



ARCHITECTURE IN THE  
**CRITICAL**  
**ZONE**

**15<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL A-IARG CONFERENCE**

**SPEAKER**  
**ABSTRACTS**

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# WELCOME

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*John McLaughlin*



*Tara Kennedy*

## **ARCHITECTURE IN THE CRITICAL ZONE**

### AIARG 15th Annual Conference 2026

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Welcome to Cork Centre for Architectural Education. We are delighted to host the 15th edition of the All-Ireland Architectural Research Group annual conference. 2026 is the twentieth anniversary of the founding of CCAE so it is wonderful to be hosting A-IARG on this occasion and to see many old friends and colleagues here. Our previous Cork edition was a decade ago and the interim has seen a growing awareness and urgency around the climate and ecological crisis as well as a deepening of the digital pivot, accelerated by the Covid-19 pandemic, and the growth of the accompanying society of surveillance. More locally, the six schools of architecture in the

Republic of Ireland collaborated with the Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland (RIAI) on revising the taught curriculum in architecture to better align with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals. Academics from these schools collaborated with the RIAI to revise the Competency Framework in Architecture and to draft a new RIAI Education Policy 2026. It is against the backdrop of these significant changes that we have framed the theme of our conference.

The theme for the conference invites discussion on how architecture, and the practices that surround it, engage with the challenge of reconceiving the terrestrial. Our title derives from the French philosopher Bruno Latour (1944 – 2022) and the German curator Peter Wiebel's explorations in their 2020 exhibition ***Critical Zones – The Science and Politics of Landing on Earth*** at the ZKM Centre for Art and Media in Karlsruhe. The exhibition took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, and many people experienced it remotely [<https://zkm.de/en/exhibition/2020/05/critical-zones>]. Latour and Wiebel captured the disorientation of life in a world facing climate change. They traced this disorientation to the disconnection between two different definitions of the land where modern humans live; the sovereign nation from which they derive their rights, and another hidden one from which they derive their wealth – the land they live on and the land they live from. Charting the land that they will live from they find not a globe, not the iconic “blue marble”, but a series of critical zones – patchy, heterogeneous and discontinuous. Within the context of rapidly shifting geopolitical conflict, we must address this trouble.

The term “Critical Zone” is taken from the geo-sciences and describes the biochemical, fragile layer of the

earth, its surface on which life is created. By Bruno Latour, the term is extended to a critical, participatory relationship to our living world, whose threatened state has reached an unprecedented scale in the Earth's now man-made history. Latour has described this worldwide situation, which affects all living beings on the planet, as a "new climate regime". It is not limited to ecological crises but touches on questions of politics and cultural history as well as ethical and epistemological changes of perspective.

As everybody learned at school, each time the position of the Earth in the cosmos is modified, a revolution in social order ensues. Remember the Galileo affair. When scientists made the Earth move around the sun, the whole fabric of society felt under attack. Today, again, four centuries later, the role and the position of the Earth is being revolutionized by new sciences: it appears that human behaviour has pushed the Earth to react in unexpected ways. And once again, the whole organization of society is being subverted. Shake the cosmic order and the order of politics will be shaken as well.

The call for papers invited proposals addressing different aspects of the Critical Zones and the politics of landing on earth through the topics presented by Latour and Weibel:

### **Disorientation / Disconnected / Critical Zones / Gaia Terrestrial / Divided / Depiction / Suspended**

We invited submissions from diverse disciplines including architects, activists, artists, cartographers, cultural producers, curators, ecologists, engineers, geographers, historians, landscape architects, philosophers, politicians, scientists, sociologists and theorists to reconceptualise and care about architectural practice in the face of the terrestrial

crisis. Reflecting the culture of CCAE the call for papers welcomed emerging fields such as research by design and artistic/creative practice. In Cork we celebrate the exhibition as a mode of what Latour and Wiebel called ***Making Things Public*** (2005) where knowledge and its audiences are co-created spatially. We are very grateful to the contributors who responded to this invitation by offering to exhibit their work in the centre.

To help us to think through these questions we invited three international architects and theorists as keynote speakers. Our first speaker, Alexandra Arenes, collaborated with Bruno Latour on the Critical Zones Observatory project before undertaking a PhD in Manchester with Albena Yaneva and then joining the faculty at l'École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris Malaquais. She is the co-author of ***Terra Forma – A Book of Speculative Maps*** (2022) which presents the thinking of the Critical Zones Observatory through the agency of drawing. Our second keynote speaker is Amin Taha, Chairman of Groupwork Architects in London who have pioneered the use of low embodied carbon materials, particularly cross-laminated timber and stone, in their buildings. Through his lectures and teaching he has articulated a vision for a post carbon architecture as a radical return to its roots in construction. He published ***Magna Parens Materia – Hybrid Stone and Timber Building*** (2024) with the engineer Hanif Kara. Our third keynote speaker is Sébastien Marot, Professor of Architectural Theory at l'École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris Est, whose book ***Taking the Country's Side*** (2019) explored architecture's historical relationship with agriculture and presented a compelling argument for the development of an architecture based in permaculture. Since 2013 Sébastien has also contributed to the development of The Architecture of Planetary Boundaries postgraduate

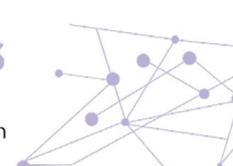
programme at ENSA Paris Est. We thank these three distinguished speakers for coming to join us in Cork.

We are extremely grateful to our financial supporters; UCC Futures – Future Humanities Institute; the Centre for Teaching and Learning in UCC through Strategic Alignment of Teaching and Learning Enhancement (SATLE) funding; the Research Office of MTU; and the RIAI who have generously supported Amin’s practitioner keynote. We would also like to thank our colleagues who have helped to enable and organise this conference and exhibition; Jason O’Shaughnessy, director and Sam Vardy, associate-director of CCAE; Kieran Cremin and Eoghan Horgan who coordinated the exhibition installation; Jedda Desmond and Peter Luddy who coordinated communications; Mark Wickham for visual communications; Niamh Hurley for her administrative support; Henrietta Williams for documenting the event and our facilities manager Luke Fox and his team for spatial management. The final event of the conference will be a visit to Den Talamh (of the ground), a pavilion in Tramore Valley Park by our colleague Seán O’Muirí’s practice Fuinneamh Workshop. Built on top of a former landfill site it is a sort of primitive hut for the twenty-first century offering an example of how we can begin to build again.

***Tara Kennedy and John McLaughlin***  
***Conference Co-Chairs***



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AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION



**MTU**  
Ollscoil Teicneolaíochta na Mumhan  
Munster Technological University

# Conference Scientific Committee

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<b>Prof. Gary Boyd</b>	<i>University College Dublin</i>
<b>Dr. Susan Galavan</b>	<i>Atlantic Technological University</i>
<b>Ms. Tara Kennedy</b>	<i>University College Cork</i>
<b>Dr. Sarah Lappin</b>	<i>Queen's University Belfast</i>
<b>Dr. John McLaughlin</b>	<i>University College Cork</i>
<b>Ms Kirstin Simpson</b>	<i>South-Eastern Technical University</i>
<b>Dr. Anna Ryan</b>	<i>University of Limerick</i>
<b>Dr. Tim Stott</b>	<i>Trinity College Dublin</i>
<b>Dr. Brian Ward</b>	<i>Technological University of Dublin</i>

Established in 2010, the All-Ireland Architecture Research Group (AIARG) is a network of researchers from nine higher education institutions in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and professionals interested in architectural research. It is at the forefront of establishing a nexus of relationships between research, education, and practice within the field. AIARG seeks to facilitate and foster ongoing development in architecture as a research field in Ireland by providing an infrastructure for research in the form of conferences and peer-review publication opportunities and by raising the profile of research within the education of architects and their subsequent careers as practitioners.



# KEYNOTE

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# SPEAKERS

**THURSDAY 5<sup>TH</sup>**

**6PM** LR2 | CCAE

**ALEXANDRA ARÈNES**

**FRIDAY 6<sup>TH</sup>**

**5.45PM** NANO NAGLE PLACE

**AMIN TAHA**

**SATURDAY 7<sup>TH</sup>**

**12.45PM** LR2 | CCAE

**SÉBASTIEN MAROT**

# KEYNOTE

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**THURSDAY 5<sup>TH</sup>**

**6PM LR2 | CCAE**

**ALEXANDRA  
ARÈNES**

**Alexandra Arènes** is an architect–researcher at shaā/SOC, holds a PhD in architecture (University of Manchester, 2022) and is an Associate Lecturer at ENSA Paris Malaquais, France. She is co–author of *Terra Forma, a book of speculative maps* (MIT 2022). Her new book *Gaiagraphie. Carnet d’exploration de la zone critique* (B42, 2025) explores the critical zone as a new understanding of the Earth. She collaborates with critical zone scientists to develop biogeochemical cycle maps. Her work can be viewed here <https://gaiagraphie.com>. Shaā ([www.shaa.io](http://www.shaa.io)) is a Franco–Iranian studio working at the intersection of architecture, urbanism, ecology and anthropology. shaā explores how architecture questions and transforms the critical zone of the Earth through situated knowledge, practices and enquiries. shaā is linked to SOC, a cartographic research platform to foster alternative cartographic practices as a means of understanding Earth dynamics, notably through collaborations with Bruno Latour. shaā is led by two partners with multidisciplinary and multicultural profiles: researcher Alexandra Arènes (FR) and architect Soheil Hajmirbaba (FR/IR).

# KEYNOTE

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**FRIDAY 6<sup>TH</sup>**

**5.45PM NANO NAGLE PLACE**

**AMIN  
TAHA**

**Amin Taha** is an architect and educator, currently teaching at the architecture faculty of the Royal College of Art, London, visiting at Harvard's GSD and Norman Foster Visiting Professor at Yale University. He is chairperson at GROUPWORK architects, a practice three time shortlisted for the annual Royal Institute of British Architects Stirling Prize for the UK's best building and known for their innovative use of materials reflecting tectonic integration and definition of architecture, context and culture. He is also a trustee of the Sir John Soane Museum, chair of its annual Soane Medal and sits on sustainable development advisory boards of two property funds.



KEYNOTE

**SATURDAY 5<sup>TH</sup>**

**12.45PM LR2 | CCAE**

**SÉBASTIEN  
MAROT**

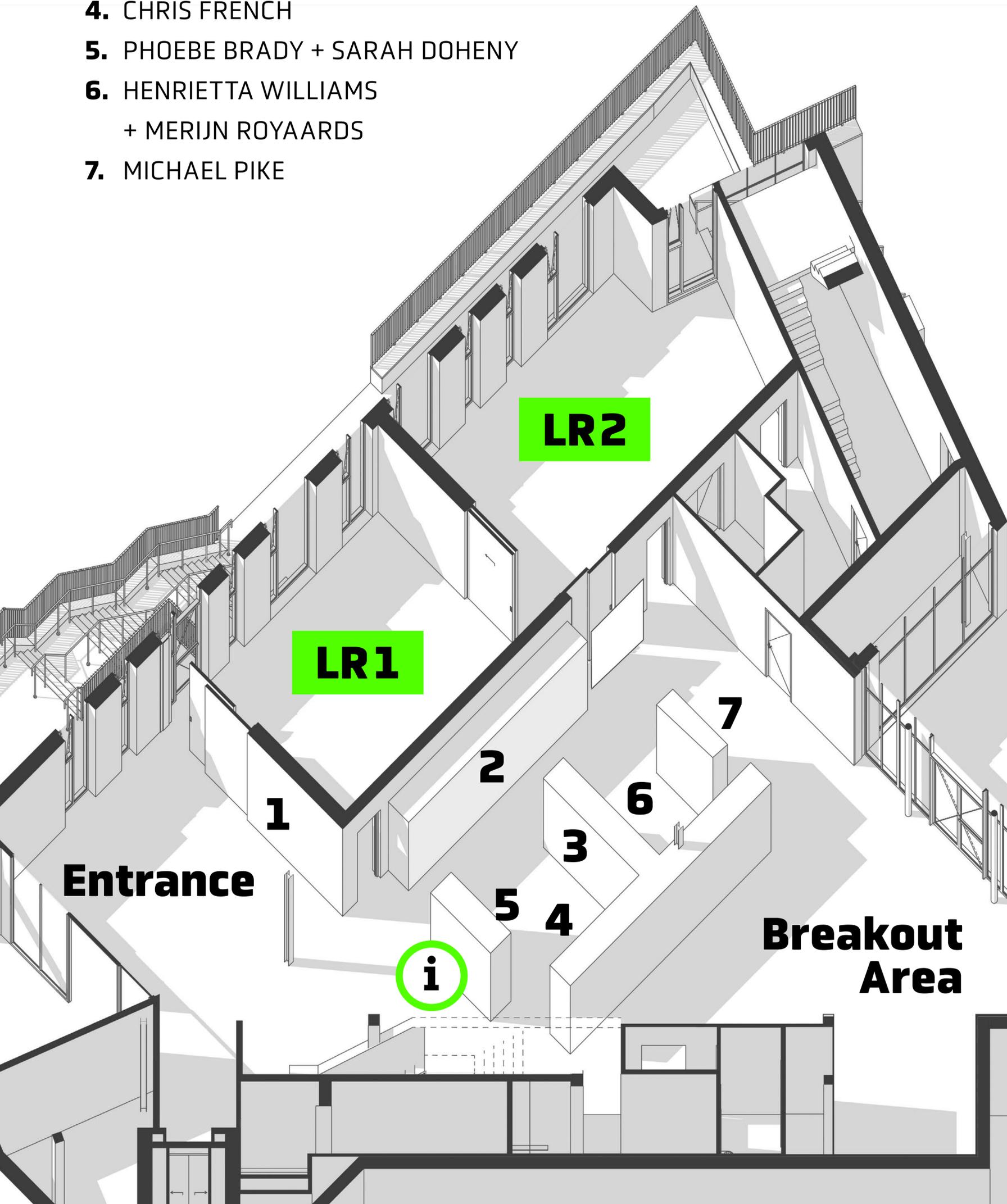
**Sébastien Marot**, holds a master in philosophy, a Phd and an Habilitation à Diriger des Recherches in history. He has written extensively on the genealogy of contemporary theories in architecture, urban and landscape design.

