10 gauge mild steel anchor plate
305 x 305 x 22mm cast into concrete
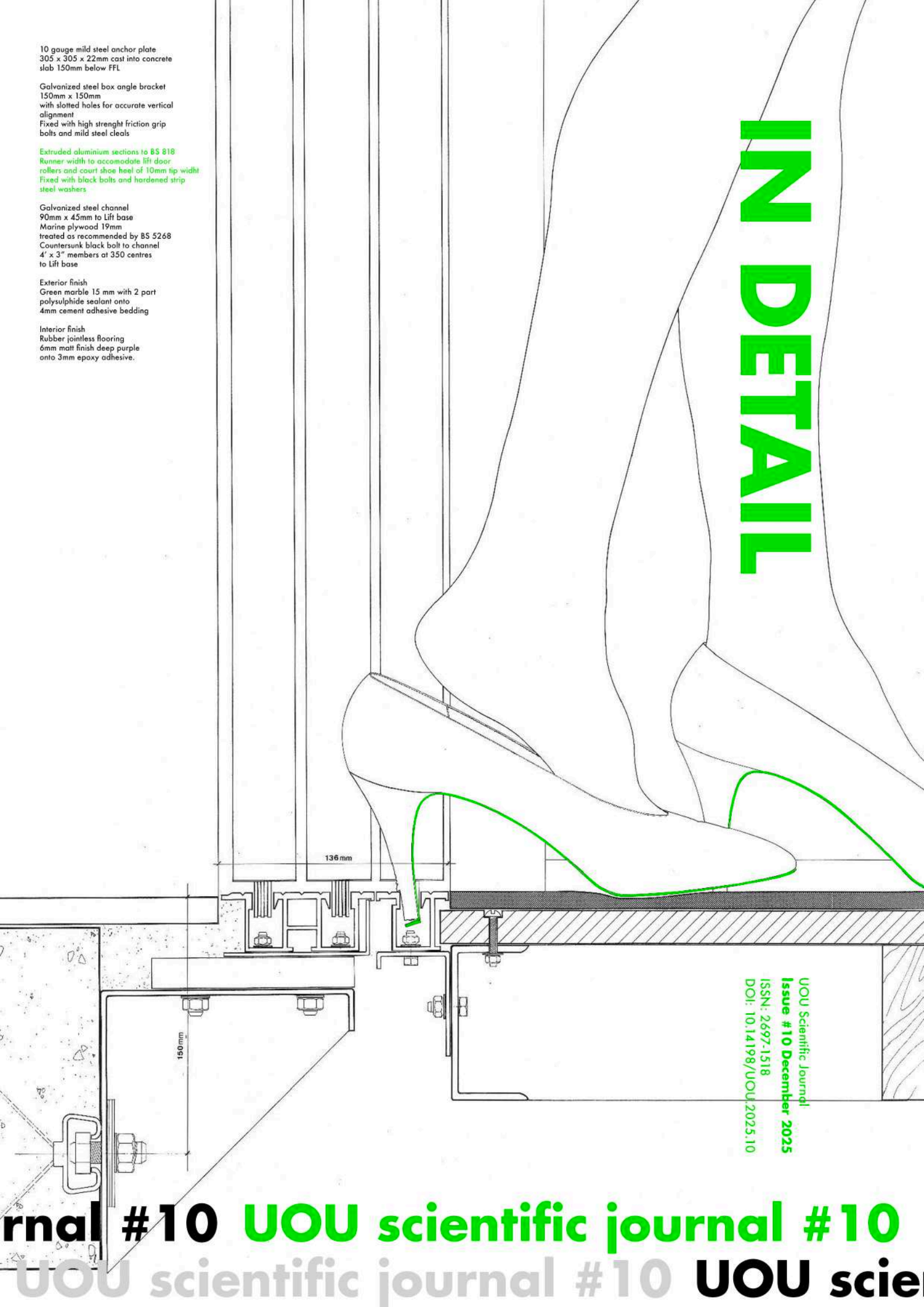slab 150mm below FFL

Galvanized steel box angle bracket
150mm x 150mm
with slotted holes for accurate vertical
alignment
Fixed with high strenght friction grip
bolts and mild steel cleals

Extruded aluminium sections to BS 818
Runner width to accomodate lift door
rollers and court shoe heel of 10mm tip widht
Fixed with black bolts and hardened strip
steel washers

Galvanized steel channel
90mm x 45mm to Lift base
Marine plywood 19mm
treated as recommended by BS 5268
Countersunk black bolt to channel
4' x 3" members at 350 centres
to Lift base

Exterior finish
Green marble 15 mm with 2 part
polysulphide sealant onto
4mm cement adhesive bedding

Interior finish
Rubber jointless flooring
6mm matt finish deep purple
onto 3mm epoxy adhesive.

136 mm

150mm

IN DETAIL

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Issue #10 /IN DETAIL
December 2025

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3 Narratives on UOUsj #10 IN DETAIL

Letter from the director

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jsm@ua.es

This article is dedicated to the memory of Mario Vargas Llosa.

THE BOOKSELLER

In an autobiographical essay, Mario Vargas Llosa recounts that as a young man he worked selling books from village to village to earn a living. During those journeys he would pass the time reading the books he sold, an experience that proved decisive in his literary formation.

The essay describes how, as time went by, he tried to remember the title of one of those books that had deeply impressed him. He searched for it in second-hand bookshops and spoke about it to acquaintances in an attempt to find a clue to its title and author. Years passed without any trace of it, until he finally found it and read it again. At that moment he confessed that it did not resemble the book he remembered. Over time, he had idealised it in his memory:

"When I read it again, I discovered that it was not the book I had remembered."

The essay reflects on how imagination and time transform our readings, a distorting yet creative power of memory.

In fact, the text entitled "The Bookseller" is included in the collection of essays *The Truth of Lies* (Seix Barral, 1990), in which Vargas Llosa reflects on fiction, reading and his own experience as a reader.

This mismatch between the original work and its appropriation by our memory suggests the following aspects, which can also be applied to architecture:

• *The Passage of Time*: Re-reading a work at different ages or moments in life reveals that it is not static; it changes with you.

• *Subjective Reality*: The remembered work is not the real one, but the version constructed by the mind. One could even argue that memory and desire are the elements that shape our reality.

• *The Complexity of the Work*: As with a great book, great architecture is never exhausted. Each re-reading is a new truth.

• *Disenchantment and Discovery*: This involves a moment of "discovery" that may entail a slight disappointment yet is accompanied by a positive revelation in realising that the work is more complex.

In all these aspects, reflection centres on how memory allows us to imagine and complete, giving life to the original project.

8   *3 NARRATIVES ON UOUSJ #10 IN DETAIL* - SÁNCHEZ MERINA, J.

#10 IN DETAIL   **UOU scientific journal**   9

DESIRING PRACTICES

I began teaching architecture in London, an experience that was memorable in every respect.
This was in the 1990s, a context full of debates on critical theory and experimental practices in architecture, and also because my courses were directed by Katerina Rüedi, a teacher of teachers.

At that time Katerina proposed that I help her with the ambitious project she was organising together with Sarah Wigglesworth and Duncan McCorquodale: *Desiring Practices: Architecture, Gender and the Interdisciplinary*. It consisted of a series of exhibitions, lectures and a symposium held in 1995, debating three main themes:

• How gender structures influence architectural production.

• The interdisciplinary nature of creative practices.

• Ways of rethinking architecture beyond traditional models.

At the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), an exhibition and a symposium were held, featuring international lectures and presentations over several days, as well as debates among architects, theorists, artists and professionals in various locations across the city, including art galleries and even buildings under construction. After the event, the book *Desiring Practices: Architecture, Gender and the Interdisciplinary* (Black Dog Publishing, 1996) was published, a collective essay bringing together texts by multiple invited authors who had participated in or reflected upon the project and the ideas presented in London.

In addition, a small catalogue of selected works was published, *Desiring Practices* (Black Dog Publishing, 1996), consisting of a paper box containing loose sheets with a short text and an illustration by each artist.

Among them, I was fascinated by the drawing on Angela Kyriacou's card. Although it appeared to depict a construction detail, it in fact

represented an action provoked by it. Firstly, the drawing becomes a critique of an architectural solution that is not fully resolved, namely the floor guide of a sliding lift door: the groove in the floor may cause an accident by trapping the heel of a stiletto shoe.

Immediately afterwards, this observation of reality is transformed into an opportunity to generate a story, giving continuity to the construction detail through the lives of its users.

Since that moment in 1995, I have referred to this drawing in many of my classes. Later, while working at the University of Alicante, I tried to contact Angela Kyriacou to inform her of the impact her work had had on my teaching, as well as on the conception and illustration of my projects, such as the *Biblioplaya*—a library on the beach of Garrucha (Spain), where, when taking a book from the glass shelf, through the gap it left behind, a love story could always emerge. There were many attempts to locate Angela, all unsuccessful. She had disappeared from London and even from the internet.

A long time passed until, twenty years later in 2015, I travelled to the architecture school of the University of Nicosia (Cyprus) as an Erasmus teacher. To my surprise, I found Angela teaching there. The explanation for her "disappearance" lay in the Cypriot custom for women to adopt their husband's surname upon marriage. It was a happy moment to finally speak with Angela Petrou, her new identity, and to ask her to show me the collection of her extraordinary Final Degree Project drawings.

My second surprise was to realise that the original drawing did not perfectly match what I remembered. As with "The Bookseller", in my explanations describing Angela's drawing I had involuntarily added elements and characters over time. Admittedly, there is a major difference between this story and that of Vargas Llosa: the lift detail remained the same and retained its quality.
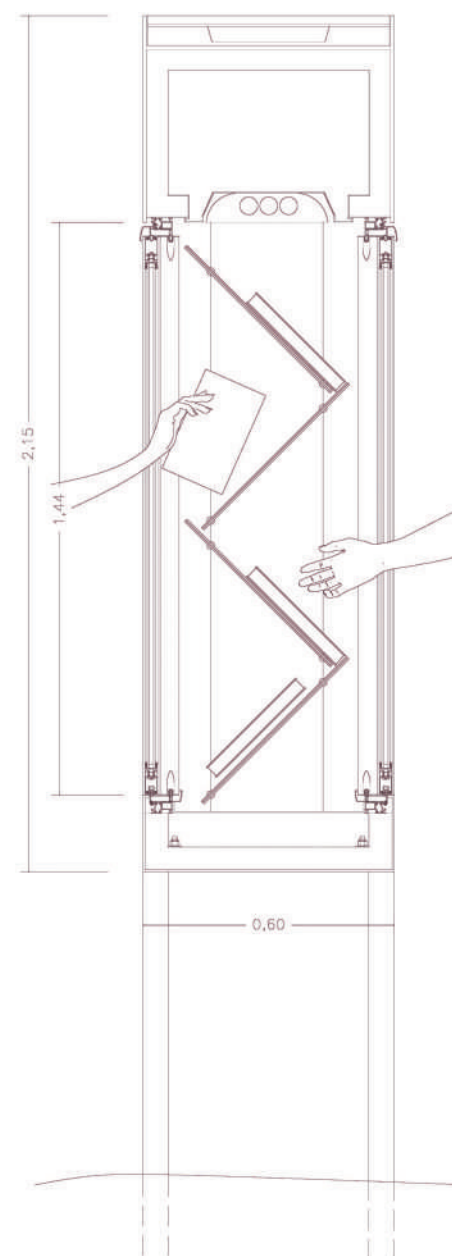
HOUSE FOR A COUPLE, CORDOBA

STORIES OF HOUSES (https://storiesofhouses.blogspot.com) is a collection of articles narrating the origins of significant contemporary houses. I wrote them together with Halldóra Arnardóttir, and although this was more than twenty years ago, they remain of interest due to their timeless nature. They are examples of architectures that will always be relevant, as they deal with personal emotions with which we all identify: information about clients, their desires and requests, without which one cannot fully understand the final result.

One of the texts we worked with for the collection was the one explaining the *House for Spiritual Retreat* by Emilio Ambasz. This house was presented in the exhibition *In-Depth* (MoMA, 2005) as a project designed in 1979 and recently built in Córdoba (Spain). A young couple without children had commissioned the Argentine architect to design this weekend house in order to "reflect on their destinies."

In this sense, the house provides a setting for the family's daily rituals—listening to music while looking at the moon and the stars, or the possibility of cooking while at the same time watching their future children play in another room through the courtyard. These are actions carried out by people of different ages, with different ways of perceiving and different ways of looking at reality. "Giving poetic
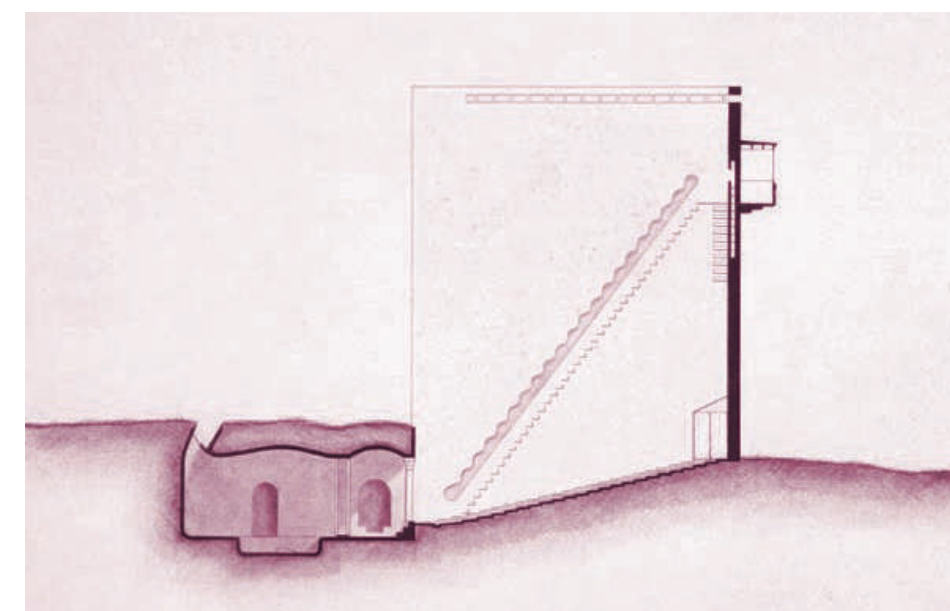
form to the pragmatic," explains Ambasz, who responded to the project by "eliminating architecture." The only element left standing was the façade, "like a mask replacing architecture."

Architecture disappeared and one could only see the earth beneath which the pragmatic elements of the dwelling were organised. Insulated with earth, which naturally preserves coolness in the arid southern climate, the house is inspired by the traditional Andalusian dwelling with its central courtyard onto which the rooms open. The long, continuous living area is defined by soft cavities excavated in the ground. A second, more internal curvilinear courtyard ensures cross-ventilation and allows a more direct and informal access to the exterior.

Interested in learning more about the conversations between the clients and the architect, we discovered that in 1980 the project had won the award granted by the American magazine *Progressive Architecture* to unbuilt projects that nevertheless challenge the limits of the profession. We then discovered that the original project was called *House for a couple, Córdoba (Spain)*, with a real date of 1975, a year before the architect founded his studio *Emilio Ambasz and Associates*. That is to say, this had been one of the architect's first projects, or possibly even the Final Degree Project of a talented student.

Furthermore, we also revealed that the house currently known as the *House for Spiritual Retreat* in fact belongs to the architect himself, its true owner.

For me, as a design studio professor, the idea that a Final Degree Project has become such an authentic experience of what each student understands architecture to be is sublime. This relationship is so powerful and personal that, in Ambasz's case, even after many years of professional practice and important built projects, he nevertheless felt the need to build it in order to breathe life into the dream of those drawings. I doubt that there are many similar cases in the history of architecture. One example that always comes to mind—but no, it is not the same, as it was never built—is the story and the *House for Josephine Baker* by Adolf Loos.

At the architecture school in Alicante, we like to refer to the Final Degree Project as the Career Starting Project, attributing to it an important character that will accompany the student throughout their professional life.

In the case of Emilio Ambasz, thirty years passed before its materialisation, the same amount of time that has passed in the case of Angela Kyriacou Petrou with this issue of *UOU In Detail*. Both cases demonstrate the enduring relevance of their enormous commitment to Architecture already as students.

EDITORIAL

One to One

10 gauge mild steel anchor plate
305 x 305 x 22mm cast into concrete
slab 150mm below FFL

Galvanized steel box angle bracket
150mm x 150mm
with slotted holes for accurate vertical
alignment
Fixed with high strength friction grip
bolts and mild steel cleats

Extruded aluminium sections to BS 818
Runner width to accommodate lift door
rollers and court shoe heel of 10mm tip width.
Fixed with black bolts and hardened
strip steel washers

Galvanized steel channel
90mm x 45mm to Lift base
Marine plywood 19mm
treated as recommended by BS 5268
Countersunk black bolt to channel
4" x 3" members at 350 centres
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Exterior finish
Green marble 15mm with 2 part
polysulphide sealant onto
4mm cement adhesive bedding

Interior finish
Rubber jointless flooring
6mm matt finish deep purple
onto 3mm epoxy adhesive.

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Invited Editorial

The drawings for my own diploma project acted as the starting point of this journal. The project focuses on the 1:1 working drawing as a moment in time. The typical threshold detail is seemingly disturbed by the 'non-architectural' element, yet it reveals itself, not as an intrusion but as something that has become a part of the drawing. The detail is developed within the project specifically in a way that allows the excluded practices to be worked into the body of the building at the smallest scale.

The 'intrusive' bodies that enter the detail become an inherent part of the drawing. Beginning with the initial encounter at the threshold of the smallest space of the institutional building; the lift, the detail shifts to the cleaner's cupboard where the janitors equipment provides opportunities for the building to be subtly transformed through the appropriation of the 1:1 detail to accommodate for alternative uses—the action and the material substance of the drawing becomes inseparable.

Architectural language communicates yet excludes. The process of gender infiltration within the confines of the technical drawing becomes a process of a methodical and subtle shift of focus, always within the recognizable language of architectural representation (Diploma Project 1993).

This issue returns to the detail to argue that the smallest detail already carries social intent. As identified by the valuable contrib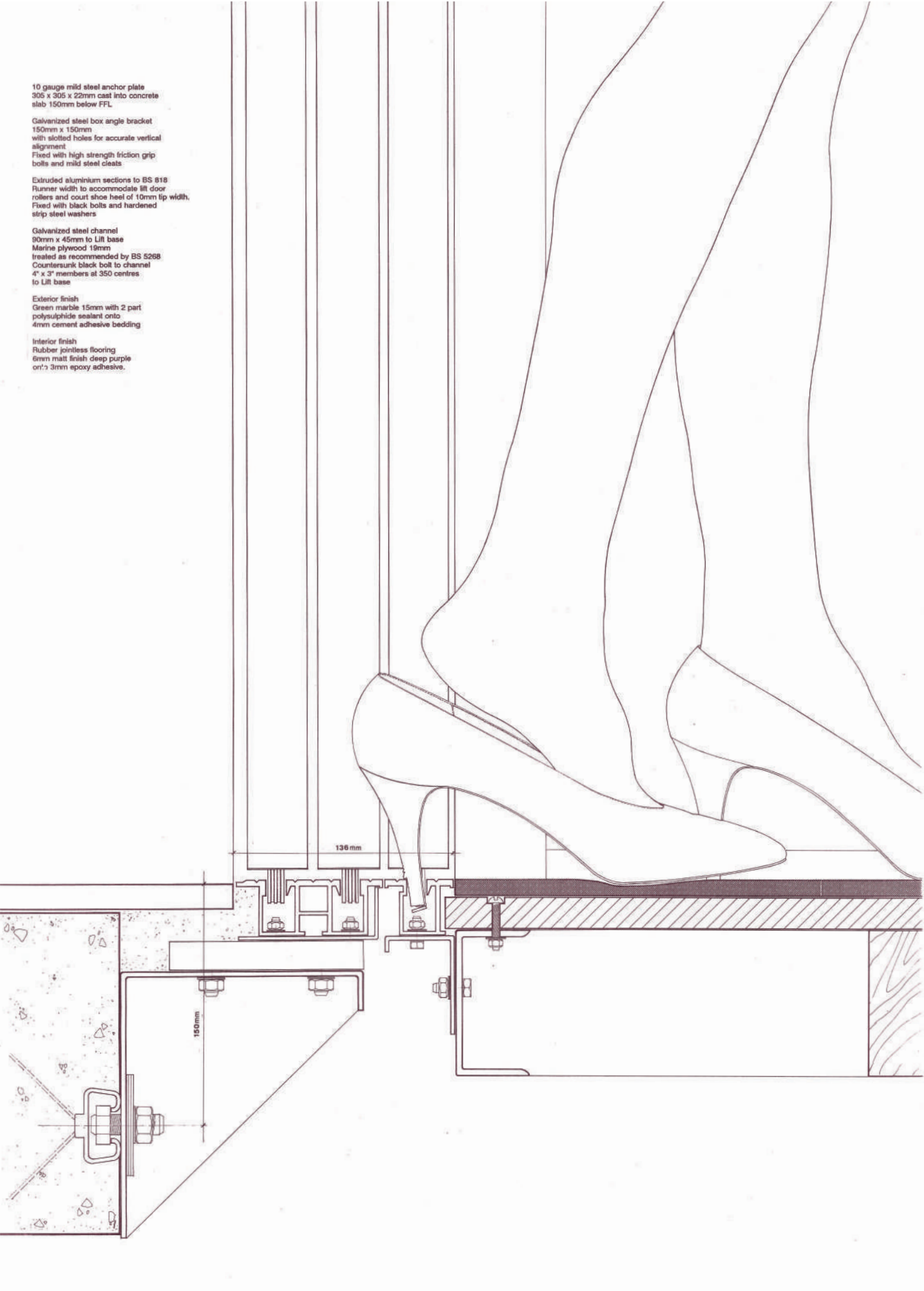utions, we witness how both power and inequality reside in; stones, fountains, conduits, fences, easements, clay pots and manholes. If the detail is the point where the political and affective converge it is inevitably a crucial point of critical inquiry.

THE CALL

This issue explores the complex con-junctions between people, materials and meanings through the micro-scales of architecture. The detail is the point at which things meet – an entanglement between materiality and everyday life. From technical detailing to the materiality of living, the issue seeks to identify the potential opportunities held in junctions, processes and moments of material convergence. Whether matter or data, material moments are not seen as purely static but instead are understood as instances which bring potential interactions into being.

The call gives emphasis to the drawing, interrogating the objective material certainty that it assumes. Seen as part of a bigger story, the drawing stands as an instruction for relationality; for the material presence of a future space or detailed examination of the corporeality of life, either way, it is a visual testimony to life lived. To make these observations, we need to examine material details as moments of a larger series of interactions and multiple temporalities, represented through a slice of space. We may witness and draw our environment— like detectives—in slow motion, attempting to reveal micro details, opportunities, invisible stories and nonhuman entities. Drawing on what moves within space, authors are invited to explore or question the drawing as a tool of interrogation from (the) detail to the whole.

GROUNDED PRACTICES AS CHARGED ECOLOGIES OF CONVERGENCE

An Archaeology of the Affective Commons: Summoning the Border in Motion. *Alessandro Zambelli.*

Zambelli explores how slow, materially attentive inscription can recharge dormant edges in the city of Melbourne and how such erased narratives can be drawn, filmed, walked, spoken and renewed into common life. The paper reimagines urban seams as sites of material convergence where the drawn line is at once legal artifact, ecological threshold and erased common land. The article exposes how the search for the city's seemingly innocent cadastral lines uncovers survey offsets, culverts, and fence posts as materialised colonial governance, while simultaneously offering points of resistance and repair.

Zambelli walks the junctions between legal abstraction and lived ground, echoing the issue's broader concern with the encounter between people, materials, and meanings. Reconfiguring archaeology as a performative commoning practice, micro-details of fence lines, survey coordinates, and plant names evidence the larger-scale historical and political questions about dispossession, stewardship, and spatial justice. Through performing the border, the author consolidates the cartographic boundaries into a palpable collective urban consciousness.

The Disinherited Fitment: Detail as Political Witness. *Melike Beşik, Bihter Almaç.*

Focusing on an infrastructural alley in Istanbul where the 20th Feminist Night March met sudden police force, the authors foreground microscale backstage street infrastructure as witness to acts of violence as well facilitators of aftercare.

Redirecting attention from technical or aesthetic refinement the detail traces multiple temporalities. Fieldwork builds micro-narratives for cameras, pipes, and stains, registering smells, textures, and minor repairs. Through the drawing, infrastructural fragments act as nonhuman witnesses. Up close— and over (enduring) time, the detail measures, annotates, layers and re scales, configuring it as a site of political inquiry and turning ordinary service items into active agents of civic life.

The article demonstrates how the smallest architectural joints can mediate between bodies and power, and that the act of drawing can open fresh vantage points on protest, memory, and spatial justice.
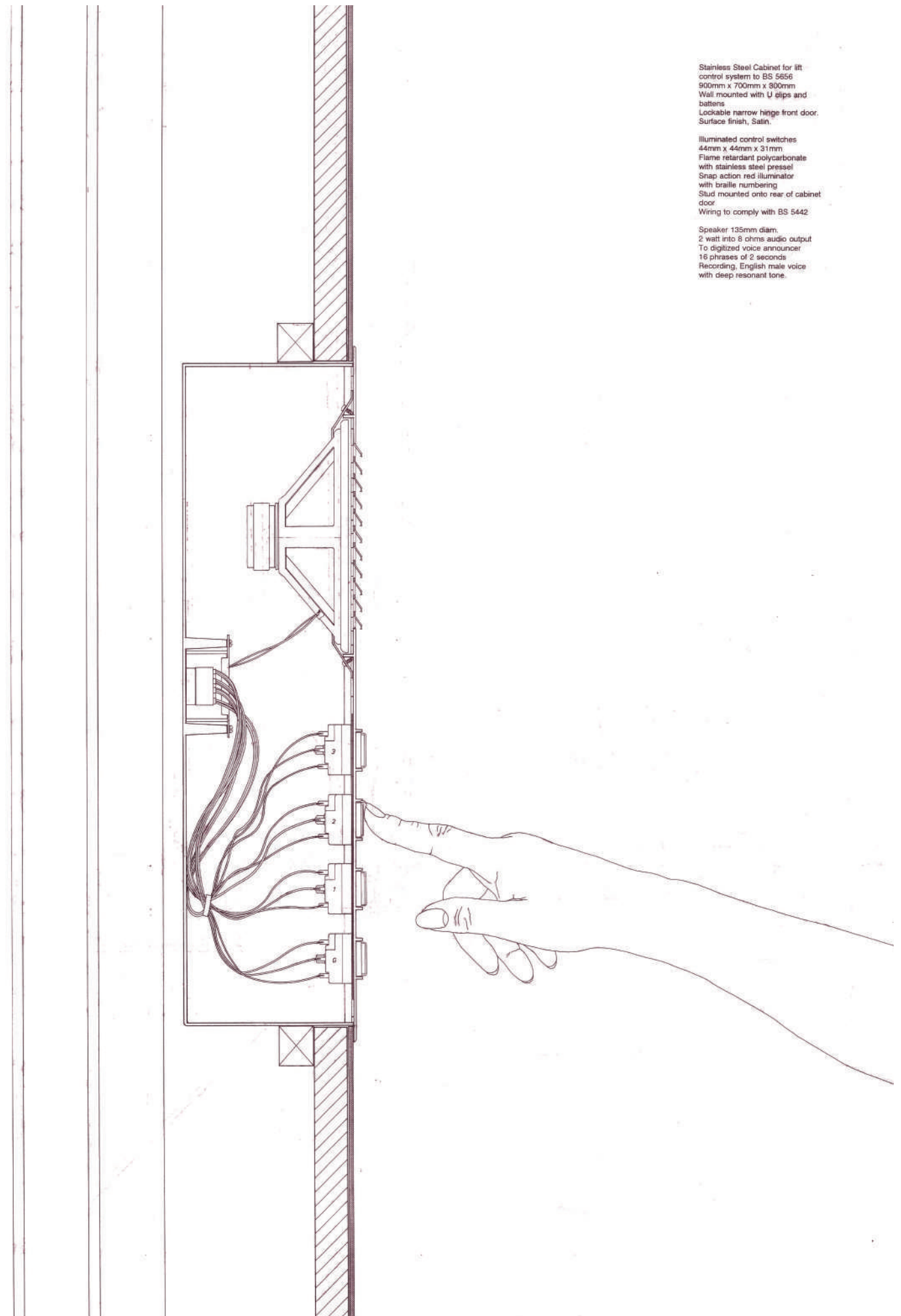
Stainless Steel Cabinet for lift control system to BS 5656
900mm x 700mm x 300mm
Wall mounted with U clips and battens
Lockable narrow hinge front door.
Surface finish, Satin.

Illuminated control switches
44mm x 44mm x 31mm
Flame retardant polycarbonate with stainless steel pressel
Snap action red illuminator with braille numbering
Stud mounted onto rear of cabinet door
Wiring to comply with BS 5442

Speaker 135mm diam.
2 watt into 8 ohms audio output
To digitized voice announcer
16 phrases of 2 seconds
Recording, English male voice with deep resonant tone.

When the Groundwater Kicks Back: Re-Drawing of Architectural Detail. *Mine Dinçer Öztürk.*

The paper reframes the architectural detail, not only as a technical solutions but also as assemblages of material and discursive relations. Through field observation, interviews, and iterative (re)drawing Dinçer explores how the foundation joint becomes a detail of material entanglement, where soil, water, cement, labour, regulations, and drawing practices converge.

Working through a feminist and new-materialist lens, the article situates the single construction detail as a dynamic junction of care and responsibility—an active apparatus that draws together epistemic and ethical boundaries rather than merely recording them.

Layered traces utilise the drawing as an apparatus of agency exposing the multiple temporalities produced through leaks, revisions, and embodied labour. The drawing frames the groundwater as a co-designer; its resistance forces revisions that reveal situated micro-politics and hydrological networks under the city of Istanbul. Groundwater's "kick back" shows that agency rests with both human designers and nonhuman forces. the detail is re-drawn as a speculative, layered diagram that includes water flows, labour gestures, regulatory loops, and the unseen reach of the Marmara Sea. Documenting sweat, delay, and risk, the section line negotiates between the different authors of line making, positioning drawing as a situated practice of care, uncertainty, and ethical accountability.

Thinking with Stones: Decolonising the culture-scape of drystone heritage. *Sevina Floridou.*

Thinking with stones identifies the drystone wall as both a material surface which sustains quotidian landscape practices but is also a political fault-line which foregrounds lines of struggle over water, quarrying and post-war politics. By tracing waterlines across the island of Cyprus, Floridou

identifies environmental and social vulnerability, the detail is utilised to foreground this pursuit; questioning the usual separation of architectural detail from territory, the drystone wall section becomes the meeting point of geology and politics—archiving drought, displacement and land practices.

The paper identifies drawing as a process of counter-mapping that aims to recover infrastructures which cadastral maps omit: abandoned terraces, forgotten water conduits and quarry scars. Each stone is framed as a datum that stores time, labour, and more-than-human care, converting the detail into a lens on ecocide and conflict.

THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF UNSETTLED FAMILIARITY

From Prescription to Description. *Konstantinos Avraamides.*

Avraamides positions "graphic ethnography" as a mechanism that captures lived adaptations in a Cypriot refugee estate. Foregrounding transformation and informal repair, student fieldwork records micro-adjustments and social rituals to build an archive of inhabited detail; the drawings operate as evidence, inquiry, and pedagogical device.

The paper reveals the ongoing negotiations of space through micro scale material adaptations where the drawing is used as a research tool, showcasing how everyday appropriations of space become an entanglement of matter and life.

The fieldwork study and drawing process become a critical space for asking questions, slowing down, and rethinking the assumed fixity of built form this nuanced reading of lived space exposes subtle ambiguities of public and private space revealing the possibilities of communal engagement and evidencing how material adaptations give agency to the inhabitants of the estate.

How to Draw a Ghost: A Lobotomy's Tale, Kowloon Walled City. *David Jiménez Iniesta, María de los Ángeles Peñalver Izaguirre.*

A Lobotomy's tale narrates a visual story of controversies exposing conflicts between myth and the lived routine of Hong Kong's Kowloon City. The infinite details create an endless storyline panning across multiple temporalities, coexisting lives and past occupations. Through the complexity of the drawing, architecture is dematerialized—we see the simultaneity of life across scales of fiction reality and history.

The city is reconstructed through fragments of information, working with secondary data sources such as newsreels, hobby photographs, and first-person memories, the authors redraw the Walled City as an architecture of agreements: eight stand-pipes for 32,000 residents, staircases that morph into clinics, power cables that double as social contracts. The detail ceases to be only a question of constructive precision and becomes an act of panning, of lateral displacement and connection, capable of establishing dialogues among elements that do not share scale, system, or material nature.

Accompanied by the testimonies of the users, drawings reveal the complex social and economic fabric that sustained the city beyond its dark clichés-Water points double as civic exchange nodes; hoses, cables, and ad-hoc stair extensions carry the story of urban artefacts which are inseparable from the specific spatial social and regulatory ecologies in which they emerge.

The Kouza and the Fountana: Gender, Coloniality, and the Afterlives of Water in Cyprus. *Stavroula Michael.*

The article utilises archival images to uncover colonial narratives framed though the use of everyday artefacts in Cyprus. Through a close reading of archival photographs, the clay water vessel and the water fountain are understood as artefacts of commons and care—as such they are identified as embodied, living archives, particularly as they

Floor finish
Rubber flooring to comply with BS 476, part 7
Grade 2, natural rubber, 8mm with
Raised sections of 4mm at entrance and
raised pastilles 4mm and 15mm diameter beyond
156 Desert Rose non slip finish
onto 3mm epoxy adhesive
Laid onto existing screed bed made level and
free from cracks

Threshold seal
Natural rubber, Grade 4
100mm width, 159 Plum Swirl
Section "wave" SS
Epoxy adhesive to floor

Door
Hardwood frame 44mm
Hardwood with flaxboard filling and hardwood dowels
6mm plywood external surface
to comply with BS 459 construction and
preservative treatment
Finished with Alkyd gloss varnish

Ironmongery
Tap action door knob
90mm Stainless steel base plates
fixed to door with 4 No. countersunk screws
Cast brass, threaded gland and spindle
with chrome plated brass easy grip cover
90mm steel door spindle to cylinder rim latch

Ingress control lock
Galvanised steel bracket
Fixed with 4 No. recessed, cavity screws
Bracket to take standard width mop handle

Mop bucket
Rigid PVC plastic bucket with handle
Heat resistant, Scarlet red

Mop
Standard mop head with steel clasp
fixings and 1200mm hardwood handle
finished with 1 coat polyurethane clear varnish

relate to the work of contemporary local artists. The author traces these artefacts through the lense of archival colonial photography. The photographs act as textual vignettes, whose close reading reveals an erasure of the palpable materiality of clay, water and women's labour. Michael reveals how, through the photographic narrations of authority, roadside concrete fountains were endorsed as progressive modernising infrastructures through anonymising actors and erasing dally material practices.

A MATTER OF SPECULATION

Diffractive Drawing Experiment: Recording Material Agency. *Ayşe Hümeyra Yeşilyurt, Bihter Almaç.*

The diffractive drawing focuses on the representation of a detail at the marble ablution fountain of Hagia Sophia. Through layered hand-drawn traces the author is guided by a complex iterative drawing process where material processes, time and the drawing hand act as reciprocal makers of the represented joint. Rather than a point of technical resolution the joint is utilised as a site of negotiation and purposeful diffraction. The authors operate through both theoretical filters as well as operational deflections, allowing drafter, ink, light, algae, and weather-worn stone to co-produce the image. What emerges is neither illustration nor repair manual; it is a living archive in which past abrasion, present stain, and speculative futures coexist.

The authorship of the drafter is challenged, foregrounding the reciprocal interaction of the designer the environment and material processes allowing the drawing to emerge as an archive of materialities and architectural surfaces (co)becoming.

Detailing Time: the Architectural Drawing as a Temporal and Speculative Construct. *Markella Menikou.*

The paper repositions the detail drawing as research method which integrates design intent, material behaviour and future use into an operable frame. Through a pedagogical sequence that spans construction seminars and an advanced design laboratories, the author shows how students deploy detail drawing first analytically, then speculatively. The drawing acts as a performative tool, foregrounding micro-temporalities as embedded in the constructional and representational processes. Menikou utilises speculative futuristic scenarios to explore indeterminate futures, expanding the detail as a mechanism of enquiry from the present to the future.

Working from the micro scale, the paper shows how the architectural detail can exploit elements of ambiguity and change to project new speculative cybernetic habitats while remaining anchored in the realities of inhabitation and material possibilities. From the detail to the whole this methodology uses the detail as a beginning of future relational life rather than the end of the design stage.

Anatomy of a Living Joint. *Raffaele Errichiello.*

The porous detail is explored as a live junction which negotiates points of material assembly but also functions as an active climatic device that orchestrates growth, drying and self-healing. The paper treats the joint as a breathing micro-climate where geometry, biology and environment are negotiated at different scales. Time and change are fully integrated into the detail as entangled processes which accommodate moisture fluctuations, enhancing the biological self repair process of the joint. Drawing across scales, the paper utilises the *Powers-of-Ten* methodology to explore multi-scalar possibilities, investigating what happens when the detail itself is biologically active. Errichiello moves from coral micro-morphology to city-wide mycelial exchange, showing that the smallest seam can seed new models of ecological reciprocity as well as speculative urban metabolisms.

Daily Details of Modernist Thresholds. *Melek Kılınç.*

Acting as a text-drawing, Kılınç's contribution lifts canonical details from the modernist archive and transplants them into a fictional apartment block overlooking the Bosphorus. Contextualised in everydayness the details of key modernist architects are put to the test. Loos' cornice, Jeanneret's window track, or Mies' steel mullion act as living junctions rather than fixed details. The project demonstrates how "objective material certainty" unravels once sea fog, street cats, and microbial bloom enter the frame. The drawings slow time to a single ordinary day, allowing readers to witness how wind, cooking steam, and pigeon spoor re-author every supposedly closed joint.

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Sink
Cleaner's bucket sink
460mm x 530mm x 280mm
Vitreous china with high back
Hardwood rim and holes for grating fixings
Supported on cast iron bracket and legs

Grating, with rinsing bowl, 320mm x 430mm
Galvanised steel fixed with pivot rod
and bolted to sink
To take standard mop and 750ml wine bottle

Copper waste fitting 50mm diameter to BS 1184
Fitted to plastic two piece trap with back nut
Rubber and brass plug with large, easy grip shackle
Hardwood core to take standard 90mm cork screw
Stainless steel chain, 40mm fixed with threaded
stay and bolted to sink

Tap
Bib cock soda tap
with smooth action lever control
Chrome plated brass shield
Plastic covered, extendable hose 160mm
with 1/2" BSP

Ingress control lock
Galvanized steel bracket 80mm x 80mm
Fixed with 4 No. recessed cavity screws
Bracket to take standard with door handle
Perspex surround, 3mm round edged
fixed with epoxy adhesive to wall

Detail as Material Entanglement

A conversation between the Editorial Committee members

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Invited Editorial

AKP: If the micro-space of the detail is understood as a material entanglement rather than a simple junction - what qualities of drawing or creative research disclose invisible stories and foreground hidden interactions between material, matter and everyday life?

JAB: From my point of view, in Architecture, matter and its construction depend on the way they are put into operation. Materials and their durability adapt to the envelope of the overall design.

The detail is the smallest constructive unit that implicitly contains the seed of the future project. The generation of construction details, within the design process, brings us closer to the modern architectural project. To build the architectural product, one must stop, detail, discard, and continue — on one hand, to ensure nothing is overlooked, and on the other, to gradually adapt matter to object systems. It is a continuous process of trial and error, accompanied by cross-disciplinary research. Translating the definition of 'detail' means engaging in an ongoing investigation in which constructive proposals are expressed non-linearly and through diverse, unconventional techniques (related to disciplines other than architecture).

Form, derived from the detail, is part of its definition. In the ship Argo, on which the Argonauts accompanied Jason to Colchis to seize the Golden Fleece, the parts were gradually replaced to the point that they ended up with a different, new ship without changing its name or its form. Processes of change occur upon a clearly defined and identifiable form. Inhabitants identify with the object and become part of its maintenance and endurance. In public constructive situations, we must focus on developing physical elaborations that have nothing to do with conceptual ideas or diagrams. A working method must be established in which responses are produced directly through the act of material selection or elaboration. Working with the material implicitly carries the form, structure, and representational nature of the object. The current form of architecture is a continuous work process developed across cultures and generations, adapting cultural and technical production methods to the needs of each specific cultural condition.

The relationship with other fields of knowledge opens up closed architectural structures, which have nothing to do with a contemporary conception of creating this model. For its real construction, relationships with other disciplines must be fostered, incorporating aspects and possible points of connection with History, Mathematics, Structures, Construction, and Installations... Without this commitment, the project lacks the character of a global construction and ends up being a product made in parts and stages, with little practicality. The architecture of the 'Object' arises from a common core of knowledge we handle in its entirety — a core that relates to culture, social systems of interaction, materials and their methods of assembly. The structure that makes objects real, and the management and production of the project for its transformation into tangible material. This core allows for the growth and updating of knowledge levels, generating architecture in a filamentous way, always from the individual order developed by each architect through the management of that core. The construction of public systems cannot be defined from outside the project; it must be generated in its conception and from within itself. On one hand, there is the elaboration of the project's 'base detail', developed collectively by all participants. Through this process, data concerning construction that can be established in this public system would be fixed. On the other hand, decisions about materials — which materials are envisioned, and what are the processes of material representation of the project — must be determined.

Two questions arise for me regarding the definition of the architectural object: Can a situation be drawn only with the materials it is composed of? Can an action be carried out solely with the matter constructed during it?

MLN: Architecture can be understood as a systemic field in which three fundamental dimensions intersect: the programmatic dimension, conceived as a sequence of actions; the structural and material dimension; and the spatial configuration of spaces. These dimensions are not autonomous but deeply intertwined, and their interaction generates the architectural object as a complex and dynamic entity. Within this framework, architectural drawing is not merely a representational tool but an operative device capable of selectively foregrounding one of these dimensions while still holding the others in tension.

The architectural detail emerges as a critical micro-space where these dimensions converge. Rather than being a simple technical junction, the detail can be interpreted as a site of negotiation between matter, construction processes and everyday practices. It is within the detail that material decisions become spatial conditions, and where programmatic actions are translated into tangible forms. As such, the detail operates as a condensed field of architectural intelligence, capable of revealing latent relationships that remain invisible at larger scales. In this sense, drawing plays a crucial role as a form of creative and projective research. When understood as a three-dimensional and temporal device, drawing allows for the investigation of material behaviours, spatial sequences and human actions simultaneously. It becomes a tool for situating actions in space, testing material configurations and imagining alternative realities, rather than merely describing an existing or predefined solution. Through drawing, the architectural project can be explored as an open system, where details are continuously redefined in relation to use, transformation and time. The project by Natalia Józefczyk – included in the ATLAS - exemplifies this approach by proposing a mode of drawing that starts from the careful reading of existing conditions and their spatial potentials. By mapping actions and material conditions within space, her work demonstrates how drawing can function as a tridimensional and operative instrument, capable of generating new spatial interpretations. Here, the detail is not fixed or resolved once and for all, but remains an active component of the design process, enabling the imagination of different spatial and material scenarios. From this perspective, the architectural detail becomes both a design tool and a critical lens: a means through which the complexity of the architectural object can be understood, constructed and reimagined. Drawing, therefore, does not simply communicate architecture; it actively participates in its formation, transforming material entanglements and everyday interactions into spatial propositions. The answer to these questions is not given in advance, but unfolds through the projects and reflections presented in this issue, curated by Angela Kyriacou Petrou, we invite our readers to navigate "IN DETAIL" as a shared field of inquiry.

GROUNDED PRACTICES AS CHARGED ECOLOGIES OF CONVERGENCE

An Archaeology of the Affective Commons

Summoning the Border in Motion

commons
archaeology
affect
colonial
border

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Invited Article

An Archaeology of the Commons stages an encounter between two systems: the commons—as place and practice—and archaeology understood as materially grounded storytelling. Following Lauren Berlant's invitation to attend to detail, both may be treated as affective infrastructures that become legible through instruments of urban governance: title plans, parcels, cadastral surveys, easements, and public works. The commons are most intensely performed at their boundary where unlike a border, they become dynamic, constitutive processes through which social, ecological and political relations are continually remade. Working with Melbourne's vestigial town common, I describe a re-enactment of "beating the bounds"—a reactivation of a dormant colonial edge—not as a revenant to be feared but as material to be reworked. Here archaeology-as-commoning is developed as a performative method— walking, drawing, filming and incantation— in order to reanimate erased sites and redistribute their narratives into shared cultural life. Attention to micro-details— fence lines, survey coordinates, species names, culverts and benchmark stones— guides a practice that both records and makes space.

Here as well, methodologically, cartography, technical drawing, field inscription and film are gathered into critical dialogue. Maps are read as cultural instruments that stabilise abstraction while insisting on generative frictions between representation and lived ground. Through slow, materially attentive inscription and speech, the work exposes how colonial spatial logics persist in urban seams—offset grids, easements, utility corridors, "paper roads"—and how they can be unsettled. The contribution is threefold: a reframing of commons boundaries as infrastructures of relation; a method for their excavation through performative, multi-scalar practices; and a demonstration that detailed attention can open new imaginaries for urban common land.

SUMMONING THE COMMON EDGE

Where the commons—understood as both place and practice—meets archaeology—a materially grounded mode of storytelling—(McFadyen 2011; Olsen 2010; Shanks and Tilley 1992) their conjunction becomes, following Lauren Berlant, an affective infrastructure that organises attention in detail (Berlant 2016). When read through the instruments of city governance—title plans, parcels, cadastral surveys, easements and public works—this infrastructure becomes legible as a distinctly urban operation. It presses us to attend closely to the commons and, especially, to the boundary, where they are most intensely played out. Such attention, in turn, asks how situated spatial and textual practices might particularise the contested histories, ecological imperatives, and community aspirations of the commons and common land through a detailed reading of place.

The boundary—unlike the border—of the common is not a line of exclusion but a dynamic, constitutive process through which social, ecological, and political relations are continually made and remade; where, read as a dormant colonial edge, the boundary exposes how colonial traces persist and can be reworked, and where to re-remember it is to better dismantle and perhaps to remake it. Thus, the common edge is summoned, not as a *"monkey's paw"* zombie revenant,[1] but to recast it as something vital and beneficent. Further, this archaeology-as-commoning is developed as a situated, performative method, using walking, drawing, filming, and textual incantation to reanimate this erased or forgotten common land and to redistribute its narratives into shared cultural life. Finally, I propose that detailed, materially grounded, practices of inscription and representation—from cartography and technical drawing to fieldwork and film—may be used to unsettle colonial spatial logics and open new imaginaries for the future of common land.

Whereas the commons, broadly understood, may be wielded as disruptors of ownership hierarchies—catalysts for ecological and cultural repair, and prompts for new forms of public infrastructure and archaeology—they also afford profoundly situated forms of practice, providing opportunities for the commons to tell a material story. Common land, as a legal and quasi-legal, historical, instance of the commons, relatedly, but also in contrast, is the physical arena— fields and pastures, but equally town reserves, creek margins, drainage easements, stock routes that became streets, and railway verges—where the commons, and commoning practices, are played out spatially and at their greatest intensity.

Transplanted from England to its colonies, and to Australia in particular, the commons arrived in both legal form—a bundle of rights in relation to land—and as a cultural imaginary: a vestige of feudal land tenure reconstituted within the machinery of colonial expansion. In this translation what had once, in England, been a fragile accommodation between ownership and shared use became, in Australia, an instrument of enclosure and dispossession on a continental scale. Its urban residues persist in cadastral seams: sudden mysterious offsets in street grids, leftover triangles at survey joins, utility corridors and *'paper roads'[2]* that often structure contemporary urban development.

Commons as a land tenure system in England began, it is often stated, in the medieval period— that is, beginning a little less than a thousand years ago (see for example, Neeson 1993). Common land, in this strictly legal sense, is always owned by someone and, historically, never by 'the people' in any straightforward way. These early owners would have been the Lords of whichever manor the land happened to be in. Latterly, owners of common land have tended to be local councils or other kinds of urban authority, the inheritors of these commons, but many are still privately owned (Rodgers et al.

2024, 4-8). Rights in common are rights that those working for the Lord—commoners—had to use and to take material from the land; to pasture their cows, feed their pigs, take fish and even to take material to maintain their dwellings. But those ancient commons were, and where they still exist, increasingly are, far more than simple resource repositories; *"[s]o important were the 'commons' in the political economy and struggles of the medieval rural population,"* writes Silvia Federici, *"that their memory still excites our imagination, projecting the vision of a world where goods can be shared and solidarity rather than desire for self-aggrandisement, can be the substance of social relations"* (Federici 2004, 18).

Is it possible that this relational intensity of feeling persists, even when those commons have been transported across the globe? In the years after the invasion of Australia large expanses of the colony were reserved for settlers as common land, beginning in 1804 with six tracts on Sydney's outskirts (Baskerville 1995; Campbell 2007; Maddison 2007). Following the 1861 Robertson Land Acts, hundreds more were declared—many in the Victorian goldfields, others in order to sustain the rapid growth of emerging and established towns (Davies et al. 2018). Melbourne, too, had its town common.

[UN]BEATING THE BOUNDS

In May 2025 Eleanor Suess, Hélène Frichot[3] and I beat the bounds of two of the four 'lost' fragments of old Melbourne Town Common in a contemporary re-enactment of ancient English communal practices.[4] These practices, medieval in origin, inscribe memory into bodies through shared, performative action, marking and reaffirming parish boundaries (then—see Fig.1) and lost commons (now); across kerb edges, fence lines and bridge abutments, but also where no border trace remains; through buildings and across football fields.[5] For us this movement was crucial to

our understanding of the common boundary, *"the border cannot be properly understood in terms of inclusion and exclusion, but only by circulation,"* asserts Thomas Nail, insisting that, *"in part this follows from the movement of the border. Since the border is always in between and in motion, it is a continually changing process. Borders are never done "including," someone or something"* (Nail 2016).

'Beating the Bounds of Melbourne Town Common' (Suess and Zambelli 2025), proposed archaeological method as an act of commoning—a process of generating shared meaning from latent or erased urban spatial, textual and more-than-human traces. Archaeology, here, is understood as a discipline which redistributes the narratives it generates, for the common good, narratives which would otherwise be locked into the ground itself. Archaeological tools and techniques designed for the purpose released material artefacts and their stories back into the world for their re-

entanglement into it. Through beating the bounds of Melbourne's forgotten common, we excavated the disappeared, working through the palimpsestuous stratigraphy of colonial and precolonial land ownership and stewardship— repairing as we walked; through small acts of re-remembrance.[6] Like archaeology, our approach was slow, attentive to traces; names, pieces of textual memory, ecological species lists. These detailed fragments were treated as evidence—re-assembled—in order to narrate a larger story of erasure and resistance.

MORE-THAN-HUMAN DETAILS

In 'Beating the Bounds of Melbourne Town Common', films, maps, and textual incantations were themselves material moments of our summoning as much as were the expansion joints, culvert mouths, gate hinges, benchmarks and blades

of lawn grass we encountered. They were reincarnations of the lost common, not precursors to buildings or made ground, but autonomous, meaningful interventions. They acted as both affective archaeological record and common cultural artefacts. These reincarnations treated fence lines, survey coordinates, and plant and animal species names as micro-details that made available larger-scale historical and political questions about dispossession, stewardship, and spatial justice.

The fence, the verge, and the offset survey line are not neutral instruments but legal as well as cartographic artefacts and encountered details. Nicholas Blomley has shown how property law materialises through such devices: the *"space of the fence"* are traces of both technique and ideology, translating the abstract promise of ownership into the daily choreography of exclusion and trespass (Blomley 2003). These cadastral seams persist

as infrastructural afterlives of colonial governance, producing what Stephen Graham calls the *"vertical politics"* of contemporary urbanism—where power circulates through pipes, pavements, and easements as much as through statutes (Graham 2016). Roads, drains, and title boundaries thus compose a buried and paper archive of expertise and violence. To walk these lines is to traverse the legal unconscious of the city, where theodolites and culverts still perform the discipline of tenure even as they decay or are forgotten. Beating the bounds unsettles this order not by erasing it but by amplifying its cracks, drawing attention to the border as a living instrument of law.

What we called the 'Docklands' fragment of Melbourne's four original pieces of common was filmed and an incantation of found text was spoken. We chanted:

Birrarung Yarra Yarra Yarra. Coast Spinifex Osaka Chestnut Teal North Wharf Kangaroo Grass Yarra New Holland Honeyeater Bolte Red-fruit Saw-sedge Citylink Magpie-Lark Docklands Coastal Tussock Grass Ron Barassi Silver Gull Moonee Ponds Knobby Club-sedge Pearl River White-faced Heron Observation Common Reed Footscray Superb Fairywren Old Timber Sea Rush Moonee Ponds Little Wattlebird Dynon Water-ribbon Anderson Little Pied Cormorant Ireland Robust Water-milfoil Railway White Ibis Dryburgh Eel-grass Adderley Black Swan Railway River Red Gum Abbotsford Buff-banded Rail Railway Drooping She-oak Madden Boobook Railway Silver Mulga Hawke Pacific Black Duck Railway Silver Banksia Roden Great Cormorant Railway Round-Leaf Pigface Stanley Darter Railway Blackseed Glasswort Rosslyn Coot Railway Coast Spear-grass Dudley Little Black Cormorant Adderley Beaded Glasswort Southern Cross Nankeen Kestrel Adderley Grey Mangrove La Trobe Rainbow Lorikeet Wurundjeri Water-tassel Marvel Noisy Miner Bourke Swamp Paperbark Batmans Rufous Fantail Fishplate Yellow Box Collins Spotted Pardalote Brentani Showy Bossiaea Batmans Hobby McCrae Golden Wattle Wurundjeri Stubble Quail Jim Stynes

Long-fruit Water-mat Wurundjeri Shining Bronze Cuckoo Jim Stynes Berry Saltbush Webb Willie Wagtail Australian Hop Goodenia Seafarer Little Raven Adela Plains Saltmarsh Grass Tom Thumb Great Crested Tern Collins Creeping Monkey-flower North Wharf Magpie Victoria Harbour. Yarra Yarra Yarra Birrarung.[7]

These performative re-enactments exposed—or so it seemed—the cartographic boundaries we traced as abstractions that both revealed and concealed lived, performative thresholds, but also provided opportunities to find rich entanglements within that abstraction.

The recitation of plant and bird names along the boundary, in particular, may be read as a kind of multispecies witnessing. Each utterance folds the ecological, the cartographic and the historical into the same performative field, an echo of what Beth Dempster and Donna Haraway called *sympoiesis*—the making-with of worlds through partial, entangled acts of attention (Dempster 2000; Haraway 2016).

The border, in this sense, is never only a human inscription; it is also sustained by vegetal persistence, avian movement, microbial life in the soil. Elizabeth Povinelli's notion of geontopower—the distinction between Life and Nonlife—sharpens this edge, reminding us that colonial governance divided the living from the non-living, rendering certain soils inert, certain relations unthinkable (Povinelli 2016). To re-speak these names is therefore not inventory but invocation, a modest reanimation of what official grammars of tenure had silenced. The commons, attended to in this way, becomes a shared sensorium rather than simply a juridical category—an affective ecology where the human voice briefly rejoins the polyphonic matter of ground.

What happens, we asked as we walked and filmed and collected, at these boundaries, edges, borders? And what relationships, between those borders and the maps we carried with us to help trace them, developed as we walked?

BORDERS, BOUNDARIES AND EDGES

I had established the likely, approximate, border of the old common fragment by re-mapping the textual description of it (Barkly 1863 [published 1915]) via a contemporaneous map (Fig.2) onto a modern digital one (Fig.3). With our phones we followed on foot this messy re-representation of a 162 year old, text-only, land law proclamation.

Henri Lefebvre distinguishes between representations of space (maps, plans, diagrams) and representational spaces (lived, practiced, and embodied space), and he reminds us that maps, plans and diagrams are 'produced', that, *"the 'raw material' from which they are produced is nature,"* (Lefebvre 1991, 84) and that space produced in this way *"is at once a precondition and a result of social superstructures. Rhetorically, Lefebvre then asks, "[i]s space a social relationship? Certainly—but one which is inherent to property relationships (especially the ownership of the earth, of land)"* (Lefebvre 1991, 85). He further warns of the double reduction of space: first through its *"isotopy"* or homogenisation and then, *"the reduction of three-dimensional realities to two dimensions (for example, a 'plan', a blank sheet of paper, something drawn on that paper, a map, or any kind of graphic representation or projection)"* (Lefebvre 1991, 285). But I am not so sure that these are straightforward 'reductions', as our and countless other 'messy' maps testify to. These gestures of remapping reveal not only how space is practiced but also how its representations carry ideological weight.

Here, questions of what a messy cartographic representation of the, in turn, messy world begin to emerge. For example, John Harley develops a critical account of maps as cultural texts, arguing that maps are not neutral depictions of territory, but rather, cultural texts suffused with power. Although they fix boundaries on paper, on the

screen, these are often obscure, confused, contested realities on the ground. I take this 'ground' literally; breaking, as Harley put it, *"the assumed link between reality and representation which has dominated cartographic thinking"* (Harley 1989). Harley warns us of the myth of cartographic accuracy, and the power structures it

hides, *"[t]he topography as shown in maps, increasingly detailed and planimetrically accurate, has become a metaphor for a utilitarian philosophy and its will to power [...]. County and regional maps, though founded on scientific triangulation, were an articulation of local values and rights,"* and that, *"cartographers manufacture power"* (Harley 1989).

However, Harley, as others have also suggested, seems to have missed the democratising power of infrastructures of community mapping (Krygier 2015)—or co-creative placemaking as processes of manufacturing power for the otherwise powerless. The community mapping of the re-appropriative strategies of "counter-
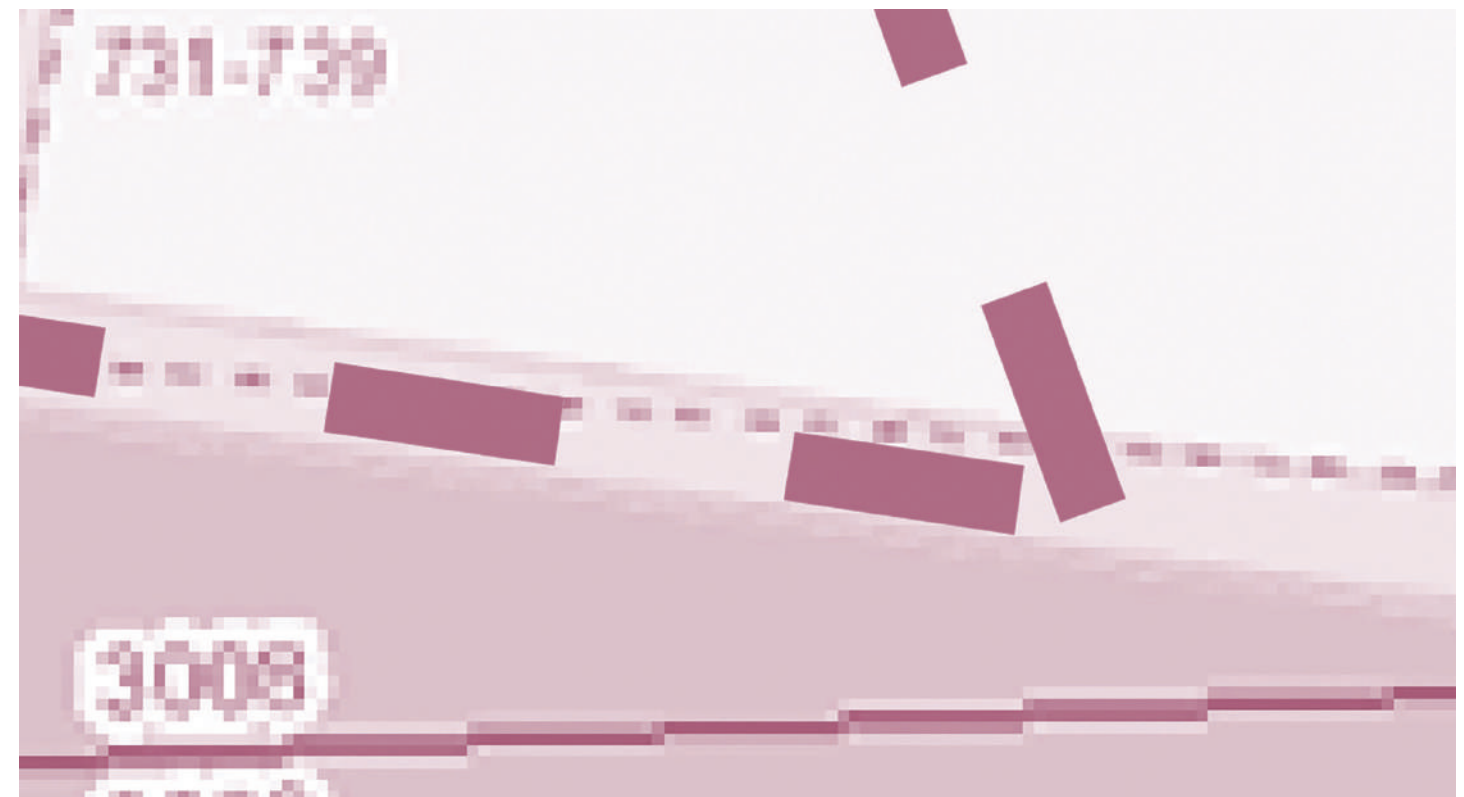
mapping," either with Indigenous land rights as with Nancy Lee Peluso's 'Whose Woods are These?' in Indonesia (Peluso 1995), or with Denis Wood et al, more generally, in 'Rethinking the Power of Maps' (Wood et al. 2010), or, again, with Shannon Mattern's machine-aided, re-democratisation of urban infrastructures in 'Mapping's Intelligent Agents' (Mattern 2017)—and many other like these, suggests so. Our efforts in beating the bounds, in summoning back the commons, rests on this suggestion.

Between Harley's representational politics and Nail's kinetic borders lies the method itself: an oscillation between map and motion. At the beginning of 'Deconstructing the Map' Harley quotes Beryl Markham's censure of the normative map. Markham writes, *"looking at it, feeling it, running a finger along its lines, it is a cold thing, a map, humourless and dull, born of calipers and a draughtsman's board"* (Markham 2001, quoted in Harley 1989). Yet this needn't necessarily be the case; drawings and other cartographic objects also have a messiness, a productive (though often obfuscated) inaccuracy. In this sense I hesitate to set messy 'reality' against clinical representational cartography. As I have suggested elsewhere (Zambelli 2013), drawing conventions traditionally associated with 'technical drawing'—such as scored or blue-line under-drawing and the deliberate over-crossing of axes—represent complex outcomes of both technological adaptation and artistic affectation. Historically, the scoring of vellum, for instance, made resistant surfaces receptive to ink, leaving behind a faint ghost of the drawing, while architects, beginning their journey towards stifling professionalisation, began distinguishing themselves from the 'finer' arts, retaining vestigial drawn flourishes within an increasingly codified practice. These minute gestures of excess—slightly over-long lines, for example, or carefully controlled wavering of the pencil or pen in hand across rigid construction geometries—constituted the architect's idiom of technical drawing: a subtle resistance to the tyranny of

idealised geometry, a rejoinder to Alder's claim that, *"[t]wo-dimensional drawings can never hope to capture fully the boisterous, messy world of thick things"* (Alder 1998, 522). In urban terms, such drawn excess becomes operative: millimetres of over-drawn axes become metres of street edge, verge width or rows of stadium terrace.[8] In Fig.3, the dashed line resists close reading: accuracy here is a dangerous illusion. The line is a scale-less vector, the map a raster that reveals less the more it is zoomed. Yet other modes of attention remain possible within this ambiguous cartography. Paul Emmons argues that, *"dashed lines are quasi-magical notations— allowing one to see the invisible, sewing together the physical and the metaphorical"* (Emmons 2020, 119). In Fig.4 the congruence of line and border allows one to, bathetically, see the window cleaners literally cleaning the edge, projected upwards, of the common.

What does it mean for the ground to be messy and for the representational line to be messy too—as if the map were the territory (Korzybski 1933)? At the level of their detail perhaps cartographic translations regain some of that assumed congruence lost in the difference between Lefebvre's *"representations of space and representational spaces"*. Nail in particular challenges the idea of borders as static lines, arguing instead that they are dynamic processes and flows. The cartographic line is a translation of one kind of mobile, lived, and embodied threshold, for another. *"[T]ake the border between states,"* Nail writes:

[t]he border of a state has two sides. On one side the border touches (and is thus part of) one state, and on the other side the border touches (and is thus part of) the other. But the border is not only its sides that touch the two states; it is also a third thing: the thing in between the two sides that touch the states. This is the fuzzy zone-like phenomenon of inclusive disjunction that many theorists have identified as neither/nor, or both/and. If the border were entirely reducible to the two states, nothing would divide them— which can't be true (Nail 2016, 3).

What is the material of the "fuzzy zone"? Can I pick it up? And what if the two states were not divided but instead drawn together? Or if the fuzziness didn't, or couldn't, decisively either divide or unite? This picture is made more complex when border fuzziness is both material and representational as I am arguing here. Often it is literally a verge or easement: seeded with native plants, say, crossed by services, owned by one entity, maintained by another, used by all. Here, *"a border seems to be something created not only by the societies that divide them within and from one another, but also something that is required for the very existence of society itself as "a delimited social field" in the first place. In this sense, the border is both constitutive of and constituted by society"* (Nail 2016, 4). Nail's "constitutive of" seems closer to what we see played out along the border of the common— at least of those commons which persist—where the border makes the society. For emphasis Nail reiterates that, *"the border is not the result of a spatial ordering, but precisely the other way around—the spatial ordering of society is what is produced by a series of divisions and circulations of motion made by the border"* (Nail 2016, 9).

In this understanding the commons occur most intensely at the border. As this border shifts— one way, another, or not at all until it is noticed—what seems to be lost on one side or the other, is not gone but subducted beneath, persisting within the other. It was therefore our intention to notice the common at its historic border. But as mobile entities, noticing the border is necessary but not sufficient: Nail reminds us that, *"[w]ithout regular intervention and reproduction (or even legal or economic deployments), borders decay and are forgotten, taken over by others, weakened, and so on. Borders are neither static nor given, but reproduced"* (Nail 2016, 6-7). Thus, we can say that beating the bounds is first a noticing, and then a maintenance, of the border's motion. Or rather, for us at Melbourne Town Common, because of its prolonged stasis, this perambulative motion was less

Fig.4 – Cleaning (at) the boundary of old Melbourne Town Common. Film still from: Beating the Bounds of Melbourne Town Common. Eleanor Suess, 2025.

like maintenance than it was the beginning of a resuscitation through incantation.[9]

Nail argues that borders demand *"a fundamental questioning of the processes of differential inclusion and exclusion that are constitutive of the public and its subjective figurations epitomized by citizenship. This is why the question of the common must always involve an interrogation of the question of borders"* (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 279). But where Neilson theorises borders as constitutive processes, Gloria Anzaldúa also offers a situated account of their psychic, cultural, and artistic force. In this way, in

Borderlands: the New Mestiza / La Frontera, Anzaldúa treats the U.S.–Mexico border not only as a cartographic line but also as a cultural, linguistic, and psychic threshold. She theorises the border as wound, scar, and generative site of hybridity. For her, borders are affective edges that she refers to as *"[t]he psychological borderlands, the sexual borderlands and the spiritual borderlands"* (Anzaldúa 2007, Preface). Anzaldúa 'zooms-in' to the detail of the border when she explains that:

[n]umerous overlays of paint, rough surfaces, smooth surfaces make me realize I am preoccupied with texture

as well. Too, I see the hardy contained color threatening to spill over the boundaries of the object it represents and into other "objects" and over the borders of the frame. I see a hybridization of metaphor, different species of ideas popping up here, popping up there, full of variations and seeming contradictions, though I believe in an ordered, structured universe where all phenomena are interrelated and imbued with spirit (Anzaldúa 2007, 66).

It is the threatening environment of the Mexico-US border which for Anzaldúa enables creativity, *"[l]iving in a state of psychic unrest, in a Borderland, is what makes*

poets write and artists create" (Anzaldúa 2007, 73). Anzaldúa's 'borderlands' also connect to more recent discussions of commons as liminal thresholds of collective life. Charalampos Tsavdaroglou and Konstantinos Lalenis in their work on refugee housing commons describe the liminal character of the commons border where, *"refugee housing commons as threshold places of direct democracy, self-organisation, and co-habitation"* (Tsavdaroglou and Lalenis 2023, 50). As Stavros Stavrides reminds us, *"[p]orosity may therefore be considered as an experience of habitation, which articulates urban life while it also loosens the borders which are erected to preserve a strict spatial and temporal social order"* (Stavrides 2016, 68).

