as the acoustical analogues to the visual arrangement were soon discarded because their effect was reversible and therefore not in tune with the mono-directionality of the spatial arrangement. Thus, space becomes segmented, frozen, and dead, and each individual is fixed in his place. It is interesting to highlight that “despite the presence of positions of supremacy in society, both the overseer and the overseen are trapped within the machine of

the Panopticon”[24]. Even if we are to accept the fact that the overseer does not need to be present in the observation tower because his implied presence is enough to guarantee order, the symbol of his power is still trapped, doomed to immobility. As Foucault asserts, the Panopticon is a “machine in which everyone is caught, those who exercise power as much as those over whom power is exercised”[25].

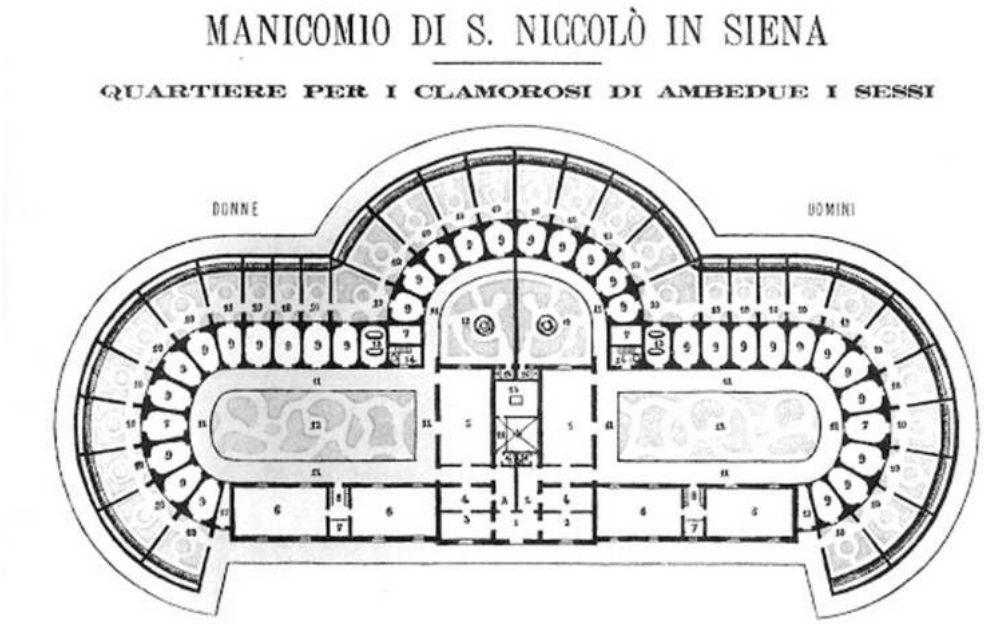

Figure 2. Conolly pavilion, Plan, Società di Esecutori di Pie Disposizioni in Siena, Manicomio di San Niccolò. 1 Ingresso - 2 Ingresso alla Sezione - 3 Residenza dei Sorveglianti - 4 Dispense dei vitti - 5 Refettori - 6 Dormitori - 7 Sorveglianze - 8 Lavandini - 9 Cella - 10 Giardinetti connessi alle celle - 11 Passaggi scoperti - 12 Corte scoperta - 13 Bagno e doccia - 14 Caldaie per il bagno - 15 Guardaroba - 16 Latrine - 17 Passaggi secondari

Bentham’s Panopticon was implemented during his lifetime in only a few cases: the Virginia State Penitentiary (1800), the Millbank Prison in England (1812), and the Pittsburgh Penitentiary (1826). After his death, numerous other detention facilities were constructed following this model[26]. In Italy, the only other comparable example is the Bourbon prison on the island of Santo Stefano, built between 1755 and 1795.
The pavilion designed by Azzurri for Siena constitutes a subtle reinterpretation of Bentham’s Panopticon, both in its spatial logic and its architectural solutions, enriched by generous open spaces described by the architect as follows: “on the internal square adorned with flowerbeds and greenery, [...] air, sunlight, the scent of flowers, and the joyful horizon will comfort the patients’ sorrowful conditions”[27]. The original plan of the Siena pavilion consisted of a single-story building composed of three semicircles forming a double horseshoe layout, with cells arranged in a radial pattern — “each 3.50 meters wide, 4.05 meters long, and 4 meters high, covered with vaulted ceilings”[28] each equipped with a small walled garden courtyard. The entire complex was enclosed by a high perimeter wall. A central core housed service areas and staff quarters, separating the two wings, one for male and the other for female patients. Each small cell had a door opening onto the internal courtyard and a window facing the resede, an exclusive garden portion enclosed by high walls, within which patients could move freely.

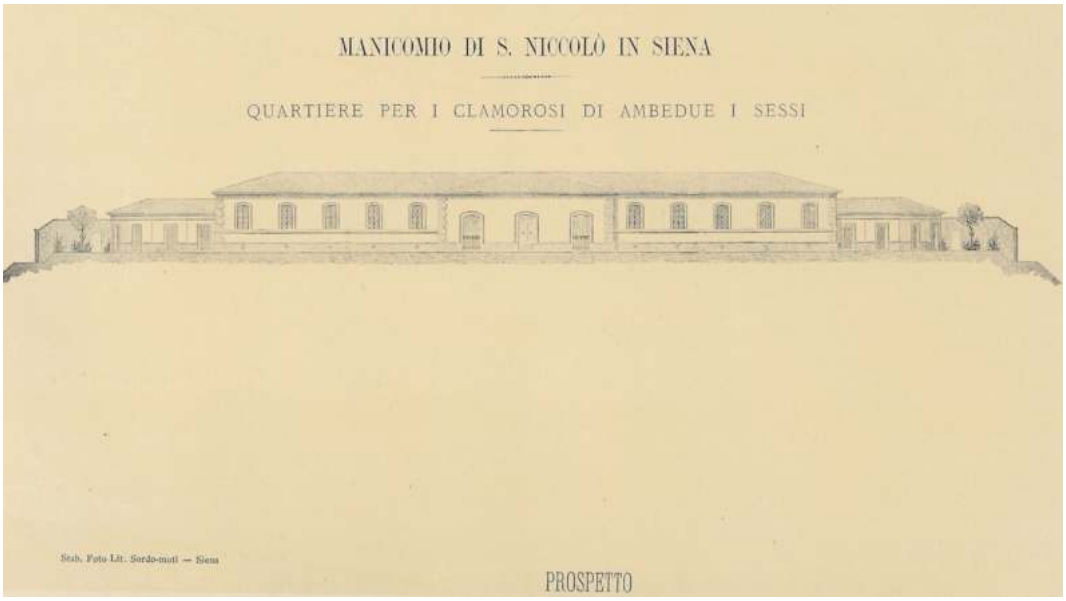

Figure 3. Conolly pavilion, East Façade, Società di Esecutori di Pie Disposizioni in Siena, Manicomio di San Niccolò

Around 1912, faced with the need to increase capacity — driven in part by the repressive climate that often labeled political dissidents as mentally ill, as recalled by the graffiti carved into the walls of some cells — plans were made to expand the Conolly ward. No longer sufficient for male patients alone, the facility required more beds; this could only be achieved by adding a floor to the central body and converting it into additional dormitories. It was during this phase that Azzurri's careful and measured design began to unravel. Along with the architecture, the therapeutic approach itself may have started to erode. The renovations likely included the full covering of the central courtyard, with the demolition of original cells to create a portico overlooking the garden.
Another major architectural alteration was the creation of the so-called Criminal Ward, accomplished by roofing over the left-hand semicircle, effectively eliminating the small internal court and transforming that portion of the building into a kind of prison. During this same period, the outdoor spaces began to suffer neglect: the radial gardens, initially separated, were effectively merged by removing the walls between them, thereby erasing the floral-like radial pattern so clearly evident in Azzurri's elegant original plan.

FITZCARRALDO

> Like the mad rage of a dog that insists on sinking its teeth into the leg of a deer already dead, and keeps shaking and pulling hard at the fallen prey, so much so that the hunter gives up any attempt to calm it, a vision had taken root inside me: the image of a great steamship on a mountain, the boat dragging itself from the rivers by its own strength, climbing a steep slope in the heart of the jungle, and, amid a nature that annihilates the weak and the strong alike, the voice of Caruso silencing the pain and the cries of the animals in the Amazon forest, and muffling the birds' song. [...] And I, like in the verse of a poem in an unknown language I do not understand, find myself overcome by a profound terror[29].

The image described in this excerpt from Werner Herzog's diary, published under the title The Conquest of the Useless, is perhaps the most dramatic and epic visual icon of Fitzcarraldo: a masterpiece that earned the German

director the award at Cannes in 1982.
This vision of the boat immobile on the side of the hill may help to frame a peculiar aspect of the Conolly. Observing Azzurri's building, one can certainly say that it is a space in suspension, in more ways than one: literally between the city and the landscape, in the relationship between the actual confinement of its inmates and the partial freedom granted to all the other 'madmen' of San Niccolò, between the memory and oblivion of its past and present condition, between physical, tangible presence and the perpetual risk of being lost in a heap of rubble.
Unlike Fitzcarraldo's ship, the Conolly ward was not meant to move, but to fix and immobilize. Yet both structures share a deep logic of loneliness and detachment. They are removed from the social fabric that surrounds them; they stand apart, forgotten in their remote or reclusive places, nearly invisible despite their physical presence: one in pursuit of a delusional utopia, the other in service of disciplinary rationality and utter control. What unites them is the image of the hill: an elevated terrain of control, detachment, and symbolic estrangement from the city.

The ship does not advance, does not navigate: it is still. In the frames where the protagonist, played by Klaus Kinski, is alone, dismayed, at the foot of the hill with the boat behind him, stuck there, Herzog stages an architecture of defeat, of the interrupted dream, which paradoxically becomes even more grandiose in its impotence. In these scenes, the director shows us the coexistence of misery and evocative power generated by the evident "suspension of function" brought about by the protagonist's madness — mimic Herzog's famous preference for an 'ecstatic truth' rather than pure and simple reality — a characteristic that links Fitzcarraldo's venture to ruins, such as the Conolly: a space that has lost its purpose, and is awaiting a new poetic potential.
If it is true that "every construction only builds a collapse"[30] this pavilion is today in a state of full realization of an 'avoidable' or 'to be avoided' destiny, precisely because it is the embodiment of a principle, an idea of space, constructed in ways, forms, and dimensions very different, if not unprecedented, compared to Bentham's prototypes.

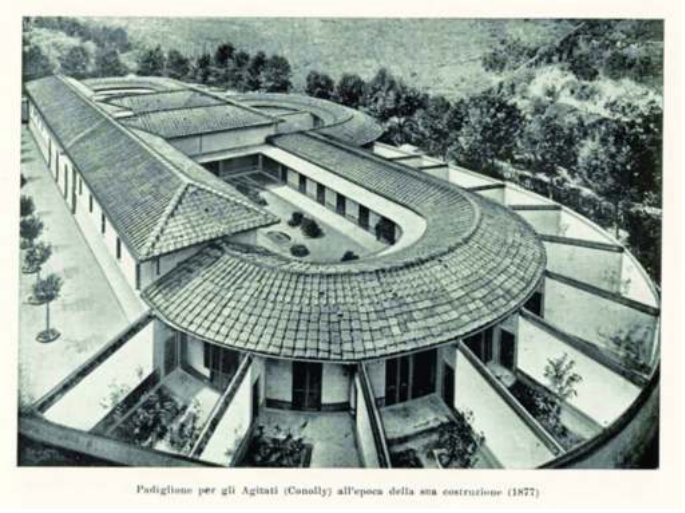
Padiglione per gli Agitati (Conolly) all'epoca della sua costruzione (1877)

Figure 4. Conolly pavilion, Photo, 1877, Società di Esecutori di Pie Disposizioni in Siena, Manicomio di San Niccolò

FATE OF A RELIC: BETWEEN OBLIVION AND RESTITUTION TO THE LANDSCAPE

In 1978, in Italy, the entry into force of Law 180 — commonly identified by the name of its inspirer: Franco Basaglia — mandated the closure of psychiatric hospitals, reforming the mental health care system and marking a turning point in the world of psychiatric patient assistance.
However, in the history of the San Niccolò in Siena, the Basaglian movement had little impact, as patients continued to be housed there for many years, even after the property was transferred to the local health authority. After a long period of dismantling, the one in Siena was the last psychiatric hospital in Italy to close definitively: on September 30, 1999[31].
Following Azzurri's interventions, the expansion of the asylum village continued between 1894 and 1933, under the work of architects Vittorio Mariani and Primo Giusti[32]. The last phase of interventions, signed by Enzo Zacchiroli, already responsible for the headquarters of the Banca d'Italia in Siena, dates back to the early 2000s and refers to the transformation of the asylum building and laundry into university campuses, as well as the creation of a new auditorium inserted between the 14th-century walls and San Niccolò.
Today, the village houses a variety of institutions and functions: a psychiatric rehabilitation center remains, along with an oncology ward, a cooperative, some residential areas, and several departments of the University of Siena for the faculties of Engineering, Mathematics, Languages, Literature and Philosophy, and Social Service Sciences. In the valley below, the former psychiatric hospital laundry was renovated and since 2004 has hosted the Department of Physics.

Other structures, however, have fallen into disuse due to their particular structural characteristics that make it difficult to repurpose them for other functions, and they are currently in a state of abandonment. Among these is the Conolly Pavilion[33]. Closed definitively on January 1, 1978, currently unfit for use and heavily deteriorated by the alterations it underwent over time to meet the asylum's needs, this urban relic is a rare but nonetheless excellent witness to a historical period — the Enlightenment — which was decisive for the cultural development of Western society and modern architecture[34], and it is therefore impossible not to think about preserving it.
What future can still be imagined for this graceful and measured 'observing space,' abandoned to itself on the western hill of Santa Maria dei Servi?
The former psychiatric complex, despite its change of use and the diversification of the institutions that currently occupy it, still retains the self-excluding exclusivity of its origin. No other road leads to the complex; it is entirely cut off from the Orto de'Pecci below and the adjacent hill on which the Basilica of San Clemente in Santa Maria dei Servi is located. From every side and from every point of the city, the complex is inaccessible to view. Both from Piazza del Mercato and from Orto dei Tolomei, adjacent to the Monastery of Sant'Agostino, on the hill facing San Niccolò, it is impossible or almost impossible to understand the layout of the former hospital or to glimpse its buildings. It is a part of the city that even the citizens themselves do not know well or visit, despite the value of the architecture within. To this day, the only access road to the complex is the one from above, coming from Via Roma.
The Conolly ward still shares the same paradoxical inability to communicate and relate to the outside. Also a child of Siena, from its confinement in the Valley of Montone, it seems to say, as in Luzi's words, 'the city looks at me and does not see me'.
If one were to imagine a future for this guilty neglect, one could only hope for a return of this space to dialogue with the landscape, expanding the scale of a desirable recovery intervention from the architectural to the urban, making

this piece an exemplary part of a cohesive whole.

If in the original model by Bentham the periphery is clearly the observed and the center the observer, the new relationship that the structure should establish with its surrounding context could attempt a reversal of perspective: proceeding with a rewriting of the constricting gaze, directed inward, exclusive, typical of the panopticon that Foucault defines as the “eye of power” [35] into one of a free nature, directed outward, inclusive, and thus contemplative.
Responding to a logic of double vision — where the subject who looks is both observer and observed — by dialoguing with the monuments or the landscape to the south, the Conolly would finally quell that desire to be recognized which, if it is an inseparable condition of being human to recognize oneself as a person — "persona originally means 'mask' and it is through the mask that the individual acquires a role and social identity"[36] — could also represent for this work a new season of overcoming its condition as an excluded. If exsistere means "to be outside oneself", or 'to be' because 'recognized by the other,' the Conolly, by opening up to the city, would initiate an unexplored process of knowledge in its history, avoiding the oblivion of neglect and the consequent risk of an irrecoverable "loss of identity"[37].
By radically changing the centripetal logic of the pavilion, rewriting its relationship with the context according to a centrifugal logic, the need to bring a marginal, exiled place back to a ‘finally’ central importance for Siena would materialize; opening its gaze to the city "full of houses and reddish towers"[38] and to that extraordinary gorge leading to the Val d'Orcia, described by the fellow poet Luzi in Nel corpo oscuro della metamorfosi as: "[...] red sea / of washed clays / [...] pointing to the heart of the enigma"[39].

Figure 5. Conolly pavilion, North Courtyard, 2021 (photograph by Arianna Fusi)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper builds owes its beginning to Arianna Fusi’s Master’s thesis on the design reinterpretation of the Conolly Pavilion (February 2022, under my supervision), expanding its scope through a broader historical and critical framework.

NOTES

[1] Luzi, Mario. 2001. "Bruciata la materia del ricordo." In *Tutte le poesie*, 607. Milano: Garzanti. Trad. by the author: "[...] Siena looks at me / from within her war / she searches within me with the damned eyes / of her young warriors / struck by her drums / pierced by her banners / and she does not see me / does not see in me my childhood / that was full of her". **[2]** *Conolly, il manicomio dimenticato*. Accessed March 2025. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lAnGq33vQOI. **[3]** Leoncini, Alessandro. 2007. "Per la storia delle origini del manicomio di Siena." In *San Niccolò di Siena: storia di un villaggio manicomiale*, edited by Francesca Vannozzi, 58. Castelvetrano: Mazzotta. **[4]** Renato Lugarini. 2007. "Il San Niccolò e la Società di Esecutori di Pie Disposizioni." In *San Niccolò di Siena: storia di un villaggio manicomiale*, edited by Francesca Vannozzi, 67. Castelvetrano: Mazzotta. Archive of the Società di Esecutori di Pie Disposizioni di Siena, p.137. Accessed February 2025. https://cartedalegare.cultura.gov.it/fileadmin/redazione/inventari/Siena_OP_SN_PieDisposizioni.pdf. **[5]** Colucci, Silvia. 2007. "Il San Niccolò di Siena da monastero francescano a villaggio manicomiale: storia, architettura e decorazione (1810- 1950)." In *San Niccolò di Siena: storia di un villaggio manicomiale*, edited by Francesca Vannozzi, 80. Castelvetrano: Mazzotta. **[6]** Giannetti, Anna. 2013. "Manicomio di San Niccolò di Siena." In *I complessi manicomiali in Italia tra otto e Novecento*, edited by Cesare Airoldi, Maria Antonietta Crippa, Gerardo Doti, Laura Guardamagna, Cettina Lenza, Maria Luisa Neri, 199. Milano: Electa. **[7]** Vannozzi, Francesca. 1991. "La vicenda manicomiale senese in un manoscritto di Carlo Livi." *Revue Internationale d'Histoire ed Métodologie de la Psychiatrie*, 3: 47. **[8]** *Ibid.* **[9]** Burckhardt, Titus. 1999. *Siena Città della Vergine*. Milano: SE, 73. **[10]** The village was intended to function as a simulacrum of the real city, separate and inaccessible, where each patient was assigned a task, usually manual and, at least in principle, the same as the one they had performed before being admitted, predominantly in agriculture and craftsmanship with the goal of "bringing the mentally ill back as much as possible to the ordinary conditions of social life" through work (ergotherapy). Colucci, Silvia. 2007. Op. cit., 82. **[11]** Francesco Azzurri was an architect born in Rome in 1827, he was the nephew of architect Giovanni Azzurri (Rome 1792–1858). A representative of the Neo-Renaissance tradition – except for the eclecticism of his later phase, which includes the Palazzo del Governo of the Republic of San Marino (1894) in neo-medieval style – Azzurri was responsible for several significant projects in the field of hospital architecture. Among his most notable works are: the Santa Maria della Pietà Hospital in Rome (1862); the Fatebenefratelli Hospital on Tiber Island (1867); and the asylums of Siena and Alessandria. In 1880, he has been president of the Accademia di San Luca. **[12]** Giannetti, Anna. 2013. Op. cit., 199. **[13]** Azzurri, Francesco. 1892. *Manicomio di San Niccolò, Siena: Società di Esecutori di Pie Disposizioni*, 3. **[14]** Burckhardt, Titus. 1999. Op. cit., 15. **[15]** *Ibid.* **[16]** This became necessary around 1868, when the insane from the provinces of Arezzo, Pisa, Livorno, and Grosseto were transferred to Siena, causing the patient population to rise from 383 to 729, rendering the old facilities hopelessly outdated. **[17]** Azzurri, Francesco. 1892. Op. cit., 3. **[18]** Colucci, Silvia. 2007. Op. cit., 87. **[19]** Modified by architect Vittorio Mariani in the 1934. **[20]** Bentham, Jeremy. 2009. *Panopticon ovvero la casa d'ispezione*. Venezia: Marsilio; Loche, Annamaria. 1991. *Jeremy Bentham e la ricerca del Buon Governo*. Milano: Franco Angeli; Belloni, Ilaria, and Paola Calonico, eds. 2023. *Un dialogo su Jeremy Bentham. Etica, diritto, politica*. Pisa: ETS. **[21]** Following the construction of the Conolly, other facilities were added: a ward for idiots and imbeciles – the Ferrus, later renamed Forlanini –; the Villa delle Signore, or women's ward; the laundry; the workshops; the Kraepelin, for patients assigned to agricultural labor; and the workshops. The Pharmacy (1885), built in a Neo-Pompeian Neoclassical style based on a design by Azzurri, was constructed almost entirely through the labor of four patients. Giannetti, Anna. 2013. Op. cit., 201. **[22]** Excerpt from the lyrics of the song: "Within" By Daft Punk Featuting: Chilly Gonzales, in Daft Punk, Random Access Memories (2013). Thanks are due to Angelo Lavanga for suggesting it, during a conversation about the ADHj Call, the topic of exclusion and its forms. **[23]** Barou, J.P., and Michelle Perrot, eds. 2009. "L'occhio del potere. Conversazione con Michel Foucault." In *Panopticon ovvero la casa d'ispezione*, edited by Jeremy Bentham, 23. Venezia: Marsilio. **[24]** Lucas, Pavlina. "Panopticon, the Prison and Modernity". Accessed February 2025. https://www.pavlinalucas.com/1993-2010/panopticon.html. **[25]** Barou, J.P., and Michella Perrot, eds. 2009. Op. cit., 19. **[26]** La Monica. Marcella. 2014. *Dal Panopticon di Bentham a modelli parzialmente panottici. Prigioni tra Settecento e Ottocento*. Palermo: Pitti Edizioni. **[27]** Colucci, Silvia. 2007, Op. cit., 88. **[28]** *Ibid.* **[29]** Herzog, Werner. 2007. *La conquista dell'inutile*. Milano: Mondadori, Prologo. **[30]** Yourcenar, Marguerite. 2014. 'Anna, Soror...' In *Come l'acqua che scorre. Tre racconti*, 55. Torino: Einaudi. **[31]** Accessed March 2025. https://www.nuovarassegnastudipsichiatrici.it/volume-18/30-settembre-1999-chiusura-san-iccolo#:~:text=L'ospedale%20psichiatrico%20San%20Niccol%C3%B2,oggi%20sede%20di%20numerose%20attivit%C3%A0. **[32]** Cfr. San Niccolò da Convento a Manicomio, Autore scheda: Contrada di Valdimontone, Andrea Ciacci, Beatrice Pianigiani. Accessed March 2025. https://www.valdimontone.it/home/archivio/a-spasso-per-il-rione/san-niccolo-da-convento-a-manicomio/. Colucci, Silvia. 2007, Op. cit., 87. **[33]** It is interesting to note that the ward designated for the segregation of agitated patients at the San Niccolò psychiatric hospital was named after the English psychiatrist John Conolly, the pioneer of the no-restraint system that is, the complete absence of any form of physical restraint; as stated in: Conolly, John. 1856. *Trattamento del malato di mente senza metodi costrittivi*. Torino: Einaudi. **[34]** Pavlina, Lucas. "Gropius | Le Corbusier : The Two Faces of Modernism". Accessed february 2025. https://www.pavlinalucas.com/1993-2010/modernism.html. **[35]** Barou, J.P., and Michelle Perrott, eds. 2009. Op. cit., 7-30. **[36]** Agamben, Giorgio. 1999. *Identità senza persona in Nudità*. Roma: Nottetempo, 71. **[37]** *Ivi*, 72 **[38]** Burckhardt, Titus. 1999. Op. cit., 15. **[39]** Luzi, Mario. 2001. "Nel corpo oscuro della metamorfosi." In *Tutte le poesie*, 382. Milano: Garzanti. Original vers: "[...] mare rosso / di crete dilavate / [...] che punta al cuore dell'enigma".

HOW RAIN ESCAPED PRISON *THE SHIFTING BORDERS OF CONFINEMENT IN THE PRISON OF GJILAN, KOSOVO*

By Gjiltinë Isufi (KU Leuven)

ABSTRACT

In examining the construction of the prison, seminal studies have shown that prisons have become integrated into a broader, all-encompassing carceral system in modern society. This understanding of the prison beyond its confines has also drawn attention to the spatial extension of seclusion. The recognition of a prison's liminal spaces, porous walls, and permeable boundaries calls for the disclosure of hidden spatial dynamics – bringing architecture to the forefront of the discussion. In this regard, this paper will advance two key arguments. First, by focusing on Kosovo within the complex historical landscape of former Yugoslavia, it will unravel how confinement transcends physical boundaries. To achieve this, the paper will draw on sources such as prison letters, poems, and testimonies – expanding the scope of evidence within architectural history. Second, by producing and utilizing architectural documents, it will develop a novel methodological framework to disclose spatial (dis)connections and their formative context.

To explore the shifting borders of confinement, this paper studies an inconspicuous building in Gjilan, Kosovo, which was one of the most notorious prisons of former Yugoslavia. Here, political prisoners were detained throughout the 1980s and 1990s, subjected to decades of torture and torment in inhumane conditions. The narratives of its survivors, distilled from testimonies, prison letters, and walk-along interviews, are closely tied to the prison's spatial components (doors, windows, walls, corridors) and its surroundings (streets, adjacent buildings, public spaces). By focusing on these spatial elements, this paper will unravel how confinement can challenge and resist physical borders. It will explore not only material ways, such as prison visits and supplies, but also immaterial ones. These include the transmission of ideas through prison literature, the sense of confinement outside the prison due to surveillance, persecution, and letter censorship, as well as enduring traumatic memories.

To disclose these spatial connections, this paper will rely on the production of maps, plans, sections, and models. Rather than serving as mere representations, these architectural artefacts function as active research tools, each offering a distinct lens. Maps help us reveal broader spatial connections, plans allow us to trace the internal organization of buildings, sections expose hidden vertical relationships, and finally, models bring structures into three-dimensional forms, making spatial dynamics even more palpable. The novelty of this approach lies precisely in the active and heuristic use of architectural artefacts in the disclosure of hidden spatial dynamics. In doing so, it extends beyond conventional architectural studies of prisons,

which often focus on stylistic or typological analyses, renowned architects, psychological studies on confinement, or criminal justice studies on large political contexts.

INTRODUCTION

The Prison of Gjilan, one of the most notorious prisons of former Yugoslavia, today stands abandoned and decaying in the center of Gjilan in Kosovo. Between 1980 and 1999, a period marked by the violent suppression of Kosovo Albanians by Yugoslav and later Serbian authorities, numerous political prisoners were tortured and tormented in inhumane conditions[1]. Despite its historical significance, the prison remains largely absent from architectural records, with no surviving blueprints or any official documentation. Lacking the hallmarks of a renowned architect or any notable stylistic values, the building has also been dismissed as architecturally insignificant. How, then, can we study a building that resists conventional approaches to architectural history? It is precisely through this question that the prison of Gjilan engages with two ongoing debates in architectural history: the question of architectural evidence and the status of the drawing.

While architectural history has long relied on coherent evidence such as buildings or their protagonist architects, more recent studies have highlighted the limitations of such monographic narrative forms. As a result, there has been a significant shift towards a broader understanding of evidence, which opened the field to more non-traditional sources: from administrative standards of technical and urban infrastructures, to bodily experience and oral history[2]. Building on this expanded view of evidence, this paper will turn to prison literature and oral history to reconstruct the spatial conditions of confinement. On the other hand, the status of the architectural drawing has long been attributed to its executional and representative functions. However, a shift in such understandings emerged in the mid-20th century with new discussions on the drawing's instrumentality and agency. This agency has been thoroughly examined by Robin Evans, who notes that

> [...] the *properties* of drawing — its peculiar powers in relation to its putative subject, the building – are hardly recognized at all[3].

While Evans does disclose the generative power of drawings, it still remains very much linked to their executive role in the translation from drawing to building. Here, what I believe to be another largely unrecognized generative power, exists just as much in the opposite direction — drawing post-production. The act of drawing existing structures — be it through maps, plans, sections or models — can help reveal certain spatial aspects that remain inaccessible through other means.
Addressing the challenge of piecing together fragmented narratives and dispersed architectural evidence, this paper will employ a dual theoretical framework: Carceral Geography and Narrative Theory. Carceral Geography provides a lens through which to examine the prison as a particular spatial condition[4]. While it covers a wide range of perspectives from cultural to political approaches, the focus of this paper will lie on exploring the prison boundary and its in-between spaces. As studies have already recognized the prison's liminal spaces, porous walls, and blurred boundaries, the paper's contribution to this discourse will focus specifically on the role of architectural documents in disclosing overlooked connections. Narrative

Theory, in turn, offers a view on narratives not as mere reflections of human experience, but as active instruments for deciphering spatial dynamics[5]. In this paper, its role is twofold. On the one hand, it helps examine what we can spatially infer from existing narratives. On the other hand, it offers storytelling as a means for reframing existing narratives, in order to reveal and make evident hidden spatial dynamics.

The paper opens with a newly constructed narrative that emphasizes the shifting borders of confinement in the prison of Gjilan. What it evokes, however, is not a linear sequence of events that happened as such in reality[6]. Rather, it employs a fictional framework that brings dispersed traces of different narratives into one linear space. More precisely, the story will trace the movement of one sound in prison — from its origin in the city, entering the prison cell, finding place in the poem, going through layers of control and surveillance, returning to the city, and finally, reaching you, the reader. Although this chapter takes a literary form, it is by no means a diary entry or an idiosyncratic exercise. Rather, it is a literary tool through which dispersed traces of undisclosed spatial connections come together and become apparent to the reader. The following chapter then returns to the original narratives of former political prisoners, further exploring the link between lived experience and space. Finally, the paper discloses the starting point of this overall investigation: the production of architectural artefacts. It is here, in the act of making, that the first spatial revelations emerge.

The paper is structured in such a way that, from the first chapter, it engages the reader directly with the research findings. However, it is important to note that although this spatial disclosure — namely, the shifting borders of confinement — becomes immediately apparent to the reader, it in fact emerged only later in the research process. In other words, the methodology behind this paper did not follow a linear process[7]. Rather, it operated through a feedback loop between the production of architectural artefacts, literary sources, and oral history. In the case of the Prison of Gjilan, the initial inquiry began with the production of drawings and models, which, as explained above, served as active tools in the disclosure of hidden histories. Although the decision to draw and make models started solely as a response to unavailable archival material, new questions emerged in this very act of making[8]. These were further informed by literary sources such as prison letters and poems, which deepened the spatial interpretation of the prison. Further, walk-along and semi-structured interviews brought new insights that, in turn, redirected attention back to the literary material and the act of making — creating a continuous loop of discovery. This process developed in multiple layers. At times, interviews reinterpreted or challenged insights drawn from literary sources; at other times, unexpected lines of discussion were opened by using the drawings and models during interviews. Therefore, as there are several research phases integrated into this feedback loop, the methodology cannot be reduced to a fixed or linear template. What appears as a clear narrative to the reader, then, is the outcome of a recursive and exploratory methodology.

HOW RAIN ESCAPED PRISON

It is spring of 1981. Streets all over Kosovo are bustling with student protests, and so is the boulevard spanning the north-south axis of Gjilan. Banners demanding freedom and independence for Kosovo Albanians ripple above the crowds, in defiance against the decades-long accumulation of oppression and injustice. On the same streets, the Yugoslav state security service (UDBA) advances with wagons, military tanks, tear gas and police batons striking against the unarmed. For the next two decades, the same streets will remain

sites for chaos and resistance, inflicting a big shift in the city's configuration. Houses will become sanctuaries for underground movements, while prisons will fill with those who will later shoulder the historical responsibility of bringing freedom to their people.

At the main crossroad in the center of Gjilan, slightly behind the city hall, stands a T-shaped blue prison. Though not immediately visible from the main road, it is locked by the court and police station with their facades touching as if their functions are inherently inseparable. The only subtle hint showing the boundary between the two is a line formed from the two colored facades — blue for the prison and white for the court. The prison's rear facade is the only hint one could get from the main road — a blue wall standing perpendicular to the street, parallel to the theatre building just twenty meters away. The theatre, less monumental than one might expect, extends to the city library in the back. Naturally, facing a theatre and a library, this side of the prison offers a little more than the opposite one enclosed in the police station's courtyard. Perhaps for that reason it is there where the guards' offices are located, often basking in the sunlight streaming through large square windows. Below them, three windows about one-ninth their size break the facade to open into three solitary cells. Double-barred and fully covered in tin, these windows offer no view of the theatre. If not the view, could the theatre's sounds have found their way inside the cells?

If the theatre's sounds do reach the prison cells, like the chirping of birds and growling of dogs, they are merely a part of a larger soundscape that penetrates the prison. While some sounds bring fragmented realities from the outside world, an entirely different rhythm occurs inside the prison. Guards shut the steel doors with force to jolt prisoners into constant wakefulness, while their movement is mapped continuously through the jingling of keys along the corridor. At the far end of the same corridor, the bathroom stands in front of the last prison cell. In cruel amusement, the guards control the water temperature from the outside, as the prisoners' screams travel to the cells in front. Further down, at the end of the bottom T-wing, lie the interrogation rooms. The guards leave the windows open on purpose, ensuring that every scream travels across the courtyard and slips through the barred windows of those awaiting their turn.

Now, it is raining. For an hour or so, drops of rain cascade down the slanted tiles of houses across Gjilan. It washes over the former textile manufacturers and tobacco warehouses, and seeps through the elongated agricultural parcels along the city's constrained topography. Rain also hits the prison. Here, it produces a sound different from that of ordinary houses. Going through layers of barbed wire coils, it threads through their spirals before striking the facade. It cannot touch the window itself, for in front of it stands a tilted tin sheet spanning its entire length. As soon as it meets the tin sheet, each drop strikes in an amplified sharpness to produce a piercing uneven rhythm. On this day, the sound of rain enters A's poem:

> *In room thirteen,*
> *colour grey*
> *upon my wounds*
>
> *The rain of day thirteen*
> *on the window tin,*
> *bullet on my dreams*

> *With thirteen other travellers*
> *we go around the circles of hell,*
> *to meet Galileo,*
> *on day fourteen*[9].

Once the rain enters the poem, written in the thin skin of an old cigarette box, it waits folded and hidden. With eyes and barriers on all sides, its only opportunity to move seems to be the window — that same window, surrounded in steel bars and covered in tin, which keeps every beam of light from entering the cell. This time, the tin becomes a shield, guarding from the eyes of those who watch from the outside. Pulling a thread from his shirt, A twists it and ties it around the small cigarette paper scroll. As soon as it gets dark outside, he lifts the thread to the window, in between the bars, and lowers it through the narrow gap. The small piece of paper carrying the sound of rain touches the facade softly until it reaches the window below. Inside this cell, B waits, not for the sound of footsteps or the turn of a key, but for the fragile scratch of a paper descending until it reaches his window sill. The sound of rain has arrived on the first floor.

On the first floor, B traces the delicate folds of the paper and presses it flat on his palm. The poem cannot stay, it must keep moving to resist detection. In the other cell, there is X, a half-paralyzed political prisoner who is serving a sentence for driving with a banner that wrote *Kosova Republikë*. X, having two more months before the end of his sentence, asks B to write the poem on the smallest piece of paper possible. “I’ll get them out,” he tells B, in a calm and determined tone. B hesitates, knowing the inhumane consequences that would await him in case of discovery. Insistingly, X gets hold of the poem, cuts the rubber of his wheelchair, and tucks the piece of paper inside the punctured inner tube. He seals it back up with glue and continues moving on his wheelchair as the poem makes circles front and back.

As the wheels turn, the sound of rain circles with them. For most of its time, the paper stands still in the cell, but sometimes, it visits the corridors along which everyone paces with measured steps. On those rare occasions when X gets closer to the inspection room, he grips the wheels a little tighter. He knows all too well what happens behind that door — letters are torn, books shaken, and even food is turned inside out under the sharp tip of the guard’s copper spear. It is that door, the border of which most items can never cross. Yet, in all their scrutiny, the guards are not interested in the poor man’s wheels. So, as X moves forward, rain rolls past the inspection room time and time again. On his last day, X passes through the gates and approaches the main exit. The sound of rain circles one last time in the dark narrow corridors, before it rattles over the uneven roads of Gjilan. It moves past the boulevard and the theatre, onto muddy villages, slipping out of the wheel to reach the hands of B’s waiting family. From there, it journeys on for 45 years, to safely reach you today.

NARRATIVE AND STORYTELLING AS ARCHITECTURAL EVIDENCE

In a letter written to his father in 1987, Merxhan Avdyli describes his morning routine of waking up before other prisoners, as the only time of day when one can hear “the chirping of jackdaws, the cawing of crows and ravens, as well as the singing of the thrushes”[10]. Teuta Hadri, imprisoned in 1981, recalls the four iron doors one had to pass to arrive at the women’s pavilion in Mitrovica, and its corridors mapped mentally by the sound of jingling keys in dreadful

silence. “Back then, I said, I will never keep keys in my life,” she says, as she takes out her keys to let us inside her home for the interview to take place[11]. On a stroll around the abandoned prison of Gjilan in 2024, Ahmet Isufi points to the torture rooms in front of the prison, his finger tracing the route in the air where screams echoed from one facade to another. As we enter inside, Selajdin Abdullahu shuts the steel door with a heavy thud, reenacting the sound the guards used to traumatize the prisoners. It is through these and many other narratives of those involved in underground political movements in Kosovo, that the short story of How Rain Escaped Prison is framed to make visible the spatial dimension of traumatic experiences of political prisoners[12].

These narratives, in their context, are first and foremost told to document a lived reality which points to a broader historical context — that in which Albanians of Kosovo lived within Yugoslavia. And it seems that, to convey the true essence of these stories, it would be more appropriate to speak in the form of information or report. But for that, Noel Malcolm argues that

> to produce an adequate survey of the human right abuses suffered by the Albanians of Kosovo since 1990 would require several long chapters in itself [13].

While the role of information remains essential, this paper focuses on another integral element of these narratives: the spatial experience. What storytelling conveys that information and reports cannot, is a transmission of experience that evokes in the reader a different form of understanding. In his short essay “The Storyteller”, Walter Benjamin points out that it is when the psychological connection of events is not forced on the reader and it is left up to him to interpret things, that “the narrative reaches an amplitude that information lacks”[14]. This approach, especially in a context in which storytelling does not happen for the sake of storytelling, can offer new spatial understandings beyond individual experience.

But why construct a new narrative? Why not insert these collected narratives as they are and discuss them in detail? To avoid an overwhelming description of traumatic accounts, this re-framing instead brings the focus on a widely overlooked dimension — the spatial component of traumatic memories. In each letter, poem, book, or interview, elements of movement, presence, and absence continually construct spatial memory. In her interview, Teuta Hadri speaks of mapping the guards’ movements in the prison of Mitrovica, not by sight, but through traces of light. On sunny days, as the guards would move silently along the corridor, their shadows would slip under her cell door[15]. However, for Ramadan Dermaku in the prison of Gjilan, no shadows appeared, as the corridors had no windows facing outside. For him, tracing their movement relied instead on sound: the guards’ footsteps and the jingling of keys[16]. This indirect understanding of space through daily accounts is not only present in practices of surveillance and torture, but also in the prisoners’ resistance to confinement. While some speak of secret practices of communication by knocking on walls, others recount how windows were utilized to send secret messages across different floors.

Some narratives extend even further, mapping spaces beyond the prison’s physical perimeter. While prisoners found ways to subvert the internal borders of the prison, the outer perimeter remained the most difficult of all. Every object that came in or out was subjected to severe censorship. Kosumi’s 1985 poem, *Package Inspection*, very well captures this invasive scrutiny. He describes how the most ordinary items — fruit, fli, and the mother’s halva —

were stabbed by the guard's copper spear, as if distrust extended not only to the prisoners but to nature itself[17]. The outer perimeter, however, was still somehow challenged. Xhavit Nuhiu smuggled poetry out of prison by concealing a small piece of paper inside the punctured inner tube of his wheelchair tire. As he sealed the tire back with glue, he carried the letter inside for over a month – risking severe punishment had it been discovered[18]. In another instance, Hysen Gega, another political activist, concealed written messages inside a bar of soap. Using a sharpened spoon handle, he hollowed out a space just large enough to fit a tightly wound roll of paper, then sealed the cavity with the same soap shavings, smoothing its surface to appear untouched[19]. The soap travelled undetected, and the poem got out.

The reach of confinement beyond the prison border did not only manifest in material ways, but also in immaterial ones. In *Correspondence in Censorship*, Mehmet Hajrizi speaks of his wife and children who used to travel for three days for a three-minute visit in the prison of Novi Sad, during which they were forced to sit 10 meters apart. Since these visits were rare, their primary means of communication became letters. Hajrizi explains that, though at home, his family lived under the constant weight of surveillance and silencing, as letters went through multiple layers of censorship from prison authorities, secret services and the judicial system[20]. Bajram Kosumi's imagery, too, speaks to this pervasive sense of control, as he describes the

> heavy black stamp – and not that solemn kind of black — pressed over the written text like a palimpsest, bearing the word "cenzurisano", [which] evokes the image of a death telegram or violence inflicted upon the text[21].

This layered censorship became often embedded into the act of writing itself, leading to self-censorship for both those in prison and at home. In a letter to his daughter in January 1987, Ahmet Qeriqi writes, "I am writing to you without any hope that you will receive this letter, as it seems that letters written in Albanian are not allowed here, even though they do not say it openly." Three months later, he writes again: "Be careful, my dear daughter, to write without making illustrations or drawings, just as I have written this letter to you"[22]. What becomes clear through these accounts, is that the practice of censorship was not limited to the inspection room, nor to the prison building or its surroundings, but stretched far further to reach those who lived "freely".

THE ARCHITECTURAL ARTEFACT

Turning the prisoners' narratives into a linear spatial story does not follow an arbitrary route. What precedes the narratives' analyses, in fact, is the drawing of the prison itself. With unavailable archival sources, drawing becomes not only the first tool with which to approach the building, but also the instigator leading to all research outcomes. Rather than serving the purpose of precise documentation, it takes on different roles, as a research tool and a mediator. The first one in a series of many is a floor-plan drawing (fig. 1). Initially, it discloses visible spatial hierarchies: the guards' offices larger than the cells, with far more light and broader views; the unaligned doors along the corridor, keeping prisoners from seeing the guards' rooms; the systematic repetition of doors, reinforcing in prisoners a sense of disorientation and confinement — and so on. Yet, besides exposing spatial relations in the prison's design, the drawing raises fundamental questions of architectural representation. How does one draw a prison door? Can you draw a door that is almost more of a wall

than the wall itself, in the same way as a conventional door?

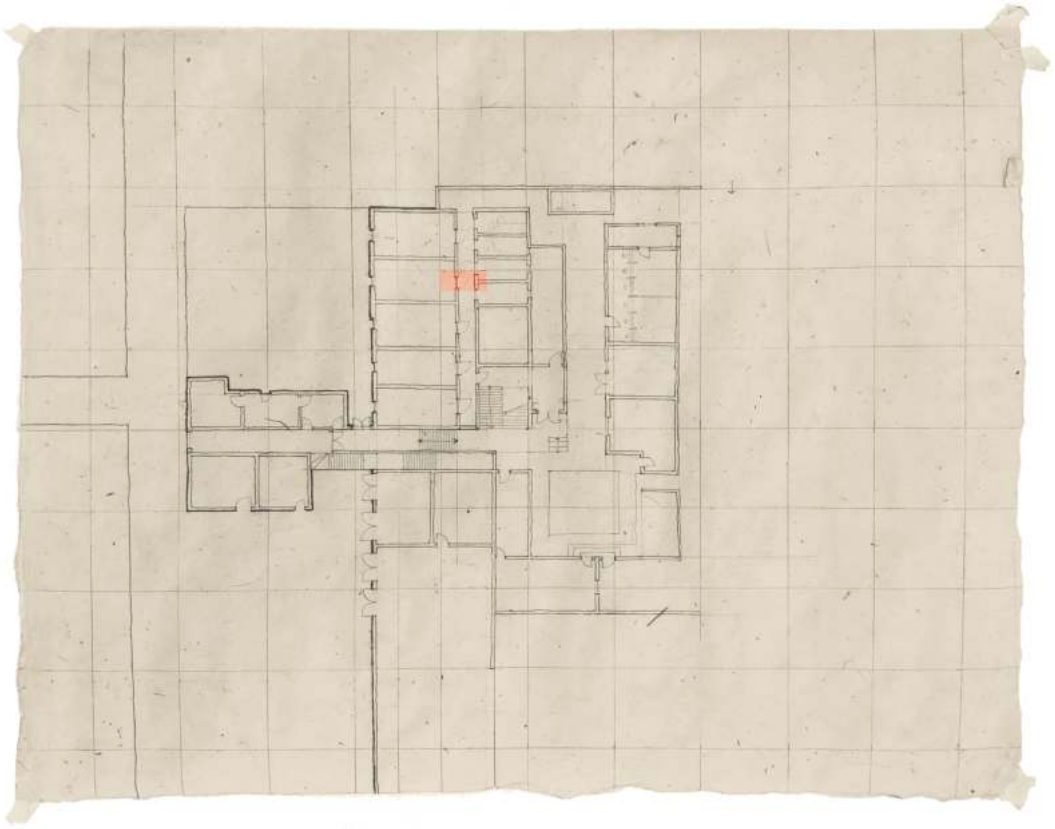

Figure. 1. Floor-plan drawing of the prison of Gjilan, graphite on washi paper, 70 x 50 cm (drawing by the author)

The same drawing defines the borders of the prison: the building ends there, the courtyard is enclosed, and the outer perimeter is fixed. 'That' is the prison. Yet, the floor plan drawing strains against these limits once sound comes into question. Following, the soundscape drawing (fig. 2) expands to trace a larger environment of life in prison. It begins with the inside, tracing the clang of steel doors, the jingling of keys and the pounding of rain against tin-covered windows. It then moves slightly outward, capturing shuffled voices from the courtyard and screams traveling from windows of one facade to another. It is only later, that poems, letters and conversations with former prisoners reveal sounds from beyond the prison's perimeter. On a walk behind the prison, Isufi speaks of the solitary cells while pointing at their windows touching the ground. Suddenly, he turns around to point at the rear part of the theatre. "That was the city library," he says, "I used to read there a lot as a child." In that moment, the drawing faced a new question: given the proximity, could faint melodies from the theatre have drifted into the cells? How far must the drawing stretch to capture not only what we see of the prison, but also what is seen, heard, and remembered from within it?

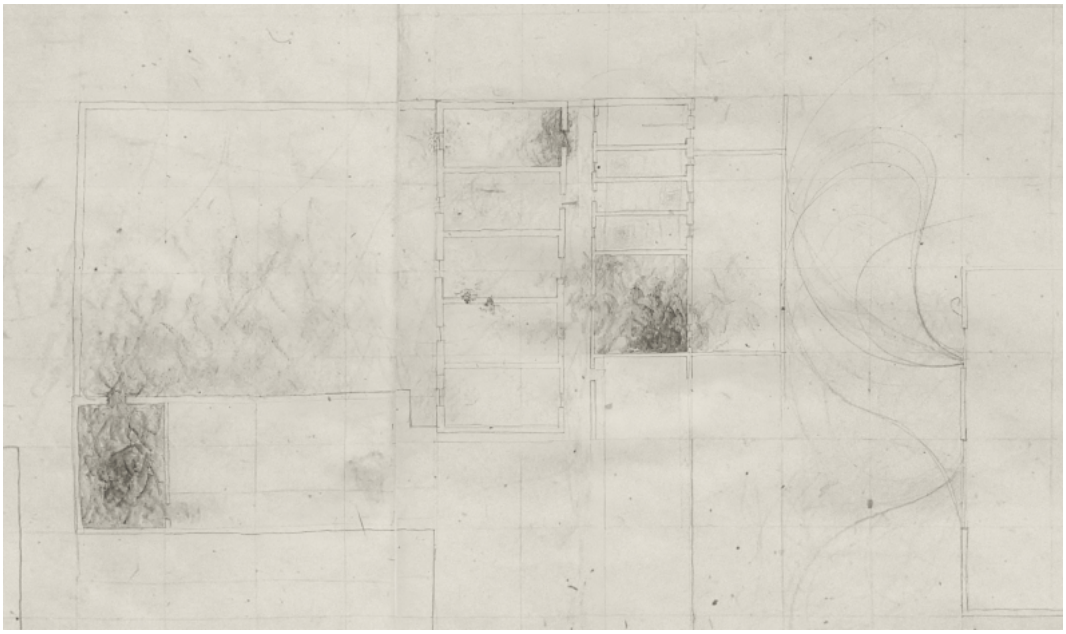

Figure. 2. Soundscape of the prison of Gjilan, graphite on washi paper, 120 x 50 cm (drawing by the author)

What follows is a section drawing (fig. 3), which opens a previously unseen dimension — the vertical cut. This vertical section reveals relationships that cannot be observed in a site visit, nor in horizontal projections such as floor plans. It first traces the cells' proportions, concrete ceiling bars, sight lines, and bunk beds. When perspective is added to the drawing, narratives begin to unfold inside each room. Some show the overcrowded cells with up to thirteen prisoners in one room, while others reveal prisoners reading on their bunk beds or standing in place and facing the window[23]. As pencil shades darken each cell of the section, the structure of the prison remains blank – its walls and slabs forming a white grid. Here, then, the boundaries become clear — thick, heavy walls and concrete slabs separating each narrative as they unfold independently within their small box. Yet, in certain narratives, the pencil traces over the white grid. Abdullahu recalls how coded knocks on the wall allowed prisoners to communicate between cells, a rhythm of taps signalling messages such as the arrival of a new cellmate[24]. In this instance, the wall transforms from a rigid border into a conduit of communication. Similarly, Isufi shares another story: taking a piece of paper from a cigarette box, writing on it, and then tying it with a thread from his shirt to lower it out of the window to the cell below[25]. It is here, that the section starts to expose connections between adjacent cells, or even those across different floors – challenging the idea of a total, isolated prison cell.

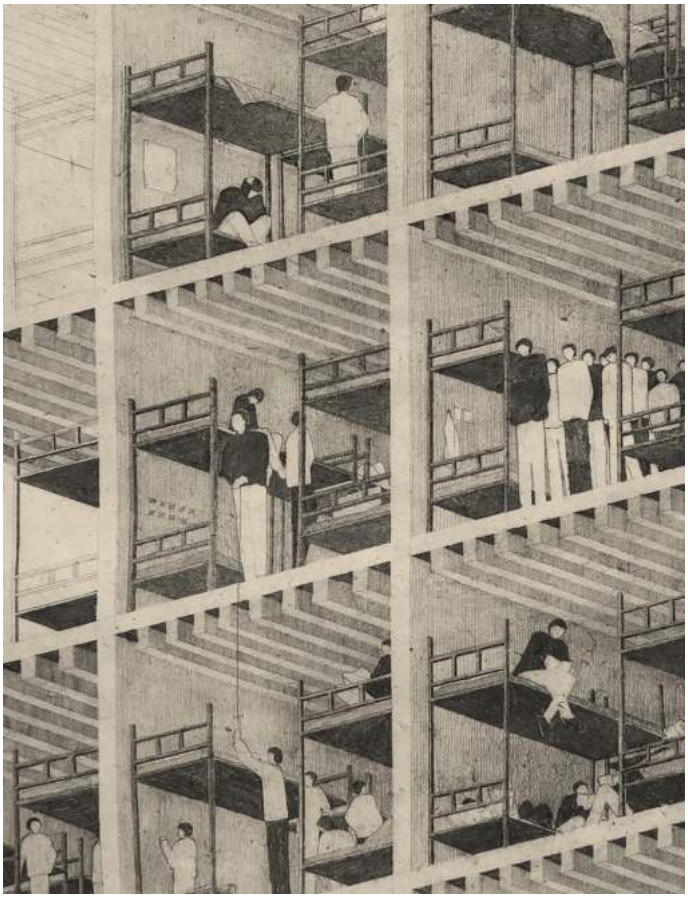

Figure 3. Section of the prison of Gjilan, graphite on washi paper, 70 x 50 cm (drawing by the author)

Moving from architectural drawing to model-making, the next artifact introduces a 1:10 section model, bringing the prison cell into three-dimensional form (fig. 4). Unlike drawings, the model engages more directly with proportion, light, texture, and detail. For instance, the choice of white cardboard as material plays a crucial role in the model's perception. Stripped of its patina of decay, the cell is abstracted into an unsettling, pure white space. But beyond materiality and perception, there is something in the very act of making that is of the essence here. As the window is built, the thickness of the wall becomes evident, with an immense depth and covered by bars on both sides. The tilted tin sheet — a detail encountered repeatedly in the prisoners' accounts — is now fixed in place, enclosing the window completely. As this element takes shape in the model, it begins to resist previous narratives: how did Isufi manage to slip a piece of paper below, if the tin sheet fully covered the window? With the model as a mediator, in a later conversation, Isufi explains in detail how the tin sheet was not attached at the bottom, but tilted in an angle and fastened by screws along its sides. Nearly 45 years later, this memory resurfaces with certainty, and a later visit to the site confirms the remaining screw holes on the window sides. The model, therefore, does not merely represent the cell. It questions, clarifies, and reconstructs reality, revealing details that would otherwise remain overlooked.

Figure 4. 1:10 model of cell thirteen in the prison of Gjilan, cardboard (modeled by the author)

CONCLUSION

In the preface of *Letters from Prison: The Censored Book* – a collection of letters from political prisoners in Kosovo – Merxhan Avdyli notes that, while the book will in no doubt leave a heavy mark on its reader, this was never the intention of the letters' original authors. What is quite evident here, is that the spatial information we derive from these sources gives an account of the prison so direct that makes them almost incomparable to conventional architectural documentation. Thus, this exploration calls for an expanded understanding of evidence in the field of architectural history. Smuggled letters, secret poems and whispered messages — often overlooked as spatial evidence — begin to map carceral spaces in ways that defy conventional understandings of prisons as total institutions. Each narrative unfolds spatially –speaking of doors, windows, walls and floors — but also temporally — structuring events, waiting, mapping movement and resistance. However, both spatially and temporally, they remain bound to the human scale, written by and for humans. It is only in combination with architectural documents that we reach the non-human scale to discover the prisons' own narrativity in its ability to evoke stories.

The production of architectural documents, such as maps, plans, sections and models, serves both as a process and a tool through which to uncover spatial dynamics. Each document, in its own dimension, abstracts certain aspects of the building that would otherwise remain undiscovered. Maps reveal broader spatial connections highlighting proximities and boundaries; plans allow us to investigate internal organizations; sections expose vertical relationships, and finally, models bring structures into three-dimensional forms, making spatial dynamics even more palpable. In the case of the Gjilan prison, these documents reveal the alternate uses of the prison infrastructure — the door

becomes a torturing instrument, the window a shield for secret exchange, and the wall a conduit for communication. In doing so, these documents do not merely describe space, but they continuously produce and transform it.

Through rethinking the limits of architectural evidence and unveiling the generative role of architectural documents, this paper calls for a more liberated field of study, not only in regard to history, but also in rethinking how we engage with the present — in heritage and in writing architecture. Moreover, through these two contributions, the relevance of this paper extends beyond the field of architectural history. First, it engages with Narrative Theory by examining how narratives and storytelling can intersect with architectural documents. It is through this dialogue that spatial relationships first become apparent. Second, it contributes to discussions on the prison boundary within the field of Carceral Geography, by spatially unveiling the tangible and intangible flows that penetrate physical borders. While Hilde Heynen notes that contemporary architectural research is marked by a growing interdisciplinarity, she also marks it crucial to keep maintaining the core questions that define the discipline's identity, namely:

> the discipline’s focus on the spatial and material characteristics of buildings — their plans and sections, their integration into context, the way they enable or guide movement, and their practical as well as symbolical values.

Accordingly, this research places architectural documents at its center, treating them as primary tools for the disclosure of overlooked information. Overall, in its layered content, this paper does not aim to construct an unambiguous and objective architectural history of a building. Rather, it embraces the subjectivity inherent in oral history and experience, highlighting spatial discoveries and creating space for multiple readings to emerge.

NOTES

[1] For an overview of Kosovo's status within Yugoslavia and the increasing repression of Kosovo Albanians from the 1980s until the start of the war in 1998, see: Judah, Tim. 2000. *Kosovo: War and Revenge*. New Haven: Yale University Press. See also: Malcolm, Noel. 1998. *Kosovo: A Short History*. New York: New York University Press. For a human rights perspective covering the war period, consult: Human Rights Watch. 2001. *Under Orders: War Crimes in Kosovo*. New York: Human Rights Watch. As there is an abundance of studies on the breakup of Yugoslavia, an overview of key scholarly debates can be found in: Ramet, Sabrina Petra. 2005. *Thinking about Yugoslavia: Scholarly Debates about the Yugoslav Breakup and the Wars in Bosnia and Kosovo*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. **[2]** For an examination of shifts in architectural evidence, see: Aggregate Architectural History Collaborative, 2021. *Writing Architectural History: Evidence and Narrative in the Twenty-First Century*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press. For perspectives on oral history as evidence, see: Gosseye, Janina, Naomi Stead and Deborah Van der Plaat, eds. 2019. *Speaking of Buildings: Oral History in Architectural Research*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press, as well as: Akcan, Esra. 2018. *Open Architecture. Migration, Citizenship and the Urban Renewal of Berlin-Kreuzberg by IBA 1984/87*. Basel: Birkhäuser. **[3]** Evans, Robin. 1997. *Translations from Drawing to Building*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 154. **[4]** For more information on the spatial dynamics of incarceration, see: Moran, Dominique. 2015. *Carceral Geography: Spaces and Practices of Incarceration*. Farnham: Ashgate. **[5]** For a thorough study on literature approaches to architecture, see: Havik, Klaske. 2014. *Urban Literacy: Reading and Writing Architecture*. Rotterdam: nai010. For a more specific view on narratives, see: Bernal, Dalia Milián and Carlos Machado e Moura. 2023. "Unearthing Urban Narratives Towards a Repository of Methods." In *Writing Urban Places. New Narratives for the European City*, edited by Klaske Havik et al., 53-72. Rotterdam: nai010. **[6]** While each element in this constructed narrative is taken from the original accounts of political prisoners in Kosovo, they occurred separately in different prisons and at different times. Their original contexts are then discussed in the following chapters. **[7]** This exploration of the Prison of Gjilan is part of a larger PhD project titled In Space We Read Trauma: Disclosing Microhistories in Kosovo, 1980-1999, funded by the Research Foundation Flanders (FWO) and supervised by Prof. Rajesh Heynickx and Prof. Gisèle Gantois. The project investigates the complex relationship between traumatic experiences and space. Thus, the methodology elaborated in this paper is neither limited to nor focused on prison architecture. For this reason, it does not primarily engage with established literature within prison studies. **[8]** The first interview was conducted in 2021 as part of my master's thesis *To Meet Galileo on Day Fourteen. An Eclectic Architectural Documentary: The Case of Gjilan Prison* at KU Leuven, within the 'Incipient Raum' studio with Tomas Ooms. Although focused differently, its initial findings laid the groundwork for this PhD project. In 2023 and 2024, six additional former political prisoners were interviewed. Those interviewed during this research were contacted based on prior acquaintance and through the Association of Political Prisoners of Kosovo (*Shoqata e të Burgosurve Politikë të Kosovës*). While it was important to integrate different actors and perspectives, only one former prison guard agreed to be informally interviewed, providing very limited information on the proportions and lighting of prison offices. The research has been reviewed and approved by KU Leuven's privacy and ethics committee (PRET), ensuring that participants' privacy and consent are handled with the utmost care and confidentiality. **[9]** Author's translation. Original poem from the private archive of Ahmet Isufi: "Në dhomën trembëdhjetë, ngjyrë e përhimtë, mbi plagët e mia. Shiu i ditës së trembëdhjetë, mbi llamarinë, plumb mbi ëndërrat e mia. Unë me trembëdhjetë udhëtarë, sillemi rrathëve të ferrit, për ta takuar Galileun, në ditën e katërmbëdhjetë."