His book *Sub-Urbanism and the Art of Memory* (AA Publications, London 2003 and 2024) has been translated in several languages. Having taught in different schools of architecture or landscape design in Europe and North America (Architectural Association, IAU Geneva, Harvard, Cornell, Upenn, ETH Zürich and EPFL Lausanne), he is currently professor at the École d'Architecture de Paris-Est where he teaches environmental history and has launched the journal: *Marnes : documents d'architecture*. In 2019, for the Lisbon Architecture Triennale, he curated a large exhibition "Taking the Country's Side: Agriculture and Architecture" which has been traveling since in many locations (Lausanne, Lyon, Brussels, Marseille, Nantes, Grenoble). In 2024, an expanded version of *Taking the Country's Side* has been published in French (*Prendre la Clef de Champs*), and will soon be out in English, Italian, and Portuguese. The French Académie d'Architecture awarded Marot the Medal for architectural analysis (in 2004), the Prize for architectural research (in 2010), for his PhD : *Palimpsestuous Ithaca : A Relative Manifesto for Sub-Urbanism*, and the Medal for research and teaching in 2020.

# EXHIBITION MAP

**i** **WELCOME** / EXHIBITION INFO

1. ALEXANDRA ARÈNES
2. MIGUEL PAREDES MALDONADO
3. KIERAN CREMIN
4. CHRIS FRENCH
5. PHOEBE BRADY + SARAH DOHENY
6. HENRIETTA WILLIAMS  
+ MERIJN ROYAARDS
7. MICHAEL PIKE



# SESSION 01

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## AIR / SUSPENDED

CHAIR: JASON O'SHAUGHNESSY

**BLACK GOLD, BLACK LUNGS:** modernist architectural responses to coal dust

**Emma Campbell**

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**EXCORIATED EARTH:** Ruskin, Decay and Breathing Matter

**Chris French**

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**INHABITING AIR THROUGH HAND**

**DRAWING:** A pedagogical study

**Sarah Cremin**

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**AGENCIES OF FICTIONING:**

The 9 Freedoms for the Air

**Paula McCloskey & Sam Vardy**



*Hook with soap dish – Mary Sylvain*

# **BLACK GOLD, BLACK LUNGS:** modernist architectural responses to coal dust

**Emma Campbell**

*University College Dublin*

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This paper examines architectural responses to airborne contamination in the mid-twentieth-century coal mining industry, positioning them as a critical yet often overlooked case study in the relationship between human-built environments and the terrestrial Critical Zone. Driven by the extraction of so-called black gold, the coal industry fuelled modern Europe's economic growth. At the same time, it produced a parallel and devastating crisis: the

widespread incidence of pneumoconiosis, or black lung disease, among miners exposed to coal dust over prolonged periods (Bohata et al., 2020). The inherent toxicity of black gold demanded a radical rethinking of the interface between the worker's body, the mine and the architectural systems that mediated between them.

In response to this crisis, modernist architecture and engineering were mobilised as instruments of protection and control (Boyd, 2023). This paper argues that architecture was not merely a backdrop to industrial labour but an active agent in the management of environmental risk. Purpose-designed mining technologies, such as the longwall shearer and its associated ventilation infrastructures, were coupled with new hygiene and welfare architectures, including pithead baths that enforced the strict separation of clean and dirty zones (Boyd, 2022). These interventions were further complemented by mobile healthcare architectures, such as x-ray diagnostic units deployed directly within European mining communities (Colomina, 2019). Collectively, these systems embodied modernist principles of standardisation and efficiency while directly engaging with the biological vulnerability of the miner's lungs (Banham, 2009).

Drawing on coal mining archives, architectural precedents, and contemporary literature on medicine and hygiene, the paper traces the journey of coal dust through subterranean ventilation systems, engineered surfaces, cleaning regimes, and emerging medical treatments. As part of the European Research Council Advanced Grant project *Architectures of Coal and Modern Europe*, this research frames these developments as a nested

system of interventions to reveal the extraordinary architectural and infrastructural effort required to sustain extractive economies while managing their toxic consequences. Through the lens of architectural history, the paper connects these mid-century strategies to contemporary debates on the intrinsic links between human and planetary health, as well as the growing detachment between sites of extraction, labouring bodies and the everyday products of mining.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Emma Campbell** is a Research Scientist in Architecture at University College Dublin. Through the lens of resource extraction, circularity and nature-based solutions, Emma applies systems and design thinking to investigate pathways to human and planetary health. In her previous role as Research Fellow at Queen's University, she has served as a co-investigator and co-lead on two transdisciplinary climate-focused projects: Future Island-Island (AHRC, £4.625m) and Reimagining Supply Chains (UKRI Network+, £6.25m). Her current role, as part of Professor Gary Boyd's ERC Advanced Grant project, involves leading a work package on modernist architecture, coal mining and health.



*The Norber Erratics, Austwick, England*

# EXCORIATED EARTH: Ruskin, Decay and Breathing Matter

**Chris French**

*University of Edinburgh*

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“How would you like your world” John Ruskin asks, “if all your arable ground [...] were suddenly turned into flat surfaces of steel—if the whole earth, instead of its green and glowing sphere” were “a globe of black, lifeless, excoriated metal?” It would be so, he continues, “were it not that all the substance of which [the world] is made... breathes [...] and as it breathes, softening [...] falls into fruitful and beneficent dust,

gathering itself into the earths from which we feed, and the stones with which we build.”

Delivered in 1858, Ruskin’s lecture traces the interaction of “earth and air” to describe a cycle of decay and creation, a circulation of matter, substances softening, gathering, and feeding. In this paper I will explore recent re-readings of Ruskin’s work in relation to our time of ecological crisis. I will reflect on Ruskin’s fascination with iron and oxygen in relation to the ‘unknown reactions’ which Latour locates within the Critical Zone, the “chemical alterations and geological mechanisms, as well as social processes” essential to life. As a space of material processes, the Critical Zone is read as a space in which the submerging and re-surfacing of elements reconstitutes material as active, ‘breathing’ matter.

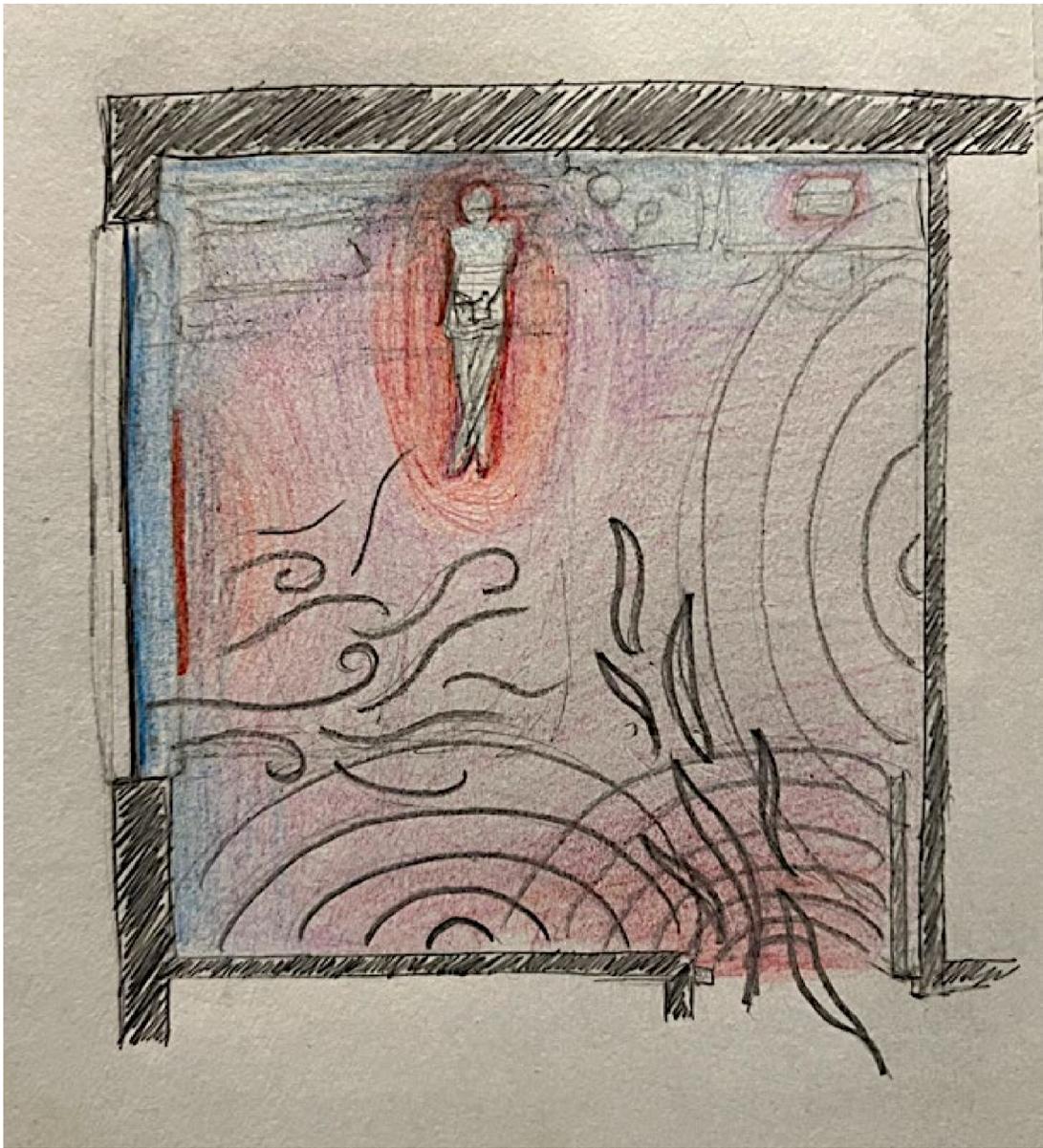
Alongside this discussion, I will describe a series of drawings and models which explore a rendering of ground as active, or which re-position ground as an unsettling, precarious element in the development of an architectural sensibility. Ruskin’s use of the term ‘excoriated’ to describe a surface devoid of life invokes the process of flaying or stripping of skin (*corium*). Recalling Raoul Bunschoten’s *The Skin of Earth*, which framed ground as a “primal horizon” that architecture seeks to “reconfigure,” I will introduce proposals for a series of interventions in a landscape in the north of England associated

with Ruskin. These interventions – ‘Travellers’ Rests’, recalling the carved sandstone blocks which were laid to provide respite for migratory workers travelling from Ireland to work the harvests of northern England – form ecological reserves and reservoirs, spaces where the geological, the chemical and the social (and their ‘unknown reactions’ and interactions) are made present. Collectively, these ‘rests’ re-imagine landscape as a surface of work, or action. They aim to respond to Latour’s challenge to artists to “render us sensitive to the shape of things.”

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Chris French** is a Lecturer in Architecture and Contemporary Practice at the University of Edinburgh, where he is a design studio leader in the Master of Architecture programme, and Programme Director for the PhD Architecture by Design programme. Chris received his PhD Architecture by Design from the University of Edinburgh in 2015, funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. His research explores how architecture registers political and territorial imaginaries, and how projections of urban space into landscape impart or impose spatial and conceptual regimes on landscapes. Chris is a founder and Managing Editor of the design-research e-journal *Drawing On*.



*The Air in my Room*, by **Catriona Darcy**, UCD, 2025

# INHABITING AIR THROUGH HAND DRAWING: A pedagogical study

**Sarah Cremin**

*University College Dublin.*

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Air is continuous and recognises no borders, and thus contradicts and challenges the 'new affinity for borders among people who had advocated their systematic dismantling' (Latour and Porter, 2018, p. 4). 'Breathing is synonymous with life' (Robinson, 2021, p. 96). Our breath connects us intimately to each other, to the air in the rooms we occupy and beyond to humans and nonhumans who inhabit the thin surface

of the earth's critical zone (<https://zkm.de/en/bruno-latour-on-critical-zones>). While buildings were traditionally designed to breathe, they are increasingly designed with airtight envelopes, sealed from the contaminated, outside air that threatens human health (Zaera-Polo and Anderson, 2021). Air is central to health, plays a leading role in climate change, and determines the experience of atmosphere and comfort indoors, where we spend over 90% of our time. Yet, air is invisible in its default state and that 'invisibility has led us to take air for granted' (Abram, 2014). Invisible air resists visual representation and is often forgotten, or at best, neglected in the visually-dominated discipline of architecture. What happens when we try to draw air? How can collective interpretation of individual hand drawings inform our perception of air? This paper forms part of a PhD study which explores how foregrounding air as a material substance within architectural education can raise awareness of air and prompt exploration and interrogation of its role in the built environment. The presentation focuses on a research seminar titled '*Inhabiting Air*', offered to a small group of postgraduate architecture students in University College Dublin. Weekly readings generated a series of texts, hand drawings and conversations. Drawing, the architect's primary tool, has the potential to translate airy, ephemeral notions into tangible

concepts. The research presents a selection of student drawings and the conversations that arose. It concludes that the embodied act of hand drawing quite literally draws attention to the embodied, sensorial perception of air and the effect of human inhabitation on the air itself, thus expanding understanding of indoor air beyond the familiar (temperature, humidity and airflow), hinting at the latent, creative potential of air to infiltrate design and to orient us, in architectural education and beyond.

## BIOGRAPHY:

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**Sarah Cremin** is a Design Fellow and PhD candidate at the School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy in University College Dublin, where she has taught since 2007. Her doctoral research explores the topic of air using hand drawing as a pedagogical tool within architectural education. Sarah was a visiting professor in the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis in 2018. She worked with Herzog & de Meuron in the US and Switzerland and co-directed an architectural practice in Dublin.