Together, these accounts—from Lefebvre's dialectics of space, Harley's critique of cartography, Nail's dynamic borders, Anzaldúa's affective thresholds, and Tsavdaroglou & Lalenis's commons thresholds—trace a line picked up by beating the bounds of Melbourne Town Common: the revival of affective commons boundaries through performative perambulation, where the commons emerge not as a fixed territory but as an affective, political, and creative border condition, continually made and remade through incantatory practice. If borders and cartography are abstractions that both obscure lived experience and offer a messy alternative, then drawing and archaeological inscription, I would argue, also offer a way back into the material and the gestural, just as soil collected at the boundary (Fig.5) reminds us that, yes, we can 'pick up' the border.

INSCRIPTION AND DRAWING

A preliminary outline of a typology of drawing marks might begin with those created by adding substance to a surface—the laying down of chalk, ink, or graphite—lines that can later be erased or reworked, leaving minimal trace. Marks may also result from the removal of material—through scratching or etching. Alternatively, they might arise from moving or displacing the material, as with techniques of chasing or repoussé work. Sometimes, drawing alters the condition of the material itself—marks made by staining, substituting one substance for another, or, more recently, by changing the alignment of liquid crystals in a digital screen. This mode of substitutional marking ranges from the ink drawings of ancient Roman instruments to twentieth-century techniques still within living memory. Above all, however, drawing as mark-making, remains an alchemical, transformative act.[10] Yet this transformation is not only a matter of time: each mark folds the instant of its making into the surface, leaving a residue of gesture and attention. Ray Lucas insists on inscription as a temporal and processual act, arguing for inscription as a creative problem that resists closure, emphasising process, temporality, and the embodied gesture as central to how we understand and theorise artefacts and movement. He uses, inter alia, architectural drawing as an example, but cartography shares the inscriptive character of drawing as well as its contested relationship to the thing represented. The thingness—but most of all its existence in time—of a line is central to Lucas's argument. In the 'Fieldnotes and Sketchbooks' exhibition, Lucas recalls, *"I made a mark - a simple, synchronous gesture that left a trace of my immediate response on the surface of the paper [...]. This line was, to repeat, the trace of an immediate (that is to say, without mediation) gesture [...]. Visitors [...] could respond to this mark because the line is most clearly understood as the trace of an action or gesture that can be reconstructed on the basis of the spectator's own experience or supposition regarding the making of such marks"* (Lucas 2009, 165). I see the cartographic line in this way too: inviting response because of its relationship to gesture. This insistence on gesture and temporality also illuminates the archaeological problem of drawing; a practice in this discipline often reduced to record-keeping, to the archive at its least affective. Leslie McFadyen argues that:

In archaeology we draw to make something of what someone else has made in the past, and we draw after we have excavated the thing that was made. This puts archaeologists off from thinking about their drawing as a creative practice in itself, and encourages them to think of it instead as a record after practice, more like a representation of something after the event (be that an event in the past or the event of excavation itself) (McFadyen 2011, 35).

Alain Schnapp goes further, insisting that, *"above all, all excavation is fabrication. The object or monument is only brought to light through the act of seeking it, and whilst observing a certain number of rules of study and interpretation isn't the archaeologist often taken for a discoverer? The discoverer must not compel the reality of the past but imagine it"* (Schnapp 1996, 30). In 'Beating the Bounds of Melbourne Town Common' we did indeed aim to "bring light through the act of seeking," yet we also, I admit, tried to "compel the reality" of it—but by imagining it through our performance of its border. Improvisatory moments in excavation reveal how drawing participates both in the making of the archive and in re-enacting past actions. As re-enactment the archaeological drawing has the incantatory power we sought in beating the bounds: carefully recited but improvisory in their making: filming where and when the mood took us, choosing particular words for our incantation from a multitude available on street signs and maps and citizen scientist lists of birds, for example. In archaeology, McFadyen explains how she:

Introduce[s] those improvisatory moments in archaeology when there is a tension between the sculpted shape of the excavated feature and the traces of action that we can draw. Between cut and fill, excavation and drawing, trowel and pencil, archaeologists find themselves amidst a prehistoric monument that is not

MELBOURNE TOWN COMMON

Fragment 2 (Docklands)

Commercing at a point where the north bank of Yarra Yarra River is intersected by the old city boundary; thence north by said boundary to the south fence of the Melbourne and Murray River Railway; by that fence south-easterly to its intersection with the northern boundary of the railway reserve at Batman's Hill; by part of the northern boundary thereof south-westerly to its north-western angle; thence south-easterly by said railway reserve and a prolongation thereof to the Yarra Yarra River and by that river westerly to the point of commencement.
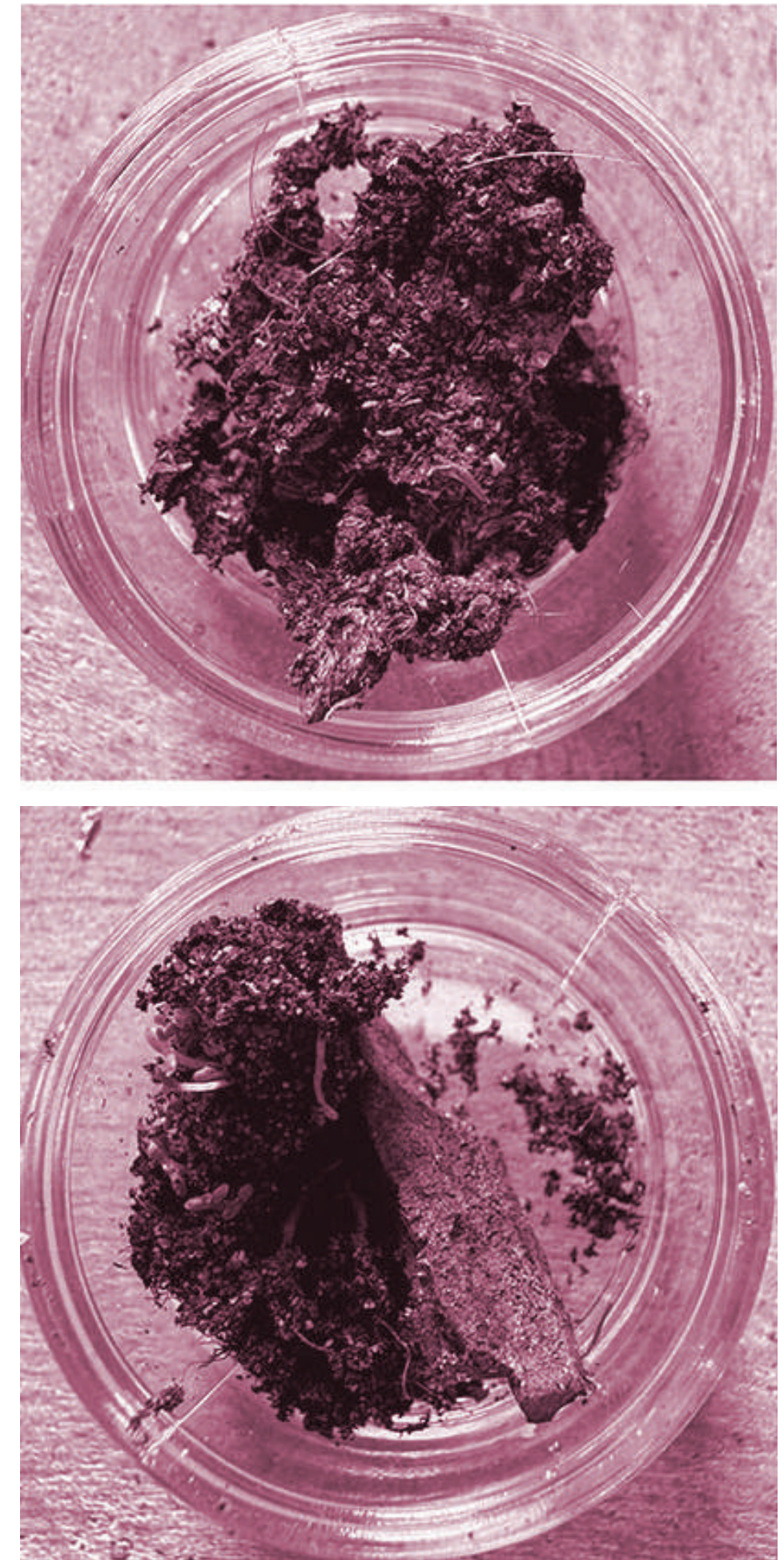

Fig.5 – Text describing the boundary of Melbourne Town Common (Barkly 1863 [published 1915]). Soil collected at the boundary of old Melbourne Town Common (Suess and Zambelli 2025) – location as Fig.2, Alessandro Zambelli, 2025.

quite here but yet at hand. What I want to emphasise about drawing, and about bringing the making of the archive into that practice, is how it changes the ways we can both write about time and relate prehistoric things to past and future (McFadyen 2011, 33-35).

In 2012, at an educational archaeological excavation at Must Farm[11] run by McFadyen, I watched her inscribe into the soil, with her trowel, the outline of what she described as 'tree throw.' Tree throw is indicated by the subtle change in soil tone and texture where, in this case, thousands of years earlier, a falling tree, its roots rotating upwards, brought with it a new stratigraphic order. Lesley McFadyen drew the new border of these disordered soils through, to my eyes, an incantatory series of magical gestures. This parallel between trowel and pencil made this archaeologist's gestures directly legible as drawing and as sympathetic magic. Here, the drawn border, the natural border, and the border inscribed in the soil, become, not one, not exactly, but a palimpsestuous layering—all layers active and affecting one-another. In this sense, both archaeology and architecture, as well as our incantatory beating of the bounds, meet in representational acts which are always also performative: a making that stages past, present, and future in a messy simultaneity. Each mark not only recording but remaking, insisting that design and excavation alike are processes of continual becoming. What does all this mean for the commons themselves, where the methods of archaeology and drawing converge upon questions of thresholds and futures?

COMMONS FUTURES

I have found commons borders to be fluid, in constant tension between cartographic line and affective threshold. The commons border does not define a territory where things are allowed (hierarchically by others) but instead generates a resistance to neoliberal pressures—it exists in spite of those pressures and not as a beneficence of the structures that support them. How is this resistance constituted? It is constituted through social, political and affective infrastructure, and in the detail of the common threshold; the section at the verge, the dimension of a gap, the specification of a fence. Building on 'Beating the Bounds,' archaeology is understood as a commoning method: a situated, collaborative set of practices that reanimates erased spaces and spatial hierarchies through micro-scale performative acts of documentation and representation. Using walking, drawing, collecting and film as investigative tools, it attended to boundary markers, survey lines, and ecological traces as material moments where multiple temporalities converged. In doing so, it framed representation not as a precursor to spatial practice, but as a meaningful act in its own right—one capable of unsettling colonial legacies and opening new commons imaginaries.

In 'The Tell-The-Tale Detail' Marco Frascari argues that architectural details are not decorative fragments but generative joints where construction and meaning meet (Frascari 1996). Tracing architectural histories from Leon Battista Alberti to Carlo Scarpa, he shows how details structure perception, order buildings, and unite ethics and aesthetics. In Scarpa's "fertile details", ornament and function merge, proving that in architecture, the detail tells the tale. It is the detail, then, that in this account, anchors the commons to the world—the scored line, the incantatory text, the boundary marker, the soil at the water's edge. These small material and gestural acts are not simply documentary and material residues, but constitutive of the commons' border itself: they hold together the motion, decay, and renewal of that threshold. As both archaeology and spatial representation reveal, the border's vitality resides in such minute negotiations—in the hand's wavering across an underscored line, in the measured perambulation of an ancient invisible boundary line, in the act of naming plants and birds along that boundary. The detail is where the not-so-abstract line meets the lived and affective thickness of ground; where the commons is continually remade through attention, care, and repetition. In this sense, to work in detail is to practice a form of commoning—to keep the border in motion, to resist its forgetting, and to sustain its potential as a shared, ever-becoming infrastructure of relation.

If every boundary is also a social contract, interactions with the living as much as the dormant must involve practices of care. Silvia Federici has described commoning as an "autonomous reproduction of life," a collective refusal of enclosure that begins in maintenance and extends to solidarity (Federici 2010). The modest gestures of cleaning, tracing, or naming along the edge belong to this lineage: they are reproductive acts that keep the possibility of relation alive. Jane Bennett's vibrant matter illuminates the political charge of such gestures, where the agency of things—the rusted hinge, the tuft of grass—presses back upon human intention (Bennett 2010). To dwell with this vibrancy is to accept that repair is never completion but continuous negotiation. The future of the commons, then, is not secured through law or plan—at least not alone—but through repeated, attentive acts that bind the affective, the material, and the ethical. It endures in the detail: in the daily maintenance of shared ground.

If the boundary of Melbourne's Town Common, once revealed, makes visible the operations of colonial surveying and forgetting, it also makes available a way of thinking more generally about the commons as an ongoing negotiation between edge and edge-adjacency, law and use, map and gesture. Here, the border is not simply the limit of the common but the place where its social and material negotiation can become most visible. Attending in detail to that edge is an act of commoning—tracing and remaking shared life through small, situated gestures of repair, delineation, and care.

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NOTES

1. In which a family uses a mummified and cursed monkey's paw to wish their dead son alive again; as frantic knocking sounds at the door, they reverse their wish—moments before his disfigured, undead, body would have entered JACOBS, W. W. The Monkey's Paw [electronic resource]. Edition ed.: Project Gutenberg, 2009 [1902].

2. 'Paper roads' are mapped and unbuilt road reserves—legal corridors existing only on survey plans, marking intended, but never realised, infrastructure.

3. Professor Eleanor Suess, Deakin University and Professor Hélène Frichot, University of Melbourne.

4. This re-enactment was first exhibited as: SUESS, E. AND A. ZAMBELLI. Beating the Bounds of Melbourne Town Common [panels and film]. In V. MANNERING, K. MCFARLANE, N. TORY-HENDERSON, H. FRICHOT AND D. NEWELL eds. Repair Stories [exhibition]. Melbourne: Melbourne Design Week, 2025. ibid. Then published as: ZAMBELLI, A. AND E. SUESS. Unbeating the Bounds of Australia's Colonial Commons. In H. FRICHOT, L. BENJAMIN AND V. MANNERING eds. Repair Stories. Melbourne: Perimeter Editions, 2025 [in press].

This work, in turn, builds upon related work done by Siobhan O'Neill as part of our 'Wastes and Strays' project: O'NEILL, S. In-Common Sites. Wastes and Strays, 2021. and RODGERS, C., A. ZAMBELLI, R. HAMMERSLEY, E. CHEATLE, et al. English Urban Commons: The Past, Present and Future of Green Spaces. Edition ed. London: Routledge, 2024.

5. Part of the border passes, now, through the centre of Marvel Stadium (also known as Docklands Stadium).

6. For a detailed meaning of 'palimpsestuous', see: DILLON, S. The Palimpsest: literature, criticism, theory. Edition ed. London: Continuum, 2007.

7. Text as read by Eleanor Suess and Alessandro Zambelli at the 'Festival of the Commons in Architectural Writing': ZAMBELLI, A. AND E. SUESS 2025. Dispelling the Unquiet Bounds of Australia's Colonial Commons. In Proceedings of the The Festival of the Commons in Architectural Writing, The Bartlett, UCL, 20th June 2025.

8. The old commons boundary passes through the middle of Marvel Stadium.

9. One historical form of beating the bounds was the Rogantide Perambulation HINDLE, S. Beating the Bounds of the Parish: Order, Memory and Identity in the English Local Community, c. 1500-1800. In M. HALVORSON AND K. SPIERLING eds. Defining community in early modern Europe. Ashgate, 2008, p. 205-227.

10. This typology was first proposed in: ZAMBELLI, A. The Undisciplined Drawing. Buildings, 2013, 3(2), 357-379.

11. A Bronze Age archaeological site in Cambridgeshire: BALLANTYNE, R., A. COOPER, D. GIBSON, M. KNIGHT, et al. Must Farm pile-dwelling settlement: Volume 2. Specialist reports, 2024.

The Disinherited Fitment

Detail as Political Witness

altyapısal detay
sıkışık mekan
minör siyaset
minör mimarlık
mimari etnografi
infrastructural detail
cramped space
minor politics
minor architecture
architectural ethnography

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Bu makale, mimari detayı teknik ya da estetik inceliklerin ötesinde politik bir tanık olarak yeniden ele alıyor ve dikkati Arslan Yatağı Sokağı'nın gözden uzak mekansal parçalarına çeviriyor. 2022'de İstanbul'da gerçekleşen 20. Feminist Gece Yürüyüşü'nün polis şiddetiyle aniden kesintiye uğradığı bu dar altyapı geçidinde; borular, klima üniteleri, rögar kapakları, kaldırım taşları ve güvenlik kameraları, bütünü ayakta tutan fakat genellikle arka planda kalan daha büyük ağların uçları ve eklemleri olarak detay niteliği kazanıyor. *The Disinherited Fitment* başlığı altında üretilen iki spekülatif çizimde bu parçalar büyütülüyor, üst üste bindiriliyor ve bozularak tarafsız mekansal unsurlar olmaktan çıkıp insan-dışı tanıklar haline geliyor. Yöntemsel olarak çalışma, mimari etnografiyi bekle–oyalan–kaydet–geri dön protokolüyle birleştiriyor; kurmaca ve alegoriyi devreye sokarak çizimi temsil aracından sorgulama aracına dönüştürüyor. Birinci çizim, kopuş anını seyirliğe indirgemeden kristalize ediyor; ikinci çizim ise olayın zamansallığına odaklanarak artıkların sonrasında nasıl yoğunlaştığını izliyor. Makale, detayın politik ve duygusal güçlerin kesiştiği bir alan olduğunu; çizimin politik olarak yüklü bir olayı yeniden anlatabilen spekülatif bir etnografi işlevi görebileceğini ve Arslan Yatağı Sokağı'nın sıkışık koşullarından, meşruiyetin ancak geçici olarak deneyimlenebildiği minör siyaset biçimlerinin ortaya çıktığını savunuyor. Bu anlamda çalışma; belgeleme ya da tasarım çözümü üretmek yerine marjinal olana yakın duran, onun öne çıkmasına alan açan ve mimarlığın eleştirel potansiyelini minör düzlemde tanıyan bir detayla çalışma biçimi öneriyor.

This article reframes architectural detail as a political witness, redirecting attention from technical or aesthetic refinement to the overlooked fragments of Arslan Yatağı Street in Istanbul - a narrow utility alley where police violence abruptly disrupted the 20th Feminist Night March in 2022. Here, infrastructural fragments are recognized as details as they operate at the scale where systems meet bodies: pipes, air-conditioning units, manholes, paving stones, and security cameras are the joints and terminations of larger networks that sustain the whole while remaining in the background. Through two speculative drawings under the title *The Disinherited Fitment*, these fragments are enlarged, layered, and distorted to operate as nonhuman witnesses rather than neutral spatial elements. Methodologically, the work couples architectural ethnography with the protocol of be–linger–record–return, along with fiction and allegory; to shift drawing from depiction to interrogation. *Drawing 1* crystallizes the instant of rupture without reproducing spectacle; *Drawing 2* works in the temporality of the event by tracing how residues thicken in the aftermath. The article argues that detail might be a ground where the political and affective converge, that drawing can operate as a speculative ethnography capable of re-narrating a politically charged event, and that from the cramped conditions of Arslan Yatağı Street emerge forms of minor politics in which legitimacy is not granted but only briefly inhabited. Rather than documentation or design solution, the project offers a way of working with detail by staying close to what is marginal, allowing it to come forward, and recognizing architecture's critical potential in the realm of minor.

INTRODUCTION

Architectural detail is usually confined to questions of technical resolution or visual refinement. Yet details are rarely neutral: they are junctions where corporeal, social and political realms converge. This article turns to Arslan Yatağı Street in Istanbul, a narrow utility alley that became the scene of sudden police violence during the 20th Feminist Night March in 2022. Pipes, broken paving stones, air-conditioning (AC) units, CCTV cameras, and fire escapes, elements usually relegated to architecture's backstage, are treated as witnesses to political violence, care, and resistance.

The paper considers infrastructural fragments as details as they operate at the scale where systems meet bodies at the threshold of joints, terminations and fixings that keep the whole running while remaining concealed. Just as conventional details, these fragments are designed to disappear in function and reappear at moments of breakdown or repair; and condense traces of labor and care.

Read through Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's (1986) notion of cramped space—a compressed, unsettled condition where political life can only appear in fragmentary and hesitant forms—Arslan Yatağı Street offers a site for minor politics: where political life unfolds affectively and in fragments, while eluding well-defined representations. In Jill Stoner's (2012) sense, the alley's overlooked fitments also provide a ground for minor architecture: small-scale, tactical practices that depart from major paradigms of permanence and monumentality and instead work through sabotage and improvisation. Taken together, these lenses clarify how infrastructural fragments act as nonhuman witnesses and how drawing, by staying in proximity to them, can configure detail as a site of political inquiry.

The project of this article, The Disinherited Fitment,[1] explores this condition through two speculative drawings that enlarge, layer, and distort infrastructural fragments. Instead of depicting the event, the drawings use detail as a witness and position themselves as a form of interrogation. Methodologically, the work couples Momoyo Kaijima, Laurent Stalder, and Yu Iseki's (2018) notion of architectural ethnography with a protocol of observation - be–linger–record–return - together with Jacques Rancière's (1999, p.149) account of fiction as a political tool, and Jennifer Bloomer's (1993) and Penelope Haralambidou's (2007) proposals of allegory as a mode of fragmentary, ambiguous, and plural representation. The project draws on first-hand observations on site by one of the authors, developed collaboratively into drawings and analysis.

Within this frame, Drawing 1 stages the instant of rupture without reproducing spectacle and assembles infrastructural fitments as nonhuman co-witnesses to police violence. Drawing 2 returns to the site four months later, working with Lisa Baraitser's (2017) notion of enduring time to trace how residues alter the site's texture. Together, the drawings demonstrate how infrastructural detail can be reconfigured as an unstable actor that mediates between politically charged events and their spatio-temporalities.

THE CRAMPED SPACE OF ARSLAN YATAĞI STREET

Since 2003, the Feminist Night March in Istanbul has gradually evolved into a central platform for anti-patriarchal and LGBTQ+ resistance in Turkey (Büyükgöze, 2023b). For many years, İstiklal Street - the city's most symbolically charged protest space - served as the march's central stage, until increasing police restrictions in recent years forced it away from that site (Büyükgöze, 2023a)[2]. In 2022, the 20th Feminist Night March once again faced severe restrictions, including a ban on entering İstiklal Street issued by the Istanbul Governor.[3, 4] Even in these conditions, the protesters

navigated within the city through improvisation: declarations were read from rooftops, slogans echoed from parked cars, and the streets were filled with banners and voices.[5] The march carried an affective plurality: alongside grief and anger[6] were bright makeup, humorous banners, parade outfits, and familiar Turkish pop songs.

The site of this project is Arslan Yatağı Street - a narrow utility alley, outside the official cartographies of political visibility and spatial authority. It is also where the 20th Feminist Night March celebration venue RX Nightclub is located, only a short walk from İstiklal Street. As one of the protesters present that night, the researcher witnessed how, shortly after the main protest, the entrance to the nightclub was blocked by police and barricades. Thus, the protesters spontaneously turned the street into a joyful protest site by turning on music, singing the songs loudly, dancing, and playfully shouting slogans. All of a sudden, protesters were attacked with pepper spray by the police. As protesters dispersed, a solidarity of care emerged: milk, lemon, and acid-acid water were shared to soothe burning skin. The site had spontaneously become a politically prominent space of the 20th Feminist Night March.

In this context, the article frames Arslan Yatağı (Fig.1) as a cramped space, a politically volatile condition that Deleuze and Guattari (1986, 17) conceptualize in their book Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature. Cramped space is a site of compression where political subjectivity does not emerge through visibility or articulation, but through rupture, hesitation, and fragmentation (Thoburn, 2016). It is where "the people are missing" (Deleuze, 1989, 216) not because they are absent, but because they do not yet cohere into a representable collective (Thoburn, 2016, 367). Their presence is excessive to the dominant order: felt but not legible, seen but not countable. Nicholas Thoburn (2016, 367) extends Deleuze and Guattari's major–minor duality into the political realm, defining cramped space as the locus

of impossibility where minor politics take place. While major politics may surface in headline events staged in central squares, minor politics can manifest as "a scream, a noise, a mark, or a disturbance" (Colebrook, 2015, 153). Judith Butler (2015, 71) similarly notes that when protests move from the square into side streets, alleys, and unpaved neighborhoods, politics crosses the supposed divide between public and private. In such movements, politics is not confined to the official public sphere but continuously reappears in unexpected spaces.

In this context, the street's infrastructural clutter of AC units, drainage pipes, manholes, graffiti, and broken paving stones, together with the fleeting eruptions of protest, produces the compressed and unsettled atmosphere of a cramped space. It is not a stage for protest but a space where minor politics surfaces affectively, sustained only by transient acts that resist legitimacy. The street does not offer a clear field for expression. Instead, it gathers fragments - bodies, fitments, gestures, affects, residues - that resist assembly into a coherent whole.

Here, infrastructural detail becomes a vehicle of minor politics, what is usually overlooked acquires unexpected political agency.

Stoner's Toward a Minor Architecture tackles this register within the architectural realm by proposing a shift from major paradigms to minor practices that "may sabotage as well as fix, and willfully take apart rather than assemble" (2012, 91). The improvisational spatial making observed in Arslan Yatağı Street accords with this minor architecture, where backstage fitments organize experience against dominant frames. As Butler (2015, 71) argues, spatial performativity is produced not only among protesters but also through relations between bodies and architectural elements. On Arslan Yatağı Street, infrastructural fragments do more than service buildings: they register the shock of the event and its aftercare. So that, in Butler's (2015, 71) sense, bodies and fitments co-compose the scene, and the alley becomes a working ground for minor architecture.

APPROACHING DETAIL: ARCHITECTURAL ETHNOGRAPHY, FICTION, AND ALLEGORY

Built upon this theoretical frame, the method is an assemblage of

three phases which interrogate the role of detail in architectural drawing. First, situated fieldwork in the form of architectural ethnography (Kaijima, Stalder, and Iseki, 2018) follows a protocol of be–linger–record–return: a temporally split sequence in which the first three steps deal with the immediacy of the event, while return marks the reflective revisit four months later. Through this split temporality, drawing extends beyond design into observation and documentation. Then, fiction and allegory rework these traces through multiplying rather than fixing meaning and allowing fragments to extend beyond their material form. The convergence of these strategies reshapes drawing into a speculative practice, one that approaches infrastructural fragments as detail; where systems, bodies and materials actually meet. Working at this scale allows drawing to do what it does best; to measure, annotate, layer and rescale, so that fragments can be interrogated rather than merely described.

Kaijima, Stalder, and Iseki's (2018) term architectural ethnography extends drawing beyond design into observation, documentation, and critique by allowing spatial narratives to unfold with both human and nonhuman participants. The ethnographic practice enacted in this project does not seek to
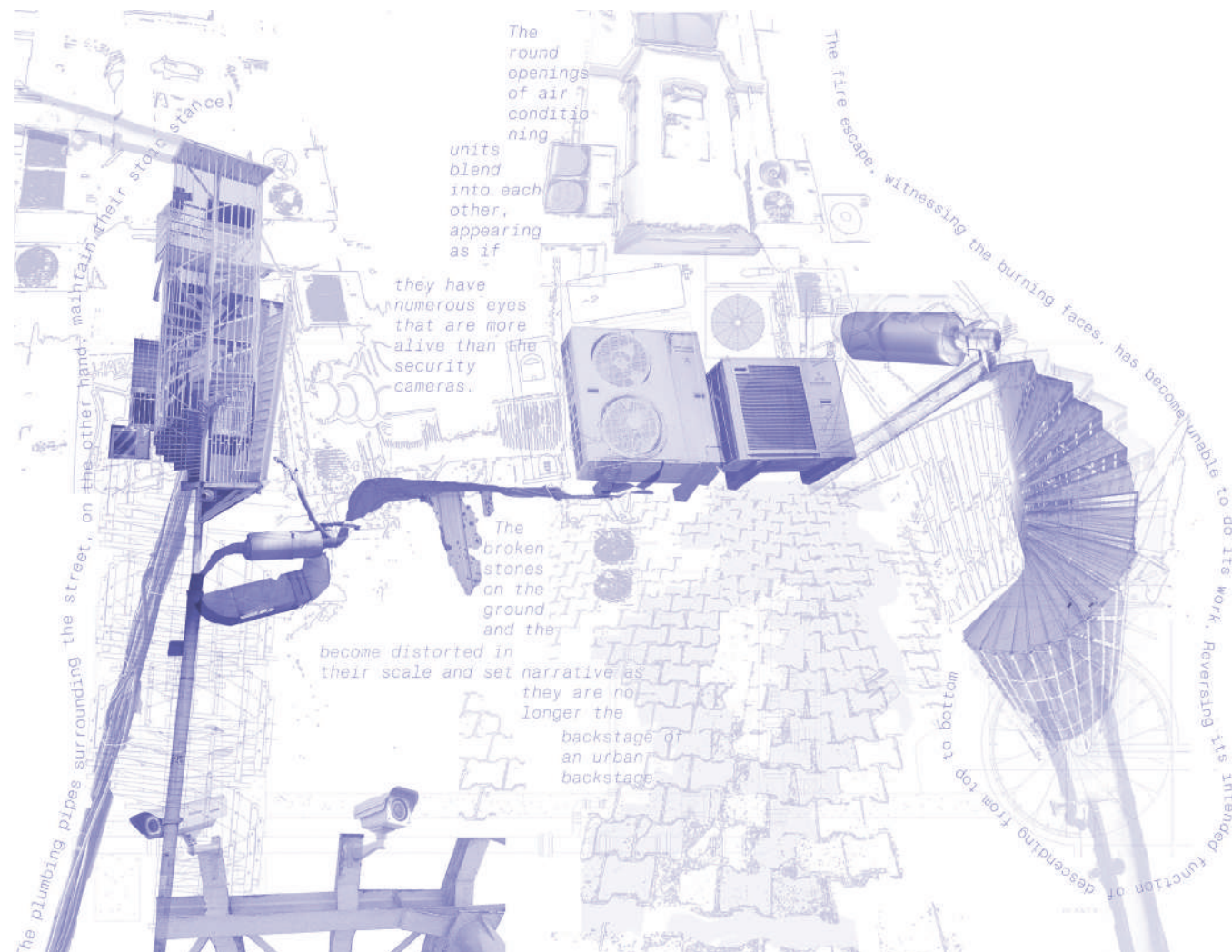
Fig.2 - Field mapping of Arslan Yatağı Street via the protocol "be–linger–record–return."

In *Architecture and the Text: The (S) Crypts of Joyce and Piranesi,* Bloomer (1993) develops allegory as a mode of architectural criticism that unsettles the boundary between theory and practice. Drawing on Walter Benjamin, she characterizes allegory as "fragmentary, ambiguous, palimpsestic, and hieroglyphic" - a representational strategy that resists totality and embraces contradiction (Bloomer, 1993, 137). Read this way, allegorical making does more than illustrate; it operationalizes fragmentation and contradiction as critical techniques. This allegorical stance resonates with what Bloomer (1993) names *minor architecture:* spatial practices that refuse completeness and permanence, and that disturb dominant arrangements not by built assertion but through partial and even inadvertent acts.

As Stoner (2012) has argued, *minor architecture* departs from the major paradigms of commodity, originality, permanence, and perfection. In this frame, Bloomer's (1993) account of allegory provides a complementary vocabulary: fragmentation and incompleteness are not shortcomings but operative strategies, where politics of space are engaged through parts rather than a whole. Similarly, Penelope Haralambidou (2007, 234) employs allegory as a ground for architectural experimentation and as a tool to engage with otherness through the imaginative realm often detached from material construction. She notes, *"an allegorical architectural project can be employed to unravel another piece of work, a site, or drawing itself by questioning its underlying syntax"* (Haralambidou, 2007, 225).

Within this project, allegory operates alongside fiction as a strategy for working with detail. Rather than stabilising meaning, it multiplies it, as it allows infrastructural fragments to exist beyond their material form and remain in interpretive ambiguity. Fiction does not fundamentally reject the reality of the site; it redistributes it by re-voicing the alley's fitments with the bodies that meet them and multiplying temporalities and points of view. In this sense, allegory lets details exceed their technical roles and act as figures of discrepancy. Read this way, allegorical making also aligns with *minor architecture* (Stoner, 2012) as practice that proceeds through partiality and rearrangement.

This allegorical mode becomes central when working with infrastructural space; those systems and objects that structure daily life while remaining peripheral to architectural attention. In *The Disinherited Fitment*, infrastructural elements are approached not as supposedly invisible materialities but as urban backstage fitments that are foregrounded to question the politics of maintenance, neglect and invisibility.

Fig.3 - Micro-monologues as in situ texts: security camera, graffiti, the broken paving stones, water drops.

As Hélène Frichot et al. note, architecture is always infrastructural in that it "maintains relations between individuals, places, and objects" (2022, 12). Yet infrastructure is routinely treated as architecture's other: "a whole world of invisible labours that are more than human" (Puig de la Bellacasa, 2014, 27). Brian Larkin (2013, 329) likewise emphasises infrastructures' affective and ontological complexity as he emphasizes how they maintain the systems functionality while remaining sensorially displaced and socially undervalued. Precisely here, *minor architecture* becomes a mode of critical making to reorganize experience from the backstage.

By drawing allegorical parallels between infrastructural labor and other forms of marginalized maintenance - including domestic work carried by women, precarious

stabilise meaning but to register how orientations are disrupted. As one of the protesters on the site, the researcher's exposure - eyes stinging, breath shortened, routes abruptly altered by police barricades - became part of the drawing process which let bodily thresholds regulate what could be traced. In this sense, *architectural ethnography* here operates as a form of close observation through disorientation, a way of drawing with and writing with the infrastructural residues of a politically charged moment.

As Bihter Almaç (2021, 54) suggests, in this kind of spatial making the architect becomes a recorder; yet what is recorded is a polyphony of uncertain witnesses, where distinctions between recorder and recorded loosen. Pipes, paving stones, fire escapes, ventilation and AC units are not mere backgrounds, they co-exist with experience alongside bodies. Walking, photographing,

and annotating the alley produced a record in which infrastructure and bodies shape each other. This field mapping arranges the *be–linger–record–return* protocol into plural layers (Fig.2): measured spatial fragments; residue textures; and timed linger points gathered through *architectural ethnography.* The mapping is not a plan but an assemblage of observation withholding a single reading. Yellow trace marks the body's main line of orientation; green typographic arcs carry in-situ notes; photo cut-outs (CCTV, AC units, fire escape, broken paving stones) points to nonhuman actors observed on site.

Rancière (1999, 29-30) argues that what is often called politics is actually the *police order,* an arrangement of roles, visibilities, and spaces that governs who can appear, and what can be seen, spoken, or done. Fiction, in this framework, becomes a tool not to escape the police order but

to disrupt it to refigure what counts as perceptible, sayable, and thinkable (Rancière, 1999, 149). It is through this lens that *The Disinherited Fitment* positions itself not as documentation but as a fictional intervention. By constructing two speculative drawings around a politically saturated yet infrastructurally mundane site, the project does not necessarily represent the 20th Feminist Night March. Instead, the drawings redistribute its spatial reality by fracturing the established order of visibility and suggest other ways of sensing what remains. In this sense, fiction binds directly into the drawing practice: the line, the fragment, the layering of textures all work less to stabilise than to unsettle. Here, fiction operates through short textual fragments and scattered voices written on site, and brings out the unresolved, corporeal and spatial reality of the event (Fig.3, Fig.4).

Fig.4 - Micro-monologues as in situ texts: the fire escape, the skin, AC units.

labor by refugees, and unrecognized care within queer communities - the approach considers the street not merely as a stage for protest but as a space through which the political charge of invisibility can be interrogated. Hosting a political event here becomes a form of carrying; an involuntary spatial maintenance of the very police order it seeks to disrupt. In this way, the infrastructural street becomes a cramped space where systems that usually recede into the background come forward as recorders.

Through allegorical drawing, these nonhuman remnants are not analyzed from a distance but worked at close range. Scaling, adjacency and layering turn utilities into characters through re-scaling and misaligning. In doing so, detail becomes the scene where politics quietly takes place, and *minor architecture* finds both its material and its methodological ground.

THE DISINHERITED FITMENT

The Disinherited Fitment suggests both the work itself and the critical stance adopted in this article. The term *fitment* is intentionally stretched here to name minor infrastructural add-ons - pipes, ducts, cameras, drains, fire escapes - bolted onto façades and courtyards where systems meet bodies, usually pushed to the urban backstage. *Disinherited* refers to bodies stripped of recognition and rights and, at another scale, to those same infrastructural fitments that architecture habitually disregards. Methodologically, the project is grounded in *architectural ethnography* in its assembly of two drawings: *Drawing 1* (Fig.5) stages the instant of rupture without restaging the event as display, treating infrastructural fragments as nonhuman co-attendants and following the

protocol *be–linger–record*. *Drawing 2* (Fig.7) enacts the last step - *return* - four months later, tracing how aftercare and maintenance alter the site and intensify the past through Baraitser's (2017) notion of *enduring time*. Across them, drawing remains with what resists capture and refuses to convert detail into a static representation. In this sense, the *disinherited* are neither illustrated nor redeemed; they are encountered through the very fragments that anchor political life yet fall outside architecture's inherited frames.

Drawing 1 captures the fleeting moment of police violence that erupted in Arslan Yatağı Street after the 20th Feminist Night March. The sudden end of festivity, the dermal sting of pepper spray, and the rise of voices mark a rupture within this *cramped space*. Yet the drawing does not seek to deliver the scene as a display. Through a layered composition - technical

lines, image fragments, and hand-drawn surface studies - it gestures toward the affective and material reverberations of that instant.

The work follows a simple field protocol that organizes both experience and evidence: be–linger–record. *Be* refers to the initial act of arriving and grounding oneself on site, registering bodily thresholds - eyes burning, breath tightening, skin prickling - as forms of spatial information. *Linger* names the choice to remain amid dispersal and confusion long enough to sense proximities and frictions; to take close notes on edges, corners, and utilities where bodies and fitments meet; and to attend to textures (slick, rough, sticky), smells, and the micro-acoustics of the alley. Lastly, *record* designates the gathering of traces: time-stamped field notes and photographs, quick notational sketches of alignments and distances, and close-up studies of

Fig.6 – Zooming into the details: fire escape stairs, HVAC units and Security Cameras, Plumbing Pipes.

Fig.5 - The Disinherited Fitment, *Drawing 1*.

Fig.7 - The Disinherited Fitment, *Drawing 2*.

pipes, stones, stains, and stairs that would later be reworked in drawing. These materials are not impartial data but traces saturated with the body's encounter.

In drawing, understanding infrastructure as detail becomes operative as a set of decisions including cropping to junctions; exaggerating scale shifts; thickening hatch where pressure accumulated; doubling lines where movement snagged (Fig.6). Selection follows affect rather than formal schemes: ghostly fragments that carry the charge of the moment are foregrounded. Thus, pipes, fire escapes, paving stones, HVAC units, and stains move from background to witness, not by narration but by their altered legibility at the scale of detail.

Here, scaling, substitution, and adjacency work as allegorical operations: a pipe swells out of proportion; a stair misaligns with its own shadow; a stain becomes a persistent figure. These moves do what documentary cannot; multiply meanings while refusing closure. Fiction provides nonhuman fragments a ground for expression without portraiture while allegory turns them into figures of discrepancy that crack the dominant, policing gaze. In this sense, drawing reorganizes what can be sensed without converting the event into a spectacle. The procedure aligns with *minor architecture;* by working from backstage fitments, the drawing takes apart inherited frames of architectural representation - plan, section, elevation - and recomposes them as close readings of detail. The result is not a finished image but a provisional construct where what is neglected becomes legible as spatial agency.

In contrast to the surveillance gaze of security cameras, the observer's position remains situated and unsettled. Faces are avoided; the view is cropped from within, at the height of a stinging eye and a held breath. What is seen is inseparable from what is touched, inhaled, and heard; the drawing treats these sensory registers as architectural

information. In this way, *Drawing 1* initiates a speculative spatial narration in which atmosphere - rather than illustration - renders the event legible. The purpose is not to expose the spatial reality of the event, but to stay with its architectural marginality: the backstage details that quietly resist the dominant order of visibility, where the political becomes palpable at the joints. While *Drawing 1* attends to rupture, *Drawing 2* stays in its aftermath by returning to the alley four months later, when the noise had faded and only traces persisted. The purpose of the return is not to reconstruct the event but to register what continues-residues, substitutions and slight misalignments that ordinary vision passes over.

The revisit follows the last step of the field protocol - return - with a close, slow traverse of the same segments of path. Edges and corners were re-walked at close range, small changes logged (a replaced screw, a repainted patch, a new cable tie), and close-ups obtained of pipes, stones, stains, and stairs. Short notational sketches mark surface distances and overlaps; surface rubbings and scans (paper pressed against metal, stone, and wall) collect textures of powdery dust, crusted residue, cold railings. These materials feed the drawing as haptic evidence rather than neutral data.

The drawing is composed under Baraitser's (2017) concept of *enduring time:* a temporality of suspension and density. Endurance here is not passive waiting but an active willingness to stay with what is incomplete. In the drawing, this appears as layered delays in the form of overlays that do not aim at legibility, slight offsets between photographic fragments and technical lines, and tonal fogs that slow the eye. Fragments hold multiple times at once; the shock, the aftermath, the slow work of keeping things going.

Treating infrastructure as detail becomes even more operative after the event. Joints, seams, hinges - those minor fitments that keep the

alley running - now hold the scene's afterlives. Scaling and adjacency are used diagnostically: a distorted drain with enlarged scale reveals trapped grit; doubled line weights mark where movement continued to snag; thickened hatching sits where cleaning agents bleached the wall. The drawing behaves like a speculative scan: an intimate diagnostic image that reads the minor rather than the panoramic.

In the aftermath, the scene resists a fixed narrative. Fiction redistributes attention; allegory lets fragments act as figures of incoherence; a stain that refuses to vanish, or a pipe that seems to swell against its bracket. These are ways to multiply how its residues can be sensed by opening detail to a minor register where politics unfolds through hesitation and incompleteness. What becomes visible in the return is a register of *minor architecture:* improvisational repairs, temporary fastenings, repainted patches, new stickers pressed over old ones. Such small acts - care, workaround, sabotage as maintenance - reorganize experience from the backstage. The drawing stays with these low-level operations to show how political life unfolds not only in rupture but in its afterlives, where bodies and fitments co-produce a persistent agency. Through this encounter, drawing reveals its spatial agency; not to assign fixed meaning, but to remain with what continues to reverberate within the multi-layered existence of a political site.

CONCLUSION

This article has reconsidered architectural detail not as technical resolution or aesthetic refinement, but as a political and affective witness. On Arslan Yatağı Street, infrastructural fragments - pipes, HVAC units, paving stones, stains, cameras, fire escapes - absorbed both rupture and aftercare during the 2022 Feminist Night March, as they emerged as nonhuman witnesses rather than impartial background. Framed through *cramped space,* the alley offers a register of minor politics: hesitant, fragmentary, briefly inhabited

rather than granted. Working with the protocol *be–linger–record–return,* the study generated situated traces and re-worked them through *architectural ethnography,* fiction, and allegory so that drawing could operate as interrogation: multiplying rather than fixing the intensity within the site.

Drawing 1 centered the instant of rupture without reproducing spectacle. Built from haptic bodily evidence, it enlarged and layered details in multiple scales and shifts fitments from function to witness. *Drawing 2* marks a return four months later by tracing how residues thicken through suspension, care, repair, and drift. Read together, the drawings show that detail carries multiple temporalities, including shock and delay, damage and maintenance, and that politics becomes palpable at the joints where bodies, materials, and utilities meet. The procedure aligns with *minor architecture:* small, improvised, and sometimes sabotaging adjustments that reorganize experience from the backstage rather than through conventional design paradigms. Allegory and fiction redistribute attention by allowing overlooked fragments to act as figures of abruptness that unsettle dominant optical orders. The contribution is threefold. First, it redefines infrastructural fragments as details that act as affective and political witnesses. Second, it advances drawing as interrogation - coupling ethnographic protocol with fiction and allegory - as a method for re-narrating residues without converting them into spectacle. Third, it clarifies how minor politics and *minor architecture* become legible from detail in cramped conditions.

The work is situated and partial as it centers one alley and one event, therefore, its drawings are interpretive. Rather than a document of protest or a design solution, *The Disinherited Fitment* proposes drawing as a critical mode of making through detail by staying with residues, unsettling the major frame, and working the political from the minor.

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NOTES

1. This project is part of *Architectures of Elusion: Narrating the Plurality of Political Spaces,* the master's thesis completed by Melike Beşik in 2024 within the Architectural Design Graduate Program at Istanbul Technical University. The thesis was supervised by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Bihter Almaç and Assoc. Prof. Dr. Meltem Aksoy.

2. The march has become increasingly subjected to police violence and spatial restriction - through blocked roads, bans, and forced dispersals - following the 2013 Gezi Park Protests and the banning of the LGBTQ+ Pride March in 2015 (Büyükgöze, 2023a).

3. İstanbul Valiliği, "Basın Açıklaması 2022/17," http://www.istanbul.gov.tr/basin-aciklamasi-2022-17

4. Despite organizers announcing another meeting point, access to the area was heavily obstructed by police barricades and public transportation shutdowns. Protesters, one of the authors included, navigated indirect routes through neighborhoods, using social media applications as a real time tool for coordination and safety.

5. DW, "Feminist Gece Yürüyüşü yasağa rağmen yapıldı," https://www.dw.com/tr/feminist-gece-yürüyüşü-yasağa-rağmen-yapıldı/a-61057343

6. The 20th Feminist Night March centered a recent legal matter: Turkey's official withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, an international treaty on preventing and combating violence against women, first initiated in Istanbul in 2011. (*Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210),* http://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/treaty/210/signatures. Against this backdrop, the protest became a site of collective mourning and rage over the 302 women who had been murdered in the following year. *İstanbul Sözleşmesi'nden çıkılmasının ardından en az 302 kadın öldürüldü,* https://medyascope.tv/2022/04/03/istanbul-sozlesmesinden-cikilmasinin-ardindan-en-az-302-kadin-olduruldu-en-az-254-kadin-supheli-sekilde-hayatini-kaybetti/

When the Groundwater Kicks Back

Re-Drawing of Architectural Detail

sızıntı
mimari detay
çizim
faili gerçekçilik
madde
leakage
architectural detail
drawing
agential realism
matter

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Bu çalışma, mimari detayları mimarlığın maddi-söylemsel pratiklerini şekillendiren güçlü bir unsur olarak ele alır. Detayı, çevre beşerî bilimlerinden gelen içgörüler ile bütünleştiren feminist, yeni-materyalist ve posthümanist bir bakış açısıyla yeniden çerçeveler. Araştırma, teknik çizimlerin nesnel ve kesin bilgi sağladığına dair geleneksel görüşe, maddi nesnellik varsayımlarını sorgulayarak meydan okur. Bunun yerine teknik çizimlerin ve detayların insan ve insan-dışı aktörlerin dolaşıklıkları içerisinde ilişkisel ve konumlu bilgi ürettiğini öne sürer (Haraway, 1988).

Karen Barad'ın Faili Gerçekçilik teorik çerçevesine (2007) dayanan çalışma, mimari çizimi gerçekliği aktif olarak şekillendiren ve epistemolojik sınırlar belirleyen bir aparatlar olarak kavramsallaştırır. Barad'ın terimiyle (2007), aparatlar mekan-zaman-maddeyi tekrar tekrar şekillendiren belirli maddi yeniden yapılandırmalardır. Bu anlamda teknik çizimler edilgen arka planlar değil, birleştirip/kesen (Barad,2018), hem belirli ilişkileri önemseyen hem de diğerlerini dışlayan epistemolojik sınırlar koyan aparatlardır.

Tartışma, İstanbul'un Karaköy semtinde bir inşaat vaka çalışmasına odaklanır. Bu çalışmada, temel detaylarının tasarım aşamasındaki çizimi ile sahadaki uygulaması arasındaki farklılık, başta yeraltı suyu olmak üzere insan-dışı etkenlerin etkileşimi yoluyla izlenir. Gözlemler, görüşmeler ve detayın (yeniden) çizilmesine dayanan araştırma, teknik çizimlerin "nesnel kesinliğini" sorgulamakta ve detayın, insan niyetleri, malzeme akışları ve çevresel güçler tarafından şekillendirilen ilişkisel bir performans işlevi gördüğünü göstermeyi amaçlar. Bu yaklaşımla mimari temel detay, madde-söylemsel bir bağlantı noktası; madde, bilgi ve etiğin iç içe geçtiği ipliklerdir. Son olarak, bu yaklaşım mimari inşa süreçleri ve maddenin performativitesinin dola(ş/n)ıklarını anlamak için bir başlangıç noktası sunar.

This study examines architectural detail as a powerful agent that shapes the material-discursive practices of architecture. It reframes the detail through a feminist, new materialist, and post-humanist perspective that integrates insights from environmental humanities. The research challenges the conventional view that technical drawings provide objective, finalized knowledge by interrogating assumptions of material objectivity. Instead, it argues that drawings and details generate relational, situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988) through entanglements of human and nonhuman agents.

Grounded in Karen Barad's theoretical framework of Agential Realism (2007), the work conceptualizes the architectural drawing as an apparatus that actively shapes reality and sets epistemological boundaries. In Barad's terms, apparatuses are material reconfigurations that iteratively shape space-time-matter. In this sense, technical drawings are not passive backgrounds but apparatuses that cut together-apart (Barad, 2018), instituting epistemological boundaries that both bring certain relations into mattering and relegate others to exclusion.

The discussion focuses on a construction case study in Istanbul's Karaköy district, where the divergence between the design-phase drawing of a foundation detail and its on-site implementation was traced through the encounter of nonhuman agents, mainly groundwater. Based on observations, interviews, and a (re)drawing of the detail, the research questions the objective certainty of technical drawings and aims to demonstrate that detail functions as a relational performance shaped by human intentions, material flows, and environmental forces. In that way, the architectural foundation detail is a material-discursive joint - a site of threads where matter, knowledge, and ethics intertwine. Finally, this perspective offers a starting point into understanding the entanglement of architectural construction practices and performativity of matter.

INTRODUCTION

This article rethinks architectural knowledge of details as being situated (Haraway, 1988), embodied, and temporally grounded. Drawing from post-humanist feminism, new materialism, and environmental humanities, it presents a case study based on observations from a construction site in Karaköy, Istanbul. Within the scope of the study, architectural details are (re)framed as not only technical solutions but also as assemblages of material and discursive relations.

This study addresses a major challenge at the Karaköy construction site: leakage and dewatering issues encountered during foundation excavation due to groundwater emergence. This unexpected groundwater presence disrupted the standardized foundation details specified in the technical drawings. As Haraway (1988, p.581) warns against the "God trick" of seeing everything from nowhere, I argue that standardized details risk assuming a view detached from body, place, and time - a detached, disembodied perspective. In contrast, this article argues that technical detail produces knowledge that is inherently rooted in space-time-mattering (Barad, 2007). The selection of the foundation detail simultaneously brings together complex, multilayered systems - connected with urban infrastructure, geological conditions, and agencies. The foundation detail, though invisible once construction is complete, anchors the building to the ground and engages soil and material conditions - making visible its relational nature and showing that architectural details are inseparable from site-specific and material embodiments. Architectural design and detailed drawing should therefore be understood not as something that comes 'out of nowhere' but as a site-specific event that involves specific bodies and materials.

The case study in this article is precisely such an example of embedded knowledge production. In Haraway's words "*nothing comes without its world*" (Haraway & Goodeve, 2018. p.xiii). Knowledge always comes within the context of a world and includes the responsibilities of that world. Through on-site observation, interviews with the architect and construction team, and analysis of construction documentation, the interactive process between drawing and construction works together. Being present on the construction site as a researcher, witnessing the transformations of the detail being drawn at the moment of its construction, deepens our understanding of that detail.

I argue that starting from the foundation detail, the detail begins to become a relational whole rather than a fixed solution; in this sense, objective certainty is impossible in architectural technical drawing. Emphasizing that design and drawing are not finished products, but part of an ongoing process offers a way to discover the components that construct this narrative. As Leatherbarrow (2009, p.46) notes, architecture has often been approached through paradigms that treat structure as passive and inert. However, meaning and performance in architecture are written over time through weathering, maintenance, and unexpected encounters. In Leatherbarrow's view (2009) architecture, then, is not the staging of a predetermined script but is continually rewritten as an 'unscripted performance.'

Similarly, Barad (2003, p.808), drawing on Butler's concept of 'materialization' and Haraway's concept of 'materialized refiguration,' views matter as performative, formed through iterative bodily acts. From an agential realist perspective, matter is an active participant in the world's process of becoming, rather than a passive one. Following Barad's framework of agential realism, the construction site can be framed as a phenomenon composed of entangled agencies - human labor, machines, materials, environmental forces, and nonhuman actors. Barad's (2007) ideas resonate with Bennett's (2010) notion of vibrant matter, which foregrounds the lively and affective capacities of nonhuman agents. Both viewpoints encourage an understanding of matter as dynamic and undermine the distinction between humans and nonhuman beings. In this way, the architectural detail is a dynamic system of fluxes, interactions, and performances of matter rather than a static joint.

This brings up a key question: What can be learned about the relational ontology of architectural detailing and the (in)visible agents participating from the variation between a foundation detail on paper and it's unfolding on-site?

GROUNDWATER, LEAKAGE AND DETAIL

Karen Barad (2007, p.215) argues that while social factors influence the construction of scientific knowledge, there is also a sense in which "*the world kicks back*." This highlights that material reality resists being entirely shaped by human intention or representation. This concept became tangible in the early stages of my fieldwork at the Karaköy construction site. The resistance of the groundwater during the excavation of the building's foundation gave material form to this 'kickback'.

Throughout my fieldwork at the Karaköy construction site from November 2024 to March 2025, I observed how unpredictable encounters with groundwater disrupted the originally designed foundation. These disruptions question the completeness and determinacy of technical drawing in architectural practices.

My research, accompanied by field notes, photographs, and conversations with the designers, site architects, and builders, positions groundwater not as a passive element but as an active matter, one that required new interventions and fostered alternative epistemologies based on material responsiveness (Fig.1).

Fig.1 - The fieldwork from Karaköy, İstanbul, highlights how architectural knowledge unfolds through entangled encounters on site. In this context, the relationships between different agents and Karaköy, as well as Istanbul's water system, are visualized. (Author, 2025)

As the excavation progressed, the presence of persistent groundwater not only impeded the implementation of the original foundation detail but also became a site of knowledge production. The subsequent interventions developed to manage the leakage reframed the water not merely as a problem to be solved but as a performative agent (Barad, 2007); a trigger for rethinking the design process.

According to Turkey's construction regulations, a geological/geotechnical survey report must be prepared by certified engineers before construction begins. This report informs the structural principles underlying the foundation design. In the Karaköy case, the report specified a raft foundation system, and technical drawings were prepared for a basement level with a 4.50-meter internal height. However, once excavation began, the flow rate and hydrostatic pressure of the groundwater significantly exceeded expectations. Despite continuous pumping efforts, the groundwater quickly returned to equilibrium once the pumps were turned off, stabiliing the water table
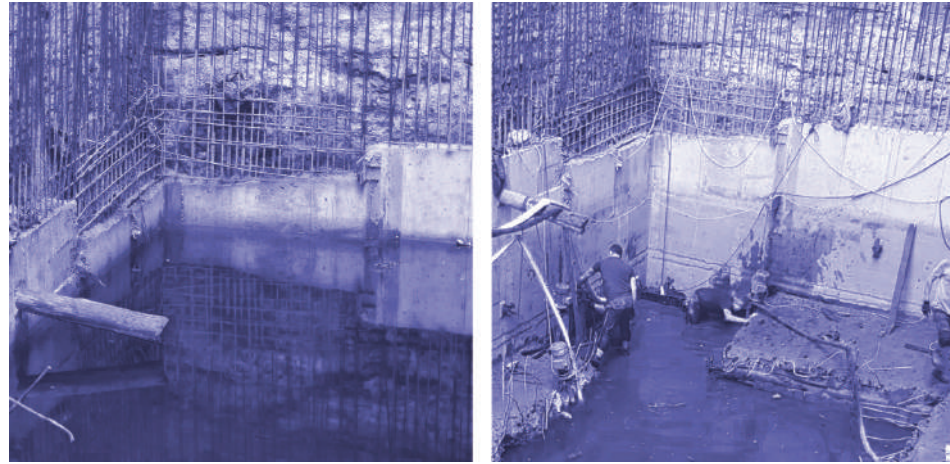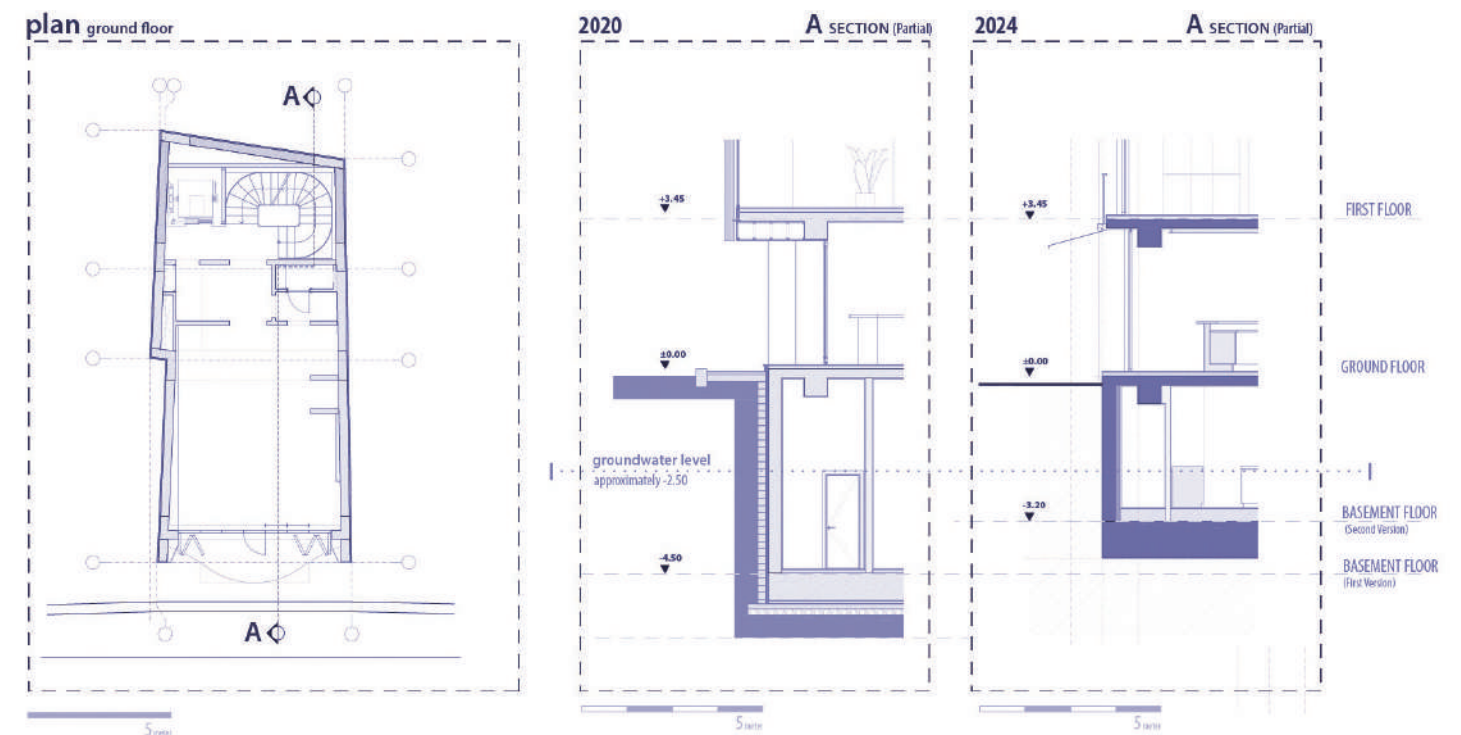
Fig.2 – Foundation drawings of the Karaköy project: the initial 2020 design (left) and the revised 2024 basement section (right), adapted after recurring encounters with groundwater. (Photos by HS Mimarlık, 2024)

Fig.3 – Foundation drawings of the Karaköy project: the initial 2020 design (left) and the revised 2024 basement AA Section (right), adapted after recurring encounters with groundwater. (Author, 2025)

at around -2.50 meters (Fig.2). The recurring presence of water nearly halted the construction process. Behaving like a performative agent, the water breached structural boundaries and required reactive interventions. The lead architect remarked on the project's progress: "*I don't know where the water is coming from, but maybe it's the Marmara Sea*." (Interview notes, February 3, 2024). I argue that this agent's unpredictability shows that architectural details are not purely subjects of representation or prediction; it is constantly negotiated with site-specific conditions.

Water infiltration, taking in water, can be understood as the way flows of matter infiltrate architecture and leave traces on its body. Drawing on Neimanis (2017), this paper frames such watery embodiment as more than metaphor. Neimanis (2017, p.29) argues for a rethinking of embodiment as watery, suggesting that such a perspective enables a "partaking in a hydrocommons of wet relations" (p.4) that connects humans with the hydrological cycles they are immersed in. In Neismasis's formulation, water is not merely an external natural element but an intrinsic component of bodily existence. She (2017, p.29) defines embodiment as both relational and relationally differentiated, reminding us that bodies of water are multiscalar, multigenerational, palimpsestic, and situated. In this sense, bodies of water reveal how spatial and material realities resist the closed system logic of

architectural representation.

In this perspective, rather than treating leakage as a technical failure, this paper approaches it as a generative fraction, an index of the body's porous relation to its environment. The trace of water thus becomes a minor rupture in the presumed closure of the drawing, surfacing the invisible agencies with which architecture is entangled. Moreover, on the Karaköy's foundation, the presence of groundwater not only testified physically but also disrupted regulatory and discursive processes. The leakage halted construction, necessitated amendments to official drawings, and forced a bureaucratic loop of re-submissions and re-approvals.

As Barad (2007, p.225) argues, phenomena are not pre-existing things that are merely observed; they are enacted through specific intra-actions. I propose that an encounter with groundwater as an intra-action (Barad, 2007) moment demonstrates how the resistance and persistence of groundwater (re) draw the boundaries of static design solutions, revealing the practical limits of representational certainty. In this context, the 'phenomenon' of the leaking foundation is not simply a condition to be recorded; it is a material-discursive joint that reconfigures the very nature of the architectural detail.

When groundwater first appeared on-site, the initial proposal was to change the construction technique to a pile foundation (Fig.3).

However, this was not a site-specific innovation but rather an attempt to reformulate a generic solution and retrofit standardized detailing onto unforeseen material conditions. As Katherine Shonfield (2000, p.37) claims, architectural details are generally discussed within a closed, scholastic framework that resists change and seems detached from material realities. She notes this tendency (2000, p.40) mirrors the scientific impulse to classify and control by reducing details to singular solutions for predefined problems. As this case demonstrates, however, real-world conditions rarely align with the abstract perfection of technical drawings. The unexpected emergence of groundwater on the site transformed the detail from a fixed technical entity into an adaptive field of situated knowledge. Thus, the appearance of groundwater was not merely a technical anomaly but also a challenge to the presumed stability and authority of the standardized detail.

When dewatering efforts proved insufficient, the construction team resorted to injecting cement slurry into the ground to block water flow. The site architect recalls, *"You see the water - it's a real struggle!... A huge amount of cement was injected, though I can't recall how much. You send it down, and it disappears... I think we were basically pouring concrete into the sea."* (Interview Notes, April 1, 2024)

This struggle was not merely technical; it was also corporeal and political. The bodies of engineers, architects, and workers became entangled in a material negotiation with a vibrant material agency (Bennet, 2010) that unsettled human intentions. As Bennett (2010, p.13) reminds us, in vibrant materialist ontologies, damaging one part of an ecological or infrastructural network is akin to harming oneself. In this sense, groundwater is an active part of the city's circulatory system, like blood running through the hidden arteries of urban life. Indeed, when the groundwater was temporarily halted on-site, it began to collect in

the basement of a building across the street where I was carrying out observations. The architect remarked that it behaved *"just like the principle of communicating vessels."* (Interview Notes, February 3, 2024)

As Pelletier (2015, p.101) notes, 19th-century urban sanitation projects buried waste and sewage beneath the surface to produce the illusion of a clean and orderly cityscape. In a similar way, the problem of groundwater at Karaköy was not resolved but entombed beneath cement injection, ensuring the building and its surface remained "clean," while the underlying flows were simply suppressed. As Barad (2007, p.206) reminds us, *"apparatuses are not mere observing instruments but boundary-drawing practices - specific material (re)configurings of the world that come to matter"*. In this sense, the architectural detail itself functions as an apparatus of concealment, materializing a particular cut between visibility and invisibility. The drawing that translates this process is not a neutral representation but a technical and discursive device that participates in this concealment - transforming architecture's claim to resolution into a practice

of covering over instability. The cement injection, heterogeneous, unstable, and unruly, contrasts sharply with the clean sectional cut depicted in technical drawings. While the drawing continues to represent order through a flawless line, it renders the subterranean disorder invisible. Shonfield (2000, p.40) reminds us that architectural junctions, where designers strive hardest to define boundaries, are ironically the most vulnerable to *"that most formless of elements, water*." Instead of viewing this material intervention as merely a performance-based solution, I propose a more nuanced approach that considers the complexities of material flows and acknowledges the role of uncertainty and leakage.

(RE)CONFIGURING THE DETAIL

Tim Ingold (2016 [2025], p.242) draws a distinction between straight and non-straight lines, an opposition historically mapped onto the divide between culture and nature, or humanity and animality. He argues that (2016) the hegemony of the straight line aligns with the epistemologies of modernity. From this perspective, architectural detail is not just an epistemological

configuration but also a political one. The cement injection used to solve the groundwater issue is not merely a hydraulic intervention; it is an act of burying urban knowledge and responsibility beneath the surface. The language of 'ground improvement' or 'solve problem' builds a promise of structural solidity while simultaneously masking ecological damage and deferred responsibility. Barad argues that "*language matters*" (2007, p.132), insisting that material and discursive practices are not separate ontological domains but entangled through mutual intra-actions (2007, p.211). This perspective dissolves the supposed divide between discourse and materiality, revealing how language can have concrete effects on bodies, environments, and architectural forms. Seen in this way, the practice of injection is not simply a form of ground stabilisation but a technique for controlling flows and enforcing linearity. It reflects an anthropocentric epistemological desire to resolve material complexity through geometric clarity.

Katie Lloyd Thomas (2007, p.17) critiques the shift towards performance-based specification formats in architecture, in which

materials are defined not by their origin or the labor involved in producing them, but by their measurable performance. In this transformation, materials are disembodied from their contexts and redefined solely through quantitative performance metrics. She describes this as a shift towards an abstract, depoliticized "matter" and calls for a more politically conscious approach (p.17). As specifications increasingly conform to regulatory and market standards, materials are detached from their ecological and social contexts. This shift renders architectural knowledge incomplete and ethically compromised, privileging compliance over situated accountability. Malterre-Barthes (2021, p.89) similarly argues that the supposed technical neutrality of details conceals architecture's complicity in the destructive impacts of industrial systems. Standard detail applications, then, are not apolitical; they silence material

histories. The invisibility behind standard detail applications then opens a critical space to engage with detail not as a resolved fragment, but as an entangled, ethical-political knot. As she notes (2021, p.88), every architectural detail is a site where certain threads are tied and others cut; therefore, the architect's decisions entangle and exclude in equal measure.

Till and Wigglesworth (2001, p.8) critique the fetishization of detail in architectural discourse, especially within modernist traditions where "good architecture" is often equated with technical and aesthetic precision. They argue that this "*atomized focus on detail*" can produce a kind of technocratic autonomy (p.15), detaching architecture from its broader social, political, and environmental contexts. The risk, they note (2001), lies in the architect's retreat into detail to escape complexity, a withdrawal from the messiness of

real-world entanglements.

In the case of cement injection, the material interacts with microcracks and pores, creating new and unpredictable flow paths. Rather than sealing a void, the detail becomes porous and leaky, a phenomenon that resists closure and boundaries. The injection is not just a solution but a subterranean act of repression, concealing infrastructural crises beneath the urban skin. In Mah and Rivers's terms (2022, p.155), to recognize the unrepresented is itself a political act. Thus, the foundation detail emerges not just as an epistemological drawing but as political.