[10] Author's translation. Original letter: "Këtu, është interesant se për çdo mëngjes, nëse zgjohesh herët, derisa nuk zgjohen të burgosurit e tjerë, me të madhe dëgjohet zhurma e përzier e shpezëve: cicërrima e harabelave dhe e vremçave të tjerë, krrokatja e sorrave dhe e korbave, si dhe kënga e vaji i kumrijave [...]" See Avdyli, Merxhan and Bajram Kosumi. 2004. *Letra nga Burgu. Libri i Censuruar[Letters from Prison. The Censored Book]*. Pristina: Brezi'81, 307. **[11]** Interview with Teuta Hadri, conducted by the author. Pristina, April 2024. **[12]** Underground movements and political imprisonments were widespread in the region since the early post-World War II period. However, this paper focuses primarily on the 1981 protests which emerged in response to the systemic repression of Kosovo Albanians under socialist Yugoslavia. For a detailed account of the 1981 protests, see Noel Malcolm's Kosovo: *A Short History*, particularly the chapter "Kosovo after the death of Tito: 1981-1997." Many of the activists involved in these protests, including those discussed in this paper, were affiliated with various underground groups operating under the broader movement known as Ilegalja. Due to its clandestine nature, Ilegalja's history remains relatively dispersed. For insights, consult: Schwandner-Sievers, Stephanie. 2011. "The bequest of Ilegalja: contested memories and moralities in contemporary Kosovo." In *Nationalities Papers 41*(6). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 953-970. For a feminist perspective, refer to: Krasniqi, Elife. 2011. "Ilegalja: Women in the Albanian underground resistance movement in Kosovo." In *Profemina*, 2. 99-114. The complex evolution of the Ilegalja movement, from the 1960s until today, is evident in a recent study that traces the origins of the Kosovo Liberation Army and its eventual transformation into the Army of the Republic of Kosovo. For more details, read: Muharremi, Robert, and Alisa Ramadani. 2024. *Transforming a Guerilla into a Regular Army: From the Kosovo Liberation Army to the Army of the Republic of Kosovo*. Cham: Springer. **[13]** Malcolm, Noel. 1998. *Kosovo. A Short History*. New York: New York University Press, 349. Malcolm writes: "Most Albanian doctors and health workers were also dismissed from the hospitals; deaths from diseases such as measles and polio have increased, with the decline in the number of Albanians receiving vaccinations. Approximately 6,000 school-teachers were sacked in 1990 for having taken part in protests, and the rest were dismissed when they refused to comply with a new Serbian curriculum that largely eliminated the teaching of Albanian literature and history. In some places the Albanian teachers were allowed to continue to take classes (without state pay) in the school buildings, but strict physical segregation was introduced - with, for example, separate lavatories for Albanian and Serb children - and equipment or materials, including in one case the window-glass, was removed from the areas they used. [...] Arbitrary arrest and police violence have become routine. Serbian law allows the arrest and summary imprisonment for up to two months of anyone who has committed a 'verbal crime' such as insulting the 'patriotic feelings' of Serbian citizens. It also permits a procedure known as 'informative talks', under which a person can be summoned to a police station and questioned for up to three days: in 1994 15,000 people in Kosovo were questioned in this way, usually without being told the reason for the summons. Serbian law does not, of course, permit the beating up of people in police custody; but many graphic testimonies exist of severe beatings with truncheons, the application of electric shocks to the genitals, and so on. Also widely violated in Kosovo are the official rules for the lawful search of people's houses: homes are frequently raided without explanation, and goods and money confiscated (i.e. stolen) by the police. In 1994 alone the Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms in Kosovo recorded 2,157 physical assaults by the police, 3,553 raids on private dwellings and 2,963 arbitrary arrests." **[14]** Benjamin, Walter. 1969. "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction." In *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn. New York: Random house. 83-109. **[15]** Interview with Teuta Hadri, conducted by the author. Pristina, April 2024. **[16]** Interview with Ramadan Dermaku, conducted by the author. Pristina, March 2024. **[17]** Avdyli, Merxhan et al. 1991. *Libri i Lirisë [The Book of Freedom]*. Pristina: Rilindja. **[18]** Kosumi, Bajram. 2020. *Letërsia nga Burgu: Kapitull më vete në letërsinë shqipe [Prison Literature. A chapter on its own in Albanian literature]*. Skopje: ITSHKSH, 66-67. **[19]** *Ibid.* **[20]** Hajrizi, Mehmet. 2021. *Korrespodencë nën Censurë [Correspondence in Censorship]*. Tetovo: Syth. **[21]** Kosumi, Bajram. 2020. *Letërsia nga Burgu: Kapitull më vete në letërsinë shqipe. [Prison Literature. A chapter on its own in Albanian literature]*. Skopje: ITSHKSH, 254. **[22]** Author's translation. Original letter: "E mira e babit, po të shkruaj pa kurrfarë shprese se do ta marrësh këtë letër, sepse si duket këtu nuk i lejojnë letrat e shkruara në gjuhën shqipe, edhe pse këtë nuk e thonë hapur. [...] Të kesh kujdes cuca e babit, të shkruash pa bërë ilustrime e vizatime, kështu siç ta kam shkruar këtë letër" in Avdyli, Merxhan and Bajram Kosumi. 2004. *Letra nga Burgu. Libri I Censuruar [Letters from Prison. The Censored Book]*. Pristina: Brezi'81, 52-53.

[23] In an interview I conducted with Ahmet Isufi, he recounts the protocol in which every prisoner was required to stand and face away from the door each time the guard entered the room. **[24]** Interview with Selajdin Abdullahu, conducted by the author. Pristina, March 2024. **[25]** Interview with Ahmet Isufi, conducted by the author. Pristina, October 2021. **[26]** Heynen, Hilde. 2024. "Architectural History Today: Where Do We Stand? Where Do We Go?." In *Perspectives in Architecture and Urbanism, 1*(1), 100005.

DOING TIME *INSTITUTIONAL RHYTHMS OF WOMEN'S INDUSTRIAL REFORMATORIES (1850-1970)*

By Tara Bissett (University of Waterloo)

ABSTRACT

Prison is often described as a space of confinement, yet it is equally a system of temporal discipline. While architectural history has traditionally framed prisons as 'timeless' structures focused on spatial containment, this article examines how time itself was a mechanism of gendered control within industrial women's reformatories, which emerged across North America, Australia, and New Zealand between 1850 and 1970. Racialized, disabled, working class, and Indigenous women were disproportionately targeted, particularly after 1920. Although Michel Foucault and Robin Evans have characterised reform architecture as an interconnected archipelago of institutions functioning within a carceral system, the gendered experience of time within these detaining spaces remains largely unexamined.

Exploring three key institutional examples – Bedford Reformatory (New York, 1901), Andrew Mercer Reformatory (Toronto, 1880), and Sherborn Reformatory (Massachusetts, 1877) – this study traces the spatio-temporal mechanisms shaping women's incarceration. Challenging assumptions about prison as a static site, the article demonstrates that women's reformatories structured carceral time by instituting the idea of the 'family' as a mode of governance. The indeterminate sentence imposed prolonged uncertainty, while 'maintenance time' was weaponized through institutional schedules, from labour cycles to moral training that mediated perceived relationships between inside and outside. Reformatory architecture reinforced this system, creating spatial progressions that materialized reform; women moved from austere cells to homely rooms, mirroring the trajectory toward expected domestic reintegration.

Women's reformatories disrupted and restructured worldly flows, assembling the 'outside' into controlled circuits that moved through grated cells, narrow passages, door slits, and the thresholds between individual spaces (cells, hospital rooms) and shared environments (visiting rooms, theatrical events, chapels). Broader surveillance networks funneled women into these institutions. Legal frameworks, such as the Vagrancy Act and the Female Refuges Act, criminalized women's mobility, policing their movement through the city and channeling them into reformatories for moral 'transgressions. Inside these institutions, the labour of reform – cleaning, mending, caregiving – blurred the boundaries between prison and domestic life, enforcing a disciplinary model of 'family time' that extended beyond incarceration. By considering the women's reformatory through the lenses of indeterminacy, imminence, and movement, we can understand how time played a significant role in shaping women's carceral space, bringing penal rhythms into contrast with inmates' temporal and relational continuities.

DOING TIME: INSTITUTIONAL RHYTHMS OF INDUSTRIAL WOMEN'S REFORMATORIES (1850-1970)

Prison is often described as a box outside of time, an architecture of walls, borders, and separation. Its euphemisms reveal the experience of enclosure: terms like the wire, box, and yard emphasize boundaries, while the hole, inside, and chokey evoke the depths of confinement and the separation of inmates from the outside world. Sometimes, the language of prison is rooted in action; penitentiary, for instance, derives from the act of penitence and regret. Less examined, however, are the temporal metaphors that shape carceral experience. Writing about his time on death row, political prisoner Mumia Abu-Jamal described prison as a temporal box, encapsulating how incarceration is measured in time: doing time, a lag, a stretch, or even life in prison[1]. Other phrases gesture toward the deadness of time behind bars: behind the clock, hard time, dead time, flat time, frozen time. The American Psychiatry Association defines 'chronophobia' as the specific condition inmates develop when facing the prospect of prolonged confinement[2]. Yet despite these temporal dimensions, architectural history has characterized prisons as 'timeless spaces' emphasizing spatial containment over carceral time[3]. Focusing on the industrial women's reformatory – a detaining space that targeted North American women for reform between 1850 and 1970 – this article challenges assumptions about the gendered politics of time, labour, and reform, both inside and outside the prison walls. It reconsiders the architecture of women's reform in temporal terms, highlighting the fraught conditions that emerge when values surrounding family, maintenance, and the regulation of women's movement are mobilized as modes of penal governance.

CONTEXT: THE INDUSTRIAL WOMEN'S REFORMATORY

In the late nineteenth century, a new type of women's prison emerged in British and European colonies as part of new nation-building efforts: the industrial women's reformatory. Spatial and temporal mechanisms had long been used to discipline and shape women's lives; thus, these later reformatories are genealogically linked to earlier systems of containment. Early modern Beguinages were women's communities with enclosed walls and systems of daily life at a remove from the host city. So-called Houses for Fallen Women (Casas de Arrepentidas) and various forms of reformatory prisons were also common across pre-industrial European cities, designed to remove and contain women perceived as threats to moral order[4]. Like Magdalene Laundries, which tarnished unconventional and marginalized women as "sinners", many of these earlier antecedents of women's reform architecture were managed by religious authorities. In the late nineteenth century, women's reform became secularized with the rise of middle-class women's philanthropic movements, such as the Women's League, YMCA, and other grassroots charitable associations. Throughout England and the British colonies, former manors and houses were revamped into multi-unit night refuges and reform accommodation for short and medium-term stays, respectably[5]. Similarly, in America, women's reformatories rapidly emerged in line with prison reform movements.

Removed from the hustle of urban life, industrial reformatories could be found in most American states by the early twentieth century, until 1970, when the reform system—its legal apparatus and architecture – was dismantled. Unlike conventional prisons, these reform institutions were factories that trained women for reintegration into the feminized workforce as housewives, domestics, and servants. Women were subjected to a system of reform based on a rigorous schedule of domestic labour at various scales, both familial and societal. While some were trained in household activities, others laundered and mended uniforms for neighboring prisons and asylums in the massive industry-scaled workhouses[6]. Emerging from the prison reform movement and evolving alongside new legislation, women's reformatories embodied conservative maternalistic ideologies that targeted 'wayward' women deemed likely to commit so-called crimes of morality. Not crimes so much as transgressions, acts such as marrying interracially, vagrancy, intoxication, sex work, and, in some cases, stubbornness, could result in young women being confined in these institutions. State archives document the lives of inmates; most women were working-class, of Irish and European descent, until 1920, when these systems of reform laid the tracks for more systematic incarceration of Black and Indigenous women[7].

Although reform programming varied depending on the reformatory superintendent – some resembling traditional prisons more than others – they were state-operated and built to designs by public works architects. However, in their early years, networks of reformers from Canada and the northern United States collaborated to develop designs and programs for these reform institutions, with new ideas and information about women's incarceration flowing across borders[8]. This article focuses on three key institutional examples, designed within a few decades of each other, that illustrate the web of power established by superintendents and reformers: Sherborn Reformatory in Massachusetts (1877), Andrew Mercer Reformatory in Toronto (1880), and Bedford Hills Reformatory in New York (1901) (figg. 1 and 3). Resembling asylums, prisons, and other institutional architecture, women's reformatories took one of two forms. Some were congregate setting facilities, such as Sherborn and Mercer, holding two hundred, or more, prisoners in a sprawling campus (fig. 2). Others adopted the 'cottage system' program, especially after 1900, featuring smaller clusters of buildings that created a less overtly carceral environment for reform, as seen in Bedford, New York (fig. 3) and Niantic, Connecticut. Regardless of their spatial programming, women's reformatories operated as self-contained societies, removed from the world yet replicating the functions of an idealized maternal society, with nurseries, clinics, a hospital, various types of cells designed for reform, recreation areas, and workhouses (fig. 4). Importantly, women labourers, including officers and superintendents, also resided collectively within these institutions, making them a compelling study of the intersection between care and power.

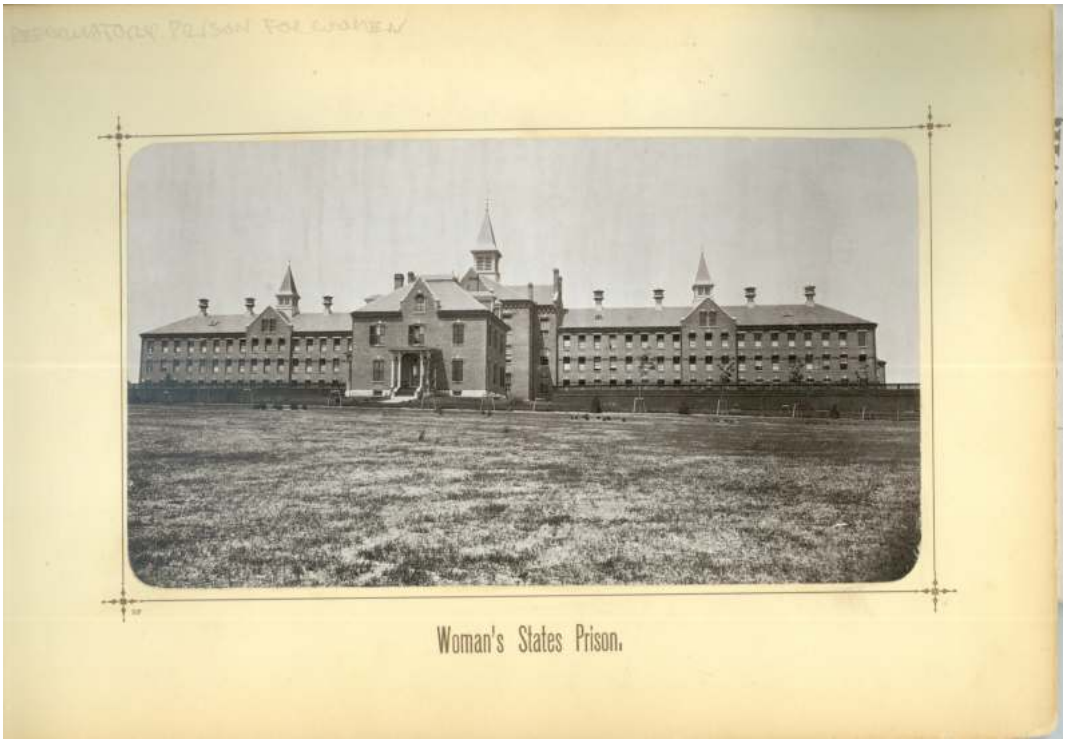

Figure 1. Sherborn Reformatory for Women, Framingham, Massachusetts, opened in 1877 to designs by architect George Ropes. Photograph. Courtesy of the Framingham History Center

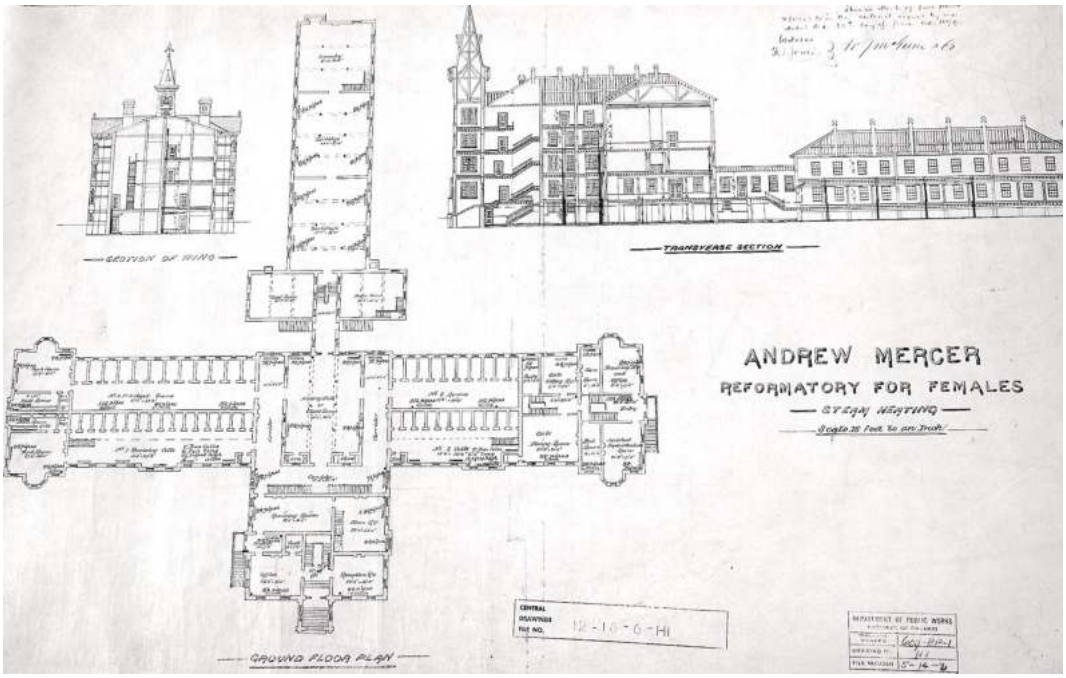

Figure 2. Andrew Mercer Reformatory for Women, Toronto, Ontario, opened in 1880. Plan and sections by Kivas Tully, 1879. Drawing. Courtesy of the Archives of Ontario

Figure 3. New York State Reformatory for Women at Bedford Hills (since 1904, known as Westfield State Farm), 1901. Photograph. Courtesy of Howard League for Penal Reform archive at the Modern Records Centre, University of Warwick

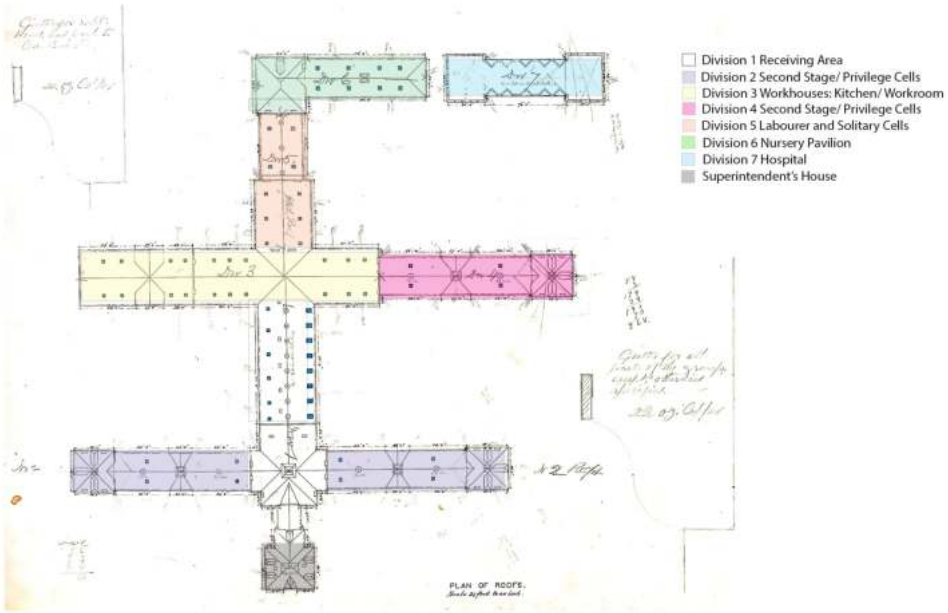

Figure 4. Sherborn Reformatory for Women. Plan of the roofs showing the sprawling campus-style institution that includes a nursery, superintendent's house, cells, workhouses, officers' lodgings, and communal areas. Architect: George Ropes, 1874. Drawing. Coloured Annotations by Author. ©Massachusetts State Archives

CARCERAL SPACE-TIME OF INSTITUTIONS

Despite extensive studies on carceral institutions, the spatio-temporal dynamics of women's reformatories remain largely unexamined. Women's reformatories operated within the framework of what Erving Goffman called the 'total institution,' environments that stripped individuals of autonomy through rigid routines, surveillance, and enforced conformity[9]. Goffman conceptualized the total institution as an architecture of walls and barriers, socially separating staff from inmates, and preventing communication between the inside and outside, realms conceived contrastingly as stasis and social mobility, respectively. Goffman's conceptualization of carceral time as both vast and dead mirrors the spatial divisions of the total institution, which forms a rigid architecture of walls separating inmates from the outside world. Assuming prison time unfolds in a vacuum, he writes that "[i]n many cases having a lot of time is of little value to people who have no time of their own such as prisoners in a total institution[10]", which functions as a "dead sea in which little islands of vivid, encapturing activity appear"[11]. These little islands of activity – courses or craft events, but also illicit events like sexual encounters, drinking and drugs, and gambling – puncture the crushing existential fog of "dead and heavy-hanging time"[12].

Time was more central to Michel Foucault's concept of the penal disciplinary process. Discipline and Punish traced the shift in Western carceral practices away from corporal punishment and toward the development of institutions that standardized reformative discipline[13]. Foucault described the carceral as a condition of modern society, linking it to the regulation of citizenship and the expansion of disciplinary control beyond prison walls. This system merged with other institutions, including orphanages, reformatories, hospitals, training schools, and migrant detention centers, embedding carceral logic within broader social structures. Relying on the structure of soft incarceration, inmates in reform institutions were encouraged to engage in a practice of mutual surveillance, swapping the visible apparatus of prisons, such as electric gates, fortifications, and locked doors for open, collective spaces, where the relationships between the powerful and passive are enabled through systems, rituals, and relational acts. Creating "docile bodies", modern conditions expanded the penal system and weaponized time for disciplinary purposes[14]. Although Foucault did not address women's reformatories directly, his theories about the role of time cannily captured the logistics of its reform system. Timetables ensured that time was segmented into strict blocks and schedules, ensuring reform-oriented and labour-based productivity amongst inmates. Each day was rhythmically regulated by cycles of work, rest, and moral training to discipline the body-mind. Over the course of a prison term, repetitive exercises were enforced to instill behavioural habits and create automized responses to the pattern of the outside world. Notably, the regimentation of these penal reform systems shaped how reformers envisioned temporarily and its role in the process of reform, conditioning inmates to internalize discipline as a continuous structure that was both self-imposed and self-regulated where inmates learned to monitor themselves even in the absence of direct oversight. From this perspective, time was not spent but rather invested; every scheduled task was banked toward a linear process of individual rehabilitation, making discipline appear as a natural progression instead of an imposed system.

Arguably, however, neither Goffman nor Foucault addressed the gendered dimension of penal reform, nor specifically women's reformatories, where time structured all aspects of women's spatial experience and functioned as a tool of control. Recently, Dominique Moran and Azrini Wahidin have shown

that time organizes the carceral experience from the prison sentencing, internal disciplinary strategies, frictions between clock time and experiential time, and the stasis of dead time[15]. Prison is not a "terminal destination", but rather "a spatio-temporal process" for inmates, who perceive incarceration as a stretch of time, comprising a negotiation between their lived experience of time and the rigid structures of prison time[16]. As Wahidin writes, "[t]ime in prison is mediated by the boundaries of the institution, imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rules, practices and procedures. The use of 'time as imposed' seeks to eliminate 'choice' and in turn instils dependency," denying inmates "the capacity to create meaningful and symbolic relations with prison-time and external time in the free society"[17]. Deepening Doreen Massey's framework of space/time, Moran and Wahidin argue that penal space is not merely a container for temporal systems but is dynamically shaped by them[18]. Arguably, as explored here, women's reformatories manipulated time in distinctly gendered ways. Reformatories' process of penal reform was governed by a type of 'family time' tied to conventional ideas about the order in which life events should unfold in the lives of young women, from marriage to family, and other socially acceptable sequences[19]. In the context of lifespan, reform institutions were framed as a discrete interruption, separate from the woman's broader life course[20]. At a more granular level, the acts of reform were embedded in labour processes that regulated inmates to the institution's clock time. Within reformatories, time was not only a tool of discipline but also a mechanism for imposing class, racial, and gendered trajectories, shaping expectations about the roles of incarcerated women in society.

MOBILITY AND CONTROL: THE TEMPO OF THE CITY

Most women contained within reformatories were turned in by a civic official, social worker, or family member, while many inmates were taken directly from the streets[21]. Between 1870 and 1950, women from the southern states and rural areas were drawn to large North American cities to work in factories, in other people's homes as domestic workers, and in department stores, believing these would be stepping stones to new opportunities[22]. Working class women and Black women disproportionately found themselves in these situations. Saidiya Hartman has written about how the movement of young Black women through the public sphere – whether strolling, protesting, or working – was perceived as a threat both to societal order and to women themselves[23]. Because media depicted women as the most vulnerable targets for organized gang activity in thriving metropolitan underworld networks, from the 1870s, legislation, philanthropic organizations, and social work focused on the protection of 'girls', a term widely used to describe mobile single women[24]. At that time, women passed through train stations, piers, docks and other urban spaces, which were key thresholds between women and the fast-moving networks of crime[25]. By 1880, the Travellers' Aid Society (TAS) was initiated by the philanthropist Grace Hoadley Dodge to form a vast network of women-to-women surveillance run by women social workers across the American northern states[26]. Waiting at train and ferry stations to intercept and direct newly arrived women toward shelters or appropriate addresses, TAS workers' interventions ranged from guidance to coercion, sometimes detaining single women in apartment-style shelters and involving law enforcement[27].

Legislation governed and regulated women's mobility in the late 19th and early 20th centuries combined with surveillance networks and detention, while also

delaying their autonomy. The Vagrancy Act established a body of legislation, adopted in Canada and the U.S. from England, that regulated who could occupy and move through public space[28]. By 1900 most provinces and states enacted ordinances prohibiting certain public acts that promoted "incivility, immorality, or disorder"[29]. Although scholars have demonstrated that these laws targeted Black and working class men and women, they were also tools to control women, especially "common night walkers" (sex workers), "persons wandering or strolling around from place to place without any lawful purpose or object, habitual loafers", or those "habitually spending their time by frequenting houses of ill fame"[30]. These laws made lingering without purpose illegal, but their ambiguity gave police officers authority in interpreting their moral valence. For women, loitering, lingering, or simply being present in high-motion or fast-paced public spaces was considered a violation of the Vagrancy Act. In 1893, the Canadian Female Refuges Act allowed judges to commit women to reform institutions for moral transgressions, such as public intoxication or vagrancy. Between 1893 and 1919, the law was amended multiple times to expand the list of transgressive acts – including asking for money in the street and being a non-compliant daughter – while also broadening enforcement, allowing anyone to report a woman. These laws reinforced the feminine chrono-normativity of 'family time', a phenomenon that Tamara Hareven has referred to as the designation of family values to the timing of life events, such as marriage, birth of a child, leaving home, and the transition of individuals into different roles as the family moves through its life course[31]. When the sequencing of family time was violated, women were often sent to reformatories, which institutionalized the role of family[32]. These laws targeted women who were out of sync with society's conservative temporal norms – 'fast' women were perceived as deviating from the expected rhythm of feminine life.

DISRUPTION/DETENTION: THE INDETERMINATE SENTENCE

Reformatories imposed a "bundle of legal, political, and social practices of exclusion" on working class, racialized, non-gender conforming, and disabled women identified to have the potential to commit moral transgressions[33]. Unlike prison, women incarcerated in reformatories were held with "indeterminate" sentences that expanded or contracted at the whim of the superintendents and officers. With a determined sentence, time is counted down. But with an indeterminate one, the boundaries of space and time blur, creating a sense of prolonged uncertainty. Influenced by Alexander Maconochie's Mark System, the concept of the indeterminate sentence aimed to promote rehabilitation over fixed punishment. A British penal reformer, Maconochie developed the system to reward prisoners for evidence of reformed behaviour through labour and education by allowing them to swap marks for privileges. Ultimately the focus on marks shifted penal practice from a fixed collective punishment to individualized rehabilitation[34]. For this system to function, reform institutions adopted practices that mimicked – albeit in a distorted form – those of the outside world. Believing that women's prison and homelife should be conceptually porous, reformers argued that routines and social structures, such as diet and recreation, should reflect ordinary practices. Inmates would go to school, learn trades, work, and be medically treated within the walls of the micro-society. Their beds should have sheets, pillowcases, and bedding allowing for the 'softening' of youthful women inmates. It was thought that deviant women should be subjected to new physical habits, allowing for "new neural paths" to be "made and connected"[35]. These ideas undergirded the reformatory movement,

influencing the design and organization of the first women's reformatories at Indiana, Sherborn, Mercer, and later, Bedford.

REGULATED FLOWS

On the other hand, though architects imagined these societies of penal reform as imprints of the world, they also designed systems that regulated the flows between the actual world outside and the space within the prison[36]. Documents from both inmates' memoirs and procedural reports tell us that women did not enter these complexes through the front door[37]. At the Mercer Reformatory women were first brought into a receiving room, where they were held for several days in a threshold space that acclimatized them to the penal environment[38]. After 1917, Mercer's solitary confinement cells acted as the receiving rooms, where women were checked for sexually transmitted diseases before being released into their own cells on the upper floors. Similarly at Sherborn Reformatory, receiving rooms constituted a narthex, or threshold, that mediated the pace of outside space (fig. 5). Receiving officers developed an inventory of each woman's personal belongings, which were removed and stored in a warehouse room. Among these belongings were timepieces and watches, ensuring that the institution's clock time became a dominant penal apparatus.

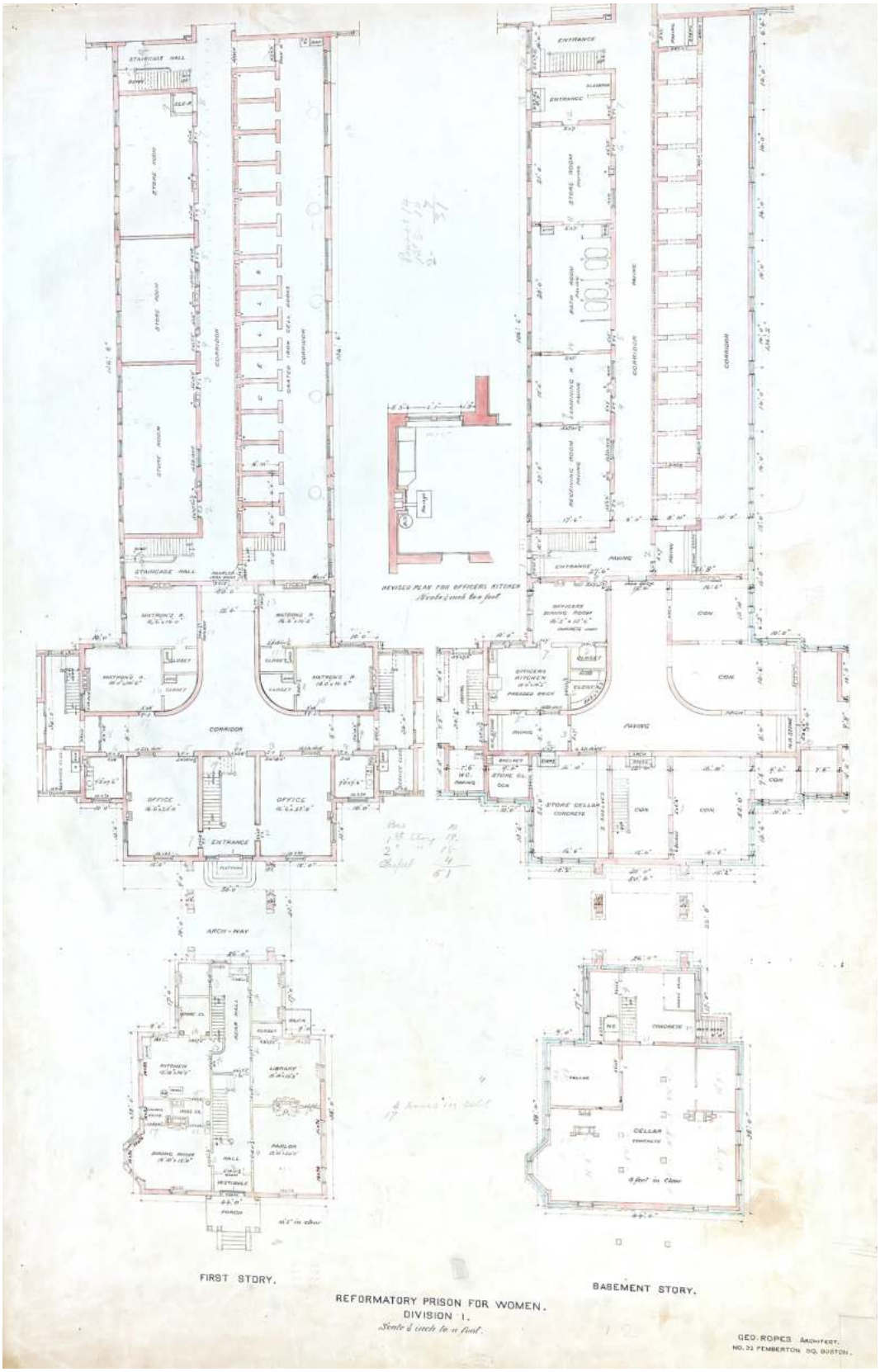

Figure 5. Sherborn Reformatory for Women, Framingham, Massachusetts. Plan of Receiving Areas. Architect: George Ropes, 1874. Drawing. ©Massachusetts State Archives

By design, reformatories controlled how the outside world flowed into the prison by banning personal effects, limiting commodities in prison canteens,

providing a supervised room for visitors, and ultimately ensuring that the carceral interior remained both physically distant and temporally disjointed from outside. Bedford and Sherborn's state archives contain letters intended for prisoners, often withheld by superintendents[39]. Moreover, the rhythm of inmates was highly controlled, linking movement between cells, workspaces, dining halls, and recreation to the individual process of reform. As women demonstrated compliance over the course of their sentences at Mercer Reformatory, they were gradually moved from austere brick prison cells near the entrance to spaces deeper within the building, eventually reaching larger homelike rooms, with white-painted walls and a window. Inmates would take different paths through the facility, depending on their status in the process of reform. As a result, many women described these institutions in temporally fragmented ways, with little objective sense of the building's spatial layout, knowing only certain short paths – from the cell to the hospital, from the clinic to solitary confinement, from the cell to the chapel (fig. 6). Their sense of carceral reform space was shaped by these brief, structured durations of controlled movement. Other temporal experiences were strictly standardized: pulleys embedded within the walls regulated food distribution, moving through ventilation ducts and minimizing interaction between confined inmates and others. Small slots in the doors of solitary confinement cells in the basements allowed trays of food to be passed through at regimented times [40]. Inmates who died in captivity were contained in the death room before being transferred with the most direct route to the exit (fig. 7). The most extreme form of containment – solitary confinement – was a banishment from clock time. Women inmates were punished by sending them to solitary cells to "have a think"[41]. George Ropes, the architect of Sherborn Reformatory tucked the solitary cells away on the ground floor (fig. 8). Public works architect Kivas Tully's drawings for the Mercer Reformatory locate these isolation cells in the basement, removed from the activities of the reform society.

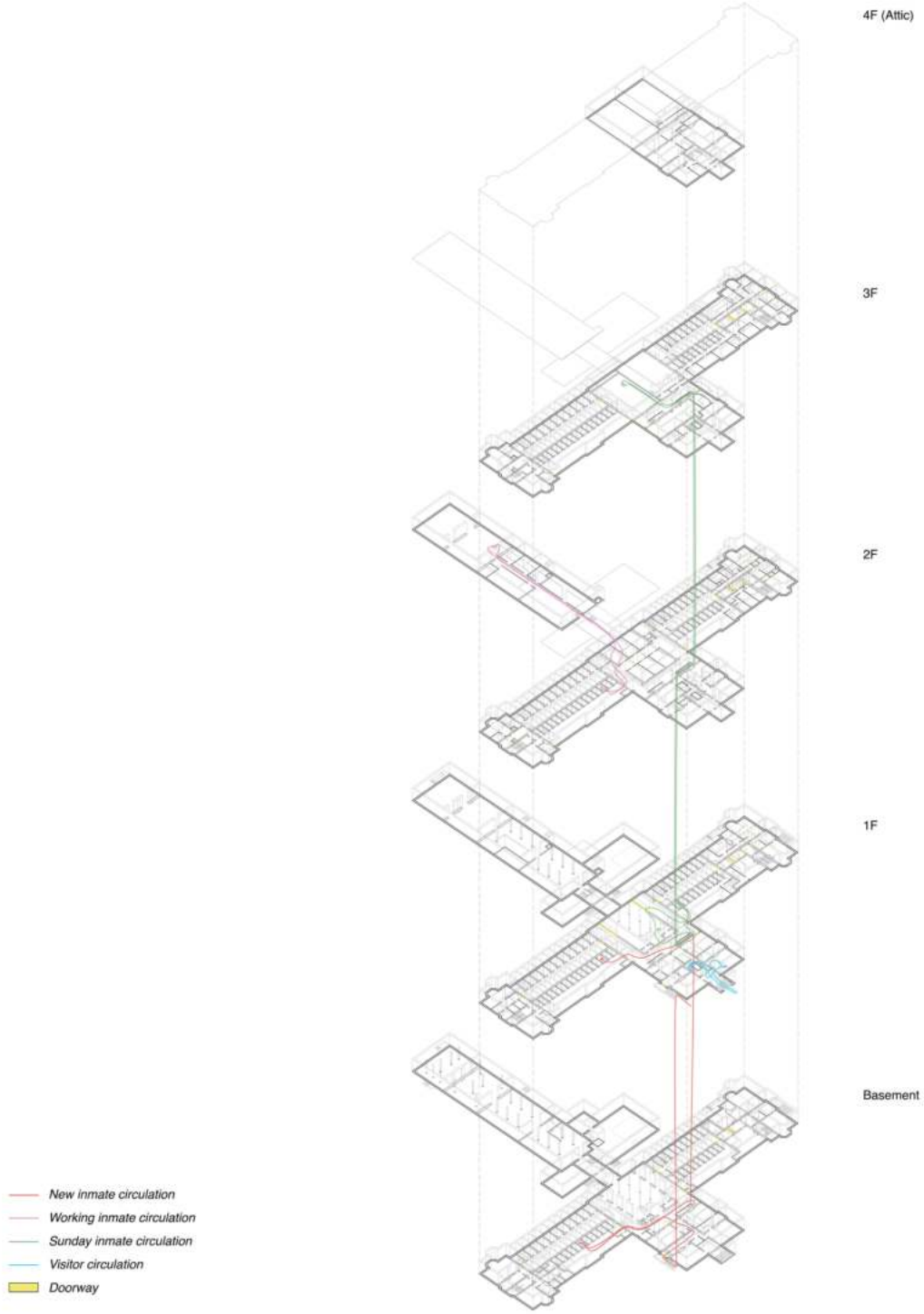

Figure 6. Andrew Mercer Reformatory for Women. Exploded axonometric showing the short and direct routes of new inmates' movements from cells to their workplaces and the church. It also shows the limited experiences of visitors to the building. Original Drawing by Chelsea Wu, 2024, based on original floor plans from the 1940s

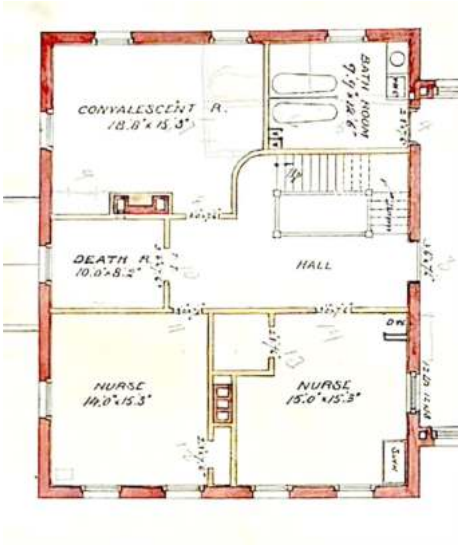

Figure 7. Sherborn Reformatory for Women, Framingham, Massachusetts. Plan of the death room near the exit. Architect: George Ropes, 1874. Drawing. ©Massachusetts State Archives

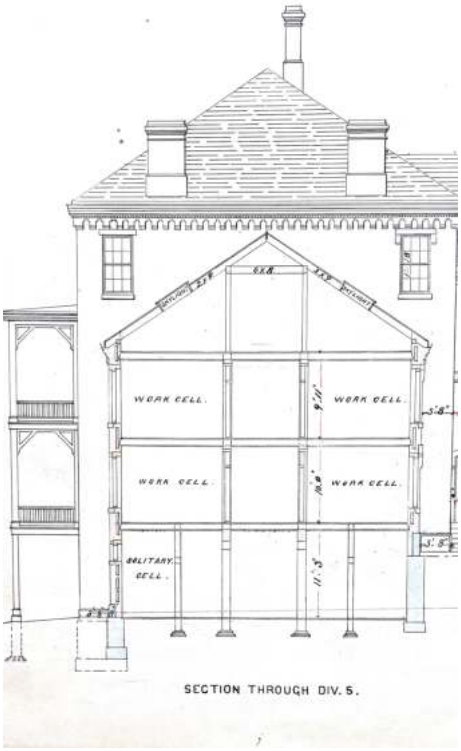

Figure 8. Sherborn Reformatory for Women, Framingham, Massachusetts. Section showing the solitary confinement cells in the basement and the solitary work cells. Architect: George Ropes, 1874. Drawing. ©Massachusetts State Archives

GENDERED LABOUR AND THE ECONOMY OF TIME

The industrialization of women's reform incorporated capitalist strategies from factories and mills, imposing regimented schedules and labour discipline. E.P. Thompson has argued that this type of control, or 'time-thrift', that fuses time with economic rhythm and the logistical and disciplinary movement of bodies is organized by "the time-sheet, the time keeper, the informers and the fines"[42]. At both Sherborn and Bedford, women's

reformatory superintendents made use of time ledgers to manage labour, punishment, and privileges[43]. However, the prisoners' experience of time was profoundly shaped – and distorted – by the rhythms of care labour: cleaning, washing, and mending. Men's prison reform also centralized labour, though most of it was productive work: making objects, furniture, and commodities that would later enter the economy of the outside world. Simone de Beauvoir and Hannah Arendt distinguished between the repetitive, non-productive labour of women's work, which sustains systems, objects, or human life, and the more generative, inventive male-associated work typically associated with the political realm of the public sphere[44]. Arendt characterized labour as the embodied processes that comprise the sphere of reproduction responsible for maintenance and sustenance – cleaning, dusting, caring – leaving nothing lasting behind[45]. Its cyclical nature is both transient and necessary, requiring that it persist, always needing to be redone. Because reproductive labour operates outside the direct production of commodities and services, its value has remained marginalized and its praxis invisible, especially when carried out within institutional confinement[46].

WOMEN'S DOMESTIC LABOUR: MAINTENANCE TIME

Industrial reformatories merged two distinct temporal experiences: the indefinite deferral of release and the unrelenting present of continuous labour. Labour traditionally performed in the home became the basis for what constituted 'a day', blurring the boundaries of home and prison. Domestic labour was scaled to the class and race of inmates; young white women were often taught how to manage their own homes, while Black and working-class women were trained as servants in the homes of others. Spaces of care labour occupied the centre of these institutions: hospitals, clinics, laundry rooms, kitchens, workrooms, and closets. Sherborn's massive workhouse occupied an entire wing, housing a factory where women performed industrial labor focused on urban-scale domestic maintenance, such as baking and laundering. In Toronto's Mercer Reformatory, the factory extended perpendicularly from the institution's core, where women laundered clothing for men's prisons and asylums. Inmates deemed able to eventually maintain their own families were allowed to work in smaller domestic rooms at the ends of the cell wings (fig. 6). In the long galleries in front of the cells, they engaged in family-scaled domestic practices such as setting tables, knitting in armchairs, and other forms of household labour.

Homelife and care labour has the creative potential to be identity affirming and transformative, as bell hooks, Iris Marion Young, and Joan Tronto, have argued[47]. Care ethicists have offered the mother-child paradigm to suggest that care plays a significant role in establishing reciprocal relationships of mutual growth and creativity, even though the mother is undeniably participating in reproductive labour and maintenance practices[48]. Moreover, Silvia Federici has demonstrated that care practices have meaningful value in 'commoning' strategies, particularly when embedded in collective processes[49]. However, because women's industrial reformatories enacted penal reform through domestic work, they offered none of these frameworks for the development of meaning through acts of maintenance.

Women were sometimes paid for their labour at the end of their prison sentence, allowing them to take some money with them upon release. However, most of the proceeds from their mending and washing were redirected toward the physical upkeep of the institutions[50]. Lisa Baraitser has

argued that maintenance carries a dual meaning, both sustaining life and propping up existing systems[51]. "Maintenance time" serves to keep "things functioning or in a steady state, allowing what already exists to continue or persevere, to carry on being." Baraitser argues that maintenance exists within conflicting temporalities: a horizontal axis "stumbling blindly on", and the "vertical axis of holding up"[52]. Women inmates performed maintenance work not to sustain their own families but to uphold a disciplinary ideal of family in the abstract—reinforced through the spatial organization of the institution, where dormitories, workrooms, and communal areas mimicked a patriarchal model of maternal domesticity[53]. Therefore, the "holding up" of maintenance performed by inmates refers to the preservation of the idea of family as a disciplinary ideal. In these reform institutions, reproductive labour was labour without home, maintenance without direct relationality, and care work that sustained an abstract moral order rather than familial survival.

CHRONO-NORMATIVITY

Professional women also resided within these institutions, adding a complex dimension to women's containment, while further eroding the distinction between home and prison. As one of the first types of institutions to give rise to new feminized roles in the workforce, from their inception, reformatories throughout North America gave rise to a professional network of women's police officers, lawyers in the Women's Court, social workers, and doctors specializing in women's health. Reformatories also housed the matrons and officers, who lived in collective apartments within the institutional complexes (fig. 9). The superintendent's home was often built into the institution, where she worked professionally without being fully ensconced in the public sphere (fig. 10). Caregiving labour within these institutions took many forms, entangling care with power and producing violent hierarchies between professional women employees and women inmates. Officers served inmates food, matrons cared for inmates' children, and superintendents adopted a maternal approach that framed the reformatory in familial terms, treating inmates as children in need of guidance and correction[54]. For professional women, the experience of time was also shaped by the institutional rhythms of surveillance, discipline, and caregiving. While they occupied positions of authority, their daily routines were similarly structured by the demands of the reformatory, because as women working in fields 'before their time' they, too, had to be contained.

Figure 9. Niantic Reformatory, Connecticut. Plan demonstrating that workers (matrons and officers) lived semi-communally with the prisoners, sharing the same floor. Plan from Hart, Hastings H. 1923. “Plans and Illustrations of Prisons and Reformatories.” The American Journal of Nursing 23 (5): 440-. https://doi.org/10.2307/3407886

Figure 10. Sherborn Reformatory for Women, Framingham, Massachusetts. Plan showing the front and side of the Superintendent's house, which was both embedded within and fronting the institution. Architect: George Ropes, 1874. Drawing. ©Massachusetts State Archives

CONCLUSION

From the nineteenth-century, state-run and secularized women's reformatories in North America structured the time and space of incarcerated women in new ways. While Foucault and Goffman have addressed institutions broadly in terms of reform, temporal discipline, and the containment of penal architectures, nither addressed the unique gendered history of these reformatory architectures. The imposition of disciplinary temporalities that dictated women's movement, labour, and moral rehabilitation, was persistent both within and outside of institutions, reinforcing chrono-normative expectations about women's roles in the domestic and social order. By merging the temporal systems inherent in industrial labour with the cyclical temporality of reproductive work, reformatories created a unique penal system in which women's time was distinct from societal order. Women professionals employed by the reformatories were also subjected to the rhythms of containment, sequestered from the outside world. From women-to-women surveillance networks in the city to the family-like structure of reformatory systems, the idea of home was weaponized against incarcerated women.

While in the first few decades, these institutions targeted women of European descent, possibly because these demographics were expected to be reformed, they reserved soft punishment for white women, while harsher penal control targeted Black and Indigenous women[55]. After 1950, many women's reformatories functioned as prisons without the reform element[56]. Twenty years later, the reform institutions that were not dismantled were transformed into prisons[57]. Although intended to be adjacent to the prison system, reformatories laid the tracks along which penal systems have unfolded into our current day, contributing to violent practices that divide and oppress women along class and colour lines. By inviting middle class women to participate in penal reform as superintendents and matrons, reformatories enforced and normalized racial and class divisions between women. Much of the legislation developed to enforce feminine reform was "colourblind" on paper. However, Michelle Alexander has shown that detaining legislation was vague enough to be locally enforced through racially discriminatory customs, disproportionately targeting Black and Indigenous people – as seen in the vagrancy and mischief laws introduced (and persisting) after the dismantling of slavery[58]. By controlling women and criminalizing non-criminal behaviour – loitering in the evening, marrying inter-racially, being in the wrong place with the wrong colour of skin – reformatories persisted earlier systems of inequity that were increasingly unacceptable in wider society. In the 1950s, women were increasingly imprisoned for civil rights activism and other political action that was deemed criminal in nature instead of a protest for human rights. Moreover, the systems of indefinite detention used for women would become widely used for the detention of immigrant populations. As Angela Davis has argued, we must not

> ignore the extent to which the institution of the prison has stockpiled ideas and practices that are hopefully approaching obsolescence in the larger society, but that retain all their ghastly vitality behind prison walls[59].

Considering these institutions of reform as temporal-spatial strategies for controlling women, through architecture, legislation, and embodiment sheds light on the role of containment in nation-building practices throughout North America and beyond, but also serves as a warning about how penal architecture continues to shape the limitations of women's freedoms.

NOTES

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COEXISTENCE OF MARGINALITY IN TOURISM AND SEASIDE DYNAMICS: *THE CASE OF THE COPPOLA-PINETAMARE VILLAGE ON THE CAMPANIA COAST*

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the themes of exclusion and the perception of marginalized spaces, with an emphasis on the so-called discarded landscapes, territories fragmented and devalued by economic, social, and environmental processes. At the heart of the thesis lies a critical and design-driven investigation of these spaces, where the concept of *non-lieux* is applied and further examined.

Villaggio Coppola-Pinetamare represents a paradigmatic case within the fragmented coastal landscape of Campania, shaped by intense infrastructural, residential and industrial pressures. Conceived in the late 1960s as a modern reinterpretation of the garden city model, the settlement was designed to offer to the region's upper-middle class a coastal *enclave* intended to remain active throughout the year, characterized by abundant greenery, a strong sense of security, and advanced amenities.

However, the 1980 Irpinia earthquake marked a dramatic rupture in this trajectory. The subsequent state expropriation of residential and hotel units to house displaced populations catalyzed a rapid socioeconomic decline. House values collapsed, investments and residents disappeared and in a short time the site quickly devolved into a state of abandonment and degradation in the hands of organized crime.

Today, this site suffers from a state of profound marginalization, manifesting as both a spatial and temporal rupture within the landscape: what was initially imagined as a protected utopia soon became a dystopian *enclave*. Through a multidisciplinary lens, the study culminates in revealing the site's latent potential, repositioning it not as a relic of past failure, but as a catalyst for urban reactivation. By engaging with its material and landscape traces, symbolic stratifications, and socio-spatial dynamics, the investigation reclaims the site's peripheral condition as a space of opportunity. What was dismissed as marginal and obsolete is reconsidered as a *locus* of meaning, where the discarded is reinvested/ re-empowered with value, and the notion of redemption becomes a generative force for reintegration into the contemporary urban imagination.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR INTERPRETING MARGINAL TERRITORIES

> If a place can define itself as identitary, relational, historical (anthropological place), a space that cannot define itself as either identitary or relational or historical will define a non-place[1].

The Italian landscape, a palimpsest of heterogeneous beauty and characteristics, inevitably invites a comparison between absolute beauty, represented by nature reserves, parks, historic buildings and natural areas of great value, and places of degradation, abandoned or reduced to wreckage. The European Landscape Convention (ELC 2000)[2] states that the term landscape is not only limited to areas of outstanding value but also includes those that are part of everyday life, encompassing all degrees of anthropization and including degraded territories[3]. The latter, despite their state of decay, are included in the concept of heritage, recognizing also in them a historical and cultural relevance to be communicated and preserved. Degraded waste landscapes are contexts that, as a result of rapid changes and urban expansions, have undergone processes of fragmentation and disintegration of territorial structures. These environments have experienced prolonged periods of abandonment, degradation of physical and functional characteristics, loss of ecosystem efficiency, becoming the object of phenomena of exclusion, disuse, disorder, poor accessibility and multiple problems linked to social rejection[4]. These are complex contexts, very widespread in rural areas close to large centers, in the peripheries of urbanized territories where ancient balances between anthropic and natural elements have been altered (fig. 1).

Figure 1. Pier Paolo Pasolini, frame from Mamma Roma, 1962 (from https://fattidarte.wordpress.com/2015/01/03/mamma-roma/ last accessed 20/05/2025)

Massimo De Angelis and Marco Armiero, in 2017, spoke of the *Westocene*, defining this era as the as one of waste, in which anthropogenic actions produce not only discarded spaces, but also marginalized figures and social dynamics. These places, symbolizing the abandonment of traditional urban

models, are characterized by blurred boundaries, uncertain temporalities and rituals that no longer conform to established paradigms[5]. Such areas include highland areas, former ports or industrial areas, disused or abandoned archaeological areas, bordering river stretches or hydrographic relicts, places of the unfinished, agricultural contexts fragmented by infrastructure networks, abandoned quarries, and small interstitial areas.
This article takes its starting point from this reality, examining it through the lenses of Identity and Genericity of the contemporary city, with particular reference to the uncontrolled expansion of the metropolitan area of Naples towards the Domitian plain and the neighboring rural areas. The focus is therefore on the outermost strip of the urban core's sphere, and thus on the identitary point[6] of the city itself, to read a suspended place, forced into a state of terrible stillness, poised between the possibility of self-destruction and renewal.
The theoretical framework of reference on the study of the potential of residues is rich, heterogeneous and multidisciplinary: *friches*, *non-lieu*, *Wasteland*, *Tiers paysage*, *No-man's land*, *espaces délaissés*, and similar definitions, all converge in understanding an urban dimension in transformation, in which rejection and abandonment open up new possibilities for reinterpreting the landscape. Ignasi de Solà Morales' concept of *terrain vague* refers to this tendency, evoking the notion of emptiness and waiting, suspended places, lacking definition[7]. Alongside this vision, the concept of *drosscape* proposed by Alan M. Berger broadens the reflection, identifying residual landscapes as natural components of a continuously expanding city[8] (fig. 2).

Figure 2. Marcel Carné, frame from Terrain Vague, 1960 (from https://laboratoireurbanismeinsurrectionnel.blogspot.com/2012/10/terrain-vague.html last accessed 20/05/2025)

> If one stops looking at the landscape as the object of human activity, one immediately discovers [...] a quantity of undecided spaces, devoid of function on which it is difficult to place a name. This whole belongs neither to the territory of shadow nor to that of light. It lies at the margins[9].

The contribution of Gilles Clément is central to the reinterpretation of marginal landscapes. Through his analysis of the transitional zone, along roads, railway lines, and urban peripheries, Clément introduces the concept of the *Tiers Paysage*: a category of residual spaces traditionally deemed valueless or neglected. Yet, it is precisely these spaces that Clément identifies as reservoirs of biodiversity and ecological richness. Rather than dismissing marginal areas as degraded or depleted, he repositions them as environments in latent balance, spaces that, if properly understood and managed, hold the potential to sustain and regenerate the landscape.
The concept of the margin has long been associated with the idea of border, but contemporary theoretical discourse, particularly within the field of the *Border Studies* in dialogue with postcolonial, decolonial, and gender studies, has significantly expanded its meaning. The theme of the border thus becomes crucial in the reflection, as what may seem a passive element actually has an active influence on the urban context and the surrounding landscape[10].
No longer understood as a static line of separation or a discrete object, the margin is now conceived as a dynamic assemblage of material and symbolic elements that generate complex social phenomena. Within this framework, Bell Hooks' *Center/Margin Theory*[11] offers a critical lens through which marginality is conceptualized geometrically, defined by difference and separation within social and communal structures.
In this perspective, the margin is not merely a site of exclusion, but a critical space from which new visions, narratives, and practices of resistance may emerge.
Therefore, the concept of marginality is intrinsically polysemous, relational and vague[12], its lines of demarcation often difficult to trace, precisely because the margin/boundary only exists and acquires meaning in relation to the dominant position defined as the center[13]. Marginality is not a static place of separation, but a field of interaction and negotiation, where the boundaries between what is considered central and what is peripheral are continuously redefined.
Within these marginal places, characterized by blurred boundaries and various forms of marginality, it is possible to identify a heterotopic essence in the Foucaultian. These heterotopic spaces disrupt normative spatial and social orders by transcending traditional syntaxes and challenging dominant discourses; they cannot be rigidly conceived as discrete objects or metaphorically as simple lines. On the contrary, they represent a complex assemblage of material and immaterial elements, generating intricate social phenomena. They embody the heterotopic essence precisely in their capacity to host and juxtapose within themselves different realities that, under ordinary conditions, would be mutually incompatible[14].

Villagio Coppola-Pinetamare represents the emblem of a marginality curve that has turned, or rather, revealed itself to be a circle in which the beginning and the end coincide at a point of apparent no return. Its reading brings out stories of reception and exclusion, immigration and abusiveness, demolition and resilience; frozen stories, suspended between phenomena of retraction and advancement, adaptation and reinvention, dystopian scenarios, ambiguous in a present seemingly stretched to infinity.

Initially conceived as a separate entity, distinct and superior with respect to the metropolitan city of Naples, the village has ended up falling into a condition of exclusion, finding itself in a context that appears totally alien to its very nature. These two shades of isolation that define a single destiny of uncertainty. It is therefore possible to read a cyclical nature in the genesis of this ambivalent place. Initially conceived as protected and isolated by its fences, it has in turn become a place of isolation and exclusion, as it is barred

to the poorest segment of the population and accessible only to a privileged minority. In the present, this place is relegated to a condition of marginalization, it appears as both a physical and temporal fracture in the landscape, like the archaeological ruins of *Liternum* not far away, which share the same fate of marginality and degradation. From both sites emerge traces of past temporalities and ancient splendors as well as signs of degradation and denied present relationships, waiting to be stitched up by new scenarios and possibilities.