*The 9 Freedoms for the Air, by the authors*

# AGENCIES OF FICTIONING: The 9 Freedoms for the Air

**Paula McCloskey**

*The University of Derby*

**Sam Vardy**

*CCAE, Munster Technological University*

Through a critical discussion of our recent practice research project '*The 9 Freedoms for the Air*' (2024/25, hereafter '9 Freedoms'), this paper will reflect on how our practice uses 'fictioning' to suggest ways to know and act within the 'critical zone'. Our paper will interrogate this fictioning practice and explicate some of the agencies it mobilises.

'9 Freedoms' sits within our artistic and spatial research platform *Amid the Air and Earth*, which investigates specific ecologies including the air, atmosphere, wetlands, forests, and bogs, conceiving these terrestrial conditions as complex social, situated, temporal and political phenomena. We are interested in how such critical sites entangle pressing concerns of both social and environmental (in)justice, yet can also be the site of emergence of new socioecological imaginaries (Ferdinand, 2019).

Working as researchers and artists in residence with Galway Arts Centre, Westside Resource Centre, The University of Galway, and the city council, '9 Freedoms' revolved around participatory workshops with local community groups in Galway City to make a large textile, film, digital prints and sound artwork.

The project functions as a *counterimaginary* to the carbon, capitalist and colonial imaginary of the aviation industry, itself exemplified by the '9 Freedoms of the Air' – a set of international rights that give nationstates and airlines privileges to cross, and land in, another state's airspace. These rights, based on capitalism, borderimperialism (Walia, 2013), and globalisation, create an imaginary of 'open skies' that legitimises the movement of certain people and contributes to air pollution. At our project's core is a fictional scenario

whose central characters are the 'airdwellers' (INSECTS, BIRDS, FAIRIES, DUST, GAS, MICROBES) – each with different stories, knowledges and entanglements with HUMAN airdwellers. Concerned by threats to their ecology, the airdwellers come together and agree to devise (through negotiation and deliberation) a new set of principles – The 9 Freedoms for the Air. Our paper will explore our methodology of fictioning here as an ecology of socioecological, collaborative, and transdisciplinary practices, that hold together difference. Tracing the development of these new freedoms through stitching and the production of a large textile, we will reflect on the dynamics and ethics of this complex process of negotiation, intimacy and trust. Different knowledges, histories, experiences, and narratives were stitched together – from community members, atmospheric physicists, a folklorist, architect, artists, a microbiologist, and lawyers. We will also explore the use of sound in the project and its potential to enable prelinguistic and embodied ways of knowing. Finally, we will consider the '9 Freedoms' themselves – how they emerged, and were able to harness political, social, and cultural complexities of the air.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Paula McCloskey** is an artist researcher whose practice research engages with the colonial violence of nationstate borders, environmental justice and issues around maternity and reproductive health. Her art practice is often site-specific and participatory using film, performance, sound, publications and sculpture. She has had solo shows, been included in exhibitions and festivals. She is co-founder, along with Dr Sam Vardy, of the art and spatial research practice 'a place of their own' ([www.aplaceoftheirown.org](http://www.aplaceoftheirown.org)) She is an Associate Professor of Art and Visual Culture at the University of Derby, UK.

**Sam Vardy** is a trained architect, a researcher and architectural educator, and engages in research at the intersection of architecture, urbanism, contemporary art practice, and social science. His research interrogates two main concerns – critiques of border-imperialism, and critical fiction/ecologies, with Dr Paula McCloskey in the art and spatial research practice 'a place of their own' ([www.aplaceoftheirown.org](http://www.aplaceoftheirown.org)).

He also investigates alternative notions of architectural design and practice, based on critical theories of participation, autonomy, feminist architectures, and self-organised spaces.

Sam is Head of Architecture at Munster Technological University, and Associate Director of the Cork Centre for Architectural Education.

# SESSION 02

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## FILM / DISORIENTATION

CHAIR: TARA KENNEDY

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**THE FUTURE BLUEPRINT:** Inis Nua  
**Rebecca Jane McConnell  
& Cathal Crumley**

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**ARCHITECTURAL FILMMAKING,**  
World War Two, and the 'critical zone'  
**Mark Shiel**

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**CINEMATIC DEPICTION OF  
HOMELESSNESS IN DUBLIN:**  
Experiencing public and private spaces in  
Nola and the Clones and Adam and Paul  
**Alice Megan Poole & Gul Kacmaz Erk**

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Testing Ground (2025)  
**Henrietta Williams  
and Merijn Royaards**



# THE FUTURE BLUEPRINT: INIS NUA

**REBECCA JANE MCCONNELL  
& CATHAL CRUMLEY**  
*University College Dublin*

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*INIS NUA* is an 8-minute cinematic research artefact that uses speculative world-building, hybrid filmmaking, and full-scale installation to interrogate the spatial politics of the Critical Zone. Our method combines research-by-design, environmental storytelling, and field-based fabrication. The film constructs a “sci-Firish” future island – an engineered refuge malfunctioning under the weight of ecological

neglect. Through three narrative chapters (Exodus, Glitch, Return), we use moving image as a research instrument to visualise disorientation, suspended geographies, and the tension between sovereign belonging and material dependency.

The work is produced through a blend of digital compositing, concept art, 3D digital modelling, creating a hybrid aesthetic where folklore collides with techno-futurism. A companion 1:1 timber installation functioned as both cinema and artefact: a travelling screening structure situated in public space to test how audiences inhabit, interpret, and co-witness speculative environmental futures. Together, the film and installation operate as a design-driven inquiry into migration, memory, and the architectures we build – and abandon – within a destabilised Earth system.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Dr. Rebecca Jane McConnell** is an architect, researcher, and educator working at the intersection of design and environmental wickedness. Her research traces Europe's post-carbon modernisation, asking how architectural representation, exhibition design, and industrial propaganda became tools for confronting super-wicked problems like climate change. She is a postdoctoral researcher at University College Dublin on the ACME project (Prof. Gary A. Boyd), examining mid-century colliery rationalisation, infrastructure, and bureaucracy across the UK, France, Germany, and Belgium. Her PhD, *The Future Blueprint*, used Research by Design to imagine climate futures for Ireland's coastal cities, continuing through 'The Future Blueprint platform' and teaching.

**Cathal Crumley** is an architect and creative practitioner exploring regenerative design, narrative, and future-facing spatial imaginaries. He is co-founder of CRITBAY, a public architecture marketplace translating research into accessible visual storytelling across social media, workshops, and events. Working collaboratively on projects such as Future Island-Island, he develops community-led design sprints, speculative prototypes, and exhibition installations that connect climate action with cultural heritage. His work blends drawing, filmmaking, and rapid-making to communicate complex systems with clarity. Cathal's practice bridges academia, practice, and digital culture, building tools and communities for the next generation of designers across Europe.

# ARCHITECTURAL FILMMAKING, World War Two, and the 'critical zone'

**Mark Shiel**

*King's College London*

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I propose to examine the theme of Critical Zones by focusing on the special ability of filmmaking to meaningfully communicate and interpret our human transformation of the fragile surface of the Earth. To do this I will first refer to the long tradition of architectural documentary film that can be traced at least as far back as the

film *L'Architecture d'aujourd'hui* (Le Corbusier, Pierre Chenal, 1929). That tradition has tended to celebrate innovation in the design and construction of landscapes and buildings as productive and progressive modern interventions in terrestrial space and place. By contrast, in my paper I will concentrate on the equal ability of documentary film to describe the destruction of land and buildings in times of disorientation, disconnection, division, and suspicion – in a word, in times of war when the Earth and the structures we build on it are threatened not only militarily but ecologically, politically, and culturally. Such threats and the destruction of the built environment by war are all too evident today in our era of renewed geopolitical turmoil and violence, and in their media reportage. However, my case study will be World War Two and its representation in the architecture and design of the Cambridge American Cemetery. At Madingley, on the outskirts of Cambridge, England, this is one of the largest United States military cemeteries, designed and built in the late 1940s by the combined efforts of the architectural firms of Olmsted Brothers and Perry Shaw and Hepburn, based in Boston and Cambridge, Massachusetts. Combining streamlined modern style with neoclassical principles on a monumental scale, the site bears witness to the war with a characteristic stoicism that necessarily works hard to sublimate its destruction, horror, and suffering. Architectural

and sculptural beauty are enlisted to this end in the cemetery's buildings, as are landscaping and gardening in its burial ground which contains nearly 4000 graves and commemorates over 5000 more war dead whose bodies were never found. I will illustrate my paper with images and clips from my documentary film about the cemetery, *Madingley* (2025) that demonstrates creative practice research that draws equally on fieldwork and archives. I will link the film to the fragile ecology of the site today and the devastation of the Earth's 'critical zone' by war in 1939–1945. World War Two was an essential point of reference for Latour in his critique "We Have Never Been Modern" (1991) and other works – a catastrophic event that sometimes seems forgotten or misunderstood today but should continue to serve as a warning.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Mark Shiel** is Professor of Film, Media, and Urban Studies at King's College London. He has published over twenty journal articles and essays, and five books, including *Architectures of Revolt: The Cinematic City circa 1968* (Temple University Press, 2018) and *Hollywood Cinema and the Real Los Angeles* (University of Chicago Press, 2014), which won the Urban Communication Foundation's Jane Jacobs Award for Best Book. He is also a photographer and filmmaker focused on urban and architectural subjects, most recently in the photographic exhibit "Unseen Architecture" at the Architecture at the Edge festival in Galway and in his new documentary film *Madingley* (2025), a study of architecture, landscape, and the memory of World War Two.



protagonists to encounter and manipulate public and private spaces. The Critical Zone (Latour and Wiebel, 2020) reports two worlds in which modern life exists. The “***world they live in***” with the protection of law, support of the state and deeds of property, and the “***world they live from***” “that benefits no legal protection, no clear delineation of properties and no state to defend its rights” (p.15). Latour and Wiebel theorise that modern life pretends to exist only in the first world, but the experiences of homelessness fall, by definition, into the second. This presentation argues that examining these films through the lens of urban, socio-economic, architectural and political context allows understanding of the role that space takes in-between the veil of the two worlds.

The films contrast in their understandings and explorations of public and private spaces. Graham Jones’s ***Nola and the Clones*** in particular questions the role that public space takes on when it acts as one’s private space. If you are homeless where becomes your domestic space? Where is your home? Nola strives for domesticity in the public realm; she is only invited into private spaces when she is accompanied by men in exchange for something whether that is sex, company or conversation. The opposite is true of ***Adam and Paul***. Throughout the film, Paul and Adam spend a small portion of their time in domestic

settings, settings where they are deeply unwelcome. They are also unwelcome and often shunned in public spaces; they are quickly removed from places of shelter. This choice by director Lenny Abrahamson portrays them as having lost their right to shelter through their circumstances and actions.

The exploration of how space is portrayed against these contextual factors sheds new light to the journeys of the characters and how they interact with the city that forms their home. The difference in sobriety between protagonists, along with gender and appearances, shape how society treats them and influences their experiences of being “house-less” (Nomadland, 2020, p.10). Latour and Wiebel talk of a widening gap between the two worlds, here however in these two films we see that if when you exist in the spaces at the edge of a world or if you do not find yourself fitting fully into one nor the other, then this gap become blurred.

## BIOGRAPHY

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With work/life experience in Ireland, Netherlands, Turkey, UK and USA, **Dr Gul Kacmaz Erk** conducts research on ‘architecture and cinema’. Before joining Queen’s Architecture in 2011, she worked as a licenced architect in Istanbul/Amsterdam, researched at Penn, UCD, and Z/KU Berlin, and taught at Philadelphia University, TUDelft and IUE. She holds BArch (METU), MArch (METU) and PhD (ITU) degrees in Architecture, directs CACity Collaborative Research Group, organises Walled Cities film festivals, and conducts urban filmmaking workshops. Gul is the Lead for Architecture and Planning at Queen’s University Belfast.

**Alice Poole** holds a BSc and MSc Architecture from Queen's University Belfast and is currently a second-year PhD student in Architecture at the same institution. Her doctoral research examines Dublin as a cinematic city, analysing housing, infrastructure, and cultural conditions through the mapping of native film locations. She has professional experience in film and theatre, both on stage and behind the scenes, and continues to work with the Lyric Theatre as part of its Creative Learning team. Prior to her PhD, she spent a year working in marketing for BMW, MINI and Omoda-Jacoo.



*Spatial essay III: Testing Ground (2025)*

# Testing Ground (2025)

**Henrietta Williams and  
Merijn Royaards**

*Bartlett School of Architecture*

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*Testing Ground (2025)* functions as a spatial essay using visual, sonic and haptic means to investigate how conflict and violence translate across time and space to impact upon our contemporary lived experience of the city. Central to the work is the activation of historic and contemporary aerial surveillance materials gathered from British Army and police helicopters. These violent visual images are challenged by field recordings – visual and sonic – gathered at ground level.

The project is composed of various elements. These include: **Screen 1 – Belfast** – Video footage has been gathered from a repository of material donated by the British Army to the Imperial War Museum Film Archive. This research activates archival materials from the 1990s that were originally made as British Army training videos and documentation of operations in Northern Ireland. This material is not in the public domain. **Screen 2 – London looking up**– Field recordings have been gathered at ground level by Henrietta Williams and Merijn Royaards to document the presence of police aerial surveillance helicopters over London. **Screen 3 – London looking down** – Materials have been drawn from the operational archive of the National Police Air Service team based at Redhill. The team are requested for support with ground level policing operations across London and use aerial surveillance helicopters equipped with advanced mapping software and a series of cameras that use live feed, thermal imagery, and night vision. **Spatial sound installation** – Sonic materials have been drawn from the archival materials activated in the work and from a series of field recordings made at ground level. Testing Ground (2025) draws together these materials to form an installation that operates across visual, sonic and haptic registers. Surrounded by an arc of images, the viewer becomes both the watcher and the watched.