This reframing demands an ethical accounting: Where do construction materials come from? Who labors in their application? What forms of waste do they produce, and where do these go? What are the ecological and social costs embedded in the line of detail drawings?
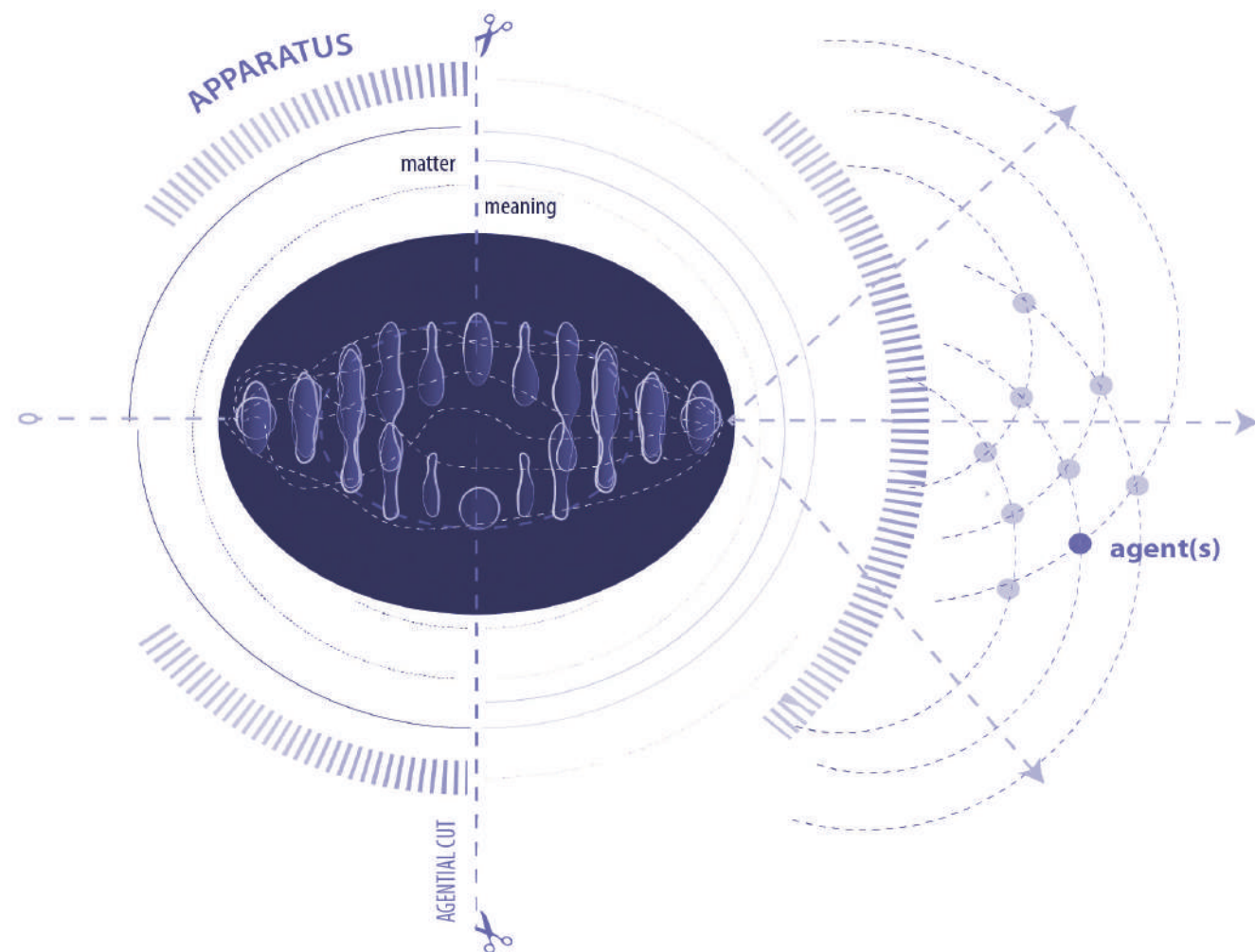
APPARATUS AND NARRATIVE

Matter, as Coole and Frost (2010, p.10) describe, emerges as temporary patterns within a choreography of indeterminacy, continually forming and reforming in unexpected ways. Building on this perspective, Karen Barad's agential realism (2007) reframes indeterminacy not as a limitation but as epistemological and ontological productivity (Fig.4).

Every measurement, in my case every drawing, enacts certain possibilities while excluding others, yet the process remains open-ended (p.172). Within Barad's performative onto-epistemology, "*apparatuses are boundary-making practices" (2007, p.148)*. This understanding reveals that a technical detail drawing cannot offer a complete script for what will unfold on-site. At best, it delineates certain boundaries, while material events develop in ways that remain unpredictable. To theorize architectural drawings as apparatuses is to acknowledge both their epistemological force (what counts as knowledge) and their ontological agency (what realities they help enact). Drawings, then, should not be understood as neutral or technical representations but as world-making practices that embed epistemic regimes, cultural codes, and regulatory constraints. As apparatuses, architectural drawings do more than record reality; they participate in shaping it. Even the lines of a foundation drawing are tied to the consistency of concrete building code regulations, workers' skilled labor, and environmental influences.

In this sense, detail drawings are not passive projections of a designer's ideas but material-discursive apparatuses that participate in the making of architecture. Co-produced by human and nonhuman agents, they not only delineate technical relations but also compose narrative boundaries - highlighting some connections while obscuring others. In doing so, drawings tell stories about what counts as

architecture and what is excluded from it. As Ursula K. Le Guin (1996, p.149) reminds us, *"it is stories that change life"* - and in architecture, it is through details that such stories are materially written.

Marco Frascari (1981, p.326) considers details to be the minimal units of meaning in architecture, not just small parts of a whole, but rather, joints where connections are created. From this perspective, details are more than technical markers of precision; they are storytellers that weave together material, spatial, and theoretical aspects. Through his well-known statement, *"Details tell the tale"* (1981; 1984), the Karaköy foundation detail can be seen not as a fixed solution, but as a relational joint and a site of agency where water, soil, and technical interventions intra-act. Encountering groundwater illustrates how drawings construct regimes of (in)visibility, framing human/nonhuman boundaries that are simultaneously fixed and blurred. Methodologically, this requires treating drawings and details with a posthumanist lens in which nonhuman agents must be recognized.

As Puig de la Bellacasa (2017, p.198) reminds us, following Haraway, knowing and thinking are always relations of care. Attending carefully to details, then, recognizes the invisible presences they unfold: groundwater, soil ecologies, laboring bodies, health risks, and waste flows. In this way, the architectural detail becomes not merely a technical or aesthetic exercise but a critical practice of inquiry.

The task is not to present drawings as completed representations but to examine the assumptions, exclusions, and constraints they carry. Reframed as apparatuses, drawings emerge as story-making agents within relational ecologies, shaping architectural worlds not only through what they describe but also through the narratives they construct, much like details that "tell the tale" (Frascari, 1981; 1984).

LEAKY FOUNDATION: DRAWING WITH WATER, CEMENT, AND SOIL

In this study, drawing is treated not merely as a technical and representational tool but as a situated method of knowledge production. The act of re-drawing the detail does not reproduce a fixed technical solution; rather, it operates as a speculative inquiry into the entangled relations of field observations, narratives, and material processes. Following Haraway's notion of situated knowledges (1988), the drawing emerges from multiple perspectives: architectural plans unfolded on site, gestures of workers, the narratives of designers, and the unruly flows of material.

As Ingold (2012, p.438) contends, the ontological existence of things is sustained by continuous matter interchange, arguing that *"things can exist and persist only because they leak"*. Following his argument, material bodies are sustained through continual exchanges with their surroundings; their vitality is dependent on leaking across porous borders. Seen from this perspective, the construction site itself can be understood as a leaky body, where groundwater, cement, and human labor are intertwined. Every intervention, such as cement injection, opens new circulations that extend far beyond the controlled lines of the drawing.

Reframing the AA section drawing, this project moves beyond a static foundation detail to incorporate adjacent structures, infrastructural systems, and ecological flows. Through folding, annotations, and over-tracing, the drawing reveals itself not as a finished representation but as a negotiated surface, shaped by architects, engineers, site managers, and workers. Each fold or cut can be read, following Barad's notion of 'boundary-making practice', as generating new visibilities while instituting new boundaries and responsibilities. In this sense,

Fig.4 – Diagram illustrating Barad's concept of agential realism, where apparatuses enact agential cuts that configure matter and meaning. (Author, 2025)
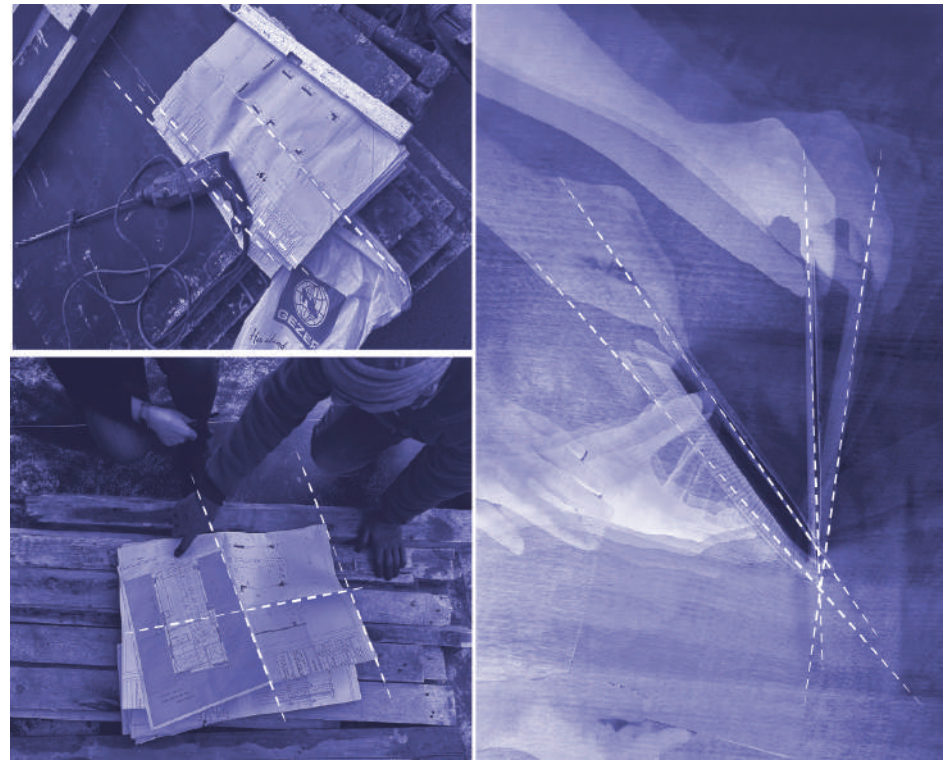
Fig.5 – Technical detail drawings on site, handled and discussed by different actors. The drawing functions as an apparatus that mediates between human and nonhuman agencies, workers' gestures, tools, groundwater, and material flows, revealing its role as an active participant in the production of architectural knowledge. (Author, 2025)

folding and unfolding drawings align with Haraway's (1988) idea of '*partial perspective*': they disclose situated, fragmentary views rather than claims to totality. Layering and over-tracing strategies disrupt the clarity of technical lines by incorporating stains, leaks, and blurred flows (Fig.5).

This extension resonates with the drawing strategies of folding and unfolding, just as folds reveal new layers and scales. The layering of workers' bodily gestures with technical marks allows the foundation detail to unfold into wider hydrological, ecological, and political networks. A partial view on paper thus becomes, in practice, a situated perspective that stitches together the micro-scale of material traces with the macro-scale of environmental cycles, narrating their interdependence across scales. This speculative re-drawing of Section AA (Fig.6) visualizes three situated encounters: (1) groundwater emergence during excavation and the workers' pouring of retaining concrete; (2) the infiltration of water into the neighboring building, echoing the

principle of communicating vessels and (3) the seepage of cement injections beyond the site, extending into Karaköy and the Marmara Sea. Together, these layered views illustrate how architectural detail drawings unfold across scales, linking local material acts to wider urban and ecological networks. Water channels and cement injections are registered, not as invisible background conditions but as marks within the drawing. What appears minor, seepage, dampness, or rust, emerges as evidence of architectural entanglement.

Just as in Frichot's reflections on dirt (2019), performative matters such as groundwater and cement slurry likewise refuse categorical distinctions, undoing the separations between inside and outside, clean and dirty, building and environment that architectural detailing seeks to enforce. Following Neimanis (2017), groundwater cannot be isolated as a local technical problem but must be understood within the broader hydrological cycle - the hydrocommons that connects soils, cements, pipes, bodies, and seas.

Once injected, cement enters this continuum, its particles migrating through pores and microcracks, carrying chemical residues that may infiltrate marine ecosystems and transform microbial life. In this sense, a building's foundations do not end at the perimeter of its walls; they merge, materially and ethically, with surrounding waters.

The speculative drawing that accompanies this inquiry thus does not map a closed system but imagines these unseen threads - where a line traced on paper might just as well continue through groundwater into the Marmara Sea. Thus, the architectural foundation is implicated in watery embodiments that extend beyond the building and its Karaköy site. Here, speculation on drawing is a methodological apparatus that reveals excluded agents and hidden narratives on technical drawing. The ethical dimension of this inquiry emerges precisely at the moment when the technical drawing begins to break down. As such, drawing as a speculative surface, a site where the ecological, chemical, and social effects are imagined and made thinkable. The act of re-drawing the cement injection as a speculative way does not simply visualize an unseen process; it interrupts the epistemic authority of the technical line.

By allowing indeterminacy, leakage, and speculation to enter the drawing, the work resists architecture's habitual impulse to conceal instability beneath the surface. This gesture, modest yet critical, reframes architectural detailing as an 'ethico-onto-epistemological' (Barad 2007) practice of exposure - a willingness to confront the material consequences of design decisions and to stay with the uncertainties they produce. In this sense, to draw speculatively is not to abandon precision but to assume responsibility for what the drawing excludes, acknowledging that every line traced on paper extends into material, ecological, and political realities that architecture can no longer afford to bury.

groundwater emergence during excavation and the workers' pouring of retaining concrete

the infiltration of water into the neighboring building, echoing the *"principle of communicating vessels"*

the leakage of cement injections beyond the site, extending into Karaköy and the Marmara Sea
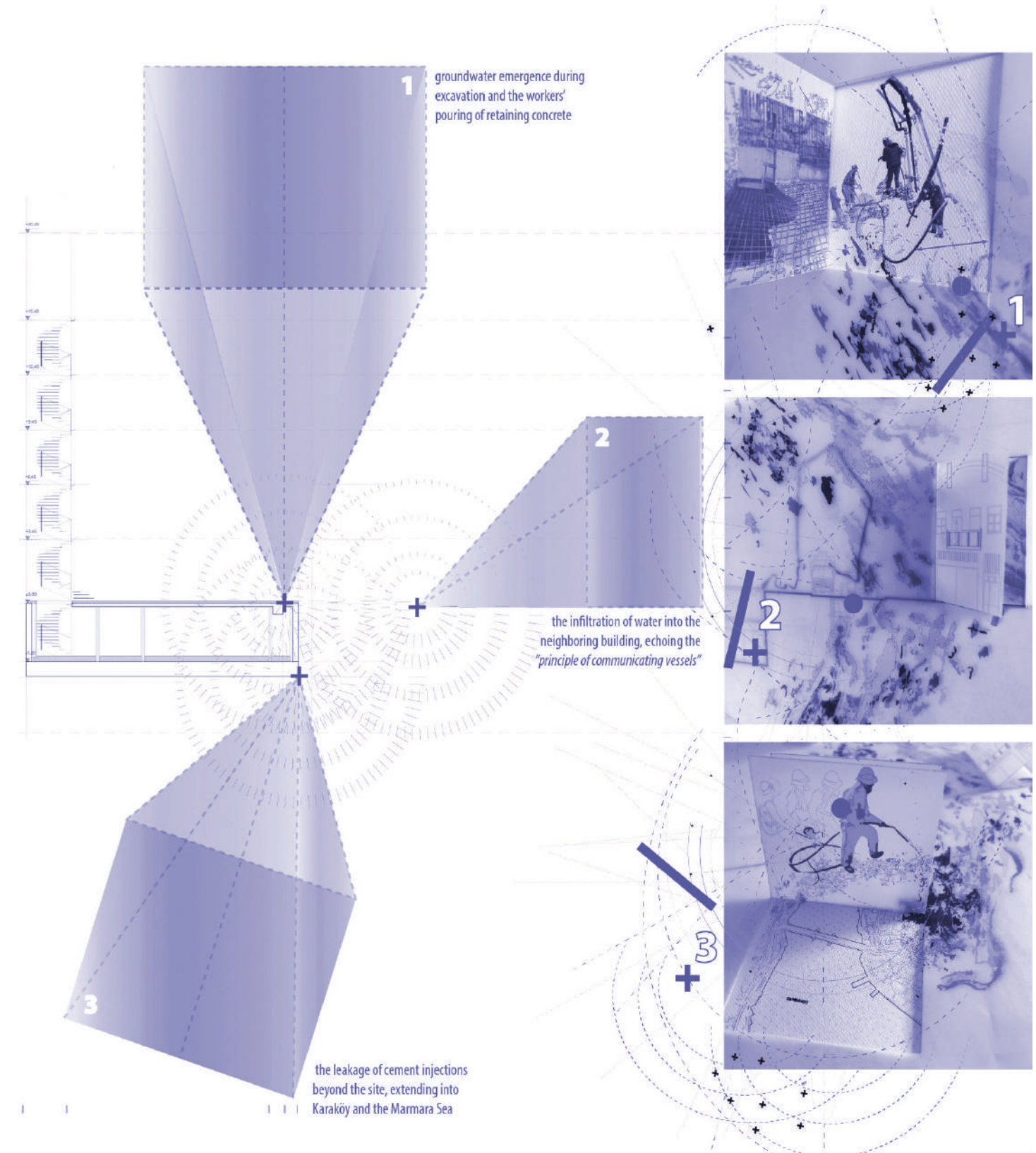
Fig.6 – Re-drawing Section AA to visualize three situated encounters at multiple scales. (Author, 2025)
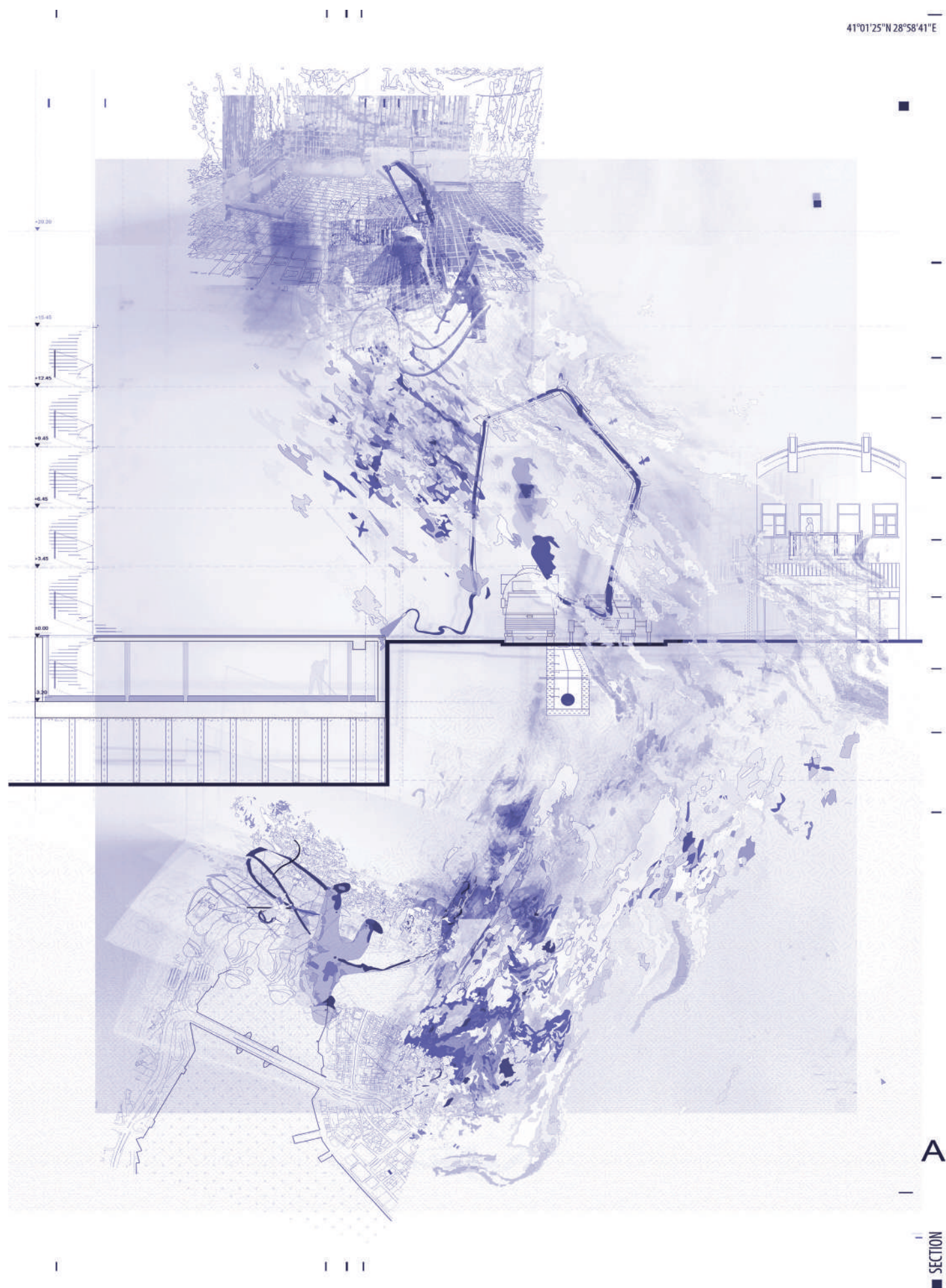
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A

SECTION

CONCLUSION

This article argues that architectural details cannot be understood merely as technical fragments or fetishized measures of mastery. Instead, it emerges as a relational structure that is simultaneously narrative, material, and ethical. Attending to details opens a lens onto architecture's intersections with active material forces. Reframing drawings as apparatuses reveals that they are active practices that shape the materialization of buildings and environments.

Although a conventional foundation drawing meticulously depicts concrete, reinforcement, and insulation, it rarely registers groundwater seepage or the micro-ecologies of soil. Through Barad's (2007) notion of apparatus, drawing can be expanded to include these invisible conditions, resulting in representations that are technical, speculative, and critical. This speculative approach aligns with the ethical and political commitments of feminist new materialism. Drawing leaks, flows, and uncertainties acknowledges overlooked material agency and cultivates what Puig de la Bellacasa (2017) calls relations of care. Thus, a key contribution of this study is highlighting the layered entanglements of drawing, thinking, and building in architectural practice. Re-drawing details becomes a responsible practice: it unsettles assumptions, visualizes excluded scenarios, and generates new forms of knowledge that are attentive to material and ecological consequences. Technical details are not flawless expressions of a designer's intent, but rather, they are the intersection of material worlds, geographies, economies, and labor. Architecture is not built from isolated details but from networks of relations extending from drawings to contractors, materials to environments, and regulations to inhabitations.

In conclusion, this study redefines architectural detailing as a speculative, situational and critical practice, rather than as a technical demonstration of the architect's mastery. As Barad (2007, p.206) argues, *"Reality is therefore not a fixed essence. Reality is an ongoing dynamic of intra-activity."* Re-drawing a detail exposes networks, troubles them, and cares for them. The strength of drawing lies in its permeability between line and stain, data and speculation, and observation and imagination. In doing so, architectural practice can evolve from an illusion of fixed objectivity to a more responsive, situated, and ecologically attuned approach to construction.

Architecture's real resilience lies not in the aesthetic or technical perfection of a single detail, but in the relations it sustains and makes visible. This approach aims to reveal not only the physical body of the architecture but also its ecological, ethical, and political aspects.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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Thinking with Stones

Decolonising the culture-scape of drystone heritage

water
resilience
drystone
ecocide
extraction

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Invited Article

It is late February 2025, and the short, cold, dry spell masks the fact that winter on the island of Cyprus has passed us by. I have been watering my plants since January, sparingly, with guilt, amidst news that Limassol's main Alassa dam has run dry; the Charokokolymbos dam in rural Paphos has also suffered, affecting nearby banana plantations, after it was emptied into the sea having developed alarming structural cracks. There was also an accidental fire at Paphos's desalination plant; or illegal siphoning of water downstream from Pera Pedi dam, by the private encroaching *Land of Dreams* retreat. Some decades ago, planners decided that tenacious terraced communities along the Diarizos river had no future, so their water rights were diverted to elite, privileged tourism industries and intensive agrarian development in the island's east. Now, coastal tourism communities are refusing desalination plants close to the beaches they rely on for revenue. Such extractive water-affected infrastructures which have commodified water to extremes, hint at, but also affect the disappearance of water. Our-as yet- running taps and plastic-bottled water cocoon us from this impending reality.

Entangling intimate experiences and concerns about the drystone terraced landscape, I try to de-center top-down approaches by examining how architecture today impacts this largely left-over landscape body, questioning how the profession has become one of the most extractive, irreversibly burdening the environment. By juxtaposing the small-scale onto a territorial scale, insights into drawing the larger political picture are revealed. What constitutes impact or value when a project 'words' itself into its own epistemic frame, entangled with but not contained by disciplinary norms?[1]

TRACING WATER LINES

Vanishing water is a huge concern of our island's collective subconscious, harking to a historic time of drought, once again upon us. Medieval folklore recounts dragons controlling water or decades of drought-induced depopulation (Hadjikyriakou, 2023). Legend has it that St Helen, Ayia Eleni, mother to Constantine the Great, became shipwrecked here during the 4th century. Hegemonic narratives have her bringing wood from the Holy Cross and building monasteries, but folklore describes how she found the island depopulated because of drought, when everyone had moved to the Syrian mainland. People returned to commemorate her actions that they said released the waters, by naming a river the Vasilopotamos or Vasilikos (i.e., Royal). It barely trickles today, through waterfalls and glades which locals keep secret.

Further afield, surface irrigation that was practiced for centuries, letting water flow upon the land, was contained in the first half of the 20th century, by colonial cemented water channels and check dams. Colonial commodification of irrigation practices reveals that contested water needs careful unpacking. How did colonial water containment affect the people, their relationship to it and the landscape? What happened when 'efficient' water commodification forced removal of labourers from the maintenance required for the natural irrigation cycles of controlled flooding? Is water vanishing, or has it been subjected to invisible mechanised servitude? Is this a contemporary disrespect of water? How we hold or trace this knowledge through drawn documentation can reveal values of privileged but also concealed narratives.

We wait for rains that never come, like gamblers waiting for their lucky break. Today, rain collection in dams through stalled rivers is the island's chief water investment, together with deep drilling into a receding
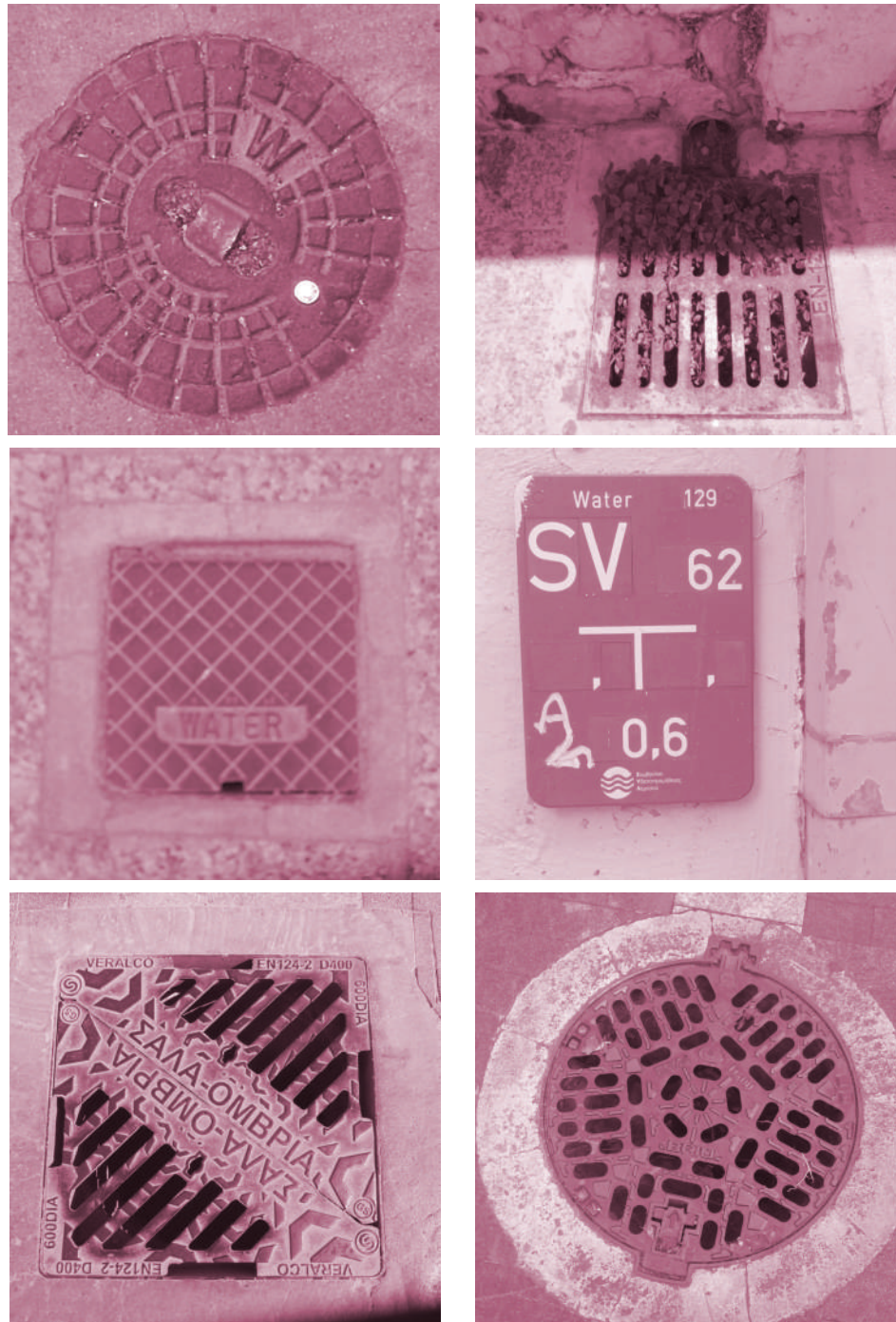
Fig.1 - Perceptions of contemporary urban irreverence: the aesthetics of running water supplied, distributed and expelled.

aquifer. Industrial desalination is seen as the only alternative but water has always been scarce. Yet the body of terraces, stepping up lower mountain slopes, roughly between 300-850m above sea level, have become a landscape liminality enclosed between coastal urban development and protected mountainous forests. Terraces attest to a different way of communal water management that implies alternatives to capitalist models. However, it is this once fertile landscape, which is under the greatest duress from

extractive industrialisation. One can see the intensive quarrying blight, superimposed onto it on both sides of the island's political divide, particularly when flying over; carved-out, kilometre-wide craters spread across the landscape, scarring centuries old terraced slopes. Extractive industrial quarrying intensified half a century ago, after 1974, when a Greek Junta instigated coup, enabled by right-wing Greek-speaking Cypriots, swiftly led to a Turkish military invasion, illegally capturing 40% of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC). The

explosive and immediate brutality of this multi-layered war caused forced displacement of a majority of Greek-speaking Cypriots from the island's north to the south. In areas not invaded, decades-long retaliations towards Turkish-speaking communities by Greek-speaking nationalist factions were politically halted through a population exchange which followed. Thus, the majority Turkish-speaking citizens of the (officially recognised) RoC south, were displaced to the illegal, occupied north (only recognised by Turkey). Since then, both political sides have been perpetuating a separatist, insular, cultural narcissism persisting under the pretext of a frozen ceasefire. Following the island's territorial occupation and political division, intensified quarrying became a backdrop supporting both post-war economies, that have been subsisting separately. In order to do so, both enable outside interests, particularly since intercommunal conflict has suspended the constitution. 1974 became a watershed that has impacted the way of life island-wide, particularly of rural terraced farming communities, intensifying abandonment of their practice. This is experienced as a loss of memory and indigenous farming knowledge on both sides of the divide.

Cement and aggregate production today monopolise construction industries of both sides, supported by foreign investment. Construction is prioritised through urban re-zoning, intensive tourism, and 'exclusive' high-rise densification. This represents a slower, sedimentary form of harm to that of sudden war, since both systemic quarrying and building gradually destroy the land's means of water storage; from how water infiltrates mountains, leading down to the artesian coastlands. Extraction is materially intertwined with environmental degradation of both mountain ranges (one north, the other south), and by simultaneous coastal over-development, all in the face of climate change and diminishing water resources that mega-building industries rely upon.

Effused with power-imagery, gentrification actively contributes to the island's post-war, war-torn landscape. Political stalemate creates a vicious cycle that perpetuates ecocide, causing exploitation and landscape degradation through practices which further industrial waste dumping, water-resource manipulation, agricultural annihilation, forced uprooting and displacement of all life, human and more-than-human. Extractive ecocide masks external capital investment on a perpetual massive scale, 'beyond the measure of the land' (Yıldırım, 2025).

Material traces of the landscapes' vulnerabilities are invariably uprooted, be they coastal (dunes, low vegetation, shallow lakes, artesian wells, estuaries and lagoons), or folding drystone terraced hills (with unique rock formations, gorges, maquis, carob and olive orchards, creeks, scattered pine, foraging herbs, a profusion of birds and endemic spring wild flowers). Yet, both these environments inspire and constitute the material world of lived collective memory.

THE WORLD OUTSIDE THE DRAWING

Today, the terraced liminality, is both perceived and administered as 'empty'; with no visualisation of context, and scarce cartographic representation - even documentation, of its fragile, diminishing, cultural and natural resources. Colonial cadastral mappings further expand dichotomies referencing geologic topography but with outdated cartography; Regional urban planning maps have digitised legal plot-boundary ownerships but omit 'obsolete' heritage infrastructure (wells, water basins, terraces, sheepfolds, kilns, mills, ancient pathways). A clear understanding of this in-between territorial body, its scale and complexity, is lacking. Thus, many contemporary architectural and construction projects, encroach by replicating non-site-specific typologies. Meaning that it is possible to have long, successful architectural careers without ever coming into contact with the world outside the drawing (Dall, 2024), or ever questioning the sourcing of building materials, or how much water and resources these designs consume.

Colonial era maps iconise the island's (depicted flat) shape, of 9,251 sq Km. It has been stamped for us onto the RoC flag as a post-colonial, unified 'imagined community' (Anderson, 1996) lest we forget to remember it as such. Satellite mappings further displace in our minds the dialectic relationship of slow cartographic
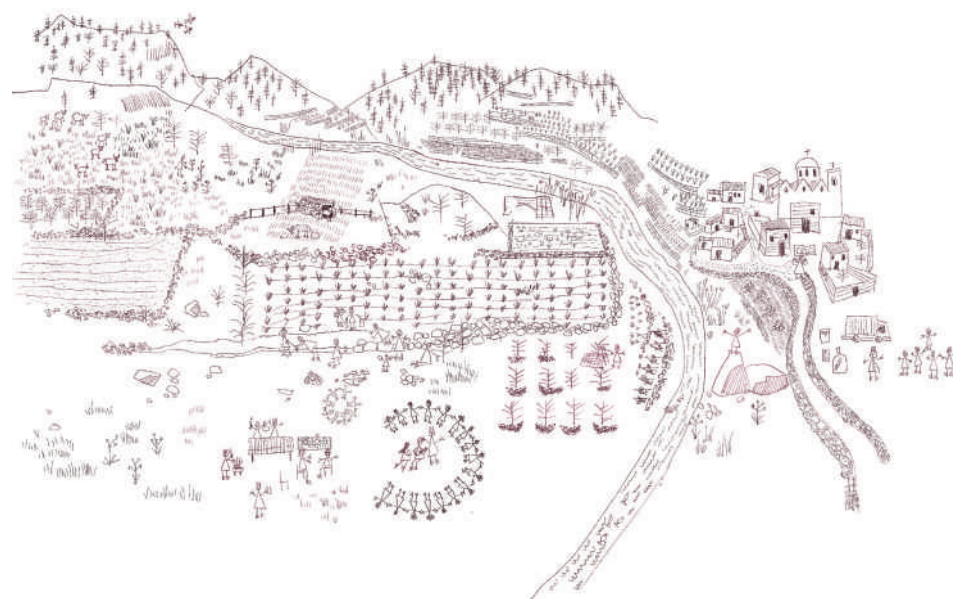
Fig.2a,b,c and d - The process of drystone assembling scaled in 'The Measure of the Land'.[2]

Fig.3 - The Salamiou Terraced Landscape, by Aaron Gatt 2025.[3]

Fig.4 - Aaron Gatt, codified elements used in the murals for the exhibition titled *"To the stones, we lent you our breath and you whispered it back to the earth"*, pamphlet for the Venice Architectural Biennale, 2025.

and individual measure. We need alternative mappings: of invested time that inform a widened perception of this rural in-betweeness; of experiences, of devoted lives lived along its three-dimensional relief; of convivial labour; of celebrated intangible livelihoods, or even, of immersive experiences in environments of more than human adaptability.

The island's finiteness becomes alarming when effects of extractive policies and environmental degradation are quantified: for example, both 2021 and 2025 wildfires have together destroyed about 200 sq.km. of forest and

largely abandoned terraced landscape, affecting many already struggling rural settlements. The north has shown equal incapability of controlling wildfires. These latest fires alone measure roughly a 2% loss, illustrating an irreversible desertification countdown. Conversely, CopernicusEMS post-event satellite fire-mapping, shows that cultivated drystone terraces inhibit the spread of fires (Azman-Momirski, 2023).

The island's architectural practice distances itself from uncomfortable realities; of military waste; bombs, minefields, discarded bullet contamination, chemical weaponry,

open-air brown-pits, junk-yards, deconstruction sites, disused mines, mine-waste. Capitalocene extraction of the island's resources, particularly where water was once meticulously harvested through communal terracing, turns landscape into wounds of both war and commercial aggression. This perpetuates collective memory loss through displacement and is escalated by a systemic industry which removes meanings from the landscape just like war does, but in the guise of lower-than-war-intensity development. Like war, non-convivial (Given, 2016) development equally defaces and eradicates. Political separation further negates possibilities for former communities to return to ancestral lands, making it also hard for architecture to see a way back into designing a more collective and convivial way of being and becoming, through material practices.

RELEARNING HOW TO GATHER, SORT AND ASSEMBLE

Memory, meaning and knowledge of still active communal ways of living and cultivation through sharing and caring, can inform current projects particularly by exploring the notion of technics as *'poesis'* (Heidegger, 1977), as a way of thinking, being in, and engaging with the world. This approach lends itself particularly in the defence of terraced landscapes (Floridou, 2020, Astreou-Karides et al., 2025) created by historically marginalised communities. For, while the island has experienced over 500 years of continuous colonial subjection (Venetian rule 1485, Ottoman conquest 1570, British colonialism 1878-1960), its scarcely mentioned multicultural population has always been stratified horizontally along class instead of vertically along ethnic differences. Meaning that architectural remnants and agrarian practices traced in the topography bear witness to ways of convivial but also non-convivial living (Given, 2016). By studying and analyzing their operational
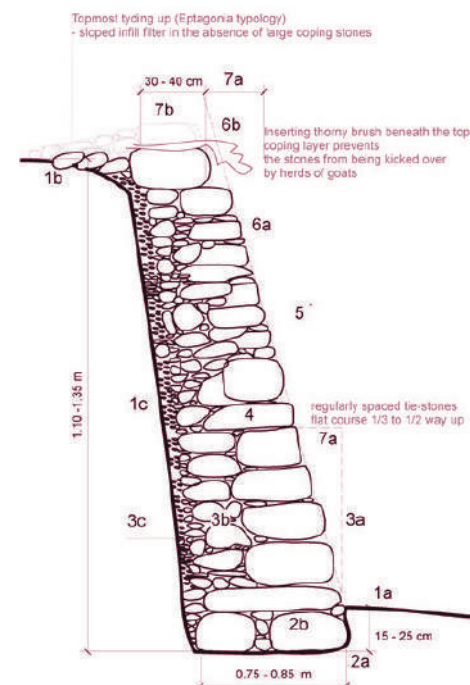
Fig.5 - Drystone wall section detail, Sevina Floridou.[4]

chains (Catapoti-Relaki, 2020), particularly of drystone construction which evolves in just three steps of gathering, sorting and assembling, consequences and implications become apparent and meaningful.

The eastern Mediterranean's almost 10,000-year-old 'Fertile Crescent', arching from Persia, across Mesopotamia over the Levant, has cultivated terraced foodscapes by interconnected communities. Cyprus shares this geography that determines its history in the long duration (Braudel, 1946). Yet, in the Capitalocene, this wider region has experienced late-industrial transformations that fracture communities and land through systems of value extraction. The disruption of these relations by colonial, genocidal and ecocidal violence, has seen the continuous displacing of people and militarising ecologies. From the early 20th c. convivial farming communities of Asia Minor and Armenia, have been erased to militarise corridors through Kurdistan, and Syria, continuing throughout the century to farming communities along the Euphrates, Palestine, Lebanon and Yemen, devoured by western-enabled military expansionism. Surviving drystone practicing communities may perhaps be last remnants of this ageless foodscape,

1. After ploughing the field, collect the surfaced stones and move them to the construction area.

2. Sort the collected stones according to their types.

3. Dig a 20-30cm deep trench and place the stones along the trench as indicated (this will accelerate the building process as the stones closest to the trench will be used first). The width of the dug trench is determined by a ratio of 1:3 relative to the height of the wall. (a) When digging keep an eye out for bulbs. If you dig one up, be sure to replant them at approximately the same depth.

drystone manual by Aaron Gatt

4. Place poles at an angle of 5-10° at either side of the trench and tie a cord from one to the other to use as a guide.

5. Place the foundation stones so they do not move or wobble. The next course will stabilize them completely.

6-7. After completing the first course of foundation stones continue with the next course of face stones working your way with infill stones from the front towards the back of the layer so that the wall thickness is at least two stones thick. The gap between the face stones and the embankment is filled in with the gravel. proceed to the next course only after completing the previous one.

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Fig.6 - Aaron Gatt, Biennale pamphlet illustrating a modified, contemporary drystone operational chain of gathering, sorting and assembling.

which carry value beyond farming functionality, to evoke artscapes, memoryscapes, craftscapes and languagescapes.

Drawing on language, our island's ongoing intercommunal conflicts from the mid 20th c. and subsequent uneasy ceasefire, has led to fragmenting memory, particularly witnessed in loss of indigenous water-sharing terminology. Post-invasion displacement of over 30% of the population has decimated vocabularies, manipulated between two official languages that both disdain their dialects, in which, however, caring for land and water

is inscribed. Within this context, shared resilient drystone practices and their vocabularies, preserve and teach a way of opposing systems of dispossession and ecological degradation, defending instead a system of value rooted in collective care and fair access to the land.

An intersection point between such convoluted realities occurs with our own transience, when crossing over human agency into the natural world. Drystone construction can thus conceptualise a return of architecture to one of its original roles; one that creates relationships between people and which fosters meaningful

relationships between humans, and the more-than-human environment. This counters the industrialised, privatised 'architecture as spectacle', denouncing it as extractive, exclusive (and exclusionary).

The sophistication of assembled stones has always witnessed entropies inherent to each epoch; stones become dry registers of data, measuring instruments of time, investment, assets, population decline, but also of growth and innovation. In Salamiou for example, within a radius of 5 Km, 2000 years of continuous farming history are identified through oral memories of drystone. Stone age querns lying about, push back agriculture another 7000 years.

Just as the penciled stripes along a doorpost in our house marking our daughter's height speak emotionally to us, they are more than just the height of our child: they also bear witness to our life of raising her, of her growing up. Emmerik (2022) likewise imbues architectural landscapes with poetry where the geological, the natural world and human imagination converge.

CONCLUSION

My own positionality resonates with Berta Flaquer's mention of Henri Lefebvre's insight, that urbanization as a process of architectural drawing and design does not begin or end at a city's boundary, but needs to engage with landscape which is fast becoming an undefined, liminal space on the edge of (ever encroaching) urbanity. Observing his own hometown in the Pyrenees transformed by sulphur extraction, (Lefebvre, 1970) was led to theorize the transition of the rural to the urban—or what he called the process of urbanization. This led him to formulate the radical hypothesis of the *complete urbanization of society*, if left unchecked (Flaquer 2025).

How then, does architecture design sustainably in the midst of extractive processes that are tipping beyond the physics of entropy? The current established order of our profession often begrudges the

intangible art of drystone, asking, "But is this architecture?" and, "Why is it architecture?" Re-learning from alternative ways of defending and care of landscape resources, through collective engagement can integrate into architectural drawing, so as to bridge divides, montaging between ecology and aftermaths of conflict. Yıldırım (2025) proposes a concept of 'War-torn Ecologies' a term gesturing towards shared grounds that unite short and long-term affects of all forms of violence. Yıldırım considers how these are lived in and resisted in the present by humans and more-than-human life. Architectural drawing needs to learn from, and design around these.

In contrast to the architecture of building, where the natural is typically supplanted by artificial practicalities, Emmerik defines the field of landscape architecture as shaped by a multi-faceted interconnectedness between humans and environment, coexisting with the natural, the cultural, between the tangible and the imaginary, the practical and the poetic.

Architecture needs to evolve a grammar of site-specific deep mapping that takes such creative resilience into consideration, and alternative ways of being need to be considered in design, beyond the anthropocenic measure (within the

Capitalocene) which places humans above nature.

Both Emmerik and Yıldırım support a radically inclusive attitude, a principle of equality, where humans realise that there is no separation. The close-up materiality of drystone construction bears this out; a merging that initiates re-defining architecture's relationship to the land, requiring that it touch the earth lightly.

Engaging with drystone practices, one becomes aware of Yıldırım's proposed 'montages' of small-scale resilient events, often surviving only as memories, onto the larger political picture. Such actions de-center definitions of top-down approaches, allowing scholars and architects to explore other meanings in their designs that evoke different valuation systems (Ireland 2017, Ireland et al, 2025).

Elytis (1979), sums up hope for a shared future of resistance; particularly defending living and terraced landscapes:

"... [Society today] looks and sees nothingness. We gaze in the same way and see the totality of everything. Where the Truth lies, will become apparent one day when we are no longer here. But it will be, if it is worthwhile, the work of one of us. And that will save the honor of us all - and the honour of our time..."

Fig.7 - October 2025, drystone workshop, Limassol.[5]

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NOTES

1. This text derives from research prepared for an exhibition and a catalogue, co-curated for the Cyprus Pavilion at the 2025, 19th International Architecture Exhibition La Biennale di Venezia by the author. The exhibition presented drystone heritage through its effects on 'land as landscape', while the multi-authored catalogue explored 'land as language'. One month after its release, the catalogue was officially banned by the Cyprus Deputy Ministry of Culture, following a presidential order, which censored the work for not adhering to the "official political narrative", and for including the two Cypriot dialects instead of modern Greek; despite the fact that freedom of speech is enshrined in the Cyprus constitution. The writers and publishers did not accept the censorship and the catalogue sold out. Opinions, mistakes or positions cited here are solely those of the author and do not reflect official political positions and opinions of the current government of the Republic of Cyprus (RoC).

2. The Measure of the Land' expresses the material world of collective memory: (2a,b) Panayiotis Panayiotou, Salamiou drystone mason explaining how stones are selected and wedged together without the use of binding mortar. (2d,e) A drystone orchard enclosure located south-east of Salamiou and possibly dated to the 14thc. through a traveller's description. Photographs by Demetris Loutsios, 2025.

3. The Salamiou terraced landscape is one of a series of murals by Aaron Gatt, for the 2025 Cypriot participation titled "To the stones, we lent you our breath and you whispered it back to the earth", presented at the Venice Architectural Biennale. The exhibition evolved on the author's research and the murals undertook the role of alternative mappings, inspired by medieval secular graffiti (Instagram: Cypriot graffiti), which is being collected by Gatt for Mia Gaia Trentin's work on medieval inscriptions. Gatt's mapping narratives derive from a collective preparatory engagement between the biennale team, of architects, artists, writers, and local craftspeople, who worked together with social anthropologists Maria Angelica Salas and Timmi Tillman, of the International Terraced Landscapes

Alliance. Salas and Tillman shared their Participatory Action methodology which they have evolved to help farming communities from all over the world, to remember shared heritage that modern way of life has pushed into oblivion, bringing it out of deep consciousness. The exercise outcome reflects transformations but also disruptions of broader geographical and socio-political context, rooted in deep memory, through a grammar of rudimentary illustrations that the team collectively adopted.

4. The drystone wall section detail illustrates the sequence of assembling by identifying 8 different stone sizes when collecting and clearing them from farm-fields: (1a,1b) Lower and upper ground level. (2a) A foundation trench is dug out. Its depth is determined by the stability of soil, the quantity of rain. (2b) Alternate foundation stones are laid ("put to sleep") in two parallel rows with the next row laid across, the upper stone always covering the lower joints between stones. (3a) Regular faced stones are selected for the front of the wall. Those that touch are said to "kiss" in the local dialect. (3b) Irregular stones are wedged behind each face stone and the horizontal width of each layer is tightly packed in, behind each ascending row with smaller chinking stones. (3c) The back is filled with progressively smaller, irregular stone wedges, terminating in gravel infill that needs to be poured in beside the earthen scarp, to form a filter that helps to increase the surface area of flowing rainwater, thus retarding its flow while helping it infiltrate the soil. (4) At regular intervals horizontally, and every 3-4 rows vertically, through-stones are placed to span the width of the construction in order to tie together the two sides of the stone wall. (5) As the wall progresses upwards, it must do so at a slant, to secure its stable settling against the scarp slope. (6a) Smaller stones are used progressively upwards, with careful shaping of the last row before the capping. (6b) The top of the wall is shaped by large, heavy caping stones, if available, or a slanted filter sloping inwards to contain silt run-off preventing it from washing away. (7a) The slope is determined as 7.5-15cm every 30 cm, or a cm in for each row. (7b) The overall slope is about 10 degrees. In order to test the slope, you lay your back against it; it should feel comfortable. Gaps left between the stones, or even constructed, become habitats for flora and fauna.

5. October 2025, drystone workshop to inaugurate the historic orchard of Niki Fytidou, courtesy of Limassol Municipality to whom it was bequeathed. The circular drystone exhibit of the 2025 Venice Biennale was reconstructed here as a space of informal community gatherings, together with volunteers from 'Friends of the Earth'. Photograph by Melios Agathangelou.

THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF UNSETTLED FAMILIARITY

From Prescription to Description

Using Architectural Drawing as Graphic Ethnography in Cypriot Refugee Estates

αρχιτεκτονικό σχέδιο
γραφική εθνογραφία
Κυπριακοί προσφυγικοί συνοικισμοί
έρευνα σχεδιασμού
καθημερινός χώρος
architectural drawing
graphic ethnography
Cypriot refugee estates
design-research
everyday space

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Το άρθρο εξετάζει πώς το αρχιτεκτονικό σχέδιο μπορεί να λειτουργήσει ως κρίσιμο εργαλείο τεκμηρίωσης και ερμηνείας της καθημερινής ζωής στο δομημένο περιβάλλον. Στόχος του είναι να επανατοποθετήσει το σχέδιο από μια «προδιαγραφική», προβολική πρακτική σε μια «περιγραφική», εθνογραφική μεθοδολογία που αποκαλύπτει τις κοινωνικές και υλικές πραγματικότητες των κατοικημένων χώρων. Μέσω επιτόπιων σχεδιαστικών ασκήσεων στους προσφυγικούς συνοικισμούς της Λευκωσίας, η μελέτη εφαρμόζει γραφική εθνογραφία για να διερευνήσει μικροκλίμακες ιδιοποίησης και βιωμένων χωρικών πρακτικών, προτείνοντας μια μεθοδολογική και παιδαγωγική συμβολή στην αρχιτεκτονική εκπαίδευση.

This paper examines how architectural drawing can function as a critical tool for documenting and interpreting everyday life within the built environment. It aims to reposition drawing from a 'prescriptive', projective practice to a 'descriptive', ethnographic method that reveals the social and material realities of inhabited spaces. Through field-based drawing exercises conducted in the refugee estates of Nicosia, the study employs graphic ethnography to explore micro-scale appropriations and lived spatial practices, advancing a methodological and pedagogical contribution to architectural education.

DRAWING INT[R]O

Spaces are understood here as sociocultural constructions, material archives upon which inhabitation—and, thus, memory and everyday spatial knowledge—is inscribed. As such, sites operate as repositories of traces; they hold material evidence of life.

Everyday life forms the foundation of architecture. For architecture to be meaningful, it must emerge from and engage with the quotidian; the daily experiences of those who inhabit it. Architectural drawings, then, ought to investigate and reveal people's habits, needs, practices, and patterns of use; they should serve as maps of the anthropological details of life. This paper explores a shift from prescriptive to descriptive modes of architectural drawing by offering a reflective account of this methodological approach within a design studio context.

Traditionally, architectural drawings have been employed to translate conceptual ideas into construction plans and, ultimately, built form. This mode, understood as prescriptive, privileges abstraction and asserts spatial and formal intent. In contrast, descriptive drawings—central to the present study—seek to capture how constructed environments are inhabited, transformed, and reinterpreted over time. These drawings function as tools for uncovering the lived realities within and around architecture. Here, drawing is positioned not only as an instrument of design but also as a means of investigating the experience of the built environment, what may be called a form of graphic ethnographic research. Attending to details such as informal appropriations, material adaptations, and everyday spatial practices, descriptive drawings register architecture as a living intersection of people, materials, and temporalities.

The core empirical material for this study consists of student-generated drawings. The article discusses the outcomes of the

Year 4 design studio Architectural Design VIII (ARH401),[1] taught at the Department of Architecture at the University of Cyprus. The studio engages students in field-based drawing activities, framing drawing as a method of spatial and social inquiry. Rather than a means to depict idealised futures, drawing is treated as a critical method of observing, recording, and interpreting the present, ultimately informing context-sensitive design proposals. Within this framework, drawing becomes both a research tool and a form of spatial testimony that documents appropriation, informality, and transformation in lived architectural environments.

This article is situated within the context of design ethnography, drawing on the practices of Momoyo Kaijima and Ray Lucas, among others, and theoretically informed by the work of Tim Ingold (2011a) on the phenomenology of drawing, Michel de Certeau (1984) on everyday practice, and Donna Haraway (1988) on situated knowledge. Despite their disciplinary differences, these scholars share a commitment to challenging dominant modes of knowing and representing the world, advancing instead an epistemology grounded in experience and context.

The article's contribution is primarily methodological. It proposes and tests graphic ethnography as a drawing practice, one that uses drawing not simply to visualise what might be, but to critically interrogate and learn from what already exists. Applied to the case of Cypriot refugee estates—urban environments shaped by state planning, displacement, and decades of informal transformation—the article also offers a contextual contribution to the documentation of under-represented, everyday spaces in the Eastern Mediterranean.

At the same time, it reviews the relevant literature and advances a theoretical argument for rethinking drawing as an epistemological tool, an architectural mode of research and knowledge production

aligned with material culture and ethnographic inquiry.

The following questions guide this study: How can drawing serve as a tool for documenting and interpreting everyday life in the built environment? What forms of material and social knowledge are uncovered when drawing shifts from projection to reflection? And how can such practices enrich architectural education by situating drawing as a critical and situated mode of inquiry into space as it is inhabited, altered, and lived? This article attempts to respond to this line of inquiry by following a practice of ethnographic drawing that surveys what is not normally surveyed (cf. Avramidis 2024). By treating the drawing as a material witness, the student projects seek to reveal how micro-traces—from improvised repairs to subtle spatial hacks—unsettle architectural fixity and bring lived experience back into the orthographic frame, opening the detail as a locus of possibility.

This article examines architectural drawing as a form of situated ethnographic inquiry. It first reviews key approaches linking drawing, ethnography, and material culture, before outlining the methodological framework used in the ARH401 design studio, where drawing served as a critical tool for fieldwork. This framework is tested through fieldwork conducted in Strovolos II, a refugee estate in Nicosia that has undergone decades of informal transformation, and student drawings are seen as records of these lived adaptations. The discussion turns to the pedagogical value of drawing as graphic ethnography, concluding with reflections on its capacity to document, interpret, and reimagine everyday life in the built environment.

DRAWING [ON] ETHNOGRAPHY

In architecture, drawing has long been treated as an instrument of control that fixes a single, idealised reality and projects it forward as building instruction. Drawings are

typically assumed to be stable, objective, and final: the means by which a building or a space is made manifest in the world. Yet, as Robin Evans (1997) argued, drawings are never simply neutral generators of buildings; they are 'translations' and the direction of their 'projective' force can be reversed. When we return traces of lived experience to the drawing, we reveal it as a site where people, materials, and meanings continually entangle and remake one another.

Marian Macken (2009) expands this rethinking of the architectural drawing by suggesting that drawings can operate 'post-factum,' serving as documentation that not only comes before a building or space but also remains present and continues to engage with it afterward. For Macken, post-factum drawings challenge the dominance of drawing as a purely projective act. Instead, they show that drawings can be interpretive, reflective, and generative, re-situating design not as a linear trajectory toward a final built object, but as an ongoing, recursive process. In this sense, the drawing can both record and re-make, collapsing the imagined and the actual into a continuous conversation.

This expanded understanding of drawing aligns with a material culture perspective, which recognises that the physical objects and spaces that people create define their culture, and are never passive but actively mediate the values, beliefs, habits; their ways they inhabit and/or use them. Within this frame, the drawing allows us to understand how people live, what they value, and how they evolve over time: it is not only a speculative projection but a junction that gathers the micro-histories of dwelling, improvisation, and adaptation. It is a mode of careful observation and knowledge production, an alternative tool for ethnographic research.

Traditionally understood, ethnography is a research method conducted through participant observation and interviews, i.e. approached as data gathering. In

our case, we are engaging with spaces as if conducting interviews with them (cf. Andron 2017), focusing on their material traces and experiential qualities, though this does not exclude the frequent involvement of inhabitants in the process. According to design anthropologist Sarah Pink, recent scholarship raises the need to appreciate ethnography as a methodology that creates as well as represents knowledge whilst celebrating researchers' experiences and expanding its modes (2013: 34). Anthropologist Tim Ingold—who dislikes the term 'ethnography' due to its open to misunderstanding 'ethno-' component, and its limiting literally meaning as 'a description of the people' (Ingold et al 2020)—suggests expanding visual ethnography by focusing on drawing, in order to develop a "graphic anthropology" which allows us to interpret and represent aspects of life, identity, community, and material realities (Ingold 2011b).[2] He urges us to "consider the potential of drawing, as a method or technique much neglected in recent scholarship, to reconnect observation and description within the movements of improvisory practice" (2011b: 2). Ingold conceptualises drawing not simply as a method of illustrating pre-formed arguments, but as an autonomous inscriptive practice, one in which the act of drawing generates and shapes the conceptual and material fabric of the research itself.

The relation between architecture and ethnography has gained attention (cf. Yaneva 2018) primarily through recent works that conduct an 'ethnography of architecture'—focusing on observing architectural practices through ethnographic methods (e.g., Yaneva 2009; Houdart & Chihiro 2009)—and 'architectural ethnography', that emphasizes representation—particularly architectural drawing—as a fundamental tool and outcome of ethnographic research for observation, analysis, and production of knowledge (e.g., Kaijima et al 2018; Briata & Postiglione 2023). Here, the focus is on the latter which resonates

with works on design ethnography that reflect on drawing (e.g., Causey 2017). In what follows in this section, key such drawing practices are traced that allow us to navigate the research and teaching position advanced here, whilst also raising questions about the role of various transcription modes in architectural ethnography.

The attention to overlooked detail finds early precedent in Kon Wajirō's *Modernologio [Modernology]* (1931), a method involving meticulous documentation of everyday objects, clothing, and interiors to analyse people's lifestyles and social identities in post-earthquake Tokyo in the 1920s. Wajirō used different drawings—sketches, floor plans, and diagrams—to study the ephemera of the modern city (e.g., makeshift furniture, handwritten signage, repaired garments, vendor layouts) and the interplay between consumption, personal habits, and social change. Kon emphasised the emotional and cultural meanings of belongings, viewing them as reflections of individual identity, memory, and social context (Kuroishi 2011, 2023). Kon's work exemplifies design analysis at its finest by uncovering the underlying structures of human practice and showing how making do and making sense are deeply interconnected in shaping the material world (Traganou & Kuroishi 2014).

This ethos carries forward into contemporary Japanese practices, like Atelier Bow-Wow (Kaijima & Tsukamoto 2001, 2007, 2014), which positions drawing not only as a representational output, but as a method of ethnographic inquiry into the social production of space (Kaijima 2018). Their work represents a move toward a more anthropological approach that prioritises understanding how spaces are lived in and used by communities before designing interventions. Their architecture and drawing practice bridges the gap between the "space of representation"—i.e., the space that is planned in advance—and the "space of occupation," that is the space emerging through use and experience; the former is defined by

building materials and construction techniques, while the latter is shaped by human behaviour, activity, and interaction (Kaijima & Tsukamoto 2017: 6, 2014: 117).

Sarah Wigglesworth and Jeremy Till (1998) also explore the relationship between architecture and the everyday. They argue that architecture often ignores the mundane realities of occupation, leading to a disconnect between design and lived experience. They suggest that embracing the everyday, can lead to more productive and relevant architectural practices, encouraging a fluid movement between engagement with daily life and periods of theoretical reflection. The famous 'Table Manners' drawings shows how everyday use disrupts and reshapes architectural order, turning a pristine design into a lived, imperfect, and memory-rich space. Wigglesworth and Till frame this not as a flaw but as a creative, productive tension between design ideals and the messy realities of human life.

Ray Lucas (2020) shows how drawing can serve as a form of 'graphic anthropology' that captures architectural arrangements in a constant state of flux. The market, he argues in his study of Namdaemun Market in Seoul, is not a fixed space but a series of daily redesigns that are improvised, ephemeral, yet socially robust. Drawing, in this case, does not stabilise form; it records negotiation. It becomes a forensic act that reveals how spatial coherence emerges not from a top-down plan, but from informal logics, collective memory, and embodied practices of trade, storage, and use. Lucas's axonometric and sequential drawings highlight how structures are built and unbuilt in rhythm with daily commerce, offering a reminder that architectural detail is often provisional rather than permanent, and that the drawing itself is an act of material observation as much as design speculation.

Whereas Momoyo Kaijima emphasizes drawings as both tools and outcomes of ethnographic

inquiry, Paola Briata and Gennaro Postiglione position ethnography as a means for architects and students to directly engage with lived space. They advocate for a designer-led ethnographic process that prioritizes immersion, affective engagement, and bodily presence in the field. Their pedagogical model foregrounds situated, sensory, and subjective knowledge. Ray Lucas sees drawing as a powerful medium through which to conduct and communicate ethnographic research. They all argue for a nuanced integration of ethnography into architectural practice and teaching.

Most of the above examples reposition ethnography not as an add-on to design, but as a way of thinking-through-making and dwelling, critical to cultivating spatial awareness and engagement with the everyday. They frame a vision of architecture that observes and responds to the real conditions and experiences of people; not through abstraction, but through engaged presence and reflective design. Together, these perspectives argue for an architectural ethnography that situates the drawing as a material junction in itself; a site where the stable promise of the plan meets the unpredictable reality of lived use. They challenge the orthodoxy of orthographic drawings to 'architecturalise' life and counter propose a drawing approach that infuses life to—or, rather, 'inhabitises'—architecture. Or, as Laurent Stalder and Andreas Kalpakci aptly put it: "the question is not how to adapt a building to fit the drawing conventions, but rather how to adapt the drawing conventions of architects to capture these environments and the life within them" (2018: 16). This means shifting the focus of drawing on different conditions of environments, such as time and inhabitation traces, among others.

This research is grounded in a pedagogically framed ethnographic methodology developed within the ARH401 design studio, where drawing is not treated as a representational end but as a situated, critical tool for fieldwork.

The methodology centres on extended engagement with the Strovolos II refugee estate, where students were encouraged to adopt a researcher's disposition: to dwell in the site, observe closely, and record iteratively. Rather than abstracting from experience, they used drawing to re-enter the space: to retrace material adaptations, spatial rhythms, and forms of inhabitation often omitted in conventional architectural representation.

DRAWING [ON] STROVOLOS II

The studio, entitled 'Caring about Refugee Estates, Refugee Estates of Care,' invites students—through an ecofeminist framing—to critically reconsider established models of spatial (re)production that typically encourage extractivism and resource exploitation. In contrast, the studio emphasises repair and reuse.[3] Focusing on the refugee estates of Nicosia— urban environments shaped by tensions between formal planning and informal adaptation—the studio centres its attention on Strovolos II. This estate is one of four refugee settlements developed along Spyrou Kyprianou Avenue, running east to west through the Municipality of Strovolos, south of Nicosia's city centre. Strovolos II holds particular significance, both for its architectural design by CAEC (Pevkios Georgiades, Theocharis David, Athos Dikaios) and because its buildings are under threat of imminent demolition. The studio's objective is to propose alternative scenarios for the estate as a whole, exploring new forms of modern collective living, encompassing housing, open spaces, shared infrastructure, urban equipment, and community-based activities compatible with the neighbourhood's fabric.

The studio unfolds in two stages. The first introduces students to key concepts—centred on reuse and collective living—and design precedents, focusing on housing typologies found in Cypriot refugee estates and relevant
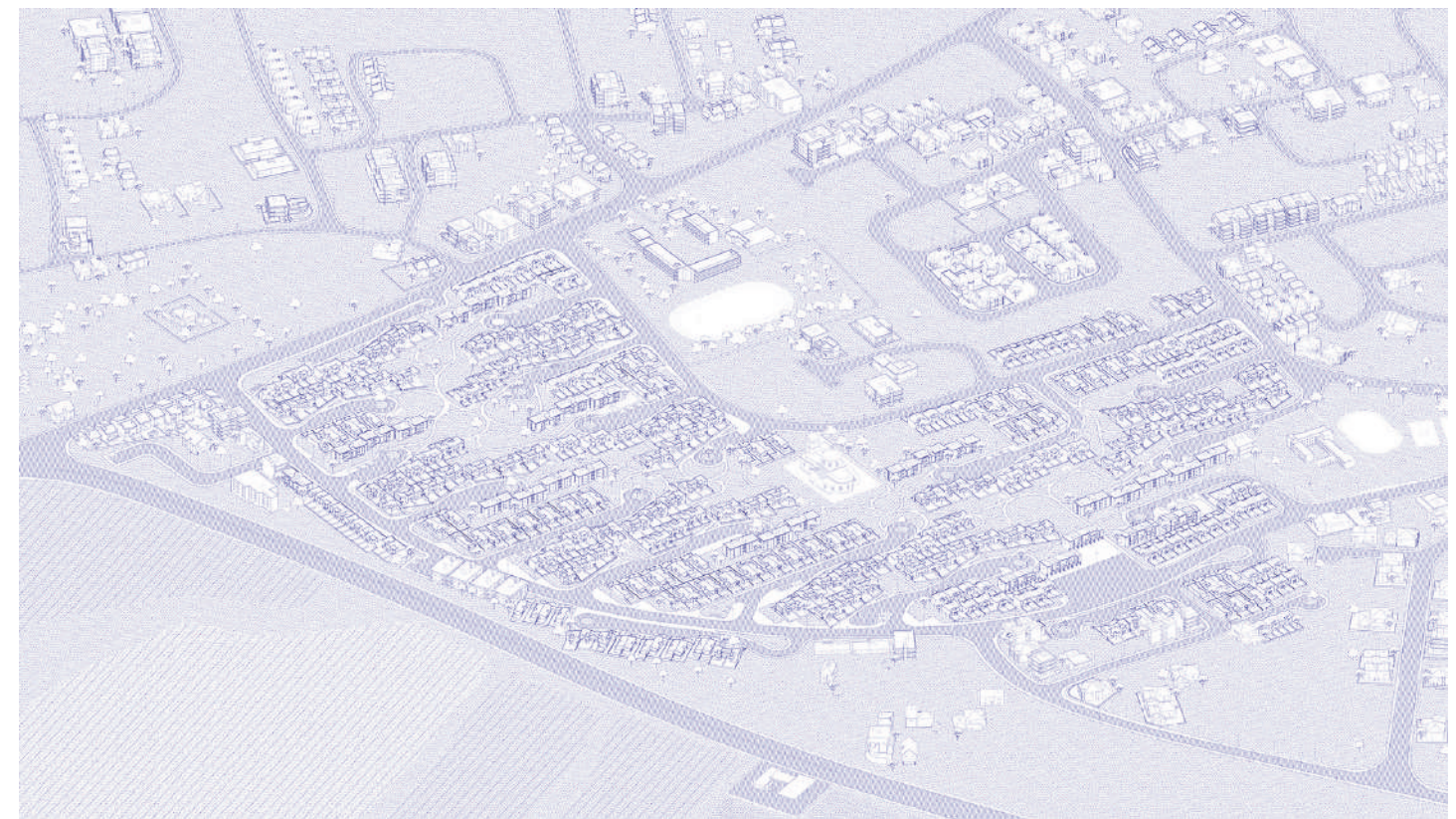
examples of collective housing from international contexts. It also involves situated field studies in the neighbourhood. The second stage involves the development of design, programmatic, and management proposals informed by both precedent studies and fieldwork. The focus here is on the first stage, which progresses from macro to micro scales.