THE DOMITIAN COASTLINE: DIACHRONIC EVOLUTION OF THE TERRITORIAL CONDITIONS

The northern coast of Campania is an example of the territorial dynamics generated by the seaside tourism of the 1960s economic boom, a period marked by the intensification of subdivision near the coastline and the exploitation of resources. In the long term, this phenomenon not only compromised the environmental qualities of the site but also caused a sharp drop in property values and the consequent degradation of the social structure.

The coastal area of the province of Caserta, known as *Litorale Domitio*, extends for about 50 km from the mouth of the *Volturno* River in the north to *Monte di Procida* in the south, presents itself as a fragmented landscape, marked by significant historical transformations and the uncontrolled superimposition of infrastructural and settlement systems on the original geomorphological structure (fig. 3). The low and sandy coastline, mainly conditioned by the fluvial dynamics of the *Garigliano* and *Volturno* rivers, has been compromised by intense anthropic exploitation represented by agricultural and zootechnical activities, coastal works and intense urban settlements that have altered the morphological structure and natural landscape[15].

Figure 3. The system of reserves ZSC and ZPS (black) overlaps with the system of urbanized areas (red) in the GIS environment. Author's elaboration

A central moment in the transformation of the Domitian coastline was the completion of the new *Via Domitiana* in 1954. This infrastructure, while facilitating regional connectivity, effectively severed the physical and perceptual link between the urban center and the coastal strip, comprising the pine forest, the beaches, and the sea. In the absence of coherent urban planning guidelines, the following decades witnessed a surge in uncontrolled urban development, with thousands of buildings constructed between the new roadway and the coastline[16]. The Domitian coastline experienced a linear pattern of expansion, with building structures parallel to the shoreline, which involved the *Licola* coastline and the entire shoreline, superimposing itself upon an existing settlement structure of second tourist residences[17].

The coastline has also been severely impacted by the absence of wastewater treatment infrastructure. Nearly all watercourses in the area are now contaminated as a result of unchecked discharges of domestic and industrial effluents, compounded by the widespread and uncontrolled dumping of solid waste. Alongside the unstoppable numerical and volumetric growth, millions of tons of waste are stored in the municipalities of *Giugliano and Villa Literno* and the poisoning of the waters of the *Regi Lagni* (fig. 4), which are an imposing work of hydraulic engineering built by the bourbons in the 17th century to channel water[18]. For several decades the canals were at the center of continuous scandals due to the lack of filtering and purification systems for

the discharges of almost 150 municipalities in Campania that use them as veritable open sewers, which spill directly into the sea, at the center of *Castel Volturno*. The situation has been aggravated by the illegal disposal of waste by *Camorra groups* in the countryside behind the coastline, and by the growing presence of organized crime, including the *Nigerian Mafia*, which has had a devastating impact on local communities and the environment[19].

What has most affected and destroyed the littoral's environmental resources has been the uncontrolled tourist pressure, the intensification of the anthropic, settlement, infrastructural and productive load on the littoral arch and on the wide plain behind it. The beauty of the landscape, characterized by the pristine sand dunes and dense pine forest by the sea of *Castel Volturno*, became an increasingly popular tourist destination. This phenomenon quickly stimulated a policy of private investment in the area for the construction and management of facilities and services, aimed at enhancing tourism in the area, as provided for in the ministerial development plans of the time. This process has included the construction of tourist-residential complexes such as *Pinetamare*, which, while offering a housing response, has further aggravated the phenomenon of urbanization and intensive land exploitation. Added to this is the abandonment of numerous buildings, which has contributed to the visual and structural degradation of the area, making the redevelopment and recovery of the Domitian coastline increasingly difficult.

Figure 4. Regi Lagni, photograph of the abandoned lake landscape, 2024, Castel Volturno (photograph by the author)

VILLAGGIO COPPOLA-PINETAMARE WASTING RELATIONSHIPS AND DYNAMICS OF DEGRADATION

The urban and social history of *Villaggio Coppola*, in *Castel Volturno*, offers a compelling case study in the contradictions of modernist urban utopias and the unintended consequences of unregulated development along Italy's coastline. A series of settlements similar to the Coppola Pinetamare village have developed along the European coast since the early decades of the 20th century, inspired by the garden-city model of Ebenezer Howard who, together with Patrick Geddes and Lewis Mumford, developed a series of critical reflections on the rebalancing of the relationship between city and countryside[20].

> At the beginning of the 20th century, two great inventions took shape before our eyes: the aeroplane and the garden city, both heralding a new era; the first gave man wings, the second gave him a better home on his return to earth[21].

To analyze the theme of the *ville radieuse* and the garden city[22], it would be necessary to explore the relationship between certain political and social theories and these residential models. In Italy, in particular, the utopia of the garden city was partly realized in the context of seaside tourism.

The initiative was launched by Vincenzo and Cristoforo Coppola, who undertook the construction of the village without proper urban planning permissions. Inspired by the contemporaneous development of *Baia Domizia*, a foundation town promoted by the municipality of Sessa Aurunca following a national design competition, *Villaggio Coppola* was likewise structured around garden city ideals. It featured wide avenues, residential villas, apartment blocks, commercial spaces, and recreational facilities, all surrounded by a coastal pine forest that, theoretically, preserved the ecological essence of the site[23]. The project drew on the principles of the garden city, as interpreted in the Italian context, to provide a self-contained, low-density[24] settlement for the upper and middle classes (fig. 5). The aim was to present an alternative to the chaos of urban life, an enclave of comfort, safety, and leisure, buffered by nature and equipped with cutting-edge amenities[25].

Figura 5. View of the Domitian coastline at the level of Villaggio Coppola, 2024, from Google Earth

However, from the outset, the development was marred by significant legal and planning irregularities; in 1962, without any authorization, eight towers of twelve floors each were built, intended to be rented for 20 years to the United States Navy and were later demolished after 30 years. This complex became

the heart of *Villaggio Coppola*: a town for 15,000 people, extended for 4 km of coastline, with 1,300 parking spaces, villas, shopping centers, swimming pools, restaurants, a harbor, a church, post offices, cinemas, and a police station, all without any urban planning regulations. In the context of rapidly expanding beach tourism, the location became a destination for second homes for wealthy Neapolitan families, hosting up to 200,000 vacationers in the early '70s, without any official authorization or infrastructure (fig. 6).

Figure 6. Postcard - Coppola Pinetamare - Castel Volturno (Caserta) - 1972

The tourist development of the coastline excluded the local population, which still lived in great hardship, with most residents forced to live in dilapidated homes without running water or electricity; a stark contrast between the wealth of tourism and the poverty of the local residents, encapsulated in a surreal and dystopian scenario[26].

Initially conceived as a seaside retreat and a temporary escape, at the beginning of the 1980s, the Village had lost its appeal as a destination for vacationers and a sunny getaway for middle-class citizens seeking a second residence outside the city. The causes of this failure stem not only from intrinsic factors dating back to the village's foundation, but also from the gradual decline in the sustainability of its intended function as a holiday and/or second home destination[27]. Between 1978 and 1988, over 5,000 people were housed in Villaggio Coppola, while another 20,000 sought refuges in other tourist complexes along the coastline. In the second half of the 1980s, the return of those displaced by the Irpinia earthquake to their homes coincided with the arrival of migrants to the coastline, even before the promulgation of the first measures to manage and control migration flows in Italy. Employed in street vending in the underground counterfeit industry, but equally intensely involved in the much more invisible turnover of local seasonal agricultural labor in neighboring areas[28].

Meanwhile, the Coppola family's ties to organized crime and the increase in environmental pressures led to an intervention by the institutions. In 1995, following a decree from the mayor of Castel Volturno, part of the village was confiscated, and in 2000 the Coppola brothers were accused of environmental and urban damage, including the disappearance of 150 species and the construction of over 5,000 illegal buildings. The eight towers, symbols of the village, were demolished between 2001 and 2003, marking the end of an era for Pinetamare (figg. 7 and 8).

Figures 7 and 8. Coppola Pinetamare Village, demolition of the towers, available on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-h4RkPnUEsg&t=7s

Over the following years, the area became one of the emblematic sites of urban decay, not only due to the problem of numerous abandoned or partially destroyed houses in Castel Volturno but also, and most importantly, due to the lack of services for the population living in those areas, urban services that need to meet the needs of a changed population[29].

At the heart of this process, marginality emerges not only as a result of an urban phenomenon but also as a condition that influences the daily lives of both the local inhabitants and the migrants who found space in a context marked by abandonment, illegality, and precariousness. Much of the services and facilities intended for migrants in Castel Volturno remain invisible from the outside, manifesting as a network of activities, exchanges, and small informal trades that have rooted over time. These spaces, born through various migratory cycles, sustain a small-scale informal economy, which not only meets daily needs but also provides communal support for the reproduction of migration. The presence of structures and fellow nationals, not only offers a sense of familiarity but also becomes a "protective shield" against administrative irregularities, a kind of rescue oasis for migrants. The Villaggio Coppola, between its lights and shadows, stands as an emblematic case of urban and social transformation, where contradictions between ambition, illegality, and sustainability intertwine, leaving an indelible mark on the Italian architectural and urban landscape.

Today, *Villaggio Coppola* presents itself as a fragmented and dystopian landscape, a spectral mosaic of abandoned factories, decaying hotels, and crumbling residential blocks (fig.9). It embodies the breakdown of dialogue between the settlement and public institutions, and it remains suspended in an unresolved tension between speculative illegality and the remnants of a failed utopian vision[30].
This trajectory mirrors broader patterns found in other planned settlements, such as Kangbashi in Inner Mongolia, originally envisioned as a prestigious new district of the city of Ordos, where ambitious urban visions, conceived as symbols of progress and modernity, were ultimately undermined by a lack of social integration, contextual sensitivity, and grounded territorial engagement. In this light, Villaggio Coppola becomes not merely a failed tourist experiment, but a spatial artifact of the contradictions between modernist planning, speculative development, and the socio-political dynamics of marginality (fig.10).

Figure 9. Coppola-Pinetamare Village, photograph of the abandoned building complex, 2024, Castel Volturno (photograph by the author)
Figure 10. Coppola-Pinetamare Village, 2024, Castel Volturno (photograph by the author)

REFRAMING MARGINS: A PROJECTIVE READING OF PERIPHERAL TERRITORIES

This paper proposes a critical and constructive re-reading of marginal territories, understood not as residual or discarded spaces, but as places imbued with latent potential, capable of generating new forms of belonging, landscape, and identity. The area of Villaggio Coppola-Pinetamare offers a complex and intricate reflection on the dynamics of marginality and urban transformation related to seaside tourism and uncontrolled urbanization. This territory reveals a landscape suspended[31] in a state of tension, marked by contradiction and ambivalence, between natural richness and unfinished urbanization, institutional abandonment and informal occupation, ecological potential and socioeconomic fragility.

This dynamic has been increased by uncontrolled expansion and the rapid alternation of the life cycle of built structures (construction/exploitation/crisis/obsolescence/abandonment), factors that have contributed significantly to the progressive decline of both the village and the broader Domitian coast, underscoring the urgent need for a rethinking of marginality not as a symptom to be erased, but as a condition from which alternative urban futures might emerge. This transformation highlights the cyclical and contradictory nature of such planned communities: from exclusive retreat to spatial marginality, reflecting broader dynamics of urban fragmentation and social segregation. This demonstrates that for an urban agglomeration to function effectively as a city, it must embrace diversity, encompassing different social classes, varied uses, and cultural practices. Much like an individual, the city thrives on diversity, as it fosters growth, development, adaptability, and continual improvement.

As Michel Foucault suggested in his reflections on heterotopias, seemingly marginal places can function as critical and reflective spaces, capable of challenging dominant spatial paradigms and opening up alternative urban imaginaries. On the Domitian coastline, the coexistence of exceptional environmental and cultural assets intersects with a deeply fragmented urban and social condition. In this context, marginality is not merely the outcome of failed planning or speculative development, but rather emerges as a complex dispositif that shapes the everyday experience of both long-term residents and migrants living within these informal and often precarious geographies. Socio-ecological practices that reactivate collective systems and strengthen social relationships through the shared management of resources and communities are gaining increasing attention in contemporary architectural practice[32]. These approaches inspire design experiments aimed at reconnecting with nature, redesigning the commons and reinforcing the social fabric, with the aim of countering territorial, political and social discrimination. The need for their recovery stems from their increasing prevalence in contemporary urban and rural contexts, as they inhabit distinct dimensions of time and space.

The ecological element can be one of the key strengths to build upon for the process of re-signification, consisting, for example, of a rich network of aquatic systems - rivers, reservoirs, marshes, and bogs - that sustain habitats of significant biological and ecological importance. The Domitian coastline includes three main hydrographic basins, the *Garigliano, Volturno* and *Regi Lagni*, and also serves as the recipient for other minor watercourses, such as the River *Savone*, the *Agnena Canal*, the *Camaldoli* riverbed and the outflow of the Lake Patria basin. In 2005 in recognition of this richness, the Campania Region established Special Protection Areas (SPAs) and Sites of Community

Importance (SCIs) to protect these places of great ecological value. The *Licola-Foce del Volturno* coast nature reserve, which covers most of the Domitian coastline, is flanked by the *Variconi Nature Reserve*, established by the Campania Region with Regional Law no. 33/93 and represents the last and only natural wetland area left in Campania.
This natural heritage is also overlaid with a cultural heritage consisting of architectural artefacts such as the tower of Patria, the archaeological remains of ancient *Liternum,* which, together with the remains of ancient *Volturnum*, testify to the presence of anthropic presidio activities at the hydrographical structures of the Volturno estuary and Lake Patria[33].

The diagnostic work conducted in this area shows how a careful reading of both material and immaterial territorial layers, historic cartographies, satellite imagery, settlement patterns, and cultural traces, makes it possible to outline design strategies grounded in the endogenous potential of place. In this perspective, marginality is no longer seen as a deficit to be filled or eliminated, but rather as a generative condition, capable of shaping a renewed vision of urbanity, based not on the erasure of the past but on its critical reinterpretation.

In this context, design must begin from the notion of the limit, not as a line of separation, but rather as a dynamic threshold, a space of mediation between territories, temporalities, and identities. It is precisely in these transitional zones that opportunities arise to activate processes of physical, symbolic, and social regeneration. A multidisciplinary design approach, integrating territorial, ecological, sociological, and architectural perspectives, can reveal hidden values, submerged narratives, and latent resources, from which to construct scenarios of redemption and reactivation.

> With the term *non-place*, we are referring to two complementary yet distinct realities: those spaces created for specific purposes (transportation, transit, commerce, leisure) and the relationship that individuals have with these spaces. [...] While anthropological places create an organic social structure, nonplaces create solitary contractual relationships[34].

The heterotopia of this place, a real yet simultaneously unreal space, stands as a witness to an urban dream that was never fully realized but has left indelible traces in the collective imagination, creating a landscape that challenges conventions and continues to tell a story of marginality and disillusionment. A sort of utopia, imagined by the Coppola brothers, realized with actual buildings but ultimately creating a place that exists outside of any place; a place that is absolutely real, connected to all the surrounding space, yet simultaneously completely unreal, as it is a relic of a history that no longer belongs to us. In conclusion, rethinking marginality as a resource entails a profound paradigm shift, one that transcends conventional notions of urban regeneration. It requires the acknowledgement of these spaces as possessing transformative capacity: not as "other" places to be normalized, but as territories *in becoming*, bearers of yet-unrealized ecological, social, and projective potential.

NOTES

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TRACING MARGINALIZED HISTORIES IN PALMA DE MALLORCA'S URBAN FABRIC *THE WALL ON CARRER DEL VENT*

By Amalya Feldman (University of Toronto)

ABSTRACT

On a small side street in Palma de Mallorca's medieval quarter a groove is carved into an ancient wall at hand height. Some residents of Palma repeat local lore that this groove was carved by the memorializing act of passing one's hand over the stones while traversing the forty-six-meter-long street.

Since the sixteenth century, this wall has served as the western enclosure of the Jesuit church in Palma, but it was originally the facade of the main synagogue of the Jewish quarter. In 1392, the synagogue was confiscated and converted into a church, leaving only this wall intact. However, this site was not eclipsed from Jewish memory. For six centuries, the Jewish and *converso* (Jewish-Christian converts) communities continuously engaged with the wall, using it as a tactile memorial to a lost past and an uncertain future.

The wall retains the evidence of various building campaigns reflecting the changing functions of this building as it oscillated between the Jewish and Christian communities of Palma. This wall, hidden down a narrow side street and mostly a fragment of a tangled building history between religious groups on the island, reveals how architecture and urban space play pivotal roles in shaping cultural identity and heritage.

It is representative of a type of structure that has long been ignored by architectural historians in favor of more monumental buildings. This paper proposes an analysis of this wall as a trace of a marginalized group. This study, a part of a larger project on Jewish spaces on Mallorca, draws on Swati Chattopadhyay's theory of small spaces, which illuminate the unseen spaces used by the unseen people in colonial India. By applying theories of memorialization in architecture and culture to the pre-modern world, this study underscores how the haptic engagement with the wall transformed urban space into an active memorial.

The wall's significance extends beyond its local and temporal contexts. It connects a repressed history with its contemporary inheritors - descendants of Jewish converts living in Mallorca, who are still grappling with the ramifications of marginalization. By focusing on small, overlooked spaces and geographies like this wall and Mallorca, we can pose new questions to the monumental buildings and dominant narratives that have traditionally shaped our understanding of early modern cities. This study calls for the re-examination of architectural history through the lens of marginalized spaces. It offers new perspectives on how architecture reflected and constructed social identity and collective memory in the pre-modern world.

TOUCHING MEMORY: ARCHITECTURE AND IDENTITY IN PALMA

In a narrow street in Palma de Mallorca's Jewish quarter, a hand-height groove is etched into a centuries-old wall (fig. 1). Frequently overlooked by passersby, oral history claims that this indentation was formed over generations by hands brushing against the stone in an embodied act of remembrance[1]. The wall, now part of the Jesuit Colegio Nuestra Señora de Montesión (fig. 2), once formed the western facade of Palma's main synagogue[2]. Although the Jewish community was extinguished on the island and the synagogue confiscated and permanently converted into a church in the 1390s, this wall on Carrer del Vent remains[3]. Since the 14th century, it has become a site of silent, tactile memorialization for *conversos* – Jewish to Christian converts – and *Xuetes* (pl.; sg. *Xueta*) – the descendants of a small group of *conversos* tried by the Inquisition in the 1670s[4]. These groups' identities remained entangled with this urban space long after official Jewish worship was prohibited[5].

Figure 1. The Wall on Carrer del Vent (photograph by author)

Figure 2. Colegio Nuestra Señora de Montesión, view from Carrer del Call with Carrer del Vent to the right (photograph by author)

The wall, which runs the length of Carrer del Vent, is a palimpsest of collective memory and cultural identity, serving as a microcosm of the tensions between hegemony and resilience, marginalization and survival. By examining its physical traces – layered stonework, haptic wear, and urban positioning – alongside the social practices it shaped, this wall reveals how modest urban spaces can mediate memory and identity in contexts of persecution.

Architectural history has long privileged monumental forms, sacred typologies, and elite patronage, yet recent work redirects attention toward ephemeral, everyday marginal spaces[6]. Swati Chattopadhyay's theory of "small spaces" foregrounds the significance of ordinary environments in shaping social relations, particularly under colonial or oppressive regimes[7]. While this study of the wall shares affinities with microhistorical approaches, it moves beyond narrative scale to engage the spatial and architectural dimensions of marginality[8]. By focusing on urban form, material traces, and embodied spatial practices, it offers a model for rethinking how small spaces structure collective memory. As a "small space" with a lasting cultural presence, the wall on Carrer del Vent resists official narratives of urban and religious change, which frame post-1391 conversions as evidence of Jewish disappearance and integration, marginalizing the persistence of Jewish memory within urban space.

Often overlooked in broader studies of Spanish Jewish history and early modern urbanism[9], Mallorca's Jewish and *converso* histories reveal how architecture functioned as both infrastructure and a site of negotiation and remembrance. The Jewish quarter, the *Call*, was both a legally segregated and socially charged zone (fig. 3)[10]. Its physical reconfigurations mirrored the political and religious pressures exerted upon its inhabitants. This study centers on a minor structure in a peripheral geography to challenge assumptions about where and how architectural meaning is constructed. By

tracing the architectural evolution and afterlives of the wall on Carrer del Vent, this study contributes to ongoing discussions on architectural memory, urban liminality, and the material legacies of marginalized communities in early modern cities.

Figure 3. Antonio Garau, "La Ciutat de Mallorca," 1644, Ink on paper, 24 x 32 in, Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (artwork in the public domain; Yale University Library)

THE CALL: DISRUPTION, SURVIVAL, AND SPATIAL CONTINUITY

The *Call* served as a vibrant node in the city's social, economic, and religious networks. Imprinted on the urban fabric of Palma is a complex history of coexistence and rupture between its Jewish and Christian inhabitants. First formally organized by the Crown of Aragon in the late 13th century, the *Call* was shaped by royal charters that simultaneously protected and constrained the Jewish population[11]. The Crown of Aragon's shifting attitude towards the Jewish community reflected the desire to protect the Christian population in an urban context. Jews were viewed as social and spiritual pollution that endangered the purity of the *Corpus Christianorum*[12]. Initially located between the Almudaina Palace (fig. 4) and the port, the *Call* was strategically embedded in a district where it was encircled by Christian institutions that asserted surveillance and control over Jewish life (fig. 5). Delimiting Jewish urban space enforced the subjugation of the Jewish population that was a necessary facet of Christian hegemony and reminded the Jews that their survival depended on royal favor.

Figure 4. Almudaina Palace, Palma di Mallorca, south facade (photograph by the author)

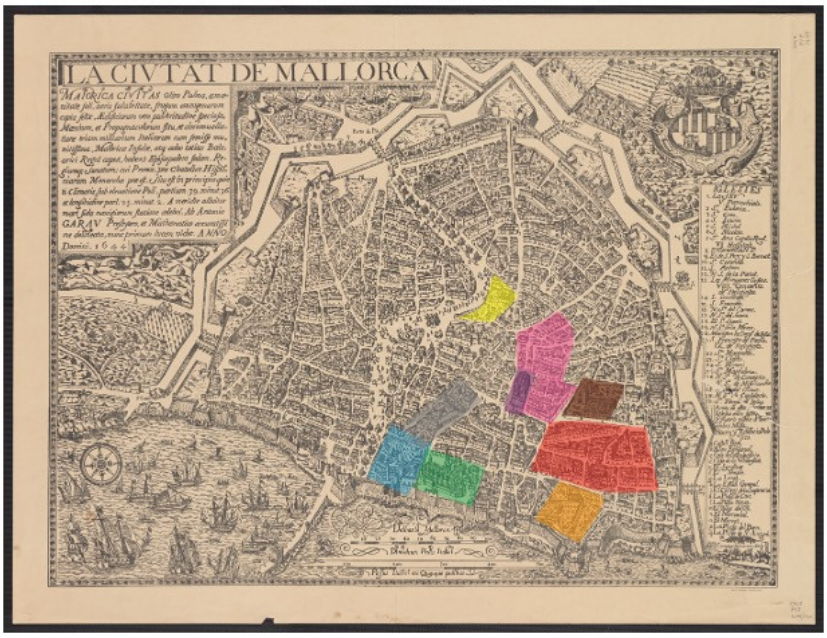

Figure 5. Antonio Garau, "La Ciutat de Mallorca," 1644. Ink on paper, 24 x 32 in. Colored overlays highlighting the Almudaina Palace (blue), the Cathedral (green), the Dominican Monastery (grey), the Casa Negra (yellow), the Call menor (pink), the Church of Santa Eulalia (purple), the Franciscan monastery (brown), the Call major (red), and the Convent of Santa Clara (orange). Courtesy of Yale University Library. Scan: Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library (artwork in the public domain; Yale University Library), overlay by the author

The *Sinagoga major* (Main Synagogue), a central institution for religious worship, education, and communal justice and administration, stood at the heart of the *Call*. This synagogue was the symbolic and functional core of Palma's Jewish community. Its confiscation and conversion following the anti-Jewish uprisings in 1391 represented a violent rupture in the continuity of Jewish urban life. The attacks of 1391, part of a wave of violence that swept across the Iberian Peninsula[13], culminated in the forced baptism of hundreds

of Jews in Mallorca, creating a new social group of *conversos*[14].
Though Christian by name, *conversos* in Mallorca remained physically and culturally tied to the *Call*. The 1391 uprising and its aftermath marked a profound reconfiguration of Palma's urban and social landscape. The Jewish *aljama* – the legally recognized, semi-autonomous governing body of the Jewish community – was effectively dismantled[15]. The Crown issued edicts to integrate the newly baptized *conversos* into Christian society, but the mass scale and coercive nature of the conversions generated widespread suspicion within Old Christian society[16]. This spatial continuity destabilized the Christian desire for clear social boundaries, as former Jews continued to inhabit, walk, and touch the same spaces they had before baptism[17]. While forced conversions occurred throughout the Iberian Peninsula in the 14th and 15th centuries, the case of Mallorca is distinct[18]. Nowhere else did an endogamous community like the *Xuetes* develop – descendants of Jewish converts who maintained internal cohesion and were externally marked for exclusion well into the modern era[19]. This outcome reflects some of the standard forms of Iberian religious persecution but adds the distinct dimensions of a deep entwinement of spatial segregation, social memory, and urban visibility[20].

Carrer del Vent bordered the western wall of the *Sinagoga major* and became a focal point for this uneasy continuity. The building itself, repurposed into a Christian chapel before becoming the Jesuit church, bore the architectural scars of its layered past[21]. The wall on Carrer del Vent retained elements of the original synagogue's stonework – subtle, but enduring markers of the space's Jewish identity. Even after Christian authorities sought to erase Jewish presence from the city, these architectural remnants provided a tangible link to a disappeared community.
The act of touching the synagogue wall – a gesture that may have originated in patterns of Jewish ritual–became a haptic form of memory, allowing *conversos* to assert an embodied connection to their past. The *converso* community, caught between two religious and cultural worlds, engaged with these spaces in ways that re-inscribed meaning onto the urban environment[22]. As time passed from the initial rupture of the building's Jewish functions, these informal practices took on heightened symbolic significance. They transformed marginal urban sites into loci of memory and identity, resisting the attempted erasure of Jewish presence from Palma's built environment. This building was more than a vestige of Jewish life from before 1391; it was a silent participant in the unfolding drama of *converso* identity, persecution, and survival. The historical evolution of the *Call* and the spatial politics surrounding the synagogue's confiscation help to understand the significance of the wall on Carrer del Vent to eight centuries of *converso* descendants living in Palma. As a site where memory was enacted through everyday gestures, the wall demonstrates how the Jewish past of Mallorca endured – not in official records or grand monuments, but in the margins, carved into stone and carried in the touch of a hand.

TRACING URBAN TRANSFORMATION THROUGH LAYERED STONES

The wall along Carrer del Vent appears at first glance to be an unremarkable architectural element in the city, overshadowed by the baroque portal on the north facade of the Jesuit church (fig. 6). Through a combination of morphological features, historical layering, and embedded memory practices, this micro-space functions as both a remnant of a lost communal center and a living site of memorialization.

Figure 6. Iglesia de Monti-Sion de Palma, north facade with baroque portal (photograph by author)

The eastern wall of Carrer del Vent reveals four distinct visible construction seams – vertical divisions that mark changes in masonry technique, stone size, and finish (fig. 7). These seams are not zones in a zoning sense, but architectural markers of successive building phases. Having a religious edifice that was expanded through successive building campaigns is not unusual, but the expansions to this building were significant because they marked out, in stone, the metamorphosis of this site and its attendant community.

Figure 7. The Eastern Wall on Carrer del Vent with colored demarcations of the construction seams separating the different zones of stonework, Palma de Mallorca (photograph and overlay by the author)

At approximately 75 centimetres above ground level, a horizontal groove runs across portions of the wall. It is particularly visible in the older masonry of zones two and three and becomes less distinct in the later construction of zones one and four (fig. 8). This groove, located at the height of a passing hand, is not the result of vehicular erosion or environmental wear – no such marks exist on similar streets in Palma's Gothic quarter. Instead, its location and uniformity suggest that it is the product of repeated tactile engagement. The *Xuetes'* oral tradition holds that this indentation was made by hands passing over the stones of the original synagogue portions of the wall. Over centuries, hands traced this wall in silent gestures of remembrance, embedding identity into the stone itself.

Figure 8. Groove in the Wall on Carrer del Vent, depicted bridging zones two and three (photograph by author)

In the aftermath of the 1391 uprisings, the loss of this building to the remnants of the Jewish community had various ramifications, including unhinging the community from this central node for the performance of Jewish religious and cultural identity in Palma as well as amplifying the sense of threat to Jewish life on the island[23]. The decentralization of communal identity that resulted from the confiscation of the *Sinagoga major* would not force this site to be eclipsed from the identity of the inhabitants of the *Call*. The Jews and their *converso* descendants in Palma would continue exploring the importance of this site to their cultural heritage as a memorial to the destabilization of a vibrant history.

This groove may be understood as a haptic memorial practice. Its very location – at the height of a passing hand – echoes Jewish tactile ritual traditions of remembrance, particularly the *mezuzah* (fig. 9). These historic, tactile forms of commemoration provided a model for the tactile form of commemoration that would occur at the site of the *Sinagoga major* from the end of the 14th century. The *mezuzah*, a small case containing sacred text placed on Jewish doorposts, functions as both a physical and spiritual threshold, linking faith and physical space. The positive obligation (*mitzvah*) of placing a *mezuzah* on the door posts of a Jewish home is explicitly stated in Deuteronomy[24]. The *mezuzah* refers both to the container and to the parchment on which a scribe records the words of the first two paragraphs of the *Shema*, the most famous and powerful Jewish prayer, which includes the commandment of the *mezuzah*. The symbolism of the *mezuzah*, however, extends further back in time to the Exodus from Egypt, and serves as a reminder of the covenant between God and

the Jewish people as well as a marker of God's promised protection over Jewish homes[25].

Figure 9. Contemporary Mezuzah Case and Scroll (Art Directors. & TRIP / Alamy Stock Photo)

Touching the *mezuzah* when passing through a doorway is a gesture of continuity, memory, and divine protection[26]. When the synagogue was violently taken from its community, the wall remained, and it became, in a sense, a secularized *mezuzah* – a site of ritualized touch, where memory was enacted in passing rather than proclaimed in stone or liturgy. While the practice of touching the *mezuzah* was codified in Jewish law and ritual, the touch of the wall was improvised, unsanctioned, and anonymous, creating a tacit micro-memory embedded in the body and activated through repeated action[27].

The wall functioned as a living threshold between a Jewish past and Christian present. Early modern Mediterranean cities were navigated as sensorial environments where belonging was shaped as much by touch, smell, and sound as by law and social ritual[28]. As a form of tacit memory, the silent, habitual, and generational commemorative gesture performed on Carrer del Vent preserved meaning in this space too marginal for official recognition[29]. Here, memory is preserved as erosion instead of inscription forming a tactile archive that transmits a history of perseverance rendered too dangerous to articulate in words.

The power of the wall lies in its material continuity and in its capacity to act as a palimpsest of identities. The wall does not erase its past lives, it overlays them. Each successive expansion altered the physical structure of the wall and

transformed its interaction with the immediate urban fabric, reconfiguring its relationship to neighboring structures, pathways, and public spaces. These changes impacted how the wall shaped patterns of movement, visibility, and access within its vicinity. As a palimpsest, the wall reveals the intertwined histories of architectural adaptation and urban development while offering a lens to study how spaces are continually redefined in response to social, economic, and cultural shifts.

The wall's endurance as a site of informal remembrance reveals the cultural strategies by which marginalized groups reclaim space. This wall is a testament to the shifting dynamics of power and control over urban space. The exterior of the building remained a complex and contested space, as its visibility and interaction with the surrounding urban environment could not be as easily controlled. Passersby would have continued to engage with the wall in ways that were shaped by their own experiences and memories of the site, creating layers of meaning that resisted hegemonic control. The wall's presence in the public realm meant that it remained a site of visual and tactile interaction, with its materiality and form carrying symbolic weight that extended beyond its intended function. The wall became a microcosm of the tensions between authority and agency in urban life, encapsulating the interplay between imposed structures of power and the resilient, often subtle acts of individual and communal engagement with public spaces. The wall, unadorned and uncelebrated, stands as a rare example of architectural memory sedimented across political and spiritual orders.

The wall demands that we read urban space through the persistent, embodied practices of those whom the official record attempts to forget. What was once a vibrant hub became a subversive site of remembrance activated by gesture, presence, and oral transmission instead of by monuments or plaques. The oral history told by descendants of the *converso* community recounts how their ancestors taught them to engage with the space of the wall as a way of maintaining a tactile connection to the suppressed communal identity of Mallorca's Jews.

Oral history provides a critical methodological approach to historical inquiry by centering lived experiences, foregrounding personal narratives, and challenging dominant historiographical paradigms. These stories are shaped by the contexts in which they are collected and disseminated, revealing individual memories and the broader structures that frame them[30], functioning as a form of civic engagement through the active participation of lay people in the construction and transmission of historical narratives[31]. Oral history is not a transparent window into the past but a layered and subjective form of memory, revealing what people remember and how individuals and communities make meaning from those memories[32]. Testimony, one form of oral history, is not simply the recounting of events but a process through which traumatic memories are first constituted. In the absence of formal recognition or public mourning, oral narratives often serve as the only possible site of witnessing[33]. This study treats oral narratives not as empirical evidence to be verified, but as expressions of cultural memory shaped by silences, repetitions, and emotional investment. This reinforces the idea that history is not merely an academic discipline, but a practice embedded in communal identity formation and dissemination[34].

For architectural history, oral histories play a crucial role in uncovering how individuals navigate spaces shaped by loss, marginalization, and displacement [35]. Oral accounts can illuminate the social meanings of spaces, particularly in contexts where official records are sparse or deliberately silencing[36]. Testimony is about giving form – however fragmentary – to historical trauma[37] . By integrating oral histories, architectural historians can more fully account for the ways spaces are inhabited, contested, and remembered, enriching

understandings of the built environment beyond its material form.

The oral traditions surrounding the wall on Carrer del Vent emerge from a long history of Jewish presence on Mallorca, carrying with them layers of memory that continue to shape historical understanding. In this study, oral traditions surrounding the wall on Carrer del Vent are understood as cultural memory practices – selective, emotionally charged, and shaped by the needs of the present as much as by the past. *Converso* oral history reveals that the past is not static; it is continuously reinterpreted through the lens of the present, shaped by contemporary concerns, identities, and absences. The physical remnants of the wall hold within them traces of past lives, yet these traces are activated in different ways depending on who engages with the wall and under what circumstances. The very act of storytelling – whether through oral tradition, communal memory, or scholarly inquiry – mediates how this architectural fragment is understood, reinforcing the idea that spaces of displacement are imbued with histories that are actively imagined and reshaped[38]. Oral histories reveal the dynamic relationship between built space and the evolving narratives that sustain it.

SMALL SPACES, LONG MEMORIES: RETHINKING MARGINALITY IN EARLY MODERN CITIES

The Jewish, *converso*, and *Xueta* communities have told a story about the importance of this wall since the 14th century, demonstrating that a part of the self-proclaimed cultural identity of the *conversos* from the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries and the *Xuetes* from the 1670s on was tied to the memory of their Jewish ancestors. By passing their hands over the wall's stones, the *conversos* created a tactile link to a Jewish past and cultural identity – an act of claiming space through memory that echoed the mezuzah tradition.

The Jewish community of the 13th and 14th centuries would have used the space of Carrer del Vent multiple times a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. It was a key node within the network of Jewish spaces in the city across its multiple iterations. It was lived in through the practice of Jewish rituals, social events, educational functions, and juridical proclamations, all of which contributed to this site living within the identity of the community[39]. When this lived space was forcibly removed from the community, the adjacent urban space maintained the lived space's cultural functions. Andreas Huyssen describes how urban spaces can be interpreted as "lived spaces that shape collective imaginaries"[40]. Carrer del Vent carried on as a lived space within the converso community, and it played a role in shaping their collective identity and memory[41].

By walking down Carrer del Vent, the remaining members of the Jewish community in the 15th century, the *conversos*, and the *Xuetes* claimed this space as their own for the duration of their presence on the street, which was reinforced by the act of touching the wall. Michel de Certeau expresses how

> the act of walking [...] is a process of appropriation of the topographical system on the part of the pedestrian[42].

The performance of this *converso* act of commemoration, rather than simply walking down the street, demonstrates how memory "is not a thing but a practice"[43]. This memory practice permitted the claiming and reclaiming of

this urban space as a Jewish space throughout the centuries, in a way that would create a complex and seemingly obtuse cultural identity for the *conversos* as seen by the Old Christian population of Mallorca.
In its modest scale, ambiguous form, and peripheral location, the wall on Carrer del Vent epitomizes what Swati Chattopadhyay has termed a "small space" – a space defined by its role in the everyday negotiation of identity, power, and memory not by monumental presence or institutional authority. Although developed in the context of colonial South Asia, this framework offers a useful lens for reading spatial marginality in contexts where religious minorities occupied ambiguous and shifting positions within the urban order in early modern European cities. In Palma, minority communities inhabited and inscribed meaning onto marginal urban sites to navigate shifting expectations of visibility amid religious and political pressures. This study acknowledges the differences in historical and political contexts but finds in Chattopadhyay's work a valuable method for examining how space mediates memory and power at the edges of urban life.
The groove carved into the wall through generations of touch is a form of counter-hegemonic memory. The wall's resistance to forgetting challenges dominant historical narratives that seek closure through conversion, erasure, or silence. Generations of *conversos* and *Xuetes* marked the wall with their presence, preserving a communal link to a violently disrupted past through gestures that eluded official scrutiny but held deep cultural meaning.

While the wall's significance emerges through the smallness of gesture and place, this work does not seek to aestheticize the ordinary for its own sake. The architectural significance of this wall lies in its sustained presence in everyday life. The aesthetics of the ordinary – when framed by ritual, memory, or repetition – can convey profound cultural meaning[44]. Treating every trace of use as inherently meaningful–i.e., over-aestheticizing the everyday–risks flattening nuance, turning ordinary gestures into curated symbols and emptying them of their lived specificity[45]. This study acknowledges that risk but argues that the groove on Carrer del Vent resists fetishization. Its meaning arises not from being curated, but from its entanglement with lived memory and intergenerational practice. The wall is not beautiful in any conventional sense, and it does not stand out from its surroundings–it blends into them. Its resonance comes from the accumulated gestures that have shaped it, participating in the poetics of everyday space–where memory takes root through use[46].
These practices reveal how architectural memory operates beyond the monumental. Small, often-overlooked spaces can become charged sites where collective memory is performed, adapted, and transmitted across generations – particularly for communities denied access to official modes of commemoration or the right to commemorate an excised past because it subverts the narrative of puritanical histories. As a memorial, the wall's resonance extends beyond its local and temporal contexts. It stands as a connective thread between a repressed medieval history and its contemporary inheritors – *Xueta* descendants still grappling with questions of identity, belonging, and historical injustice. By centering the wall and by listening to oral histories alongside analysing material traces, different aspects of architecture's participation in shaping the historical consciousness emerge to the forefront of urban histories.

NOTES

[1] These stories were recounted to me by descendants of *Xuetes* living on Mallorca. The wall on Carrer del Vent and the oral histories have not previously been considered in academic study. These oral histories were gathered between 2022 and 2024 through informal conversations with twenty-one descendants of *Xueta* families in Mallorca. These were not structured interviews, but recurrent exchanges during social gatherings and site visits, often accompanied by gestures indicating the groove in the wall. I acknowledge my positionality as both observer and interlocutor in these memory practices. **[2]** Bernat i Roca, Margalida. 2005. *El call de la ciutat de Mallorca: a l'entorn de 1350*. Palma: Lleonard Muntaner, 22-35. The 17th-century historian, Vincent Mut relays the story of the final conversion of the island's Jews, but did not cite any sources (Mut, *Historia General de Mallorca*, 384-390). Gabriel Cortès i Cortès has traced the details of this story to a "memoria" of the period that was kept in the episcopal court and subsequently copied by Benet Espanyol in his *Historia de la Sancta Fide Catolica*, versions of which were kept in the oratory of Santa Fe and the guild of skinners (Cortès, *Historia de los judíos*, 95-96). According to Mut, the *jurats* enforced the baptism of the remaining Jews on the island after a ritual murder trial, of which the small Jewish community was found guilty. Given the lack of archival documentation relating to the Jewish and converso communities from the period between 1416-1435, it is not possible to determine the series of events that took place leading up to the eventual demise of the Jewish community of Mallorca through the forced baptisms of 1435. **[3]** ARM (Mallorca, Arxiu del Regne de Mallorca) Reial Patrimoni (RP) 2048: 19r-22v (October 10, 1391); ARM, Arxiu Historic (AH), Lettres Reiales (LR) 39: 103r-v (July 7, 1392). **[4]** AHN (Madrid, Archivo Histórico Nacional) Inquisición de Mallorca, Leg. 1715, numero 5; Leg. 1709, numero 1, pieza 3. **[5]** Scholars have long grappled with the complexities of *converso* identity, resulting in a large and often disputed body of work. For general overviews see: Roth, Norman. 1995. "Appendix A: Critical Survey of the Literature." In *Conversos, Inquisition, and the Expulsion of the Jews from Spain*. 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The history of the *Xuetes* appears as the subject of a group of works from the second half of the 20th century including, Forteza i Cortès, Miquel. 1968. *Els Xuetes: Sa gent de sa Calle*. Mallorca: Editorial Moll; Braunstein, Baruch. 1973. *The Chuetas of Majorca: Conversos and the Inquisition of Majorca*. New York: Ktav Pub. House; Moore, Kenneth. 1976. *Those of the Street: The Catholic Jews of Mallorca a Study in Urban Cultural Change*. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press; Selke, Angela. 1986. *The Conversos of Majorca: Life and Death in a Crypto-Jewish Community in XVII Century Spain*, translated by Henry J. Maxwell. Jerusalem: Magnes Press. **[10]** Régné, Jean, Assis, Yom Tov, and Adam Gruzman, eds. 1978. *History of the Jews in Aragon: Regesta and Documents, 1213-1327*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 399, nos. 2267, 2268, 2271. **[11]** Sarasa Sánchez, Esteban, ed. 2009. *La Sociedad en Aragón y Cataluña en el Reinado de Jaime I, 1213-1276*. 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De Mallorca, Leg. 1709, No. 1, pieza 3, "Testificaciones contra los descendientes de judíos que están en la Call del Sagel; y [contra] Augustín Cortés y otros de dicha Calle, por observancias judaycas. (1674)". **[18]** Baer. 1978. *A History of the Jews in Christian Spain*, vol. 2, trans. Louis Schoffman. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America. **[19]** Moore, Kenneth. 1976. *Those of the Street: The Catholic-Jews of Mallorca*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press. **[20]** Baer. 1978. Op. cit.; Roth, Norman. 1995. Op. cit.; Netanyahu, Benzion. 1997. *Toward the Inquisition: Essays on Jewish and Converso History in Late Medieval Spain*. Ithaca: Cornell UP; Assis, Yom Tov. 1998. T*he Jews of Spain: From Settlement to Expulsion*. Jerusalem: The Rothberg School for Overseas Students and Dor Hemshech. **[21]** The *Sinagoga major* was confiscated in c. 1315 after the purported conversion of two German Christians to Judaism by the community of Mallorca (Alvaro Santmara, "Sobre el antisemitismo en Mallorca anterior al "pogrom" de 1391," *Mayurqa* 17 (1977-78): 49, citing Vincent Mut). The synagogue was converted into the Chapel of Santa Fide before being returned to the Jewish community to be used as a school ("*scola*") in 1324. Pons i Pastor, Antoni. 1949. *Libre del Mosaeff de Mallorca*, vol. 2. Palma: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Cientificas, no. 88,, 271; Bernat i Roca, Margalida. 2005. Op. cit., 24. **[22]** Selke, Angela. 1986. Op. cit. **[23]** Bernat i Roca, Margalida. 2005. Op. cit., 22. **[24]** Deuteronomy, 6:1-2, 9; Babylonian Talmud, Tractate Yoma 10a-12a. **[25]** Exodus, 11:1-12:33; Cohn, Yehudah B. 2012. "Mezuzah," *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*. 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ALAMI FARM SCHOOL: *REGENERATIVE PEDAGOGY AND ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE IN THE LANDSCAPE OF DISPLACEMENT*

By Teresa Serrano Avilés (University of East London)

ABSTRACT

The Alami Farm School, founded in 1949 in Jericho by Palestinian leader Musa Alami, was an agricultural school that served as both a refuge and an educational institution for Palestinian refugee children displaced by the Nakba—the mass displacement of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. Transforming the arid land of the Jordan Valley—then part of Palestine under Jordanian administration—into a thriving agricultural and educational environment, the Alami Farm School modelled a regenerative approach to the impermanent, aid-dependent structures of typical refugee camps. Refugees at the school actively participated in land restoration, developing skills in sustainable farming, water management, and ecological care. This hands-on approach enabled them to reclaim both knowledge and autonomy, embodying a decolonial ethos that positioned them as active participants rather than passive recipients of aid.

Rather than reinforcing dependency, the Alami Farm School empowered students to revitalize their environment, integrating cultural identity with environmental stewardship. Its regenerative model countered extractive systems that had historically depleted resources and disrupted traditional ecological knowledge, instead fostering a self-sustaining relationship with the land. Alami's vision prioritised reintegration and resilience, strengthening both community cohesion and ecological sustainability.

Drawing on newly examined archival materials, this paper examines the architectural, pedagogical, and ecological strategies of the Alami Farm School, highlighting its significance in refugee settlement design.

The school's architecture reflected this philosophy, being constructed from locally sourced materials and designed to serve both educational and agricultural functions. Its structures harmonised with the surrounding landscape, countering colonial legacies of environmental degradation and nurturing a symbiotic connection between people and place.

As climate-driven displacement accelerates globally, the Alami Farm School's approach offers a compelling model for refugee spaces. In a time when displacement is increasingly long-term, the school's legacy challenges contemporary refugee policies, advocating for regenerative, not extractive, refugee settlements that foster autonomy, ecological restoration, and community resilience. Even within the constraints of displacement, the Alami Farm School demonstrates the possibility of cultivating rootedness, resilience,

and sustainable development, presenting a vision for humanitarian architecture in a world facing escalating climate and displacement crises. Its relevance is amplified by contemporary humanitarian and environmental crises.

INTRODUCTION

The Alami Farm School, founded in 1949 by Palestinian leader Musa Alami, represented a remarkable intervention in the aftermath of the *Nakba* – the forced displacement of Palestinians during the 1948 Arab-Israeli War. As over 700,000 Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homes, humanitarian efforts focused on temporary relief rather than long-term solutions. Refugee camps, set up at that time under the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), became spaces of waiting rather than reconstruction, reinforcing aid dependency and political exclusion[1].

In contrast, the Alami Farm School redefined the refugee experience – not as a condition of passivity but as an opportunity for self-sufficiency, environmental restoration, and economic renewal. Situated on two thousand acres of arid land in the Jordan Valley, the school functioned as both an agricultural training centre and a model village, where displaced Palestinian youth could learn to cultivate the land, reclaim economic independence, and envision a self-sufficient future [2,3].

At its core, the school was an experiment in architecture, pedagogy, and resistance, offering a material alternative to the spatial confinement of UNRWA refugee camps. Through regenerative architecture, hands-on agricultural training, and self-reliant communal living, it sought to prove that Palestinian displacement could be transformed into an act of restoration. This paper explores the historical, architectural, and pedagogical significance of the Alami Farm School, positioning it within broader debates on decolonial education, environmental resilience, and the politics of refugee architecture[4,5] (fig. 1).

Figure 1. Residential courtyard. Fundraising leaflet Miracle in the Holy Land, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford

REIMAGINING REFUGE IN A LANDSCAPE OF DISPLACEMENT

The *Nakba* was not only a mass exodus but an act of erasure – a campaign that dismantled Palestinian space and dislocated rural life. Entire villages were destroyed, farmlands seized, and local economies systematically disrupted[6]. The establishment of the State of Israel led to the systematic depopulation of over five hundred Palestinian villages, many of which were transformed into Israeli settlements or military zones[7] (fig. 2).

Figure 2. Map of the 1949 Armistice Agreements between Israel, Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. United Nations Digital Archive, UN Map H212/10/1955

In the wake of this destruction, UNRWA was established to manage the refugee crisis. However, rather than facilitating resettlement or long-term economic independence, UNRWA-administered camps functioned as containment spaces, where refugees received minimal provisions, including

basic rations, makeshift shelters, and limited infrastructure[8]. Though initially intended as temporary relief, this system became a permanent mechanism of statelessness, in which Palestinians remained geographically displaced and politically marginalised (fig. 3).

Musa Alami, one of Palestine's most influential intellectuals, criticised this architecture of dependency. In 1949, he founded the Arab Development Society (ADS), securing Jordanian state backing and international funding to establish a self-sufficient refugee training centre in Jericho. His vision was to create a training centre for Palestinian orphans where modern agriculture would serve as a tool for rehabilitation and renewal. On the outskirts of Jericho, a landscape thought to be agriculturally unviable became a site of pedagogical and ecological experimentation[9,10] (fig. 4).

Figure 3. Aqabat Jaber refugee camp near Jericho, undated. Once home to 45,000 refugees, the camp saw a dramatic decline in population following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) archive

Figure 4. Citrus groves cultivated at the Alami Farm School. Photograph Album The Arab Development Society, Jericho-Jordan, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford (5/1/35)

While radical in its rejection of aid dependency, the ADS was also implicated in the era's developmentalist ethos. It relied on funding from organisations such as the Ford Foundation, Oxfam, and the World Bank – entities often associated with Western agendas of modernisation. This paradox reveals the dual identity of the Alami Farm School – both a radical rejection of refugee dependency and a product of cold war-era development economies[11,12].

ARCHITECTURE AS AGENCY: CONSTRUCTING RESILIENT SPACE

The built environment of the Alami Farm School was central to its pedagogical vision. In contrast to the rigid, grid-like structures of UNRWA camps, which were designed for administrative efficiency rather than autonomy, the school was conceived as a living laboratory for regenerative architecture[13].
Rather than relying on prefabricated shelters or concrete structures with little regard for environmental context, the Alami Farm School's material and spatial choices were deeply intentional. Housing units were constructed from sun-dried mud bricks, produced on-site, which ensured both durability and insulation while symbolically preserving pre-colonial Palestinian construction traditions[14] (fig. 5). The school's architecture blended with the surrounding landscape, mitigating the sense of alienation often associated with prefabricated refugee housing[15]. The spatial arrangement followed vernacular logics, interweaving communal and agricultural functions rather than separating them[16].

Figure 5. Mudbrick preparation by refugee students, 1953. From Bootstrap: The Arab Development Society's Jordan Valley Project (Near East News Association, Beirut, 1953)

Even the site selection – a rocky, arid edge of the Jordan Valley – was significant. It was a deliberate act of reclamation, demonstrating how ecological knowledge and collective labour could rehabilitate “unusable” land [17]. Each housing unit included a small garden cultivated by students, producing food for communal meals and reinforcing principles of cooperative responsibility and sustainability.

Key architectural features of the school reflected its commitment to pedagogy, the environment, and community integration. The locally produced materials reinforced the school's ethos of self-reliance, minimizing dependency on external resources. The classrooms opened directly onto agricultural fields, allowing students to transition between theoretical instruction and hands-on training[18]. Communal living was also central to the school's architectural vision. Collective housing units were deliberately designed to foster social resilience, offering an alternative to the nuclear family model that was more typical of Palestinian village life[19]. Vocational training, such as textile, carpentry or construction workshops, played a key role in equipping students with practical skills to maintain and expand these living spaces (fig. 6). These spaces encouraged cooperation and shared responsibilities, mirroring the broader philosophy of regenerative education and settlement.

Figure 6. Carpentry workshop at the Alami Farm School. Students engaged in woodwork, one of the vocational training programmes offered at the school. Photograph Album The Arab Development Society, Jericho-Jordan, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony’s College, Oxford (5/1/25)

Daily life at the Alami Farm School extended beyond agricultural training and labour – it fostered a sense of belonging and normality. Students swam, cared for animals, and shared meals they helped grow. (figg. 7 and 8). The presence of animals, gardens, and recreational activities underscored the school’s holistic approach to education, in which emotional well-being was valued alongside vocational training. By creating shared experiences and a structured daily rhythm, the school allowed students to grow up as part of a supportive community rather than merely receiving aid[20].

Figure 7. Students are swimming at the Alami Farm School. Photograph Album The Arab Development Society, Jericho-Jordan, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford (5/2/16)
Figure 8. Beekeeping at the Alami Farm School. Beekeeping was part of the agricultural education curriculum. Photograph Album The Arab Development Society, Jericho-Jordan, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford (5/2/27)

The school's irrigation systems not only demonstrated the Jordan Valley's agricultural potential – challenging Western assessments of the region as unviable – but also served as a pedagogical tool where students learned hydrological techniques, soil conservation, and sustainable water management[21] (fig. 9). Housing and learning spaces were not discrete entities but interconnected, ensuring that students were fully immersed in the daily rhythms of land cultivation[22]. Classrooms opened directly onto fields, with movable partitions allowing for seamless transitions between indoor and outdoor learning spaces, reinforcing the integration of theoretical and applied knowledge[23] (fig. 10). Each residential unit, home to ten students, maintained its own garden, where boys cultivated crops together as part of their daily routine[24]. This agricultural engagement extended beyond the practical – through cultivating the land, students developed a deep sense of stewardship, understanding their role not only as learners but as active participants in shaping their environment. The gardens also symbolised a broader philosophy: that displaced communities could sustain themselves through regenerative practices, transforming landscapes while reclaiming agency over their livelihoods[25]. This approach anticipated contemporary biophilic design principles, where built environments are designed to cultivate ecological awareness and engagement[26].

Figure 9. Irrigation system at the Alami Farm School, Jericho. Agricultural fields under sprinkler irrigation, demonstrating land rehabilitation efforts. Photograph Album The Arab Development Society, Jericho -Jordan, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford (5/1/34)
Figure 10. General view of the vocational training centre. Photograph Album The Arab Development Society, Jericho-Jordan, Middle East Centre Archive, St Antony's College, Oxford

The central irrigation system was not merely an infrastructural feature but also a pedagogical tool, where students participated in hydrological experiments, soil conservation techniques, and sustainable water management, acquiring hands-on knowledge crucial for farming in arid conditions[27].

The school's architectural philosophy contrasted with both traditional Palestinian village layouts, which were rooted in kinship networks, and Israeli kibbutzim, which functioned as state-sponsored agrarian collectives. The Alami Farm School occupied an ambiguous position between community-building and developmentalist planning[28].

The philosophy behind the school's spatial design can be understood as a counter-colonial spatial strategy, asserting permanence in the face of enforced displacement. By creating a landscape capable of regenerating itself over time, the school subverted the dominant model of refugee settlements, which typically relied on precarious, short-term shelter solutions[29,30]. In many refugee camps of the time, architecture functioned as an instrument of containment rather than a catalyst for development, reinforcing the notion that displacement was a passive condition to be endured rather than actively overcome. The Alami Farm School rejected this premise, demonstrating that refugee communities could actively shape their environment, reclaiming agency over both built space and agricultural landscapes[31,32].

Yet the physical resilience of the school could not shield it from political violence. Following Israel's occupation of the West Bank in 1967, the Israeli military dismantled its irrigation systems, effectively erasing its capacity for self-sufficiency[33]. This act was not isolated – it formed part of a wider strategy aimed at undermining Palestinian agricultural autonomy.

Throughout the occupied territories, agricultural landscapes have been deliberately targeted as a form of environmental warfare. The systematic razing of farmlands, water wells, and cooperatives has served as a mechanism of geopolitical control, ensuring that Palestinian communities remain dependent on external food markets rather than achieving economic sovereignty[34,35].

The dismantling of the school's self-sustaining infrastructure was not incidental but strategic. It aligned with broader Israeli policies restricting Palestinian access to water, constraining agricultural output, and obstructing efforts to rebuild independent farming systems[36].

Ultimately, this destruction was not merely an attack on the school itself but an effort to erase the possibility of alternative Palestinian futures—where displaced communities might sustain themselves beyond the imposed structures of humanitarian aid and military occupation[37,38].

LESSONS FOR A CLIMATE-DRIVEN FUTURE

Today, as climate change displaces millions, Alami Farm School – better known as the Arab Development Society – offers an urgent alternative to conventional refugee policy frameworks. Unlike United Nations-administered camps of its time, which relied on external aid and non-sustainable materials, the school modelled a self-sufficient, regenerative approach to displacement[39].

Modern refugee settlements remain dependent on international aid and humanitarian infrastructure. However, as climate-induced displacement accelerates, there is growing recognition that long-term refugee spaces must prioritise ecological sustainability[40].

The Alami model – centred on self-sufficiency, land regeneration, and participatory settlement planning – offers a critical framework for rethinking refugee architecture[41]. Rather than treating displacement solely as a humanitarian crisis, its legacy challenges policymakers to view refugees as

active agents of environmental restoration[42]. In an era where forced migration is increasingly long-term and systemic, the Alami Farm School remains a provocative alternative, urging us to design refugee spaces not as sites of containment but as landscapes of renewal[43].

The pedagogical and ecological principles tested at the Alami Farm School have not disappeared. In recent years, experimental schools such as the ARCò-designed Primary School in Al Khan Al Ahmar (Jerusalem periphery), and the Earth-Bag School in Um al Nasser (Gaza Strip), co-designed by ARCò and MCA, have echoed similar commitments to local materials, community autonomy, and regenerative construction. These projects, like Alami's, emerge in landscapes of restriction and displacement – yet imagine new educational and environmental futures through architecture[44,45].

In light of the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Palestine, the legacy of such models becomes even more urgent. They not only demonstrate design resilience but challenge dominant paradigms of humanitarian aid, positioning refugee communities as stewards of their environments, even under occupation[46,47].

