ARCHITECTURAL DISSONANCES

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ARCHITECTURAL DISSONANCES

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Corina Oprea

Genealogy

By trying to obscure, contradict or amplify notions of modernity, the compositions, essays, videos and architectural projects in this collection explore strategies and technologies of investigating beyond the predominantly western modernist architectural format and the main framework for today's uncontested architectural sites.

This publication unfolded throughout an interrupted year of research, lectures and discussions. Initial plans to contextualise questions within certain sites and provoke research projects and a participatory archive failed to be realised due to the constant change of regulations amid the 2020–21 pandemic. However, the exchanges between the participants of DAAS (Decolonizing Architecture Advanced Studies), the editorial team of L'Internationale Online and the invited theoreticians and practitioners Charles Esche, Temi Odumosu, Joar Nango and Hilde Heynen, situated the driving questions of the publication and very much informed its core:

How do we approach decolonization in Europe?

How did modernism become the main, uncontested site for architecture studies and practices?

How might decolonization be enacted in museum practices?

By recognising the limits and slippages of academic disciplines such as architecture, art history, museology and curating, and encouraging practices of unlearning, we focused on situating a critical conversation around decolonization in Europe through challenging western epistemologies in relation to architecture, living and working spaces, territories of care, urban and rural planning.

The publication brings L'Internationale Online and DAAS together in a collaboration based on shared urgency in addressing decolonization within the European context. This follows a previous exhibition, conference and publication on **Decolonizing North**[1], co-edited by Alessandro Petti, Corina Oprea and Shahram Kosravi, which had the same commitment to investigating colonial histories within the Nordic region, including their ongoing impact upon the present. Furthermore, L'Internationale Online has published a series of publications that puts the need for decolonizing museum and archive practices at the core of alter-institutionality.

Today, a comprehension of colonial history and its bearing is barely existent in the European public sphere. Formal collective memory actively dislocates, quiets or rejects this history, restraining its prominence or depicting it as if it grew in isolation from an assumed fundament of European history. As an outcome, colonialism is often seen as part of a detached past. However, we cannot grasp Europe without understanding its position as a colonial power.

Colonization hasn't ended because it still constructs civic life. In Europe, cultural institutions, museums and universities are some of colonialism's most persistent monuments. Not only are they at the forefront of a system of representation based upon alterity and otherness, they also vigorously mutate to integrate critical challenges, extending colonialism's temporality into the present. Hence the question Temi Odumosu offered during preliminary work for this

1. 'Decolonizing North', Konsthall C, Edition 4, http://www.decolonizing. ps/site/wp-content/ uploads/2017/11/decolonizing-north_book_2_AP.pdf

2. Entangled historiography refers to Sebastian Conrad, Regina Römhild and Shalini Randeria's description of modernity as having both a shared and a divided history, which emphasizes the twofold results of increased interactions and interdependence. Sebastian Conrad, Shalini Randeria and Regina Römhild (ed.), *Jenseits des Eurozentrismus: Postkoloniale Perspektiven in den Geschichts- und Kulturwissenschaften* (Beyond Eurocentrism: Postcolonial Perspectives in History and Cultural Studies), Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2014.

publication: How to think and practice decolonial museum programming?

On Demodernizing Museums

What would it mean to generate an art museum that houses discourse through collected and displayed objects, and presents perspectives on art, modernity/coloniality rather than modern art itself? During Temi Odumosu's lecture, Nuuk Kunstmuseum in Greenland was offered as an example of such an attempt in November 2020. In keeping with this, the genealogy of the word 'museum' comes to us from the nine Muses, the classical Greek goddesses of inspiration, via the legendary Mouseion of Alexandria, which was more like a university with an important library, than a place for the display of objects.

The modern museum, as a secular space for public engagement and direction through the staging of objects, is closely correlated to various institutions that surfaced concurrently in eighteenth and nineteenth-century Europe: nationalism connected with colonial expansion, democracy and the Enlightenment. Thus the importance of a focus on situating decolonization in Europe. The impact of the museum model, as an instrument of colonialism but also as a location for confined acclimatization and self-definition in spaces other than the West, are two sides of an essential denomination.

Pursuing the concept of 'history as entanglement' within a postcolonial articulation,[2] Nuuk Kunstmuseum points towards defying historical clashes and depicting a more discerned representation of Greenlandic identity. Objects or other traces of history, such as the remains of remembrance or oral histories, function as midway points for an endeavour to recount the entangled histories between Greenland and Denmark.

The archive offers a space for the documentation of silenced histories, as well as for the scrutiny of historical colonialisms and contemporary colonialities, as prompted by Anibal Quijano[3]. Arjun Appadurai affirms essential, autonomous, non-governmental archive and documentation projects as social tools and interference. Starting from these ideas, and outside the mere collecting of objects, the archive may operate as a starting point for explorations and connections of different kinds, spaces where epistemological disobedience and divergent thinking can be practiced[4].

In an attempt to demythologise the narratives around artworks that are part of the museum collection, Meleko Mokgosi and his work *Modern Art: The Root of African Savages, Addendum* (2015) were brought into the conversation. Mokgosi's work aims to expose the lack of contextualisation visible in the labels linking the collection's works. Furthermore, by editing, writing over and adding comments to them, Mokgosi challenges the modernist institutional discourse within the description of artworks, and counters the ways that art history and its categorisation and linear historicisation and exclusion determine our existing rationale, understanding and vision.

3. Aníbal Quijano, *Coloniality and Modernity/Rationality, in Globalization and the Decolonial Option* (ed. Walter D. Mignolo and Arturo Escobar), New York: Routledge, 2010.

4. Walter D. Mignolo, 'Epistemic Disobedience, Independent Thought and Decolonial Freedom', *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 26, no. 7–8, pp. 159–81, December 2009.

Editors' Notes: Architectural Dissonances

Architectural Dissonances is a collection of responsive acts travelling along trails and through sites of architectural structures as a provocation to unsettle inconsistent thoughts, beliefs and actions within norms of modernity. It attempts to draw attention to these manifestations, to observe variations and the agencies devised to affect resolutely held beliefs and values. The collection includes essays and works by Suha Hasan, Malin Heyman, Sepideh Karami, Lais Myrrha, Harun Morrison, Joar Nango, Itohan Osayimwese, Victoria Ogoegbunam Okoye, Laércio Redondo, Ayedin Ronaghi, Emilio Distretti and Alessandro Petti.

The European colonial/modern project constructed its identity in opposition to 'other worlds' labelled as traditional or backward. The suppression of alternatives was, and is, an attempt to create a singular colonial/modernist canon; hence modernity cannot exist without the disqualification and degradation of other approaches and world views.

Echoing processual music terminologies, the dissonant structures and practices outlined in this collection transform, twist and interfere with the surrounding context, with the potential to change the ideologies of the fixed urban form.

Through the approach of decolonial thinking, being and doing, one question that emerges is how to fundamentally rethink, and offer ways to reimagine, society through spatial practice – beyond the utopian universalist constraints conceived within modern architecture.

Recognising the limits and slippages of academic disciplines such as architecture, art history, museology and curating, and encouraging practices of unlearning, our task is therefore to situate a critical conversation around decolonization in Europe by challenging western epistemologies in relation to architecture, living and working spaces, territories of care, urban and rural planning.

With **Malin Heyman**'s *Reconstructing the Anatomical Theatre in Uppsala* and her analysis of the profound relationship between racist politics and architecture, the discussion starts with a closer look at the architectural site of knowledge and the violence that sits within its thick walls. The essay *Cracks in the Modernist Foundation: On the Necessity of Challenging Dominant Narratives* by **Itohan Osayimwese** proposes an analysis of moments of transit, denoting transformation and individual identity revolution, and a critical reflection on the architectural concept of evoking correspondences between Oyotunji African Village in South Carolina, USA, and James Onwudinjo's Adinembo House in Nigeria, in relation to architectural responses to the dichotomy between modernity and modernism, inverting, for example, colonial hierarchies of space, with a focus on the problematic legibility of colonial architecture.

Asymmetries in architecture, just as in music, are neither an immobile, inert terminus nor a reaction, rather they may perform as a syllabus of new imaginaries. Sometimes this opens up an alternate reality as an option, a model for action. It spins, interferes and denies, discloses a new surface – generously, engagingly. Works featured in this publication by **Joar Nango, Lais Myrrha, Ayedin Ronaghi** and **Laércio Redondo** reach such density. They both propose and consider a new order, inventing temporary asymmetry as an imaginary: neither rehearsal nor discharge, but rather speculation, study and prospect.

An archive is often regarded as proof of sorts: an ordering of historical documents that remits and accounts for evidence

about societies, places and occurrences. This assessment however is inclined to obscure a critical feature of the archive and the archival process: it is not only volatile and subject to the impulses of time and history, but the material archive and the process of archiving is as much about determining the future as it is about describing the past. In the essay *The Imagination of an Aesthetic Regime in the Modern Arab City: Dissent, Redistribution of the Sensible, Poetics*, **Suha Hasan** asks: What part can the archive play in generating and supporting a critical and culturally located architecture history with the archive as both object and process? Has the lack of a complete archive of modernist architecture across North Africa and the Middle East, for example, left substantial gaps in architectural history regarding local practitioners and international epistemologies? Has this, in turn, reduced the pursuit of architectural historical research marginal to the region's general history, current apprehensions and the future of architecture as a practice?

If the archive does circumscribe a possible hesitant horizon of commitment, reflecting rather than simply recording the past, how do architectural practices involve, negotiate, dispute and define their current liaison with the archive and the processes of archiving? What role, furthermore, has the archive performed in architecture practices across North Africa and the Middle East?

Architecture itself is an archive, a repository for cultural knowledge and, coextensively, a means of interrogating certitudes related to that knowledge. All these definitions and more are crucial to **Victoria Ogoegbunam Okoye**'s essay *The Colonial Afterlife of Encroachment*, concentrating on the colonial violence still produced and reproduced in contemporary African urban space and spatial relations, with a particular focus on Accra, Ghana.

For Walter D. Mignolo, the distinctiveness of the archive and its determination to produce knowledge defines a narrative that exceeds the status of fiction and transforms into ontological 'reality'. To draw such contours of analysis is to suggest that the archive produces events as much as it records them. Indeed, in **Emilio Distretti and Alessandro Petti** produce a pedagogical twist towards new practices and parameters within which future generations can approach and question knowledge in relation to fascist heritage in the village of Borgo ~~Rizza~~, Northern Sicily.

In **Harun Morrison**'s *Temporal Collage and Producing Escape: What is the relationship of modernization to boat living?* the wandering, nomadic spirit becomes a visible yet disembodied entity. It is in this unstable, haunted state that a new infrastructural imprint is produced, and it is this instant that presents the artist and architect with the occasion to negotiate and rewrite, visually or otherwise, the construction of living and acting in space as a reality in waiting.

As **Sepideh Karami** writes in her essay *Sludge: An Imagined World beyond Development*: 'A decolonized world is imagined to be a world beyond petroleum; free from the burden of politics of oil, wars, terrorism, dictatorship, colonization, environmental crisis and forced migration; a hospitable ground.'

In response, the works of the architects, researchers and artists included in this collection look at 'infrastructural architectures' as stories and as spaces of narrative, where locations, trajectories, buildings, ruins and canals become cross-continental networks, exposing sometimes uncomfortable intricacies of relationships.

Architectural Dissonances invites citizens in art and architecture to engage with spaces via performances and talks that re-sharpen the focus on giving form to our times.

ARCHITECTURAL DISSONANCES / DISSONANT ARCHITECTURES - EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

Marie-Louise Richards

1. Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

2. See Walter D. Mignolo, 'Interview – Walter Mignolo / Part 2: Key Concepts', Alvina Hoffmann, *E-International Relations*, 21 January 2017, https://www.e-ir.info/2017/01/21/interview-walter-mignolo-part-2-key-concepts/ (accessed 29 November 2021).

Born of the Enlightenment, modernity was built on the values of reason, progress, growth and science. But its self-presentation as universal and transparent has been, and must continue to be, challenged; the product, too, of the intertwined forces of capitalism, slavery and empire, modernity has a 'darker side'.[1] Decolonial arguments show how the narrative of modernity works to impose the rhetoric of 'salvation' (through civilisation, progress, development, growth) and the logic of (resource) extraction upon peoples and lands. And the rhetoric of salvation is what makes the logic of extraction possible. Whether justifying colonization because it brings the salvation of civilisation, or modernization because it brings the salvation of progress; positing development as salvation in the era of decolonization after World War II, growth as the salvation of market-based democracy, or neoliberalism as salvation after the Cold War, the persuasive discourse of salvation continues to have multiple coexistent designs within the current rhetoric of modernity.[2]

In the 2019 essay 'From Welfare to Warfare: Exploring the Militarization of the Swedish Suburb', Irene Molina, a professor of Social and Economic Geography at Uppsala University, foregrounds the process by which the stigmatised Swedish suburbs, largely framed via racialised representations of criminality, violence and vulnerability, have been militarised through the Million Programme (*Miljonprogrammet*). The Million Programme was realised through the modernist project of Swedish functionalism, an integral component of the Swedish welfare state. Molina traces how the Million Programme operates within the rhetoric of salvation and the logic of resource extraction to effect gentrification and

leverage sites of market speculation and investment. As such, the colonial continuum makes itself present.

Drawing on the work of Ruth Wilson Gilmore, Molina observes how, via the logic of colonization, control and surveillance are normalised in these neighbourhoods, and how this supports a culture of impunity.[3] She demonstrates how these processes of militarisation may be seen to work in tandem with colonial practices, processes, technologies and assemblages of securitisation at various socio-spatial scales to create a prevailing environment of distrust, fear and suspicion and a lack of belief in the institutional legitimacy of state institutions, producing and reproducing spatial, racial and socio-economic segregation as a consequence. Moreover, Molina shows how it is in this built environment that the colonial continuum makes itself present, and how architecture itself – as discipline, practice and discourse –operates as the critical domain where colonial violence is produced and perpetuated.

As the legitimacy of cultural and state institutions is increasingly called into question, it becomes urgent to examine not only architectural but also artistic and cultural practices more generally. These institutions have, over time, produced, upheld and made possible the operations of the rhetoric of salvation and the logic of extraction, in the name of the rational, transparent, civic and scientific values of modernity and the nation state. Culture is the terrain where our societies' norms, values, beliefs and habits are reproduced: the cultural institution is therefore a crucial site for interrogation.

Over the past few years, art institutions and institutions of higher learning across the globe have begun the important task of confronting their own colonial legacies and are trying to make their organisations better reflect the diversity and multiplicity of voices that have been excluded for so long.

3. Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*, Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007.

However, it is important that in the process they should also reflect on the institution's own 'culture of practice', which may sometimes go to replicate colonial behaviours and attitudes. Institutions must decentre Eurocentric views and not just include, but also give value to those narratives that have been 'othered' until now. It is not just about inviting Indigenous and other marginalised peoples into the institutions – the institutions must also seek to reimagine themselves entirely.

For us at Decolonizing Architecture + *L'Internationale Online*, this means reflecting on the ways we are embedded within institutions of higher learning in art and architecture as well as on the ways we engage with, and relate to, other cultural institutions; our cultural practices and modes of thinking and being. This publication offers some reflections on, and interrogations of, some of the connections and relations between modernism and colonialism, and speculates on some possible approaches to architectural demodernization.

One question that emerges is how society itself might be reimagined through spatial practice – beyond the universalist constraints conceived within modern architecture and projected into a distant utopian future. At the core of modernism lay the idea that the world had to be fundamentally rethought. Focusing on elements of daily life such as housing, furniture, domestic goods and other key cultural forms, modern architects set out to reinvent them for a new century. But modernity exists within a binary relation that involves the erasure, disqualification and degradation of other approaches and world views. Decolonial approaches seek pluralities of transformation of everyday life, occurring day by day.
The demodernizing task for us, then, involves not only imagining other modes and forms of architectural and artistic practice, but also reflectively recovering and foregrounding modes and forms of thinking, being and doing, which have been erased, forgotten and devalued, with reference and reverence to that which came before – as nothing is ever 'new'.

FIJFERE VANÁS GEAĐGI (BURL BOAT STONE)

Joar Nango and **Anders Rimpi**

GIELLA PRESCHOOL IN JOKKMOKK

Joar Nango and Anders Rimpi, *Fijfere Vanás Geađgi* (Burl Boat Stone), 2018 - ongoing (permanent artwork). Photo: Ricard Estay.

Joar Nango and Anders Rimpi, *Fijfere Vanás Geađgi* (Burl Boat Stone), 2018 - ongoing (permanent artwork). Photo: Ricard Estay.

Joar Nango and Anders Rimpi, *Fijfere Vanás Geađgi* (Burl Boat Stone), 2018 - ongoing (permanent artwork). Photo: Ricard Estay.

RECON-STRUCTING THE ANATOMICAL THEATRE IN UPPSALA

Malin Heyman

GUSTAVIANUM

1. Dr Christine Beese is a research associate and lecturer in art history at Freie Universität Berlin. Dr Beese's current research focuses on early modern anatomical theatres as objects and agents of scientific cultural history.

2. Henrik Björck, 'Till frågan om folkhemmets rötter. En språklig historia', Lychnos, 2000, pp. 139–70.

'The antiquarian just told me she thinks the anatomical theatre is the most beautiful space in Uppsala.' As I walk through the door of the small sunlit office we have been let to use, Dr Christine Beese looks up from the piles of boxes that the building antiquarian has retrieved from the archive of the Uppsala county museum (Upplandsmuseet) for the two of us to look at.[1] This is the second day of our visit to Uppsala, and our last stop. It's Dr Beese's first time seeing the theatre, which, with its powerfully dramatic space proclaiming the prominent early knowledge production of the university, amply veiled in baroque mystique, is beloved. I myself have been a frequent visitor since childhood, when my mother, a medical scientist and researcher at Uppsala University, would bring visiting international colleagues here. Since our arrival in Uppsala, Dr Beese and I have been met with nothing but enthusiasm and eagerness to help. My intention for this visit is to research the mid-1900s reconstruction of the theatre, first built in 1662–63. In writing this paper I reflect on the role of the theatre in Uppsala in the context of what were arguably Sweden's two most significant periods of nation-building: the peak of the Swedish Empire in the mid-1600s, and the construction of the Swedish welfare system and the 'almost mythical nationalist *and* Socialist concept of *folkhemmet*, or the people's home' in the early 1900s.[2]

The Site

The city of Uppsala was the seat of the Swedish Crown until the Reformation, when the church and the university belonging to it were stripped of their economic basis and Stockholm was made the new capital. (The university was founded in 1477, making it one of the oldest universities in the world still in operation.) Uppsala retained some of its consequence even after this blow: as the seat of the Swedish Church remained in Uppsala, coronations were still held in the cathedral, and Uppsala castle was still in use by the Crown. The decision to join the Thirty Years' War was made here, a decision that proved crucial to the emergence of the brief and tumultuous Swedish Empire when Sweden controlled most of the territory around the Baltic Sea as well as colonies in North America, West Africa and the Caribbean. Sweden's new position as a great military power created a need for competent government officials and the Crown invested heavily in Uppsala University, which by then was practically inoperative.[3] In 1620 a building across the square from the medieval Uppsala cathedral which, prior to the Reformation, had been the property of the catholic church was donated to the university by the king, adapted to the needs of teaching and publishing and given the name 'Gustavianum'. Today it is the universities' oldest remaining building.[4] At around the same time, as a consequence of the Counter-Reformation the Swedish Church wished to educate clergy in order to maintain the status quo and the former privileges of the university were restored.[5]

3. 'The history of Uppsala University – a brief summary', Uppsala University website, https://www.uu.se/en/about-uu/history/summary/ (accessed 9 September 2021).

4. 'Gustavianum, Uppsala', Statens Fastighetsverk website, https://www.sfv.se/fastigheter/sok/sverige/uppsala-lan/gustavianum-uppsala/ (accessed 20 September 2021).

5. 'The history of Uppsala University – a brief summary', Uppsala University website, https://www.uu.se/en/about-uu/history/summary/ (accessed 9 September 2021).

6.   Gunnar Eriksson, 'Olof
       (Olaus) Rudbeck',
       *Svenskt biografiskt lexi-
       kon*, Riksarkivet website,
       https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/
       Presentation.aspx?id=6987
       (17 September 2021).

The Architect

The initiator, architect and master builder of the anatomical theatre housed in Gustavianum was Olof Rudbeck, anatomist, botanist, engineer and architect; historian, astronomer, linguist and singer. The son of a former Uppsala University professor turned bishop, he entered the university as a student and remained as professor of medicine until his retirement at age 61, ten years prior to his death in 1702 shortly after allegedly having led the efforts to extinguish the flames of the great fire of Uppsala (which destroyed most of his life's work) from the roof of his theatre. Already as a student he had gained the attention of Queen Kristina and her allies. The queen's interest in making Uppsala University an institution worthy of a great European power provided fertile ground for Rudbeck's ambition and productivity, and he was given positions within the university that for a period practically made him its autocrat.[6] Although he made many enemies over the course of his career, he seems always to have had enough confidence, persuasion and powerful allies to be able to avoid any significant trouble and to realise his own projects.

The Theatre

'It feels like a model of an anatomical theatre', Dr Beese says, when I ask for her first impressions. There are many ways in which this space can be read, as it spins a far-reaching web of relationships between its constellation of signifiers. Spatially very compact, it is filled with representational devices. The dramatic angle of the octagonal tiers produces a space where everyone present is placed in an intimate spatial and visual relationship to each other: up to 200 people or more sharing

Photograph of the Gustavianum anatomical theatre interior, 17 January 1950, '*Anatomiska teatern* 43, F:66', Uppsala county museum archive (accessed 31 August 2021).

the same almost-vertical plane, like they would in a rolled-up painting. At the bottom centre of this flattened verticality with its controlled, carved ornaments of various classical orders painted in dark colours, condemned criminals were once dissected. Above the tiers floats a voluptuous dome flooded with light from a double clerestory. The architectural elements around the dome and windows are joyfully and organically ornamented. Thus, the duality of the theatre's upper and lower sections is striking: it may be that of heaven and earth, or that of paradise and purgatory.

This photograph is one of many held in the Uppsala county museum that document the 1950s restoration of the theatre. Its tiers had been ripped out in the mid-1800s, and at some point the space was bisected by a slab. The photographer is standing where the dissection table would have been with the camera lens pointed upwards at an angle towards a mocked-up section of the theatre's tiers. In the 1600s, both students and members of the ruling class would have observed the new empirical sciences defying the hegemony of the church by procuring knowledge of the inner workings of the body from up there. Temporarily stripped of both its base and the floor slab below it, one of the eight original dome-supporting columns appears to float next to the mocked-up tiers. In the top right corner of the photographic frame, a screen or sheet covers one of the eight walls where maps would have hung, displaying the conquest by knowledge of the territory of the world.

    In 1946, a committee was appointed to oversee the restoration work that came to span nine years. Besides such clues as were offered by the largely intact dome, columns and load-bearing walls, the committee had access to three sources of information on the theatre's original state. First, two pilasters remained from the original interior, which Rudbeck claimed to have carved and put in place himself. Of these today just one pilaster capital remains. Second, a printed

woodcut of a section drawing of the theatre designed and drawn, by all accounts, by Rudbeck could (and still can) be found in remaining copies of his gigantic publication project of 1679–1702, commonly referred to as the *Atlantica*. Third, a transcript of a letter written by Rudbeck in 1685 in which he defends himself against accusations of having spent too much of the university's resources on the theatre's construction.

The Capital

The surviving ionic pilaster capital is held in the Gustavianum archive. An enthusiastic and obliging museum curator greets us and shows us to the aged fragment. It is laid out on crumpled white tissue paper – that it presumably has been wrapped in – on a table in front of one of the large nineteenth-century windows that overlook the former gardens, designed by Rudbeck, of the Uppsala castle. I ask the curator about the challenge and opportunity of working on the new exhibition for Gustavianum, today the Uppsala University Museum. The museum is once again being renovated, the display of objects being remade. She lights up and laughs nervously. Looking at me over the hot pink reading glasses sitting at the tip of her nose she says, 'Well, this is the chance of a lifetime. It is really exciting, but I also worry about failing completely.'

    The surviving capital seems smaller than the ones that have replaced it and it weighs next to nothing. Yellowed wood with a strongly contrasting grain shows through two layers of flaking grey paint. I'm guessing it is pine, ubiquitous and cheap, nothing fancy. The carving has a naive and rushed yet somehow unfazed quality to it. Its symmetries aren't symmetrical. They don't line up with each other. The minutes of the restoration committee meeting held in May 1953 report a 'lively discussion' among the professors about the proposed replacement capitals, which Hr Fåhraeus finds too 'fine' to

7. Minutes of the restora-
    tion committee meeting
    of 4 May 1953, Uppsala
    county museum archive
    (accessed 31 August
    2021).

8. Gunnar Eriksson, 'Olof
    (Olaus) Rudbeck',
    *Svenskt biografiskt lexi-
    kon,* Riksarkivet website
    (accessed 17 September
    2021).

give the same 'rustic impression' as the
original.[7] Hr Elmqvist points out that
there is, however, a great similarity in
terms of richness of detail. Hr Paulsson
stresses that Rudbeck never aimed at
any 'primitivity' in the sculpting of
capitals. This architecture 'was intend-
ed for the upper classes, comparable
to the interiors of a castle.' Indeed, at
the height of the Swedish Empire the
theatre provided the university with
a space of its own in which the Crown and the aristocracy as
well as its international guests could be entertained, so that it
no longer had to wait for invitations to promote its work.