The first exercise tasked students with reconstructing the entirety of Strovolos II in isometric view (cf. Avramidis & Issaias, forthcoming). The representation (Fig.1) deliberately extended beyond the estate's boundaries, seamlessly integrating the surrounding urban fabric to prevent it from being read as an isolated parcel. This collective drawing—approximately body-sized when printed and pinned up in the studio—served not only as a shared reference and representational tool but also as a vital methodological and pedagogical device. Created through collective effort and collaboration, the drawing challenged notions of individual authorship, foregrounding interdependence. It depicted the estate in its original form, as conceived by the architects, highlighting its formal

typological purity. In the subsequent exercise, the isometric became a large-scale map, repurposed as a tool for ethnographic reporting. Onto this surface, students layered annotations—identifying spatial thresholds, embedding interview fragments, and marking observational notes—tied to specific locations. This process helped illustrate how various practices unfolded in context and the ways in which people activate the space. The drawing also provided the foundation for more focused observation-based drawings.

The second exercise sought to bring together the type (τύπος) with the type-less (άτυπος), creating an inventory of residents' spatial routines and practices (cf. Kenniff & Lévesque, 2021).[4] This marked a deliberate shift away from top-down, formal, and objective design logics toward informal, bottom-up, subjective practices of adaptive inhabitation. This repositioning also reoriented drawing and recording practices: from a distant or aerial perspective to one grounded within space and experience.

Students were asked to observe and document architectural details, materials, and activities inscribed

within them, combining precise and imprecise observations with attentiveness to architectural settings and the agency of both human and nonhuman actors. This approach aimed to challenge what I have elsewhere described as the "tyranny of architectural precision" (Avramidis, 2023). Students were explicitly instructed to avoid presuming that observed spaces needed improvement through redesign (cf. Bratia & Postiglione, 2023: 35). It's an exercise in restraint: setting aside the designer's impulse to intervene in order to more deeply attune to the lived reality of the place.

Fieldwork formed the backbone of this exercise, with considerable time dedicated to detailed emplaced observation. Students were encouraged to connect with residents and engage with the everyday realities of the estate through an ethnographic lens. While specific observation and annotation tools were suggested, students selected their own sites and content. Fieldwork combined photography, drawing, and direct observation to uncover micro-scale negotiations and material traces that conventional ethnographic methods might overlook or

struggle to convey. As Suzanne Ewing argues in her volume on architectural fieldwork, "[the] recurring engagement with non-textual output, although familiar in architecture, agitates conventional anthropological paradigms, and within an 'ethnographic turn', encourages review of relationships between visual, aesthetic fieldwork output and design" (2011: 2).

As a pedagogical model, this approach invites students to engage drawing not as an act of projection but as a situated and iterative mode of research. Students were encouraged to cultivate observational patience and to recognise drawing as a practice of relational learning that involves attunement to material and social environments. This not only reframed their understanding of architectural tools but also repositioned them as embedded observers rather than distant designers. The process of drawing became a critical space for asking questions, slowing down, and rethinking the assumed fixity of built form. In doing so, the studio promoted a mode of architectural education rooted in care, attentiveness, and context, positioning students to develop design propositions that are informed not by abstraction but by the textures and practices of everyday life.

Students were encouraged to reflect on how spatial arrangements shape or challenge social interaction, and how everyday (personal) objects—often modest or improvised (e.g., a plastic chair)—undermine or exceed normative expectations of space. A core element of the work involved documenting not only architectural environments but also everyday (improvised) furnishings and objects that revealed how spaces are inhabited and made meaningful. Through drawings, photographs, and written notes, students captured habits, spatial practices, and local social dynamics (Fig.2).

Common themes that emerged included residents' affinity for gardening as a means of fostering

Fig.2 - Adaptation moments in Strovolos II. Photographs by: Victor Pilavas (left column); Andreas Nicolaou & Stavros Theophanous (right column); Stavros Theophanous & George Vessiaris (drone).

community, the revitalisation of underutilized open spaces, resident-led architectural adaptations, the reconfiguration of interiors, makeshift improvements to pedestrian and transport infrastructure, the informal repurposing of recreational facilities, and the provision of essential services and markets. Categories explored included space—both interior and exterior—and time, in terms of changing routines and rituals. Drawing techniques ranged from tracing to axonometric and orthographic representations.

From makeshift open bars and private chapels to scattered ovens and communal gardens, paradoxical elements are evident from the very first visit, highlighting the intricate nature of life in Strovolos II. Upon closer observation, care emerged as a unifying theme: a reciprocal condition wherein caring for spaces or people elicited care in return. For example, students Aikaterini Lada, Dimitrios Papanikolaou and Eleni Vassila, identified six locations that exemplified residents' spatial negotiations (Fig.3). These revealed blurred boundaries between public and private, formal and informal,

producing what one might call urban domesticities. A covered communal area in front of private courtyards functions as a flexible social hub in the absence of designed shared spaces. Nearby, outdoor ovens and a makeshift storage unit activate a green space as a site for gathering. An improvised chapel extends private use into public space, reshaping its collective meaning. A semi-public urban farm accommodates both enclosed and open cultivation, balancing privacy and interaction. A shared cul-de-sac functions dually as a space for car repair and spiritual practice, embodying the paradoxes of everyday life. Lastly, a privately hosted open bar informally occupies the sidewalk, fostering neighbourhood connections. The exploded axonometric of this ad-hoc structure captures its material and spatial sophistication (Fig.4). Together, these interventions reflect adaptive, community-driven uses of space that drawings can document to reveal the dynamics of daily life in the refugee estate.

Andreas Nicolaou and Stavros Theophanous focused on a passageway informally appropriated by Mrs. Sofia and her husband over five decades. Intended as a communal green space, it had been transformed into a richly personalised environment, complete with concrete kitchen, roofing, basins, and planted trees. The ground floor emerges as a privileged spatial condition, enabling everyday rituals such as watering plants or drinking coffee. Their drawings—evoking the spirit of Wigglesworth and Till—captured the residents' rituals by animated objects—the chair, the bucket, the water tank—each contributing to a choreography of daily life (Fig.5). In a second case, Andreas and Stavros studied a notably overcrowded 90m² apartment housing nine individuals, including three generations of family. The overcrowding severely impacted quality of life, prompting the appropriation of communal areas—such as the staircase, rooftop, and a long-vacant adjacent apartment—as extensions of the domestic space. Through participant observation
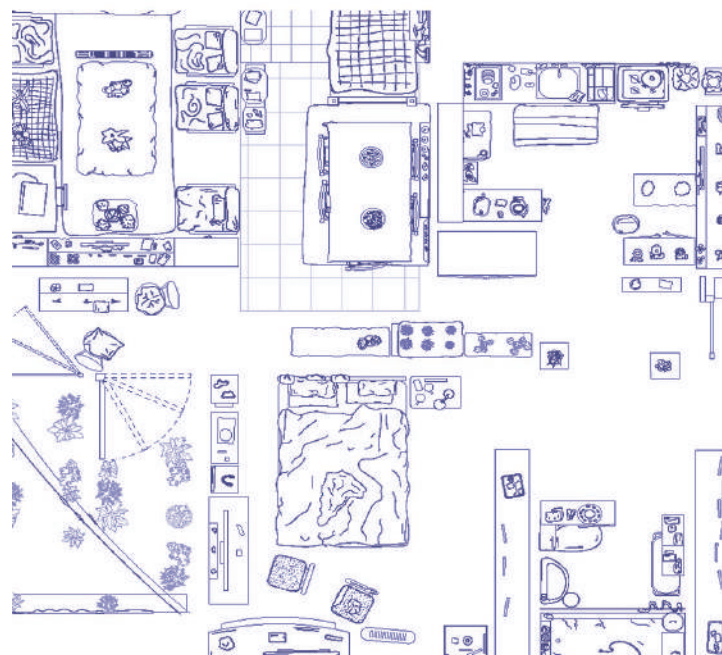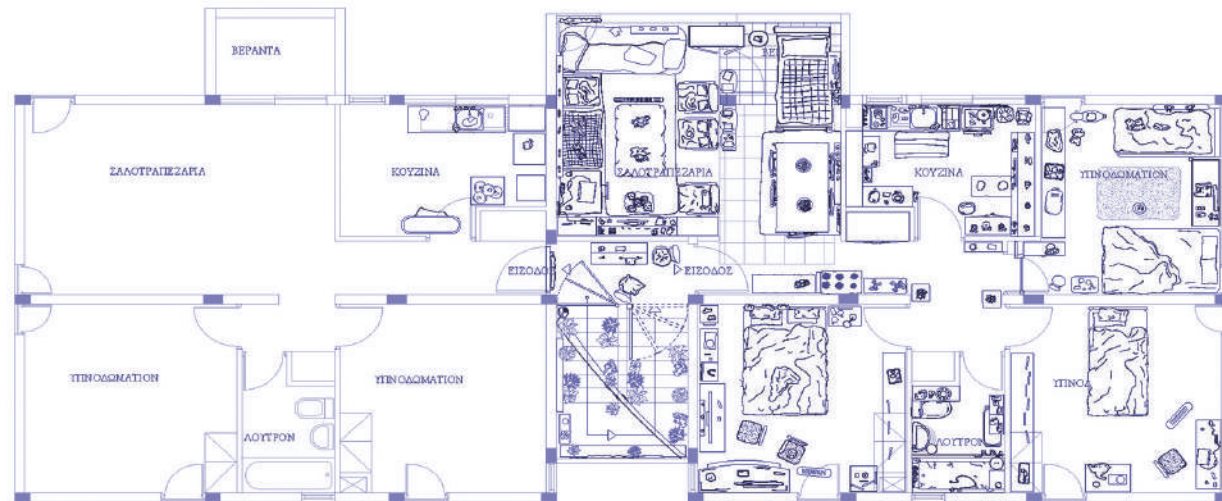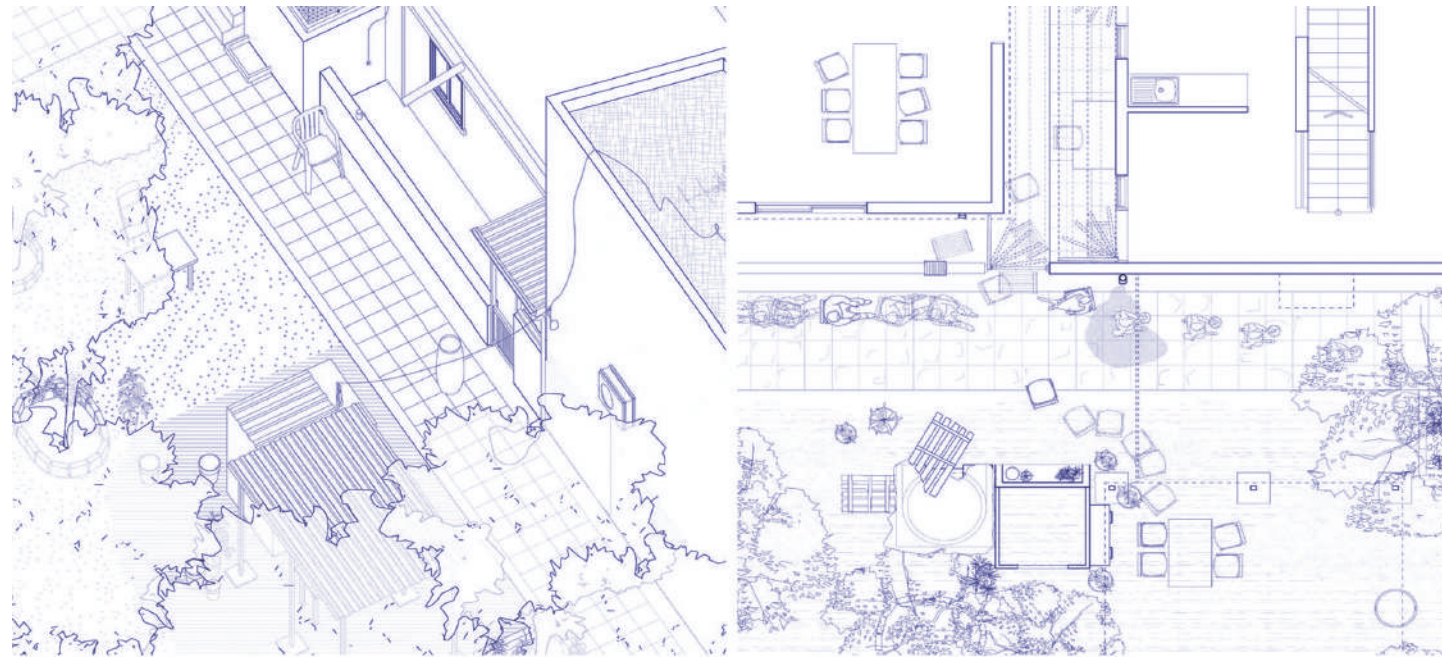
Fig.3 - Blurring the boundaries between public and private; drawings by Aikaterini Lada, Dimitrios Papanikolaou and Eleni Vassila.

Fig.4 - The 'open bar' and its components, by A. Lada, D. Papanikolaou and E. Vassila.

and hand-drawn mapping, the transformed interior revealed how furniture began to act as spatial dividers, compensating for the removal of partition walls. The balcony became a bedroom, the sofa a bed, and the arrangement of objects sustained a sense of spatial order. Drawing was essential in capturing this improvised choreography of domestic life under constraint.

Eleni Gabriel and Maria Orfanou, through careful ethnographic observation, revealed a hidden network of gardens whilst exposing that the planting—especially of productive trees—is a way of connecting with homelands before being uprooted. To explore this situated human geography, on top of the photographs, Eleni and Maria produced a series of plans to study the organisation of the gardens but also linear perspectives tracings (Fig.6). As Ray Lucas argues, in his study of the discipline of tracing in architectural drawing (2018), the traced drawings are not mere replicates but re-performances of an original, opening up opportunities for knowledge production. The human presence is implied rather than depicted, with objects and spatial arrangements serving as traces of occupation. The protagonists, in this case, are the plants. These absences encourage the viewer to infer meaning, prompting reflection on what each garden reveals about its inhabitants (cf. Rice 2024). The drawings become a space for interpretation, where the significance of plants and their placement suggests the rhythms, habits, and values embedded in each case.

Eleni Sergiou and Antigoni Karekla studied the front and backyards of single-row family houses, producing elevations that captured a range of personalisations diverging from the estate's original uniformity: decorative tiles, pergolas, storage additions, water tanks, laundry spaces, air conditioning units, and more (Fig.7). The need for shade has prompted the installation of improvised canopies in outdoor seating areas, while the rear façades often feature added storage,

Fig.5 - The choreography of everyday life, by Andreas Nicolaou and Stavros Theophanous
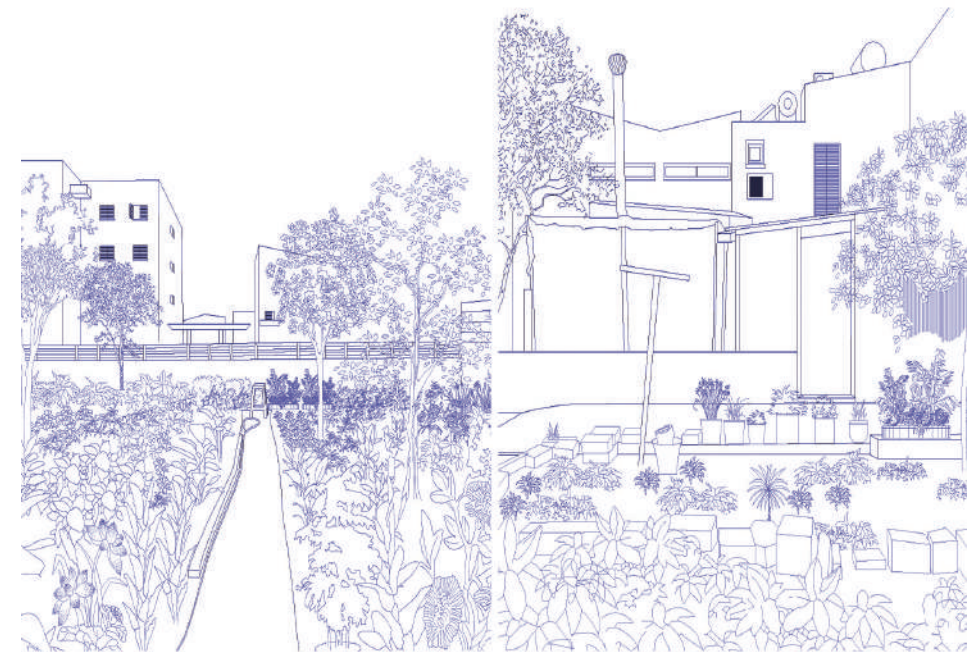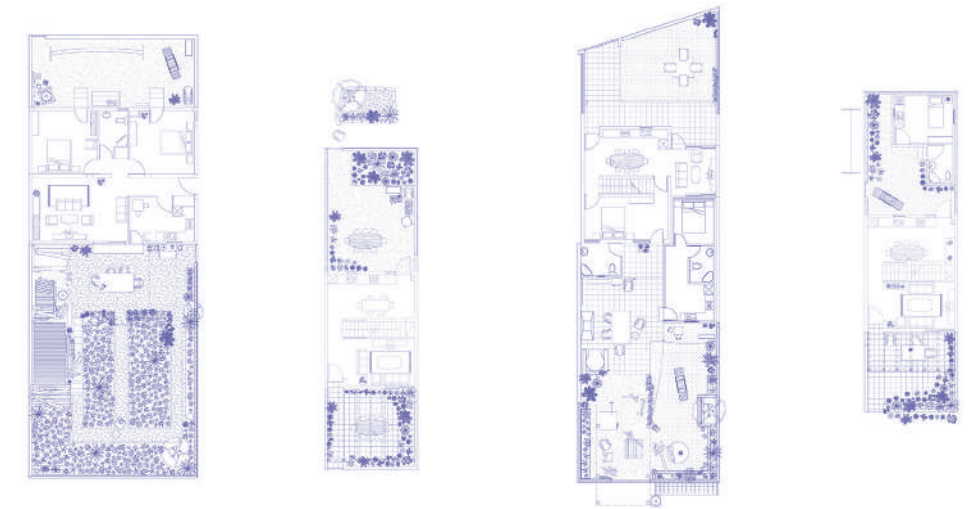
Fig.6 - The hidden gardens of Strovolos II, by Eleni Gabriel and Maria Orfanou.
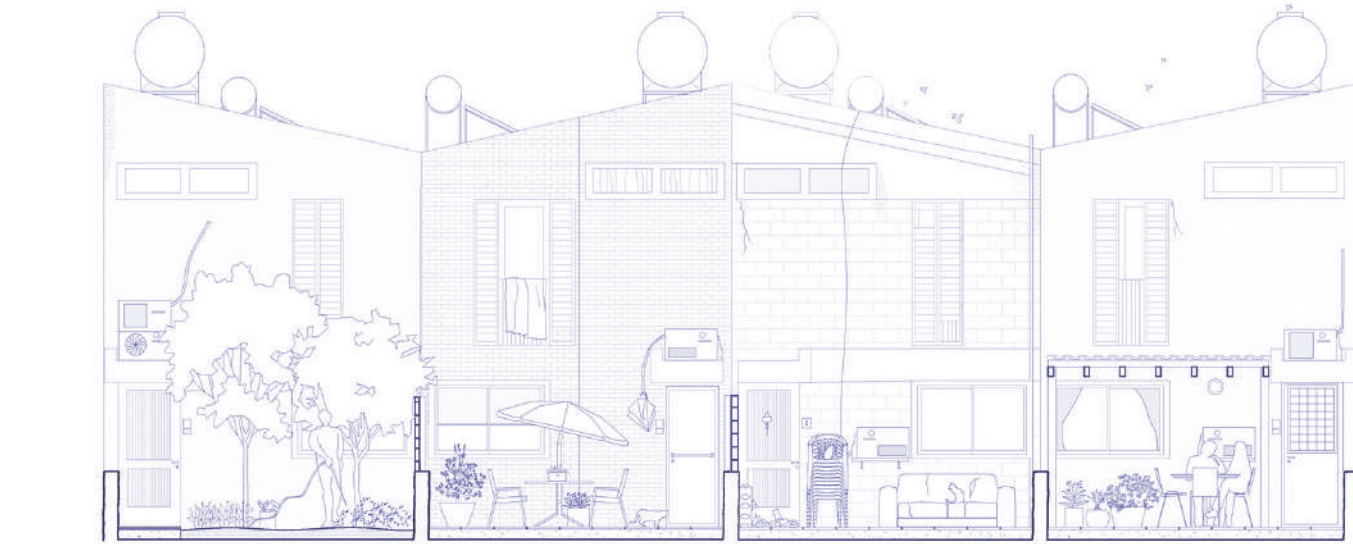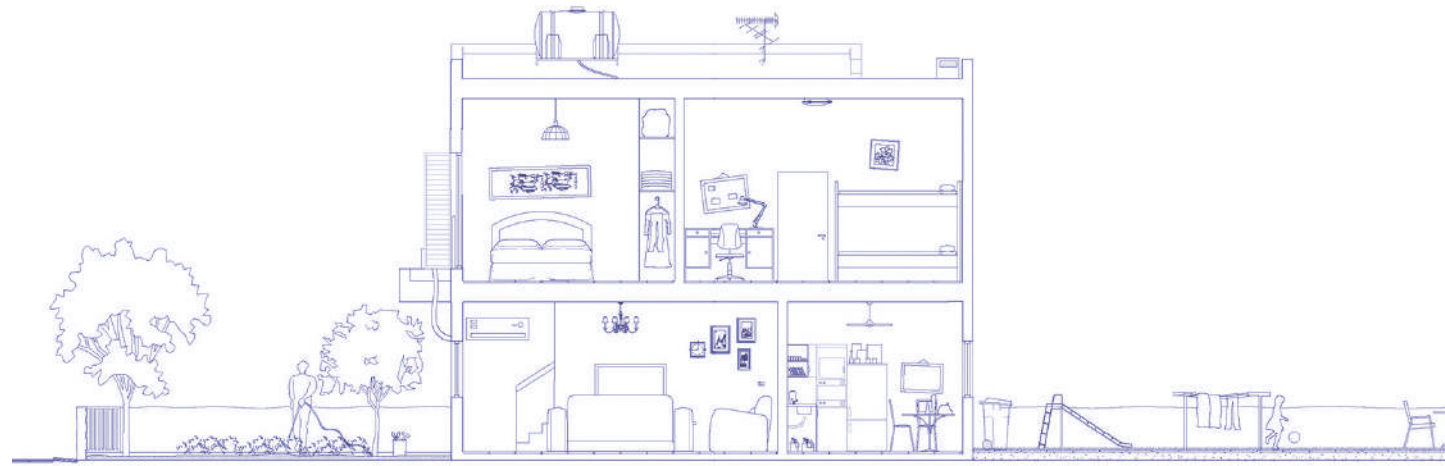
Fig.7 - Interior/exterior of the Strovolos II row houses, by Eleni Sergiou and Antigoni Karekla.

Fig.8 - Thresholds and boundaries, by Marina Koiliari and Savvina Vorka (top), Eleftherios Christou and Louzia Toumpa (bottom).

reflecting both a demand for extra space and a blurring of boundaries between interior and exterior. Additional modifications, such as altered doors and air conditioning units, further demonstrate individual interventions. The drawings also capture how planting, cultivation, children's play, and laundry extend into the outdoor areas, highlighting the continuous interplay between domestic life and outdoor spatial adaptation.

Marina Koiliari and Savvina Vorka, study physical thresholds and material boundaries between and across different properties while the accent of Eleftherios Christou and Louiza Toumpa is on the estate's modest commercial centre

(Fig.8). Their drawings capture the daily interactions of residents with shop owners, who often extend their shops informally into public space, with places like the local grocery acting as social hubs. Some residents created shortcuts through backyard walls to access these spaces, disrupting the estate's original planning logic. The shared pedestrian paths—animated by watering, conversations, laundry, and play—blurred lines between private and public, revealing a rich social ecology.

Georgios Beis and Victor Pilavas, using sectional and isometric drawings, documented the qualities of the estate's informal pedestrian alleys through a peripatetic

experience (Fig.9). These capture key moments along the path demonstrating their role as places for community gardening and gathering, as shortcuts through passages and/or as places of boundary negotiation. Nikolas Kallenos and Alexandros Skenter shift the focus on the characteristic cul-de-sacs, highlighting them as critical sites of interaction that resist the estate's formal organization. Their work revealed not neighbourhoods based on building blocks, but a mosaic of "micro-neighbourhoods" defined by proximity, ritual, and shared use (Fig.10).

The final outputs were compiled in a uniform A3 portrait format,

producing detailed, spatialised narratives that foregrounded the physical, material, and social dimensions of life in Strovolos II. This process underscored the value of observation not only as a subjective act but also as part of a shared method of representation and storytelling. The aim was to build a collective archive that reveals the complexity of lived space and is read for patterns: recurring informal practices, subtle appropriations, or material traces that suggest new ways of understanding the estate as a living, evolving environment. This graphic ethnographic archive demonstrates how drawing—when approached as a descriptive ethnographic tool

alongside other media—becomes a critical practice for registering the traces of inhabitation and revealing how people shape and are shaped by their architectural environs, continually negotiating the boundaries between formality and improvisation.

In doing so, the studio foregrounded drawing as slow observation practice and research method capable of capturing and interpreting the layered dynamics of lived space. The drawing becomes both testimony and interrogation, a record of what is, and a prompt for seeing differently. These drawings do not impose architectural knowledge upon the site; rather, echoing Kaijima, they become

"instances of collective learning, not a one-way knowledge transfer" (2021: 261).

Strovolos II serves as an exemplar case of the ethical and practical challenges inherent in graphic ethnography within architectural education. Cypriot refugee estates demand of students a heightened sensitivity to the histories and vulnerabilities embedded in everyday spaces. Navigating this context, students were compelled to engage with residents' lives ethically, often encountering tensions between the desire to document and the risk of intrusion into private, and sometimes contested, spatial narratives. This situated context foregrounded the
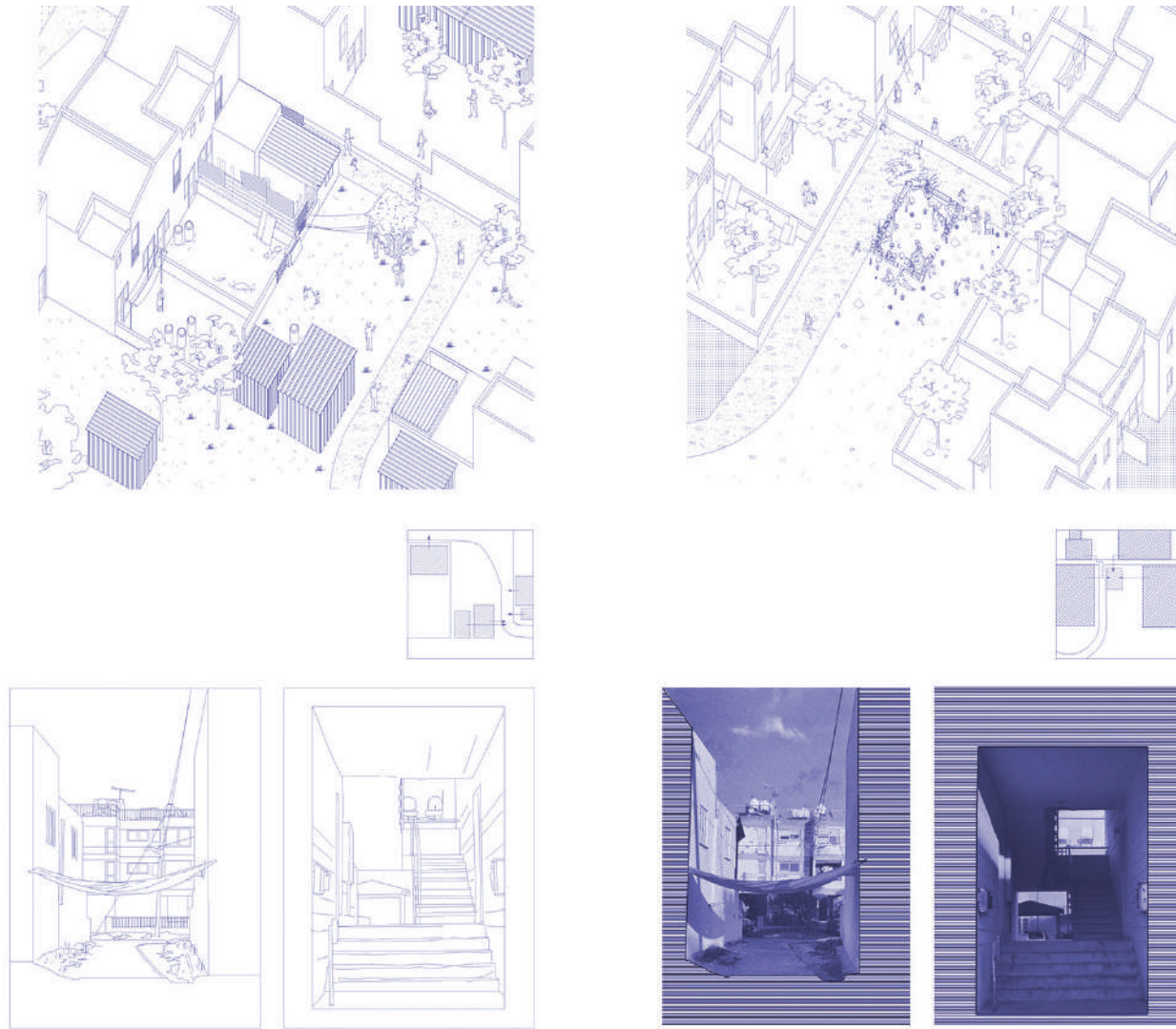
necessity of consent and ongoing dialogue, aligning with Pink's insistence on ethical attentiveness in visual ethnography (2007: 58). Ethical considerations that emerged over the semester had to do with the documentation of private spaces, difficulties in gaining full access or trust, managing biases in observation, or the inherent limitations of drawing as a medium to capture all aspects of lived experience. A student's familial ties helped access while photography and annotation supplemented the aspects that drawing sometimes could not convey.

Moreover, the collective archive of drawings from Strovolos II exemplified the challenge of integrating subjective perspectives into a shared representation of space. Students' individual interpretations were brought into conversation through studio critique and collective reflection,

fostering a pluralistic yet coherent understanding of the estate's socio-spatial dynamics. This collaborative process echoed Ingold's (2011) conception of drawing as a relational practice, where observer and observed co-constitute meaning through attentive engagement.

DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

"By all accounts, as a technique of observation drawing is unrivalled," Ingold argues (2011b:16), who likens drawing to walking, where the drawer—like the pedestrian carefully watching his/her steps—synchronises perception with action, becoming immersed in the world through the very act of tracing it. The drawings discussed here, though created digitally, serve a similar purpose to ethnographic field notes: they contribute to theory development, providing

contextual understanding, and guide future designs (cf. Lucas 2020: 13).

Drawing has played a crucial role not merely in documenting, but in reimagining both the past and present as foundations for the future. While inherently incomplete and shaped by personal experiences or the limitations of the outsider, the drawing remains a vital tool to grasp and preserve fragments of lived reality. As Ingold (2020) suggests, "students should cultivate more their subjective sensibilities in order to produce better observations," thereby underscoring the value of subjectivity in enriching the act of observation.

Drawing, unlike other forms of documentation, invites a more attentive and embodied mode of seeing. It focuses on subtle details that might otherwise escape notice, while allowing these to inform

future design possibilities. Rather than offering a final representation, ethnographic drawing opens up space for interpretation, reflection, and transformation.

Although architectural design has traditionally been oriented toward speculation and future projection, as Ingold (2020) reminds us, "you cannot speculate or propose without a deep understanding of the lived world, and deeply understanding the lived world would be completely pointless if it wasn't linked to some sort of proposition or speculation about how life might be." In this way, drawing becomes not just a representational practice but a critical method for engaging with the present and imagining the future.

Here, drawing functions as a bridge between observation and understanding, cultivating a more active and responsive form of attention. Through acts of showing, narrating, and tracing, it sharpens sensitivity to nuance and enhances awareness of the evolving nature of place. Drawing is not merely a tool of final representation or a means of depicting reality; it is a fundamental method of knowledge production that links observation with expressive transcription. The aim of ethnographic knowledge—produced through the tools of the architect—is not to be directly translated into specific design solutions based on user demands. Rather, in line with our experience and echoing Bratia and Postiglione (2023: 41), ethnographic insights function as a way to understand the dynamics of a place, offering deeper knowledge that can inform and support reflective design choices. Ethnographic drawing enables the surveying of what is typically overlooked. It attends to the informal appropriations, material adaptations, and social improvisations that conventional orthographic drawings tend to omit. In this shift from prescription to description, drawing becomes not merely a tool for envisioning future architecture, but a means of uncovering the everyday spatial practices that shape it

after construction: what remains, transforms, and is quietly reinvented in use. By focusing on these small, often unnoticed details—leftover objects, spatial arrangements, or fleeting moments—drawing captures the anthropological richness embedded in ordinary settings. These seemingly minor elements can speak to larger narratives, offering spatial evidence of lived experience.

The practice of ethnographic drawing, as explored here, repositions architectural representation as a process of inquiry rather than resolution. By tracing the informal, the improvised, and the residual, drawing becomes a critical lens through which lived experience can be surfaced and made legible. This challenges disciplinary conventions that equate drawing with control, precision, and foresight, offering instead an approach that values partiality, subjectivity, and embeddedness. In this context, drawing is not only a method of seeing but also a way of knowing, one that acknowledges the agency of everyday actors, materials, and temporalities in shaping architectural space. Such a shift has implications for both practice and education, encouraging architects to approach the built environment not as a fixed outcome but as a dynamic field of encounter and transformation.

Reflecting on the outcomes of the study, it becomes clear that the studio's pedagogical framework—grounded in careful observation, ethical attentiveness, and situated engagement—allowed students to reveal the lived realities of Strovolos II through drawing. In many ways, their work embodies Ingold's (2011b) idea of drawing as a continuous "movement of observation and description," while echoing Kaijima's (2018, 2021) understanding of drawing as a collective process of learning and exchange. The students' drawings translated everyday gestures and material improvisations into spatial knowledge, capturing what de Certeau (1984) would call the "tactics" of inhabitation that transform planned architectures

into lived spaces. At the same time, they align with Haraway's (1988) notion of "situated knowledges," recognising that every act of observation is partial, embodied and situated. Taken together, these works show how an ethnographic approach to drawing can move beyond representation, bridging theory and experience, and confirming, as Lucas (2020) argues, that drawing is itself a way of thinking and knowing.

The approach advanced here challenges the supposed neutrality and objectivity of conventional orthographic drawings, positioning drawing instead as both inquiry and a generator of knowledge: an act that recognises buildings as dynamic junctions between design and improvisation, matter and meaning. In this context, drawing is less about prescribing a finished space than about describing the iterative acts of small-scale reconfiguration that make architecture a living, open-ended process. In embracing observation, subjectivity, and the everyday, ethnographic drawing affirms that architecture is not a static object to be completed, but a dynamic field of experience to be continuously lived, traced, and reimagined. In the Strovolos II studio, this continuity between observation and design was made tangible. Students' careful attention to marginal details, informal appropriations, and lived adaptations in their ethnographic drawings did more than produce site knowledge: it cultivated the sensibilities and attentiveness that directly informed reflective, context-sensitive design proposals. In this way, drawing functioned as both a method of inquiry and a bridge to speculative practice, demonstrating how the act of observing and tracing the everyday can shape the imagination of future architectural possibilities. By animating drawings through the lived, the improvised, and the mundane, students introduced the vitality of life into architectural representation. In the end, to draw ethnographically is to draw life itself, and to recognise that architecture, at its most vital, is nothing less.

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NOTES

1. I have been running the ARH401 module since 2021 and had the privilege to teach together with a number of great colleagues who contributed to its development: Platon Issaias, Constantinos Marcou, Olga Balaoura, Charis Nika, and Ersia Stylianou. As of 2024, the studio focuses on refugee estates in Cyprus and introduced the drawing exercises that are of interest here. The article presents projects from the spring semester of 2025 during which Frixos Petrou acted as teaching assistant and I'm indebted to his input.

2. Ray Lucas identifies a tension between what might be called an ethnographic mode and its anthropological interpretation. Echoing Ingold, his dissertation supervisor, he highlights a broader concern: that ethnography is increasingly treated as mere reportage, lacking the reflective depth that characterizes anthropology (Lucas 2020:16).

3. For a detailed discussion on the studio's theoretical and conceptual framework as well as key student design outputs see Avramidis (forthcoming).

4. Here, I am not arguing against typological thinking or the generative and creative capacities of type. On the contrary, I acknowledge that types carry disciplinary memory and can be framed culturally (cf. Lechner 2021; Lechner & Postiglione 2025). I argue that both type and type less improvisations are key to appreciating adaptive capacities in architecture.

How to Draw a Ghost

A Lobotomy's Tale: Kowloon Walled City

ciudad amurallada de Kowloon
arquitectura y disidencia
lobotomía
laboratorio urbano
narrativa
Kowloon walled city
architecture and dissidence
lobotomy
urban laboratory
narrative

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Historia de una Lobotomía es un proyecto de investigación sobre la extinta Ciudad Amurallada de Kowloon (KWC), que llegó a ser el edificio más densamente poblado del mundo. El proyecto se fundamenta en la reconstrucción de la historia de la KWC; sin embargo, ¿cómo reconstruir algo que ya no existe, especialmente en ausencia de documentos arquitectónicos como planos o secciones, y en un contexto donde nunca se establecieron normas arquitectónicas? La investigación recurre, por tanto, a lo que podríamos llamar "fuentes bastardas": documentales televisivos de Hong Kong, fotografías encontradas en libros e incluso testimonios de antiguos residentes. En este sentido, el trabajo se despliega como una suerte de transcripción etnográfica, explorando cómo la arquitectura puede ser estudiada e imaginada a través de archivos fragmentarios, marginales o no oficiales. El proyecto reivindica esta arquitectura, a menudo descartada en los debates académicos por su supuesta baja calidad, como un modelo de empoderamiento, participación y disidencia, así como un laboratorio urbano que revela nuevas formas de entender la complejidad de la ciudad. A través del concepto de lobotomía como amnesia inducida, el proyecto cuestiona las narrativas históricas hegemónicas que excluyen posibilidades alternativas, buscando en cambio reactivar historias suprimidas. Cualquier acontecimiento histórico estudiado desde el presente implica aceptar como válido un discurso hegemónico que es, inevitablemente, político y basado en la exclusión. Sin embargo, siempre permanecen otras posibilidades, a la espera de ser reactivadas.

En última instancia, *Historia de una Lobotomía* también funciona como un manifiesto. Sitúa el proyecto final de carrera como un ejercicio que debe responder a realidades más amplias de la práctica arquitectónica, yendo más allá de la mera producción de edificios para involucrarse con cuestiones de memoria, narrativa y disidencia.

A Lobotomy's Tale is a research project focused on the extinct Kowloon Walled City (KWC), once the most densely populated enclave in the world. The project is grounded in the reconstruction of KWC's history; yet, how can one reconstruct something that no longer exists, especially in the absence of architectural documents such as plans or sections, and within a context where no architectural rules had ever been established? The research therefore turns to what could be called "bastard sources": television documentaries from Hong Kong, photographs found in books, and even testimonies from former residents. In this sense, the work unfolds as a kind of ethnographic transcription, exploring how architecture can be studied and reimagined through fragmented, marginal, or unofficial archives. The project reclaims this architecture, often dismissed in academic discourse due to its perceived poor quality, as a model of empowerment, participation, and dissidence, as well as an urban laboratory that reveals new ways of understanding the complexity of the city. Framed through the concept of lobotomy as induced amnesia, the project questions hegemonic historical narratives that exclude alternative possibilities, aiming instead to reactivate suppressed stories. Any historical event studied from the present implies accepting a hegemonic discourse as valid - one that is invariably political and grounded in exclusion. Yet, other possibilities always remain, awaiting reactivation.

Ultimately, *A Lobotomy's Tale* also functions as a manifesto. It positions the final degree project as an exercise that must respond to broader realities of architectural practice, moving beyond the mere production of buildings to engage with questions of memory, narrative, and dissent.

BACKGROUND

The Kowloon Walled City (KWC), located in Hong Kong, was the most densely populated urban enclave in history. Although no official census was ever conducted, it is estimated that it housed around 32,000 inhabitants within an area of barely 2.6 hectares. Originally a military fortress, over time it transformed into a chaotic complex of residential and commercial buildings informally stacked together, with no urban planning or state supervision. Its narrow alleys, labyrinthine passages, and overlapping structures sheltered tens of thousands of people in unsanitary conditions, but also within a high degree of self-management and internal community life. The city was demolished in 1994, yet it remains an icon of extreme urban density, informality, and architectural resilience.

This image of the city as a prototype of self-organization contrasts with the dark legend that has accompanied it: a territory marked by unsanitary conditions and illegal businesses such as drugs, gambling, or prostitution, which became a recurring setting in films and manga over the past decades. These productions helped consolidate the myth of the KWC as a dark and marginal space. Titles such as Brothers from the Walled City (1982), Crime Story (1993), Bloodsport (1988), Long Arm of the Law (1984), or Twilight of the Warriors: Walled In (2024) reinforced this narrative, depicting its alleys as scenes of violence and secrecy.

When deciding to write this article based in the Master's dissertation at Alicante University, *A Lobotomy's Tale*, we wondered what sense it made to discuss this architectural object thirty years after its demolition and to what extent this paper could introduce aspects that had not already been discussed about the project in other media.[1]

We used the term lobotomy in the project's title as a synonym for amnesia, as an approach to a history that has been silenced.

Researching the KWC involved an exercise of reconstruction based on scattered traces and fragments.

Throughout the development of this research, we constantly sought to move away from the Hollywood narrative that turned the city into an exotic backdrop for marginality, as well as from the romanticization of the slum as a symbol of resistance. Our interest lies instead in thinking of the KWC from its real complexity: a space that was at once precarious and resilient, chaotic and communal, whose memory needs no exaggeration to be fascinating.

THREE NOTIONS OF RE-MEDIATION.

At the beginning of this research a question arises: what is the ultimate goal of this exercise? The mummification of this space? Its architecturization? We soon realized that it made no sense to offer a remedy to the problem, since from a pragmatic point of view the problem no longer existed. The KWC had been demolished more than twenty years ago.[2]

As Andre Jaque says, solutions to problems only appear through simplification and reductionism (Jaque, 2013). To remediate does not necessarily mean to solve a problem or restore a previous state, but rather to act within a conflicting condition, to mediate between forces, damage, or deficiencies, and to produce a form of coexistence or temporary adjustment. To remediate is to engage in an intermediate practice, situated between repair and invention, where the emphasis is not on reaching a definitive solution but on enabling processes of care, negotiation, or adaptation within a complex context.

Remediation can also be understood in a media sense: as the exploration of alternative formats through which architecture can be communicated. These may include collections of projects, investigations, books, exhibitions, or videos. In essence, this approach defines a multimedia architecture, one that extends architectural

practice beyond the physical building, highlighting the diverse roles and profiles of contemporary architects and their work outside canonical frameworks. Crucially, this perspective challenges conventional hierarchies in architectural representation. Each format becomes a legitimate medium for experimentation, provocation, and critical inquiry.

A BASTARD BIBLIOGRAPHY[3]

Approaching the study of an architecture such as the KWC presents an evident difficulty. It is a place that no longer exists and whose material production lacked official technical records. No plans or administrative files accompany its buildings, since they were erected informally. In addition, the available documentation is fragmentary and, in many cases, written in Chinese, a language we do not understand, which makes the collection and analysis of primary sources a complex task. In this process, we also acknowledge that much of the available information comes from an orientalist fascination that tends to exoticize the place, making it difficult to clearly discern where reality ends and myth begins.

However, there are valuable documents that allow access to everyday life within the city. Among them, the book *City of Darkness: Life in Kowloon Walled City* by photographer Greg Girard and journalist Ian Lambot stands out. Also relevant is the 1988 documentary The Walled City directed by Hugo Portisch, as well as the episode of Hong Kong Connection – Kowloon Walled City by the RTHK aired on 1979 that shows the daily life of its residents.

These materials, using different languages and perspectives, focus on the daily experiences of the inhabitants and reveal a sense of normality that contrasts with the usual apocalyptic portrayals. Within their pages and frames, one can find dentists, doctors, restaurants and small businesses, schools, daycare centers, and temples, showing the

complex social and economic fabric that sustained the city beyond its dark clichés. Moreover, these descriptions are not only graphic but also accompanied by the testimonies of the users themselves.

Another remarkable reference is the extraordinary section found in The Big Map of Kowloon. The work of these Japanese researchers is possibly the first attempt to approach the KWC from an architectural perspective, as they produce a large sectional drawing that simultaneously reveals the architecture and the daily lives of its inhabitants.

A Lobotomy's Tale began with a mapping of controversies.[4] This archaeological exercise consisted of reconstructing history through fragments. Each image, text, and document became part of a digital archive that, instead of delegitimizing non-academic sources, placed them on the same level. Latour's Mapping of Controversies is characterized by recognizing the complexity of

conflicts beyond simple opposing positions. Rarely do all agents act under equal conditions, and this mapping seeks to validate every discourse. Only by observing a problem from the greatest number of viewpoints can we reach something resembling objectivity, if such a thing is possible.

This mapping revealed how the conflict surrounding the KWC transcended the limits of the built environment. The architecture and the situation of its inhabitants reflected a geopolitical tension between China and the United Kingdom but are also a broader social issue regarding housing that occurred in other parts of Hong Kong.

AN ARCHITECTURE OF AGREEMENTS

In 1999, seven years after the eviction and demolition of the KWC, *City of Darkness* by Ian Lambot and Greg Girard was published, a collection of photographs and

testimonies about the extinct city. In Lambot and Girard's book, the architect Peter Popham stated that *"The Walled City became that rarest of things, a working model of the anarchist society. Inevitably, it bred all the vices that the enemies of anarchism denounce."* (Popham, 1993,10)

On the other hand, In March 16th 2013, The South China Morning Post published an infographic by the Spanish illustrator Adolfo Arranz commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the demolition of the Walled City, titled *City of Anarchy*.

Such a casual use of the term anarchy, however, fundamentally oversimplifies the complexities of the KWC and, more importantly, distorts a far richer and more rigorous philosophical and political tradition. Labeling KWC as an "anarchist society" reduces the term to a shorthand for disorder or lawlessness, ignoring the intellectual lineage of anarchism as a theory of self-organization, collective responsibility, and non-hierarchical
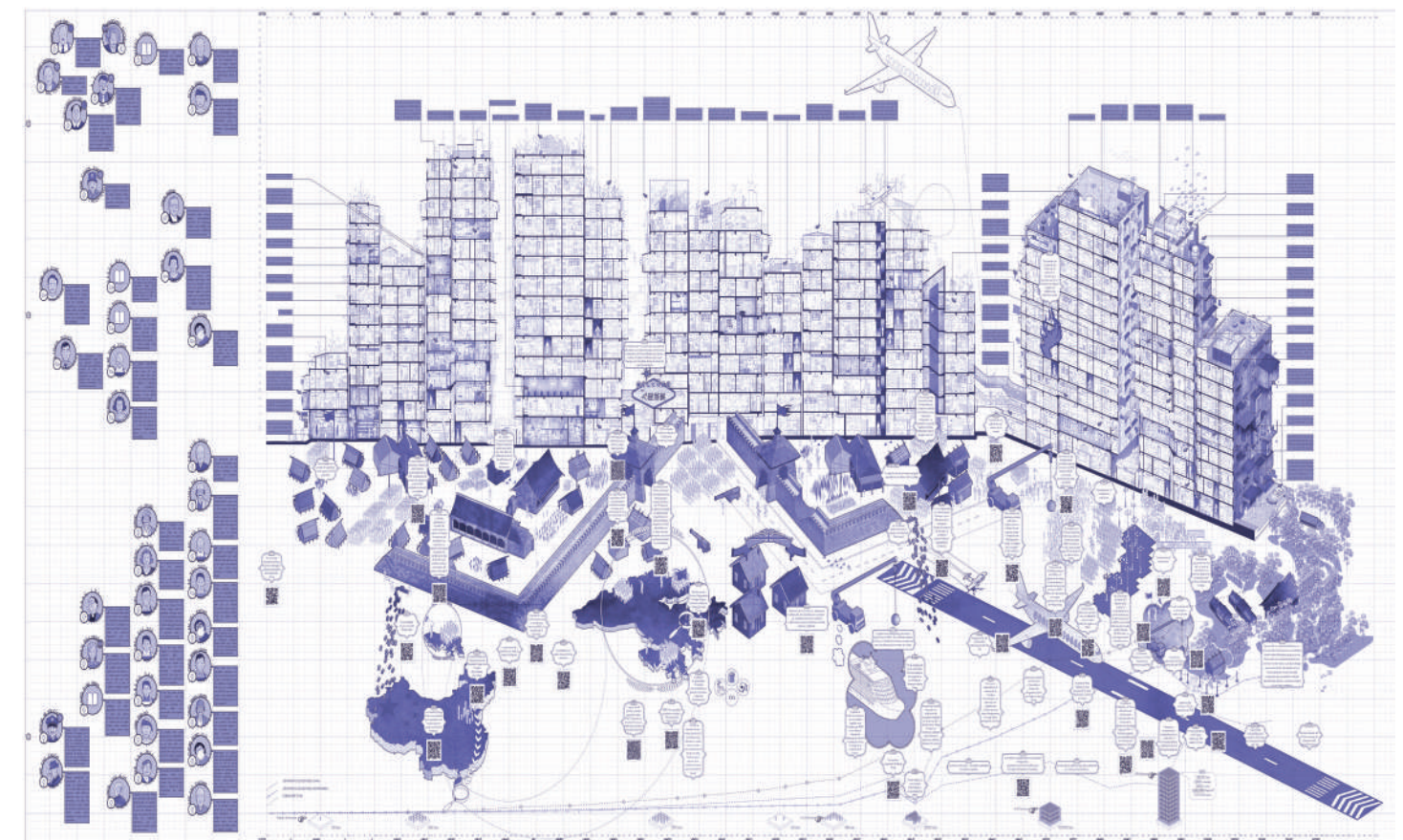

Fig.1 - Controversy Mapping. The mapping simultaneously presents a timeline showing the evolution of the controversy, a sectional view of the complex, the opinions of the involved stakeholders, and a graph of demographic change (Authors, Universidad de Alicante, 2014).

social structures. In this sense, the invocation of anarchy operates less as an analytical category than as a sensationalist trope - one that obscures far more than it reveals about the lived realities, spatial negotiations, and informal governance that sustained the KWC.

From a strictly disciplinary perspective, the architecture of this place lacks any apparent interest. As Atelier Bow Wow describes, these are not-good buildings (da-me, or "not-good" architecture): ugly, architect-less constructions whose value lies in their immediacy and pragmatism. They are architectures that cannot be validated from an academic standpoint. *"The buildings that attracted us were those that prioritized a recalcitrant honesty in response to their environment and to programmatic demands without insisting on architectural form or aesthetics"* (Bow-Wow, 2001, 9).

This idea of an architecture without architects is not something suddenly "invented" or discovered by Atelier Bow-Wow. Rather, it belongs to a longer disciplinary lineage that extends from Bernard Rudofsky's 1964 exhibition *Architecture Without Architects* to the systematic attention paid by Venturi and Scott Brown to commercial strips, vernacular environments, and the ordinary fabric of the city. Many of these movements have been revisited recently, for example in the architecture compendium published by Enrique Walker, *The Ordinary*:

"Objects that the architectural discipline proclaims as outside its territory, and against which it defines its limits (...) that architecture which Architecture itself excludes." (Walker, 2010, 7).

What distinguishes Bow-Wow's contribution is not merely an appreciation for these anonymous or "not-good" buildings, but the way they are read as urban artefacts, inseparable from the specific ecologies - social, spatial, and regulatory - in which they emerge. Their value lies less in their architectural qualities per se than in the relational systems they recognize.

We believe this is precisely the value of the KWC: a gigantic, heterogeneous mass that condenses many of Hong Kong's structural conditions and contradictions. Its extreme mixed-use, its radical hyperdensity, its near-total absence of a conventional ground plane, and the precarious infrastructures that sustain it all operate as an intensified mirror of the city surrounding it. In this sense, KWC is not simply an anomaly or an exception, but a hyper-legible distillation of the urban logics that define Hong Kong itself.

It is from perspectives such as Atelier Bow-Wow's Behaviorology that this urban complex begins to gain interest for us. Architecture is understood not so much as what is built, but as everything that happens through it. It is an architecture of pacts, where neighbors articulate complex forms of sharing common spaces, access to energy, water, or telecommunications. Like the staircase that Georges Perec describes in *Species of Spaces*:

"We don't think much about staircases. The most beautiful part of old houses used to be the staircases. And they are the ugliest, the coldest, the most hostile, the most miserly elements of buildings today. We should learn to live much more in staircases. But how?" (Perec, 1999, 67).

A place where almost nothing happens, that belongs to everyone and no one, here becomes a focal point of activity and not merely a space of transition. The private boundaries of dwellings are blurred, and businesses occupy circulation areas. There is a fuzzy logic in the use of space.[5]

With these axonometric drawings, we identified associations and political institutions created by the residents, but also the agreements that emerged from daily life: the unwritten rules of construction, the technologies that sustained these arrangements, and the deals connected to them. In short, this is an architecture that deeply reflects citizen participation in its construction.

If one must speak about the architecture of this building in terms of detail, it is what happens inside, rather than its materiality, that becomes truly interesting. That exercise of bricolage or ready-made was, in the end, a crystallization of those pacts that dismantled the idea of Kowloon as an anarchic space. The city's supposed anarchy was, in reality, only visual, distorting a much deeper philosophical and political current.

THE DETAIL – ZOOMING VS PANNING

The traditional understanding of architectural detail, both in academia and in canonical practice, has been based on a zooming logic: an operation that increases resolution over a fragment of the project, isolating it from the whole in order to examine it with greater technical precision. However, this hierarchical conception of detail as a mere act of focusing, proves insufficient for thinking about the relational complexity of contemporary architecture. Against this perspective, we propose to understand detail also as an act of panning, of lateral displacement and connection, capable of establishing dialogues among elements that do not share scale, system, or material nature. The detail therefore ceases to be only a question of constructive precision and becomes an instrument of thought that links, articulates, and translates between different dimensions of the project. In the model space of digital drawing, this operation becomes evident. The continuous movement between zooming and panning not only allows one to navigate through the project but also to think of its structure as a network of active relationships, where each part exists in relation to the others.

An example of this understanding of relational networks can be seen in the water system of the Kowloon Walled City. With only eight standpipes serving the entire community, these points of access to water naturally became spaces of social interaction among
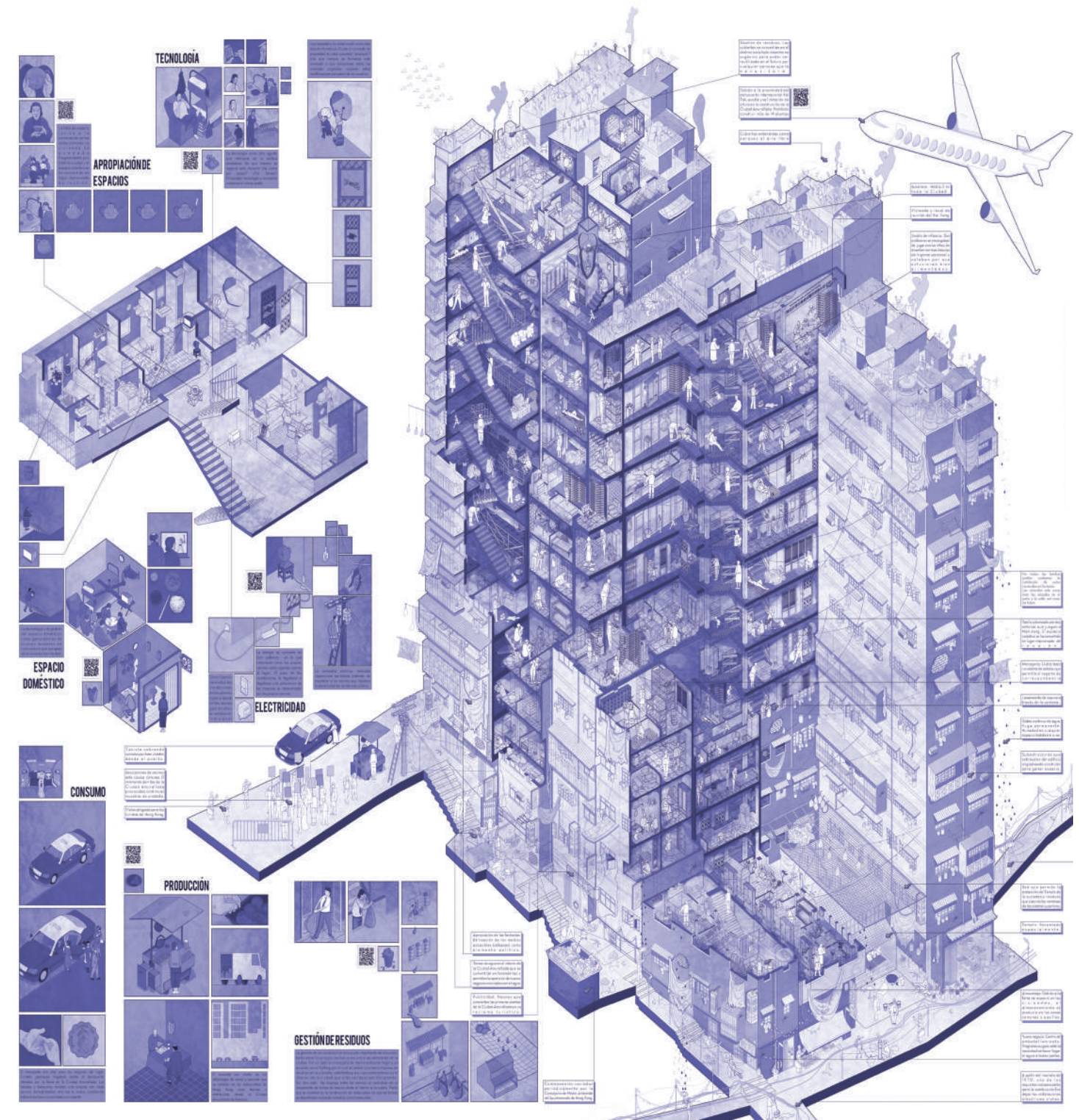
PACTOS
ALTURA
CUBIERTA GRÚA ALMACEN
PROPIEDAD
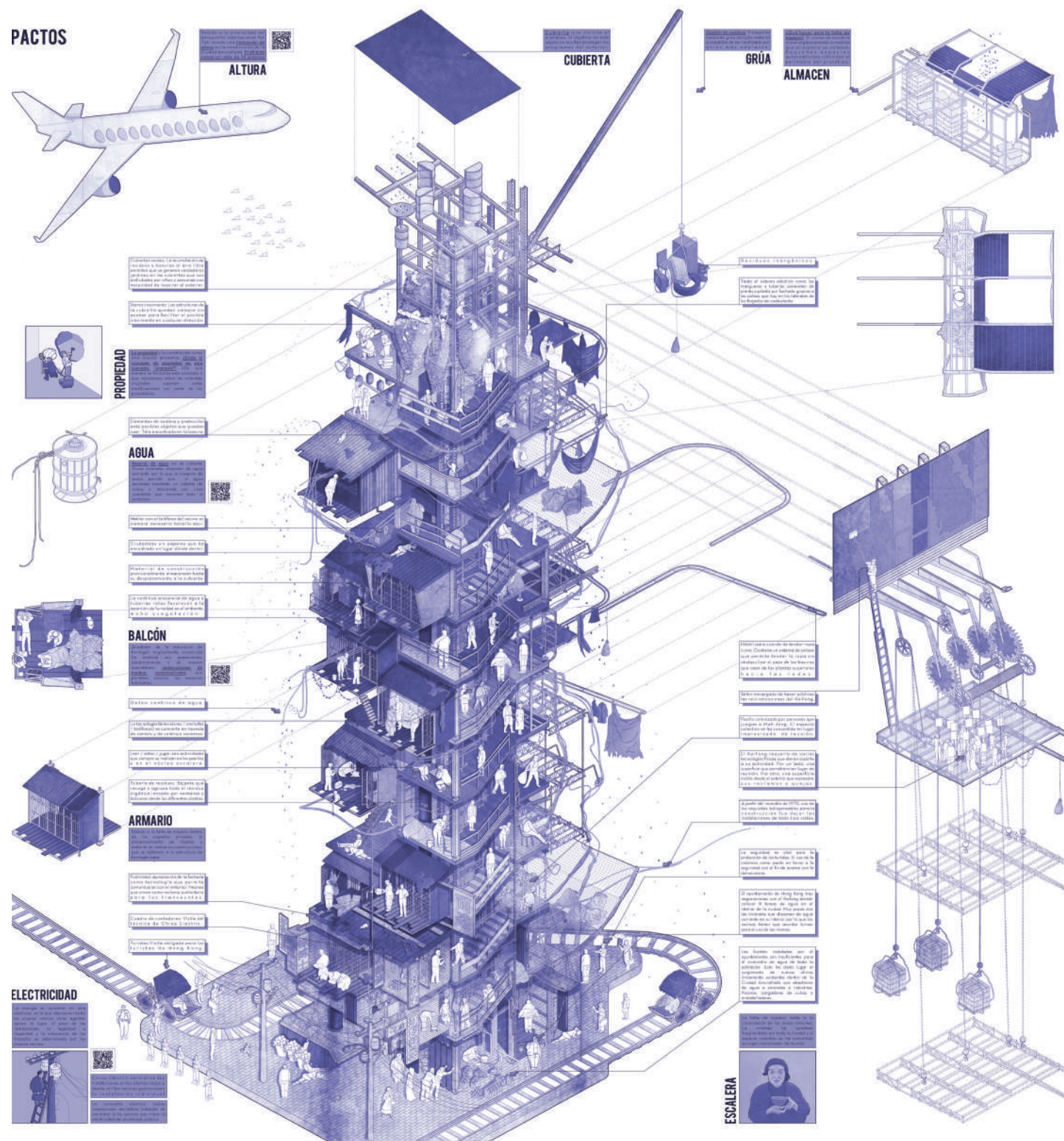AGUA
BALCÓN
ARMARIO
ELECTRICIDAD
ESCALERA

Fig.3 - A political Sample. Instead of addressing the issues by introducing new technologies, the proposal seeks to exaggerate and amplify those existing agreements (Authors, Universidad de Alicante, 2014).

neighbors - a place to fetch water, exchange news, or even share a cup of tea. Beyond their functional role, pipes, cable trays, hoses, and stacks of water containers began to play a fundamental role in shaping everyday spatial life, mediating both private and communal uses. This illustrates the principle of the part standing in for the whole: small infrastructural elements, when observed closely, reveal and structure the complex network of relationships that sustains the city's life.

A Lobotomy's Tale drawings are strongly inspired by three references: *Building Stories* by Chris Ware, *Graphic Anatomy* by Atelier Bow Wow, and the maps of Alexander von Humboldt. The first two, beyond their graphic similarities, are fundamental in this way of understanding architecture because they place the users, life itself, at least on the same level as the buildings, as Bow-Wow describes:

"They are drawings with an astonishing level of detail, where the diversity of the objects being studied becomes evident. The ability to distinguish each element within an illustration is proof that it has been observed, and at the same time proof that these objects guide the human gaze. Within a single drawing coexist the composition of rooms and components, the surrounding exterior environments, actions and locations, and the relationships between objects. This creates the appearance of multiple intentions full of contradictions and encounters, organically connected through specific architectural elements, and it produces unexpected phenomena of light and daily life in response to the physical constraints of each individual house. Without disregarding the places and people that form the initial conditions of each dwelling, these situations embody what could be called a practice of living space. Architecture that opens its eyes and ears to this diversity of spatial practices, encouraging and supporting them, constitutes the rediscovery of architecture itself" (Bow-Wow,2007, 3).

At the same time, Alexander von Humboldt's drawings represent natural, geographic, and climatic phenomena simultaneously within the same plane, establishing dialogues among elements at multiple scales. In all three cases, drawing not only records but connects. It makes visible the network of relationships between things that are usually observed separately. In the contemporary context, the digital drawing space amplifies this capacity even further. It invites us to think of infinite scale, where the site plan, the floor plan, the section, the wall detail, the furniture, or even the screw coexists within the same file, within the same expanded surface, where tags convey not only constructive materials and their properties but also the relationships among them. Everything is connected, everything forms part of the same graphic thought, inviting us to consider problems as a multi-scalar web.

CONCLUSIONS

Any historical event, when studied from the present, implies accepting a hegemonic discourse as valid, which is inevitably political and based on some form of exclusion. There are always other possibilities that have been suppressed and can be reactivated.

To think about the KWC today is to accept its condition as a ghost - a territory that no longer exists physically yet continues to inhabit the architectural imagination as a specter, a warning, and a possibility. This ghost embodies both absence and disappearance as well as the force of a myth: a past that shapes the present and that, potentially, can reappear in new forms. Far from simplistic interpretations that reduce the KWC to chaos, marginality, or romanticized resistance, it emerges as an extreme laboratory of coexistence, spatial negotiation, and informal creativity. Its material disappearance does not erase its potency as an object of thought; on the contrary, it makes it urgent to recognize the social, technical, and political dimensions that architecture often silences.

The notion of re-mediation allows this case to be approached not as an exercise in nostalgic reconstruction, but as a critical practice of care, translation, and activation of relationships. To remediate the KWC is not to rebuild it, but to give it voice and presence in new narratives, understanding architecture as mediation, communication, and knowledge. Drawing, archiving, and writing function here as instruments of both design and thought, making visible a complexity that cannot be reduced to traditional disciplinary categories.

A Lobotomy's Tale does not seek to close a memory, but to keep it in friction: a ghost that exists between past and present, myth and reality, ruin and archive, informal and academic. The KWC teaches us that architecture can be an open process of agreements, adaptations, and conflicts, where the unfinished, the marginal, and the bastard are not defects, but legitimate forms of knowledge and creation. This ghost reminds us that even what has disappeared can remain alive in practice and imagination, capable of reappearing and transforming the way we think, make, and inhabit architecture.