The installation develops an understanding that aerial systems, in use over London in this current moment, have a direct correlation to the technologies used by British Army helicopter surveillance teams over Belfast in the 1990s. Through a visual and sonic interplay, the violence of helicopters operating across time and space is interrupted with the embodied presence of an individual at ground level. The view from above is troubled through this ground level disruption – the power of the aerial gaze is dismantled and disorientated.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Henrietta Williams** (b. 1982) is a visual urbanist based at the Bartlett School of Architecture UCL. Her work takes the form of moving image and photographic installations, writing, walking and performance. These methods are often used as ways to ask questions about how our cities are formed through conflict and how the security and surveillance of the built environment change our lived experience.

Henri is a Lecturer (teaching) at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. She is a core tutor on the MA Situated Practice and tutors across a number of programs with a particular focus on critical film making methodologies. She has recently an LAHP funded PhD by Design, also at the Bartlett, making short films and moving image installations alongside a written thesis.

Henri has exhibited work internationally including at the Het Nieuwe Instituut, the Golden Thread Gallery Belfast, the Mies van der Rohe Institute, the V&A, and the Architectural Association. She has presented her research through Open City Documentary Festival, Modern Art Oxford, the Royal College of Art, and the Bauhaus. Her project ‘The Secret Security Guard’ was featured on the front page of the Guardian newspaper and she has presented the ‘Ring of Steel’ project on a number

of international television programs and the BBC Culture Show. She lives in South London with her partner and 3 young children.

**Merijn Royaard** is a sound designer, composer, artist-researcher and drummer with degrees in Music, Fine Art, Urban Design and Architecture and currently work as a lecturer at the Bartlett School of Architecture and as a freelance sound designer and spatial audio/ music producer. I have 25 years of experience teaching drums and percussion, music technology and production in schools and privately. My professional practice includes sound design, mixing and mastering for podcasts (BBC, Yarn Productions) and a variety of independent essay films and art projects. As Artistic director of Sonic Sphere, I have provided custom spatial mixes for work by The xx, Steve Reich, Yaeji, Carl Craig, and many others, and I continue to act as lead sound designer, audio-visual designer and composer for the same project. I'm currently based in London with studios in Lambeth and Holloway.

# SESSION 03

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## NONHUMAN CLIENTS / GAIA

CHAIR: PAULA M<sup>c</sup>CLOSKEY

### **CRACKS IN THE CONTRACT:**

Posthuman Futures in Architecture

**Grace Johnson**

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### **LISTENING TO RIVERS:** Restoring

Reciprocity with Waterbodies

**Phoebe Brady & Sarah Doheny**

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### **PROTOTYPING THRESHOLDS BETWEEN THE RIVER LAGAN AND THE CITY:**

A collaboration between architects and a sound artist to make structures that negotiate civic and ecological urban ambitions.

**Rachel O'Grady**



*Studio Other Spaces. [2021]. Future Assembly installation at the Venice Architecture Biennale.*

# **CRACKS IN THE CONTRACT:** Posthuman Futures in Architecture

**Grace Johnson**

*South East Technological University (SETU)*

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Architecture is a practice born of humanist tradition. It operates through an archaic logic: human-to-human, bound by order, place, and contract. The client–architect relationship has historically anchored architectural authority, organising responsibility through clearly defined human roles. Yet this framework is increasingly strained. Climate change, ecological breakdown, and

the instability of the Anthropocene have precipitated a state of dysphoria within the industry, emphasising the urgent need for re-evaluation.

As planetary processes increasingly influence architectural decisions, amid rising sea levels, soaring temperatures, and more frequent ecological disasters worldwide, the issue of responsibility extends beyond human interests. Latour's concepts of Gaia and the Critical Zone reframe the Earth not as a passive backdrop but as an active, contested domain in which humans and nonhumans are entangled. Within architectural discourse, this shift appears most provocatively in calls to "see the Earth as client," positioning the planet as a stakeholder in its own future and challenging architects to recognise their role within this active system. This paper questions whether posthumanism could be a possible solution to encouraging a vital shift towards a more-than-human future. If architecture is to respond meaningfully to ecological crisis, it may require a move away from human-centred logics toward a practice that recognises the agency of materials and environments. Recognising this potential can inspire architects to rethink their approach and embrace new paradigms that challenge traditional boundaries.

This paper explores that question by examining how architects narrate their projects.

Architectural competitions provide a helpful site for this inquiry because the traditional client is absent or undefined. Architects must therefore interpret for whom or what their work is intended, including nonhuman entities. In the absence of a normative client, we can explore the ontologies articulated by architects concerning sustainability, landscape, and the future. This ambiguity enables this paper to examine how non-traditional, nonhuman forms of clienthood are presently shaped through language, revealing the underlying potential beneath the surface.

Using a deconstructive reading of project texts alongside retrospective interviews, the analysis examines how architects speak about the environment, responsibility, and agency. It asks whether these narratives reflect a genuine posthuman shift, such as the recognition of nonhuman agency, or merely reproduce sustainability as rhetoric or greenwashing. By closely examining architectural language, the paper traces where ecological responsibility begins to emerge—and where it fractures—at a moment when technological metrics and optimisation risk deepening, rather than repairing, architecture's distance from Mother Earth.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Grace Johnson** is a fourth-year PhD student at South East Technological University (SETU) . She holds a bachelor's degree in architecture from SETU (formerly the Waterford Institute of Technology).

Her research is titled 'Earth as our client'- rethinking the client of architecture, focusing on introducing posthumanism into architecture to reshape the way we think and design with the environment. She is also a studio lecturer in the Department of Built Environment and Architecture at SETU.



*Collaborative wetland ecology study Brú na Bóinne, **Take Me To the River 2025**.  
Photo credit; Finn Richards*

# **LISTENING TO RIVERS:** Restoring Reciprocity with Waterbodies

**Phoebe Brady & Sarah Doheny**

*Cineal Research & Design*

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Architectural discourse must meaningfully engage with the realities of climate change, ecological degradation, and the urgent demand for sustainable design approaches that respect and enhance natural systems. This paper examines the interconnectedness of architectural practice, ecological systems, and cultural landscapes through the proposition of rivers as living entities with agency—imagined

not merely as resources, but as stakeholders within design processes.

In Ireland, rivers have historically shaped patterns of settlement, livelihoods, and cultural identity. However, urbanisation, industrialisation, and infrastructural development have contributed to a growing disconnection between communities and their water systems. In the context of accelerating climate and biodiversity crises, this research draws attention to the damaging effects of pollution, land-use change, and habitat fragmentation and argues for the re-establishment of reciprocal relationships with rivers through a respectful spatial practice. Designing with the “voice” of the river as a client foregrounds ecological stability and the importance of riparian buffer zones. Restoring these natural systems enhances water quality and biodiversity and contributes to human well-being by improving access to green and blue spaces.

Participatory community engagement is central to architectural practice within the critical zone, where ecological and social systems intersect. Interdisciplinary collaboration between local communities, environmental scientists, policymakers, artists, and designers enables cultural identity and ecological health to be understood as mutually reinforcing.

Such approaches foster collective stewardship that strengthens community resilience and locally grounded responses to environmental challenges.

The paper presents the Boyne Valley Catchment as a test site through *Take Me To The River*, a collaborative initiative between the Solstice Arts Centre and Cineál Research & Design. The project has developed partnerships with local authorities, water agencies, river trust networks, artists, and community groups to cultivate shared knowledge of rivers and waterbodies in County Meath. Through creative, site-based public workshops, participatory fieldwork, and layered exploratory mapping, the initiative bridges ecological science and public perception. National and international precedents are also discussed to demonstrate how community-based frameworks can successfully promote environmental action and long-term river conservation.

Reimagining rivers as sentient entities invites both ethical and practical transformation, challenging extractive paradigms and human-centred control. Instead, the paper advocates for architectural practices grounded in ecological reciprocity. Ultimately, it argues that by working within broader ecological and cultural contexts, architectural practice can play a critical role in the reclamation and

regeneration of terrestrial landscapes to create and support resilient and vibrant environments for future generations.

## **BIOGRAPHY:**

Cineál Research & Design is a collaborative architectural practice led by **Phoebe Brady** and **Sarah Doheny** since 2021. The studio explores the experiential qualities of the built environment through a practice of mapping and observation. Their design work and research explores the relationships of materials and ecology in the design and creation of spatial experiences. Cineál identifies as an environmentally sensitive practice where drawing, designing and building processes are rooted in place, connecting local landscape knowledge, ecology, geology, climate and weather. They are both engaged in research and teaching within the schools of architecture at UCD , UL & ATU.



# PROTOTYPING THRESHOLDS BETWEEN THE RIVER LAGAN AND THE CITY:

A collaboration between architects and a sound artist to make structures that negotiate civic and ecological urban ambitions.

**Rachel O'Grady**

*Queen's University Belfast*

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DRIFT was a demountable, floating pavilion that moored at three sites along Belfast's River Lagan

in 2024–2025. Using the same kit of parts, it was assembled in three configurations to respond to different site constraints. The project is a continuation of extensive design research by the architects (including the author) on temporary structures. In this case, the design methodology informed the creation of places that could bring people down to the water's surface. The architects collaborated with a sound artist to create reciprocal outputs – a composition and a pavilion – that drew attention to invisible instances of human interference with the river's ecosystem. A heuristic methodology centred the development of drawings, models, and prototypes that evolved through conversations with collaborators. Methods of drawing and modelling were invented and refined for the architects and sound artist to better understand each other's practice. This allowed the sonic and architectural design processes to fold into each other, resulting in a collaborative exploration of the relationship between temporality and a civic space held by the site as habitat. Recording human and non-human engagement with the project with respect to temporal horizons led to discoveries about negotiating civic space and ecological health at the river's edge.

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## BIOGRAPHY:

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**Rachel O'Grady** is a lecturer and design tutor in architecture at Queen's University Belfast and a founding director of OGU Architects. Her research focus on temporal nesting in civic spaces emerged from collaborative projects with north Indian NGO CURE, examining varied interpretations of heritage restoration within communities in Agra. Since 2017, Rachel has been developing design-led research into temporary public structures. Her practice OGU have won many prestigious awards for temporary and demountable work including the AJ Small Projects Award in 2023 and a Civic Trust Award.

DRIFT was the only UK/Ireland entry shortlisted in the final five for the Dezeen Small Project Award 2025.

# SESSION 04

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## TERRITORIES / DISCONNECTED

CHAIR: EOGHAN HORGAN

### **LEARNING IN THE CRITICAL ZONE:**

Miners' Institutes and the Infrastructures  
of Extractive Modernity

**Tabassum Ahmed**

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**THE COALSCAPE:** Excavating  
the Coalmining Imaginary

**Gary A. Boyd**

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### **ROBIN WALKER'S REGIONAL PLANNING**

**Brian Ward**

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**TOXIC TEMPORALITIES** & Machines  
in the Anthropocene's Garden

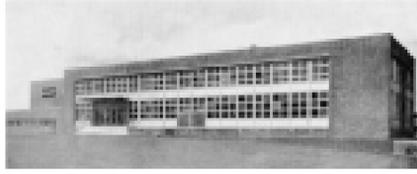
**Jason O'Shaughnessy  
& Denis Linehan**



1875  
The Old Tin Tabernacle



1903  
Technical College Building, Library Street



1954  
John McCurdy Hall, Parsons Walk



1962  
Wigan Technical College, Parsons Walk Buildings

*The image shows how mining education in Wigan evolved from a small voluntary mining school into a full-scale technical college by the early 20th century, reflecting the needs of a growing industrial economy [Source: Ahmed, 2025]*

# LEARNING IN THE CRITICAL ZONE:

## Miners' Institutes and the Infrastructures of Extractive Modernity

**Tabassum Ahmed**

*University College Dublin*

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This paper examines the architecture of the critical zone – the thin, dynamic interface where geological extraction, human labour, and environmental change intersect – within the context of coal mining in the twentieth century. Drawing on extensive archival materials and contemporary publications, and producing new visual representations of both forms and

networks, it maps the socio-spatial evolution of miners' institutes across the United Kingdom and beyond: architectural spaces where education, entertainment, recreation, linked with underground labour practices, emergent safety regimes and legislation, and training programmes.

Between 1920 and 1946, the Miners' Welfare Committee supported an extensive network of institutes, libraries, halls, and training and education facilities that became key infrastructure for welfare, culture, and knowledge within the British coal industry in the 20th century. Their emergence reflected a fundamental reality of the coal age: coal was the driving energy source of Britain's industrial modernity, so essential that it demanded long-term investment, rigorous planning, and sustained care for labour. The welfare infrastructure embodied in spaces such as miners' institutes was not only critical in shaping labour within the pits and the working-class life of the coal community but also, as this paper argues, instrumental in establishing, disseminating and normalising cultures and practices associated with extraction beyond the coalfield.

The evolution and absorption of this architectural typology reveals it as not only a welfare architecture that cultivated technical competence, nurtured social cohesion, and formed civic identity, but also socio-spatial mechanisms through which processes of extraction became increasingly rationalised, normalised, and ultimately rendered invisible—somewhat “washed clean”. Within architectural space, the violence of extraction was

transformed: danger softened into diagrams, geology into coursework, bodily strain into civic identity; and the institutes themselves into colleges, universities, civic libraries. Presuppositions of extraction thus slipped into everyday life.

While the legacy of labour and extraction is now often overlooked and hidden in plain sight in the facades and spaces these architectures left behind, by tracing how these institutes mediated the layered identities of coal – as an energy source, social structure, and epistemic regime – the paper argues that they not only supported extractive modernity but also contributed to collective capacities and ways of thinking that outlived the pits and remain instrumental to how we continue to consider the environment.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Tabassum Ahmed** is an architect, researcher, and educator at the School of Architecture, Planning & Environmental Policy, University College Dublin. She currently teaches across UCD's architecture programmes, contributing to community-engaged design studios and research-led pedagogy, and has previously taught at the University of Huddersfield (UK), University of Pavia (Italy), and North South University (Bangladesh), as well as contributing actively to European research projects. Her research explores spatial unfolding of urban commoning practices, visual and ethnographic methods in architectural inquiry, and situated practices as critical pedagogy. Tabassum is a Research Scientist on the ERC-funded project Architecture of Coal and Modern Europe (ACME).