    The Uppsala theatre was by no means the first of its
kind. These early modern spaces for teaching anatomy had
already been in use for almost a century at the universities of
Padua and Leiden by the time Rudbeck built his. Regardless,
his building of it helped to raise both interest in, and the
quality of the teaching of, anatomy, as well as laying claim
to Uppsala University's international significance as an insti-
tution for research in the new empirical sciences. Anatomic
dissections were performed in the space, and they were public.
They were, however, rare, and the space was primarily used
for lectures.

    As one of only a couple of students at the medical faculty
of Uppsala University, still at the time an overwhelmingly theo-
cratic, scholastic teaching institution without any international
influence, Olof Rudbeck was the first Swede to make an inter-
nationally significant scientific discovery: the workings of the
lymphatic system. His empirical work got the attention of both
the Crown and the university leadership, and he received per-
mission and funding to construct his anatomical theatre.[8] The
theatre was built on top of the university building, spanning its
full width and centred lengthwise, imposing symmetry.
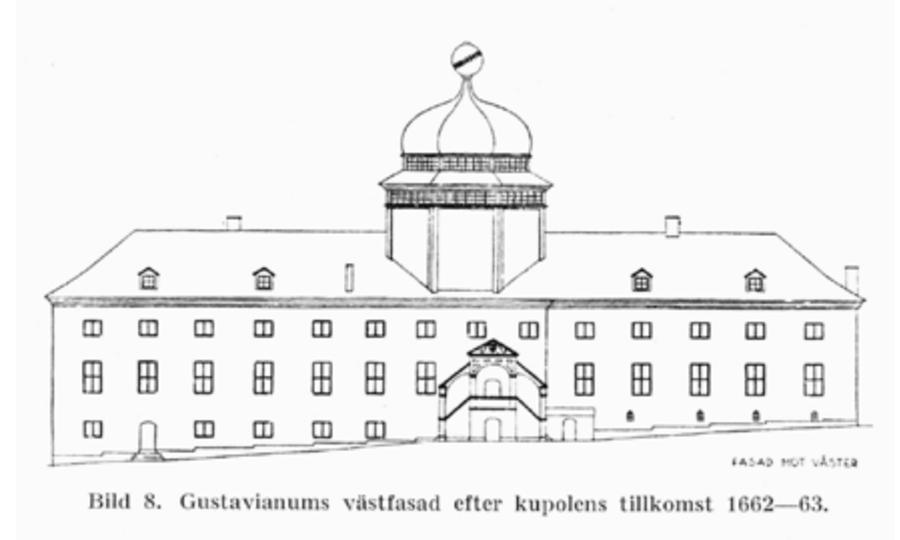

Bild 8. Gustavianums västfasad efter kupolens tillkomst 1662—63.

Gustavianums västfasad efter kupolens tillkomst 1662-1663 (The West façade of
Gustavianum after the addition of the cupola 1662–1663), in S. Lindqvist, O. Eklöf, N.
Sundquist, ' *Soluret på Gustavianum'* ('The sundial at Gustavianum'), *Årsboken Uppland*,
Uppsala: Upplands forminnesförening, 1947, p. 19, fig. 8.

Towering above the Uppsala roofscape, Rudbeck's zealous baroque dome, with its large and effectively superfluous sundial (there were plenty of clocks around to tell time), joined the previously uncontested steeples of the cathedral in the sky, challenging both the power and the paradigm of the church while giving the smallest faculty of the university – the medical – physical prominence over the others.

The Section

Our expedition to Uppsala was initiated by a lunch, generously organised by Gustavianum, Uppsala University Museum, with representatives from Gustavianum and the university's library. Our hosts listened attentively to our ideas and expressed their gracious interest in the new points of view that Dr Beese and I might have to offer. At one point, Dr Beese raised the relevancy of Rudbeck's *Atlantica* in relation to the anatomical theatre, stating that the two projects ought to be read and discussed in light of each other. The uncomfortable shuffling-in-seats that occurred around the table in response to this remark is, in my experience, a common reaction to any mention of the *Atlantica*.

Much, if not all, of Rudbeck's extensive work as engineer and architect is included in the illustrated volume of this work, which remains a source of reference in relation to his scientific and technical undertakings. Written in both Swedish and Latin, the language of this lavish and lavishly illustrated publication is energetic, humorous and rushed, with sentences and thoughts frequently left unfinished. As the only surviving image of the theatre in its original state, the fact that the section drawing inserted into the illustrated volume (where it shares a spread with plans and axonometric projections of other, archaeological, circular spaces of significance to Rudbeck's claims) doesn't show the situation of its entrance caused some headaches for the 1946 restoration committee.

Spread including section drawing of the anatomical theatre, Olof Rudbeck, *Atlantica/ Atland eller Manheim, Atlas*, vol. 5, 1698, fig. 136, https://www.bukowskis.com/sv/auctions/E711/ lots/1323313-rudbecks-atlantica-5-vol.

9. Gunnar Eriksson, *The Atlantic Vision*, Canton, MA: Science History Publications, 1994, preface.

A few years after the theatre's original construction was completed, the *Codex Argenteus* (a sixth-century Italian evangeliary which constitutes the primary source of the Gothic language) and a copy of the Edda (the most expansive source of Norse mythology) were donated to Uppsala University by the vice chancellor, himself a patron of Rudbeck's. For Rudbeck, it was this addition to Uppsala's existing collection of classical texts, then regarded as original and absolute historical sources, that marked the beginning of his enormous and never-to-be-finished publishing project, of which the historian of science and professor emeritus at Uppsala University Gunnar Eriksson has written:

> [The *Atlantica*] should be classed as a historical work of extreme patriotism … Although his [Rudbeck's] historical work, huge, chaotic, unfinished after three and one-half giant volumes, is mainly crowded with classical mythology, Edda poetry, and endless breakneck etymologies, it contains many scientific observations and remarks about the natural history of Sweden. In fact, Rudbeck maintains that the countryside of Sweden with its mountains, forests, lakes and rivers is the firm basis for all his historical arguments … my main issue is the history of 17th-century science. Its use in the *Atlantica* is, in my opinion, typical of what prevailed in a time of transition when philologists and historical scholars maintained close relations with scientists, and the two cultures were still not distinctly separated.[9]

In the *Atlantica,* Rudbeck presents 102 congruences between Sweden and the mythological empire of Atlantis as described

by Plato in his dialogues Timaeus and Critias before concluding that the capital of Atlantis must have been situated in Old (Gamla) Uppsala. This constitutes the framework and the raison d'être of all that ensues. Many of its (proto-)scientific methodologies may be seen to be early imperfect attempts at wielding what subsequently were developed into techniques in use today (such as the analysis of archaeological strata), all of whose results tend to prove Rudbeck's initial thesis. Eriksson observes that the *Atlantica* was not the first publication of its kind: other sixteenth- and seventeenth-century volumes claim exceptionalism for various European countries, and topography often plays a prominent part in their argumentation. The fact that territory could be so-defined, measured, mapped, and categorised allowed for previously unknown spatio-temporal relationships to be claimed.

In the second chapter of the *Atlantica* Rudbeck discusses 'the difference of peoples'. On the basis of criteria such as 'kinship, language, locality, customs, legislation, physiognomy, skin colour, ways of building, clothing, etc.', he concludes that 'from the oldest times the Swedes have been a homogenous people, identical through the ages, unlike almost all other European peoples.'[10] Rudbeck's development of an origin myth in order to claim exceptionalism for the Swedes (and for Uppsala in particular) was nothing new, but his locating this mythical origin as a lost, expansive and technologically advanced Atlantis was without precedent. For Rudbeck, Swedes were Atlanteans – one of the original and unaltered peoples from whom all other peoples, all knowledge and all culture, had descended.

When the period of Rudbeck's near-autocracy at Uppsala University came to an end in 1670, he retained his professorship in medicine but focused most of his attention on the *Atlantica* and his work in botany, including the ambitious

10. Gunnar Eriksson, *The Atlantic Vision*, Canton, MA: Science History Publications, 1994, p. 13.

11.   Gunnar Eriksson, 'Carl Linné (von)', *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, Riksarkivet website, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/Presentation.aspx?id=10735 (accessed 8 September 2021).

12.   Linda Andersson Burnett, Annika Windahl Pontén, *'Linnés förhållande till rasism är komplicerat'*, ('Linné's relationship to racism is complicated'), Uppsala University website, May 4 2021, https://www.uu.se/nyheter/artikel/?id=16878&typ=artikel (accessed September 11 2021).

production of full-scale woodcut representations of plant species. After his son, Olof Rudbeck the younger, succeeded him as professor of medicine, the next person to hold the chair was Carl von Linné, who also inherited and used the botanical garden set up and attentively cultivated by the Rudbecks, known today as the Linné garden (Linnéträdgården). At a young age, Linné was given room and board in the private home of Rudbeck the younger, who saw the promise of this student. In return, Linné worked with him and assisted in the education of his children.[11] As part of Linné's own *Systema Naturae* for naming and categorising forms of life, he ordered and hierarchised the human species into four 'varieties' connected to continents and skin colour.[12]

The Letter

'Do you mind staying for just another minute? The archivist who helped you with the material wanted a quick word before you go, if you don't mind.' With that the receptionist at the Uppland county archive (*länsarkivet*) left to fetch his colleague, who wanted to make sure we were aware that the substructure supporting the theatre tiers is original and who reminded me that the county museum holds the 1940s antiquarian survey of the theatre in its archive.

The county archive also holds a transcript of Rudbeck's 1685 letter in which he confidently defends himself against a committee of inquiry. In this letter he details the cost of

each and every component part of the theatre's construction, claiming that if anything, the university owed him money and not the other way around. It was from this document that the 1950s restoration committee knew how many pilasters the original interior had, and of what order. Together with the section drawing of the theatre in the *Atlantica*, this letter helped them to approximate the original design of the theatre's entrance. Hr Fåhraeus, who, as we have seen, considered the new capitals too 'fine', also found the proposed tier formation presented at the May 1953 meeting unsatisfactory. In his opinion, the rings of the tiers ought to be pinched in a bit, making the part of the entrance with the stairs 'less open'.[13] Walking into the space today, the forced perspective that is produced by entering via a narrow cut-out of the tiers has a dramatic, imposing effect.

The Committee

The chairman of the committee overseeing the restoration of the anatomical theatre was Nils von Hofsten, vice chancellor of Uppsala University 1943–47. A professor of zoology specialising in comparative anatomy, Von Hofsten was instrumental in popularising the new scientific field of genetics through his lectures at Uppsala as well as his multiple publications, one of which long remained the only Swedish course literature in the field.[14] From this he developed as his main focus the study of human genetics and eugenics. A member of the Swedish Association for Racial Hygiene (Svenska sällskapet for rashygien), he belonged to the network of people who successfully lobbied for the founding of SIRB, the Swedish State

13.   Minutes of the restoration committee meeting of 4 May 1953, Uppsala county museum archive.

14.   Marianne Rasmuson, 'Nils G E Hofsten, von', *Svenskt biografiskt lexikon*, Riksarkivet website, https://sok.riksarkivet.se/sbl/Presentation.aspx?id=13698 (accessed 15 September 2021).

15. John Sjögren, '*Rektorn som var rasbiolog*' ('The vice chancellor who was a race biologist'), *Uppsala Nya Tidning,* 29 October 2011, https://unt.se/kultur/rektorn-som-var-rasbio-log-1510140.aspx (accessed 16 September 2021).

16. Ulrika Kjellman, 'A Whiter Shade of Pale', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2013, pp. 180–201.

17. '*Anatomiteatern invigs 31 maj*', Svenska Dagbladet, 24 April 1955.

18. Marianne Rasmuson, 'Nils G E Hofsten, von', *Svenskt biografiskt lexi-kon,* Riksarkivet website.

Institute for Race Biology,[15] 'with the purpose being to survey and classify the Swedish people according to their race', under the leadership of Herman Lundborg. According to Lundborg and his eugenic theories, the Nordic race was threatened by degeneration due to miscegenation and it was necessary to adopt a rational population policy in response. With the data produced by SIRB, Lundborg argued, 'informed decisions could be made on who was pure Nordic, true white, and who was not, and what strategies to take to encourage the former to reproduce and ensure that the latter did not.'[16]

The idea to restore the anatomical theatre originated in conjunction with the 1920 restoration of Gustavianum. At the time Von Hofsten was working as a conservator at the Museum of Zoology (Riksarkivet) which then inhabited the partially demolished theatre.[17]

In 1922 SIRB opened in Dekanhuset (the Dean's building) on the same square as the cathedral and Gustavianum. Von Hofsten was on the board of SIRB 1926–53; vice chairman 1933–45, and chairman 1945–53.[18]

In 1935 Gustavianum was listed as a landmark building of national historical and cultural significance and thenceforth protected by preservation laws. That same year, Von Hofsten became chairman of the Lärdomshistoriska samfundet in Uppsala, a society for the study of the history of scientific research. In 1937, the society commissioned a transcription of the original *Atlantica* in its entirety. This drastically increased the availability of Rudbeck's writings: as their sole source, the original volumes had been both difficult to

get hold of and to decipher.

Ultimately, the fate of SIRB parallels that of the *Atlantica*. While the scientific validity of race biology and eugenics was soon called into question, Lundborg replaced and the institute eventually incorporated into Uppsala University under a new name, this is by no means to say that the ideas put forth and the structures put in place by SIRB have not had a lasting impact.[19]

19. Ulrika Kjellman, 'A Whiter Shade of Pale', *Scandinavian Journal of History*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2013, pp. 180–201.

Reflections

In so-tracing the construction and reconstruction of the anatomical theatre in Uppsala, I have come to 'read' its architecture as a means of promoting, perpetuating and legitimising ideas and ideologies by connecting narratives of Swedish exceptionalism and racial 'purity' with rhetorics of empirical science, fuelling and fuelled by the nation-building projects that took place at the height of the Swedish Empire and during the construction of *folkhemmet*.

Crucially to this perspective, I understand the theatre and the *Atlantica* to be critically connected: both were used in the 1600s to promote Swedish prominence in scientific knowledge production, and by including the theatre in his *Atlantica*, Rudbeck was effectively situating it within his narrative of the 'purity' ('homogenous and identical through all ages') of the Swedish people. If the anatomical theatre constituted a spatially fixed, didactic tool for entertaining this worldview and the significance it dictated, the *Atlantica* provided a mobile vessel for the same. And whether or not Rudbeck himself believed in the connections he made (or just milked them for their entertainment value or their potential to please a nation-building Crown), legitimised by his empirical work the *Atlantica* was read and discussed within the European context, drawing the

Islands president på besök i anatomiska teatern (President of Iceland visiting the ana-
tomical theatre), Gustavianum, Uppsala, 1954, https://digitaltmuseum.se/011014029694/
islands-president-pa-besok-i-anatomiska-teatern-gustavianum-uppsala-195.

attention of the aristocracy and other
leading figures, albeit opinions of
its value varied – we know that Isaac
Newton owned a copy.

In relying on the theatre's repre-
sentation in the *Atlantica* during the
process of its restoration, those responsible created new con-
nections between them. The intricate spatial and social entan-
glement of the theatre with the State Institute for Race Biology
(SIRB) in the 1900s leads me to suspect that the same ideology
may have influenced the reconstruction of one and the found-
ing of the other. Considering Von Hofsten's role at SIRB, I read
his engagement in the restoration of the anatomical theatre
and the republication of the *Atlantica* as likely motivated by a
wish to legitimise and popularise the ideas presented by the in-
stitute. And while I don't know for sure if it was Rudbeck that
Lundborg had in mind when he argued that 'archaeological
research and history had shown evidence of various exception-
al qualities of the Nordic race',[20] it does seem likely that the
Atlantica formed at least part of the basis for this statement.

Among the documentation of the theatre's restoration,
the Uppsala county museum keeps photographs of its presen-
tation to various guests while in process; once again providing
a space to impress visitors.

Here the Icelandic president is gazing up into Rudbeck's dome
during a state visit in 1954 while someone, presumably a rep-
resentative of Uppsala University, gesticulates vividly beside
him. The drawings produced for the restoration are piled up
on the dissection table: at the top of the pile is a copy of the
section drawing from the *Atlantica*.

20. Herman Lundborg,
Svensk raskunskap,
Uppsala: Almqvist &
Wiksell, 1927, p. 28 (trans.
Ulrika Kjellman).

CRACKS IN THE MODERNIST FOUNDATION: ON THE NECESSITY OF CHALLENGING DOMINANT NARRATIVES

Itohan Osayimwese

OYOTUNJI AFRICAN VILLAGE IN SOUTH CAROLINA, US AND ONWUDINJO'S ADINEMBO HOUSE IN NIGERIA

1. Walter D. Mignolo, 'Coloniality and globalization: a decolonial take', *Globalizations*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2020, pp. 1–18; Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.

2. Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1982.

3. Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2018, p. 116.

There are and there always have been cracks in the foundations of coloniality, colonialism, modernity, and architectural modernism. These cracks have emancipatory potential; it is to these cracks that we might turn to conceptualize change in the present and in the future. This essay aims to locate, synthesize, and analyze these cracks, with a view toward widening them until their edifices decisively rupture. This disruption might include interventions that demodernize architecture, or rupture may take other forms.

Walter D. Mignolo argues that the two terms 'modernity' and 'coloniality' are inextricably linked in the complex matrix of power invented and controlled by the West since the sixteenth century. The concept and reality of modernity/coloniality are supported on one side by the construct of race – as the monstrous apex of the neologism of 'free trade' – and on the other, by a rhetoric of salvation (conversion, civilization, progress, and development), which places Europe at the end point of historical time.[1] Marshall Berman's canonical definition of modernity as the experience of living in a time when previous certainties 'melt into air', along with other celebratory narratives, are then not simply uncritical descriptions of the phenomenon, but are themselves intrinsic to modernity's insidious logic.[2] There is some confusion about colonialism's relationship to this concept of modernity/coloniality. Where modernity/coloniality is an epistemological frame through which much of the world's history can be understood, colonialism is often interpreted as a finite project in which one group subjugates another by inhabiting their land.[3] However, theorists of European colonialism often conceptualize it as a much more

prevalent beast that overlaps with imperialism and the rhetoric of Europe's cultural dominance and right to exploit the world's resources, dating from the sixteenth century (or even earlier) to the present.[4] For this reason, I use coloniality and colonialism interchangeably.

How does architecture relate to all of this? Modernism, as distinct from modernity, is widely understood as a 'loose affiliation of aesthetic movements that unfolded in the first half of the twentieth century,' breaking radically with existing artistic practices in an effort to contend with the profound transformations of modernity.[5] I note here Susan Stanford Friedman's convincing argument that modernism is not and has never been singular. If we reject the thesis of multiple or alternative modernities on the basis that it continues to reify Euro-American modernity as paramount, Friedman's contention of multiple modernisms stands, since modernism brooks no definitional fixity even in its most narrow Euro-American conceptualization.[6] In architectural studies, however, modernism is still largely understood as a singular stylistic and formal meditation on 'linear progress, absolute truths, and rational planning of ideal social orders', developed by elite, avant-garde guardians of high taste, primarily in Europe and the United States.[7] The formula is familiar – cubical forms, white walls,

4. Stephen Slemon, 'The Scramble for Post-colonialism', in *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (ed.), Taylor & Francis: New York, 1994, pp. 45–52; Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (ed.) *Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, London: Routledge, 2000, p. 126. Cf. Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2018, p. 116.

5. Susan Stanford Friedman, 'Periodizing Modernism: Postcolonial Modernities and the Space/Time Borders of Modernist Studies', *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 13, no. 3, 2006, pp. 425–43 [p. 426]; Susan Sanford Friedman, 'Definitional Excursions: The Meanings of Modern/Modernity/Modernism', *Modernism/modernity*, vol. 8, no. 3, 2001, pp. 493–513.

6. Mignolo, *The Darker Side*, p. 5.

7. Friedman, 'Definitional', p. 497.

flat roofs, plenty of glass and other industrially produced materials – and applies even when non-Western regions and architects are added to the pantheon, and even when modernism's conventional narrative of aesthetic rupture with the past is acknowledged as a strategic invention.[8] Indeed, modernism in this form is almost an official culture within professional education and practice in the United States, for example, where forms and practices classified as 'traditional' are seen, by default, as conservative, anachronistic and unappealing.[9]

It is this vision of architectural modernism as a predominantly autonomous stylistic phenomenon that dominates perceptions of its emergence in colonial contexts. A few scholars are beginning to reframe US modernism as a colonial technology for expropriating life and land.[10] Previous critiques of modernist mass housing in the United States – such as Pruitt–Igoe in Saint Louis, Missouri, or Lafayette Park in Detroit, Michigan – as misapplications of otherwise worthy modernist tenets of standardization and the interwar ideal of *Existenzminimum* (subsistence dwelling), should likewise be reframed as part of a larger regime of coloniality in which African Americans and Native Americans have been racialized, displaced, continually exploited for their labor, and condemned to generational poverty. Overwhelmingly, however, in studies of architecture, colonial contexts are still understood as regions in Africa, Asia and Australia that were colonized by Europe in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. And modernism is generally seen as a Western invention that was exported to these other geographies at the end of formal colonization starting in the 1940s.[11] The work of Jane Drew and Edwin Maxwell Fry in Ghana, Nigeria and India is the quintessential example here.[12] Yet scholars of postcolonial architectural history have long argued that the colonies were in fact constitutive of both modernity and modernism, which the West can therefore no longer exclusively claim.[13] In most cases, they show that conditions in the colonies forced

8. Duanfang Lu, 'Entangled Modernities in Architecture', in *The SAGE Handbook of Architectural Theory*, C. Greig Crysler, Stephen Cairns, and Hilde Heynen (ed.), pp. 231–46, New York: SAGE, 2012. See also Fernando Lara, *The Rise of Popular Modernist Architecture in Brazil*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008; Maiken Umbach and Bernd Hüppauf, *Vernacular Modernism: Heimat, Globalization, and the Built Environment*, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2005.

9. See Lucien Steil, *In the Mood for Architecture: Tradition, Modernism and Serendipity*, Tübingen: Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, 2018.

10. Kelema Lee Moses, 'Shorelines and Settlements', *The Avery Review*, vol. 49, 2020, https://averyreview.com/issues/49/shorelines-and-settlements (accessed 14 June 2021); Manuel Shvartzberg Carrió, 'Prefabricated Steel Houses, Automation, and Settler Colonialism in Postwar America, 1943–1968', in *Productive Universals—Specific Situations:*

Critical Engagements in Art, Architecture and Urbanism, Anne Kockelkorn and Nina Zschocke (ed.), pp. 160–211, Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2019.

11. Kathleen James-Chakraborty, 'Beyond postcolonialism: New directions for the history of nonwestern architecture', *Frontiers of Architectural Research*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2013, pp. 1–9.

12. Iain Jackson and Jessica Holland, *Architecture of Edwin Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew: Twentieth Century Architecture, Pioneer Modernism and the Tropics*, New York: Routledge, 2016; Rodri Windsor Liscombe, 'Modernism in Late Imperial British West Africa: The Work of Maxwell Fry and Jane Drew, 1946-56', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 65, no. 2, 2006, pp. 188–215.

13. Lu, 'Entangled Modernities', p. 236; James-Chakraborty, 'Postcolonial Thought and the Emergence of Global Architectural Histories', forthcoming; Itohan Osayimwese, *Colonialism and Modern Architecture in*

Germany, Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2017.

14. See for example, Peter Scriver, 'Empire-Building and Thinking in the Public Works Department of British India', in *Colonial Modernities: Building, Dwelling and Architecture in British India and Ceylon*, Peter Scriver and Vikramaditya Prakash (ed.), London: Routledge, 2007, pp. 69–92; Jiat-Hwee Chang, *A Genealogy of Tropical Architecture: Colonial Networks, Nature and Technoscience*, New York: Routledge, 2016.

15. Jyoti Hosagrahar, *Indigenous Modernities: Negotiating Architecture and Urbanism*, New York: Routledge, 2005.

16. Rixt Woudstra, 'Planning the "Multiracial" City: Architecture, Decolonization and the Design of Stability in British Africa, 1945-1957', PhD Dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2020; Tim Livsey, 'The University Age: Development and Decolonisation in Nigeria, 1930 to 1966', PhD Dissertation, University of London,

2014; Osayimwese, *Colonialism*, p. 149; Itohan Osayimwese, 'Networks and Systems as Tools of Empire in Post-Independence Nigeria: The International Institute for Tropical Agriculture', *Perspecta*, vol. 52, Summer 2019, pp. 263–77.

17. Despina Stratigakos, *Hitler at Home*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015; Paul Jaskot, *The Architecture of Oppression: The SS, Forced Labor and the Nazi Monumental Building Economy*, New York: Routledge, 2000; Samia Henni, 'The Coloniality of an Executive Order', *Journeys and Translations,* Canadian Center of Architecture, 23 June 2020, https://www.cca.qc.ca/en/articles/issues/5/journeys-and-translation/73571/the-coloniality-of-an-executive-order (accessed 14 June 2021).

a certain type of prescient bureaucratic thinking, a commitment to utility and function as drivers of design, and technical innovation, which sometimes prefigured, paralleled, and even inspired new developments in metropolitan architecture especially in England and France.[14] The main protagonists of these colonial modernisms were European colonial administrators and settlers, but Indigenous or local individuals were often active agents too.[15] Exemplars of colonial modernism – especially in the form of large public buildings and newly planned housing developments, neighborhoods or entire cities – served colonial administrators' efforts to define specific groups as primitive or traditional: for example, they helped reinforce the idea that the colonized population was not ready for full suffrage in British Nairobi, or enabled egregious population displacements at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, both in the 1940s; or were the sites of forced labor captured during wars of colonial subjugation, in the case of the 1913 Government Secretariat Building in Windhoek, Namibia.[16] Even as scholars show that colonial modernism was often an outcome of complex negotiations between colonizers and colonized, the overall picture is one in which a power imbalance is translated into built environment forms and practices that actively undermine the lives of indigenous, colonized and non-European populations. This is the nature of colonial modernism.