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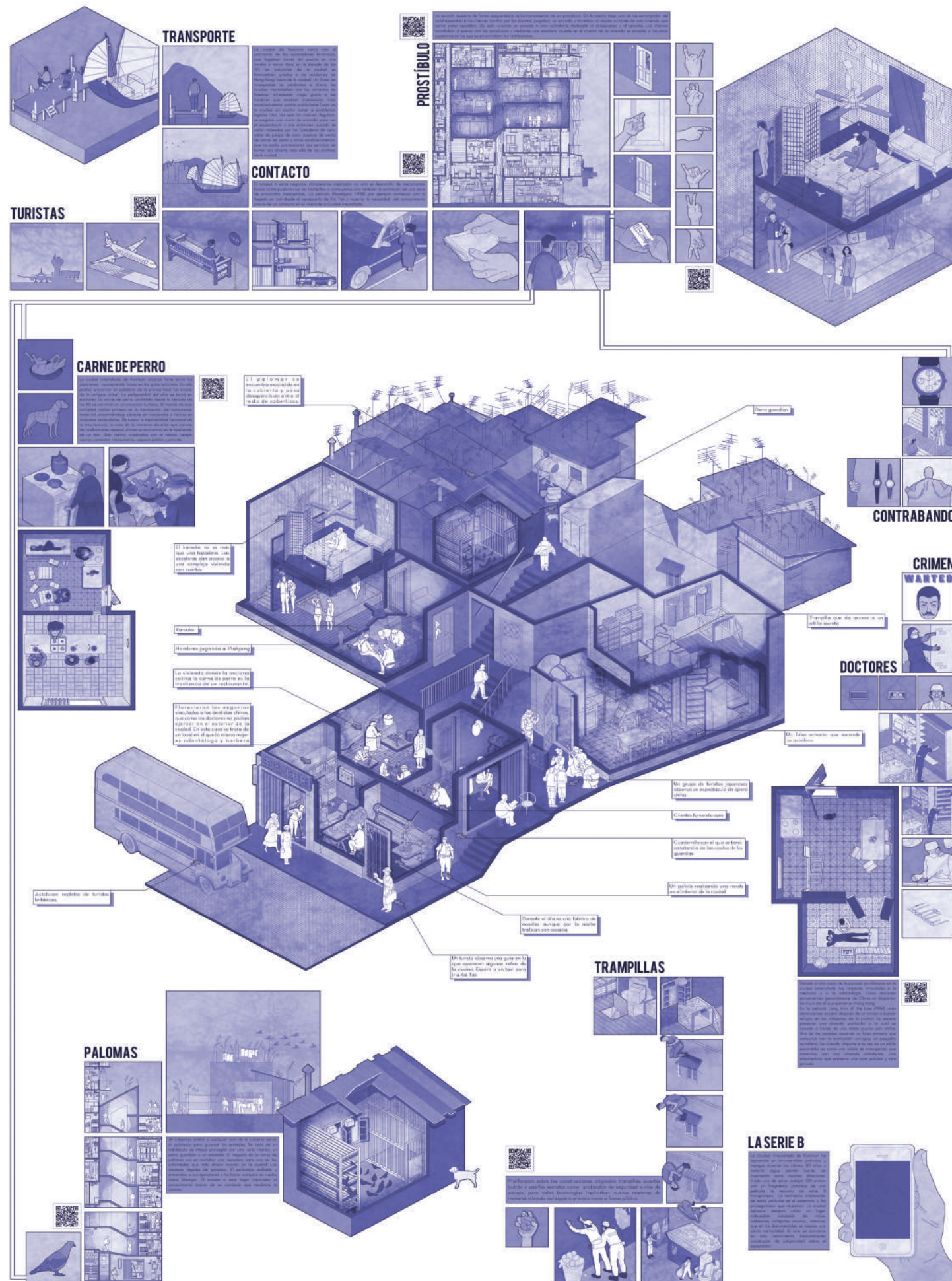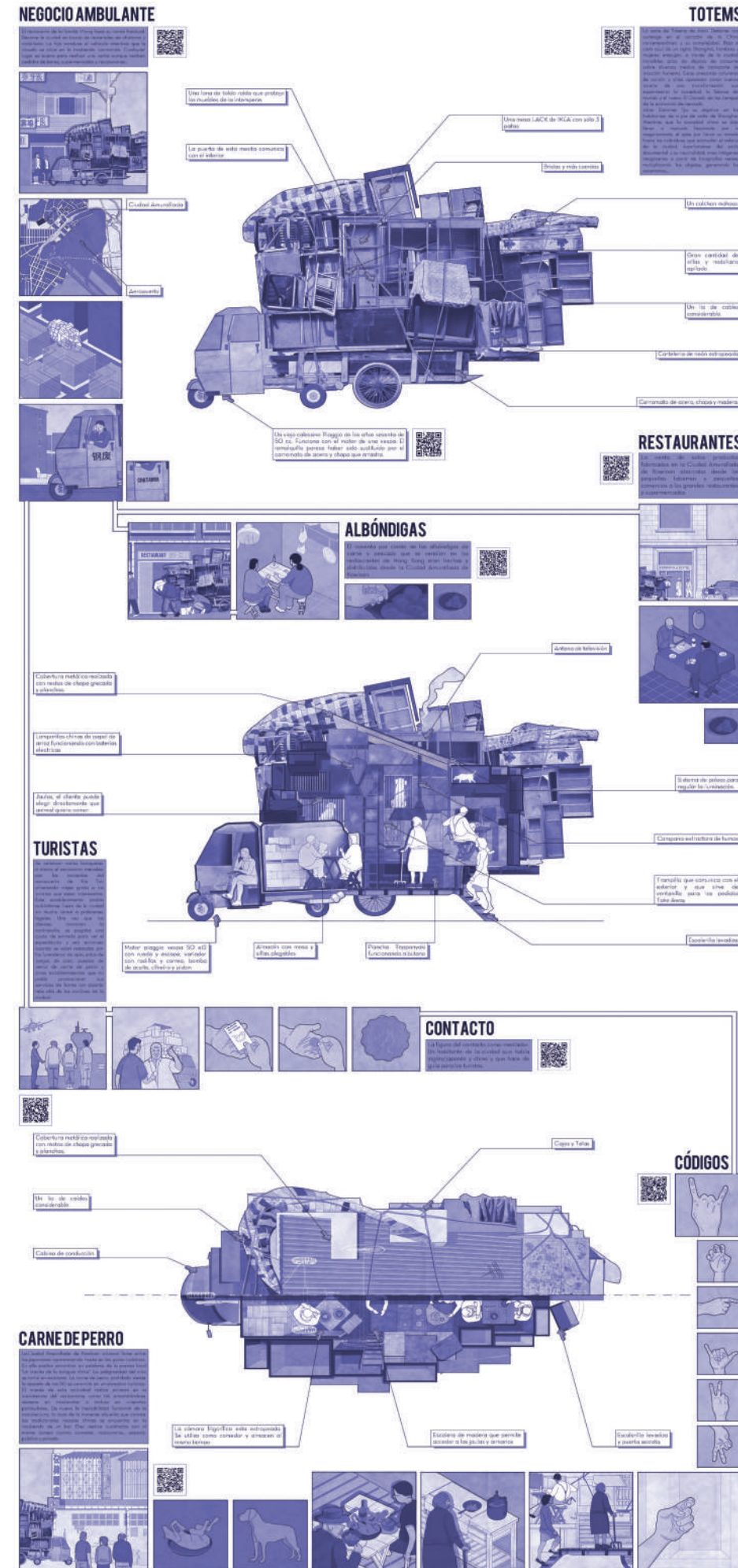WALKER, Enrique. Lo ordinario. Barcelona. Ed.Gustavo Gili, 2010

Fig.4 - An unstable architecture. The mapping illustrates how a fuzzy logic is applied to spaces, challenging the clear distinction between public and private realms (Authors, Universidad de Alicante, 2014).

NOTES

1. All of the documents illustrating this essay are part of the Master's project submitted at the University of Alicante in 2014, which was supervised by Miguel Mesa del Castillo and Enrique Nieto. The project received considerable attention at the time, being published in national and international architectural media, selected for the Archiprix Awards for the international exhibition, a finalist in the IsArch Awards, and included in the Spanish pavilion of the 2018 Venice Biennale Becoming.

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JIMENEZ INIESTA, David; PENALVER IZAGUIRRE, María Ángeles. FDP | A Lobotomy's Tale [en línea]. Alicante: More Than Green, 2014 [consulta: 20 septembre 2025]. Disponible en: https://www.morethangreen.es/en/fdp-a-lobotomys-tale-bv-mari-angeles-penalver-and-david-jimenez/

2. Lam, Sharon. "Far from the Western Fetish: The Kowloon Walled City Between Extraordinary Space and Normal Lives." The Funambulist, no. 16 (September-October 2018): Proletarian Fortresses. It should be noted that, as seen in this interview by Sharom Lam with one of its residents, KWC is an example of a more serious housing problem in Hong Kong, of which KWC is a hyperbole.

3. Bastard in the sense of being non-strictly canonical.

4. Venturini, Tommaso. Diving in Magma: How to Explore Controversies with Actor-Network Theory. Paris: CSI Working Papers Series, 2009. "Controversy mapping is the practice of developing tools to observe and describe debates - especially social ones -around techno-scientific issues. Initiated by Bruno Latour at the École des Mines de Paris, it was conceived as a toolkit to address the growing hybridization of disciplines and to follow conflicts that cross their boundaries. Rather than reinforcing traditional cause-and-effect models, it invites us to question them. Latour proposes a set of observational lenses - more guiding than methodological-designed not to dictate what to observe, but to help focus attention on the multiple layers that make up a controversy. These lenses are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive; they simply remind us that a complete observation is impossible without overlapping perspectives.

5. The term "fuzzy logic" is used here in reference to Bart Kosko's theory of graded, non-binary reasoning, applied metaphorically to the indeterminate and overlapping spatial practices observed in the building.

The Kouza and the Fountana

Gender, Coloniality, and the Afterlives of Water in Cyprus

νερό
αποικιακότητα
υλικότητα
Κύπρος
water
coloniality
critical fabulation
materiality
Cyprus

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Το άρθρο ιχνηλατεί την ζωή των υποδομών νερού στην Κύπρο μέσα από την *κούζα* και τη *φουντάνα*, διαβάζοντάς τες ως λεπτομέρειες όπου η υλικότητα, η καθημερινότητα και η εξουσία διασταυρώνονται. Από τις γυναίκες που ισορροπούν πήλινα δοχεία στο πηγάδι του χωριού έως τις χυτοσκυρόδετες βρύσες των βρετανικών προγραμμάτων ευημερίας, τα αντικείμενα αυτά λειτουργούν ως τεχνουργήματα και κοινωνικοί μεσολαβητές. Ο κόκκινος πηλός, η πορώδης επιφάνεια που «ιδρώνει», τα χειροποίητα σεμεδάκια και οι αποικιακές επιγραφές εμπεριέχουν μεταβαλλόμενα καθεστώτα εργασίας και κοινωνικότητας. Στην αποικιακή φωτογραφία, τα πηγάδια παρουσιάζονται ως χώροι «χυδαίων κουτσομπολιών», ενώ οι κινήσεις των γυναικών αισθητικοποιούνται ως επιπολαιότητα ή «ζωντανά αγάλματα». Στην Κύπρο του 20ού αιώνα, οι βρύσες με τα βασιλικά αρχικά μνημειοποιούν μια λογική «αρκετής προόδου», ενσωματώνοντας την αυτοκρατορία στις καθημερινές πράξεις πόσης και ανάπαυλας.

Το άρθρο προσεγγίζει το σχέδιο όχι ως αρχιτεκτονική λεπτομέρεια, αλλά ως μέθοδο αργής παρατήρησης και μαρτυρίας. Μέσω κριτικής αφήγησης και αρχειακών εικόνων, ιχνηλατούνται οι μικρο-υλικότητες του νερού, του πηλού, του σκυροδέματος και της φροντίδας. Σύντομα αφηγηματικά αποσπάσματα λειτουργούν ως κειμενικά σχέδια, αποδίδοντας χειρονομίες και συναντήσεις που απουσιάζουν από το αρχείο, ενώ οι φωτογραφίες και οι σύγχρονες καλλιτεχνικές πρακτικές λειτουργούν ως καταγραφές βιωμένων υποδομών. Σε αυτό το πλαίσιο, το άρθρο συνομιλεί με το έργο της Κυριακής Κώστα *Το Νερό Της* και με το *KUZA* του PASHIAS, που συμπλέκουν υποδομή, σώμα και μνήμη. Μαζί, οι πρακτικές αυτές επανατοποθετούν την κούζα και τη φουντάνα όχι ως στατικά κατάλοιπα, αλλά ως πορώδεις συμμετέχοντες της καθημερινής ζωής — σπόρους μνήμης, κοινότητας και φροντίδας.

This article traces the life of water infrastructures in Cyprus through the *kouza* and the *fountana*, read as details where materiality, everyday life, and power converge. From women balancing clay jars at the village well to the cast-concrete fountains of British welfare schemes, these objects function as both technical artefacts and social mediators. Their red clay, porosity, sweating surfaces, lace coverings, and concrete inscriptions materialize shifting regimes of labour, gendered sociability, and imperial authority. In colonial photography, wells were framed as sites of "vulgar gossip," women's gestures aestheticized as frivolous chatter or "living statues." In mid-twentieth-century Cyprus, fountains stamped with royal initials monumentalized "just enough" progress, embedding empire in everyday acts of drinking and pausing.

The article approaches drawing not as architectural detailing but as a mode of slow observation and testimony: tracing, through speculative narrative, archival images, and more-than-human perspectives, the micro-materialities of water, clay, concrete, and care. Short vignettes act as textual drawings, responding to archival silences without assuming the voices of unnamed women, while photographs and contemporary artwork function as drawn records of lived infrastructures. In this sense, the work resonates with Kyriaki Costa's *Her/Its Water*, which catalogues fountains as lived archives, and PASHIAS' *KUZA*, which collapses vessel and body in a performance of continuity. Together, these histories and practices reposition the *kouza* and the *fountana* not as static relics but as porous participants in everyday life—seeds of memory, commons, and care.

MATERIAL HISTORY

In the photo albums of the Public Information Office of the Republic of Cyprus there is a treasure trove of information that is otherwise unavailable in the written reports and official surveys of engineers and bureaucrats of the British colonial government of Cyprus. Under the general title "Water Supply and Irrigation 1950s" in the Water Development Department folder, one such photograph instantly shocked and excited me. After years of researching in dusty typewritten documents compiled by British white men—and later Greek Cypriot men—on the history of late colonial water infrastructure construction, I refused to believe that the pervasive image of the Cypriot woman in traditional headdress balancing a terracotta pot on her shoulders is completely absent from the technical histories of water infrastructure. The iconography surrounding water in Cyprus, shaped first through British colonial documentation and later through state-building after independence, circulates across official and unofficial archives, and across the material histories of the everyday objects themselves. This initial encounter with unnamed women and their terracotta vessels reveal how material traces, even when fragmentary, unsettle the official histories that omit them.

Against this backdrop, this article examines the *kouza* and the *fountana* not merely as vernacular artefacts but as micro-sites where gendered labour, imperial technopolitics and the everyday practices of Cypriot life become materially entangled. Drawing from architectural history, postcolonial critique, and more-than-human feminist theory, the aim is not to reconstruct a singular origin story, but to trace how these artefacts operate across archives, photographs, infrastructures and gestures. Their materiality reveals the limits of the colonial record, what Ann Laura Stoler (2009) calls the "epistemic anxieties" of the archive, while also opening the possibility of what Ariella Aïsha Azoulay (2019) terms "potential

history," an unlearning of imperial frames in order to imagine relations otherwise.

Within these gaps, the article employs speculative vignettes narrated by objects or environments themselves. Following Saidiya Hartman's (2008) method of "critical fabulation" these vignettes are not speaking for women whose identities remain unknowable, and particularly Turkish Cypriot women whose presence has been doubly obscured by colonial and nationalist historiographies. Instead, these constructed images and narratives activate material, spatial and archival evidence to articulate relational histories that official records cannot name.

The Cypriot woman with the *kouza* itself—the terracotta vessel likely named after the ancient Greek word for head "κύβη" which literally denominates its bodily design elements—entered the symbolic repertoire of the Republic of Cyprus shortly after independence. On the Cypriot one-pound (or *lira*), one side depicted the portrait of a woman in traditional attire and the other side depicted the *kouza* alongside other traditional handcrafted artifacts of Cyprus. Examining the lira's material and design history, immediately raises some important questions: who designed these images, and what meaning do they encode? The official website of the Central Bank of Cyprus provides a description of all the depicted figures on all the banknotes but does not name the designer (Central Bank of Cyprus n.d.). İsmet Vehit Güney, the Turkish Cypriot artist who designed the official flag of the Republic of Cyprus after successfully winning a competition in 1960, was asked to designed the new coat of arms and the official banknotes of the Republic. Yet, according to a 2006 newspaper article, he was never compensated and eventually pursued legal action at the European Court of Human Rights (Cyprus Mail 2006).

This episode underscores the broader skewed official historiography of Cyprus, shaped predominantly by Greek Cypriot

authors and largely omitting Turkish Cypriot contributions and labour. Scholars have demonstrated how nationalist narratives and the politics of memory structured these exclusions (Papadakis 2009, Papadakis 2008, Hatay and Papadakis 2012, Constantinou 2008, Bryant and Papadakis 2012, Psaltis and others 2011, Bryant 2004). Within this context, the symbolic economy of the banknotes becomes more revealing. High-denomination notes privileged ancient Hellenic heritage: the twenty-pound note depicted the Aphrodite of Soloi, the Kyrenia ship, and *Petra tou Romiou* (in Greek, translated as the "Boulder of Romios") denominating both its "Greekness" and sanctity since the stone was supposedly thrown into the sea by a legendary Greek hero.[1] By contrast, the one-pound note featured the *kouza* made by unnamed potters and carried by unnamed women. This visual hierarchy, even if unintentional on the part of the designer, reflects a tacit ranking of heritage and gendered labour: Hellenism elevated, vernacular material culture feminised and diminished.

This symbolic ordering mirrors the broader processes through which the Cypriot past was selectively monumentalized after independence. And yet, beneath these official narratives, the everyday objects omitted from such hierarchies like vessels, wells, and fountains, hold histories that exceed their assigned cultural value. The following section turns to the *kouza*, an artefact most deeply entangled with these contradictory histories of labour, representation, and colonial capture.

THE KOUZA

Approaching the archival photographs of women carrying *kouzes* requires acknowledging the limits of my own positionality as a Greek-speaking Cypriot scholar. My access to Turkish-language archives, to communal memory within Turkish Cypriot contexts, and to the lived experiences of the women captured in these photographs is certainly constrained. For this reason, the speculative vignette

accompanying the first two images does not attempt to imagine the interior life of these women. Following Azoulay's (2009) call to "unlearn imperialism," the narrator is the *kouza* itself for photographs likely depicting Greek Cypriot women, followed by the *well* for those taken in Lefka, a predominantly Turkish Cypriot village. This method does not claim to recover lost voices, but it allows the infrastructural and more-than-human elements in the photograph to articulate what the colonial archive leaves unsaid.

The *kouza* is a particularly eloquent object through which to consider these tensions. Made of terracotta in pottery centres such as Lapithos, Varosha, Foini or Kornos, it was designed for balance: its rounded belly tapering to a narrow neck, light enough to rest on the shoulder or head, heavy enough to stabilise once full. Domestic *kouzes* typically carried a single handle; larger *stamnes* used for transport had two handles and a broader base. Their porosity allowed water to cool by evaporation. Inside the home, *kouzes* stood upright in *stamnostates* or *kotypostates* (handcrafted wooden stands) and were often covered with lace cloth made by women to keep insects away (Fig.1). Today, both Cypriot lace and traditional pottery vessels are listed in the Europeana digital heritage database, marking their continued presence as part of European vernacular material culture (Europeana 2025).

Handcrafted by village potters, the *kouza* embodies both everyday necessity and craftsmanship, linking women's domestic labour to artisanal skill. It is at once a tool of survival, a colonial prop, and later a symbol for state development and of Cypriot cultural heritage. As such, it carries a layered biography: the weight of water, the intimacy of touch, the burden of representation.

John Thomson's *Through Cyprus with the Camera* (1879) is where the *kouza* most explicitly enters the colonial photographic canon. Across many of his plates, women appear with terracotta vessels,
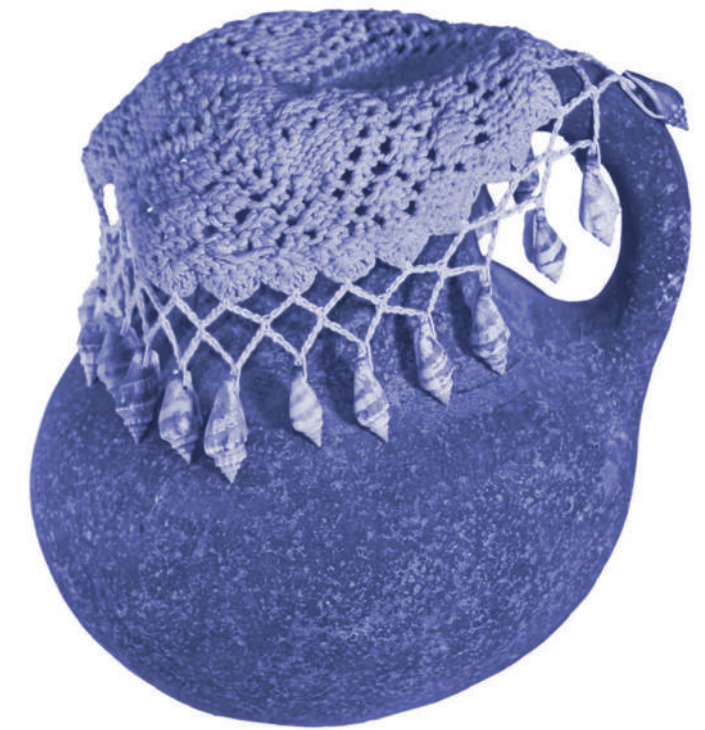
posed, arranged, and captioned as types. In *A Water-Carrier* (Fig.2) the sitter braces the *kouza* against her hip; Thomson's caption links the vessel to potteries in Varosha and to ancient funerary jars, situating her within a timeless ethnographic tableau. In *A Woman of the Labouring Class* (Fig.3) the same woman is re-posed against a plain wall, her identity split to satisfy two typological categories: the humble female labourer and the rustic water-bearer. Her headdress and jewelry now arranged more "artfully," serve to authenticate the scene as evidence of Cypriot "tradition" as well as female vanity. Yet her gaze shifts slightly between photographs: in the first image, the *kouza* seems to provide her the courage to look directly toward the lens; in the second, her head tilts away, as if withdrawing from the camera's claim.

The anonymity of these women is not incidental but symptomatic of how the archive operates. State

archives catalogue the vessel, the village, the infrastructure—but not the woman. And yet the archival record does not always cooperate with its own omissions. During an informal conversation at the Water Development Department, a clerk showed me one of the most widely reproduced images of a young girl with a *kouza*. In trying to identify her, he discovered that one of their former colleagues was her son, and still, he could not recall either name. The image circulates endlessly as evidence of "tradition," while the subjects themselves recede into anonymity. This moment exposed the tension between visual ubiquity and historical erasure, and clarified why I turned back toward the "safe zone" of state archives during my doctoral research: institutional documents may satisfy evaluative expectations, but they also perpetuate forms of unknowing (Stoler 2009). Hartman's "critical fabulation" offers strategies for narrating lives that appear only in fragments (Hartman 2008). Azoulay
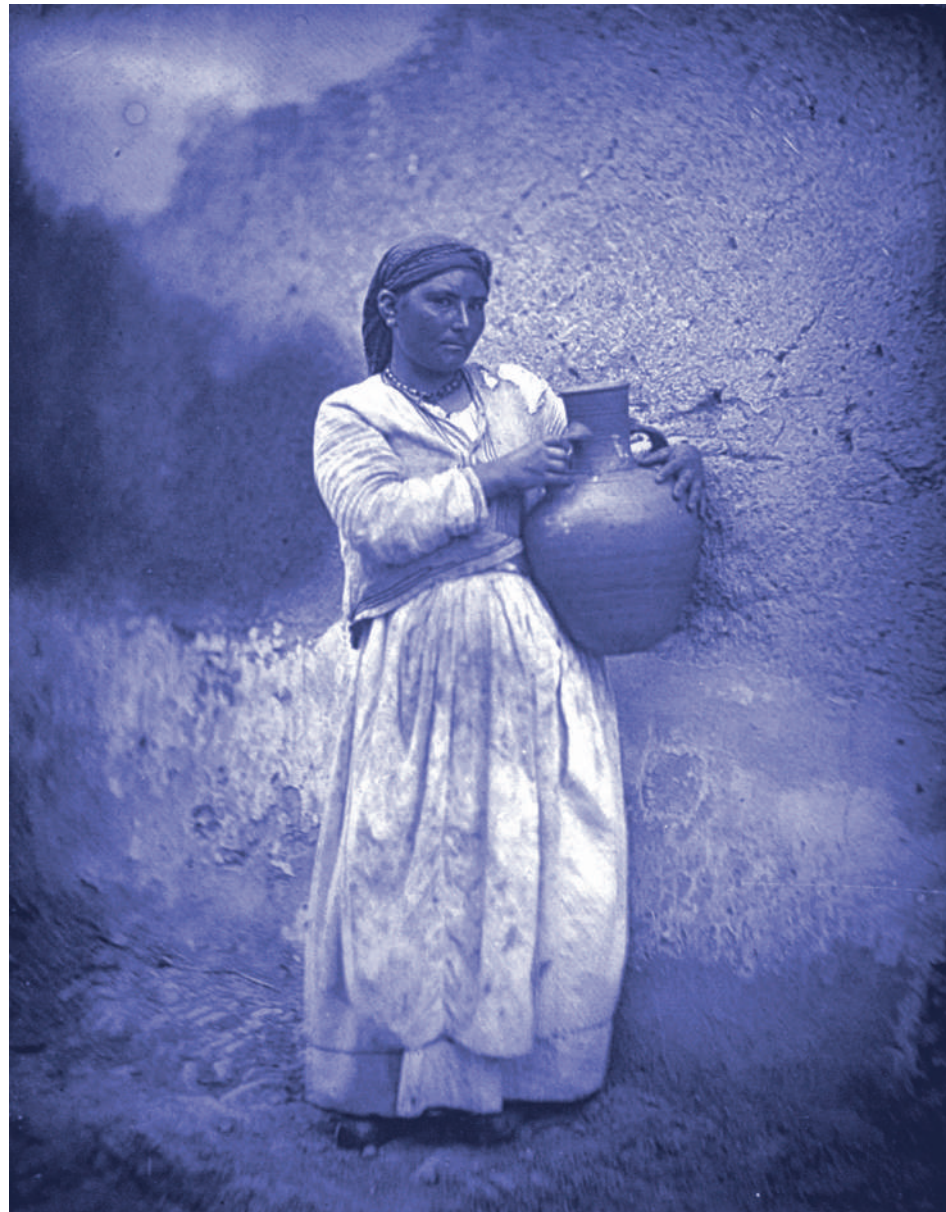
I was soil, shaped in Varosha, turned by hands that knew the weight of water and the patience of earth. I rest against her shoulder where the fabric is already worn smooth, following a curve we have learned together. The sun warms my surface; her palm steadies my neck. I do not know her name, yet her stride is familiar: firm, practised, in rhythm with the path. In the photograph they see only a type, but I remember the texture of her skin, the scent and sound of well-water cooling inside my belly, and the quiet knowledge carried between us. She carried me through fields and footpaths long before the photograph, and long after it was taken.

Fig.2 - (Left) "A water carrier." Fig.3 - (Right) "Woman of the labouring class." From *Through Cyprus with the camera*, in the autumn of 1878 (1878). Courtesy of the University of St Andrews Libraries and Museums. ID: PhotoDS54-T5-18b and ID: PhotoDS54-T5-19a.

reminds us that photographs are not static objects but ongoing events that bind viewers to responsibilities (Azoulay 2019). Positioned within these frameworks, my speculative vignette aims not to reconstruct biography but to attune our attention to the material and relational textures that the archive allows us to glimpse. They open a space to listen differently, much as contemporary artists such as Kyriaki Costa and PASHIAS return to fountains and vessels not as mute artefacts, but as agents of memory and care. This vignette is followed, in the next section, by the Lefka photographs—*Women at a Well* and *Coming from the Well*—where the narrator shifts from *kouza* to *well*, allowing the infrastructure itself

to speak across communal lines in a context where the identities of the women, likely Turkish Cypriot based on period attire described by foreign travelers logs at the time, cannot be ethically narrated.

AT THE WELL: LABOUR, GESTURE, AND THE POLITICS OF LOOKING

Approaching the archival images taken in Lefka requires acknowledging the layered gazes that have shaped their afterlives. The women pictured in these photographs are almost certainly Turkish Cypriot. Their presence is mediated first through Thomson's

lens, then through the nationalist selectivity of Greek Cypriot historiography, and finally through the limited access I have as a Greek-speaking researcher to Turkish-language archives, oral histories, and community memory. For this reason, the speculative vignette accompanying the Lefka images is narrated not by the photographed women but by the well: a structure made of earth, mudbrick, and water, positioned at the centre of communal life.

This shift recognizes the ethical limits of imagining women's interiority, while still allowing the photograph to be re-read through the material and environmental presences that grounded it.

Fig.4 - (Left) "Women at a well, Levka." Fig.5 - (Right) "Coming from the well, Levka." From: John Thomson, *Through Cyprus with the camera, in the autumn of 1878* (1878). Courtesy of the University of St Andrews Libraries and Museums, ID: PhotoDS54-T5-33 and ID: PhotoDS54-T5-34.

I am built of mudbrick mixed with the very water I hold. Each day their footsteps approach: measured, habitual, accompanied by kouzes clacking against stone and voices carried through the linen folds of white. The photographer names none of them, calling one "Aphrodite," but I remember only labour— the leaning in, the lifting, the balance regained before the path home. Whether they arrive in small groups or descend alone toward the village, their gestures repeat across generations. I keep no record of origins or tongues; only the echo of hands drawing water and the traces left as they depart.

Thomson frames these scenes as ethnographic tableaux: women gathered in a courtyard, *kouzes* at their feet, one bending to draw water, others pausing mid-conversation. In *Women at a Well (Lefka)* (Fig.4), the accompanying text acknowledges them as "the recognized drawers of water," only to trivialize their sociability as "vulgar gossip" (Thomson 1879). Labour is named, yet diminished; everyday exchange is observed, yet dismissed. The well becomes a stage set on which the colonial photographer arranges gendered gestures according to a ready-made script of rustic Mediterranean femininity.

In *Coming from the Well (Lefka)* (Fig.5), the dynamic shifts again. The woman is captured mid-motion, her *kouza* braced at her

hip, but Thomson's caption ignores her labour entirely. Instead, he aestheticizes her as "a living model of some Greek statue found in Soloi," drawing her into a pastoral Hellenic imaginary and a sexualized female body of the goddess of love Aphrodite. Here, the *kouza* ceases to be a tool of survival and becomes instead a signifier of timelessness. The complexity of the village, the multireligious and multilingual life of Lefka, and the specificities of women's work vanish behind a classical allegory that served the tastes of a British imperial audience.

These representational manoeuvres must be understood within a broader colonial and nationalist context. As British traveller Esmé Scott-Stevenson (1880) observed around the same period, many Muslim Cypriot women wore long white garments covering their bodies, revealing only one eye. Her description not only exoticized them but also shows how dress, embodiment, and visibility became coded along lines of gender, religion, and class. When viewed alongside Thomson's images, her account illuminates the broader imaginative landscape through which these women were rendered legible—or illegible—to Western observers.

Against these flattenings, the vignette that follows is voiced by the well itself. Built from hand-shaped mudbrick, fed by groundwater, surrounded by *kouzes* resting on stone, the well stands as an

infrastructural witness to cross-communal rhythms of fetching, pausing, greeting, and returning home. It acknowledges that the archive cannot recover, names, kinship networks, personal histories, while refusing to substitute them with imagined speech.

The two Lefka photographs expose how the *kouza* was repeatedly mobilized as a device of meaning-making: sometimes evidence of supposed female frivolity, sometimes the accessory that completed a pastoral Hellenic fantasy, hence European, justifying British colonial presence. In both cases, the vessel was instrumentalized to stabilise narratives that were not the women's own. Missing in both cases is the embodied knowledge of balancing, bending, waiting, and walking; the choreography of wrists and backs; the sociability of pausing and exchanging news. What Thomson's captions dismiss as trivial chatter constituted, in fact, the dense sociality of communal life.

This misrecognition continues beyond the nineteenth century. Thomson's *Through Cyprus with the Camera* (1878) is not only an early photographic record but also a canonized one. He is celebrated as a pioneer in the British State Archives, as seen in the UK National Archives' 2020 article that hails him as a "Victorian pioneer of photojournalism" without acknowledging his entanglement with imperial projects (Howells

2020). Similarly, in Cyprus, cultural institutions still exhibit his photographs as nostalgic glimpses of a bygone era. As Philippou has argued, such uncritical reproduction sustains a romanticized vision of Cyprus while overlooking the colonial implications embedded in Thomson's work (Philippou 2013). Recognizing Thomson's canonization means recognizing the institutional apparatus that continues to consecrate colonial vision as heritage.

Yet, against this canonization, the everyday gestures that Thomson trivialized, endure in aspects of tradition and contemporary cultural creativity. The Cypriot traditional dance of the *kouza* still performed at school events and festivals, stylises the act of water-carrying into choreography: jars balanced on shoulders, women circling, pausing to gossip, to flirt, to laugh. What Thomson called "vulgar gossip" becomes, in the dance, collective artistry and cultural memory. The entanglements between vessel, body, and gesture are also taken up in contemporary artistic practice. In *KUZA* (2024), PASHIAS performs with his head replaced by a fragment of amphora, collapsing vessel and body into one (Fig.6). He is inspired by the very origin of the word which literally refers to the human head and illustrates the parallel associations move beyond the visual, equating the body and the amphora with the universality of carrying vessels, safekeeping and

Fig.6 - (Left) promotional photo for KUZA by PASHIAS, 2024. Fig.7 - (Right) photograph by Dimitris Venizelos at the live KUZA performance by PASHIAS at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, 2024. Images courtesy of the artist.

spilling substances, materialities, ideas, experiences and cultural values (Fig.6). His curator Dimitris Venizelos sees the part-human part-clay figure as both proof of the material continuity of collective human presence literally embedded in fingerprints of man-made clay, that remind us of our own corporeal and material existence: from the one hand we strive to satisfy the bodily need for water by containing it and, on the other, we meticulously try to imbue ourselves in handcrafted works of art which defy the passage of time. Where Thomson's camera immobilized the anonymous water-bearer into a "living statue," PASHIAS reanimates the vessel as a precarious extension

of the body itself—porous, fragile, resistant to containment.

If Thomson framed women with clay pots as typological props of a fading tradition, *KUZA* insists instead on continuity: the vessel as both burden and potential, a site of identity and becoming. In some of his previous work, PAHIAS refers back to the choreography of the traditional dance and song of the *kouza*, both in *Waiting* (2023) and *Mother, send me to the water* (2023), where the strenuous activity of carrying the vessel on his shoulders is literally illustrated in a video artwork where the female body has been replaced by a male one[2] (Fig.8).

Waiting,
Video artwork for book presentation
curated by Daphne Nikita,
A. G. Leventis Gallery

2023

2023

Mother, send me to the water,
Installation for group exhibition "Cruel Spring"
curated by Daphne Nikita,
Centre of Contemporary Art Diatopos

Fig.8 - Excerpt rom "Artwork Timeline Theme: Amphora and Pottery, 2017", by PASHIAS, Images courtesy of the arstist.

Fig.9 - A photograph of another fountain with the inscription "ER 1956", designating again year of construction and Queen Elizabeth as the benefactor of this Turkish Cypriot village in the Mesaoria plains. Source: PIO photographic archive, under the folder "Water Supply and Irrigation 1950s", 28A-0055-0002, captioned "Mora village water supply."

This gesture does not erase the longstanding history of Cypriot women embedded in the water vessel or its implied feminine character, but it rather subverts the male body's own stereotypical perception of masculine strength, only so that its fragility and fluidity is again encapsulated in an installation depicting the broken vessel and the spilled water.

The negotiated gender identity embodied in water vessels and architecture also resonate with the case of the mid-twentieth-century "gossip squares" designed by Doxiadis Associates in Iraq. As Pyla has shown, the inclusion of such squares signalled an unusual recognition: that informal sociability like chatting, pausing, exchanging news, was indispensable to community life (Pyla 2013). Yet, the very term "gossip square" soon became problematic. Doxiadis himself, a Greek male modernist, later forbade its use, unwilling to let his professional authority be associated with the feminized and Orientalized connotations of "gossip" (Pyla 2013). What began as a fleeting acknowledgement of everyday practices not unlike those around Cypriot fountains, was quickly disavowed in favour of modernist respectability.

The irony is telling. In Thomson's photographs of Cyprus, wells are described as sites of "vulgar gossip," where women's labour and sociability were dismissed as trivial. In Baghdad, decades later, Doxiadis initially elevated gossip into a spatial category, only to erase it from his vocabulary when its gendered and cultural associations threatened to undermine his authority. In both cases—the *kouza* at the well or the fountain, the gossip square in the plan—women's practices of sociability were simultaneously recognized as vital and marginalized as improper.

Across these histories, the well, the square, and the fountain all function as small public stages where sociability and labour blur into one another. By allowing the well to speak in the vignette, this section reframes the Lefka photographs not as inert ethnographic evidence but as encounters shaped by material infrastructures, gendered labour, and contested ways of looking. This reframing also prepares the ground for the next section on the fountain, where similar tensions between visibility, public life, colonial aesthetics, and everyday practice unfold under mid-twentieth-century British welfare and development projects.

THE FOUNTAIN: COLONIAL DETAIL, EVERYDAY LABOUR, AND THE AFTERLIVES OF WELFARE MODERNITY

If the *kouza* brings us close to the individual body, the fountain brings us close to the collective. The mid-twentieth-century public fountain, particularly those built under the British Colonial Development and Welfare (CDW) schemes and the early years of the Republic, is a different kind of micro-infrastructure: cast-concrete, stamped with royal initials, positioned at the threshold between state authority and everyday sociability. These fountains exemplify what this journal's call identifies as "material moments that bring potential interactions into being." Their details, a date, a cypher, a small spout, a shallow basin and doric capital-like addition to its top, tell a story of political intent, bureaucratic pragmatism, and the rhythms of daily life.

Public fountains and their architectural orchestrations have long been part of Cyprus' urban and rural fabric. As Anna Marangou shows in her work on the Pedieos River, the *fountana* or *çeşme* once structured the social life of both city and countryside (Marangou 2018). Fountains were often named after benefactors, landmarks or neighborhoods like "Tzoutzou," "Mavros," "Karydia," "Kamarouthkion," signifying the communal relationships that formed around them. Their religious significance was also marked, particularly in Muslim practice, where fountains provided ritual water and commemorated piety. This perhaps explains why, as Marangou notes, so few fountains survive today in the southern part of Nicosia: they were deliberately erased in the effort to de-Ottomanize the urban landscape (Marangou 2018).

Some infrastructures carried entire neighbourhoods in their

I stop in front of the fountain in Aglantzia. The initials GR are still inscribed, the crown of a monarch pressed into its concrete skin. Once it stood as a monument of progress—cast, dated, inaugurated, photographed. Now it is painted over in fresh grey, its tap dry, nestled between a basil in a plastic pot and a bay laurel seemingly sprouting from the cracks of the well-maintained house in the poorer side of town. No sound of flowing water, no queue of women with kouzes, no gathering in the shade, no chatter. It is part of the narrow street with no pavement, absorbed into the rhythms of the suburb which today hosts a jazz festival. And yet, someone cared enough to paint it. Someone still plants flowers beside it. The fountain no longer distributes water, but it still gathers traces of maintenance, of attachment, of memory. I wonder what's the name of her carer.

Fig.10 - A photograph of a fountain with the inscription "GR 1951" in Aglantzia, designating the year that it was constructed as well as the 'benefactor', in this case King George. Source: The author, 2022.

orbit. At Saman Bahçe in Nicosia, a hexagonal limestone water tank once stood at the centre of a small square. Local tradition held that women would clean it annually, a ritual act of maintenance that reinforced communal bonds (Marangou 2018). The neighbourhood itself, constructed by the Evkaf between 1918–1925 for low-income families, has often been described by some as Cyprus' first social housing project (Doratli and others, 2002). Its grid-like yet intimate urbanism reflected a hybrid of traditional courtyard architecture and modernist planning, and the fountain/tank at its centre, made explicit the association of water, hygiene, and vitality with benevolent governance. Later additions by Photiades and Sons in 1955, in collaboration with the colonial administration, further entangled Ottoman religious foundations, British developmentalism, and modernist aesthetics (Marangou 2018).

Yet, as Sioulas and Pyla have argued for the Omorphita housing estate (1944), these schemes cannot be understood purely as stylistic attempts at a "modern vernacular" (Sioulas and Pyla 2018). They were embedded in the politics of the Colonial Development and Welfare Acts: efforts to pacify rising nationalism, contain unionism, and display the benevolence of the colonial state. The architectural negotiation between "tradition" and "modernity" reflected in a semi-open space like the iliakos here, a fountain for domestic water supply there—mirrored broader negotiations of domesticity, modernity and political control. Water infrastructures, whether central tanks or fountains, were part of this contested terrain. Today, many of these cast-concrete fountains remain scattered across villages and towns in Cyprus. Their royal initials and stamped dates still signal their colonial origins, even when the water no longer flows (see Fig.9 and 10).

By the late 1940s and 1950s, colonial processes of progress and development culminated in the Greater Nicosia Water Supply Scheme, which rolled out cast-concrete fountains across Cypriot villages. These were striking in their austerity: small rectangular blocks stamped with the date of construction and the monogram of the sovereign, GR (Georgius Rex) or ER (Elizabeth Regina). Where Ottoman and Evkaf fountains were made from local limestone, hand carved with ornate inscriptions praising benefactors and invoking divine blessing, the colonial fountains monumentalized "just-enough" progress through imperial cyphers. They were both modest and monumental: utilitarian taps concretized as urban artefacts,

anchoring sociability while projecting authority and a mediated modernity for Cypriot colonial subjects.

As in continental modernism where women (and children as also non-masculine presences) were used as props to convince of their usefulness, benevolence and modernity, the photographic representation of infrastructures relied heavily on gendered staging.[3] In one newspaper report of Governor Turnbull's visit to the Greek Cypriot village of Patriki (1951), the headline proclaimed: "This new Scheme will Aid the WOMEN WHO FETCH THE WATER" (capitals in original) (Cyprus Review 1949). A photo showed Turnbull ceremonially opening a tap, declaring, "What pleases me about your water supply is the way it helps you womenfolk." Next to him, his wife received flowers from a schoolgirl—both silent props in a tableau of benevolence. Another newspaper reported the same event under the title: "The Men Talk but the Women Fetch the Water" (The Cypriot 1949). As in Thomson's 1878 photographs, women's presence validated the infrastructure, but their voices were excluded from its narration.

In a more recent article citing the same event and a similar discussion, a counter photograph is unearthed from the archive to confirm the active involvement of Cypriot women in the construction of not just fountains, but large-scale dams (Michael 2024). On the one hand, this indeed rightfully claims space in the collective imaginary to subvert the stereotypical depiction of Cypriot women in traditional attire, carrying a *kouza* and performing domestic duties by establishing them as active members of manual labour. Yet, it still relies on a problematic framework: a perceived "male" occupation such as construction is mobilized as proof of women's modernity and progressiveness. To demonstrate that Cypriot women were "more than what we think today," we continue to fall back on the very narratives we wish to destabilise, reproducing hierarchies

between domesticity and labour, "tradition" and "modernity." And by "we," I realize, I am referring to historians, artists, and myself included—those of us who are committed to feminism not only as a theoretical lens but also as a practical methodology.

The challenge, then, is not only to retrieve women's participation in infrastructures but also to rethink the very categories through which participation is measured. Why should labour be legible only when it resembles "male" occupations such as construction? Why should the carrying of water, the tending of fountains, the maintenance of tanks, or the everyday sociabilities that unfolded around them not count as infrastructures of care?

This is where ecofeminist and hydrofeminist perspectives can be particularly generative. They allow us to move beyond the binaries of domestic/technical or female/male labour and to recognize infrastructures of care, maintenance, and sociability as equally vital. Astrida Neimanis has argued that water is not a passive backdrop but a medium that binds bodies in "watery intimacies" (Neimanis 2017). Farhana Sultana shows how water infrastructures encode colonial and gendered relations of power and care, while hydrofeminist scholarship has emphasized how water mediates ecological as well as geopolitical survival (Sultana 2009, Neimanis 2017). Here, care is understood as infrastructural labour in its own right, a notion central to ecofeminist scholarship. From this perspective, the *kouza* and the fountain are not ancillary props but porous participants in social life—sweating, cooling, leaking, commemorating. Thinking with water and clay as more-than-human actors resists the finality of archival silence; even when names are lost, vessels, flows, and materials continue to speak.

Such approaches also resonate with contemporary artistic practices in Cyprus, which treat water infrastructures not as mute relics but as living participants in memory and care. Artist Kyriaki Costa has

drawn attention to the afterlives of such infrastructures. In *Her Water*, she catalogued Nicosia's fountains, troughs, wells, and tanks not as nostalgic relics but as lived artefacts that shape memory and sociability (Costa 2016). By photographing them in their present condition whitewashed, dry, overgrown, or still in use, Costa highlights the quiet forms of maintenance and attachment that persist around them (Fig.11). Her later participatory project *Head & Hand – Foun[d]ain* (2021–22) extended this archive into an artistic activism, calling for fountains to be restored as accessible commons. In this sense, her work resonates with the Aglantzia fountain: both insist that infrastructures continue to matter, even in disuse, and that care itself—repainting, planting, gathering—is a form of keeping water infrastructures alive.

A contemporary example from Aglantzia, which I photographed in 2024, attests to this layered material afterlife (Fig.10). The fountain, with its "GR" cypher still visible beneath a fresh coat of grey paint, stands amidst a row of potted plants and encroaching ruderal vegetation. Once a symbol of moderate colonial progress and a node of village sociability, it now sits unceremoniously on the edge of a busy road in a prominent suburb of capital Nicosia, neither preserved as heritage nor fully abandoned. Its material presence reveals how imperial infrastructures persist in altered urban ecologies, absorbed into the rhythms of everyday suburban life. My short note when I took the photograph, is presented here as another speculative vignette, this time acknowledging my own positionality directly, as someone who has an intimate knowledge of water infrastructures as an architectural historian. The afterlives of the fountain remind us that infrastructures do not simply disappear once they cease to function. They persist as social and material artefacts, folded into new urban and suburban landscapes. Their imperial symbolism is eroded, repurposed, or overwritten by everyday acts of care.

May 11, 2015

Subject: Proposal for the maintenance of fountains and their accessibility to the public. Proposal for the placement of drinking fountains for the stray animals of Nicosia.

Dear Mr. Mayor,

Thank you for your reply to my request and for the useful information you provided concerning the bodies and persons responsible for the suggested fountains. I am delighted that you recognize the importance of my venture and are willing to contribute to future actions related to it.

In this light, I would appreciate if you could examine my proposal for the continuation of the actions for the reactivation of the fountains after the completion of 'Waterways. Its water: Taps and sources of Nicosia'. As the material elements in questions have social and cultural significance and constitute evidence of the heritage of our city, their restoration and return to the citizens would be a worthwhile endeavour. As restored monuments of Nicosia, accessible to the public and integrated in our everyday life, the fountains would invigorate the current image of our city and life within it.

This project could be carried out with the help of grants, European programs and a symbolic donation from the municipality. I am personally committed in finding ways and sources of funding in order to make their maintenance and complete restoration possible. My longstanding involvement with this issue. the publication of the list/catalogue to be created and my experience in matters of funding for such actions, can contribute to the success of such an objective.

Additionally. I would also like to request from the municipality to grant the permission for the placement of drinking fountains for stray animals within the city, especially for its numerous cats, giving them direct access to water during the summer months. I have already ordered three drinking fountains from a local manufacturer on my own expense, which will nevertheless need to be connected to the water supply by the municipality.

As a human, an artist and a sensitive citizen of Nicosia, I am inspired by and give great importance to the concept of water as a common valuable good, as a right. as a natural element which connects us with deeper existential and human needs, which can activate several values in modern life (I attach an explanation of the concept of Waterways. Its water: Taps and sources of Nicosia)

Thanking you in advance and always at your disposal for any clarification and cooperation, I remain,

Sincerely,
Kyriaki Costa

Fig.11 - Pages from the exhibition catalogue "Her Water," Kyriaki Costa, 2015, Nicosia: Point Art Centre. Image courtesy of the artist.

MEMORY IN MOTION

From the *kouza* to the fountain, this article has traced how water infrastructures in Cyprus have been framed, erased, and reimagined. Colonial archives preserved vessels and fountains as typologies while leaving the women who used them remained nameless. Their labour was instrumentalized as evidence of domestic tradition or as props for imperial progress, but rarely recognized as history in its own right.

Faced with such silences, speculative narrative becomes a necessary method: a way of listening otherwise, of allowing objects, materials, and water itself to speak. This is not a literary embellishment but a methodological stance, aligned with Saidiya Hartman's "critical fabulation" and with Ariella Aïsha Azoulay's (2019) call to unlearn the conditions of imperial archives. To let the *kouza*, the well or the *fountana*, themselves speak, is a way to foreground material traces and infrastructural relationships without imposing interiority on subjects whose identities remain unknown or outside one's own cultural and linguistic vantage point. It also acknowledges infrastructures as more-than-human actors, porous participants in histories of labour, empire, and care.

Contemporary artistic practices in Cyprus strengthen this approach. Kyriaki Costa's *Her/Its Water* catalogues fountains and troughs as lived archives, foregrounding maintenance, attachment, and everyday care rather than monumental authority. PASHIAS collapses vessel and body in performance, unsettling the typological stillness of Thomson's "living statues" and reanimating the vessel as a site of embodied continuity rather than ethnographic fixity. Together, their work demonstrates how infrastructures can be reactivated not only through preservation but through performance, participation, and renewed relations of care.

Seen through these lenses, the *kouza* and the *fountana* are not relics of an obsolete past but enduring sites where memory, sociability, and imagination persist. Infrastructures are never simply built or abandoned: they are sustained, neglected, repainted, planted around, and re-narrated. They gather attachments even in disuse, and they continue to mediate relations between communities, ecologies, and histories. To listen to them—and to water—is to attend to histories that the official archive renders silent but which still flow through everyday life.

By pairing material history with speculative vignettes and contemporary artistic practice, this article has proposed a way of reading the archive that neither romanticizes the past nor repeats its violences. Instead, it invites attention to the details that matter: the porous clay of a *kouza*, the chipped concrete of a fountain in Aglantzia, the gestures of carrying, pausing, gossiping, caring. These are the small but persistent movements through which water infrastructures continue to shape, and be shaped by, the lives around them.

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NOTES

1. *Romios* was the colloquial word in mainland Greece for "Greek man" during the Ottoman empire years.

2. "Mother send me to the water" is a reference to the lyrics of the traditional Greek song which usually accompanies the traditional dance featuring women holding terracotta vessels on their shoulders. It is yet another testament to the embodied and lived historical experience of carrying water in amphorae that is so deeply embedded in the everyday lives and culture of the semi-arid East-mediterranean island of Cyprus.

3. Beatriz Colomina for example, considers these popularised depictions in mass media is the real 'space' within which modernist architecture and its problematic perceptions of gender were constructed: Beatriz Colomina. 1996. *Privacy and publicity: modern architecture as mass media*. Boston: MIT Press.

A MATTER OF SPECULATION

A Diffractive Drawing Experiment

Recording Material Agency

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Bu araştırma, muğlaklığı çizen ve madde arasındaki diyaloğun aracı olarak kullanarak maddenin failliğini kaydetmeyi amaçlayan eleştirel bir çizimsel pratiği ele almaktadır. Feminist yeni-materyalist teoriye dayanarak, çizimi bir kayıt hali olarak incelemek için kırınım metodolojisini kullanıyorum. Bu süreçte, yaratıcı pratik olarak çizimselin öngörülemezliği, madde ve çizgi arasında bir aracı olan kayıtla üst üste bindirilir. Böylece, kırınımlı çizim bir temsil olarak değil, dönüşüm sürecindeki materyalin ve mimari yüzeylerin performatif bir arşivi olarak ortaya çıkar.

Mimari detay, form ve maddenin etkileşime girdiği yüzey olarak bu dolanıklığın mikro anlatılarını taşımaktadır. Bu çalışmada muğlaklık kavramını, malzemenin geçmişi, şimdisi ve geleceği arasındaki dolanıklıkları kaydetmenin bir aracı olarak kullanıyorum. Kırınımlı çizim aracılığıyla malzemenin geçmişine ait izler şimdiki zamanda görünür hale gelirken; çizen ile madde arasındaki münazara çizgisi, maddenin geleceğine dair bir spekülasyon üretir. Bu süreç, farklı kayıt dizileri üzerinden araştırılır ve muğlaklık ile çizen ve madde diyalektik kurar.

Araştırma mekânı olarak, İstanbul'un tarihi yarımadasındaki bir anıtın parçası olan mermer bir şadırvanı seçtim. Mermerin yüzeyinde biriken izler, zamanın, kullanımın ve çevresel koşulların mikro-anlatılarını taşır. Bu izleri kaydetmek, maddenin kendi failliğini görünür kılar. Böylece mimarlık, yalnızca ideal formların sürekliliğiyle değil, aynı zamanda maddenin dönüşümüyle de tanımlanabilir. Yüzeydeki bu dönüşümler mimarlığı kırılgan bir hale getirirken, çizimsel olan bu kırılganlığı arşivleyen ve muhafaza eden bir beden işlevi üstlenir.

This research explores a critical drawing practice that aims to trace and record material agency by practicing indeterminacy as a tool of reciprocity between drafter and matter. Building on feminist new-materialist theory, I use diffraction methodology to explore drawing as a form of recording. In the process, the unpredictability of the drawing as a creative practice is superposed with the act of recording as a negotiator between matter and line. The resulting diffractive drawing emerges not as a representation but as a co-performative archive of materialities and architectural surfaces in becoming.

Through diffractive drawing, the record of material past is unraveled in its present, and the negotiating line between drafter and matter speculates on their future. The surface where architectural form and material body interact holds the micro-narratives of their entangled history. And for this study, I record these superpositions of material past-present-futures. There are two sets of records, one situates the drafter on site, and within her practice, the latter uses indeterminacy to converse with matter.

The site selected for this study was a marble fountain, part of a monument in the historic peninsula of Istanbul. The traces accumulated on the marble's surface carry micro-narratives of time, use, and environmental conditions. Recording these traces makes visible the agency of the material itself. Thus, architecture is defined not only by the continuity of ideal forms but also by the transformation of matter. While these transformations on the surface render architecture fragile, drawing serves as a body that archives and preserves this fragility.

ARCHITECTURAL SURFACE AS THE WOUND

Conventionally, architectural drawing is a form giving practice that acts as a translation between a design proposal and the material world that will constitute it (Evans,1997). In the process, matter is first disciplined, that is, transformed into 'material' that can be measured, standardized, and controlled, so that its unpredictable, unruly nature is restrained (Hughes, 2007). It is then shaped and assembled into the form outlined by the drawing. This process establishes and reinforces a binary construct between architecture and matter, positioning drawing and consequently, architecture, as the one who commands, and matter as the passive object to be acted upon. This approach privileges the authority of representation over the agency of materiality, reducing the complex, dynamic interactions of the physical world to a fixed and compliant backdrop for architectural intent. Through my drawing practice, I challenge the authorship of the drafter, allowing drawing to emerge as a co-performative archive of materialities and architectural surfaces in becoming, rather than a mere representation.

Architectural surfaces that make up the form can be seen as similar to veils created over what Francesca Hughes defines as the "territory of matter", describing it as the space in between "the known, the stills, the drawing" (Hughes, 2007, 279). Through time, and agency of the assemblages[1] -created by encounters of material, living, and non-living agents surrounding it - the surface containing them etches away, and disrupts the architectural form. For such micro-sites, I use the term wounds. One approach to such sites would be creating survey drawings as a foundation for conservation. The initial step would condense timely emergent materialities into classified time periods as a conservation foundation for the remaking of

the surface to what it once was. This is followed by a maintenance, of cleaning, closing the wound, would follow flattening any assemblages of material agency. I am interested in these wounds as how an archeologist might read them, carefully unpacking layers and recording, speculating on their past-present-future, rather than a conservation practitioner.

The research builds on feminist new-materialist theory to develop a drawing-recording practice that challenges the position of humans as the sole agents in shaping the material world. Opposed to a reflective methodology, in which a displacement of "the same" occurs, Donna Haraway discusses diffraction to map interference so it does not observe differences, but what they become (1992, 300). Karen Barad adds on and further proposes diffraction methodology as a way to "read insights through each other" so that their "always already entanglements" can be observed (2020, 313). Thus, diffraction methodology can be used to understand the entanglements of bodies and materialities not by comparing them but mapping -drawing- their interference. The methodology of the work shared here relies on Haraway's interpretation of feminist objectivity, which she terms situated knowledge (1988, 581). This values a personal, locatable, and partial vision that can create knowledge that is grounded in the embodiment of the researcher and the agency of the one being studied. Haraway states that this process of creating knowledge cannot accept the world and the entities being studied as 'passive and inert', waiting to be exploited and discovered. Instead, she discusses how knowledge is produced in conversation (Haraway, 1988). My drawing practice is informed by Haraway's approach, exploring a means to converse and negotiate the record of the material agency that shapes the architectural artefact. In this way it can be positioned as a critical spatial practice, as defined by Jane Rendell as those practices that question dominant orders, reclaiming and critiquing through every-day and

creative practices (Rendell, 2008).

This drawing practice experiments with two seemingly clashing, creative systems: drawing and recording. Here, drawings are defined as a pursuit for the unpredictability of the new. Recording on the other hand, is positioned as a negotiation between the existing material and the depicting line. The wounds in question cannot easily be traced because they do not follow conventional lines of a given form, as it is where matter is emerging. Therefore, tracing as a delineation process is laced with drafter's lines to re-weave the wound with matter emergence. In the process, drawings become superpositions of textual, linear, and photographic components that can be read through each other. Diffracting drawing and recording through one another allows material agency to reciprocate against the drafter. Thus, diffractive drawing[2] emerges as a performative act, where drawer and material engage through the practice of diffractive drawing, and the result is a superposition of material past-present-future.

DRAWING BEFORE ARCHITECTURE

Architectural drawing became essential to the practice and in reference the status of the architect during the 15th century (Hill, 2005). During this period, sole ownership of a design and thus the artefact was attributed to the master architect. As descriptive geometry began to shape the architectural drawing, the abstraction of the Cartesian grid offered an infinite, ordered, sterile surface that removed the architect from the messiness of the matter (Emmons, 2019). Consequently, the material histories and the labor that built the artefact are overshadowed by the architect's authorship.

Architectural drawing before architecture, captures a virtual space that emerges on the paper. Design is created through drawing rather than just a transfer from the mind to paper (Frascari, 2007). It is

a messy process filled with crinkled paper, smudges, and erased lines. Yet, the desire to create an objective truth, the exact built form on a paper surface, forced the architect to reduce the drawing into a set of geometrical instructions, and the drafter's body was excluded. The straight singular line prevents the inclusion of the subjective position of the drafter, rendering it "voiceless" (Thomas, 2007, 100). And in that geometry, architecture hides all that is deemed improper for the discipline, sexuality, materiality, the female body, and the mythical (Ingraham,1998).

In my research, I pursue to make visible what conventional architectural drawing practice avoids and erases from the drawing surface; introducing the materiality of the drawing act and the architectural surface into the drawing itself.

DRAWING AFTER ARCHITECTURE

The discourse of architectural drawing often focuses on the process preceding architecture. Here, I want to speculate on the role of architectural drawing after architecture. The work hypothesizes that within these instances, materiality cannot be ignored since architecture left the Cartesian plane for the material world. Thus, the act of drawing crosses over to the act of recording. We often encounter such phenomena as architecture survey drawings of conservation, and heritage studies. In architecture survey drawings, after decades of use, the architecture needs to be delineated by the lines and surfaces that once defined it. Every surface of the building is drawn, and every material emergence is outlined, but these are all seen as potential problem areas to address. I claim that drawing after architecture is precisely the threshold of diffractive drawing when we approach it without the ambition to return it to its original state, but to understand the entanglements that have come to be.

Jennifer Bloomer's dirty drawings

are one such example that brings materiality into the discussion of the drawing. She brings together the rendered drawing with the working drawing, questioning architecture's desire after the image (1992). By incorporating unconventional materials into her drawing practice, Bloomer deliberately disrupts the sterility associated with architectural drawing.

Sarah Wigglesworth's work 'Table Manners' (1998) is a unique example that her drawings of material traces become the beginnings of an architectural artefact. Thus, what is after and what is before becomes blurry. The architectural drawing here is built upon everyday materialities, in this case, on the architecture of the dining table. Everyday practices occupying the dining table, its materiality, the aftermath of dinning of dirty plates and stains are all recorded and interwoven with the drafter's line to create a plan (Wigglesworth and Till,1998). By integrating mundane and messy everyday practice into architectural drawing, Wigglesworth criticizes the order and propriety of architecture. This opens opportunities to engage material practices into architectural drawing even before the architectural artefact emerges.

Building upon these examples of critical practices, and a critique of what conventional architectural drawing practices obscure, I pursue a drawing practice as an engagement with the architectural artefact and its material entanglements. I attempt to reintegrate the agency of matter into the process of architectural representation by balancing the creativity of drawing with the responsibility of recording. In doing so I reconsider architectural drawing as an active, collaborative practice that negotiates between matter, architecture, and the architect.

DIFFRACTION IN DRAWING

Diffraction as a drawing method[3] is introduced by Kai Mah Woods and Patrick Lynn Rivers (2022).
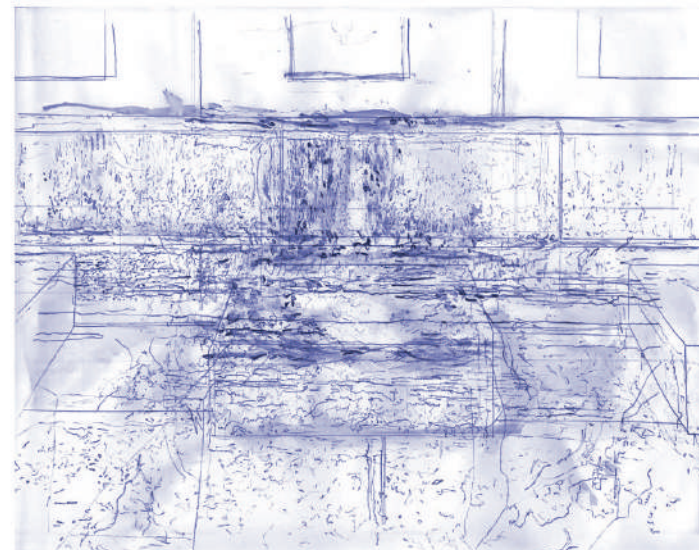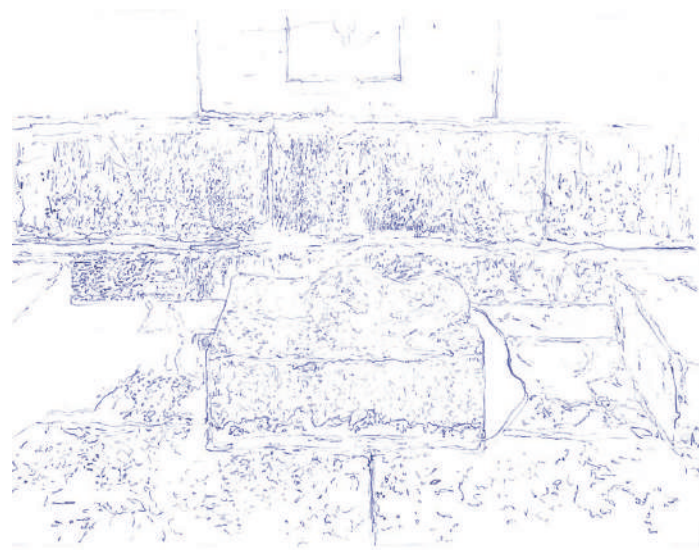
They practice diffractive drawing in survey drawings to reveal multi-layered, performative relations of the site. Their work enables veiled intra-actions of matter entanglements being visible through diffraction in drawing. Thus, these drawings delineate matter, enabling its material existence (Woods and Rivers, 2022). Their practice utilizes computational tools to disrupt the drafter's command over the drawing and emphasize material agency.

My drawing practice shares some of these concerns and uses indeterminacy to create a negotiation between drafter and matter. I interpret diffraction in drawing to co-create a drawing record between the one who draws and the one who is drawn. Just as waves create diffraction patterns when they overlap in response to an obstacle, drawing and recording intersect to create a pattern that serves as an archive of the material surface. This emerges as a pattern that both reveals what is and what may become. Here, the drafter is embedded in the drawing just as much as the matter. The drawing formed through a conversation between the self and matter. The apparatus therefore is not an outside entity that objectively transfers between three-dimensional and two-dimensional space but part of the record itself.

THE SITE

In the process of construction, the architectural surface acts as a stabilizer that confines the material into a static state. However, material is a living agent that changes through time. Therefore, the architectural surface is strained between upholding the precision of the paper and the material's becoming. In that strain, matter bursts through, creating wounds. This is most evident in buildings that have long stood the test of time.

The recordings take place at the ablution fountains of the prominent historical monument, Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, Turkey. Due to its long history, the structure has interacted with numerous

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Fig.1 - *Record-I* layers unraveled.

Fig.2 - *Record-I* layers unraveled.

living and non-living agents that have etched the surface, becoming intertwined with its materiality and offering traces of what is often overlooked or forgotten. However, for a site which has a history full of erasing, re-membering, re-making, it is challenging to look past the architectural artefact and what it represents. In this research I however focus on the micro-narratives of the wounds amid such an assemblage.

The building is a renowned example of Byzantine architecture that has stood for over fourteen centuries. Hagia Sophia has witnessed changes of empires, and with those changes shifts in its use from a church to a mosque, then to a museum, and recently again to a mosque. Throughout these changes, many additions, restorations, and repairs have been made to maintain the propriety of the architectural surface. Some of these were major rebuilds following collapses due to earthquakes, while others were additions made to accommodate changing religious practices. The structure predominantly uses brick for non-structural sections, while natural stone forms part of the load-bearing system, such as columns. Stone is also applied decoratively in elements such as wall plates and floor finishes (Angı, 2015). One of the frequently used natural stones in Hagia Sophia is Marmara (Proconnesian) Marble, and this was used as flooring, wall covering, column headers, and bases (Angı,

2015). The ablution fountain is also made of Marmara marble due to its durability against water. However, even materials like natural stone that appear static and permanent change over time.

RECORDING EXPERIMENTS

Record-I (Fig.1) is an investigative record where I situate myself both on the site and within my drawing practice. The drawing is based on several site photos. For this experiment I printed the photographs in order to work on them by hand. Emmons emphasizes that drawing by hand and the accompanying rituals allow the drafter to inhabit the spatiality of the drawing, and combined with the drafter's presence on paper, make the act twice embodied (2019). By choosing to draw by hand, I aimed to be part of the line that is in dialogue with the matter being recorded. A continuous linkage from paper to pen, pen to my hand, and consequently to my body.

I traced this first photograph twice; first by using tracing paper on the image at my desk, looking at it as I drew, giving the drafter a sense of control, gazing upon the page as it reveals itself to me. Emmons argues that the horizontal surface creates a closer relationship with the paper, describing the surface where the drafter's belly touches the table as where drawing is conceived (2019). That closeness

appears to create hierarchy in the reciprocal relationship between the matter being recorded and the drafter telling the story. For the second trace I placed the drawing in front of a source of light, a window. Drawing in front of the window created a different dialogue with the surface of the drawing. Instead of looking upon, it is a case of being face-to-face with the paper. I am more aware of my body, standing up, using myself to block and let in light, creating a site of reciprocity that makes me vulnerable to being led by matter.

