



# ARQUITECTURAS DEL SUR

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UNIVERSIDAD DEL BÍO BÍO

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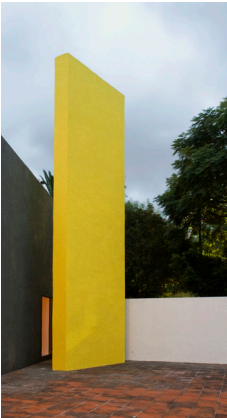
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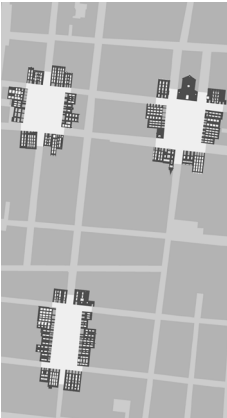
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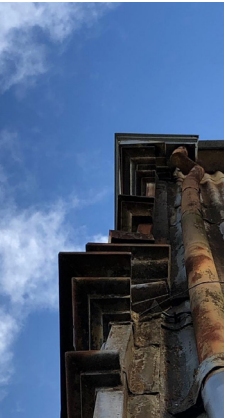
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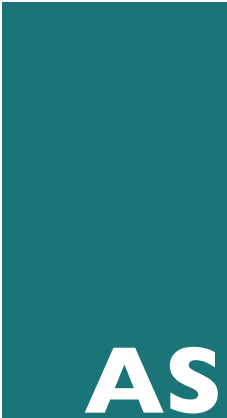
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## HABITAR POÉTICO

Se habita en la casa, pero también se habita en la plaza. La vivienda, que acoge el habitar privado, tiene su correlato en el espacio público, la plaza, la calle, la ciudad. En esta dialéctica casa-plaza, íntimo-colectivo, las formas de ocupar el espacio pueden ser infinitamente diversas. Sin embargo, en esta oportunidad, nuestra mirada se ha vuelto hacia un habitar trascendente, que evoca la fantasía, la creatividad, lo sublime, y le hemos denominado, “HABITAR POÉTICO”.

Este Habitar Poético, se puede encontrar tanto en la vivienda como, en el espacio comunitario y el universo; determinando que lo poético es irrestricto e infinito. Nos imaginamos el habitar desde lo popular; espontáneo y vernáculo, hasta la organización de una pequeña comunidad en torno al mar, el desierto o las altas montañas.

En ciertas oportunidades la poesía, se encuentra explícita y declarada en el hecho arquitectónico, como en la ciudad abierta de Ritoque en la Región de Valparaíso, Chile, donde la poesía aparece como una palabra fundante y en el corazón de dicho espacio.o propuesta poética?? En la mayoría de las veces, sin embargo, ésta se encuentra implícita; ¿quién podría dudar, por ejemplo, que existe poesía en la colorida arquitectura pintada a mano con motivos geométricos en la aldea de Kiébélé en Burkina Faso, África? O en la inspiración de la caleta pesquera de Tortel, en el sur de Chile, habitada mediante una red de pasarelas de madera única en el país, declarada el año 2001, como Monumento Histórico por el Consejo de Monumentos Nacionales de Chile.

¿Cómo será el habitar poético en Latinoamérica? Esa fue la pregunta que nos planteamos para invitar a la comunidad académica latinoamericana y del mundo a enviar sus contribuciones e investigaciones sobre este tema, en la idea de soñar que aún es posible imaginar un habitar, ya sea individual, familiar o colectivo, que evoque la fantasía y la poesía.



## POETIC LIVING

One lives in the house but also the square. Housing, which welcomes private living, has its complement in the public space, the square, the street, and the city. In this house-square, intimate-collective dialectic, the ways of occupying space can be infinitely diverse. However, on this occasion, our gaze has turned to a transcendent living, which evokes fantasy, creativity, and the sublime, and we have called it “POETIC LIVING.”

This poetic living can be found in the home, the community space, and the universe, determining that the poetic is unrestricted and infinite. We imagine living from the popular, spontaneous, and vernacular to organizing a small community around the sea, the desert, or the high mountains.

On certain occasions, poetry is explicit and declared in the architectural fact, as in the open city of Ritoque in the Valparaíso Region, Chile, where poetry appears as a founding word and at the heart of said space or poetic proposal. However, most of the time, this is implicit. Who could doubt, for example, that there is poetry in the colorful hand-painted architecture with geometric motifs in the village of Kiébélé in Burkina Faso, Africa? Or in the inspiration of the fishing cove of Tortel, in the south of Chile, inhabited by a network of wooden walkways, unique in the country, declared in 2001 as a Historical Monument by the Chilean National Monuments Council.

What will it be like to live poetically in Latin America? That was the question we posed to invite the Latin American and world's academic community to send their contributions and research on this topic, in the idea of dreaming that it is still possible to imagine a dwelling, whether individual, family, or collective, that evokes fantasy and poetry.

## EDITORIAL

## EDITORIAL

### HABITAR POÉTICO

Habita-se a casa, mas também se habita a praça. A casa, que abriga o habitar privado, tem seu correlato no espaço público, a praça, a rua, a cidade. Nessa dialética casa-praça, íntimo-coletivo, as formas de ocupar o espaço podem ser infinitamente diversas. No entanto, nesta ocasião, nosso olhar se voltou para um habitar transcendente, que evoca a fantasia, a criatividade, o sublime, e nós o chamamos de “HABITAR POÉTICO”.

Esse Habitar Poético pode ser encontrado tanto no lar quanto no espaço comunitário e no universo, determinando que o poético é irrestrito e infinito. Imaginamos o habitar que vai do popular, espontâneo e vernacular; até a organização de uma pequena comunidade junto ao mar, ao deserto ou às altas montanhas.

Em certas ocasiões, a poesia é explícita e declarada no fato arquitetônico, como na cidade aberta de Ritoque, na região de Valparaíso, Chile, onde a poesia aparece como palavra fundadora e no coração desse espaço ou proposta poética? Na maioria dos casos, porém, ela está implícita; quem poderia duvidar, por exemplo, de que há poesia na arquitetura colorida pintada à mão com motivos geométricos no vilarejo de Kiébébé, em Burkina Faso, na África? Ou na inspiração da enseada de pesca de Tortel, no sul do Chile, habitada por uma rede de passarelas de madeira única no país, declarada Monumento Histórico pelo Conselho Chileno de Monumentos Nacionais em 2001.

Como será o habitar poético na América Latina? Essa foi a pergunta que lançamos para convidar a comunidade acadêmica da América Latina e do mundo a enviar suas contribuições e pesquisas sobre o tema, com a ideia de sonhar que ainda é possível imaginar um habitar, seja individual, familiar ou coletivo, que evoque fantasia e poesia.





**Figura 7.** De arriba hacia abajo: *Tapiri* en Mutum, construcción en el riachuelo Mutum, *tapiri* en Amparo, *tapiri* en Escondido, y construcción en el Río Gregorio. Fuente: Fotografías María Ayara Mendo-Pérez 2016.



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## PUBLIC SPACE AND POETIC LIVING. THE CASE OF MUSEO EXPERIMENTAL EL ECO

### ESPACIO PÚBLICO Y HABITAR POÉTICO. EL CASO DEL MUSEO EXPERIMENTAL EL ECO

### ESPAÇO PÚBLICO E HABITAR POÉTICO. O CASO DO MUSEU EXPERIMENTAL EL ECO



**Figure 0.** Yellow wall-tower.  
Source: Photographs by Alan  
Gerardo Galván de los Santos.

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Sciences and Arts for Design. Department of Methods and Systems.



## RESUMEN

El presente artículo, inscrito en una investigación más amplia en torno al espacio público y el habitar poético, analiza la obra denominada: Museo Experimental El Eco, una de las obras cumbre de la arquitectura moderna en México, donde el espacio arquitectónico participa activamente en la presentación de diversas manifestaciones artísticas y en la experiencia emocional, estética y sensible del público. Obra enclavada en la Colonia San Rafael, Ciudad de México, "El Eco" es proyectado y construido entre los años 1952 y 1953, por Mathias Goeritz, artista plástico de grandes búsquedas, cuya obra va desde el campo de la gráfica a la escultura urbana. Con un gran reconocimiento como artista y una visión crítica de la arquitectura moderna, a Goeritz se le presenta la oportunidad de plasmar en una obra arquitectónica, con escasas condicionantes programáticas, su propia comprensión de la arquitectura, la que a su vez condensa en su famoso manifiesto de la arquitectura emocional. El trabajo presenta un análisis de la espacialidad arquitectónica de la obra referida, centrado en la experiencia del lugar y soportado en la recopilación y estudio de los antecedentes, visitas y recorridos en distintos días al lugar; tomas fotográficas y elaboración de los planos respectivos. Como el gran artista que fue, Goeritz, es capaz con esta obra de abordar la arquitectura como el resultado de la conjunción del vacío y la materia, para que la emoción y las sensaciones del cuerpo en el espacio fluyan, para estructurar el sentido mismo de la creación arquitectónica.

**Palabras clave:** arquitectura emocional, México, habitar poético, espacio público, Mathias Goeritz

## ABSTRACT

This article, inscribed within a broader investigation of public space and poetic living, analyzes Museo Experimental El Eco, one of the masterpieces of modern architecture in Mexico, where the architectural space participates actively in the presentation of diverse artistic manifestations and the public's emotional, aesthetic, and sensitive experience. "El Eco," a project embedded in the San Rafael neighborhood in Mexico City, was designed and built between 1952 and 1953 by Mathias Goeritz, a grand plastic artist whose work ranges from the field of graphics to urban sculpture. With his great recognition as an artist and a critical vision of modern architecture, Goeritz is presented with the opportunity to shape an architectural project with few programmatic constraints, his understanding of architecture, which, in turn, condenses in his famous manifesto of emotional architecture. The article presents an analysis of the architectural spatiality of this work, focused on the experience of the place and supported by the compilation and study of the background information, visits, tours on different days, photographic shots, and preparation of the respective plans. Goeritz, like the great artist he was, is able to approach architecture as the result of the meeting of emptiness and matter so that the body's emotions and sensations in the space flow to structure the very meaning of architectural creation.

**Keywords:** emotional architecture, Mexico, poetic living, public space, Mathias Goeritz

## RESUMO

O presente artigo, parte de uma investigação mais ampla sobre o espaço público e o habitar poético, analisa a obra denominada Museo Experimental El Eco, uma das mais importantes obras da arquitetura moderna do México, na qual o espaço arquitetônico participa ativamente da apresentação de diversas manifestações artísticas e da experiência emocional, estética e sensível do público. Localizado na Colonia (bairro) San Rafael, na Cidade do México, "El Eco" foi projetado e construído entre 1952 e 1953 por Mathias Goeritz, um artista visual destacado por sua ampla pesquisa, cujo trabalho abrange desde a arte gráfica até a escultura urbana. Com grande reconhecimento como artista e uma visão crítica da arquitetura moderna, Goeritz teve a oportunidade de expressar em uma obra arquitetônica, com poucas condições programáticas, sua própria compreensão da arquitetura, que condensou em seu famoso manifesto da arquitetura emocional. O trabalho apresenta uma análise da espacialidade arquitetônica da referida obra, centrada na experiência do local e apoiada na compilação e no estudo dos antecedentes, visitas e passeios pelo local em dias diferentes, tomadas fotográficas e a elaboração dos respectivos planos. Como grande artista que foi, Goeritz, com esta obra, é capaz de abordar a arquitetura como o resultado da conjunção do vazio e da matéria, de modo que a emoção e as sensações do corpo no espaço fluam, para estruturar o próprio significado da criação arquitetônica.

**Palavras-chave:** arquitetura emocional, México, habitar poético, espaço público, Mathias Goeritz.

## INTRODUCTION

- 1** The architect Luis Ramiro Barragán Morfín is the only Mexican architect to have won the Pritzker Prize, which was awarded to him in 1980.
- 2** *Ciudad Satélite* is an urban and residential subdivision located northwest of the metropolitan area of Mexico City. In 1957, the architect Mario Pani, head of the project, invited Luis Barragán and Jesús Reyes Ferreira to create an entrance landmark for this new housing area. The “*Torres de Satélite*” or Satellite Towers, a national artistic heritage since 2012, is a sculptural set of five monumental triangular prisms, symbolically marking the entrance to the “new city.”
- 3** Mathias Goeritz was not an architect by profession. In fact, in his meeting in 1949 with the businessman Daniel Mont at the Mexican Art Gallery (*Galería de Arte Mexicano*), where the businessman offered Goeritz to do “whatever he wanted,” Goeritz replied that he was not an architect, to which Mont answered that this was precisely why he was looking for him. See: <https://eleco.unam.mx/4665-2/>
- 4** This is the name of the document prepared by Mathias Goeritz as a manifesto for *El Eco's* inauguration, where he presents his vision of an architecture that fulfills a role forgotten by functionalist architecture, aimed at stimulating the emotion and senses of the human being.

## METHODOLOGY

*When entering a building or touring a city something good must happen in the soul.*  
(González, 2014, p. 275).

Conditions of total freedom to propose an architectural project are rare, and this is the case of the well-known *Museo Experimental El Eco*, the work of Werner Mathias Goeritz Brunner, a plastic artist who arrived in Mexico in the second half of the 1940s. He was invited to be part of the nascent Guadalajara School of Architecture, “accompanying” the architect Luis Barragán **1** in some of his works, with specific productions that were key in the spatial results of works, such as the stained glass window and the altar of the Chapel of the Capuchinas in Tlalpan, Mexico City, as well as the joint approach - involving the painter Jesús Reyes Ferreira-, in the iconic monumental urban sculpture at the entrance to Ciudad Satélite, internationally known as the Satellite Towers or Torres de Satélite.**2**

He also collaborated with other architects, such as Ricardo Legorreta, for whom he designed the famous large-scale pink lattice that framed the fountain and entrance to the Camino Real Hotel. Although direct commissions for Mathias Goeritz in architectural terms were scarce**3**, he had the opportunity to embark upon an iconic “emotional architecture”**4** project and built manifesto, the *Museo Experimental El Eco*, in a period where the main path being taken was an internationalist architecture, building a dwelling from reason, rather than from the senses.

The main goal of this article, which is part of a broader research on poetic living, is to analyze *Museo Experimental El Eco*. In this proposal, the architectural space actively engages as an artistic work, creating an atmosphere conducive to receiving the artist’s work, highlighting compositional-spatial characteristics that, in this specific case, contribute to the emotional and sensitive experience of the architectural work in pursuit of a poetic dwelling.

To analyze *Museo Experimental El Eco*, it was necessary to review the material there was on the project and study the author’s personal and artistic biography as a referential framework to understand the museum’s appearance.

Added to this, site visits, a sensitive interpretation of the place, leisurely tours at different times and on different days, taking shots, and studying and remaking the floor plans have been needed to properly analyze the plastic and spatial qualities of the work in question.

## Background

Mathias Goeritz Werner Brunner was born in Danzig in the German Empire, today, Gdansk in Poland. He studied at the School of Arts and Trades in Charlottenburg, Berlin, and later at the Friedrich-Wilhelms University, where he received a doctorate in Philosophy and Art History. In 1941, he traveled to Spain, working on his art alongside important avant-garde figures, such as Joan Miró and Ángel Ferrant. He founded the well-known School of Altamira (*Escuela de Altamira*). He also traveled to Africa (Jácome, 2007, p. 44). With this background and plastic experience, he was invited, in 1949, to be part of the newly created Guadalajara School of Architecture by the engineer-architect Ignacio Díaz Morales,<sup>5</sup> its founder and director in its first 15 years. After working as a teacher in Guadalajara for about two years, teaching the novel subject of Visual Education, Goeritz decided to move to Mexico City, where he made most of his artistic work, abundant and significant works of urban sculpture that stand out alongside *El Eco*.

During his stay in Guadalajara, he met Luis Barragán Morfín, among others, with whom he would often collaborate. Their contributions would be indisputable in the creation of atmospheres from their stained-glass windows and golden leaf paintings, which throw light and color inside spaces considering the spatial purposes of "magic, enchantment, serenity, silence, intimacy and amazement" (Saito, 1994, p. 10), as Barragán would say of his architecture when he won the Pritzker Prize in 1980.<sup>6</sup>

Meeting and working collaboratively with Barragán and the painter Jesús (Chucho) Reyes Ferreira would be, for Goeritz, a key experience in the architectural field, since, before this, he had worked mainly in the fields of sculpture, painting, illustration, and teaching.

During his artistic life, Goeritz was a sculptor, poet, art historian, architect, and painter, recognized as a promoter of "emotional architecture," of which *El Eco* would be his manifesto. Goeritz was trained under the influence of Expressionism and Bauhaus, so the idea of integrating the arts was not unknown to him (Jácome, 2010, p. 58). At the age of 37, in 1952, during a chance meeting at an exhibition at the *Galería de Arte Mexicano*, he met an important businessman of that time, Daniel Mont, whose business interests were linked to restaurants, bars, and art galleries. He is the one who, by way of patronage, commissioned him for a project on a piece of land he owned in the Tabacalera neighborhood in Mexico City (Miranda, 2017).

The references to Goeritz's avant-garde vision in art led the entrepreneur to ask him to propose an architectural project free of programmatic constraints, where, in the words of Mont himself, he was to do "whatever he wanted." *The meaning of an Experimental Museum* (2020, p. 01)

<sup>5</sup> Ignacio Díaz Morales coined the phrase: "To conceive the poetic thing first and to build the walls around it." Among his standout professional work in the field of architecture and urban space design and construction, his successful intervention in the completion or remodeling of some of the most valuable heritage buildings and most distinguished open spaces in Guadalajara stands out. He received, among other awards, investiture as an honorary member of the American Institute of Architects, the National Academy of Architecture award in 1986, and the National Prize of Sciences and Arts in 1989 (Government of Jalisco, n.d.).

<sup>6</sup> The press release began with the following sentence: "We honor Luis Barragán for his commitment to architecture as a sublime act of poetic imagination" (Saito, 1994, p. 10).

This is how, based on the commission's tremendous creative freedom, the artist worked on the idea of an experimental space for different artistic manifestations (reminiscent of the Cabaret Voltaire), a building as a manifesto built of "emotional architecture." (de Alba, 1999)

As background information, it is necessary to mention that modern Mexican architecture produced in the 1930s and 1940s, as Toca (1989) would say, "...apart from its extraordinary quality, started from a radical change towards what he sensed was a modern culture and, for the most radical architects, entailed a complete social revolution for which they proposed models with full candor. A minimal retelling of the quality of the period's main works reveals notable achievements, such as the skill in designing functional and formal solutions; the interesting unprecedented constructive solution due to the lack of adequate technological infrastructure; the adaptation of rationalist typology to the climatic conditions of Mexico; and the outstanding incorporation of formal or technical solutions to foreign models, improving them and creating a modern, functional architecture that, in the case of Brazil and Mexico, soon achieved deserved international recognition." (p. 31-32)

During the 1950s, the period in which the work in question took place, De Anda (2013) mentions a transformation of the compositional principles of the functionalist trend. Many types of buildings were developed and labeled under the title of internationalism. In Mexico, the work of Augusto H. Álvarez stands out among others, characterized by approaching architectural design from both internal and external modulation, as in the case of the Mexico City International Airport in 1954 and the Castorena buildings of 1957 and Jaysur in 1961, which are presented with an absolute mastery of the glazed facades and whose composition is supported by the use of lines on planes (p. 207).

Faced with this panorama, Mathias Goeritz, a critic of modern architecture, writing in his famous manifesto on emotional architecture in 1953 for the inauguration of *El Eco*, highlights, among other aspects:

1. "...there is an impression that the modern individualized and intellectual architect is sometimes exaggerating, perhaps because he has lost close contact with the community, on wanting to emphasize the rational part of architecture too much. The result is that the 20<sup>th</sup>-century man feels crushed by so much "functionalism," logic, and utility within modern architecture (Goeritz, 1953).
2. ...the creator or receiver man of our time aspires to something more than a lovely, pleasant, and adequate house. He asks, or will have to ask one day, for a spiritual elevation from architecture and its modern means and materials; simply put, an emotion... Only by receiving genuine emotions from architecture can man consider it art again."<sup>7</sup> (Goeritz, 1953)

<sup>7</sup> These paragraphs are part of the "Emotional Architecture Manifesto " written by Mathias Goeritz in 1953 (El Eco, 2015).



In these points, Goeritz extols the importance of man and his emotions in facing the architectural experience and the necessary conjunction between space and body that arises without being explicit, a triggering moment of aesthetic emotion. The space and, with it, our corporeality are subjected to a whole experience, with our senses put into action to produce the aesthetic emotion to make possible an experience that enriches and changes us.

Put in a more current way, Carranco mentions (2014) that "The body is a fundamental concept in poetic living. From a phenomenological point of view, we can define the human being as embodied consciousness. In this sense, the body becomes relevant because it is the medium we have to live in the world. We understand our environment from our body, linking ourselves to the world through our verticality with the horizon and gravity, in a simultaneous natural and cultural reality" (p. 73).

In this way, in the search for an architecture of the "lost emotion," predominantly facing an architecture whose principles arose mainly from reason, Goeritz sees in Mont's architectural commission, the possibility to explore and express the substantial value of architectural work. In this sense, the concepts of depth, emotion, surprise, materiality, etc., are applied in the project's conception through plastic and scale resources to produce the necessary changes in living, feeling, and inhabiting the architectural space. In all this, Bauhaus beats as a reference, the experimentation with the work of total art. Goeritz, as an artist, worked with sculpture, painting, graphics, etc. Still, it is through the opportunity received at a mature stage of his artistic work that Goeritz considers in *El Eco* the realization of a true "material manifesto of emotional architecture."

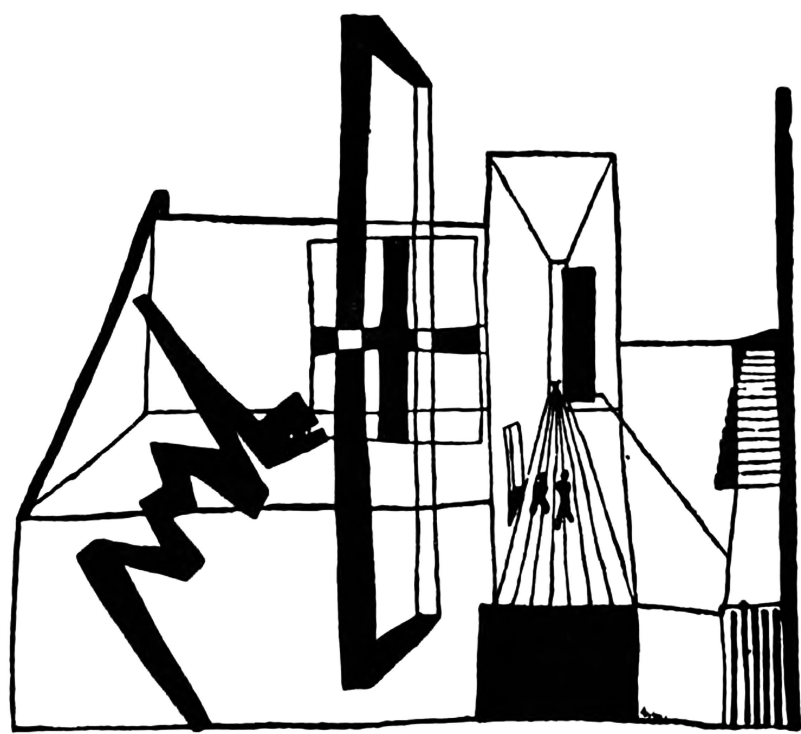
On the day of the museum's opening, a Dadaist-style event was held: Buñuel worked as a choreographer with Walter Nicks' Experimental Ballet; Lan Adomian directed a musical group and performed a piece entitled the "Tamayana"; Henry Moore made a mural with strokes based on the Mexican Judas; while Goeritz, among the crowd, read his "Emotional Architecture" manifesto (Torres, 2013, p. 24).

Set on a trapezoidal-shaped dividing plot, with an area of approximately 515 m<sup>2</sup>, facing a linear park, overlooking the Sullivan art garden, and very close to the *Monumento a la Madre Square* in the San Rafael neighborhood of Mexico City, Goeritz intends an architectural project combining the experimental work of diverse avant-garde artistic areas, where the architectural space actively takes part, integrating with the different creative manifestations.

One of the features that stands out from the first visit- once the building was restored by the National Autonomous University of Mexico in 2005- is the creative freedom with which the architectural work has been approached. Its essence, its origin, is definitely spatial. The limits and the entry of light are necessary to produce aesthetic emotions in the observer;

## ANALYSIS OF THE WORK

**Figure 1.** Ideogram of El Eco.  
Source: Miranda, 2017.



in and with the space, who can hardly assume a neutral attitude towards the architectural space in which they are immersed. Some authors, such as Rita Eder (n.d.), María Teresa de Alba (2011), and Cristóbal Andrés Jácome (2007), among others, highlight expressionism in his training as an artist. They establish a relationship, a particular echo, with the expressionist environments shown in the film “The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari” <sup>8</sup> (Figure 1).

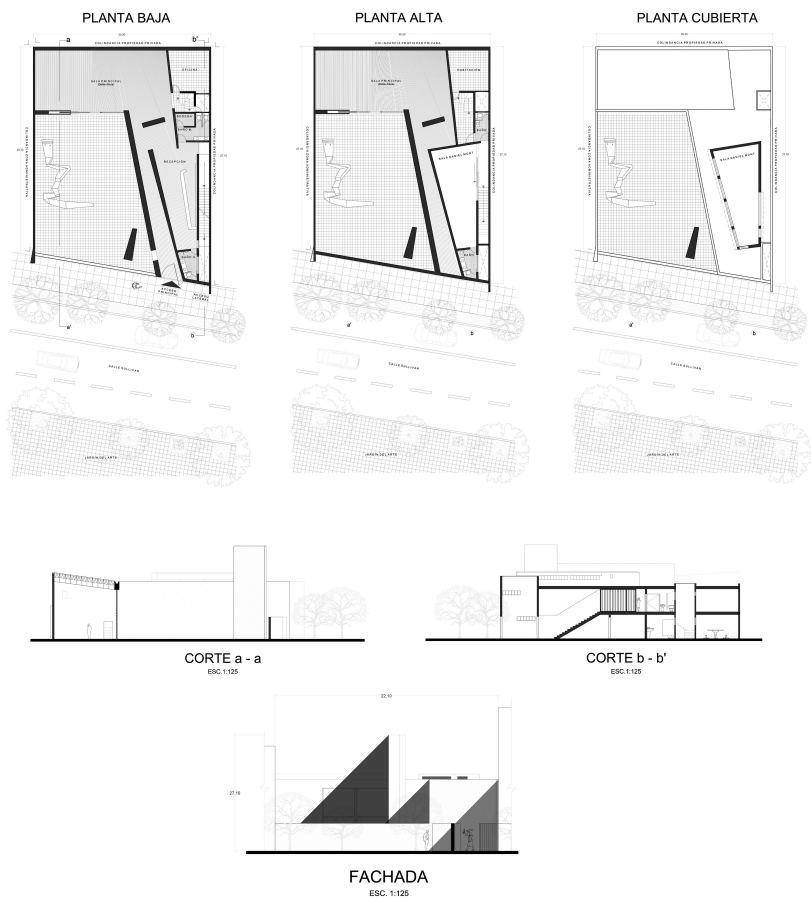
A second feature is the configuration of flexible spaces, totally split from functional rationalism. According to the words of Goeritz himself, quoted by de Alba (1999), he comments,

“The whole [project] was made in the same place, without exact plans. Architect, mason, and sculptor were one and the same person. I repeat that this whole architecture is an experiment. It does not want to be more than this. It is an experiment to create new psychic emotions in man within modern architecture without falling into an empty and theatrical decorativism. It wants to express a free will of creation, which, without denying the values of ‘functionalism,’ tries to subdue them under a modern spiritual conception” (p. 45). <sup>9</sup>

Faced with a panorama of architectural production in Mexico and the world, of an eminently functionalist view supported by reason and dominating the architecture stage, Mathias Goeritz criticized the building

<sup>8</sup> Rita Eder tells us: “Goeritz will absorb not only the gospel according to Hugo Ball but the synthesis of the German art of his time; the scenography of Robert Wiene’s film, ‘The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari,’... the purity of Paul Klee; the cleanliness of Bauhaus shapes ...” (Eder, n.d., p.73).

<sup>9</sup> Statement written in early 1953 and published in the *Architecture Notebooks* of Guadalajara in March 1954, according to what was mentioned by María Teresa de Alba in her text *Cabaret Voltaire* (1999).



**Figure 2.** Floor plans, cross-sections, and facade of El Eco.  
Source: Plans by Luis Daniel Bello Jiménez.

production of the moment. Provided with great artistic sensitivity, both as a creator and a theorist, and enriched by his encounter and collaboration with Barragán and Reyes Ferreira, among others, he sees in the architectural commission the possibility of developing a manifesto built from an “other” architecture, capable of housing in it the emotional experience that, beyond the appropriate functional resolution, accommodates the bodily and sensitive experience of the one who inhabits it, or beyond this, as Pallasmaa (2006) expresses it, “...like our memories, our dreams and our imagination” (p.19).

A third feature refers to space with narrative; namely, as the journey progresses as a narrative, space tells us about different possibilities, producing a plastic and spatial dialog with the observer; which is always novel or unexpected, which awakens diverse emotions before the artistic-spatial fact. *El Eco* moves the observer. It carries in its soul the critical-creative action that enunciates a way of understanding and formulating the architectural space. The work becomes a personal manifesto that questions the disciplinary action of the time and explores the architectural from its most profound spatial nature, promoting a powerful encounter and dialog from the moment the observer faces the work. The first effect of this dialog is emotional.

*El Eco*, a work of poetic and experimental dimension, breaks all compositional precepts. The creation of the habitable void without any

**Figure 3.** Courtyard and wall-tower and plastic poem. Source: Photographs by Alan Gerardo Galván de los Santos.



functional imposition, open to various forms of occupation, is for Goeritz a search for the whole, living, and changing work of art, the result of his primary purpose, that of freely welcoming the artistic avant-garde in all its manifestations. This freedom is confirmed by its outline and materiality, breaking with the imposition of the right angle and strengthening the experience of time-space, displacement, and depth (Figure 2).

*El Eco*, shocking and revolutionary, is a revealing work. Just as Juan O’Gorman <sup>10</sup> introduced in the heart of the residential neighborhood of San Ángel, on a corner plot —the most visible in the entire sector— the famous house studio for Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo, built between 1931 and 1932, and his parent’s house on the adjacent property, as a champion of radical functionalism, so Mathias Goeritz will project and build, as a manifesto, the *Museo Experimental El Eco* (1952).

In the case of O’Gorman, the corner site of the land where he implanted his work gives him greater visual exposure to the urban context. In the case of Goeritz, the land between party walls entails greater limitations for its urban manifestation. Despite this, he takes advantage of this condition through a spatial proposal that ends in a courtyard bordered in the front by a low enclosing wall that allows visually eliminating the outside, the street, but recovering the participation of the tree mass of the park in front of it.

Goeritz, being a multifaceted artist, approaches the building not only from its architectural condition but also as a habitable painting and sculpture, incorporating graphics through his famous plastic poem (Figure 3).

**10** Considered a pioneer of modern architecture in Mexico, Juan O’Gorman was an architect, muralist, and painter. As an architect, he went from a radical functionalism to an organicist proposal developed in his house in San Jerónimo, Mexico City, , which is no longer standing, between 1948 and 1952. Source: <https://www.gob.mx/cultura/prensa/juan-o-gorman-artifice-de-la-arquitectura-moderna?state=publisheduente>



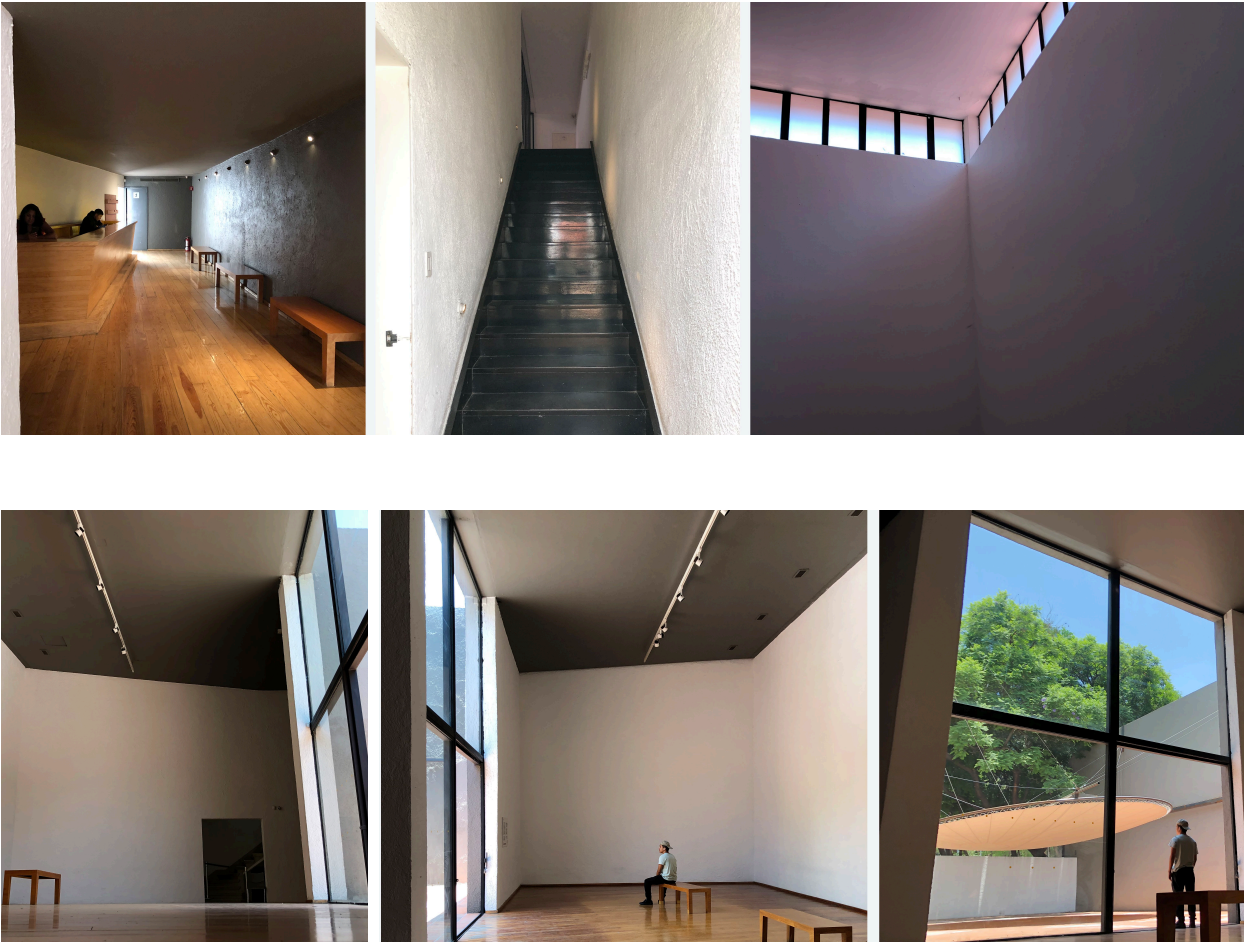


A tour of the building is marked by a constant spatial surprise whose main characteristics are given by the management of narrowing walls, the changing heights of the different spaces, and the management of very focused openings towards the end of the essential routes. The large sliding window that integrates the central space of activities, exhibitions, and artistic presentations with the courtyard acts as a spatial extension for the same ends.

The low limit at the front of the site, the light of the courtyard behind the enclosing wall, and a free-standing yellow wall tower, very bright and of sufficient scale, play harmoniously, composing a space facade of sculptural character. The tower, together with the sculpture of the snake –initially located in the courtyard– participate in the courtyard's composition, also conceived as a meeting space for different artistic disciplines (Figure 4).

**Figure 4.** Model of the snake.  
Source: Photo by Alan Gerardo Galván de los Santos.

**Figure 5.** Access, corridor, and hallway. Source: Photographs by Alan Gerardo Galván de los Santos.



**Figure 6.** Gallery-bar, access staircase to Daniel Mont Room. Source: Photographs by Alan Gerardo Galván de los Santos.