This said, modernism is not the only architectural ideology or practice to serve coloniality. There are numerous other examples in history and in the present, from the National Socialists' rejection of a 'degenerate' modernism in favor of monumental neoclassicism fueled by the labor and lives of those condemned to concentration camps, to former US President Donald Trump's 2020 executive order that required neoclassical architecture to be the style for all new federal government buildings.[17] Architectural modernism does not have an exclusive claim to coloniality, but because of its dominance in architectural thinking around the globe in the twenty-first

18. Mignolo, *The Darker Side*, p. 5.

19. Cameron Clark, 'All Quiet on the Water-Front: Uncontacted Tribes in the Modern Era', *Harvard International Review*, vol. 40, no. 2, 2019, pp. 10–11; Scott Wallace, 'Some Isolated Tribes in the Amazon Are Initiating Contact', *National Geographic*, 13 August 2015, https://www.national-geographic.com/science/article/151013-uncontacted-tri-bes-mashco-nomole-peru-a-mazon (accessed 14 June 2021); J. Oliver Conroy, 'The life and death of John Chau, the man who tried to convert his killers', *The Guardian*, 3 February 2019, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/feb/03/john-chau-christi-an-missionary-death-senti-nelese (accessed 14 June 2021).

century, it does require interrogation as part of any effort to conceive a non-colonial future.

My introductory sketch of coloniality, colonialism, modernity and architectural modernism already reveals internal inconsistencies in each of these edifices. The problem is that it accepts as fact the totalizing logic of Euro-American modernity. Alternative, Indigenous, entangled, and global modernities still orient themselves in relation to a standard Euro-modernity.[18] Against this plurality of modernities, we must ask: Were there no people or places that were never modern or did not aspire to become modern, in the accepted, Eurocentric sense of the term? If tradition is itself already conditioned by what we know as modernity, what name do we give to that which was decidedly something else in spite of the dominating logic of modernity? What name do we give to what appears in the cracks and on the edges of that which modernity failed to reconstitute in its likeness? Perhaps the most obvious contenders are the so-called uncontacted Indigenous groups like the Sentinelese people of the Andaman Islands in the Indian Ocean or the Mascho-Piro group in Peru's Amazon rainforest. Popular reportage indexes a high level of righteous indignation and resolute incomprehension at these peoples' refusal to abandon their seemingly restricted lives for our modern cities and occupations, and to subscribe to the ethics of modern society with regard, for example, to welcoming uninvited strangers.[19]

By the very nature of their refusal, we cannot know the Sentinelese and Mascho-Piro peoples' architectural alternatives to modernity/coloniality. But perhaps we can imagine something about their shape. In architecture, the language for imagining alternatives to dominant orders is the language of utopia. The beginnings of (Western) architectural imaginaries of utopia are often dated to the sixteenth century, which is the timeframe of modernity/coloniality's own invention and expansion. Thus, these utopias were complicit with modernity/coloniality even as they reflected concerns with its logics and contained the seeds of alternatives. Many of these utopias were formulated in rejection to capitalism's promotion of the individual and increasing emphasis on rationality, but few challenged the fundamental coloniality of modernity vis-a-vis its dependence on the expendability of enslaved lives. Revolutionary Haiti was arguably an exception, as were, to some extent, maroon communities in the Caribbean, and villages built to stave off slave raiders in Ghana.[20]

The impulse to conceive and build utopias can be traced through to the present in the most recent efforts to live off-grid, build small or create intentional communities.[21] But here again, specific, enunciated resistance to the racial and patriarchal pillars of coloniality

20. Lyman Tower Sargent, 'African Americans and Utopia: Visions of a Better Life', *Utopian Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1, 2020, pp, 25–96; Leslie Alexander, 'Black Utopia: Haiti and Black Transnational Consciousness in the Early Nineteenth Century', *The William and Mary Quarterly*, vol. 78, no. 2, 2021, pp. 215–22; Amber Foster, 'Nancy Prince's Utopias: Reimagining the African American Utopian Tradition', *Utopian Studies*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2013, pp. 329–48; Brooke Takala, 'A Survey of Sites and Relics on the Slave Trade in Ghana: A History Archaeology Perspective', *African Diaspora ISPs*, 83, 2003, http://digitalcollections.sit.edu/african_diaspora_isp/83 (accessed 14 June 2021).

21. Rachel Goldlust, 'Going Off Grid: A History of Power, Protest and the Environment, 1890–2016', PhD Dissertation, La Trobe University, 2020; Lisa Alexander, 'Tiny Homes for the Homeless', *Journal of Affordable Housing & Community Development Law*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2017, pp. 39–42.

22. Kamari Maxine Clarke, 'Transnational Yoruba Revivalism and the Diasporic Politics of Heritage', *American Ethnologist*, vol. 34, no. 4, 2007, pp. 721–34 [p. 722].

is largely missing. One example is Oyotunji African Village in South Carolina, US, which was founded by African Americans in 1970 in order to reclaim Yoruba religious traditions and associated identities (figure 1). The village, which is materially circumscribed from its surroundings and intentionally adopts a historical Yoruba-based architectural vocabulary, functions as a separate domestic space, whose political and economic structures operate both independently and under the umbrella of the nation state. Kamari Maxine Clarke explains: 'Through the formation of a "poor" African village in the richest country in the world, perceived continuities (shared African ancestry as lived through blackness, spatial aesthetics, and traditional organizing practices) are used to legitimatize discontinuities and to obfuscate politico-economic configurations that splice class, race, and geographic belonging into new forms of inequality.'[22]

As the village of Oyotunji indicates, architectural modernism was not the only architectural response to modernity in colonialism/imperialism. Oyotunji's vocabulary of sculpted wood caryatids supporting verandahs that surround frescoed rectilinear and cylindrical single-story hipped-roof buildings pays homage to the historical tradition of Yoruba architecture while forging a distinctive path. Oyotunji signals an epistemology that is modern but does not sit comfortably within the dominant experience of modernity, and its architecture is similarly modern though not modernist. It is debatable whether Oyotunji has been successful in providing an alternative to modernity, and recent scholarship like that of Clarke indeed suggests that the village, which today is sparsely populated, has an outsized impact transnationally through its long-armed networks of diasporic affiliation, which it owes to globalization and mechanisms of capitalist consumption and production.[23]

There are other architectural responses to modernity in colonialism/imperialism that may likewise undermine the oppressive force associated with colonial modernism. Ikem Okoye has described the work of James Onwudinjo, an African architect practicing in Eastern Nigeria in the 1910s, as a 'spatial cipher of the contestation of European metropolitanism, and (the latter's) assumption of its own centrality.'[24] Okoye is referring to Onwudinjo's Adinembo House, where the architect made rare use of reinforced concrete in a flat-roofed, three-storied house whose tripartite façade seems to evoke Italian Renaissance palazzos at the same time as the abstract, modular reliefs sculpted on its outer skin gesture toward local cultural practices of cicatrization and body painting. The building's plan inverts the by-then conventional colonial hierarchy of space by placing service spaces at its core. Little information is available on Onwudinjo's background but it seems unlikely that he was aware of cutting-edge architectural developments in France and Germany in the 1910s. And yet, his design resonates with some modernist experimentation with materials and dynamic cross-sectional planning, even as it resists the association between excessive ornamentation and the primitive Other to the modern European self. Okoye compellingly hypothesizes that Adinembo House is a statement about being modern that decenters Western epistemologies.

The examples of Oyotunji African Village and Adinembo House, which are simultaneously embedded in and break with the overwhelming totality of modernity/coloniality, suggest two further responses to the proposition of demodernizing architecture. First, I want to challenge the assumption that architectural modernism, because of its link to modernity, is itself

23. Clarke, 'Transnational'.

24. Ikem Okoye, 'Unmapped Trajectories: Early Sculpture and Architecture of a "Nigerian" Modernity', in *Exiles, Diasporas and Strangers*, Kobena Mercer (ed.), Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008, pp. 28–44 [p. 33].

25. Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity—An Incomplete Project', in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, Hal Foster (ed.), Port Townsend: Bay Press, 1983, pp. 3–15 [p. 6].

26. Ibid.

27. Maristella Casciato, 'Modern Monuments and Heritage at Risk', *Heritage @ Risk*, 2006, pp. 22–23.

28. Fernando Lara, *The Rise of Popular Modernist Architecture in Brazil*, Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2008.

totalizing. The narrative that modernism (in the particular definition offered at the start of this essay) has dominated architecture at any moment since its multi-origin inception in the nineteenth century is a figment of the collective imagination of professionally trained architects. Writing in the 1980s, Jürgen Habermas asserted: 'modernist culture has come to penetrate the values of everyday life; the life-world is infected by modernism.'[25] What signals this pervasiveness of modernism, in the broad sense, for Habermas is the embrace of the 'principle of unlimited self-realization, the demand for authentic self-experience and the subjectivism of a hyperstimulated sensitivity.'[26] But any survey of the built environment across the globe whether today, in the 1980s or in the 1940s would reveal that the majority of structures do not conform to modernist tenets or aesthetics. Long before postmodernism emerged in the 1960s and 1970s, the majority of builders and users of the built environment in the United States and the United Kingdom, for example, did not equate 'authentic self-experience' with brutalist concrete, shiny white boxes or open plans. This is why it was necessary to establish an organization, Docomomo International, dedicated to saving modernist buildings and sites in the face of rampant development.[27] Modernism only dominated large sectors of the built environment in a few places, such as Brazil, where it was popularized by builders and laypeople. Here, notably, the modernism that ensued was a transformed version, which did not accept the social, spatial or economic changes suggested by avant-garde models.[28] Modernism may have 'infected life-worlds' (as per Habermas), but it did not dominate the architectural realm. Perhaps architectural modernism is different in this sense from other cultural modernisms, and from the economic and societal modernizations it accompanied. Ultimately, Brazilian popular modernism did not challenge high modernism's complicity in the continued occupation of Indigenous land or the structural marginalization of African- and Indigenous-descended people. If anything, it reinscribed problematic social practices inherited from the colonial period. Yet popular modernism does highlight certain openings in which resistance might occur.

Lastly, in addition to architectural modernism's failure to achieve totality, I would like to point to the oft-belabored argument of the incompleteness of modernity itself, and the significance of this for modernism. Habermas explained that the project of modernity was an effort by French Enlightenment philosophers to develop 'objective science, universal morality and law, and autonomous art according to their inner logic', and for the goals of enriching everyday life, expanding human understanding, moral progress, justice and happiness.[29] However, the project stalled, in part because it was so efficient at developing individual spheres of knowledge that they became disconnected from the everyday life that they were intended to improve. Habermas critiques the postmodern backlash against modernist architecture as an attack on the symptoms rather than the cause. He advocates trying to realize what he sees as modernity's emancipatory ideals, in part by placing limits on the unchecked 'colonization of the life-world through the imperatives of autonomous economic and administrative systems of action.'[30] Decolonial scholars have criticized Habermas's theory for its Eurocentrism, and for failing to grasp the fundamental coloniality of modernity. Habermas's

29. Habermas, 'Modernity', p. 9.

30. Jürgen Habermas, 'Modern and Postmodern Architecture', in *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, K. Michael Hays (ed.), Cambridge: MIT Press, 1998, pp. 412–27 [p. 425].

Figure 1: Welcome Sign, Oyotunji African Village (Source: Flickr).

Figure 2: View of the abandoned El Roye building on Ashmun Street, Monrovia. Tim Hetherington, 2006. https://library.artstor.org/asset/AWSS35953_35953_37899770. (Source: Magnum)

31. Raymond Morrow, 'Defending Habermas against Eurocentrism: Latin America and Mignolo's Decolonial Challenge', in *Deprovincializing Habermas: Global Perspectives*, Tom Bailey (ed.), New York: Routledge, 2013, pp. 117–36 [p. 129].

32. Danny Hoffman, *Monrovia Modern: Urban Form and Political Imagination in Liberia*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2017.

defenders have pointed out in turn that his theory nonetheless recognizes modernity's pathologies and that his concept of an unfinished project leaves room for multiple modernities and diverse forms of life.[31]

What did it mean to advocate modernism in the 1980s? If advancing modernism was about achieving the supposedly emancipatory potential of modernity, then an examination of modernist architecture in colonial contexts during this period is instructive. Anthropologist Danny Hoffman introduced architectural historians to arguably one of the last large-scale modernist building campaigns of the twentieth century with his book, *Monrovia Modern: Urban Form and Political Imagination in Liberia*.[32] Hoffman tells the story of four modernist structures built in Monrovia, Liberia, between the 1960s and 1980s with the assistance of multinational expertise and funding from Israel and the United States, and thus deeply embedded in Liberia's founding history of colonization and structural dependency. With their immense cellular, reinforced concrete frames raised on plinths and relieved occasionally by curved forms and public art, the buildings towered over the urban landscape on which they were strategically sited. When civil war erupted in 1989 as an outcome of the historical establishment of Liberia as a settler colonial state, the buildings, which were closely associated with the ruling party of the Americo-Liberian elite, became targets and theaters of the war against settler hegemony. Rebels and soldiers alike fired from the blown-out windows and balconies of the brutalist structures, and sought refuge behind their concrete fins and still-intact shafts. Two of the buildings were incomplete when the war started, and by

its end in 2003, all four buildings had reached a deep state of ruination (figure 2). At the end of the war, thousands of demobilized ex-combatants, unattended to in peacekeeping agreements, found shelter in the scarred shells of these structures. Theirs is not a triumphal occupation of previous sites of oppression, or a powerful reclamation of what is rightfully theirs. Rather, they eke out life and shelter with discarded materials and no access to the utilities grid. Hoffman suggests that the buildings pose an opportunity for inhabitants to make 'place-based claims to a right to the city', and for architects, politicians and the general public to reconfigure their futures.[33] But, due to the continued insecurity of life and livelihood in Liberia, no one has stepped through these openings. The incomplete modernist ruins in Monrovia are not a passive backdrop to failed promises of postcolonial prosperity or a blank state for a hopeful future to come. They are a dynamic actor in the 'urban aftermodern', where 'built form and political imagination remain in tension and in dialogue.'[34]

In addition to colonial modernism, there exist architectures that were never modern as well as those that were otherwise modern. In focusing on demodernizing architecture, we must be careful to resist the totalizing logic of modernity by assuming modernism's dominance. Finding cracks in the edifice will help guide us to the other side.

33. Hoffman, *Monrovia*, synopsis, p. 176.

34. Ibid.

THE IMAGINATION OF AN AESTHETIC REGIME IN THE MODERN ARAB CITY: DISSENT, REDISTRIBUTION OF THE SENSIBLE, POETICS

Suha Hasan

THE CITY IN THE ARAB ARCHIVES

THE IMAGINATION OF AN AESTHETIC REGIME IN THE MODERN ARAB CITY: DISSENT, A REDISTRIBUTION OF THE SENSIBLE, AND THE POETICS

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1. See Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* [1958] (trans. Maria Jolas), Boston: Beacon Press, 1994.

The Arab city has been surrounded by dissensus for the past decade. It is high time to review this dissent, which, I argue, is ongoing, through the lenses of planning and architecture, revisiting the architectural and urban discourses within which the imagination of the Arab city is embedded. It regards the city as a productive space rather than solely as a category or a field of study and maps out various active agents in the production and shaping of an aesthetic regime for the Arab city of today. This is achieved through an examination of certain aspects of post-independence planning in the Arab world and by analysing both the discourse disseminated by the Arab Towns Organization (ATO) and the associated aesthetic regime as anticolonial, political tools.

By dissecting collective and individual acts connected to this aesthetic regime, its textual and its visual 'language', this paper effects a reconsideration of the positioning of its architects and urban planners within the political landscape. The paper starts with (and is subsequently structured by) a theoretical discussion of a specific aesthetic regime that is linked to the imagination of the Arab city and attempts to understand the rise of this regime as a decolonizing tool. Taking a 1979 newspaper article featuring ATO as a point of entry into a conversation about the early formations of the modern Arab city, it then proceeds to redraw this city as a productive space of dissent within which to rethink and reimagine its own formation. The paper then presents an analysis of the new distribution of sensibilities in the city. Finally, the paper showcases the 'poetics of space' of several projects designed by the architect Mohamed Makiya that are connected to ATO among other Pan-Arab organizations.[1]

Jacques Rancière's work on the aesthetic regime resonates with me and affords me with the means to unpack this intertwinement of space and politics. I arrive here through

the work of Mustafa Dikeç, who interprets Rancière's writings on aesthetics alongside those of Jean-Luc Nancy and Hannah Arendt in order to understand the politics of spaces within cities.[2] Rancière claims that aesthetics is:

> subject neither to the law of understanding, which requires conceptual determination, nor to the law of sensation, which demands an object of desire. Aesthetic experience suspends both laws at the same time. It therefore suspends the power relations which usually structure the experience of the knowing, acting and desiring subject.[3]

I agree with this statement, which I would reformulate to claim that aesthetic experience can suspend and override pre-existing sensations and desires. Put either way, this usefully stakes out some of the common ground that is held between aesthetics and politics. The promise of a new poetics speaks to and can reorganize our sensibilities. The ruptures formed by encounters with aesthetic newness do not necessarily have to be grand or violent moments of change. They can occur delicately (as when engaging with a subtle art installation) and still provoke us to think and feel in new directions.

As mentioned earlier, this paper is structured around my reading and translation of a newspaper article entitled 'Our Arab Cities Have Lost Their Identity' by Fawzi Shabaan, published in *Akhbar Al Khaleej* on 21 January 1979 (see figures 1 and 2). Each line of the translation has been numbered according to a process of discourse analysis that is used in linguistics and social studies, providing the reader with precise references to the text in their full context.[4] Thus, whenever line numbers are mentioned within the text these refer to those of my

2. See Mustafa Dikeç, *Space, Politics and Aesthetics*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.

3. Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents* (trans. Steven Corcoran), Cambridge: Polity, 2009, p. 97.

4. See Annette Hastings, 'Connecting Linguistic Structures and Social Practices: a Discursive Approach to Social Policy Analysis', *Journal of Social Policy*, vol. 27, no. 2, 1998, pp. 191–211.

5. See Aníbal Quijano, 'Coloniality and modernity/rationality', *Cultural Studies* vol. 21, no. 2–3, 2007, pp. 168–78; Walter D. Mignolo, 'Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality', *Cultural Studies* vol. 21, no. 2–3, 2007, pp. 449–514.

6. See Valentin Seidler, 'Institutional Copying in the 20th Century: the Role of 14,000 British Colonial Officers', *Journal of Contextual Economics*, vol. 137, Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2017, pp. 93–120.

translation (figure 2). In conducting the translation, I have attempted to convey the meaning as fully as possible rather than rendering the translation word-for-word. Occasionally Arabic verbs and nouns are placed in a different and deliberate manner to create a dramatic effect, a literary technique which does not always translate well into English, for example. I will touch upon issues of language again.

The Aesthetics of Coloniality

The participants also undertake field studies and visits to some major German cities to get acquainted with the modern administrative and organizational means that these cities follow in order to benefit from global experiences (lines 179–84).

Colonialism enabled the project of modernity in the West and paved the way for the emergence of coloniality (a term attributed to Aníbal Quijano).[5] The continuing-to-function after independence of bureaucratic, legal, educational and other governing systems established by the colonizers has,[6] Quijano argues, reshaped the world of today, re-organizing the distribution of resources and structures within societies and, perhaps more drastically, their sensibilities, thus limiting and constraining the ability of these societies to imagine. This continuation of the domination of colonialism through the domination of the imagination is coloniality.[7]

Figure 1. Article entitled 'Our Arab Cities Have Lost Their Identity' by Fawzi Shabaan in Akhbar Al Khaleej (21 January 1979). Image by Mohammed Adwan.

Figure 2. Translation of article entitled 'Our Arab Cities Have Lost Their Identity' by the author. Image 1/2.

The emergence and creation of independent states as modern nations, as opposed to a return to what predated nationalism, was symbolised by a national flag raised high. But the system of the colonizer was not altered: there was simply an exchange of power into the hands of local actors, who were many times the same enablers of the colonizer's exploitation. The imagination of the new nations came to be dominated by what had become global systems of trade and diplomacy, and by the constraints of rhetorics of nationalism – thus, Walter D. Mignolo advocates for delinking from the centres of global power as a precondition for true independence.[8]

The nation-building project is one in which the new leaders will attempt to rewrite the nation's history through selective suppression.[9] This requires a new mode of visual representation, a new aesthetics for the cityscape that aligns with this history. Interestingly, references to pre-colonial times may be invoked in the attempt to communicate the identity of the newly independent nation state, and with the passage of time the aesthetic productions of colonial times transform into national heritage in need of preservation. The post-colonial city thus comes to represent the narrative of the new governing system.[10] This narrative supports a single story of the nation, drawing from its ancient history and avoiding its more recent history – the latter constituting what Achille Mbembe terms the demons of nations.[11] In the case of previously colonized states this includes the trauma that resulted from colonization as well as the silencing of groups that pose a threat to the homogeneity of the nation state.

7. Ibid.

8. See Walter D. Mignolo, 'Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality', *Cultural Studies* vol. 21, no. 2–3, 2007, pp. 449–514.

9. Achille Mbembe, 'The Power of the Archive and its Limits', *Refiguring the Archive* (ed. Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Jane Taylor, Michele Pickover, Graeme Reid, Razia Saleh), Dordrecht: Springer, 2002, pp. 19–27.

10. These conditions appear in various places such as Palestine, Egypt, Algeria, and Lebanon. See Rona Sela, 'The Genealogy of Colonial Plunder and Erasure – Israel's Control over Palestinian archives', *Social Semiotics* vol. 28, no. 2, 2018, pp. 201–29; Marwan Ghandour and Mona Fawaz, 'Spatial erasure: Reconstruction Projects in Beirut', *ArtEast Quarterly*, Spring 2010; René Boer, 'Erasing the Remnants of a Revolution', *Failed Architecture*, 2015, https://failedarchitecture.com/erasing-the-remnants-of-a-revolution/ (accessed 11 November 2021).

11. See Achille Mbembe, 'The Power of the Archive and its Limits'.

12. See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, London: Verso, 2006.

In the process of decolonization, the countries that formed the Arab League started to form a homogeneous entity in many of whose cities Arabic became the only language that was permitted to be spoken. Even while other identities and languages were removed from the landscape, the visual language of their architecture was appropriated and recoined as part of an Arab visual language. The solidarity required for and between anti-colonial movements inadvertently dictated that a single identity was to be shared amongst these cities.

The Dissent of the Arab City

… encouraged us in our mission and activities related to the development of Arab cities and the preservation of their Islamic character (lines 32–36).

The question of the character of the city in the Arabic-speaking world is a complex one due to the diversity of these cities for which the terms 'Arab' and 'Islamic' are often used interchangeably. Nonetheless, this paper acknowledges that the dominating aspect of the Arab city is rather a hegemonic Arab identity – which, I argue, is imagined. The imagination of national identities is discussed at length by Benedict Anderson, who attributes the imagination of national consensus to the print-capitalism through which language and its dissemination

through publication produce new allegiances.[12] It is therefore not surprising that the Arab and Islamic identities are intertwined, given their uniting mode of communication. Throughout its history the character and appearance of the modern Arab city has been closely tied to print media's production of spaces for the consolidation of power and of a condition of continuous dissent from which new systems have emerged.

According to a 1954 Foreign Office report, one of the earliest instances of an Arab nationalist project occurred in 1805 when Mehmed Ali came to power in Egypt during the Ottoman Empire.[13] The report states that his Egyptian nationalist project had failed to appeal to the masses, attributing this to then-widespread illiteracy in addition to his being of Albanian descent. Khaled Fahmy critiques Mehmed Ali's attempt to build an Arab Empire on the basis that he spoke no Arabic.[14] Contrast the contributions made to the rise of Arab nationalism as a political movement by intellectuals such as Rifa'at Tahtawi, Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani, and Mohammed Abdu, who, influenced by their experiences in France and the ideas of modernity they encountered there, used written media to share their ideas in Arabic-speaking countries.[15] Rifa'at Tahtawi specifically wrote a book on Paris, providing a detailed account of the city and comparing it to Egypt.[16] While this book and its effect are often cited in relation to modernity and education in Egypt and the Arabic-speaking world, I have yet to encounter an assessment of its influence on urban planning.

13. See report FO 371/45241 held at the National Archives in London; see also A.L. Burdett, *The Arab League: 1944–1946*, vol. 4, Cambridge: Archive Editions, 1995.

14. Khaled Fahmy, *Mehmed Ali: from Ottoman Governor to Ruler of Egypt*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 2012.

15. See Albert Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age 1798–1939*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983; Talal Al-Rashoud, 'Modern Education and Arab Nationalism in Kuwait 1911–1961', unpublished doctoral thesis, London: SOAS University of London, 2017.

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16. See Rifa'a al-Tah-tawi, *Takhlees Al-Ibriz Fi-Talkhis Bariz* (translated as *A Paris Profile or An Imam's Account of Paris*), Cairo: Hindawi Foundation for Education and Culture, 2012.