NOTES

[1] Feldman, Ilana. 2008. *Governing Gaza: Bureaucracy, Authority, and the Work of Rule, 1917–67*. Durham: Duke University Press. For UNRWA's founding mandate and evolution as a permanent humanitarian institution. **[2]** Al Husseini, Jalal. 2023. "The Dilemmas of Local Development and Palestine Refugee Integration in Jordan: UNRWA and the Arab Development Society in Jericho (1950–80)." *Jerusalem Quarterly* 93. Detailed study comparing UNRWA's relief model with the ADS. **[3]** Abusaada, Nadi. 2023. "Forgotten History: A Vision for Palestinian Refugees' Agricultural Self-Sufficiency." *The Architectural Review*, October 30. Describes Alami's land acquisition and the nationalist framing of agricultural rehabilitation. **[4]** Tan, Pelin. 2022. "An Agricultural School as a Pedagogical Experiment." In *Radical Pedagogies*, edited by Beatriz Colomina et al. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Discusses the integration of technical education and local knowledge at the school. **[5]** Bosch, Susanne. 2017. *Alter-Nationality: 4 Aphorisms*. Reflects on spatial autonomy in refugee settlements through examples like the Alami Farm School. **[6]** Khalidi, Walid. 1992. *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*. Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies. Foundational documentation of village erasure following the *Nakba*. **[7]** Masalha, Nur. 1992. *The Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948*. Institute for Palestine Studies. Provides ideological and strategic context to village destruction. **[8]** Feldman, Ilana. 2018. *Life Lived in Relief: Humanitarian Predicaments and Palestinian Refugee Politics*. University of California Press. Explores the everyday implications of UNRWA aid mechanisms. **[9]** Al Husseini, Jalal. 2000. 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Op. cit. **[14]** Near East News Association. 1953. *The Arab Development Society's Jordan Valley Project*. Beirut: Near East News Association. **[15]** *Ibid.* **[16]** Al Husseini, Jalal. 2000. Op. cit., 251–275. **[17]** Tan, Pelin, and Dima Yaser. 2022. *Designing Modernity: Architecture in the Arab World 1945–1973*, edited by George Arbid and Philipp Oswalt, 149. Berlin: Jovis Verlag. **[18]** Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, trans. Myra Bergman Ramos. London: Penguin Books. **[19]** Khalidi, Rashid. 1997. Op. cit. **[20]** Near East News Association. 1953. Op. cit. **[21]** Abusaada, Nadi. 2023. Op. cit. **[22]** Al Husseini, Jalal. 2023. Op. cit. **[23]** Freire, Paulo. 1970. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Translated by Myra Bergman Ramos. London: Penguin Books. **[24]** Near East News Association. 1953. Op. cit. **[25]** Ibid. **[26]** Harrell-Bond, Barbara. 1986. *Imposing Aid: Emergency Assistance to Refugees*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 214. **[27]** Weizman, Eyal. 2007. *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*. London: Verso. **[28]** Bosch, Susanne. 2017. Op. cit. **[29]** Tan, Pelin and Dima Yaser. 2022. Op. cit., 152. **[30]** Abusaada, Nadi. 2023. Op. cit. **[31]** Al Husseini, Jalal. 2023. Op. cit. **[32]** Khalidi, Rashid. 1997. Op. cit. **[33]** Abusaada, Nadi. 2023. Op. cit. **[34]** Weizman, Eyal. 2007. Op. cit. **[35]** Harrell-Bond, Barbara. 1986. Op. cit., 214. **[36]** Tan, Pelin and Dima Yaser. 2022. Op. cit., 149. **[37]** Al Husseini, Jalal. 2000. Op. cit. **[38]** Abusaada, Nadi. 2021. Op. cit., 361–391. **[39]** Chatty, Dawn. 2010. *Displacement and Dispossession in the Modern Middle East*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. ADS serves as a precedent for regenerative, land-based refugee settlements that foreground ecological recovery. **[40]** Betts, Alexander et al. 2017. *Refuge: Transforming a Broken Refugee System*. New York: Penguin. 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Built with local labour and earth-bag techniques to reinforce spatial autonomy in a context of economic blockade. **[46]** UN OCHA. 2023. "Education Under Threat in the West Bank and Gaza," *Humanitarian Bulletin*. Documents the systematic demolition of Palestinian learning spaces by Israeli authorities, including schools using sustainable materials. **[47]** UNRWA. 2025. "Situation Report #171 on the Humanitarian Crisis in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem," May 16.

A HIATUS AFTER A 'MODERN' BRAZIL: *THE POPULARIZATION OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AS UTOPIA AND ITS DEMISE*

By Eduardo Mantoan (Institut of Economics at UFRJ) and Paulo H. Soares de Oliveira Jr. (FAUP-PDA)

ABSTRACT

The Brazilian modern architecture, originally envisaged as a project of social emancipation, underwent a profound transformation over the decades. This paper investigates how political and economic changes - particularly following the 1964 military dictatorship in Brazil -weakened the social role of architectural design, promoting the elitization of urban space and the marginalization of metropolitan peripheries, notably in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. It dialogues with Vilanova Artigas's theory of the "social function of architecture", Oriol Bohigas's critique of "architecture as consumption", and Ermínia Maricato's and Pedro Arantes's reflections on the crisis of modernism in Brazil during the dictatorship years. After the 1964 coup, the persecution of progressive architects, democratic suppression, and the forces of capital reproduction deepened urban segregation, restricting access to architectural projects and encouraging self-construction in *favelas* and suburban areas, promoting *peripheralization*. This exclusionary logic has resonated globally, due to the weakening of public housing policies. It is concluded that architecture must be reappraised as a tool for social justice, advocating for the right to architectural design within public policy. Alternative models - such as those practiced by the *Usina de Arquitetura* collective - are presented as potential (though to be radicalized) solutions to combat structural inequalities and promote urban inclusion, moving beyond generic housing programs that overlook community needs and become new agents of segregation.

INTRODUCTION: FROM THE IDEA OF EMANCIPATION TO A LOGIC OF SEGREGATION

This paper examines the evolution of Brazilian modern architecture, originally conceived as a project of social emancipation, and how it gradually became an instrument of urban segregation, particularly in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Drawing on autobiographical and ethnographic insights, the authors - raised in peripheral areas of these cities - reflect on the dismantling of the utopian promises of modern architecture by the political and social crisis resulting from the political rupture caused by the 1964 military coup.

Modern architects such as Afonso Eduardo Reidy and Lúcio Costa sought to democratise access to architectural space through collective housing, leaving a significant legacy in Brazil. However, the 1964 coup constituted a decisive rupture, leading to the persecution of progressive architects such as Vilanova Artigas and Paulo Mendes da Rocha, and weakening the "social function of architecture"[1]. Influenced by international capital and American imperialism, this period saw the entrenchment of urban segregation, with architecture increasingly becoming a luxury good reserved for the privileged, reinforcing a divided urban landscape of "ghettos of wealth" and "ghettos of poverty". Engaging with theoretical contributions from Artigas, Oriol Bohigas and Pedro Arantes, the paper critiques the Architecture of Consumption and its role in reproducing inequality and exclusion, in the context of urban *peripheralization* in Brazil. It highlights how the loss of access to architectural design in the urban periphery undermines wellbeing and dignity, leading to widespread self-construction in *favelas* and marginalised areas. These dynamics represent new forms of segregation, with implications that may extend beyond Brazil as democracies weaken and housing policies lose priority.
The paper concludes by advocating a renewed commitment to architecture as a tool for social transformation. It argues for recognising architectural design as a right guaranteed by the State and embedded in territorial development strategies. Alternative approaches, such as those exemplified by Usina de Arquitetura in São Paulo, emphasise co-production, local knowledge, and inclusive processes, promoting social inclusion through architectural design.

From the "Golden Years": The emergence of a utopia

In the twentieth century, Brazilian architecture experienced a crucial period: from the initial modernist enthusiasm with its emancipatory ideals. Modernist architecture - initially driven by the search for brasilidade and national identity[2] - was appropriated and distorted to serve the demands of a political and economic elite.
The arrival of modernist architecture in Brazil in the 1920s coincided with the country's economic progress, such that in architecture "modernisation emerged as a leap to be taken over the country's backwardness"[3], a challenge embraced by an ambitious aesthetic avant-garde and innovative engineering. Vilanova Artigas, a pioneering figure of modernism, contextualises this emergence:

> Brazilian modern architecture has its origins in modernising movements that appeared after the First World War. A period marked by military insurrections, political reform struggles, defined in literature and the arts by the nowfamously Modern Art Week of 1922[4].

The political discourse of the post-1930 period, under Getúlio Vargas's government, reinforced the idea of a Brazil "without traditions", a "tabula rasa" ripe for modernization. However, this process ignored and repressed popular traditions, such as indigenous and quilombola architectures. When elements of these cultures were incorporated, they often constituted appropriation rather than genuine appreciation. The period's spirit held that "Brazil is a country condemned to modernity"[5], imposing a narrative of liberation from traditions, as argued by Mário Pedrosa. While assimilating and reinterpreting foreign influences - like Bauhaus and Le Corbusier - Brazilian modernism nevertheless produced a distinctive style characterized by formal

freedom, generous spans, and the artisanal use of concrete.
With the consolidation of modern architecture came iconic experiences such as Flamengo Park, by Afonso Eduardo Reidy and Lota de Macedo Soares, and Brasília, by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer under President Juscelino Kubitschek (1956-1961). These projects seemed to point towards democratising access to architectural design. In the 1940s, the exhibition *Brazil Builds* (fig. 1) at MoMA projected Brazilian modern architecture onto the international stage. According to Guilherme Wisnik, this architecture was "universally Brazilian", reworking foreign influences in a singular manner.

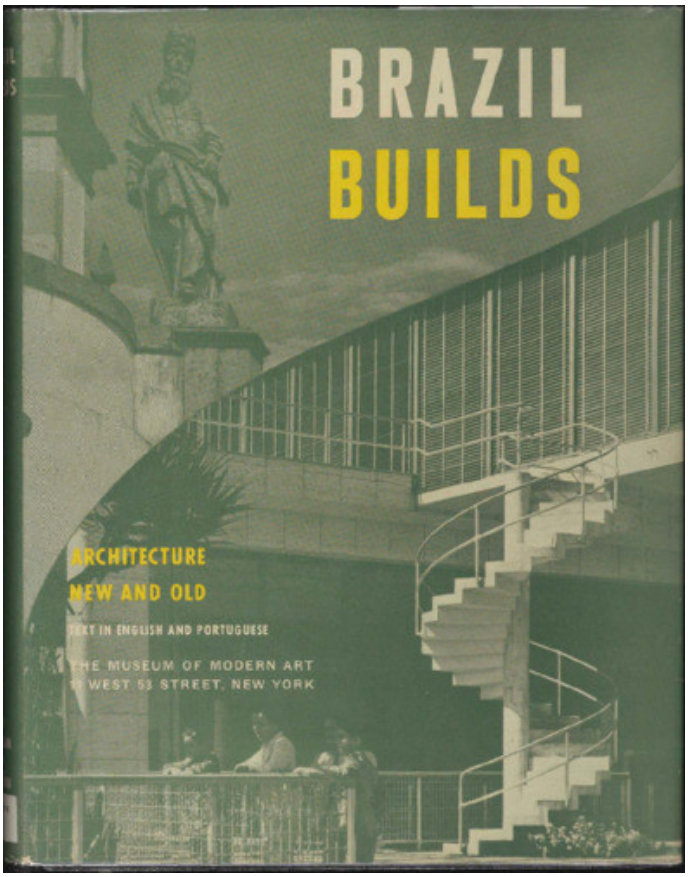

Figure 1. Cover of the exhibition "Brazil Builds", MoMA

During the "Golden Years" of the 1950s, modern architecture intertwined with other artistic expressions such as Bossa Nova and Concretism, consolidating a modernity paradigm. The *Brazil Builds* exhibition and the Bossa Nova[6] concert at Carnegie Hall in 1962 exemplify this international recognition. Beyond international glamour, this architecture positioned itself to address the realities of a country with deep structural inequalities, challenging those structures so that Brazilian modern architecture would also be architecture of its people, not merely serving a fraction. The construction of Brasília from 1956 onwards, illustrated in (fig. 2), marked the high point of this era, yet its planning also revealed the contradictions and dualities of the modern movement by failing to include workers and migrants in its housing plan - thus generating the first *favelas* around the new federal capital.
Breaking with the contradictions of a country historically shaped by extractivist, slaveholding and oligarchic legacies was the core challenge for a Brazil striving to assert itself as a modern nation. In the urban realm, these

contradictions manifested acutely, driven by the social demands that accompanied profound transformations in the country's socio-economic structure. With industrialization emerging as the new economic driver, rapid growth attracted large numbers of rural families to urban centers in search of waged employment, sparking an accelerated and unregulated process of urbanization.

Between 1940 and 1980, Brazil's population grew from 41.2 million to 119 million, nearly tripling, while the proportion of urban dwellers rose from 31% to 67% in the same period (IBGE, 1990). In major cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, this demographic shift exacerbated existing issues of urban *peripheralization*, informal settlements, and lack of access to dignified housing. In Rio de Janeiro, for example, the proportion of the urban population living in *favelas* rose from 7.2% in 1950 to 17.6% by 1990[7].

Figure 2. Truck carrying construction workers near the future National Congress building, 1959. (Photo: Mário Fontenelle) Accessed from: https://memorialdademocracia.com.br/card/construcao-de-brasilia

Architectural production during this period included emblematic projects such as the *Conjunto Residencial Prefeito Mendes de Moraes*, or Pedregulho (1947), by Affonso Eduardo Reidy, and the Copan Building (1951–1966), by Oscar Niemeyer - both promising typological diversity and social mixing. Other lesser-known examples, such as the Vila Operária da Gamboa (1933) (fig. 3), designed by Lúcio Costa and Gregori Warchavchik, and the CECAP *Complexo Residêncial* (1972), by Artigas, proposed more democratic solutions to the housing problem. Though less celebrated than Niemeyer's exuberant forms, these projects anticipated post-war concerns about urban life and suggested that architecture could serve as a tool for promoting collective well-being.

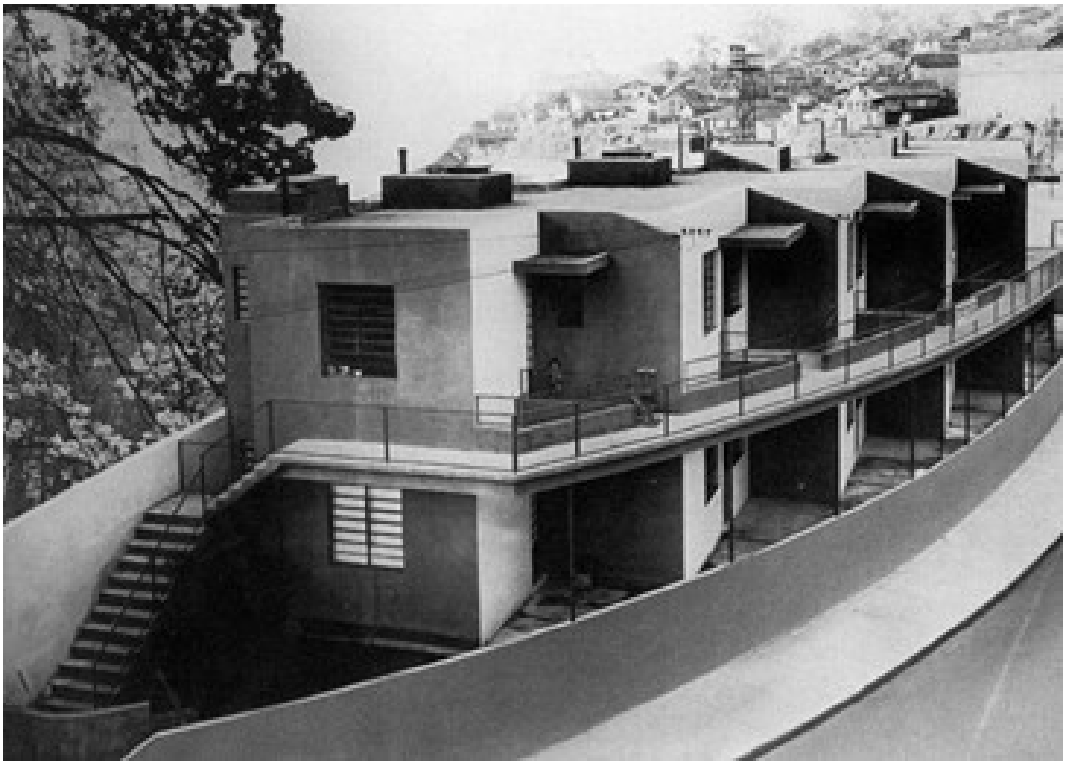

Figure 3. Vila Operária da Gamboa, Rio de Janeiro. Project by Lúcio Costa and Gregori Warchavchik. In: Enciclopédia Itaú Cultural de Arte e Cultura Brasileira. Available at: http://enciclopedia.itaucultural.org.br/obra35657/vila-operaria-da-gamboa-rio-de-janeiro. Accessed: 8 April 2024. ISBN: 978-85-7979-060-7

We argue that the cycle of euphoria and utopia that defined Brazilian modern architecture reached its decisive decline following the military coup of 1964 - an event that not only interrupted a democratic project, but also severed the architectural commitment to social transformation. From that moment on, architecture was gradually depoliticized, co-opted by market logics, and relegated to serving elite interests. The new regime intensified repression of the *favelas* and deepened urban *peripheralization*, instituting a logic of territorial segregation that, as will be discussed in the following section, came to shape the patterns of spatial occupation across Brazilian cities.

The "Dark Years": The Abduction and Death of Utopia

Following the 1964 military coup, Brazilian modernist architecture lost its role as a State-led project for social transformation. The suppression of progressive and popular movements - directly supported by the United States - ushered in a new urban model shaped by market logic and car-oriented development, reflecting a typically North American influence imposed on cities. Oriol Bohigas, commenting on this global turn, observed that "architecture came to depend on communicational devices beyond its control, such as illuminated signage and symbolic forms." Urban space became increasingly spectacularised, with architecture shifting from an emancipatory tool to a medium of image and consumption.
US influence in Latin America, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, materialised in Brazil through cultural, economic, and intelligence support for the military coup. Under the pretext of saving the country from a purported "communist" dictatorship, the US supported the ousting of President João Goulart and offered CIA-led training for repressing democratic opposition. In the aftermath, the regime dismantled democratic structures - suspending elections, outlawing political parties and trade unions—and

curtailed the work of architects dedicated to social transformation, such as Vilanova Artigas, Sérgio Ferro, Paulo Mendes da Rocha and Rodrigo Lefèvre. During the military dictatorship, Brazil experienced significant economic growth (an annual average of 6.3%), driven by an import substitution strategy[8]. However, this growth coincided with intensified income concentration. Trade union repression and wage suppression expanded corporate elites' profit margins, while the introduction of monetary correction on public bonds shielded rentiers from inflation. Consequently, the gains from growth were appropriated by the wealthiest strata. As Victor Leonardo de Araujo[9] highlights, between 1960 and 1970, the income of the poorest decile grew by 28%, while the richest decile's income advanced by 67%, increasing their share of national income from 39.6% to 47.8%. Although industrial dynamism generated more skilled jobs, workers' purchasing power eroded, reducing their relative income, even as the overall mass of income and consumption increased, concentrated primarily among the upper class and the emerging middle class.

Within this context, urban centers expanded to accommodate migrants from rural areas and working-class populations. Despite the military regime's creation of the Housing Financial System (Sistema Financeiro da Habitação - SFH) in 1964 (Law No. 4,380), aimed at facilitating credit for home ownership, the program was limited to meeting the financing demand of the upper and middle classes. This aspect reinforced social segregation in urban areas. The regime deepened urban *peripheralization*, instituting a territorial segregation logic that began to guide spatial occupation patterns in Brazilian cities. During the same period, repression of *favelas* became a systematic policy aimed at expelling the poorest from urban areas undergoing gentrification. As Paola Berenstein notes, in the context of the dictatorship, "many favelas were systematically demolished and their inhabitants displaced from highly valued land, especially in Rio de Janeiro's wealthier southern zone"[10]. In their place, luxury buildings or urban parks were erected, which, rather than democratizing space, served to further enhance the value of these elite areas.

In the consolidation of the so-called "ghettos of the rich," the State concentrated investments in major road infrastructure projects, expanding residential zones for the elites. An emblematic example is the expansion towards Barra da Tijuca in Rio de Janeiro, where, as it was said at the time, "total socio-spatial segregation was possible"[11]. There, an urban model combining modernist aesthetics with a deeply exclusionary logic was consolidated. In São Paulo, the launch of the luxury development Alphaville in 1975 reinforces this pattern: built on indigenous lands bordering Carapicuíba - one of the poorest municipalities in the metropolitan area - the project expresses the structural dependency of elites on precarious labor from these territories, a stark residue of the country's slaveholding culture. Cities thus became the stage for an authoritarian project that instrumentalized architecture and urbanism as tools of planned segregation, pushing poor populations into new *favelas* or increasingly distant peripheral areas - the "ghettos of the poor." In contrast, elite "fiefdoms" formed, enclaves protected by infrastructure and private security, imagined as barriers against the chaos and violence of the "real" city. The figure 4 illustrates the Favela da Rocinha.

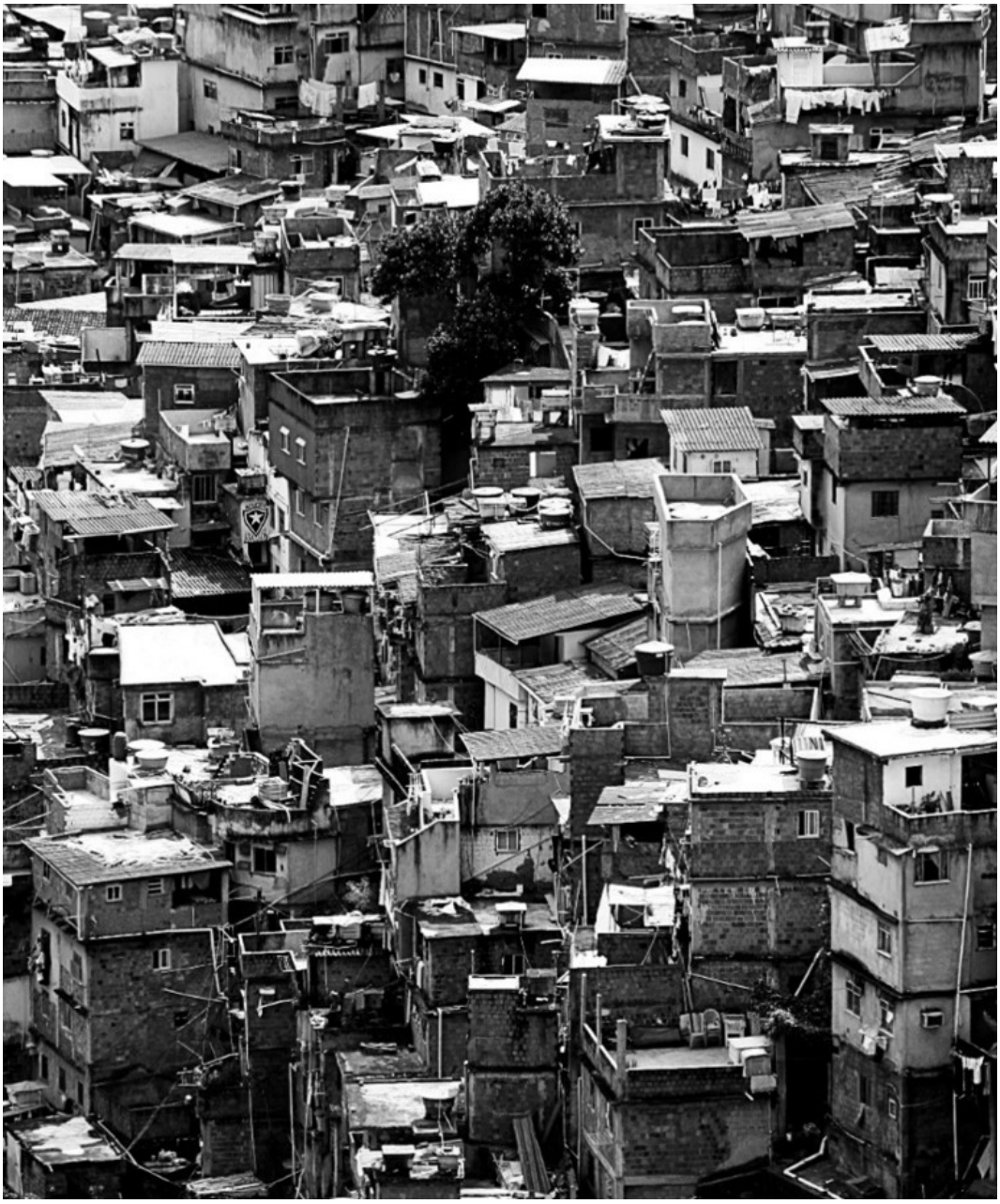

Figure 4. Aerial photograph of Rocinha favela in Rio de Janeiro. Photo: Fabio Venni, London, UK, 2006. Accessed at: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Rocinha_in_black_and_white.jpg

Caldeira observes that the growth of the middle and upper classes, alongside housing credit, generated intense demand for areas previously inhabited only by workers, raising prices and displacing them to new peripheral zones[12]. Marginalized at the edges, the poor build their homes through self-construction, often in precarious and illegal conditions. Even with redemocratization opening urban debate, the dictatorship's legacy - increased social inequality and segregated cities - promoted an unequal urbanization model, deepening fragmentation and weakening architecture's social function. Brazilian modernism, once an instrument of social emancipation, was emptied and redirected to serve capital's demands. The 1964 coup imposed a hiatus on this trajectory, crushing progressive agendas and reinforcing the precarization of life.

The attempt to democratize access to architecture and the city, which peaked between the 1930s and 1950s, found its turning point in the military dictatorship, culminating in its failure and the dilemmas persisting today.

Consequently, the accelerated expansion of peripheries and *favelas* reflected a segregatory and unequal State model that neglected displaced populations within Brazil's territory. Migrants forced by drought, hunger, and underdevelopment sought better living conditions in urban centers but were socially condemned to live in suburbs and *favelas* where the State is absent and other agents dominate social dynamics.
Concerns regarding contemporary Brazilian architecture arise from the perception of a profound distancing from its former commitment to collective aspirations. Architecture, increasingly confined to an elite, appears to have relinquished its transformative potential as an instrument of social change. Within this scenario, legitimate questions arise regarding the discipline's role in national development and overcoming historical inequalities. Artigas, in The Social Function of the Architect (1989), already denounced this impasse and claimed the profession's social commitment: "under the conditions of Brazilian capitalism, as perverse as it is, we architects bear a social responsibility to think utopically in the face of this reality".

For Artigas, the modern project contained an essential utopian dimension, and the "popular house" symbolised architecture's greatest twentieth-century ambition—to make dignified housing an accessible right for all, the "Greater Number"[13]. He recognised that such transformation could only occur through strengthening democratic institutions and the architect's political engagement. As he stated, "the social exaltation of architecture [...] was such that the popular house became the greatest monument of the twentieth century." In this sense, Brazilian modern architecture, especially between 1930 and 1964, still envisaged a pathway whereby design was a tool of emancipation, capable of collectively addressing urgent social needs.
This understanding was crystallised in events such as the Basic Reforms Rally (Comício das Reformas de Base) of João Goulart's democratically elected government, held in March 1964 in Rio de Janeiro. The progressive agenda of Goulart's administration included agrarian and urban reform, which inspired architects and intellectuals of the time with the promise of structuring Brazil as a less unequal nation, with democratised housing access as the ultimate aspiration, truly modern in character.
The deposition of João Goulart and the installation of the military-bourgeois coup in April 1964[14] shattered the young Brazilian democracy and inaugurated a long period of authoritarianism. With the coup, the utopias of social transformation that mobilized broad sectors of society vanished. Architects, artists, students and political opponents were persecuted, imprisoned, tortured and often killed. Those who could sought exile. The vanguard of progressive Brazilian architecture - often linked to the Communist Party and popular movements - had its professional and academic activities halted. The dictatorship, which lasted until late 1985, dismantled an architectural field committed to social justice.

Between the decades of hope and the brutal rupture imposed by the regime, not only were projects interrupted, but the ideals underpinning them were also eroded. Guidelines for urbanism and social housing were progressively emptied, if not entirely annulled. Architecture, which had sought to respond to collective demands and contribute to building a less unequal country, gradually became a privilege reserved for a few. In this context of repression and curtailment of freedoms, a critical impasse in the history of Brazilian modernist utopia was consolidated: architectural design, which should be part of the right to the city and dignity, transformed into a commodity for a minority, distancing itself from the population and its recognition as a fundamental right, as established in the Federal Constitution (Art. 6).

This reality was linked to the economic context of the time. The military dictatorship's years deepened inequality and favored the formation of a luxury goods and specialised services market aimed at elites and the emerging middle class. Within this context, architectural design increasingly catered to these classes, capturing a significant portion of professional practice, which adapted to serve this segment. Consequently, social issues - previously central to many architects' agendas - were relegated to the background.

Since then, access to architectural design in Brazil experienced a rupture – a hiatus in efforts to popularise architecture. This interruption also prevented a critical review of the modern movement and suffocated progressive proposals from its great masters. For example, the São Paulo group comprising Sergio Ferro, Flavio Império and Rodrigo Lefèvre - associated with the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) - sought through the "New Architecture" ideology to revise and expand the design agendas established by Brazilian modernism's luminaries such as Artigas and Mendes da Rocha.

This group had limited practical impact, resonating more in theory with some contributions to popular participation in architectural debate. Although their discussions were later incorporated into architectural schools nationwide, their influence and positions remained limited at the urban scale. This was largely because their ideas remained a countercultural current within Brazilian universities.

Still, a relevant example is the USINA collective, a group of architects inspired by educator Paulo Freire's thought, advocating a popular architecture based on mutual aid building efforts - experiences with parallels in Portugal's SAAL programme. USINA consolidated as a technical advisory group in São Paulo, Usina CTAH, composed of architects and social scientists working with popular movements to produce social housing through self-management (fig. 5). The group collaborates with organizations such as MST (Landless Workers' Movement). However, despite its relevance, experiences like this remain marginal in contemporary Brazilian architectural practice. We argue that such initiatives need to be expanded nationally, with local training programmes for workers conducted under architects' technical guidance. This practice has been an acupuncture amidst a country deeply afflicted by social housing challenges.

> In Brazil, the right to another societal project never existed, as elites have always co-opted or repressed their opponents. Thus, without restoring voice to the majority, no change is possible. However, for a people oppressed for centuries to express social transformation, it is necessary to invent a pedagogy that still teaches that The Impossible is Possible[15].

Figure 5. Works of Mutirão União da Juta by USINA. Photo: Nelson Kon

The Brazilian architecture after modernism, suffocated by democratic suppression, was limited to an uncritical or even fetishized practice of its great masters' works. The absence of a postmodern movement in Brazil - which in Europe and North America sparked critical debates, either to break with or reinforce modernism's principles – resulted in a restricted production in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, with few notable exemplars. Brazil lacked figures willing to critically revisit orthodox modernism while acknowledging its tradition, as occurred in Spain and Portugal.

THE PERIPHERALIZATION OF CITIES: SEGREGATION AS A DELIBERATE PROJECT

Contemporary evidence suggests that architectural praxis has ceased to meaningfully engage with the lived experiences of ordinary people in a proactive manner. From the "years of lead" under military dictatorship to the subsequent redemocratization processes, urban development has been dominated by American-style urbanism[16], featuring enclaves of affluence and poverty. Even social advances during Brazil's nascent democracy - such as statewide housing programs via *Cohabs* (*Companhias de Habitação*), and more recently, the federal *Minha Casa Minha Vida* I and II - have delivered generic housing typologies applied uniformly from the north to the south of the country. In a country spanning more than five diverse climatic zones, this uniformity constitutes a disregard for contextual responsiveness.
Architecture - with a capital 'A', as Lina Bo Bardi once advocated[17] - when invited to participate, now serves mere bourgeois interests, thus isolating the architectural legacies of those modernist masters from that earlier, more aspirational Brazil.
As a result, unplanned settlements and a pervasive fabric of self-built housing have extended across the territory, marking a process of urban *peripheralization*. Present from the northernmost inlands to peripheral suburbs across Brazil, these developments typically orbit around economic hubs or city centers. These peripheral areas lack not only architectural design

but also urban design. Their predominantly working-class, poor and Black inhabitants are consigned to precarious housing, labor, mobility and leisure conditions. Public authorities exclude these areas from budgetary priorities and large-scale urban projects, which are almost invariably geared towards affluent enclaves and central districts. As Maricato observes, this dynamic is "empirically evident in the formal housing market, which reaches less than 50% of the Brazilian population"[18].

Urban *peripheralization* in Brazil represents a broader phenomenon than favelization alone, though both are often conflated. It refers to urban expansion characterized by precarious housing that, while legally constructed, lacks proper infrastructure, urban continuity and planning. These peripheries emerge not through democratic urban planning, but via speculative and market-driven land occupation: plots sold individually, anticipated for future appreciation, rather than integrated according to territorial or urban quality criteria. Although they differ from *favelas* - marked by irregular occupation and lack of land titling -these suburbs share their deficit in services, public amenities, and dignified living conditions. Although slightly better equipped than *favelas*, these peripheral areas suffer from narrow streets, limited tree cover, deficient public transport and scarce recreational facilities - exposing a model of urbanization that reproduces socio-spatial inequality. Functioning as dormitory suburbs, residents face exhausting commutes and return only at night. Life in the Brazilian periphery entails daily hardship and reveals an architecture stripped of its social role, serving primarily those who can afford it. Both *favelas* and peripheries reflect the exclusionary dynamics of capital-driven urbanization, in which the State intervenes selectively: investing in central, profitable areas while relegating the working classes to "sacrifice zones". In a country of continental scale, few architectural practices offer real alternatives for younger generations, as dominant urbanism entrenches segregation and inequality as tools of control. This phenomenon has manifested year after year, particularly within major metropolitan regions. In São Paulo state, beyond *favelas*, an extensive peripheral sprawl encompasses cities such as Osasco (fig. 6), Carapicuíba, Guarulhos and the ABC Paulista, forming a continuous urban conglomerate. In Rio de Janeiro, urban segregation is visible not only within principal *favelas*, but also in peripheral cities like Duque de Caxias, Queimados, Magé and São Gonçalo. Between the 2010 and 2022 censuses, those residing in favelas and informal urban communities increased from 11.4 million to 16.3 million, while such urban fabric expanded from 6.3 thousand to 12.3 thousand agglomerations, according to IBGE data (2024). Maricato highlights:

> Brazilian urbanism (understood here as urban planning and regulation) is not committed to concrete reality, but to an order that pertains only to part of the city... The illegal city is unknown in its dimensions and characteristics. It is a place outside of ideas[19].

Figure 6. Osasco, São Paulo Metropolitan Region. Photo: Ana Felício, Agência Mural, 2021

Today, a considerable portion of informal territory exists, and where there is diseño, it comprises buildings utterly disconnected from urban context, climate or geography- often with ground-floor parking and living units beginning on the fourth storey, with no engagement with the street, creating "dead" streets devoid of social life and thus more dangerous. Maricato highlights:

> Illegality is, therefore, functional—for archaic political relations, for a restricted speculative real estate market, for arbitrary application of the law, based on patronage[20].

This model of peripheralized urban growth, reinforced by selective urbanization policies, continues to shape Brazil's urban fabric. Informality and precariousness are tolerated and strategically functional, hierarchizing and restricting access to the city. The State intervenes unevenly, prioritizing investment where market value is anticipated while leaving other areas in limbo. In such spaces, the absence of design becomes a political act - a deliberate method of spatial organization that reinforces inequality and exclusion.
We argue this constitutes a project of socio-spatial disorder, condemning the poor to informality that elites exploit.

> A large portion of humanity, through disinterest or incapacity, can no longer obey the laws, norms, rules, customs derived from this hegemonic rationality. Hence the proliferation of 'illegal', 'irregular', 'informal' people [21].

This invites reflection on architectural practices capable of revealing these exclusionary mechanisms and whether an architecture rooted in territory, cultural context, and social participation can be cultivated beyond the elite

sphere.
Brazil's ongoing political crises are not anomalies, but part of a broader structure that sustains inequality. From the 1964 dictatorship to the 2016 parliamentary coup and the failed coup attempt following Bolsonaro's 2022 defeat, a pattern of assaults on democracy has reinforced socio-economic and spatial segregation. This reality is etched into the built environment, where architecture becomes commodified, reinforcing exclusion and exacerbating the precariousness of the urban poor.
In light of this, it is crucial to rethink urban intervention strategies. Rather than merely replicating initiatives like Minha Casa Minha Vida or historical experiments such as Arquitetura Nova, a more radical and grounded approach is needed. This entails working from existing realities - as seen in the *Favela-Bairro* programme - but with deeper, sustained State involvement in marginalised territories. Only through a combination of effective public policy and place-based design strategies can the entrenched segregation of Brazilian cities be addressed.
Urban segregation is not a contingency - it is a pillar of Brazilian society, perpetuated by aristocratic policies inherited from an exclusionary colonial past. Attempts at popular urban reform have often been suppressed, underscoring the necessity for a more confrontational and emancipatory role for architecture and urbanism — proportionate to the systemic forces that perpetuate inequality.

> Balanced on a steep and uncomfortable bank
> Half-finished and filthy
> Yet it is their only home, their possession and shelter
> A dreadful stench of sewage in the yard
> Above or below, if it rains it will be fatal
> A piece of hell, here is where I am
> Even the IBGE came here and never returned[22].

At this juncture, it is pertinent to introduce an ethnographic perspective: the life experiences of both authors validate theories of segregation and *peripheralization*. Raised in Osasco's periphery within migrant families seeking better living conditions - a common trajectory throughout Brazilian urban fringes - this lived experience is not merely biographical, but an epistemic component enriching and challenging the analysis. Experiencing the absence — or oppressive presence — of architecture in these territories cultivates a critical awareness that shapes our professional perspectives. First-hand awareness of the city's fringes - its physical, symbolic and social limits - enables us to perceive often-invisible forms of exclusion, as well as modes of resistance, reinvention and space appropriation emerging in these contexts. Acknowledging this trajectory is not an appeal to personal authority, but a position that values epistemologies from the margins, contrasting with the technocratic and abstract detachment that has long shaped architectural production in Brazil. Listening to and considering the voices of those experiencing urban segregation is essential for advancing socio-spatial understanding and ensuring that architectural design acts with these populations - not merely upon them. Bridging the gulf between technical knowledge and real life is an urgent task in light of the prolonged failure of urban policies and historical State neglect.
Worth recalling is that cities often celebrated as planning exemplars - such as Barcelona - also faced acute housing precarity in recent history. The proliferation of shanty towns in mid-20th-century Barcelona exposed the State's neglect of internal migrant flows and escalating housing demands. In Barcelona entre el Pla Cerdà i el barraquisme[23], Bohigas analyses the tensions

between the rationalist, egalitarian design of the Eixample and the exclusionary reality of informal peripheries - demonstrating how even paradigm urban modernity cities can succumb to abandoning vulnerable populations.
This parallel suggests that the *peripheralization* process - defined by State withdrawal in popular territories, replacement of project rights by standardized, decontextualized solutions, and consolidation of a segregationist logic within urban market dynamics - should not be regarded as uniquely Brazilian. Rather, it has the potential to expand globally, especially in contexts marked by democratic weakening, erosion of public housing policies, and the rise of authoritarian regimes.

Brazil's urban trajectory should be read not merely as a peripheral exception, but as an advanced symptom of an exclusionary urban model that threatens generalization. Far from being solely a denunciation, the Brazilian case operates as a warning: it exposes the dangers of urbanism captured by the market and disconnected from daily life – latter-day conditions replicable worldwide, especially in the Global South. The contemporary challenge demands a critical response that recasts architecture as a tool of territorial justice and confronts the forces intent on transforming cities into privileges - not rights.

CONCLUSION

This paper has examined how the *peripheralization* of Brazilian cities- intensified since the 1964 military coup - constitutes not merely an urban phenomenon, but a deliberate political project of socio-spatial segregation. Architecture, once articulated as an instrument of collective emancipation during the modernist cycle, has been progressively emptied of its transformative potential and reified as a commodity accessible only to urban elites. The adoption of North American-inspired urban paradigms, the imposition of standardized housing solutions (as seen in *Cohabs* and *Minha Casa Minha Vida*) and the State's retreat from popular territories have all contributed to the entrenchment of an exclusionary logic of urban land occupation.
Through a critical, situated approach, this article argues that territorial segregation does not stem simply from policy neglect or inefficiency, but from an enduring power structure that spans political crises and regime changes. Events such as the 1964 military coup, the 2016 impeachment, and the 2022 attempted coup reveal a historical continuum in suppressing popular participation and blocking progressive agendas - demonstrating how cities become the material battlegrounds of these conflicts. Within this context, architecture ceases to work with the people and instead acts upon them, reinforcing hierarchies, symbolic frontiers, and social exclusion.
Faced with this reality, it becomes imperative to rethink urban intervention models. It is not enough to replicate ad hoc programs or address technical deficiencies; we must reconceptualize architecture as a political practice committed to territorial justice and the right to the city. This entails recognizing peripheral epistemologies as legitimate knowledge, valuing popular spatial production forms, and ensuring universal access to architectural design as a common good through strong State engagement. Only by bringing architecture closer to the everyday lives of the majorities will it be possible to reverse the historical cycle of exclusion and envisage new modes of inhabitation that do not reproduce rich and poor enclaves shaping Brazilian metropolitan landscapes today.

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NOTES

[1] Artigas, João Batista Vilanova. 1984. "A função social do arquiteto." In *Caminhos da Arquitetura*. São Paulo: Edusp. **[2]** Bittar, William. 2016. *Formação da arquitetura moderna no Brasil (1920–1940)*. Rio de Janeiro: Docomomo Brasil. **[3]** Wisnik, Guilherme, and Fernando Serapião. 2019. *Infinito Vão: 90 anos de arquitetura brasileira*. São Paulo: Editora Monolito. See: "Artigas e a dialética dos esforços." In *Saltando sobre o atraso: de Niemeyer a Artigas*, 31. **[4]** Artigas, João Batista Vilanova. 1984. Op. cit., 275 (Our translation). **[5]** Pedrosa, Mario. 2015. *Arquitetura Ensaios Críticos*. Editora: Cosac & Naify ISBN-13: 978-8540507982. **[6]** In a public lecture at Escola da Cidade, São Paulo, Guilherme Wisnik stated: "Brazil chose to be born modern," referring to the acceptance of modern architecture as representative of Brazil as a modern, independent nation. These aspirations were especially manifest in architecture, literature, and the arts, as symbolised by the 1922 Modern Art Week (Semana de Arte Moderna) with figures like Oswald de Andrade, Mário de Andrade, Anitta Malfatti, Tarsila do Amaral, and Manuel Bandeira. **[7]** Fesller Vaz, Lilian, and Paola Berenstein Jacques. 2003. "Una pequeña historia de las favelas de Rio de Janeiro." In *Ciudad y Territorio: Estudios Territoriales*, Vol. XXXV (136–137): 268. **[8]** Tavares, Maria da Conceição. 1972. *Da substituição de importações ao capitalismo financeiro*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar. **[9]** Araùjo, Victor Leonardo. 2021. *A Macroeconomia do Governo Médico (1969-1974): Uma contribuição ao debate sobre as causas do "milagre"econômico*, 304, 2021. Em: Araujo, V.L. & Mattos, F.A.M., A Economia Brasileira de Getúlio a Dilma – novas interpretações. São Paulo: Hucitec. **[10]** Fesller Vaz, Lilian, and Paola Berenstein Jacques. 2003. Op. cit., 268. **[11]** *Ibid.* "(...) the combination of popular parceling/self-construction became the metropolitan standard for popular housing, just as peripherisation became the urbanisation model", 268. **[12]** Caldeira, Teresa Pires do Rio. 1996. "Fortified Enclaves: The New Urban Segregation." *Public Culture*, Vol. 8, No. 2. **[13]** This idea, modern in its matrix, finds a parallel in Georges Candilis's article "Problèmes d'Aujourd'hui," written after the 1962 CIAM meeting at Royaumont, where he called for architecture for the "Greater Number". **[14]** The year 1964 is referenced due to the military-bourgeois coup that overthrew Brazil's democratic state on 31 March 1964. In the years that followed, architects such as Vilanova Artigas and Paulo Mendes da Rocha were banned from practising as professionals and professors. Artigas, for instance, was forbidden to work at the faculty building he himself had designed. **[15]** Arantes, Pedro Fiori. 2002. *Arquitetura Nova – Sérgio Ferro, Rodrigo Lefèvre, Flávio Império: de Artigas aos mutirões*. São Paulo: Editora 34, ISBN 85-7326-251-6: 224. (Our translation). **[16]** Rolnik, Raquel. 2015. *Guerra dos Lugares*. São Paulo: Editora Boitempo. **[17]** Bo Bardi, Lina. 2009. *Lina por Escrito – Coleção Face Norte*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify. **[18]** Maricato, Ermínia. 2013. *As ideias fora do lugar e o lugar fora das ideias*. In Arantes, Otília, Vainer, Carlos, and Ermínia Maricato. 2000. *A cidade do pensamento único: desmanchando consensos*. Petrópolis: Vozes. ISBN 85-326-2384-0. **[19]** Ivi, 122 (Our translation). **[20]** Ivi, 123 (Our translation). **[21]** Santos, Milton. *Por uma outra globalização*. 2000. São Paulo: Edusp, 120 (Our translation). **[22]** Racionais MC's. 1993. *Song: Homem na Estrada. Album: Raio X do Brasil*. [Hip-hop group from São Paulo's periphery that voiced social inequalities in the 1990s and early 2000s]. (Our translation) See also: https://www.museudasfavelas.org.br/. IBGE means – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística [Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics]. **[23]** Bohigas, Oriol. *Once arquitectos*. In Venturi, Robert. 1976. *Barcelona: La Gaya Ciencia*, 1976, 254. ISBN 84-7080-022-1.

THE PERSISTENCE OF THE "CLAUSTRUM" *FROM "PONTIFICIS CASTRA" TO PLACES FOR THE "PUBLIC GOOD" IN AUSTRIAN LOMBARDY (1768-1797)*

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ABSTRACT

Among places historically closed to the city, monasteries and convents have an emblematic role. In his famous *De re aedificatoria* (1452), Leon Battista Alberti wrote "Pontificis castra quidam sunt clausura" ("the stronghold of the religious is the monastery"). The seats of religious orders stood as large, impenetrable and autonomous building volumes, located in the heart of the city.

During the reign of Empress Maria Theresa of Austria (1740-1780) and her son Joseph II (1780-1790), these places, mostly closed to the community, were taken by the State from the control of the Church and put at the service of the "public good". Aligned with the new Enlightenment ideas, these rulers financed the construction of public buildings not just for cultural enrichment, but also altruistic care for a vast range of groups in need – from orphans and widows to the unemployed and mentally ill.

This was possible thanks to the abolition of religious orders and brotherhoods and the confiscation of their assets: income, land, precious goods, and above all property – the latter of which was often typically well suited to the activities necessary for modern social transformation due to the spatial characteristics of its unique typology: dimension, position, and distribution, which were made even more favorable thanks to the monastery's auspicious separation from the city.

The case of the territory known as Austrian Lombardy (including the territories of the former duchies of Milan and Mantua) is of particular interest, as it constituted the first "laboratory" of religious reforms both in relation to the rest of the Habsburg Empire and to the other pre-unification states of the peninsula (more involved by the Napoleonic suppressions).

Since 1768, in Milan, Pavia, Lodi, Cremona, Como, Casalmaggiore and Mantua the first monasteries were suppressed, and, after careful evaluations regarding the "public decorum", expertly repurposed by the selected chamber architects into hospitals, prisons, workhouses, orphanages, public schools, and administrative offices. Thus began the process of transformation of "Pontificis castra" to places for the "Public good," which would continue for the next 200 years.

INTRODUCTION

Religious architecture has historically represented one of the most emblematic spatial forms of exclusion. In early modern urban contexts, monasteries and convents constituted separate worlds: spaces physically and symbolically isolated from civic life. As Leon Battista Alberti wrote in *De re aedificatoria* (1452), "Pontificis castra quidam sunt clausura" – the monastery as a fortress of the sacred, walled and autonomous[1].

This article explores the persistence of the claustrum – the space of monastic enclosure – even after its transformation into public infrastructure. Through archival and bibliographical sources, and adopting a typological and territorial approach, the essay analyses the case of Austrian Lombardy as an early laboratory for the secularization of urban welfare in the modern era. Retracing the spatial and institutional conversions in the main cities of Lombardy, particularly in Milan, the investigation questions fractures and continuities: to what extent were these once-exclusive spaces truly opened to the public? And what symbolic, architectural, or regulatory remnants of religious enclosure continued to operate in their new uses?

By bringing to light the spatial and cultural legacies of these transformations, this study contributes to the contemporary debate on the intersection between architecture, memory, and mechanisms of governance, offering a reflection on how exclusion can survive even within architectures seemingly oriented toward inclusion.

ARCHITECTURE OF EXCLUSION: SURVIVALS AND TRANSFORMATIONS OF THE "CLAUSTRUM"

The term *claustrum,* from the Latin *claudere* (to close), evokes an architectural and existential condition of separation. In the monastic tradition, it did not refer only to the cloister as a physical element, but designated an entire regime of regulated and ritualized isolation. As prescribed by the rule of the order, the *claustrum* was the space of enclosure, intended for prayer, meditation, and self-surveillance, and it represented the daily horizon of religious life. One did not enter it by chance: one entered by vocation, and once inside, the rule dictated time, gestures, and silences[2].

The cloister, the central element of the conventual structure, assumed a significance that was not only functional but also symbolic, forming a spatial translation of theological and disciplinary principles. Its centripetal and repetitive geometry, often organized around a central garden, structured an existential experience aimed at interiority. The architectural configuration was designed to foster contemplation, isolation from the external world, and discipline of the body and senses. Every part of the conventual space – from dormitories to refectories, from libraries to oratories – was conceived to reinforce separation from the secular world and promote the regularity of spiritual life (fig. 1)[3].

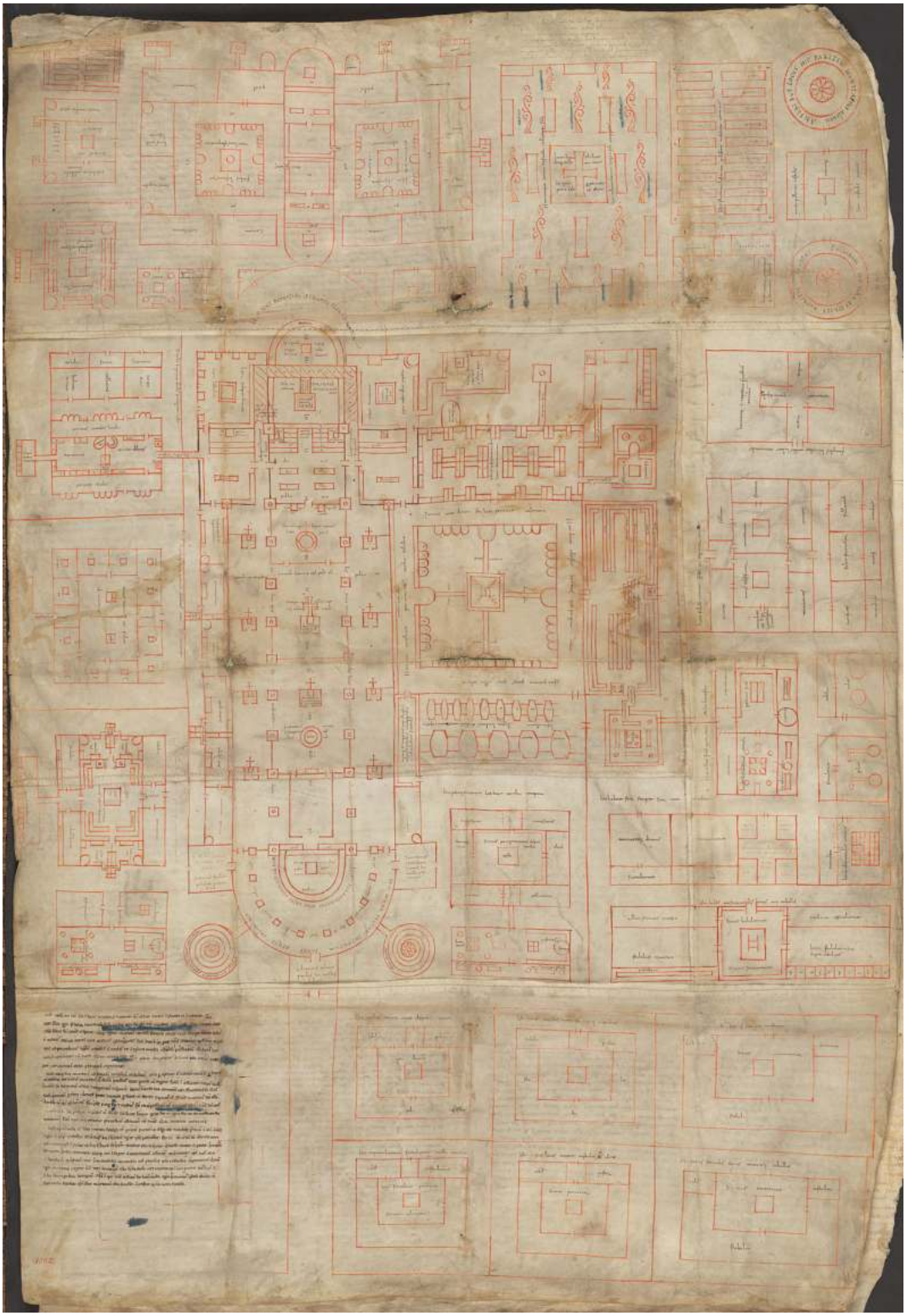


Figure 1. Plan of the Ideal Monastery of St. Gall (ca. 820–830). This famous Carolingian drawing, preserved at the Stiftsbibliothek St. Gallen (Codex Sangallensis 1092), is the earliest comprehensive vision of a monastic complex: church, cloister, dormitories, refectory, infirmary, workshops, stables, and gardens are arranged in a functional and symbolic order. The monastery is conceived as a self-sufficient microcosm and a spatial device of control, foreshadowing architectural logics of enclosure that would endure for centuries

Over time, this architectural logic produced highly codified forms. Monasteries were established in the heart of cities without ever blending into them: enclosed enclosures, easily identifiable, but inaccessible. Elements such as massive perimeter walls, elevated and screened openings, and the internal

separation of pathways between monks and laypeople all contributed to defining a spatial device aimed at segregation and limiting visual and functional permeability. In the case of female monasteries, an additional barrier was added: that of the male gaze, further reinforcing the condition of marked isolation for religious women[4].

This symbolic condition – being "other," separate, inaccessible – survived even when, in the 18th century, the Enlightenment began to question the ideological legitimacy of monasticism. Whereas the claustrum had once been justified by divine law, it now came to be seen as an obstacle to the rationality of urban space, to the efficiency of the State, and to the principle of social utility. The architecture itself became a target of critique: what had once been sacred closure was now suspect; invisibility, historically associated with spiritual purity, began to be interpreted as a sign of social unproductivity and organizational inefficiency[5].

Yet it was precisely in this phase of deconstructing the convent system that the claustrum demonstrated surprising resilience. The very qualities that had defined monastic isolation – functional autonomy, internal order, physical separation – made it an ideal container for the new uses envisioned by the Habsburg reforms: hospitals, asylums, penitentiaries, orphanages, schools, but also factories, barracks, and offices. The architecture of separation was not demolished, but reconfigured: spiritual control became social control; moral surveillance became medical or disciplinary surveillance[6].

The *claustrum* did not disappear: it survived materially, spatially, and ideologically. Its logic was reinscribed in the new institutions of care and control. As Michel Foucault has shown, modernity does not destroy mechanisms of exclusion but reformulates them: it secularizes them, institutionalizes them. The former monastery, now a place of care or confinement, continued to separate, to silence, to regulate[7].

Thus, the architectural space originally intended to protect the soul from the contamination of the world became a device for containing the marginal figures of the new society: the insane, the poor, criminals, and orphans. The memory of enclosure, far from being erased, is etched into stone and continues to operate. Modernity did not dissolve the claustrum, but secularized it.

THE REFORM CONTEXT: CRISIS AND SECULARIZATION IN AUSTRIAN LOMBARDY

In late 18th-century Austrian Lombardy, spaces of religious enclosure underwent an unprecedented political and institutional transformation[8]. The economic and demographic crisis following the Seven Years' War (1756–1763) struck the Habsburg Empire hard: severe human losses, a rise in widows and orphans, famines, and a drastic decline in births left a deep mark on both urban and rural populations[9].

In this dramatic context, the court of Vienna launched a vast program of administrative and fiscal reforms aimed at strengthening state control and regenerating imperial finances[10]. More peripheral territories such as the Austrian Netherlands, Hungary, and especially Lombardy were called upon to contribute new resources to an empire that was weakened but still ambitious.

The so-called Austrian Lombardy – comprising the State of Milan and the former Duchy of Mantua – presented itself as a territory marked by administrative disorder and deep social inequalities, inherited from previous governments. The central authority struggled to impose itself on a local system dominated by noble incomes, ecclesiastical immunities, and a large and entrenched clergy. Illiteracy, unemployment, urban crime, and widespread poverty weighed on a state that lacked adequate tools to intervene [11].

It was in this scenario that the monarchy promoted a plan to rationalize fiscal and bureaucratic structures, under the leadership of Chancellor Anton von Kaunitz and Count Carlo Firmian, plenipotentiary of Lombardy[12]. The adoption of a unified currency, the liberalization of trade, and the improvement of infrastructure enabled an acceleration of economic activity[13]. Farmers and entrepreneurs, attracted by new opportunities, invested in manufacturing and agriculture, also aided by land reforms and the alienation of ecclesiastical property[14].

Within this framework of state reorganization, the convent system became the target of a focused reform effort. Religious orders, long accused of economic uselessness and social inefficiency, were viewed as obstacles to the Enlightenment project of rationalization and public utility. Convents, with their tax-exempt incomes, opaque property management, and tendency to shelter individuals removed from productive labor, were seen by the State as contrary to good governance[15].

Suppressions, initiated under Maria Theresa and radicalized by Joseph II, were justified not only as economic measures but also as actions of public order and moral reform[16]. Between 1768 and 1790, dozens of conventual complexes in Lombardy were dissolved, alienated, repurposed, or auctioned off. The resulting release of real estate generated a true "spatial" reform of Lombard cities[17].

On the surface, this appeared to be a shift from sacred space to the common good, from enclosure to collective service. Yet, upon closer examination, the process was far from linear. The spatiality of the enclosure was not always eliminated: sometimes it survived, incorporated into new uses; other times, it was symbolically reproduced in different forms. The State's self-representation, even with inclusive aims, often adopted architectural codes and devices rooted in separation and control[18].

THE POLITICAL PROJECT OF STATE WELFARE UNDER MARIA THERESA AND JOSEPH II

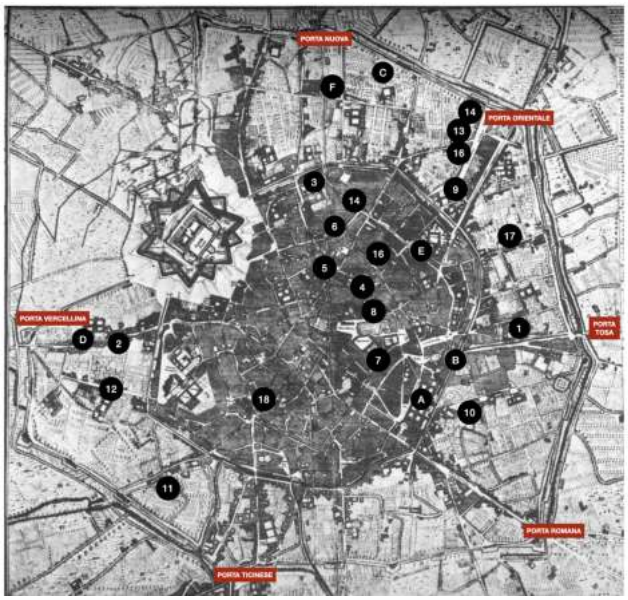
The introduction of state welfare in Lombardy was the joint result of an ideological shift and the implementation of a systematic and rationally planned technical-administrative apparatus[19]. Between 1767 and 1786, the Austrian monarchy deployed an operational machine of extraordinary efficiency: the *Giunta Economale per le materie ecclesiastiche e miste*, tasked with reclassifying, rationalizing, and redistributing religious assets according to principles of public utility.

Under the direction of Firmian and the supervision of Kaunitz, the *Giunta* operated as a true institutional reorganization unit, anticipating practices typical of the modern administrative state[20]. Its main operational tool was the so-called *Piano di sussistenza*, drawn up in collaboration with ecclesiastical authorities but based on objective parameters: numerical consistency, financial sustainability, internal discipline, and the potential use of assets for civic purposes. The language adopted was technical, not moral: expressions like "disorder," "uselessness," "redundancy," and "profitability" reflected a secular approach to the management of the sacred[21].