**Figura 7.** Views of the main room and courtyard. Source: Photographs by Alan Gerardo Galván de los Santos.

Between nondescript facades, *El Eco* announces itself. Passing through a black door (which, when fully open, is configured more as a mural than a door), we find ourselves facing a corridor whose walls, thickened at one of their ends, are not parallel but looking for an almost illusory perspective effect, where even the hardwood floor has been worked to produce and reinforce this purpose. The stave has been thinned to do this, emphasizing a space fled in its materialization (Figure 5).

After that initial effect, a neutral distribution point is reached that leads us, on the one hand, to a triangular-shaped space, opposite to the access, where to one side and at the bottom, we find a step that leads us towards a staircase to the next floor. Once on the upper floor, a triangular-shaped space, intended for different uses, appears once more, illuminated through an upper opening as a continuous belt of light, including the exhibition of works (Figure 6).

Towards the back, in the right corner, the entire service area that has been hidden is concentrated through a practically continuous wall that separates this area from the habitable and significant areas of the building.

The spaces are configured considering variable shapes for directions, scales, dimensions, light, color, and textures that, concatenated and changing, become





**Figure 8.** Yellow wall-tower.  
Source: Photographs by Alan Gerardo Galván de los Santos.

fundamental plastic resources, making the observer an active subject of spatial experience and aesthetic emotion.

When we return to the ground floor and cross the lobby that plays between the finite and the infinite, we find a very lit space with a relatively regular floor plan made up of a wall, a large window, and a glass door, square in shape and with a cross-shaped inner door, which opens to the sizeable trapezoidal courtyard that returns us to an encounter with light, with the horizontality of the enclosing wall, with the treetops of the park and with the free-standing yellow tower-wall, which acts as a sculpture in the space and that at the time was accompanied by the serpent, the author's sculpture, now located in the sculpture garden of the Modern Art Museum, in Mexico City (Figure 7).

At *El Eco*, the courtyard is a unique representation and exhibition space. It can be accessed in two ways: one, through the sequence of interior spaces, and the other, through the lobby that appears once entering the building, where on the left-hand side, there is a door that leads us to a small external lobby generated by the separation between the building and the tower-

wall, which makes us enter the courtyard without going through the interior. It should be noted that this yellow wall, rotated from the main wall and forming a right angle with the front of the lot, has a particular feature: an irregular base that thins at one of its ends, generating a more significant presence as a volume. The use of yellow proposes an intense luminosity, which, together with its height, dominates and composes the courtyard playfully and sculpturally (Figure 8).

Triangular, more or less pronounced prisms would be a permanent feature of his work. Sometimes combined with stained glass and light, as in the case of his intervention in the Chapel of the Capuchinas **11**, or as massive prisms of different scales, free-standing volumes as in the case of *El Eco*, or sometimes as large-scale sculpture-towers, where his participation in the Satellite Towers becomes evident, or in the sculptural work "*Corona del Pedregal*," made for the sculptural area of the cultural circuit of Ciudad Universitaria and the "Sculptural Space," a great collective work for the National Autonomous University of Mexico (UNAM), with the participation of the sculptors, Federico Silva, Manuel Felguérez, Helen Escobedo, Manuel Hernández Suárez (Hersúa), Sebastian and, of course, Mathias Goeritz.

In his plastic work, both the stroke and the volumetric explorations and the management of dimension, color, light, and textures emphasize a playful relationship, promoting a body-aesthetic and spatial experience that is always different and surprising.

Some slightly inclined roofs, especially that of the main room on the ground floor, have differentiated handling of the slabs, effectively contributing to capturing the limits as if obeying enormous compositional freedom that, by discarding the right angle, critically questions their dictatorship. This also contributes to the fact that the condition of a dividing lot disappears in the spatial experience of *El Eco*.

Since 2005, the *Museo Experimental El Eco*, acquired by the UNAM, has been retrofitted, returning it to its original condition, and is open to the public. Although it is the heritage of UNAM, the building, by vocation, is of a public nature; anyone can visit it within opening hours.

Beyond the exhibitions and artistic expressions, *El Eco*, for a long time forgotten, left adrift from the commercial comings and goings, represents for Mexico and the world the possibility of moving to the thought of a great artist who, with a holistic vision of art, understood and exposed with this work his criticism of the forgetfulness of the international functionalist movement, forgetfulness that reduced living and architectural creation to merely practical character solutions, leaving aside the experience and aesthetic emotion.

**11** Chapel inside the Convent of the Capuchinas, Tlalpan, Mexico City. Architect Luis Barragán, 1952..

The *Museo Experimental El Eco*, thought of as a space for artistic experimentation, tells us about a poetic living marked by many signifiers and meanings. The main one: architecture as a poetic and emotional message that acts on us, not in a neutral or anodyne way, but admonishing us to discover the millenary and wise art of building with imagination, to produce dialog and emotion, that is, active and sensitive participation of the human being, of the body and senses, contributing to enrichment and experiences. Pallasmaa (2016) about this comments that:

“the existential meanings of inhabiting space can only be forged through the art of architecture. Architecture continues to have a great human task in mediating between the world and us and providing a horizon of understanding in our existential condition” (p. 75).

From the analyzed work, we can extract, among others, the following lessons:

Poetic living is associated with the movement of the inhabitant or spectator and the different plastic and aesthetic emotions that the architectural work can produce in the subject who moves through it, and as González (2014) says: “the movement of the user is a central part of any architectural proposal: the movement is foreseen, proposed, promoted and, incredible as it may seem, *it is projected*.” (p. 72).

Poetic living in architecture is primarily associated with purposes and actions that do not necessarily arise from a practical purpose but from understanding the act of inhabiting as the conjunction between reason and emotion. The architecture that arises from it incorporates verbs such as walking, contemplating, entering, leaving, passing, strolling, waiting, looking, hiding, revealing, surprising, etc.

*El Eco* is experimental in itself. It is an enclosure that welcomes and actively participates in the different artistic manifestations, and fundamentally, it is a work that arose from the creativity of an integral artist who, with this work, manages to establish an intense dialog between those who explore it, travel and inhabit the space and its atmospheres, where the boundary between architecture and sculpture seems to disappear.

Today, since the life of most of the population in Latin American countries takes place in spaces so alien to a poetic dimension of living, it is essential to turn our gaze to examples of architecture and the city that lead us to the search for a living that allows the development and full enjoyment of human beings.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

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# INHABITING THE WINDOW. THE SQUARE AS A ROOM IN BARCELONA

HABITAR LA VENTANA.  
LA PLAZA COMO HABITACIÓN  
EN BARCELONA

HABITAR A JANELA. A PRAÇA COMO QUARTO EM  
BARCELONA



**Figure 0.** Squares of Vila de Gràcia, an archipelago of interiors. Source: Preparation by the Author.

## RESUMEN

Las pequeñas plazas de barrio de Barcelona, tienen un papel determinante en la construcción del hábitat urbano de la ciudad. Su escala modesta y claridad espacial permite leerlas como habitaciones a cielo abierto, en cuyo interior se desarrollan incontables rutinas cotidianas. Utilizando el dibujo como herramienta de análisis, el presente artículo se centra en las fachadas que rodean estas plazas, para mostrar la importancia de la ventana más allá de lo funcional o morfológico. El texto muestra que, este elemento determina aspectos formales y significativos con el que se identifican sus habitantes. Al habitar la ventana, la plaza se nutre de las casas que la rodean, diluyendo los límites entre lo público y lo privado. Mediante la representación gráfica, se reconoce el valor de las ventanas y balconeras que, construyen un escenario sencillo y modesto donde la domesticidad compartida del espacio interior de la plaza, contribuye a la identidad social y formal de la ciudad de Barcelona.

**Palabras clave:** plazas, hábitat, morfología urbana, dibujo arquitectónico, Barcelona

## ABSTRACT

The small neighborhood squares of Barcelona play a crucial role in shaping the city's urban habitat. Their modest scale and spatial clarity allow them to be seen as open-air rooms where countless daily routines unfold. Using drawing as an analytical tool, this article focuses on the facades surrounding these squares to illustrate the importance of the window beyond its functional or morphological aspects. The text shows that this element determines formal and meaningful aspects that resonate with their inhabitants. By inhabiting the window, the square draws nourishment from its surrounding houses, blurring the boundaries between public and private. Through graphic representation, the value of windows and balconies is recognized, building a simple and modest stage where the shared domesticity of the square's interior contributes to Barcelona's social and formal identity.

**Keywords:** squares, habitat, urban morphology, architectural drawing, Barcelona.

## RESUMO

As pequenas praças de bairro de Barcelona desempenham um papel decisivo na construção do habitat urbano da cidade. Sua escala modesta e clareza espacial permitem que elas sejam lidas como salas ao ar livre nas quais ocorrem inúmeras rotinas diárias. Usando o desenho como ferramenta de análise, este artigo se concentra nas fachadas que circundam essas praças para mostrar a importância da janela além do funcional ou morfológico. O texto mostra que esse elemento determina aspectos formais e significativos com os quais os moradores se identificam. Ao habitar a janela, a praça é nutrida pelas casas que a cercam, diluindo os limites entre o público e o privado. Por meio da representação gráfica, o valor das janelas e sacadas é reconhecido, construindo um cenário simples e modesto em que a domesticidade compartilhada do espaço interior da praça contribui para a identidade social e formal da cidade de Barcelona.

**Palavras-chave:** praças, habitat, morfologia urbana, desenho arquitetônico, Barcelona.

## From the window: actors and spectators

*A tomb has no windows. The window shows that one lives there; life is impossible without light and air. The window is the eye of the room towards the street. On the facade of the building, we distinguish the rooms by counting the windows. The window is a place.* (Monteys, 2014, p.132)

Looking out of the window involves not only observing but also being observed. These reciprocal looks play a fundamental role in the construction of public space, where we are, at the same time, actors and spectators. Seeing and being seen allow mutual recognition, connecting others with us. Only in this way can we build a common habitat with which we identify ourselves. In the words of Hannah Arendt: "The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves" (2016, p.60).

This is precisely what happens in the modest and straightforward neighborhood squares scattered throughout the urban fabric of Barcelona. Through this visual recognition among the inhabitants, the public dimension of the square is integrated with the private life that appears on the facades of the houses that make up the perimeter. Halfway between a small square and a large room, these urban enclosures embody that communal room that Louis Kahn (2003, p.255) expected from the street. By approaching the square as a room, it is proposed that we understand the square as the main interior space of Barcelona. Defined by the houses surrounding it, the square is a work of architecture based on other architectures, and as such, it can configure the physical dimension and the mental image of the interior space it contains.

In this sense, the window is an element that establishes relationships that go beyond the strictly pragmatic in terms of light or ventilation. In addition to eye contact, they can reveal times, habits, and sensory experiences that contribute to the domestication of public space. Not surprisingly, Kahn (2003, p.253) recognized the window as the most critical element of any room. In the case of these squares, the windows and balconies benefit the house and, more importantly, qualify the interior space of the square. Just as the house's rooms look at the square, this, in its condition of room, looks inside the rooms surrounding it. For this reason, the facades of the square's perimeter are, at the same time, the stage and the box of an everyday theater that takes place inside this urban enclosure.

Therefore, the squares addressed here could be defined as minor squares instead of the traditional Spanish Main Squares. Instead of

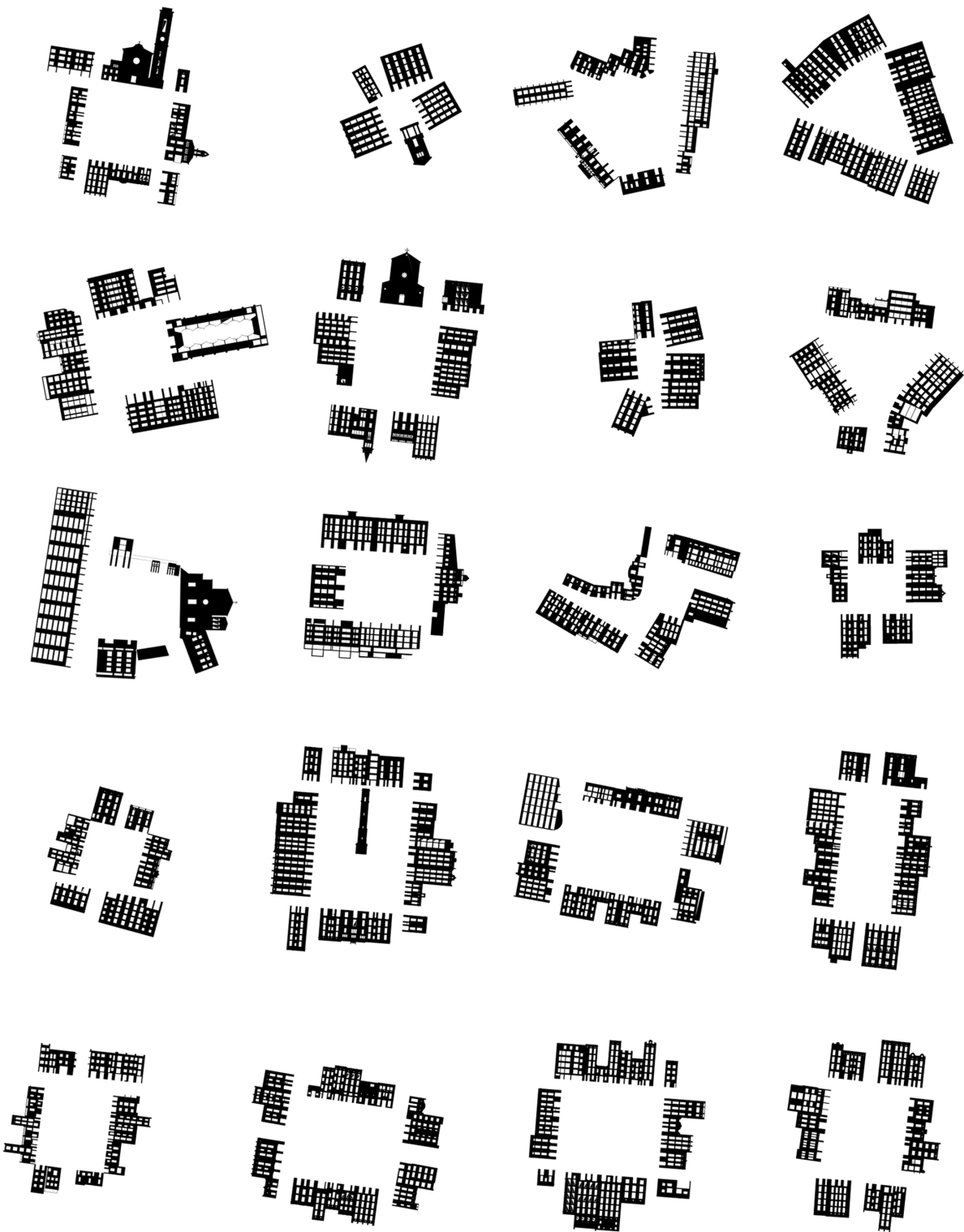
the institutional buildings or the uniform and controlled composition typical of the Main Squares (Rincon García, 2008, pp. 157-178), these small squares of Barcelona are surrounded by different houses. They are the ones that define their domestic condition. The fieldwork is done inside the square, redrawing the facades to reconstruct the perimeter graphically. The square is approached from the surrounding constructions through the representation of these interior settings. It is precisely in these walls, where the windows and balconies are an inhabited place, that articulates dualities such as public-private, individual-collective, and house-city, and that, mistakenly, are usually considered as separate.

### Unfolded boxes: a method for thinking with drawing

In methodological terms, collecting information to prepare the representations used several sources of information. The first and most important is fieldwork: staying in the square. The facades are measured, inventoried, and drawn for hours, taking notes of elements and observing the dynamics inside this room. In other words, the main input is the experience of the square itself. Inhabiting them allowed getting to know their daily dynamics and, as it will be seen later, to access the perimeter rooms surrounding it. Thus, the city, the public space of Barcelona, is an incredible archive. Along with the cartographic surveys, the information is contrasted and complemented with traditional graphic and documentary archives, such as municipal and historical archives, as well as photographs and planimetry available in libraries and digital records. Similarly, remaining inside these spaces has generated small ties with their inhabitants, allowing access to their windows and improvised conversations. When writing this article, the research considers about fifty squares scattered around the different neighborhoods of Barcelona.

The research understands and represents the square as an unfolded interior. Thus, the representation acts as a tool for observation and spatial analysis, and from there, reflections emerge. The drawings show the morphology, defined by the pattern of windows that emerges from the facades, and that, thanks to the topological relationships they establish, configure the square as an interior room, usable as such. In the systematic approach of the drawings and the accumulation of cases that, for reasons of space, only some are presented allows for establishing similarities and differences that evidence the formal logic of these open-air rooms. In this way, the collection of figures directly shows what the text cannot say with the same clarity.

As if they were open boxes and extended on the paper's two-dimensional surface, the vertical planes of the facade walls fall directly on their position on the floor plan (Figure 1). In this way, the



**Figure 1.** Interiors of Squares in Barcelona displayed as boxes.  
Source: Preparation by the Author.



representation translates the three-dimensionality of the architectural object the square constitutes into a two-dimensional form that shows, in unison, both the interior space and the formal aspects that configure it. The elementary quality of the representations provides an accurate clarity that visually synthesizes the original shape of each square. This almost childish precision is precisely its primary value because, as Paul Klee recognized, the child draws as he thinks (Geist, 1950, p.191).

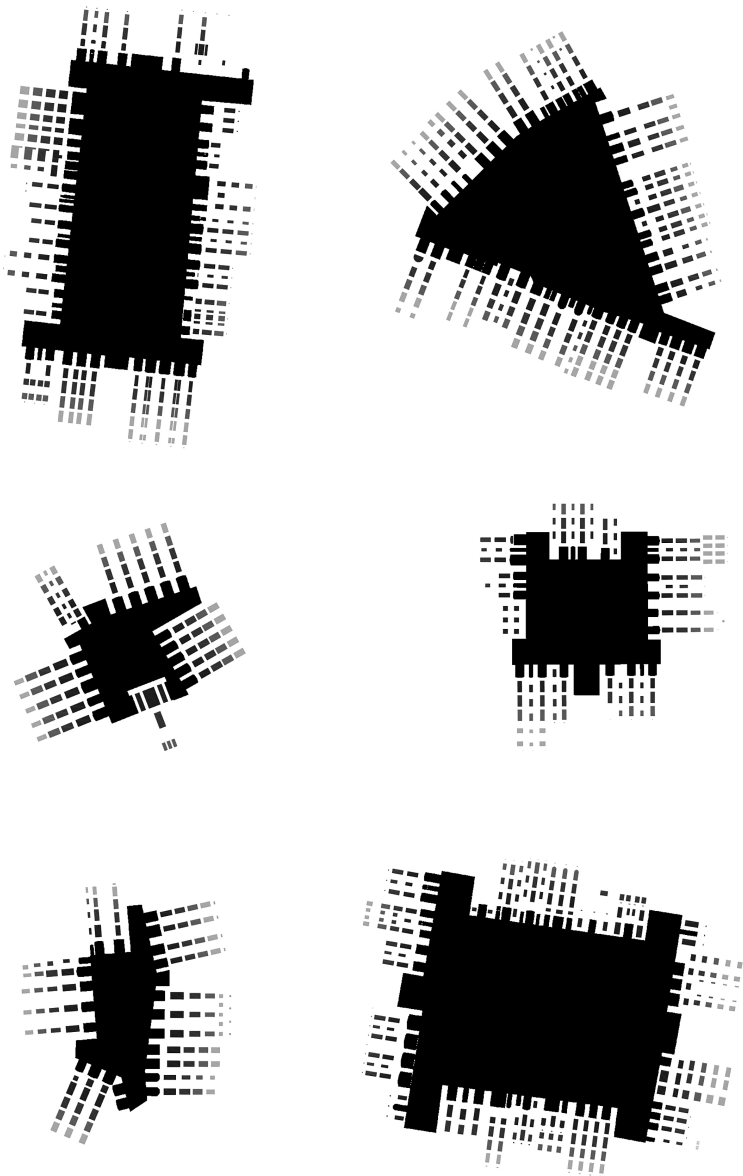
In the same sense, the research made separately by Laura Jacobus (1988) and Robin Evans (2005) on the interior drawings of 18<sup>th</sup>-century English architecture should be mentioned. In their respective articles, both recognize that these unfolded interiors represent not only architecture but, more importantly, a way of thinking about it. As both recognize well from their particular points of view, these drawings acknowledge the independence of the room compared to the system containing it. In this way, attention is focused on the internal relationships established by the surfaces that make up the enclosure. Similarly, when drawing the square from its interior, it is recognized as an autonomous piece within the urban fabric, and just as with the decorated walls of the English rooms, attention is paid to the constructions that enclose it, expressed in the facade walls of the perimeter.

However, unlike these English interiors, the drawings presented here are deliberately detached from the circumstantial design of the surface to underline the importance of the openings within the facades' plane. Similar to the representations of the Gestalt studies (Arnheim, 1954), the facade planes are uniformed by a continuous solid, as if it were perforated paper, thus forming a formally unified and recognizable piece. Nourished by this elementality, the representation makes explicit topological aspects of the shape of the square's interior space.

The first of them is that, thanks to the explicit figure-background relationship of the representations, we see how similar but not identical openings define a kind of pattern that unifies the perimeter. This simple pattern alternates the openings of one building to another, giving continuity not only to the facades on the same plane but also to all those surrounding the square. Accentuated by the modest dimensions of the plane, the proximity of the facades, and the geometric similarity of the openings, form a pattern that provides uniformity and compactness to the interior shape of the square. Thanks to this geometric similarity of the mostly vertical windows, a regular pattern prevails despite the visible differences in the buildings' profiles and heights.

The vertical proportion inevitably evokes the human figure that inhabits it. Through these windows and balconies, the upright silhouette

**Figure 2.** Window patterns inside the Plaça de la Revolució, Plaça George Orwell, Plaça de la Verònica, Plaça del Raspall, Plaça del Regomir, and Plaça de Rovira i Trias. Source: Preparation by the Author.



of the inhabitants appears from time to time on different balconies of the squares. Unlike the perfectly designed and controlled patterns of the “street-corridor” that Le Corbusier criticized (1963), the squares of Barcelona enjoy a certain irregularity that is nothing more than the imprint of a gradual building process, away from the significant urban planning interventions of places like Paris or London. In this way, the accident and the historical processes typical of any city are incorporated into the square’s formal richness (Figure 2).

Finally, seen as a set of isolated pieces, the facades show that these simple compositional elements somehow end up defining a common language of the city of Barcelona (Figure 3). This similarity between the facades, either by constructive or compositional factors, contributes to a certain morphological identity that relates the squares to each other and



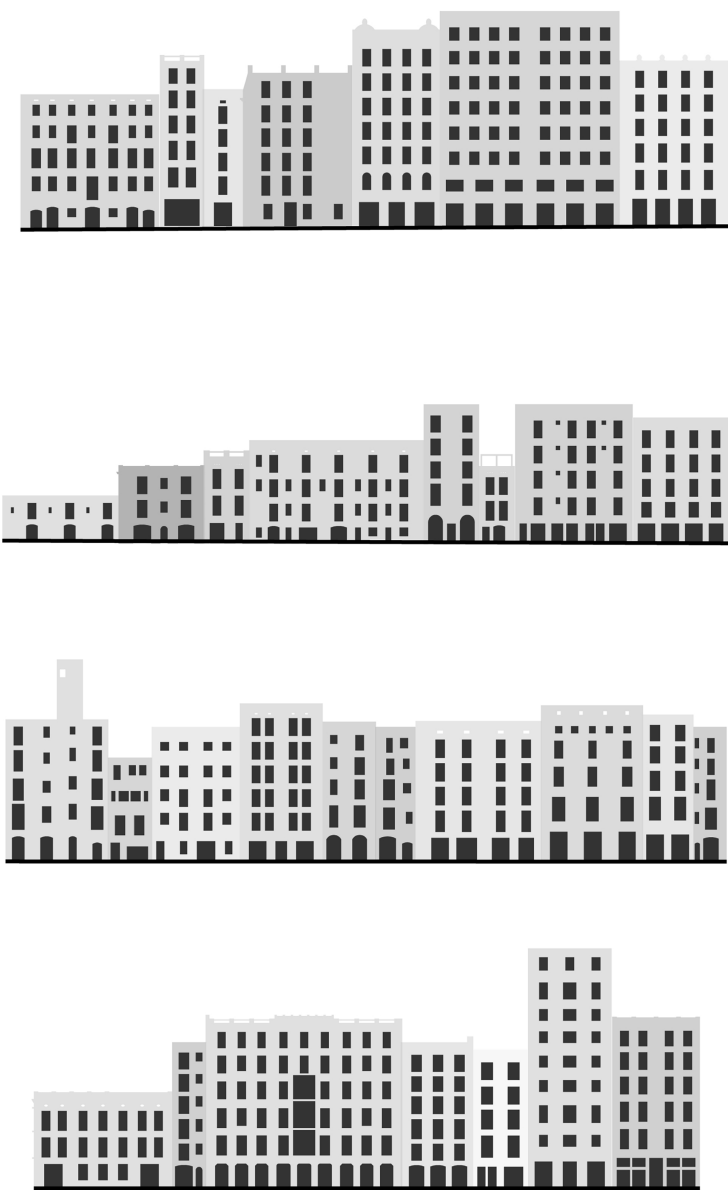
the city. Thus, for example, squares with different layouts, such as Plaça del Regomir, Plaça del Raspall, and Plaça George Orwell (Figure 4), share a common morphology where their perimeters, cohesive by the pattern of openings, clearly define the interior space they contain. Somehow, this almost handmade construction, expressed in the patterns of the buildings' windows and profiles, manages to incorporate the individuality and identity of each construction without losing the sense of collectivity that integrates it into the urban fabric of Barcelona.

A room made of rooms

From the city, the window is the visible imprint of the room. Therefore, in addition to the formal and compositional definition that they give to the facades and the limits of the square, it must be recognized that there is a

**Figure 3.** Comparison of vertical window patterns in four squares in Barcelona. Source: Preparation by the Author.

**Figure 4.** Common language of Barcelona's facades. Source: Preparation by the Author.



habitable interior behind each of these openings. In this way, the square is not only configured by the walls that delimit it but also qualified by the rooms behind them. According to Kahn (2003), the walls donated to the public space also provide its rooms. That is why, when we see the regular opening pattern surrounding the square, we are confirming a sequence of rooms that confine the inner space of the square. In other words, if the square is defined by its windows and these are the footprint of the rooms, the square is a room made of rooms.

These rooms qualify the interior space of the square and not vice versa. The presence of the house, through the windows that surround the enclosure, is one that, little by little, is taming the square. Thus, a



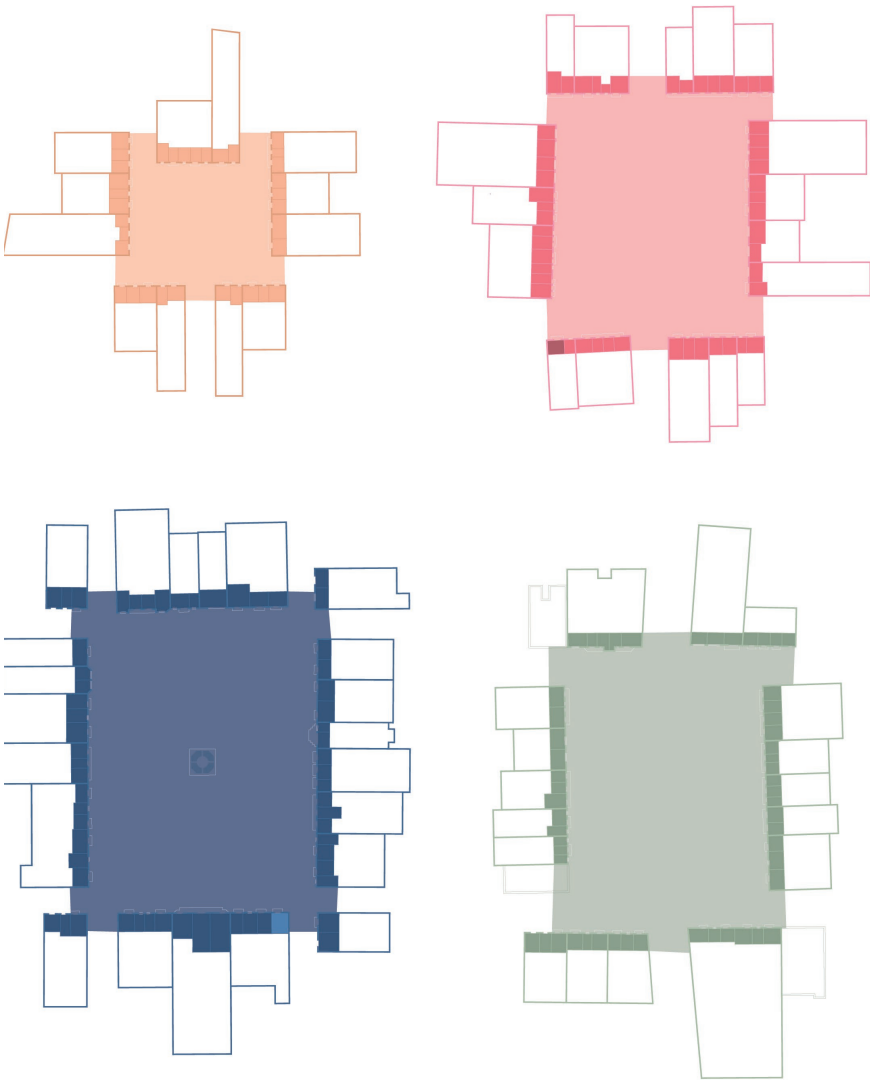
good square is not determined so much by the current urban design but by the relationship that it can establish between the buildings that surround it and its interior space. Therefore, if the rooms surrounding the square look into it from the other side, the square looks into each room's interiors. Hence, the domestic condition of these small neighborhood squares, because from the square, the glimpses of private space give an account of the daily dynamics of the houses: the inhabitants who peer out to look or smoke a solitary cigarette; the clothes hanging out that expose the most intimate of our closets; the plants that grow or die slowly according to the care they receive; barking of the pets clamoring for their daily walk through the square, are just some traces of the habits that are taming the interior space of the square.

The compactness of the square's shape and the partitioning between party walls in most Barcelona neighborhoods give greater importance to the window facing the square. In addition, except for the simple interior ventilation patios, these constructions are not directly related. As Van der Laan (1983) acknowledges, "The peripheral juxtaposition of houses enclosing the square does not allow direct communication between them" (p.167). In this way, the square is the first shared space of the houses surrounding it. According to the same author (1983), it is because of the peripheral arrangement of the houses around the square that also becomes "the first interior space at an urban level" (p.167).

This interior condition of these modest squares is decisive in constructing the mental image of the space they contain. This situation allows looking at them as if they were rooms. As Sitte (1945) pointed out, "The essential thing about both the room and the square is the quality of the enclosed space" (p.20). This quality depends directly on the constructions that enclose this space and determine its qualities and potential uses. Therefore, surrounded by houses and rooms, these squares in Barcelona act perfectly as the main and shared rooms of the houses and, by extension, of the neighborhood that contains them.

As can be seen in the drawings (Figure 5), thanks to the arrangement indicated above, the rooms form an almost continuous ring around the square enclosure. As happens in Plaça del Diamant, Plaça de la Vila de Gràcia, Plaça Rovira i Trias, or the small Plaça del Raspall, the continuous sequence of enclosures is a regular crown where the public and private dimensions intersect. It is precisely this first crown that qualifies the interior space of the square and not vice versa. Being surrounded mainly by houses and not essential buildings, the interiors of these squares should be recognized as an extension and complement of the house's space. Inside the square is space for ordinary day-to-day events and those extraordinary events.

**Figure 5.** The first crown of rooms in Plaça del Raspall, Plaça del Diamant, Plaça de la Vila de Gràcia. and Plaça de Rovira i Trias. Source: Preparation by the Author.



This interior condition of the square contrasts clearly with that of the block yards of the Eixample district of Barcelona. With few exceptions driven by recent urban reforms, most of these yards have ended up almost entirely densified by the ground floor constructions, eliminating the possibilities of collective use. Unlike the square, the galleries and places of services surround the block-based square. In geometric terms, the irregularity of the aplomb in the facade planes destroys the continuity of the wall surface that the facades facing the street have. Also, the condition of controlled and, in some cases, non-existent accessibility to these spaces is decisive, unlike the free transit that sustains the square. The yards should be understood as an outdoor space inside the almost monolithic and regular blocks of the consolidated blocks of the Eixample district. On the contrary, the square is an interior space outside the architecture that built it, while the density of the urban fabric of Barcelona's neighborhoods accentuates this interior condition because we only see most of these squares when we are already inside them.



**Looking between interiors: the window as a place and a testimony.**

As in any room, the role of the window is fundamental. In the case of these Barcelona squares, through these windows and balconies, there is a double reciprocal and bi-directional relationship that is decisive for the domestic condition of this open-air room. Square and room, in their condition of interiors, look at each other, blurring the boundaries between the public and the private. In this way, the window allows looking between two interiors that intertwine the house and city in a single continuous habitat, as Van Eyck (2021) expected.

On the one hand, inside the house, the rooms surrounding the square directly behind the facade walls benefit from light, lighting, and views. This makes them the best room in the house, and therefore, the main daily routines are usually displayed in it. In this sense, contemporary social and economic dynamics, such as the breakdown of the traditional family unit, shared flats, or remote work, are becoming visible in these rooms that, in the past, were almost exclusively defined as the house's living room.

Similar to the painting, *Jeune homme à sa fenêtre* by Gustave Caillebotte from 1875 (Gleis, 2019), inhabitants such as Marisol in the Plaça de la Vila de Gràcia or Juan in the Plaça del Bonsuccès, standing at their windows, contemplate the theater of inner life of Barcelona, which is contained in the square (Figure 6). These records, the fruits of the research fieldwork, prove that the room facing the square is the privileged room of the house. Even these balconies, where the roles of actor and spectator are happily confused, the aroma of coffee shops in the morning, the bustle of children playing, or the regular bells of churches and clock towers sneak into the house, giving an account of the habits and times of the city.

**Figure 6.** Similar to Gustave Caillebotte's painting, Marisol and Juan inhabit the window as actors and spectators of the Plaça de la Vila de Gràcia and Plaça del Bonsuccès respectively. Source: Preparation by the Author.

On the other side, inside the square, these rooms and the routines that appear in them are the ones that, in some way, tame the square. Sitting in places like Plaça del Prim or Plaça del Raspall is enough to see that the window is more than a strictly visual relationship. From the interiors of the houses, the sounds of dishes, conversations, and laughter sharing a meal, whose smells we can perfectly recognize, it is seen that the window can articulate all kinds of sensory relationships. This is a sample of the bodily experience that means the human habitat that becomes present inside the square, blurring the boundaries where the space of the house begins and ends.

If during the day the house looks out of the window, during the night the square looks inside the house. It is no longer a question of the wise play of volumes under light proposed by Le Corbusier (1977, p.16) but of the random play of light under volumes. When the sun disappears, the facades are unified in a continuum, only glimmers of artificial light peeking out from the interiors and transforming the windows into small shop windows. Like many paintings by Edward Hopper (1942), solitary characters are seen eating or engrossed in their computers. Thus, the perimeter of the square is also an observatory of the house.

For this reason, in the squares, in addition to the recognition of others, in the public dimension, one recognizes oneself in the countless images of domestic life that peer out of the windows. Identified with those fleeting but familiar scenes, the square builds a sense of belonging. Through these fragments of our routines, visible in the lives of others, the physical form of the square and, by extension, of the city is building the mental image of a room that we recognize as our own. Thus, the house looks at the inside of the square, and the square looks at the inside of the house.

### **Inhabiting the window: taming the square.**

The representations included here show that the window, in addition to being a compositional element, formally and architecturally defines the square, establishing relationships beyond the strictly visual. In addition, the set of displays shows specific formal patterns typical of Barcelona's facades, offering a new reading of the city.

Through these openings, a series of daily routines are visible, both of the square and of the house and, therefore, public and private. So, in these rooms, the inhabitants are settling the daily habits that build a recognizable habitat as such. The permanence and repetition of the routines build the domestic dimension of the square.

This record, which has not existed until now, means a revaluation of these spaces, both in their morphological condition and ability to constitute a quality community space with which the inhabitants





identify. This sense of appreciation and attachment gives these modest neighborhood squares a fundamental role in shaping the social and cultural dimension of the city of Barcelona.