17. Amale Andraos, 'The Arab City', *Places Journal*, May 2016, https://doi.org/10.22269/160531 (accessed 22 April 2020).

18. See Janet Abu-Lughod, 'The Islamic City – Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, pp. 155–76.

It was in this context that a new aesthetics was to emerge in the newly postcolonial Arab region where, it is important to note, the Ottoman Empire had also figured as a colonial power. The use of the word 'Arab' thus served to emphasise a disconnection from the Ottoman Empire, elevating an Arab identity over a Muslim one. In contemporary usage, however, including the academic discourse that both describes and constructs the Arab city, the words 'Arab' and 'Muslim' are often used interchangeably or in tandem. Amale Andraos claims that the image invoked by 'the Arab city' does not intrinsically include the Islamic, attempting to substantiate this claim by referencing works by Janet Abu-Lughod and André Raymond.[17] However, I note that in her paper 'The Islamic City – Historic Myth, Islamic Essence, and Contemporary Relevance', Abu-Lughod specifically discusses the Arab city *as* Arabo-Islamic, critiquing attempts by planners in the Arab world and in the Gulf in particular to reproduce the Arabo-Islamic city as driven by an Orientalist-formalist obsession with the shape of the city as opposed to the processes that led to its production.[18] She also touches upon the discourse that has produced and reproduced a specific understanding of the medieval Islamic city and how, in turn, this has affected the perception of the Arabo-Islamic city. Raymond, for his part, in his paper 'Islamic City, Arab City: Orientalist Myths and Recent Views' does uncouple the Arab city from the Arabo-Islamic city, also stating that the Arab city precedes the Arabo-Islamic city (here specifically referring to cities on the Arab Peninsula).[19] Both he and Abu-Lughod

highlight a lack of understanding of the diverse influences that have shaped each Arab city on the part of other researchers, who, they claim, would tend to study one city and then generalise their findings to apply to all.

A new trend of referring to the Arab city as secular has emerged in contemporary debates. Andraos writes that the Arab city is 'secular, transnational, progressive, and belongs to the intellectual "Arab" that attempted to articulate modernity', away from any religious references.[20] Perhaps she is looking at a city where the (polity) *demos* appears to override or reshape the *ethnos* (imagined community of descent and affiliation) and sees this as the emergence of a progressive politics? In her book, Andraos mentions the Arab Spring as if it were the passage to a modern, progressive, secular Arab city – as if by revolting one becomes one with those intellectuals whose project it is to reformulate what an Arab city should be.

One kind of printed matter that has had a direct effect on practicing architects and planners is that which has been produced by their peers. Early periodicals reflect a local focus on their country of origin rather than a collective regional Arab identity, as well as links with the modernity of the West. With the exception of vol. 3, nos. 3 and 4 – which, published in 1941, featured Ottoman palaces and depicted Mehmed Ali on the cover with a mosque in the background and the name of the magazine rendered in calligraphy[21] – *Al Emara*, founded in 1939 by the architect and planner Sayyid Karim as the first architectural journal to disseminate content in Arabic, attempted to engage with Western architectural discourse by showcasing the modernity of Egypt.[22] After *Al Emara* stopped

19. See André Raymond, 'Islamic city, Arab City: Orientalist Myths and Recent Views', *British Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 21, no. 1, pp. 3–18, 1994.

20. Ibid.

21. For the cover of *Al Emara*, vol. 3, nos. 3 and 4, 1941, see https://www.archnet.org/publications/5539 (accessed 27 November 2021); also included in figure 3.

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22. *Modern Indignation* (2018), Egypt's first (and award-winning) entry into the London Design Biennale, focused on *Al Emara*'s attempts to engage with a modernity that extended beyond the borders of Egypt and into Europe.

in 1959, there seems to have been a gap until the following periodicals appeared in the 1970s: *Albenaa* in Saudi Arabia in 1978, *Alem Albenna* in Egypt in 1980, *Mujatama wu Imran* in Tunisia in 1982, and *Mimar* in Iraq in 1989. ATO also issued a journal in 1981, in parallel to which a periodical was published by the Riyadh-based Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities. Both of these publications attempted to reach beyond their national boundaries, respectively those of Kuwait and Saudi Arabia at the time.

This section has identified three important elements in the shaping and production of the imagination of the modern Arab city. First, the forces and intellectual discourses of political resistance and the desire for liberation; second, an academic discourse that has shaped the imagination of the Arab city without truly resolving the issue of its secularity or non-secularity; third, the discourse produced by practicing architects and planners themselves, into which this section has provided a brief insight.

The Arab Towns Organization (ATO): An (a)political regime

For we have set a policy that the organization works for Arab cities only, and therefore its work is not political and members should stick to that … unfortunately some Arab organizations link politics to their work and transfer conferences to halls to give speeches and lectures. (lines 298–306).

Figure 2. Translation of article entitled 'Our Arab Cities Have Lost Their Identity' by the author. Image 2/2.

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23. See Jacques Rancière, 'The thinking of dissensus: politics and aesthetics', *Reading Rancière* (ed. Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp), New York: Continuum, 2011, pp. 1–17.

24. *Fundamentalists and Other Arab Modernisms*, Kingdom of Bahrain's Pavilion, 14th Venice Biennale of Architecture, 2014.

25. Conversation with Bernard Khoury, 27 April 2020, Virtual Space, Mawane, https://www.mawane.org/virtualspace (accessed 27 November 2021).

Of course, the contemporary Arab city that came about according to a political agenda does not correspond with the historical Arab city that preceded the Arabo-Islamic. Through both its negotiation of boundaries with bordering empires and its reckoning with previous colonial systems, the contemporary Arab city has effectively questioned its own social order and the distribution of the sensible within it – and this, according to Rancière, is when politics happens.[23] Bernard Khoury, who is critical of the secularity of the Arab city and sees its modernity as a failed project, expressed as much through his curation and design of *Fundamentalists and other Arab Modernisms* at the 14th Venice Biennale of Architecture.[24] Shaped like a panopticon, the pavilion afforded the visitor the chance to sit and listen to the national anthems of each Arab country, amongst whose lyrics are included references to the non-secularity of most of those states.[25]

ATO was established in Kuwait on 15 March 1967 as part of a large network of national movements, both organized and spontaneous, that was then starting to take form, just a couple of weeks before the war began that Khoury identifies as the moment when the project of Arab modernity started to break down.

According to the current secretary general of the organization, ATO was jointly founded by the municipalities of various cities in the Gulf and the Arab world. However, given that its headquarters and funds are both located in Kuwait and the fact that it has always been led by a Kuwaiti, it is hard not to see ATO as a Kuwaiti organization that has appropriated the Arab identity so as to exercise its influence. ATO is currently affiliated with the Development Fund For Arab Cities, Kuwait; the Arab Urban Development Institute (AUDI), Riyadh; the Arab Towns Organization Awards, Doha; the Environment Center for Arab Cities (ECAT), Dubai; the Arab Forum for Information Systems, Amman; and the Foundation for Arab Historic Cities and Heritage, Tunisia.[26] Of these five affiliates, the first two are mentioned in the 1979 newspaper article around which this paper is structured (lines 105–27 and 128–44 respectively).[27]

Then as now, ATO's clearly stated goal was to maintain the Arabic and Islamic nature of Arab cities (lines 33–36), and it is important to note that in this article as elsewhere, the terms 'Arab' and 'Islamic' are used interchangeably (lines 33–36, 192–93, 188). It should also be noted that what is discussed therein is not the creation of new Arab cities but rather their preservation (lines 34, 187, 193, 250). This resonates with Abu-Lughod's claim that Arab city planners were attempting to recreate the past.[28] Here, the redistribution of the sensible entails the foregrounding and restoration of a past that the article claims to have been erased by capital-oriented development, city growth and external influences from outside of, and disconnected from, the urban context in question (lines 260–73).

Also mentioned in the article (lines 130–31), the Arab Urban Development Institute, which conducts research and training programmes, has an exhaustive archive/library. This library contains publications by municipalities within the Arab

26. Interview with Nuha Eltinay, former director of the Arab Urban Development Institute, 27 April 2020.

27. According to this article, the Development Fund For Arab Cities was created at the instigation of the Head of the Bahrain Municipality Abdullah bin Khalid Al Khalifa with the aim of supporting Arab cities through the provision of loans (lines 112–16). The Arab Urban Development Institute was established to provide professional development enabling recipients to better respond to the needs of their city (lines 143–44).

28. Janet Abu-Lughod, 'The Islamic City'.

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29. Interview with Nuha Eltinay, 27 April 2020. Among those of the institute's archival holdings in which the Arab city's heritage and identity are mentioned, I noted one publication in which the Mosque and the Arab city were discussed but no mention was made of any of the other religious buildings present – another instance where the Arab and Islamic have been seen to intersect.

30. See videos ATO1 and ATO2 hosted on the Arab Towns Organization's YouTube channel, https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC34t191jPRp4TtxmG-CsEhA (accessed 22 November 2021).

31. See Mustafa Dikeç, *Space, Politics and Aesthetics*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015.

region, many of which can no longer be found in the places they were first published.**29**

Although it is denied a political aspect in the article, where it appears under the subtitle *Away from Politics* – a sentiment affirmed by two videos produced by the organization itself, in which it is stated that its apolitical status is why it has been welcomed in all Arab countries (lines 284–311) – the founding of this organization was undoubtedly a political act, at least according to Rancière's definition of what *is* politics.**30**

ATO's own statement in the article that various Arab cities are now members of the directorial boards of international city organizations serves in a subtle way to imply that they have come to wield global influence (lines 291–95), indicating a redistribution of power and a change to the structure of what Rancière calls the police, meaning the system that orders the various networks in society.**31** Moreover, the article then goes on to mention ATO's overtly political stance of actively excluding Zionists from international planning organizations, displaying a strong solidarity with the Palestinian cause (lines 288–306).

In this section of the paper the Arab city may be seen to have emerged, albeit the term remains somewhat ambiguous. I have shown the contested status of the contemporary Arab city as either secular (or aspiring to be so) or inherently Muslim, and discussed some of the ways in which the Arab

Figure 4. Sketch of the League of Arab States [unbuilt], Tunisia. Mohamed Makiya (ca. 1984). Image credit to: Mohamed Makiya Archive, courtesy of Aga Khan Documentation Center, MIT Libraries (AKDC@MIT). https://www.archnet.org/collections/123

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Figure 5. Model of the Arab OAPEC Organization [unbuilt], Kuwait, Mohamed Makiya (ca. 1982–85). Image credit to: Mohamed Makiya Archive, courtesy of Aga Khan Documentation Center, MIT Libraries (AKDC@MIT). https://www.archnet.org/collections/123

Figure 3. Model of the Arab Towns Organization (ATO) [unbuilt], Kuwait, Mohamed Makiya (September 1983). Image credit to: Mohamed Makiya Archive, courtesy of Aga Khan Documentation Center, MIT Libraries (AKDC@MIT). https://www.archnet.org/collections/123

32. Gabriel Rockhill, prelude to Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, (trans. and ed. Gabriel Rockhill), New York: Continuum, 2004.

33. Ibid.

34. See Jacques Rancière, *The Names of History: On the Poetics of Knowledge* (trans. Hassan Melehy), Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1994.

city and its discourses are political – sometimes even when it is claimed that they are not.

What Language Does the City Speak?

Also during this year, the Organization will start from the Arab World as it will organize a scientific symposium in the city of Milan in Italy and the preparations shall be overseen by the Global Cities Institute … The symposium will be devoted to researching traffic and public transport problems in Arab cities, and all studies and lectures will be in the Arabic language (lines 163–70).

In many ways, this insistence on using only Arabic can be seen as part of the self-rediscovery of the Arab city, a reconnection with its pre-colonial identity. In his prelude to Rancière's *The Politics of Aesthetics*, Rockhill explains that he has translated the text based on the 'entire relational system' of the text, up to and including the wider network of Rancière's oeuvre.[32] Rockhill is right to state that text, language and words are not disconnected objects but are rather connected to historical precedents and social conditions.[33] The language we think with influences how we understand and communicate. Each language has its own structure that not only reflects but, for Rancière, also constructs its culture.[34] Thus, communicating in Arabic a form of discourse that is usually discussed in other languages can be seen as a mode of dissent, creating a visible and audible identity and a new poetics of knowledge; perhaps even as liberating the mind from a discursive domination that

unconsciously functions to intimidate other ways of thinking. A written language also has its own visual identity. According to Nada Shabout, the use of Arabic letters and calligraphy has 'provided the means for political and visual unity', including between those of different ethnicities, 'as well as mediation between the sacred and profane (between the desired afterlife and transient life)' and continuity between the past, present and future.[35] In countries where the language was forbidden during colonial occupation, Arabic has become a strong decolonial tool.

Another form of visual language that is present in the Arab city is that of architecture, with all its functional and symbolic meanings.[36] It emerges to reshape the landscape of the city, its streets and the spaces of its civil society, both demos and ethnos. Take for example Mohamed Makiya's unrealised design for ATO's headquarters (figure 8). Free of motifs, the proposed building has a simple white façade with some extrusions. However, arches and a dome are deployed, features (arche)typically associated with Arab city architecture, as if to bridge the universalising simplicity of the modern project with the past of the Arab city. The late architect's son Kanan Makiya labels this, his father's style, as Post-Islamic Classicism.[37] Like many of his generation Mohamed Makiya was politically engaged, and this could have led to his receiving commissions connected to the project of Pan-Arabism (in one image from the 1960s he appears to be giving a speech at the Arab League – see figure 9). Certainly, ATO is not the only organization that adopted a Pan-Arab identity for which Mohamed Makiya proposed projects: he also designed a

35. Nada M. Shabout, 'The Arabic Connection in Articulating North African Modernity in Art', *South Atlantic Quarterly*, vol 109, no. 3, p. 534, 2010.

36. See Umberto Eco, 'Function and Sign: Semiotics of Architecture', *Signs, Symbols and Architecture* (ed. Geoffrey Broadbent, Richard Bunt, Charles Jencks), Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 1980.

37. See Kanan Makiya, *Post-Islamic Classicism: A Visual Essay on the Architecture of Mohamed Makiya,* London: Al Saqi, 1990.

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38. Mohamed Makiya, 'Appendix II: Lecture to Royal Institute of British Architects, 31 January 1984', in Karen Dabrowska, *Mohamed Makiya: A Modern Architect Renewing Islamic Tradition*, London: Saqi Books, 2021.

building for the League of Arab States in Tunis and a headquarters for the Arab Organizations in Kuwait, neither of which were ever built. The architectural model of the latter is white. Edges connect the floor to the roof, wrapping the building to the top and side to side. Its simple façade extrudes inwards to form a shade-giving *liwan*, a transitional covered portal or vestibule connecting the interior to the outside, upon whose walls windows appear in repetitive bays. A repetition of elements continues throughout the building's design. Arches of two distinct types serve to contextualise the building: these are no longer the structural elements they once would have been, but cultural motifs. This is not modernity as a turning away from history, culture, and context. Rather, it is a search for the soul of the city, using elements from the past to produce a contextual identity.

Makiya's (unbuilt) project for the Arab League is another simple building whose modest exterior is without motifs beyond the forms of arches and a dome (see figure 6), though its interior appears more extravagant. Like those of his proposed ATO headquarters, these exterior arches are effectively follies, here for aesthetic reasons. That this is so seems clear to me from an examination of the drawings for this project; no doubt an analysis of his correspondence with the Arab League and his recorded lectures and speeches at the MIT archives would further clarify the issue. In a recently published lecture, Makiya connects the Arab and Islamic aesthetics to environmental and climatic needs, claiming they are inherently more functional, and hence modern.[38]

Like other intellectuals before them, architects such as Hassan Fathy, Rifat Chadirji, and Mohamed Makiya were among those who returned from the West with ideas of modernity that they then sought ways to contextualise. This is clear not only from their works of architecture but even more so from the publications authored by themselves and others that document their projects. In his foreword to Chadirji's *Concepts and Influences Towards a Regionalized International Architecture, 1952–1978*, for example, Robert Venturi reflects on Chadirji's internal struggle between modernity and contextual relevance.[39] Kanan Makiya's *Post-Islamic Classicism: A Visual Essay on the Architecture of Mohamed Makiya* defines his father's work in a similar manner.[40] In relation to forms, by comparing these writings with Hassan Fathy's discussion of his own work in *Architecture for the Poor: an Experiment in Rural Egypt* it becomes clear that whereas Chadirji and Makiya were primarily in search of a visual identity for them, Fathy's main preoccupation was with the processes behind their production, in line with Abu-Lughod's recommendations.[41]

In addition to its political pursuit of unification, the Arab League created a cultural committee aimed at uniting otherwise culturally diverse Arabs through joint cultural activities. This endeavour was most likely viewed by the youthful and enthusiastic as a radical project of liberation and freedom and by political elites as a chance to increase political gains and domination. Although the Arab identity did not entail religious discrimination, it still excluded non-Arab citizens of Arab countries such as the Iranians in Bahrain, the Amazigh in Algeria, the Southern Sudanese in Sudan, and the Nubians in Sudan and Egypt, in ways that manifested in different forms and at different magnitudes. Arab nationalism also produced a new architectural identity, a new sense of what was considered

39. See Robert Venturi's foreword to Rifat Chadirji, *Concepts and Influences Towards a Regionalized International Architecture 1952–1978*, London: Routledge, 1986.

40. Kanan Makiya, *Post-Islamic Classicism*.

41. See Hassan Fathy, *Architecture for the Poor: An Experiment in Rural Egypt*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010; Janet Abu-Lughod, 'The Islamic City'.

Figure 6. Mohamed Makiya giving a speech at the Arab League (ca. 1960s). Image credit to: Mohamed Makiya Archive, courtesy of Aga Khan Documentation Center, MIT Libraries (AKDC@MIT). https://www.archnet.org/collections/123

to be an Arab architecture and, as a result, what could be considered as traditional – this even though, as according to Andraos, the early Arab modernists were not attempting to recreate traditional Arab and/or Islamic architecture but were rather engaged in building functional architecture inspired by the ancient civilisations of their respective countries, as evidenced in the periodicals they produced.[42]

42. Amale Andraos, 'The Arab City'.

The Modern Arab City that Manifested

The design of the city must be compatible with the customs of the citizens, their traditions, environment, religion and needs … and this all gives in the end a special character to the city … But unfortunately, the rapid growth of Arab cities did not consider these issues, especially if we take into account that the technical planners are from foreign companies which are ignorant of our traditions and they also aim to achieve the greatest amount of profit … Unfortunately, this matter is reflected on the reality of our cities that have thus fundamentally lost their personality (lines 256–67).

'The city has lost its character' is the title chosen by the journalist author of this article featuring ATO. Published at a time when the region was soon to find itself subject to a rising Islamic revival and the advancement of political Islam, the article itself seems to be characterised by an urgency to retrieve said character, whose loss it attributes to the foreign companies that were commissioned to design the cities in question. In hindsight, it may also be attributed to increasing globalisation and the rise of capitalism that has infiltrated every aspect of life, motivating architects to build primarily for profit

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Figure 7. Streets named after Arab capitals in Isa Town, Bahrain. The streets are ordered according to their width and length, the largest on the upper left, and the smallest on the lower right.

The Gateway to the town was designed by Mohamed Makiya.
Image credit: Suha Hasan, 2021.

43. Amale Andraos, 'The Arab City'.

rather than to produce change. Andraos writes of architects' 'powerlessness in the face of global capital but also the continuing capacity of buildings to embody ideas, to produce content, to shape context'.[43] So if, in the past, the introduction into the city of a new-old aesthetic was intended to serve a political Pan-Arab project, what is the city communicating today? Does capital, like politics and aesthetics, have a language?

In this paper, I have addressed the rise of a post-modern aesthetic in Arab city architecture and planning by analysing a newspaper article featuring ATO that links to wider issues. I have used the work of Rancière as a conceptual and organizing framework, connecting the rise of urban aesthetics with politics, dissent, and the redistribution of the sensible, leading to the emergence of a new poetics of knowledge. No mere object of study, the city itself can be seen as a subject with the agency to produce a new body of knowledge through the new-found identity it embraced out of a desire for self-ownership and liberation. It is therefore ironic that this project has tended to reproduce Orientalist ideas. More recently it seems to have been diluted by economically motivated development and the rise of nationalism within each country. However, the aesthetic and architectural search for, and reimagination of, the Arab city is an ongoing process in which new moments of dissensus continue to emerge.

The early years after independence led to the production of a new aesthetics that embodied the solidarity of a socialist Pan-Arab movement as well as the political agendas of regional governments. It has been noted that the terms 'Arab' and 'Islamic' are sometimes used interchangeably in this context, although they are *not* identical and can sometimes be discordant with one another. The former is linked to a secular political project that looks forwards to a united Arab future, whilst the latter is connected to a politico-religious project demanding a return to a united Muslim past. When discussing design identities, however, the terms can rightly be conjoined to describe elements of an aesthetics that seeks symbolically to express a place's uniqueness, born in reaction to the colonial times that preceded it and the forms of modernity imposed by colonial institutions.

DOUBLE STANDARD

Lais Myrrha

CICCILLO MATARAZZO PAVILION,
PARQUE DO IBIRAPUERA,
SÃO PAULO BIENAL PAVILION

When I designed *Double Standard* for the 32nd São Paulo Art Biennial, *Incerteza Viva* (Live Uncertainty), I was thinking a lot about how the different cultures, implicit in each of the towers, were valued so unequally. Even after Benjamin, and the new historiography of the École des Annales, and so many other efforts *to brush history against the grain*, the most celebrated and valued cultures continue to be those capable of producing immense and numerous ruins.

There is the example of a people who lived in the Chilean territory in southern Peru, and produced mummies, about two thousand years older than the Egyptians. However, they were a people who left us very few legible traces. Studies say that they were fishermen, whose constructions were possibly more ephemeral, and lived in a society with little or no hierarchy because, it seems, everyone who died was equally mummified. Another very special story I heard from architect Paulo Tavares, who participated in the São Paulo Biennial with me, is how certain indigenous peoples in the Amazon see the forest. They are able to recognize, by the age of the trees, their distribution, the empty spaces between them, and other features that now elude me, signs of past occupations of the land. Where we see only trees and clearings, they see ruins and monuments.

Roland Barthes was right when he wrote in his book *Camara Lucida,* that we have, for some time now (for him since the 19th century), been living an anthropological crisis of death and, I would also add, of love. I will quote his words here:

> (...)the "crisis of death" beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century; for my part I should prefer that instead of constantly relocating the advent of Photography in its social and economic context, we should also inquire as to the anthropological

place of Death and of the new image. For Death must be somewhere in a society; if it is no longer (or less intensely) in religion, it must be elsewhere; perhaps in this image which produces Death while trying to preserve life.

And further on it continues:

> In front of the only photograph in which I find my father and mother together, this couple who I know loved each other, I realize: it is love-as-treasure which is going to disappear forever; for once I am gone, no one will any longer be able to testify to this: nothing will remain but an indifferent nature. (RB)

Perhaps the *indifferent nature* does not exist, perhaps we need to relearn how to look at it and recognize its signs. Perhaps this love, whose disappearance Barthes lamented, is a trace of a dying civilization, a civilization founded on the patrimonialism that the patriarchal nuclear family so well represents and defends. Perhaps, this disappearance is not of love itself, but of the conditions necessary to make it prosper. Perhaps, for this very reason, it is good that it dies, and this does not mean that we will love our children and our parents less, but that we must learn from some peoples the meaning of loving an extended family, and the world it inhabits. We must relearn to love from those who can see trees as monuments to past civilizations.

To learn from these peoples who silently teach us that death, in order to be remembered, does not need to be under a sterile and grandiose slab of stone, nor in photographs, which produces Death while trying to preserve life, it can even be in found tenderness, subtlety, amidst life, in the middle of the verdant forest.

Double Standard, 2016, woody vines, logs, straw,bricks, cement, steel, glass, pipes.

Photo: Pedro Ivo Transfetti courtesy of Fundação Bienal de São Paulo

DOUBLE STANDARD   LAIS MYRRHA

Double Standard, 2016, woody vines, logs, straw,bricks, cement, steel, glass, pipes.

Photo: Pedro Ivo Transfetti courtesy of Fundação Bienal de São Paulo

Double Standard, 2016, woody vines, logs, straw, bricks, cement, steel, glass, pipes.
Photo: Pedro Ivo Transfetti courtesy of Fundação Bienal de São Paulo

THE COLONIAL AFTERLIFE OF ENCROACHMENT

Victoria Ogoegbunam Okoye

ENCROACHMENT IN ACCRA, GHANA

1. Jemima Pierre, *The Predicament of Blackness: Postcolonial Ghana and the Politics of Race*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013.

2. Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016; Saidiya Hartman, *Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route*, New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007.

3. Wangui Kimari, 'The Story of a Pump: Life, Death and Afterlives within an Urban Planning of "Divide and Rule" in Nairobi, Kenya', *Urban Geography*, vol. 42, no. 2, pp. 141–160, 2019, https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2019.1706938 (accessed 7 November 2021);

Hamza Moshood, 'Colonialism Walks into a Chop Bar', *Popula*, 27 September 2019, https://popula.com/2019/09/27/colonialism-walks-into-a-chop-bar/ (accessed 7 November 2021).

How does coloniality *live on* in everyday urban space, practice and design?