Initially, the closure of convents followed a selective logic based on numerical and territorial criteria: priority was given to small convents in minor towns, especially those with fewer than twelve religious members. Beginning in 1769, the first closures took place: buildings were visited, inventoried, and their movable and immovable property alienated, rented, or auctioned[22]. The procedure included settling any debts contracted by the suppressed communities and granting pensions to expelled religious members. However,

the core of the operation was the efficiency of reuse: urban spaces – already built, autonomous, and centrally located – were quickly reassigned to new public functions.
The suppressions unfolded in two distinct phases, corresponding to the reigns of Maria Theresa (1740–1780) and Joseph II (1780–1790), and they marked a crucial turning point in the institutional transformation of the territory. In the first phase, the policy was implemented cautiously: closures mainly affected smaller male communities, with systematic exclusion of female orders[23]. It was under Joseph II that the policy became systematic and centralized: all contemplative orders were abolished, regardless of gender or function, and their assets were absorbed by the State and redirected toward public utility[24].

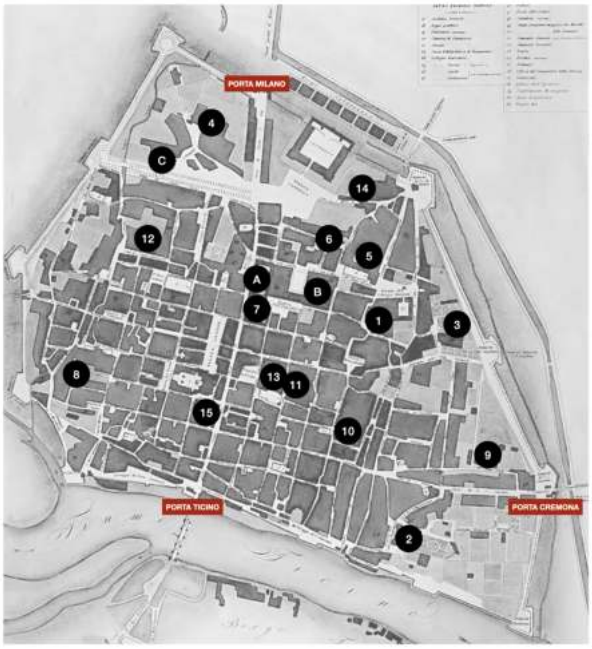
Reuse strategies varied according to the political and institutional role of each city. In Milan, the administrative capital of the Kingdom, reuse followed a logic of civic centralization: between 1770 and 1786, at least eighteen religious complexes were closed and transformed into hospitals, poorhouses, workhouses, orphanages, schools, archives, bureaucratic offices, or barracks[25] . In some cases, buildings were demolished to make room for institutions emblematic of Enlightenment modernity – as in the case of the church of Santa Maria della Scala, replaced by the theater of the same name (fig. 2)[26].



	ABOLISHED BUILDINGS	CLOSED IN	NEW INTENDED USE	AREA
1	S. Pietro in Gessate	1770	New Male Orphanage	PORTA TOSA
2	S. Maria delle Stelline	-	Female Orphanage	PORTA VERCELLINA
3	Collegio di Brera	1773	Schools and Academy	CITY CENTER
4	S. Fedele	1773	State Archives	CITY CENTER
5	S. Maria della Scala	1776	Demolished and replaced by the new Teatro Grande	CITY CENTER
6	S. Chiara	1782	*Monte di pietà*	CITY CENTER
7	Canobbiana	1780	Demolished and replaced by Theatre and Royal Post Office	CITY CENTER
8	S. Redegonda	1780	Demolished and opening of the street of the same name	CITY CENTER
9	Collegio Elvetico	1787	Seat of Government	PORTA ORIENATALE
10	S. Caterina alla Ruota	1782	New Hospital of the Exposed	PORTA ROMANA
11	S. Vincenzo de' Matti	1782	Workhouse for the poor	PORTA TICINESE
12	S. Maria di Loreto	1782	Shelter for girls	PORTA VERCELLINA
13	Monastero de' Carcani (S. Maria dei Sette dolori)	1782	Demolished and replaced by new public garden	PORTA ORIENTALE
14	S. Barbara	1782	*Luoghi pii riuniti*	CITY CENTER
15	S. Dionigi	1783	Demolished and replaced by new public garden	PORTA ORIENTALE
16	S. Maria del Rosario	1785	Demolished and replaced by Palazzo Bovara	PORTA ORIENTALE
17	S. Pietro in Monforte	1785	Demolished and replaced by Palazzo Diotti	PORTA ORIENTALE
18	S. Marta dei Discipilini	1786	Police District	CITY CENTER
	OLD BUILDINGS ENHANCED			
A	Ospedale Ca' Granda			
B	Pio Albergo Trivulzio			
	NEW BUILDINGS			
C	Casa di Correzione		Newly built	PORTA NUOVA
D	Ergastolo		Newly built	PORTA VERCELLINA
E	Monte di S. Teresa		Newly built	PORTA NUOVA
F	Zecca		Newly built	PORTA NUOVA

Figure 2. Map of Monastic Reuse in Habsburg Milan (1768–1790). This historical map of the city highlights the main religious complexes suppressed between 1770 and 1790 and their new public functions: orphanages, schools, hospitals, barracks, and administrative offices. The black numbers indicate abolished and repurposed buildings (e.g., 1: S. Pietro in Gessate), while the letters mark enhanced pre-existing institutions (A–B) or newly constructed buildings (C–F). The reuse of monastic spaces, promoted by the reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II, helped redefine Milan's institutional and welfare geography, following a model of urban governance based on order, discipline, and public utility

In Pavia, home to the reformed university and a center of new secular culture, the approximately fifteen suppressions documented between 1773 and 1790 were oriented toward educational repurposing: convents and religious colleges were converted into seminaries, civil schools, secondary colleges, and university-related facilities, reinforcing the city's role as the academic capital of the Lombard territory (fig. 3)[27].



	ABOLISHED BUILDINGS	CLOSED IN	NEW INTENDED USE	AREA
1	Collegio Ghislieri		Liceo	CITY CENTER
2	Collegio Borromeo		Liceo	PORTA CREMONA
3	S. Epifanio	1773	Botanical garden	PORTA CREMONA
4	S. Pietro in Ciel d'Oro	1781	New headquarters of the Franciscan Fathers	PORTA MILANO
5	S. Francesco	1781	Collegio Germanico Ungarico	CITY CENTER
6	S. Chiara la Reale	1782	New headquarters of the Benedictine	CITY CENTER
7	S. Salvatore detto il Leano	1782	University	CITY CENTER
8	S. Agata	1782	Sold to private	PORTA TICINO
9	S. Clara	1782	Collegio dei Calchi	PORTA CREMONA
10	S. Dalmazio	1783	Sold to private	CITY CENTER
11	Seminario di S. Andrea dei Reali	1783	-	CITY CENTER
12	S. Felice	1786	New General Orphanage	PORTA MILANO
13	S. Tommaso	1786	Seminario generale	CITY CENTER
14	S. Maria in Pertica	1788	-	PORTA MILANO
15	S. Maiolo	1790	-	PORTA TICINO
	OLD BUILDINGS ENHANCED			
A	Università			CITY CENTER
B	Ospedale di S. Matteo			CITY CENTER
C	Albergo dei Poveri Pertusati			PORTA MILANO

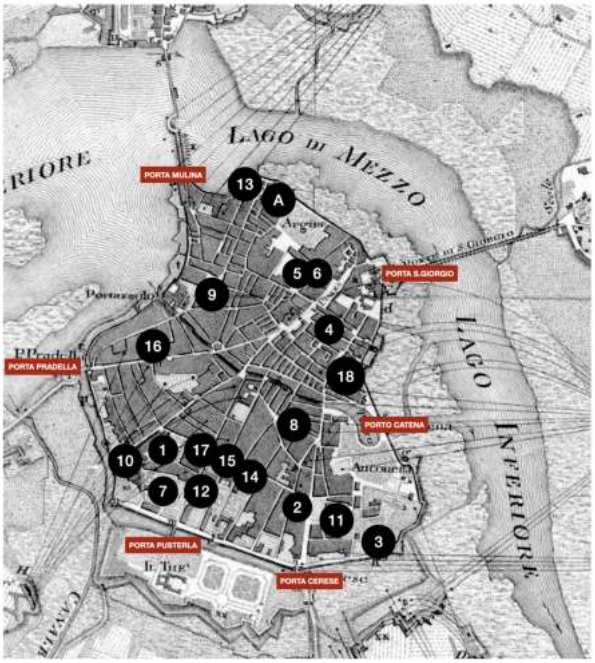
Figure 3. Map of Monastic Reuse in the City of Pavia (1773–1790). The map highlights the main religious complexes suppressed under Josephine reforms and their new intended uses. Black numbers mark abolished buildings (e.g., 1: Collegio Ghislieri), repurposed for educational, charitable, or administrative functions; letters indicate enhanced historical institutions (A–C), integrated into the new urban system of welfare and public education. This spatial reorganization was part of the broader Teresian project of territorial rationalization and social reform, which positioned the university city as a key site for civic formation and the management of social marginality

In Mantua, a city with a weaker civic and welfare network, reuse followed a compensatory and territorial logic. The eighteen convents taken over between 1771 and 1785 were assigned to hospitals, orphanages, popular schools, barracks, and military warehouses, helping to construct a minimal public service network. Architects such as Paolo Pozzo and Leopold Pollack were entrusted with transforming the spaces, adhering to a functional and decorous aesthetic (fig. 4)[28].

A decisive turning point came with the suppression of the Order of Jesus in 1773, decreed by Pope Clement XIV[29]. Their assets, which were highly concentrated in urban and intellectual contexts, were explicitly converted to public educational uses: for the first time, ecclesiastical capital was directly reinvested into a state project for collective education, marking the shift from confessional to civic knowledge.

A key aspect of the entire process was the traceability of funds: the monarchy required that proceeds from alienations be reinvested in useful institutions under state control[30]. During the Teresian period, these funds were allocated to targeted charitable initiatives, aimed at addressing local shortcomings – particularly to benefit the poor and orphans – and to promote education in the major centers of Lombardy. Under Joseph II, these interventions became part of a more organic and territorial plan, focused on reorganizing the healthcare system and on a labor policy intended to combat poverty and crime[31].

The state welfare project developed between the 1760s and 1780s cannot be reduced to a simple act of secularization: it represented a complex political and territorial restructuring that not only redefined assistance, but generated a new public spatiality – composed of repurposed buildings, administrative networks, cadastral maps, and notarial acts. Most importantly, it made visible the shift from spiritual control to state control, transforming the convent from a closed space into a monitored, secular, and productive public resource [32].



	ABOLISHED BUILDINGS	CLOSED IN	NEW INTENDED USE	AREA
1	S. Marco	1771	Sold to private	PORTA PUSERLA
2	S. Matteo	1785	Sold to private	PORTA CERESE
3	S. Maria del Gradaro		Military warehouse	PORTA CERESE
4	Collegio gesuitico	1773	Liceo and Academia	CITY CENTER
5	S. Agnese	1775	General Orphanage	CITY CENTER
6	S. Maria del Soccorso	1775	Albergo dei Poveri	CITY CENTER
7	Oratorio Scuola Segreta	1781	Botanical garden	PORTA PUSERLA
8	S. Lucia	1782	Male Orphanage	PORTA CERESE
9	S. Maria Maddalena	1782	Female Orphanage	CITY CENTER
10	S. Giuseppe	1782	School of music	PORTA PUSERLA
11	S. Paola	1782	Barracks	PORTA CERESE
12	S. Sebastiano	1782	Barracks	PORTA PUSTERLA
13	Cappuccine	1782	Military hospital	PORTA MULINA
14	S. Caterina da Siena	1782	Sold to private	PORTA PUSTERLA
15	Carmelino	1782	Military warehouse	PORTA PUSTERLA
16	S. Orsola	1782	-	PORTA PRADELLA
17	S. Cristoforo	1782	Headquarters of the Augustinian Fathers	PORTA PUSTERLA
18	S. Maria del Carmine	1783	New customs	PORTO CATENA
A	Ospedale Grande			PORTA MULINA

Figure 4. Map of Monastic Reuse in the City of Mantua (1771–1785). The map illustrates the location of the main religious buildings suppressed under the Habsburg reforms and their subsequent repurposing. Black numbers identify abolished monastic complexes (e.g., 4: Jesuit College), which were converted into orphanages, hospitals, barracks, schools, or civic institutions. The letter A marks the Ospedale Grande, reinforced as the city's main healthcare center. The reuse of former ecclesiastical spaces followed a logic of infrastructural compensation, aimed at strengthening welfare and social control in a city marked by a weak and fragmented civic network

CARING AND SEPARATING: FORMER CONVENTS AS HOSPITALS AND ASYLUMS

The transformation of convent buildings into hospital facilities was one of the strategies favored by the Habsburg state to address the severe healthcare deficiencies in late eighteenth-century Lombardy[33]. In a context where existing hospitals proved inadequate – in terms of bed numbers, hygienic conditions, management capacity, and the treatment of complex illnesses – desacralized convents offered an architectural opportunity ready for reuse: solid, autonomous, walled, already designed for isolation and regulated daily life. As often emerges from the reports of the *Giunta economale*, the conventual typology of double-loggia cloisters made religious buildings easily adaptable to all public and collective functions[34].

A technical commission composed of a physician, a surgeon, and a pharmacist was tasked with assessing the healthcare system in Lombardy. Of the eighteen active hospitals, with 2,010 beds and about 31,750 patients treated annually, only a few met the efficiency standards required by modern medicine[35]. "Hospitals were few and lacked beds, equipment, and services, mostly managed by the incompetent," to the extent that they excluded "chronic patients, incurables, the insane, the rickety, and those with venereal diseases" [36].

The reorganization of convent spaces was intertwined with a broader epistemological transformation: the emergence of clinical knowledge based on the separation of diseases[37]. Where previously a social and charitable logic had prevailed, now a classificatory rationality took hold: mentally ill, infectious, chronically ill, and venereal patients were isolated in distinct areas, each with specific therapeutic functions and behavioral rules. In this process, convent architecture was not only reused but reinterpreted: cloisters became walking spaces, cells tools for therapeutic isolation, dormitories subdivided according to nosographic categories[38].

The case of Milan exemplifies a gradual evolution toward specialization. Since 1456, there had been a hospital for the mentally ill at the convent of San Vincenzo in Prato (called "dei Matti"), strategically located near Porta Ticinese. However, in 1784, the building was converted into a workhouse, and the mentally ill were moved to the former Jesuit complex of Senavra, a large site outside Porta Tosa: spacious, well-ventilated, dry, and sufficiently distant from the city (fig. 5). This choice reflected a new sensitivity toward the therapeutic environment: "considered healthy, solid, well-ventilated, dry, and sufficiently distant from the city"[39].

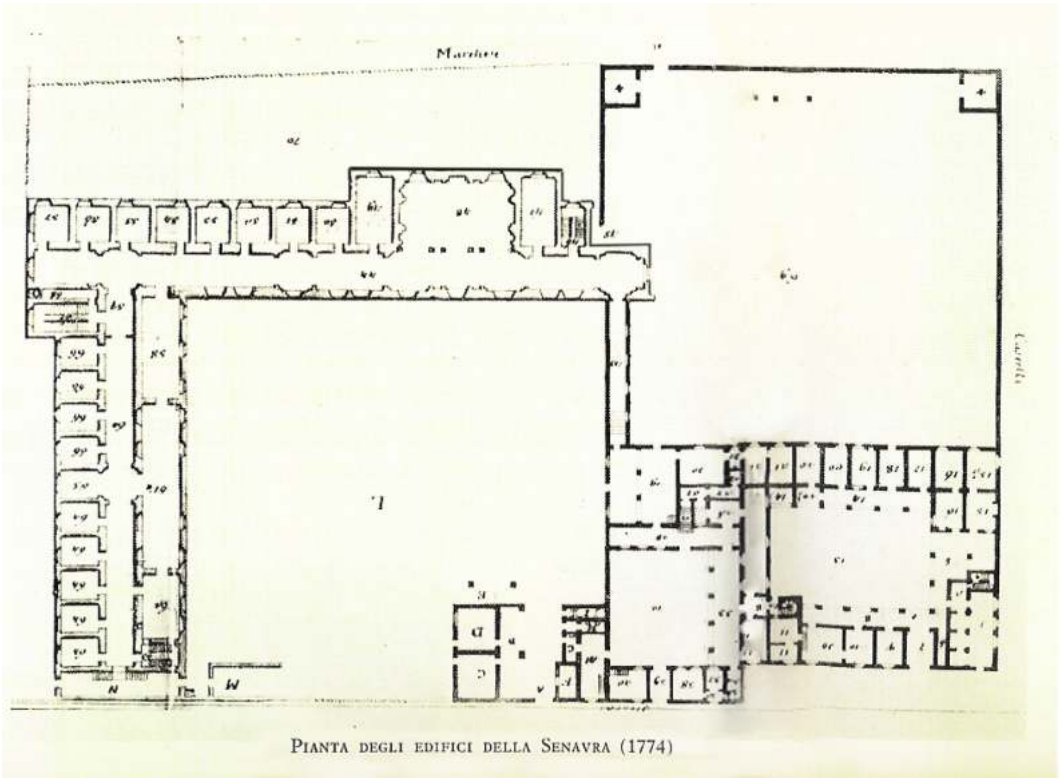


Figure 5. Floor plan of the Senavra complex, 1774 (ASM). This plan shows the layout of the former Jesuit college of Senavra, which was repurposed in 1773 to house Milan's new psychiatric hospital. The structure, organized around large courtyards and symmetrical wings, reflects the adaptation of convent architecture to the requirements of modern medicine: individual cells, segregated wards, service areas, and controlled circulation paths. The reuse of Senavra stands as a paradigmatic case of the transformation of the religious claustrum into a space of confinement and care, in line with the hygienic and disciplinary principles of Josephine reform

In Pavia, the response was slower and less structured: only in 1786–87 was the former convent of Sant'Agata converted into an asylum[40]. Compared to Milan, the project was more modest, but it exemplified a model gradually expanding from the center to the provinces. In Cremona, the solution was even more minimal: two rooms for the mentally ill inside the Hospital of Sant'Alessio, while the main hospital was renovated with targeted interventions by chamber architect Faustino Rodi[41].
Among existing facilities, the *Ospedale Grande* of Mantua stands out for its early adoption of the "pavilion model": already in 1771, despite its limited size, it featured separation of patients by type of illness — a principle that anticipates modern nosological models[42]. The 1772 expansion included "several small rooms intended for the insane," demonstrating an awareness of mental illness absent elsewhere. Additionally, a later project by Piermarini planned the transformation of the entire facility according to principles of cross-ventilation and therapeutic differentiation[43].

These examples reveal different approaches to the healthcare repurposing of convents: Milan, with the Senavra, anticipated a model centered on psychiatric specialization and suburban isolation; Mantua experimented with a more articulated internal distribution; Pavia opted for pragmatic, more adaptive solutions rather than design-driven ones. In all these cases, monastic enclosure – originally designed to preserve silence, contemplation, and order – proved surprisingly compatible with the needs of the new therapeutic paradigm, based on separation and classification of bodies[44].
Yet it is particularly in the management of active marginality – vagabonds, beggars, and the unemployed – that the former convent reveals its full potential as a tool of governance: from a space of spiritual retreat to a disciplinary device oriented toward forced productivity. Within this logic, the transformation of suppressed religious complexes into poorhouses-laboratories and urban reformatories takes place[45].

REEDUCATING AND DISCIPLINING: LABOR AS A MEANS OF SOCIAL CONTROL

Alongside healthcare reform, the Habsburg government implemented a systematic policy to contain and reeducate vagrancy, viewed not merely as a social issue but as a moral and economic disorder[46]. Idleness, inactivity, and begging were no longer seen as exclusive objects of religious charity but as phenomena to be regulated through labor discipline. Within this framework, the transformation of convents into poorhouses-laboratories, reformatories, and prisons became part of a broader project of coercive welfare, inspired by a logic of forced social productivity. Convent structures, as architectural legacies of religious enclosure, were particularly well-suited for this purpose: based on a strict regulation of spaces and times, already predisposed to isolation, silence, and control, they were now "reactivated according to a new disciplinary logic[47].
Unlike hospitals, where the focus was on care, these institutions aimed to induce behavior, instill order, monitor, and make industriousness visible. Convents offered infrastructure perfectly suited to this aim: cells, cloisters, refectories, and dormitories could easily be converted into collective dormitories, workshops, and wards divided by gender and function[48].
Milan once again served as the experimental center for this policy[49]. As early as 1753, plans were discussed to build a large Poorhouse near Porta Nuova, conceived as an integrated structure combining a reformatory, prison, and manufacturing workshop (fig. 6) – though it was soon scaled back to a single wing designated as the House of Correction for budgetary reasons[50]. In 1766, thanks to a testamentary bequest from the noble Prince Antonio Tolomeo Trivulzio, the Pio Albergo Trivulzio was established, particularly intended for the care of the elderly. It became a model for other cities due to its "spacious, monumental, and well-designed premises"[51].

Figure 6. Perspective view of the proposed Albergo dei Poveri in Milan, by Giulio Galliori (late 18th century). This architectural rendering illustrates the ambitious plan by Giulio Galliori for a large-scale Albergo dei Poveri in Milan, designed as a centralized facility for the care, labor, and correction of marginal populations. With its symmetrical layout, separate pavilions, and central church, the project embodies the functional and disciplinary aesthetics of the Teresian and Josephine reforms. Although never completed, it strongly influenced other welfare institutions across Lombardy

At the same time, it became necessary to separate the House of Correction from the Penitentiary, built near Porta Vercellina, an area with numerous manufacturing industries. This structure, also based on prisoner labor, consisted of two large rooms of over 400 square meters each, designed more by a road engineer than an architect – a sign of the increasing importance of technical function over monumental form[52]. In 1777, to enhance its economic output, adjacent workshops were built and assigned to the inmates for artisanal production.

Nearby stood the already-mentioned former convent of San Vincenzo in Prato, previously used as an asylum. In 1784, highlighting the area's productive vocation, the mentally ill were transferred to the Senavra, and the building was converted into a Voluntary Workhouse for individuals of both sexes. The project called for two separate wings for men and women, across two floors, each housing four large manufacturing spaces. This was the realization of the belief that "curing idleness" could only be achieved "through the promotion of industry and compulsory labor"[53].

In Pavia, the high incidence of unproductive and destitute individuals had already prompted plans in the 1760s to build a Poorhouse. The project, inspired by both philanthropic and corrective ideals, called for a large complex between the gate toward Milan and the monastery of Sant'Epifanio. It was intended to house various categories of the poor – "ashamed poor," infirm priests, orphans, and deviants – divided by type of assistance: support, training, or correction[54]. Alongside this, a civil and military academy was envisioned for the most capable individuals, with the goal of removing part of the marginalized population from idleness and unemployment[55].

However, it was the convent complex of San Fedele, made available by the Josephine suppressions, that became the actual centerpiece of the new welfare reform project. In 1786, engineer Girolamo Pizzocaro was officially tasked with designing a Workhouse in accordance with the rationalizing principles of the Habsburg state. The former convent – spacious, centrally located, and already equipped with an autonomous and compartmentalized structure – was seen as an ideal site for this new institution[56].

Leopold Pollack, building on his experience with Milan's San Vincenzo Workhouse, also submitted a conversion project for the Pavia complex. However, his proposal failed to gain the support of Chancellor Kaunitz[57].

Unlike other Lombard capitals, Mantua at the time had an extremely fragmented welfare system, with a multitude of small entities unevenly distributed across the urban fabric. Alongside the *Ospedale Grande*, the city's main facility for the sick, operated many minor institutes dedicated to specific social categories: the *Ospedale dei poveri orfani di Sant'Antonio*, for abandoned children; the Company of the Holy Trinity, serving pilgrims and catechumens; and various female-run institutions such as the *Pio Luogo della Misericordia*, the *Pio Luogo del Soccorso*, and the *Casa di Sant'Anna delle Derelitte*, which served orphans, spinsters, mistreated, or abandoned women[58].
For the homeless poor, a small overnight shelter was available at the Poorhouse. Despite the limited capacity and irregular distribution of these facilities – which compromised their effectiveness – the city lacked a unified and adequate welfare center[59].
The differences between these three contexts reveal the flexibility of the Habsburg model. Milan developed centralized and specialized structures with a strong productive vocation; Pavia emphasized an educational, meritocratic, and selective function; Mantua, unlike the other capitals, did not build a centralized institution for assistance and reeducation, but instead made use of existing buildings.
The convent thus became a normative space for marginalized adults, where labor was a means of redemption and forced productivity[60]. But the same principle – order, discipline, control – was applied to a group even more central to the reform project: children. Indeed, it was with regard to orphaned or abandoned children that the claustrum in its secular form became a laboratory of civic training and moral shaping[61].

EDUCATING AND PRODUCING: CHILDHOOD AS THE OBJECT OF MODERN WELFARE

In the social reform project promoted by the Habsburg monarchy, abandoned or orphaned children held a central position[62]. Poor children were now seen as potential human capital to be recovered, educated, and employed: assistance was no longer limited to feeding and sheltering, but needed to educate them in labor, discipline, and order. In this new vision, the orphan became a "child of the State," and the desacralized convent – once dedicated to spiritual formation – was transformed into an educational and productive space.
With the 1772 decree, Maria Theresa officially assigned the care of orphans in each Lombard capital to the State, mandating the creation of public and centralized orphanages. Many of the resources freed up by the suppressions were redirected specifically for this purpose, launching a genuine building program for social care that involved the main cities of Lombardy[63].
In Milan, the most emblematic project was the transformation of the Benedictine convent of San Pietro in Gessate into the new boys' orphanage. The task was entrusted to Giuseppe Piermarini, who undertook a radical yet respectful renovation of the original structure. The new complex was organized around two courtyards: one for rural activities, and the other for dormitories, the refectory, and workshops arranged on two levels. The spaces were designed to be not only functional and well-ventilated, but also to represent the rational and stable order of the State. The requirement to teach a trade to the orphans led to the creation of internal workshops (1777–1780), making the convent ideal in its new educational-work function (fig. 7)[64].

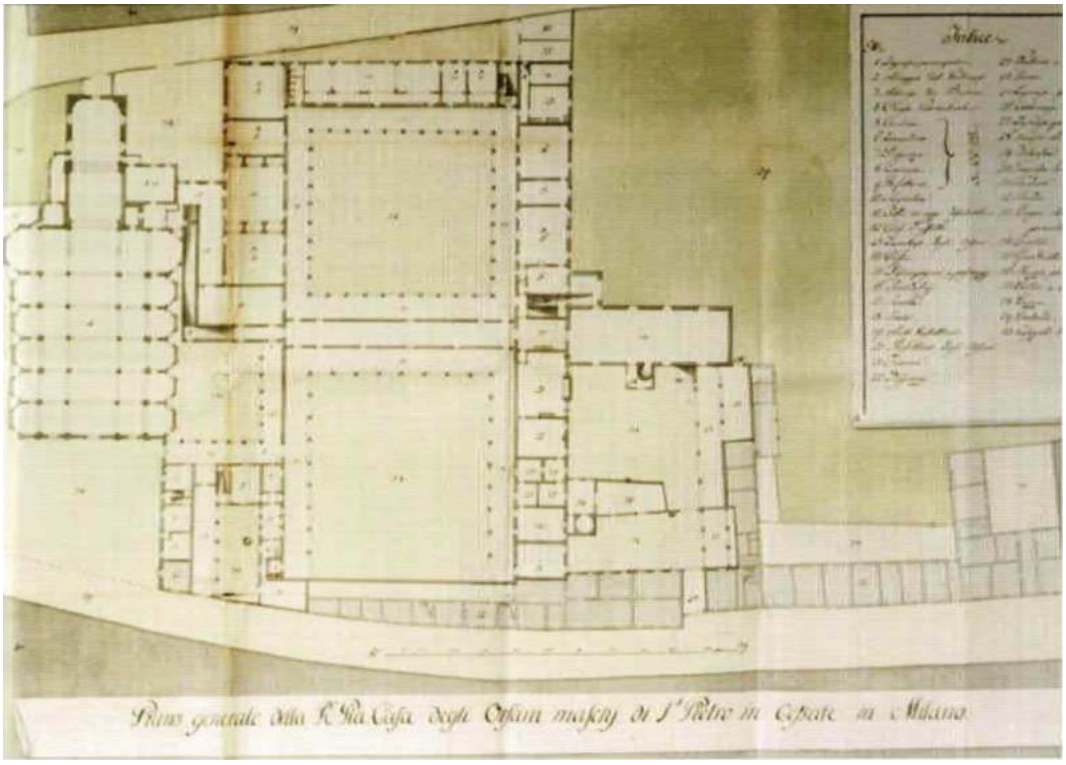


Figure 7. General plan of the Male Orphanage of San Pietro in Gessate, Milan, late 18th century (ASM). This drawing illustrates the transformation of the former Augustinian monastery of San Pietro in Gessate into a public male orphanage, following its suppression in 1770 under Habsburg reforms. The plan reveals a new functional organization of space: residential areas, inner courtyards, refectories, dormitories, and educational facilities were adapted within the existing monastic structure, following a modular and hierarchical logic consistent with the Teresian system of welfare based on discipline, segregation, and control

The treatment reserved for orphan girls, however, was less innovative: the girls' orphanage remained at its historic location in the *Ospizio della Stella*, which was smaller and less renovated. Only in 1784, following further suppressions, was the complex expanded to include the former convent of Santa Maria di Loreto ("Ochette"), intended to house girls with physical and mental disabilities[65].

Unlike other Lombard cities, Mantua did not have a proper orphanage. Childcare, like poor relief, was provided by a patchwork of small, often female-run organizations located in cramped or poorly equipped facilities. The mandate to establish an orphanage thus opened up the possibility of experimenting with a unified model that would house both orphans and poor adults, based on a rationale of rationalized care and economic restraint (fig. 8). The project of a mixed orphanage was innovative for Mantua, but absorbed much of the available resources, delaying – or possibly discouraging – the creation of a Poorhouse[66].

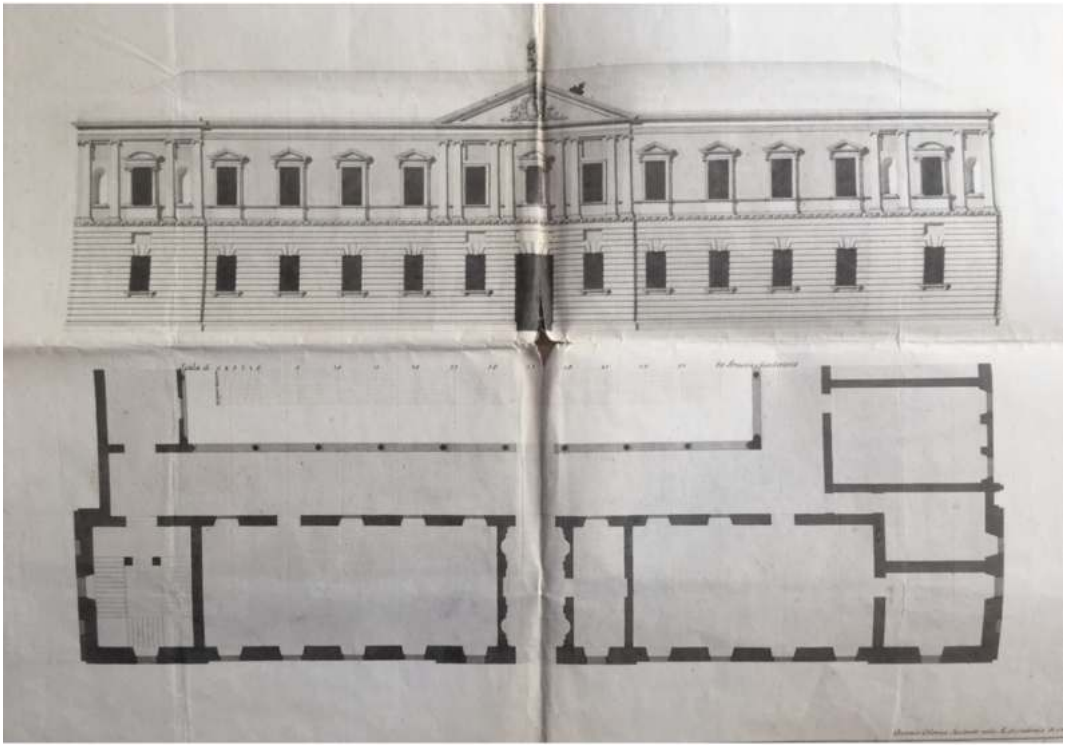


Figure 8. Project for the façade and plan of the Orphanage of Sant'Agnese in Mantua, 1775 (ASM). This architectural drawing illustrates the transformation of the former Sant'Agnese convent into an orphanage, following its suppression in 1775. The neoclassical façade and internal reorganization reflect the ideals of sobriety, symmetry, and functional clarity characteristic of reformed architecture under Habsburg rule. The intervention was part of a broader program to repurpose monastic spaces for public welfare and child supervision

In Mantua, where no centralized structure for abandoned children yet existed, an attempt was made to concentrate both orphans and poor adults into one single complex. The general orphanage, housed in the former Augustinian convent of Sant'Agnese merged with the *Pio Luogo del Soccorso*, was initially assigned to Piermarini, then reassigned to chamber architect Paolo Pozzo[67]. The project envisioned a mixed institution, including dormitories, refectories, textile workshops, and separated areas for boys and girls.

The rising costs of renovations and the 1784 edict by Joseph II, which mandated strict gender separation and functional classification of care environments, led to the interruption of the project and its reconversion into a barracks. The boys were transferred to the former convent of Santa Lucia, the girls to Santa Maria Maddalena, adjacent to the *Pio Luogo della Misericordia*. The architectural intervention, by Pozzo and Pollack, followed the new hygienic-sanitary guidelines: well-ventilated spaces, infirmaries, bathrooms, and no superfluous decoration. The clean, regular articulation of the façades reflected the Enlightenment ideal of functional transparency and moral discipline[68].

In Pavia, the conditions of the existing orphanages (San Siro for girls, San Majolo for boys) were so dire that a complete overhaul was necessary. After various proposals, it was decided to concentrate all children – both boys and girls – in the monastery of San Felice, renovated under the supervision of Pollack[69]. Here too, the monastic building offered a modular structure that could be easily adapted to new functions: cells became dormitories, cloisters turned into recreational courtyards, and refectories were repurposed as training classrooms.

What emerges from this comparison is a strong ideological consistency – labor, discipline, hygiene, differentiation – accompanied by operational differences tied to local resources, building quality, and the influence of key figures such as Piermarini or Pollack. If the orphan was now seen as human

capital to be recovered, knowledge itself became political capital to be managed[70]. It was not just about providing care, but about forming useful, disciplined, and informed citizens. Hence the repurposing of convents into spaces for public education and the secular production of knowledge – the final outcome of the Enlightenment project to secularize the claustrum.

INSTRUCTING AND GOVERNING: THE CONVENTS OF SECULAR KNOWLEDGE

In the vast project of urban repurposing promoted by the Habsburg monarchy, education was one of the most strategic areas for building a new social order[71]. Education served not only cultural needs but also a clear logic of governance: to instruct meant to discipline, to produce useful knowledge, and to spread civic values. In this light, convents and monasteries also offered ideal spaces to house schools, academies, and universities: centrally located, solid, self-sufficient, and already designed for communal life[72].
The case of *Brera* in Milan is emblematic. After the suppression of the Jesuit Order in 1773, the entire complex was designated to become a citadel of secular knowledge. In a 1774 decree, Maria Theresa ordered that "all revenues from the vacated Jesuit estate would be used for public education," explicitly stating the will to convert ecclesiastical wealth into educational capital for the State[73]. The Jesuit college was repurposed as the *Liceo di Brera*, and later became home to the Academy of Fine Arts, the Astronomical Observatory, the Botanical Garden, the *Braidense* Library, and the School of Mechanics. The coexistence of these institutions under one roof reflected the new vision of integrated and public knowledge, in sharp contrast to the previous confessional model of teaching (fig. 9)[74].

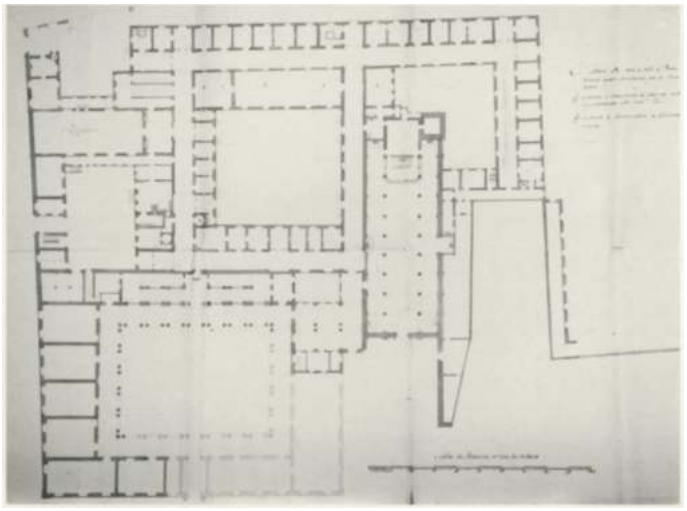


Figure 9. Plan of the former Jesuit convent of Brera, Milan, by Giuseppe Piermarini, c. 1780 (ASM). This floor plan documents the reconfiguration of the Brera complex following the suppression of the Jesuit order and its conversion into a multifunctional cultural hub under Habsburg rule. Piermarini's project integrated newly established educational, scientific, and artistic institutions – including the Academy of Fine Arts, the Observatory, the Library, and the Botanical Garden – within a reorganized monastic space, shaped by Enlightenment ideals of symmetry, clarity, and functional order. Brera became a symbolic model for the secular transformation of the claustrum, a central aim of Lombardy's reformist agenda

In Pavia, the reform of the university – launched in 1771 at the sovereign's direct initiative and carried out under the direction of Carlo Firmian – was accompanied by a new geography of educational spaces[75]. Several religious buildings were converted to host scientific cabinets, classrooms, and

anatomical theaters, libraries, and student colleges (fig. 10). A report from the *Giunta Economale* stated that buildings were evaluated "with attention to the good use that could be made of them for the public good, and in particular for the cultivation of sciences and the arts" (1772)[76]. These were not just available spaces: they were spaces already structured for discipline, concentration, and separation from urban disorder – and therefore ideal for the experimental and rational knowledge that the state sought to promote[77].

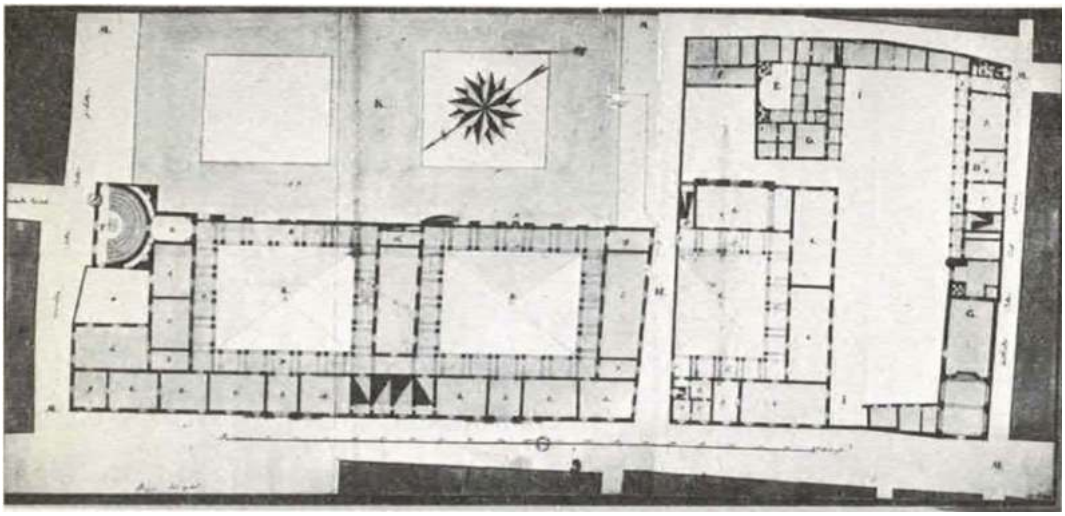


Figure 10. Plan of the University of Pavia, by Leopoldo Pollack, 1785ca. (ASM). Commissioned as part of the Austrian Enlightenment reforms, Leopoldo Pollack's redesign of the University of Pavia is one of the most significant neoclassical interventions in late 18th-century Lombardy. The plan reveals a rational layout based on a sequence of symmetrical courtyards, with designated spaces for teaching, research, and academic life. The architectural order and clarity embodied Enlightenment ideals, aligning spatial organization with the broader vision of reformed higher education

In Mantua, the *Palazzo dello Studio* – formerly Jesuit – represents a successful example of adapting a pre-existing religious complex to the new educational model promoted by the Teresian school system[78]. The renovation works preserved the original layout of the religious complex but overlaid it with new functions aligned with the state's secular education program, such as the Chemistry Laboratory and the Physics Cabinet. The project aimed to produce large, well-ventilated, healthy, and rigorous environments, in line with the imperial decree of 1784, which established minimum architectural standards for all schools and orphanages in Lombardy: "absence of ornamentation, regularity of openings, functional separation of spaces, and provision of bathrooms and infirmaries"[79].
The transformations of *Brera*, Pavia, and Mantua therefore followed a shared logic: to reuse the physical shell of the sacred in order to establish a new architecture of public education. The convent – once a space of separation and silence – was not demolished but repurposed: from a place of spiritual salvation to an instrument for building the citizen[80].

CONCLUSIONS

The 18th-century conversions of convents in Austrian Lombardy do not merely represent a trajectory of functional secularization. More profoundly, they demonstrate the surprising resilience of a spatial model born of exclusion and capable of surviving ideological change. The claustrum was not abolished, but reformulated: from sacred space to infrastructure of control, from a place of individual salvation to a collective mechanism of governance.
In each Lombard capital, the transformation followed different paths, adapting to specific institutional roles and urban-social structures. Milan, the

administrative capital of the Kingdom, stood out for adopting a centralized and specialized model: the former convent of San Vincenzo in Prato was repurposed first as an asylum, then as a workhouse; Senavra became a modern psychiatric hospital; Brera was transformed into a citadel of secular knowledge. Here, enclosure was reconfigured as an instrument of medical, productive, and educational control, in line with a broader, well-planned urban governance project.

Pavia, a university city with an educational vocation, instead showed a more selective transformation focused on instruction: the former convent of San Fedele was designated for labor reeducation, while San Felice became a mixed orphanage. The emphasis here was on civic formation and the disciplining of bodies through education and merit. Enclosure survived as a device of concentration and moral profiling — aimed at forming citizens rather than supervising deviants.

Mantua, finally, a city with a weaker and more fragmented welfare infrastructure, adopted a mostly adaptive approach to reuse. The former Sant'Agnese was designated as a general orphanage, later reconverted into a barracks for economic reasons; other complexes were given multiple, compensatory functions. Rather than a systematic model, a pragmatic logic prevailed, where enclosure was reactivated as a building resource in a context of scarcity.

In all cases, the convent was not simply adapted: it was reinvented as a machine for care, containment, reeducation, or formation. Separation, silence, compartmentalization, and the rituality of time and gestures – foundational elements of religious enclosure – were reactivated through secular, medical, educational, or productive codes.

Modernity did not dissolve the claustrum: it translated it, institutionalized it, and made it appear neutral. The fortress of the sacred became a laboratory of utility, an instrument of good governance, a stage for the public good. Yet, in its walled geometries, its regulated rhythms, its orderly voids, it still speaks a language of separation. Enclosure, far from disappearing, has been transformed into a spatial grammar of power.

NOTES

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REIMAGINING THE URBAN PRISON: A NEW PARADIGM OF RELATIONSHIPS AND SOCIAL REINTEGRATION *NOTES FROM SAN VITTORE, MILAN*

By Gianfranco Orsenigo (Politecnico di Milano)

ABSTRACT

The relationship between prisons and cities has long been characterized by spatial and symbolic distancing. While detention facilities were once integrated into the urban fabric, they have been progressively relocated to peripheral and marginal areas over time, reinforcing their isolation from society. This article explores the historical trajectory of prison architecture, from the Enlightenment-era transformation of punitive spaces into places of rehabilitation to the modern-day reintegration challenges.

Focusing on San Vittore Prison in Milan, a historic institution embedded within the city, the contribution investigates whether a prison should be considered an urban anomaly to be removed or a potential resource for both inmates and the surrounding community. The ReverseLab project, developed by Laboratorio Carcere- Politecnico di Milano, takes an innovative approach to rethinking the relationship between detention and the city. Through artistic interventions, it seeks to reopen dialogue between the prison and society, challenging the notion that incarceration must mean exclusion. Instead of dismantling historical prisons, ReverseLab suggests revitalising them through community engagement, transforming them into hybrid spaces of culture, creativity, and rehabilitation.

The case study of ReverseLab at San Vittore Prison tested the potential of interdisciplinary research, artistic production, and participatory processes in reshaping the prison's role within Milan. Through an experimental transformation of a disused prison space into an 'art gallery', the project exemplifies how integrating the voices of inmates, prison staff, and the public can challenge traditional paradigms of incarceration. In doing so, it envisions a model where prisons are not merely invisible institutions at the city's margins but active spaces of social reintegration, education, and cultural production.

> *I think very few people would remember to include the prison when drawing a city map. They might add the hospital, the courthouse, the school, the playground, and the kindergarten, but they would rarely think of the prison. We look at the prison from afar and consider it something separate from us. For example, while driving on the highway to Varese, we might notice this enormous grey building blending in with the grey of the highway – that is Bollate Prison.*

Cosima Buccoliero[1]

This is the exercise that Cosima Buccoliero, director of several Italian prisons, proposes to the audience at the beginning of her TED Conference talk. It is a practical exercise that allows her to introduce a fundamental question: "What do we see of the prison? Or rather, when do we see the prison? We never actually see it"[2]. The director reminds us that, despite Italian laws promoting detention facilities focused on rehabilitation and a necessary relationship with the outside world, society still perceives prisons as "real places outside all places"[3].

DISTANCING THE PRISON: A LONG PROCESS

If today we are used to thinking of prison as a place outside the city, the process of distancing began centuries ago in a slow, complex, and non-linear way. This shift started when the prison became the subject of specific architectural reflection, imagining it as a specialized space, just like other modern city functions, rather than being integrated into different buildings, repurposing existing structures such as convents, hospices, castles or fortified architectures.
To summarize this evolution, it can be stated that, until the 18th century, prisons were conceived as places of punishment and containment. Consequently, they were accommodated within various structures, often situated near courthouses or even integrated into them, “with the austerity of the court itself serving as a symbolic representation of justice”[4]. This tendency began to change in the Papal State, which is usually credited with building the first cellular-structured prison: the *Carceri Nuove*, complex in Via Giulia in Rome. It was built between 1652 and 1655 by Innocente X, based on a design by Antonio del Grande. A few decades later, with the San Michele correction house 1701-1704 also in Rome[5], we witnessed the first detention institution where the idea of treatment informs the building structure. The inmates are segregated at night in individual cells overlooking a large room for collective work, in silence, during the day.
During the Enlightenment, a profound rethinking of punishment began. The principle of legality is affirmed as a guarantee of individual freedom and the distinction between the moral sphere and that of law. Punishment, now seen as a humanized measure, was transformed into a tool for prevention and social security, placing rehabilitation at the center of detention. The evolution of the aims of imprisonment inevitably reflected on the first prison theories that questioned the most appropriate methods to achieve them. In this context, prison architecture took on specific functional characteristics and was designed with special building types. Based on this new radical vision of detention, two mutually divergent projects were drawn up at the end of the 18th century.

The first proposal was designed by Claude-Nicolas Ledoux’s Aix-en-Provence Prison (1784), a square building with four inner courtyards. The strength of

the proposal, however, lies in the exterior appearance: a sizeable prismatic body with four massive towers at the corners, a barrel vault covering the central portico and a series of imperceptible windows punctuating the full and unadorned walls. The project is part of an extensive series of public buildings that Ledoux designed for Aix, though it was never realized.
The Panopticon is the second model. It was developed by the Bentham brothers (1787) and was based on the principle of "total inspection", allowing a few guards to oversee many prisoners efficiently. For this reason, it is considered the first architectural figure of surveillance. The layout consisted of two concentric rings: the outer ring contained cells, each equipped with an external window and an inner grate to ensure constant visibility. The inner ring housed a watchtower, allowing guards to monitor all detainees without being seen. The idea was to create a sense of perpetual observation, encouraging inmates to regulate their behavior.
This second model gained widespread popularity, particularly in America, where it led to the formalization of two prison systems. The Philadelphia model advocated for constant isolation combined with prayer and labor. In contrast, the Auburn model permitted daytime communal work but enforced night-time solitary confinement, with an absolute prohibition on communication among prisoners. The term panoptic

> in 19th-century literature and subsequent prison manuals, was often associated not with Bentham's original design but rather with the star-shaped or radial layouts, where cell wings radiated from a central hub[6].

In this period, the prison building gained increasing autonomy, both in its meaning and spatial configuration: "it is freed on all four sides, having four façades"[7]. However, these reformulations did not foster "a perspective that engages with the environment in which the penitentiary is situated, measuring its interactions, criticalities, and potentialities"[8]. The specialization of prisons coincided with their distancing from the city.
A significant example is the *Millbank Penitentiary* in London, built along the Thames in a swampy area on the southwestern edge of the city. Bentham's Panopticon was initially intended to be built here, but the project was abandoned for multiple reasons. A competition was then launched and won by William Williams with a design that envisaged a hexagonal central courtyard surrounded by pentagonal courtyards, each positioned outside the central space. Inaugurated in 1816, it was demolished in 1892. In Paris, with the decision to replace the Prison of *Madelonettes* in 1861, the construction of La Santé began, and it was inaugurated in 1867. The chosen site was a former coal market, a marginal area typically used for large-scale urban infrastructure and functions. A similar case occurred in Rennes (1867–1876), where the prison was built south of the city, beyond the railway, near the train station, in a city sector where, in addition to the station, it also housed the barracks and parade ground. From the nineteenth century, prisons followed the broader phenomenon of expelling major urban functions, relocating them to low-value lands, often marginal, unhealthy, and environmentally precarious sites. This process reflects the logic of clustering new service facilities[9], a large network of objects, practices, and actors that Wacquant later described as "urban outcasts"[10].

PRISONS IN ITALY SINCE THE UNIFICATION

Italy experienced similar processes. In the *Regno delle Due Sicilie*, the Bourbons, fascinated by the philosophy of the panopticon, built two new

central prisons: one in Avellino (1832) and another in Palermo (1836): the *Ucciardone*, the famous detention house of the city. These were designed following the radial model inspired by the *Cherry Hill* Prison (1829) in Philadelphia. The radial or star-shaped layout became the predominant model. However, the *Auburn* model prevailed in the Regno di Sardegna e Piemonte. In Alessandria, a competition was announced for the construction of a new prison on the site of the former convent of San Bernardino, along the bastions of Porta Marengo, at the city's edge. The competition was won by the French architect Henri Labrouste (1801-1875), who rigorously followed the detailed functional program provided. The prison was built between 1840 and 1844.

With the unification of Italy in 1861, there was an immediate need to collect and standardize the various existing legal frameworks, including those related to the penitentiary system. Initially, the Sardinian Penal Code was extended to the entire Italian territory. However, within two years, the government issued five new regulations, each governing a different type of detention facility: Penal baths (September 1860), Judicial prisons (January 1861), Houses of punishment (January 1862), Houses of relegation (August 1862) and Houses of custody (November 1862). Each regulation outlined the institutions' operation and the custodial and administrative staff structure. The rules required nighttime separation of prisoners and mandatory daytime work with continuous silence.

Alongside these regulations, a survey was conducted about the conditions of the prisons inherited by the Italian state. The outcome was a harshly negative evaluation: "it reveals a heterogeneous and poorly functional space. Few buildings can be considered 'modern'"[11]. This assessment laid the groundwork for a new prison construction program. Of particular significance was the initiative to organise a competition, with a well-structured program, for constructing new judicial prisons in Turin and Genoa. In the case of Turin, the winner was Giuseppe Polani (1815 – 1894), the chief of the city's land registry, who would go on to design numerous prisons in Italy[12]. His rectangular proposal represented an evolution of the panoptic model, incorporating advanced technical solutions regarding cell design, ventilation systems, and heating. However, difficulties arose during its construction, not technically, because, as Dubini explains, "the building is a standardised object, designed to be inserted into any context"[13]. The resistance was primarily related to the choice of location and conflicting interests tied to urban land dynamics and aesthetics. When the Ministry identified a location near Piazza d'Armi, in the southern part of the city, the Municipal Council strongly opposed the choice:

> it is very unfortunate to see such an important and beautiful area, the most appropriate for the future expansion of the city, occupied by the prison [...] and that the nature and destination of the planned building and the wall that is to enclose it can only make that joyful and pleasant place of recreation, so dear and popular with the people of Turin, becomes sad and melancholic.

As a result, the Ministry decided to relocate the prison to a more peripheral area, near the railway, in a district that also housed the *Foro Boario* (cattle market) and the *Nuovo Macello* (new slaughterhouse). This case is similar to other European examples previously mentioned, and it would become a model for large-scale prison constructions, influencing both technical guidelines and location criteria. In a comparable context, the new prison in Milan was later built near the new slaughterhouse and the San Vittore monastery, but we will return to it later.

In 1889, the new Penal Code (Zanardelli) was enacted, followed by the first law on prison building, allocating budget funds for constructing and maintaining penitentiary facilities. The new law and penal code laid the foundations for the General Regulation of Prison Facilities.
These reforms attempted to go beyond the cellular model, drawing inspiration from the “gradual model”, also known as the "Irish model", which provided four differentiated treatment phases. In the first period, the offender is placed in strict solitary confinement, followed by night-time segregation only, with collective work during the day and, ultimately, conditional release. Inevitably, the model for building the new prisons also changed, adopting the so-called ‘telegraph pole structure’. This layout consisted of parallel buildings connected by a central corridor, generally aligned with the prison's main entrance. The adoption of this model responded to several needs. It facilitated the categorization of prisoners, simplified internal circulation, and enabled quick access to buildings in case of emergencies. It also allowed for future expansion of the facility and ensured security by encouraging the segregation, division, and control of many inmates.
While the philosophy of punishment and the prison model evolved, one constant remained: penitentiary institutions continued to be built outside urban centers. This trend did not change even with the second prison reform of 1932. The only exceptions were prisons built under the Austro-Hungarian government, which were functionally and organically integrated with court services, as seen in the cases of Gorizia (1902), Trieste (1911), and Trento (1881).

This heritage built, initially constructed in peripheral, isolated, and often disadvantaged locations, soon found itself “reached by the city”. The urban area of the prisons changed radically. The more marginal they had been at the construction time, the more they now found themselves in dense urban conditions, where new centralities had developed, property values had increased, and diverse populations had settled.
In the twentieth century, especially after World War II, the trend of distancing prisons from urban centers became even more pronounced, following increasingly banal location logic. Marcetti notes that prisons were placed “no longer on the outskirts but in whatever available areas lay along the shifting frontier of contemporary urbanization”[14]. In the new locations, the construction of a relationship between the city and the prison became slower and more complex, due to their remoteness from essential services, which could otherwise help mitigate their isolation, and from the associative networks that play a crucial role in fostering social and cultural reintegration processes. In this context, the prison increasingly reinforces its role as a “scanned or avoided place”[15]. The only territorial connection sought for new penitentiary institutions is infrastructural, such as proximity to relevant road junctions: “the prison near the motorway”[16]. Some of them are: the Nuoro Prison (1953-64) designed by M. Ridolfi (1904-1984), W. Frankl (1907-1994); Rebibbia Prison (1971) designed by S. Lenci (1927-2001), and Sollicciano Prison in Florence (1983) designed by A. Mariotti, G. Campani, P. Inghirami, I. Castore, P. Rizzi, and E. Camici (fig. 1)[17].

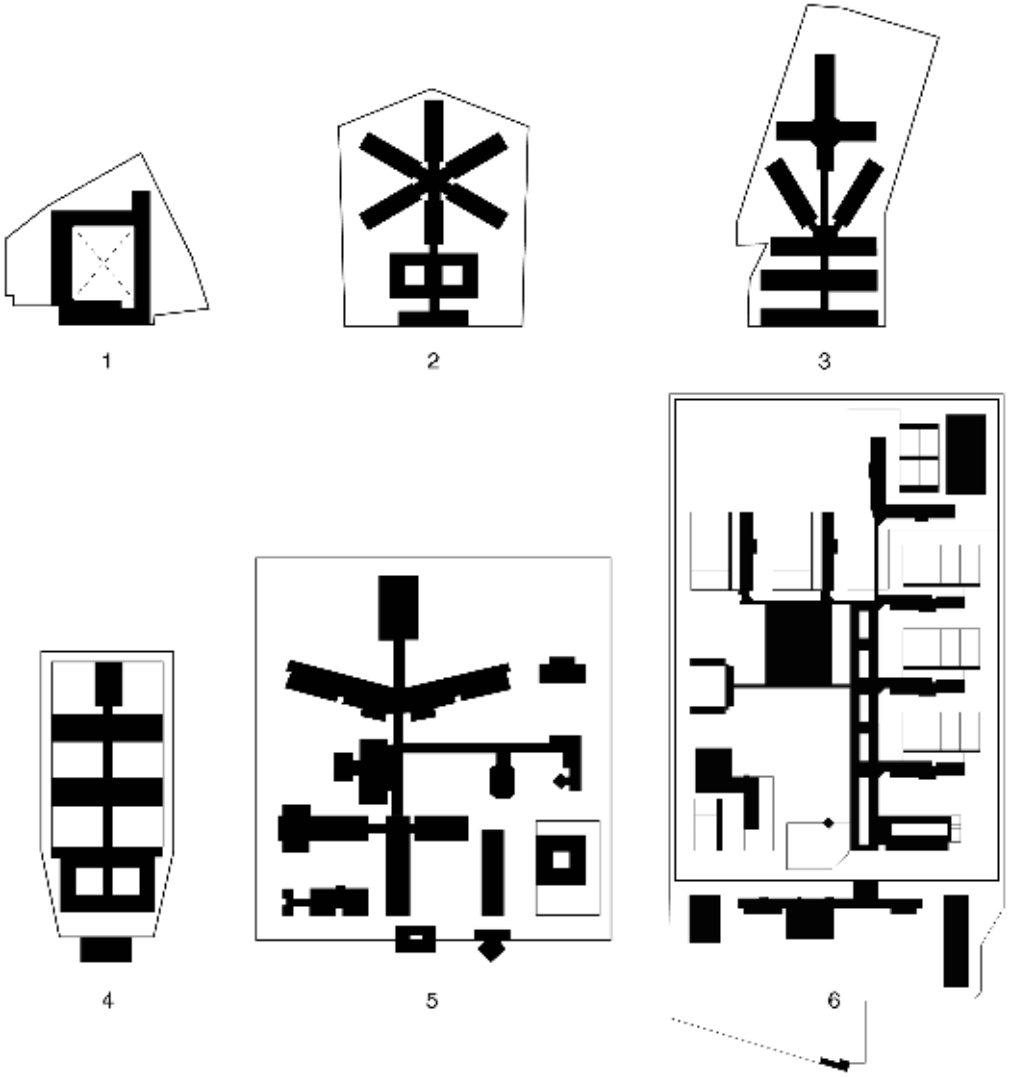

Figure 1. Comparison of prevailing types of prisons in Italy: 1. CC of Lucca (14th century); 2. CC of Milano - San Vittore (1879); 3. CC of Regina Coeli - Roma (1882); 4. CC of Caltanissetta (1908); 5. CC of Foggia (1963); CR of Milano- Bollate (2000)

BETWEEN DISMANTLING AND REUSE: SEIZED AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

The construction of new prisons in the last century often started from the demand for new beds[18], frequently justified by the need to decommission historic prisons. The arguments for decommissioning are commonly based on technical reasons, particularly the poor living and working conditions that these older structures allow. While this is a valid concern in many cases, it should not be the only factor considered in the evaluation.