Seen as a whole, both on a neighborhood and city scale, these authentic open-air rooms account for non-strictly planned nuclei that serve as a referential map within the urban fabric. A unique example is the Vila de Gràcia neighborhood. Each square is recognizable as an autonomous piece (Figure 7). Its spatial, cohesive, and autonomous form should be recognized as a domestic

**Figure 7.** Squares of Vila de Gràcia, an archipelago of interiors. Source: Preparation by the Author.

interior on an urban scale. Thus, the fragmentary origin of the ancient town (Serra Riera, 1993) is evident in its squares as a whole. The ambiguity and functional indeterminacy of these interior spaces, evidenced by the deliberate absence of representations, give them the potential to be occupied in the most diverse ways. This shows that it is not so much the current urban design (furniture, pavements, trees, or any other almost decorative element) that qualifies the public space, but instead, it is the architecture that builds it.

As described, the formal, visual, and perceptual relationships established in the perimeter's windows and balconies allow the square to be able to build, like any room that prides itself on such, the physical and mental dimension of the space it contains. Beyond the functional or pragmatic of everyday uses, the square establishes significant, semantic, historical, and political relationships that allow and promote the development of the most banal habits. By inhabiting the window, we are taming the square through our daily experience. According to Van Eyck (2021), these squares are "a handful of real places for real people and things" (p.70). Precisely, there lies the almost poetic beauty of these places that can construct such a common scenario, caught between so much theory and paradigmatic works that we have forgotten to see.

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# LIVING IN BLINDNESS. HOUSES, ATMOSPHERES, AND PERCEPTIVE LANDSCAPES THROUGH THE EYES OF SOME 20TH-CENTURY MASTERS

## HABITAR EN LA CEGUERA. CASAS, ATMÓSFERAS Y PAISAJES PERCEPTIVOS A LOS OJOS DE ALGUNOS MAESTROS DEL SIGLO XX

## MORANDO NA CEGUEIRA. CASAS, ATMOSFERAS E PAISAGENS PERCEPTIVAS ATRAVÉS DOS OLHOS DE ALGUNS MESTRES DO SÉCULO XX.



**Figure 0.** Black Box en Lund,  
1972. Source: Previously  
unreleased images courtesy of  
Arkitekturmuseet, Stockholm.

Research funded by VI Research and Transfer Plan of the University of Seville.

## RESUMEN

Jorge Luis Borges confesó, en más de una ocasión, que su modesta ceguera no era la dramática oscuridad que el sentido común cree, sino mas bien un refugio que en su caso se fue construyendo en un lento crepúsculo. Al finalizar su discurso de recepción del grado Honoris Causa de la Facultad de Filosofía y Letras de la Universidad de Chile, el escritor argentino narraba la lenta despedida de su vista y la sensación placentera de entrar en un nuevo espacio habitable más rico, profundo y creativo. Confiando en la ceguera como paisaje introspectivo, como espacio habitable donde se da cita a la fantasía con el realismo, es en este contexto que, el ensayo propone habitar con el pensamiento un espacio doméstico ingrátido e infinito. Otros artistas lo consiguieron - Groussac, Monet, Homero, Joyce, Herzog, Pallasmaa e Italo Calvino- convirtiendo esta especie de ceguera inducida en una habitación íntima y creativa, en la cual acomodarse al final de sus vidas. El profesor Yeager introduce este relato haciéndonos ascender a los cielos en busca de un espacio inspirador, negro y profundo. La casa soñada por Manuel Parra y Danilo Veras, nos aleja de la luz para descubrirnos a nosotros mismos en una experiencia sensitiva única. De la mano del maestro Lewerentz se dará cita en este ensayo a algunas experimentaciones arquitectónicas con una singular caja oscura, un medioambiente asfáltico y negro: black box en Lund. *Habitar en la ceguera* nos sugiere una revisión de nuestro campo perceptivo, habitando con la imaginación estos lugares introspectivos en los que las leyes parecen haber desaparecido. La ceguera, como afirmaba Borges en aquel discurso, hace que el cuerpo se una al espacio para soñar con un nuevo habitar más poético y creativo (Figura 1)

**Palabras clave:** ceguera y habitar; paisajes perceptivos, Chuck Yeager; Manuel Parra-Danilo Veras, Lewerentz-Anshelm.

## ABSTRACT

Jorge Luis Borges confessed, on more than one occasion, that his modest blindness was not the dramatic darkness that common sense believes but rather a refuge that, in his case, was built in a slow twilight. At the end of his speech to receive the Honoris Causa degree from the Faculty of Philosophy and Letters of the University of Chile, the Argentine writer spoke about the gradual parting of his sight and the pleasant sensation of entering a new, richer, deeper, and more creative living space. Relying on blindness as an introspective landscape, as a habitable space where fantasy meets realism, it is in this context that the essay proposes to inhabit, with thought, a weightless and infinite domestic space. Other artists achieved it - Groussac, Monet, Homer, Joyce, Herzog, Pallasmaa, and Italo Calvino - turning this kind of induced blindness into an intimate and creative room in which to settle at the end of their lives. Professor Yeager introduces this story, making us ascend to the heavens in search of an inspiring, black, and profound space. The house dreamed by Manuel Parra and Danilo Veras leads us away from the light to discover ourselves in a unique sensory experience. From the hand of the master Lewerentz, this essay will bring together some architectural experimentations with a singular dark box, an asphalt and black environment: black box in Lund. *Living in blindness* suggests a revision of our perceptual field, imaginatively inhabiting these introspective places where laws seem to have disappeared. Blindness, as Borges mentioned in that speech, makes the body join the space to dream of a new, more poetic, and creative dwelling. (Figure 1)

**Keywords:** Blindness and living, perceptual landscapes, Chuck Yeager; Manuel Parra-Danilo Veras, Lewerentz-Anshelm.

## RESUMO

Jorge Luis Borges confessou, em mais de uma ocasião, que sua modesta cegueira não era a escuridão dramática que o senso comum acredita que fosse, mas sim um refúgio que, no seu caso, foi construído em um lento crepúsculo. No final de seu discurso para receber o título Honoris Causa da Faculdade de Filosofia e Letras da Universidade do Chile, o escritor argentino relatou a lenta despedida de sua visão e a agradável sensação de entrar em um novo espaço habitável, mais rico, mais profundo e mais criativo. Confiando na cegueira como uma paisagem introspectiva, como um espaço habitável onde a fantasia se encontra com o realismo, é nesse contexto que o ensaio propõe habitar com o pensamento um espaço doméstico leve e infinito. Outros artistas conseguiram isso - Groussac, Monet, Homer, Joyce, Herzog, Pallasmaa e Italo Calvino - transformando esse tipo de cegueira induzida em um cômodo íntimo e criativo no qual se instalaram no final de suas vidas. O professor Yeager apresenta essa história fazendo-nos subir aos céus em busca de um espaço inspirador, negro e profundo. A casa sonhada por Manuel Parra e Danilo Veras nos afasta da luz para nos descobrirmos em uma experiência sensorial única. Das mãos do mestre Lewerentz, este ensaio reunirá algumas experiências arquitetônicas com uma singular caixa escura, um ambiente asfáltico e negro: black box em Lund. *Habitar na cegueira* sugere uma revisão de nosso campo perceptivo, habitando com a imaginação esses lugares introspectivos nos quais as leis parecem ter desaparecido. A cegueira, como Borges afirmou naquele discurso, faz com que o corpo se junte ao espaço para sonhar com um novo habitar, mais poético e criativo (Figura 1)

**Palavras-chave:** cegueira e habitar; paisagens perceptivas, Chuck Yeager; Manuel Parra-Danilo Veras, Lewerentz-Anshelm





**Figure 1.** Cartographies of the house: inhabiting thresholds - sample 00. This polyptych aims to define the house from beginning to end, from threshold to threshold. It shows a folded sheet of rooms, where the entrance and exit are the elements that nuance and dilute the boundaries with the outside. A simple movement of the hands unfolds on the table the poetry of the perceptive landscapes that are part of our houses. Source: Prepared by the authors.

**Black Atmospheres: Professor Yeager, 1950**

This essay invites us to approach the world more deeply and sensitively. Through blindness understood as a house and shelter, this text of architecture immerses us in a dimension where words become landscapes, verses become houses, and their calligraphy an introspective atmosphere. Three houses and three masters who inhabit a common space: blindness. Three life experiences bring us into a state of consciousness where emotions and feelings can be explored in a more accessible, more profound, and more sensitive way. Three domestic miniatures, at the antipodes of each other, are the very essence of this poetic dwelling about which we write.

*Living in blindness* explores beauty in everyday details, words, symbols, the petite, and what shelters us, and makes us happy. A poetic living that suggests we experience reality more intensely and meaningfully, finding beauty in the most subtle details and revealing the underlying harmony when we close our eyes. This text is an inner, unpublished, and inaugural journey that invites us to explore our emotions, reflect on our existence, and share our experiences uniquely and personally. A weightless and deep poetic living, where every word becomes a threshold that transports us to a world where imagination, creativity, and fantasy reign. This essay is an invitation to inhabit the world with poetry and discover the house hidden in each verse.

There was an American pilot whose flying skills and maneuvering abilities became legendary during World War II, to the point that some

considered him a supernatural being. Professor Chuck Yeager was chosen to head the supersonic secret. In October 1947, at 24, he broke the insurmountable barrier contradicting many physicists' advice and conventional wisdom. Yeager was a pure creature of movement and speed and one of the most instinctive pilots the American Air Force ever had (Hutchinson, 1969).

Lieutenant General Fred J. Ascani said of him, "He was the only pilot I had flown with who gave the impression that he was part of the cockpit instrumentation. He was so in sync with the machine that more than being flesh and blood, he seemed to be an extension of it." (Yeager, 1994).

Yeager routinely had his students climb above the first limit of the atmosphere to give them a taste of outer space, the real space, as the professor liked to say. An aerial zone where the atmosphere becomes black, blind, and silent, but in the molecular structure of the air, it still maintains the aerodynamic lift force.

In November 1994, Yeager published an article about his methodologies and tactics when flying. The text consists of three parts, outlining the basic principles for deforming and dilating the threshold of any envelope. For the teacher, there was only one maxim that he tried to transmit to his students: to close their eyes, to live in blindness in order to, in this intimate solitude, learn to see more (Perec, 2001) **I** of what your adversary is capable of seeing (Sartre, 1972). That is, to free the eyes from objects and conventional habits that follow an object-oriented vision. Yeager teaches us to close our eyes to see the whole space, to truly and completely assimilate it. "To explore the aerospace qualities of the atmosphere, it is not necessary to see; it is enough to let yourself go" with your eyes closed; to let the inner dynamicity move, dance, listen, like an ethereal floating body, free of obstacles and forming part of the machine (Kwinter, 2002).

Yeager taught generations of pilots how to fly effectively in the air, using risky dives in this blindness. It was an ideal place for the practice of dangerous maneuvers where time and gravity seemed to stop. This wild sky - his home, as the General used to call it- was the very source of creativity every day; this living space showed great potential to experiment with new flight techniques. The General used this region of space as a laboratory to practice: the strange density of that blind air, the prevailing silence, and unusual gravity values benefited the creation and testing of new flotation techniques, allowing the student to experience things that were not possible in the real world (Flammarion, 1902).

Suddenly, the roof of the sky had become an immense and unlimited unknown plain and a landscape open to imagination and fantasy (Figure 2) (Yeager, 1965):

**1** Perec (2001) "Do we know what is important? [...] Nothing catches our attention. We can't see. We have to go slower, almost awkwardly. [...] Force you to see more simply" (p.84).

**Figure 2.** Black atmosphere.  
Flight training. Beyond 80,000 feet. Source: Yeager, Ch. (1994).



“It’s almost impossible to explain the feeling in that place, it was as if I was part of that Mustang, an extension of that damn accelerator. That blindness made me feel so connected to that plane that I was piloting it to the limit of its capabilities. I couldn’t see but felt the engine in my bones. I couldn’t see but felt the dashboard rattling when I entered a stall. I couldn’t see, but its smell indicated that I had reached the maximum level of maneuverability. In this other region of space, I could fly by instinct. I tell my students that we must listen to the air and follow its flow, but to do so, we must first learn to see without eyes.”

Let these atmospheres act as introspective landscapes where a certain emotional and perceptive sensitivity grows; let these tactics and thresholds act as an introduction and methodology to this essay that invites us to immerse ourselves in two case studies that, we think, exemplify well the idea raised in this issue of the journal: turning our gaze towards a transcendent dwelling, which evokes fantasy, creativity and the sublime. A poetic, richer, more profound, and more creative living proposes a revision of our perceptual field (Bachelard, 1957).

All that is left is to get ready for the journey. A journey inside a more human and profound living, where the flame that illuminates it is not the light but its absence. Let us fearlessly enter this thick shadow to blindly discover a world full of perceptive experiences. Who could doubt there is poetry in that house dreamed up by Manuel Parra and Danilo Veras? A unique way of thinking and doing, with which one can model the dreams of habitable spaces, impossible in other latitudes. Who could doubt that there is poetry in the green blade that grows in the immensity of that black ocean? That lachrymatory of smells made to the master's measure as a chest of his thoughts. A house and a black asphalt box in which Lewerentz was, little by little, shutting down his life.

### **Perceptive landscapes: the dream house. Manuel Parra-Danilo Veras, Mexico, 1997**

Danilo Veras Godoy, an architect born in Houston (Texas) in 1949, graduated from the University of San Carlos (Guatemala) in 1975 and died in Cuernavaca (Mexico) in 2007; he received the inheritance of finishing a house started by the architect Manuel Parra Mercado (1911-1997), considered one of the greatest Latin American architects of the twentieth century (Cruz, 2016). The assignment came about after the master's death, by his express wish, after he visited, already blind, the house where Danilo lived. Like Borges, Parra became blind in a slow twilight when he still had things to see, and even without vision, he never stopped doing.

For some reason, Parra wanted to know Danilo Veras's house. He explored it by touching all its interior elements with extreme delicacy, following various paths that made him stretch or bend down and crouch from here to there, caressing the floor. Parra recognized Danilo's architecture by touching it, caressing it with his hands, and feeling its echoes (Seguí, 2001). With this inspection, Parra made Danilo his spiritual heir, pointing him out as an architect with the necessary sensitivity to finish the works that would have to be interrupted because of his death.

Parra, almost blind, projected modeling proposals with his hands, which he then directed indicatively helped by the visual appreciation of his wife. Parra's blind projects are models and peculiar drawings where hands play the singular role of explorers and determiners of the voids and their envelopes. Parra's models are shells, empty bowls with wires, and clay. The drawings are thick strokes where the architect subtracted incredible voids with an eraser (Ortiz, 1984). The portrait of Manuel Parra made by his friend, the painter Naret (José Terán), uses these same issues, blinding his left eye in the black of the drawing until it disappears and veiling the right eye between his fingers with a dazzling white spot (Figure 3).

It is necessary to imagine those hands acting, first in the amplitude of the air or on the warm and extensive surface of the paper, inventing movements that probe virtual contents, marking implausible footprints





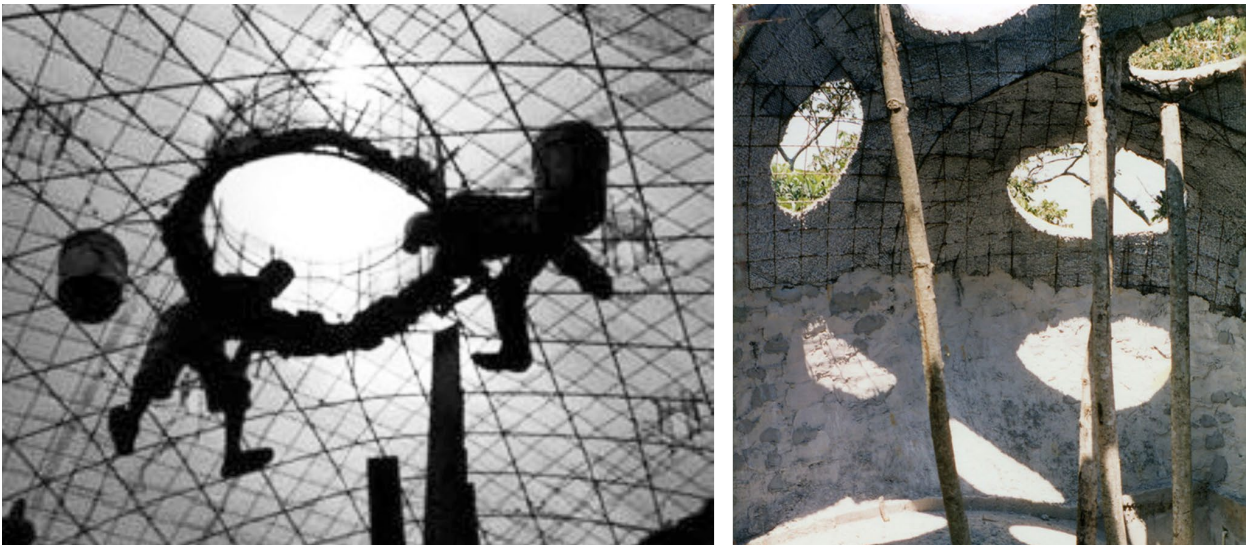
**Figure 3.** Manuel Parra, architect. (left) Portrait by José Terán (Naret), 1969. (right). Drawing made by the architect, The Dream House, 1970. Source: Cruz, L. (2016).

in space. These hands think Juhani Pallasmaa would affirm (Pallasmaa, 2006). It is necessary to imagine the repetition of these movements until they become structured, memorizable, and scaled outlines. And then, it is possible to imagine these same hands, transformed into superficiality, delimiting the edges where the empty outlines reached are to be housed, making other types of movements, now invested with touch to caress the matter of their construction.

In a conversation with Javier Seguí in Xalapa (Mexico), Danilo confessed to feeling a certain unease caused by the glimpse that he could finish his unfinished house, the one that the master had commissioned him years ago, as so it was. I like to imagine Danilo Veras finishing that house in thoughts, with his eyes closed, dreaming it as his master would have done, immersed in voluntary and sensitive darkness without plans, memories, or normative rules. Danilo became a sculptor of hollows, which he modeled day by day in the privacy of that blind house. Cast domes, subtle nerves, whimsical cantilevers, or folded slabs that gently push us, inventing situations, fabricating wills. A unique way of thinking and doing, with which one can model the dreams of habitable spaces is impossible in other latitudes (Figure 4).

This imagined house is not seen. This house is lived by touching, caressing, and feeling its echoes. This house is modeled with the eyes closed, handcrafted, like pottery, shaping the material until it becomes a concentrated covering loaded with perceptual significance. Like small milestones that evoke parallel



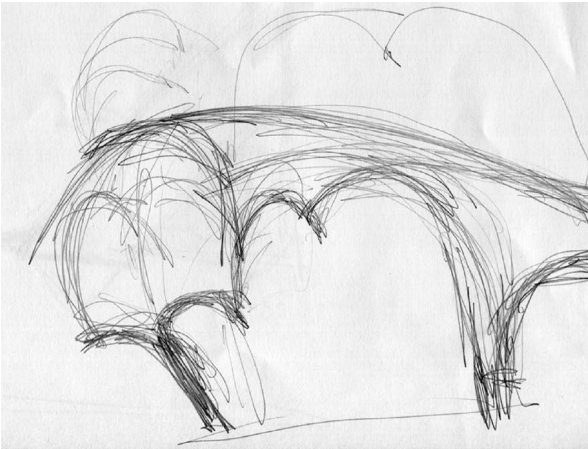


existences, like urns destined to contain dreams in their voids and vital interstices. Letting the body act, move, touch, listen, like an ethereal thought free of attachments, listening to the echoes of the voids, smelling the materials and their shadows.

That house could have served as a mental scenography for José Saramago in his novel *Ensayo sobre la ceguera* (Essay on Blindness) (Saramago, 1995), where he states that architecture would continue to exist even if we were all blind. We would move by feeling the walls, dragging our feet along the floor; and trying to build in our memory an image formed by hardness, textures, temperatures, and cold or hot surfaces. I try to imagine how the drawings of these architectures would be; perhaps they would be closer to the idea of engraving, or maybe they would be lists of precise indications for the perception of space; coordinates, measurements, and surface finishes would be agglutinated on the paper. What I am sure of is that - as Saramago advances in his essay - we would move from the visual values, color, size, and shape that dominates the contemporary architectural project to appreciate new poetic living with values linked to touch: winds, temperatures, hardness, polished; or to sound: reverberations, sounds, shadows, reflections. We would appreciate the difference between the superficial coldness and acoustic reflection of a polished stone versus the warm touch and sound quality of felt; we would discover new materials and new ways of using them (Le Breton, 2010).

In that dream house, the floors would become of greater importance in the creation of new spaces; any small bump or the slightest ramp would attract our attention and form part of the creative speculation of the project, and new situations would lead us to occupy all kinds of levels without discontinuities such as those produced by the stairs. The walls would play as floors with slight concavities to grasp with our fingers. We would oppose the sharp edges in sculptural molded and polished corners and

**Figure 4.** Danilo Veras - architect and sculptor of hollows. Cast domes, ribs, pillars, and holes in the matter. Source: Casa de los Milagros, Coatepec, Veracruz (Mexico), 2002



**Figure 5.** Danilo Veras, House of Dreams. (left) Thought drawing: shells, empty bowls, wires, and clay (right) The architect, in the garden of his house, modeling a scale model of one of the rooms of the Dream House. Danilo Veras makes habitable miniatures, small enlarged worlds. He understands living in a poetic way: as a scaled miniature that models and gives life with its hands. Source: Seguí, J. (2001).

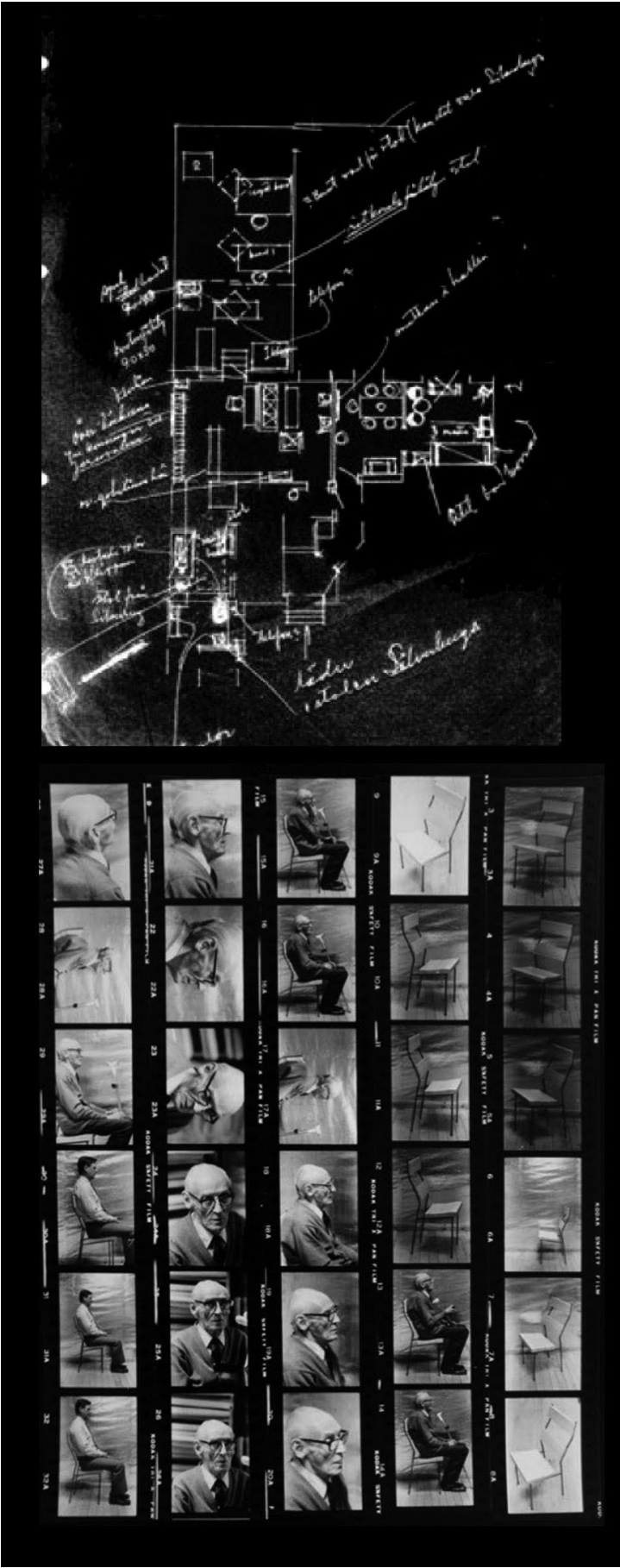
warped surfaces, forcing us to slide our hands along them. Hands would play a decisive role; our fingers would slide through the mortar, looking for the shapeless difference between materials. In that dream house, I have seen its inhabitants caress the walls of its rooms, run their fingertips excitedly along the roughness of the clay, and feel the dark touch of the skin of its chairs (Figure 5).

**A house and a floating box: black box.  
Klass Ahshelm-Sigurd Lewerentz, Lund, (Sweden), 1969**

If there is an architect, a master, who has worked with darkness as the substance of the architectural project, if there is a space in the history of architecture that simulates the sensations described so far in our essay, it is that weightless and dark black room, black box, made by the master Sigur Lewerentz, for his personal and creative use. A house and a black and asphalt box where Lewerentz himself was, little by little, shutting down his life. “Touch the brick, feel its rough surface” (Ahlin, 1987), he used to tell his disciples, as if one could attribute to his architecture the qualities rehearsed in Saramago’s novel.

It is 1969; Master Lewerentz is 84 years old. His frequent visits to the hospital during recent months forced him to travel constantly from Skanör. This, in addition to the death of his wife Etty, made Bernt Nyberg, a young friend and fellow student in the last years of his life, help him seek residence in Lund (Caldenby, 1998). He put him in touch with the architect Klas Anshelm, who gave him part of one of his houses. In the spacious back garden, under giant fruit trees, both built a small studio, the last of their black boxes, walls impregnated with asphalt and silver emulsions, where the master worked until the last days of his life (Curtis, 2004).

For this research, we have had the opportunity to be there, to immerse ourselves in the Lewerentz and Anshelm archives at the Stockholm Architecture Museum, to experiment, measure, and draw an unpublished drawing of it (Figure 6).



**Figure 6.** Black Box in Lund, 1972. The conversations around Lewerentz's table took place often, and it was Bernt Nyberg who especially documented this era. (top) The things of the master. Lewerentz made the drawing with the arrangement of his things in the house. (bottom) The photographs were taken on the occasion of the design of the chair and the table commissioned by the company Töreboda. Apart from Lewerentz, Nyberg and Anshelm appear around the chair. Architects who, together with Edman, formed what has become known as the Lund School. The three adjustable reading lamps that have always been on Lewerentz's table, lit up the conversations on which the works of these three architects were founded in the subsequent years. Source: Previously unreleased images courtesy of Arkitekturmuseet, Stockholm.

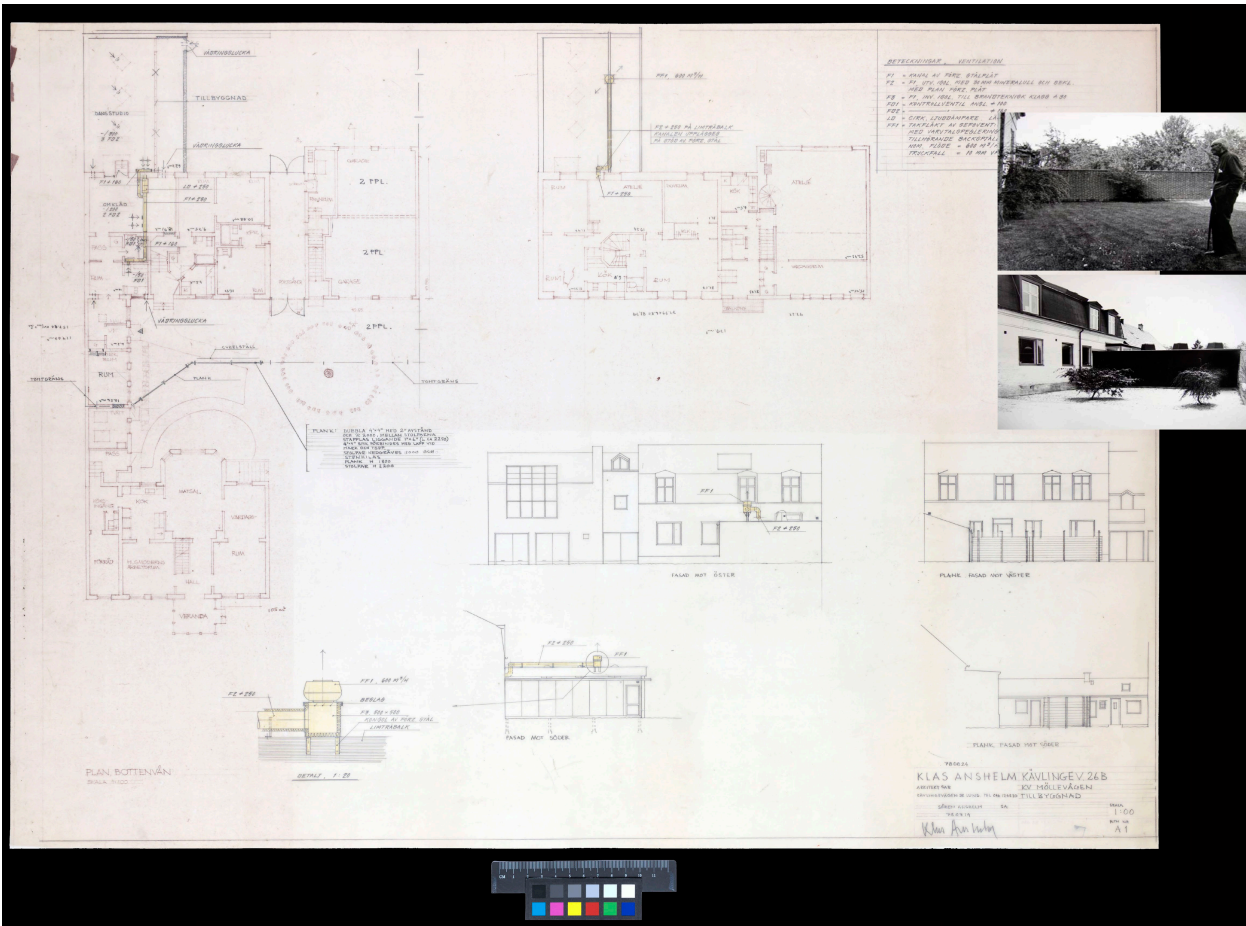




**Figure 7.** 26 Kavlingeavagen in Lund, 1970. Floor plan and longitudinal section of the plot. Source: Drawing and images made by the author, 2012.

The house Anshelm gave to the master is in a quiet neighborhood, a short walk from the historic center and very close to the hospital he regularly frequented. It is an elongated plot, which gives access to each house built inside, three according to the original plans. There are certain differences compared to the planimetry consulted in the archives, mainly related to its variations to accommodate the master during the last years of his life. The constructions are grouped in a sequence accompanying the way of touring the plot. All of it must be understood as part of a vast, green, and wild garden, where trees, stones, benches, tables, and more or less regular constructions are glimpsed.

The first house, with a substantially quadrangular floor plan, with access from the front garden and rear exit to the intermediate plot, occupies its entire plan with two levels and a small attic and basement. It is the largest and gives its image to number 26 Kavlingeavagen Street. The second house, narrow and elongated, is where the master is installed. With an L-shaped floor plan, the building is supported by the side party wall and has access from the intermediate garden; unlike the first, its height is variable, with a low body and a two-story construction that delimits this intermediate space. Finally, the third house is installed as a bridge between the previous house and the other party wall, finishing closing the intermediate plot space. Jörgen Fogelqvist, an artist who maintained a close relationship with Lewerentz during these years, lived

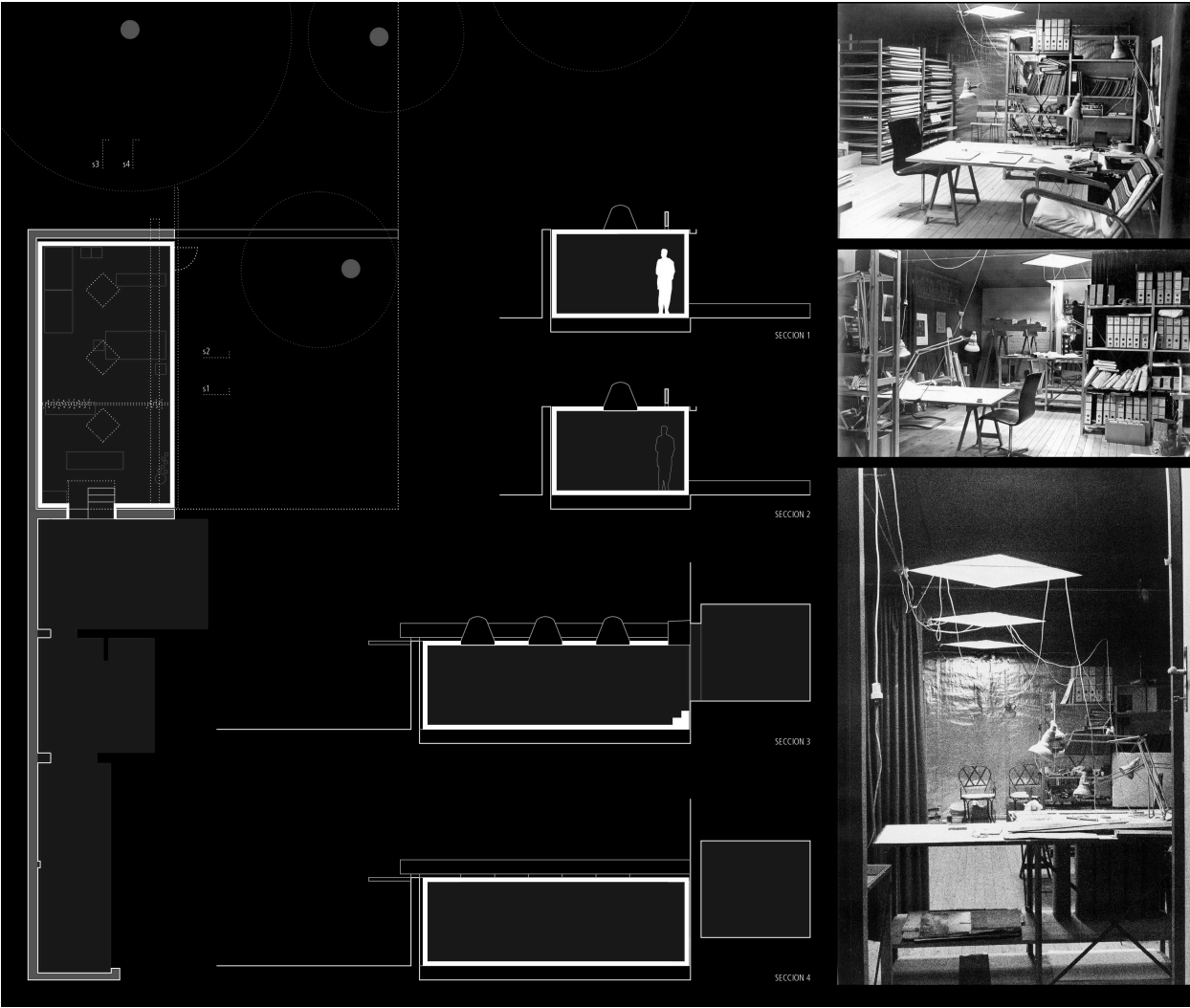


there. Between both houses, an open passage on the ground floor allows access to the bottom of the plot, large and with lush vegetation, which becomes the real treasure that gives meaning to this domestic sequence (Figure 7).

K. Anshelm gives him part of the ground floor of one of these houses, the second partially occupying the ground floor and with access from the intermediate garden. Despite his age, Lewerentz was still active in his work; taking advantage of some walls in the back garden, the two devised a small space with almost no light and windows, a kind of black box that serves the master as a refuge and small studio. A few months passed from the moment Lewerentz moved to Lund, and the studio was built. It is a time when Lewerentz's relationship with Anshelm is consolidated due to the project and construction of this suggestive object.

Lewerentz's studio in Lund has always been seen as a contribution of Anshelm, to which Lewerentz moves when the work is finished. This statement is not entirely true. Due to the proximity of their homes, Lewerentz and Anshelm maintained a close relationship during the small project. The architects constantly exchanged impressions during 1969 and 1970, months when Lewerentz occupied the Lund house without the studio still being available (Figure 8).