Working through the concept of 'encroachment', I presence the colonial violence still produced and reproduced in contemporary African urban space and spatial relations. I locate my thinking in Accra, Ghana, where I have lived, built relations and experiences, and worked on urban planning and design, policy and community research. I locate myself as an African diasporan, born in the settler-colonial United States, having lived in post-independent Ghana, and now living in the post-imperial UK. These movements and stays shape my perception of the relations and realities of coloniality and inform my navigation of 'encroachment' as a concept in the planning and design of urban space. Locating myself through these traversals leads me to the work of Black scholars who link the projects of slavery and colonialism,[1] and frame these projects' continued impacts as an '*afterlife*' – reverberations that continue to structure everyday life, Black lives and embodied experiences.[2] These reverberations persist, including through space in African locales.[3] I draw upon this lineage of thought in order to attend to coloniality as (not dead and gone but rather) kept *alive* and enduring through the ways in which we conceptualise, design and speak of space in post-independent Accra.

'Before the British [colonial administration] started building infrastructure, nobody owned land,' says Nat Nuno Amarteifio, former mayor of Accra, to Larry Aminu, Fatimatu Mutari, Mustapha Adamu and me in our research interview. It is a conversation informing our project on children and community space in the Nima neighbourhood of Accra. Amarteifio begins from deep within the city's history, and he makes discernible for us the entwined trajectories between migrations, British colonialism, territory and urban change. He continues: 'You used it [land] for whatever you needed – to farm, to house your family. Ownership was very fluid, it belonged to the whole group.'

It is the thirteenth century when the Ga people form Accra as a coastal settlement comprised of seven residential quarters, where they establish land customs and relations in the ways Amarteifio describes above.[4] In each quarter, members manage their own coastal lands alongside 'hunters' lands', inland farming villages originally inhabited by the descendants of hunters' groups and families then living in the settlement. The Ga people shape spatial access, use and inhabitation through membership to a particular quarter and within the larger society. Within a quarter, members openly farm on and cultivate unoccupied lands, and they farm or construct their homes on a specific land plot with permission from the relevant custodian, such as the family head. To farm or construct a home in another quarter, a Ga member seeks permission from recognised local authorities, such as the chief priest or elder. With permission of a political leader, even non-Ga residents, both subjects and strangers, have limited rights to land usage and can access leftover unused lands for hunting, fishing, farming and building their homes. This multidimensional socio-spatial organisation orients around custodianship and permissions,

4. Ato Quayson, *Oxford Street, Accra: City Life and the Itineraries of Transnationalism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014.

5. Naaborko Sackeyfio, 'The Politics of Land and Urban Space in Colonial Accra', *History in Africa*, vol. 39, 2012, pp. 293–329.

6. *terra nullius*, 'nobody's land', exploited by the British colonizers to justify their occupation of territories; *tabula rasa*, 'clean slate'.

relations, and usage.[5] It creates flexible and 'fluid' uses of land – as per the former mayor's description – held not by a single individual, but through the group.

When the British colonize the settlement and surrounding territories (formally, from 1874–1957), they produce the 'Gold Coast' through subjugating and joining together diverse peoples and their territories into a single colony. They position Accra as colonial capital, drawing it into the global landscape of British empire. Accra's land emerges as a principle asset to the colonial administration, which stakes its dominance through multiple violences. The spatial violence of colonialism lies in its practices of unseating Indigenous uses and relations, through the epistemic, physical and material violences of devaluing and dismissing Indigenous land claims, spatial relations and ways of living: the principles of *terra nullius* and *tabula rasa*;[6] the demolition of and claim to territory; then the work of colonial architects and planners to produce spatial and urban transformations, grounded in modernist visions and projecting westernised concepts, designs and control onto these peoples and their lands. The colonial administration transforms land through the expropriative forces of seizure, design and planning, along with, as Amarteifio points out, infrastructure: the roads, streets, corridors, ports and railways necessary for colonial extraction and globalisation. These are predicated on and entangled with land ordinances and regulations – laws created by the colonial authority to control the use of land and space in everyday life, formalising the dispossession and curtailment of Indigenous custodianship and spatiality, in order to transplant a western concept of property, with enduring ramifications.

The Towns Ordinance of 1892, predicated on 'better regulating towns and promoting the public health', introduces the concept of encroachment on streets:

> It shall not be lawful without the permission of the Governor to erect any house, building, wall or fence upon or adjoining any street; nor to extend, make any additions to or bring forward any house, building wall or fence adjoining any street, or any part or outbuilding of any such house or building, so as to encroach upon any street … nor to stop up, divert, enclose, or permanently obstruct, or cultivate, or otherwise turn to any private use, any street or any part thereof.

I look up the term 'encroachment' in the Oxford English dictionary:

> Noun: An intrusion on a person's territory, rights. A gradual advance beyond usual or acceptable limits.

The word draws its lineage from British domestic concerns and makes boundaries, enacts property, ownership.

The ordinance and the term 'encroachment' disregard and dismiss pre-existing Ga authority, spatial usage, customs and modes of conduct, and vest authority and power with colonial administrative authorities, specifically the Public Works Department. From the acquisition of lands, to the construction and demolition of buildings, to the regulation, maintenance and repair of streets, walls and fences, and even the maintenance of unbuilt spaces, the Public Works Department cedes numerous powers from Indigenous authorities in order to produce westernised orientations to space, and with the power of threats, fines and punishment to compel the obedience of

7. Public Records and Archives Administration Department, Ministry of Work file no. DGD 172, p. 58A, 19989/20, 'Accra – Nima Unauthorised Building on Crown Lands', 'Squatting on Crown Land', 31 July 1954, RG3/5/1875.

colonial subjects. This regulation introduces the concept of encroachment in order to re-conceptualise spatial relations, resulting in colonial administrative processes that dispossess Indigenous ways of using space, relating to space, dwelling, building and being in space.

Today, I notice this concept that infiltrates understandings of space and continues its hold, displacing Indigenous spatial relations and practices. Encroachment surfaces in contemporary planning discourses and pronouncements. In turn, residents' claims to and use of urban spaces in ways that would align with precolonial modes of spatial usage are understood as unauthorised developments, as diversions, or as misuses of space:

In Nima, residents self-organised '78 buildings … unlawfully constructed on Crown land', forming an 'unauthorised development' and creating a 'slum' neighbourhood, which 'represent[ed] a flagrant trespass on Government's property, and a defiance of the [Accra Town] Council's Building Regulations and Town Planning restrictions.'[7]

In the city's 1958 strategic plan, prepared by British architects and signed off by the independent country of Ghana's first president, Kwame Nkrumah, this vision continues. The plan laments how the myriad self-organised uses of space take away from the 'modern' character of the postcolonial city shaped through colonial planning and design:

Vehicle drivers claim the edges of main roads to park their vehicles in the outer parts of town.

Young boys transform open lands and fields through play into their own 'makeshift' football pitches.

Residents construct their own 'slum housing' around urban commercial zones and large workshops.

Local laborers assemble around bus repair depots, starting up makeshift activities and other 'non-conforming uses' around markets and lorry parks, and street vendors and hawkers' trading activities as 'unofficial overflow' from the government-built markets onto the adjacent streets and throughout the central commercial area.[8]

8. B.A.W. Trevallion and Alan G. Hood, under the direction of W.H. Barrett, *Accra: A Plan for the Town. The Report for the Minister of Housing*, Town and Country Planning Division of the Ministry of Housing, Accra: Government Printer, 1958: 23, 46, 58, http://mci.ei.columbia.edu/mci/files/2013/03/Accra-Town-Plan-1958.pdf.

In these and other ways, residents have continued to claim urban spaces for their own livelihood, shelter, social and recreational needs, thinking and doing outside of top-down colonial and post-independent design schemes in everyday life. In response, encroachment continually designates these activities as problematic diversions from the plan and the dominant modern imaginary for the city. This framing of encroaching activities weaves its way into local conversations, with each utterance of the 'modern' extending the life of coloniality and its hold on contemporary time, place, and being in space.

My research partners and I also interview a former MP, Hon. Shareau Tajudeen, who represented the Nima neighbourhood for nearly two decades. As we sit in the internal courtyard of his house, which sits within a compound, two male workers mix concrete into bricks to build an extension to

9. *Modern Ghana*, 'AMA demolishes illegal structures as temporary "fishing bay" in Jamestown', 16 July 2021, https://www.modernghana.com/news/1093637/ama-demolishes-illegal-structures-at-temporary.html (accessed 13 September 2021).

the multigenerational family home. Tajudeen uses this same concept of encroachment to frame for us the multiple ways in which residents of Nima continue to claim spaces across the neighbourhood: 'People are encroaching, encroachment is too high,' he tells us. 'So, any small space, somebody will claim it.' It is February 2019, and his statement describes residents' practices of building and extending their homes for residential activities, and setting up kiosks and containers for commercial and money-earning activities, not only in Nima but throughout the city. These extensions, constructions and occupancies even take place in the *lungus* (alleyways), on pavements, and in any remaining open spaces, in an increasingly tight and built-up neighbourhood, and in ways that can also block or prevent the movement of vehicles and pedestrians.

Throughout the city of Accra too, encroachment constantly resurfaces. In Jamestown, the historic neighbourhood where the colonial government first set up its port, business and trading, and administrative activities, media sources report Accra Metropolitan Assembly's (AMA) execution of:

'demolition exercises' to tear down fisherfolks' 'wooden shacks serving as abodes … constructed washrooms and kiosks among others', as a means to 'police the site to prevent encroachment', which the government pegs as 'unauthorized structures [that] had sprung up at the site contrary to the agreed plan.'[9]

At the Spintex Road, similarly 'unauthorized' structures are 'demolished because the owners

Victoria Okoye, 2019. Cement structure built in neighbourhood pathway. Painted text reads 'FRIED RICE AND INDOMIE FOR THE ROAD' with seller's mobile number. Nima, Accra, Ghana.

10. Edna Agnes Boakye, 'Structures pulled down over encroachment on KIA buffer zone; contractor arrested', *Citi Newsroom*, 14 June 2021, https://citinewsroom.com/2021/06/spintex-structures-pulled-down-over-encroachment-on-kia-buffer-zone-contractor-arrested/ (accessed 13 September 2021).

11. Salomey Appiah, 'AMA Clears Squarters on Achimota School Land', *Graphic Online*, 19 November 2015, https://www.graphic.com.gh/news/general-news/ama-clears-squarters-on-achimota-school-land.html (accessed 13 September 2021).

12. Epifania Amoo-Adare, 'Who Rules the Waves? A Critical Reading of (An) Other-Ed Modern Future', paper presented at the conference, 'Postcolonial Oceans: Contradictions and Heterogeneities in the Epistemes of Salt Water Joint Annual Conference of GAPS and IACPL', May 2019, University of Bremen.

13. Lena Fält, 'From Shacks to Skyscrapers: Multiple Spatial Rationalities and Urban Transformation in Accra, Ghana', *Urban Forum*, vol. 27, no. 4, 2016, pp. 465–86; Tom Gillespie, 'Accumulation by Urban Dispossession: Struggles over Urban Space in Accra, Ghana', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 41, no. 1, 2016, pp. 66–77.

had encroached on a buffer zone for the Kotoka International Airport.'[10]

In the Achimota School grounds, the AMA demolishes 'illegal structures … to clear squatters off the school's property' and to 'pave the way for the fencing of the school's land, which has been encroached upon by churches, slum dwellers, and estate developers.'[11]

These instances form part of a wide and long historical trajectory in which government authorities – colonial and post-independent – continue to invoke this colonial term and its concomitant processes to demolish shelters, livelihoods and other material building blocks of place that they deem 'informal' and 'illegal' encroachments. In Accra, these violent devaluations, dismissals and demolitions form the colonial blueprint in a path-dependent pattern upon which the dominant and mainstream visions and narratives of Ghana's modernity are modelled. These visions are tightly tied to a 'neo-colonial modernity' grounded in violent colonial histories and practices.[12]

exercises in decongestion, government forces raze, clear and displace individuals, materials and practices, reproducing precarity for already marginalised publics in order to pave the way for official urban visions.[13] As this concept continues to shape dominant planning and everyday imaginations, it illustrates how coloniality *lives on*, pervading spatial practice and shaping constructions of what is authorised or non-authorised usage of urban space today, in order to produce a 'modern' African city.

These framings echo the long histories of locating such practices of taking space as out-of-place, and demonstrate the normalisation of the colonial concept of encroachment. Through

ARCHITECTURAL DEMODERNIZA-TION AS CRITICAL PEDAGOGY: PATHWAYS FOR UNDOING COLONIAL FASCIST ARCHI-TECTURAL LEGACIES IN SICILY

Emilio Distretti and **Alessandro Petti**

BORGO ~~RIZZA~~

1. Danilo Dolci, *Banditi a Partinico* [1956], Palermo: Sellerio Editore, 2009.

2. Neelam Srivastava, *Italian Colonialism and Resistances to Empire, 1930–1970*, London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2018, p. 2.

The Southern question

In 1952, Danilo Dolci, a young architect living and working in industrial Milan, decided to leave the North – along with its dreams for Italy's economic boom and rapid modernization – behind, and move to Sicily. When he arrived, as he describes in his book *Banditi a Partinico* (The Outlaws of Partinico,1956), he found vast swathes of rural land brutally scarred by the war, trapped in a systematic spiral of poverty, malnutrition and anomie. After twenty years of authoritarian rule, Italy's newly created democratic republic preserved the 'civilising' ethos established by the fascist regime, to develop and modernize Sicily. The effect of these plans was not to bridge the gap with the richer North, but rather, to usher in a slow and prolonged repression of the marginalised poor in the South. In his book, as well as in many other accounts, Dolci collected the testimonies of people in Partinico and Borgo di Trappeto near Trapani, western Sicily.[1] Living on the margins of society, they were rural labourers, unemployed fishermen, convicted criminals, prostitutes, widows and orphans – those who, in the aftermath of fascism, found themselves crushed by state violence and corruption, by the exploitation of local notables and landowners, and the growing power of the Mafia.

Dolci's activism, which consisted of campaigns and struggles with local communities and popular committees aimed at returning dignity to their villages, often resulted in confrontations with the state apparatus. Modernization, in this context, relied on a carceral approach of criminalisation, policing and imprisonment, as a form of domestication of the underprivileged. On the one hand, the South was urged to become like the North, yet on the other, the region was thrown further into social decay, which only accelerated its isolation from the rest of the country.

The radical economic and social divide between Italy's North and South has deep roots in national history and in the colonial/modern paradigm. From 1922, Antonio Gramsci branded this divide as evidence of how fascism exploited the subaltern classes via the Italian northern elites and their capital. Identifying a connection with Italy's colonisation abroad, Gramsci read the exploitation of poverty and migrant labour in the colonial enterprise as one of 'the wealthy North extracting maximum economic advantage out of the impoverished South'.[2] Since the beginning of the colonisation of Libya in 1911, Italian nationalist movements had been selling the dream of a settler colonial/modern project that would benefit the underprivileged masses of southern rural laborers.

The South of Italy was already considered an internal colony in need of modernization. This set the premise of what Gramsci called Italy's 'Southern question', with the southern subalterns being excluded from the wider class struggle and pushed to migrate towards the colonies and elsewhere.[3] By deprovincialising 'the Southern question' and connecting it to the colonial question, Gramsci showed that the struggle against racialised and class-based segregation meant thinking beyond colonially imposed geographies and the divide between North and South, cities and countryside, urban labourers and peasants.

Gramsci's gaze from the South can help us to visualise and spatialise the global question of colonial conquest and exploitation, and its legacy of an archipelago of colonies scattered across the North/South divide. Written in the early 1920s but left incomplete, Gramsci's *The Southern Question*

3. Antonio Gramsci, *The Southern Question*, Ontario: Guernica Editions, 2015.

anticipated the *colonizzazione interna* (internal colonization) of fascism, motivated by a capital-driven campaign for reclaiming arable land that mainly effected Italy's rural South. Through a synthesis of monumentalism, technological development and industrial planning, the fascist regime planned designs for urban and non-urban reclamation, in order to inaugurate a new style of living and to celebrate the fascist settler. This programme was launched in continuation of Italy's settler colonial ventures in Africa.

Two paths meet under the roof of the same project – that of modernization.

Architectural colonial modernism

Architecture has always played a crucial role in representing the rationality of modernity, with all its hierarchies and fascist ramifications. In the Italian context, this meant a polymorphous and dispersed architecture of occupation – new settlements, redrawn agricultural plots and coerced migration – which was arranged and constructed according to modern zoning principles and a belief in the existence of a *tabula rasa*. As was the case with architectural modernism on a wider scale, this was implemented through segregation and erasure, under the principle that those deemed as non-modern should be modernized or upgraded to reach higher stages of civilisation. The separation in the African colonies of white settler enclaves from Indigenous inhabitants was mirrored in the separation between urban and rural laborers in the Italian South. These were yet another manifestation of the European colonial/modern project, which for centuries has divided the world into different races, classes and nations, constructing its identity in opposition to 'other' ways of life, considered 'traditional', or worse, 'backwards'. This relation, as unpacked

by decolonial theories and practices, is at the core of the European modernity complex – a construct of differentiations from other cultures, which depends upon colonial hegemony.

Taking the decolonial question to the shores of Europe today means recognising all those segregations that also continue to be perpetuated across the Northern Hemisphere, and that are the product of the unfinished modern and modernist project. Foregrounding the impact of the decolonial question in Europe calls for us to read it within the wider question of the 'de-modern', beyond colonially imposed geographical divides between North and South. We define 'demodernization' as a condition that wants to undo the rationality of zoning and compartmentalisation enforced by colonial modern architecture, territorialisation and urbanism. Bearing in mind what we have learned from Dolci and Gramsci, we will explain demodernization through architectural heritage; specifically, from the context of Sicily – the internal 'civilisational' front of the Italian fascist project.

Sicily's fascist colonial settlements

In 1940, the Italian fascist regime founded the *Ente di Colonizzazione del Latifondo Siciliano* (ECLS, Entity for the Colonization of the Sicilian Latifondo),[4] following the model of the *Ente di Colonizzazione della Libia* and of colonial urban planning in Eritrea and Ethiopia. The entity was created to

4. The *Ente di Colonizzazione* is often translated into English as 'agency' or 'body'. Here we suggest 'entity' as an alternative option. The Latin origin of 'entity' from medieval Christian theology suggests a spiritual dimension; namely, a formal, absolute and immanent presence that absorbs, encompasses and supersedes the individual sphere. Later secularised into a juridical body, the *ente* indicates institutions or legal bodies that vouch for supra-individual interests. In our translation, 'entity' is a presence in itself, which can manifest equally as supernatural or immanent and bodily or material.

5. Joshua Samuels, 'Difficult Heritage: Coming "to Terms" with Sicily's Fascist Past', in *Heritage Keywords, Rhetoric and Redescription in Cultural Heritage* (ed. K. Lafrenz Samuels and T. Rico), Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2015.

reform the *latifondo*, the predominant agricultural system in southern Italy for centuries. This consisted of large estates and agricultural plots owned by noble, mostly absentee, landlords. Living far from their holdings, these landowners used local middlemen and hired thugs to sublet to local peasants and farmers who needed plots of land for self-sustenance.[5] Fascism sought to transform this unproductive, outdated and exploitative system, forcing a wave of modernization. From 1940 to 1943, the *Ente* built more than 2,000 homesteads and completed eight settlements in Sicily. These replicated the structures and planimetries that were built throughout the 1930s in the earlier *bonifica integrale* (land reclamation) of the Pontine Marshes near Rome, in Libya and in the Horn of Africa; the same mix of piazzas, schools, churches, villas, leisure centres, monuments, and a Casa del Fascio (fascist party headquarters). In the name of imperial geographical unity, from the 'centre' to the 'periphery', many of the villages built in Sicily were named after fascist 'martyrs', soldiers and settlers who had died in the overseas colonies. For example, Borgo Bonsignore was named after a *carabinieri* (military officer) who died in the Battle of Gunu Gadu in 1936, and Borgo Fazio and Borgo Giuliano after Italian settlers killed by freedom fighters in occupied Ethiopia.

The reform of the *latifondo* also sought to implement a larger strategy of oppression of political dissent in Italy. The construction of homesteads in the Sicilian countryside and the development of the land was accompanied by the state-driven migration of northern labourers, which also served the fascist regime as a form of social surveillance. The fascists wanted to displace and transform thousands of rural laborers from

the North – who could otherwise potentially form a stronghold of dissent against the regime – into compliant settlers.[6] Simultaneously, and to complete the colonizing circle, many southern agricultural workers were sent to coastal Libya and the Horn of Africa to themselves become new settlers, at the expense of Indigenous populations.

All the Sicilian settlements were designed following rationalist principles to express the same political and social imperatives. Closed communities like the Pontine settlements were 'geometrically closed in the urban layout and administratively closed to farmers, workmen, and outside visitors as well'.[7] With the vision of turning waged agrarian laborers into small landowners, these *borghi* were typologically designed as similar to medieval city enclaves, which excluded those from the lower orders.

These patterns of spatial separation and social exclusion were, unsurprisingly, followed by the racialisation of the Italian southerners. Referring to a bestiary, the propaganda journal *Civiltà Fascista* (Fascist Civilisation) described the Pontine Marshes as similar to 'certain zones of Africa and America', 'a totally wild region' whose inhabitants were 'desperate creatures living as wild animals'.[8] Mussolini's regime explicitly presented this model of modernization, cultivation and drainage to the Italian public as a form of warfare. The promise of arable land and reclaimed marshes shaped an epic narrative which depicted swamps and the 'unutilised' countryside as the

6. Maria Rosa Protasi and Eugenio Sonnino, '*Politiche di popolamento: colonizzazione interna e colonizzazione demografica nell'Italia liberale e fascista*', *Popolazione e Storia*, vol. 4, no. 1, 2003, pp. 91–138.

7. Diane Y. Ghirardo, 'Italian Architects and Fascist Politics: An Evaluation of the Rationalist's Role in Regime Building', *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, vol. 39, no. 2, 1980, p. 124.

8. Mario M. Morandi, 'L'introduzione all'Agro Pontino', *Civiltà Fascista*, vol. II, 1935, pp. 1009–10. Translation by the authors.

9. The *Ente* in Libya was only formally abolished in 1961, ten years after Libya's independence, while the ECLS was reformed in 1950 and renamed the *Ente per la Riforma Agraria in Sicilia* (Body for Sicilian Agrarian Reform). This was followed by the creation of a new institution, the *Ente di Sviluppo Agricolo* (Body for Agricultural Development, ESA) in 1965.

battlefield where bare nature – and its 'backward inhabitants' – was the enemy to be tamed and transformed.

However, despite the fanfare of the regime, both the projects of settler colonialism in Africa and the plans for social engineering and modernization in the South of Italy were short-lived. As the war ended, Italy 'lost' its colonies and the many *Ente* were gradually reformed or shut down.[9] While most of the New Towns in the Pontine region developed into urban centres, most of the fascist villages built in rural Sicily were meanwhile abandoned to a slow decay.

Although that populationist model of modernization failed, the Sicilian countryside stayed at the centre of the Italian demographic question for decades to come. Since the 1960s, these territories have experienced a completely different kind of migration to that envisaged by the fascist regime. Local youth have fled unemployment in huge numbers, migrating to the North of Italy and abroad. With the end of the Second World War and the colonies' return to independence, it was an era of reversed postcolonial migration: no longer white European settlers moving southwards/eastwards, but rather a circulatory movement of people flowing in other directions, with those now freed from colonial oppression taking up the possibility to move globally. Since then, a large part of Sicily's agrarian sector has relied heavily on seasonal migrant labour from the Southern Hemisphere and, more recently, from Eastern Europe. Too often trapped in the exploitative and racist system of the Italian labour market, most migrants working in areas of intensive agriculture – in various Sicilian provinces near the towns of Cassibile, Vittoria, Campobello di Mazara,

Caltanissetta and Paternò – have been forced out of cities and public life. They live isolated from the local population, socially segregated in tent cities or rural slums, and without basic services such as access to water and sanitation.

As such, rural Sicily – as well as vast swathes of southern Italy – remain stigmatised as 'insalubrious' spaces, conceived of in the public imagination as 'other', 'dangerous' and 'backward'. From the time of the fascist new settlements to the informal rural slums populated by migrants in the present, much of the Sicilian countryside epitomises a very modern trope: that the South is considered to be in dire need of modernization. The rural world is seen to constitute an empty space as the urban centres are unable to deal with the social, economic, political and racial conflicts and inequalities that have been (and continue to be) produced through the North/South divides. This was the case at the time of fascist state-driven internal migration and overseas settler colonial projects. And it still holds true for the treatment of migrants from the ex-colonies, and their attempted resettlement on Italian land today.

Since 2007, Sicily's right-wing regional and municipal governments have tried repeatedly to attain public funding for the restoration of the fascist settlements. While this program has been promoted as a nostalgic celebration of the fascist past, in the last decade, some municipalities have also secured EU funding for architectural restoration under the guise of creating 'hubs' for unhoused and stranded migrants and refugees. None of these projects have ever materialised, although EU money has financed the restoration of what now look like clean, empty buildings. These plans for renovation and rehousing echo Italy's deepest populationist anxieties, which are concerned with managing and resettling 'other' people considered 'in excess'. While the ECLS was originally designed to implement agrarian reforms and enable a flow of migration

from the north of the country, this time, the Sicilian villages were seen as instrumental to govern unwanted migrants, via forced settlement and (an illusion of) hospitality. This reinforces a typical modern hierarchical relationship between North and South, and with that, exploitative metropolitan presumptions over the rural world.