*The Crown* (2019) Episode 3, Series 3. Aberfan.

# THE COALSCAPE: Excavating the Coalmining Imaginary

**Gary A. Boyd**

*University College Dublin*

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For the eminent American historian and philosopher of technology Lewis Mumford, coalmining both established and epitomised the capitalist exploitation of both land *and* labour. He described the space of the mine as the first completely ‘manufactured terrain’, an unnatural, inorganic antithesis of the ideal pastoral arcadia. Mining, he argued, was the archetypical site where earth and land were reconceived as

being no longer just about growing food but as something more instrumental, something that could be objectively acted or operated upon.

Episode 3, Series 3 of the television series ***The Crown*** (2019) depicts the 1966 disaster at Aberfan in South Wales. A consequence of coal mining, the slag heap, the waste produced by the industry, has slipped down the mountain to engulf the village and specifically the local primary school where the children had just begun their lessons. Returned to several times throughout the episode, it is a scene of utter devastation, of displaced matter, of death visited on the most innocent in the most appalling circularity. The spoil hewn by the labour of miners underground, augmented by unusually high rainfall, has visited their settlement – the primary school, houses, village and its streets and spaces – and drowned their children, younger siblings, grandchildren. Architecture and space provide a visual surrogate for their bodies. Inundated by black matter, buildings have been rendered uncanny, their meaning irrevocably altered.

One of the most tragic and traumatic industrial accidents in British history, Aberfan provides an acute metaphor for the hubris and singularity of extraction within the critical zone. Yet its depiction in ***The Crown*** merely provides an update in a process of visualising coal mining, its consequences and controversies that is centuries old, has developed from drawings and texts to

photographs and finally the moving image, and has contributed to what can be described as a 'coal mining imaginary'. Using Aberfan as a starting point and engaging with other documentary and fictional depictions, this paper examines the visualisation of the emergent *coalscape* in twentieth century Europe reflecting on the roles of architecture and space not only in the production of its controversies but also in the legitimation of some of its practices.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Gary A. Boyd** is Full Professor of Architecture at University College Dublin and Principal Investigator for Architectures of Coal and Modern Europe (ACME) funded by the European Research Council. Prior to this he was Project Leader of a Getty Foundation Keeping It Modern Grant (2018–2021) and a Leverhulme Major Research Fellow (2018–22). The latter resulted in the publication of the monograph *Architecture and the Face of Coal: Mining and Modern Britain* (Lund Humphries, 2023) winner of the Alice Davis Hitchcock Medallion in 2023.



IRELAND

PLAN

— TRUNK ROADS  
— RAILWAYS

— LOCAL ROADS  
— WATERWAYS

— LINK ROADS  
— RURAL DIVISIONS

■ TOWNS  
■ REGIONAL CENTRES

0 10  
MILES

*'Ireland: Plan' in Robin Walker, "Ireland: A Regional Study" (Masters Thesis, Illinois Institute of Technology, 1958), Irish Architectural Archive.*

# ROBIN WALKER'S REGIONAL PLANNING

## Brian Ward

*Technological University Dublin*

'Ireland: Plan' in Robin Walker, "Ireland: A Regional Study" (Masters Thesis, Illinois Institute of Technology, 1958), Irish Architectural Archive. Bruno Latour lamented that, during the rush to modernity, 'old questions of land and people' were 'pushed aside and considered reactionary'. In *Critical Zones* he observed that, within our increasingly desperate contemporary searches for 'a durable ground', cosmologies previously discarded as outmoded have assumed a new

and 'vital relevance'. The de-growth philosopher, Kate Soper's recent interest in the Ireland of Éamon De Valera and W.B. Yeats – which deliberately eschewed a universal modernity – can be categorised as one such search.

Without discounting its many problems, she seeks to recast the 'deficient modernisation' of this Ireland as a site suggestive of alternative relations to modernity (Cleary cited in Soper, 2013, p. 249).

This paper examines two plans – from 1958 and 1967 – by the Irish architect, Robin Walker. The second, 'A regional plan for Ireland', was an essay in 1960s centralised planning. It aligned with the industrial policy of Sean Lemass and T.K. Whitaker that steered Ireland towards a modernity converging with that of other Western societies. However, the paper focuses on the first: 'Ireland: A Regional Study'. In this, his Master's thesis, Walker instrumentalised modern planning in service of the isolationist policies of early twentieth century Irish governments, while simultaneously exploring the related decentralisation advocated by his Illinois Institute of Technology teacher, Ludwig Hilberseimer. The thesis proposed a radical reorganisation of Ireland's territory. Large holdings in the eastern midlands were shared amongst farmers relocated from the 'congested' areas of the west. Industry related to the processing of raw materials – produced through

market gardening and a general intensification of agriculture – was dispersed across the countryside in ‘village units’ to prevent rather than cause rural depopulation. Each village unit was provided with at least one factory to enable workers oscillate seasonally between agricultural and industrial labour. Drawing Walker’s thesis out of the archives, the paper returns to an alternative (and now reactionary and fanciful) modernity that considered, even if it could not resolve within the structures of capitalism, ‘old questions of land and people’.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Brian Ward** is a Lecturer in the School of Architecture, Building and Environment at Technological University Dublin. He previously worked for dePaor Architects and Dominic Stevens Architects. Interested in locating architectural design skills within their social and cultural contexts, he contributes regularly to publications on modern and contemporary Irish architecture and planning. He co-edited *Irish Housing Design 1950-1980: Out of the Ordinary* (Routledge, 2020) with Gary A. Boyd and Michael Pike; co-curated an exhibition and series of events on Marion Mahony Griffin for the Irish Architecture Foundation with Sarah Sheridan (2019); and co-curated *The Architecture of Creative Learning* for the Irish Pavilion in the Dubai Expo with Gary A. Boyd (2022).



*Fig.1 Industrial Hopper, Cork Docklands (Photo by Denis Linehan, 2025).*

# TOXIC TEMPORALITIES & Machines in the Anthropocene's Garden

**Jason O'Shaughnessy  
& Denis Linehan**

*University College Cork*

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This paper examines the Cork Docklands as a site where toxic temporalities become legible within what Bruno Latour has termed as the *Critical Zone* (Latour, 2020, p. 2) – the fragile, overburdened stratum in which geological, ecological, and socio-technical processes collide. Rather than approaching the Docklands as a post-industrial landscape awaiting

remediation or renewal, the paper treats near-abandonment as a historically produced condition in which time itself has become environmentally compromised. Drawing on Robert Smithson's entropic aesthetics and his concept of "ruins in reverse," (Smithson, 1967, p. 54) the paper argues that toxicity in the Docklands cannot simply be confined to residual contamination or industrial afterlives. Instead, and in our characterisation of it – explored through text and a display comprising drawings and Polaroid instant photographs – the site exists in a state of anticipatory decay. In this version of things, the site exemplifies how nature and infrastructure co-produce a chronic, entangled disorder that does not immediately yield to the conventions of normal technocratic management. Instead, and resisting valorisation – it offers us ongoing delayed visions and different states of dereliction that collapse into one another where toxicity reveals itself as the foreclosure of genuine futurity – rather than merely revealing ongoing fields of polluted matter (air/soil/ water). In this state, the place takes-on the form of a secondhand temporality where landscape is increasingly mediated through masterplans and renderings, rather than sustained inhabitation or use. It produces a temporal distance that anaesthetises any sense of ecological urgency – displacing the site into a

mediated temporal register, while turning lived time into an afterimage of planning. In these ways, it configures the landscape in a ***suspended present*** where temporality becomes thickened and stratified: a chronotope of prolonged degradation where time itself has become environmentally noxious. Read this way, a view of the site emerges – not so much as a construct understood as a failure and needing to be corrected but one that becomes a crucial new index within the ***Critical Zone***.

# SESSION 05

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## HOUSING / CRITICAL ZONES

CHAIR: BRIAN WARD

**LANDING ON THE BLOCK:** Noetic  
Rehabilitation and the Critical Zone  
of post-war Rationalism in Berlin

**Mariana Ferreira, dos Santos**

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**INTERTWINING METHODOLOGIES**  
in the Reuse of Institutional Buildings  
as Housing

**Michael Pike**

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**LIVING IN THE COALSCAPE:** miners'  
housing in the critical zone of the  
European coalfield

**Anna Cooke**

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**GOVERNANCE FOR CLIMATE:**  
Resilient Housing in Coastal Cities

**Kritika Singhal**



Figure 1: The materialization of abstraction: Panoramic view of Karl-Marx-Allee from the Berlin TV Tower Source: Sansculotte (2004). Image obtained via German Wikipedia

# LANDING ON THE BLOCK: Noetic Rehabilitation and the Critical Zone of post- war Rationalism in Berlin

**Mariana Ferreira**

*dos Santos*

The philosopher Bruno Latour identified the Terrestrial Crisis as a problem of disconnection: Architecture and modern society operated within the abstraction of an infinite globe, ignoring the finite and heterogeneous conditions of the critical zone which we live. This article argues that Rationalism of Post-War Reconstruction (World War II), exemplified by standard construction

in Berlin (Hansaviertel vs. Karl-Marx-Allee), is the epitome of the disconnection, by imposing *Tabula Rasa* and rigid typologies. The modernist belief in universal building detached from the climate, culture and history of the place, led to the replacement of the complex urban fabric with monolithic structures that today represent a vast architectural and ecological liability.

The essence of the Modernist dream was the autonomy of form and reconstruction *ex-nihilo* (from nothing), treating the Earth as an inexhaustible resource for new foundations and new materials. The result, materialized in the gigantic post-war housing blocks, was functional rigidity and social alienation. The “Block”, in this context, symbolizes the material of Critical Zone that architecture must now confront: a problematic node of unadaptable structure and high *embodied energy* that we cannot afford to waste. The act of “Landing on the Block” therefore means abandoning the modernist abstraction of new construction in favour of the difficult and complex reality of transformation and rehabilitation.

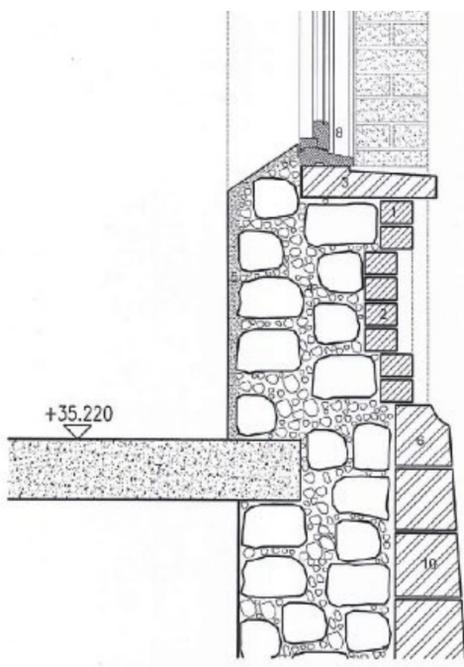
The massive rehabilitation of these buildings isn't merely a sustainable choice; it is an ethical and gnoseological imperative. It demands a paradigm shift, moving from mere technical “know-how” to a profound “know-why”, which understands the material history of the building environment and optimizes its future existence. Noetics and Gnoseology provide the theoretical framework

for his new mode of knowledge, which replaces the rigidity of the *type* with the intelligence of *contextual adaptation* and *material resilience*. Proposing a solution for scaling up rehabilitation lies in a new design methodology, capable of transcending the traditional approach. This data-driven methodology uses AI assistance (through *Predictive Optimization*) to map, simulate and compare performance scenarios (structural, energy, typological) in the pre-design phase. This process dismantles the inherent risk in rehabilitation, transforming it into an investment with proven profitability and viability at scale. The future of architecture lies in reconciliation with the Critical Zone. The challenge of rigid Rationalism can be solved through data-assisted rationalism, which empowers the architect to truly “land” in the complexity of the built environment and fulfil the Latourian imperative.

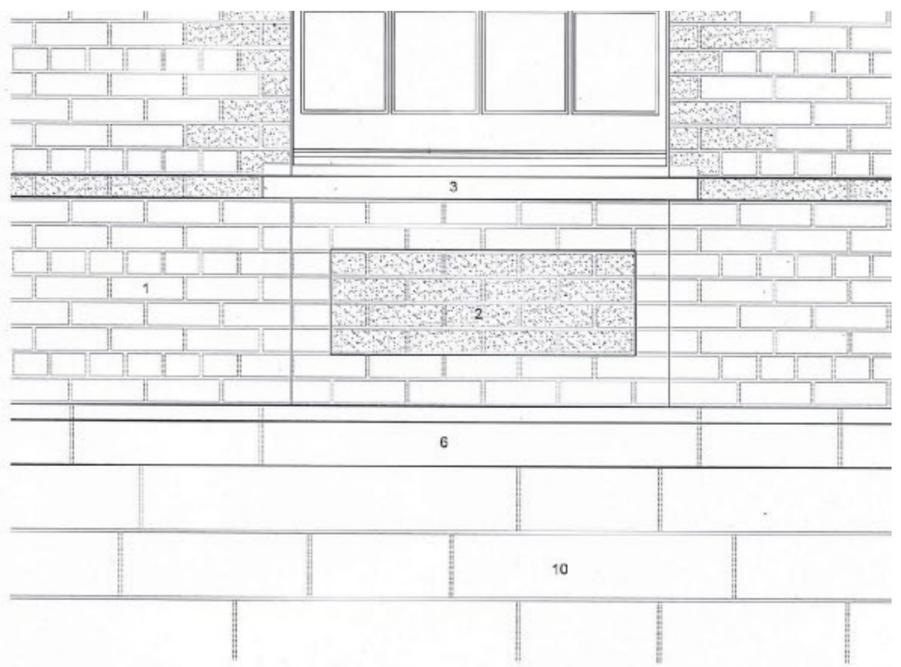
## BIOGRAPHY

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**Mariana Ferreira dos Santos** is an architect with over a decade of professional experience, ranging from interior design to large-scale urban complexes. She holds a Master's in Architecture from the University of Beira Interior (UBI) and a Postgraduate degree in Project Management from Porto Business School (PBS). Currently an independent researcher preparing for doctoral studies, her work bridges historical critique with computational design. Her research focuses on the legacy of Post-War Rationalism, exploring strategic rehabilitation strategies that integrate technical project execution with the theoretical challenges of the “Critical Zone.”