**Figure 8.** 26 Kavlingeavagen in Lund, Klas Anshelm, 1970. Original floor plans of the house, submitted to the Town Hall for the construction of the Black Box. Above, the master in the back garden; the object is not yet built. Below, just finished. Source: Planimetry and images provided by Arkitekturmuseet, Stockholm.



**Figura 9.** Black Box in Lund, 1970. Habitable miniature. Floor and section plan. Source: Drawings made by the author, 2012. Images courtesy of Arkitekturmuseet, Stockholm.

Black Box is a simple body of fifty square meters, a poetic experiment covered inside with aluminum sheets. Without windows, only three square skylights are placed according to their diagonal and an opening coinciding with the access steps from the house. A house and a box, airtight and smooth, wrapped in silver foil and a pine-boarded floor; designed as a precious piece of furniture where to store the last days of the master. It was built without foundation, directly on a gravel bed, since when they took this strange object to the City Hall, any attempt to fit it into the regulations was useless, reaching an agreement with the officials that it could be understood as a temporary construction. This is the magic of this space, which hangs from the ceiling floating above the garden. This box levitates suspended from a massive wooden beam supported on the old house and a backyard wall.

Black Box, a small interior space of 3x6x2 meters, is a chest and a box of thoughts, a habitable miniature where the senses are sharpened and specialized appropriately (Figure 9). A beautiful consequence of this





**Figura 10.** Interior of the Black Box in Lund, 2012. The vine the teacher patiently helped grow now occupies much of the space. Leaves, lithographs, and shadows on the aluminum walls.  
Source: Images taken by the author, 2012.

way of building, in light floating on the earth, was the appearance of a vine through one of the joints of the wooden floor, which the teacher will patiently help to climb until he sees it reach the studio's ceiling. A tiny green blade grows in the middle of a black ocean that makes the intimate something sublime. During my visit to this place, I saw how that tiny sprout already envelops the entire space. Lars Berlin, its current owner, has turned that place into a fragment of his garden. There is no furniture, lamps, chairs, models, or drawings today; nature has been tamed to inhabit this place that Lars now lovingly pampers and preserves as if he were the soul of that space or who knows of the master himself. Black Box has thus become a lacrymatory of smells, plant prints, and fragrances that evoke other times and worlds (Figure 10).

The master slowly collects his things, and in the autumn of 1975, he begins to fade away. First, his legs and then his eyes, to slowly immerse himself in a black space, getting blacker and deeper. His last conversations were dedicated to Bert Nyberg, to whom he confessed the intimacies of his blindness. Almost fifty years later, that poetic experiment is still floating in this garden at number 26 Klavlingeavagen in Lund.

CONCLUSIONS

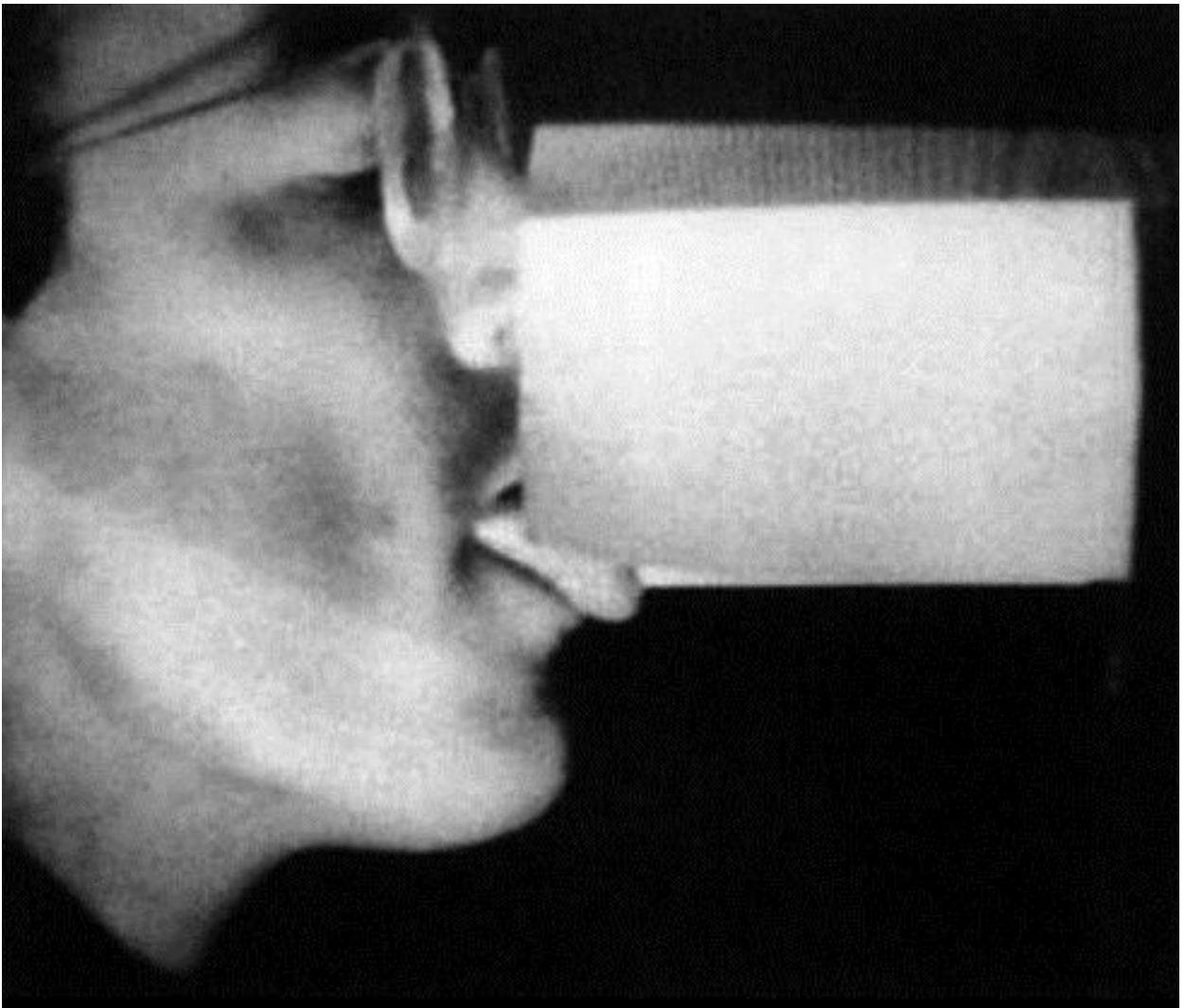
Intangible for a poetic living

For a long time, I have been obsessed with the experience of seeing and ceasing to see, seduced by the idea of achieving a kind of induced blindness, of seeing with closed eyes. In Six Proposals for the Next Millennium, the writer Italo Calvino (Calvino, 1998) stated that fantasy is a place without light. There is no better sentence to conclude this essay than to define these spaces as laboratories for our imagination and senses, where light cannot exist. This text suggests an idea for a time overflowing with images: not using the eyes. Not having eyes is like having nothing, and going blind does not mean not seeing but doing it with your hands or your hearing, taste, and smell, which is the best possible way to truly see things (Merleau-Ponty, 1975). The image that a young Herzog gives us is eloquent in this sense; with the model in his hands and his eyes closed, he looks at it with his tongue and caresses it with his salivary glands. Herzog licks the object to absorb ideas for his architecture; the eyes have not been enough, and the architect must sip the space to really taste it (Figure 11).

Deliberately turning off our eyes will lead us to forget the steps that anticipate behaviors, the paths of memory. To project without eyes means to do it inward, to recognize yourself in what surrounds you, as something yours, intimate and close. That is why the emotion of finding without the eyes supposes a moment of shared life, where you are the other; where the body is suspended in an immense black space. Moving without eyes will lead us to think without them, and when this happens, everything is new, appears for the first time, is born, and dies instantly. This idea will allow our senses to appear: blindness appears and, with it, the body (García, 2017).

Without eyes, we will discover the articulated movement of our body in space, feeling the rhythmic and fluid elements that inhabit it. Not having eyes does not mean being blind; it is instead the boundary between vision and the absence of sensory perception. A state where one can be, without becoming fully 2, maps for disorientation with which we will come to feel the energies of space and the gods that inhabit it. Without eyes, we will pay attention to the nuances, to what is not seen but heard; we

2 (PALAZUELO 2000) "A fragment of space that is neither on this side nor on the other, neither outside nor inside, that is the end and beginning at the same time, light and shadow at the same time, map and territory at the same time, so defining of the edge that it actually blurs all the edges" (quote/excerpt from the podcast *How to Be Pablo Palazuelo*. from the exhibition *Pablo Palazuelo. The Line as an Architectural Dream*), in Torrijos, P. (2023-presente) <https://www.spreaker.com/user/11299905/como-suena-edificio-13-pablo-palazuelo>



will feel the temperature changes inside a wall or the wind's caress. Being an architect entails using the eyes this way, closing them to see the true space.

We have been taught to understand the structure of wood, the weight of the stone, and even the magical character of glass. Facing this technical field are the intangible, non-manipulated substances that constitute our natural environment and are the origin of the constructive materials we refer to as the earth, the vegetation, the rain, or the air. This essay aims to ensure that these intangibles, the essence of a new creative space, offer new possibilities to contemporary living (Holl, 2011).

As Borges stated in the speech summarizing this essay, "This induced blindness will allow us to explore with our mind other fields, other worlds; more intimate, more architectural, purer" (Borges, 2000). This new poetic, contemporary, and fresh way of living is a perceptive landscape: an environment where narratives, descriptions, sensations, confessions, events, and projects are embedded (Fernández-Trucios, 2023).

**Figure 11.** Jacques Herzog licking a model. Herzog runs his tongue over the paper surface. A gesture that we quickly associate with gustatory activities but that, applied to an inedible object, obtains an added value. It manifests this need to expand the perception of the material and spatial conditions of what has been tasted through the most intimate of the senses. The image is a still from the video recorded by J. Herzog in 1978 and was used by Luis Fernández-Galiano during the lecture given at the Juan March Foundation, Madrid, in 2011. Source: Image provided by Herzog & De Meuron, architects.

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# EXTERIOR CLADDING IN THE GERMAN ARCHITECTURE OF VALDIVIA. A METAPHOR OF REFINEMENT AND SOCIAL DISTINCTION

LOS RECUBRIMIENTOS EXTERIORES EN LA  
ARQUITECTURA ALEMANA DE VALDIVIA. UNA  
METÁFORA DE REFINAMIENTO Y DISTINCIÓN  
SOCIAL

REVESTIMENTO EXTERNO NA ARQUITETURA  
ALEMÃ EM VALDIVIA. UMA METÁFORA PARA O  
REQUINTE E A DISTINÇÃO SOCIAL



**Figure 0.** Building with decorations emulating classical design in metal edges and lateral facade. Source: Preparation by the Author.

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## RESUMEN

A consecuencia del proceso de colonización impulsado desde mediados del siglo XIX en el Sur de Chile y con ello, el arribo sistemático de inmigrantes europeos, se ha favorecido con el tiempo un discurso oficioso para sostener el aporte trascendente de extranjeros en la zona, así como también de las arquitecturas devengadas del mismo, emergiendo con ello un discurso de valoración y catalogación ampliamente difundido; la «arquitectura alemana del sur de Chile». Sin perjuicio de la agenda colonizadora y su impacto general ampliamente difundidos, los progresos económicos y las mejores condiciones materiales no son asuntos transversales dentro de esta colonia migrante. Dentro de este escenario, la *Zona Típica de la calle General Pedro Lagos* ubicada en la ciudad de Valdivia constituye un sector altamente representativo en cuanto a su reconocimiento social, así como de la asignación de valoración de los inmuebles situados ahí como exponentes de un prolífico proceso de colonización. En un grupo específicos de inmuebles en esta zona, revisaremos y expondremos antecedentes pormenorizados que permitirán erigir una escena arquitectural situada y compleja, revelando los mecanismos empleados para exhibir prosperidad y ascenso social como vehículo expiatorio para recubrir condiciones de producción ajenas a la pulcritud del emprendimiento capitalista alemán y la sofisticación europea que tanto se deseaba transmitir en las ciudades bajo procesos de inmigración temprana.

**Palabras clave:** colonización, inmigraciones, discurso, inmuebles, revestimientos.

## ABSTRACT

As a result of the colonization process that began in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in southern Chile and, with it, the systematic arrival of European immigrants, an informal discourse has been favored over time to sustain the transcendent contribution of foreigners in the area, as well as the architectures accrued, thus emerging a widely spread valuation and cataloging discourse; the «German architecture of southern Chile.» Notwithstanding the widely publicized colonizing agenda and its overall impact, economic progress and better material conditions are not transversal issues within this migrant colony. Within this scenario, the Typical Zone of General Pedro Lagos Street, located in the city of Valdivia, constitutes a highly representative sector in terms of its social recognition and the valuation given to the properties located there as exponents of a prolific colonization process. In a specific group of buildings in this area, this article will review and present detailed background information that will allow building a situated and complex architectural scene, revealing the mechanisms used to exhibit prosperity and social climbing as an expiatory vehicle to cover production conditions alien to the neatness of capitalist German entrepreneurship and the European sophistication that was so desired to be transmitted in the cities undergoing fledgling immigration processes.

**Keywords:** colonization, immigration, discourse, building, cladding.

## RESUMO

Como consequência do processo de colonização promovido desde meados do século XIX no sul do Chile e, com ele, a chegada sistemática de imigrantes europeus, desenvolveu-se ao longo do tempo um discurso não oficial para sustentar a contribuição transcendente dos estrangeiros na região, bem como das arquiteturas que dela resultaram, dando origem a um discurso de valorização e catalogação amplamente difundido: a “arquitetura alemã do sul do Chile”. A despeito da agenda colonizadora e de seu impacto geral amplamente disseminado, o progresso econômico e as melhores condições materiais não são questões transversais a essa colônia de migrantes. Dentro desse cenário, a Zona Típica da Rua General Pedro Lagos, localizada na cidade de Valdivia, constitui um setor altamente representativo em termos de seu reconhecimento social, bem como da valorização dos imóveis nela situados como expoentes de um prolífico processo de colonização. Em um grupo específico de imóveis dessa área, revisaremos e exporemos informações detalhadas de antecedentes que nos permitirão erigir um cenário arquitetônico situado e complexo, revelando os mecanismos utilizados para exibir prosperidade e ascensão social como veículo expiatório para cobrir condições de produção alheias ao asseio primoroso da iniciativa capitalista alemã e à sofisticação europeia que tanto se desejava transmitir nas cidades submetidas aos primeiros processos de imigração.

**Palavras-chave:** colonization, immigration, discourse, building, cladding.

*Rose, oh reiner Widerspruch, Lust,  
Niemandes Schlaf zu sein unter soviel  
Lidern.*

*Rosa, oh contradicción pura, deleite  
de ser sueño de nadie bajo tantos  
párpados.*

Rainer Maria Rilke [1875-1926] Epitafio

## INTRODUCTION

In Chile, driven by several State agents since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, the country's south experienced a systematic migratory process whereby people and families, mainly from Western Europe, arrived, entailing an insertion process of social, economic, and political influences. This is how German immigrants became a representative colony, both on the shores of Llanquihue Lake and in the cities of Osorno and Valdivia (Blancpain, 1985; Guarda, 1953, 1973, 1979, 2001; Held, 1965; Krebs, 2001; Sanhueza, 2006). This process and the analysis of its consequences have been extensively documented, establishing by consensus the magnitude of their impact and the transformations introduced. One is the creation of an extensive volume of constructions, socially recognized as "German Architecture" (Cerdea Brintrup, 1987; Cherubini, 2016; D'Alençon & Prado, 2013; Guarda, 1971, 1980, 1995; Guarda & Rodríguez, 2013; Gross, 1978, 2015; Irrarázaval, 1996; Montecinos et al., 1981), which, over time, have been valued and accepted as the material inheritance of migrant subjects.

In this way, the issues related to the architectures of this process seem to be matters seen or settled and, when facing incipient controversy, immediately resolved without requiring acute examination, conforming only to refer to what was previously stated in the literature on the subject. From this position, the European influence on the architecture of the Chilean south resonates in line with a colonization itinerary. However, we would like to return to the architecture, review some of the background, and, above all, try to overcome the expeditious classification of some of these buildings, introducing a hypothesis that some records and attributes would uniquely characterize them, moving towards understanding them as unpublished cultural products (Browne, 1988). This approach alone is disruptive, but based on the literature above, it is also possible to recognize a positioning structure through an extreme assessment of foreign contributions to architectural practices as a result of the migratory process, fostering a willingness to exhibit (Horn, 2021) a corollary of subjects of success and prosperity.

## Approximation and method

To suggest the revision of the attributes constitutive of architectural cataloging, widely disseminated and efficiently reproduced for an unofficial discourse, would seem a reckless operation since the records are plausible and socially accepted. However, the emergence of a different, broad, and complex epistemological statute directed by decolonial movements (Beverley, 2004; de Sousa Santos, 2010, 2018; Dussel, 2011; Fanon, 2009) makes it possible to open an approximation capable of silencing the homogeneous and comparative gaze, installed as a dominant position of unquestionable veracity (Deleuze & Guattari, 2010; Derrida, 2006, 2008), exerting coercion on society and also impacting architectures, to articulate discourses in favor of specific, external and, above all, alien images. In the future, we will try to address these reductions in the proposed analysis scenario, from where the itineraries of modernity and colonization will have found a sufficiently forceful material means for their deployment and conformity in architecture. In short, through revision, parceling, and observation operations, it is intended to progress toward a profuse and, above all, situated understanding of some architectural manifestations in the scenario of the migratory processes of southern Chile, reducing the expeditious presumptions under a colonial perspective on what was observed, with the desire to approach our own, honest and singular story.

Supported by the notion of *collection* (Baudrillard, 2010), we will address the enunciation mechanism and the evidence used, where “(...) it is rarely the presence, and more often than not it is the absence of the object that gives rise to social discourse” (Baudrillard, 2010, p.120). This, grouped with the understanding of material goods as social capital, will allow for identifying how a particular social group uses them to establish rules of distinction (Bourdieu, 1998) that can be applied from an architectural perspective.<sup>1</sup> This ends in a displacement and willingness to look at what happened again (Horn, 2021), understood as a methodological willingness of the observer(s), positioning the gaze in one's own time, neutralizing the lights of a period to perceive its darkness (Agamben, 2011) and thereby challenge the preconceived categories regarding typologies and morphologies, as well as their expression and use. Everywhere, architectural - and also cultural- possibility is a silent condition, waiting to be observed and translated as powerful and singular elements (Baudrillard & Nouvel, 2001) endowed with meaning (Deleuze, 2005), modifying the perception of the known and indeed, the announced in the heritage field.

To achieve this, the procedure used is of a hypothetical deductive type because it tries to look at aspects barely addressed in the available literature, complementing it with documentation, records,

<sup>1</sup> Pierre Bourdieu's research [1930-2002] considers furniture in French homes of the 1970s, carrying out aesthetic and functional analyses of their arrangement, ordering, and hierarchies. Even when there are no explicit references to real estate, it allows us to standardize the dimensions mentioned because they are acquired material goods.

and fieldwork activities supported by a theoretical structure from human-social sciences. To mention some revealing aspects, we will focus on durable elements in real estate. These are aspects that are not affected - or undergo drastic changes or suppressions- over an extended period, using their treatment and analysis as constant variables. This decision is argued due to the limited bibliographic, photographic, and planimetric material available for architecture and construction in Valdivia between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

To accompany this process, we will rely on the cataloging and classification of objects, following the proposition of Baudrillard (2010), offering key aspects to address this issue, namely, first, that objects can be classified. However, that classification has implications and different mechanisms and categories that would exceed the solely material or functional descriptions, opening a scenario of the relationship between subjects and objects. Secondly, these objects contain dialog and receptivity of the World that welcomes and shapes them; therefore, meddling in objects is also a matter that concerns society and its people:

“Thus objects (especially property) have, apart from their practical function, a primordial function as a container; a vessel of the imaginary. Its psychological receptivity. They are the reflection of a vision of the world where each being is conceived as a “vessel of interiority” and to relationships as transcendent correlations of substances” (Baudrillard, 2010, p.27).

With this premise, we propose investigating the architectural issues qualitatively - specifically, in residential buildings- allowing thinking-, or rather, assuming, the task of analyzing objects and not things, that is, an organic set of form and substance (Fabbri, 2000), and in this way, focus the process on ontological issues (Bachelard, 2000; Derrida, 2006; Heidegger, 1951; Kaufmann, 1999, and Ricoeur, 2008), architecturally expressed in real estate of heritage interest.

The onslaughts of the migratory process also install a transformation of the canons and known valuations of the architectural setting of the southern part of the country. Perhaps this is where the split between the pre-existing and the novelty offered by the arrival of modern industrial production technologies and procedures for building materials and cladding brought by the immigrant promote a differential treatment and, consequently, the possibility of assigning symbolic qualities to architecture that had not been exhibited in the area until then (Gredig, 1985; Villagra Huijse, 2019). As Gredig points out, patterned ornaments, preferably for homes, were “used for representation and status purposes” (1985, p.15) and that, unlike what is appreciated in central cities, the southern climate precipitated



a radical adaptation, cladding buildings, to the point of transitioning from a "(...) partial ornament to an integral protective material" (Gredig, 1985, p.15). Although this adaptation is plausible from climatic considerations and durability, it suggests not only the possibility of a strictly material condition but also one where the inclusion of this cladding results in a symbolic transcendence, enabling mediation and dialog in an urban environment (Trachana, 2021), represented in a material aspect and with it the emergence of an architectural setting:

"Let us remember that Valdivia is a city intimately related to German colonization, and what we could consider as its architectural heritage is precisely the monumental and ancient stately wooden residences, where the stamped metal found the opportunity, as we had said, to fully and integrally express itself, surpassing its quality of 'added ornament' to embrace the entire building" (Gredig, 1985. p.15).

Although the physical outline of an architectural object is the announcement of its appearance, it will be its cladding or envelope that allows its material expression, whereby through the notion of cladding as a depository of a cultural, relative, and anthropomorphic consideration (Baudrillard, 2010) of architectural objects, it would be possible to establish a dynamic link between subjects and objects, going beyond appearance and exposing the depth of its content (Benjamin, 2015). Thus, the thick and dense cladding becomes diaphanous - not in the sense of transparency or translucency - but in a crystalline state that allows *one to look inside its thickness*, where that thickness is an attribute of a discursive and symbolic dimension. To produce this notion, it will initially be necessary to identify the material expressions that have occurred, those that are possible to describe without clouding the possibilities.

### The field of tanneries: An emerging scenario for German immigrants in Valdivia

Although the natural leather refining and leather-making industry in Chile has a longstanding tradition, in Valdivia, it would achieve its most significant commercial expression with the arrival of German immigrants (Bernedo, 1999; Blancpain, 1985; Guarda, 2001),<sup>2</sup> who introduced a productive innovation by adding Lingue bark [*Persea lingue*] with its high concentration of tannins, boosting growth to become one of the four relevant productive areas of the city (Bernedo, 1999; Pérez Canto en Alfonso, 1900b).<sup>3</sup> Once the production guidelines were installed and the first few years with a discreet volume of commercialization, covered almost exclusively by local and national demand, the industry saw explosive growth through the signing of two commercial agreements, specifically, in 1862 with a direct coastal trade line between the cities of Valdivia and Valparaíso and, in 1872, a maritime traffic route between Valdivia and Hamburg (Bernedo, 1999).

<sup>2</sup> In Valdivia, the first tanneries started operating in 1846. Later, in 1851, Hermann Schülke inaugurated the first tannery managed entirely by German immigrants (Bernedo, 1999).

<sup>3</sup> The others would be the breweries, distilleries, and shipyards.

Now, decisively guided by German immigrants, the leather industry was gaining relevance in Valdivian society (Bernedo, 1999; Kassai, 2000; Guarda, 2001; Pérez Canto en Alfonso, 1900b).

The impact would not only lie in the number of factories but also - and perhaps transcendently - in its capitalist organization, that is, "(...) that the tanneries founded by the Valdivian-Germans, by the 1880s, were organized as factories, as modern companies, that had steam and electricity-powered machinery, that paid wages in cash and that, in at least one case, applied the concept of productivity in this field" (Bernedo, 1999, q.25). Consequently, at the beginning of the 1900s, the tannery industry had become the largest employer in the region (Bernedo, 1999). However, in subsequent years, it would experience a decline due to diverse factors.<sup>4</sup> This contrast, over a short period, of an economic activity strongly promoted by the German community in Valdivia would be decisive, as would the implications of the social transit between both conditions in a colonization scenario.

Although this evidence offers an overview of the tannery industry in the city of Valdivia, we are also presented with a close relationship between these activities and their profuse development in a specific sector in the city of Valdivia:

"(...) The factories are spread over several neighborhoods, (...) In Los Canelos, a large number of tanneries have been established along the banks of the river" (Julio Pérez Canto en Alfonso, 1900b, p.12).

It is precisely in the latter sector where the number of primarily German entrepreneurs linked to this area is significant, with productive zoning and tanneries and byproduct services dominating the industrial landscape:

"There are 23 tannery establishments, a sizeable steam-powered shoe factory, and three glue factories that use waste hides. Los Canelos is home to the tanneries of Jerman Ehrenfeld, Schüler Brothers, Jorje and Carlos Martin, Rudolfo Beckdof, Jorje Haverbeck (closed for now), Adan Nelcke, Sebastian Werkmeister, Anwandter Brothers, Teodoro Pausenberger, and Julio Lopetegui. The Schüler brothers and Alberto Haverbeck own establishments for animals and the preparation of jerky" (Julio Pérez Canto en Alfonso, 1900b, p.12).

<sup>4</sup> First, the withdrawal of the tariff benefits offered by Germany to import hides [ca. 1906], later [ca. 1930] by the introduction of the "Fordist" method in the country (Kassai, 2000) and finally, the opening of import markets in 1970.

Despite this, from an urban and social positioning perspective, the outlook for the sector was less auspicious because the emerging German families were developing activities with a more significant impact and economic scope, namely those associated with logging in nearby forests, breweries, the beer and distillate marketing industry, shoe manufacturing, and the shipbuilding industry. The latter used the sectors of Isla Teja, Las Animas, or Collico for their factories and their

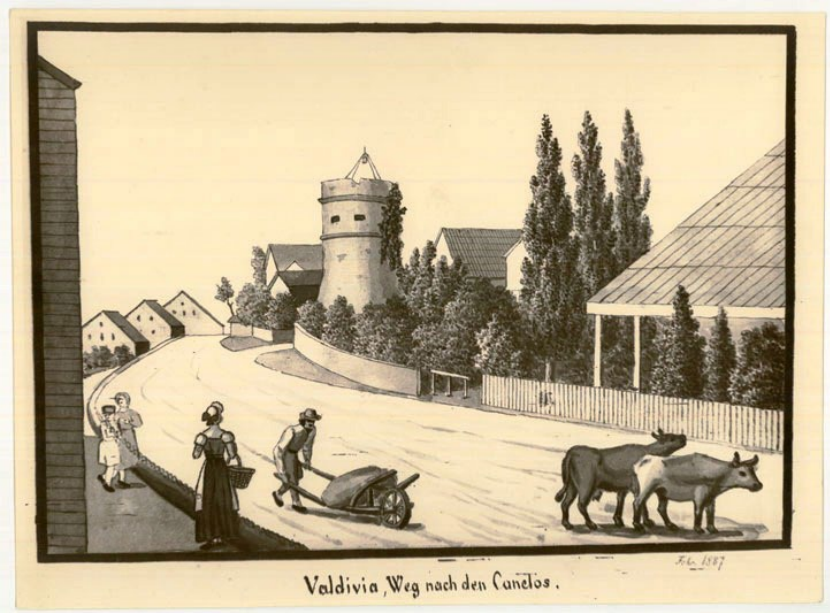
homes. This constitutes substantial evidence regarding what happened in the Los Canelos sector and would refer to less common issues regarding assertions endorsed to the entire community of German immigrants in Valdivia. It is suggestive and, at the same time, feeds the suspicion of an unfinished business revealed in this sector of the city, namely the observation of an environment forged between tanneries, pelts, blood, carnal putrefaction, and organic wrappings. Seen this way, the street appreciated in the historical records (Figure 1) is not only a street where the people of Valdivia and their recent foreign neighbors roam but also one where pelts, hides, and blood circulate, spreading smells and liquids. In short, a street where not everything seems to be convincingly exposed or revealed, covering, as an act of concealment, the transfiguration and metamorphosis of bodies, be they architectural or social, breaking the boundaries of an identity (Deleuze & Guattari, 2010).

### The Los Canelos sector

Perhaps this is not the only thing; in fact, this sector, located beyond Valdivia's foundational hub (Adán et al., 2017; Guarda, 1973, 1979, 2001; Urbina et al., 2012), offers a response to two demands of the period. First, to satisfy the need for buildable land to host internal migrations (ca. 1810), and second, the foreign migration process (ca. 1850), which redoubles the need to locate new residents, whether local or foreign (Alfonso, 1900a, 1900b; Domeyko, 1850; Pérez Rosales, 1886; Santos Tornero, 1872; Treutler, 1958, 1861). However, the sector is rarely mentioned by these authors. If it is, they describe it as a "low sector," "remote," and "not very valuable," contrasting drastically with other areas of the city, which were referred to as "high areas" and "suitable for living," marking a contrast between them. Thus, the areas marked as suitable would be all the elevated ones, the foundational plateau, and the least suitable are all on the perimeter and low-lying areas, close to the river level and prone to flood risks. Consequently, an alien place, external and lacking the imprint endorsed to the migratory process; *they are not part of the city*.

The collection and registration in *the German colony of Valdivia 1891* (Soto Melo, 1986) also express some central features of the activities and trades carried out by the residents of the Los Canelos sector. Of these, the activities carried out most often towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were those associated with tanneries, tanners, butchers, blacksmiths, locksmiths, and accountants. They all have a unique character, linked to commercial activities with a low impact and economic profitability for the demanding scenario where they were installed, albeit of complex elaboration and production remnants. This is ratified with ads for the sector's activities, noting that tanneries were the most distinctive (Figure 2). All this allows us to accurately consolidate some central features of the character and vocation of

**Figure 1.** Valdivia, road to Los Canelos, 1887. Source: Emilio Held Library and Historical Archive.



**Figure 2.** Tannery ads in the Los Canelos sector [clippings]. Source: Soto Melo. 1986. p.w/n.



the place towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Specifically, the tanneries and their productive process were systematically grouped in this city sector due to negative externalities, particularly the waste thrown into the waterways as leached liquids and into the atmosphere through the emanation of steam and strong odors.

In this way, the scenario and the accompanying evidence are relevant, creating a setting of pestilence and putrefaction, unworthy conditions for a neat image of German capitalist entrepreneurship and European sophistication that was so desired in cities under early immigration processes. There is no doubt that it was an industrial city. However, within that setting, some activities were despicable, or at least merited special treatment by designating a specific sector for their development, thereby limiting the dissemination of smells and environments characterized by hides, pelts, and blood throughout the city. The sector chosen was that of Los Canelos.

Despite this, in recent times, an exercise of positioning the sector's splendor has been encouraged, a matter reaffirmed with expressions that announce an exceptional value, such as, "(...) we do not hesitate to qualify this street as the most important of the cultural, architectural and tourist heritage of Valdivia, which, preserved (...) can be constituted, as a unique case in the country" (Guarda, 1980, p.27). This quote probably overwhelmed each subsequent attempt, consolidating a discursive action to establish a site with unique characteristics and substantial architectural value (Horn, 2021), although - according to the hypothesis offered - for very different reasons.

## Real estate in Los Canelos

Once the scenario has been announced, it is appropriate to delimit coverage to make a detailed analysis, choosing a set of properties located in the second section of the *Typical area of General Pedro Lagos Street in Valdivia*.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, according to that stated by the authors consulted (D'Alençon & Prado, 2013; Guarda, 1980, 2001; Guarda & Rodríguez, 2013), those properties that have been included in lists, due to their association with German immigrants in the South of Chile and in which the existence of constructive and/or typological elements linked to this can be verified. Specifically, a particular structural system, the planimetric distribution, the inclusion of attics, and the use of semi-detached volumes (Prado, D'Alençon & Kramm, 2011). We will also check the records with buildings still standing, thus reducing speculation on matters that are difficult to empirically verify today so that the analysis refers to what is happening (Horn, 2021) over the discursive recursion seen in previous paragraphs. In this way, Figure 3 below identifies the properties available in the area, distributed along General

**5** The Typical Area of General Pedro Lagos Street in Valdivia was established by a Supreme Decree in 1991, establishing the legal protection of the area and its buildings.

For application and management purposes, the area was divided into two sections, from east to west, the first, along Yungay Street between Lautaro and Yervas Buenas, and the second, along General Pedro Lagos Street, from its intersection with Yervas Buenas and Miraflores. Source: Supreme Decree No. 89, Ministry of Education. Declares Calle General Pedro Lagos in Valdivia as a Typical Area. April 1st, 1991.

For the purposes of this work, the second section was considered, identified as the section physically located outside the city's founding walls. Therefore, it was a sector occupied later, and as a result of the demands of new urban sites by the city's growing population due to migratory processes. "General Pedro Lagos Street has witnessed the history of the city of Valdivia.

On this avenue, important families of the late 19th and early 20th centuries built their mansions imitating European styles that endowed the city with elegance and sophistication. A peculiarity of these buildings is that they are one of the few survivors of the catastrophes that affected Valdivia during the 20th century, such as the fire of 1909 and the earthquake and tsunami of 1960, from which the street received the name it currently has. In 1991, General Pedro Lagos Street and the properties located on it were declared a Typical Area due to their homogeneity, quality, architectural value, and historical importance for the city of Valdivia. Although some have been affected by fires or lack of maintenance, they are generally in good condition, and part of them have been acquired by the Austral University of Chile, which has taken care to restore and preserve them" Source: <https://www.monumentos.gob.cl/monumentos/zonas-tipicas/calle-general-pedro-lagos>



**Figure 3.** Identification of properties in the second section of General Lagos Typical Area, Valdivia. Source: Preparation by the Author.