The Entity of Decolonization

To imagine a counter-narrative about Sicily's, and Italy's, fascist heritage, we presented an installation for the 2020 Quadriennale d'arte – FUORI, as a Decolonizing Architecture Art Research (DAAR) project. This was held at the Palazzo delle Esposizioni in Rome, the venue of the *Prima mostra internazionale d'arte coloniale* (First International Exhibition of Colonial Art, 1931), as well as other propaganda exhibitions curated by the fascist regime. The installation aims to critically rethink the rural towns built by the ECLS. It marks the beginning of a longer-term collaborative project, the *Ente di Decolonizzazione* or Entity of Decolonization, which is conceived as a transformative process in history-telling. The installation builds on a photographic dossier of documentation produced by Luca Capuano, which reactivates a network of built heritage that is at risk of decay, abandonment and being forgotten. With the will to find new perspectives from which to consider and deconstruct the legacies of colonialism and fascism, the installation thinks beyond the perimeters of the fascist-built settlements to the different forms of segregations and division they represent. It moves from these contested spaces towards a process of reconstitution of the social, cultural and intimate fabrics that have been broken by modern splits and bifurcations. The project is about letting certain stories and subjectivities be reborn and reaffirmed, in line with Walter D. Mignolo's statement that 're-existing means using
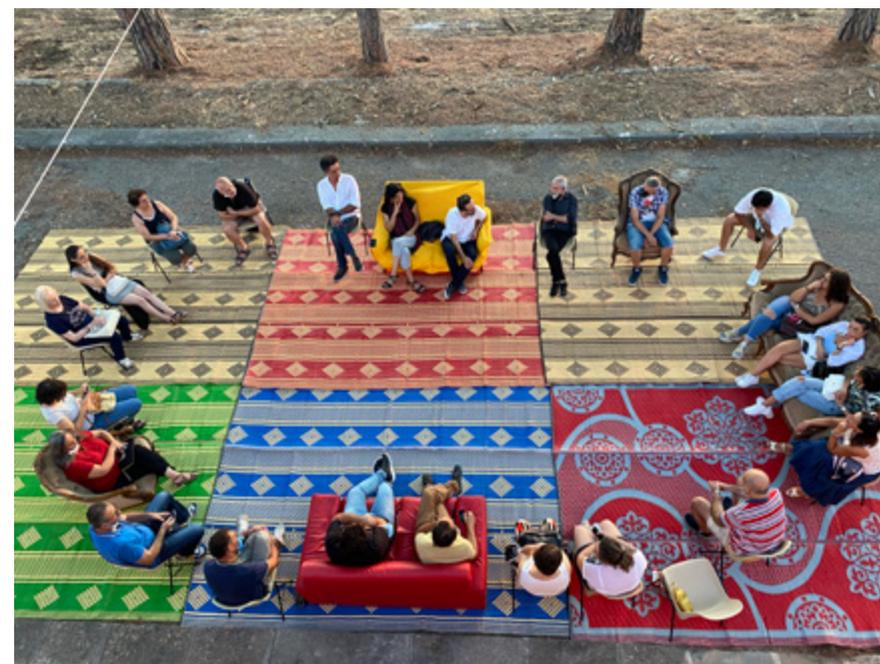
Difficult Heritage Summer School in Borgo Rizza, Carlentini, Sicily – Instants
Credits: by courtesy of Sara Pellegrini, 2021

Difficult Heritage Summer School in Borgo ~~Rizza~~, Carlentini, Sicily – Instants
Credits: by courtesy of Sara Pellegrini, 2021

the imaginary of modernity rather than being used by it. Being used by modernity means that coloniality operates upon you, controls you, forms your emotions, your subjectivity, your desires. Delinking entails a shift towards using instead of being used.'[10] The Entity of Decolonization is a fluid and permanent process, that seeks perpetual manifestations in architectural heritage, art practice and critical pedagogy. The Entity exists to actively question and contest the modernist structures under which we continue to live.

In Borgo ~~Rizza~~, one of the eight villages built by the *Ente*, we launched the Difficult Heritage Summer School – a space for critical pedagogy and discussions around practices of reappropriation and re-narrativisation of the spaces and symbols of colonialism and fascism.[11] Given that the villages were built to symbolise fascist ideology, how far is it possible to subvert their founding principles? How to reuse these villages, built to celebrate fascist martyrs and settlers in the colonial wars in Africa? How to transform them into antidotes to fascism?

Borgo ~~Rizza~~ was built in 1940 by the architect Pietro Gramignani on a piece of land previously expropriated by the ECLS from the Caficis, a local family of landowners. It exhibits a mixed architectural style of rationalism and neoclassical monumentalism. The settlement is formed out of a perimeter of buildings around a central protected and secured piazza that was also the main access to the village. The main edifices representing temporal power (the fascist party, the ECLS,

10. Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine E. Walsh, *On Decoloniality: Concepts, Analytics, Praxis*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2018, p. 147.

11. The Summer School is a collaborative project between DAAS - Decolonizing Architecture Advanced Studies at the Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm, the Critical Urbanisms program at the University of Basel, and the municipality and local community of Carlentini, Sicily.

the military and the school) and spiritual power (the church) surround the centre of the piazza. To display the undisputed authority of the regime, the Casa del Fascio took centre stage. The village is surrounded on all sides by eucalyptus trees planted by the ECLS and the settlers. The planting of eucalyptus, often to the detriment of indigenous trees, was a hallmark of settler colonialism in Libya and the Horn of Africa, dubiously justified because their extensive roots dry out swamps and so were said to reduce risks of malaria.

With the end of the Second World War, Borgo Rizza, along with all the other Sicilian settlements, went through rapid decay and decline. It first became a military outpost, before being temporarily abandoned in the war's aftermath. In 1975, the ownership and management of the cluster of buildings comprising the village was officially transferred to the municipality of Carlentini, which has since made several attempts to revive it. In 2006, the edifices of the *Ente di Colonizzazione* and the post office were rehabilitated with the intent of creating a garden centre amid the lush vegetation. However, the garden centre was never realised, while the buildings and the rest of the settlement remain empty.

Yet despite the village's depopulation, over the years the wider community of Carlentini have found an informal way to reuse the settlement's spaces. The void of the piazza, left empty since the fall of fascism, became a natural spot for socialising. The piazza was originally designed by the ECLS for party gatherings and to convey order and hierarchy to the local population. But many locals remember a time, in the early 1980s, before the advent of air-conditioned malls that offered new leisure spaces to those living in peri-urban and rural areas, when people would gather in the piazza for fresh air amid summer heatwaves. The summer school builds on these memories, to return the piazza to its full public

function and reinvent it as a place for both hospitality and critical pedagogy.

Let's not forget that the village was first used as a pedagogical tool in the hands of the regime. The school building was built by the ECLS and was the key institution to reflect the principles of neo-idealism promoted by the fascist and neo-Hegelian philosophers Giovanni Gentile and Giuseppe Lombardo Radice. Radice was a pedagogue and theoretician who contributed significantly to the fascist reforms of the Italian school system in the 1930s. Under the influence of Gentile, his pedagogy celebrated the modern principle of a transcendental knowledge that is never individual but rather embodied by society, its culture, the party, the state and the nation. In the fascist ideal, the classroom was designed to be the space where students would strive to transcend themselves through acquired knowledge. A fascist education was meant to make pupils merge with the 'universal' embodied by the teacher, de facto the carrier of fascist national values. In relation to the countryside context, the role of pedagogy was to glorify the value of rurality as opposed to the decadence wrought by liberal bourgeois cultures and urban lifestyles. The social order of fascism revolved around this opposition, grounded in the alienation of the subaltern from social and political life, via the splitting of the urban and rural working class, the celebration of masculinity and patriarchy, and the traditionalist nuclear family of settlers.

Against this historical background, our summer school wants to inspire a spatial, architectural and political divorce from this past. We want to engage with decolonial pedagogies and encourage others to do the same, towards an epistemic reorganisation of the building's architecture. In this, we share the assertion of Danilo Dolci, given in relation to the example of elementary schools built in the fascist era, of the necessity for

12. Giuseppe Casarrubea, '*Danilo Dolci: sul filo della memoria*', *Pratica della Libertà*, no. 7, July–September 1998, p. 16. Translation by the authors.

a liberation from the physical and mental cages erected by fascism:

These seemed designed (and to a large extent their principles and legacies are still felt today) to let young individuals get lost from an early age. So that they would lose the sense of their own existence, by feeling the heavy weight of the institution that dominates them. These buildings were specifically made to prevent children from looking out, to make them feel like grains of sand, dispersed in these grey, empty, boundless spaces.[12]

This is the mode of demodernization we seek in this project: to come to terms with, confront, and deactivate the tools and symbols of modern fascist colonization and authoritarian ideologies, pedagogy and urbanism. It is an attempt to fix the social fabric that fascism broke, to heal the histories of spatial, social and political isolation in which the village originates. Further, it is an attempt to heal pedagogy itself, from within a space first created as the pedagogical hammer in the hands of the regime's propagandists.

This means that when we look at the forms of this rationalist architecture, we do not feel any aesthetic pleasure in or satisfaction with the original version. This suggests the need to imagine forms of public preservation outside of the idea of saving the village via restoration, which would limit the intervention to returning the buildings to their 'authentic' rationalist design. Instead, the school wants to introduce the public to alternative modes of heritage-making.

Architectural demodernization
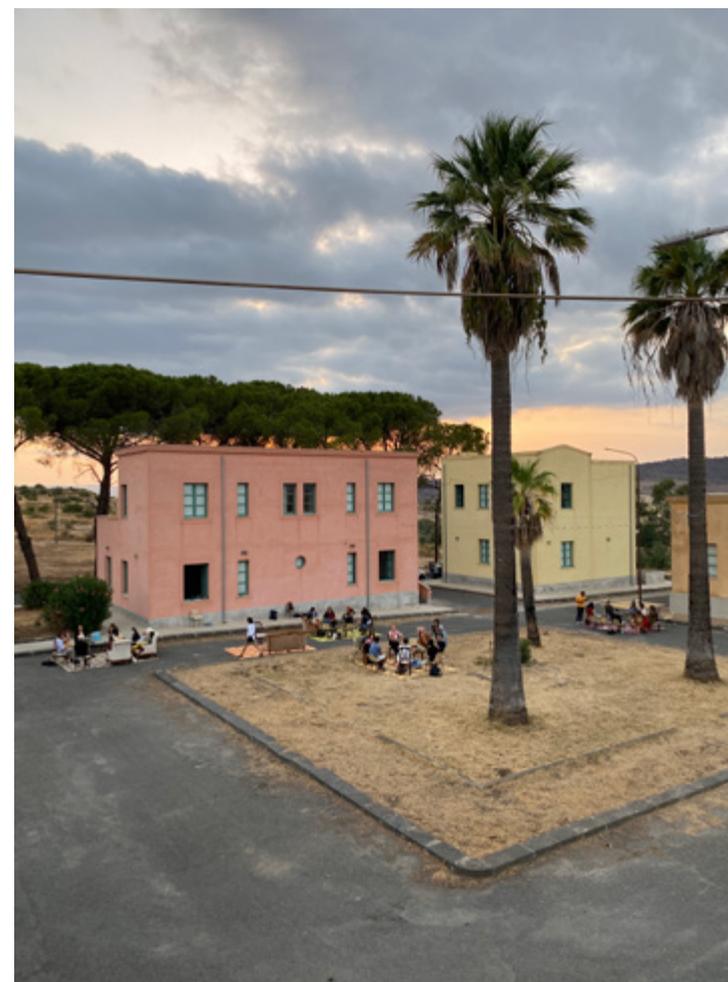
Difficult Heritage Summer School in Borgo Rizza, Carlentini, Sicily – Instants
Credits: by courtesy of Sara Pellegrini, 2021

Difficult Heritage Summer School in Borgo Rizza, Carlentini, Sicily – Instants
Credits: by courtesy of Jens Haendeler, 2021

In the epoch in which we write and speak from the southern shores of Europe, the entanglement of demodernization with decolonization is not a given, and certainly does not imply an equation. While decolonization originates in – and is only genealogically possible as the outcome of – *anti-colonialist* struggles and liberation movements from imperial theft and yoke, demodernization does not relate to *anti-modernism*, which was an expression of reactionary, anti-technological and nationalist sentiment, stirred at the verge of Europe's liberal collapse in the interwar period. As Dolci explained for the Italian and Sicilian context, there is no shelter to be found in any anachronistic escape to the (unreal and fictional) splendours of the past. Or, following Gramsci's refusal to believe that the Italian South would find the solutions to its problems through *meridionalism*, a form of southern identitarian and essentialist regionalism, which further detaches 'the Southern question' from possible alliances with the North.

Demodernization does not mean eschewing electricity and wiring, mortar and beams, or technology and infrastructure, nor the consequent welfare that they provide, channel and distribute. By opposing modernity's aggressive universalism, demodernization is a means of opening up societal, collective and communal advancement, change and transformation. Precisely as Dolci explains, the question it is not about the negation of progress but about choosing which progress you want.[13]

In the context in which we exist and work, imagining the possibility of an architectural demodernization is an attempt to redraw the contours of colonial architectural heritage, and specifically, to raise questions of access, ownership and critical reuse. We want to think of demodernization as a method of epistemic desegregation, which applies to both *discourse* and

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13. Giuseppe Barone, *La forza della nonviolenza. Bibliografia e profilo biografico di Danilo Dolci*, Napoli: Dante & Descartes, 2004.

praxis: to reorient and liberate historical narratives on fascist architectural heritage from the inherited whiteness and ideas of civilisation instilled by colonial modernity, *and* to invent forms of architectural reappropriation and reuse. We hold one final aim in mind: that the remaking of (post)colonial geographies of knowledge and relations means turning such fascist designs against themselves.

FACHADA

Laercio Redondo

THE GUSTAVO CAPANEMA BUILDING, THE FORMER MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND CULTURE IN RIO DE JANEIRO

The exhibition *Fachada* (Façade, 2014), took as its point of departure a milestone in Brazilian modern architecture: the Gustavo Capanema building, the former Ministry of Education and Culture in Rio de Janeiro. Constructed between 1936-1945, it was designed by a team of architects, including Lucio Costa, Oscar Niemeyer, Eduardo Reidy, Carlos Leão, Ernani Vasconcellos and Jorge Machado Moreira with the assistance of the French-Swiss architect Le Corbusier. Paradoxically, however, these left-leaning architects conceived the building in the midst of Getúlio Vargas's regime (1930–1945), which established the Estado Novo in 1937, initially of fascist inclination. Thus, the building embodies a contradiction: the architecture represented a system based on democratic values and at once responded to the regime's vision of a modern nation.

Fachada included four main elements: a phrase cast in bronze, a film, a wall-mounted framing system, and an enlarged postcard image from the 1950s. However, key to the whole installation is the film of the building's façade. In a single take, the camera travels in a vertical line from the ground floor to the building's roof terrace and beyond, revealing the city, the sea, and the horizon. In this shot one sees how Corbusean functionalism meets local elements, from finishing materials to a landscape design with tropical plants.

Art critic and researcher Sergio B. Martins writes "*On the one hand, all the sophisticated visual modulation of the architecture is reviewed. From the pilotis we move on to the large façade covered entirely by brise-soleils, one of many idiosyncratic adaptations by the group of Brazilian architects responsible for the construction (Le Corbusier, the project supervisor, employed brise-soleils in a more judicious fashion). They are sometimes closed, sometimes open, until finally glimpsing the Guanabara Bay from the top of the terrace and through other buildings, with Pão de Açúcar (Sugarloaf Mountain) in the background. On the other hand, the video's vertical thrust*

is analogous to the architecture itself, whose monumentality, another deviation from the Corbusian standard, signals the necessity of making the building unique, making it more a visible emblem of the Vargas state's voluntarism than a model for a proportional and potentially replicable urbanism."
He continues "*This is the ideological sense in which the building establishes a parallel with the city's iconic landscape, which is suddenly interrupted in the video by a lone sign: the logo of Vale S.A. (a now-private mining company also founded by the Vargas administration) on top of its headquarters. The camera lingers on that final image, making abundantly clear that the whole take was filmed from the point of view of a drone (a device whose use in journalism, surveillance, and repression already refers to the space of the city and its conflicts).*"

The exhibition also featured a wall-mounted framing system that mirrored the window grid of the building's façade. Each work that used this wooden framework displayed silkscreen prints on wooden panels, which pictured a selection of the artist's contemporary photographs of the building.

"*For Fachada, Redondo retooled the aesthetics of montage to physically juxtapose various visual details from the site that speak to the building's complex history and iconography, including Vargas and Capanema portrait busts, wall paintings by Cândido Portinari, and the Brazilian flag. Together these fragments' placement evoked the legacy of how distinct ideologies came to be performed in the same physical space, while the Capanema building's architecture (i.e., its windows) structured the individual artworks' formal articulation.*"

The fact that the Capanema building was originally the Ministry of Education and Health, whose political program was premised on the development of a modern and "healthy" nation, was also addressed through a printed and enlarged emblematic postcard image from the time. In response to

this history, the image depicting an athlete posing in front of the building is distributed across various pieces of plywood, which at times recall the shapes and sizes of protest posters.

A final element, the bronze cast phrase *Na verdade, a cidade do Rio não existe ainda* (In reality, the city of Rio does not exist yet), was lifted from a sketch made by Le Corbusier during his trip to Rio in 1936. The phrase speaks to the way Modernism was perceived as an ultimate solution for development without, however, taking into consideration local realities. By overlapping different temporalities and various elements that all come together in this signature landmark building, Redondo's work reactivates a vision on the history of politics. In so doing, he creates a space for the viewer to assess the complexity of historical memory and its ambiguities from different perspectives. *Fachada* suggests the variegated historical context of the Capanema building's construction and the possible meanings of the façade's afterlife today.

Video stills, "Façade", Video projection on plexiglass screen, 3min, loop, 2014
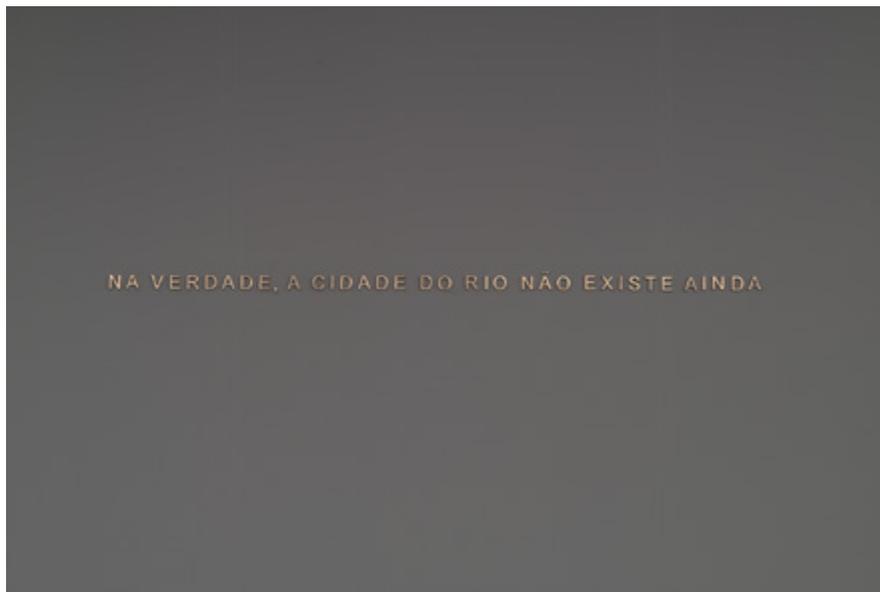
"Le Corbusier 1936", cast bronze, approx. 4×180cm, 2014
Photo: Mario Grisolli

"These Times (MEC/D.N.E. 1937-1957)", silk-screen on plywood, approx. 245×190cm, 2014
Photo: Mario Grisolli

"Façade", 100×60cm each. Monotype / Wood, Plywood, Glass & Silk-screen, 2014
Photo: Mario Grisolli

"Façade", 100×60cm each. Monotype / Wood, Plywood, Glass & Silk-screen, 2014
Photo: Mario Grisolli

"Façade", Diptych 100×60cm each. Monotype / Wood, Plywood, Glass & Silk-screen, 2014
Photo: Mario Grisolli

TEMPORAL COLLAGE AND PRODUCING ESCAPE

Harun Morrison

THE BOAT ON ST PANCRAS BASIN IN KINGS CROSS AND MAIDA HILL TUNNEL ON REGENTS CANAL

Harun Morrison, *Zoar Returns* (digital still), 2021.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLeXBV3E6tY

Harun Morrison, *Zoar Returns* (digital still), 2021.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hLeXBV3E6tY

What is the relationship of Modernism to boat-living in London? The itinerancy, the use of firewood or coal for heat, a metal bucket in the water to keep milk and cheeses cool rather than electro-chemical refrigeration. . . the core of narrowboat living in Britain has changed minimally across the 20th century. Tractor engines have replaced horses towing boats (there are bridge pillars on Regents Canal scored by the ropes) and the installation of solar panels has become more frequent since the 1970s, otherwise there is a constancy in boating practice and boat design. This is in contrast to the successions of architectural styles and ideologies be it Modernism, Postmodernism, Neo-Futurism and wherever we think we find ourselves today. The larger modernisation projects such as the development of the National Grid (the system operator of Great Britain's electricity and gas supply), which included the introduction of initially 26000 electricity pylons by 1933; in turn altered the aesthetic of the British landscape and added to the lexicon of our visual imaginations. While the sewage system in London had only been completed 60 years earlier: 2000 kilometres of brick tunnels taking raw sewage direct from houses and a further 130 kilometres of interconnecting sewers. While the subterranean structures carrying effluence might be a spatial and mental counterpoint to the now picturesque canals; it's fruitful to see them as two forks from the same stem, despite the sewer system being funded by government. On the other hand, canals were largely funded by private syndicates from the 17th century onward to meet expanding demand to ferry produce between ports such as London and Bristol and centres of production such as Birmingham or Coventry. With trains superseding canals in their speed and efficiency, by the end of the 19th century the waterways slowly became redundant as a network of trade routes. From this perspective boat-living on the UK canals is a byproduct (and beneficiary) of a defunct distribution system, one that came to an end in the late stages of the Industrial Revolution and the advent of modernity.

The railways and the National Grid were both accelerators (of bodily movement and products in the case of the former, and freeing time (for those with the means to exploit it) through new access to electricity in domestic, commercial and industrial spaces in the latter. Yet these contributors to modern living as we know it in London today: improved road and rail travel, access to power, efficient sewage did not directly affect the conditions of boat-living (and others living off-grid).

The moment key drivers of modernity escape narrowboat-living so it becomes para-modern. Today the necessities of a century earlier continue to be enacted (burning fuel, dealing with one's own waste and the other acts of vehicle maintenance). At the same time, the disorderly arrangement of boats, the chock-a-block aesthetic of many a roof, the ethos of communal and DIY maintenance is inclusive of both Steampunk and a Hollywood vision of the post-apocalyptic, i.e. an improvised repatching and rewiring of the boat's interior and its aged systems, not to mention protecting against the water - which left to its own devices corrodes the steel hull. It is also important to puncture the image of isolationism implied by being off-grid for the boater today. Electronic devices are charged from the mains where possible, items are ordered online to another address, Calor Gas canisters arrive via delivery car and so on. Living on the water doesn't mean you are not a beneficiary of big infrastructure systems. Recognising the interconnectivity of our bodies through air and water borne diseases, foregrounds how our health is dependent on the people around us not just the sole strength of our personal immune system; therefore effective waste management, reducing spreadable disease benefits everyone however you live. The para-modern is a permeable condition.

*

Long before Le Corbusier's declaration: "A house is a machine for living in" from his 1920s publication, Towards An Architecture, narrowboats as had functioned in this way. Both the narrowboat and the canals are the products of engineers as much as architects, they embody the edict 'form-follows-function'. However they could never embrace the sterility, the monochromatic and moral aspirations of archetypal modernist building. Boat-living cannot demodernize because it never became modern, but it exemplifies living as a kind of temporal collage. A tractor engine, solar panels, coal fire, a wifi hub, a radio, and plastic cassette toilet - as more time passes a bric-a-brac of technologies emergent in multiple eras is generated. Contemporaneity seeps into boat-living through its administration: the registering of vessels, the licences, fees, databases that catalogue the various maintenance and safety surveys, i.e. the less visible organising structures that regulate living on the water today. Yet more so than ever boat-living in London is a counterpoint to the city's verticalities and outsourcing of the labour of living provided by modern infrastructure (a National Grid, sewage, supermarkets, water system and reservoirs and so on).

This temporal-collage is what I attempt to dissect through my own autoethnography as a boater on my narrowboat liveaboard, Zoar, originally built in 1975 - although I've only owned this particular boat since 2019. I am currently externalising these reflections through the development of a videogame, *Zoar Returns*. Pictured are stills from a 2m 25 sec trailer for this game that doesn't yet exist. The boat itself is the unmanned protagonist and modelled on my own. The shots in the animation feature St Pancras Basin in Kings Cross, Maida Hill Tunnel on Regents Canal and an aerial shot of Zoar passing the Banana Warehouse in Digbeth, Birmingham. It takes

Harun & Jamie departing from St Pancras Basin aboard Zoar, 2020. Photo by - R. Nordin.

after video game trailers on Youtube in the 'simulator' genre such as *18 Wheels of Steel*, a trucking game, and Microsoft Flight Simulator. The blue light in the tunnel alludes to a line describing 'ultramarine skies' from a translation of Rimbaud's poem 'The Drunken Boat' (1871), in which we hear the inner voice of an unmanned vessel, sharing a transcendental vision as it slowly fills with water.