SECTION AT GROUND FLOOR WINDOW  
scale 1:20 © A3



ELEVATION TO GROUND FLOOR WINDOW  
scale 1:20 © A3

#### WALL CONSTRUCTION

1. TUCK POINTED ENGLISH GARDEN WALL BONDED RED FACING BRICK 70 x 230 x 100mm TOOTHED INTO STONE WALL AT EVERY FOURTH COURSE WITH HEADERS
2. PALE YELLOW BRICK 70 x 230 x 100mm
3. SILVER GREY KILTEALY CUT GRANITE CILL
4. QUARTZ TYPE STONE MATRIX
5. 30-40mm THICK INTERNAL SAND:CEMENT SCRATCH AND SCUD COAT WITH 1-3mm PLASTER SKIM
6. SILVER GREY KILTEALY CUT GRANITE CHAMFERED CUSHION COURSE
7. IN-SITU CONCRETE FLOOR SLAB
8. TWELVE-OVER-TWELVE TIMBER SASH WINDOW
9. SILVER GREY KILTEALY CUT GRANITE STRINGCOURSE
10. ROCK FACED KILTEALY GRANITE ASHLAR BATTERED BASE

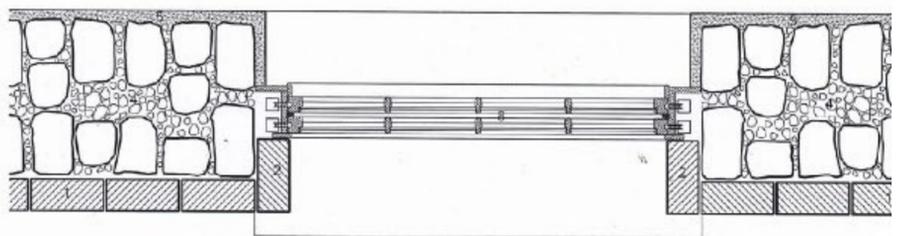


Fig.1 GKMP Architects: Plan, Section and Elevation of Typical Window, Transformation of St. Senan's Hospital.

# INTERTWINING METHODOLOGIES in the Reuse of Institutional Buildings as Housing

**Michael Pike**

*UCD School of Architecture*

The proposed contribution combines text and images to explore the question of how we make the best possible use of what exists in the reuse of institutional buildings as housing. This practice-based research seeks to develop a methodology that is based on an attentiveness to what already exists on the site and in the

immediate context; to the people, uses, spaces, and materials that are already there; with the intention of reanimating and exploring their latent potential. The research is focused on our current project for the adaptive reuse of the former St. Senan's Hospital in Enniscorthy as housing and other amenities. St. Senan's Hospital was designed by architects James Bell and James Barry Farrell in the 1860s on an elevated site south of Enniscorthy town. The two-hundred-and-twenty-metre long building is two-and-three storeys, made primarily of red brick with a silver-grey Kildealy granite plinth and yellow brick dressings. The project involves the transformation of this protected structure into fifty-six apartments, with a restaurant, leisure and communal facilities. This work has been ongoing since 2018 and is currently the largest reuse project underway in Ireland. We have spent the last eight years drawing and analysing every piece of the building. Through a persistent paying of attention to all that exists the aim is to promote a new way of looking, free of preconceived ideas.

This methodology forms part of the development of a model for regenerative practice based on holistic thinking that can address the complexity of these types of projects. It seeks to reassert the value of the architect as a generalist rather than a specialist in the context of the climate crisis,

capable of intertwining intuitive, scientific, and creative methodologies. The focus is therefore on the process (*modus operandi*) more than the product (*opus operatum*). It seeks to activate the knowledge, skills and competencies acquired in architectural practice and bridge them into research. It is based on the understanding that the design process produces its own kind of insights and knowledge, and that these can be studied and understood to help us to act more effectively in the world.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Michael Pike** is a Director of GKMP Architects and Associate Professor in University College Dublin. Our practice work is principally concerned with the design of domestic space, both individual houses and housing projects. Our work has received a significant number of architectural awards and has been exhibited and published internationally. We were nominated for the European Union (Mies) Prize for Architecture in 2026, 2022 and 2019. Our work was exhibited at the Venice Biennale 2018 as part of the 'Close Encounter' exhibition. My research is focused on the design of housing and the development of an ongoing body of enquiry into the relationship between domestic space and everyday life.



Still from **Germinal** (1913), Albert Capellani

# LIVING IN THE COALSCAPE: miners' housing in the critical zone of the European coalfield

**Anna Cooke**

*UCD*

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“Beyond, on the horizon, were the other pits, La Victoire, Saint-Thomas, Feutry-Cantel; while to the north, from the tall blast-furnaces and the batteries of coke-ovens, smoke was rising into the pure morning air. He had better hurry if he wanted to catch the eight o’clock train, because he still had six kilometres to go. And far beneath his feet, the stubborn tap-tap of the

picks continued. The comrades were all there, he could hear them following him with each stride he took. Wasn't that La Maheude beneath this field of beet, bent double at her work, her rasping breaths audible above the roar of her ventilating machine? On the left, on the right, ahead of him, he thought he recognised others, there beneath the corn and the hedges and the young trees."<sup>1</sup>

In this closing scene, the protagonist of Emile Zola's *Germinal* (1885) is walking on ground with which he is deeply familiar. A miner and agitator, he connects landmarks with moments of unrest and dispute. But what is different here is the spatial connection to the world under the ground with which he is also familiar. He imagines that he hears the sound of tapping, as his mining comrades work below fields of beet and young trees. The geography of the surface is overlaid with the network of tunnels and shafts below that are animated by the constant tapping of the miner. Zola demonstrates the unique perspective of the miner who understands the crust of the earth, who hollows it out and brings its residue home.

The journey undertaken by the miner from home to pithead to shaft and seam, back again to the surface and to home, is the spatial experience that gives the miner particular knowledge of the terrestrial. The three-dimensional nature of the

claim to ownership by mining companies, where they have rights below ground and property above ground, is understood as a daily reality by miners. The land they live on and the land they live from are entangled. The coalfield can therefore be considered a critical zone in two senses, in the material sense of the fragile crust and the political sense of a complex web of individual and sovereign interests.

From the earliest mining colonies onwards, proximity to the mine and the journey underground were significant in the provision of housing for miners. The environmental realities of the mining context were also formative in how daily life was managed. Efficiency and the organisation of labour permeated developments above and below ground. In this paper, I examine the evolution and spread of European miners' settlements and housing typologies as they followed the spread of coal mining infrastructure in the early 20th century. With a focus on the Upper Silesian Coal Basin in Poland and the Campine Basin in Belgium, changing attitudes to labour in the settlement and in the home are explored by illustrating journeys through the critical zone of the coalfield. Using drawing at a territorial and domestic scale, this paper asks what common qualities inflected miners' housing and the experience of all those living, working and passing through the constantly shifting landscape of the coalfield?

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Anna Cooke** studied architecture at University College Dublin. Having worked with de Blacam and Meagher Architects in Dublin, Mole Architects in Cambridge and Caruso St John Architects in London, she established Hannigan Cooke Architects with Damien Hannigan. With an MA in History and Theory of Architecture from London Metropolitan University, she has been a design studio tutor at TU Dublin since 2018 and a design fellow at UCD since 2019. She is currently teaching on the Master of Architecture programme at UCD and undertaking a PhD within the ACME (Architectures of Coal and Modern Europe) research group at UCD, funded by the European Research Council.



*Image: Diagram illustrating how the research conceptualises governance systems through three interrelated dimensions—spatial (land-use), social (justice), and legal (policy), that shape climate adaptation in housing. Source: Author.*

# GOVERNANCE FOR CLIMATE: Resilient Housing in Coastal Cities

**Kritika Singhal**

*Trinity College Dublin*

Sustainable housing in urban areas has evolved as a multidimensional concept, expanding beyond environmental performance to encompass social and spatial considerations (Winston, 2022). However, this evolving understanding must now be viewed in light of escalating climate risks. Coastal cities, situated within socio-ecological ‘critical zones,’ face complex and intersecting challenges related to

climate change, housing provision, governance, and social equity (Monckeberg and Gómez, 2025). Human settlements, particularly in coastal urban context are increasingly exposed to climate-induced hazards such as coastal erosion, flooding, and storm surges, making it imperative to align housing strategies with broader climate change mitigation and adaptation frameworks.

While mitigation continues to dominate climate agendas, adaptation—especially in relation to housing design, land use, and infrastructure—remains comparatively underdeveloped (Hurlimann et al., 2021). Moreover, climate adaptation may require a rethinking of the smart-compact city agenda itself. Urban land may need to perform new roles: not only accommodating density, but also absorbing heat, buffering flood risks, and enhancing liveability. In certain urban contexts, allocating space for blue and green infrastructure may be more urgent than prioritising infill development alone (Gill et al., 2007).

These shifts demand coordinated governance, inclusive policy design, and explicit recognition of the socio-spatial inequalities that shape urban vulnerability and resilience. Recent studies highlight that effective climate-resilient densification hinges not only on material resources, but also on governance capacities, including actor cooperation, participatory norm-

setting, transparent communication, and the strategic use of external support (Erlwein et al., 2023).

Drawing on interdisciplinary academic and grey literature, the paper examines how spatial governance systems shape climate adaptation for housing in critical coastal zones. Using a global snapshot of comparable coastal urban contexts, it highlights recurring challenges in translating climate risk knowledge and policy ambitions into spatial and social outcomes, particularly under conditions of rising housing demand and constrained urban land. Within this broader international context, Dublin is presented as a prospective research site through which to explore how Ireland's national adaptation frameworks and planning objectives are beginning to engage with these tensions in practice. The paper identifies opportunities related to policy coordination, institutional capacity, and socio-spatial equity, and establishes a conceptual and analytical foundation for subsequent empirical research on enabling climate-resilient and just housing through integrated spatial governance in coastal urban areas.

## BIOGRAPHY:

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**Kritika Singhal** (ksinghal@tcd.ie) is a second-year PhD researcher at Trinity College Dublin, Ireland, and a Trinity Research Doctoral Award (TRDA) holder on the interdisciplinary ASHA (Achieving Sustainable Housing Affordability) project. Her research sits at the intersection of geography, law, and engineering, with a focus on climate-resilient housing and spatial governance. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Architecture from DCRUST, India, and a Master's degree in Sustainable Urban Design from Lund University, Sweden. She has a diverse portfolio of professional experience across the built environment, urban research, and humanitarian sector, with work spanning Asia, Africa, and Europe.

# SESSION 06

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## SITUATED / DEPICTION

CHAIR: GARY A. BOYD

**CLOSE ENCOUNTERS** - Mapping  
Conversations with Nonhumans in the  
Urban Landscapes of Karlsruhe

**Miguel Paredes Maldonado**

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**ZONES OF INTEREST:** Cormac McCarthy's  
ficto-critical landscapes through  
Research by Design

**Kieran Cremin**

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**TESTING GROUND (2025)**

**Henrietta Williams  
and Merijn Royaards**

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*Karlsruhe Open Data map: Human activities (waste disposal, public toilets, rental cycle networks, playgrounds) + iNaturalist historic logs of flora and fauna (by taxon)*

# CLOSE ENCOUNTERS

## - Mapping Conversations with Nonhumans in the Urban Landscapes of Karlsruhe

**Miguel Paredes Maldonado**

*University of Edinburgh*

Close Encounters is a collection of data-driven design-research works comprising visual cartographies, immersive video and an audio soundtrack. It presents an intimate re-mapping of sixteen interstitial urban landscapes in Karlsruhe (Germany), charting the heterogeneous, shifting relationships between their human and nonhuman

inhabitants: animals, plants and 'things' alike.

The project 'hacks' the technical platforms of embedded digital urban sensing, appropriating their tools and methods to explore, register, and mediate coexistence, simultaneity, and entanglement across visible and invisible domains of urban life.

This is achieved through a small, inconspicuous DIY digital sensing device. A sentient computational object, it surveys the fringes of small natural spaces in the city, tuning in to nonhuman existence by capturing visual, sonic, and environmental data streams that lie outside the ranges of human attention and perception. Using a custom digital workflow, its data-based perspectives of the city are mapped into a large-format visual 'atlas' describing potential sites of entanglement and interaction between natural and social life in Karlsruhe. A collection of twenty short videos collates the time-based visual and sonic stimuli recorded by the device through its short-range microphone and thermal camera.

Close Encounters extends the production of spatialised urban knowledge beyond the normative, anthropocentric sensory field, exploring how nonhuman modalities of knowledge can be rendered visible and activated within the public urban landscape. It unfolds a radically reoriented urban field in which the perspectives of plants, animals, and objects exist on an ontological footing equal to that of people in the city.

## BIOGRAPHY:

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**Miguel Paredes Maldonado** is Head of the Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, University of Edinburgh. He is also a Senior Lecturer in Architectural Design, a chartered architect, and a partner in the award-winning research and design studio Cuartoymitad Architecture & Landscape. He is Visiting Professor at the Beijing Institute of Technology, and has held visiting positions at Karlsruher Institut für Technologie, Università degli Studi di Cagliari, the Frank Lloyd Wright School of Architecture, and Technische Universität Graz. Miguel's research is articulated through writing, speculative design, and architectural practice. He explores the intersections of digital computation, urban public space, and contemporary design theory. His work has been published and exhibited internationally, most notably at the 11th and 16th editions of the Venice Biennale.