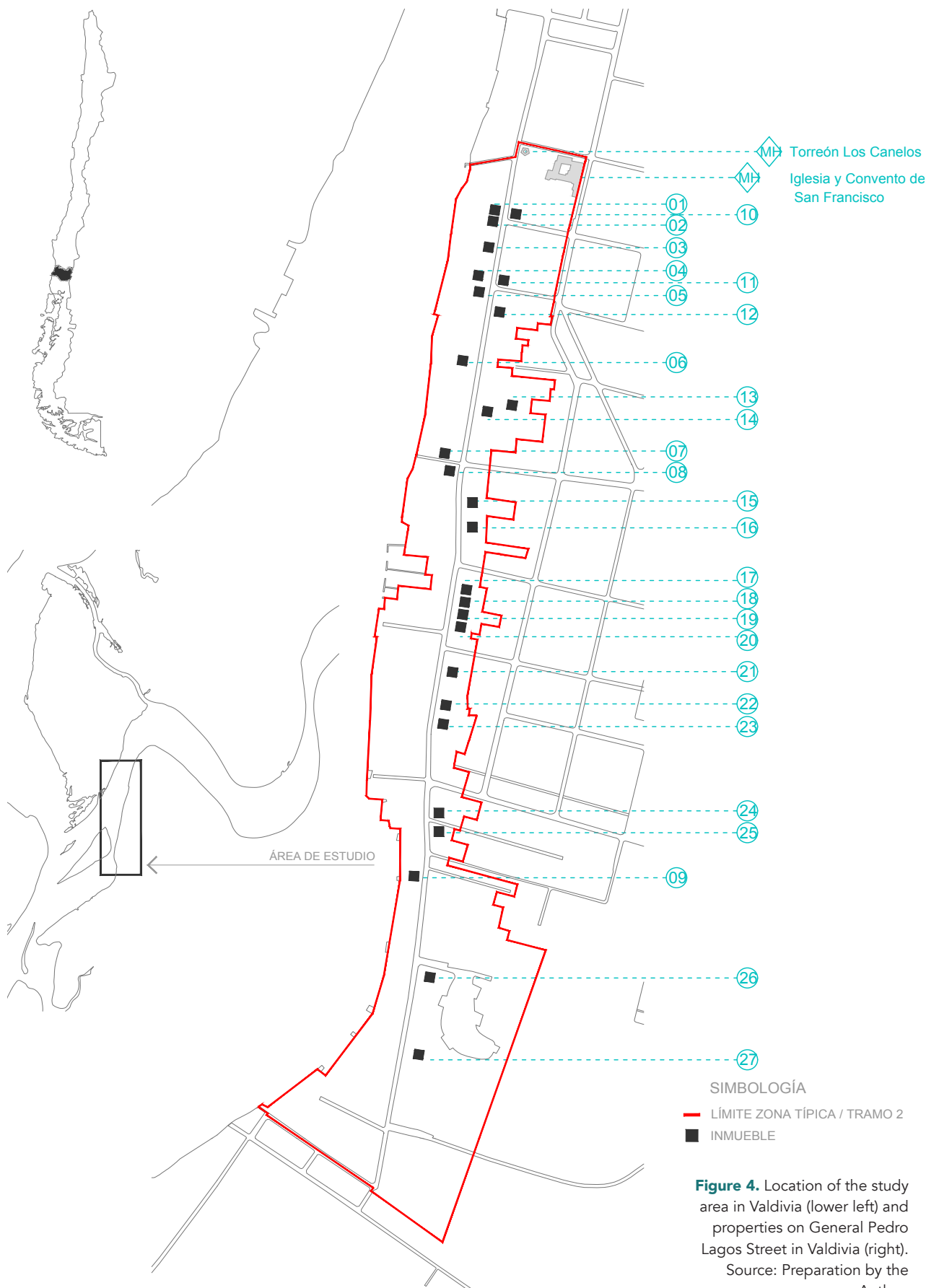
ID	Nombre	Calle	Nº	Estado
	Casa 837	General Lagos	837	-
01	Casa Gaete García	General Lagos	891 A	+
02	Casa Lopetegui Mena	General Lagos	891 B	+
03	Casa Von Stillfried	General Lagos	911	+
	Casa Werkmeister	General Lagos	965	-
04	Casa Monje Anwandter	General Lagos	985	+
05	Hogar Villa Virginia UACH	General Lagos	1001	+
06	Casa Ehrenfeld	General Lagos	1107	+
	Casa Río, Conjunto Behrens	Pasaje Behrens	s/n	-
07	Casa A, Conjunto Behrens	Pasaje Behrens	60	+
08	Casa B, Conjunto Behrens	Pasaje Behrens	81	+
	Casa Interior, Conjunto Behrens	Pasaje Behrens	s/n	-
	Casa Bartsch	General Lagos	1271	-
	Casa 1551	General Lagos	1551	-
	Casa 1757	General Lagos	1757	-
09	Casa 1845	General Lagos	1845	+
10	Casa Cite	General Lagos	890	+
11	Casa Noelke Pausenberger	General Lagos	990	+
12	Casa Pausenberger	General Lagos	1036	+
13	Casa Hoffmann Huber	General Lagos	1190	+
14	Casa Commentz Hoffmann	General Lagos	1194	+
15	Casa Möller	General Lagos	1334	+
16	Casa Schuller	General Lagos	1352	+
	Casa Weiss	General Lagos	1394	-
17	Casa 1448	General Lagos	1448	+
18	Casa Liewald	General Lagos	1452	+
19	Hogar Leiva Mella, UACH	General Lagos	1470	+
20	Casa 1480	General Lagos	1480	+
21	Casa 1550	General Lagos	1550	+
22	Casa Harwart	General Lagos	1608	+
23	Casa 1638	General Lagos	1638	+
24	Casa 1748	General Lagos	1748	+
25	Casa Perez Yoma	General Lagos	1768	+
26	Casa Haverbeck I	General Lagos	2026	+
27	Casa Haverbeck II	General Lagos	2050	+

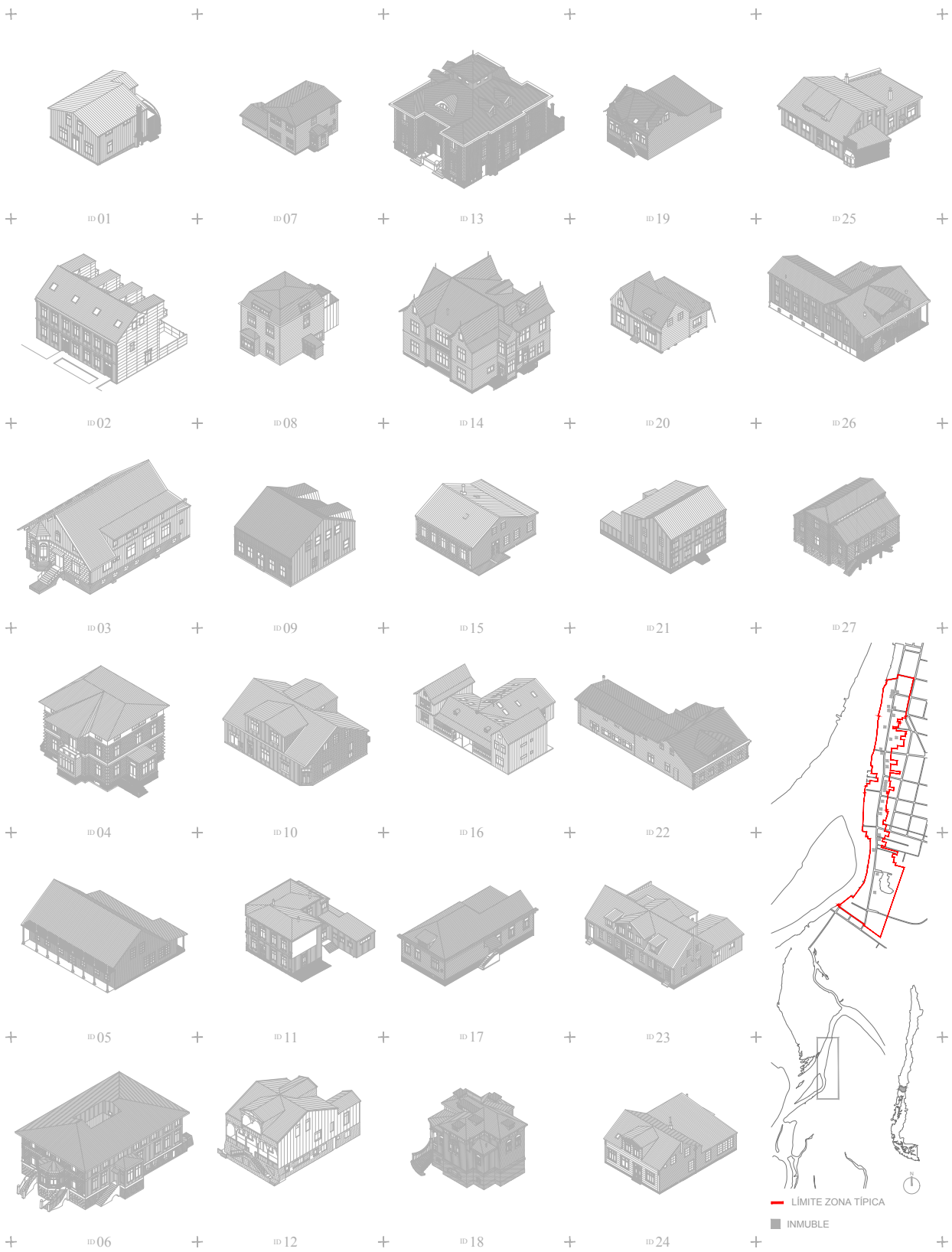
Notas: [+] inmueble aparece en fuente bibliográfica, existente en actualidad, [-] inmueble aparece en fuente bibliográfica, no existe en la actualidad.

Pedro Lagos Street as indicated in Figures 4 and 5, a total of 27, a considerable sample for the purposes here.

Findings

The evidence presented and the empirical verification of the urban and social scenario where the properties in the Los Canelos sector were built differs from a sublime and prolific economic panorama linked par excellence to the German immigrant families in Valdivia. Their examination implies stalking the scene until revealing the traces of what was happening there, even when those properties seem dissimilar and complicit. The





**Figure 5.** List of properties in the General Pedro Lagos Street Typical Area. Source: Preparation by the Author.

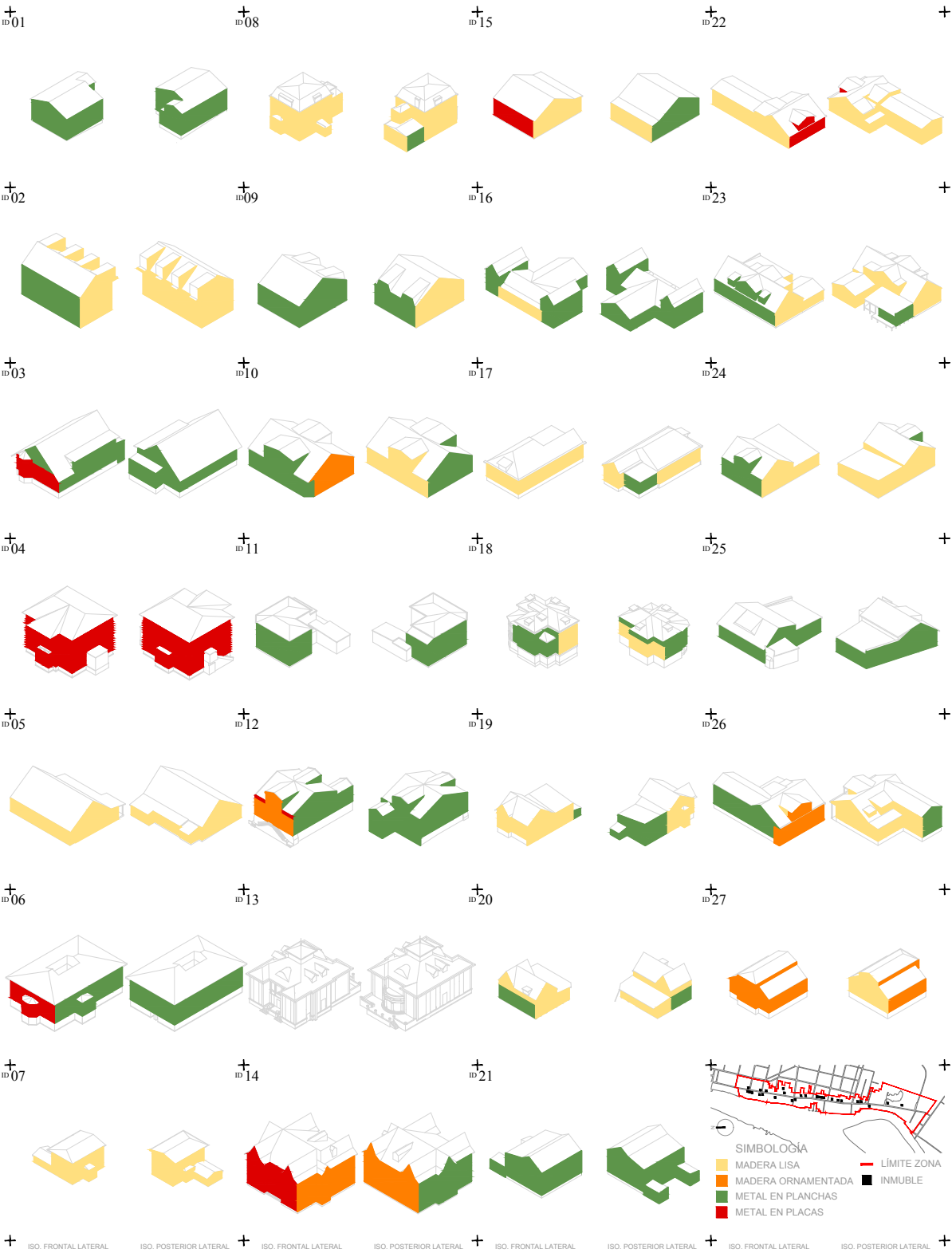
historical and material conditions seem to impel a will to transgress and, with it, the realization of an expiatory mechanism capable of expressing what is improper.

Looking again at the buildings, as expressed in Figure 6, the following material expressions can be identified in their cladding: a. *smooth wood*, based on elaborated species (e.g., Oak, Lingue, Coihue, among others), preferably arranged horizontally and assembled by a *tongue-and-groove* or *shingled* system on vertical uprights. This has a smooth and homogeneous finish but sometimes has functional recesses without constituting an ornament; b. *ornate wood*, a variation of smooth wood using slits and deep carvings with mechanical tools, developing rectilinear and trapezoidal formats, emulating cladding such as carved stone or brick masonry; c. *sheet metal*, made of ferrous metal with zinc-based galvanized coating, with smooth or wavy presentations, the latter being the most common due to its greater resistance to compression deformation. Its assembly is done on a continuous wooden surface, allowing strengthening and the application of mechanical fasteners<sup>6</sup> and; d. *plate metal*, a variation of plate metal in reduced format, using square, rectangular, or trapezoidal geometries, emulating materials such as stone or brick but increasing durability. These incorporate edges, margins, or perimeter folds and have inscriptions of floral or organic motifs made by mechanical stamping. The total number of expressions would be<sup>7</sup> smooth wood, 44 times, or 39%; ornamented wood, 8 times, 7%; sheet metal, 50 times, or 45%; and plate metal, 10 times, 9% of the total cladded facades. The most common are smooth wood and sheet metal, with 84% vertical facade planes. This seems conclusive regarding equitable distribution, leaving in doubt the cladding and appearance mechanism if the smooth-wood - associated with local materials of reduced processing - continues to be very representative.

However, based on a saturation strategy, this very circumstance shows the presence of one cladding. We review the catalog again, dispensing with the gross quantifications to examine spatialization and the relationship with the surrounding environment. Thus, an asymmetry emerges between the numbers and their constitutive vocation, where 23 properties are identified with a single defining material of the main facade, which we will call "simple-cladding," and only 3 properties - Pausenberger House, Schuller House, and House 1480-, have more than one cladding material for the main facade, called "multi-cladding." This confirms that these buildings' facades predominantly use a single material, denoting a condition of resounding and particular application, without fuss and additional resources, sure of its concealment capacity by exhibition. Once the check had been made, the breakdown would be smooth wood on 7 main facades, or 24%; ornamented wood on 3 main facades, or 10%; sheet metal on 12 main facades, or 42%; and plate metal on 7 main facades, or 24%. In this way, 66% of all the main facades are represented by metals, relegating wood to the sides and/or

<sup>6</sup> See *Pieles Metálicas, Patrimonio Material del Sur de Chile 1875-1930*, by María Emilia Villagra Huijse (2019).

<sup>7</sup> Casa Hoffmann Huber is excluded due to cladding unrelated to the general sample. So, considering 4 facade plans per property, 104 plans are counted. However, for 7 properties, facades with more than one material are identified, thus, the analysis is made with 112 cladding plans.



**Figure 6.** Recurrence of cladding materials in the buildings. Source: Preparation by the Author.



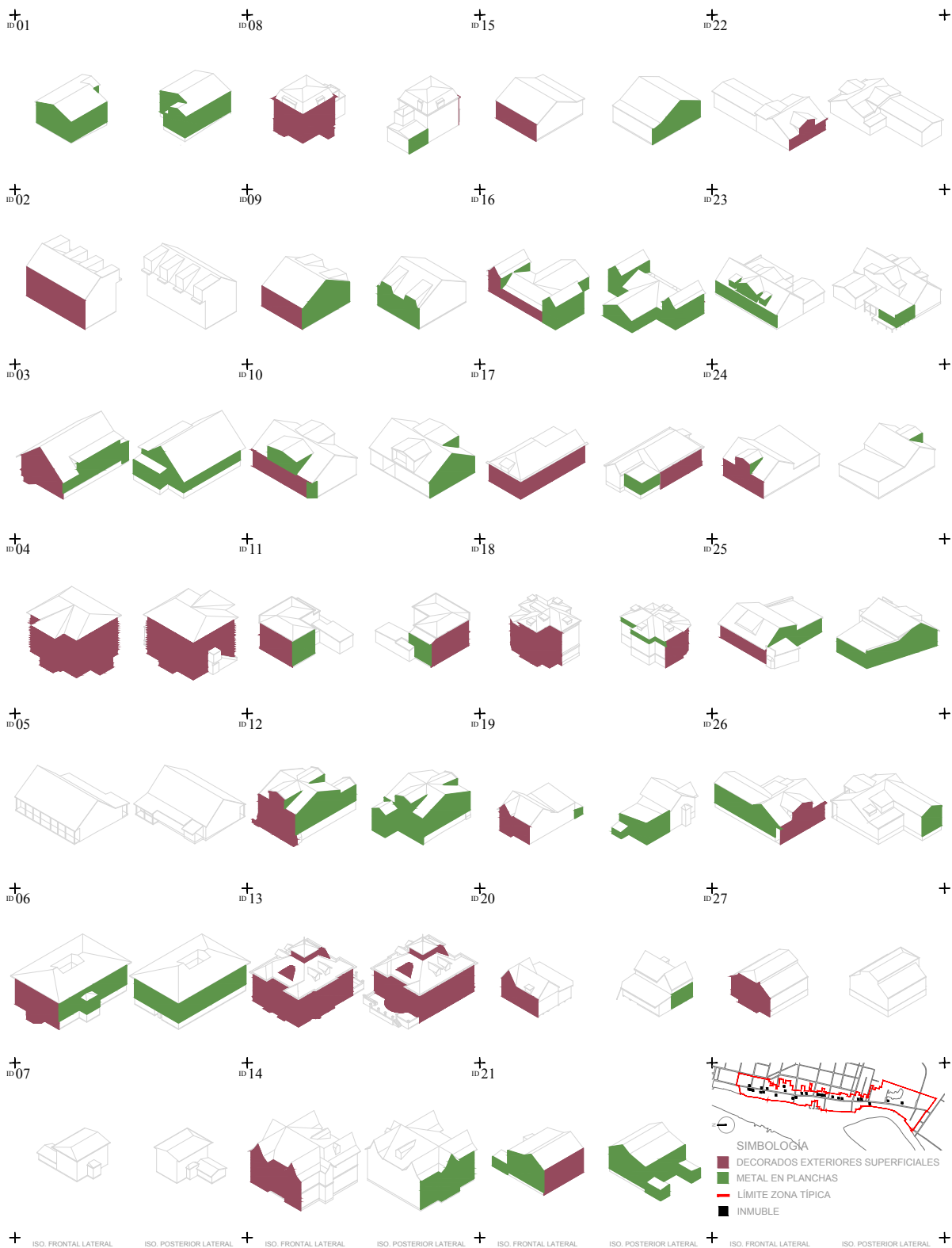


Figure 7. Recurrence of metals and exterior decorations in the buildings. Source: Preparation by the Author.

**Figure 8.** Building with spatialized cladding. Source: Preparation by the Author.



rears of the buildings, hiding them from the public road, and a symbolic exhibition.

Removing wood opens up the possibilities, in particular, of including these metals as refinement and distinction elements in a specific socio-cultural and architectural environment. This evidence is complemented by the fact that 85% of the buildings (22 out of 27) have exterior decorations on the main facade, with different formats and geometries, highlighting edges, borders, cornices, or some offsets. All this can be seen in Figures 7 and 8, where the different materials identified are represented, as well as their spatialization and recurrence in the catalog, offering an explicit and graphic understanding of what was revealed.

What has been presented until now allows establishing concrete variables, but without the ambition to formulate a new taxonomy of the evidence, but rather, to organize the panorama of the possible material expressions that can be identified and quantified in the properties chosen, impacting their expression and valuation. In this way, pelts are a transcendental and defining issue of registering and cataloging the architectural universes examined, but for very different reasons. That is to say, the initial concealment. Hence, introducing additional elements in the facades as a primary gesture due to economic restrictions to finance the inclusion of more complex and complete elements, produces a very accentuated strategy of hierarchization and prioritization, either in the cladding



**Figure 9.** Building with metal cladding on the main facade, decorations, and wooden side facade. Source: Preparation by the Author.

or ornamentation - or in both -, where we have demonstrated their inclusion primarily in the street-facing facade plane and with it, the social and public facing facade. This would clearly be a strategic exhibition within the field of the exposed and full exteriority so that it would fall on the visibility of an exteriorized exterior. Then, with the incorporation and addition of textures in the *exterior surface cladding*, a contradictory effect is produced, that is, with the desire to wrap, cover, and overlay to saturate the objects, on the one hand, it manages to divert attention from the limited conditions of access to material goods to produce an architecture similar and related in material and formal conditions to those indicated for the other subjects of capitalist success. On the other hand, it exposes them intentionally in front of those -or anyone - who notices them, thus becoming available for view and contemplation, stripping - and covering - the architecture. Therefore, once executed, it ceases to look like a masked thing and begins to blend in with those appearances that it wishes to emulate, shedding its cover, abandoning the simulation, and assuming definitively all that it is not. It is a matter of self-persuasion and a very well-assimilated speech. The certainties of the device are such that, from what has been mentioned, we can establish its presumed and full display and, with it, its effective masking.

Considering this background information and, above all, the images and figures where the spatialization and recurrence of the exterior cladding of buildings in the catalog are presented, we can maintain that what is

**Figure 10.** Building with decorations emulating classical design in metal edges and lateral facade. Source: Preparation by the Author.



appreciated in them not only refers to a material dimension linked to constituent elements of the cladding but also to a discursive dimension for the interests of recording architectural universes known and with immigrant ancestry, specifically, German (Figures 9 and 10).

CONCLUSION

Once again, the buildings have changed their physiognomy, fixing exteriority understood as a projected image, an enunciated discourse, and thus, an ambitious appearance, executed by some ambassadors of progress, who, charged by a will of positioning and recognition in the social structure in the city of Valdivia, subvert the material conditions of a sector characterized as a place where they circulate, transfer, and process pelts - and their pestilence and putrefaction-, through an expiatory and at the same time, compensatory mechanism. To do this, they resort to a device, adopting cladding from which, that presented with repulsion, manages to be converted and transfigured into an architectural state, using for this the initial disadvantage as a creative power, subverting the moment of inferiority and decimation. Characterized by the advent of metal-based cladding and superficial exterior ornaments, assisting the covert conversion of organic leathers made in the sector as an economical vehicle and family prosperity in *arquitecturized skins*. In short, this *architecture of pelts* is in charge of completing the process, covering up the denounced material conditions

of its occupants and, at the same time, exposing to the public road and the attentive gaze of passers-by, those attributes capable of claiming distinction and nobility.

To move towards its realization, we must reveal the double cladding used: on the one hand, the cladding of the impure productive tasks of the sector lacking impact and scope in the dimension of progress and modernization, and on the other, their cladding using different formats, sizes, and executions within the limited repertoire of analysis. However, they allow us to assume the unequivocal condition of their validation. They are so different from each other that it is impossible to trace a pattern or shape, where an architectural modeling device based on simulation and disguise is hidden behind all that heterogeneity. What a paradoxical matter it would be for a colonizing agency to continue working the same hides and pelts as any local manufacturer would, reducing the differences between classes and placing the new German neighbors as an equal, or at least, a fraction of them -specifically- those who lived or worked in the Los Canelos sector of Valdivia.

However, as mentioned, the notion of *architecturized pelts* challenges the ambitious state of the catalog and, at the same time, reconciles the frustrated desires of an absent material distinction as a consequence of economic prosperity achieved, understood as those that would make them participate in a dignified and hereditary scenario, this time crystallized in architectural objects. However, the actions favoring this masking and covering cannot saturate the property in content and meaning; on the contrary, they end with its total nakedness. An architectural melting pot from which the stage of concealment becomes the stage of facades and with it - again - the stage of skins. Thus, edges and contours outline a device, where, years later, the architecture of the pelts will become the "German Architecture of General Lagos Street," transfiguring its imprint and the reasons for its appearance. While giving space and acceptance to the breadth in the view, this notion founds a dialogical understanding of some buildings built in the city of Valdivia between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, where the agency of colonization, individual entrepreneurship, the development of peripheral capitalism, the desire for distinction and the will of noble origin, forced a heterogeneous material expression in the form and homogeneous in the background, to build social promotion and position. Although it is impossible to ignore the existence and development of a capitalist upper class among the German immigrants of Valdivia, those records are insufficient to endorse sectors such as Los Canelos [General Pedro Lagos Street] in the same city.

Everything mentioned above does not attack or reproach what happened; on the contrary, it is observed comprehensively and consistently concerning a maelstrom introduced by certain subjects



and social groups since the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in southern Chile. Nor do these results imply a questioning of the foreign contributions to the architectural practices of a city under migratory influence. Instead, they aim to smooth over the comparisons towards the known or previous so that, under the protection of the evidence presented, they move towards a deep and dense characterization of the architectural events, the consequence of the valuable contributions of different social and cultural groups in the analyzed scene.

The action of overexposing is precisely a gesture of diverting attention from covert issues, which, as we have argued, refer to the material and economic limitations of the sector's inhabitants, who cunningly elaborate a simulation device with which they cover their shortcomings, presenting an appearance and in this way, elaborating an architectural discourse of imposture and effective masking. However, it is not hidden as if it were an omission. Quite the contrary, the fundamental gesture is based on the fact of covering up the pelt scenario that allowed a slight economic and social ascent, but without ceasing to exhibit it publicly, being altered only in their state, turning the initial social and economic disadvantage into an architectural capital, which, over the years would be valued and positioned as the most significant in the city of Valdivia.

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# INDIGENOUS LIVING AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH THE LANDSCAPE

## O HABITAR INDÍGENA E SUA RELAÇÃO COM A PAISAGEM

## EL HABITAR INDÍGENA Y SU RELACIÓN CON EL PAISAJE



**Figure 0.** Opy the Tekoa Itaty. The Opy  
the Tekoa Itaty, collectively built, is inserted  
in the landscape of Serra do Tabuleiro.  
Source: Nauíra Zanardo Zanin.



## RESUMO

O presente artigo busca tecer relações entre o habitar, a paisagem e os povos originários, em especial os Mbyá Guarani que vivem no Sul do Brasil. Buscamos relacionar os seres e elementos que compõem a paisagem e estão presentes em suas narrativas de origem e nas formas construtivas que elaboram para habitar esta paisagem, ao transformarem seus componentes em arquitetura e lugares de convívio. Utilizamos uma abordagem etnográfica que inclui observações, diálogos e percursos pelas paisagens. Publicações de autoria indígena e não-indígena são referenciais teóricos interdisciplinares que auxiliam nossas reflexões. Compreendemos que a relação dos povos indígenas com a paisagem é ancestral, vinculando-se às suas memórias, narrativas e cosmologias. As formas construtivas por meio das quais habitam a paisagem revelam afeto e sentimento de pertencimento e parentesco com os elementos que dela fazem parte. Como conclusão, percebemos que a sabedoria vivenciada dos povos indígenas com relação à paisagem, desde tempos imemoriais, oferece ensinamentos para repensarmos nossa relação com o planeta como um todo.

**Palavras-chave:** povos originários, arquitetura, paisagem, percepção, pertencimento.

## ABSTRACT

This article seeks to weave relationships between living, the landscape, and the original peoples, especially the Mbyá Guarani from Southern Brazil. We seek to relate the beings and elements that make up the landscape and are present in their narratives of origin and in the constructive forms they create to inhabit this landscape by transforming its components into architecture and places of conviviality. An ethnographic approach was used, including observations, dialogs, and journeys through the landscapes. Publications by indigenous and non-indigenous authors are interdisciplinary theoretical references that help these reflections. It is understood that the relationship between indigenous peoples and the landscape is ancestral, linked to their memories, narratives, and cosmologies. The constructive forms through which they inhabit the landscape reveal affection and a feeling of belonging and kinship with the elements that are part of it. In conclusion, it is perceived that the experienced wisdom of indigenous peoples about the landscape since time immemorial offers lessons to rethink our relationship with the planet as a whole.

**Keywords:** original peoples, architecture, landscape, perception, belonging.

## RESUMEN

Este artículo busca tejer relaciones entre el habitar, el paisaje y los pueblos originarios, especialmente los Mbyá Guarani del Sur de Brasil. Buscamos relacionar a los seres con los elementos que componen el paisaje y están presentes en sus narrativas de origen y en las formas constructivas que crean para habitar este paisaje, transformando sus componentes en arquitectura y lugares de convivencia. Se utilizó un enfoque etnográfico que incluye observaciones, diálogos y recorridos por los paisajes. Las publicaciones de autores indígenas y no indígenas son referentes teóricos interdisciplinarios que ayudan a estas reflexiones. Entendemos que la relación entre los pueblos indígenas y el paisaje es ancestral, ligada a sus memorias, narrativas y cosmologías. Las formas constructivas a través de las cuales habitan el paisaje revelan afecto y sentimiento de pertenencia y parentesco con los elementos que forman parte del mismo. En conclusión, nos damos cuenta de que la sabiduría experimentada de los pueblos indígenas con relación al paisaje, desde tiempos inmemoriales, ofrece lecciones para repensar nuestra relación con el planeta en su conjunto.

**Palabras clave:** pueblos originarios, arquitectura, paisaje, percepción, pertenencia.

**Nota sobre a grafia dos termos indígenas:** as palavras em línguas indígenas não possuem plural, portanto ao nos referirmos a um povo utilizamos maiúscula no singular (ex.: os Guarani); enquanto a utilização como adjetivo é em minúscula (ex.: escola guarani). Os demais termos têm como base o Léxico Guarani, de Dooley (2013). São respeitadas as formas utilizadas pelos autores guarani e, no caso de citações de outros autores, é mantida a forma utilizada por eles.

Note on the spelling of indigenous terms: words in indigenous languages do not have a plural, so when referring to a people we use a capital letter in the singular (e.g.: the Guarani); while the use as an adjective is in lower case (e.g.: Guarani school). The other terms are based on the Guarani Lexicon by Dooley (2013). The forms used by the Guarani authors are respected and, in the case of quotations from other authors, the form used by them is maintained.

**Nota sobre la ortografía de los términos indígenas:** las palabras en lenguas indígenas no tienen plural, por lo que cuando nos referimos a un pueblo utilizamos mayúsculas en singular (por ejemplo, los guaraníes); mientras que cuando se utiliza como adjetivo va en minúsculas (por ejemplo, escuela guaraní). Los demás términos se basan en el Léxico Guaraní de Dooley (2013). Se respetan las formas utilizadas por los autores

## INTRODUCTION

Living refers to the feeling of belonging, recollection, and the welcome of the abode. It refers to the sense of shelter; to what is familiar and intimate. In our search for theoretical references that delve into the concept of living, we come across many possible understandings, with many ways of approaching the subject. Here, we present those that enable dialog with other knowledge, such as the inhabitation of native peoples and their ways of relating to the landscape. In our research, we found correspondence between the positions of different indigenous peoples concerning the Earth and the recognition that other beings and elements that make up the landscape are part of their cosmological conceptions. The indigenous living we present is poetic not only because of the aesthetics evidenced but also because it defies understanding - it is difficult to grasp by eyes used to other configurations and forms of human habitation, so it invites us to different perceptions. Something that destabilizes, as inhabiting involves affections, identifications, conformations, and sensitivities educated in certain directions.

We aim to understand indigenous living and the relationship of the native peoples with the landscape and territory, looking closer at some aspects of the dwellings (places configured for permanence) observed with the Mbyá Guarani of southern Brazil. The Mbyá are a Guarani subgroup found in several Brazilian states, especially in the south and southeast regions and other countries such as Paraguay, Argentina, and Uruguay. Their geographical occupation includes different biomes and landscapes whose ancestry is recorded by archeology, which considers them as producers of these environments from their cultivation system that consisted of agroforestry polycultures forming "anthropogenic forests" (Noelli et al., 2019, p. 18). Archaeological records show their occupation's landscape and environmental diversity, which can be observed to the present day, even with the limitations imposed by colonization. For a long time, the Mbyá avoided relating to national society, constantly avoiding contact with it, leading them to invisibility (Souza, 1998) and losing their territories. However, this also allowed them to cultivate cultural aspects such as language, music, religion, art, architecture, and their relationship with the environmental context. These characteristics, added to the facilitation of access to the villages by more experienced researchers, led to our choice of research.

We introduce this article with some theoretical discussions that help the reader understand our point of view regarding the topic. Next, we present the methodology used in the research and then refer to the field findings related to the origin narratives of the Guarani and the transformation of landscape elements into architecture. In this way, we broaden our perceptions to understand the connection between Indigenous peoples and landscapes. Finally, we reflect on the contributions that Native peoples offer, through their ways of life and world views, to our self-criticism as beings who share the same planet and constantly transform it to adapt it to our way of living.

As authors of these reflections, we are inserted in a Westernized and capitalist society, which has not prioritized dialog or understanding of other ways of life practiced here since its arrival on this continent. We observe that until today, the colonizing posture remains in force, depriving their places of ancestral and plural wisdom from a deep relationship with the context in which they are found. As a theoretical basis, we use interdisciplinary references of Indigenous and non-Indigenous authorship, which make it possible to weave relationships between Indigenous knowledge and academic rationality. Our reflections are based on an extended research journey with the Guarani, during which we maintained a dialogical posture (Oliveira, 2000) that uses strategies of the ethnographic method. Being in the field, in the most different opportunities for interaction and learning, was fundamental to understanding the Guarani living and their relationship with the landscape.

Tim Ingold (2000, 2015) argues that we are constituted by going through places, making exchanges with the environment, and absorbing and becoming part of the spaces through which we move. Similarly, when discussing the understanding of human spatiality, Bollnow (2008) goes further with the reflection on spatial perception mediated by the body:

The body is not only a tool with which space is experienced, but it is itself an experienced space, and indeed the most primitive experienced space, in whose example all other spaces can be understood. Thus, we are immersed in the larger, more comprehensive space not as a non-spatial subject but, through the body, as a product that is itself spatial. (Bollnow, 2008, p. 298)

With the help of Sartre and Merleau-Ponty, Bollnow (2008) ponders that the spatial world is transmitted through the body, permeating it as part of sensorially perceptible space. We share Merleau-Ponty's (1994 [1945]) notion of the body, which the idea of a phenomenal body can clarify. It is our own body just as we experience it, from within, a body that rises toward the world. Thus, we cannot look at our bodies distanced and purely objectively. It is about our body through which our thoughts and feelings come into contact with objects. This is how the world exists for us: a body in the first person, the subject of experience. We experience the world with the senses, acting on it through the most sophisticated technology down to the most primitive movements, having feelings that give us a range of complexity and subtlety. The body is a sensitive among the sensitive; it is the one in which an inscription is made of all the others; it is a thing among things that is dimensional by itself. Similarly, the house can be considered as an

Expanded body, with which man identifies himself similarly and by which he correspondingly classifies himself in a larger surrounding space. (...) Thus, there is also an immediate

identification in the house, even if not as pronounced as in the body. The man identifies with his house. He merges with it. Once he lives in his house, he is present in it all. (Bollnow, 2008, p. 309)

The domestic space of our home is the most common and where we can live for the longest time. In the book “The Poetics of Space,” by Gaston Bachelard (1998), we realize how rich the house is in poetic ephemerities. In the domestic sphere, space assumes and reassumes roles and is (re)designed by bodies. It is also in it that body that paths are traced. It is very pretentious to draw such poetic details. Thus, space is a space lived with all the partialities of the imagination. Therefore, what we experience with our body serves as a foundation, as a starting point to create the possibility that another body has its own perceptual experience.

The house as a cosmological representation is a common reference “for our house is our corner of the world. As has often been said, our first universe. A real cosmos in every sense of the word” (Bachelard, 1998, p.24). Following this understanding, Bachelard (1998, p.41) integrates the house into its context: “The house has become a natural being, whose fate is bound to that of mountains and of the waters that plough the land.” Just like bodies, living spaces also (co)respond to the environment where they are. Moreover, they explore the environment where other beings and elements that maintain the cosmological balance inhabit.

To inhabit means to have a fixed lease on the space, to belong to it, and to be rooted in it. However, for man to remain there to feel protected, the “place” of the living cannot be conceived as a simple point, as initially, we speak of a natural center of the space experienced to which all paths would be referred. To be able to live there quietly, this lease must be expanded in a certain way. There, man must be able to move in a particular territory. (Bollnow, 2008, p. 138)

It is interesting, here, to reflect on the indigenous dwellings beside roads, adjacent to their ancestral territories, those located literally on the margin of a dwelling, where people are separated from all the elements that give meaning to their life (the *nhanderekó*<sup>2</sup>, in the case of the Mbyá Guarani). It is really a life uprooted, out of its context, a provisional life, and subject to diverse forms of violence and injustice (Heurich et al., 2010). At the same time, many of the so-called indigenous “settlements” on the roadsides are meant by them as forms of “retaking,” of re-appropriating their territories, in a kind of “self-demarcation” of lands, while the state does not do so. There is political power in this if we think of politics as defined by Jacques Rancière (2012) when he refers to the hierarchical division of our society and the individuals who integrate it based on their social positions, functions, identity traits, etc. The indigenous people, according to Rancière, would be one of the groups excluded from the hegemonic socio-political

<sup>2</sup> *Nhanderekó*: our way of life, our way of being and living.

order: One of the “Without a part” (*sans-part*) in the division of the parties. Nevertheless, against this social-political order, they can rebel in different ways, including by reaffirming their political capacity.