'The Drunken Boat', despite being, or maybe precisely because it is a poem, can be thought of a simulation of (though not an interactive one), but the simulation of the imagined conscious-ness of a boat in delirium. The virtuality of boating, aspired to in the game is also a possibly impossible attempt to decouple a spirit, a theory-of-boat living, from the actuality of being on water. Parallel to the development of the trailer, this spring I converted my boat into a camera obscura. Not only were the images of the exterior projected into the blacked out room in-side, but using sheets of photographic paper across the width of the cabin enabled me to produce photographs, manually developed on the boat-turned-darkroom. I think of boat-living represented by these two forms of image making, digital an-imation and the centuries old camera-obscura, as a means of visualising this temporal-collage. While the former represents the boat externally, the photographs are produced internally, the boats interior contains the exterior. This also points to boat-living not only as itinerant but composite and pluralistic, alternatively understood as a relationship: the interplay of the water and the other-than-human life (vegetal and animal) that surrounds and supports the boat, the human infrastructure of the canal and river network, the boaters themselves and the administrative and legal frameworks that regulate boating and determine its relationship to land and mobility. There was little space for the itinerant under Modernist visions of futu-rity, unless it was emphasising the modularity and movability of the buildings themselves - or bodies in cars between other

Harun Morrison, *Boat as Camera*, 2021. Eastside Projects, Birmingham. Documentation photo by Stuart Whipps.

buildings. Nomadic indigenous peoples across multiple geographies have been forcibly housed and assimilated into the sedentary modes of living that are dominant in cities. While there remain approximately 300,000 Gypsy Roma and Irish Travellers in the UK, I intuit the consistent discrimination they face is partly rooted in the way their mode-of-living is read as an existential threat to an orderliness and stability erroneously presumed in sedentariness. Itinerant and nomadic lives take on different meanings in the context of the shifting and accelerated world-building around them. To be itinerant in the built-up zones of Westernised nation states is no longer necessarily motivated by seasonal change or following particular groups of animals. Could it be that the itinerant, by avoiding a totalising encapture within modern infrastructure not only become para-modern but 'produce' escape, not as an act of feigned magic but a perpetually unstable condition that is sought after and needs to be cultivated? If we recognise itinerancy as a state of desire, that should not be legally or socially repressed, then even on desert mountains, or a state-neglected housing-complex, boat-living might be practiced.

'SLUDGE': AN IMAGINED WORLD BEYOND DEVELOPMENT

Sepideh Karami

OIL AT SEA

1. Charles Eisenstein, 'Development in the Ecological Age', *Kosmos Journal for Global Transformation*, Spring/Summer 2014, https://www.kosmosjournal.org/article/development-in-the-ecological-age/ (accessed 29 January 2019).

2. Malini Ranganathan, 'Property, Pipes, and Improvement', *POWER*, 16 July 2019, https://power.buellcenter.columbia.edu/essays/769 (accessed 17 July 2019).

In Search of 'Hospitable' Grounds

In 'Development in the Ecological Age', Charles Eisenstein describes the narrative of development as a colonialist one, which 'devalues the existing lifeways of people around the world and seeks to conform them to the image of the dominant power.'[1] The support systems put in place to 'help' developing countries, such as financial grants and loans from the Global North/West, are simply meant to make local resources available to global capital. By the use of cheap labour those resources are monetised and those countries are left with huge debts. Likewise, the construction of material infrastructure such as pipelines, railways and structures for the extraction of natural resources, provides colonial instruments for the demarcation of territories, turning the soil into profitable land. These are violent processes of exclusion through which property comes into being under the logic of 'improvement'.[2] Such parts of these structures as are visible on the land are only the tip of the iceberg, signalling the presence of a far more complex system of material flows, labour, politics and environmental issues. They physically form territory by removing earth and making holes, piles and roads, layering the landscape while also expanding geopolitically via the flows of material, production and exploitation that feed urbanisation and development, comprising a network of structures in which the Earth figures as an indefinite resource for feeding the modern agenda. But the failures of the care-*less* project of development and of innovation as the dominant paradigm have left the planet requiring 'critical care', and in a state of ecological crisis.[3] We need to stand, at this critical point, and ask: What is to be done beyond the modern project of development? How can we slow down and ultimately put an end to the unbridled project of modernity? What could be imagined and how can we live instead of exhausting and consuming the planet? What other stories could be told in lieu of those of progress and development?

In the ecological turn of architectural practices, the call to respond to the nexus of environmental, social and political crises has become urgent.[4] It is no longer just a marketing term, like 'sustainability', but a compulsion under which practitioners have to work and rethink not only how to put an end to further harm to this planet, but also how to repair the damage already imposed on it. It is in this context that *infrastructure architecture* comes into focus, as these are the structures that connect or disconnect, exhaust or invigorate, care for or violate our planet. The characterisation of infrastructure in this discussion is twofold: it concerns both the *colonizing* aspects of infrastructure and the *decolonizing* potential of infrastructure and infrastructural thinking. The former is characterised by the Western-dominated logic of development and advancement that, in Brian Larkin's words, is formed through 'technopolitics', here understood as 'forms of political rationality that underlie technological projects and which give rise to an apparatus of governmentality'.[5] The latter, on the other hand, tries to connect us to the Earth, not as a resource to be consumed but as a ground to cohabit; to be protected,

3. The term 'critical care' refers to *Critical Care: Architecture and Urbanism for a Broken Planet* (ed. Angelika Fitz, Elke Krasny and Architekturzentrum Wien), Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2019.

4. India Block, 'RIBA declares climate emergency saying it is architecture's "biggest challenge"', *Dezeen*, 28 June 2019, https://www.dezeen.com/2019/06/28/climate-emergency-riba-action-plan/?fbclid=IwAR1Jg3-AL-Zepx3tJzkHPUV9aJ7zmejSK-mjh59gSRpFrJC-KrUNMojHT-cwiQ (accessed 12 August 2021).

5. Brian Larkin, 'The Politics and Poetics of Infrastructure', *Annual Review of Anthropology*, no. 42, 2013, p. 328.

6. See Arturo Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible* (trans. David Frye), Durham: Duke University Press, 2020.

7. Gustavo Esteva, 'Postdevelopment @ 25: On "Being Stuck" and Moving Forward, Sideways, Backwards, and Otherwise', in Arturo Escobar, *Pluriversal Politics: The Real and the Possible*, p. 101.

8. Ibid.

9. Shannon Mattern, 'Maintenance and Care', *Places Journal,* November 2018, https://placesjournal.org/article/maintenance-and-care/?fbclid=IwAR0aeq3w6K5fcg0co-bd-CADLcIM7oA4cKLZkmWDEF-7IB-BtTH7FmWX3otmw#0 (accessed 22 November 2018).

taken care of and helped to flourish. Instead of thinking of infrastructure that consumes and exhausts the Earth's resources in support of urbanisation, decolonising infrastructure tries to create hospitable grounds where the singular grand narrative of modernity is challenged by the thousand ways of being that in Arturo Escobar's terms are 'pluriversal'.[6] In conversation with Escobar, Gustavo Esteva says that 'development is radically inhospitable: it imposes a universal definition of the good life and excludes all others.'[7] As a challenge to 'development' he suggests the word 'hospitality', and continues: 'We need to hospitably embrace the thousand different ways of thinking, being, living, and experiencing the world that characterise reality.'[8] Thinking through hospitality stretches our imagination to find ways of putting this broken world that has become a blasted landscape back together.

Acting within the existing obsolete and dysfunctional political and social structures that consistently fail to respond to environmental and social challenges, decolonising infrastructure moves from the question of 'how the world is breaking down' to that of 'how the world gets put back together'.[9] In the radical process of putting the broken pieces back together, a novel interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary practice of *infrastructure architecture* can take shape that will address the questions of the grounds of action and design methods, imagining a world that can be lived and organised differently.

In this broken world, despite the limited natural resources, 'failure is a raw, limitless field of value', as Keller Easterling writes in her text 'A Losing Game: Harnessing Failure'.[10] The failure of the modern project of development in the age of petroleum-based industry has left the planet in a climatic crisis and has increasingly extended the 'sacrifice zones' from places far from the centres of so-called civilisation to everywhere on this planet.[11] In this situation of omnipresent failure, mass migration due to climate change and to the crisis of capitalism, Easterling proposes that engaging with failure could unveil a new global geography of value. The practice of *repair* as an emergent tendency, in response to failure at the 'intersection of politics, ecology and economy',[12] could challenge the idea of human-centred development.

Sludge

This short text is part of an ongoing series of experiments called *Oily Stories* that is in search of imagining a hospitable ground and decolonising infrastructure. *Oily Stories* tells decolonising stories of oil, set in ecologies shaped by oil. Situated mostly in the Gulf region and the Iranian context,[13] the series works with the materiality, history

10. Keller Easterling, 'A Losing Game: Harnessing Failure', *The Architectural Review*, 4 February 2019, https://www.architectural-review.com/essays/a-losing-game-harnessing-failure (accessed 4 February 2019).

11. See 'Let's Talk About Sacrifice Zones,' *Climate Reality Project*, 13 May 2021, https://www.climaterealityproject.org/blog/lets-talk-about-sacrifice-zones (accessed 22 July 2021).

12. Valeria Graziano and Kim Trogal, 'Repair matters', *Ephemera Journal* (ed. Valeria Graziano and Kim Trogal), vol. 19, no. 2, 2019, p. 203, http://www.ephemerajournal.org/sites/default/files/pdfs/papers/CfPRepairmatters_0.pdf (accessed 22 November 2021).

13. Another episode in this series, *Those Planktons* was exhibited at All Art Now Lab in Stockholm in April 2021 as part of the 'Troubled Home' project curated by Maryam Omrani. This episode comprised two video installations and a series of drawings and texts that together made a performance ground for the plankton to speak and tell stories of oil upon.

14. Kathryn Yusoff, *A Billion Black Anthropocenes or None*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018, p. 4.

15. Walter D. Mignolo, 'Coloniality Is Far From Over, and So Must Be Decoloniality,' *The University of Chicago Press Journal*, 2017, https://www.journals.uchicago.edu/doi/full/10.1086/692552 (accessed 26 November 2021).

and politics of oil and its encounters with different materials, environments, structures, bodies and political forces. In the manner of oil, these stories are leaked; they spill out of the infrastructure of petroleum, flow over boundaries and expand their environmental, political and social effects by polluting the grand narratives, 'white geology',[14] and other subjugating forces. As part of this project, 'Sludge' specifically challenges the modern project of 'development' through forms of both textual and visual storytelling, using oil sludge as a starting point and metaphor for being stuck in a petroleum-driven world. Oil sludge is created when oil is mixed with soil and dust – basically, when it leaks out of petroleum infrastructure. Being *stuck in sludge* refers to how deeply interwoven with our lives oil has become: it even flows in our veins, due to the foods and medicines we take that are produced in connection to the petroleum industry. At the same time, the pollution, waste, global warming and environmental crisis form another metaphoric sludge that doesn't allow us to move on: a massive sign of the failure of the modern project that started with the discovery of oil through colonisation. Following Easterling's idea of using failure as the raw material for envisioning a new world, 'Sludge' addresses the broken infrastructure of oil as well as the unwanted side effects of the petroleum industry, imagining how a world beyond petroleum is to be constructed from these failures and flaws. The theoretical framework of these stories follows Walter D. Mignolo's decolonial work of 'de-linking' from coloniality and 're-existing' beyond colonial logic.[15] A decolonised world is imagined to be a world beyond petroleum, free from the burdens of oil politics, wars, terrorism, dictatorship, colonisation, environmental crisis and forced migration: a hospitable ground.
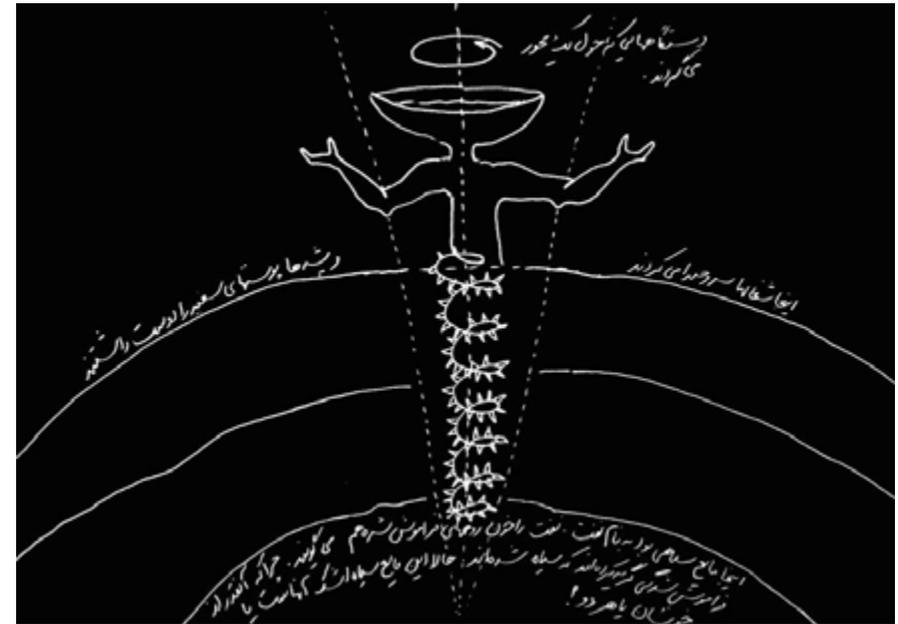
The Goddess of Oil (Drawing by Sepideh Karami, 2020)

16. Reza Negarestani, *Cyclonopedia: Complicity with Anonymous Materials*, Melbourne: re.press, 2008, p. 19.

17. Ibid.

The project imagines an underground infrastructure that takes shape and grows to clean the world of petroleum and thereby repair the planet. Underground there are goddesses of oil, protagonists of the story who wait for failures of the modern project represented by petroleum waste, leaking pipelines, oil pits, and other failed infrastructure which oil leaves to meet the soil, absorbing, collecting and restoring the leaked oil to its original loci in-between the strata of the Earth. By removing the oil from the surface of the planet, they delink life from oil; delinking from the colonial narrative as the narrative of flawless modernity.

1. Pipes

To arrive at oil one needs to cross the deserts. The oil as lubricant of war machines turns the deserts into a battlefield, a terrain for galloping machines of colonialism, both living and non-living; for hyper-consumers of capitalism, and radical jihadis.[16] The oil gives birth to these foreign characters of deserts: for both jihadis and colonizers, the horizontality of the desert should be preserved. The former does so by the removal of vertical terrestrial idols, the latter by the invention of pipelines as collapsed phallic idols. Pipelines are forms of infrastructure that guarantee the flow of energy and capital by preventing encounters between oil and earth. They prevent formations of sludge, mess and dirt to 'ease [the] narration' of colonialism,[17] to optimise profit and to deny the Indigenous, among other exploited human and nonhuman inhabitants of these ancient deserts. Underneath the deserts, under where the pipes cross there are goddesses of oil collecting that which leaks out of the pipes.
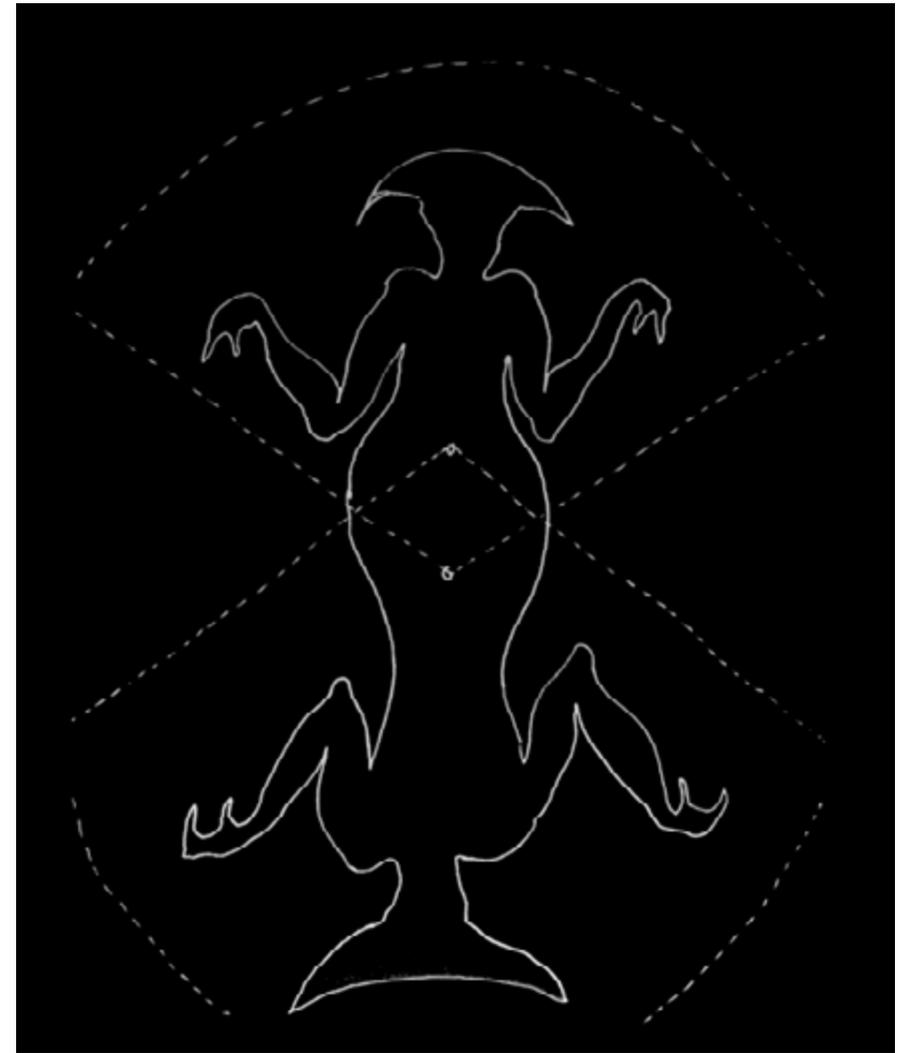
The Goddess of Oil (Drawing by Sepideh Karami, 2020)

There is a carpet in the middle of a desert. The carpet notates a place of discovery, giving orientation to a plane only known to the Indigenous people. They are absent in this photo, ignored in the narrative of oil discovery. They used to use trees, stones, winds, mountains and hills, rocks, sunrises and sunsets to orient themselves while moving about in the planes. In the picture, geologists are having a picnic. There is a bottle of some sort of dark liquid on the corner of the tablecloth. Under the carpet there is soil, earth, stones.

If you cut through the photograph and cut a deep section through the earth you will arrive in an in-between space where the pressure has created a world of black liquid creatures. The goddess of oil is summoning the oil back into the earth. She is summoning all the ghosts that are wandering around the troubled oil sites.

A diagram of claiming land and its resources (Drawing by Sepideh Karami 2021).
The original photograph shows oil mining "pioneers" in the Middle East, having picnic near Masjed Soleyman, Iran 1900.
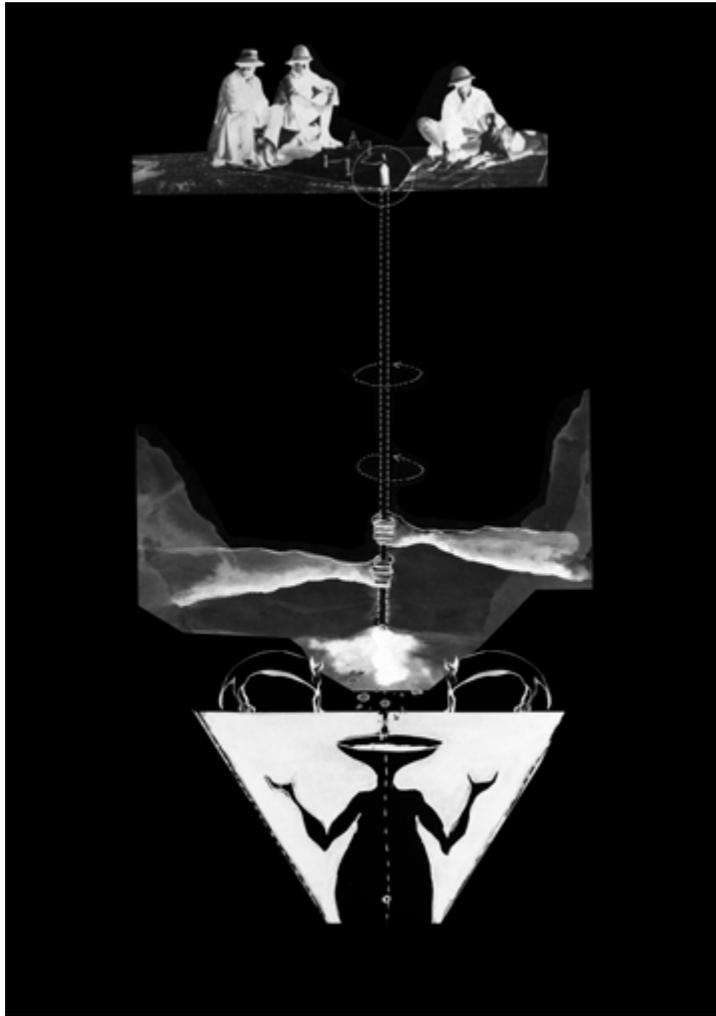
The Goddess of Oil, collecting and restoring oil underground
(Collage by Sepideh Karami, 2020)

Broken oil pipes (Drawing by Sepideh Karami, 2020)
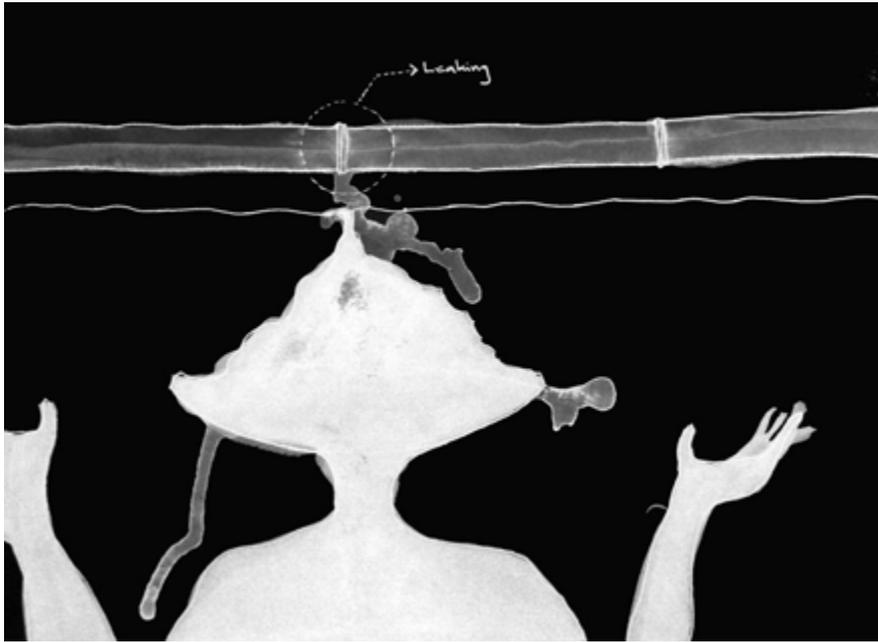
The Goddess of Oil is collecting leaked oil from broken pipes.
(Drawing by Sepideh Karami, 2020)
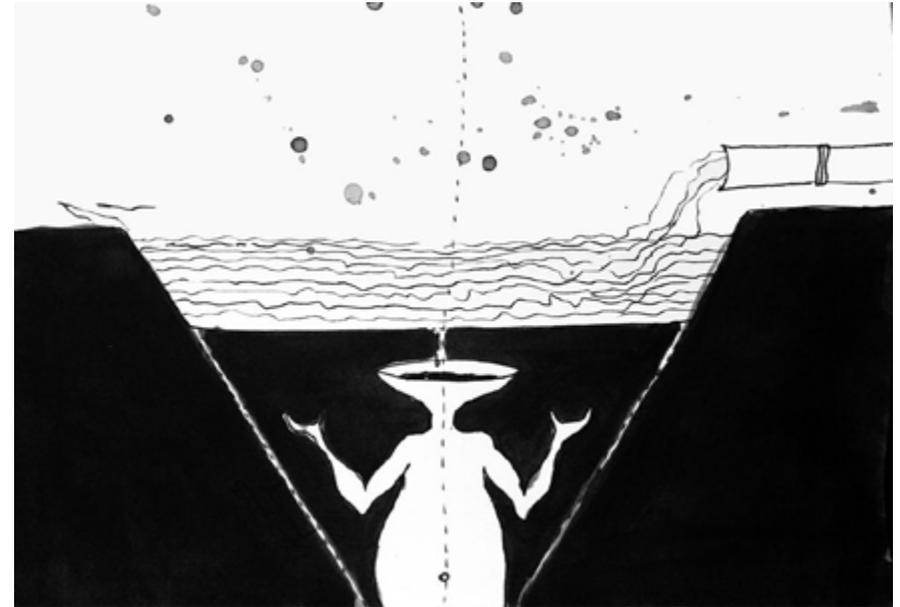
The Goddess of Oil collecting oil from leaking oil pits (Drawing by Sepideh Karami, 2020)

2. Crude Oil Stone

This is a crude oil stone, invented to protect, to cherish and to dump waste. A mock-up of Earth, the original habitat of oil, it is a piece of stone that holds oil waste in its heart. When the stone absorbs and holds enough oil waste, it closes. It becomes heavy, burdened with dark stories of wars, pollution, deaths and lives. When it closes, it remains silent. If you want to re-listen to the stories, you should shake it. Then the words mix, sounds change. A new language is created.
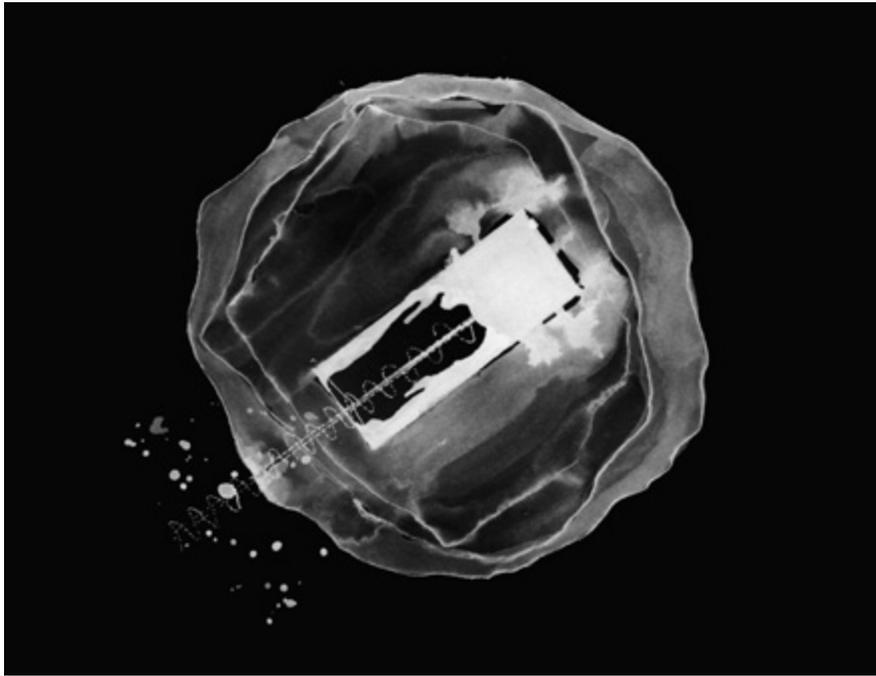
Crude Oil Stone for storing oil waste (Drawing by Sepideh Karami, 2020)

THE GATHERING

Ayedin Ronaghi

THE RUG IN THE LIVING ROOM

23rd September 2021
Roberta Burchardt and
Tatiana Pinto
in conversation with
Ayedin Ronaghi

RB/TP   The way we see your work in this publication is bringing the possibility of undoing something. What is it that you are undoing?