Matter is a hard thing to capture, always seemingly contained between the lines. Architecture represses matter into materiality to contain and isolate; it is left undefined and suspended between the drawing sections and plans (Hughes, 2007). Therefore, it requires wounds to emerge over time so that we can see material re-becoming matter. I started tracing each little wound, but found their edges do not really exist. And without an edge I was in a constant state of being lost (Fig.2). The trace did not have a definite end or a beginning. This resisted the constant desire of precision in architecture, which is how architecture prevents matter from taking over form (Hughes, 2007). Consequently the drawing is more than just a trace; it is a conversation between me and the matter, a drawing that captures both of us. Here, being lost is the beginning
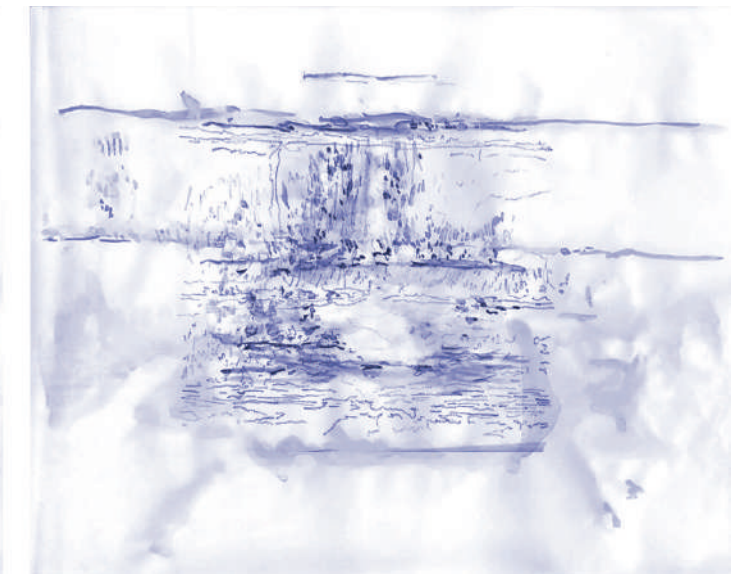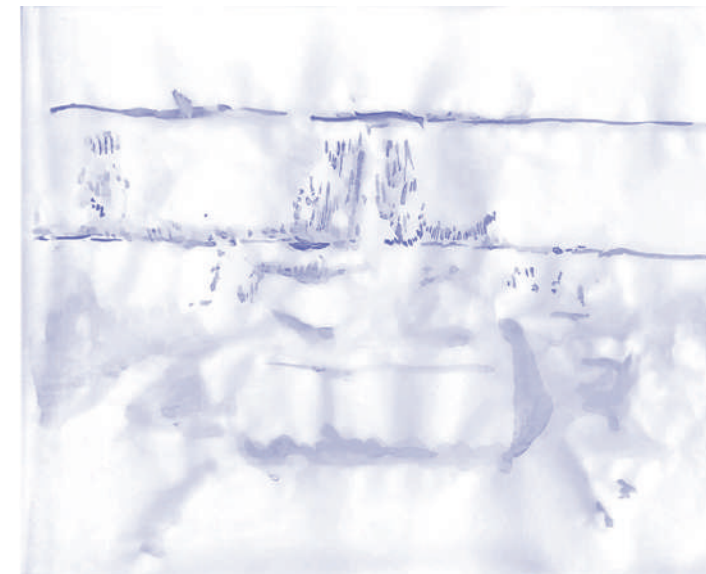
where our conventional teaching starts to fade into the agency of the material itself.

When each sheet of recording is brought together (Fig.3), some traces follow each other, and some do not. It is a shifting, moving recording on paper; a

possibility of coming together in the superimposed. However, this record was still mostly dominated by form, thus it was not diffracted enough. The anonymous gaze floating across the site, distances the way it is engaged, even though the act of drawing brings the voyeur and the matter together. However,

the shifting in the way drafter positions themselves with paper, and the indeterminacy it creates because of the loss of control, diffuses the recording. Therefore, for the following records I arranged indeterminacy, encourages myself as drafter to be lost and in a reciprocity with matter.
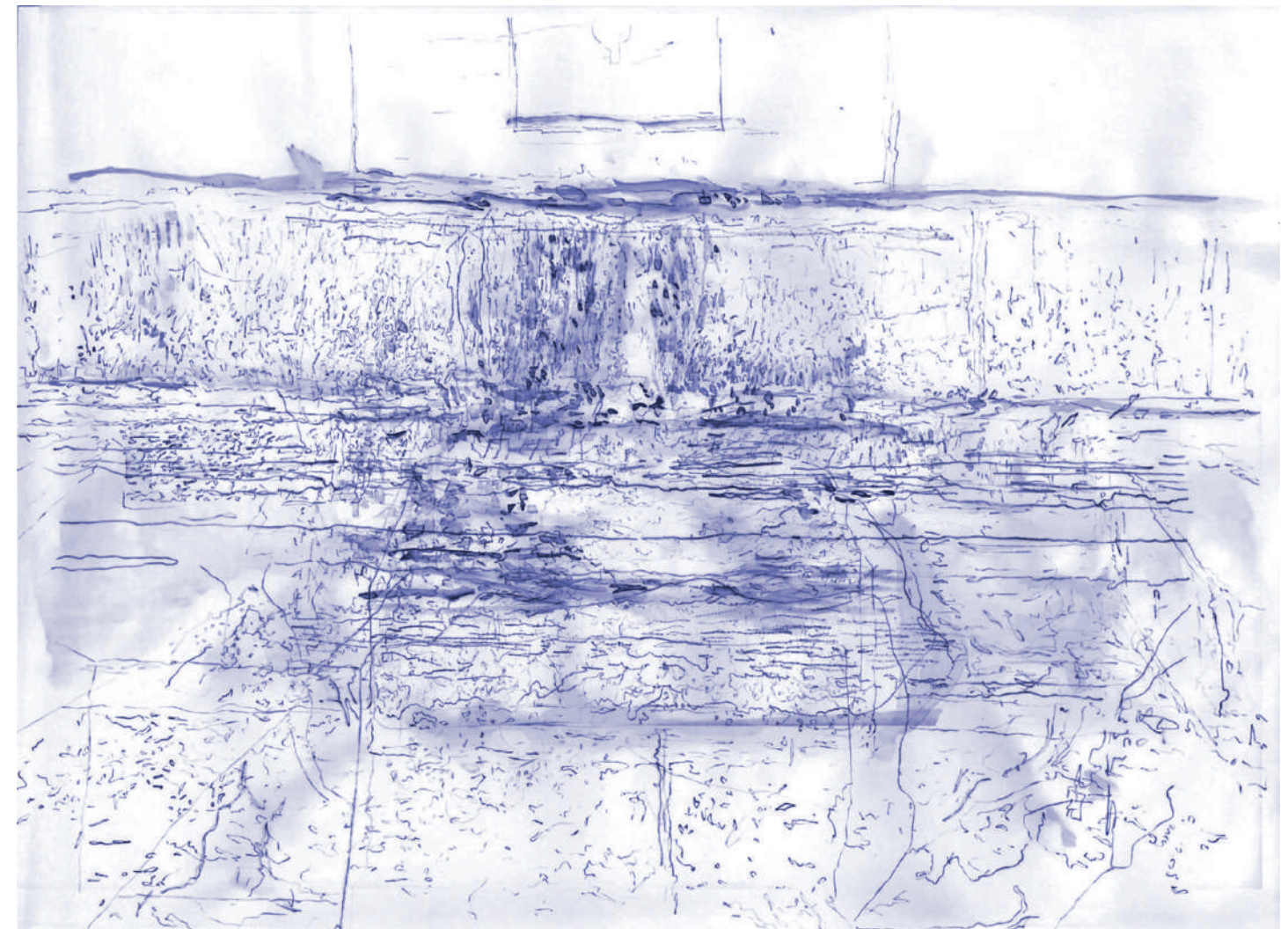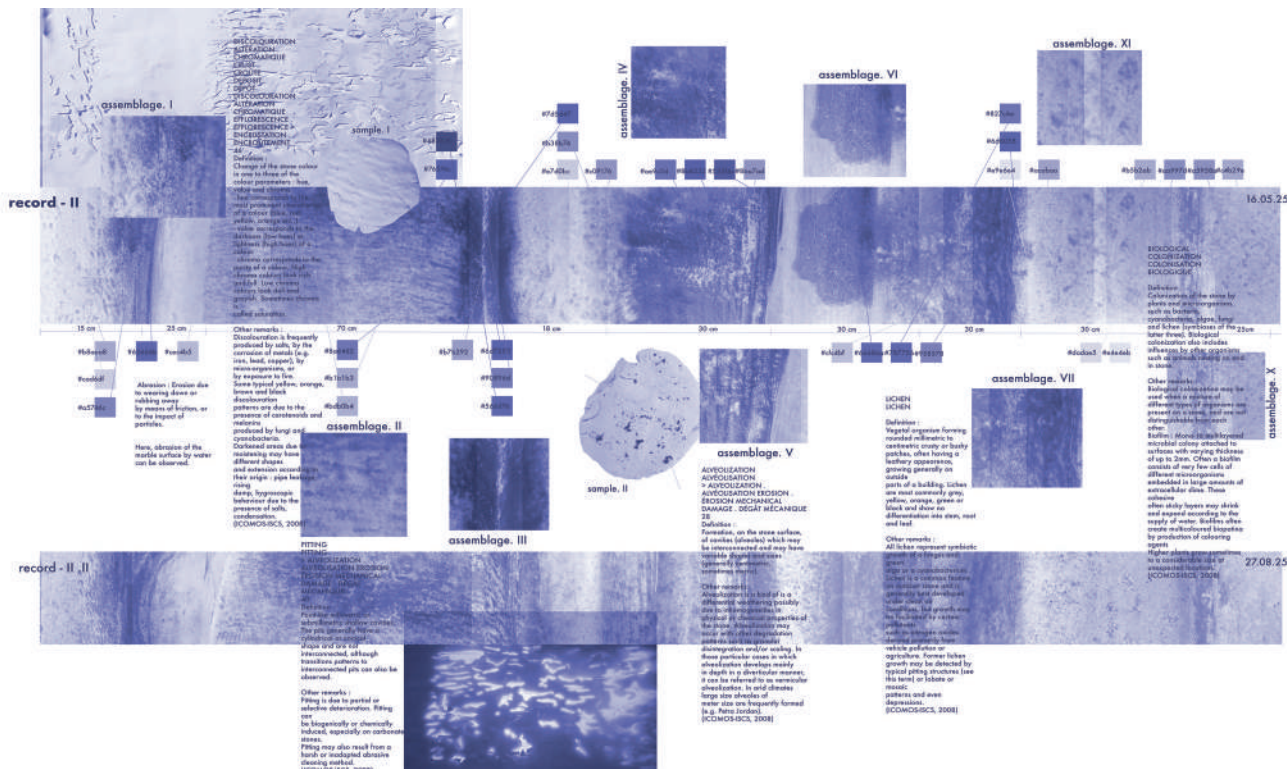

Fig.3 - *Record–I* layers altogether.

Fig.4 - *Record-II*

Fig.5 - *Record-II*, detail.

Record-II (Fig.4) undertook experiments with indeterminacy in the gaze. Often, when drafting survey drawings materials are observed and documented through their reference to form. As we record it onto paper, we seek out its edges, where the lines of the projection meet with matter. Through these edges the architectural artefact is compared to the lines of the design. This disregards the emerging matter inside the outline, and marks wounds as defects. If architecture survey drawing does not comply with the form as it was intended, maintenance erases it back to the sterile surface from when it was first built. The drive to fit the changing materiality back into the Cartesian space is emphasized through the orthogonal projection, which returns the material back into the geometrical. This projection is designed to objectify the gaze as an all-seeing entity. Therefore, Record-II aims to disorient the observer with the Cartesian planes bleeding into each other, losing any sense of direction. The geometry of the marble fountain dissolves outside the frame, and the material surface unfolds as a horizontal narrative that reveals assemblages created over time. Here I can only read what matter tells me, rather than according to its given form.

The diffracted drawing in Record-II is composed of different layers (Fig.5). The first layer is created by photographs taken to observe the texture of the material surface, rather than the parallel view that disrupted the drawing in Record-I. Here images are overlapped to create a continuous narrative of material agency. It aims to show how other bodies shape the marble, how marble houses them, how they rewrite the architectural surface… Overtime, marble surface engages with other living and non-living agents creating assemblages of matter. Even though marble itself might appear to be static, it affects and gets effected by the other bodies it encounters. Water carves the marble, creating shine by exposing under the top layers, curving the surface. Microbiomes engrave it with repetitive small pits, staining it red. Algae and lichen attach to the surface, coating it with a bright green hue. The drawing focuses on ten micro-assemblages of this narrative (Fig.5). To decipher the assemblages, I referenced the illustrated glossary of natural stone deteriorations created by ICOMOS-ISC (2008). However, here, they are not understood as deteriorations but assemblages of more-than-human bodies re-weaving the wound. The drawing is diffracted with the explanations of how matter came together.

CONCLUSION

In these recordings, I reimagine drawing as an act of negotiation, a practice where architecture and matter co-archive their entangled histories. When approaching material emergence on wounds, I claim that drawing is not a simple act as it holds the architectural surface together. By drawing on the wound I recall its previous states by the remained traces of the form and record continual shape-shift by layering of the material agency.

Conventional architectural drawing is mainly a tool to form and confine matter into the architectural surface. However, by approaching the surface after its conception, the drawing becomes a conversation between drafter and materiality of architecture. With a diffractive methodology between drawing and recording, the drawing process unfolds a space where material past, present, and future overlap. First, I situate myself as a drafter on site and the process of drawing is not for shaping matter but of taking it in. With consequent record, the form that suppresses matter is erased, and the agency of matter is exposed. Taken together, these experiments reveal how the intersection of architectural surface and matter holds narratives of emergence and transformation.

By approaching drawing as a record this research also speculates a critical spatial practice from sole authorship to collectivity. The negotiating line becomes less an instrument of regulation and more a mark of co-becoming. Such a shift challenges how architecture engages with its materials, inviting us to consider the micro-narratives embedded within form and the agencies that shape them over time.

In doing so drawing becomes more than a representation, but an inquiry into the space of matter and how material agency emerges from the clean and linear surfaces of form.

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NOTES

1. Here, I use the term assemblage as Jane Bennet explores in her discourse. She describes it as a collective of all kinds of bodies functioning together without a central head; their agency together is greater than what each individual would have. They are ephemeral states of encounters that are in constant change (Bennet, 2010).

2. The term diffractive drawing is first used by Kai Mah Woods and Patrick Lynn Rivers. (Mah, K. W., & Rivers, P. L. Diffractive drawing. In: Murris, K. Bozalek, V. (ed) *In Conversation with Karen Barad*. New York: Routledge, 2022, pp. 144-157.

3. Diffraction is a broad methodology that is interpreted differently by many researchers.

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Detailing Time

The Architectural Drawing as a Temporal and Speculative Construct

future foresight
temporal architecture
speculative drawing
architectural pedagogy
integrative technological thinking

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Invited Article

This paper examines the detail drawing as a research tool for exploring speculative visions of future life, situating it as both a pedagogical and conceptual instrument for architectural inquiry. Drawing on a series of design studio and construction courses led by the author, the discussion traces how the detail evolves from a technical exercise into a lens for investigating material, temporal, and social transformation. Through references to writings from Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow, the Smithsons, Peter Salter, and Cedric Price, the paper frames the detail as a field of negotiation between design intent, material agency, and lived experience. Within this framework, drawing is approached not as a fixed representation but as a performative act; an anticipatory process that reveals architecture's mutable continuity with time and use. The case study 'Tech(no)-Cosmos' extends this approach, envisioning a technologically integrated future where architecture, body, and machine co-evolve. By tracing the micro-temporalities embedded in constructional and representational processes, the paper argues for an expanded understanding of detail as an active, temporal construct. Ultimately, it advocates an architecture that embraces indeterminacy and transformation; an architecture that is, in the fullest sense, alive.

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the paper is to discuss how the detail drawing acts as a research tool for exploring visions of future life. The detail becomes a lens through which to trace the life of materials and space in flux: moments of use, adaptation, decay and renewal that reveal architecture's mutable continuity with everyday life.

The idea of the 'detail' will be presented as a pedagogical tool utilised under the agenda of a series of architectural design studio and construction courses taught by the author. These courses culminate in an advanced level design studio research laboratory with a theme that poses technology as a lens to inspect the future of architecture. The common denominator across all of these courses is the attempt to test how the subject of technology fuses in the architectural design studio and vice-versa.

A NEW UNDERSTANDING OF DETAIL DRAWING

In the theoretical construction courses the focus is to introduce the principles underlying performance criteria in construction, identify reference texts to build knowledge and understanding and explore contemporary case studies to test analytic capability and develop a 'language of construction'. Additionally, students are introduced to detail drawing as a tool for studying and devising construction applications, in the context of both 'instrumental' and 'experiential' performance (Fig.1). The courses move from basic technical knowledge and understanding to an integrated approach of technology with design strategies.

Integrative technological thinking is accumulatively developed in the curriculum. At the end of Year 3 students follow a design studio with a focus on building technology where the idea of working with a slice of the project at 1:20 scale is introduced at the very start of
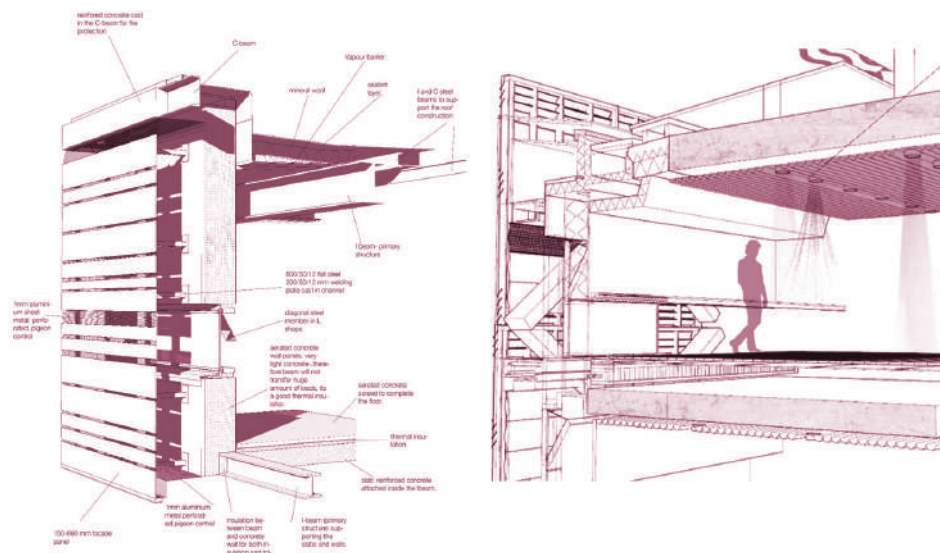

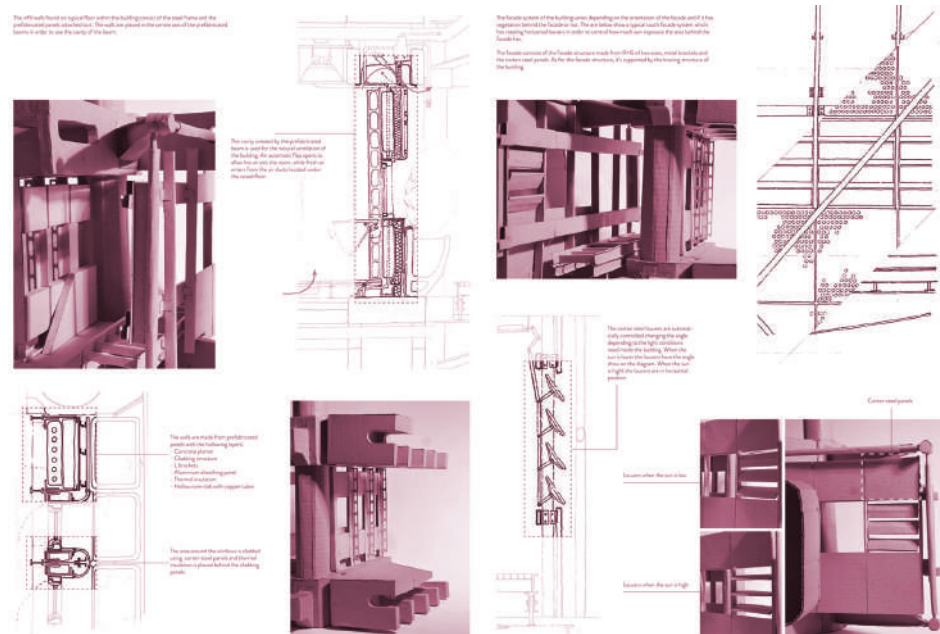Fig.1 - Typical construction course detail drawing studies.

Fig.2 - 1:20 scale drawn and modelled investigations of building slice.

the studio project. The 'detail' is articulated through processes of drawing and making (Fig.2). The exercise is intentionally parachuted quite early into the design process to avoid misinterpreting it as a 'detailing' exercise towards linear/ traditional building resolutions. The objective is to equally appreciate this as a conceptual driver of the propositions and thus as an invitation to dare to propose. Conditioning space is considered on both an operational/ instrumental level as well as on an experiential/conceptual way. The detail drawing shifts from an analytical tool to a speculative one. Emphasis is given to developing an understanding of how technological phenomena can inform and drive design development and

'realisation'. The detail drawing becomes a tool for uncovering the interactive, temporal, and material entanglements that shape lived space (Fig.3). Students are encouraged to deal with overall arrangement, not as an imposed fixed narrative, but rather as an open-ended process; from the part to the whole and vice-versa, where the fragments are designed to invite a series of future scenarios in line with a developing overall narrative (Fig.4). Students understand the detail as having a value which transcends its definition as an abstract architectural mechanism towards technical resolution. The detailed slice of space is truly understood and tested as a slice of the future life of the project. The detail drawing is not tested
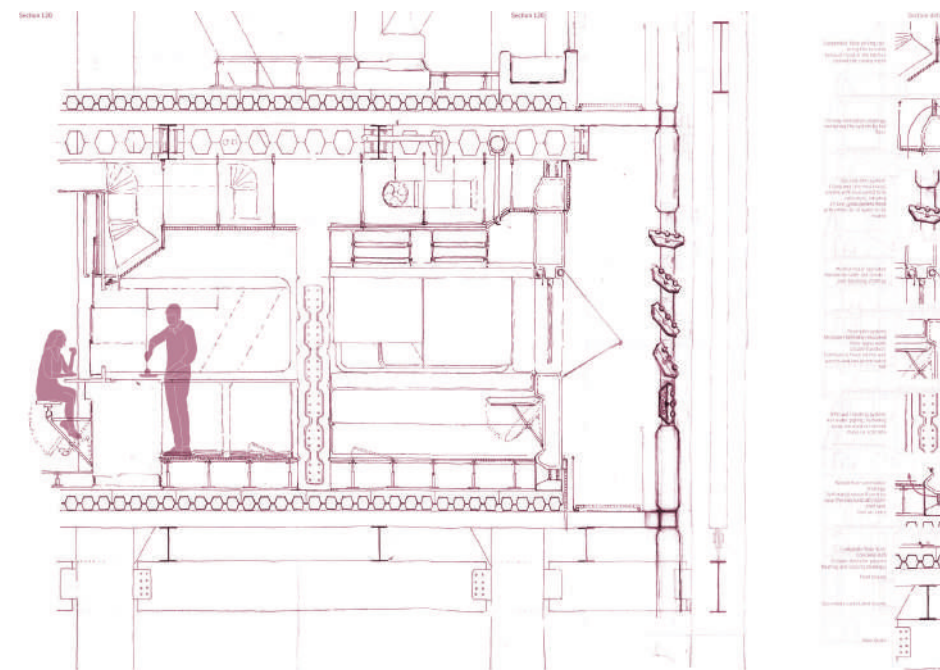

Fig.3 - 1:20 building slice; the detail drawing becomes a tool for uncovering the interactive, temporal, and material entanglements that shape lived space
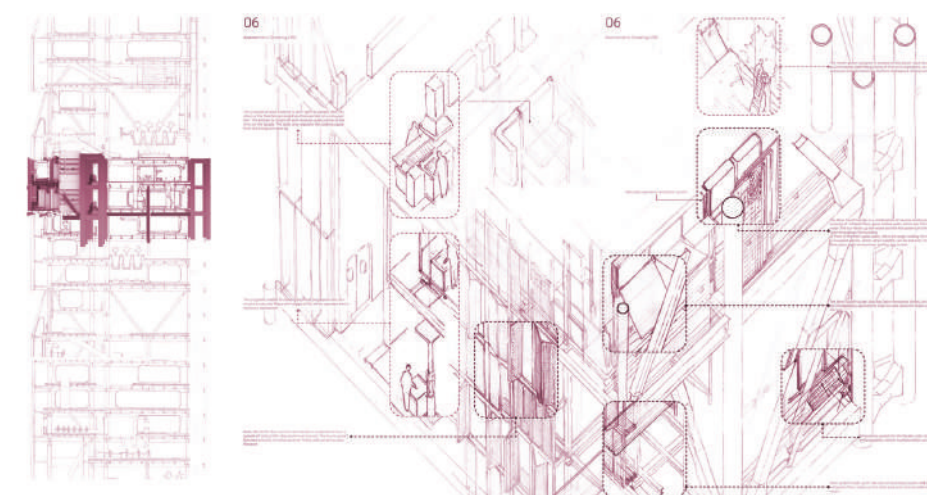

Fig.4 - Continuously shifting from the part to the whole and vice-versa

in isolation but viewed as part of a bigger story; it becomes the speculative proposition, the conceptual axis towards the whole. Eventually the act of drawing operates not as a fixed

representation but as a generative medium for relational thinking; whether envisioning the material presence of a future space or probing the corporeal dimensions of lived experience, it ultimately

serves as a visual record of life itself (Fig.5). Students are exposed to theoretical references in order to develop a conceptual understanding of technology, detail, function, programme and performance. The relationship between material, time and architectural authorship has been a recurring theme in architectural discourse from the mid-twentieth century to the present. A number of theorists and architects have explored how architecture is shaped not only by its initial act of construction but also by its subsequent transformation through weathering, appropriation and renewal. The evolution of the detail drawing reflects an understanding of architecture as a temporal process, shaped by a set of generative rules for detail.

In *On Weathering* (Leatherbarrow, Mostafavi, 1993), Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow establish the foundation for this line of thought. They argue that the traditional notion of 'completion' in architecture is an artificial one, imposed by the conventions of design and construction. Buildings are, in fact, in a state of continual making, their surfaces altered by environmental exposure and human use. For Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow, weathering is not a form of decay but a mode of construction that continues beyond the architect's control. Materials react to moisture, sunlight, pollution, and occupation, creating an evolving aesthetic that expresses the passage of time. This is challenging the modernist aspiration for permanence and perfection, suggesting instead that

Fig.5 - The 1:20 detailed slice of space is truly understood and tested as a slice of the future life of the project.

architectural beauty emerges from this negotiation between intention and inevitability.

In their view, weathering is an essential part of architecture's communicative capacity—its ability to reveal the processes of making, use, and aging.

This notion is echoed in the phrase "*Finishing ends construction, weathering constructs finishes*," (Leatherbarrow, Mostafavi, 1993, 5) which encapsulates the idea that architectural completion is never final but perpetually redefined by time and use.

This sensibility resonates with the 'as found' attitude articulated by Alison and Peter Smithson during the 1950s and later examined in *As Found: The Discovery of the Ordinary* (Lichtenstein, Schregenberger, 2001). The Smithsons' concept of the 'as found' also arose from a critical response to the idealised purity of modernism. They sought instead to recognise value in the ordinary, the contingent, and the already existing. The 'as found' is not simply an aesthetic choice but an ethical one: it expressed a willingness to work with reality as and when it is encountered.

In his writings Peter Salter develops these ideas at the scale of construction, in particular referring to concepts such as rules for detail and "tolerance as strategy" (Salter, 1997, 79). Salter's approach to detailing treats the junctions and connections of a building not as purely technical resolutions but as opportunities for expression and negotiation. He suggests that rules in architecture are not fixed laws but frameworks that guide interpretation and adaptation. The detail, therefore, becomes a site of encounter between materials, trades, and intentions—a space where the unpredictable nature of making can be acknowledged rather than suppressed. Similarly, Salter reframes tolerance from a technical parameter into a conceptual stance.

Rather than striving for absolute precision, he advocates designing for difference: allowing gaps, overlaps, and misalignments to

become part of the architecture's character. This notion of tolerance echoes the acceptance of imperfection found in both the Smithsons' and Mostafavi and Leatherbarrow's writings. It recognises that architecture is a material and social process subject to negotiation, error, and change. Salter's notion of tolerance transcends the mechanical; it becomes a design strategy that allows the unexpected to emerge, acknowledging imperfection as an intrinsic quality of making.

The interplay between finish, weathering, and tolerance underscores a broader reconsideration of how architecture performs over time. The statement "*Finishing ends construction, weathering constructs finishes*" (Leatherbarrow, Mostafavi, 1993, 5) highlights this dynamic: the moment construction is declared 'finished,' the building begins its next stage of becoming, as life unfolds.

Weathering becomes an active form of design, extending the architect's authorship into a dialogue with time, climate, maintenance, and use. Salter's tolerance strategies can thus be read as a means of accommodating this dialogue; of creating conditions where the inevitable shifts of time and matter can occur without undermining the architectural whole.

DETAIL AND THE FIVE STAGES OF ARTIFICIAL TIME

Across the aforementioned references a consistent theme emerges: architecture is not a static object but a temporal condition. Either through the slow erosion of weather, the adaptation of detail, or the acceptance of the 'as found,' these authors advocate for a mode of practice that acknowledges impermanence and embraces the contingencies of making.

The building becomes an open system subject to material transformation, environmental influence, and human inhabitation.

The architect does not just control every aspect of form and finish but rather becomes a collaborator with time and circumstance.

The act of 'finishing' is not an end but a threshold, marking the point at which the environment and life takes over the work of construction.

Students understand early on that in order to be able to embrace the drawing as a tool of interrogation from the detail to the whole, they have to challenge its assumed authority as an objective mediator between design intent and material realisation. Cedric Price's speculative and temporal approach to design, what he termed "anticipating the unexpected" (Price,1996, 38), further destabilises the fixity of representation by privileging adaptability and indeterminacy.

Thus, to interrogate the drawing from detail to whole is to acknowledge its role not merely as documentation, but as an active participant in shaping architecture's evolving material and conceptual realities. Price's notion of architecture as an evolving system of temporal and material relations, through his definition of the "*five stages of artificial time: use, re-use, mis-use, disuse, refuse*" (Price,1996, 38), sets a promising framework for interrogating the micro-scales of architectural detail.

Architectural drawing, traditionally positioned as a means of control and precision, has increasingly been conceived as a generative and interpretive act; an instrument through which the contingencies of material, time, and inhabitation may be explored rather than resolved. As Robin Evans suggests, the drawing is not a transparent vehicle for transmission but a translation that both produces and distorts architectural intention. In this sense, the drawing operates as a site of negotiation, where detail becomes a lens for examining the relational dynamics of making (Evans,1997).

Building on Evans's conception of drawing as a generative and interpretive translation, the students explore how Price's anticipatory approach transforms
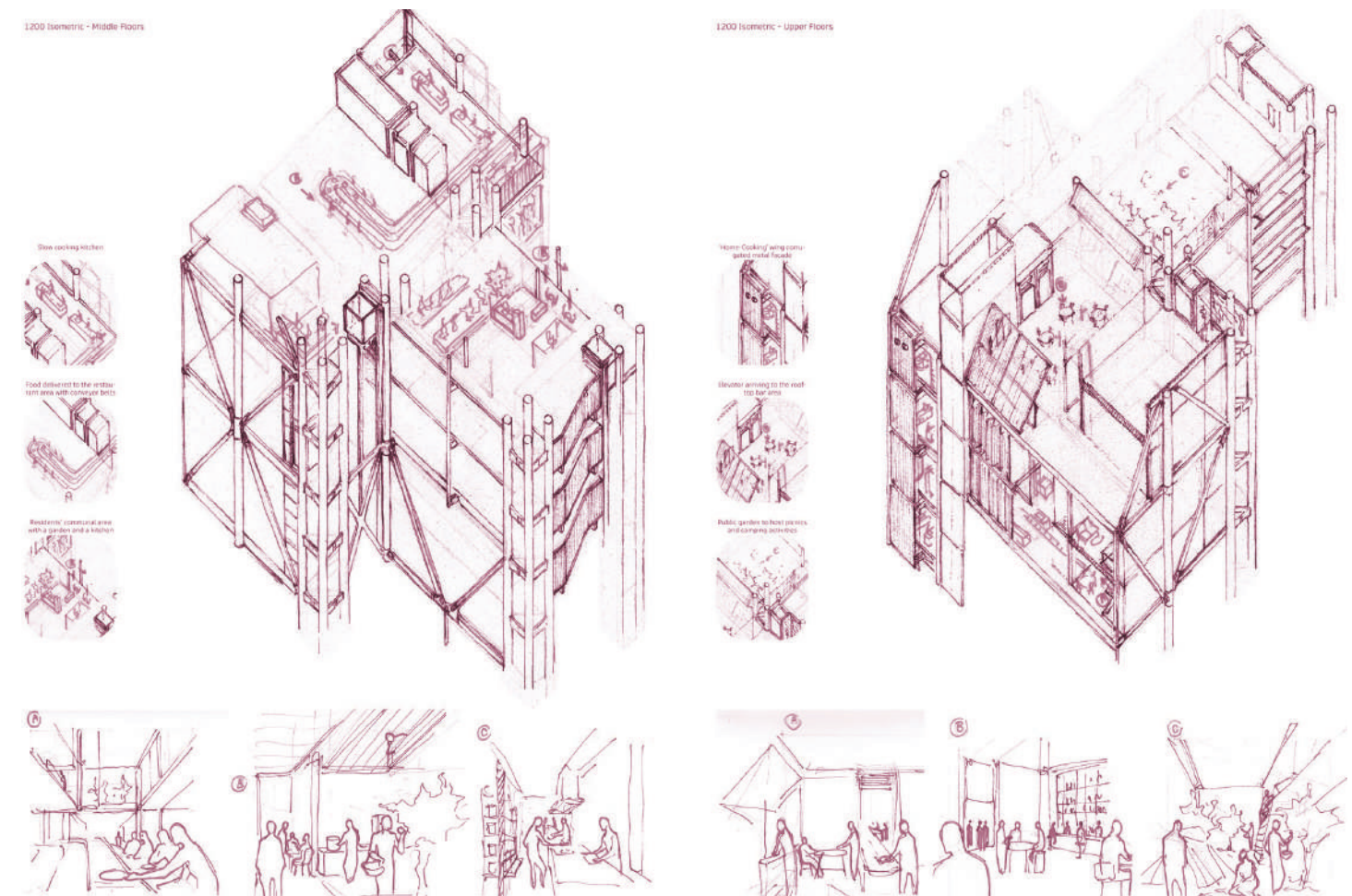
the architectural detail from a point of resolution into one of perpetual negotiation. The drawing, rather than fixing material certainty, becomes a dynamic tool that reveals the latent possibilities within processes of change, decay, and renewal (Fig.6).

TECH(NO)-COSMOS; A CASE STUDY TESTING DETAIL DRAWING AS A TOOL FOR EXPLORING VISIONS OF FUTURE LIFE

The awareness of time in architecture is most useful when particular intervals of the process are recognized. As Cedric Price stated "fine-tuning of intervals of time or relevant speed becomes even more critical when the human factor is considered" (Price,1996, 38). His project the Fun Palace, conceived as an architectural machine design for time, was an

architecture of probabilities in present time. It acknowledged the inevitability of change, chance, and indeterminacy by incorporating uncertainties as integral to a continuously evolving process. Inspired by Cedric Price's notion of time as a design element, all student projects produced under the advanced level design studio research laboratory Unit 4 "Divining the Future; Technology is the answer but what was the question?"[1] are developed through timelines. Through the timeline process the aim is to frame the future in sequential stages through depth of time, ranging from 50-1000 years ahead. It is therefore invaluable to understand the evolutionary momentum developed over the past to assist in the understanding of a trajectory for the future. The timeline of up to a thousand years forward becomes the speculative proposition, the conceptual axis for incrementally projecting architecture into the future. It is worth noting that envisioning the future is not an

end in itself, but it is the process of contemplating it through a timeline that may inform better present-day propositions.

Presented here is a series of selected student output, from the project 'Tech(no)-Cosmos'. The theme of Unit 4 poses technology as a lens to inspect the future of architecture, therefore it provides a fertile ground for testing how the detail drawing acts as a research tool for exploring and enabling visions of future life.

The project 'Tech(no)-Cosmos' envisions a speculative future in which technology and human life become inseparably integrated, erasing traditional limits of mortality, mobility, and physical ability. The proposal projects from the technological condition of today—where digital interfaces, virtual reality, and prosthetics already extend human capacity— towards the year 2200, when architecture, body, and machine form a continuous ecosystem of adaptation and support. In this

imagined future, the body itself is technologically constructed. Prosthetics and mechanical enhancements replace or augment human limbs, redefining anatomy as modular and adaptable. The human figure evolves into a hybrid organism capable of overcoming disability and even transcending death.

Technology thus becomes a new form of 'armour', simultaneously protective and enabling; a material extension of the self that allows continuous interaction with architectural and environmental systems (Fig.7).

The architecture mirrors this transformation. The building functions as a responsive machine, adjusting to users' needs. Spaces are layered and reconfigurable, designed to support multiple forms of habitation, from nomadic and virtual lifestyles to intergenerational communities and assisted living for the elderly. The emphasis shifts from permanence to stability through adaptability, suggesting a model of space that evolves as organically as the bodies that inhabit it (Fig.8). Socially, the project reimagines community in the age of technological interdependence. The building operates under a set of inclusive and egalitarian principles. It is conceived as a space for everyone, open to individuals from all socioeconomic backgrounds, with designated sections that ensure accessibility and belonging. Within this framework, prosthetics or bodily extensions, referred to in the project as 'armour', are integrated into the architecture itself, becoming part of the primary structure that supports human needs. As one enters the different spaces, specific sockets
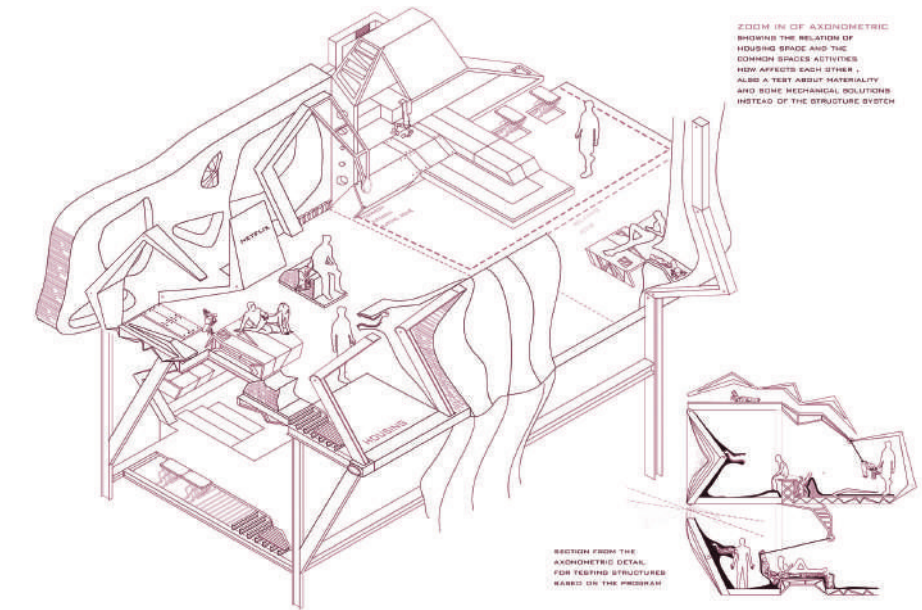
Fig.7 - Technology as a new form of 'armour'; a material extension of the self that allows continuous interaction with architectural and environmental systems.
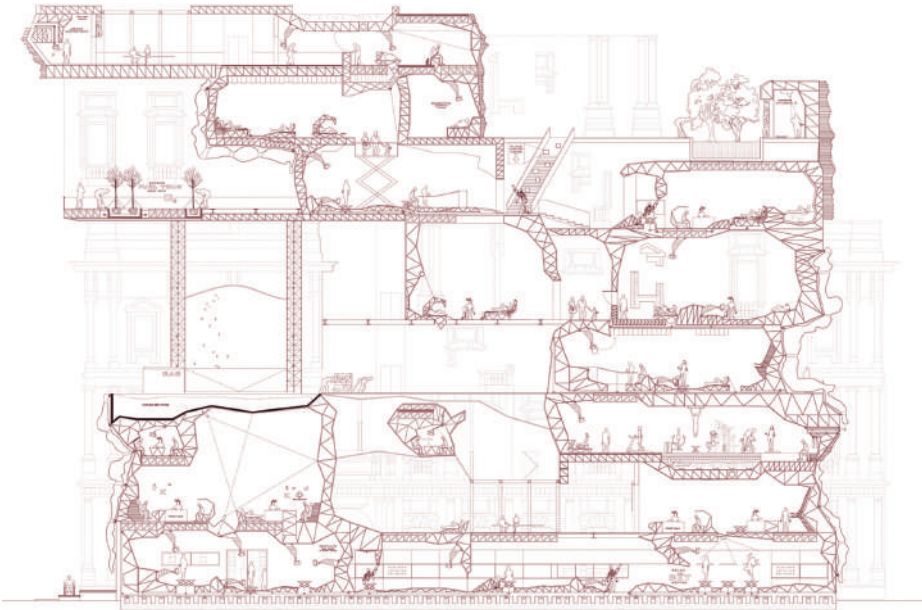
Fig.8 - Sectional drawing of proposition; building as a responsive machine.

are provided for attaching the armour, which in turn contributes to the building's overall insulation and environmental performance. Upon the death of an inhabitant, the armour remains within the structure, merging the traces of individual lives into the collective fabric of the building. The project embodies the principle that 'nothing belongs to anyone', proposing an architecture of shared materiality and interdependence (Fig.9).

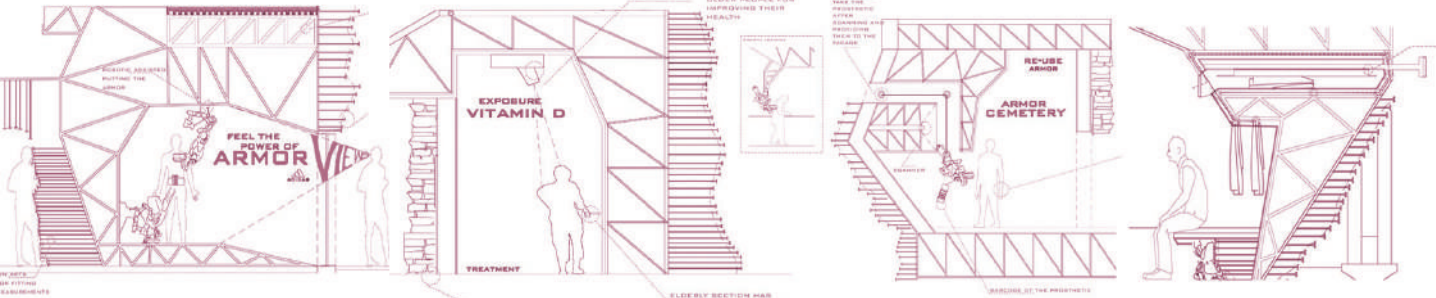The idea of co-living extends into new typologies of shared spaces

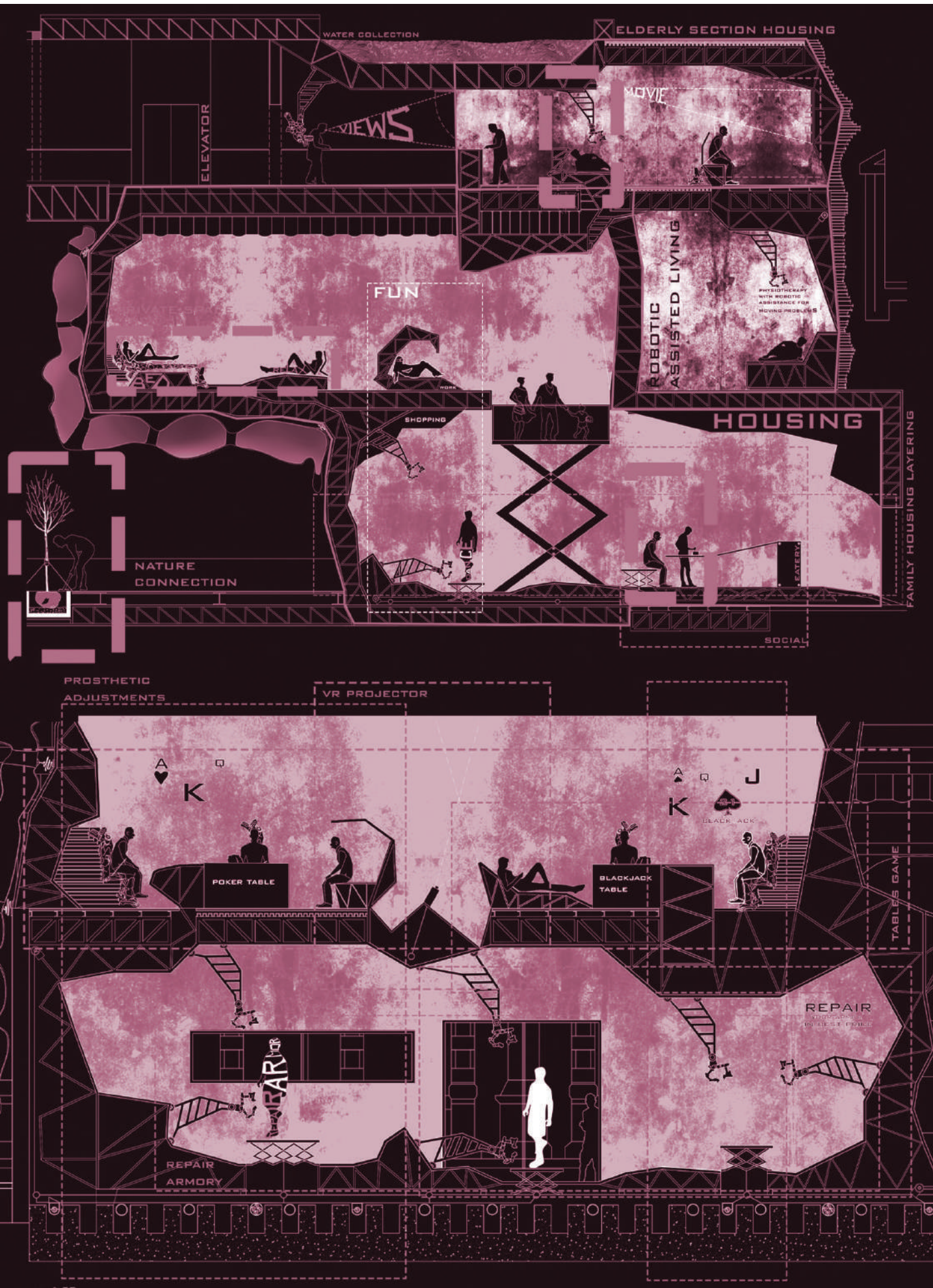Fig.9 - Detailed moments showing bodily extensions integrating into the architecture itself.

Fig.10 - Sectional moment exploring programmatic layering and complexity.

where users rent adaptable layers rather than fixed units, allowing occupation by the hour or day, thereby questioning fixed notions of domestic permanence. Facilities like the Fun Zone and other communal areas evoke Cedric Price's Fun Palace, reinterpreted here as a space of interaction between humans and intelligent systems (Fig.10).

These drawings only present a moment in the timeline of this project, as the premise of the proposition understands building as a 'development': a system of objects and processes over time. The project starts within the spatial limits of an existing urban square yet progressively transcends its boundaries through a process of absorption and transformation. It appropriates materials and architectural fragments from the surrounding fabric, reconfiguring them into its own structural and spatial logic. This act of subsumption operates as a form of urban metabolism, an ongoing cycle of decay, reuse, and renewal, where the city continuously reconstructs itself from its own residues. Drawings of various scale reveal the detail as a site of negotiation between permanence and transformation (Fig.11). The project matured to a coherent proposition as a sum of numerous detail drawings that were never conceived as a static instruction but as a performative act that anticipates transformation, embodying Cedric Price's call to "anticipate the unexpected" (Price,1996, 27).

The idea of tolerance transcends its technical definition, as the permissible deviation from precise dimensions is detail drawings. Instead in these drawings it gains a conceptual dimension and drives the technical resolutions: it is an accommodation of difference, an acceptance of uncertainty and imperfection as inherent conditions of space inhabitation.The tolerance here becomes a space of negotiation between intention and reality, manifested through the proposed systems and materials (Fig.12).

The sectional drawing (Fig.13) suggests a vertical city, interwoven with transportation infrastructure such as a metro station, where boundaries between inside and outside, private and collective domains are deliberately blurred Through its intricate spatial connections and overlapping functions, the drawing explores architecture as a living organism—adaptive, porous, and responsive to the complexities of future urban life.

The resulting architecture possesses a sense of vitality and temporality—what Peter Salter describes as a willingness to accept the life of the building as an ongoing process. The proposition also shares Salter's fascination with detail as a vehicle for ambiguity, where constructional precision coexists with a tactile roughness that invites human engagement (Fig.14).

These details integrate into a larger spatial and narrative framework, where structure, branding, and user experience merge into a unified environment. The composition thus interrogates how technology, design, and embodiment converge, transforming individual components into a holistic vision of augmented human performance and architectural adaptability.

The selection of drawings produced evidence how representational practices might transcend the fixity of technical detailing to articulate architecture as an event of continual becoming.

For example, the drawing operates as a tool of interrogation (Fig.15) by moving from detailed mechanical and spatial components to the overall architectural and experiential concept. At the micro level, it reveals precise mechanisms; robotic arms assisting in fitting the 'armour', truss systems supporting adaptive prosthetics, and pin arts capturing body measurements, highlighting the interaction between human and machine.

Ultimately, 'Tech(no)-Cosmos' proposes a vision of a cybernetic structure that grows, heals, and learns alongside its inhabitants. It explores how the merging of human anatomy, artificial intelligence, and architectural design can generate new definitions of community, care, and continuity in a post-human, post-anthropocentric future (Fig.16).
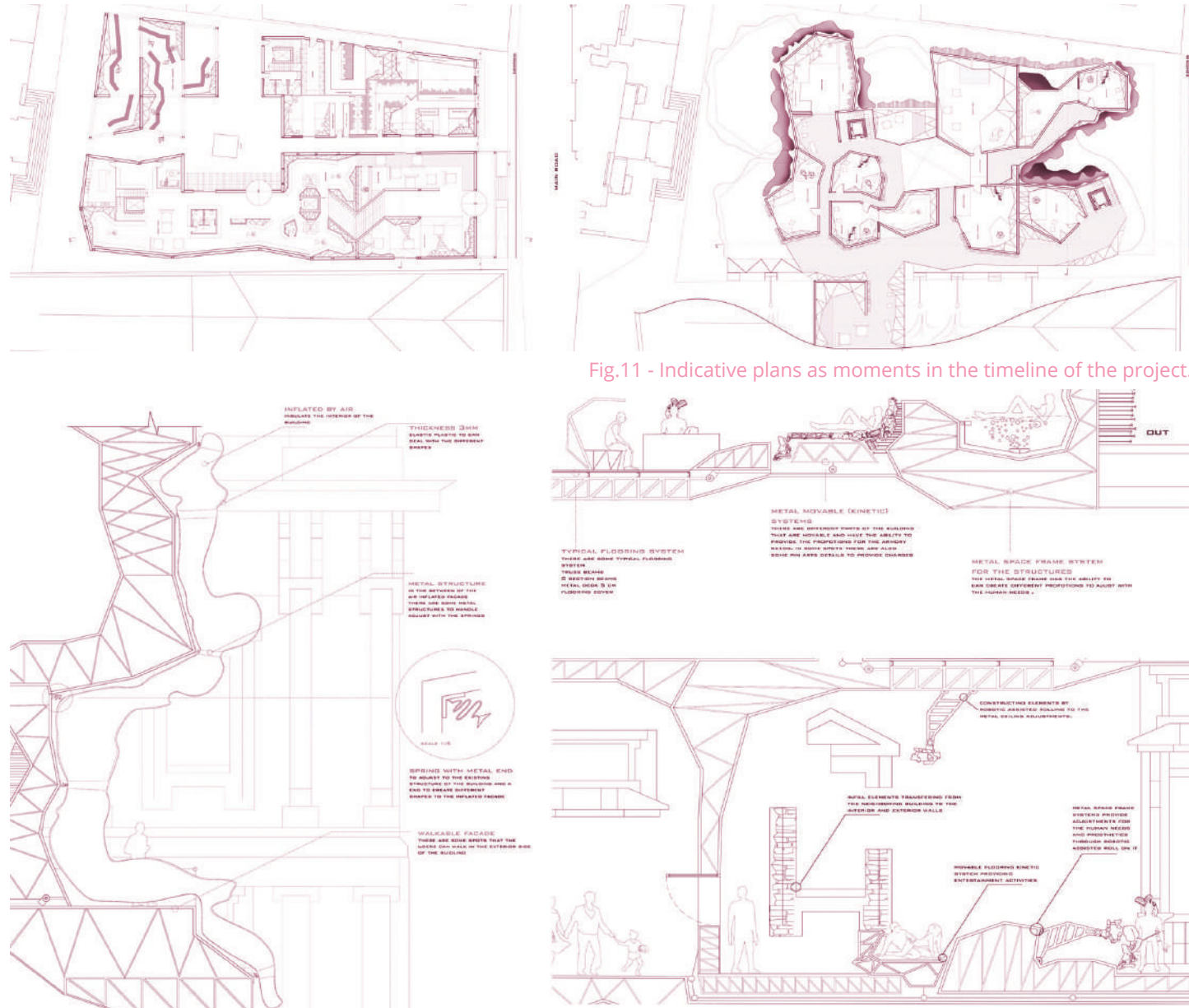

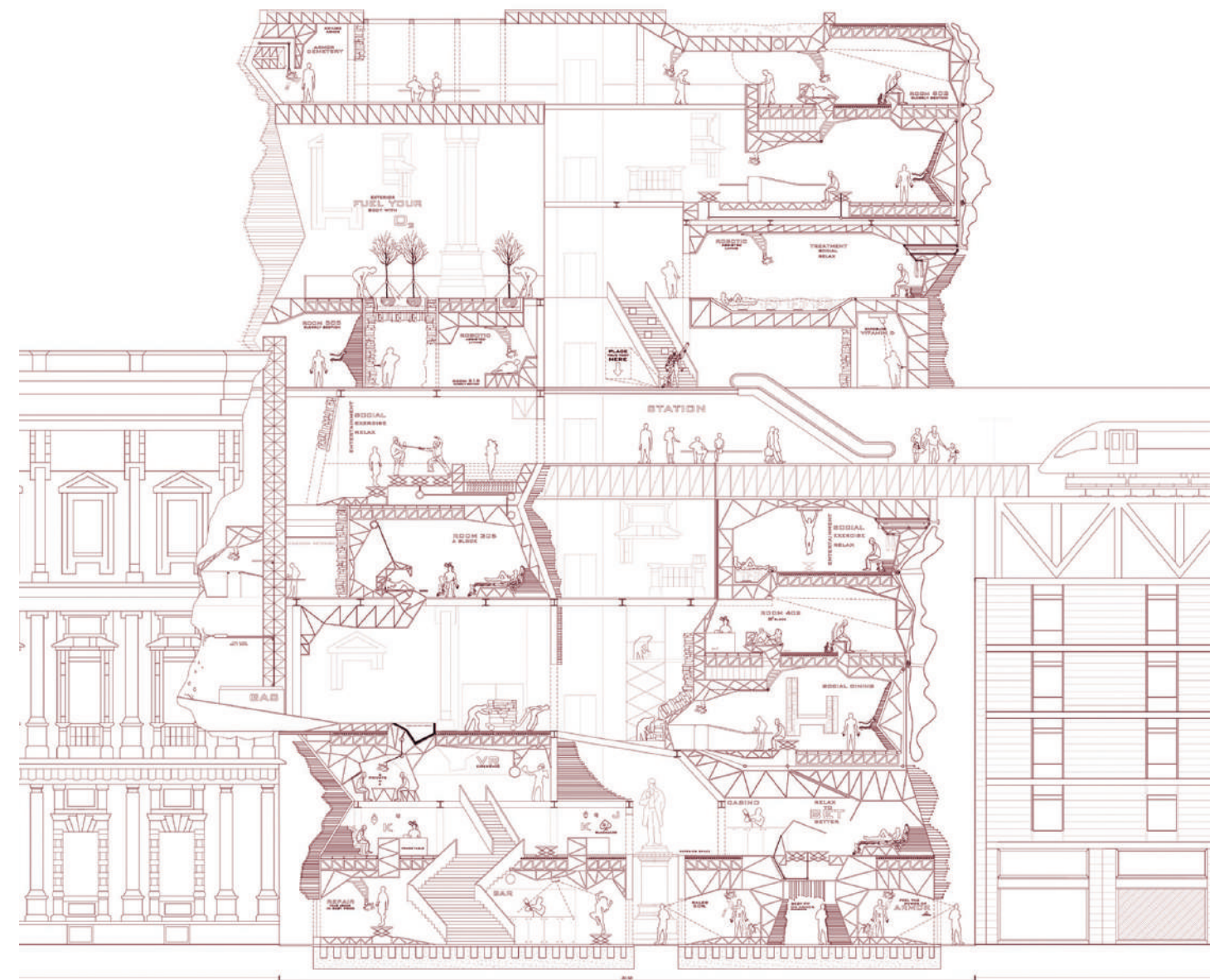Fig.11 - Indicative plans as moments in the timeline of the project.

Fig.12 - "Tolerance" tested as a space of negotiation between intention and reality, manifested through the proposed systems and materials.

Fig.13 -The sectional drawing unfolds as a narrative of inhabitation within a continuously transforming future urban organism.

"WAKE UP"

"TAKING A SHOWER"

"TAKE A LUNCH"

"WALKING IN THE GROUNDFLOOR"

"ENTERING THE BUILDING FROM THE GROUNDFLOOR"

"FUN ZONE"

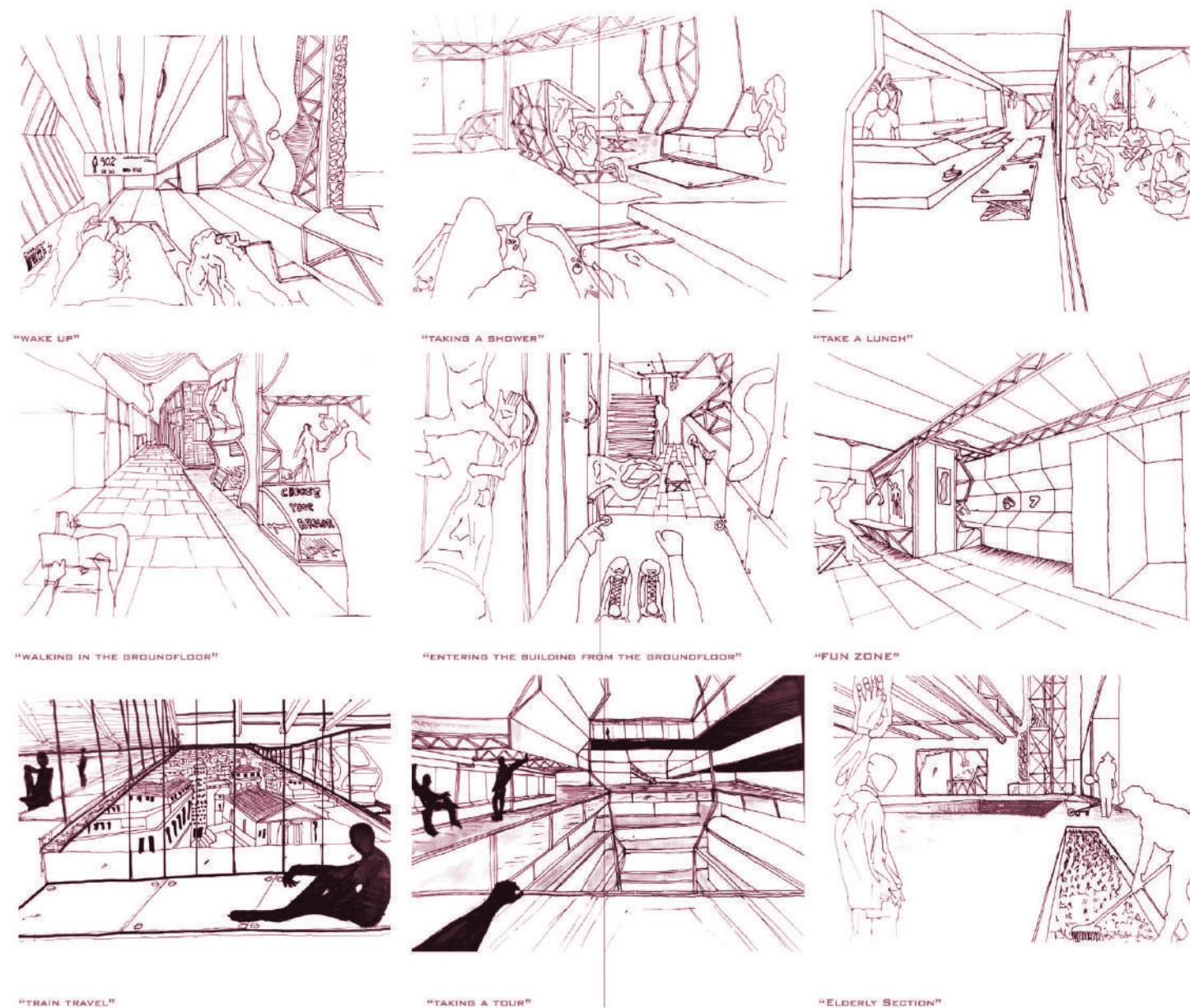"TRAIN TRAVEL"

"TAKING A TOUR"

"ELDERLY SECTION"

Fig.14 -The overall narrative developed via a series of detailed moments
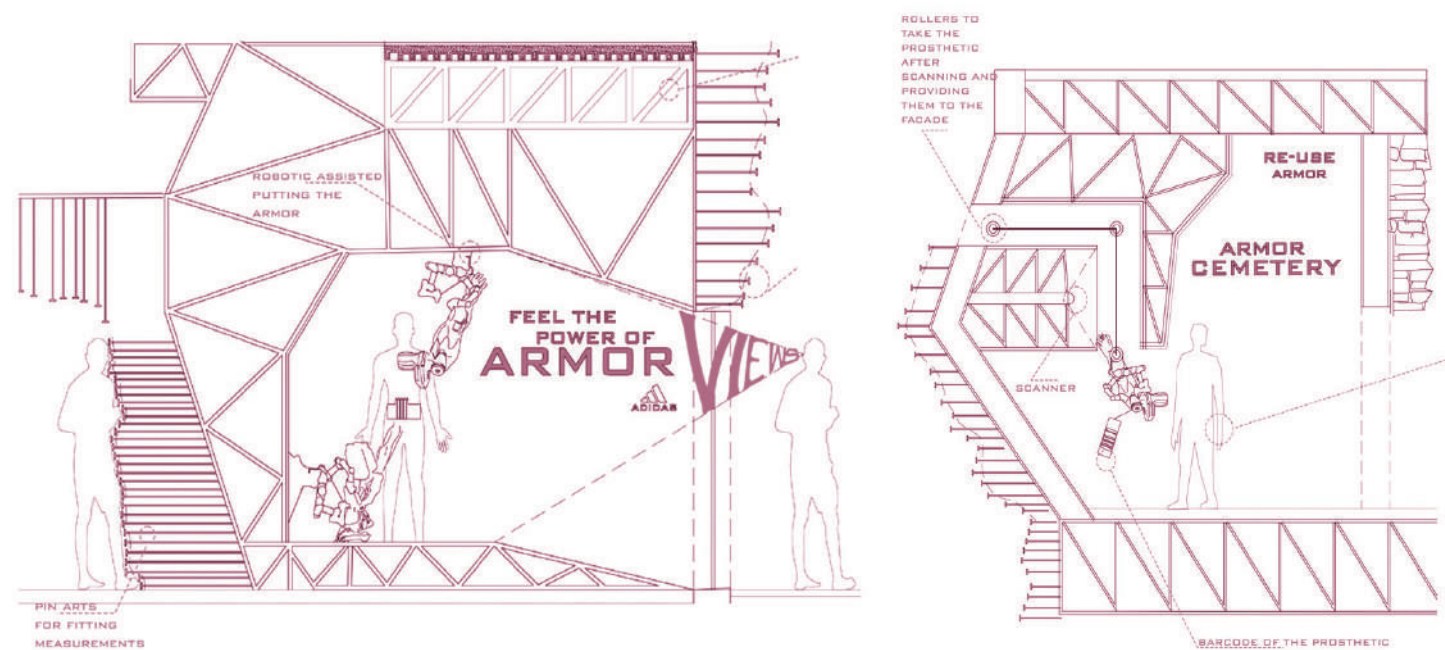

Fig.15 -Detail drawings as a tool of interrogation from the zoomed-in mechanical and spatial components to the overall narrative.
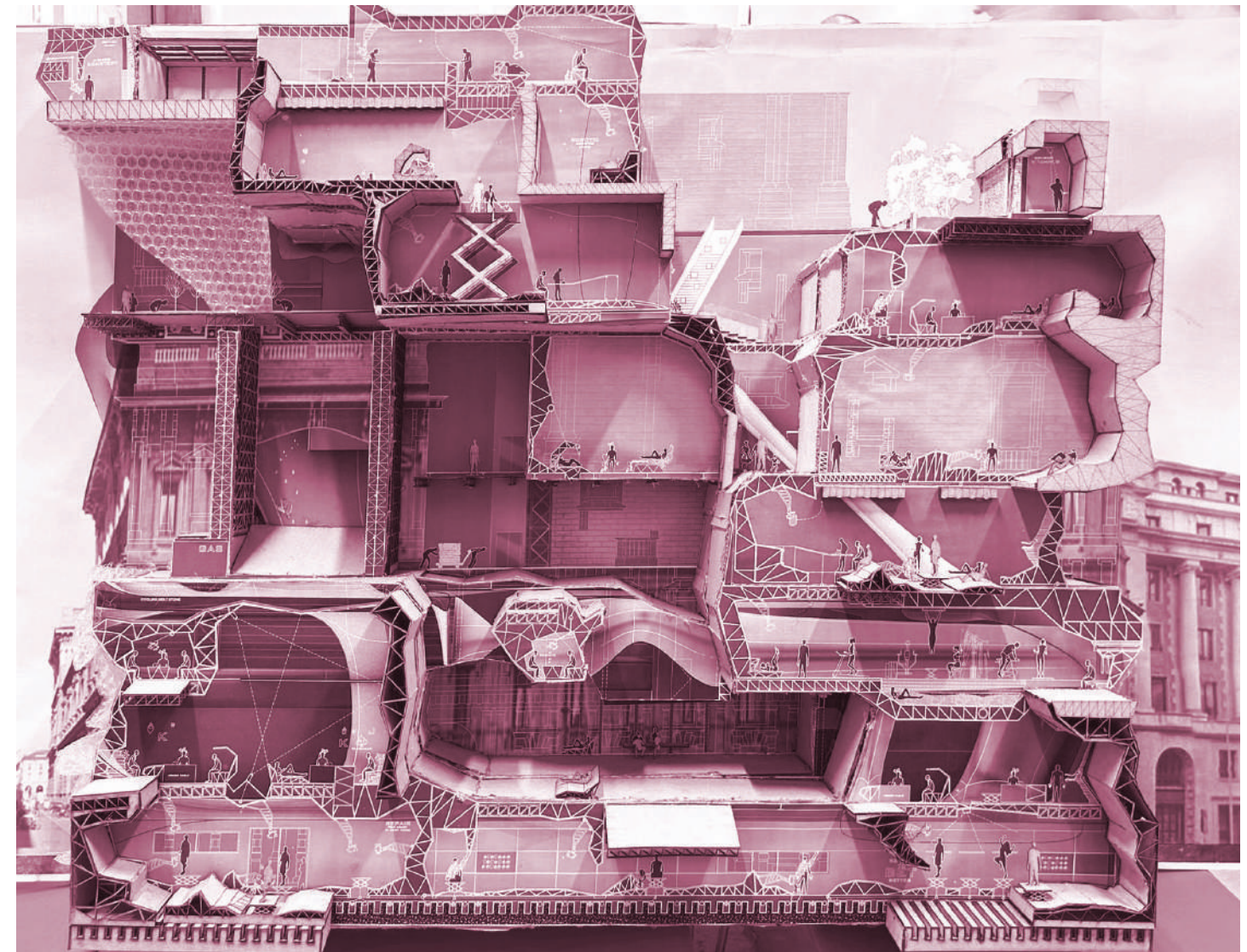

Fig.16 -Hybrid overall sectional model of 'Tech(no)-Cosmos'

CONCLUSION

The paper argues for an expanded understanding of detail as an active, temporal construct that situates architecture within continuous processes of interaction and becoming. By positioning drawing as both an instrument of foresight and a testimony to the lived, temporal nature of architecture, it challenges the notion of the building as a fixed object, proposing instead that architecture exists in a state of in-betweenness; a condition of ongoing transformation. Within the pedagogical context of the design studios and selected output discussed the detail becomes a site where technology and architectural thinking converge, enabling students to speculate on how buildings evolve through time.

Tracing the micro-temporalities embedded within material junctions and adaptive processes, the study frames the detail as a site of negotiation between human and nonhuman agencies. In doing so, it aligns with Price's vision of an architecture that finds beauty not in permanence but in transformation; an architecture that is, in the fullest sense, alive.

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NOTES

1. Design studio research laboratory Unit 4 'Divining the Future; Technology is the answer but what was the question?' is taught by the author and Adonis Cleanthous, Associate Professor, University of Nicosia.