For a man to be able to inhabit his room, in order for him to have a resort there against the assault of the world, in order for him to find his security and his peace, it is necessary to guarantee this territory with the appropriate means. (Bollnow, 2008, P. 138)

The need for territorial guarantee is currently latent for Indigenous Peoples after centuries of usurpation and expropriation of their territories. Even if they feel affectively linked to certain places, that they see themselves as part of them, that they are deeply rooted, and that they believe that a document confirming this is not necessary, the colonizing process, which is still perpetuated, determined that they began to seek legal guarantees of access and permanence to their territories. The logic of private property is imposed on the kinship relationship that Indigenous Peoples maintain with the land. Indigenous peoples' relationship with the landscape is more profound than subsistence or survival. It represents a spiritual and cosmological connection, guided by respect for all forms of life and elements in the landscape.

It is necessary to understand the conception of territory encompassing territoriality and landscape, considering different ways of being in a place and being part of a landscape. The reading of Indigenous authors allows access to their ways of understanding the territory as something that connects with their lives, linking relationships of kinship, affection, and spirituality (Krenak, 2020; Yxapyry, 2022; Gakran, 2015).

The feeling of kinship with the Earth, in turn, makes room for potential affinity with all beings living on it. Here, from America, animals, plants, minerals, meteorological phenomena, spirits, humans, and non-humans coexist in constant communication in a space-time of transformation. Here, time and space are axes that unfold; distances and landscapes are thought of as life in motion, possessing a temporality, a dynamic, a duration. (Freitas, 2008, p. 18)

We consider that landscapes, as life support spaces, become symbolic places through the appropriation and reading of the world based on cosmological narratives, forming places of reference and memory: “Landscapes belong to the present – even containing a history of past interactions – reified in memory about past interactions and present practices to preserve ancestral connections and identities based on the Earth” (Zedeño, 2008, p.214). In this way, we understand that Indigenous territoriality is marked by ancestry and displacements (forced or spontaneous) experienced throughout the history of occupation of a landscape. By following the paths of their ancestors, they constitute themselves as Indigenous people and become part of the landscape they created, which is demarcated by the symbolic plant species present there.



METHODOLOGY

WALKING THROUGH LANDSCAPE AND EXPERIENCING  
ARCHITECTURE

The discussions presented here result from a research journey initiated approximately twenty years ago, if we count the first research on the subject. It is impossible to separate the path experienced by researchers because experiences shape our worldview. In this sense, we can consider as methodology ethnographic interaction, observation, photographic surveys, focus groups, journeys in landscapes and places that have been building our understanding of living. We agree with Geertz (2008, p.4) when he states that what gives identity to ethnographic work is not the methodological resources employed but “the type of intellectual effort it represents” by enabling the researcher to generate a “dense description” of the reality where he proposes to investigate.

Because we are in dialogue with Indigenous interlocutors, ethnography strategies were used, such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, and dialogue with focus groups (André, 2012). Previous experiences have shown that for the success of the research, it is necessary to establish a relationship of trust; we need to be accepted by the group, which happens over time as dialogues become more profound. Formal acceptance to perform the research is also fundamental, with consent being signed by the leaders and interlocutors, even though they value the words spoken and feel them more than the written ones.

Our research approach is qualitative, including some characteristics such as direct contact with the studied context through intensive field research, collection and production of data related to the problem, greater focus on the research process than on the product, understanding of the perspectives and meanings attributed by the interlocutors; absence of pre-established hypotheses, putting into practice a data analysis process that begins with broad questions that are looked closer at and delimited throughout the study based on interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks (Lüdke & André, 2012). In this article, we use previously registered and published sources as theoretical references from different areas of knowledge with a focus on Indigenous thought. We examine various sources such as books, articles, theses, dissertations, interviews, audiovisual elements, and documentaries. We resort to the spoken, written, and recorded words of Indigenous thought, which allow a greater understanding of their way of relating to the landscape. We follow the path indicated by Indigenous leaders and Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers, seeking to understand, learn, and reconnect with other wisdoms that go beyond academic paths but which are also in them.

When researching landscapes, walking through the places can be exhilarating and eye-opening. In this research, we report on the opportunities experienced in the field when visiting ancestral indigenous places in southern Brazil. We bring images of the places we have been, although only one image cannot convey the atmosphere (Zumthor;

2006) perceived in these experiences. As an alternative to the written text, photographic records are a relevant contribution, as they capture not only a snapshot but the perspective of the observer, suggesting interpretations and revealing the vital force of a place (Ferrara, 1997). The displacement through different places, the sensation of the textures of the walls warmed by the sun's heat, the freshness of the spring's water, or the wind whispering in the middle of the forest need to be experienced. Still, photography can represent many perceptual aspects through shapes, colors, textures, details, surroundings, lights, and shadows. Even if it captures only a snapshot, the photographic record helps in the subsequent analysis, complementing the memory and field notes (Attané & Langewiesche, 2005).

## MBYÁ GUARANI ARCHITECTURE AS A REFLECTION OF COSMO-ECOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENTS

Indigenous people experience and teach other ways of being on Earth, other ways of life. The *nhanderekó* guarani values harmony, joy, and beauty in the simplicity of life. Spirituality is experienced in every dawn, in every daily activity. Sustainability is expressed as a demonstration of respect for elders and the wise (Zanin, 2006). The *opy* (prayer house) is the place to honor all wonders, to pray for shared joy, for children, to transmit and follow the teachings of the creator deities: beautiful words, divine song, and infinite love (Popyguá, 2017; Poty, 2015).

These other ways of living, found with the indigenous peoples, as Ailton Krenak (2021) said, as a representative of the indigenous peoples in the National Constituent Assembly of 1987, do not even endanger the lives of animals. The transformation of the landscape by Indigenous Peoples is a landscape formation by distributing sacred plants and symbolic trees, which (de)mark a presence but which, for non-Indigenous people, can go unnoticed. A reading of the landscape (through archaeology, ethnobotany, or landscape anthropology) can reveal that the constitution of landscapes in different biomes is the work of the indigenous peoples who inhabit them and reproduce symbolic elements that are part of their oral narratives, worldviews, and spirituality.

Just as they go (con)forming the landscapes (natural, but as we understand, cultural), the trans-form-action of space, converting them into living places (*Tekoa*<sup>3</sup>), also translates an integration with the landscape. Meliá and Temple (2004) consider that *Tekoa* consists of some distinct spaces, such as the virgin forest (used for hunting, fishing, and gathering), the cultivable forest, and the house with the yard, the principal place of daytime use. In addition to the forest, the presence of water is fundamental in the composition of the *Tekoa*.

Generally, the housing areas are located near the forest and include buildings a nuclear or extended family uses. One or more houses and a

## RESULTS

<sup>3</sup> *Tekoá* ou *tekoha*: village, suitable place to live according to Teko. Teko or reko: guarani system, way of life, way of being and living.



**Figure 1.** Set of homes and opy, Tekoá Koenju. The buildings have the colors of the Earth used as enclosures for the walls. The roofs and structures comprise local plant species with symbolic meaning. Source: Zanin, 2006.

covered open space may be used for cooking with a camp-type fire (Zanin, 2018). There is no specific design for distributing these housing nuclei within the Tekoa, usually located in clearings and connected by trails in the woods or the field. An opy (House of prayers) and its courtyard (Figure 1) represent the non-geometric center of the Tekoa (Schaden, 1954). This is the main building and can serve as housing for the karáí (spiritual leadership).

Dwellings are built with local materials that contain symbolic meanings and can protect the spirit (Zanin, 2006). They reveal the contextualization of the shelter inserted in the landscape, using its elements, colors, textures, and, we can say, reaching all the senses. They are part of a full, joyful life, which is rarely achieved today.

[Teko Poran] This is a blissful, joyful, contented, and satisfied state, happy, pleasurable, pleasant, and calm. Good living exists when there is harmony with nature and community members and enough food, health, and peace of mind. It is also a cultural identity fully possessed and free from threat. (Melià, 2016, p. 24)

**4 Yvy Tenondé:** First Earth, where everything was perfect and imperishable.

In the Mbyá Guaraní narratives of the creation of the first Earth (Yvy Tenondé)<sup>4</sup>, sacred elements that participated in this creation appear and are demarcations of the existing spiritual connection between human beings and the other landscape elements. To create the first Earth,





Nhamandu Tenondegua initially created *tenhirui pindovy*, five Blue Palms (Popygua, 2017). This palm tree, called *pindó* or *pindó ete* by the Guaraní, is popularly known as the jerivá coconut tree (*Syagrus romanzoffiana*) and is found in their places of residence, especially near the *opy* (houses of prayer). As investigated by Zanin (2006), houses of prayer can be built with this palm tree in places where it is abundant. Its leaves can be used in roofing or side closures. The trunk can also serve as a fence for the walls. However, generally, the Mbyá choose to conserve the *pindó* next to the *opy* as a spiritual protection (Figures 2 and 3). The new areas humanized by them are symbolically demarcated with the *pindó*<sup>5</sup>. We understand that this is one of the plant species that symbolizes the bond they have with landscapes.

The *taquara mansa* (*takua ete í-Merostachys sp.*) bamboo grass is widely used in the roofs of the native buildings of the Mbyá Guaraní and the fence structures of the *opy*. To be used in roofing (Figure 3), the *taquaras* are opened longitudinally and folded from the inside out, forming a tile (*takua oje kava 'ekue*). According to what was observed and discussed with the Guaraní, this natural cover presents relative durability because it can remain in use for a decade by following the appropriate guidelines for collecting, managing, and maintaining the material (Zanin, 2006). However, this material is not always available to use because, despite their rapid growth, since the *taquareiras* have

**Figure 2.** Yard of the *opy* of the Tekoá Itaty, with *pindó* coconut trees nearby. Source: photo by Nauíra Zanardo Zanin.

**5** *Pindó*: jeriva coconut tree, sacred palm that symbolizes the creation of the first Earth.





**Figure 3.** Opy covered with taquara and set of pindó in the surroundings, Tekoá Yynn Morotchi Wherá. Source: Zanin, 2021.

a collection period every thirty years, in which they remain in a kind of hibernation for seven years, which leads the Mbyá Guarani to seek alternatives for roofing.

We braid taquara straw to make baskets and also to make roofing. It is also done with *pari* to catch fish. Taquara is very important in Guarani life. The *takuapu*, a musical baton that women beat on the ground during singing-praying, *mborai*, is made from the trunk of the taquara. (...) Taquaras also offer *takuaraxó*, a larva it has in the center of the trunk that can be eaten as food. These only give larvae every 30 years; one way to count a person's age is to tell how many taquaras they have. If you're 30, you say you have one taquara; if you're 60, two. Some people live to three taquaras. So, the taquara has a life cycle, which the life of the Guarani accompanies. At 30, the taquara dies, dries up, then blooms and gives this larva, *takuaraxó*. (Papa Miri Poty [Carlos Guarani Fernandes], PIB, 2018).

The Mbyá Guarani spiritual leader and filmmaker Carlos Papa Miri Poty says that taquara was also created by *Nhanderu Papá* (our Heavenly Father). Therefore, its use has symbolic meaning for making various elements used in daily life and ceremonies. Valéria Macedo (PIB, 2018) reports how Xaí, Carlos Papá's mother, presents taquara and yerba mate as gifts from *Nhanderu*:

And here, Xaí enters the conversation, highlighting that both *Takuá* and *Ká'a* - yerba mate- are daughters of *Nhanderu* and gifts to the





Guarani, enjoyed in the form of *chimarrão*, in the case of *Ka'a*, and music/prayer (*takuapu*) and basketry (*qjaká*) in the case of *Takuá* -, all of which are of great relevance to village life. Xai describes *Ka'a* and *Takuá* as inhabitants of the first Earth, from which they departed in the company of *Nhanderu* with the advent of the flood that ended it. In today's world, marked by the imperfection and transience of subjects and things, yerba mate and taquara are some of the resources that bear the mark of the First Land of the Immortals.

**Figure 4.** Detail of the Tekoá V'a opy wall. Detail of the Tekoá V'a opy wall, on light-colored raw land, due to its proximity to the coast. The marks left by the fingers that smoothed the wall can be seen, a trait of the traditional Guarani construction process. Source: Zanin, 2021.

In addition to the plant species used in the construction of the *opy*, the walls are usually covered with Earth (*inharu kangua*). According to our interlocutors, this coating gives thermal comfort and protects the wood and taquara used in structures and seals. It also represents a local feature, as the color and composition of the soil will give a different aspect to the construction in each place. When they cover the wall, they leave the fingermarks that smoothed it on the surface (Figure 4).

The *opy* (Figure 5) represents the shelter where the deities protect them, where the Mbyá Guarani way of life is lived and transmitted, the *nhanderekó*. "The symbolic place that the *Opy* and its courtyard occupy in the context of a community facilitates the understanding of Guarani cosmology, behavior, and worldview" (Zanin, 2018, p.191). The house represents a symbiosis with the territory, landscape, and specific place it was built in (Zanin, 2021). It is the materialization of a dwelling. It is the





**Figure 5.** Opy interior. Opy interior with musical instruments used in religious rituals, Tekoá Pirai. Materiality is observed as a reflection of locally available materials. Source: Zanin, 2021.

translation of a cosmology configured in a home instead of permanence and shelter.

In general, buildings are considered shelters, places we inhabit, places in which we “live” (Heidegger, 2001). When Heidegger (2001) states that living is related to the creation of places that welcome and preserve the square – the integration between heaven and Earth, gods and mortals – this refers us to the meaning of the indigenous Mbyá Guarani constructions as the shelter of the deities (Zanin, 2006). We understand that Indigenous constructions can express the integration of quadrature of the Mbyá cosmological relationship, which translates into their way of life.

The constructive process also provides integration with the quadrature, leading the quadrature to space and welcoming its multiplicity. For Heidegger (2001), the meaning of production is greater than that of the thing itself: the process of transforming space connects the thing to the quadrature, producing a place and an appropriate environment. We observed the correspondence of this statement to the mode of production of the living environments of the Mbyá Guarani because the constructive process is part of their way of life. It generates an economy of reciprocity in the community, enables the transfer of constructive knowledge between generations, values *ogapuá* (wise builders), and the gifts received by the deities, among others (Zanin, 2006). “The materialization of indigenous construction, due to its durability, favors the continuity of constructive knowledge in the periodic repetition of this process” (Zanin, 2018, p.354).





We highlight the importance of continuity in the transmission of this constructive knowledge because it fosters the autonomy of the communities, promotes socio-environmental connection, and sustains the Mbyá way of life, which is guaranteed by the living in these buildings, especially in the presence of *opy* in the communities. The constructive process of the *opy* happens through a *mutirão* (*potiron* - help), a gathering of relatives or a nuclear family for a collective construction (Figure 6). Meliá and Temple (2004) characterize the *mutirão* as collective reciprocity, where hands are extended for mutual aid (*jopói*), expressing joy in sharing the tasks, which feeds hope, trust, friendship, and spirituality.

Indigenous constructions are not made to last long, but to integrate into nature easily. As Zanin (2006) pointed out, this characteristic is related to the posture of the Mbyá before the transience of life, which manifests itself in little durability and detachment in relation to the constructions. However, the continuity of the Mbyá architecture, as a reflection of the context/landscape, depends on balanced natural environments, access to forests, *Tekoa*, in the complete sense of the word- suitable places for the *nhanderekóto* to live. Their constructions materialize a living that can only link to the territory because it expresses a cosmo-ecological relationship. Since the European invasion, recognizing their right to land (and to be part of it) has been the great struggle of the original peoples. It is a struggle for the right to life, to their way of living and inhabiting.

**Figure 6** *Opy the Tekoa Itaty.*

The *Opy the Tekoa Itaty*, collectively built, is inserted in the landscape of Serra do Tabuleiro. Source: Nauíra Zanardo Zanin.





## DISCUSSION

### BEING PART OF THE LANDSCAPE

**Figure 7.** View of Tekoa Itaty.  
Landscape view from Tekoá Itaty,  
with the Maciambu River in the  
foreground and Serra do Mar on  
the right. Source: Zanin, 2018.

The territory has importance for life, both the continuity of a way of life and the Mbyá Guaraninhanderekó, which relates to the elements of the landscape and the cosmos, as well as, in practical terms, to subsistence (through the cultivation of food and other ways of interacting with the territory and generating income, such as crafts, guided tours, and cultural festivals). Through the research by Zanin (2018), we realized that territory is always present in Mbyá education because knowledge is transmitted and generations are connected through it. An example is the use of clay found along the Maciambu River (Figure 7) in the educational processes of Tekoá Itaty. The elders keep and transmit knowledge through practices that need to be experienced in natural environments in cultural landscapes, which contain significant elements (plants, animals, minerals, water...). Constructive knowledge is also linked to the territory, the availability of plant elements, and the soil and climate characteristics. It also depends on the transmission of knowledge during the construction process (Zanin, 2006). Therefore, life, the continuity of this way of life, is directly and affectively linked to the territory.

Amerindian cosmology is fruitful in examples of affection towards landscapes and their elements (Popygua, 2017; Kaingang, 2022; Gakran, 2015). In the origin narratives of various indigenous peoples, we can find connections between the elements of the landscape (origin narratives of the world, animals, humans, plants, etc.). Indigenous peoples in various

parts of the world can read in the landscape forms and elements related to their ancestral narratives (Barabas, 2017; Morphy, 1995). These connections establish other ways of relating to places by providing feelings of affection and belonging, such as deep and ancient knowledge derived from their oral traditions, which make them belong to specific landscapes.

The markings identified in the natural landscape can be living elements (such as the jeriva coconut tree - *pindó*) and for that very reason, 'transitory' ones, ephemeral as life. Thus, we understand the natural elements as readings of a cultural, symbolic landscape that reveals narratives of the creation of the Earth, of human beings, non-human beings, and divine beings. The relationship with the territory, as argued by Indigenous women Braulina Baniwa, Joziléia Kaingang, and Giovana Mandulão (2023), is also guided by spirituality, recognizing the sacred in each element:

Thinking of the indigenous body-territory as a free and healthy space involves physical dimensions and spirituality. Similarly, for Indigenous peoples, the spiritual issue is linked to our present body-territory. We understand spirituality as a whole. We understand spirituality as our waters that flow in our territories; we understand spirituality in the territory that we live in, and we understand it as the part that composes us as human beings and also made of non-human beings.  
(Baniwa, Kaingang & Mandulao, 2023, p. 19)

Indigenous living gradually composes the landscape, transforming it and its elements into living, into shelter. It perceives and dialogs with the elements and other beings of the landscape, responding to their calls, challenges, characteristics, and limitations. It is a posture that stems from integrated living, which recognizes the interaction between everything in a given place. We find this understanding in several Indigenous authors, who reiterate the need to rethink and feel our relationship with other beings and elements that make up the mosaic of life on the planet by sharing their visions to provoke an awakening to recognize and respect these other beings. Guarani activist and psychologist Geni Núñez (2021) translates this feeling into the form of a poem, evoking being part of the landscape and being composed of nature:

(...) If most of my body is water, I am also a river  
If only I exist, if I breathe, I am also wind  
The trillions of microorganisms that coexist in me, in us, do not  
allow me to claim the individual authorship of the being that we  
are  
How many millions of beings are our smiles, tears, and joy made  
with?  
Every time I see the sunset or the rain, I celebrate the memory of  
knowing that I am also (part of) the sun, the rain, and the Earth.  
Every time we hurt the Earth, it is self-destruction (...)  
(Excerpt from poem by Geni Núñez. Núñez, 2021, p. 5)



**Figure 8.** *Waters of the Brito River.* Crystal clear waters of the Brito River, surrounded by the Atlantic Forest of Serra do Mar, Tekoá Yaka Porã, Morro dos Cavalos Indigenous Land. Source: Zanin, 2018.



By inhabiting the landscape, we consider that we live with all the beings and elements that are part of it, just like us. Thus, we can speak of being part of the landscape, of being constituted by the landscape, the rivers, the plants, the Earth, the minerals, and the animals (Figure 8), and being part of a collective of beings and elements that exchange sensations, perceptions, and feelings (Souza & Guaragni, 2021).

Heidegger (2001, p.140) criticizes the uprooting of human beings, which leads to the crisis of living. The author suggests that we must first “learn to live.” We consider that indigenous living, as exemplified here in Guarani living, provides rich and significant lessons about “learning to live” as part of a knowledge that can be recognized in its importance instead of being invisible and silenced by us (the *juruá*). We understand

that *nhanderekó* is a way of living that respects all other forms of life, all human and non-human beings, and the elements that make up the planetary balance. In this way, it offers lessons on how to “save the Earth” by leaving it “free in its vigor,” like the living of which Heidegger argues:

*Mortals dwell as they save Earth*, taking the word save in its old sense (...). Saving doesn't just mean eradicating a danger. It means, in fact: to leave something free in its own strength. Saving the Earth is more than exploiting or depleting it. (Heidegger, 2001, p. 130, not original)

When we reflect on this position of Heidegger, we can consider that the Guarani ways of living are configured as “practices of freedom” in the sense given by Deleuze and Guattari (1977). Freedom occurs through what is learned and experienced with *nhanderekó*. We can think of the landscape and the territory as a source of both this learning and the experience that leads to knowledge, as we understand from Larrosa-Bondía (2002, p.21): “Experience is what happens to us, what we go through and what touches us. Not what happens, what is gone through, or what touches”, that is, the order of the event. The experience crosses the subject and their history, becoming an ingredient of their singularity. We understand that living needs to be experienced with all senses, feelings, and thoughts to constitute a deep connection with the place.

From the argumentation built in dialog with Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors, we end our discussions with the words of Ingold (2022, P.121): “inhabiting the world, on the contrary, is joining the processes of its formation. It is to participate in a dynamic world of energies, forces, and flows. I think this is the world of Earth and heaven.”

## LEARNING FROM THE JOURNEY

When we turn to the poetic living of indigenous peoples, we find manifestations of how we can establish deeper relationships with the landscape. We find, in a general way, and we can say emphatically, many Indigenous voices that alert us to the living crisis that manifests itself in the lack of adequate spaces for healthy living, not only due to the threats and destruction suffered by natural environments but also due to the precariousness of life in the city (Krenak, 2022). We understand that this crisis is related to a way of life associated with environmental imbalance and massive exploitation of “natural resources” – destroying landscapes and elements that, as we seek to demonstrate in this article, have deep and sacred meanings for these peoples. We must rethink our way of life and relationships with the landscape and nature. We need to feel that we are an integral part of the world, recognizing and caring for other beings and elements that integrate it and make it possible for us to live.

## CONCLUSIONS

Indigenous peoples' lives can be inspiring because they provide examples of a smoother walk on Earth. Knowing other ways of relating to landscapes, with the elements of nature that make up our environments, allows us to glimpse other perspectives and possibilities for constructing inhabited spaces. It is about something more profound than discussing sustainability in a system that supports just one worldview based on exploiting natural resources. Such perspectives and possibilities imply a greater integration with the context and landscape, in line with the continuity of sociocultural processes. It is the search for greater involvement in the care of life, the environment, the ecosystem, and its vital processes.

Finally, it is essential to note that the ways indigenous peoples live are only possible when they are allowed access to their ancestral territory and landscapes and when their rights are recognized and respected. This is a basic premise so that their ways of life can continue.

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# IMAGINARIES FROM THE POETRY BOOK CIPANGO BY THOMAS HARRIS. WASTELANDS, REPRESSION, AND VIOLENCE ON OROMPELLO STREET IN CONCEPCIÓN

IMAGINARIOS DEL POEMARIO CIPANGO DE  
THOMAS HARRIS. ESPACIOS BALDÍOS, REPRESIÓN  
Y VIOLENCIA EN LA CALLE OROMPELLO DE  
CONCEPCIÓN

IMAGINÁRIOS DO LIVRO DE POEMAS CIPANGO  
DE THOMAS HARRIS. ESPAÇOS BALDIOS,  
REPRESSÃO E VIOLÊNCIA NA RUA OROMPELLO  
EM CONCEPCIÓN.



**Figure 0.** Ruins of the Homecenter Sodimac store located on Orompello Street. Photo of the social uprising in Concepción, October-December 2019. Source: Courtesy of the author of the photograph, Nicolás Sáez.

## RESUMEN

En este estudio se busca presentar los imaginarios de la calle Orompello de Concepción, Chile, descritos en el poemario Cipango (1992) de Thomas Harris. Para ello, se realizó un análisis cualitativo interpretativo del poemario por medio de fichas de lectura, se comparó con los hechos históricos acaecidos en el lugar y una entrevista semiestructurada con el autor para ahondar en ciertos significados presentes en el texto. Los resultados arrojaron que el espacio urbano y el habitar presentes en el relato, conforman una heterotopía transformada en distopía, situada en un contexto atemporal producto de una violencia primigenia que data de la época del descubrimiento de América y que es reproducida no solamente por la dictadura de Pinochet, sino también por el Estado en democracia. Los habitantes de este lugar se ven sumergidos en una atmósfera marginal de represión y devastación, transformando el lugar en un baldío. Estas características y sucesos hacen de calle Orompello un lugar inhabitable, pero lleno de significado.

**Palabras clave:** espacio urbano, hábitat, poesía, política urbana, marginalidad urbana

## ABSTRACT

This study seeks to present the imaginaries of Orompello Street in Concepción, Chile, described in the poetry book Cipango (1992) by Thomas Harris. To do this, a qualitative interpretive analysis of the collection of poems was carried out through reading cards. It was compared with the historical events that occurred in the place and a semi-structured interview with the author to delve into certain meanings present in the text. The results showed that the urban space and the living present in the story make up a heterotopia transformed into dystopia, located in a timeless context, the product of primordial violence that dates back to the time of the discovery of America and that is reproduced not only by the dictatorship of Pinochet but also by the State in democracy. The inhabitants of this place are immersed in a marginal atmosphere of repression and devastation, transforming the place into a wasteland. These characteristics and events make Orompello Street an uninhabitable place but full of meaning.

**Keywords:** urban space, habitat, poetry, urban policy, urban marginality

## RESUMO

Este estudo se propõe a apresentar os imaginários da rua Orompello, em Concepción, Chile, descritos no livro de poesias Cipango (1992), de Thomas Harris. Para tanto, foi realizada uma análise qualitativa interpretativa do livro de poemas por meio de fichas de leitura, uma comparação com fatos históricos ocorridos no local e uma entrevista semiestructurada com o autor, de forma a penetrar em determinados significados presentes no texto. Os resultados mostraram que o espaço urbano e o habitat presentes no relato compõem uma heterotopia transformada em distopia, situada em um contexto atemporal, fruto de uma violência primordial que data da época do descobrimento da América e é reproduzida não só pela ditadura de Pinochet, mas também pelo Estado na democracia. Os habitantes desse lugar estão submersos em uma atmosfera marginal de repressão e devastação, transformando o local em um terreno baldio. Essas características e eventos fazem da Rua Orompello um lugar inabitável, mas cheio de significado.

**Palavras-chave:** espaço urbano, habitat, poesia, política urbana, marginalidade urbana.

# INTRODUCTION

*Cipango* (1992) is a Santiago Municipal Prize-winning work (1993) and a finalist in the Casa de las Américas prize (Cuba, 1992). It is one of the outstanding books of Thomas Harris, one of the few provincial writers to be part of the literary generation of the 1980s, comprising figures such as Enrique Lihn or Diamela Eltit. The book brings together four previous poetry collections: *La vida a veces toma la forma de los muros* (Harris, 1983), *Zonas de peligro* (Harris, 1985), *Diario de Navegación* (Harris, 1986), and *El último viaje* (Harris, 1987). Harris constructs an Imaginarium of the city of Concepción, in an era affected by the dictatorship in Chile (1973-1990), through a story crossed by references that place the city in a timeless context, nourished by historical and mythical references, along with fictions of cinema and literature.

The Concepción of *Cipango* comprises fictional spaces interspersed with places based on reality, highlighting Orompello Street, where much of the story is circumscribed. It is a vacant space, the protagonist of the *Penquista* prostitution activity and incidents such as the murder of a prostitute painted with gold, as in the scene of the movie *Goldfinger* (Hamilton, 1964), embodying the suffering of the author and society during the dictatorship.

This article analyzes the urban space and the living of the lyrical speakers and the characters on the Orompello Street of *Cipango* (1992). ■

# BACKGROUND

“Orompello, Orompello.  
The journey itself is absurd.  
The last straw is someone who sticks to its moss,  
from Concepción to the south of the stars.”  
Gonzalo Rojas, Orompello, 1964.

**1** This article is part of the thesis work of Leonardo Muñoz, a Latin American Master’s student in Architecture at the University of Bío-Bío (UBB), 2024.

**2** Harris mentions the Revolutionary Left Movement, the poetry of Gonzalo Rojas, who cites Danger Zones as a preface, and the visit of the American poet Allen Ginsberg to the University of Concepción in 1960 (Muñoz, 2023) as triggers of this cultural revolution. The Chilean New Wave in the 1960s and the creation of the state publishing house Quimantu in 1971 can also be added to the movement.

Together with its literary environment, made up of poets such as Carlos Decap, Thomas Harris proposes to demystify Concepción of nostalgia for the cultural revolution times of the 1960s-1970s, **2** to “re-signify the city” (Harris, 2019, p. 166). It is appealing to violence as one of the Latin American topics (Dorfman, 1970), referring to historical events such as the conquest of America, with documents like the *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las indias* of Las Casas (2023) or to more recent literature, such as *Los ríos profundos* of Arguedas (1995), adding the pop culture of cinema and painting, to propose a contemporary image of Concepción, an issue that is crystallized in his second book of poems, *Zonas de Peligro* (Harris, 1985).

Continuing the country’s literary tradition, Harris aspires to construct a “*mito moderno*” (2004, p.38), or modern myth, set in the period of cultural devastation during the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile. Gonzalo Rojas, in the poem “*Orompello*” (1964), tells of his experiences on that street as an antecedent for the author, who had personally experienced the marginality of



those spaces, where “New York is not (being) talked about” (Muñoz, 2023). *“The urban space was thus opened not as a backdrop, but as the very locus where the poem should be uttered, occur, and become from a metaphorical and metonymic contextualization, which could be read in the city of real Concepción, to which another imaginary one has been superimposed, and in which substrates of the other Concepciones survive, of the other cities as a palimpsest, where all the writings or geological layers of the urban writings, converged and projected to Chile, to South America.”* (Harris, 2004, p. 40). A city in ruin; Harris describes its places, architecture, streets, bars, neighborhoods, hills, lagoons, etc.

Diverse studies have been made on the wasteland as a characterization of urban space in the *Zonas de Peligro* (1985) and *Diario Navegación* (1986) poetry books, interpreting it as the fruit of the violence of the conquest of America (Sepúlveda, 2007). Its inhabitants, imprisoned by fear, do not distinguish between reality and fiction; the imagined becomes space, the streets are bloody, and sediments of bodies cover the walls. It would be about a *“presence-absence from the world”* (Debord, 1995) inserted in a panopticon. Garrido (n.d.), in his analysis of *La vida toma a veces la forma de los muros* (1983), highlights the darkness in which the place is submerged, where the human body is part of the morphology of the empty space.

Referring to the type of analysis that interests us, Vera (2020) carries out a study of the urban imaginaries of Valparaíso through science fiction. Based on the dialog and interaction of the characters that inhabit the city, an image of a prospective city is constructed (Moreno & Palibrk, 2011). Certain utopian texts present a parallel dimension as a model of a paradisiacal city, *“a city that hung from the hills”* (Briceño, 2014, p. 20), and in others, a dystopian city, where zombies who seek to destroy the city, appear as a metaphor for the *“Other,”* an invader from Santiago who has deformed the city for his economic interests (Muñoz, 2014).

Delimiting the terms that concern us, the urban space is *“that space of public or private property, which is of free, although not necessarily, free access of the population of a city, commune, or neighborhood so that it can develop social, cultural, educational, contemplation, and recreation activities”* (León Balza, 1998, p. 31). For Delgado and Malet (2007), it is a *“space of generalized visibility, where the co-present ones form an optical society, so to speak, to the extent that each of their actions is submitted to the consideration of others, territory therefore of exposure, in a double sense of exhibition and risk”* (p. 1,2), declaring that public space transcends its distinction from private space. It forms a political instance under the power of the ruling classes, where a unity of society with the State is apparently maintained, but where it is also possible to visualize its contradictions.

On the other hand, according to the RAE, to inhabit means to live, to dwell. For Heidegger (2002), it is *“the way we humans “sind” (are/are) on earth”* (p. 17); *“it is the end that everything pursues to build”* (p. 13). It would be about the daily experience of the human being within time and space (Pallasmaa, 2017), establishing relationships between things, people, and

spaces that, in the temporal context in which they develop, constitute the identity principles of the inhabitant.

For Benjamin (1980), it is impossible to know with certainty what a city is like, as multiple interpretations are given by “a fusion of the old and the new, the public and the private, the sacred and the profane, in a spatial anarchy where social relations are ephemeral,” distancing itself from any hegemonic cartography or imaginary (Guerra, 2014, p. 19,25). On the other hand, Cortázar (1968) points out that the city can only be defined subjectively. It is a specific and unrepeatable personal, spatial, and temporal experience.

The “written constructs” in literature constitute a primary source for researching architecture and the city, especially when it disappeared, allowing us to approach the reading of the inhabitants of the past and the present. These would be ekphrasis exercises that could be represented graphically and even physically embodied (Muñoz, 2019, p. 32).

## METHODOLOGY

The analysis of the space and living of the Orompello Street of Cipango responds to a qualitative approach, taking as an object of study the poetry book *Cipango*, published by Ediciones Documentas/Ediciones Cordillera in 1992.

An interpretative analysis of meanings present in the book of poems was carried out to identify the spatial and living characteristics of the lyrical speaker, and other characters of Orompello Street described in the book. To do this, the poems where the street is mentioned were analyzed, developing reading cards, investigating the poem’s story from the lyrical speaker and the characters that compose it, together with the references of the street and comparing it with the historical reality of its urban space. These interpretations were contrasted with a semi-structured interview with the author, Thomas Harris.

## RESULTS

### OROMPELLO: FROM HETEROTOPIA TO URBAN DYSTOPIA

*“They’re not going to tell me now that Orompello is a pure symbol  
cast over the city  
and the houses, seven houses with golden doors  
and the fucking seven whores dressed in white clothes.” (Harris, 1992, p. 16)*

Orompello Street, described in *Cipango*, is a heterotopia that has resulted in a dystopia. Heterotopia is a concept coined by Foucault (1997) and defined as a materialized utopia located outside places controlled by the forces of power. They are spaces that “take place precisely at the limit that has excluded any regular system or structure” (Toro-Zambrano, 2017, p. 36). By the 1980s, Orompello Street, in the northern sector of Avenida Los

Carrera, was considered the periphery or, more specifically, the red-light district of Concepción, where men could satisfy their sexual fantasies with paid encounters. In the words of Harris, Orompello Street was “*the marginal of the marginal*,” the place “*where the party ended*.” It was the El Castillo Bar, where he used to meet with his friends at the end of the night and then visit the area’s brothels (Muñoz, 2023). The brothel as a heterotopic place (Hozven, 2004) is recognizable in other Chilean literature as *Juana Lucero* of D’Halmar (1902), or *El lugar sin límites* (Donoso 1966). It is rescued “*as a place that has the virtue of including all the other spaces recreated by culture, of confronting them, deforming them, inverting them and, finally, annulling them*” (Cánovas, 2003, p. 6). This heterotopia is threatened by the arrival of the Chilean military dictatorship between 1973 and 1990, where life is constantly monitored, and the street becomes a “*danger zone*,” a space vulnerable to police violence and susceptible to disappearing (García Alonso, 2014).