AR   I was five-six years old when I moved to Sweden, and the first few years I was busy growing up, learning the language, making friends and being a teenager and I was never really that interested in Iran. I remember my parents trying really hard to get my sister and me closer to the Iranian culture but we were really rejective and the Persian rug for some reason symbolizes those years for me. In *The Gathering*, I worked with some rugs that I inherited from my great grandmother, but for decades they just laid in the attic because I didn't want anything to do with them. And it was that rejection that I found interesting and I wanted to explore that further. But when I first started to experiment with the rugs, I realized that I was trying to completely change the rugs into something else, as if I was trying to erase every part that visually was Iranian. So, I started to wonder: "Haven't you done this your entire childhood? Trying to distance yourself from your background"? And it was then that I also knew that I had found the right material for this project. But the Persian rug is not only a symbol of course. Traditionally we sit on the floor, on the rug and it's where the family gathers and has meals. I guess my

The Gathering series, 2019, textile sculpture, deconstructed persian rug by hand, 345×275cm (photo by Jasmin Daryani)

The Gathering series, 2021, textile sculpture, deconstructed persian rug by hand with wood frame, 420×155cm

intentions with this process of undoing has been a way of reliving and processing the past and that 70 years of violence and conflict.

RB/TP This history of violence that is 70 years long, that you talk about but have not lived through; it is lived by your parents and grand-parents. That is something that you also had to confront, the silence you experience in the family. Is it so that by sitting with these rugs you can also reminisce and go back to this, these Eras?

AR I would love to but unfortunately, I can only go back to my own feelings towards these eras while I was growing up and, of course, to that silence I have experienced. But I also wonder if past events and trauma can be passed down to generations, that is something that I want to look into more.

RB/TP The rug is this place that holds the family together, holds this peace at the moment.

AR Yeah, but it also holds many secrets.

RB/TP But there's also a coming to terms with this, no? There's a meeting point between the modern western body, and this other body that is part of a family and a history. There´s trauma in this history, but there's also beauty, richness, and ancestry to come to terms with. There's a coming to terms with that because you step on both terrains, you revisit both terrains. And choose how Swedish or Iranian, you can be. And perhaps the work is exactly

this binding, or this middle-zone. Even though it's the Iranian icon that we see.

It's interesting to dislocate this a little. We now locate your whole trajectory and *The Gathering*, the rugs as based in the Iranian territory, and in that struggle and in that violence, and your understanding of that violence due to silence or fragmentation. But there's also a western gaze in the lived experience of undoing that specific history, trauma, silence. The work is made within the structures of western contemporary art, or? Does the undoing become the method, the way of doing art?

AR I would say that the undoing is just that, but you bring up an interesting point, a difficult one. Because sometimes I find it hard to separate those things from each other. I grew up here, I am living here, my entire family is living here and we have our history here, but at the same time, we also have another history, one that has a lot of baggage, one that is not visible, but still real. So how do you separate those two from each other? Is it even possible or are they now the same? I think in the end it comes down to access and where you position yourself, but it is a difficult subject and one that I have carried with me throughout this entire project.

RB/TP The whole idea of understanding *we* in the world, through decolonization, is to understand that complicity, of power, and of our Global space in society. And that it's not "they over there" and "we over here". That is one thing. Then it is also important to talk about

The Gathering series, 2021, textile sculpture, deconstructed persian rug by hand, 420×83cm

ancestry and relationship to land, as a means of grappling descent, lineage, transgenerational trauma.

The Gathering series, 2021, textile sculpture, deconstructed persian rug by hand, 600×85cm

A CONTINUOUS CONVERSATION BETWEEN ROBERTA BURCHARDT AND TATIANA PINTO

EPILOGUE

Tatiana Pinto

You might know Nelson Sargento's song '*Agoniza mas não morre*' (Agonises but does not die). He sings that samba and people rooted in samba culture, especially those from favelas, can be intimidated and threatened with death, but that samba itself will never die.

I found myself in Europe seeking a modern way of living that was imposed on me by a non-acceptance of the Other: the Other's knowledge, methods, grammar; the Other's sciences, the Other *us*. Coloniality and modernity as such put me in a situation of displacement without me realising, which shattered my identity. On the other hand, movement and a shifting position allowed me to rebuild and reinvent this identity in a much broader and more complex way, embracing diversity and pluriversality. I could find comfort in liminal spaces in which to engender myself without having to choose between two poles: 'exotic' Brazil and modern Sweden.

It has been claimed that living within modernity is the only universal way forward, annihilating other ways of life by suggesting they are uncivilised, underdeveloped and backward, *behind schedule*.

I often see Brazil referenced as a place of becoming, of what *will be*. This continuous becoming doesn't allow us to be genuinely who we are *now*, without the incessant phantom of an ideal future being, which never actually comes. This is how I see us Brazilians relating to history – not understanding our past and not being fully aware of our present, in order to build our future. We live in an outstretched hand trying to reach this impossible future, because it is disconnected from who we really are. This relation of past, present and the creation of history is well-articulated in your practice. You offer your inherited Luso-Brazilian house in southern Brazil (Sobrado House, fig. 1, 2) as a site of reflection on how we make history. When you question whether the right to inherit an object/artefact/building means you also own its history, you're also proposing a new understanding of history.

Roberta Burchardt

My practice, which I work on in dialogue with my mother (the architect, conservator, scholar and writer, Isabel Kanan), reflects upon the idea of being handed down something that has a specific, charged value to a specific, charged history. Beyond that specificity, our practice considers how we are given the option to question what is handed down to us, and how this is understood as a right, but one that can and should be confronted, renegotiated and reimagined. What kind of history does this specific space or architecture have to tell, and how does our private ownership close off the possibility for others to participate, beyond just being visitors to a well-preserved heritage site? It's important to highlight that the will to preserve this site is in itself both a struggle and a privilege.

The practice meditates on this inherited house and its land; a house listed as national heritage, and that therefore represents material evidence of a specific history that doesn't only belong to me but to a whole context, peoples, a macro- and micro-history. At the same time, in becoming my research practice, the house allows me to consider the possibilities and meanings of sharing; how by shifting

Sobrado House, Lagoa da Conceição, Florianópolis, Santa Catarina Island, Brazil, late 1980s. Photograph: Guto Sisson

Sobrado House, Lagoa da Conceição, Florianópolis, Santa Catarina Island, Brazil, 2020. Photograph: Eduardo Beltrame

the idea of private ownership towards a space of dialogue, I'm expanding my relation to 'home', and to ideas and practices of private and public, and sharing the burden of inheritance as a deflagration of a privilege-based right. The practice also reflects on the vernacular, the material vestige that is heritage, and how we can actively engage with this place and space. Because the vernacular is still there, the material offers a spatial aspect that bridges past and present. The research practice also thinks about memory and atmosphere as personal and communal spheres, understanding place and space as extending beyond one specific historical narrative and its remains.

TP   It is affecting to see your desire and need to understand how your personal history fits and is in dialogue with the history of this house. Which histories are public and which private? Who has the right to own this story? Which history is relevant or recognised? How can you place your personal history within the collective history of an architectural object? These are wistful questions that I can also relate to in my current research and architectural practice, which strives for its own position and relevance. I say 'wistful' because the confrontation with my positioning often brings up loss, oppression, erasures and absences that initially sparked melancholy in me.

During my professional trajectory, I went through an existential crisis when I realised my limitations in the male-dominant field of architecture. I'd been trying to understand my position and role as a woman architect in a world designed by and for men, with little space for the participation of women beyond the domestic realm.

It took years of unease before I uncovered the oppressive colonial structure that continues to control knowledge in order to maintain gender power and authority. My melancholy turned into anger, and I learned from Audre Lorde's lesson to activate anger creatively. She says: 'We cannot allow our fear of anger to deflect us nor to seduce us into settling for anything less than the hard work of excavating honesty.'[1] As a decolonial feminist architect, I'm now empowered to disobey, to be subversive and to transcend the limits imposed by the colonial matrix of power. That disobedience and subversion is a resistance strategy. Walter D. Mignolo also suggests conviviality, harmony, creativity and plenitude as decolonial strategies. That's what you've been offering with the Sobrado House – a space where conviviality takes place as a means of understanding positionalities and history.

RB   I struggle to characterise, frame or defend my practice according to any specific criteria of decolonization, but if I think of decolonization as a way of doing, a way of life, of being in the world, as a constant practice of depths and traversals, then yes, the practice becomes decolonial in the sense that it situates me. It locates my questioning within a wider context, through a confrontation with what I have inherited, and what I claim to be my right. I can claim certain identities that have been handed down to me, and that offer me the position I hold today, or that I have occupied in the trajectory of my life. And that offer me the ability, tools or privilege to stop and reconsider what my position is and

1.   Audre Lorde, 'The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism' [1981], in *Sister Outsider, Essays & Speeches by Audre Lorde*, Berkeley, CA.: Crossing Press, 2007, pp. 124–34.

2. Michael Hardt has been an important reference here, in particular his 2015 talk 'Property Law and the Common' at the European Graduate School, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7VlcZtU1q9U (accessed 23 September 2021).

its implications within a wider context.

The fact that my mother and I own this traditional Luso-Brazilian (Azorean/Portuguese-Brazilian) house and its associated heritage gives me (us) the opportunity to question this as a responsibility and as a burden. That is what the decolonial affords: the possibility to see the ambiguity between responsibility and burden, privilege and responsibility, privilege and burden. And how these always come together, much like your idea of the liminal – a space of questioning, action and belonging, but also of discomfort. This possibility to consider my artistic and architectural practice to be decolonial perhaps comes from my questioning of what rights of ownership and inheritance, property and heritage, I should claim.[2] By 'heritage', I mean a shared history, which places us in different positions in relation to that history – positions of power, knowledge, oppression, privilege. The decolonial has given me a tool to navigate these positions, and to renegotiate my specific body and my affects. Your work is also situated in relation to breaks from and within modern paradigms.

TP   My architectural practice brings such questions and personal struggles into an open space for conversation. And this is how I see this publication – as a collation of conversations with writers, artists, academics and architects, as we try to understand what we mean by decoloniality and demodernization.

At first, I thought a fundamental task in organising this collection was to understand and share the foundations of colonialism and coloniality, so that we would

move towards modernism and modernity before approaching de-modernity. This became a long process, twisted from the beginning, as soon as it became clear that we can't ground these concepts collectively. Each definition is individual, personal and local to each context, taking into account body, time and space.

I remember about ten years ago when I was part of an intense academic environment pursuing my master's degree in London, every discussion used the word 'unpack': to unpack knowledge, unpack concepts, unpack history. It was easy to understand what the word meant and the need to do this, but there was no tool or method to unpack. There were many postcolonial theories but very little discussion, yet alone practices, of the decolonial. The decolonial gaze is the tool for me to unpack, undo, unlearn, through an unveiling of the colonial structures that still exist. While postcolonial theory concluded colonialism, in decolonial theory we still live under colonial structures and from here the unpacking begins, in order to break these structures. I understand the *de*-words as a deviation from decolonial: de-modern.

3. Aníbal Quijano in an interview with Walter D. Mignolo, 'Part 2: Key Concepts', *E-International Relations*, 21 January 2017, https://www.e-ir.info/2017/01/21/interview-walter-mignolo-part-2-key-concepts/ (accessed 3 November 2021).

RB   'There is no modernity without coloniality,' as Aníbal Quijano puts it.[3] Within this logic, we deal with the de-modern as itself undoing coloniality, which is paradoxical.

What needs to be undone is an important starting point. Modernism as a progressive force in architecture is difficult to undermine: the question, 'how one can be against rationality?' is part of a steady backlash. How can we then speculate

4. Laurajane Smith, *Uses of Heritage*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2006.

on demodernization, and what can we do from this position of questioning? Demodernization involves acknowledging vulnerabilities that traverse architecture, epistemologies, nature and health. It's an educational, pedagogical searching of the imbalance between the discourse of decolonization/demodernization and the reality of what's practiced in the arts, cultural institutions, and the academy, and in our ways of perceiving and intervening in the world around us.

There is a way of understanding the de-modern as something backward. But undoing the modern doesn't mean projecting backwards. When we talk about heritage, for example, about the past, the vernacular; this idea that the modern suddenly locates us in a specific time span or timeline – it's a modern timeline. We accept the modern as ground zero, the starting point, the moment things begin to exist within a specific set of principles. Sure enough, within the western concept of time, we are walking towards a progression that ultimately leads to death; a very specific beginning and end. The de-modern undoes this flat, linear timeline, letting us inhabit a myriad of other forms of time and ways of life, both as a revisiting of worlds constructed before our times and as a continuous construction of possibilities.

The possibility for other temporalities is something we touch on with the *matéria* (material) and atmosphere of the heritage object, and that has been referred to as 'performativity';[4] meaning the potential for affective relationships with ancestries or cosmologies that influence the here and now.

TP Something I've grown to understand from our discussion is that tradition is not diametrically opposed to modernity. Modernity is easily placed in this false dichotomy, which casts the term in a completely non-generative modality. Demodernization does not and must not mean returning to previous concepts of living and doing. Modernity is something that evolves, that is not static but a state of being – in movement and transformation – as is tradition. When we understand tradition as being in constant motion in relation to our times and spaces, we free ourselves from its precepts and understand its core values. Paradoxically, tradition is much more linked to our current times than modernity, being something that always projects itself into a future that never comes.

RB In terms of contextualising modernism and the de-modern, we have to look both ways. As much as modernism appears as this supposedly universal language, universal infrastructure, we need to acknowledge the specificity of context. The dialogue is local, intimate; it doesn't reject exchange between different contexts, which is healthy and necessary. These specificities are also what will support us through our practice. Internal and local discussions, in an effort to nurture our home, in the sense of our space of practice. Knowledge produced in this intimacy can then become shared and can strive to find parallels in structures beyond its specificity.

When local questions are used as tools, their destabilising radicality pulls at the roots of things.[5] Making the space of colonial imbalance we inhabit ever explicit and present, 'we allow for markings to

5. From a conversation with L'Internationale editorial group, specifically Marie-Louise Richards' insight.

6. Reference uprooted from Temi Odumosu, in conversation with Decolonizing Architecture Advanced Studies group, 2020.

be made visible as an ethics of seeing, finding ways to represent what is still quite difficult to see, and not seeing things fully, but seeing things as they are – walking towards a polyphonic view.'[6]

In attempting to take modernity's form and relay it beyond the colonial/modern affective paradigm, we allow ourselves to shift focus, opening it up to reimaginings and reinterpretations that potentially disrupt the systemic structures of institutions – architecture and modernism included.

There was a moment in conversation with Isabel, when we realised that the practice, the house, was always sitting with us, at the dinner table, at parties, conferences, whether or not it had been invited. This meant that the intimacy of the trouble, the burden, was always with us. I realised then that the work, the practice, was coming out of different spheres and systems of knowledge, generating different spaces, here, there and elsewhere. In many ways, the domestic aspect of the house reflects our possibility to generate the intimate conviviality we propose within its structure, elsewhere. The fact that we are women of two generations, thinking and doing this together, indicates a matriarchal liberation of care as an affective practice that fosters sustainability, not vetted by publicness but by:

an ideal between private and public, where feelings and affections maintain the same trust and care, in our private conduct as in our public actions. Proposing a *listening in* to architecture and history, as entities that have prerogatives. Until we

begin listening, inhabiting them as spaces for learning, we will not see them for anything more than mere consumption for our own needs.[7]

7. Roberta Burchardt, 'Conversing Colonial Heritage: Inhabiting – inheritance, private ownership, common patrimony and use as form-of-life', 2019–20, https://www.daas.academy/ wp-content/uploads/2020/03/ ConversingColonialHeritage. pdf (accessed 30 November 2021).

Tatiana Pinto, Reserved for Female Architect, 2021, metal plaque
Photo: IASPIS Open Studios, Jean-Baptiste Béranger, 2021

Tatiana Pinto, Reserved for Female Architect, 2021, metal plaque
Photo: IASPIS Open Studios, Jean-Baptiste Béranger, 2021

BIOGRAPHIES & COLOPHON

Emilio Distretti is a researcher, writer and an educator. He lives in London and currently he is Postdoctoral Fellow at Urban Studies, at the University of Basel in Switzerland. Prior to this, Emilio lived and taught in Palestine, as the Director of the Urban Studies and Spatial Practices program at Al Quds Bard College for Arts and Sciences in Abu Dis. His research and pedagogy take on interrelated avenues on decolonial re-use of colonial architectural heritage in the Mediterranean and in the Horn of Africa.

Marie-Louise Richards is an architect, lecturer and researcher at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm. Based within radical black feminist thought and queer studies her work explores invisibility as embodiment, a critical strategy and a spatial category through methods of architectural and artistic practice, curatorial practice, and writing.

Alessandro Petti is a professor of Architecture and Social Justice at the Royal Institute of Art in Stockholm and co-director with Sandi Hilal of DAAR (Decolonizing Architecture Art Research), a research based artistic and architectural practice. A series of books documents and expands DAAR practice: *Permanent Temporariness* (Art and Theory, Stockholm 2019), is a book-catalog that accounts for 15 years of research and experimentation within and against the condition of Permanent Temporariness. By reusing, misusing, and redirecting UNESCO World Heritage guidelines and criteria, the book-dossier *Refugee Heritage* (Art and Theory, Stockholm 2021), challenges dominant definitions of heritage. www.decolonizing.ps

Harun Morrison is a UK-born and based artist. Working with the shifting potentials of civic space, informed by being a boater, prompts questions about land ownership in relation to itinerancy, and the degree to which living on water affects one's relationship with the environment and state infrastructure (notably sewage, administrative systems and the National Grid).

Ayedin Ronaghi is an Iranian- born artist who grew up and is based in Sweden. His artistic practice has "The Gathering" as a possible starting point but also a continuous process where sculpture, text and installation are metaphorical elements. Through iconic symbols, such as the Persian rug, Ayedin weaves the personal and the collective as ways to build up and deconstruct a contested history of violence, political precariousness and vulnerability.

Laércio Redondo is a Brazilian-born artist. In his artistic research Laércio engages extensively with collective memory and its erasure in society. His work is often based on the interpretation of specific events in relation to the city, architecture, and historical representation. Laércio is current based in Sweden and pursues works in Brazil, Germany and Spain.

Joar Nango is a Sámi architect and artist investigating space and its relation to colonial heritage and indigenous identities through various formats. He co-founded the architectural collective Felleskapsprosjektet å Fortette Byen (FFB), together with Eystein Talleraas and Håvard Arnhoff, in 2010, which was nominated by Norsk Form as Young Architects of the Year in 2012.Nango has exhibited extensively internationally, including at Documenta14 and Sakahan. Nango lives and works in Tromsø.

Lais Myrrha is a Brazilian-born artist. She brings visibility to the naturalization of social agreements and our correspondent ability to transform into solid truth that which exists only immaterially. Lais works with architecture and the cycles of construction and destruction endangered by it, constantly bringing forth the provisionality and arbitrariness inherent to the universe of representation – the conventions, the construction of memory and the values.

Victoria Ogoegbunam Okoye, is PhD Candidate in Urban Studies & Planning at the University of Sheffield (UK). Her doctoral research is an activist project with the *Spread-Out Initiative NGO*, situated in their neighborhood of Nima in Accra, Ghana. Her research focuses on the ways that architecture, urban design and planning reproduce colonial aesthetics and imaginaries that marginalize Blackness, and the diverse ways that Black peoples make space around and despite that. Her activist research approach focuses on race, space, and place using critical scholarship in the areas of global Black geographies of Africa and the African Diaspora, Black feminism, African feminism, and decolonial thought.

Itohan Osayimwese is an architectural and urban historian. She is Associate Professor of History of Art & Architecture. She engages with theories of modernity, postcoloniality, and globalization to analyze German colonial architecture, urban design, and visual culture; modern architecture in Germany; African and African diaspora material cultural histories; and the architecture of development in Africa. Another research interest is the architectural and urban lives of religious cults.

Suha Hasan is a practicing architect and researcher based in Stockholm and with working and teaching experience in Bahrain, Dubai, and Khartoum. Suha is the co-founder of Mawane, a platform for urban research based in Bahrain and a founding member of the MSc [Modern Sudan collective]. She is the co-director of the AA Visiting School Khartoum that explores the intersection of cultural heritage and climate change.

Malin Heyman is an architect and lecturer at KTH School of Architecture at the Royal Institute of Technology in Stockholm. She is educated at the KTH and the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art in New York, United States. She is a founding partner of the Stockholm based collaborative practice AT - HH and practices architecture within the frameworks of both built and speculative design projects, teaching, exhibitions, publications and other forms of staging. Using feminist epistemology and queer theory as a departure point, Malin Heyman experiments with the central role of fiction in the production and representation of architecture, in order to make visible and orient physical, spatial and social relationships.

Roberta Burchardt is an independent researcher and practitioner, mediator and writer based in Stockholm. With a background in architecture, visual arts and crafts, her research engages heritage via notions of atmosphere, ownership, private/public, contemporaneity, emancipation and meaningfulness, where a theory and practice of uses is central.

Tatiana Pinto is an architect, artist and independent researcher. Her main research interests revolve around social inequalities, the political aspect of space and the

responsibilities of architects in current societal struggles. Her trans-disciplinary work combines architecture, art, activism, writing and public interaction.

Sepideh Karami is an architect, writer, and researcher with a PhD in Architecture, Critical Studies (KTH), and currently a Lecturer in Architecture at the University of Edinburgh, School of Architecture & Landscape Architecture (ESALA). She completed her architecture education at Iran University of Science and Technology (MA, 2002), and at Chalmers University in Sweden (MSc, 2010). Since completing her first degree in architecture, she has been committed to teaching, research and practice in different international contexts. She works through artistic research, experimental methods and interdisciplinary approaches at the intersection of architecture, performing arts, literature and geology, with the ethos of decolonisation, minor politics and criticality from within.

Corina Oprea is the managing editor of L'Internationale Online since January 2019, as well as Lecturer at HDK-Valand Academy of Arts and Design, Gothenburg. She was artistic director of Konsthall C, where she curated a programme on decolonisation in the north. She holds a PhD from Loughborough University, UK, with the thesis 'The End of the Curator: On Curatorial Acts as Collective Production of Knowledge'. She is also a member of the curatorial team of Timisoara European Capital of Culture, 2023.

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Lais Myrrha
Double Standard, 2016, woody vines, logs, straw, bricks, cement, steel, glass, pipes, photo: Pedro Ivo Transfetti courtesy of Fundação Bienal de São Paulo

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Le Corbusier 1936, 2014, cast bronze, approx. 4×180cm, photo: Mario Grisolli

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Façade, 2014, monotype / Wood, plywood, glass & silk-screen, diptych 100×60cm each, photo: Mario Grisolli

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Laércio Redondo
Façade, 2014, monotype / wood, plywood, glass & silk-screen, 100×60cm each, photo: Mario Grisolli

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Lais Myrrha, *Double Standard*, 2016, woody vines, logs, straw,bricks, cement, steel, glass, pipes.
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