Kieran Cremin, **The Head** (2023–24) installed in Minto House, Edinburgh, 2025. Porcelain model. Image from author.

## ZONES OF INTEREST:

Cormac McCarthy's ficto-critical landscapes through Research by Design

### Kieran Cremin

*University College Cork / Cork Centre for Architectural Education*

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This proposal presents an exhibition of design research on the landscapes of Cormac McCarthy's 1985 novel *Blood Meridian*, or *The Evening Redness in the West*. The exhibition will be staged as an itinerary of an 'Architecture by Design' doctoral study, which translates *Blood Meridian* into a series of speculative research artefacts that explore the novel's distinctive description of a critical zone: the American borderlands.

Operating in the methodological role of a tracker, the study imagines the novel as a paracartographic surface marked with traces and remainders that provide rich material for examining McCarthy's vision of landscape. Specifically, this 'by Design' research carefully examines literary and topographical descriptions – tilling for clues in the naming of chapters, the phonologies of place-names, and the archetypal characters of the novel. The research 'draws out' from McCarthy's writing, moving between textual and visual registers to form a series of designed research objects with which to think about both landscape and violence. The exhibition will comprise the material register formed during this process: architectural drawings, matter-collages, and live research objects including The Raft (a fragmented large-scale installation), paper-cast Death Masks, a proto-architectural Bath House, culminating with The Head, a porcelain sculpture that binds McCarthy's fictional characterisations to a material history of colonial extraction.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Kieran Cremin** is a Lecturer in Architecture at Cork Centre for Architectural Education. He earned his PhD in 'Architecture by Design' at the University of Edinburgh under Prof Mark Dorrian and Adrian Hawker, for research examining Cormac McCarthy's enigmatic 1985 novel *Blood Meridian* as a para-cartographic site, tilling both text and landscape for clues that unlock exploration of the novel's spaces. Kieran's research garnered him a National University of Ireland Traveling Doctoral Studentship in 2020, and a bi-institutional Fulbright Student Scholarship to Texas State University and Cornell University in 2021.



# Testing Ground (2025)

**Henrietta Williams  
and Merijn Royaards**

*Bartlett School of Architecture*

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*Testing Ground (2025)* functions as a spatial essay using visual, sonic and haptic means to investigate how conflict and violence translate across time and space to impact upon our contemporary lived experience of the city. Central to the work is the activation of historic and contemporary aerial surveillance materials gathered from British Army and police helicopters. These violent visual images are challenged by field recordings – visual and sonic – gathered at ground level.

The project is composed of various elements. These include: **Screen 1 – Belfast** – Video footage has been gathered from a repository of material donated by the British Army to the Imperial War Museum Film Archive. This research activates archival materials from the 1990s that were originally made as British Army training videos and documentation of operations in Northern Ireland. This material is not in the public domain. **Screen 2 – London looking up**– Field recordings have been gathered at ground level by Henrietta Williams and Merijn Royaards to document the presence of police aerial surveillance helicopters over London. **Screen 3 – London looking down** – Materials have been drawn from the operational archive of the National Police Air Service team based at Redhill. The team are requested for support with ground level policing operations across London and use aerial surveillance helicopters equipped with advanced mapping software and a series of cameras that use live feed, thermal imagery, and night vision. **Spatial sound installation** – Sonic materials have been drawn from the archival materials activated in the work and from a series of field recordings made at ground level. Testing Ground (2025) draws together these materials to form an installation that operates across visual, sonic and haptic registers. Surrounded by an arc of images, the viewer becomes both the watcher and the watched.

The installation develops an understanding that aerial systems, in use over London in this current moment, have a direct correlation to the technologies used by British Army helicopter surveillance teams over Belfast in the 1990s. Through a visual and sonic interplay, the violence of helicopters operating across time and space is interrupted with the embodied presence of an individual at ground level. The view from above is troubled through this ground level disruption – the power of the aerial gaze is dismantled and disorientated.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Henrietta Williams** (b. 1982) is a visual urbanist based at the Bartlett School of Architecture UCL. Her work takes the form of moving image and photographic installations, writing, walking and performance. These methods are often used as ways to ask questions about how our cities are formed through conflict and how the security and surveillance of the built environment change our lived experience.

Henri is a Lecturer (teaching) at the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. She is a core tutor on the MA Situated Practice and tutors across a number of programs with a particular focus on critical film making methodologies. She has recently an LAHP funded PhD by Design, also at the Bartlett, making short films and moving image installations alongside a written thesis.

Henri has exhibited work internationally including at the Het Nieuwe Instituut, the Golden Thread Gallery Belfast, the Mies van der Rohe Institute, the V&A, and the Architectural Association. She has presented her research through Open City Documentary Festival, Modern Art Oxford, the Royal College of Art, and the Bauhaus. Her project ‘The Secret Security Guard’ was featured on the front page of the Guardian newspaper and she has presented the ‘Ring of Steel’ project on a number

of international television programs and the BBC Culture Show. She lives in South London with her partner and 3 young children.

**Merijn Royaard** is a sound designer, composer, artist-researcher and drummer with degrees in Music, Fine Art, Urban Design and Architecture and currently work as a lecturer at the Bartlett School of Architecture and as a freelance sound designer and spatial audio/ music producer. I have 25 years of experience teaching drums and percussion, music technology and production in schools and privately. My professional practice includes sound design, mixing and mastering for podcasts (BBC, Yarn Productions) and a variety of independent essay films and art projects. As Artistic director of Sonic Sphere, I have provided custom spatial mixes for work by The xx, Steve Reich, Yaeji, Carl Craig, and many others, and I continue to act as lead sound designer, audio-visual designer and composer for the same project. I'm currently based in London with studios in Lambeth and Holloway.

# SESSION 07

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## ALIGNMENTS / TERRESTRIAL

CHAIR: DENIS LINEHAN

### **WE HAVE NEVER BEEN SIRIAN:**

Measurement uncertainties  
in the Critical Zone

**Maciej Stasiowski and Gül Kaçmaz Erk**

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### **ANCIENT ALIGNMENTS:**

Architecture as Instrument

**Ella White**

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### **LANDING LIGHTLY:** Care and Friction\*

in the Public Realm as Terrestrial Ethics

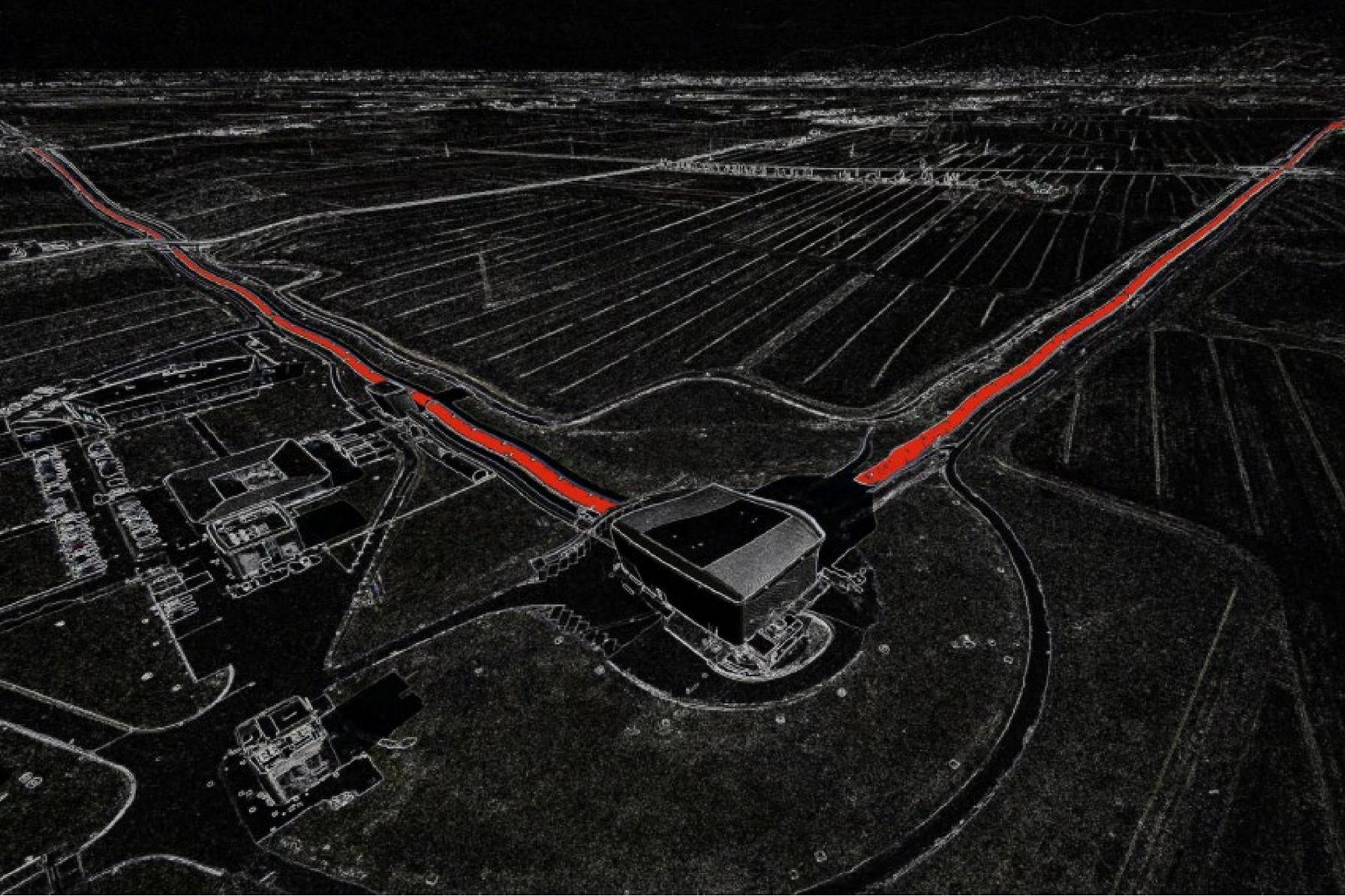
**Jenny Kingston**

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### **THE FATE OF 'TEMPORARY PARADISE':**

A dialogue between neighbours?

**Kirstin Simpson**



# **WE HAVE NEVER BEEN SIRIAN:** Measurement uncertainties in the Critical Zone

**Maciej Stasiowski and  
Gül Kaçmaz Erk**

*Queen's University Belfast*

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The critical work of reconceiving the terrestrial should not come at a cost of discarding the interstellar. Never having truly occupied a universal vantage point, we remain inherently earthbound, and our vision is deformed by terrestrial conditions whenever we stipulate truths about the universe. Among the alternative descriptions continuously pursued in physics is the problem of quantum gravity versus

quantized gravity, proposed as means of reconciling general relativity with quantum mechanics. Within this field, Claudia de Rham's theory of massive gravity advances the assumption that graviton mass „absorbs the shock of vacuum energy”, thereby straightening the universe's curvature. Remaining in line with Latour's call to re-engage with materiality, de Rham's model restores mass to a yet-undetected particle assumed to be massless.

A further operation of re-terrestrialization emerges at the level of detection practices, where hypothetical constructs are rendered perceptible through apparatuses conceived as terrestrial infrastructures, such as gravitational wave observatories (e.g. LIGO, KAGRA) and neutrino detectors (e.g. MiniBooNE). By means of design fiction, this paper examines these architectural typologies at the level of concept and representation, thereby situating them within Latour's critical zone – at once, exposed to the extreme conditions of an increasingly unstable planet and fine-tuned for maximal measurement exactitude despite operating within a chaotic complex system.

Drawing on de Rham's massive gravity postulate, as well as Freeman Dyson's thought experiment concerning the conditions necessary for graviton discovery (involving sensitivity thresholds and background noise levels), this critical speculative project for a graviton detection laboratory answers Latour's call for alternative description methods. Unbuildable architectural proposals function here as artistic-critical tools for the evaluation of alternatives to contemporary observational practices, enabling a cultural metareflection on the supposedly neutral perspective contested in *Down to Earth* (2018). In

particular, the emphasis is put on the conceptual intricacies of minute, error-sensitive designs; the contingencies and limits of particle detection; and the strategies of noise mitigation and compensation.

Just as massive gravity challenges idealized assumptions of masslessness, the speculative laboratory challenges cosmological measurement practices that presuppose a gravity-neutral vantage point. Operating through purposeful exaggeration, the accompanying artistic-critical methodology deploys unbuildable architectural design framework as a visual thought experiment to test the limits of terrestrial orientation in contemporary cosmological measurement. By embedding planetary instability (seismic noise, climate variability) into its spatial and operational logic, the project makes calibration drift, contingency, and entanglement legible as constitutive to the apparatus rather than aberrant.