For Harris, violence is of primal origin. It is the same found in Latin America from its discovery to the present day (Harris, 2019) and even since the beginning of humanity: “*Orompello dates from the Upper Paleolithic of the city*” (Harris, 1992, p. 17). Uribe (2001) defines it as cyclical violence, inherited from generation to generation and accepted by the State as a method of governance, validating the subjugation of the lowest social strata using force to this day. Violence that is reused by the dictatorship to attack political and moral dissidents: “*The country was born and lived in ugly violence, and was learning that it was necessary; and that it should be justified in the law*” (p. 19). This violence experienced by the inhabitants of Orompello Street turns it into a timeless space where the violations of the dictatorship, such as those experienced upon the founding of Latin American cities, make their presence known in the place (Sepúlveda, 2007). This causes lyrical speakers to constantly compare the city of Concepción with other cities and historical country estates, where forces of power besieged the population: “*It was Thebes, the place of tragedy, and we were not in Thebes. It was Treblinka, the place of comedy and we were not in Treblinka*” (Harris, 1992, p. 36).

The inhabitants of Orompello live in a constant sense of vulnerability and danger. In a nocturnal environment, where the sun does not appear (Harris, 1992, p. 11, 25), becoming unable to comprehend reality and remaining in a hallucinatory state:

(...) *and a mirage, the whores dressed in white clothes,*  
*and a mirage, the wasteland blooming.*

(...) *in Orompello, we will never know if it was true:*  
*to discover every night the bloodiest wound*  
*under the sun of 40 watts wrapped in red cellophane*  
*with the same stupefaction*  
*of an idiot before the sea*  
*like in front of a puddle of rain.* (Harris, 1992, pp. 16-21)



**Figure 1.** Coral, Vivaceta, Santiago. Photograph from the series “La manzana de Adán” (1982-1988). Source: Paz Errázuriz (1987).

This hallucination, in the eyes of Christopher Columbus and his expedition, characters from the book of poems in *Diario de navegación* (Harris, 1986) and *El último viaje* (Harris, 1987), appears described as a scenography, the “theater of pain”: the dead are Chinese shadows, and “a glass door shining deep blue in the night” appears through the effect of rain. (Harris, 1992, p. 49). This condition allows them to evade reality and put themselves before the suffering experienced on the spot: “But we knew that the perverted mechanisms of sleep oppose pain.” It is possible to deduce that the physical and real urban space are fused with the imagined space, making it difficult to discern reality and, with it, the meaning of what is related (Harris, 1992, pp.49-75).

There is evidence of sexual harassment, as a form of torture, to which the female victims of the dictatorship were subjected, exemplified in the prostitutes of the Orompello Street of *Cipango*. The photo album *La manzana de Adán* (Errázuriz, 1987) recounts the experiences in the brothels of Talca during the dictatorship. In one of the visits to the La Sota brothel in 1984, he states that these places are constantly besieged by law enforcement: “The presence of a police van in front of the brothel’s door belied the image we had been painted of Talca as the last area in Chile where transvestites are not harassed by the police” (Donoso y Errázuriz, 1990, p. 19) (Figure 1).



In particular, Harris narrates the murder of Jaqueline in the middle of Orompello Street (Harris, 1992), alluding to the scene of the film *Goldfinger* (Hamilton, 1964), where the James Bond agent's companion, Jill Masterson, is murdered painted gold on a bed. Jaqueline was the name that was used, not to say pejoratively prostitute. Eltit, in her novel *Lumperica* (1983), describes a similar situation, where a woman is abused in the Plaza de Armas of Santiago, becoming a victim of the show made by the media: "*She waits anxiously for the luminous one, and that's why she moves whole when she feels touched*" (p. 7). Jaqueline is also exposed in the street to public scrutiny: "*ferocious act of sodomy - they will say in the newspapers.*" In the expedition of Columbus, similar acts are told of: "*They seemed like ghost ships gliding through those nights/women (schoolgirls, vestals, prostitutes/puberty and impuberty, the entire dreamed catalog)*" (p. 47), added to the orgy they have with the vestal **3** called O, who dies abandoned on the spot: "*after consummated, her body was left adrift in the wasteland*" (Harris, 1992, p. 52).

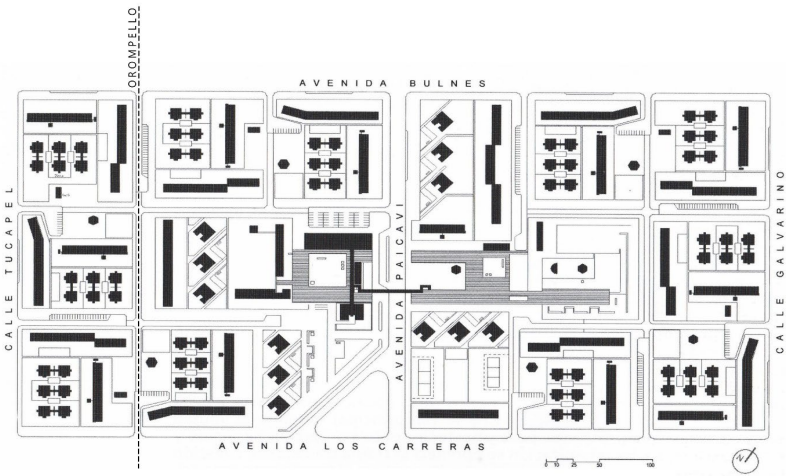
In this way, sexual activity moves to the street without differentiating between public and private space, maintaining its exposure by the forces of power that perpetrate it. Although there is no record of sexual crimes in the heart of Orompello, events involving people who saw their rights violated by the State would take place in the streets of Concepción. They would be recorded by the press, with information available at the Museum of Memory and Human Rights, naming the case of the immolation of Sebastian Acevedo (Victims, n.d. a), in front of the Cathedral of Concepción when asking for the release of his children in 1983; the murder of Luciano Aedo in the commune of Hualpencillo, present-day Hualpén, and the death of Mario Lagos (Victims, n.d. b), and Nelson Herrera (Victims, n.d. c), in front of the Vega Monumental Market, in 1984, all with the interference of the CNI. In this way, the street would be the scene of crimes perpetrated by forces of power. The affected characters in the book of poems show no resistance. Orompello's space makes visible the domination of the state over the individual and the illusion of democratic public space.

Another of the events narrated in *Cipango* is the exodus of prostitutes from Orompello to Prat "*by municipal edict,*" thus being, in addition to being raped, stripped of their home. The unfortunate event is guarded by "*armed guards and barbed wire (...) helicopters*" (Harris, 1992, p. 54), in a clear appearance of the vigilante state exercising repression in Orompello Street. With this last event, heterotopia takes its final step to dystopia.

It is important to note that this coincides with the planned dismantling of the State Railway Company by the dictatorship during the 1980s that occupied a large area of Prat, where in *Cipango*, they would remain "*rusty old locomotives fill the hall, the square/the surrounding streets*" (Harris, 1992, p. 26) that would go on to form the sediment of the walls.

**3** According to the RAE, vestal means "of a Roman maiden: Consecrated to the goddess Vesta." The Vestals were virgins, and Vesta was the goddess of the protection of the home, so the violation of the vestal could suggest that the Orompello Street of Cipango reached such levels of uninhabitability that the sense of home was unable to take shape for any individual.

**Figure 2.** TAU. Sectional plan on 18 blocks on the perimeter of Bulnes Street, Galvarino, Los Carreras Ave., and Tucapel. The 6 blocks adjacent to Orompello Street, to the east and west, were not built. Source: Pérez, L. & Fuentes, P. (2012). Concepción. Neighborhoods that built the modern city. w/ed



THE WASTELAND AS A SYMBOL OF ABANDONMENT

*“They are always loaded with repeated images  
the twilight over the wastelands. Without human form,  
in pure land modeled, in pure rain crumbled,  
spread out in pure mud and vegetable waste”* (Harris, 1992, p. 41)

The repression and violence of the dictatorship move cultural life to the margins of the city, allowing, in Orompello, the possibility of living in hiding, embodying the metaphor of empty space (Muñoz, 2023). Orompello Street is a space of rot and death, monotonous, a cemetery and garbage dump on the pavement, making it an uninhabitable and empty space.

Nevertheless, this wasteland is not just a metaphor but a historical spatial characteristic of the street. Its urban space marks the border where the modernizing project of the developmentalist state dies. On the one hand, the earthquake of 1939 would generate considerable damage in the sector, so a plan would be developed by the Reconstruction and Relief Corporation, which would be a restricted “*product of low investment and the decline of the construction sector*” (Fuentes, Miranda & Pérez, 2012, p. 74). With the earthquake of 1960, the construction of the Remodelación Paicaví would arrive (Figure 2), a set of residential buildings that would become an icon of the modern public architecture of the city, but of which only a section of 3 blocks would be built by the middle of that same year (Fuentes et al., 2012, p. 78). Hence, the expropriated lands on both sides of the street would remain in disuse until the 1990s, with the last sections between Las Heras and Los Carrera (Figures 3 and 4). Finally, the ruins of the Homecenter Sodimac shopping store, which occupied three-quarters of the block between Orompello, Los Carreras, Ongolmo, and Las Heras, burned down in 2019 during the Social Uprising and which remain to this day, are evidence of how



**Figure 3.** Empty space from the corner of Ongolmo and Los Carreras. In the background, Orompello Street. Source: UBB Architecture Archive (c. 1990)

**Figura 4.** View towards Orompello Street from Remodelación Eleuterio Ramírez (CORMU, f. 1970-1973). The contrast between the built and the empty space can be seen. Source: UBB Architecture Archive (c. 1990)



the wasteland still takes presence in the place for political reasons (Figure 7). In this way, "*the wasteland of Orompello invents for you a prison/hidden at the other end of Concepción*" (Harris, 1992, p. 29), an empty and peripheral space delimited by the machinery of the state.

The uninhabitability that the empty space represents constitutes the scene where the characters of the story unfold. Columbus, in *The last journey* (1987), is affected by the rot of the place to the point of losing faith in the future: "*Maybe my own transvestite body forever is already going along Prat, the last street of Concepción, towards the fetid void from which I should never have peeked.*" This rot refers to the repression and violence suffered in the city (Harris, 1992, p. 23-148). In H.P. Lovecraft's literature, Harris' influence, the image of spaces flooded by a putrid viscosity caused by a powerful force, is a recurring theme. In the story *The Horror of Dunwich* (Lovecraft, 1996), a gigantic and tentacular being, freed with the death of Wilbur Whateley leaves a trail of death with a completely stunned population: "*The Frye house had been flooded as if it were an eggshell, and no living or dead remains could be found among the ruins. Just an unbearable stench and a bituminous viscosity.*" (Lovecraft, 1996, p. 62).

The wasteland of Orompello Street becomes deadly, even for the perpetrators of violence themselves, as is narrated by the yellow horse of the Horseman of Death of the Apocalypse, "*with power over a fourth part of the Earth, to kill with the sword and with famine and with plague and by the wild animals*" (Bible The Word, 2010, Revelations 6:8), appearing in several scenes of the book, galloping down the street and subsequently passing away in one "*corner of the wasteland*" (Harris, 1992, pp: 16-86). This environment is reflected in the reiteration of the words "*Orompello*" and "*danger zone*," along with events such as those of the same galloping horse, which gives Orompello Street and the city of Concepción the idea of "*a dead-end universe, always the same; in short: unbreathable*" (Gómez, 2014, p. 75), from "*oppressive and toxic air*" (Gómez, 2014, p. 76).

In addition to the locomotives and other state debris, the bodies, living or dead, make up the sediments of the whitewashed walls comprising the materiality of the urban space of Orompello: "*These motionless bodies in the corners had already been painted on the walls, leather on stucco, bone on adobe, paint on live flesh*"; "*all the walls were whitewashed in our ghost towns*" (Harris, 1992, p. 17-36). This forms a metaphor for the concealment of the bodies of the disappeared detainees during the military dictatorship in Chile and of the mass of violated bodies of the Native Americans (Harris, 2019). These bodies are reminiscent of Bellmer's doll (1934), a plaster and wooden sculpture in a voyeuristic position (Harris, 1992) that Huenchuleo depicts in a painting inspired by *Cipango* (Figure 5). Harris finds the influence of these sedimented bodies in the paintings of El Bosco and Goya (Figure 6) (Muñoz, 2023) as referred to in the poem *Tu ojo, los muros* with his paintings presented on the walls of the King Hotel:





**Figure 5.** "Bellmer's Doll", (c. 2011). Source: Courtesy of the author Álvaro Huenchuleo, mixed technique on canvas.



**Figura 6.** "Aquelarre de Goya" (c. 2011). Source: Courtesy of the author Álvaro Huenchuleo, mixed technique on canvas.





**Figure 7.** Ruins of the Homecenter Sodimac store located on Orompello Street. Photo of the social uprising in Concepción, October-December 2019. Source: Courtesy of the author of the photograph, Nicolás Sáez.



**Figure 8.** O'Higgins Street. Photo of the social uprising in Concepción, October-December 2019. Source: Courtesy of the author of the photograph, Nicolás Sáez.

“On the whitewashed wall to the lime they put us  
an old magazine clipping, a reproduction  
broken from the covens of Goya.” (Harris, 1992, p. 37)

Along with the colors muted by the lime, the sediments of the walls and the rot-dyed yellowish shades, red, is also present in the traffic sign “Stop” located between Bulnes and Orompello Streets, portrayed as a “moldy sun that spies on you” (Harris, 1992, p. 22), a bloody brass sun that becomes the symbol of the danger of the street (Figure 8), next to the “the red reflections of the street” (Harris, 1992, p. 93), the “long and narrow bands of blood” (Harris, 1992, p. 15) dumped on the cobblestones of Orompello Street.

Orompello Street, described in the book *Cipango* by Thomas Harris (1992), is a heterotopia in the process of eradication, immersed in the primeval violence experienced by the inhabitants of Latin America since its discovery. This street is inhabited mainly by prostitutes who live this physical violence perpetrated by forces of power, such as the dictatorship and those involved in the conquest of America. This violence, combined with the cultural censorship that the country was experiencing, gives way to the timeless and empty space, where the rot, the sediments of bodies that make up the walls, the bloody streets, and the symbols of death and oppression make it an uninhabitable place. Orompello Street becomes a dystopia where death reigns.

The empty space and the heterotopias in decay, as a consequence of the dictatorship, is an image developed by other authors of the time, such as Enrique Lihn (1979) in his poem *Nunca salí del horroroso Chile* (1979) to talk about the cultural and human devastation left by the regime: "my trips that are not imaginary/late, yes - moments of a moment -/ they did not uproot me from the / remote and presumptuous wasteland (...) I never got out of anything" (p. 53). It even makes an appearance in the book *Naciste Pintada* (1999) by Carmen Berenguer, in architecture as a result of the disappearance of the sanctuary character of the home for women "to be desecrated by military violence" (Santa Cruz, 2009, p. 92). This recurrence in the national literary scene can lead to a more finished study to understand the habitat at a time that still has significance today.

The book of poems is a valuable testimony to the urban space of Concepción, especially its peripheral and marginalized places. According to Caillóis, "to answer this question (about imaginaries), to the point we are tempted to point to the literature" (1998, p. 166). Thus, the literary text becomes a record capable of revealing situations forgotten by the official history. Orompello Street and its city are not only affected by natural catastrophes or the rupture that ensued with the dictatorship but also by state policies "of progress and its consequences" (Harris, 2004, p. 41) who have dismissed the periphery of the city while maintaining its wasteland character.

As for the interview, it provided a primary source to understand certain aspects of Harris' book of poems, giving validity to the interpretations of the story, which evokes one of the bloodiest episodes in Chilean history from the margins of the city of Concepción.

## CONCLUSIONS

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# LANDSCAPE AND ARCHITECTURE: YAWANAWÁ DESIGN LESSONS FROM THE BRAZILIAN AMAZON FOREST

PAISAJE Y ARQUITECTURA: LECCIONES  
DE DISEÑO YAWANAWÁ DE LA FLORESTA  
AMAZÓNICA BRASILEÑA

PAISAGEM E ARQUITETURA: LIÇÕES DE DESIGN  
YAWANAWÁ DA FLORESTA AMAZÔNICA  
BRASILEIRA



**Figure 0.** Dwellings in Mutum, which preserve ancestral material technologies and exhibit formal mutations. Source: Photographs by the author, 2016.

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## RESUMEN

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo, observar las prácticas de diseño espaciales de la población indígena Yawanawá, que habita en la Tierra Indígena Río Gregorio, localizada en la Floresta Amazónica brasileña. La intención es reflexionar, en colaboración con este pueblo, sobre enfoques que puedan enriquecer la investigación de sus conocimientos espaciales, contribuyendo así, a la consolidación de los saberes amerindios en el ámbito académico de la arquitectura y el diseño. La metodología de observación participante, permitió la inmersión en las narrativas Yawanawá que, rescatan su papel ancestral en la configuración arquitectónica y paisajística del territorio. Mediante la elaboración de una investigación visual fotográfica, se buscó ampliar voces y sentidos, en estratos de tiempos coexistentes, articulando las imágenes a las concepciones arquitectónicas amerindias que sobreviven al atropello colonial. En las conclusiones se destaca las lecciones que, los Yawanawá expresan y manifiestan, al construir espacios de resistencia de manera poética, simbólica y cotidiana donde las estructuras de poder urbanas edificadas y que atraviesan su territorio, fueron y son resignificadas para ensayar otras formas de habitar en la floresta.

**Palabras clave:** arquitectura indígena, diseño arquitectónico, diseño del paisaje, patrimonio histórico, pueblos indígenas

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this article is to observe the spatial design practices of the Yawanawá indigenous population that inhabits the Rio Gregorio Indigenous Land, located in the Brazilian Amazon Forest. In collaboration with this community, the intention is to reflect on approaches that can enrich the research of their spatial knowledge, thereby contributing to the consolidation of Amerindian knowledge in the academic field of architecture and design. The participant observation methodology allowed an immersion into Yawanawá narratives that rescue their ancestral role in the architectural and landscape configuration of the territory. Through elaborating a photographic visual investigation, it is sought to expand voices and meanings in strata of coexisting times, articulating the images to the Amerindian architectural conceptions that survived colonial abuse. In the conclusions, the lessons that the Yawanawá express and manifest are highlighted when building spaces of resistance in a poetic, symbolic, and daily way where the urban power structures constructed and/or that cross their territory were and are re-signified to test other ways of living in the forest.

**Keywords:** indigenous architecture, architectural design, landscape design, historical heritage, indigenous people

## RESUMO

O objetivo deste artigo é observar as práticas de design espacial da população indígena Yawanawá que vive na Terra Indígena Rio Gregório, localizada na Floresta Amazônica brasileira. A intenção é refletir, em colaboração com esse povo, sobre abordagens que possam enriquecer a investigação de seus conhecimentos espaciais, contribuindo assim para a consolidação dos saberes ameríndios no campo acadêmico da arquitetura e do design. A metodologia de observação participante permitiu a imersão nas narrativas dos Yawanawá, que destacam seu papel ancestral na configuração arquitetônica e paisagística do território. Por meio da elaboração de uma investigação visual fotográfica, buscaram-se ampliar vozes e significados, em camadas de tempos coexistentes, articulando as imagens às concepções arquitetônicas ameríndias que sobrevivem ao ultraje colonial. As conclusões destacam as lições que os Yawanawá expressam e manifestam ao construir espaços de resistência de forma poética, simbólica e cotidiana, onde as estruturas de poder urbano edificadas e que atravessam seu território foram e são resignificadas para experimentar outras formas de habitar a floresta.

**Palavras-chave:** arquitetura indígena, projeto arquitetônico, projeto paisagístico, patrimônio histórico, povos indígenas.

# INTRODUCTION

## THE DESIGN OF THE FORESTS: ARCHITECTURAL LANDSCAPES

Indigenous lands cover 11.6% of the Brazilian territory, which translates into an area of 991,498 km<sup>2</sup>, *protected* by law, to conserve the ways of living of the country's Amerindian societies (IBGE, 2002). However, they face threats such as invasion by agricultural activities, mineral exploitation, timber extraction, road building, and hydroelectric plants (IBGE, 2002). According to official data, these attacks have had a profound impact on Amerindian sociability<sup>1</sup>, even leading to their extermination and significantly accelerating the environmental degradation of the territories, which, in turn, has compromised the physical and epistemic survival of the indigenous population.

In addition to facing the appropriation and exploration of their natural resources, they have been affected by diverse forms of colonial extraction. These operate not only in expropriating natural resources but also in images, symbols, and representations. According to the UN report on the *State of Indigenous Peoples in the World* (UN, 2021), indigenous peoples, amid their multiple threats, play a crucial role in preserving ecosystems, home to approximately 80% of the planet's biodiversity. However, the most urgent global challenges, such as climate change, are ignored by allowing continuous environmental degradation, gradual or otherwise, and the loss of original ways of living.

The analysis shows that the environmental crisis and the defense of indigenous territories are part of the landscape debate because it is urgent to discuss the interventions allowed in the space and the architectural operations that would collaborate in the design of instruments to protect threatened territories and knowledge. There are diverse points of view and historical constructs for the definition of landscape. This work is put together from the perspective of *historical ecology* (Balée, 2006; Crumley, 2007), where the concept is built in an operational sense, "[the] landscapes are encounters of people and places whose stories are imprinted on matter, including living matter" (Balée, 2008, p. 11). From this perspective, Balée (2008) defends the *indigeneity* associated with the design of landscapes; in other words, certain landscapes are living proof and reveal specific design techniques linked to *indigenous* life practices.

In the Amazonian landscape, scientific evidence reveals transformations caused by Amerindian activities before the European arrival. These designs, confirmed by recent archaeological research (Heckenberger, Petersen & Neves, 1999; Heckenberger et al., 2008), mainly consist of large earth manipulations, extensive in their designs and roles. These constructions had everyday uses and roles related to fish exploration, drinking water provision, and watercourse design, among others, but they are also associated with multiple cultural or symbolic interpretations. In short, this forest is an archaeological landscape, and its *architectural* design was produced in

<sup>1</sup> The term Amerindians defines the indigenous peoples of the Americas, given the similarities among the indigenous societies of North, Central, and South America. Source: Povos Indígenas No Brasil, 2023.



the pre-overseas expansion world by different Amerindian cultures, the ancestors of contemporary indigenous peoples (Balée, 2008).

In the field of architecture and urbanism, voices attentive to recent research in other fields – such as archaeology, historical ecology, and anthropology – are rising up to legitimize Amerindian spatial conceptions and practices, urging the overcoming of limited visions of the Amazon, historically reduced as a remote, untouched, or unoccupied space. Until now, architects have focused mostly on studying traditional architectural objects – typological, constructive, material, and formal systems – and have documented these constructions within the notion of the *vernacular or popular architecture* (Schlee, 2012). However, in some ways, these generalist conceptions reduce local knowledge's richness and specificity. It is about “being attentive” so as not to let their techniques and spatial intelligence, still alive but in constant threat, extinguish the landscapes built by the Amerindian cultures. (Balée, 2008).

Contemplation onsite generated the need to observe and recognize the design practices inscribed in the Amazonian landscape. These are linked to extended interpretations of architecture, where its relationship with the interspecies production of the territory and the landscape is inherent. In this incipient architectural debate, it is urgent to elaborate other vocabularies and conceptual tools that allow formulating strategies for the care, reproduction, and listening of the landscape articulated to the architectural agenda.

The hypothesis posits that Yawanawá spatial, architectural, geographical, artistic, and ecological knowledge (Jecupé, 1998; Krenak, 2022; Xakriabá, 2020; Baniwa, 2021) survived colonial violence and is a powerful instrument for the production of ideas and thoughts that point to other possible worlds and open ways for us to dream of futuristic ways of living.

This article results from research on the urban transformation dynamics in the Brazilian Amazon Forest that is crystallized in the Gregorio River Indigenous Land, TIRG (in Portuguese) **2** (Figure 1). The Yawanawa **3**, who live in the TIRG, despite the cultural impact they have suffered since contact with non-indigenous people, maintain and claim their traditional ancestral knowledge, among which is the design of the landscape they cohabit. The introduction of urban logics in the territory, have occurred gradually and originate in the mid-nineteenth century. Subsequently, the invasion of their lands by non-indigenous groups was the origin of the destabilization of their original ways of life. With the arrival of foreign missionaries, ancestral rituals and cultural practices were extinguished (Vinnya, Pinedo & Teixeira, 2007; Yawanawá, 2017). In parallel, the rubber explorers' invasion impacted the productive, constructive, and socio-spatial systems. Both invasive dynamics caused the fragmentation, transformation, and erasure of their routines, language, and original way of living for decades (Vinnya et al., 2007; Yawanawá, 2017).

**2** The Gregorio River Indigenous Land (TIRG) was demarcated in 1983, with approximately 187,400 inhabitants and a perimeter of 239km. Hunting and fishing are two of its main traditional economic activities, although, at present, some of them participate in urban work dynamics related to private companies or public institutions. The Siasi/Sesai showed that 813 Yawanawá live in Acre, Brazil. Source: Indigenous Health Information System, Siasi/Sesai, (2014).

**3** The word Yawanawa comprises yawa, the generic name of the queixadas, a mammal commonly known as a wild pig, and Nawa, which refers to the village. The Yawanawá call themselves the people of the queixadas, symbolizing their form of social organization: “As the queixadas, we always walk together” (Camargo-Tavares, 2013, p.30).

The text seeks to expand the visual and written documents that make visible the diversity of Yawanawa spatial design practices such as landscape, architectural, infrastructural, and artistic practices, contributing to visualizing perspectives of Amerindian architecture. The methodological approach is qualitative, with a visual documentary design supported by oral stories and an architectural, archaeological, and anthropological bibliographic review, including sources of the Yawanawá people.

The first part of the text briefly addresses the concepts of inhabiting the forest from the Amerindian perspective (Krenak, 2022; Xakriabá, 2020; Yawanawá, 2017) and also from classical sources, such as Bachelard (1957) and Heidegger (1951), looking for articulations or dissonances between these perspectives. Subsequently, the specific case of the production of architecture and landscapes in the Amazon Forest is described based on the fieldwork in the Gregorio River Indigenous Land, TIRG. It reflects on how the articulation between the Amerindians' ways of inhabiting and resisting is translated into poetic forms of *living in the forest*. The text finally concludes with reflections on the lessons expressed by the Yawanawá when designing spaces of resistance, where the visible and invisible power infrastructures that cross their territory are re-signified to formulate other ways of living.

## METHOD

The start of a research journey is proposed based on a dialogue with the Yawanawá in 2016, where they outlined their spatial memories and historical narratives. Concerning the problem, the analysis assumes an exploratory essayistic character, which seeks to generate new interpretative possibilities and conceptual approaches relating to epistemic debates, historicities, and socio-territorial processes. The methods and techniques applied in the research have been the documentary analysis of texts and photographs, in addition to participant observation.

Direct and participant observation has taken place in the following areas:

- (i) at the TIRG in Mutum village in 2016<sup>4</sup>; and
- (ii) at the meetings held with members of the Mutum village in Rio de Janeiro in 2018 and 2019, respectively.

During the participant observation, photographic records were made that were organized and treated. This territorial investigation takes special care not to extinguish the social violence involved in the planetary urbanization processes; namely, it is essential to visualize the paved roads, the material transformations, and other physical expressions that appear in the territory to visualize the ways of life, which are being threatened by the abuse of colonial contact. The visual records are documents that reveal complex processes of dispossession and resistance in the analyzed areas.

<sup>4</sup> The field research was carried out between July and August 2016, arriving at the Mutum village on June 29th, 2016. All the villages were visited, including Escondido, Tibúrcio, and Sete Estrelas. On August 18th and 19th, Amparo village was visited, and on the 20th, the return began.

## PERSPECTIVES OF LIVING IN THE FOREST

The historical relationship between living, landscape, and territory goes back to the conception of *terra nullius*, a concept created by Europeans to name the lands and societies of the New World and elaborated to define the territories considered as uninhabited (Balée, 2008). This conception, which is kept alive in the narrative of the natural landscape or virgin forest, participates in the construction of the colonial project, which portends the fragmentation and erasure of Amerindian societies and territories. This link persists in aesthetic debates, such as literature or philosophy, where other narratives are formulated but somehow perpetuate the uninhabited forest's paradigm.

For Gaston Bachelard (1957), *the forest is a transcendental spatial figure that illustrates the immensity*, a philosophical category to explore the *poetics of space*. In this context, Bachelard examined “close up what the immensity of the forest was” and articulated different authors to this end. “The poet feels this immovable immensity of the ancient forest” (Bachelard, 1957, p. 165). This phenomenological study reveals how limited visions of pre-existing design in some forests still support certain aesthetic narratives.

A proximate perspective – the forest as a space of thought that helps to reformulate ways of living - underlies Martin Heidegger's lecture (1951), *To build, to inhabit, to think*. Heidegger (1951), in this manifesto, puts forward his critical vision of the urban constructive forms of the postwar; for its inability to create roots and complicity with the environment. In addition, he argued that inhabiting is linked to the way of living on Earth. In this sense, cultivating and caring for the earth (Heidegger, 1951) is an inherent part of inhabiting. Therefore, when inhabiting in its original meaning, the human being cares for and cultivates the earth. Therefore, this *Heideggerian* postulate started a contemporary debate on the homogenization of urban life and the loss of agrarian or artisanal ways of life.

This example is still valid, questioning how inhabiting, caring for, and cultivating the planet can be understood globally, promoting resistance and the restorations of silenced social and cultural diversities. To expand this listening, it is necessary to inhabit places hinged between the different existing worlds and to transcend the limits of the Western perspective. It is not very difficult to assume that the homogeneous design of urban life “has failed and fails in mediating relations between human-urban and other beings and non-human entities, including the e(E)arth” (Cançado et al., 2022, p.237). Moreover, inhabiting or living on the earth does not equate to urbanizing, planning, or asphaltting (Cançado et al., 2022).

From this critical perspective, the indigenous thinker Ailton Krenak (2022) highlights that urban designs interrupt life flows and consume the body of the E(e)arth. Krenak (2022) proposes carefully observing the ways of living in the forest, as Bachelard suggests (1957), in search of its poetic

potential. Krenak (2022), from the Amerindian perspective, conceives *the forest* as the place where beings cooperate to coexist and cohabit the landscape, and that is designed between humans and non-humans. Could this conception of the forest help us imagine futures where to evoke other poetic forms of life? For Krenak (2022), architects and urban planners can look to forests for ways of design to reconcile with the Earth, (re)learn grammar, break with outdated urban conceptions, and “[...] summon the forest to enter, to cross the walls, to flourish in the city –flowering-city. This is poetic. It evokes *the poetics of life* to break these walls and make some flower sprout from inside the hard stone” (Krenak, 2022, p. 228).

From this approach, the forests reveal themselves as places where the poetics of life are sustained and show ways to restore the conception of inhabiting the Earth towards an “ancestral future” (Krenak, 2023). In the Amazonian lands, indigenous peoples, by practicing a theory of generalized cultivation, believe that other beings contribute to organizing the land and making it more productive (Cunha, 2023), “the indigenous peoples undoubtedly transformed the forest more favorably to human life, but they did not colonize it” (Cunha, 2023). According to the leader Francisco Panahãi, the Yawanawá: “always sought a balance between using resources and thinking about tomorrow [...], we were very careful with the land” (Yawanawá, 2017, p.25). Raimundo Sales, son of the last great Yawanawá leader, reveals: “My father already had in his blood the presentiment of the causes that the world would embrace, the cause of the forest, of the environment” (Yawanawá, 2017, p.43). Both testimonies reflect the deep and central character of the territorial Yawanawá design in its forest environment.

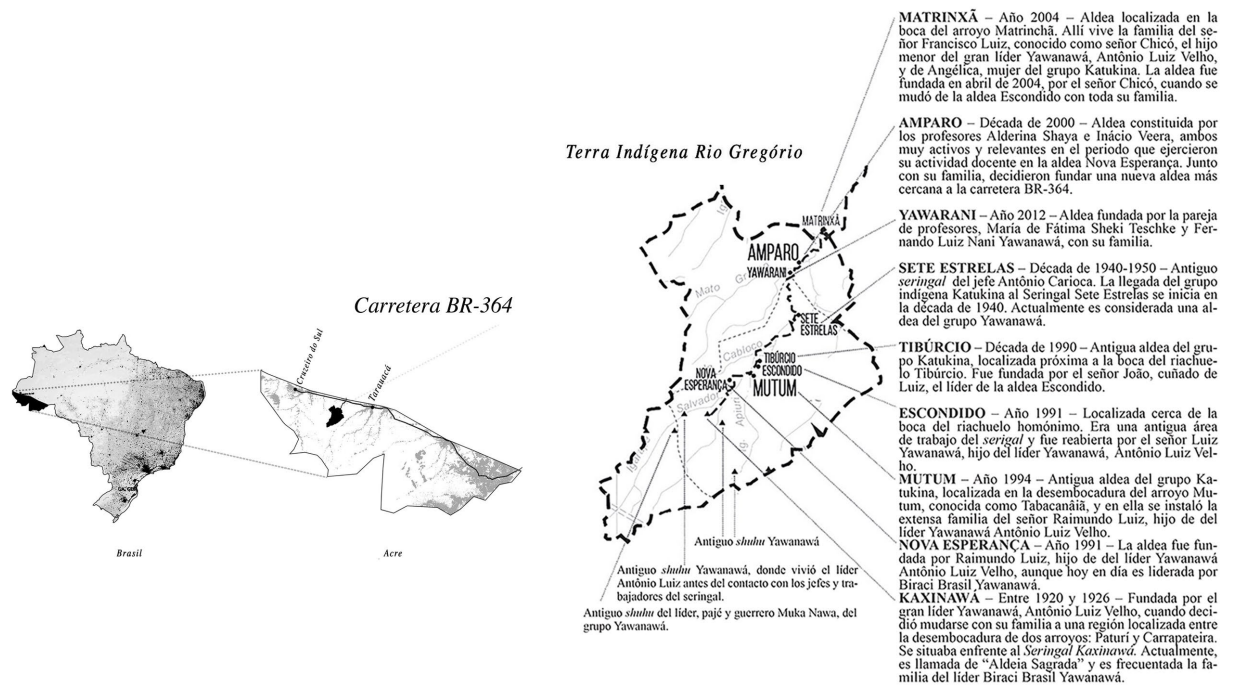
These Amerindian sapiences are “present and active, still today, being dynamic and marked by processes of resignification that will define our relationship with the body-territory memories in the future of those who will be still to arrive” (Xakriabá, 2020, p.111). It is about forging links between the city and the forest, where the living design forms in the Amazon forest can open paths of thought for constructing other worlds.

CASE  
STUDY

DESIGN FORMS OF YAWANAWÁ LIVING

The Gregorio River Indigenous Land, TIRG, is affected by global urbanization dynamics, although this is not evident to the naked eye (Figure 1). Field research revealed that this place is deeply interconnected with the total urbanization of society process (Lefebvre, 1970; Brenner & Schmid, 2012). There is a set of economic, political, and social links produced between the Yawanawá territory and different agents of the global urban logic throughout recent decades, which repositioned the forms of sociability, alliance, (re)existence, and (re)invention in the





Amazon Forest (Mendo, 2018). In addition to the physical constructions, such as the BR-364 highway (Figure 2) and other urban extensions that have crystallized the territory, there is an *invisible network of connections*. It is an infrastructure designed for the control of nature and its plundering, articulated by different devices: communication satellites for the control of forest tree masses, interpretation centers of nature as a product, regulations, and entities that transform this environmental wealth into *environmental services*, of the international market and finally, the financial systems, which market *forest assets on a planetary scale*. A whole *invisible* interscalar network that supports this infrastructure is designed to incorporate the forest into the planetary urban rhythms (Mendo, 2018).

## LANDSCAPE DESIGN PRACTICES

Despite the sophisticated devices of silencing the Amerindian culture and knowledge, the Yawanawá have maintained the territorial design of the Acreana Forest. In different sources (Aquino & Iglesias, 1994; Ribeiro,

**Figure 1.** Location map of the TIRG. Source: Preparation by the Author, 2023

**Figure 2.** The BR-364 highway. Source: Photographs by the author, 2016.



**Figure 3.** Landscape design in Mutum village: Multiple bridges connect a designed network of forest roads and water bodies, expressing forest management through a system of environmental gradients and biome production. Source: Photographs by the author, 2016.

2005; Vinnya et al., 2007), some accounts describe, even at the time of the rubber plantation, how the Yawanawá maintained their practices of designing the Amazonian landscape: they designed the rubber extraction roads, built the taxiways, the placements, the docks, the branches, carried out the circulation of the raw material, provided food, etc. Archaeological investigations confirm the existence of an infrastructure material built in the Amazon region by the Amerindian peoples, evidencing vestiges of a network of roads for communication, circulation, and regional occupation (Heckenberger et al., 1999; Heckenberger et al., 2008).

