

# CALL FOR ABSTRACTS

## *HERITAGE CITIES AND OBLIVION*

In a story by Jorge Luis Borges, included in *Fictions*, the enigmatic case of Ireneo Funes is recounted: a young man whose mind, following an accident, acquires an absolute and unfailing memory. Every image, every detail, every fragment of the past remains inscribed within him with limitless precision. Yet this gift, which initially appears miraculous, soon reveals itself to be a curse: incapable of forgetting, Funes becomes a prisoner of his own recollections. Through him, Borges illustrates the reverse side of knowledge – reminding us that oblivion is not always an irrevocable loss, but rather a necessary condition: a “selective void” that enables us to perceive the whole, to comprehend, and to learn from the past by discerning what ought to be remembered and what may be forgotten. In the project, as in memory, forgetting is therefore not a loss but a critical instrument, for it allows one to distinguish what deserves to resurface from what ought to remain in the background, and to construct new relationships beginning from that which has been temporarily obscured. Architectural projects acknowledged by historiographic critics often represent only a portion of the built heritage that has contributed to shaping cities. Alongside the most renowned works, there exists a widespread legacy of forgotten or overlooked architectures that testify to the commitment of both eminent and local authors in defining spaces for collective life. In this sense, oblivion is not merely a historical condition, but also a device through which design may operate: forgetting allows established value to be suspended, enabling one to look anew and to render visible that which had become neutral or invisible. Architectural and landscape design constitute an interpretation of reality: they obscure certain features in order to allow others to resurface with renewed vitality. What should be forgotten? What should be brought back to light? Cultural spaces – libraries, museums, schools – as well as allotments, gardens, and parks, convey a quiet quality shaped by everyday uses and social relations, one that often eludes the dominant narrative of heritage. These places, forgotten, unacknowledged, or concealed, must be revealed, interpreted, and reintegrated into the urban network of relations from which they derive their meaning. Their rediscovery makes it possible to critically question the architectural memory of

cities, offering alternative narratives and unprecedented perspectives on the concept of heritage at both national and international scales. In many cases, such works belong to design trajectories that have remained at the margins of mainstream research, yet are capable of expressing profound values of community, accessibility, and urban relationships. To bring what has been forgotten to light therefore means recognizing that heritage is not an immutable archive, but a dynamic field that is continuously reconstructed through selective processes of memory and oblivion.

ADH Journal invites submissions that explore the role of architecture in recognizing, documenting, and valorizing these submerged heritages. Critical reflections and original investigations are encouraged, aimed at understanding how the recovery of minor, local, or forgotten works can enrich contemporary discourse on architectural heritage and urban identity – and how oblivion itself may be interpreted as a design resource, capable of guiding new forms of attention, care, and transformation.

Possible thematic areas include, but are not limited to:

- Rediscovery and reinterpretation of marginal or forgotten public architectures;
- Architectures for culture and community: spaces of shared memory;
- The role of local (minor) authors in the construction of widespread heritage;
- Design strategies for reintegrating forgotten places into contemporary urban dynamics;
- Processes of memory and oblivion as critical instruments for reading and designing heritage;
- Heritage in transition: abandoned, unfinished, or temporarily reactivated spaces;
- New perspectives on the relationship between time, memory, and urban transformation;
- Incomplete archives and documentary policies: how the selection (or loss) of sources constructs a partial architectural memory;
- Erasure as a critical gesture: design practices that employ absence, void, or subtraction as a form of positionality;
- Design as a tool for ideological rewriting: reconstructions, substitutions, and manipulations of the built past;
- Removed or silenced architectures: analyses of deliberate exclusions in historiographic narratives;
- Policies of memory and *damnatio memoriae*: case studies of urban transformations aimed at the removal of symbols, regimes, or identities.

## HOW TO PARTICIPATE

- The participation to the call is open to national and international structured and independent scholars (PhD students, postdoctoral fellows, research fellows, researchers).
- The issue will host essays and articles selected through a double-blind peer review process.
- To apply, please visit the journal page (<https://www.adh.journal.mantova.polimi.it/>) and submit your abstract through the platform no later than January 18th, 2026.
- The outcome of the selection and the judgments of the peer review will be communicated by e-mail to the author of the article.
- Proposals selected for publication must be developed into unpublished texts, complete with bibliography and images.

For inquiries, please contact: [adh-journal@polimi.it](mailto:adh-journal@polimi.it)

## TIMETABLE

- Launch of the Call: December 18th, 2025
- Abstract submission deadline: January 18th, 2026
- Notification of acceptance: by February 2nd, 2026
- Text delivery for peer review: April 25th, 2026
- Notification of full-text peer review outcome: May 25th, 2026
- Final text delivery: June 10th, 2026

## THE JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN AND HISTORY

The Journal of Architectural Design and History is a biannual magazine, undergoing a double-blind peer review process, realized within the framework of the UNESCO Chair in Architectural Preservation and Planning in World Heritage Cities at the Mantova Campus of Politecnico di Milano.

This editorial project intends to generate and disseminate a critical and multidisciplinary debate around the past, present and future of heritage cities, by soliciting the international scientific community to reflect on the related themes through the analysis of architectural, historic, interpretive, and didactic experiences that operate on Heritage as a laboratory of knowledge.

The selection of the contributions will draw on the exploration and the comparison of different theories, techniques and practices tackling the complex questions pertaining to the transformation, conservation, and enhancement of historical contexts, with the aim to unfold connections and exchanges among different disciplines, technologies, and perspectives, and to promote a strategic and evolutive notion of the interventions on built heritage.