Starting in the late 20th century, many prisons were disused, but not all have been followed by recovery and valorization projects. Sometimes, facilities have been converted to house services related to justice, as in the ongoing process of the new *Cittadella della Giustizia* (town of justice) in the Perugia prison, which finally closed in 2005.

In some cases, these spaces have been transformed into museums. In Italy, one example is the Prison Museum at *Le Nuove* prison (1870-1986) in Turin, which was permanently closed in 2003 and now narrates stories of imprisonment. Another case is *Le Murate* in Florence (1883–1985), which now houses a center dedicated to contemporary Florentine culture and beyond.

Numerous similar examples exist across Europe and beyond, including the Horsens Prison Museum (Fængselsmuseet, 1853-2006) in Denmark, Peterhead Prison in Aberdeen, UK (1888-2013), and Patarei Sea Fortress Prison in Tallinn, Estonia (1919-2018).
In other cases, prisons have been transformed into tourist facilities, often entirely disconnected from their penitentiary past or merely exploiting their imagery. This is the case for small Italian island prisons, such as Pianosa (1858-1997) and Asinara (1885-1998). As well as more striking examples of luxury hotel conversions, including Het Arresthuis (1863–2007) in Roermond (Netherlands), Malmaison (closed in 1996) in Oxford (United Kingdom), and Långholmen (1725-1975) in Sweden. In these transformations, the theme of detention disappears or becomes purely vernacular.

Even in cases that seem more promising, such as the reactivation of the Palencia prison (1851-1997) in Spain and its transformation into a cultural centre[19], or the participatory process of reopening the spaces of *La Model* Prison (1904-2017) in Barcelona to the city following its recent closing[20]. These sites often bear witness to significant historical events. In the case of *La Model*, for instance, the prison was both a symbol and a tool of political repression under Franco's regime, as well as a site of human rights violations that occurred within it. These buildings carry a layered and often contradictory legacy. Dealing with historic prisons usually means confronting what has been defined as "dissonant heritage", that is, "a condition in which there is a lack of congruence at a particular time or place between people and the heritage with which they identify"[21]. In the case of prisons, this dissonance is extreme: they are places that can evoke vastly different interpretations – symbols of oppression for some, instruments of justice or rehabilitation for others. These conflicting perceptions, shaped by past events and present values, tend to resurface in discussions about their future. As such, prisons often become contested spaces, where competing narratives struggle for visibility and legitimacy. They are no longer just buildings but stages where society negotiates meaning, memory, and identity.
Working to affirm the principle that the prison is a service to the community, on the one hand, the dismantling of historic prisons in urban centres often brings profound changes to the urban history of a city, as prisons have frequently shaped the social fabric of their surrounding territories. On the other hand, those prisons still in use possess a valuable resource: the proximity to society. Returning to the reflections of Director Cosima Buccoliero, she emphasises that through her years of service, she has learned that

> the breath of the prison must be in sync with that of the city to which it belongs. Without that thread connecting inside and outside, there is no breath. Milan has nourished Bollate, and Bollate represents one of Milan's many faces – the face of an active civil society, of volunteering that becomes the extended arm of public administration in caregiving[22].

It should be remembered that the prison community is made up of multiple actors. In addition to inmates, there are prison officers, who often live in barracks within the prison walls, as well as administrative and healthcare staff, educators, and a varied group of volunteers. A location that is easily accessible primarily facilitates encounters, interactions, and overlaps between the 'internal community' and the 'external community' linked to these groups.
Several nineteenth-century prisons, including *Ucciardone* (1834) in Palermo, *Poggioreale* (1905) in Naples, *Regina Coeli* (1881) in Rome, and San Vittore (1879)

in Milan, are still in use today. Every so often, public debates arise over whether they should be closed. However, rather than simply removing them, the priority should be to evaluate whether they can be upgraded to improve conditions. If possible, at least acceptable, the desirable approach would be to enhance their urban location to fulfil their legal mandate better: to be places of rehabilitation and social reintegration. In Italy, Law No. 354 of 1975 defines rehabilitation and reintegration as the core objectives of imprisonment.

REACTIVATING HISTORIC PRISONS: THE REVERSELAB CASE STUDY

With the belief that community involvement is fundamental for the success of the prison system, a multidisciplinary research group from the Politecnico di Milano – *Laboratorio Carcere* – has been investigating the relational nature of detention spaces for several years. Their work focuses on developing interventions that sensitively open up the lived experience of incarceration to broader society[23].

Since October 2022, the group has been leading activities at Off Campus San Vittore, a space opened by the Politecnico di Milano within the historic prison of San Vittore[24]. These two rooms work as a research-action hub, allowing academic inquiry for and within the prison environment. The overarching aim is to strengthen and concretely establish a dialogue between the inside and the outside worlds, highlighting the opportunities that emerge from this relationship. Within this framework, the team developed the project *ReverseLab. A Space for Contemporary Art Between the Prison and the City*[25].

Opened in 1879, San Vittore Prison was built during the transformation of Milan into a modern city, between Italian unification and the adoption of the first city's urban development plan, drafted by engineer Cesare Beruto (1835-1915) between 1884 and 1889. At that time, various urban improvement projects were carried out to enhance the efficiency of city life. Infrastructure networks such as potable water and sewage systems were developed. New public services, including schools, charitable asylums, a new slaughterhouse, a cemetery, and the new San Vittore prison, were built (fig. 2). These services, essential for the city's expansion, were constructed in the area known as the *broli* between the built-up city and its fortifications. In 1864, the Milan city administration decided to start the project for a new prison to replace the city's three existing detention facilities, which were no longer considered suitable. The new facility was planned along the city bastions, between Porta Genova and Magenta. Designed by engineer Francesco Lucca, it featured a star-shaped cellular structure of six wings, inspired by the panoptic model and reminiscent of the contemporary *Carceri Nuove* in Turin. A five-meter-high perimeter wall surrounded the prison. A 30-meter buffer zone was established where no buildings taller than five meters could be erected. For the next 20 meters, the maximum allowable height was set at 11 meters. This regulation was intended to conceal activities within the prison from public view. By 1910, historical maps already show that the urban expansion of Milan had reached San Vittore, integrating it into the city's growing fabric (fig. 3). Today, the area is one of the most valuable areas of the city.

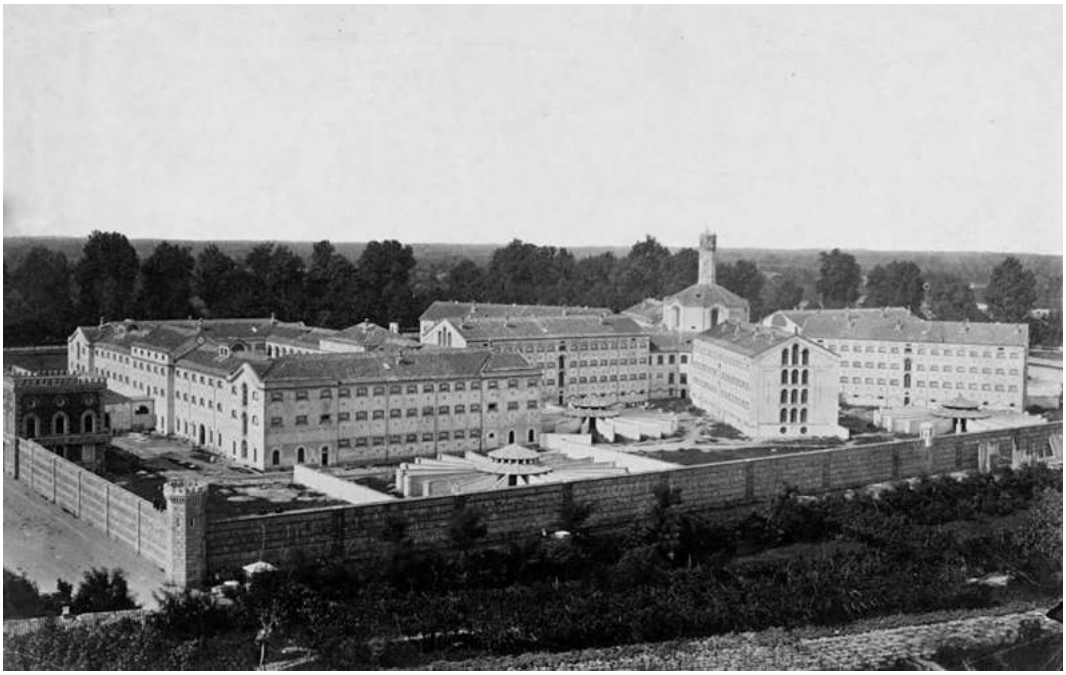

Figure 2. The San Vittore prison has just been completed

Figure 3. The San Vittore Prison in the western part of Milan: city map from 1886 (above) and 1910 (below)

San Vittore Prison and the city of Milan have always had a complex relationship. Today, one must ask: is the prison an alien body that should be removed from the city, or does its location represent an opportunity and

resource for both the institution and urban life? *ReverseLab* embraces the second hypothesis, reversing the prevailing perspective of the prison as an inconvenient function, especially in areas like San Vittore, where real estate values have skyrocketed. In contrast, the city should be a complex, dialectical space, where differences coexist and engage. But dialogue requires mutual knowledge. Understanding the presence of a prison is not straightforward: often, what creates distance is not the physical wall but rather the "suspension of urbanity"[26] imposed by the prison on its surroundings – what we might call a "neutralization" of ties between prison and its environment.
Facing the "San Vittore problem" and fully aware of the fundamental shortcomings and contingent issues affecting the prison, the *ReverseLab* project focuses on the ability to "see inside from the outside and outside from within". Contemporary art has been adopted as a tool to interpret this duality and develop a shared language between the city and the prison. The project has two complementary components. One is the spatial intervention, the redevelopment of an abandoned basement corridor in the first wing of the prison, which has been closed since the 1980s (fig. 4). The second is a participatory art workshop, led by an artist, involving inmates and prison staff in co-creating a contemporary artwork that reflects life inside San Vittore. The exhibition of this collective artwork in the newly reclaimed space became a tangible encounter between internal and external communities.

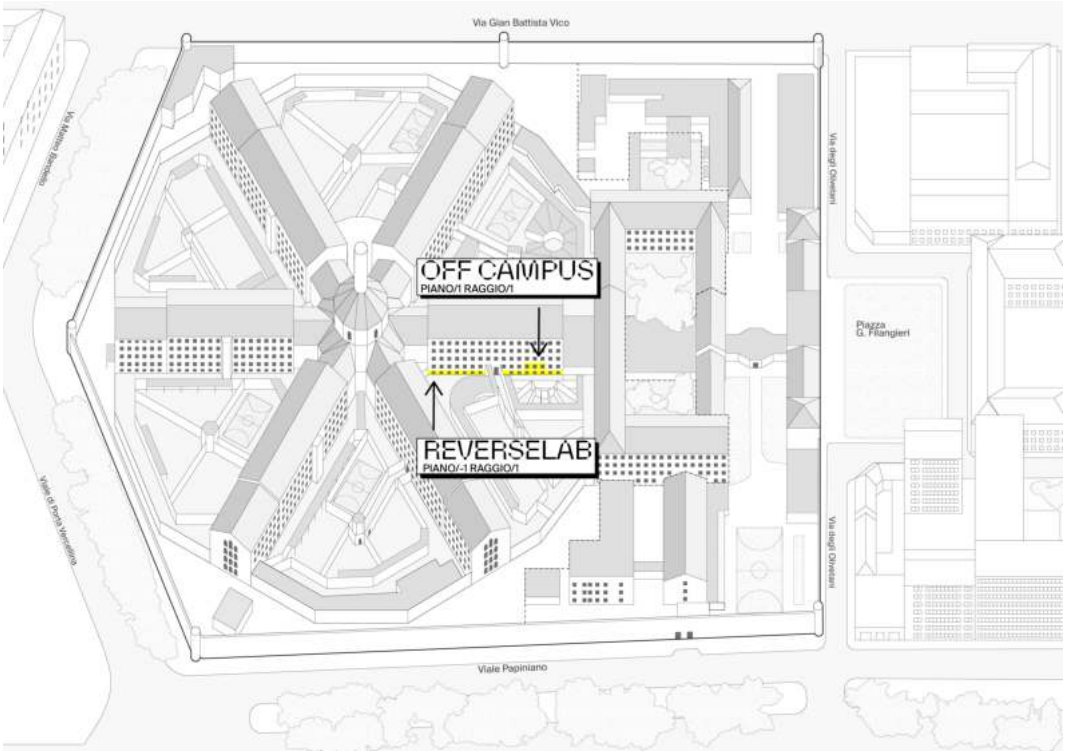

Figure 4. San Vittore prison axonometry with location of ReverseLab space and Off-Campus San Vittore office

The research developed in collaboration with the prison administration has involved the Milan Pavilion of Contemporary Art (PAC) for artistic curatorship, along with two local cultural associations – *Forme Tentative ETS* and *Philo-Pratiche Filosofiche*. It has also received funding from the *Fondazione di Comunità Milano*. The network of partnerships established through this project already represents a small but tangible step toward dialogue and engagement.

RECLAIMING SPACE AS A PRACTICE OF CARE

As previously mentioned, the space chosen for the project is the basement level of the first wing, which, after its closure, had been used as a storage area (fig. 5). The research focuses on this place in close dialogue with the prison administration. Despite its state of neglect, the site has significant potential. It has the exact dimensions and layout as the active prison wings. It is structured around a central gallery measuring 50 meters in length and 5 meters in width, with side cells that inmates once inhabited. Compared to the other basements, this area holds a unique position: not only is it inside the detention area, where external activities are typically not allowed, but it also sits along the mandatory circulation path connecting inmate spaces, service areas, and the prison's main entrance. The access is through a small door to the left of the monumental staircase, which leads to the first-floor corridor and then to the 'rotunda', the symbolic device of the panoptic structure. An unused second entrance at the opposite end connects this wing to the upper detention floors in use. In the past, this wing was designated as a maximum-security area, housing inmates considered highly dangerous, particularly during the years of terrorism in the '70s and '80s of the 20th century, and the *Brigate Rosse*, a profoundly traumatic period in Italian history. Its "tragic beauty" remains evident, still visible in the historical memory of the site (fig. 6).

Figure 5. The ReverseLab space in San Vittore before the regeneration works

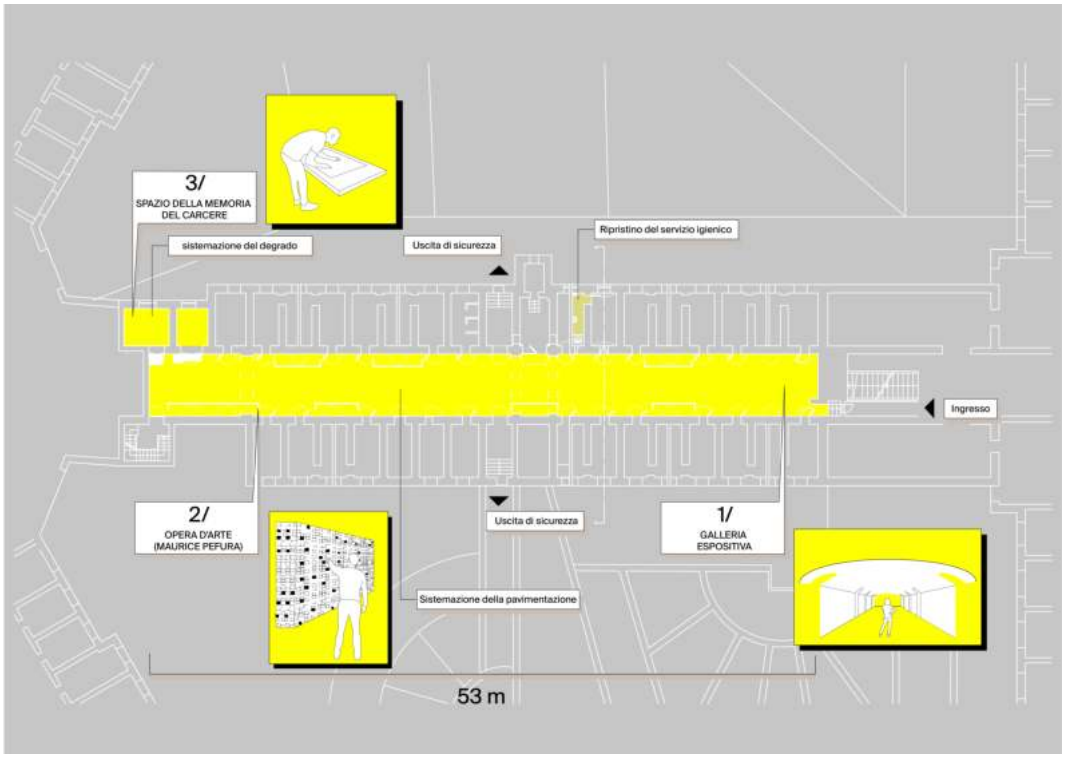

Figure 6. Exhibition layout: Gli artisti sono quelli che fanno casino

The space transformation was conceived as "a collective act of care". The institution, particularly with the collaboration of prison officers, carried out a clearance and archiving operation, removing decades of accumulated objects and documents that had contributed to the space's abandoned appearance. Once emptied, the renovation process adopted an incremental approach, focusing on a few essential actions in line with the limited budget. Visible intervention appears minimal: cleaning, repainting, and new lighting of the central corridor. However, the invisible work was more substantial, involving wall restoration and the initial reactivation of electrical and plumbing systems. More than a simple refurbishment, the project laid the foundations for new infrastructure: a space designed for immediate use, but also open to future adaptation and growth (fig. 7). Its open-ended character was not just a practical decision, but a deliberate methodological choice to keep the space flexible, evolving through new collaborations between the prison and the city. An external contractor carried out the work but also involved the *Manutenzione Ordinaria Fabbricati MOF* (ordinary building maintenance) team, composed of prison officers and inmates who routinely handle repairs within the facility. Their participation strengthened the project's message that renewal is both a physical and relational process.

Figure 7. Redevelopment of the space and setting up of the work in the basement

ART AS ENCOUNTER: THE WORKSHOP AND EXHIBITION

A workshop was held from March to June 2024 to create a collective contemporary art piece. Led by artist Maurice Pefura, with support from the Laboratorio Carcere team and the cultural associations Forme Tentative and Philo, the workshop involved around 40 inmates, who participated every Monday morning. Together, they explored a range of interpretive and expressive techniques, including writing, painting, drawing, and performative practices. Over several weeks, participants produced hundreds of paper fragments – like pieces of a mosaic – which were gradually assembled into a larger, unified artwork. The creative process became a space for dialogue, knowledge-sharing, and reflection on life in prison. It also fostered meaningful interaction among participants, encouraging individual expression and collective engagement. Maurice Pefura later reinterpreted the material generated during the workshop to develop the final piece presented in the pilot exhibition. The installation process became an additional moment of collaboration: prison staff and volunteers were invited to contribute, leaving their mark on the work and reinforcing the project's emphasis on shared authorship and relational creation.

On September 24th, the exhibition *Gli artisti sono quelli che fanno casino. Frammenti dal carcere di San Vittore* was officially inaugurated (fig. 8). Curated by Diego Sileo (PAC Milano), the opening event was attended by the prison director, the Rector of the Politecnico di Milano, the Regional Head of the Department of Penitentiary Administration, Milan's Cultural Affairs Commissioner and the National Guarantor of detained persons, a clear demonstration of institutional commitment to the initiative. For the following two months, the prison opened its gates twice a week to allow pre-registered visitors to experience the exhibition. The guided tours, led by researchers and workshop participants, offered more than a viewing of the artwork: they allowed visitors to enter previously inaccessible areas of San Vittore and engage directly with the lived realities of the prison today.

Figure 8. The opening day of the exhibition (Laboratorio Immagine Politecnico di Milano)

The artwork occupied the entire central basement corridor. Two long paper walls faced each other, interrupted by open cell doors, from which the recorded voices of project participants emerged (fig. 9). A narrow path between the walls invited visitors to walk through, creating an intimate and reflective experience. At the far end, two original cells were transformed into screening rooms: one showing a documentary on the artistic process[27], and the other presenting a video on the transformation of the space (fig. 10), from abandoned corridor to cultural gallery. Also featured were three interviews with former inmates, exploring how the project reshaped their understanding of the prison's historical and personal significance.

Figure 9. The artwork produced by Maurice Pefura with inmates is set up in the central corridor of the ReverseLab space. (Laboratorio Immagine Politecnico di Milano)

Figure 10. The memory room with the video that describes the transformation of space using the photogrammetry technique

The exhibition encouraged movement, reflection, and a shift in perspective. Visitors were not passive viewers but active participants, invited to interpret the work and co-construct its meaning. In this sense, they became co-authors of the experience. The project had a dual objective: to offer insight into daily life inside the prison, and to give incarcerated individuals a platform to share their experiences, free from stereotypes and preconceptions. The exhibition was a resounding success, with over 700 visitors and participation from two

high school art classes. It helped generate thrust and institutional support for the broader initiative of reopening the prison to public engagement. Thanks to this effort, the previously unused basement corridor is now being permanently repurposed as a workshop and educational space for members of the prison community, including inmates, officers, administrative staff, and volunteers. Simultaneously, it will serve as a public gallery, fostering sustained dialogue and integration between the prison and the city it inhabits.

CONCLUSIONS: REIMAGINING THE PRISON AS A CIVIC SPACE

The pilot edition of *ReverseLab* has catalyzed multi-level collaboration, bringing together internal and external actors essential for repeating and sustaining this experience, the true objective of this research. The vision that could truly reshape the operational practices of San Vittore prisons is one in which *ReverseLab* establishes a permanently open space, connecting the prison with the city through art and culture. A space open to the public within an operative prison at the heart of the town, a place where new cultural productions are created with and for inmates, prison officers, and the broader community year after year. This vision does not seek to remove or repurpose the prison for something else. Still, it imagines a place of detention that intentionally reconnects with its urban surroundings, fulfilling its rehabilitative mandate through programs and proximity, participation, and shared creativity. Realizing this vision will not be easy. Neither the prison system nor society at large is fully prepared; both remain shaped by enduring stereotypes and misconceptions that often obscure the very constitutional principles that define the role of incarceration in Italy.

This will not be easy, as neither the prison system nor society is fully ready. Both remain trapped in a widespread, stereotyped vision that distorts real possibilities and even the constitutional principles reflected in specific legislation.

Yet early signals of change are emerging. In Milan, *Teatro Punto Zero Beccaria* brings incarcerated youth into collaboration with professional performers using the theatre built along the wall of the juvenile prison. At *In Galera*, a restaurant within Bollate Prison, inmates prepare and serve meals to the public. Elsewhere, projects like *Teatro dell'Arca* in Genoa Marassi, the first self-built theatre in Europe, and the Rebibbia canteen in Rome, producing bread and meals through in-house workshops, reflect a growing desire to reimagine carceral spaces. These are small but significant steps toward transforming the invisible and avoided spaces of incarceration into visible, creative, and connected parts of civic life. They offer concrete answers to Giovanni Michelucci's vision: "the no-man's land that the city imposes between itself and the prison must become a space of new creativity"[28].

In this light, *ReverseLab* is not simply a project, but a working prototype of a broader cultural shift. It affirms that rehabilitation and reintegration are not abstract ideals, but processes that must be spatially and socially embodied. What is at stake is how we build or reform prisons, how we imagine the boundaries between exclusion and inclusion, and how we design cities that make space for complexity, care, and shared responsibility. In this sense, the urban presence of a prison, too often seen as an inconvenience, is instead a strategic resource. It creates the possibility of connection, proximity, and mutual visibility. A prison in the heart of the city can become a place of civic experimentation, where inside and outside communities meet, and where dignity and dialogue are rebuilt through shared spaces and stories.

NOTES

[1] Buccoliero, Cosima. 2022. *Senza sbarre: Storia di un carcere aperto*. Torino: Einaudi. All the translations from Italian are by the author. **[2]** *Ibid.* **[3]** Foucault, Michael. 1967. "Des espaces autres". In *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité* 5, 46–49. **[4]** Canella, Guido. 2012. "Carcere e architettura". In *Carcere, città e architettura. Progetti per il carcere di San Vittore a Milano 2004-2009*, edited by Marco Biagi, 166–181. Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli. **[5]** Commissioned by Clement XI, the complex was built to a design by Carlo Fontana. For a description see Dubbini, Renzo. 1986. *Architettura delle prigioni. I luoghi e il tempo della punizione (1700-1880)*. Milano: Franco Angeli. **[6]** Comoli Mandraci, Vera. 1974. *Il carcere per la società del sett-ottocento*. Torino: Centro Studi Piemontesi. **[7]** Santangelo, Marella. 2017. *In prigione: Architettura e tempo della detenzione*. Siracusa: LetteraVentidue. **[8]** Infussi, Francesco. 2020. "Per restituire il carcere alla città". In *Lo spazio di relazione nel carcere*, edited by Andrea Di Franco and Paolo Bozzuto, 78-115. Siracusa: Lettera Ventidue. **[9]** Dubini, Renzo. 1986. Op. cit. **[10]** Wacquant, Loïc. 2007. *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality*. Hoboken: John Wiley and Sons Ltd. **[11]** From the study of MP Federico Bellazzi (1866). **[12]** He designed and realized the prison of Perugia (1863), Sassari (1862), and Genova Marassi (1863). **[13]** Dubini, Renzo. 1986. Op. cit. **[14]** Marcetti, Corrado. 2009. "L'edilizia che non c'è". In the conference: *Gli spazi della pena e l'architettura del carcere*, Solliciano (Florence), 13th June 2009. **[15]** *Ibid.* **[16]** *Ibid.* **[17]** To learn more about the evolution of prison structures in Italy see Scarcella, Leonardo, Di Croce Daniela. 2001. "Gli spazi della pena nei modelli architettonici del carcere in Italia". In: *Rassegna penitenziaria e criminologica*, Roma. **[18]** It is not possible here to return to the debate, repeated several times in recent decades, on whether or not the number of beds in Italian prisons should be increased. See, for example, what is recorded on the association Antigone website http://www.antigone.it or the magazine http://www.ristretti.it/. **[19]** The project is carried out by Exit office, Ángel Sevillano and José Tabuyo architects. **[20]** To see more https://www.decidim.barcelona/processes/lamodel. **[21]** Tunbridge, John E., Ashworth, Gregory J. 1996. *Dissonant heritage: The management of the past as a resource in conflict*. Chichester ; New York: J. Wiley. **[22]** Buccoliero, Cosima. 2022. Op. cit. **[23]** *Laboratorio Carcere* is composed of Andrea Di Franco, Marianna Frangipane (from Department of Architecture and Urban Studies), Francesca Piredda, Chiara Ligi and Mariana Caiancia (Department of Design) involving students and young researchers. Laboratorio Carcere. **[24]** Off Campus Polimi. **[25]** ReverseLab Polimi. **[26]** Infussi, Francesco. 2020. Op. cit. **[27]** ReverseLab documentary. **[28]** Michelucci, Giovanni. 1993. *Un fossile chiamato carcere: scritti sul carcere*. Firenze: Pontecorboli.

WHEN ARCHITECTURE IS NOT ENOUGH *A COMPARISON OF SAN BASILIO AND CORVIALE*

By Anna Veronese (Università Iuav di Venezia)

ABSTRACT

The end of the Second World War revealed the severe housing crisis Italy was about to face, as well as the urgent need for a comprehensive rethink of urban centers. In Rome, still governed by the 1931 General Regulatory Plan, the lack of a suitable urban planning framework to guide the city's expansion had resulted in neighborhoods and buildings devoid of urban coherence and architectural or constructional quality—often the by-products of land speculation by a handful of large landowners. From the outset of Mario Fiorentino's (1918–1982) career, attention to the city—the "new" city—and to the role of architecture in designing residential neighborhoods for social housing became a central focus.

Fiorentino was deeply engaged in debates surrounding the relationship between architecture and urban planning, as well as in policies aimed at curbing Rome's uncontrolled expansion. Throughout his career, he maintained a strong commitment to the issue of housing, designing numerous residential buildings ranging from individual houses to apartment blocks and entire neighborhoods for social and affordable housing.

This essay examines two of Fiorentino's projects in Rome, which, despite their differing architectural languages and building typologies, share similar design intentions and, paradoxically, similarly unsuccessful outcomes. On one hand, there is the San Basilio UNRRA-Casas neighborhood, designed between 1951 and 1955 with Serena Boselli, located on the far north-eastern outskirts of Rome. Here, the foundational concept was rooted in the "neighborhood unit", with buildings arranged to create small internal courtyards intended to foster community life. On the other hand, there is the IACP residential complex in Corviale, the iconic kilometere-long building in the south-western quadrant of the city, a symbol of large-scale architecture, designed and built by Fiorentino between 1972 and 1981.

Despite the twenty-year gap between the two projects and their differences in urban context and architectural approach, both were conceived to avoid social marginalization and foster community integration. However, while the ghettoization of these spaces is often attributed to their architectural typologies and layouts, this essay aims to examine the two projects in parallel—from the neorealist "small houses" to the megastructure—reflecting on the role of architecture in processes of urban isolation and analyzing the synergies necessary to build a cohesive city. Comparing these two "architectural opposites", which nonetheless led to similar social outcomes, provides an opportunity to reflect on the insufficiency of architecture alone in addressing the challenges of contemporary urban design.

POST-WAR RECONSTRUCTION: REBUILDING THE CITIES

The end of World War II highlighted the severe housing crisis facing Italian cities and the urgent need for a comprehensive rethinking of urban centers. In Rome, in particular, the migration from rural areas to the city (with the population increasing from 209,222 in 1871 to 916,858 in 1931 and 2,155,093 in 1961)[1] and the destruction caused by the war exacerbated an already existing housing crisis that had begun in the early 20th century. This made the provision of new housing and the spatial reorganization of residential units more urgent than ever.

According to the 1951 census, 6.6% of dwellings were shacks, caves, or under-stair spaces; 21.9% of families lived in shared accommodations. The state housing agency INA-Casa, established by the Fanfani Law on February 28, 1949, played a key role in addressing this issue. Unlike ICP and INCIS, INA-Casa was financially robust and capable of initiating large-scale housing policies. By 1949, INA-Casa began operations, and by the following year, the first houses under the Fanfani plan appeared on the outskirts of Rome. In ten years, INA-Casa built 110,953 rooms in Rome, which by December 31, 1959, accounted for 7.33% of the total habitable rooms in the city[2].

Public entities responsible for economic and social housing became laboratories for architectural experimentation, shaping the form of the suburbs and leading to significant interventions across the country. These efforts reflected various architectural movements and theories over more than two decades, from the immediate post-war period to the mid-1970s.

MARIO FIORENTINO: A "COHERENT" ARCHITECT

Mario Fiorentino (fig. 1) emerged in this context. Born into a well-off Jewish family on June 5, 1918, in Rome, he lived there all his life. A contemporary of Bruno Zevi, he attended Liceo Torquato Tasso with him, and they often collaborated over the years. In 1937, Fiorentino enrolled in the Faculty of Architecture at Rome's La Sapienza University. In December 1944, after experiencing events unrelated to architecture but significant for his generation – anti-fascist struggles at the university, war, survival, resistance, political imprisonment, and liberation – he graduated with a project for a Modern Art Gallery.

In the immediate post-war years, Fiorentino gained international recognition with the project for the Monumento ai caduti delle Fosse Ardeatine (1945-1949), created with collaborators Nello Aprile, Cino Calcaprina, Aldo Cardelli, and Francesco Coccia, alongside Giuseppe Perugini and Mirko Basaldella, the latter two authors of another project that shared the first prize in the second-degree competition. Simultaneously, between 1945 and 1946, Fiorentino worked on the *Manuale dell'architetto* promoted by Gustavo Colonnetti, Biagio Bongioannini, Pierluigi Nervi, Mario Ridolfi - his first mentor - and Zevi, and published in 1946 under the auspices of CNR-USIS[3]. He participated in the Executive Committee and the general editing of the volume under Ridolfi's guidance[4].

Throughout his professional life, which ended with his sudden death in 1982, Fiorentino's interests, goals, and architectural principles remained consistent, focusing on three main themes: attention to urban development, particularly in Rome and its suburbs; continuous research on the use of prefabricated elements; and a clear preference for residential architecture. He often reflected on the significance of the word “home”, connecting it to his

personal experiences and works, from the small neorealist houses he designed for Cutro and San Basilio to the "machine for living" that is Corviale.

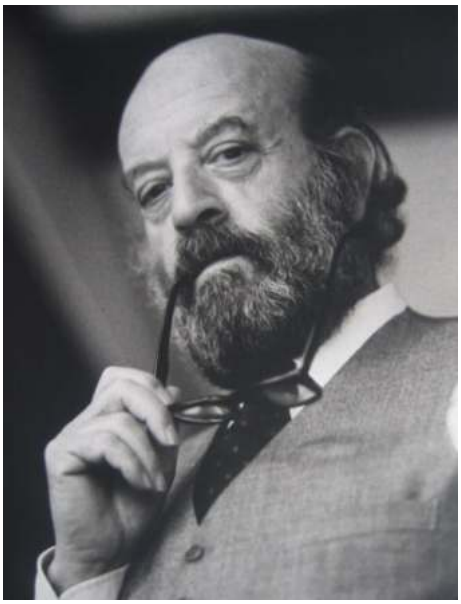

Figure 1. Mario Fiorentino, 1981

This essay aims to compare two of Fiorentino's architectural experiences in Rome, differing in architectural language and building typology but sharing the same design intentions and, paradoxically, similar unsuccessful outcomes: the UNRRA-Casas San Basilio neighborhood and the IACP residential complex in Corviale. The former represents the neorealist "neighborhood unit", while the latter is a heavily criticized emblem of megastructures resulting from large-scale urban planning theories.

SAN BASILIO

Situated between Via Tiburtina and Via Nomentana, the San Basilio neighborhood was designed by Mario Fiorentino in collaboration with Serena Boselli between 1951 and 1955[5]. The land, approximately 80,000 square meters in size, was granted free of charge by the Municipality of Rome. The UNRRA-Casas program provided specific guidelines for the number and type of dwellings to be allocated to homeless Roman families:

> 180 housing units, 10 of which with shops, plus essential services. [...] A prevalence of terraced houses with two to three bedrooms; and a building type composed of four flats, two per floor. Each dwelling had to have completely independent access and a garden plot of approximately 150–200 square metres. All buildings were to be no more than two storeys high, so as to guarantee the independence of each family unit[6].

The site plan of San Basilio is geometric, clear and functional, “organized” along a cruciform road system that defines four residential blocks, offset from the main traffic flows (fig. 2). At the intersection of the two main roads lies the service center, comprising shops, a social welfare building, and a nursery school – all designed by Boselli. The north–south axis, intended for through

traffic, was conceived in relation to the construction of the Grande Raccordo Anulare; the east–west axis connects the four residential nuclei with the surrounding districts. Each block includes an internal road system and a network of pedestrian paths that allow residents to move from one nucleus to another with minimal vehicular interference.

Figure 2. M. Fiorentino and S. Boselli, San Basilio neighborhood (1951-1955), Rome, Masterplan. Image published in Gorio, Federico. 1959. "Dieci anni di produzione coerente: Opere dell'architetto romano Mario Fiorentino". L'architettura, cronache e storia, no. 45 (July): 160

At the core of the scheme was still the idea of the "neighborhood unit", with the residential volumes arranged to form small, articulated inner courtyards designed to foster community life. There is a clear reference to traditional local building practices, with masonry structures, pitched roofs, and Roman-style clay roof tiles. To lend character and visual variety to the built environment, Fiorentino employed a polychromatic palette: facades were painted in ochre, yellow, violet and light blue, with white trims around the windows and edges. Window frames were white, shutters painted green-grey, and metalwork finished in black (fig. 3-4).

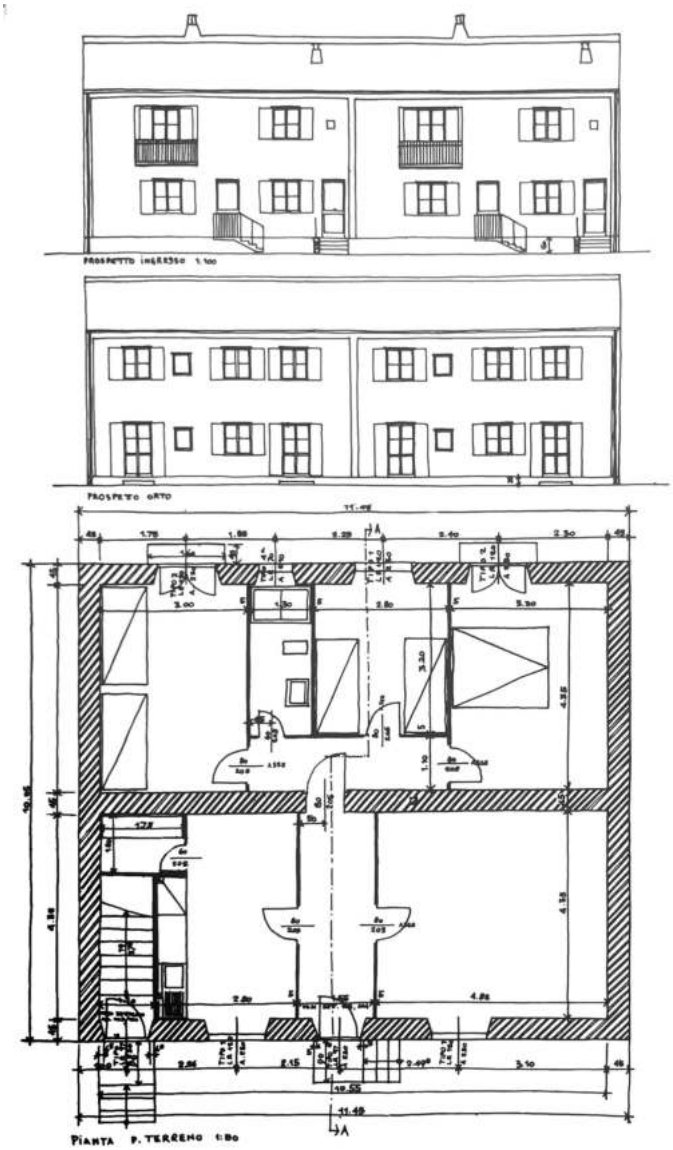

Figure 3. M. Fiorentino and S. Boselli, San Basilio neighborhood (1951-1955), Rome, Front and plan of a 4-apartments house. Image published in Mario Fiorentino: La casa. Progetti 1946-1981, edited by Francesco Moschini, 59. Roma: Edizioni Kappa

Figure 4. M. Fiorentino and S. Boselli, San Basilio neighborhood (1951-1955), Rome, Vintage photo. Mario Fiorentino private archive

As Federico Gorio noted:

> The passion for studying details, the attempt to draw on a traditional, and at times even vernacular, architectural vocabulary (as seen in the corner and roof junction solutions), the effort to vary the repeated housing types to spare residents the humiliation of living in cookie-cutter dwellings — all of these are clear signs of a constant and genuine commitment that characterises Fiorentino's urban work: to imbue state-funded housing with the warmth of human presence, and the voice of a personal relationship that rescues it from indifference[7].

Given the tight construction schedule and limited budget, Fiorentino paid particular attention to standardizing the building components and outdoor elements, aiming to optimize site operations — an ambition that ultimately went unrealized. Fiorentino himself later described the two core issues that undermined the project during construction: first, the site was divided between two contractors, each with their own construction methods and habits, thus thwarting any attempt at standardization and industrialization; second, there was a lack of coordination in the execution of primary infrastructure works (roads, drainage, water, electricity, gas, etc.). This led to repeated demolitions of completed works (such as paving and drainage systems), continual patch-ups and modifications, which not only compromised timelines and costs, but also altered the original architectural design.
The experience of the San Basilio site served as a lesson for future projects. Notably, in the case of a complex structure like Corviale, all construction phases would later be assigned to a single contractor, and the structural system would be executed entirely using standardized components.

THE QUESTION OF LARGE-SCALE HOUSING: CORVIALE

Nearly twenty years later, in 1972, Fiorentino was appointed one of the five lead architects -alongside Federico Gorio, Piero Maria Lugli, Giulio Sterbini, and Michele Valori – commissioned by the IACP (Istituto Autonomo Case Popolari) to design a new residential complex approved under Piano di Zona no. 61/bis[8], in the south-western periphery of Rome. The selected site lies between Via Portuense and Via della Casetta Mattei, on a hilly area equidistant from the historic center and the coast. An area of high morphological and environmental quality, still relatively untouched by building development. The plot covered 605,300 square meters and was intended to accommodate housing for the "general working population", with a projected total of 8,512 residents, including 1,600 organized in cooperatives supported by the Gescal housing fund.
In 1970, when IACP selected the site, the area was almost entirely undeveloped, save for a few newly emerging residential pockets near Via della Casetta Mattei, just to the east of the site.
From the very first site visit, Fiorentino identified the preservation of the landscape as the primary objective of the intervention. This is clearly expressed in the project's technical report:

> Given that the Corviale area marks a boundary between the city and a countryside still largely intact - and which the masterplan (PRG) intends to preserve through zoning constraints as agricultural land - we conducted in-depth morphological and typological research to ensure the development had a strong and defined identity. The entire western sector of the city has very particular physical characteristics: a sequence of hills punctuated by deep and articulated valleys, with built settlements mainly located on the higher ground, and two road systems: ridge roads and valley roads, the latter generally older, such as Via Portuense. The development area occupies one of these territorial emergences, and any scattered construction would have entirely compromised its current morphological appearance[9].

During the first six months of 1972, the five teams worked together, comparing various settlement hypotheses. It was Fiorentino, appointed overall project coordinator, who proposed consolidating the entire building volume into a single linear structure positioned along the ridge. The aim was to create a unified work in which no single architect's hand would be recognizable, and in which architecture, technology, and site management would coalesce into a cohesive and integrated plan.
As Giuseppe Cappelli later wrote:

> [Corviale] was just a pie to be sliced up between many hands, and Fiorentino turned it into an architectural opportunity. He rejected the approved plan and, more importantly, refused to draw up another that would allow each architect to claim a section and carry out their personal 'stylistic exercise' in isolation. Fiorentino proposed a path that demanded real engagement from everyone, a difficult and risky path. He held no hierarchical role among the others, but having originated the idea, he naturally became general coordinator[10].

The built project was the result of a long refinement process, evolving and simplifying from initial grid layouts to curved, and finally linear forms, over

the course of two years of design work - until 11 June 1974, the date the final design was approved. Construction began on 12 May 1975 and was awarded to three building contractors: Manfredi S.p.A., Salice II, and Co.Ge.Co. Manfredi was assigned both the Corviale North and South segments - comprising the two major residential blocks. Drawing from his negative experience at San Basilio, Fiorentino strongly opposed awarding the construction of a single architectural unit to multiple firms. In a 1982 site visit with secondary school students, he reflected on the pros and cons of this choice:

> Another undoubtedly experimental decision that proved misguided (but hindsight is always 20/20) was this: I believed the experiment should extend to the construction process. A linear structure like this was perfectly suited to being built on dual-track rails with cranes on either side, rising steadily like a long profile—250 metres at a time. That's what we did: a single contractor. But then, industrial action erupted at the highest level in Italy, and that proved a major problem. [...] Yet, in another sense, the decision was a success: it produced a high level of cohesion across the project. From the north to the south end, the building appears the product of a single technological and constructional hand—never mind the architect, who is always the last wheel on the cart[11].

The project area covered approximately 60.5 hectares, comprising residential buildings, service facilities, a system of pedestrian routes, roads and parking, and both private and public green spaces. The masterplan was structured around a single urban element: a one-kilometre-long residential block (Corpo I), located at the top of the hill, occupying a dominant position over the site and the surrounding rural landscape. Conceived as a strong horizontal marker in the relatively intact Roman countryside, the building follows a north-south axis, which defines the main organizational spine of the complex (fig. 5).

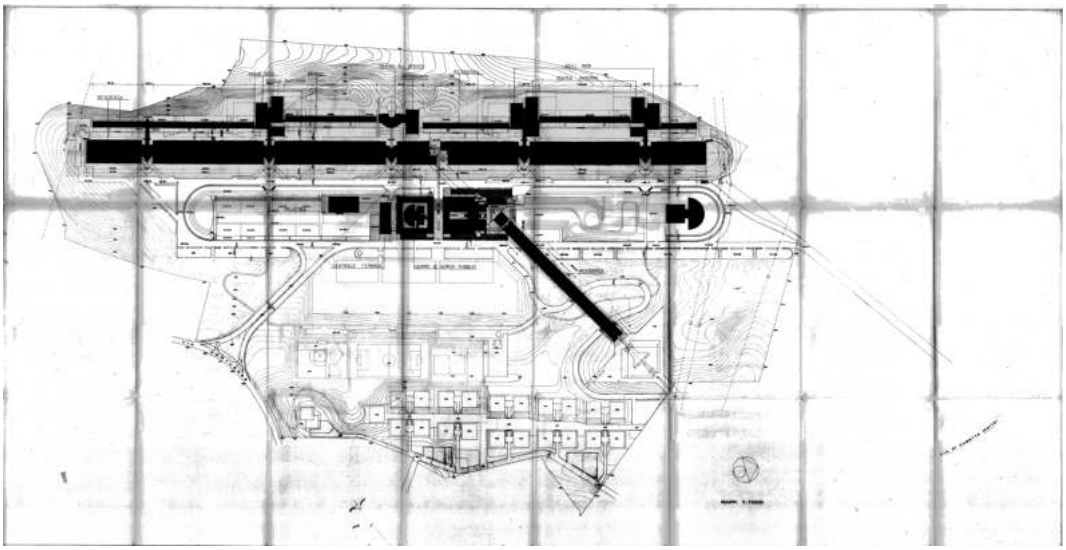

Figure 5. M. Fiorentino, Corviale residential neighborhood (1971-1931), Rome, Masterplan. Mario Fiorentino private archive

To the west lies a secondary residential slab (Corpo II), aligned parallel to the first, while to the east is the service complex known as Corviale Centro. Five transverse axes cut across the entire complex, with neighborhood services located at their intersections with the longitudinal axes. A third directional layer is added by a further linear building positioned at a 45-degree angle to

Corpo I, symbolizing both practically and conceptually the umbilical link to the existing city. Designed with a mirrored cross-section, this building was to include three- to five-stories housing blocks depending on terrain elevation, with a covered ground-floor pedestrian arcade allocated to commercial units. This path was intended to connect with future service areas laid out in adjacent districts by the PRG, which - combined with those provided within Corviale - would have significantly reinforced the urban fabric.
The neighborhood is served by a one-way ring road, connected to Via Portuense and Via della Casetta Mattei, which encircles the area of Corviale Centro and defines a 50,000-square-meter zone reserved for primary urban-level services: the district headquarters, several facilities for commercial activities including the local market, the church, the public park, the theatre, the library, and a sports club. Beyond the ring, towards the city, a school complex was planned, comprising two primary schools and one lower secondary school, as well as an additional zone designated for sporting activities. Further east, at the edge of the site, stand six-stories residential blocks intended for the families of cooperative workers financed by the Gescal fund.
The decision to abandon the idea of a traditional neighborhood, as stated in the Report annexed to the Zoning Plan,

> was part of the search for a new dimension of the habitat, conceived as a radical alternative to the sprawl of the current periphery, to the subordinate role it plays in terms of function and image with respect to the urban core, to the separation of residential areas from services and to the social downgrading that characterises it. The new Corviale is a large 'residential unit', a single housing complex that stretches continuously for about one kilometre and which, although it can be physically considered a single gigantic building, in fact contains and expresses through its architecture the complexity and richness of relationships proper to the city [12].

From an architectural perspective, Corpo I comprises eleven stories: eight residential floors, a service floor, the ground floor dedicated to distribution and cellars, and a garage level, reaching a total height of approximately 37 meters and a depth of 23 meters (fig. 6). The building's full kilometer length is the result of the extrusion of a section composed of two mirrored volumes, separated by a four and a half-meter-wide slit that cuts through the building from ground to roof. The base of the building consists of a sloped plinth extending outward for about 36 meters, containing the garage and the ground floor used for circulation and storage (fig. 7). Vertically, Corpo I results from the stacking of two distinct building types: the first four stories are organized into flats of various sizes – 4, 5, 6, and 7 rooms – arranged in groups of four around a stairwell (fig. 8). Above this lies the entirely open "fourth floor", originally intended partly for professional activities and retail, and partly for community use - the cantilevered volumes of the shared halls are located here. The top four floors return to a residential use, with flats accessed via internal galleries overlooking the central light well, which were also conceived as semi-public spaces for social interaction.

Figure 6. M. Fiorentino, Corviale residential neighborhood (1971-1931), Rome. Photo taken by G. De Bellis

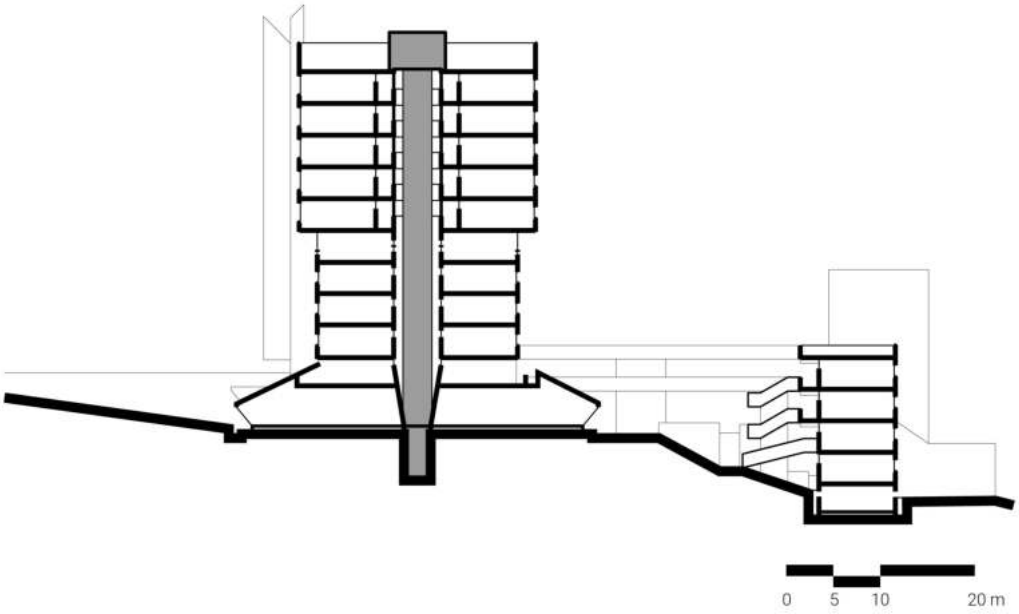

Figure 7. M. Fiorentino, Corviale residential neighborhood (1971-1931), Rome, Cross-section. Drawing by A. Veronese

Figure 8. M. Fiorentino, Corviale residential neighborhood (1971-1931), Rome, Plans of the apartments. Drawing by A. Veronese

Five monumental stair towers, aligned with the transverse axes and designed as gateways to the entire complex, punctuate the rhythm of the building (fig. 9). These also define the subdivision of the building into five administrative units and provide vertical access to the gallery levels. In addition, twenty-six secondary stairwells reach all floors of the building. Given the exceptional nature of the complex, Fiorentino intended the main entrances to function as key urban episodes – actual squares in this linear city – lit day and night along with the stairwells and shared halls, each designed with a unique layout.

Figure 9. M. Fiorentino, Corviale residential neighborhood (1971-1931), Rome. Photo taken by G. De Bellis

The main facade, facing east, extends almost uninterrupted for the entire kilometer of the building's length. Only a few carefully positioned architectural elements break this continuity and enrich the overall design: the convex stair towers, the projecting glass-block volumes of the communal halls, the overhang of the gallery levels, and the deep shadow cast by the open fourth floor all contribute to a unified facade composition. The alternation between individual episodes and serial elements allows for multiple levels of interpretation and engagement, both at the scale of architectural detail and urban design. Special attention to the facade is also evident in the decorative panels of prefabricated concrete infill walls, designed by sculptor Nicola Carrino, whose aim was "to deny its own technological nature by recovering chiaroscuro effects, emphasized through the use of diagonal signs that change with the light" – an approach that introduced "variety within unity and austerity in this large residential building"[13].
Corpo II, known among residents as the "Little Corviale" (Corvialino), is situated downhill and parallel to Corpo I. It consists of six two- and three-stories blocks, following the site's topography, and accommodates flats accessed via open-air galleries and external staircases. These six volumes, each approximately 11 meters in height, are interspersed with service buildings and small shops located opposite the entrances to Corpo I, along the five transverse axes that structure the complex. Three of the service nodes house a nursery and a kindergarten (fig. 10), another features an open-air theatre and a restaurant, while the southernmost axis terminates in a panoramic belvedere overlooking the Tiber Valley.

Figure 10. M. Fiorentino, Corviale residential neighborhood (1971-1931), Rome. Photo taken by G. De Bellis

Between the two residential blocks runs a broad tree-lined avenue planted with rows of linden and pine trees, designed primarily for pedestrian circulation and only occasionally for vehicles. At the intersection with the transverse axes, the buildings are connected by elevated pedestrian walkways, designed by Fiorentino and Cappelli, which provide direct access to the nurseries and kindergartens and also host a number of small essential-goods shops.

Interestingly, Corviale - regarded by some as Fiorentino's architectural testament[14] – encapsulates all the key themes that characterized his work: the opposition to low-quality, high-density speculative housing on the city's periphery, lacking proper planning; the meticulous attention paid to housing quality and domestic space, with bright, spacious homes and panoramic views; and finally, the drive toward technological rationalization and optimization.

WHEN ARCHITECTURE IS NOT ENOUGH

The two experiences described above - despite their markedly different formal and design approaches - ultimately shared a similar fate: one marked by urban decay, social marginalization, and a failure to integrate with the surrounding urban fabric. While San Basilio is often cited in the media as one of the capital's key drug trafficking hotspots, Corviale has become a symbol of the ghettoization and marginalization of post-war social housing, and is frequently invoked as a paradigmatic example of so-called "bad architecture". Yet, from both theoretical and formal perspectives, the two neighborhoods are fundamentally different - starting with their geographical positioning, which is diametrically opposed: both are situated just within the boundaries of Rome's Grande Raccordo Anulare, but while San Basilio lies in the city's north-eastern periphery, Corviale occupies the south-western quadrant.
Their site plans, architectural language, land area, and overall urban scale all reveal radically different design strategies. These distinctions, however, do not detract from the shared ambition of counteracting the mechanisms of urban isolation and social hardship through architectural means.

In the 1950s, the proposed solution to such problems seemed to lie in the concepts of the "neighborhood unit" and the "quartiere" as foundations for community life-ideas aligned with Scandinavian models and the garden city movement, also theorised by Lewis Mumford in his 1954 essay *The Neighbourhood and the Neighbourhood Unit*. At San Basilio, the notion of introversion – within a neighborhood whose scale and formal qualities drew on a traditional and vernacular architectural language – was expressed not only through the morphology of the inner courtyards formed by the residential volumes, but also through the overall urban layout, which revolved around a central core designated for shared public services. The relationship with the wider urban context was mediated exclusively by the main road axes, which served as the only points of connection to the outside world.
Conversely, in the case of Corviale, public services were intended to act as a hinge between the new development and the existing city, with the aim of fostering a cohesive urban reality. The housing blocks, in turn, were designed towards the surrounding landscape, privileging openness rather than enclosure. Unsurprisingly, the issue of "large scale" – which had become central to architectural discourse from the 1960s onwards – progressively led to a broadening of the design scale, ultimately encompassing substantial portions of the territory within the urban project.
The social failure of these neighborhoods should thus be analyzed not solely, or even primarily, through the lens of their formal and compositional choices, but rather in relation to public policy and urban planning – or more specifically, the absence of a comprehensive social agenda integrated with the architectural one. Formal experimentation, even when authored by renowned designers and of clear architectural value, risks producing unlivable environments if not supported by a genuine economic and social diversity among residents, and by a long-term strategic vision capable of guiding the future of the city and its communities.

In Rome, as in many other Italian cities, what was lacking – despite the efforts of numerous architects and intellectuals of the time, including Fiorentino himself[15] – was a coherent strategy to shape a unified vision of the new metropolitan city. An urban plan, for example, is capable of mitigating the risks associated with peripheral location, such as distance from the city center and infrastructural isolation.
In Corviale's specific case, only a small fraction of the services envisaged in the original project were ever realized. Construction efforts focused almost exclusively on the residential units of Corpo I, while the other elements of the scheme were gradually and significantly scaled back. Following the bankruptcy in 1982 of Salice II – the contractor responsible for building Corviale Centro – the construction site came to an abrupt halt, ushering in a long period of stasis, functional transformations, and abandonment. In particular, the "fourth floor" of Corpo I, originally intended to accommodate commercial activities and communal spaces, was never completed.
Already by 1983, with the first housing units allocated, the first illegal occupations of vacant flats had begun. Then, from 1989 onwards, the entire open floor was gradually occupied, giving rise to numerous irregular residential units, which are today the focus of a regeneration project led by architect Guendalina Salimei.

Both San Basilio and Corviale are currently the subject of regeneration initiatives financed through Italy's National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR). However, the term "regeneration" risks becoming a hollow formula if not accompanied by a structured set of long-term and participatory actions. In some cases, it may even result in counterproductive outcomes, as exemplified by the so-called "Caivano model"[16].
Any urban and social redevelopment project targeting these areas must necessarily combine physical investments – aimed at improving or even establishing essential services – with truly effective policies for social inclusion and a direct, active involvement of the residents. No real transformation can occur without recognizing local communities as protagonists in the process. After all,

> architecture, which remains a superstructure, and the beauty it can undoubtedly generate, is not in itself sufficient to bring happiness, though it can certainly help create the conditions for it[17].