In the Gregorio River Indigenous Land, TIRG, the material conformations observed in 2016, such as bridges, dams, roads, paths, and plantations, reflect and make visible the territorial designs of the Yawanawá (Figure 3). This infrastructural tradition is expressed in some stories, where the Yawanawá remember their authorship in the design

of the rubber routes, building “big bridges for the convoy to pass” (Vinnya et al., 2007, p. 36). In Mutum, the socio-spatial transformation practices produced by the Yawanawá can be observed in the design and production of environments: water bodies, their agricultural systems, gardens, and orchards, among others. This designed landscape reveals a system of different gradients and intensities in managing biomes, where mature forests, domesticated forests, orchards/gardens, heaths, scrublands, and human settlements appear. In short, the perception that was obtained is that the *architectural* landscape made by the Yawanawá is recognized as a large-scale urban heritage, where the geographical, technical, and material knowledge of the Yawanawá has been activated and transmitted in the project of recomposing their spatialities.

## CONTEMPORARY HOUSING DESIGN PRACTICES

In the past, the Yawanawá built large collective dwellings, which, over the decades of contact with the rubber vendors, saw modifications, such as the influence on the design of the rectangular floor (Carid Naveira, 1999; Vinnya et al., 2007). Despite this, ancestral construction technologies and materials have been maintained, evidenced in the vegetation roofs and the fastening and structural tying systems. However, at present, the Yawanawá do not intend to formally rebuild the ancestral collective habitat, the *shuhu*<sup>5</sup>, and the architectural living knowledge is perceived with attention, which implies know-how to build, invent, and open paths for other possible architectures (Figure 4). This reinvention process is expressed in recently built homes, where the innovative design establishes evident formal and functional transformations of original spatialities (Mendo, 2022).

In recent decades, some Yawanawá villages have incorporated industrialized materials, such as metal or fiber cement sheets, affecting the forest's climatic comfort and environmental quality. In 2016, in a conversation with the political leader of the Mutum village, Mariazinha Yawanawá, she expressed the urgency of consolidating certain Amerindian constructive technical knowledge, which would allow self-construction and self-management of spaces. At that time, the group was actively testing and searching for a place of Yawanawá spatiality from the present.

In the resurgence and maintenance of its constructive design techniques, its resistance to the extinction of its ancestral constructive knowledge is expressed, but also the disagreement with the idea of spatial linear evolution of its architecture. There is an evident design exercise in this system of choices and decisions concerning the techniques maintained, incorporated, and re-signified in contemporaneity, as they express a living design in movement and are open to constant experimentation.

<sup>5</sup> For more information on the *shuhu*, Source: “Entre a dança e a arquitetura das mulheres Yawanawá: práticas espaciais indígenas na contemporaneidade” (Mendo, 2022).





**Figure 4.** Dwellings in Mutum, which preserve ancestral material technologies and exhibit formal mutations. Source: Photographs by the author, 2016.





**Figure 5.** From top to bottom:  
Design of domestic spaces and  
ceramic kitchen, fruit ripening,  
roof maintenance, and collective  
fishing in the Amparo village.  
Source: Photographs by the  
author, 2016.

### EVERYDAY DESIGN PRACTICES

Faced with the oppression of the colonial period, daily practices of supporting their ways of life emerged (Figure 5), such as collective fishing with ancestral techniques, the elaboration of woven baskets, the upkeep of roofs and sewing techniques, the manual construction of ceramic stoves and spatial systems to accelerate the ripening of bananas. These cultural and environmental practices keep Yawanawa technological knowledge alive and have evolved in use, form, and function since their original customs (Vinnya et al., 2007; Yawanawa, 2017).

So, the study shows that the Mutum village has an extensive network of architecture designed for everyday situations, such as bathing in the river or washing clothes in the stream, maintaining the heritage of traditional buildings for productive activities such as hunting, fishing, or harvesting.



**Figure 6.** Artistic design practices. From top to bottom: Design of bracelets, ornaments made with floral materials, and drying of the clothes used for collective celebrations or mariris. Source: Photographs by the author, 2016.

Since the 1990s, the Yawanawá have created a variety of ornamental elements and artistic manifestations, led mainly by a group of women (Vinnya et al., 2007). This movement includes recomposing objects, materials, and languages and formulating new designs and meanings, such as bracelets and necklaces made with beads (Mendo, 2022) (Figure 6). While expanding and transforming graphic, formal, and material design repertoires, they remain sensitive to cultural tradition and the care of their ecosystems. These domestic cultural designs blur the line between architecture and landscape, manifesting an authentic Yawanawa biocultural heritage and blurring the distinction established by the Western perspective between culture and nature.

DESIGN PRACTICES OF COLLECTIVE SPACES

After expelling the rubber vendors and loggers from their territory, the Yawanawá group began the recovery of spiritual and festive practices, such as





**Figure 7.** From top to bottom:  
Tapiri in Mutum, construction  
on the Mutum stream, tapiri in  
Amparo, tapiri in Escondido, and  
construction on the Gregorio  
River. Source: Photographs by  
the author, 2016.

the *mariris*. According to Raimundo Sales Yawanawá (2017), in that context, the question arose, “Why don’t you do it like you did in the past? We played like this and sang like that...” (Yawanawá, 2017, p. 3). This initiative was expanded, attracting urban visitors interested in culture and artistic manifestations. Between 2012 and 2013, the proposal arose to create the Center of Ceremonies and Healings in Mutum to receive visitors to the Forest. The Center, built with indigenous materials, has different collective and individual spaces (Yawanawá, 2017; Mendo, 2018) (Figure 7).

In Mutum’s Center, the wood used to raise the structures was extracted from the surrounding forest, natural fiber ties made the knots and structural connections, and the roofs were covered with palms. In these constructions, the wood comes from the surrounding forest, and the knots and structural connections are made with vegetable fiber ties, while the roofs are made mainly with *coquero* palm leaves. The central space of this room is used to

perform ceremonies, building a circular space, covered but without walls, called *tapiri*. These are temporary structures with conical roofs that more evidently transmit ancestral structural, constructive, and formal systems. The *tapiris* observed in the villages visited have different sizes, geometries, and materials used for group activities, whether for political, economic, or internal festive organization, and recompose the concentric *spatialization* of the *Shuhu* and the collective dances.

It is possible to see that this spatial-formal dynamic can have several readings. Still, it mainly highlights the relationship between the spatial and even constructive collectivity, as they are built from group work, which evidences the resistance of the social values and mechanisms shared by the Yawanawá, in contrast to other external urban orders. In this way, the *tapiris* and other elements of collective use are architectural ensembles and spatial designs, where no boundaries are established with the environment, without barriers and walls; its design appeals to build links and gradual relationships with the various adjacent forest environments often also produced as part of the spatial ensemble.

FINAL  
COMMENTS

With their cultural routines, the Yawanawá daily challenge the forms of spatial domination through complex political strategies of mutation and adaptation to the territorial dynamics of their living, rooted in their cosmology, and thus survive “in another world, a world of others, of their invaders” (Danowski & Viveiros de Castro, 2017). This cognitive arsenal manifests as a sensitive form of poetic living, inhabiting between worlds, where design forms that reinvent and recompose spatial practices are manifested for an *ancestral future*. Through spaces of symbolic, poetic, and everyday resistance, they reinterpret and re-signify the visible and invisible urban power infrastructures that cross their territory.

It was observed that the Yawanawá landscape, architectural, domestic, and daily spatialities materialize the re-composition of their spatiality. Therefore, these spatialities are not configured exclusively as symbols but as ways of being in the world together; of collective living, and of welcoming the space of multiplicity, allowing the poly-rationality of voices and dialogs. The design of large-scale forest management is presented as a lesson on the magnitude of transformations, the production of new biomes, and the conversion of forests, redefining the relationship between design and the environment and proposing a vision of coexistence and co-design between humans and non-humans, which covers the production of the landscape in an extensive and prolonged way over time.

Likewise, a conception of forest design without limits or barriers is revealed, that is, of diffuse transitions between environments with different gradients and intensities in their production and management, including the connection of these through extensive road networks and



water systems. Adaptability emerges as a key characteristic challenging traditional physical demarcation in landscape design. The capacity of open planning facilitates disinterested experimentation and aesthetic appreciation, allowing the adaptation to new ideas and favoring creativity in the field of architectural and landscape design. These lessons, which could be observed from the ways of life of the forest peoples, challenge the conventional conception of territory management, and its approach implies the design of techniques of alliance and cooperation between species.

The research reveals a vast knowledge perceived as urban, architectural, and biocultural heritage, which constitutes a subject of interdisciplinary study and documentation. It is about starting the construction of other grammatical bases, which involve unleashing places and establishing links with new interlocutors, making continuous displacements that allow redefining the locus of architectural knowledge production to advance in the multiplication of worlds. Since the climate crisis is rapidly advancing, the limited conditions of habitability on Earth, and urban ways of living are deteriorating, this research identifies the importance and urgency of *thinking, expanding, and learning with the design forms of the Amerindian cultures.*

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# TERRITORIES OF WATER AND SAND. THE CONFIGURATION OF THE HUAVE TERRITORY BETWEEN TIME AND SPACE IN SAN MATEO DEL MAR, OAXACA, MEXICO

TERRITORIOS DE AGUA Y ARENA. LA  
CONFIGURACIÓN DEL TERRITORIO HUAVE ENTRE  
EL TIEMPO Y EL ESPACIO EN SAN MATEO DEL  
MAR, OAXACA, MÉXICO

TERRITÓRIOS DE ÁGUA E AREIA. A  
CONFIGURAÇÃO DO TERRITÓRIO HUAVE ENTRE  
TEMPO E ESPAÇO EM SAN MATEO DEL MAR,  
OAXACA, MÉXICO



**Figure 0.** Wind farm landscape  
seen from Santa Maria Xadani at  
one end of the lagoon. Source:  
Author's archive, 2023

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## RESUMEN

El pueblo huave de San Mateo del Mar, Oaxaca, está ubicado en la barra de arena dentro de la zona lagunar del istmo de Tehuantepec. Desde una aproximación de metodología horizontal, a través de la teoría fundamentada se identificaron diversas categorías y una de ellas es el territorio, que, a partir de su geografía lagunar, dio origen a un tejido tangible e intangible entre el tiempo y el espacio, a través de las relaciones entre el agua, la arena, los vientos y las estrellas, creando una cosmovivencia y convivialidad que aún persiste en nuestros días, y que se manifiesta en el habitar a través de la pesca, la fiesta y la vivienda. En situaciones muy particulares de esta cultura, entidades naturales transforman el territorio y permiten nombrar paisajes ancestrales de sublime poética. Esta manera de habitar entre el agua y la arena es la materialización de los procesos de territorialización de una cultura como la huave/ikoots.

**Palabras clave:** territorio, arquitectura vernácula, patrimonio material e inmaterial, teoría fundamentada.

## ABSTRACT

The Huave town of San Mateo del Mar, Oaxaca, is located on the sand bar in the Tehuantepec isthmus's lagoon area. Diverse categories were identified using a horizontal methodology approach and grounded theory. One of them is the territory, which, from its lagoon geography, gave rise to a tangible and intangible fabric between time and space through the relationships between water, sand, winds, and stars, creating a cosmo-existence and conviviality that persists today, manifesting itself in living through fishing, partying, and housing. These are particular situations of this culture that, through the natural entities, transform the territory and allow the naming of ancestral landscapes of the poetic sublime. This way of living between water and sand is the materialization of a culture's territorialization processes, particularly the huave/ikoots.

**Keywords:** territory, vernacular architecture, tangible and intangible heritage, grounded theory

## RESUMO

A aldeia Huave de San Mateo del Mar, Oaxaca, está localizada em um banco de areia dentro da área lacustre do Istmo de Tehuantepec. A partir de uma abordagem metodológica horizontal, por meio da teoria fundamentada, foram identificadas várias categorias, uma das quais é o território, que, com base em sua geografia lacustre, deu origem a um tecido tangível e intangível entre o tempo e o espaço, por meio das relações entre água, areia, ventos e estrelas, criando uma cosmovivência e convivência que ainda hoje persiste, que se manifesta no habitar por meio da pesca, dos festivais e da moradia. Em situações muito particulares dessa cultura, entidades naturais transformam o território e permitem nomear paisagens ancestrais de poética sublime. Esse modo de habitar entre a água e a areia é a materialização dos processos de territorialização de uma cultura como a dos Huave/ikoots.

**Palavras-chave:** território, arquitetura vernacular, patrimônio tangível e intangível, teoria fundamentada.

## INTRODUCTION

### THE MAREÑA LIFE OF THE HUAVES OF SAN MATEO DEL MAR, OAXACA.

The municipality of San Mateo del Mar is located on the sandbar to the south of the Laguna Mayor of the Tehuantepec isthmus in Oaxaca, Mexico. This is the municipal seat and houses settlements, neighborhoods, branches, and communities that have broken away from the original or foundational people (Bailón, 2001), which originates when the Huave/*ikoots* divided into four large groups, giving rise to San Francisco del Mar, San Dionisio del Mar, Santa Maria del Mar, and San Mateo del Mar, all around the lagoons of the isthmus. San Mateo del Mar, or *Tikambaj*, as its inhabitants call it in Huave (*ombeayiüts*), the native language, has existed for more than 500 years according to some oral chronicles of its inhabitants, who claim that they came by sea from distant lands in the south and that they populated the entire Isthmian territory lagoon (García Souza, 2017), from the rugged mountains to the coast. Their language has no linguistic kinship with another language in Mexico, making them carriers of unique knowledge in Isthmian life and an equally unique world vision.

The geographical condition of this place in the sandbar somehow evokes a body of sand crossed by water; an island, of an infinite horizontal landscape bordered by sea mist and that see, in the distance, the sacred lagoon of the north (Lower Lagoon) and the dead Sea (Upper Lagoon) that, in Huave/*ombeayiüts*, are named *kalüyndek* and *Tsolyüw*, respectively (Tallé, 2020). The mountains that give rise to the upper part of the isthmus can be glimpsed in front of them as the large fans of red windmills that Don Quixote himself would lash out

**Figure 1.** Map of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, pinpointing San Mateo del Mar. Source: Preparation by the Laboratory of Traditional Construction Procedures and Systems (LABPYSCT), 2023. Based on an aerial image taken from Google Earth.



at, and that has transformed the lagoon landscape in search of an environmental responsibility that should be reviewed.

On the other hand, the dominance of winds that enter from the south (*kwak*), bringing rain from the coming together of the white woman (*Müm Nucherrec*) and the north wind (*Teat lünd*) (García Souza, 2017), is part of the temporary markers that change the seasons (Campos, 2016) and determine the daily life of the Huaves/*ikoots*. In another season, the force of the north winds changes those activities in the dry season. This force slowly advances the sand dunes over the sandbar, transforming the landscape into great desert expanses (Tallé, 2020).

In the vastness of the living sea to the south, the Pacific Ocean (*Nadam ndek*) is where the most skilled fishers throw their kites to the wind in the dry season when fish and shrimp are scarce in the lagoons. These cross the sky and meet schools of fish, and at the appropriate distance offshore, they drop the net they carry as a passenger to collect the catch in a strong and violent sea. From the shore, on the sand, they pull the ropes that weave the net until they manage to take out the precious fish that will feed families or be sold in the market.

Meanwhile, the misty limits of the east (*nonüt*) and west (*noleat*) give rise to the vast body of sand and earth, where the other activities marked by the walking of the sun and the moon are configured (Lupo, 1991), with livestock and agriculture being the main ones. Both activities configured the territory in the past (Zizumbo & Colunga, 1982b), and now they have lost teachers and apprentices transforming the way of living in the sandbar.

The rain and dry cycles mainly govern marine life in San Mateo del Mar since the transformation of the territory from the presence of water is very marked, both in the sandbar and the lagoon area. This, in turn, marks the possibility of carrying out productive and ceremonial activities throughout these cycles. The presence of water in the sandbar generates significant changes in the landscape, mobility, and daily activities. The emergence of these water bodies, in some points of the territory, is determined by their location and relationship with the high or low ground, giving rise to saltwater bodies such as the southern lagoon or Quirio Lagoon (*kawak ndek*) and other freshwater ones like a shoal that they call *wajyow* (water at the nape of the village), (Tallé, 2020).

It is seen that the territory is configured by these liquid presences and their relationship with the sand bodies that make up the bar, as well as the transformative and mobile presence of the sand dunes that roam the bar, driven by the force of the north winds, has already in the past generated the abandonment of houses and villages because it devours them and leaves them hidden within its sandy body.



**Figure 2.** Boats without water in the Quirio Lagoon (kawakndek). Source: Prepared by LABPYSCT, 2023

These geographical and climatic conditions have given rise to the Huave/*ikoots* culture of San Mateo del Mar, particular and very different from the other three Huave peoples of the region, generating domestic landscapes of a lot of privacy and intimacy through the delimitation of the plots (*nden*) (Diedbold, 1966), using natural reed fences that defend from the strong winds and keep the eyes of curious people away from the heart of the palm houses (*iümnit*). (Herrera & Hernández, 2017).

The rainy and dry cycles have shaped Huave/*ikoots* life in two large groups, the first related to the economic and productive part due to its relationship with fishing, and the second with ceremonial or religious activities. These are ordered for the process of requesting rain, well-being, and abundance for all the inhabitants (Campos, 2016), a task that will be entrusted to the cloud-body men (*mombasoic*), the religious hierarchy, and the *montag ombas* (those of the large body) (Millán, 2007; Ramírez, 2009), the civil authority, who are in charge of offering and making the petitions together with the inhabitants and their saints,





among the waves of the living sea that reach the beach, on the shore that joins the water and the sand. (García Souza, 2017)

The set of social, political, religious, productive, and cultural aspects have given rise to and traced the way, making the most of an adverse wasteland, appropriating the good things of the place, and gradually transforming the bad ones. These practices have marked the territory, leaving traces and indications in many ways, but always guided by the lunar and celestial time (Lupo, 1991).

These conditions of the sea-based territory have brought wind energy companies closer (Zanotelli & Tallé, 2019) to install several wind farms in the region, transforming the landscape and contributing to the change of routes of some of the region's birds and their nesting places. It is also a point of conflict between the communities, as some have benefited but have lost the use and transit of their territory, altering how they inhabit the region that not only impacts the Huaves/*ikoots* (Zanotelli & Tallé, 2019), Montesi, 2022), but also other neighboring municipalities that have yielded to the pressure of these companies and have pawned their territory for a century, establishing contradictions between their own landscape, full of symbolism and relations with culture, and the other vision, where the environmental benefit is the flag in the occupation of a territory whose use does not immediately consider the inhabitants (Zanotelli & Tallé, 2019).

**Figure 3.** Wind farm landscape seen from Santa Maria Xadani at one end of the lagoon. Source: Author's archive, 2023

## METHODOLOGY

### RECOGNIZING LIVING AND THE TERRITORY BETWEEN THE WATER AND THE SAND.

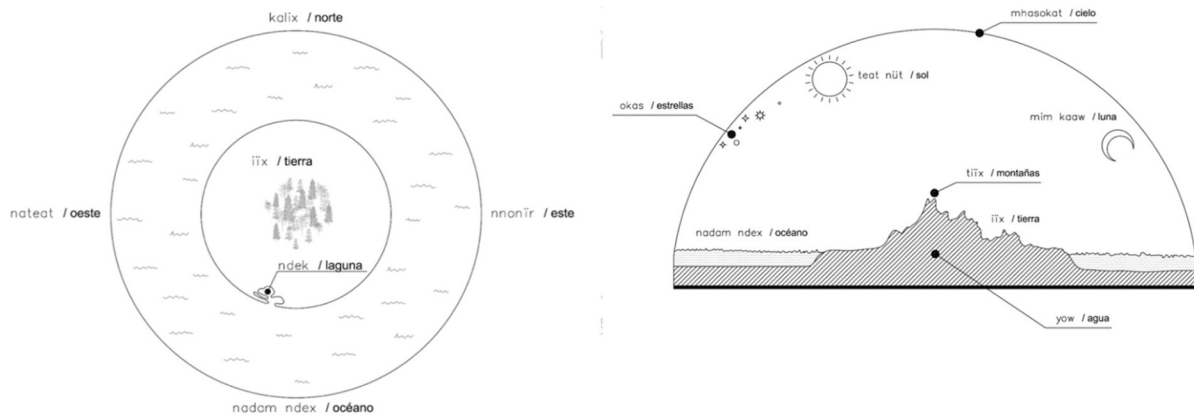
To recognize and characterize the living of the Huave/*ikoots* community of San Mateo del Mar, visits and stays were made that allowed carrying out fieldwork in different seasons over nine years, interrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic and a strong confrontation among the same community, which had a disastrous outcome and that strongly marked them.

On the other hand, the review of documentary material provides indications and inquiries from multiple contexts and disciplines on how the territory, housing, daily activities, and religious festivities are organized, allowing crossing information in a more complete and complex way through seminar discussion and contributions on maps, product of participatory cartographies (Castaño-Aguirre et al., 2021) and photographic records, as evidence of the phenomena on how original peoples live, from their system of beliefs and actions concerning the marine environment, where the Huave culture and the Isthmian territory have been shaped symbiotically (Ingold, 2002).

In 2021, the transdisciplinary CONACYT boundary science project, "Study of the philosophy of the original peoples to inhabit the territory. Cultural landscape, vernacular and biocultural knowledge," started. They have been discussing the different phenomena of living and territory from a horizontal methodology (Corona, 2019) and grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2002), which throw out some codes and categories that have been explored from a holistic view, as several of the categories and codes are intertwined because life is not fragmented. However, everything is a set of actions and beliefs that configure the inhabiting of and appropriate territory (Giglia, 2012).

Within the different categories that emerged from the horizontal methodology and the grounded theory is the territory, territoriality, and territorialization (Castaño-Aguirre et al., 2021), which will be the subject of this article, as the particularities of their belief systems and the characteristics in how the Huaves/*ikoots* of San Mateo del Mar have lived, and have managed to appropriate a wild and abandoned place, which in previous centuries, other native peoples despised. For those same characteristics of the territory, the Huaves/*ikoots* were displaced to this inhospitable region throughout their history, first by the Zapotecs and later by the Spaniards (Bailón, 2001), thus giving a very particular sea-based culture, due to their relationship between the lagoons of the isthmus of Tehuantepec and the enormous forces of the Pacific Ocean or *Nadamndek*, the great sacred sea in *ombeayüts* (Tallé, 2020).

Through the maps, drawings, and photographs made with members of the community, interviews, and workshops, the manifestations of the processes of territorialization and territoriality were recorded, which configure and establish order and a sense in the territory from the inhabiting of the Huaves/*ikoots* of San Mateo del Mar.



## TIME, SPACE, WATER, AND SAND IN THE CONCEPTION OF HUAVE OF SAN MATEO DEL MAR LIVING.

“The world is round like a coin; the sky is like a gourd upside down over the world. And through the inside of that gourd pass the sun, the moon, and the stars. There is no more room below the world; there is a tall, long girl named jal nüch. She carries the Earth; when she gets tired, she settles down, and that’s why she trembles. When she trembles, they don’t get scared; they just say that the girl is making herself comfortable.”  
(Ramírez, 2009, pp. 14-15)

The presence of Huaves/*ikoots* in the lagoon area of the Tehuantepec isthmus, mainly on the sandbar facing the sea, has generated a reticular layout of the town. This is not only the organization of the plots (*nden*) related to the water bodies that cross it, but it also has the reference between the relation of the village and the water bodies at its northern (*kalüy*) and southern (*kawak*) ends. This is due to their absolute frame of reference, which they have to locate themselves in the world (Campos, 2016), namely, based on their relationship with the world and the different directions it comprises, and not as an anthropocentric reference, as they are named that way; north heading-*kalüy*, south heading-*kawak*, east heading-*nonüt* and west heading-*noleat*, configuring a first mesh in the territory, where elements such as water, animals, trees, plants, mountains, wind, rain, the way of the moon, the way of the sun and the way of the winds are related; where everyone acquires a sense or direction depending on the phenomenon that moves them, for example, the north wind (*teat iünd*). Its direction goes from north to south, and with its 120 km/hr. force, it mobilizes the sand dunes (*wiüd*). It is said that its forehead (*ombas*) or face, goes to the south and its back (*pech*) to the north (Tallé, 2020). This follows the system of meronyms<sup>1</sup>, where they give characteristics of body parts, metaphors, or geometric projections to every entity with which they relate. From this condition of identity that the artifacts and the ecofacts have (Pérez De Micou, 2013), from the Huave vision/*ikoots*, we can also talk about the presence of agents and agencies (Ingold, 2007), which are considered by the native peoples in a

## RESULTS

**Figur 4.** Representation of the sky, according to the Ikoots concepts. Based on Alessandro Lupo. Source: Prepared by the Author, 2019

<sup>1</sup> Meronyms are terms that lexicalize parts of objects as such. That is to say, it has the part-all relationship as part of its meaning. In Mesoamerica, meronyms are often terms for body parts, but they can also refer to geometric features of objects and spatial regions. In Huave, meronyms are parts of the body; therefore, they behave in some way like them. (but not for counting).  
(Herrera, 2013)

**Figure 5.** San Mateo del Mar in the rainy season. Source: Campos, 2016. Sound Symbol

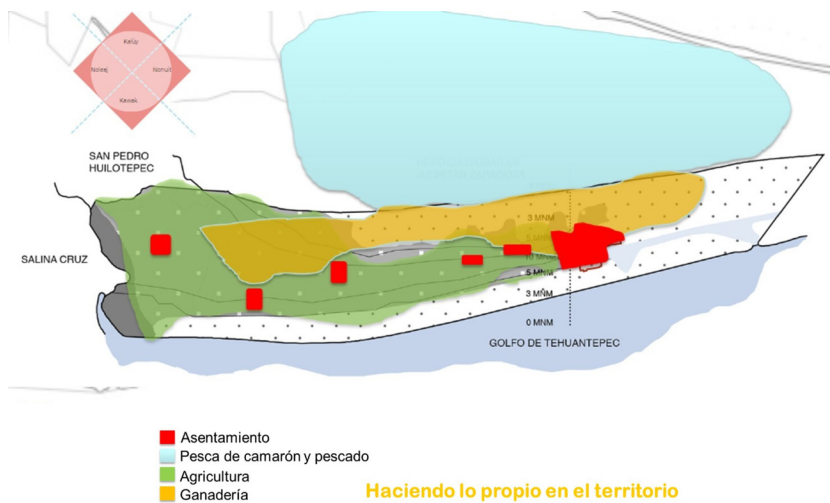


more everyday and ancestral way, unlike the Central European vision, that is, the otherness generated from everyday coexistence. Through what the language or Huave language *ombeayiüts* has, these characteristics talk about what surrounds them and thus build a cosmo-experience and conviviality where all the worlds are touched, as mentioned by S. Yampara (2011).

The dual force is vital for the Huaves/*ikoots* within his cosmo-experience (P.Yampara, 2019), since it maintains the balance between the parts. Social practices are governed following this conception, where the masculine is associated with the north (*kalüy*), with the cold, the dry, and the lightning, and the feminine is associated with the south (*kawak*), the humid, the warm, and the wind. In both cases, these are concepts linked to the natural elements involved, in rain and water processes, which transform the landscape at each change of cycle and open the door to different activities that are done in the previous cycle. (Campos, 2016). The dual condition is so important that when a baby or a new member is born, the placenta is buried in the plot depending on the sex according to the corresponding direction. The pantheon of the south side is destined for women, and the north side is destined for men. This also contributes to the conception of the complementary dualities of balance, a concept present in many of the original peoples of Mexico (León-Portilla, 1980; P.Yampara, 2019).

On the other hand, the presence of cycles is something very marked in the daily life of San Mateo del Mar's Huaves/*ikoots*, since they are the ones that maintain the balance between rains and droughts, agricultural activities and fishing activities (Zizumbo & Colunga, 1982a), in addition to marking the end and beginning of religious festivities, an issue that has been diminishing with the presence of religions other than Catholicism. These have disrupted these festive activities, which go beyond the Judeo-Christian cults, but rather a syncretism of the Mesoamerican practices of the Huaves/*ikoots* in their conception of the relationship with the world.





**Figure 6.** Configuration of the territory. (2023) Source: Preparation by the Author.

These cycles are so important that good living or living healthily depends on them (*monapaküy*) (Tallé, 2020.), given their close relationship with the productive activities that feed the population, such as spiritual food and participating in religious holidays.

At the same time, the cycles also mark the territory with time and space because, with the presence and absence of rain, the landscape is transformed significantly; not only the limited vegetation that lives on the sandbar but also large bodies of water appear that you can even navigate. Some change the roads, going from one side of San Mateo del Mar to the other. Depending on these aquatic presences and the amount of rain, these bodies of water also become conducive or not to shrimp (*tixem*) and mullet (*mil*) fishing, also linked to the lunar time that makes the tides of the ocean and the lagoons coincide, giving way to the arrival of shrimp into the lagoons and water bodies that are formed during the rainy season along the sandbar. Within lunar cycles, three times are considered; from dusk to dawn, the new moon and the full moon, since, years ago on fishing nights, they marked the rhythm of work with the atarraya and the chinchorro for fishermen who were great celestial observers (Lupo, 1991). On the other hand, the full moon changes the tides in the sea, and the lagoons illuminate the night paths to go to Tehuantepec and Salina Cruz (García Souza, 2017) and promote night activities by moonlight for the families of San Mateo del Mar. These encounters, between time and space, are also borders for social and economic activities since setting the time from the Huave/*ikoots* cosmo-experience implies a way to enter into synergy with the world. For the Huaves/*ikoots*, time belongs to God, while the activities that are carried out in the territory, such as fishing, agriculture, or others, are governed by respect and synchronicity with the other worlds, marking the territory (S. Yampara, 2001) through the presence of the cayucos, the sticks for the nets, the fishermen's shelters, and which act as processes of territorialization. In other words, how they have appropriated the territory tangibly and reciprocally, with the inhabitants and the environment coexisting synchronously.

**Figure 7.** House in San Mateo del Mar. (2023) Source: Personal file of the Author.

**Figure 8.** Routes of the pilgrimages on the feast of Candlemas (female) and Corpus Christi (male) Source: Prepared by LABPYSCT, 2023



In its layout, the village's reticular network has the particularity of building a series of corridors or walkways that run east (*nonüt*) to west (*noleat*) to connect the central and oldest parts of the village. These corridors are crossed by the living fences of trees, shrubs, or reeds that make up the boundaries of the plots (*ndén*) and the houses, generating a protection mechanism for the inhabitants (Herrera & Hernández, 2017) that, in the dry season, while the sand moves with the strong north wind at high speed, can hurt the inhabitants. These corridors, in turn, offer a pedestrian mobility system, which is used more intensively in the dry cycle without disturbing the privacy and intimacy of the daily life of the inhabitants of the central area of San Mateo del Mar.

As part of the participatory mapping work (Castaño-Aguirre et al., 2021), a network of crosses was found around the central hub of the town of San Mateo del Mar; referring to how its inhabitants protect the town from the devil. This series of red crosses are used as places of prayer but also

to make offerings, identified as markings on the territory, which establish a boundary, a central body (*ombas*) with the church as the head (*omal*) (Tallé, 2004; García Souza, 1999), for the town of San Mateo del Mar (Millán, 2007), from where the rest of the town is organized from the plot (*ndén*). This is the basic family unit, which grows like arms and legs in the territory, giving rise to the neighborhoods that make up the founding village (Diedbold, 1966). At the same time, this network of crosses serves as a spatial limit for the pilgrimages of the saints, who only go out to tour the central part of the town; a boundary that is only passed when they perform the ritual of asking for rain at the seashore, which is one of the most important in the Huave */ikoots* calendar.

It was seen that a phenomenon happens in the streets of the center of San Mateo del Mar during the feast of Corpus Christi in Holy Week, according to the Catholic calendar. Three ephemeral constructions that are ideally located appear in the middle, as they have the preparation for the setting of pitchforks, which will give body to the *Ninemok*. These stations are built for the pilgrimage, set up and dismantled in one day, with the region's traditional palm (*nit*) construction techniques (Ingold, 2012). It is also important to mention that this ephemeral architecture arrived much earlier than the streets, since the road is barely 15 years old, accelerating the transformation process of San Mateo del Mar.

Therefore, these are a brief account of the phenomena of time and space, which give rise to the appropriation and configuration of the territory in a cyclical and changing way with each season, between the mixture of social, productive, and religious activities, where territorialization is part of the process in the way of inhabiting the sandbar and water.

## THE TERRITORIES CONFIGURED BY LIVING BETWEEN TIME AND SPACE IN SAN MATEO DEL MAR.

We can start by considering one of the most complex concepts or categories, which is the territory, from which several phenomena arise that intrinsically relate it to other elements of the sea-based culture of the isthmus of Tehuantepec.

The territory can be considered a multidimensional category that links appropriation and identification with a physical space and delves into everyday social, political, and symbolic constructions (Illicachi, 2014).

For the Huaves/*Ikoots*, the territory is as follows, according to the Atlas of Place names of the *ikoots* of San Mateo del Mar, made by Tallé (2020):

*IÜT*

*Niüng akül wüx meawan leaw almajlüy, palpalwüx nipilan, xiül, soex. Alkiqaj nadam kambaj, nine kambaj, rüñch, korrül, at ndek nine ndek, nadam ndek. Ajlüy arej ombas iüt: wiüüd, chikot iüt, ndeor.*

## DISCUSSION

Land, terrain

“Where everything that exists lives, different types of people, animals, trees and plants. There are big and small towns, ranches, corrals, seas, lagoons, and oceans. There are three forms of earth: sand, friable earth, and mud” (Tallé, 2020, p. 12).

Through this definition, we can find the essence of the way to relate and consider everything that surrounds them, entering the complex dimension of cosmo-experience and conviviality that S.Yampara (2011) borrows from the Andean perspective, and states that there are four worlds living in parallel and that all have beings, presences, and entities with which we coexist when that coexistence occurs respectfully, a situation shared by the Mesoamerican indigenous peoples, and in this case the huaves/*ikoots* from San Mateo del Mar (P. Yampara, 2015), in addition to constituting a natural eco-biotic community, that breaks with colonial thinking about the relationship with nature, and reinforces the practice of coexistence among all those who inhabit the universe of the sandbar and the sacred seas, as proposed by S.Yampara (2016), hence the importance of doing it from, or from the colonial-thought (Boaventura de Sousa, 2010).

At the same time, these daily practices and habits (Heidegger, 1997; Azevedo Salomao, 2010; Giglia, 2012) shape the way of living in this place of water and sand, generating actions on the material space (territorialization), transforming it according to the way they perceive the territory (territoriality), thus generating a particular symbiosis between the inhabitants and their natural environment. (Ingold, 2002; S.Yampara, 2001)

On the other hand, these networks or meshes that are woven between the different beings that inhabit the territory, a widespread practice among the original peoples of Mesoamerica and of which there are few ancestral documentary records, although there is enough ethnographic documentation preserved today, they can be referred to the explanations that he raises (Ingold, 2002; Ingold, 2007; Ingold, 2012) in his different publications about inhabiting, where this consideration of agents and agencies arises, in how the territory is transformed with the presence since human beings are conditioned by their relationship with the territory, from this approach for new anthropology (Ingold, 2002), where it is possible to systematize how the relationship of the worlds of P. Yampara (2015) and the local presence of San Mateo del Mar is recorded.

CONCLUSIONS

The way the territory of San Mateo del Mar is configured seems obvious. However, the depth of these decisions by the community is based on centuries of inhabiting the sandbar flanked by the seas, where the syncretic practices of five centuries of living have been transformed as everyday life has been, and where there is a risk of the disappearance of their cosmovision, due to the loss of traditional knowledge, the force of nature, through climate change, the exploitation and pollution of aquifers that have marked the last twenty years of San Mateo del Mar.



It is evident that, faced with a landscape that transforms cyclically into territories of sand and water; its identity is built from the stars, the lunar and the solar paths, which are presences that do not leave or transform but instead, have accompanied the Huave/*ikoots* culture of San Mateo del Mar for centuries, now in the face of light pollution, the forgetting of the language *ombeayüts*, the changes in the designation of authorities, among other situations that currently affect greetings and learning, is at risk of losing ancestral knowledge, to navigate and walk among the landscapes of *Tikambaj*.

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