Anatomy of a Living Joint

From Hyphal Networks to Urban Fabrics

compositi a base di micelio
materiali viventi ingegnerizzati
geometria biomimetica
giunti architettonici
stampa 3D

mycelium-based composites
engineered living materials
biomimetic geometry
architectural joints
3D printing

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I materiali vivi possono riconfigurare il modo in cui gli edifici si relazionano e si adattano nel tempo. Le connessioni convenzionali si basano su tolleranze strette e adesivi inerti; nei compositi vivi, invece, l'interfaccia può essere progettata come un microclima, in cui geometria, materiale e biologia cooperano. Questo articolo presenta un'indagine progettuale circa un pattern biomimetico ispirato alle superfici di scambio gassoso dei coralli cervello. Attraverso corridoi di ossigeno e aree di umidità per compositi a base di micelio (MBCs) stampati in 3D, la giunzione guida le ife ad attraversare gli elementi e a saldarli. Lo studio si esprime attraverso diverse scale seguendo la logica di *Powers of Ten* di Charles e Ray Eames. Vengono illustrati pattern alla scala del centimetro, gradienti di umidità al millimetro, ife alla scala del micron, forme architettoniche alla scala del metro e reti urbane speculative. L'approccio colloca la geometria all'interno dei più ampi sviluppi nei materiali viventi ingegnerizzati (ELMs) e nelle geometrie di stampa per l'ottimizzazione di prestazioni. Alle scale maggiori, la giunzione suggerisce come gli edifici possano favorire la biodiversità e persino scambiare nutrienti attraverso reti miceliari sotterranee, richeggiando la *Wood Wide Web*, in cui ife e micorrize connettono gli alberi e facilitano la condivisione di acqua, carbonio e nutrienti. Il focus di questo articolo è sulle implicazioni narrative del progettare con il contest vivente, mostrando come un pattern apparentemente semplice potrebbe influenzare il comportamento del materiale, lo spazio architettonico e le ecologie urbane.

Living materials may reconfigure the way buildings join and adapt. Conventional connections rely on dry tolerances and inert joints; in living composites, the interface can be designed as a breathing microclimate where geometry, material and biology co-operate. This article presents a design-led investigation into a biomimetic pattern inspired by the gas-exchange surfaces of brain corals. By carving oxygen corridors and sheltered moisture wells into 3D printed mycelium-based composites (MBCs), the joint encourages hyphae to cross between elements and weld them without glue. The narrative unfolds across scales following the logic of Charles and Ray Eames' *Powers of Ten*. Centimeter-scale patterns, millimeter moisture gradients, micron-scale hyphae, meter-scale architectural forms and speculative urban networks are illustrated. The approach situates the geometry within broader advances in engineered living materials (ELMs) and performance-aware printing toolpaths. At larger scales, the joint suggests how buildings could foster biodiversity and even exchange nutrients through underground mycelial networks, echoing the *Wood Wide Web* where mycorrhizal hyphae connect trees and facilitate water, carbon and nutrient sharing. The focus of this paper is on the narrative implications of designing with life, showing how a seemingly simple pattern may influence material behavior, architectural space and urban ecologies.
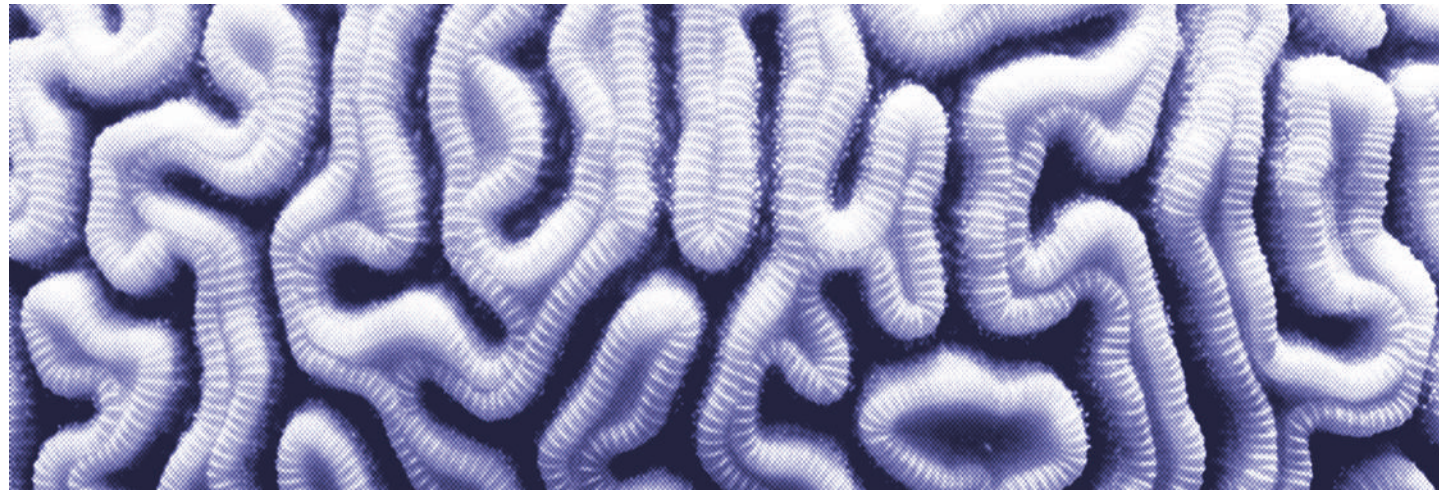
Fig.1 – Brain-coral–inspired reference pattern, showing labyrinthine ridges and channels that inform the reaction–diffusion geometry of the modular 3D-printed joint. Adapted from Adobe Stock.
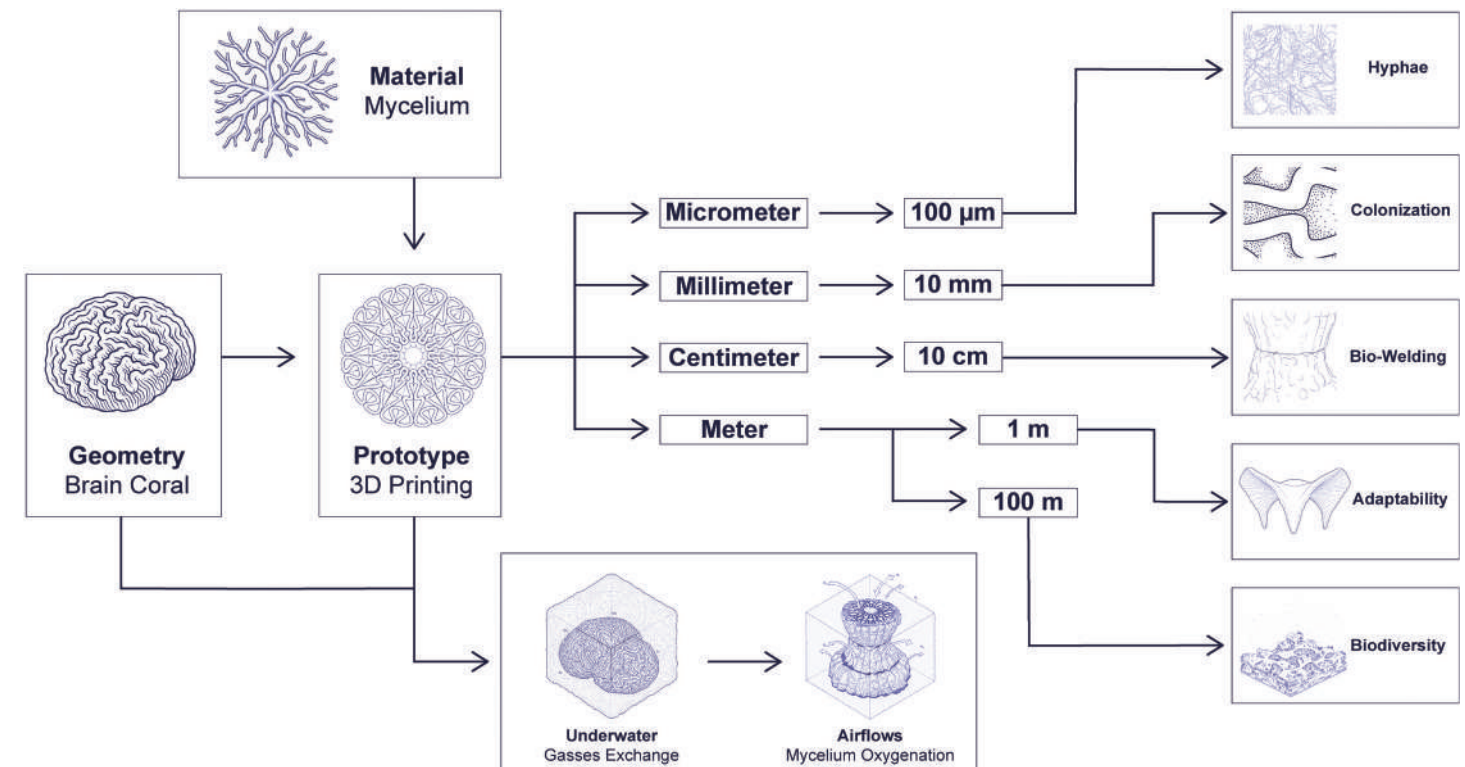

Fig.2 – Methodology inspired by *Powers of Ten*, examining the living mycelium-based joint across scales, from microscopic hyphae to architectural components and urban scenarios.

INTRODUCTION

Architectural joints are typically imagined as mechanical or chemical problems: steel meets concrete through bolts, welds, and mortar; polymers are fused by heat or resin. When working with living composites, the joint can instead be imagined as a generative interface where environmental conditions are tuned so that the material's own biology consolidates the assembly (Nguyen et al. 2018; Elsacker et al., 2023). Mycelium-based composites (MBCs), lightweight solids formed when fungal hyphae bind lignocellulosic particles, are attractive for their thermal and acoustic behavior, self-healing properties and capacity to transform agricultural waste into building components (Appels et al. 2019; Elsacker et al. 2019; Jones et al. 2020; Huang et al., 2024). But their adoption faces challenges: shrinkage during drying, limited stiffness, contamination and the need for oxygenation across thick sections. Recent studies have begun to tackle these issues through material formulation and 3D-printing strategies. In a related study focusing on material behavior and fabrication, we tested biochar-mycelium composites for 3D Printing; we investigated brain coral inspired printing paths to balance porosity and strength, as well as bio-welding of printed segments (Errichiello & Diarte, 2025). Another study, explored similar geometries at pavilion scale, using digital fabrication to create vaulted shells (Errichiello, 2024).

The present investigation asks a complementary question: how does the geometry of the joint allow biological processes across multiple scales? Inspired by corals' ability to maximize surface area for gas exchange, the joint pattern carves corridors and cavities to guide airflow and moisture. In biological systems, a high surface-area-to-volume ratio increases exchange capacity; plant leaves, for example, maximize photosynthesis and gas exchange via thin surfaces, while succulent tissues lower the ratio to retain water (Mauseth, 2000). Coral colonies likewise exhibit morphologies that increase surface area relative to volume and enable efficient diffusion (Stocking et al., 2018). Translating these principles into a joint, we aim to design a functionally graded interface where oxygen diffuses along channels while pockets retain humidity longer, driving hyphal growth (Glass et al., 2000; Neira et al., 2015). Framing the topic within the broader field of engineered living materials (ELM), we use a narrative methodology inspired by the *Powers of Ten* film: the design is analyzed at centimeter, millimeter, micrometer, meter and urban scales to reveal how geometry, material and ecology interrelate (Eames & Eames, 1977).

The research questions therefore become: Can a biomimetic pattern shape the microclimate at the interface of living composites to promote biological welding? How do its implications unfold from microstructure to urban networks?

The contribution of this article is the articulation of a multiscale narrative that situates a living joint within ecological and architectural contexts, complementing technical studies with a broader conceptual lens (Benyus, 1997; Oxman, 2015).

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Biomimicry and pattern inspiration

The joint's geometry draws from *Diploria Labyrinthiformis* (brain coral), whose labyrinthine ridges and valleys increase the colony's exposed surface for respiration and nutrient uptake. Biological systems often adapt morphology to maximize surface area relative to volume for gas exchange (Stocking et al., 2018). Our pattern abstracts this principle: the material mass creates oxygen corridors that allow more oxygenation and faster drying, while in concave wells the humidity persists longer, enabling hyphae to grow a stronger network. The pattern is generated via reaction–diffusion algorithms that mimic natural morphogenesis and produces a network of regions with high and low level of moisture (Kondo & Miura, 2010).

Functionally Graded Material

Functionally graded materials (FGMs) are characterized by variations in composition or structure over their volume, producing continuous changes in properties (Suresh & Mortensen, 1998). Translating this concept into geometry, we design an interface where porosity and curvature are graded. Nested cavities keep moisture, allowing hyphae to cross and fuse; towards the edges, channels expand, facilitating airflows (Glass et al., 2000; Fricker et al. 2017). This spatial gradient is not a change in material composition but a variation in geometry that creates differentiated microclimates along the seam. Such functionally graded design echoes natural tissues like bamboo or bone, where gradients in porosity and mineralization support multiple functions (Tan et al., 2011; Rho, Kuhn-Spearing & Zioupos, 1998).

Representation and scale

To explore the joint's behavior across scales, we adopted a visualization method modelled on the *Powers of Ten* (Eames & Eames, 1977). Starting from a 30 cm square representing the joint in plan, we interpret the pattern as if viewed through radiography (centimeter scale). We then zoom in to 30 mm square samples (millimeter scale) where the effects of moisture variations are evident. At the micro-scale, electron microscopy depicts the mycelial hyphae weaving through the substrate. Moving outward, longitudinal sections at component-scale show how the joint perform bio-welding; while conceptual sketches at building-scale imagine people inhabit 3D printed vaulted space with this living composite as a prefabricated pavilion. At the urban scale, exploded axonometric drawings speculate on a cluster of buildings connected by subterranean mycelial networks. Through this methodology, the geometric and material behaviors are analyzed at different scales, as: cell, tissue, bone, body and ecosystem.

RESULTS
Centimeter scale: the pattern as bone

At the centimeter scale, the joint resembles a radiograph of a bone. Figure 3 shows a 30 × 30 cm plan where the printing path defines
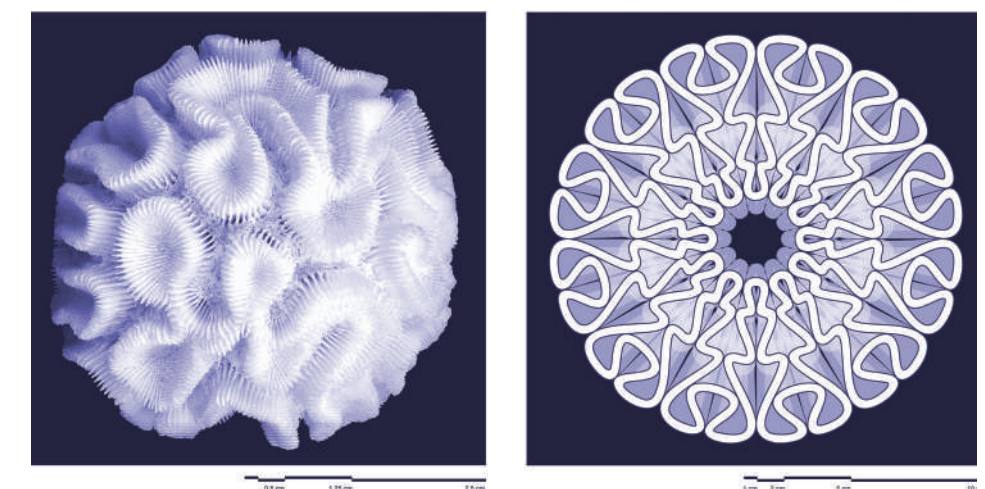

Fig.3 – (Left) Brain Coral top view, it shows its reaction-diffusion pattern. Adapted from NMITA; (Rigth) Centimeter-scale plan of the brain-coral-inspired joint pattern, where reaction–diffusion toolpaths create structural ribs and stacked cavities that increase surface area and enable oxygenation.

a maze-like geometry inspired by brain coral's reaction-diffusion pattern. The continuous white line traces the material deposition, while black areas show porosity. The design achieves multiple functions: the material path act as structural ribs that stiffen the geometry, the porosity regulate moisture, and the overall pattern increases the interface's surface area. The cross-section reveals that the cavities flow also vertically, allowing oxygen to permeate from the top and bottom faces.

Fig.4 – Thirty-millimeter square samples showing the functionally graded material and the moisture fields.

Millimeter Scale: tissue and moisture gradients

Zooming into a 30 mm square region (Fig.4), the pattern becomes a landscape of black and white zones representing porosity levels. During cultivation, mycelium grows faster in moist zones and slower in dry zones. Hyphae proliferate purely in areas more porous, while they form harder bands along the ridges. The design therefore creates a functionally graded environment: moisture and oxygen vary continuously, guiding the biological process. Each sample illustrates a different portion of the joint, to show that the gradient occurs across the geometry's entire perimeter.

Micrometer scale: hyphal networks

At the micrometer scale, scanning electron microscopy (Fig.5) reveals how the intertwined network of hyphae colonizes a substrate. White threads grow across the black voids, bridging particles and weaving the joint together.

Hyphae are tip-growing filaments that fuse when genetically compatible; their *anastomosis* forms a network capable of transporting water, metabolites and signals. Intersections of hyphae mark the points where bio-welding occurs, fusing adjacent elements.

This microscopic view links back to our design objective: by shaping
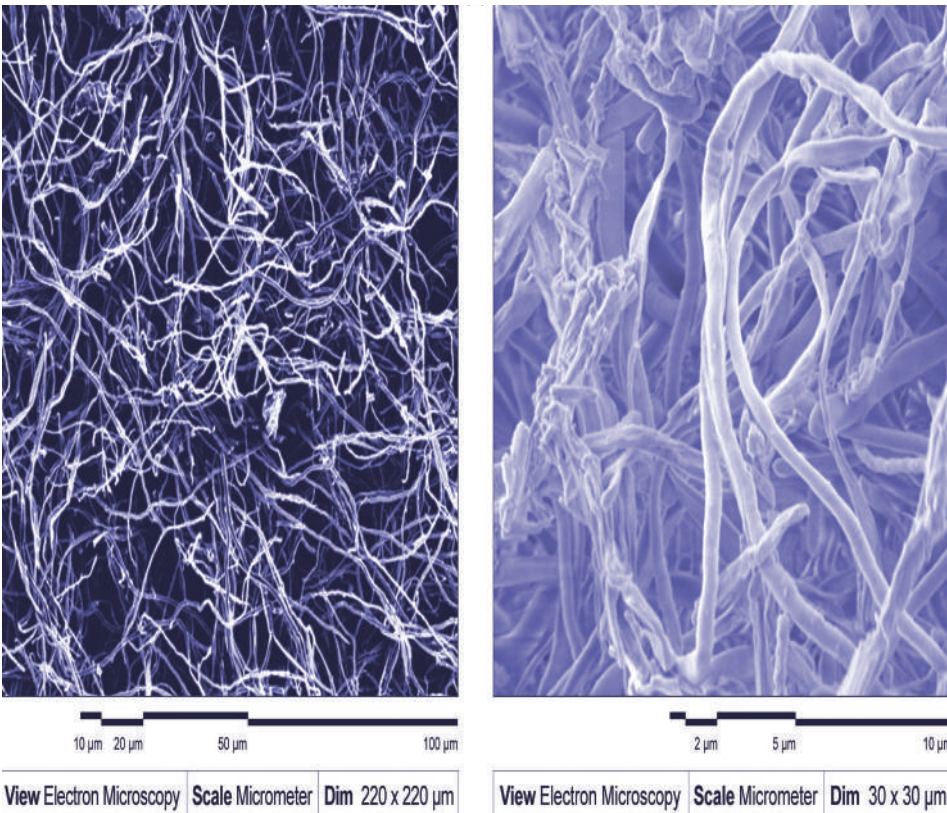

Fig.5 – Hyphae bridging pores in substrates. Adapted from Islam et al., 2017; Motamedi et al., 2025.

cavities and channels, we influence the microenvironment that hyphae encounter, encouraging them to cross the seam and reinforce the joint.

Cross-sections and biological welding

Figure 6 shows three printed elements brought together. As the composites cure, moisture evaporates from exposed ridges but lingers inside the wells, sustaining a humid microclimate.

Hyphae from both sides extend into this region, weave through the cavities and fuse, creating a continuous network. Once the joint dries, the fungi become inactive, and the seam behaves as a single element.

Longitudinal sections (Fig.7) show how this mechanism repeats along the length of a column. Such biological welding contrasts with conventional junctions: the joint self-organizes and uses the material's own growth to perform the connection.
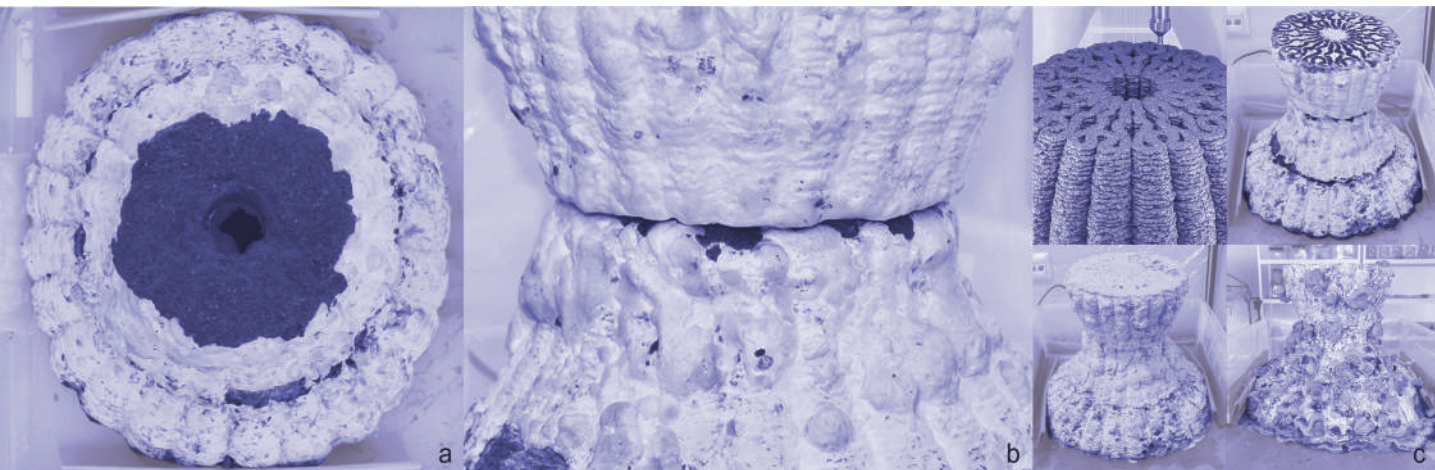

Fig.6 – Process timeline of a 3D-printed mycelium–biochar demonstrator, from fresh extrusion to colonization, biological welding of the seams, and dried element with emerging fruiting bodies.
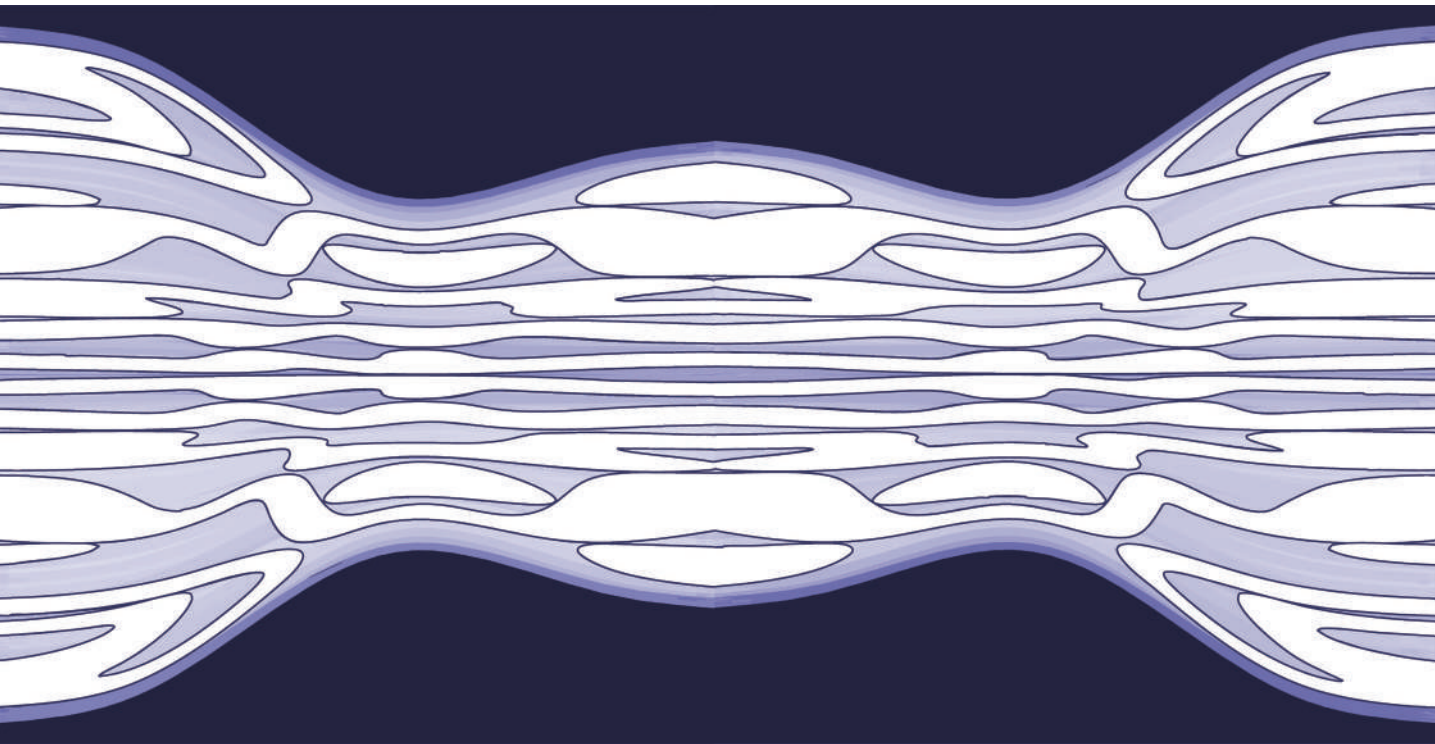

Fig.7 – Longitudinal section along a column showing the repetition of bio-welded seams, which consolidate discrete printed segments into a single structural element.

Meter scale: architectural and urban ecologies

In Figure 8 a section shows a small pavilion where the material and the pattern have been employed trough 3D printing and prefabrication. The design demonstrates the freedom offered by additive manufacturing: complex geometries can be fabricated as segments and bio-welded on site. The final step in our close up look considers clusters of buildings at
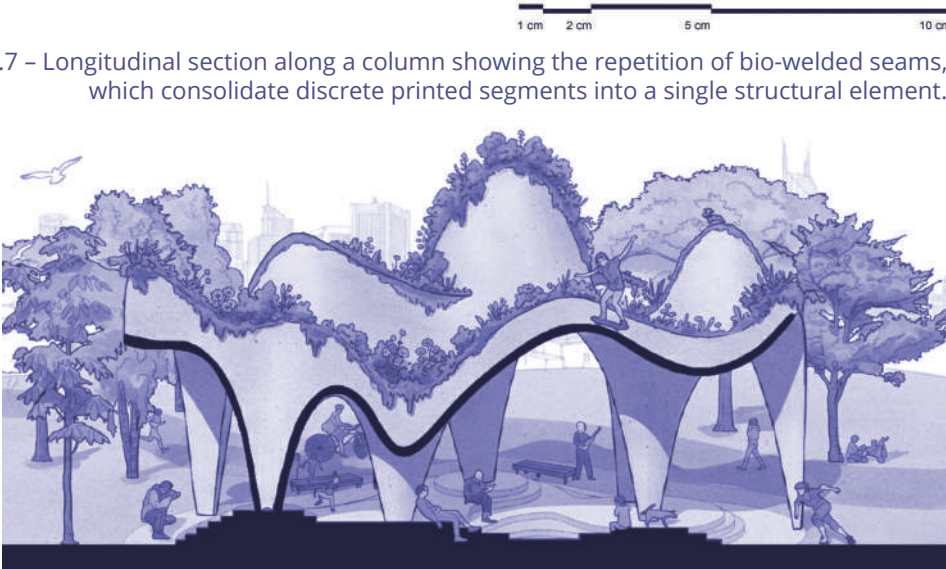

Fig.8 – Section perspective through a small prefabricated pavilion 3D-printed with MBCs, visualizing if living engineered materials may becomes part of inhabitable spaces.

the urban scale. Figure 9 speculates on a neighborhood made of engineered living materials. Each building's facade incorporates the coral pattern, providing niches for algae and cyanobacteria that may form lichens (Honegger, 1991; Cruz & Beckett, 2016; Beckett, 2023). Over time, the facades develop living patinas that photosynthesize, sequester carbon and moderate microclimates. Underground, the mycelium that binds each module extends into the soil. Research on mycorrhizal networks shows that fungal hyphae can connect trees, enabling them to exchange water, carbon and nutrients (Simard et al., 1997; Steidinger et al., 2019; Simard, 2021). If similar networks formed under a district of living buildings, they could share moisture, nutrients or even chemical signals, creating an urban analogue of the Wood Wide Web (Castro-Delgado et al., 2020). Such speculations shift the design problem from isolated components to ecosystems; buildings become nodes in a metabolic network where architecture, biology and ecology intertwine.

DISCUSSION

This study aims to show how a simple biomimetic pattern may arrange material behavior, structural form and ecological speculation across scales. At the centimeter scale, the geometry manipulates surface area and moisture retention, echoing the biological principle that high surface-area-to-volume ratios enhance exchange (Stocking et al., 2018). At the millimeter and micrometer scales, the functionally graded cavities create microenvironments where hyphae grow, fuse and perform biological welding. These processes rely on the intrinsic capabilities of mycelium to bind and self-heal. At the architectural scale, the same logic could produce complex forms that can be fabricated through 3D printing and assembled via bio-welding. Such forms invite human occupation and non-human colonization, suggesting new typologies where buildings are both habitat and structure.
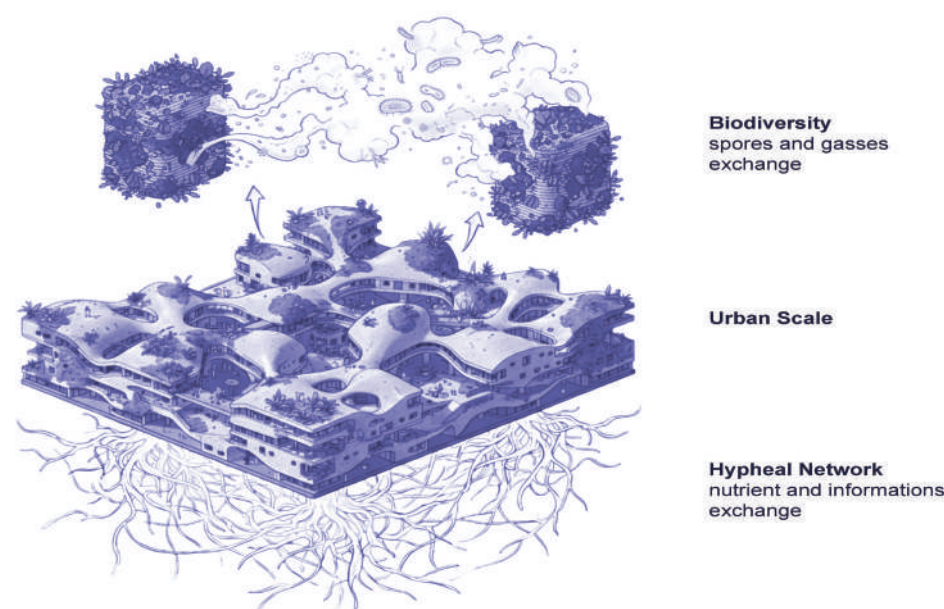

Fig.9 – Exploded axonometric of an urban block with bioreceptive façades above and interconnected mycelial networks below, speculating on buildings as nodes in a shared metabolic and ecological infrastructure.
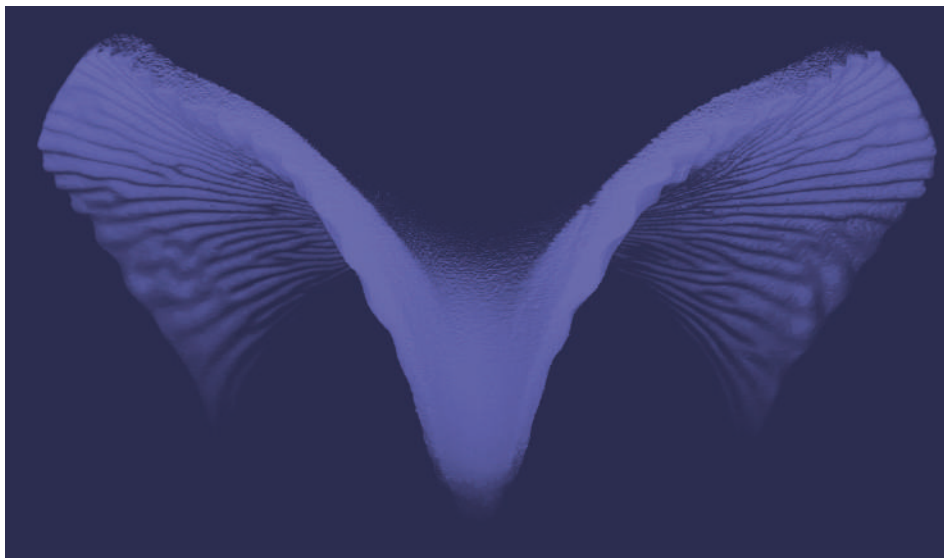

Fig.10 – Speculative modular shell for 3D printing, exploring minimal surfaces and performance-driven printing toolpaths as a prototype for future living structures.

The urban speculation invites broader reflection. Mycorrhizal networks demonstrate that fungi can interconnect organisms and facilitate resource sharing (Simard et al., 1997; Steidinger et al., 2019; Simard, 2021). If architectural modules grown from mycelium could connect underground, they might exchange moisture and nutrients, stabilise microclimates and enhance biodiversity (Cruz & Beckett, 2016; Cruz, 2017; Beckett, 2023). Facades colonized by algae and cyanobacteria could form lichens; in lichens, fungi protect phototrophs and gather water and minerals while receiving carbon (Honegger, 1991; Nash, 2008). Such symbioses could introduce low

carbon footprint construction, as living skins photosynthesize and repair themselves. The pattern also hints at economic and social implications. Using by-products and bio-welding may support local circular economies, reducing reliance on extracted materials and enabling modular prefabrication. The design invites a shift from building as static object to building as process: assemblies can be grown, disassembled and regrown, adapting over time.

While previous research, related to this study, focused on optimizing material formulations and printing parameters to control shrinkage and stiffness, our contribution here

is narrative and conceptual: we articulate a multiscale imagination that frames living joints within ecological and cultural contexts. The methodology aims to encourage designers to consider how decisions at one scale ripple across others. The results suggest that carefully designed geometry can harness biological processes not only at the microscale but also at the scale of buildings and cities.

CONCLUSION

The coral-inspired joint shows how geometry can arrange the microclimate at the interface of living composites. By combining oxygen corridors with sheltered moisture wells, the pattern drives hyphal growth to fuse printed segments, turning bio-welding into a spatial design problem rather than an added adhesive. Read through the lens of *Powers of Ten*, the same configuration becomes cell, tissue, bone, body and ecosystem, linking microscopic hyphae to architectural shells and speculative districts woven by fungal networks.

This multiscale narrative complements ongoing technical work on engineered living materials by foregrounding their ecological, spatial and cultural implications. As architecture responds to climate breakdown and resource scarcity, such living joints suggest an alternative paradigm in which buildings are grown from by-products, heal through biological processes and participate in metabolic networks as intricate as those found in forests and reefs.

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NOTES

Daily Details of Modernist Thresholds

A Speculation: What if Modernist Details Settled in Üsküdar/İstanbul?

modernist detaylar

eşikler

mimari antropoloji

spekülatif çizim

modernist details

thresholds

architectural anthropology

speculative drawing

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Bu çizim-metin, tasarım nesneleri olarak binalarla değil, yaşamın çok duyulu çevresinin izlerini taşıyan mekânın aktörlerini görünür kılmak için, neredeyse hiçbir zaman bu aktörlerin okunabildiği, kirlenmiş bir imge ile aklımızda beliremeyen ikonik modern mimarlık eserlerinin detaylarına yönelir. Modernist detayların farklı bir kültürel ve fiziksel bağlama taşınmasıyla kurgulanan sıradan bir günün detaylarına ilişkin bu spekülasyonda, sıklıkla yaşamdan kopuk bir mimarlığın başat teknikleri olarak görülen ortografik temsil sistemlerinden oluşan bir çizim-metin üretimine başvurulur. Mimari detayların maddesel gerçekliğinin katılığı yaşam ile aşınırken, temsil tekniklerinin alışılagelmiş tanımlılığı "ya şöyle olsaydı" sorusunun kışkırtıcılığında anlatısal bir spekülasyonda bulanıklaşır.

The work is a speculation on the impact of transposing modernist details into different cultural and physical contexts on an ordinary day. Orthographic systems of representation are often regarded as techniques that detach architecture from life. The rigidity of architectural details is however eroded when it comes in contact with life. This drawing-text therefore turns to the details of iconic works of modern architecture, works that almost never appear in our minds with the "contaminated" image through which such actors might be legible. The conventional fixity of representational techniques is unsettled within a narrative speculation provoked by the question "what if...", in order to render visible the actors of space that carry the traces of life's multisensory environment.

This text-drawing speculates on the details of an ordinary day. Set in a fictional apartment building on a hillside overlooking the Bosphorus in Üsküdar, one of Istanbul's old neighborhoods, the work provides a glimpse into the residents' daily lives through detailed drawings. The apartment appears only through these fragments, detail drawings that shift between scales.

The text-drawing turns to the details of iconic works of modern architecture, works that hardly ever appear in our minds marked by any trace of use. It does so in order to speculate on an architecture not centered on buildings as design objects, but instead one that values the traces of daily routines of dwelling. An architecture that considers how space is lived, and beyond that, how space and matter themselves are inhabited and aged by life; microbes, molds, etc.

The fictional apartment worked with in this study is a collage-building assembled from the detail drawings of iconic modern architectural works. These were produced either as fixed projections of constructive reality or, published in architectural magazines. All were ignoring traces of life, engaging neither with any distortions in translation from drawing to building, nor with the reality of buildings being marked by life. This work brings this collage of details of modernist architecture that ignore, conceal, or hide the traces of life, in direct contact with the familiar traces of daily dwelling routines. In a sense it brings down to earth the exalted, sanctified images of modernism.

Undoubtedly, these details that belong to Loos, Le Corbusier, Jeanneret, and Mies, did not experience the smooth, unmarked life that had been anticipated. These frozen, idealized, or fixed projections, make contact with the worn, marked, and vitalized; humans, plants, insects, cats and dogs, as well as rain, snow, mud, wind, and sun. Perhaps they could not live exactly as predicted even for a single moment. The presented text-drawings do not trace these real lives of the details, but surround these idealized details with the routines, seasons, and lives of animals and insects familiar to us. The work opens the details to speculation, revealing the imaginative and provocative nature of the "what if..." question.

Interestingly, when approached in this way, detail drawings begin to amplify their witnessing of the lives of different living beings they have encountetred. As we descend from the scale of the human to smaller scales, the visibility of life in small nooks increases. A window detail designed to block the wind, the track of a sliding window so it may be opened for the view, or the curve of a windowsill to divert water, all become dwelling spaces for spiders, mold, and other living creatures. A crack becomes a path for ants, the gap between paving stones turns into a garden for clover, a windowsill becomes a table for doves, etc.

Dorrian speaks of how while solidifying the architectural object, architectural representation traditions, continuously produce effects of alienation (Dorrian, 2005, 62). Even when assumed to be predictable they lead to unforeseeable outcomes. In detail drawings representational techniques are often employed in the search for precision and clarity. Plans, sections, elevations, axonometric projections all present idealized promises whilst situated within everyday unpredictable life details and a narrative structure. The drawings presented here aim to create a medium conducive to thinking beyond the material reality of the building, toward the simultaneous existence of human and more-than-human actors. The work asks can the representation of these encounters beyond the predicted lives of the material environment, this making visible of the actors that constitute the multisensory surroundings of life, provide a discursive space for speculative intervention? Can architectural representation become a productive site for anthropological inquiry when incorporating traces of life? By bringing together human and more-than-human inhabitants, can this generate a research field suitable for the speculative intervention in life-worlds? In Ingold's terms, might this form an architectural anthropology, which approaches the environment as a living and intervention-ready medium?

This study enlists modernist drawings for this purpose. What if they were part of architectural anthropology...

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NOTES

1. Tschumi (1997, p. 397) noted the futility of the modernist ideal to break away from traces of life. His reflection on the Villa Savoye (1997, 397)—once erected as a timeless transcendental ideal, yet ultimately debased into a lived and dying object, its squalid walls stinking of urine, smeared with excrement, and covered with obscene graffiti.

daily details of modernist thresholds

what if modernist details settled in Üsküdar?

plan 1:20 villa muller's entrance [redrawn from the original, with photo reference]

Undoubtedly, these details that belong to Loos, Le Corbusier, Jeanneret, and Mies, did not experience the smooth, unmarked life that had been anticipated. These **frozen, idealized,** or **fixed** projections, unmarked by worn, marked, and vitalized life, as well as rain, snow, mud, wind, and sun. Perhaps they could not live exactly as predicted even for a single moment. The presented text-drawings do not trace these idealized details with the animals and insects familiar to us. The work opens the details to speculation, as predicted: humans, plants, insects, cats and dogs, but surround these idealized details with the **REAL LIVES of different living beings** they have question. Interestingly, when and approached from the scale of the human to smaller scales, **the revealing the imaginative and provocative nature of the "what if..." amplify their witnessing of the lives of different living beings begin to visibility of life in small nooks** increases. As we descend from the encountered in this way, **detail drawings** human detail designed to block the wind, the track of a sliding window so it may be opened for the view, or the curve of a windowsill to divert water, all become dwelling spaces for spiders, mold, and other living creatures. A crack becomes a path for ants, the gap between paving stones turns into a garden for clover, a windowsill becomes a table for doves, etc.

plan 1:5 Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret, sliding window, manufactured by Sutter & Koller in Basel (redrawn from the original drawing (FLC29855. © FLC))

> nom nomm... when the ribbon window's open... say goodbye to peace tiny spider!

> peck peck! we, the lovebirds, are here!

> they're away on holiday, so I'm here at my sayfiye. * my seaside-view home...

> tired of hiding under the windowsill... winter's cozy, but "tebdil-i mekanda ferahlık vardır". *

> yes, curtain!... west-facing façade: perfect for Bosphorus sunsets! perfect for boiling!

* istanbullites would spend summers at the sayfiye, coastal retreats from the city

* in an english cartoon, you could say it like: "change your place, ease your mind."

villa tugendhat / Le Corbusier and Pierre Jeanneret 1925-24

1 Corroded and bird-soiled metal window sill
2 Dust-accumulated window track
3 Spider web-covered metal window profile
4 Bird-blind double glass
5 Bird-scratched window handle

> mırmır... my zer-stone bed

what if ...

more than human actors.
... simultaneous existence of human and building, toward the **reality of the material beyond the material** conducive to thinking aim to create a medium here **The drawings presented** within everyday unpredictable life situated and a narrative structure. **idealized promises** whilst present. **precision and** axonometric projections, elevations, all sections for clarity. Plans **drawings** employed in the search for predictable outcomes. **In detail** representational techniques are often **ideal** lead to unforeseeable outcomes (Dorrian, 2005, 62). **effects** continuously produced to be predictable they **of alienation** representation traditions. the architectural object, solidifying Even when assumed how while Dorrian speaks of

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The work asks can the representation of these encounters beyond the predicted lives of the actors that constitute the material environment, this making visible of the **multisensory surroundings** of life, provide a discursive space for **speculative intervention?**

Can architectural **anthropological inquiry** representation become a productive site for life? By bringing together human and more-than-human inhabitants, can this generate a research field suitable for **the speculative intervention in life-worlds?**

In Ingold's terms, might this form an "architectural anthropology which approaches the environment as a living and intervention-ready medium?

This study **enlists modernist drawings for this purpose. What if** they were part of **architectural anthropology?** ...

what if .....

dd section 1:5 marble wall

1 time-carved and footstep-polished marble wall
2 worn, corroded metal rail
3 cut and torn linoleum
4 lime-carved plaster

section bb 1:5 double-glazed sliding window, manufactured by Sutter & Koller in Basel

> zeitopf, no! it's not a travel baloon!

> what a big fat lie!

the steady northeasterly wind of istanbul # bosphorus poyraz never stops. not my payraz! the downstairs neighbor moans at the crumbs windy day... the downstairs...

what if ... cc section the balcony of unite d'habitation le corbusier [redrawn from Edward R. Ford, 2003, MIT Press]
1 probable spider residency or a frame for the Bosphorus rain-brewed mold colony
2 cracked tiles with darkened grout lines for starting residency
3 a cozy corner for starting residency
4 / 5 fail-approved window height

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FORD, Edward R. The Details of Modern Architecture – Volume 2: 1928–1988. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 2003.

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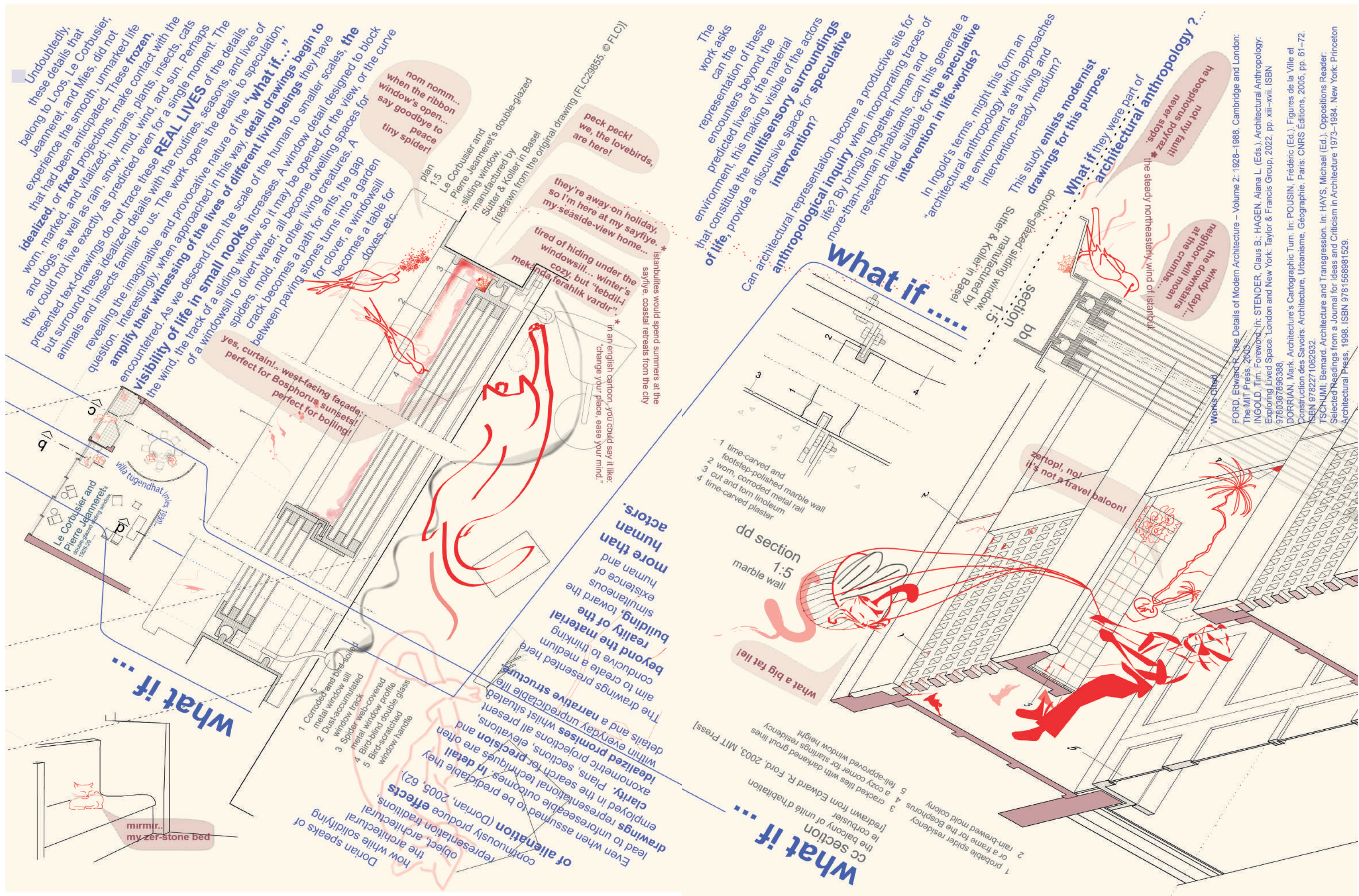
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ATLAS

IN DETAIL Atlas

The Atlas showcases student project work produced during the three-week online UNIVERSITY of Universities (UOU) international workshop.

The UOU international network of academics from European schools of architecture cooperates to provide online workshops throughout the academic year for students from different universities who work together remotely and in a collaborative way.

The contribution of tutors from many parts of the world gives students a diverse and immersive learning experience and enhances cultural diversity among both students and tutors.

The IN DETAIL Atlas shows a selection of work produced by students individually or in small groups – focusing on different themes related to their own experiences or environment, framed by the workshop task.

UOU WORKSHOP 4a_IN DETAIL

Tutor: Angela Kyriacou Petrou, University of Nicosia

Student Projects:

1 Cecilia Villegas Poveda. The balcony as an extension of the home. Minimal architecture, maximum life.

2 Dina Alloin. Echoes on the Wall: Rebuilding Memory in Alicante.

3 Miguel Itxaso Del Rio. "Of Walls, Marks, and Growing Things.

4 Zoia Dolgova 'The continuity of time and empty facades.

5 Joan Briones / Èlia Montagud/ José González. Archiblackout© When The Lights Went Out, The Neighbourhood Lit Up Archisuitcase©

6 Miguel Ángel Fernández Serrano. The skin that the sea wears away: Erosion and geological transformation at Cala Palmera, Cabo De Las Huertas

7 Natalia Józefczyk. A Story of La Casita de las Macetas Azules_A Story of transformation in the spaces and streets of El Barrio.
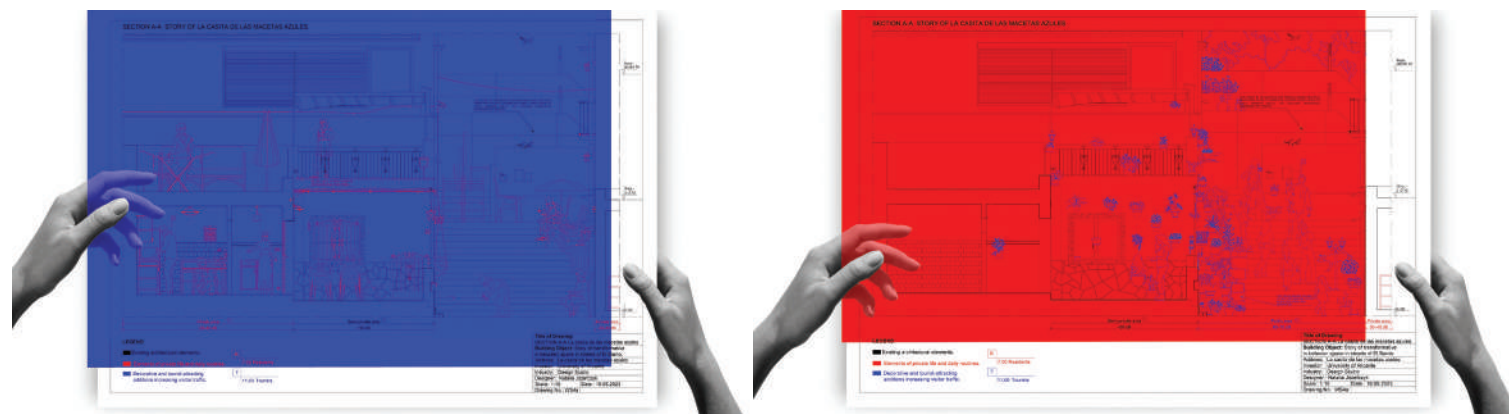
Kyriacou Petrou, Angela[1]

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In addition to the UOU workshop, the journal received - as a response to the call - important contributions from artists and students, which are included in the final section of this ATLAS:

Anastasia Leontiou, Ksenia Dovydenko, Tamara Fansa, Andreas Al-Khoury, Pia Bernhardt. "Tracing the In-Between: Material Evidence in AI-Mediated Architectural Education" University of Nicosia_ ARC Department of Architecture, Hum(ai)nity - Patterns of Association, MArch_ 2024 / 25. Teaching faculty: Alessandra Swiny, Michalis Georgiou, Stavros Voskaris, Christina Christoforou.

Valentin Strohkirch. "Something is simmering". Konstfakt University of Arts, Craft and Design in Stockholm, Sweden.

AIM

The aim of the workshop is to draw out ideas of lived architecture.

Rather than analysing space in an abstract way, observing and drawing -in detail- is intended to situate architecture as an extension of human life. Touching on areas of microhistory, anthropology, micro matter and ecological networks, the aim is to visualise new narratives of architecture.

We are looking to create drawings of architectural elements, spaces, artefacts and details of urban spaces that tell stories about how spaces change over time, how they are used or how they could be used.

These stories may include human parameters – actions and behaviours of users- or they may include nonhuman or environmental parameters. The idea is to think through the micro scale & in detail.

WHAT WE ARE OSERVING

The ways buildings are transformed through adaptation or reconstruction, and uses - describing architecture's wider relations to external factors - this could be about how buildings change and weather or it could simply be about everyday stories of life and space:

- Capturing scenes of daily life from the perspective of the people involved - public spaces animated by human activity.

- Tracing repetitive acts of home-making: weaving, mending, growing and maintaining.

- Evidence of the daily life of marginalised communities – telling a story of exclusion.

- Recognizing how everyday items are used in the appropriation of spaces or neighbourhoods.

- Recording events and actions of urban spaces or animating important historical events.

- Visualising the reconstruction of sites or cities after war or environmental destruction.

- Recording spaces that express how people's ways of life are shaped by different climates, topographies, cultures.

In order to make these observations we need to witness our environment - like detectives - in slow motion. we want to reveal invisible stories/marginal communities hidden worlds, micro details and unknown lives- all details are important.

The first task is to look for the story you want to tell. Make a small video or storyboard to begin to tell your story. It could be a story related to your domestic environment/your neighbourhood or community. It could also be a story about an environmental condition or event that has occurred.

Think about recording all details related to the story – we want to focus on the material evidence that exists in the detail: the body, the artefacts, the actions and movements, materiality, nonhuman life, deterioration and change, etc.

DESIGNING THE DRAWINGS

For the development of your ideas from the storyline you produced, begin by gathering detailed information: you need to include as much information as possible on one image. Look at examples to find good graphic ways to include figures/data/names/ materiality/information etc onto the "architectural" drawing.

The drawing should begin as a line drawing - probably a plan section or axonometric. Start with basic information and slowly add detail. Use your videos and additional data to explore the 'reality' of your story:

Archives or records of historic events - details, actors, places, dates. Data about the location; cities, street names, names of rivers or water bodies, materiality, microorganisms, individuals or communities involved.

- Critically analyse the minimal spaces of everyday life.

- Ability to identify problems and develop strategic scenarios.

- Ability to develop and represent design proposals at different scales.

SCHEDULE

- Workshop Online Presentation / 4/4/25.
- Classes online UOU / Fridays from 9:30 to 13:30 (CET): 11/4/25 and 9/5/25.
- Final Presentation, Face-to-face in Alicante and online / 16/5/25.

NOTES

We will take cues from ideas related to architectural ethnography/architectural anthroplogy, referring particularly to text such as: Learning from Architectural Ethnography by Atelier Bow-Wow & K. Michael Hays; Architectural Anthropology- Exploring lived space Ed Marie Stender, Claus Bech-Danielsen & Aina Landsverk Hagen; Urban Flotsam: Stirring the city by Chora & Raul Bun.

The balcony as an extensión of the home. Minimal architecture, maximum life.

Cecilia Villegas Poveda

Alicante University

This project begins with a forgotten space: a balcony. Through everyday actions the space becomes active and transforms. This project draws how daily gestures reconfigure architecture. Here, action transforms space. And the smallest place becomes a stage for life.
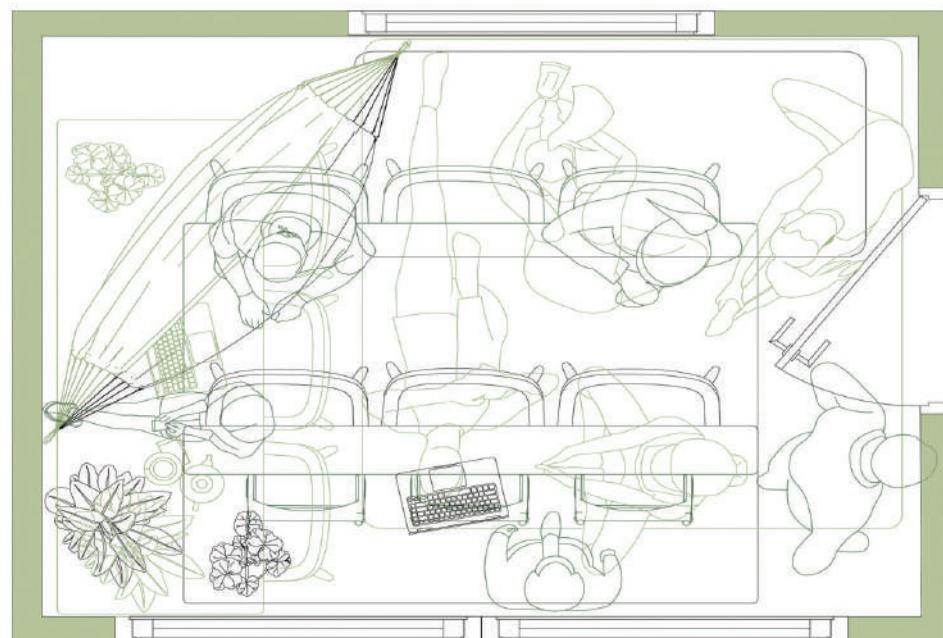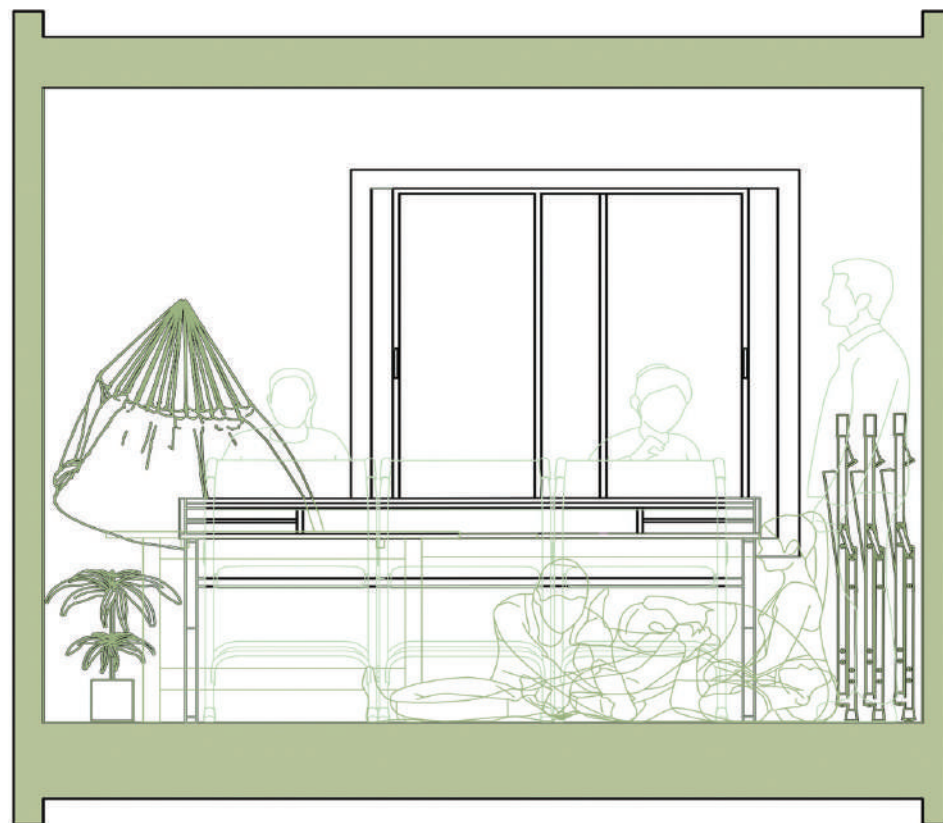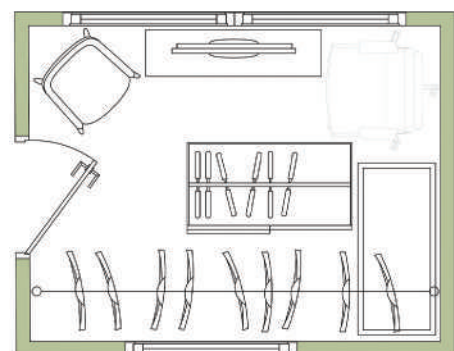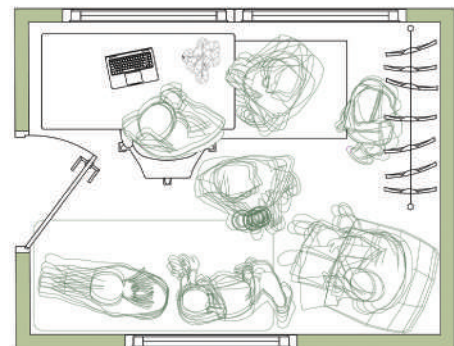
Echoes on the Wall: Rebuilding Memory in Alicante.

Dina Alloin

Alicante University

Walking through the streets of Alicante, a story unfolds: not through words, but through walls. Many buildings have been destroyed over time, leaving behind tall, blind party walls that bear the silent imprints of past lives. Marks are still visible: traces of staircases, shadows of rooms, outlines of doors. These architectural ghosts reveal how people once lived, where they gathered, rested, cooked, and played. These clues are the city's memory, a quiet testimony to a life once full.

But despite their potential, these walls remain mute. Legally, they cannot host new windows. They stand tall and opaque, bordering on invisible, despite being monumental canvases of past domesticity. This project proposes listening to those walls and speaking back.

The project reimagines these abandoned, exposed party walls as the backbone of a new communal structure. By carefully reading and interpreting the remaining clues, I repositioned elements of furniture, precisely aligned with where they once stood.

This furniture doesn't sit inside a home: it becomes the architecture itself. It hides windows discreetly within its volumes, letting light in where the law says no, yet leaving no external trace. The result is not a new building, but an extract of one, like a memory made real. A partial reconstruction, not of bricks and mortar but of life and function. It's a stage for new stories, layered over the old.

This open structure invites the neighborhood back into space. Children have four stories of real furniture as playground. Laughter echoes where silence reigned. Music, games, and everyday noise reanimate the void. And the people who once lived here?

They are not forgotten. Plaster sculptures rise from the wall, shaped from impressions of what once was. Names appear on recreated letterboxes, ensuring the departed remain part of daily life, unfolding again.This is not a memorial. It is a reawakening.

Through this intervention, easily replicable, the city gains a new kind of public space: one rooted in memory, yet alive with activity. It blurs the boundary between building and ruin, absence and presence, past and future. By transforming forgotten walls into shared ground, I create a space where architecture is not just seen, but felt, lived again differently by every generation. [C/ Dagniol, 15, 03012 Alicante (Alacant), Alicante, Spain].

Of Walls, Marks, and Growing Things.

Miguel Itxaso del Río

Alicante University

It speaks. it is a witness. it is a character. it is the city. Every mark, every shadow, transforms it.

"The wall is not just a surface — it is a presence." A wall stands still, but it is never empty. In its silence, it collects traces, gestures, shadows.

A graffiti appears, the vegetation leans in, and what was background becomes story. The city leaves its mark. Nature joins in. The wall becomes memory, a voice, a witness. It is not just concrete.

It is imprint, boundary, living surface.

It is a witness of time, a mirror of place, a character in the city that never stops speaking.
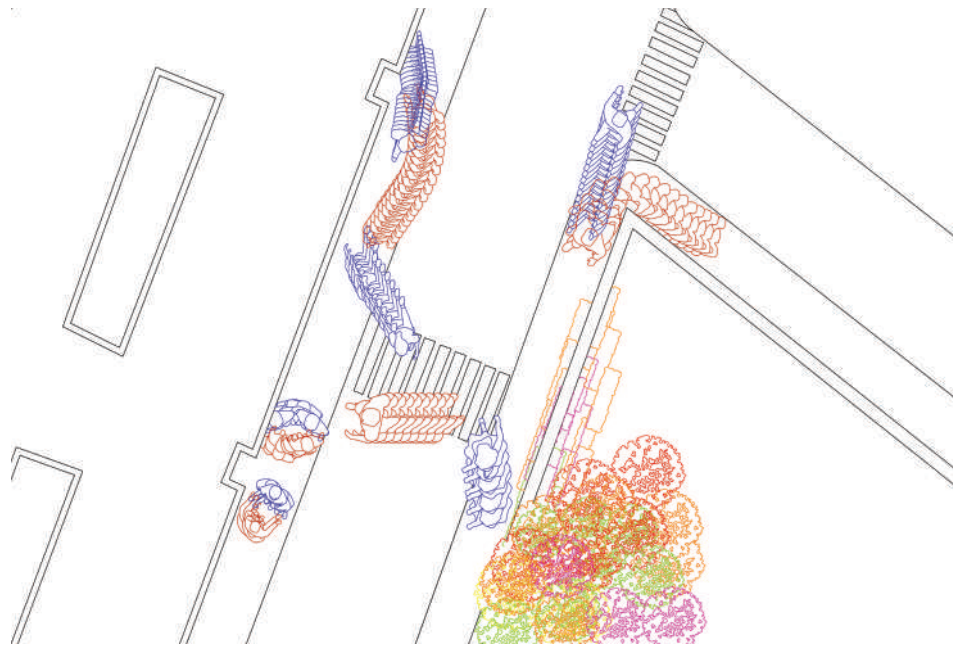
'The continuity of time and empty facades

Zoia Dolgova

Alicante University

This project / workshop was located in El Barrio, Alicante.

Investigation into traditional building techniques from southern Spain and local life.

One of the things that drew me to the Old town was the presence of empty facades, left up for their historic value.

Whilst exploring the area, I was looking at the leftovers of a demolished building and ended up talking to a local lady walking past.

She told me how the building ended up getting demolished because someone tried to change the inner walls to create an Airbnb. She also spoke of how life used to be here - of kids running around - and how now it didn't feel the same.

This project was an attempt to consider materiality from the perspective of time - using the depiction of a local little girl - to a young woman and then finally as an elderly lady. How time and storytelling are tied into materiality. How the wall weathers and ages with the locals. They lean into each other to tell us about what life in el barrio was like.

The stories in el barrio is in the materiality. there is a point in life where it all feels simple. Life in el barrio had the allusive promise of a future, of graceful ageing.

It was home for so long and for so many of us local people. but now home no longer feels the same, the walls have come down and all is the left is an empty façade.

A representation of what once was. There is a longing for home but slowly it is fading and soon we will be gone too.