NOTES

[1] Istat data reported on the web page: https://www.tuttitalia.it/lazio/33-roma/statistiche/censimenti-popolazione/. **[2]** Insolera, Italo. 1962. *Roma Moderna. Un secolo di storia urbanistica*. Torino: Einaudi, 192-193. **[3]** The *Manuale dell'architetto* was compiled under the auspices of the National Research Council (CNR) and published with funding from the United States Information Service (USIS). **[4]** Alongside Fiorentino, the Executive Committee included Cino Calcaprina and Aldo Cardelli. The general editing of the volume was overseen by Ridolfi, with the assistance of the committee members. **[5]** In December 1951, UNRRA-Casas launched two separate competitions: one for the urban plan and housing design, and another for the design of the community center and nursery school. The respective winners were Mario Fiorentino and Serena Boselli. **[6]** Fiorentino, Mario. 1985. "Relazione tecnica". In *Mario Fiorentino: La casa. Progetti 1946-1981*, edited by Francesco Moschini, 66. Roma: Edizioni Kappa. **[7]** Gorio, Federico. 1959. "Dieci anni di produzione coerente: Opere dell'architetto romano Mario Fiorentino". *L'architettura, cronache e storia*, no. 45 (July): 151. **[8]** During this period, on 18 April 1962, the Italian Parliament passed Law No. 167, which aimed to facilitate the acquisition of land at affordable prices for public housing. The urban planning tool entrusted to local authorities to identify and manage these areas was the PEEP – Piano di Edilizia Economica e Popolare (Plan for Public Housing). In Rome, the PEEP was first approved in February 1964 on the basis of the guidelines of the 1962 Master Plan. It included the implementation of 73 Piani di Zona and identified the "zone 167" areas located along the edges or within the peripheral belt of the city. The goal was to address the urgent need for new residential developments, reconnect and upgrade areas of the urban fabric, and reclaim territories most affected by illegal building. Of the 73 initially planned districts, 48 were implemented between the mid-1960s and the 1970s, including the now well-known districts of Spinaceto, Casilino, Laurentino, Vigne Nuove and Corviale. **[9]** Cf. Technical Report associated with Piano di Zona No. 61/bis Corviale. **[10]** Cappelli, Giuseppe, and Luca Reale. 2004. *Oltre Corviale. L'impossibilità dello stile*. Roma: Gangemi, 10. **[11]** Regni, Bruno, and Marina Thiery. 1993. "Una visita guidata dieci anni fa." *Groma*, no. 2 (June): 60. **[12]** Cf. Technical Report associated with Piano di Zona No. 61/bis Corviale. **[13]** Fiorentino, Mario. 1985. "Considerazioni su Corviale." In *Mario Fiorentino: La casa. Progetti 1946-1981*, edited by Francesco Moschini, 272. Roma: Edizioni Kappa. **[14]** Purini, Franco. 2013. "Corviale." In *Architettura del Novecento: Opere, progetti, luoghi A-K*, edited by Marco Biraghi and Alberto Ferlenga, 519-523. Torino: Einaudi. **[15]** This refers to Fiorentino's involvement in the advisory committee for the new 1962 PRG and his participation in the *Studio Asse – Ricerche per l'Asse Attrezzato e il nuovo Sistema Direzionale di Roma*, carried out between 1967 and 1969 together with Vincio Delleani, Riccardo Morandi, Vincenzo, Fausto and Lucio Passarelli, and Ludovico Quaroni, with historical and critical consultancy provided by Bruno Zevi. **[16]** This refers to the "urban regeneration" measures implemented in Caivano, part of the Naples metropolitan area, and intended to be replicated in seven other "critical" peripheral districts: Quarticciolo in Rome, Scampia in Naples, Orta Nova in Foggia, San Ferdinando in the province of Reggio Calabria, San Cristoforo in Catania, and Borgo Nuovo in Palermo. **[17]** Capozzi, Renato, and Felice Iovinella. 2021. "Le periferie tra forme urbane e forme di vita." *Nuova Atlantide*, no. 4 (December): 83-87. https://www.sussidiarieta.net/nuova-atlantide/cn3279/le-periferie-tra-forme-urbane-e-forme-di-vita.html.

«IL PAPA VIVENDO MUORE E MORENDO VIVE» *ARCHITECTURE IN TRANSITION IN THE EARLY MODERN CONCLAVE*

By Fabio Gigone (ETH Zurich)

ABSTRACT

The conclave stands as the foremost irregular papal ritual —alongside coronations and funerals— designed to address the juridical and political discontinuities characterising the sede vacante. In Early Modern times, the conclave entailed the seclusion of the College of Cardinals, who assembled in secrecy (within the Vatican Palace from 1455 until 1775) until a new Pope was elected.

During this period, riots often erupted, leading to the looting of the Lateran Palace and the private residences of the cardinals (Ginzburg 1987, Hunt 2016). Consequently, the Apostolic Palace was safeguarded through a four-tiered protection system, extending from the building's entrance to the final door before the conclave's chambers.

Scholarly literature has explored the ceremonial aspects within the broader history of the papacy (Pastor 1886–1933), European diplomatic relations (Poncet 1996, 2002), and from religious (Pirie 1935, Buranelli 2006), ceremonial (Dykmans 1977–1985, Wassilowsky-Wolf 2007, DeSilva 2022), and social perspectives (Paravicini-Visceglia 2018). However, relatively little attention has been devoted to the architectural dimensions —both large and small-scale— that influenced the conduct and outcomes of these elections. The selection of Vatican rooms for the ceremony, the allocation of minimal space and specific objects for each cardinal, and the random assignment of temporary cells where cardinals lived in strict seclusion for unpredictable periods ranging from 10 hours (Julius II, 1503) to 1006 days (Gregory X, 1271), all suggest that the spatial and material aspects of the event played a critical role in shaping the policies for selecting a Pontiff.

This paper examines the spatial measures at both urban and architectural levels by which the College of Cardinals ensured the physical and political protection of the electoral body from the Roman multitude during the sede vacante. It does so by analysing the procedures formulated by the Masters of Ceremonies, and visualised in five key prints produced between 1550 and 1665 depicting the conclave setting within the Vatican Palace.

INTRODUCTION

Despite today's global media offering almost obsessive coverage of the papal election —laying bare its electoral mechanisms— the actual manoeuvrings that lead to the election of the successor of Peter, and Vicar of Christ on Earth, remain, as in the past, largely unknown. Since at least the 11th century, the transition of the *plenitudo potestatis* from one Pope to his successor has been guaranteed by the Sacred College of Cardinals. This body convenes in *conclave* within a designated location and, through an electoral procedure —subject to historical variation— determines who shall ascend the Papal Throne, a choice not necessarily limited to its own members.

However, the College simultaneously constitutes an elite group that threatens the very politico-spiritual existence of the Papacy. Particularly from the early modern period onwards, its oligarchic tendencies have traditionally stood in tension with the monarchical claims of the Pontiff[1]. This apparent contradiction, rather than signalling a structural flaw, reveals a strategy of self-preservation on the part of the sovereign papal authority —an authority characterised by an inherently immunitary logic. If one considers the appropriation of the concept of immunity from virology —wherein the inoculation of non-lethal quantities of a virus stimulates the production of antibodies capable of pre-emptively neutralising pathogenic effects—[2] then the legislative actions undertaken by popes over time to curtail the power of the College may be better understood. These actions, while limiting, nonetheless presuppose the College's continued existence as essential to sustaining the mystical nature of the pontifical body.

The secret —or rather private— nature of the electoral ceremonial began to acquire a limited public representation from the late 16th century onwards, when the so-called *ceremoniali* were formalised. These texts detailed the religious and civil ceremonies to be observed during festivals and solemn occasions. One of the most significant examples is the *Pontificalis Liber*, commissioned by Pope Innocent VIII (pp. 1484–1492) and compiled by the Master of Ceremonies Agostino Patrizi Piccolomini (c. 1435–95), with the assistance of Johann Burchard (c. 1450–1506), and published in 1485[3]. Moreover, Piccolomini also compiled —apparently at the behest of Pope Innocent— the *Rituum ecclesiasticorum*, which regulated the rubrics to be followed from the conclave, to the papal coronation, the consistory, and during other solemnities of the liturgical year[4].

However detailed, these ceremonial texts remained guidelines intended for high-ranking prelates: they defined roles, established ceremonial timings, and ensured ecclesiastical efficacy. What they lacked, however, was a spatial representation of the ceremonies accessible to a broader audience. To address this gap, from the mid-16th century onwards, visual representations of the conclave ceremony began to be produced. By then, the Apostolic Palace had become the established site for resolving the *sede vacante*. Originally created for commercial purposes, these prints remain the only extant testimony to the architectural role played by the Vatican's Apostolic Palace in managing the *sede vacante* and the election of the Pontiff.

This paper adopts an interdisciplinary perspective to reveal how spatial strategies, at both urban and architectural levels, through which the College of Cardinals ensured the physical and political protection of the electoral body from the Roman populace during the *sede vacante* evolved besides the ceremonial development. It does so by analysing the procedures devised by the Masters of Ceremonies and visualised in five key prints produced between 1550 and 1655, which depict the conclave setting within the Vatican Palace. The aim is to demonstrate how an architectural analysis —ranging from urban-level measures of social containment to the self-seclusion within the

ephemeral micro-architectures of the cardinals' cells— can contribute to a reappraisal of architectural historiography of the papal election understood as a relational dynamic between the individual cardinal, the Sacred College, and the *popolo romano* during the *sede vacante*.

THE CONCLAVE AS A PRIVATE CEREMONIAL

The Papacy is the only absolute monarchy in Europe whose elective form, called the *conclave*, has survived over time. However, the term conclave did not originally refer to the mechanism or ceremonial election of the Pope. Instead, with *con-clavis* or *cum-clavi*, it defined secret, that is, private, material and immaterial spaces, as opposed to an accessible physical environment or a spiritual state of sin.
Festus, in fact, defines the conclave as the rooms locked with a key[5]. The denied access to these houses' rooms clearly defined their secret quality: "conclave locum secretum dicit in domo"[6]; while the use of a mechanical device such as keys to lock a room extended the meaning of the conclave to fortified places or remote spaces within a building[7].
The spatial metaphor was appropriated by the Christianity of the Church Fathers, who transposed the secret and inaccessible nature of the room to that of the individual soul. Cassian, in fact, warns of the difficulties of investigating "the innermost chambers [*conclavibus*] of the soul"[8], while Ambrose stated that "nothing is hidden from God, nothing is closed [*clausum*] to the eternal light: but He disdains to open the gates [*portas*] of malice, He does not wish to penetrate the chambers [*conclavia*] of wickedness"[9].
Nonetheless, the seclusion of the Sacred College of Cardinals was not the initial form of election experience in the Christian tradition. Actually, not even the Pontiff was elected among the cardinals of the College. In the 4th and 5th centuries, the Popes were elected from among the deacons, and specifically, the archdeacon who survived his Pontiff became Pope[10].

Subsequently, and until the 9th century, the presbyters elected to the papal throne were more numerous than the archdeacons. It was only in 882 that, despite the 'prohibition of translation' which bound the bishop to his diocese, the election of a bishop as Pope gradually became a possibility. It would take until 1185 to see the practice of the two-thirds majority of voters —and not simply acclamation— for the election of a cardinal to the papal throne.
Regarding the nature of the electoral body of the new Pope, the ancient tradition allowed the reigning Pontiff to appoint his successor, and only in the case of unexpected death could the college of clergy replace his will by expressing themselves unanimously or by majority. The political continuity of this custom ceased only in the 7th century when the possibility of appointing the new Pontiff by the reigning one fell into disuse[11].
The electoral device thus opened very early —considering the history of the Church— to election rather than appointment. An election that included the 'popolo' of the ecclesial community, that is, a restricted social circle that included the clergy and the notables of Rome. Nonetheless, the exclusion of the right to vote for the secular part was decreed in 1059 by Nicholas II (pp. 1059–1061), who established the primacy of the cardinals in the exercise of the vote, thus officially excluding the influences dictated by the Roman nobility.
It was therefore the definition of a socially homogeneous electoral body —the cardinal bishops— limited in number, to which was added the enduring political agency of the local nobility, that laid the foundations for what became a practice, namely the elections in conclave. In 1241, in fact, upon the death of Gregory IX (pp. 1227–1241), the college of cardinals was undecided on the choice to make due to the political crisis that had involved the papacy, the Ghibelline faction, and Emperor Frederick II for years. It was Matteo Rosso of

the Orsini family —also destined for a cardinal career— who in that year locked the cardinals in the Septizonium, thus forcing them into coercive seclusion to prompt a decision that was slow in coming[12].

The vacancy of the Apostolic See was not only an ecclesiastical and political problem of succession of power but also an economic one. A few years later, in fact, the long vacancy following the death of Clement IV (pp. 1265–1268) in Viterbo risked collapsing the traditionally very advantageous real estate revenues due to the presence of the papal curia in the city. Thus, the local authorities locked the cardinals in the Apostolic Palace on November 16, 1269, even going so far as to uncover the roof in May of the following year to force the cardinals to make a decision. The result was the election of Gregory X (pp. 1271–1276) on September 1, 1271, which ended the longest vacant see in history [13].

Remembering his experience as a conclavist ante litteram, Gregory, during the second Council of Lyon convened by him in 1274, proposed the decree for the election of the Pope *Ubi periculum*, which aimed to protect the Church from the dangers inherent in a prolonged vacant see[14]. Specifically, *Ubi periculum* was the first official document that named and defined the necessity of the rigor of the conclave, defined as living "in common in the same hall, without dividing walls or other curtains; this, except for a free passage to a separate room, should be well closed on all sides, so that no one can enter or leave"[15]. Furthermore, the seclusion of the cardinals had to be ensured within ten days of the previous Pope's death. This was accompanied by the rationing of food introduced into the palace through a window and the absolute prohibition of communications to and from the outside.

URBAN SECLUSION

What dangers did Gregory X aim to address with the issuance of his bull? The political and legal transition inherent in the *sede vacante* depended primarily on the unique nature of the Pope, understood in his threefold role as Bishop of Rome, sovereign of the Papal States, and Vicar of Christ on Earth. From this latter perspective, and thus from a theological standpoint, since the 14th century, the Augustinian Augustinus Triumphus argued that there could be no discontinuity in the presence of Christ within the Church. As His Vicar on Earth, the Pope's *plenitudo potestatis* continues "in the College or in the Church, which is simply that of Christ himself, the incorruptible and everlasting head"[16]. As Luigi Spinelli recalls, Triumphus, following Henry of Segusio, supported the principle that the transfer of papal potestas from the deceased Pope to the elected one was transmitted by the mystical body of the College of Cardinals, who were as close to the Apostles as the Pope was to Christ[17].

The theological argument aimed at stabilising the principle and process of juridical-political continuity between Popes. However, it risked, in the writings of medieval theologians and glossators, attributing excessive power to the College, so much so that Triumphus himself wondered:

> Whether the College can do anything without the Pope that it can do with the Pope, or whether the College can do anything when the Pope is dead that it can do when the Pope is alive... is perhaps doubtful[18].

This was perhaps the internal danger, a sort of risk of autoimmune disease, that Gregory X aimed to prevent when, in the *Ubi periculum*, he urged the Cardinals to make a quick decision in the conclave, decreeing that

> During the time of the election, the aforementioned cardinals shall receive nothing from the Apostolic Chamber, nor from anything that may come to the same church from any source during the vacancy; instead, all revenues during this time shall remain in the custody of the one [the Camerlengo] to whose fidelity and diligence the Chamber itself has been entrusted, to be at the disposal of the future Pope[19].

But the danger to be avoided did not only come from within. If, indeed, the power of the Pope was guaranteed continuity through his mystical body of cardinals —even if through a theological device— the same did not apply to the earthly *auctoritas* attached to the physical body of the Pope as Bishop of Rome. As Reinhard Elze has demonstrated through a series of examples that testify to the existence of a tradition rather than a rule, the Pope's corpse and effigy were not immune to the possibility of being disrupted, both symbolically and materially. Thus, Jacques de Vitry, arriving in Perugia in 1216,

> found Pope Innocent [III] dead, but not yet buried. During the night, some people stealthily stripped him of the precious garments with which he was to be buried; they left his almost naked and fetid body in the church[20].

The same fate awaited the earthly remains of Innocent IV (pp. 1243–1254), as well as those of Clement V (pp. 1305–1314).
But the assault on the 'body of the Pope' was not limited to the corpse but also extended to his memory. It happened repeatedly during the 16th and 17th centuries that statues erected in Rome to commemorate Paul IV (pp. 1555–1559) in 1559 and Urban VIII (pp. 1623–1644) in 1640 were subjected to mob violence, while that of Sixtus V (pp. 1585–1590) narrowly escaped destruction[21].

Finally, not only were the immaterial assets (economic revenues of the Pope) and his physical body and effigy at risk, but also the material goods and physical spaces that defined the nature of his office. This includes the stripping of the precious liturgical vestments that covered the corpse of Gregory the Great (pp. 590–604) in 595, as well as the disappearance of all sacred objects that adorned the corpse of Sixtus IV (pp. 1471–1484) in 1484. As Johann Burchard recounts,

> After [Sixtus] death, all the most reverend cardinals present in the city came to the palace and passed through the room where the deceased lay on the bed, dressed in a long robe over a shirt, with a cross on his chest and his hands folded [...]. The Abbot of Saint Sebastian, the sacristan, had a bed with furnishings, although it should rather have belonged to our office. All other items, as soon as the deceased was carried out of the room, were taken away in a single moment, so to speak; for from the sixth hour until that hour, despite all my diligence, I could not obtain a single basin, a single sheet, or any vessel in which wine and water with fragrant herbs could be prepared for washing the deceased, nor clean trousers and a shirt for dressing the deceased...[22].

The traditional looting of goods, along with the intrusion and plundering of the palace of the cardinal elected as Pope, is evidenced by a series of decrees that were periodically issued, and evidently constantly violated. An example is the *Decretum de non spoliando eligendum in Papam* issued during the Council of Constance in November 1417:

> Therefore, we have sometimes found that when a Roman Pontiff is elected, some, under the pretext of a certain pretended abusive license, falsely claim that the goods and possessions of the elected, as if they had obtained the summit of wealth, are granted to the occupier. They not only invade, seize, occupy, and transport the houses, goods, and possessions of the elected, but sometimes also those of some whom they falsely pretend to be elected, as well as the goods of the cardinals and others present in the conclave, considering them as profit. If this were allowed, many dangers, scandals, plundering, thefts, and sometimes murders and homicides would follow[23].

In the 17th century, the deceased Pope's body assumed a fundamental role in the conclave reform promoted by Gregory XV (pp. 1621–1623) in 1621 and 1622. Despite the key points of the *Constitutions Aeterni Patris filius* (December 15)[24] and *Decet Romanum Pontificem* (March 12)[25] aimed at favouring the elective method by secret ballot over the methods of election by acclamation and adoration, a preparatory document shows the intention —disregarded by the Constitutions— to incorporate the Pope's corpse within the conclave and display it in the Sistine Chapel as a reminder of the transience of worldly life[26]. This immunitary attitude of incorporating the element that had until then become the focal point of symbolic disruption and material looting by the populace and the curia itself is not surprising. With Gregory XV's Constitutions, the ceremonial of the conclave election assumed the rigidity of a strictly regulated rite in all its parts[27].

As a result, in addition to the spiritual defence against worldly temptations practiced internally, a procedure was established for measures against possible riots and attacks from the outside. This defence was already outlined in the *Pontificalis Liber* drafted under the pontificate of Innocent VIII (pp. 1484–1492) by the Master of Ceremonies Agostino Patrizi Piccolomini with the help of Johann Burchard in 1485. In the first book of the Pontifical, Piccolomini recognises a 'double-quadruple' system of protection. The outermost was constituted by three hundred infantrymen led by a high-ranking prelate or a powerful noble who guarded the first gate day and night[28]. The second concerned the first access gate to the area under conclave, and it was the responsibility of lay members appointed for security, such as the conservators and noble citizens[29]. The third protection concerned the gate from the Apostolic Chamber to the conclave and was the responsibility of foreign dignitaries appointed by the Master of Ceremonies[30]. The fourth protection was the gate to the conclave, whose guard was entrusted from the outside to six or eight "most dignified prelates of the Roman curia [...] chosen from different nations" to signify a common commitment to safeguarding the event's sacredness[31]. Finally, reflecting the first four external defensive circles, four internal and four external locks closed the *porticulum*, the final gate to the conclave[32], whose keys were assigned to the clerics of ceremonies from the inside, and three to the external prelate guards[33]. The conclave is thus a political phenomenon that spatially reconfigures the Vatican palace, both in relation to the outside urban landscape and internally.

THE IMPACT OF THE COLLEGE AND ITS CONFINEMENT

The period of *sede vacante* and the conclave were events in which the entire city of Rome was involved from the perspective of public order reorganisation, with the Apostolic Palace as the epicentre of interest[34]. The confusion and

simultaneous expectation brought about by the event was due to the unpredictability and secrecy of the electoral process. The variability in the times with which Popes were elected in the Early Modern period can be attributed to various political causes, both external and internal to the curia. Among the former, the shifting power balances between foreign states and their ability to influence choices through diplomatic agency and the persuasion of cardinals played a significant role[35]. Internally, the role of family and power factions within the College, combined with the electoral system most commonly adopted, such as acclamation or access, had a decisive impact [36].

Despite the study of these political circumstances and agencies benefiting the understanding of a single election, the human and unknown quality of these factors becomes irrelevant if we aim to offer an overview and comparison of several conclaves over the long run. This, in turn, may be considered insignificant for the outcome of a single election but important for highlighting the significance —such as in the use of physical space— of a small detail that was previously considered a constant.

A foundational element for the continuity of the sovereignty of the Holy See and the unique agent in the electoral moment of the conclave is the Cardinal elector. Beyond their creation, affiliation, and voting preference[37] —which, at least in cases of election by secret ballot, will always remain unknown— their number is a quantifiable parameter. The trend during the period in which conclaves were held in the Vatican from the 15th to the late 17th century shows a constant increase, with a decline only in the following century (fig. 1). This indicates an increasing political weight of the College in relation to the office to be elected. Not coincidentally, a long-run analysis shows how the average age of cardinals elected as Pope progressively rises over the three centuries considered, while the average duration of pontificates progressively decreases (fig. 2). This indicates that a strong College corresponds to a weaker papal office with potentially less room for manoeuvre.

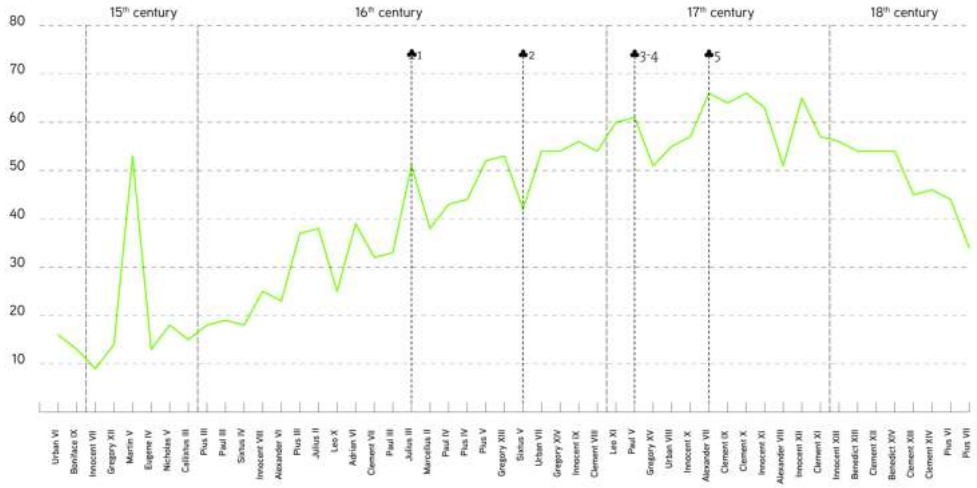

Figure 1. Number of Cardinal electors. Diagram by the author

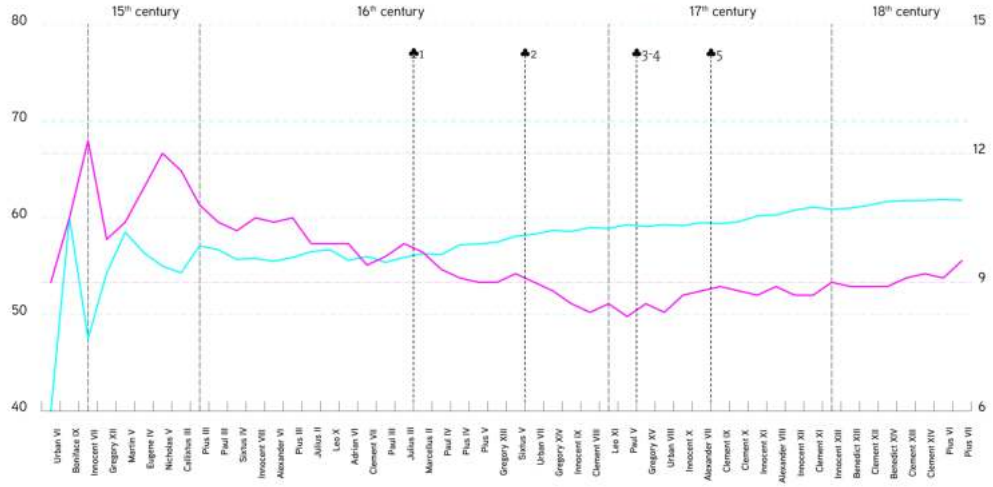

Figure 2. Progressive average age of the Pontiff at election (cyan), average duration of the Papacy (magenta). Diagram by the author

Equally significant is the apparent correlation between the growth in the number of electors within the College of Cardinals and the disproportionate increase in the duration of the conclave, both in progressive average terms and when measured in century intervals (fig. 3). If the average duration of the event in the 15th century was about five days, it increased to eleven days in the 16th century, reached 51 days in the 17th century, and averaged 94 days in the following century.

The cardinals were not indifferent to this increase in seclusion time, and there were signs indicating moments of crisis in this forced cohabitation. Despite progressively improving hygienic conditions over the centuries, the lack of air due to the almost complete sealing of all doors and windows, for example, made the death of College members not entirely sporadic[38].

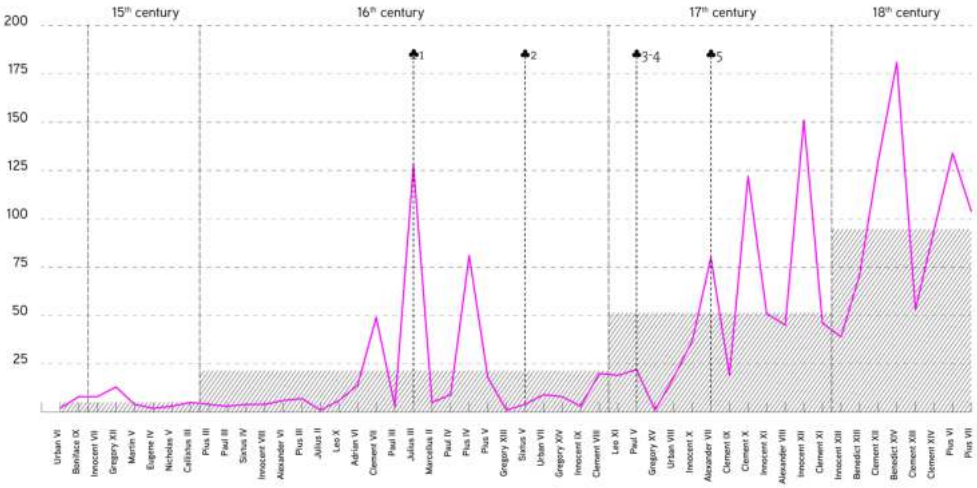

Figure 3. Duration in days of conclave (magenta), average duration of conclave per century (hatch). Diagram by the author

As Marc Dykmans shows in a reconstruction based on the drawing of Uffizi 3989 A (fig. 4)[39], in preparation for the conclave, a temporary wall was built dividing the Sala Regia, located on the first floor of the Vatican Palace, into two unequal zones. The northern zone of the Sala was part of the conclave's cloister, while the southern zone was accessed via the Scala del Maresciallo, originating from the eponymous courtyard under the control of the Savelli family[40]. The passage point in the wall was the *porticulum*, the only access and exit door, and the defensive bulwark of the conclave. All windows facing external spaces were sealed. The premise of the ceremony was the prohibition of anyone entering or exiting[41], as well as communication between the inside and outside[42]. This absolute prohibition had one exception: a narrow window through which food could be introduced without allowing the passage of a human body[43].

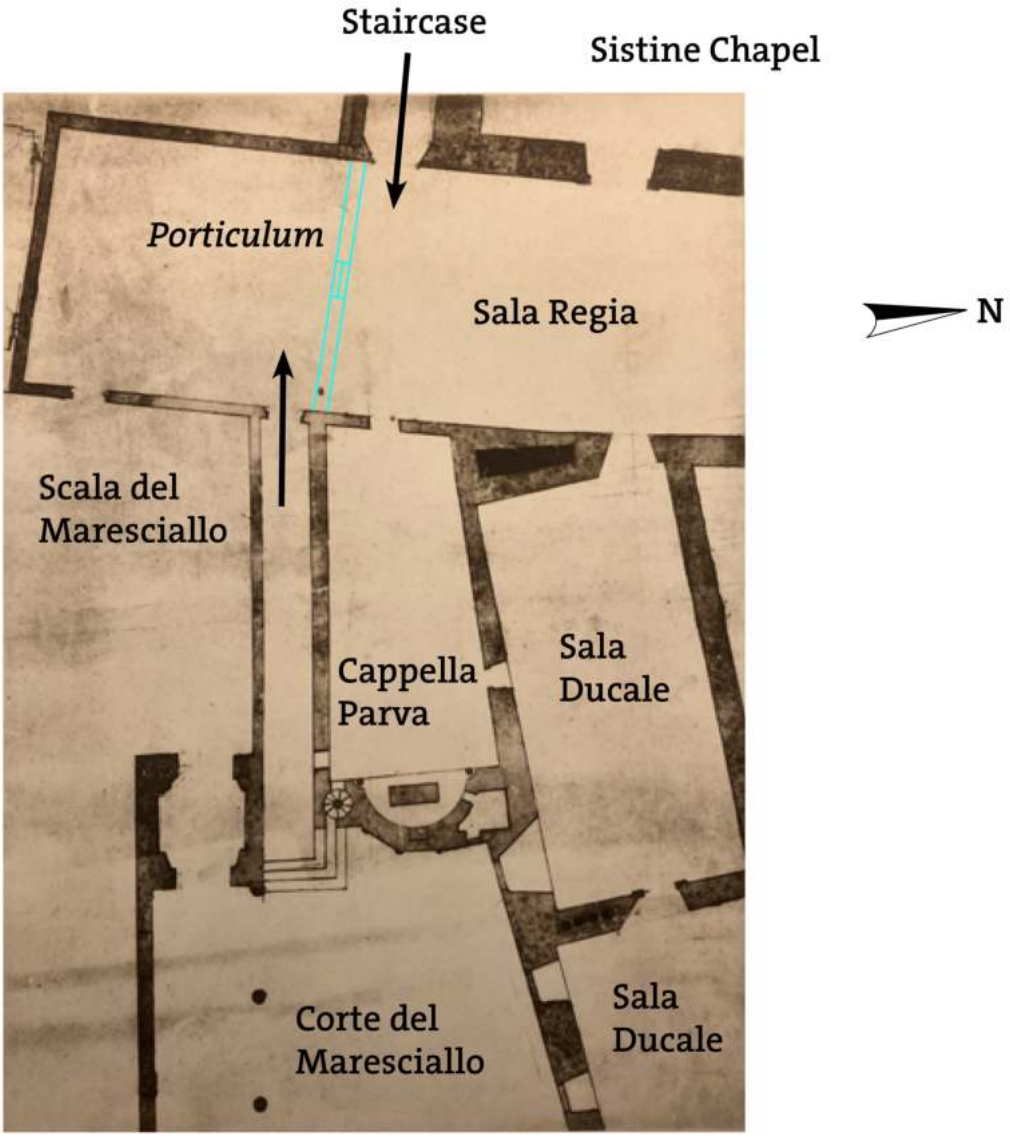

Figure 4. Anonymous. 3989 A. End of XVI. Penna e matita su carta, 585 x 966 mm. 3989 A. Gabinetto dei Disegni e delle Stampe degli Uffizi. Reconstruction from Marc Dykmans, L'oeuvre de Patrizi Piccolomini ou le cérémonial papal de la première Renaissance. Vol. I. Livre Premier. Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1980, 98*–99*

Food was thus the only regularly introduced vector —often rationed to induce the Cardinals to make a quick decision— through the physical borders of the cloistered area. The food prepared elsewhere, contained within the *cornuta*, was transported by the dapiferi to the foot of the Scala del Maresciallo and finally introduced by the grooms through the *ruote*[44], a rotating device that allowed the safe passage of objects through the *porticulum* (fig. 5)[45].

Figure 5. Bartolomeo Scappi, Ordine che si tiene in Sedia vacante, a servire gli Illustriss. & Reverendiss. Cardinali al Conclave, si di tavola dove li Scalchi presentano le vivande delli Reverendissimi alli Reveditori. In Bartolomeo Scappi, Opera di Bartolomeo Scappi mastro dell'arte del cucinare, con la quale si può ammaestrare qualsivoglia cuoco, scalco, trinciante, o mastro di casa. Diuisa in sei libri. Venetia: Alessandro de' Vecchi, 1622

THE CONCLAVE IN PRINTS

As previously mentioned, the anticipation for the outcomes of the conclave among those residing in or arriving in Rome was significant. Equally significant was their curiosity regarding the preparations for the ceremony. Various accounts indicate that crowds of people gathered in the Sala Regia and the surrounding areas to observe the form and scale of the event[46]. Its arrangement and internal organisation, the spaces designated for the conclave at that specific moment, the layout and construction of the Cardinals' cells, and the assignment of their names to these *cubicula*, thus became a public event preceding the "*extra omnes!*", the moment when the doors were closed. In this sense, the papal curia offered the public a first glimpse of what would soon be closed off to everyone. This glimpse, however, would be captured in a series of drawings that, from a certain point in history and throughout the early modern era, would accompany citizens and pilgrims as they awaited the electoral result, while also stimulating considerable commercial interest.
To date, 45 conclave drawings have been published. Most of these were rediscovered by Cardinal Franz Ehrle[47]. According to Ehrle, the oldest *Conclavepläne* belongs to the collection of the Vatican Apostolic Library, while other drawings from later periods were passed down and even printed abroad, in France and Germany, either following or combining parts of models created in Rome. However, beyond a genealogical reconstruction —which Ehrle himself, along with Hermann Egger, sketches out— that would require the

publication of the remaining 65 known examples (up to the end of the 18th century), what is of interest here is identifying how some of these conclave plans can serve to describe a shift in the use of space within the Vatican Palace during the electoral event and the perception that was intended to be communicated through the medium of print.

1) Valerium et Lodovicum Fratres Brixienses, 1550

Among the oldest known graphic representations of a conclave is a woodcut measuring 442 x 318 mm, printed by Valerium et Lodovicum Fratres Brixienses (fig. 6)[48]. The drawing refers to the conclave convened for the death of Paul III Farnese (pp. 1534–1549) on November 10, 1549. In the upper right corner, a chronology of events informs about the main facts observable from an external perspective: the gradual arrival of the Cardinals; the funeral of the deceased on November 28; the Mass of the Holy Spirit and the beginning of the cloister the following day. Once the conclave began, other Cardinals entered the Papal Palace, while on December 19, the eighty-three-year-old Cardinal Filonardi ("Verulanus") was taken out of the palace to Castel Sant'Angelo, where he died the same day. Other Cardinals left, probably exhausted or ill. Ridolfi and Cybo left the cloister on December 20 and 23, respectively; both returned, but Ridolfi died there on January 31.

The almost frenetic succession of dramatic events for the cardinals was the consequence of a conclave that was about to become the longest in the last two centuries. This —along with the entry into the Jubilee Year of 1550— was probably the reason that induced the Fratres Brixienses to publish a visualisation of the event on February 3, 65 days after the start of the ceremony, a period that had already exceeded by two weeks the recent conclave for the death of Adrian VI (pp. 1522–1523) which lasted 49 days.
In addition to the account of events, which aimed to present the print as an updated document and thus commercially appealing to pilgrims, the drawing showed the cells whose arrangement, for the first time since conclaves were held in the Vatican, exceeded the Sistine Chapel. The reason for this choice was the increased number of Cardinal electors, which rose from 35 to 51.
The cells, distributed by lot to the electors, consisted of a structure measuring

> twenty palms in length [4.5 m], while the width and height are fifteen palms [3.3 m], made of square wood, with the floor covered by planks, while the walls and ceiling are covered by a cloth, commonly called 'saia,' green in color if the cardinals are elderly, while if they were created by the deceased Pope, the color is purple[49].

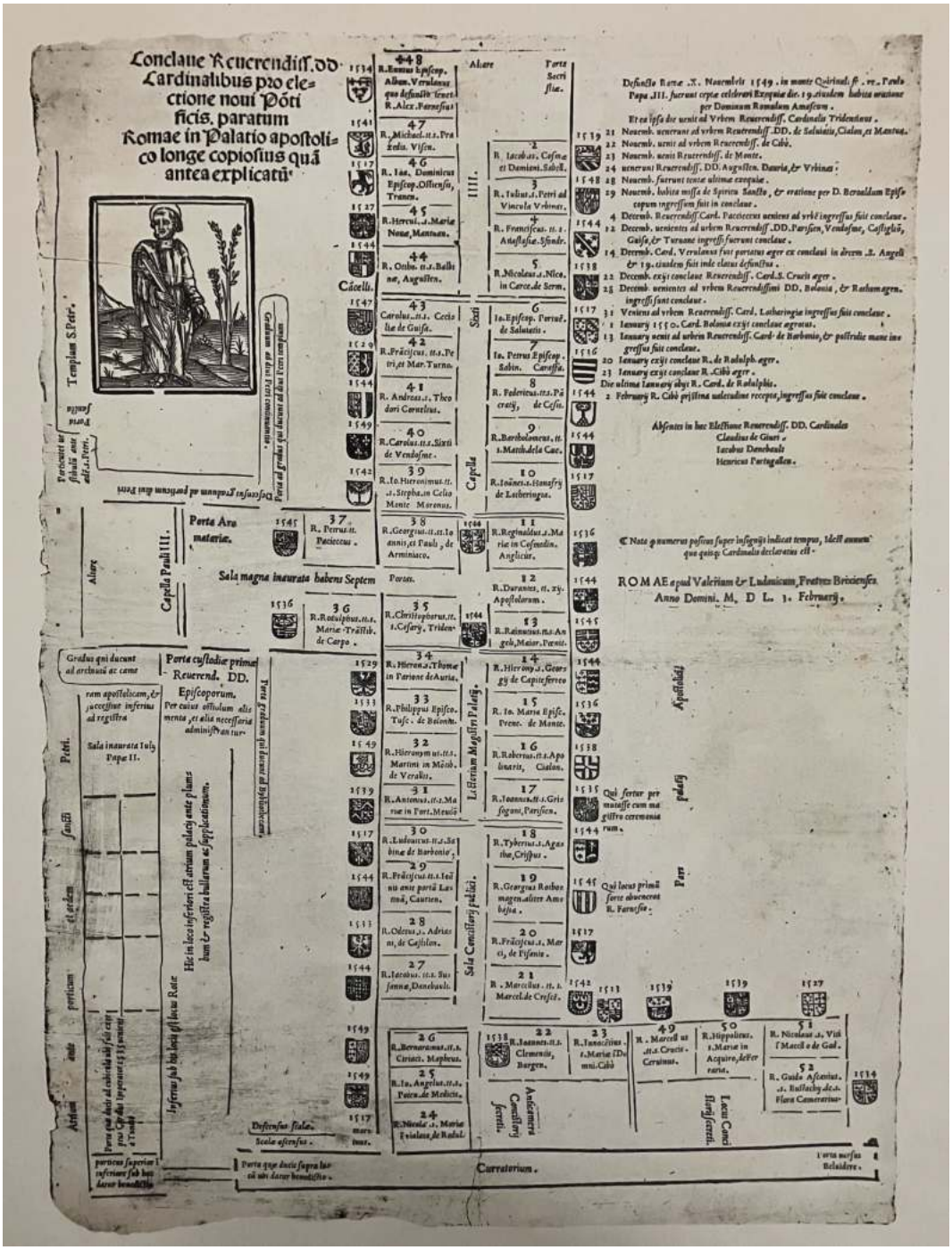

Figure 6. Valerium et Lodovicum Fratres Brixienses, Conclave reverendiss. dd. Cardinalibus pro electione novi Pōtificis paratum Romae in Palatio apostolico longe copiosius quā antea explicatū. February 3, 1550. Woodcut, 442 x 318 mm. From: Ehrle, Franz, and Hermann Egger. Die Conclavepläne: Beiträge zu ihrer Entwicklungsgeschichte. Vol. 1. Studi e documenti per la storia del Palazzo apostolico vaticano 4. Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1933: Tav. II

As the drawing shows, nineteen cells were built in the Sistine Chapel, seven in the Sala Regia, sixteen in the first and second Sala Ducale (Sala Concistorii Publici), five in the antechamber, and four in the Sala del Concistoro Segreto. The architecture of the Palace is treated schematically: the mass of the walls is beyond the scope of the representation, and the proportion of the rooms is referenced only by the number of cells contained therein. However, through concise labels, the memory of the visitor is oriented, allowing them to easily recall the experience of their direct visit while awaiting the election of Julius III Del Monte (pp. 1550–1555) as Pope.

2) Natale Bonifacio, 1585

The second plan here considered refers to the brief conclave held for the death of Gregory XIII (pp. 1572–1585), which lasted from April 21 to 24, 1585 (fig. 7)[50]. Of the plans published so far, this was the first in a landscape format, measuring 224 x 343 mm. The engraving was prepared before the start ("*elezione da cominciarsi alli 22 Aprile*") but was published only after the conclave's conclusion, given the coat of arms of Pope Sixtus V placed at the centre of the Cortile del Pappagallo. The author was Natale Bonifacio, an experienced engraver and printer from Capua who had already produced a considerable number of engravings thanks to his relationships in Rome with major printers of the time, such as Antonio Lafréry and Claude Duchet. In this print, Bonifacio's commercial intelligence is evident from the use of the vernacular language, more accessible to the readership of pilgrims to whom it was addressed, compared to Latin, the language of the clergy. The "*Vera Pianta del Conclave*" thus includes a series of environmental details, such as the indication of the position of the torches "*accese per l'oscuranza del Pas[s]agio*," and distinguishes the cells covered with green fabric (V) "*usato dali Cardinali antiani*" from those in "*pavonazo [...] usato dali Cardinali Nuovi.*" The depiction of the Vatican Palace's architecture, unlike the Fratres Brixienses' plan, is realistic in the rendering of wall thicknesses and the position of elements such as doors, windows, and stairs. At the top of the Scala del Maresciallo, the "*ruote che servono al conclave*" for accessing food to be consumed in the "*loggia di Pasteggio*" (T) on the Belvedere corridor are indicated. The boundaries with the outside, and thus the conditions of the cloister, are emphasised by the air vents (Y) surrounded by "*cancelli per resistere alla turba*" (BB). Given the impassability of the Scala del Maresciallo door, Cardinals needing to re-enter the conclave would be admitted through a different door (CC) near the Pauline Chapel (A).

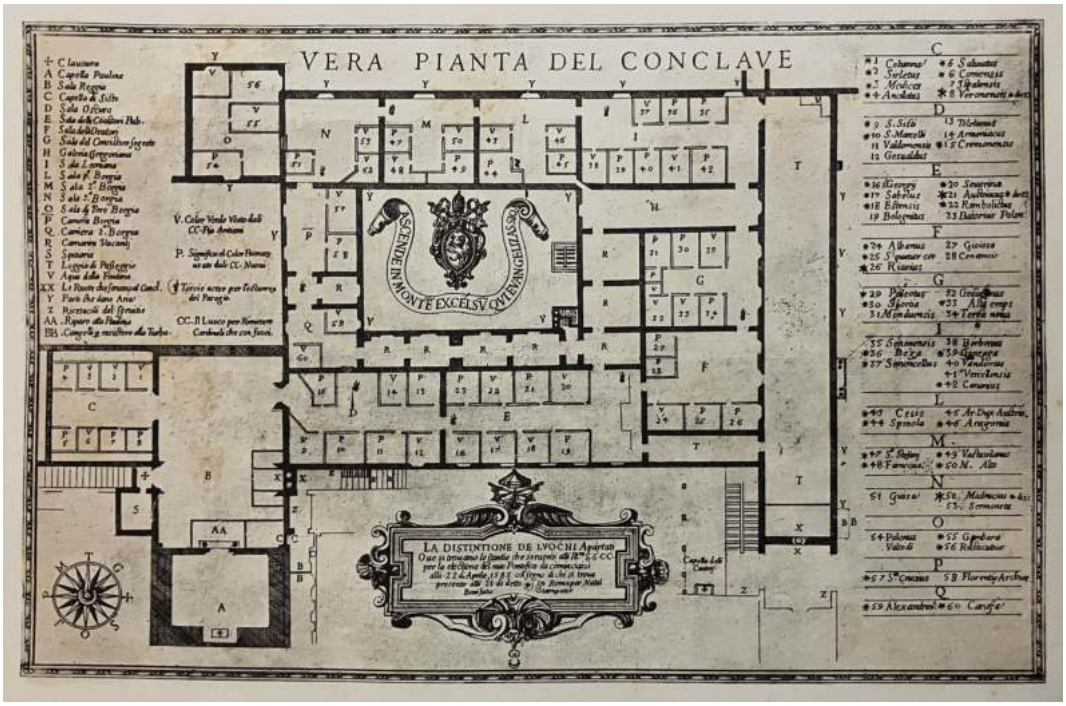

Figure 7. Natale Bonifacio, Vera pianta del Conclave. April 24, 1585. Burin, 224 x 343 mm. From: Ehrle, Franz, and Hermann Egger. Die Conclavepläne: Beiträge zu ihrer Entwicklungsgeschichte. Vol. 1. Studi e documenti per la storia del Palazzo apostolico vaticano 4. Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1933: Tav. IX

Despite the numerous references listed in the legend at the top left, the building plan is far from being the result of a survey. As Ehrle notes, despite the majority of Vatican rooms being irregular in shape, Bonifacio prefers to render them all with orthogonal walls. Additionally, this is the first plan oriented with north at the top, a choice that facilitates the representation of the area affected by the conclave, which increasingly moves away from the Sistine Chapel. Here, only eight cells were arranged, none were installed in the Sala Regia, while all the others were placed in the rooms around the Cortile del Pappagallo, occupying all the rooms of the Borgia Apartment. The final innovative detail is the precision with which the cells were represented, equipped with doors that, in most cases, never faced those of the opposite cell. To the right of the drawing, a legend lists the Cardinal electors, corresponding to the number assigned to them and their respective rooms. Cardinal Felice Peretti ("M. Alto," from the name of his father Peretto di Montalto), the future Pope Sixtus V, occupied cell 50 in the second Borgia Hall.

3-4) Nicolas Van Aelst and Giovanni Maggi, 1605

In 1605, the representations of the conclave underwent an evolution that proved crucial for all future plans engraved in the following centuries. The novelty, introduced already in the conclave for the death of Clement VIII (pp. 1592–1605), was to combine the architectural drawing with scenes depicting the course of the ceremony, from the death of the Pope to the election of the new Pontiff. However, it was with the subsequent conclave, convened after the death of Leo XI (pp. 1–27 April 1605) in the same year, that these scenes achieved a balance that made them an integral part of the conclave plans in future centuries.
The attention aroused by the previous conclave, which concluded in April 1605 must have attracted the attention of engravers and publishers when, after only 25 days from his election, Leo XI died. It was then that two prominent figures of the time, Nicolas Van Aelst and Giovanni Maggi, produced two important engravings to compete in the market.
The one signed "*Nicolo Van Aelst formis*"[51] is a woodcut measuring 260 x 383 mm and is the more cohesive representation of the two (fig. 8). Desptite the schematic nature of the palace plan, for the first time, this becomes an element of a broader narrative that starts from the Pope's death and describes how and who acted outside and inside the fortifications built for the security of the cloister. Thus, the Swiss guards (playing dice), the district chief quelling a crowd attack, the *dapiferi* transporting the *cornuta* and delivering it to the grooms, the wheel assistants, and a long prayer procession for the election of the new Pontiff are depicted.

The etching by Giovanni Maggi, on the other hand, adopts a different communicative strategy (fig. 9)[52].The print is almost twice as large (410 x 543 mm), and the center line clearly divides the contents, suggesting the possibility of folding the sheet in two. The left part is introduced by two small scenes: the crowd in anguish at the bedside of the dead Pope, and Saint Peter receiving the keys to Paradise, while at the bottom, a prayer procession crosses Ponte Sant'Angelo towards the Vatican. The conclave plan is placed at the centre. The drawing breaks with the orthogonal schematism of previous plans, although the wall masses are still too simplified to derive from a survey. For the first time, the Sistine Chapel is free of cells, which are instead arranged in the rooms around the Cortile del Pappagallo and beyond the Belvedere Corridor (67 cells are indicated).

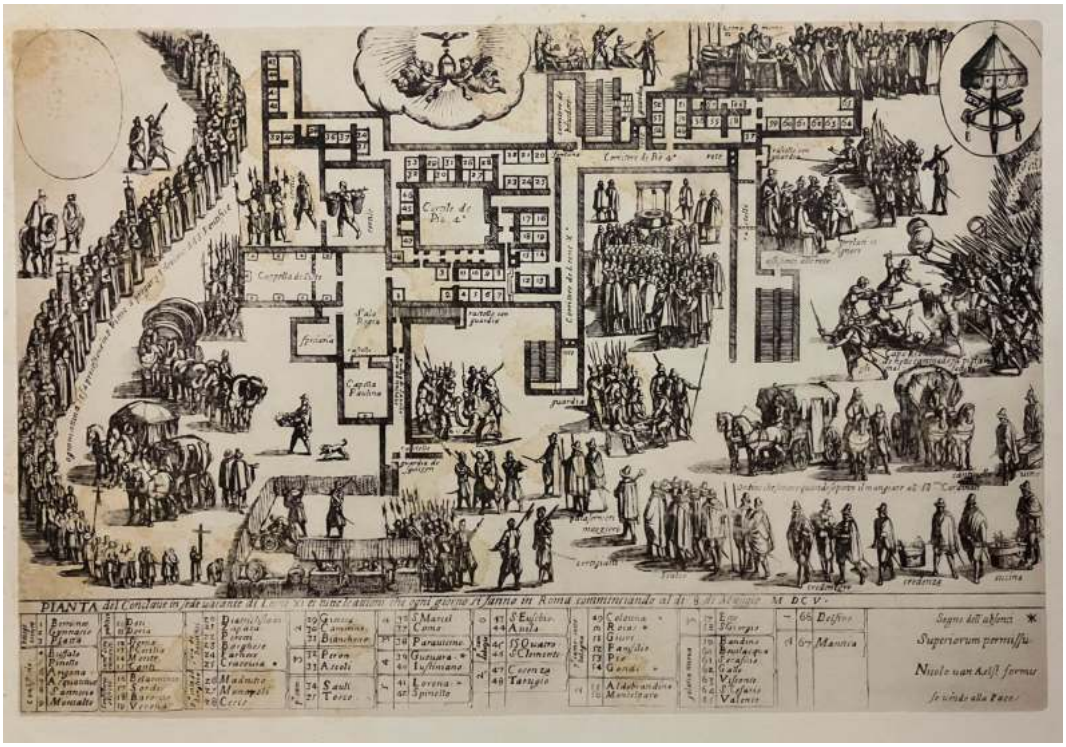

Figure 8. Nicolaus van Aelst, Pianta del Conclave in Sede Vacante di Leone XI et tutte le attioni che ogni giorno si fanno in Roma cominciando al di 8 di Maggio MDCV. 1605. 260 x 383 mm. From: Ehrle, Franz, and Hermann Egger. Die Conclavepläne: Beiträge zu ihrer Entwicklungsgeschichte. Vol. 1. Studi e documenti per la storia del Palazzo apostolico vaticano 4. Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1933: Tav. XIV

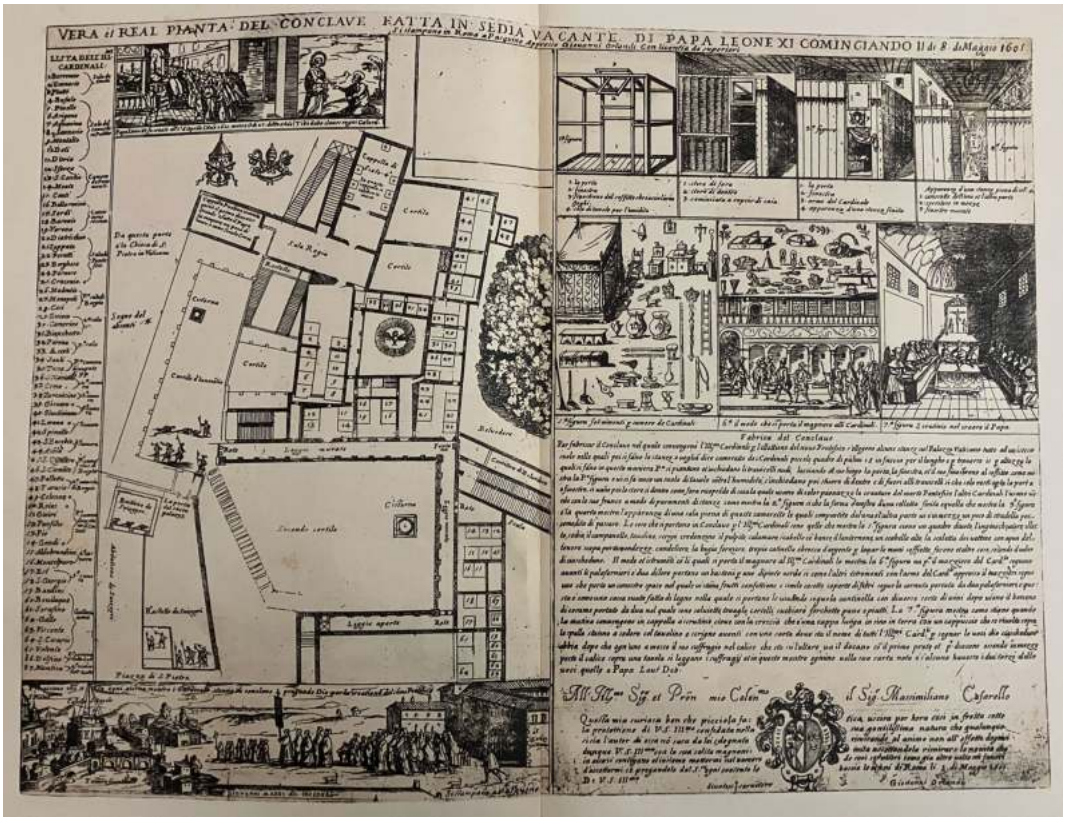

Figure 9. Giovanni Maggi, Vera et Real Pianta del Conclave fatta in sedia vacante di papa Leone XI cominciando il di 8 di Maggio 1605. 1605. Etching, 410 x 543 mm. From: Ehrle, Franz, and Hermann Egger. Die Conclavepläne: Beiträge zu ihrer Entwicklungsgeschichte. Vol. 1. Studi e documenti per la storia del Palazzo apostolico vaticano 4. Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1933: Tav. XIII

However, it is the right part that deviates most from tradition: a long text at the bottom refers to a sequence of seven drawings at the top. For the first time, the physical construction of the conclave is depicted, from the creation of the wooden structure, the covering with boards and cloth, the interior furnishings, to the creation of *"di un poco di stradella per comodità di passare*," thus demonstrating the cramped arrangement of the cells. The fifth drawing shows the set of objects each Cardinal is allowed to bring: a devotional painting, a kneeler, a bed, a chair, a bell, a small table, a chest, a small cupboard, a pulpit, an inkwell, a stool with a bench, a large lantern, a high stool, a small ladder, a broom and trash basket, a candlestick, a strongbox, three bowls, and a silver jug, a bellows. Finally, always accompanied by textual description, the food and those who transport it are depicted, ending with the ballot counting in the Pauline Chapel, which will assign the Apostolic office to Paul V Borghese (pp. 1605-1621).

5) Giovanni Giacomo de' Rossi, 1655

In 1655, coinciding with the death of Innocent X Pamphilj (pp. 1644–1655), Giovanni Giacomo de' Rossi, the most active printer of the de' Rossi dynasty, whose activity began in Rome under the guidance of his father Giuseppe, entered the conclave print market. His activity is recorded through prints produced between 1638 (the year of his father's death) and 1691, when his death passed the business on Via della Pace to his son Domenico[53]. The first printing by de' Rossi is a watershed for the genre in question (fig. 10)[54]. The plate contains all the main elements that will characterise the adaptations proposed by the publisher —and his successors— for subsequent conclaves, as well as influencing the equally successful works of Giovanni Battista Contini and Giovanni Battista Falda. This first example, whose engraver is unknown, seems to give relative importance to the list of Cardinals, relegated as it is to the lower left part of the frame. In this detail, Giovanni Giacomo's commercial experience immediately emerges, dedicating a well-defined frame to this and other elements whose areas on the copper plate will be adjusted to update the contents. The most striking characteristic —and perhaps the success of this model— is the modulation between architectural drawing and the scenes contained in the frames. The plan of the Vatican Palace fits recognisably into the frame through the north-south positioning of the Loggia delle Benedizioni at the bottom, dividing the sheet in two. The plan demonstrates knowledge of the Vatican Palace and is updated with Bernini's Scala Regia drawn in dashed lines, and Martino Ferrabosco's Clock Tower in St. Peter's Square (whose demolition and replacement with Bernini's corridor is recorded in de' Rossi's plate adaptation for the 1667 conclave). Additionally, the tower, part of Sixtus V's Palace, and the interior of the Cortile del Pappagallo are drawn in ichnographic projection to emphasise the separation of the outside world from the cloistered area. Surrounding the plan, fourteen liturgical and secular scenes complete the artboard. Counterclockwise, the Pope's funeral, the Mass of the Holy Spirit, the kissing of the deceased's foot, the entrance to the conclave, the votive procession on Ponte Sant'Angelo, the thousand soldiers of Marshal Salviati, the "Capo Rione" night patrol through the city, the transport of food to the *ruote*, up to the Cardinals' cell, the adoration of the elected Pope, and his conduct to the Basilica for the Coronation. De' Rossi's composition was produced with future use in mind, making it one of the most successful models of the 17th century, and inaugurating the mature Baroque under the auspices of the elected Pope Alexander VII Chigi (pp. 1655–1667).

Figure 10. Giovanni Giacomo de' Rossi, Nova Pianta del conclave fatta in sede vacante di Papa Innocentio X per elettione del novo pontefice a di 7 di Gennaro 1655. 1655. Engraving. Private Collection

CONCLUSION

The conclave stands as the foremost irregular papal ritual —alongside coronations and funerals— designed to address the juridical and political discontinuities characterising the *sede vacante*. In early modern times, the conclave entailed the seclusion of the College of Cardinals, who assembled in secrecy (within the Vatican Palace from 1455 until 1775) until a new Pope was elected. During this period, riots often erupted, leading to the looting of the Lateran Palace and the private residences of the Cardinals. Consequently, the Apostolic Palace was safeguarded through a four-tiered protection system, extending from the building's entrance to the final door before the conclave's cells.

In this political contest, the spatial organisational arrangement of the event played the reciprocal role of cause and effect. This is why the representations of the conclave plans, whose creation likely began in 1550, are crucial for understanding the mechanisms and the role that architecture played in the relationship with the outside and within the electoral event itself.

Although these plans were drawn for commercial purposes, their conception tells, on the one hand, the role of the College of Cardinals in the political dispute for the predominance of a candidate, but also the difficulties experienced by individual prelates in the constraints of a cloister whose duration was inscrutable and often led to death.

On the other hand, the commercial success of these prints narrates the anxiety that the power vacuum inherent in the elective office of the Papacy created among believers, as well as in the courts throughout Europe, and the need to establish security systems against urban disorders. But they also convey the anticipation for the election of a single person, that unique figure who "lives by dying and dies by living"[55].

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work was supported by the Carlsberg Foundation under Grant CF23-1239.