Eventually they will pull down any evidence of a different life and our stories will also be gone with the limestone.
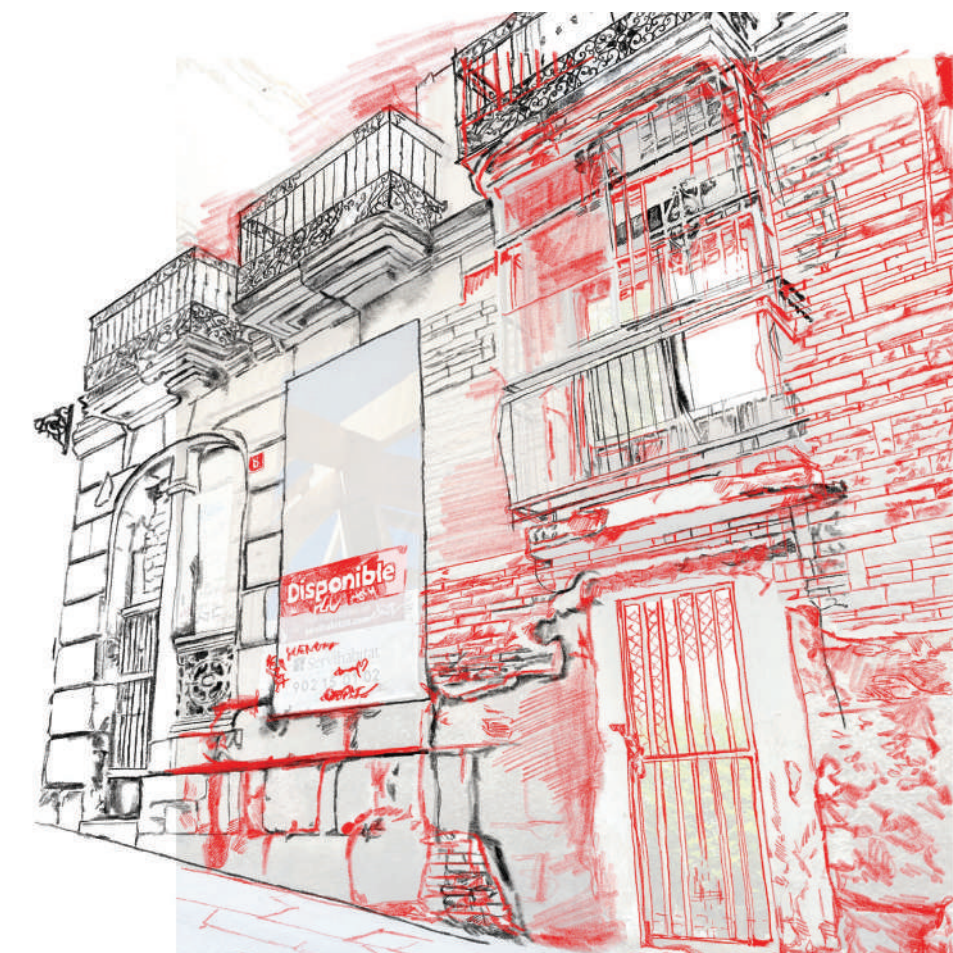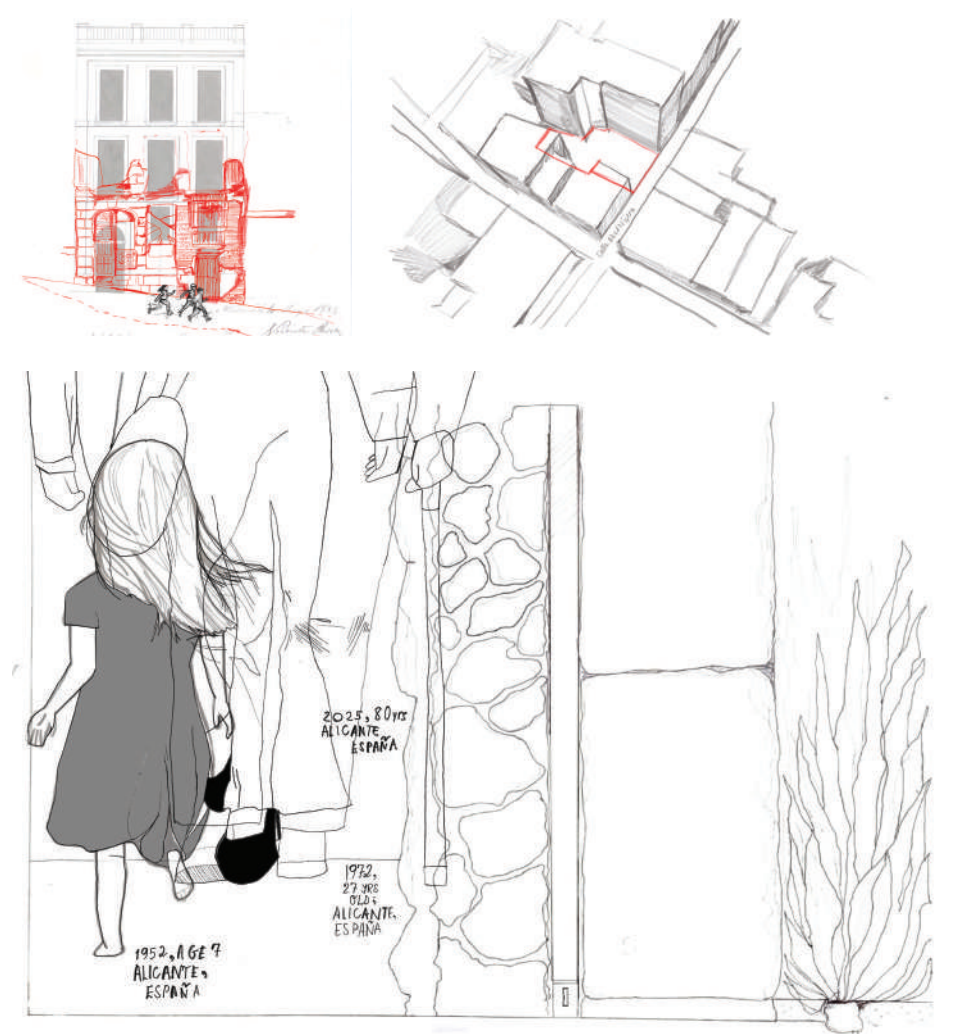
ARCHIBLACKOUT© When the lights went out, the neighbourhoord lit up. ARCHISUITCASE©

Joan Briones, Èlia Montagud, Jose González

Alicante University

The suitcase stood by the door like a silent monolith, its geometry precise, its corners worn by time and movement. It wasn't just a container—it was a structure, a micro-architecture of memory and intent. With its compartments and zippers, it mirrored the rooms of a home, the wings of a museum, the grids of a city not yet explored.

She packed it slowly, almost reverently, as if laying out the floorplan of a future life. Each object had its place, each fold a gesture of design. Her notebook—always first—held sketches of facades she'd never seen but had already imagined: curved balconies in Lisbon, terraced rooftops in Seoul, stone thresholds in a forgotten Sicilian village. A single black dress, folded like a staircase. Shoes, aligned like columns. A scarf, rolled into a soft spiral reminiscent of a Guggenheim ramp.

This was not just travel; it was a pilgrimage of perception. She wasn't chasing landmarks. She was hunting space—the way light shifted through a narrow alley, how a shadow fell across a cracked mosaic floor, how a city breathed at dusk through its open windows.

The suitcase, in its stillness, held the blueprint. Not just of destinations, but of who she might become in those spaces—how her body would move through a cathedral, how her thoughts might echo in the silence of a modernist pavilion, how her steps would reverberate on ancient steps carved into hillsides. When she finally zipped it shut, it sounded almost like a final line drawn on a plan. The kind architects make just before the model comes alive. She reached for the handle. Behind her, structure. Ahead, experience. Inside the suitcase, a manifesto made of
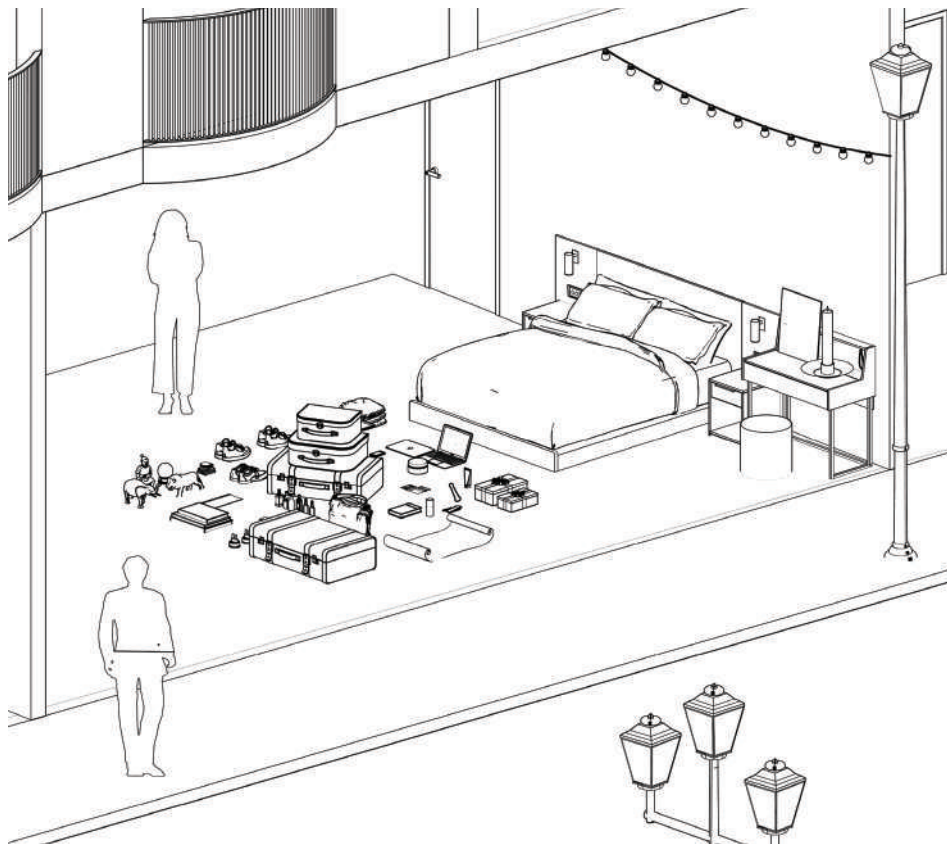
fabric and dreams. And as the door clicked behind her, she knew: this was not just the beginning of a trip, it was the foundation of a life rebuilt through spaces yet to be drawn.

April 28, 2027. Two years after the wellknown blackout that hit all of Spain, and comes again now. However, spanish people get used to that and a hidden architecture come up.Without warning, architecture loses its nervous system: electricity. Amid the chaos, a foreign tourist arrives at her Airbnb on the ground floor of a building near the MARQ in Alicante. She carries a suitcase unlike any other: the Archisuitcase, a device designed to reconfigure domestic space according to the needs of the traveler. As she opens it on the bed, objects begin to colonize the interior: a mosquito net unfolds toward the ceiling, a portable lamp reshapes the atmosphere, and local textiles soften the rigidity of standard furniture. The living room becomes a new habitat—hybrid, between intimacy and temporality. And then, the darkness.The blackout doesn't just shut off the lights—it reactivates a latent architecture. Ultraviolet signals and candles, invisible in normal times, begin to glow. Hidden messages guide

residents to spaces prepared for such contingencies: the rooftop and the elevator.

The elevator, known as the Archicapsule©, is more than a vertical means of transport. A descendant of the architecture school of Alicante, it has become an active node: distributing light, drinks, information, and company. A microcosm of urban survival. Its autonomous system—solar panels and integrated batteries—activates only in emergencies, offering everything from hydration to entertainment. It is an architectural extension of collective resilience.

The tourist follows the signals. She ascends. Upon reaching the rooftop, she finds an unexpected scene: the neighbors, already accustomed to these events, are throwing a party powered by small solar panels, portable generators, and the momentum of the community. There is no Wi-Fi, but there is music. No networks, but a net of people. Archiblackout is not just a response to collapse— It's a new paradigm of coexistence:Architecture that adapts, unfolds, and lights up only when needed.

A silent architecture... until the lights go out.
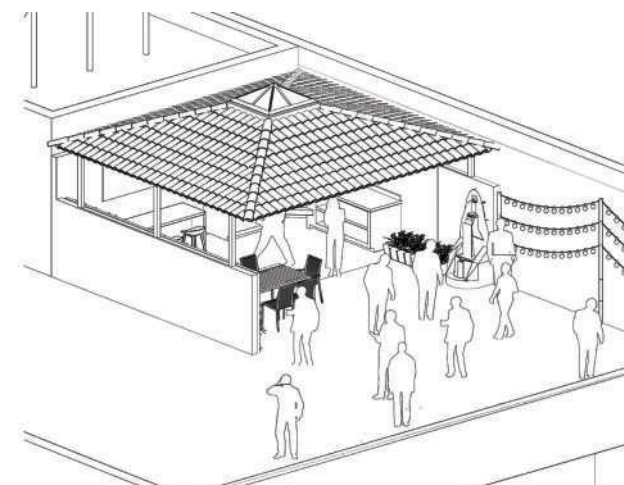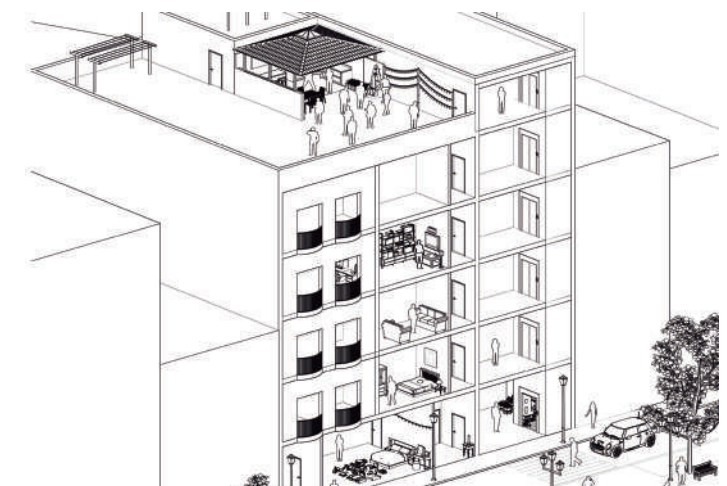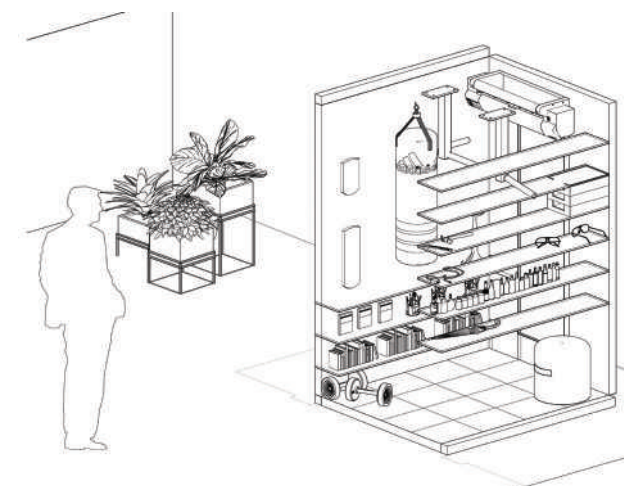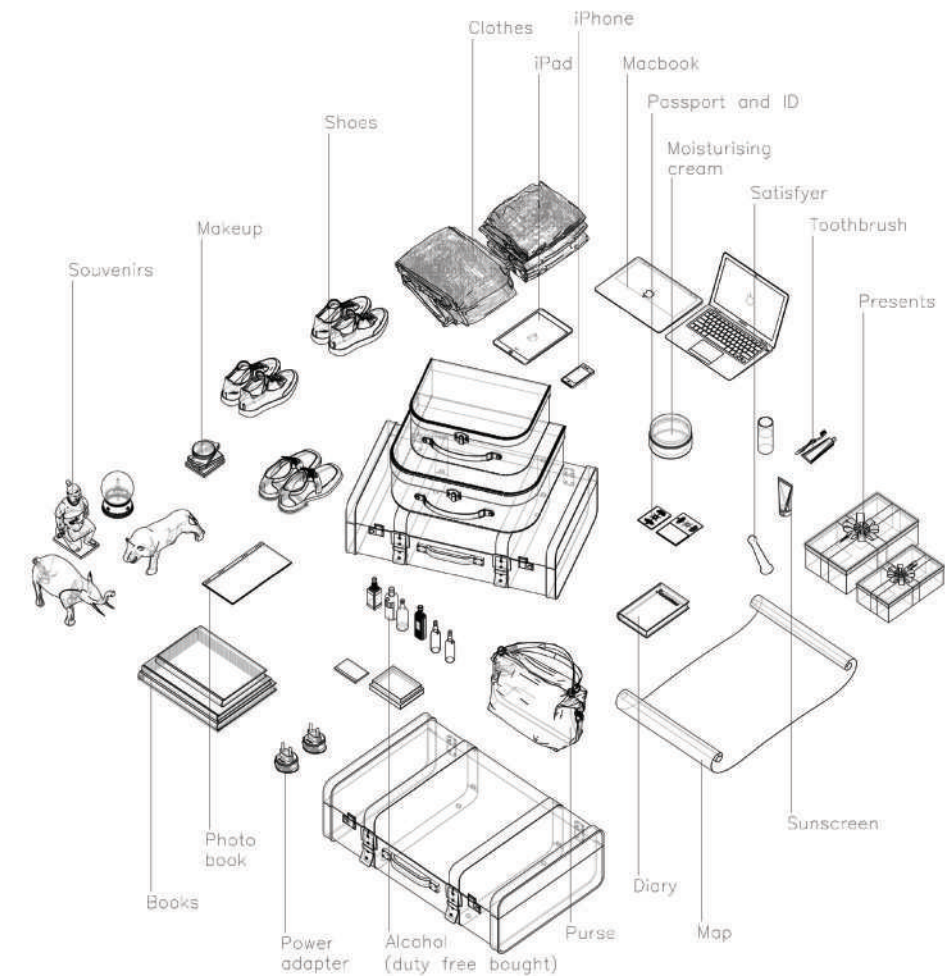
The Skin that the Sea Wears Away. Erosion and geological transformation at Cala Palmera, Cabo de las Huertas.

Miguel Ángel Fernández Serrano

Alicante University

TASK 1:

STORYBOARD_ CABO DE LAS HUERTAS, ALICANTE

1. Observing the landscape: The landscape of Cabo de las Huertas features an extensive rock formation by the sea. At first glance, it appears immobile, but time and the sea are constantly transforming it.

2. Surface eroded by use and weather: The soil shows traces of footsteps, saltwater marks, and cracks. The irregularities indicate how rain, wind, and human activity contribute to its wear and tear.

3. Lines and cracks formed by erosion: Natural fractures can be observed, possibly caused by thermal shock between sun and moisture, and accentuated by the force of the waves over many years.

4. Coastal area at low tide: At low tide, areas covered with seaweed are exposed. Water accumulates in small depressions formed by erosion, allowing the layers of the substrate to be observed.

5. Sedimentary layers and progressive erosion: The rocks show horizontal lines that reveal processes of sedimentation and differential erosion. Some layers are softer and erode more easily.

6. Microerosion detail: Small holes form on surfaces, allowing water and salt to enter. These pores increase over time and weaken the rock structure.

7. Formation of cavities and hollows: Hollows and cavities develop due to the continuous action of the sea. These spaces change over time, becoming deeper or collapsing.
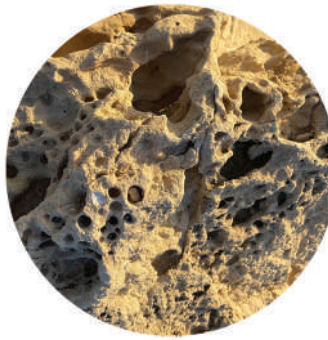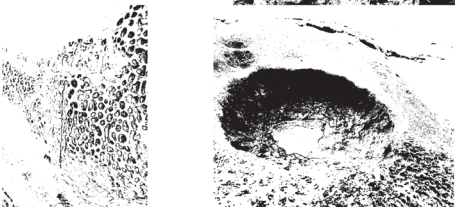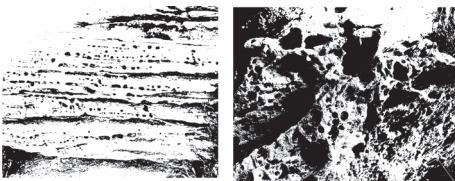
TASK 2:

SEA-ROCK CONTACT

Area of direct wave impact. This is where cavities and surface weathering begin.

HUMAN INVENTION

Human activity accelerates erosion processes and leaves visible traces on the terrain.

RUNOFF AND VEGATION

Rainwater decomposes the stratum and favours the gowth of resistant vegetation.

ERODED HOLLOW

The action of salt, wind and water creates cavities known as taphonis.
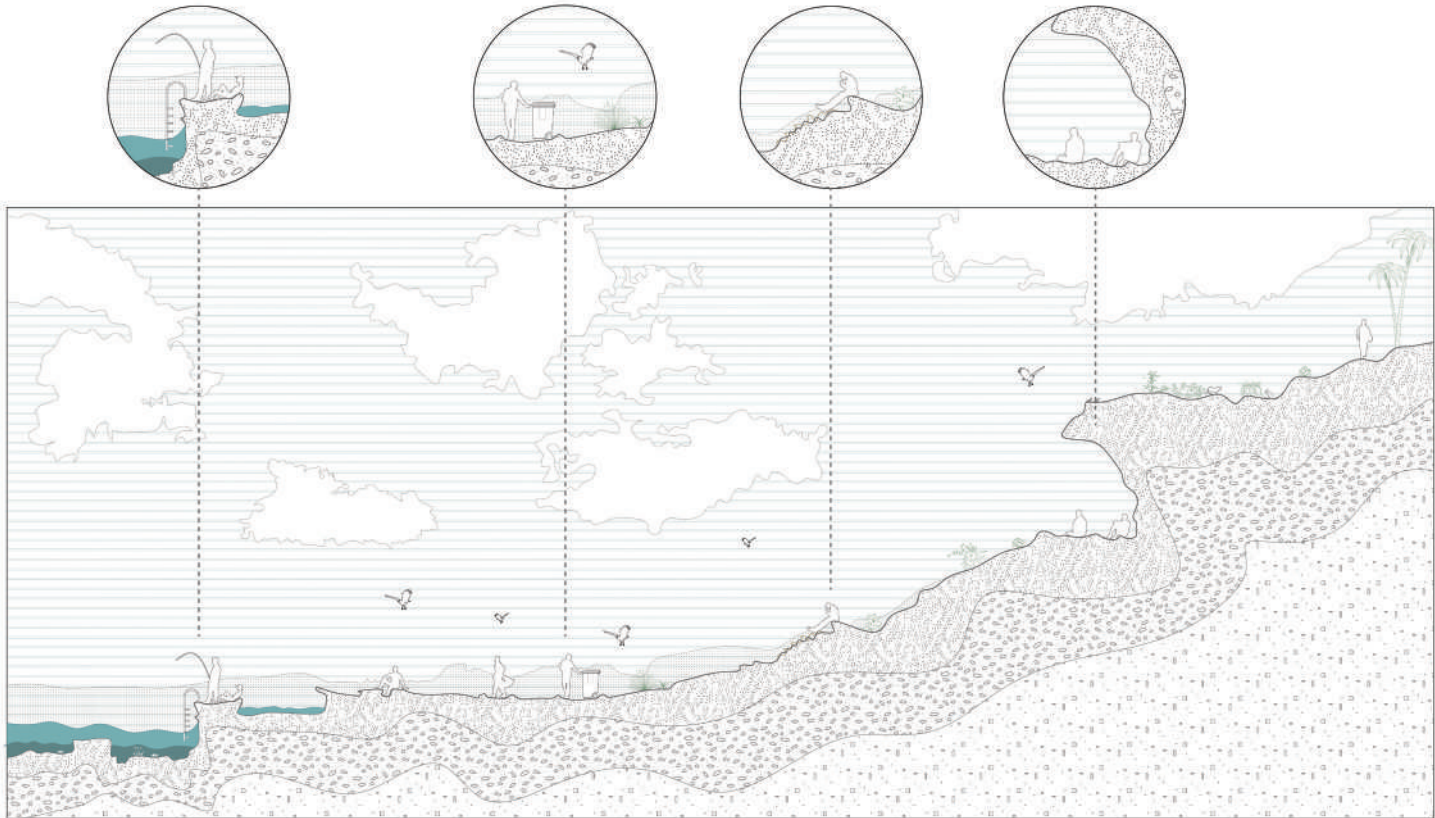
El Barrio de Santa Cruz

Natalia Józefczyk

Alicante University

Context & Background

El Barrio, formally known as Barrio de Santa Cruz, is the oldest neighborhood in Alicante, Spain. It sits on the slopes of Mount Benacantil, right below the Santa Barbara Castle. Historically inhabited by fishermen, artisans, and working-class families, the area has developed a distinctive identity with narrow, winding streets, whitewashed houses, vibrant flowers, colorful ceramics, and religious icons on the walls. Over the last two decades, El Barrio has undergone a slow revitalization, preserving its unique charm while becoming a symbol of local culture and identity. Its atmosphere today is a blend of tradition, tourism, and everyday life, where neighbors take care of shared spaces and keep the spirit of the community alive.

La Casita de las Macetas Azules– "The Little House with Blue Flower Pots"

This is a small, two-story white house located on one of the typical narrow streets of El Barrio. It became iconic thanks to the dozens of blue ceramic pots attached to its facade, balconies, and windowsills— filled with geraniums, succulents, and other local plants. These blue pots contrast beautifully with the white walls, creating a striking visual effect that captures the essence of Mediterranean and Andalusian architectural tradition.

Why the Decorations?

1. Cultural Tradition: Hanging flower pots are a long-standing tradition in many southern Spanish cities - particularly in Andalusia and the Valencian Community - symbolizing care, beauty, and hospitality.

2. Community Identity: Residents of El Barrio use these decorations to express pride in their neighborhood, maintaining a lived-in, welcoming atmosphere.

3. Tourist Attraction: The aesthetic appeal of houses like the Casita has made them Instagram-famous and widely featured in travel blogs and guidebooks, drawing tourists to explore beyond Alicante's beachfront.

4. Seasonal Rituals: Many decorations are added or refreshed in the spring and summer months, as part of everyday life and preparation for local festivals or holy days.

When Did This Start?

It's hard to pinpoint an exact year, but the use of decorative pots in El Barrio became more prominent in the early 2000s, when revitalization efforts began and tourism to the historic center increased. Social media and digital tourism also played a role in highlighting these homes, encouraging residents to continue and even expand the tradition.

"WORLDS COLLIDING- story board Where daily life blends with tourism."

1. Stepping In. We begin our journey into the narrow lanes of El Barrio. The passage between two buildings opens up the story. This space "in between" will become the focus of my walk.

2. Up the Lane. Climbing a little higher, the space tightens. The street is still empty, filled with flowers and calm. It's the start of the tourist zone – not yet discovered.

3. First Contact. Looking back down, everyday life appears. A father carries his daughter down the steps, a woman is mopping her floor. The first subtle contact between local life and tourism.

4. A Pause. Climbing a little higher, the space tightens. The street is still empty, filled with flowers and calm. It's the start of the tourist zone – not yet discovered.

5. Privacy & Display. To the right, a curtain offers privacy yet is part of the visual harmony. It's a functional but beautiful touch. The contrast between living space and tourist gaze is softened.

6. Visitors Arrive. Children sit to rest, tired from the steps. A previously quiet space becomes shared. Tourists begin to enter.

7. Parallel Lives. Tourists take photos near a decorative shopfront. Above them, locals watch from balconies. Two layers of life unfold at once.

8. Midday Sounds. A woman washes dishes, a man paints while softly singing. I hear water running, clinking plates, a gentle melody. Life behind the facade comes to the surface.

9. Across the Street. Locals sit in the shade, facing the decorated facade. Just across, tourists take photos and laugh. Daily life rests right opposite tourism.

10. A Step Away. Just a few steps higher, a man carves a wooden cross. The contrast is striking – sacred labor near a touristic set-up. Two narratives sharing a stairway.

11. Everyday Details. Laundry dries above the path where tourists walk. A man rests just above the buzzing street. Details of daily life mix with the polished image below.

12. The Space in Between. Here in El Barrio, the "in-between" space is everything. It's where tourists and locals coexist – overlapping, observing, living. Everyday sounds, languages, and actions blend in one shared stage.

Story of transformation: A-A between spaces and streets of El Barrio

Address: La Casita de las macetas azules

Investor: University of Alicante

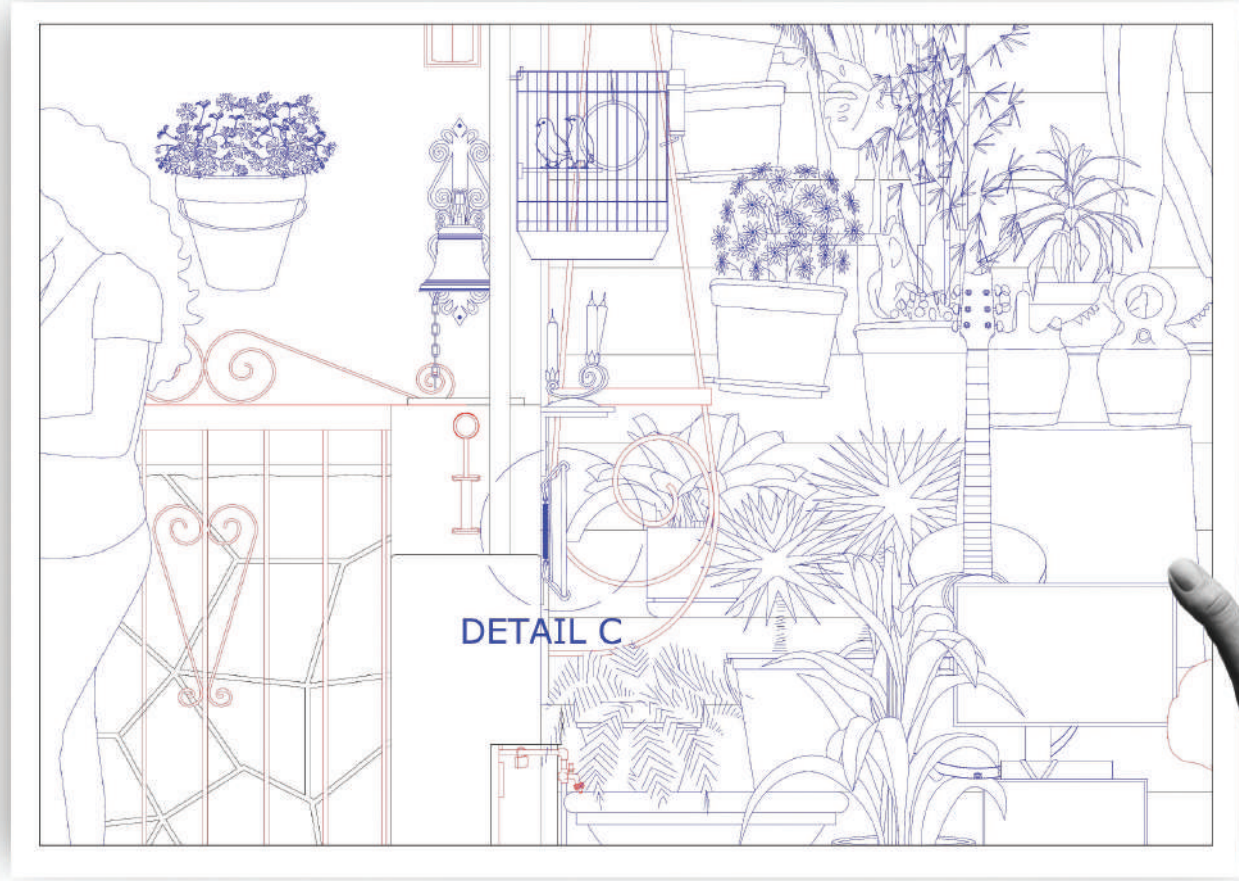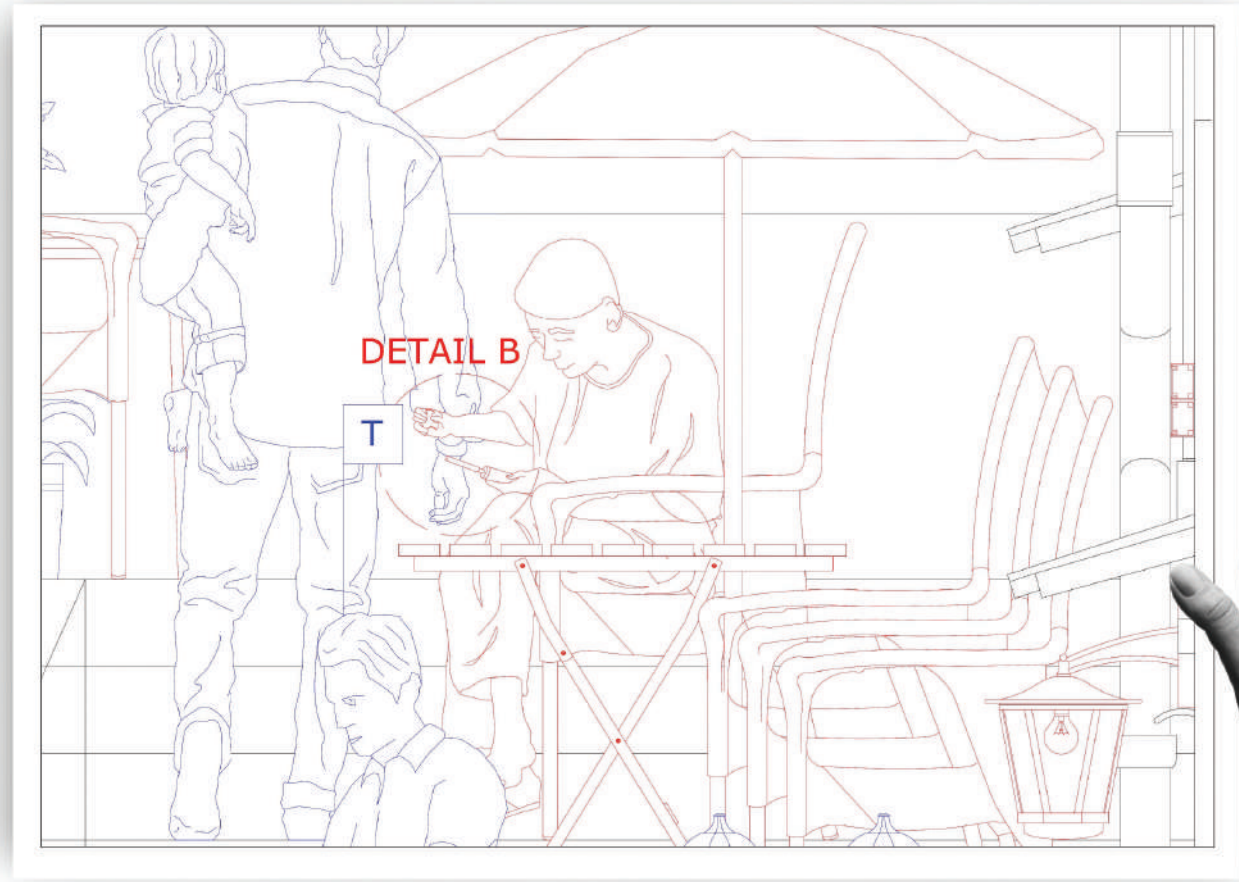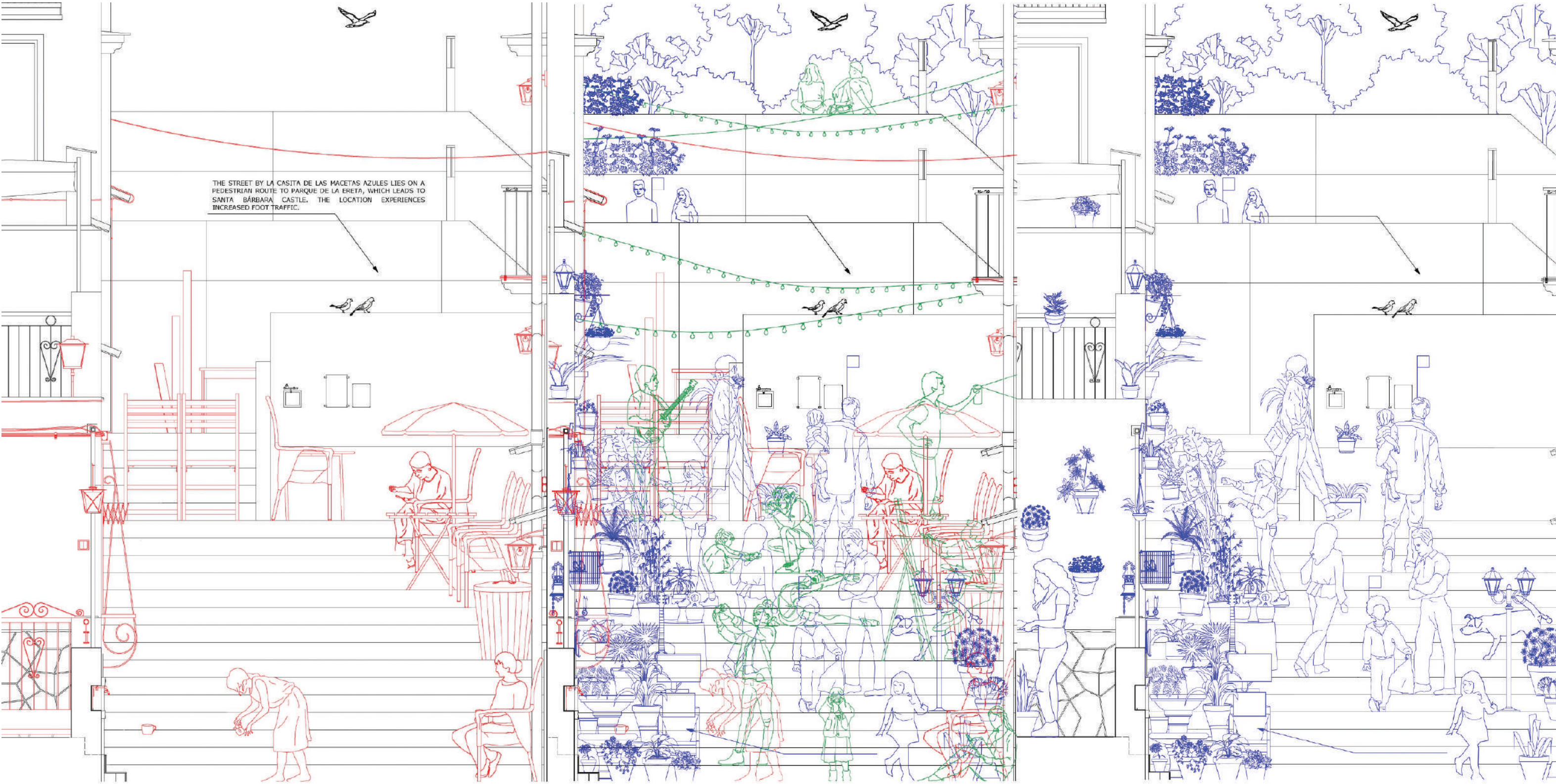Industry: Design Studio

Designer: Natalia Józefczyk

Scale: 1:100

Date: 03.06.2025

Drawing No.: WS5

DETAIL B

T

DETAIL C

WORLDS COLLIDING- SANTA CRUZ EL BARIO


THE STREET BY LA CASITA DE LAS MACETAS AZULES LIES ON A PEDESTRIAN ROUTE TO PARQUE DE LA ERETA, WHICH LEADS TO SANTA BÁRBARA CASTLE. THE LOCATION EXPERIENCES INCREASED FOOT TRAFFIC.

LEGEND

Black – Existing architectural elements:
  This color highlights the existing architecture, which serves as the backdrop for the story unfolding in El Barrio.
Red – Elements of private life and daily routines:
  People engaged in everyday activities, animals, and other signs of ordinary life.
Blue – Decorative and tourist-attracting additions:
  Figures of tourists, ornamental street details, and elements that draw attention and encourage visitor flow.
Green – Layer of movement, sound, and color:
  An imagined arts festival featuring dancers, musicians, photographers, and painters.

USERS
  (with letters and numbers on drawing):
  - R / 7.00 – Residents
  - T / 11.00 – Tourists
  - A / 12.00 – Artists

ZONING AREAS
  (based on sound levels):
  - Private area: 30–40 dB
  - Semi-private area: ~50 dB
  - Public area: 60–70 dB
  Additional Notations on Drawing:
  - The Street: "As artists, we enter the narrative spaces of El Barrio, using arts and stories to produce and transform them."
  - Park access lvl / Avg. -1.2 lvl

Stories written on Drawing:

BLACK

- the street by la casita de las macetas azules lies on a pedestrian route to parque de la ereta, which leads to santa bárbara castle. the location experiences increased foot traffic.

RED

- a woman washes dishes, a man paints while softly singing. i hear water running, clinking plates, a gentle melody. life behind the facade comes to the surface. everyday life unfolds ust beyond the tourist's curious gaze.
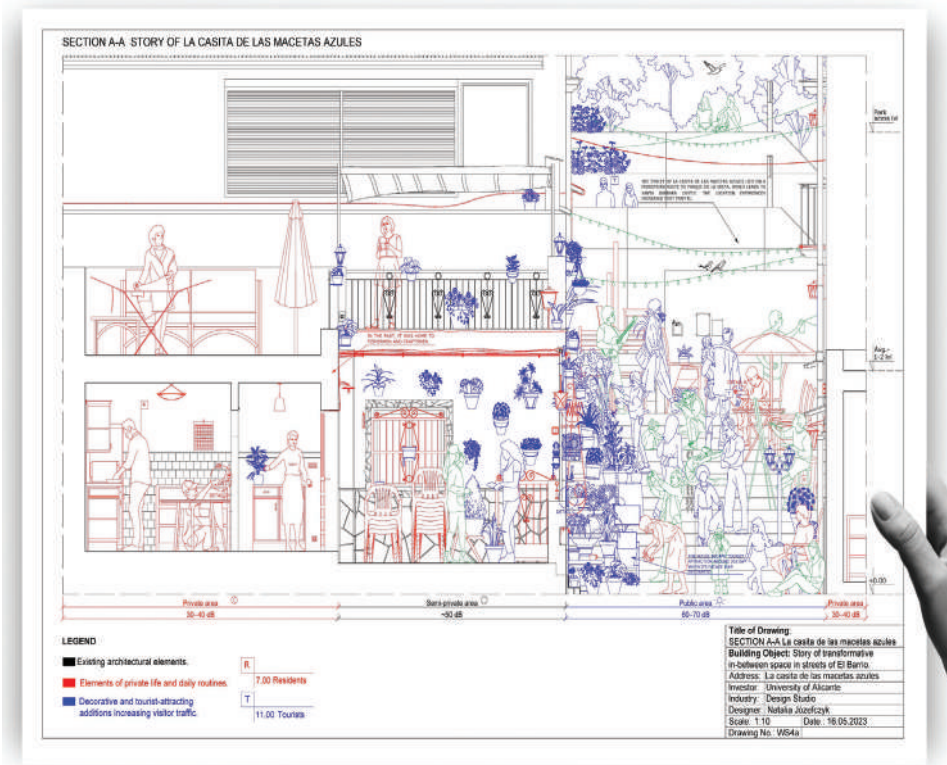
- in the past, it was home to fishermen and craftsmen.

- not far off, behind a sun-worn wall, a woman hangs laundry with steadyb hands- part of the quiet rhythm of real life, unfolding.

- once a quiet residential street, this place was shaped by daily rhythms - neighbors chatting, laundry flapping in the sun, children playing between doorsteps. now, transformed by its charm into a tourist destination. though the pace has changed, and privacy sometimes blurs, the street breathes with a new kind of life - half local half observed.

- locals lounge in the shade, eyes on the ornate facade, quietly escaping the sting of the midday sun.

- woman waters each plant with quiet precision not for herself, but to catch the eyes of those just passing.

- a woman sips her coffee, watching the street unfold like a quiet performance.

- just a few steps higher, a man carves a wooden cross. the contrast is striking – sacred labor near a touristic set-up. two narratives sharing a stairway.

- above them, locals watch from balconies. two layers of life unfolds at once.

- a street light flickers on, marking the shift from day to pause.

BLUE

- the house became tourist attraction around 2021's, when its facade was decorated.

- kids stop to rest.

- the quiet fades turists arrive.

- a father carries his daughter down endless steps tired, sweating caught in the struggle tourist path.

- a woman walks through the gate quietly disrupting everyday life.

GREEN

- stop to take a picture, try to capture what can only be lived.

- music weaves through the street's noise.

- a man paints, brushstroks blending with the city's colors.

- a woman moves with the street in sync, rythm.

- fresh wall art a new scene etched into the old city walls.

- the woman steps past the gate uninvited, her curiosity blurs the line between observing.
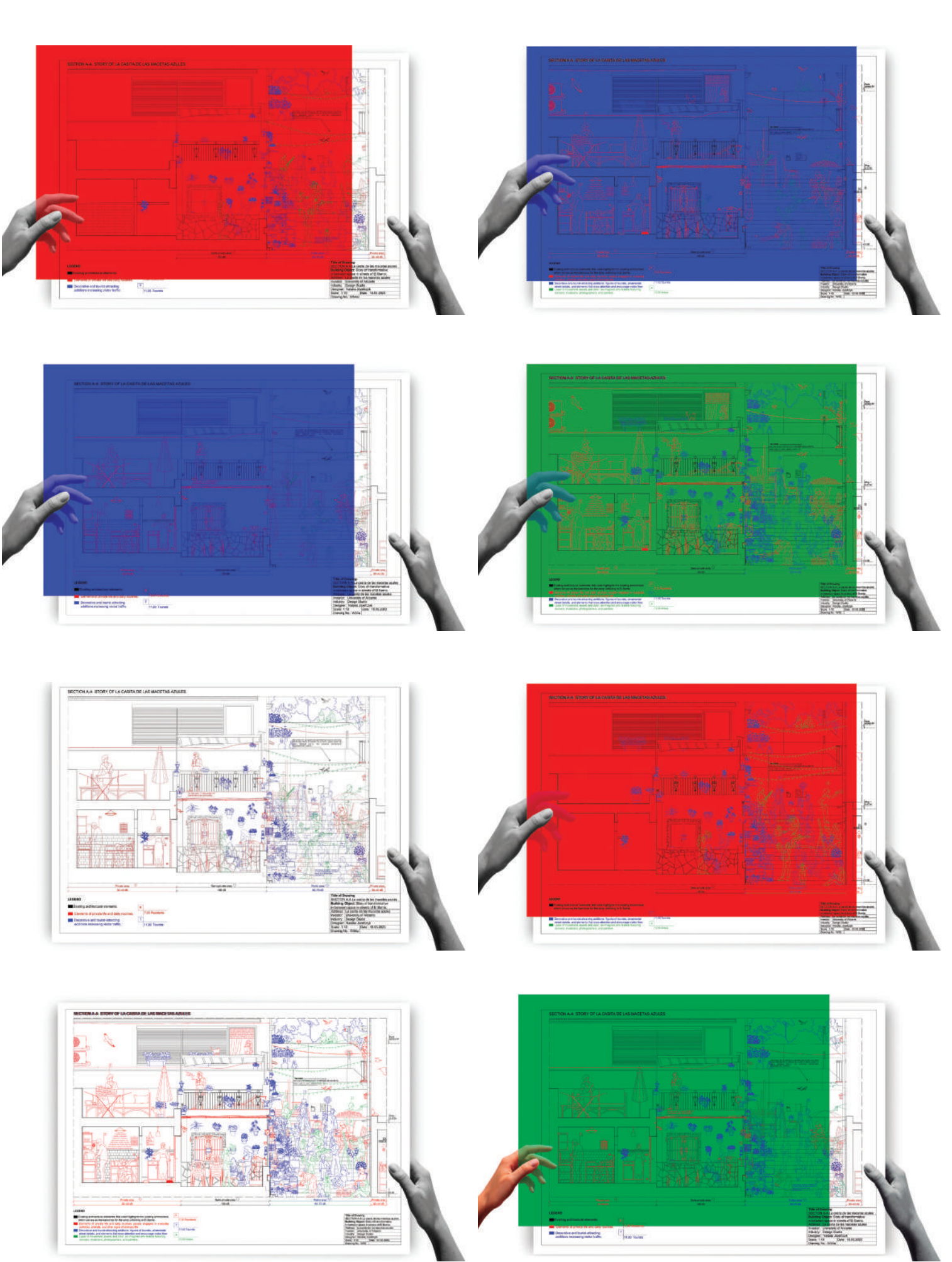
Tracing the In-Between: Material Evidence in AI-Mediated Architectural Education

Anastasia Leontiou, Ksenia Dovydenko, Tamara Fansa, Andreas Al-Khoury, Pia Bernhardt

Course: Hum(ai)nity - Patterns of Association, MArch_ 2024 / 25

Teachers: Alessandra Swiny, Michalis Georgiou, Stavros Voskaris, Christina Christoforou

University of Nicosia_ARC Department of Architecture

The "detail" is experienced as an active threshold — a site where human thought, digital processes, and material realities converge and leave behind evidence of their encounter. Within architectural education increasingly mediated by artificial intelligence, the traditional detail is no longer a static technical joint. It becomes a living junction between mind and machine, material and data, author and algorithm.

In this work, the detail is read not simply as a resolution of parts but as a field of negotiation. Through a series of design workshops, students engaged with AI-driven systems that produced speculative architectural artefacts — fragments, misalignments, ambiguous forms, and curious near-solutions. The machine's generative logic collided with the students' intuitive reasoning, structural awareness, and embodied sense of material. What emerged were not finished designs, but hybrid artefacts: drawings, models, and traces that document the very process of collaboration between human and nonhuman actors.

These objects - sometimes precise, sometimes incoherent - became the evidence of an unfolding dialogue. Each drawing carried a residue of decision, correction, resistance. When students reworked or annotated AI-generated outputs, the drawing transformed into a kind of forensic map, recording invisible negotiations between imagination, technology, and craft. It is in these delicate moments of adjustment - a digital line redrawn by hand, a structural impossibility reinterpreted as metaphor — that the junction reveals itself as both material and temporal, a slice of life within design education.

The study approaches these artefacts as spatial testimonies, small witnesses to a larger shift in architectural culture. They suggest that the act of drawing, when interlaced with artificial intelligence, becomes more than representation: it is a form of inquiry. It is where the unseen is made visible — the hesitation before command, the misrecognition of a prompt, the quiet insistence of material logic against machine abstraction.

By tracing these moments, the paper argues that AI-mediated design does not replace human authorship; it reframes it. It positions the detail as a site of learning, where ambiguity becomes method and material thinking becomes negotiation.

The AI-generated drawing, then, is not a conclusion but a conversation — an evolving testimony of the complex entanglement between people, codes, and matter.Through this lens, architectural education becomes a laboratory for observing new forms of relational making.

The micro-scale of the detail opens onto wider questions about knowledge, authorship, and agency in an era where tools begin to think alongside us.

Here, the drawing is both instruction and reflection, both trace and imagination - a witness to the shifting boundary between human and machine, and to the quiet, intricate moments where architecture continues to be made by hand, by code, and by the spaces in between.
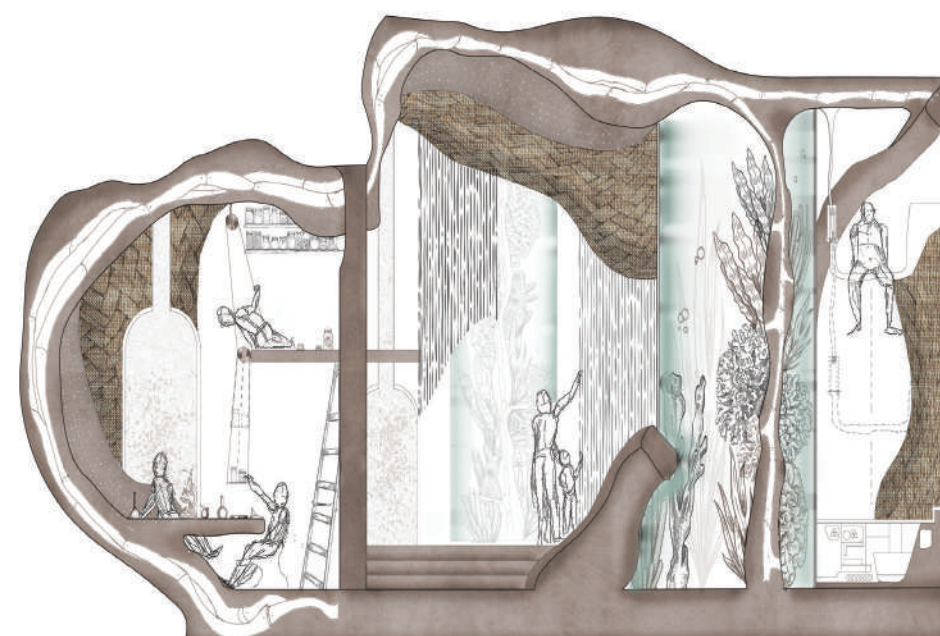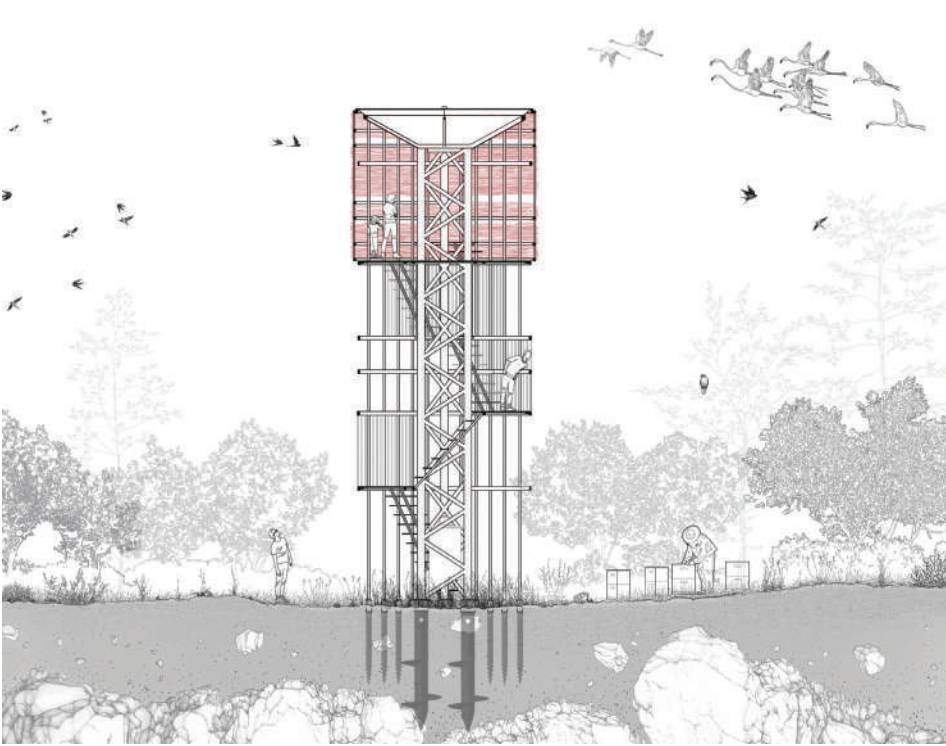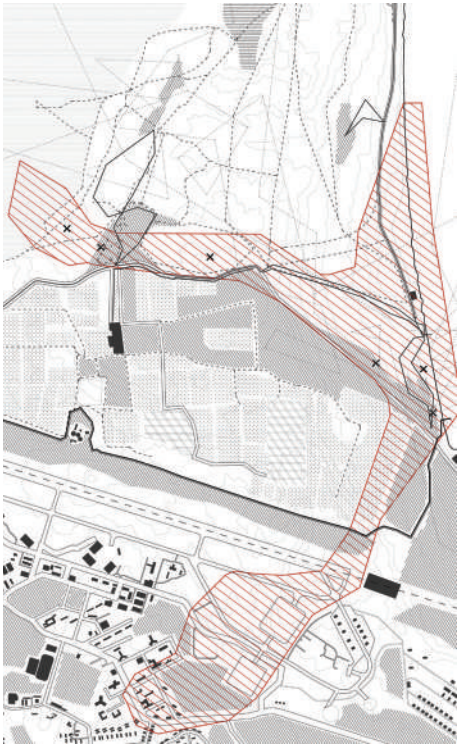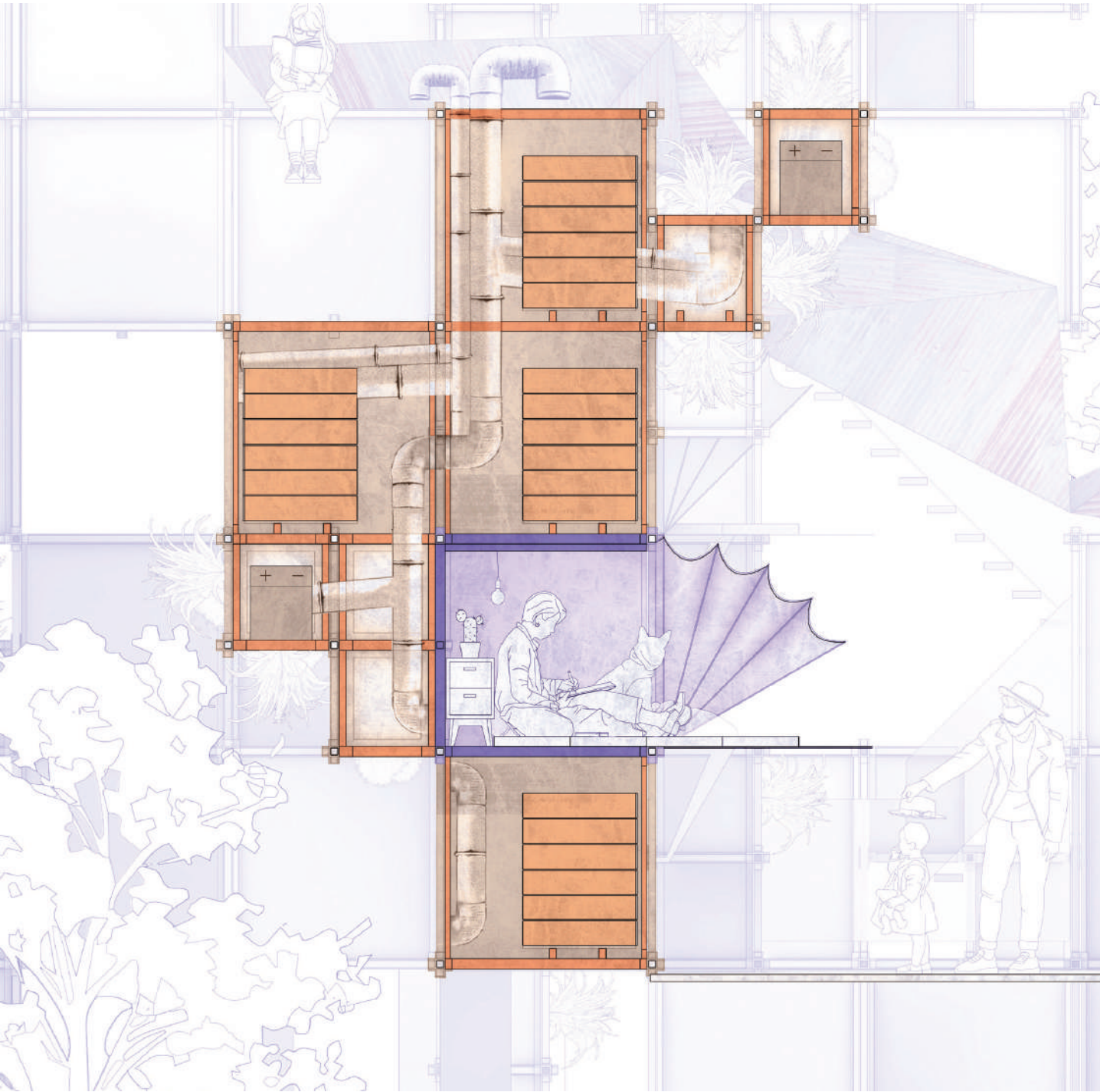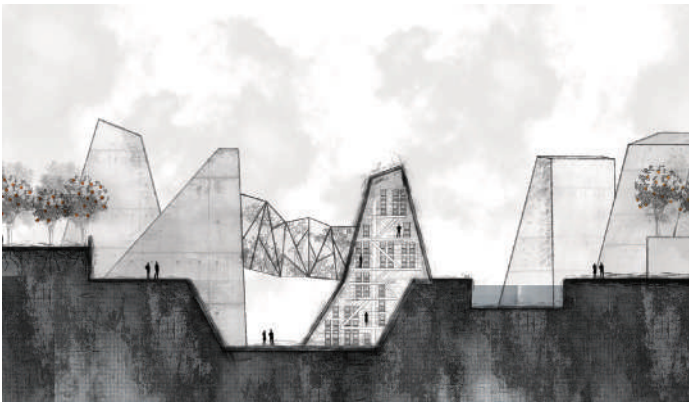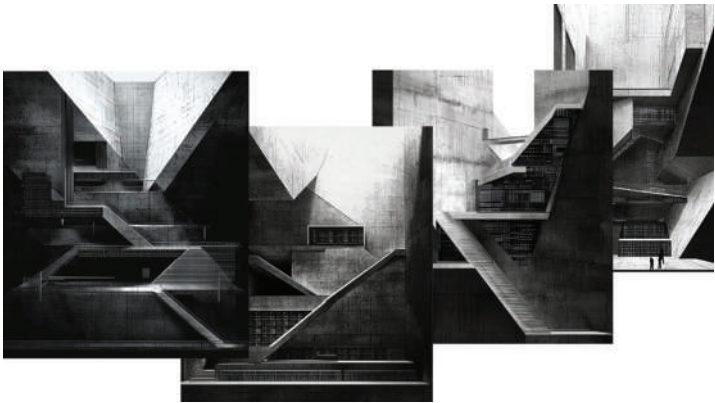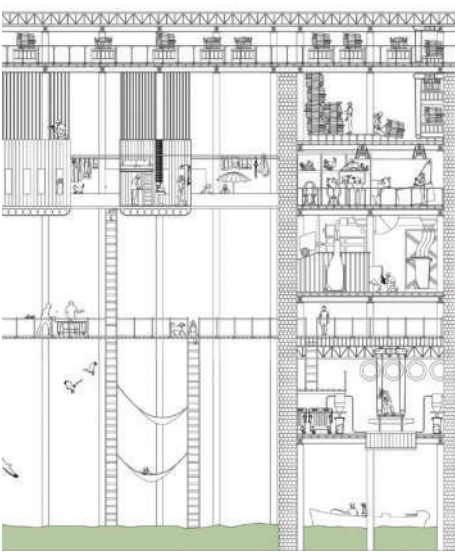
Something is simmering

Valentin Strohkirch

Konstfack, University of Arts, Crafts and Design in Stockholm, Sweden

This project departs from the kitchen as one of the most standardised and predetermined architectural environments. As an everyday stage set, the kitchen is shaped by fixed dimensions, regulations, and conventions that leave little room for alternative spatial imaginations. This environment became the point of departure for exploring how making, that is, building, can be used as a form of drawing, that can explore new possibilities of developing a set typology.

By building a set of furniture, the drawing and the 1:1 construction merge and become the key instrument of this exploration. Rather than treating drawings as representations of something yet to be built, the project positions the built objects as drawings

themselves: tools for analysing size and scale within contexts, staging possibilities, and exploring relations. In their precision, the objects are detail drawings, examining fixtures, proportion, and materiality, yet they also offer a three-dimensionality that can be placed within different contexts, allowing both physical analysis and also psychological interpretation of object and space. In this sense, they are portable, three dimensional, voluminous, assembled drawings, available to be added onto existing layers of space.

Only through later reflection did I come to understand that this act of making, creating and assembling objects with my hands, was indeed itself a form of drawing. A type of drawing that carries the specificity of a detail drawing while retaining the speculative and spontaneous

nature of the sketch. When situated in varying contexts, these pieces reveal how the detail can expand into the scale of a room, shifting between object and architecture associated and interpreted by others.

The project thereby highlights how this kind of drawing, as a material assembly, can operate as a living instrument on site, where actual form and scale can co-exist with speculation and individual interpretation. It proposes that drawing is not only a two dimensional analysis, or form of representation, but could rather be an active device capable of representing, imagining, assembling, and staging architecture within contexts in real time.

Unfolded kitchen analysis
2400mm standardised kitchen
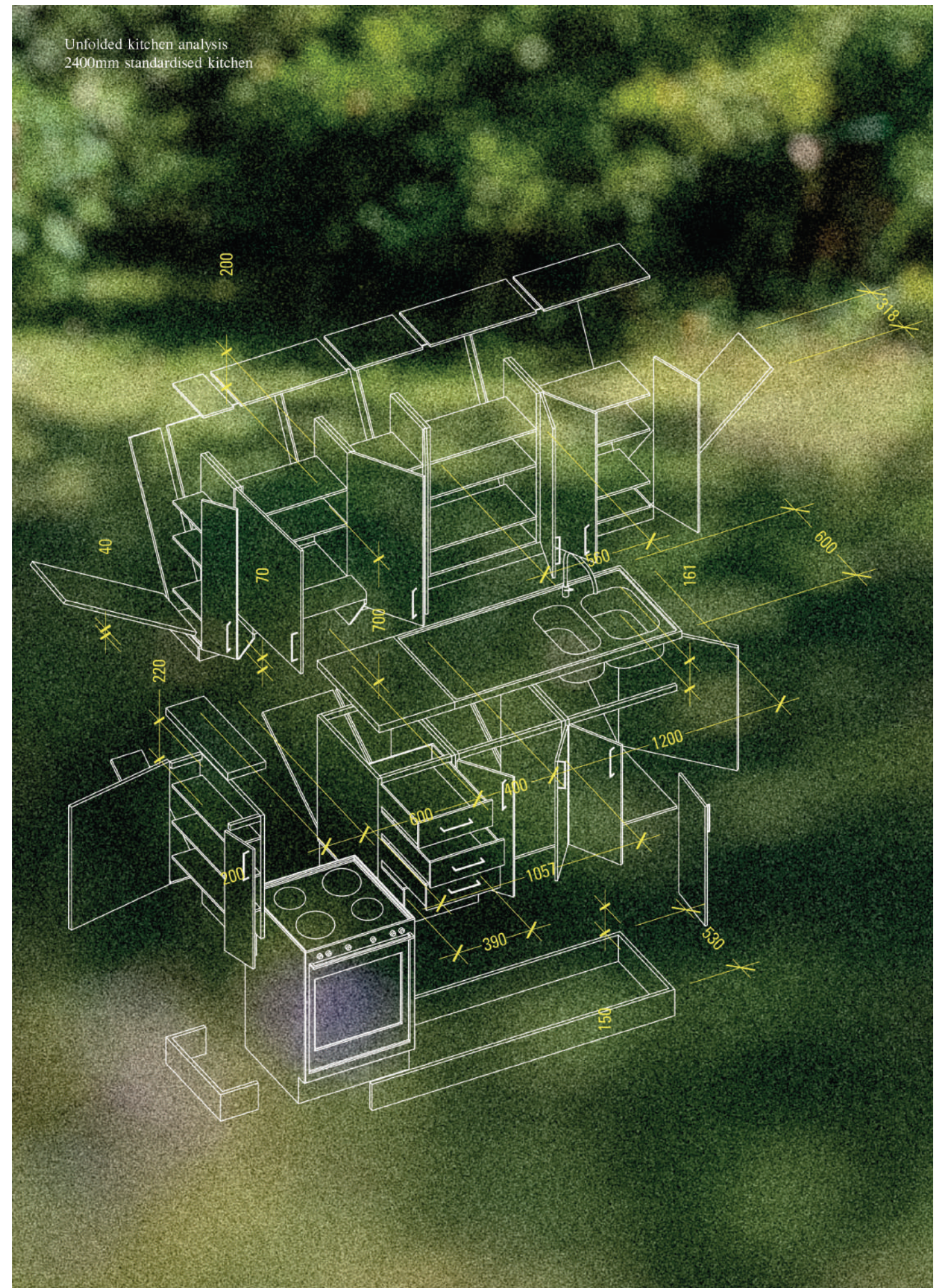
UOU scientific journal
Issue #11 / UNSCRIPTED GROUNDS
June 2026

Guest Editor
Hocine Aliouane-Shaw / ENSAP Bordeaux, France

15 December 2025
Call opens.

15 February 2026
Full paper submission.

15 March 2026
Outcome of double-blind peer review process.

15 April 2026
Final submission of completed papers.

Situations, Practices and Shared Stewardship at the Margins of City-Making

This issue explores unscripted grounds: environments left open, undefined or held in suspension that often occupy blind spots in conventional architectural practice and spatial planning. These are spaces of various scales that have slipped out of formal and institutional control. Rather than disappearing altogether, they remain hidden in plain sight; and as former functions wane, informal and unforeseen ones begin to emerge. Drawing on Ignasi de Solà-Morales's notion of the "terrain vague" and related debates on liminality, in-between conditions and vacancy, unscripted grounds also refer to places where scripts of ownership, use and value are loosened and not yet stabilised.

This issue asks how such grounds can be approached as situations where new ways of acting and living together may be rehearsed – and learned from – in order to inform more transversal and bottom-up approaches to architectural practice and urban planning.

We are particularly interested in contributions that treat these engagements as forms of inquiry – whether research, pedagogy or practice – and that reflect explicitly on their methods, positionalities and, where relevant, the ethical questions raised by participatory, collaborative and co-produced approaches.

More information:
https://revistes.ua.es/uou

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Every issue underlines a specific topic addressed by one of the universities involved in the Research Project, with a focus on Pedagogy in Architecture.

UNSCRIPTED GROUNDS