NOTES

[1] Prodi, Paolo. 1982. *Il sovrano pontefice. Un corpo e due anime: la monarchia papale nella prima età moderna*. Saggi 228. Bologna: Il Mulino. **[2]** Esposito, Roberto. 2002. *Immunitas. Protezione e negazione della vita*. Torino: Einaudi. §1. **[3]** Żak, Łukasz. 2023. "Vademecum delle fonti scritte nell'ambito dell'Ufficio delle cerimonie pontificie a cavallo tra il XV e il XVI sec." *Anuario de Historia de la Iglesia* 32: 375–398. **[4]** Marcello, Cristoforo, and Agostino Piccolomini Patrizi. 1516. *Rituum ecclesiasticorum sive sacrarum cerimoniarum S.S. Romanae ecclesiae. Libri tres*. Venetiis. **[5]** "Conclavia dicuntur loca, quae una clave clauduntur." Festus, Sextus Pompeius. 1839. *De verborum significatione quae supersunt cum Pauli epitome*. Lipsiae: Libraria Weidmanniana, 38. **[6]** Internationale Thesaurus-Kommission. 1991. "conclave." In *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae. Editus iussu et auctoritate consilii ab academiis societatibusque diversarum nationum electi*, IV:71–73. Lipsiae: B. G. Teubner. **[7]** "interius cubiculum, sed proprie domus sic appellatur; locus clusus vel munitus vel domus quae multis concluditur cellis." *Ibid.* **[8]** "de intimis animae conclavibus." Migne, Jacques Paul, ed. 1846. *Patrologiae cursus completus. Joannis Cassiani Opera Omnia*. Vol. 49. Paris: Garnier Fratres, 803. **[9]** "nihil deo est obseratum, nil clausum aeterno lumini: sed portas malitiae dedignatur aperire, conclavia non vult penetrare nequitiae". Migne, Jacques Paul, ed. 1844. *Patrologiae cursus completus. S. Ambrosii tomi primi*. Vol. 15. Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1432. **[10]** Paravicini Bagliani, Agostino, and Maria Antonietta Visceglia. 2018. *Il Conclave. Continuità e mutamenti dal Medioevo a oggi*. Roma: Viella, 15. **[11]** Ivi, 18. **[12]** Hampe, Karl. 1913. *Ein ungedruckter Bericht über das Konklave von 1241 im römischen Septizonium*. Heidelberg: Carl Winter's Universitätsbuchhandlung. **[13]** Ceccaroni, Agostino. 1901. *Il Conclave: storia, costituzioni, cerimonie*. Torino: Giacinto Marietti. **[14]** Gregorius X. 1274. "Ubi periculum," July 7. **[15]** "In eodem autem palatio unum conclave, nullo intermedio pariete seu alio velamine, omnes habitent in communi, quod servato libero ad secretam cameram aditu, ita claudatur undique, ut nullus illud intrare valeat vel exire." Ivi, §1. **[16]** "In Collegio vel in Ecclesia, quae est simpliciter ipsius Christi capitis incorruptibilis et permanentis." Quoted from Spinelli, Luigi. 1955. *La vacanza della Sede Apostolica dalle origini al Concilio Tridentino*. Mllano: Giuffrè,164. **[17]** *Ibid.* **[18]** "an possit Collegium sine Papa, quidquid potest cum Papa, vel an possit Collegium mortum Papa, quidquid potest Papa vivens ... forte est dubium." Ivi, 167. **[19]** "Quibus provisione non facta decursis, extunc tantummodo panis, vinum et aqua ministrentur eisdem, donec eadem provisio subsequatur. Provisionis quoque huiusmodi pendente negotio, dicti cardinales nihil de camera papae recipiant nec de aliis eidem ecclesiae tempore vacationis obvenientibus undecunque, sed ea omnia, ipsa vacatione durante, sub eius cuius fidei et diligentiae camera eadem est commissa, custodia maneant, per eum dispositioni futuri pontificis reservanda." Gregorius X. 1274. Op. cit., §1. **[20]** "Post hoc veni in civitatem quandam quae Perusium nuncupatur, in qua papam Innocentium inveni mortuum, sed nundum sepultum, quem de nocte quidam furtive vestimentis preciosis, cum quibus sci erat, spoliaverunt; corpus autem eius fere nudum et fetidum in ecclesia relinquerunt." De Vitry, Jacques. 1960. *Lettres De Jacques De Vitry*. Edited by R.B.C. Huygens. Leiden: Brill, 73. Mentioned in Elze, Reinhard. 1977. "'Sic transit gloria mundi': la morte del papa nel medioevo." *Annali dell'Istituto storico italo-germanico in Trento = Jahrbuch des italienisch-deutschen historischen Instituts in Trient* 3: 23–41. **[21]** Delbeke, Maarten. 2012. *The Art of Religion: Sforza Pallavicino and Art Theory in Bernini's Rome*. London: Routledge, 101-102. **[22]** "Quo defuncto, venerunt ad palatium reverendissimi domini cardinales omnes in Urbenpresentes et per cameram, in qua defunctus jacebat supra lectum, veste quadam longa suprancamisiam indutus, supra pectus crucem habens manibus compositis, defuncto reverentiam profundam facicbant cardinalarem; [...] Abbas Sancti Sebastiani, sacrista, habuit lectum cum fornimentis, licet ad officium nostrum potius pertineret. Alia omnia, quamprimum defunctus ex camera portatus est, unico momento, ut ita dicam, sublata sunt; nam ab bora VI usque ad illam horam, omni diligentia per me facta, non potui habere unum basilem, unum linteum vel aliquod vas, in quo vinum et aqua cum herbis odoriferis prò lavando defuncto ordinaretur, neque bracas et camisiam mundam prò defuncto induendo, ..." Burchard, Johann. 1911. *Liber notarum ab anno MCCCCLXXXIII usque ad annum MDVI*. Edited by Celani, Enrico. Vol. 1. Rerum Italicarum scriptores. Città di Castello: Lapi, 14–15. **[23]** "Cum itaque nonnunquam evenisse comperimus, quod electo Romano Pontefice, nonnulli sub prætextu prætensæ cujusdam abusivæ licentiæ, res & bona sic electi, quasi culme divitiarū adepti, falsò prætendentes occupanti concedi, nedum illius sic electi, imò aliquando nonnullorum, quos electos esse mendaciter confingunt, domos, res, & bona illorum, nec non bona aliquando Cardinalium, & electorum Romani Pontificis & aliorum in loco conclavis existentium, etiam violenter invandunt, rapiunt, occupant, transportant, lucrifacta existimantes: Ex quibus, si permitterentur, plura pericula, scandala, rapinæ, furta, & nonnunquam cædes & homincidia sequerentur: Nos igitur tam scelerate temeritatis & audaciæ viam precludere, & hujusmodi periculis & scandalis obviare volentes, præfactum damnantes sceleratum abusum, talia fieri hôc edicto perpetuo prohibemus." Hardt, Hermann von der, ed. 1699. "Decretum de non spoliando eligendum in Papam." In *Magnum Oecumenicum Constantiense Concilium De Universali Ecclesiae Reformatione, Unione, Et Fide*, 1473–76. Francofurti, Lipsiae: Genschius Helmestadii. **[24]** Gregorius XV. 1621. "Aeterni Patris Filius," December. **[25]** Gregorius XV. 1622. "Decet Romanum Pontificem," March. **[26]** "Barb.lat. 2032." Roma, 1621. Barb.lat.2032, ff. 307r-324r. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. Mentioned in Wassilowsky, Günther. 2007. "Teologia e micropolitica nel cerimoniale del conclave riformato da Gregorio XV (1621–22)." *Dimensioni e problemi della ricerca storica* 1: 37–55. **[27]** Visceglia, Maria Antonietta. 2013. *Morte e elezione del papa: norme, riti e conflitti. L'età moderna*. Roma: Viella. **[28]** "Prime porte palatii custodia alicui magno prelato vel nobili potenti, ut primum obiit pontifex, committitur, qui armata cohorte die noctuque palatium patresque tueatur, cui ducenti sive trecenti pedites assignantur." Dykmans S.J., Marc. 1980. *L'oeuvre de Patrizi Piccolomini ou le cérémonial papal de la première Renaissance*. Vol. I. Livre Premier. Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 29. **[29]** "Secunda custodia est in prima porta qua ad locum conclavis ascenditur. Et hec demandatur conservatoribus et capitibus regionum urbis, qui, adiunctis sibi aliquibus nobilibus civibus, portam ipsam custodiunt." Ivi, 29. **[30]** "Tertia custodia in secunda porta aliquanto superius, demandati solet oratoribus laicis, sive non prelatis, regum aut principum, aut etiam aliquibus magnis et potentibus proceribus numero condecenti.". Ivi, 29-30. See also Visceglia, Maria Antonietta. 2013. Op. cit. **[31]** "Quarta autem custodia, que est in ipso aditu unico conclavis, committi consuevit prelatis dignioribus Romane curie, sex aut octo, sive sint oratores sive non, et si commode fieri potest, et alioquin idonei censeantur, curandum ut ex diversis nationibus eligantur, ut omnium studiis tractetur quod ad omnes pertinet." Dykmans S.J., Marc. 1980. Op. cit., 30. **[32]** "Quarta autem custodia, que est in ipso aditu unico conclavis, committi consuevit prelatis dignioribus Romane curie, sex aut octo, sive sint oratores sive non, et si commode fieri potest, et alioquin idonei censeantur, curandum ut ex diversis nationibus eligantur, ut omnium studiis tractetur quod ad omnes pertinet." *Ibid.* **[33]** "Turn, omnibus predictis expulsis, porta conclavis cum suo porticulo omnibus clausuris clauditur intus et extra, assignanturque claves due clericis cerimoniarum ab intus, et tres prelatis custodibus ab extra." Ivi, 39. **[34]** That is, since the Vatican became the seat of the conclave with the election of Urban VI in 1378 after the return of the popes from Avignon. **[35]** Lombardo, Edoardo. 1959. "Incontro con Antonio Barberini gran Protettore degli affari di Francia." *Capitolium* XXXIV, no. 11: 2–11. Poncet, Olivier. 2002. "The Cardinal-Protectors of the Crowns in the Roman Curia during the First Half of the Seventeenth Century: The Case of France." In *Court and Politics in Papal Rome, 1492-1700* (Cambridge Studies in Italian History and Culture), edited by Maria Antonietta Visceglia, Gianvittorio Signorotto, and Gigliola Fragnito, 158–76. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Wolfe, Karin. 2008. "Protector and Protectorate: Cardinal Antonio Barberini's Art Diplomacy for the French Crown at the Papal Court." In *Art and Identity in Early Modern Rome*, edited by Jill Burke and Michael Bury, 113–33. Aldershot: Ashgate. Spagnoletti, Angelantonio, and Péter Tusor, eds. 2018. *Gli "angeli custodi" delle monarchie: i cardinali protettori delle nazioni*. Viterbo: Sette Città.cBrancatelli, Stefano. 2012. "Dallo squadrone volante alla fazione zelante. Continuità e discontinuità nel collegio cardinalizio della seconda metà del XVII secolo." *Archivum Historiae Pontificiae* 50: 13–40. **[36]** Hunt, John M. 2022. "The Market in the Conclave: Gambling on Election Outcomes in Renaissance Italy." In *The Casino, Card and Betting Game Reader*, edited by Mark R. Johnson, 351–73. New York: Bloomsbury Academic. **[37]** Visceglia, Maria Antonietta. 1996. "La 'Giusta statera de' porporati'. Sulla composizione del Sacro Collegio nella prima metà del Seicento." *Roma moderna e contemporanea* 1: 167–211. Hollingsworth, Mary, Miles Pattenden, and Arnold Witte, eds. 2020. *A Companion to the Early Modern Cardinal*. Leiden; Boston: Brill. **[38]** "Ma essendo dette stanze [Sala Regia, Cappella Sistina, Sale Ducali] parte volte verso prati, e parte havendo lume da Cortili, si rende in esse l'aria grassa e putrefatta per la multiplicità de fiati e dell'immondezza che per essere le finestre per la maggior parte murate, non può entrar tant'aria che buona, che possa cavar la cattiva, il che ha causato nel'uscir d'ogni Conclave che de Cardinali ne siano morti molti." Ferrabosco, Martino. "Vat.lat. 10742 - Architettura della basilica di S. Pietro in Vaticano," n.d. Vat.lat.10742, ff.369r-384v. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana: ff. 378v-379r. **[39]** Dykmans S.J., Marc. 1980. Op. cit., 98*–99*. **[40]** The office of the "Maresciallo di Santa Romana Chiesa" had been the prerogative of the Savelli family since the Middle Ages (probably from 1270 onwards). His task was that of perpetual custodian of the Conclave. The Savelli held the office until 1712, when it passed to the Chigi family. Visceglia, Maria Antonietta. 2013. Op. cit. **[41]** "ut nullus illud intrare valeat vel exire." Friedberg, Aemilius, ed. 1959, *Corpus iuris canonici*. Vol. II. Graz: Akademische Druck- u. Verlagsanstalt, 947. **[42]** "Nulli etiam fas sit, ipsis cardinalibus vel eorum alicui nuncium mittere vel scripturam; qui vero contra fecerit, scripturam mittendo vel nuncium, aut cum aliquo ipsorum scerete loquendo, ipso facto sententiam excommunicationis incurrat." *Ibid.* **[43]** "In conclavi tamen praedicto aliqua fenestra competens dimittatur, per quam eisdem cardinalibus ad victum commode necessaria ministrentur; sed per eam nulli ad ipsos patere possit iningressus." *Ibid.* **[44]** The device was introduce byy the Master of Ceremonies Paris de Grassis after Leo X election. Ceccaroni, Agostino. 1901. Op. cit., 18. **[45]** Visceglia, Maria Antonietta. 2013. Op. cit. **[46]** "Cum pervenissem in primam aulam conclavis, in eo erant circiter tria millia liominum qui nos prevenerant; nam yicecamerarius ante introitum nostrum non expulerat gentem ibidem existentem, neque viam pro cardinalibus et suis, conclave intrare debentibus ordinaverat vel custodiverat, prout ex officio sibi incumbit." Burkhart, Johann. 1883. *Diarium sive rerum urbanarum commentarii*. Edited by Louis Thuasne. Vol. I. 1483-1492. Paris: Ernest Leroux, 26. **[47]** Franz Ehrle (1845–1934) was a Jesuit who became the Prefect of the Vatican Library in 1895, a position he held until 1914. In 1922, he was elevated to the rank of Cardinal. Ehrle, Franz, and Hermann Egger. 1933. *Die Conclavepläne: Beiträge zu ihrer Entwicklungsgeschichte*. Vol. 1–2. Città del Vaticano: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. **[48]** Valerium et Lodovicum, Fratres Brixienses apud. *Conclave reverendiss. dd. Cardinalibus pro electione novi Pōtificis paratum Romae in Palatio apostolico longe copiosius quā antea explicatū*. February 3, 1550. Xilografia, 442 x 318 mm. Stampe.Cartella.Conclavi(9). Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. **[49]** From the description of the conclave of 1549 by Angelo Massarelli. Ehrle, Franz, and Hermann Egger. 1933. Op. cit., 17. **[50]** Bonifacio, Natale. 1585. *Vera pianta del Conclave*. April 24. Bulino, 224 x 343 mm. Stampe.Cartella.Conclavi(10). Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. **[51]** "Formis" indicated the activity as editor. The lettering adds "se vende alla Pace" because Van Aelst run a shop in Via della Pace, Rome. Bellini, Paolo. 1975. "Stampatori e mercanti di stampe in Italia nei secoli XVI e XVII." *I Quaderni del conoscitore di stampe*, no. 26: 19–45. **[52]** Aelst, Nicolaus van. 1605. *Pianta del Conclave in Sede Vacante di Leone XI et tutte le attioni che ogni giorno si fanno in Roma cominciando al di 8 di Maggio MDCV*. 260 x 383 mm. Chig., Vol. 160, f. 1. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana. **[53]** Bellini, Paolo. 1975. Op. cit., 19–45. **[54]** Rossi, Giovanni Giacomo de'. 1655. *Nova Pianta del conclave fatta in sede vacante di Papa Innocentio X per elettione del novo pontefice a dì 7 di Gennaro 1655*. Engraving. Private Collection. **[55]** BAV, Urb. Lat. 1059/II, Avvisi di Roma, f. 303rv, 9 ottobre 1591." Da Visceglia, Maria Antonietta. Op. cit. 2013.

OF OTHER SPACES: *UTOPIAS AND HETEROTOPIAS*

Edited by Elisa Boeri (Politecnico di Milano), Luca Cardani (Politecnico di Milano) and Michela Pilotti (Politecnico di Milano)

TITLE
Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias

AUTHOR
Michel Foucault

DATE
March 14th, 1967

CONFERENCE
Des Espace Autres

LOCATION
Paris

NOTES
"Des Espace Autres" written in Tunisia in 1967, and published by the French journal Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité, no. 5, October, 1984, pp. 46-49 is the basis of a lecture given by Michel Foucault in March 1967. Although not reviewed for publication by the author and thus not part of the official corpus of his work, the manuscript was relaeased into the public domain for an exhibition in Berlin shortly before Michel Foucault's death. Translated from the French by Jay Miskowiec.

Delivered in 1967 at the 'Cercle d'études architecturales' in Paris and only published posthumously in 1984, the lecture Des espaces autres represents a central reflection in Michel Foucault's (1926-1984) production on space, as well as its relationship with time.
The philosopher outlines six principles for identifying heterotopias – psychiatric hospitals, prisons, cemeteries, museums, colonies – defining a category of places «outside of all places», but at the same time deeply rooted in the social and cultural structures of their time. These principles highlight how certain spaces can juxtapose incompatible places, accumulate different temporalities, function according to precise rules of access and seclusion, and act as places of crisis or deviation.

Figure 1. Cover of the journal Architecture, Mouvement, Continuité, no. 5, October, 1984, in which Michel Foucault's lecture was published for the first time

The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and of suspension, of crisis, and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of

dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world. The nineteenth century found its essential mythological resources in the second principle of thermodynamics. The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects points and intersects with its own skein. One could perhaps say that certain ideological conflicts animating present-day polemics oppose the pious descendents of time and the determined inhabitants of space. Structuralism, or at least which is grouped under this slightly too general name, is the effort to establish, between elements that could have been connected on a temporal axis, an ensemble of relations that makes them appear as juxtaposed, set off against one another, implicated by each other—that makes them appear, in short, as a sort of configuration. Actually, structuralism does not entail denial of time; it does involve a certain manner of dealing with what we call time and what we call history.

Yet it is necessary to notice that the space which today appears to form the horizon of our concerns, our theory, our systems, is not an innovation; space itself has a history in Western experience, and it is not possible to disregard the fatal intersection of time with space. One could say, by way of retracing this history of space very roughly, that in the Middle Ages there was a hierarchic ensemble of places: sacred places and profane places: protected places and open, exposed places: urban places and rural places (all these concern the real life of men). In cosmological theory, there were the supercelestial places as opposed to the celestial, and the celestial place was in its turn opposed to the terrestrial place. There were places where things had been put because they had been violently displaced, and then on the contrary places where things found their natural ground and stability. It was this complete hierarchy, this opposition, this intersection of places that constituted what could very roughly be called medieval space: the space of emplacement.

This space of emplacement was opened up by Galileo. For the real scandal of Galileo's work lay not so much in his discovery, or rediscovery, that the earth revolved around the sun, but in his constitution of an infinite, and infinitely open space. In such a space the place of the Middle Ages turned out to be dissolved, as it were; a thing's place was no longer anything but a point in its movement, just as the stability of a thing was only its movement indefinitely slowed down. In other words, starting with Galileo and the seventeenth century, extension was substituted for localization.

Today the site has been substituted for extension which itself had replaced emplacement. The site is defined by relations of proximity between points or elements; formally, we can describe these relations as series, trees, or grids. Moreover, the importance of the site as a problem in contemporary technical work is well known: the storage of data or of the intermediate results of a calculation in the memory of a machine, the circulation of discrete elements with a random output (automobile traffic is a simple case, or indeed the sounds on a telephone line); the identification of marked or coded elements inside a set that may be randomly distributed, or may be arranged according to single or to multiple classifications.

In a still more concrete manner, the problem of siting or placement arises for mankind in terms of demography. This problem of the human site or living space is not simply that of knowing whether there will be enough space for men in the world—a problem that is certainly quite important—but also that of knowing what relations of propinquity, what

type of storage, circulation, marking, and classification of human elements should be adopted in a given situation in order to achieve a given end. Our epoch is one in which space takes for us the form of relations among sites.

In any case I believe that the anxiety of our era has to do fundamentally with space, no doubt a great deal more than with time. Time probably appears to us only as one of the various distributive operations that are possible for the elements that are spread out in space,

Now, despite all the techniques for appropriating space, despite the whole network of knowledge that enables us to delimit or to formalize it, contemporary space is perhaps still not entirely desanctified (apparently unlike time, it would seem, which was detached from the sacred in the nineteenth century). To be sure a certain theoretical desanctification of space (the one signaled by Galileo's work) has occurred, but we may still not have reached the point of a practical desanctification of space. And perhaps our life is still governed by a certain number of oppositions that remain inviolable, that our institutions and practices have not yet dared to break down. These are oppositions that we regard as simple givens: for example between private space and public space, between family space and social space, between cultural space and useful space, between the space of leisure and that of work. All these are still nurtured by the hidden presence of the sacred.

Bachelard's monumental work and the descriptions of phenomenologists have taught us that we do not live in a homogeneous and empty space, but on the contrary in a space thoroughly imbued with quantities and perhaps thoroughly fantasmatic as well. The space of our primary perception, the space of our dreams and that of our passions hold within themselves qualities that seem intrinsic: there is a light, ethereal, transparent space, or again a dark, rough, encumbered space; a space from above, of summits, or on the contrary a space from below of mud; or again a space that can be flowing like sparkling water, or space that is fixed, congealed, like stone or crystal. Yet these analyses, while fundamental for reflection in our time, primarily concern internal space. I should like to speak now of external space.

The space in which we live, which draws us out of ourselves, in which the erosion of our lives, our time and our history occurs, the space that claws and gnaws at us, is also, in itself, a heterogeneous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another.

Of course one might attempt to describe these different sites by looking for the set of relations by which a given site can be defined. For example, describing the set of relations that define the sites of transportation, streets, trains (a train is an extraordinary bundle of relations because it is something through which one goes, it is also something by means of which one can go from one point to another, and then it is also something that goes by). One could describe, via the cluster of relations that allows them to be defined, the sites of temporary relaxation—cafes, cinemas, beaches. Likewise one could describe, via its network of relations, the closed or semi-closed sites of rest—the house, the bedroom, the bed, et cetera. But among all these sites, I am interested in certain ones that have the curious property of being in relation with all the other sites, but in such a way as to suspect, neutralize, or invent the set of relations that they happen to

designate, mirror, or reflect. These spaces, as it were, which are linked with all the others, which however contradict all the other sites, are of two main types.

HETEROTOPIAS

First there are the utopias. Utopias are sites with no real place. They are sites that have a general relation of direct or inverted analogy with the real space of Society. They present society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down, but in any case these utopias are fundamentally unreal spaces.

There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, real places—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society— which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. I believe that between utopias and these quite other sites, these heterotopias, there might be a sort of mixed, joint experience, which would be the mirror. The mirror is, after all, a utopia, since it is a placeless place. In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am. The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there.

As for the heterotopias as such, how can they be described? What meaning do they have? We might imagine a sort of systematic description—I do not say a science because the term is too galvanized now—that would, in a given society, take as its object the study, analysis, description, and 'reading' (as some like to say nowadays) of these different spaces, of these other places. As a sort of simultaneously mythic and real contestation of the space in which we live, this description could be called heterotopology.

Its first principle is that there is probably not a single culture in the world that fails to constitute heterotopias. That is a constant of every human group. But the heterotopias obviously take quite varied forms, and perhaps no one absolutely universal form of heterotopia would be found. We can however class them in two main categories.

In the so-called primitive societies, there is a certain form of heterotopia that I would call crisis heterotopias, i.e., there are privileged or sacred or

forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc. In out society, these crisis heterotopias are persistently disappearing, though a few remnants can still be found. For example, the boarding school, in its nineteenth-century form, or military service for young men, have certainly played such a role, as the first manifestations of sexual virility were in fact supposed to take place "elsewhere" than at home. For girls, there was, until the middle of the twentieth century, a tradition called the "honeymoon trip" which was an ancestral theme. The young woman's deflowering could take place "nowhere" and, at the moment of its occurrence the train or honeymoon hotel was indeed the place of this nowhere, this heterotopia without geographical markers.

But these heterotopias of crisis are disappearing today and are being replaced, I believe, by what we might call heterotopias of deviation: those in which individuals whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed. Cases of this are rest homes and psychiatric hospitals, and of course prisons, and one should perhaps add retirement homes that are, as it were, on the borderline between the heterotopia of crisis and the heterotopia of deviation since, after all, old age is a crisis, but is also a deviation since in our society where leisure is the rule, idleness is a sort of deviation.

The second principle of this description of heterotopias is that a society, as its history unfolds, can make an existing heterotopia function in a very different fashion; for each heterotopia has a precise and determined function within a society and the same heterotopia can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another.

As an example I shall take the strange heterotopia of the cemetery. The cemetery is certainly a place unlike ordinary cultural spaces. It is a space that is however connected with all the sites of the city, state or society or village, etc., since each individual, each family has relatives in the cemetery. In western culture the cemetery has practically always existed. But it has undergone important changes. Until the end of the eighteenth century, the cemetery was placed at the heart of the city, next to the church. In it there was a hierarchy of possible tombs. There was the charnel house in which bodies lost the last traces of individuality, there were a few individual tombs and then there were the tombs inside the church. These latter tombs were themselves of two types, either simply tombstones with an inscription, or mausoleums with statues. This cemetery housed inside the sacred space of the church has taken on a quite different cast in modern civilizations, and curiously, it is in a time when civilization has become 'atheistic,' as one says very crudely, that western culture has established what is termed the cult of the dead.

Basically it was quite natural that, in a time of real belief in the resurrection of bodies and the immortality of the soul, overriding importance was not accorded to the body's remains. On the contrary, from the moment when people are no longer sure that they have a soul or that the body will regain life, it is perhaps necessary to give much more attention to the dead body, which is ultimately the only trace of our existence in the world and in language. In any case, it is from the beginning of the nineteenth century that everyone has a right to her or his own little box for her or his own little personal decay, but on the other hand, it is only from that start of the nineteenth century that cemeteries began to be located at the outside border of cities. In correlation with the

individualization of death and the bourgeois appropriation of the cemetery, there arises an obsession with death as an 'illness.' The dead, it is supposed, bring illnesses to the living, and it is the presence and proximity of the dead right beside the houses, next to the church, almost in the middle of the street, it is this proximity that propagates death itself. This major theme of illness spread by the contagion in the cemeteries persisted until the end of the eighteenth century, until, during the nineteenth century, the shift of cemeteries toward the suburbs was initiated. The cemeteries then came to constitute, no longer the sacred and immortal heart of the city, but the other city, where each family possesses its dark resting place.

Third principle. The heterotopia is capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites that are in themselves incompatible. Thus it is that the theater brings onto the rectangle of the stage, one after the other, a whole series of places that are foreign to one another; thus it is that the cinema is a very odd rectangular room, at the end of which, on a two-dimensional screen, one sees the projection of a three-dimensional space, but perhaps the oldest example of these heterotopias that take the form of contradictory sites is the garden. We must not forget that in the Orient the garden, an astonishing creation that is now a thousand years old, had very deep and seemingly superimposed meanings. The traditional garden of the Persians was a sacred space that was supposed to bring together inside its rectangle four parts representing the four parts of the world, with a space still more sacred than the others that were like an umbilicus, the navel of the world at its center (the basin and water fountain were there); and all the vegetation of the garden was supposed to come together in this space, in this sort of microcosm. As for carpets, they were originally reproductions of gardens (the garden is a rug onto which the whole world comes to enact its symbolic perfection, and the rug is a sort of garden that can move across space). The garden is the smallest parcel of the world and then it is the totality of the world. The garden has been a sort of happy, universalizing heterotopia since the beginnings of antiquity (our modern zoological gardens spring from that source).

Fourth principle. Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time—which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies. The heterotopia begins to function at full capacity when men arrive at a sort of absolute break with their traditional time. This situation shows us that the cemetery is indeed a highly heterotopic place since, for the individual, the cemetery begins with this strange heterochrony, the loss of life, and with this quasi-eternity in which her permanent lot is dissolution and disappearance.

From a general standpoint, in a society like ours heterotopias and heterochronies are structured and distributed in a relatively complex fashion. First of all, there are heterotopias of indefinitely accumulating time, for example museums and libraries, Museums and libraries have become heterotopias in which time never stops building up and topping its own summit, whereas in the seventeenth century, even at the end of the century, museums and libraries were the expression of an individual choice. By contrast, the idea of accumulating everything, of establishing a sort of general archive, the will to enclose in one place all times, all epochs, all forms, all tastes, the idea of constituting a place of all times that is itself outside of time and inaccessible to its ravages, the project of organizing in this way a sort of perpetual and indefinite accumulation of time in an immobile place, this whole idea belongs to our modernity. The museum

and the library are heterotopias that are proper to western culture of the nineteenth century.
Opposite these heterotopias that are linked to the accumulation of time, there are those linked, on the contrary, to time in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect, to time in the mode of the festival. These heterotopias are not oriented toward the eternal, they are rather absolutely temporal [chroniques]. Such, for example, are the fairgrounds, these' marvelous empty sites on the outskirts of cities that teem once or twice a year with stands, displays, heteroclite objects, wrestlers, snakewomen, fortune-tellers, and so forth. Quite recently, a new kind of temporal heterotopia has been invented: vacation villages, such as those Polynesian villages that offer a compact three weeks of primitive and eternal nudity to the inhabitants of the cities. You see, moreover, that through the two forms of heterotopias that come together here, the heterotopia of the festival and that of the eternity of accumulating time, the huts of Djerba are in a sense relatives of libraries and museums, for the rediscovery of Polynesian life abolishes time; yet the experience is just as much the rediscovery of time, it is as if the entire history of humanity reaching back to its origin were accessible in a sort of immediate knowledge.

Fifth principle. Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, the heterotopic site is not freely accessible like a public place. Either the entry is compulsory, as in the case of entering a barracks or a prison, or else the individual has to submit to rites and purifications. To get in one must have a certain permission and make certain gestures. Moreover, there are even heterotopias that are entirely consecrated to these activities of purification—purification that is partly religious and partly hygienic, such as the hammin of the Moslems, or else purification that appears to be purely hygienic, as in Scandinavian saunas.

There are others, on the contrary, that seem to be pure and simple openings, but that generally hide curious exclusions. Everyone can enter into the heterotopic sites, but in fact that is only an illusion—we think we enter where we are, by the very fact that we enter, excluded. I am thinking for example, of the famous bedrooms that existed on the great farms of Brazil and elsewhere in South America. The entry door did not lead into the central room where the family lived, and every individual or traveler who came by had the right to open this door, to enter into the bedroom and to sleep there for a night. Now these bedrooms were such that the individual who went into them never had access to the family's quarter the visitor was absolutely the guest in transit, was not really the invited guest. This type of heterotopia, which has practically disappeared from our civilizations, could perhaps be found in the famous American motel rooms where a man goes with his car and his mistress and where illicit sex is both absolutely sheltered and absolutely hidden, kept isolated without however being allowed out in the open.

Sixth principle. The last trait of heterotopias is that they have a function in relation to all the space that remains. This function unfolds between two extreme poles. Either their role is to create a space of illusion that exposes every real space, all the sites inside of which human life is partitioned, as still more illusory (perhaps that is the role that was played by those famous brothels of which we are now deprived). Or else, on the contrary, their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled.

This latter type would be the heterotopia, not of illusion, but of compensation, and I wonder if certain colonies have not functioned somewhat in this manner. In certain cases, they have played, on the level of the general organization of terrestrial space, the role of heterotopias. I am thinking, for example, of the first wave of colonization in the seventeenth century, of the Puritan societies that the English had founded in America and that were absolutely perfect other places. I am also thinking of those extraordinary Jesuit colonies that were founded in South America: marvelous, absolutely regulated colonies in which human perfection was effectively achieved. The Jesuits of Paraguay established colonies in which existence was regulated at every turn. The village was laid out according to a rigorous plan around a rectangular place at the foot of which was the church; on one side, there was the school; on the other, the cemetery, and then, in front of the church, an avenue set out that another crossed at right angles; each family had its little cabin along these two axes and thus the sign of Christ was exactly reproduced. Christianity marked the space and geography of the American world with its fundamental sign.

The daily life of individuals was regulated, not by the whistle, but by the bell. Everyone was awakened at the same time, everyone began work at the same time; meals were at noon and five o'clock, then came bedtime, and at midnight came what was called the marital wake-up, that is, at the chime of the churchbell, each person carried out her/his duty.

Brothels and colonies are two extreme types of heterotopia, and if we think, after all, that the boat is a floating piece of space, a place without a place, that exists by itself, that is closed in on itself and at the same time is given over to the infinity of the sea and that, from port to port, from tack to tack, from brothel to brothel, it goes as far as the colonies in search of the most precious treasures they conceal in their gardens, you will understand why the boat has not only been for our civilization, from the sixteenth century until the present, the great instrument of economic development (I have not been speaking of that today), but has been simultaneously the greatest reserve of the imagination. The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.

WHEN THE BLACK TIDE ROLLS IN THE FORGOTTEN SPACE OF THE SEA: FISH STORY BY ALLAN SEKULA

Edited by Beatrice Moretti (Università degli Studi di Genova)

TITLE
Fish Story

AUTHOR
Allan Sekula

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NOTE
The title of the review derives from a sentence of the documentary The Forgotten Space (Allan Sekula, Noël Burch, 2012) that claims "[...] of all the forgotten spaces the sea, in its ancient terribleness, is the most forgotten. The sea is really remembered only when maritime disaster strikes. When the black tide rolls in." Source: The Forgotten Space, Documentary (Wildart Film, 2012) 1:04:07-1:04:35.

Allan Sekula's *Fish Story* is an intense and multifaceted photographic research project about the global shipping industry and its implications for labour, capital, and the environment. Through his critical realist approach, Sekula offers a nuanced visual analysis about "the forgetting of the sea", that is the erasure of maritime labour from the realms of imagination (Lerner, 2019) and, as a result, the conversion of the sea in a blind spot, out of sight and beyond representation. In his view, the impact of globalisation becomes a new historical narrative. Photographer, writer, and filmmaker Allan Sekula, who grew up overlooking the Port of Los Angeles, examines how the ocean, once perceived as a wild frontier, has been transformed into a regulated space to facilitate the flow of goods and capital. Seas and oceans are thus places often excluded from the debate of the disciplines of space, immense territories perceived as empty deserts, but also objects of a special, often aggressive, kind of urbanization.

Sekula's *Fish Story* offers a critical, unvarnished portrayal of workers in global maritime industries, revealing the alienation and exploitation often obscured by mainstream media. Far from the naivety of "traditional" documentaries, Sekula challenges sanitized narratives by exposing the harsh realities of globalization. A recurring theme in Sekula's work is his sensitivity to the vulnerable and impoverished (Stimson, 2015): his work consistently foregrounds the lives of those overlooked or marginalized, acting as a rebellion against the hyperreal by reasserting lived reality into public consciousness. The concept of the "disappearing sea" is another poignant aspect of Sekula's work. As global exchange has intensified, the sea has been commodified and transformed into a mere conduit for economic activity. Sekula critiques this process, emphasizing how the natural world has been subsumed by the imperatives of capitalism, losing its significance in the process.

Completed between 1989 and 1995, *Fish Story* is the third of a cycle of works dedicated to the "[...] imaginary and material geographies of the advanced capitalist world" (Sekula, 1995). In both *Sketch of a Geography Lesson* (1983) and *Canadian Notes* (1986), Sekula charts relationships between spaces and political dynamics, moving from the German context shaken by the Cold War to the landscape of extractive industries and the architecture of banks. With *Fish Story*, he abandons the "groundedness" of solid land and moves towards the fluidity of the sea, exploring sites of maritime power, as well as more peripheral territories. His extensive travels to port cities across the globe – from Los Angeles and San Diego to Korea, Mexico, Scotland, and Poland – provide a comprehensive view of the world shipping industry and its far-reaching impacts.

Designed to be both an exhibition and a printed volume, the book's combination of powerful imagery and theoretical insight makes it a key work in contemporary photography. With 105 colour photographs, 9 chapters, 26 texts, and two slide projections with 80 slides each, Sekula crafts a narrative structure that moves between different contexts, drawing connections between seemingly disparate elements. The sequencing of images in *Fish Story* is meticulous and deliberate, allowing the author to illustrate the interconnectedness of global systems and the ways in which local events are shaped by broader economic forces. For instance, the juxtaposition of images from Rotterdam and Los Angeles highlights the contrasts between automated and human work in port cities. Sekula's ability in weaving connections through shifting visual perspectives is clear from the book's opening. The first image – a pair of rentable binoculars to gain greater view to passing ships – symbolizes a

mediated, selective gaze. This is echoed in the first accompanying text, which mirrors the act of zooming in: it narrows the viewer's focus to offer deeper context, before gradually expanding the scope once more. (Young, 2018)

Fish Story was exhibited in major international venues, including Witte de With in Rotterdam, Fotografiska Museet in Stockholm, Tramway in Glasgow, Le Channel in Calais, and the Santa Monica Museum of Art between 1995 and 1996. It continued to gain prominence with later showings at the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle (1999), Documenta 11 in Kassel (2002), and most recently at the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis (2024). Sekula later revisited the maritime themes of *Fish Story* in the 2012 documentary The Forgotten Space, co-directed with Noël Burch. Subtitled "The sea is forgotten until disaster strikes," the film essay traces the path of the container box as a symbol of global capitalism, offering a sharp, visually rich commentary on the often-invisible infrastructures that sustain globalization.


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FISH STORY (1995; 2018) BY ALLAN SEKULA PUBLISHED BY MACK (LONDON) IN 2018.
COURTESY OF THE ALLAN SEKULA ESTATE AND MACK

WHAT FEMINIST URBAN FUTURES DO WE DREAM OF? EXPERIMENTS AND POSSIBILITIES IN THE FEMINIST CITY BY LESLIE KERN

Edited by Francesca Giudetti (Politecnico di Milano)

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Feminist City. Claiming Space in a Man-made World

AUTHOR
Leslie Kern

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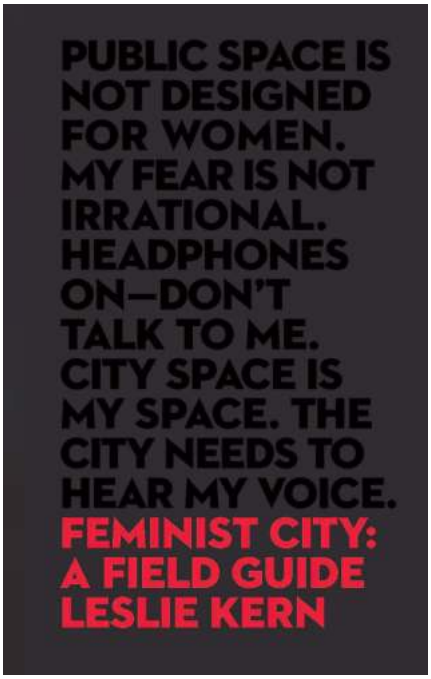

Virginia Woolf once wrote that street haunting in London was among the "greatest of pleasures". Can we today say the same? Or, on the contrary, is it true that, as it has been said, a woman's place is not in the city?

Written by Leslie Kern, Associate Professor of Geography and Environment and Director of Women and Gender Studies at Mount Allison University, *Feminist City* stands as a compendium of author's personal experiences (between London, Toronto, New York, and other cities), various studies, and academic works. The main topic focuses on the forms of oppression and urban injustices faced by women, as well as the recognition of the right to the city.
The book structure reveals that today's city is a minefield and the city of men (introduction), the city of moms (chapter 1), the city of friends (chapter 2), the city of one (chapter 3), the city of protest (chapter 4), the city of fear (chapter 5), the city of possibility (conclusions). All these cities, however, coexist in the general belief that the city as a physical entity should empower everyone. The suggestion that emerges is, in fact, to reshape the city, following the model of Wien ("gender mainstreaming" concept applied in urban planning), for example, with its housing developments newly imagined by feminist designers, which includes on-site childcare, access to transit and health services.

While revealing their gendered implications and drawing on second-wave feminism, the book dissects how women experience cities differently than men by confronting many urban practices.
The pages, hence, deeply analyze stereotypes and racial effects caused, among other things, by the increasing development of suburban areas, which became good places for women and children already according to Jane Jacobs 1960's theories.
Taking up Baudelaire' and Simmel's image, the city has been designed, from its foundation, for flâneurs, white and able-bodied men. The barriers through which women inhabit the city are not only physical, but also psychological, social, economic. Among the physical constraints, Kern highlights spatial forms of exclusion. In this regard, the experiences of disabled people in a wheelchair or the one of a new mom who tries to move around the city are frustrating, despite the inaccessible or inoperative elevators in the underground ["stairs, revolving doors, turnstiles, no space for strollers, broken elevators and escalators, rude comments, glares", p. 39]. Trapped in a body that becomes "a big inconvenience to others" [p. 29], the disappointment of moms includes also social hostilities embedded by the city, where freedom turns into a distant memory and the metropolis becomes a "physical force to constantly struggle against" [p. 33]. Other forms of segregation, moreover, are the ones generated by post-war transformations, with the developments of suburbs and problems raised by gentrification.

Furthermore, from a social perspective, there is a focus on the intersections of gender and sexuality. By quoting famous movies (Sex and the City, 1998; The Fits, 2016; Our Song, 2000; Girls Town, 1996; Beverly Hills 90210, 1990; Foxfire, 1996) and novels (Notes from a Feminist Killjoy, 2016; My Brilliant Friend, 2011), the author questions how a city should decentre the nuclear family, valuing women relationships. Friendships, in fact, shape the ways of engaging with the city itself, but are also part of the "spheres" that influence the urban spaces, such as individual space and solitude in a patriarchal environment (where wearing headphones is one way for women to claim their personal space and independence), protest, fear, motherhood.

In 2023 the chosen word of the year by the Institute of the Italian Encyclopedia Treccani was “femicide”. If we think about the trends that are sadly becoming common, the perceived city is the one described by Kern: the city of fear. Women, in fact, feel unsafe during both day and night-time, experience harassment, threats, crimes, domestic and sexual violence. Since we live hammered by dreadful events, women build “mental maps” [mapping danger, p. 121] in order to face fear and better navigate the city, limiting the use of public transport and sometimes even their work choices.

Contemporary city life offers women a freedom that is still bound by gendered norms, mainly based on older roles (private sphere, domestic, etc.). Hence, women inhabit a written city and, quoting the geographer Jane Darke, “our cities are patriarchy written in stone, brick, glass and concrete” [p. 21]. Kern insists on the fact that physical places like cities influence and mould social relations, power and inequalities and “matter when we want to think about social change” [p. 21]. At the same time, the risk of planning cities friendly to all – women and men – is that policies may not be accompanied by a commitment to redressing inequalities in caregiving and domestic work, that should not be prerogative of women only.

If being a woman in the city means “learning a set of embodied habits, mostly unconsciously” [p. 136], then Kern argues for issues and taboos that are almost invisible to architects and planners. Although on March, 7 2025 the European Commission adopted the Roadmap for Women’s Rights, a long-term vision for achieving gender equality, there is still a long way to go. Public bathrooms and restrooms, for example, should be accessible for all bodies across gender, ability and class (e.g. diaper change, spots to nurse, menstruation, etc.); some paradoxes such as the use of earbuds for personal defense, the gentrification of parenting, the stigma of the stroller, and the “pink taxes” on public transportation, make the city a barricade for women.
Exceptions of inclusive projects are the Superblocks in Barcelona, the “complete streets” in Madrid to prevent gender-based violence in public spaces, the pilot “safe zone” in the centre of Dublin, the parking spaces marked with pink lines for new mothers and fathers of kids (under two years old) emerging in Milan and Paris.

“A feminist city must be one where barriers–physical and social– are dismantled, where all bodies are welcome and accomodated. A feminist city must be care-centred, not because women should remain largely responsible for care work, but because the city has the potential to spread care work more evenly. A feminist city must look to the creative tools that women have always used to support one another and find ways to build that support into the very fabric of the urban world” [p. 52], writes Leslie Kern. And yet, few are the the examples of cities careful to women’s needs, where harassment, crimes and violence are mere words and not established practices [“There are little feminist cities sprouting up in the neighbourhoods all over the place, if we can only learn to recognize and nurture them”, p. 143]. Thus, this book reminds us that the feminist city is still an ongoing experiment and, unfortunately, not a fixed masterplan.

NOTE: Any reference to precise pages in the text comes from the 2020 edition, published by Verso Books.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION **CITY OF MEN**

I have an old picture of my little brother and I surrounded by dozens of pigeons in London's Trafalgar Square. I'm guessing from our matching bowl cuts and bell-bottom corduroys that it's 1980 or 1981. We're happily tossing out seeds that our parents purchased from a little vending machine in the square. You won't find those machines anymore because feeding the pigeons is strictly frowned upon, but back then it was one of the best parts of our trip to visit my dad's family. We were in the centre of everything, our excitement palpable. In our glowing faces I see the beginning of our mutual lifelong love of London and city life.

Josh and I came into the world via downtown Toronto, but our parents raised us in the suburbs. Although Mississauga's population makes it one of the largest and most diverse cities in Canada, its essence in the 1980s was car-centred suburban mall-scape. My brother and I each moved to Toronto as soon as we could, rejecting suburbia faster than we could say "Yonge-University-Spadina Line." But our experiences of city life have been vastly different. I doubt Josh has ever had to walk home with his keys sticking out from his fist or been shoved for taking

CHAPTER 1 **CITY OF MOMS**

If you've ever been pregnant, the "geography closest in" gets real strange, fast. Suddenly, you're someone else's environment. And everything about how your body moves through the world and is perceived by others is about to change.

I was pregnant with my daughter Maddy over a typically dreary London winter and through what felt like an unusually warm spring and summer. I had a part-time office job in Kentish Town. My commute from Finchley Central was only five Tube stops but most days it felt interminable. When I worked a morning shift, my nausea would force me off the train at Archway where I'd stumble to a bench and try to calm my stomach before gingerly re-boarding a new train. Before I was visibly pregnant there was no chance of being offered a seat, no matter how waxy and green my face. This lack of hospitality didn't improve much even after my belly expanded.

I was determined to be one of those pregnant people who carried on with their normal lives as though nothing had changed. This was long before Serena Williams won a Grand Slam tournament while pregnant but, I was channeling that

CHAPTER 3 **CITY OF ONE**

Hardly a week goes by without the appearance of yet another op-ed, thinkpiece, or viral meme decrying our addiction to mobile digital technologies. As in previous technology panics over the home television or the video game, we're warned that all of the attention we're giving to our personal tech is creating anti-social children, fomenting the breakdown of intimate relationships, making us more superficial and individualistic, and breaking the very bonds of civility and sociability that hold human societies together. Urban thinkers have hopped on this panic train too: according to some, our use of smartphones, digital music players, and other wearable tech is contributing to a more atomized, hostile urban environment where people don't participate in public social life.

In these visions, it's never clear who these social urban subjects are or what kinds of bodies they inhabit. These critiques both romanticize an imagined past when city streets were open and amiable, and envision a present where plucking those headphones out of our ears would create modern versions of the agora, with a multiplicity of spontaneous social interactions

generating an urban renaissance. We're never told which magical spell banished sexism, racism, poverty, or homophobia from our civically-engaged streets. These rich fantasies certainly never consider that for some people, phones and headphones are part of our urban survival toolkit.

PERSONAL SPACE

Virginia Woolf wrote that "street haunting" in London was among the "greatest of pleasures."[138] Moving comfortably and silently through the city, drifting amongst fascinating strangers was a cherished pursuit. For women, however, being the flânuese is fraught. To enjoy being alone requires respect for personal space, a privilege that women have rarely been afforded. The idealized flâneur slips in and out of the urban crowd, one with the city yet also anonymous and autonomous.[139] Today, the flâneur might be blasting his favourite tunes through earbuds while strolling the city streets, enjoying his own personal urban adventure soundtrack.

I love having my headphones and music with me in the city too, but for me and many other women, they provide more than a form of entertainment. They may be small, but they create a social barrier against the all-too regular and almost always unwanted intrusions of men. It's impossible to know how many unwelcome conversations and incidents of street harassment I've avoided or been unaware of because of my headphones. I can, however, think of times when a little set of white earbuds might have saved me from humiliating and deeply sexist encounters.

I recall walking home one afternoon from a day shift at the pub where I worked in North London. A man sitting in a parked car waved me over. Because he was stopped in an odd place (and because I'm a helpful Canadian), I assumed he wanted

CHAPTER 4 **CITY OF PROTEST**

I was arrested at one of my very first protests. I can't remember how I heard about the action, but it was probably through the Women's Centre at University of Toronto. I was in my second year of university, deep into my first women's studies courses, and dipping my toes into feminist organizations and activism on campus. A recently elected conservative provincial government was making severe cuts to services that would affect survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. Women from anti-violence organizations like the Toronto Rape Crisis Centre wanted to shut down an intersection outside Queen's Park, the site of the Ontario legislature. I was ready to be directly involved in actions that would disrupt the city. I was ready to get arrested with my sisters.

There was a strong spirit of protest in Ontario in the mid- to late-1990s, as labour unions successfully organized massive one-day general strikes known as "Days of Action" beginning in late 1995. In what I believe was my first experience of a large scale protest, I went to the Toronto Day of Action on October 25, 1996. An estimated 250,000 people—the largest ever protest in

CHAPTER 5. **CITY OF FEAR**

I was born in 1975, perfect timing for a childhood haunted by the spectre of stranger danger. At school, we had yearly visits from police officers demonstrating the latest techniques for avoiding kidnappers. Never tell a caller you're home alone. Have a code word that only you and your parents know. Never help anyone search for a lost puppy. Don't accept candy. With the rise of the international 24-hour news cycle, tales of missing children captured our wide-eyed attention and reminded us to be ever so cautious. The 1985 disappearance of eight-year-old Nicole Morin in Toronto's west end, not far from where we lived, was a scary moment. I was almost ten. Nicole got into the elevator on the way to her building's pool and vanished without a trace. Her picture was everywhere: a normal looking kid with mousy brown hair like mine. More than thirty years later, she's never been found. The image of a little girl in a red striped bathing suit disappearing in mere moments is still a haunting one.

It probably wasn't long after Nicole Morin's presumed kidnapping that the general threat of stranger danger started to take on a particularly gendered shape for me. The generic kidnapper

CITY OF POSSIBILITY

My earliest memories of cities like Toronto, London, and New York are impressionistic, often nostalgic, with fleeting recollections of sounds, smells, atmospheres, and bodily sensations. As I grew older, these feelings drew me to university in the biggest city in Canada, to moving to London, and to making a living studying cities. When I arrive back in the city today, something in my body shifts and a kind of urban muscle memory takes over. I step off a train and emerge onto a busy city street and my posture changes, my gait alters, my facial expression is different. Ten years of small town life mean that I probably make a little more eye contact with strangers than I once would have, but my body still knows how to move through the city.

I started writing about the feminist city through the questions generated by women's embodied experiences of city life. The "geography closest in" is solid material from which to question all that we take for granted in cities. And because so many of the ways that women are cast as problems for cities revolve around our bodies—too fat, too fertile, too sexual, too messy, too vulnerable—we must keep returning to the body to help us imagine alternatives. Feminist urban activists and scholars pay attention to the body with a careful understanding that the body is a site where gendered, classed, raced, and sexualized urban power relations and politics play out.[240] While my own embodied experiences aren't universal, I know they resonate because women have been talking and writing and sometimes shouting about these issues ever since urban life became a pressing social concern.

The city for women can be a real minefield, but as Rebecca Traister writes, it can also be a "true love," furnishing women with all the support that traditional marriage was meant to provide and a great deal more freedom to boot.[241] Looking at my daughter now, I delight in her confidence and joy in the city. She moved to Montréal at eighteen, a city she barely knew. On the phone, she's gleeful about her new metro pass: "I love being able to go anywhere!" When I visit, she walks with the speed and intensity of a born-and-bred urbanite, too fast even for me. I want her to be brave and brash, I want her to take up space here. I don't let my mind wander too often through the dreadful scenarios every parent occasionally conjures. And I certainly don't burden her with my fears, although we've had many candid talks about safety, bystander interventions, and rape culture, topics she understands far better than I did at eighteen. I do wonder what she doesn't tell me about. My own experiences suggest that I already know the answers to those unspoken questions. But I don't want any of that to stop her from loving her urban life.

Nonetheless, she's learning that being a woman alone in the city means learning a set of embodied habits, mostly unconsciously. Over time and through repetition (or iteration, as Judith Butler would say[242]) these condense and shape the body. Your posture, walk, facial expressions, movements, gestures, eye

PAGES FROM LESLIE KERN, FEMINIST CITY. A FIELD GUIDE, 2019. © COURTESY OF THE PUBLISHER BETWEEN THE LINES.

OVER-TOURISM AS URBAN EXCLUSION THE HOUSES OF OTHERS AND THE IMPACT OF TOURISTIFICATION IN THE CITY OF NAPLES

Edited by Rosa Sessa (Università di Napoli Federico II)

TITLE
Le case degli altri. La turistificazione del centro di Napoli e le politiche pubbliche al tempo di AirBnB

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Historically, Western cities have seen the forced displacement and expulsion of certain resident groups from parts of the urban fabric for various reasons, typically economic, ethnic, or religious. However, over the last fifteen years, a more pervasive phenomenon of exclusion from cities has emerged, rapidly impacting local economies and the structure of the resident population: that is, over-tourism. While spaces for foreign visitors have always been contemplated in popular art cities at least since the dawn of the Grand Tour age in the Eighteenth century, the expulsion of residents to make way for tourists, vacationers, and short-term travelers has worsened significantly in very recent times. This escalation is largely due to the widespread and somewhat uncontrolled proliferation of short-term rentals facilitated by digital booking platforms, most notably Airbnb, a company founded in San Francisco in 2008.

The book *Le case degli altri. La turistificazione del centro di Napoli e le politiche pubbliche al tempo di AirBnB* (*The Houses of Others. The Touristification of Naples' City Center and Public Policies in the Age of AirBnB*) starts with the premise that housing and gentrification driven by tourism are a political problem. It then develops this idea through compelling insights into the economic implications of these urban upheavals, the still-partial law regulations surrounding them, and their direct effects on the population of the urban areas most affected by over-tourism.

The book has three chapters. The first outlines the broader context, focusing on tourism and its effects in Southern European countries. The second chapter hones in on Naples, a Southern Italian city currently experiencing some of the fastest and most devastating impacts of the "Airbnb effect". The third chapter examines the latest legislation concerning tourism, a branch of law that is still evolving.
The author, Alessandra Esposito, faces the topic of exclusion and expulsion of inhabitants from turistified cities from a multiplicity of points of view: first of all, she is originally from Naples, and is able to address the rapid dynamics that are changing the character of the residential heritage of the city from a very personal perspective. Then, she is an activist, and her effort in social causes is clear also in the critical cut she privileges for her book. And finally, she is a university researcher at the University of Roma La Sapienza, with a PhD in Engineering for Architecture and Urban Planning and a vast curriculum of publications on evictions, migrations, and tourism-driven displacement, and the effects of these three phenomena on housing, economic evolution, and urban changes.

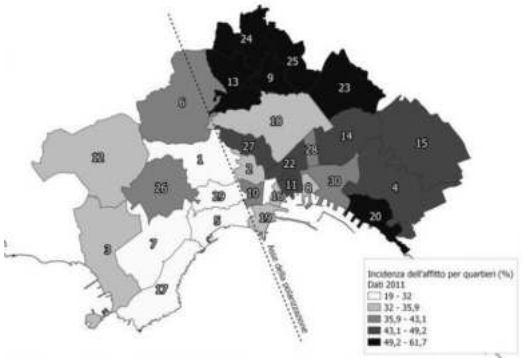
The second chapter on the case study of Naples proves essential for understanding the hasty and potentially irreversible consequences of over-tourism on city center's urban fabric and the social composition of its inhabitants. This section also represents the most original and, in some ways, surprising part of the entire book: through a deep examination of the over-tourism phenomenon and many meticulous maps and diagrams, Esposito is able to unveil the effects not only on the city's economy and change in the built environment, but also the process of rapid physical exclusion of the most vulnerable segments of the population.

Low-income residents, renting in the historic center of Naples, seem to be the primary and undefended victims of over-tourism. Through very telling maps, Esposito shows how it is possible to divide the city of Naples in two with an imaginary line running from Castel Sant'Elmo on the hill to Castel dell'Ovo along the shore, called by the author "polarization axis". On the Eastern side lies the historic center of Naples, home to the most visited but

also the poorest neighborhoods of the city. On the Western side of the line are the richest parts of Naples, where most owners of apartment buildings in the center actually live. Esposito demonstrates, in a compelling and highly visual manner, that the fragility of the historic center and its vulnerability to a rapacious management of its residential heritage are a direct consequence of these disproportions. Social injustices and the forced evictions of low-income tenants stem from landlords' intentions to place their properties on the temporary tourism rental market.

Due to the rapid exclusion of large segments of its population from their original neighborhoods in favor of temporary lodging for tourists, Naples can be considered both a case study and a warning for many other cities. And yet, Esposito is not against tourists, but against a consumerist view of the city itself. As beautifully put by Augustin Cocola-Gant in a quote cited by Alessandra Esposito on page 25: «The issue of expelling or excluding local residents isn't merely a consequence of tourism itself, but rather a result of real estate speculation, the liberalization of rentals, the lack of social housing, and insufficient regulation of the housing market. Tourism has amplified the exclusion that occurs when housing is primarily seen as an opportunity for profit».

Alessandra Esposito, Le case degli altri, book cover



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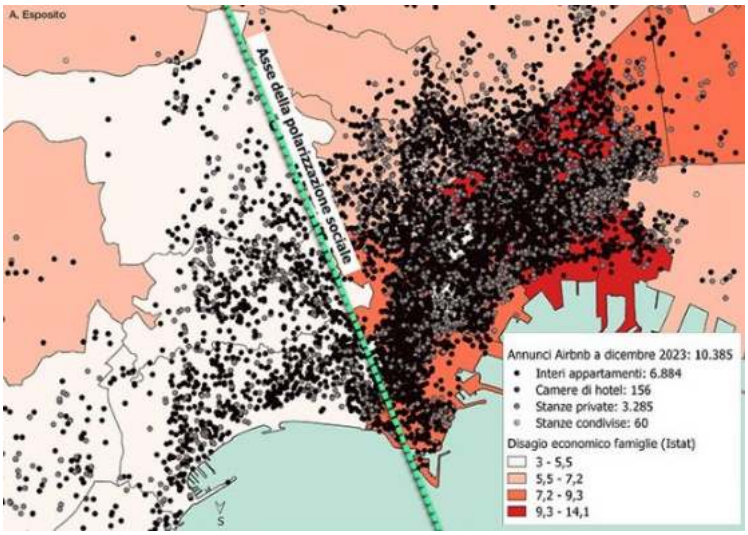
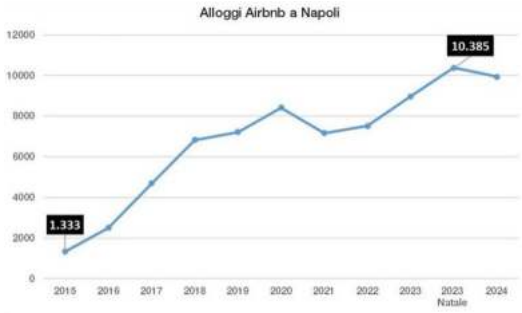
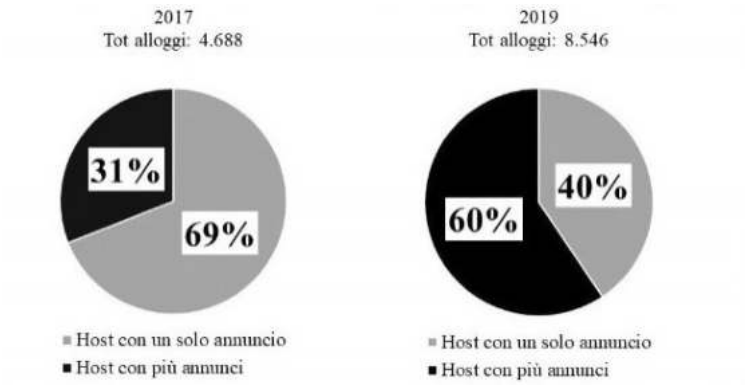


Airbnb listings in December 2023 and household economic hardship (Istat) © Alessandra Esposito



Monitoring Airbnb accommodation in Naples, 2024 © Alessandra Esposito



Distribution of listings by host on Airbnb in Naples. Own processing on data scarping of the platform © Le case degli altri, Alessandra Esposito

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