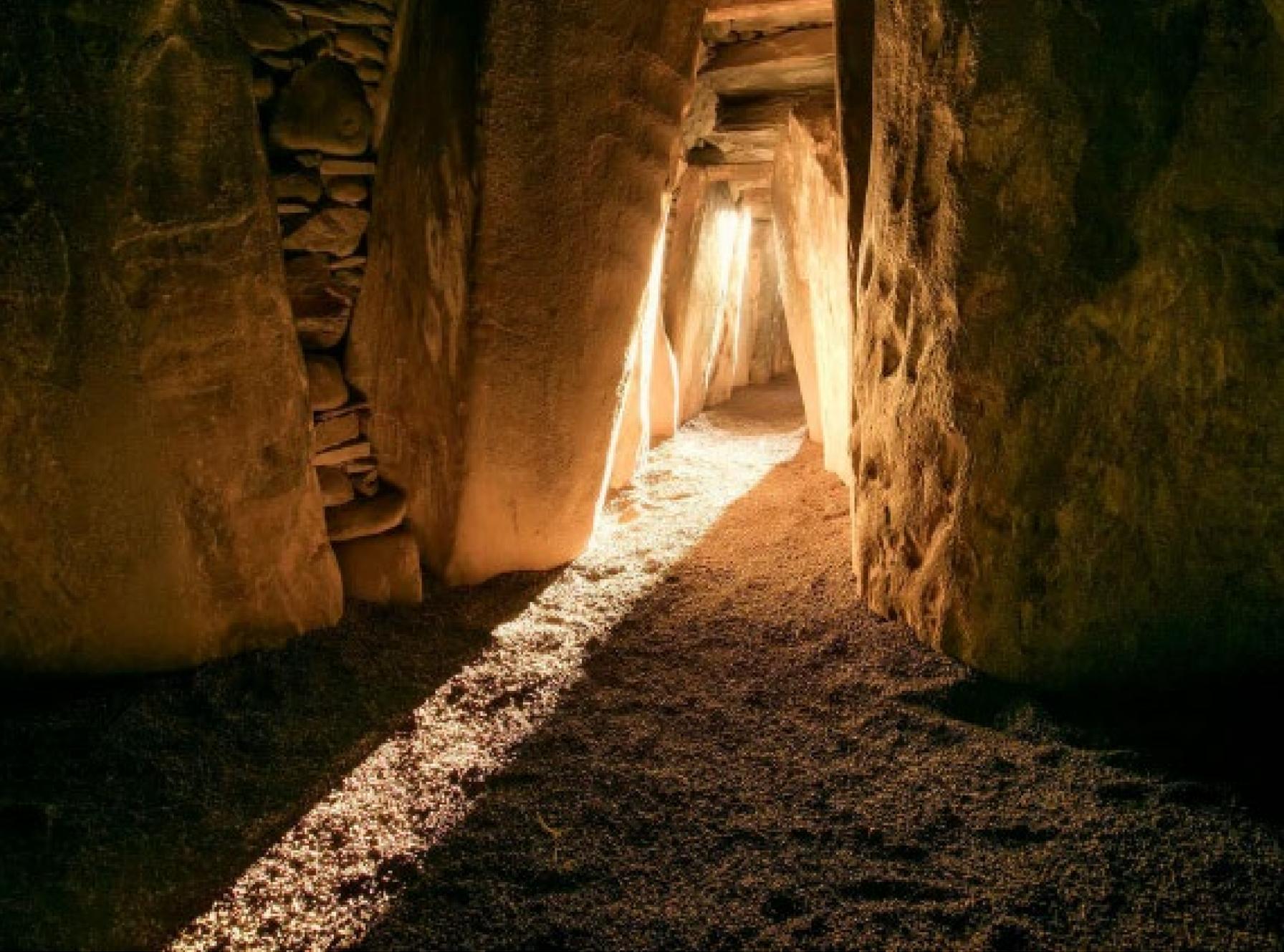
## BIOGRAPHIES

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**Maciej Stasiowski:** Visiting Scholar, School of Natural and Built Environment, Queen's University Belfast. Dr Stasiowski is a graduate in film and media studies at the Institute of AudioVisual Arts at the Jagiellonian University's Faculty of Management and Social Communication (Cracow, Poland), at present conducting research as a Visiting Scholar at the QUB. He is the author of the books *Anarchitectural Experiments: When Unbuilt Designs Turn to Film* (Intellect Books, 2023) and *Atlas of all Things Inconstant: Strategies, structures and metafictional devices in the works of Peter Greenaway* (Nomos, 2014), alongside articles on literary utopias and construction of filmic space.

**Gul Kacmaz Erk:** Senior Lecturer, School of Natural and Built Environment, Queen's University Belfast. The Subject Lead for

Architecture and Planning, and Senior Lecturer at Queen's University Belfast in Northern Ireland, UK, conducting interdisciplinary research at the intersection of architecture and cinema. She received her BArch and MArch degrees at Middle East Technical University, and PhD degree at Istanbul Technical University in Turkiye. Using film as a representation of urban space and/or architectural space, Dr. Kacmaz Erk studies the relationship between the two disciplines to better evaluate and interact with the built environment and urban landscapes.



*Tourism Ireland (2021) Newgrange, County. Meath*

# ANCIENT ALIGNMENTS: Architecture as Instrument

**Ella White**

*Cotter & Naessens Architects*

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Just before dawn on the winter solstice, Newgrange is cloaked in darkness. Outside the dawn begins to break, but deep within the passage nothing stirs; the stones wait in silence, as they have for millennia. Then, almost suddenly a thin thread of gold pierces the roof box growing, bolder and brighter until it finally spills into the central chamber. For those few minutes, the place feels alive — as though the ancient myths are rising from the stone, and our forebears are dancing on the ground once more.

This yearly event is often framed through a contemporary lens of mysticism. However, such

alignments were historically neither symbolic curiosities nor esoteric gestures; they were instruments of environmental calibration. The precision of Newgrange exemplifies how prehistoric architectures operated as epistemic tools—devices that enabled communities to track celestial cycles, anticipate terrestrial conditions, and synchronise daily life with seasonal and agricultural rhythms. In this sense, ancient architecture functioned as an active interface with what modern Earth sciences call the Critical Zone: the thin, fragile layer of soil, air, water, and life upon which human survival depends. By contrast, contemporary architectural practice is increasingly characterised by disconnection—a technological and cultural distancing from the very systems with which earlier structures were designed to be in dialogue. Buildings now tend to buffer, neutralise, or conceal the dynamics of the Critical Zone rather than reveal them. This shift has produced a built environment that protects us from the earth rather than keeps us in tune with it, reinforcing a detachment that obscures the climatic and ecological signals once legible through architectural form.

This paper argues that re-engaging with ancient alignment practices offers more than historical curiosity; it provides a conceptual framework for rethinking architecture's relationship to the terrestrial. By analysing Newgrange and other ancient sites as case studies in cosmological engineering, the paper proposes that the cosmic orientations of the past can help contemporary designers recover a mode of architectural thinking capable of mediating between planetary processes and human habitation. In returning to these principles—not as romantic myth but as sophisticated environmental

knowledge—we may begin to develop architectural strategies that facilitate renewed connection with the Critical Zone, fostering forms of dwelling grounded in ecological awareness and reciprocity.

## **BIOGRAPHY:**

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**Ella White** is an architectural graduate working in professional practice at Cotter & Naessens Architects in Cork. She completed her degree in architecture in 2024 and subsequently spent a year in the United States, where she engaged with architectural discourse, research-led practice, and interdisciplinary exchange. Alongside practice, her independent research explores architecture, cosmology, and spatial experience. She recently participated in the EU-funded COST Action conference “Architectural Ambiances” while in the United States.



*The Seven Sisters Trees at Page Green, c.1818. Engraving from a drawing by H. C. Fields.  
From the collections and © Bruce Castle Museum and Archive*

# **LANDING LIGHTLY:** Care and Friction\* in the Public Realm as Terrestrial Ethics

**Jenny Kingston**

*University of Westminster, muf architecture/art*

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This paper examines public realm architecture as a terrestrial practice operating within what Bruno Latour has termed the Critical Zone: the fragile, inhabited layer of the earth where ecological, political, and social processes are inseparably entangled. Drawing on the completed public realm project Page Green Common in Tottenham, London, commissioned directly by Haringey Council and designed by muf architecture/art, the paper argues that architectural value in the Critical Zone emerges not from consensus or resolution, but from practices of care and friction.

Page Green Common is a small, materially modest intervention, yet socially dense. Its design process involved sustained negotiation between residents, council officers, and the architect, surfacing competing desires around safety, openness, calm, and activity. Rather than smoothing these tensions into a single narrative or formal solution, the project held conflict open as a productive condition. Design became a form of relational maintenance, attending to attachments, disagreements, and the long-term inhabitation of the site.

The paper situates this approach within Latour's call to "land" rather than to operate from abstract global positions. It proposes that public realm architecture is a critical site where terrestrial politics are lived daily, and where architects must relinquish claims to mastery, permanence, or universal applicability. Instead, architectural practice is framed as temporary custodianship within a civic ecology.

A central contribution of the paper is its articulation of withdrawal as a terrestrial ethics. Post-completion, muf's deliberate stepping back from Page Green Common is understood not as abandonment, but as an act of care that enables residents and local authorities to assume ownership and stewardship. The architect's absence becomes a condition for civic presence.

By focusing on a single, situated project, the paper resists scalable solutions and instead offers Page Green Common as a microcosm of Critical Zone practice. It argues that architecture, when grounded in care and friction, can support forms of shared life that are durable precisely because they remain unresolved.

★ The pairing of “care and friction” is used here as an interpretive lens derived from Bruno Latour’s reorientation of critique toward practices of care and attachment. Latour argues that political and ecological life in the contemporary condition emerges not through abstract consensus or universal solutions, but through situated attachments, resistance, and ongoing negotiation. (Latour 2004; 2017; 2018).

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Jenny Kingston** is an associate architect at muf architecture/art, whose work operates at the intersection of architecture, landscape, and the public realm. Her practice and research focus on co-design methodologies, participatory processes, and socially engaged approaches to urban transformation. She is currently contributing to public realm projects in rapidly changing areas of London, including social housing in Hackney, a Ruskinian-informed landscape in East Croydon, and a High Street regeneration in Haringey. Alongside practice, she is an early career researcher and tutor at the University of Westminster, where she leads a first-year design studio. She also serves on the Islington Design Review Panel.



*Border Wall between Tijuana and San Diego*

# The Fate of 'Temporary Paradise': A dialogue between neighbours?

**Kirstin Simpson**

*South East Technological University*

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The implicate order, according to quantum physicist David Bohm, refers to a deep, more fundamental level of reality, where everything is interconnected. The explicit order, by contrast, is the unfolded reality that we experience in our daily lives.

Playas de Tijuana, the most north-westerly city in Mexico, represents a boundary between two traditions in terms of culture, language and politics. Not far from the beach, is 'Friendship Park' inaugurated in the 1970's under the Nixon

administration, at the time, symbolising ‘brotherhood and cooperation between the two nations. However, in more recent times, the US Department of Homeland Security made the decision to construct a dividing fence that cuts through the space, diving unapologetically into the Pacific Ocean and making the space accessible only from the Mexican side.’ 2024 marked the 50th anniversary of a project sponsored by the City Planning Commission of San Diego. Kevin Lynch and Donald Appelyard ‘envisioned a regional plan for the integration of both cities, an initiative they called ‘Temporary Paradise.’ Vitality, they stated, comes from the interchange between two cultures when they communicate with each other. The intervening years has seen deepening political division and a population explosion in Tijuana for a number of reasons, the most recent being that of becoming a ‘filter point’ for those wishing to enter the US from different regions and countries. Thus, the emergence of informal settlements, especially in Los Laureles Canyon, an area heretofore deemed inhospitable to human settlement and its associated environmental issues.

The consequent poverty and unsavoury living conditions have become the focus of a number of architectural practices, such as Estudio Teddy Cruz with Fonna Forman and Oscar Romo. Unlike in other South American cities, there is currently no state-sponsored programme for development within informal settlement here.

This paper will use Tijuana as a vehicle to explore, on one hand, the interdependence of territories despite, or in addition to, political borders, the relationship between the formal and informal urbanism on the other, and the positioning of architectural practise within the formal and its potential to expand and become a catalyst within the informal.

## BRIEF BIO:

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**Kirstin Simpson** is a lecturer in the Architecture Department at SETU, hold a BArch degree from UCD, Dublin, an MA from NCAD, Dublin and is a PhD candidate at Queens University Belfast.

Her research is in addressing the necessary reshaping of architectural practice and education to respond to global issues such as informal urbanism and finance capitalism.

# SESSION 08

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## PEDAGOGY / DISCONNECTED

CHAIR: TIMOTHY STOTT

### EDUCATING WITHIN CRITICAL ZONES

**Idis Turato, Mia Roth-Čerina, Krešimir Borošak, Matej Orkić**

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### CRITICAL SPATIAL PRACTICES:

Situated Environmental Knowledge

**Kateřina Krebsová**

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### REHEARSING PUBLIC SPACE

on Bordeaux's Ring Road Fringe

**Hocine Aliouane-Shaw**

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### FROM TECHNOLOGY TO CITIZEN

**PARTICIPATION:** Addressing Climate Change through Dundrum by Design

**Chiara Cocco, Nathalie Weadick, Miriam Victoria Fernandez Lins, Miruna Popa, Carla Fidecaro**



*Image: The first edition of the KM3 studio (left) exhibited at Pratt Institute during the AHRA conference Climate Collectivism in 2022, photo: Mia Roth-Čerina*

# EDUCATING WITHIN CRITICAL ZONES

**Idis Turato, Mia Roth-Čerina,  
Krešimir Borošak, Matej Orkić**

*University of Zagreb, studio roth&čerina*

This paper explores shifts in architectural education brought about by societal transformation and climate urgency, demanding a rethink of not only the content and process through which we teach, but addresses a radical turn in understanding what is traditionally considered architectural practice. It is illustrated by an example of a master design studio at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb, mentored by Idis Turato, which aims to expand architectural education beyond knowledge toward

relational, ethical, and collaborative capacities.

The master design studio KM3: Critical Zones took place during five consecutive years in a displaced setting of an art gallery managed by the Museum of Contemporary Art, the Richter Collection. It was developed as an experimental pedagogical and design-driven-research format positioning architecture within the new climatic regime and related transformations in how students are asked to think, conceptualize and represent. Initially departing from the theoretical and curatorial premises of “Critical Zones – The Science and Politics of Landing on Earth” (Latour, Weibel), the studio evolved as a free space for researching how architectural thinking can move from object toward relations, processes and territorial interdependencies shaping fragile terrestrial systems.

In their research and design work, students have identified critical zones as spatially, ecologically, socially or infrastructurally specific fragments which they then took as polygons for testing architectural hypotheses. These zones were not understood as isolated locations, but rather as interdependent and interconnected parts of a larger, heterogeneous complex. In the first edition, their speculative graphic connection produced a speculative map which did not represent a territory in the cartographic sense, but rather a multilayered structure of relationships between living and non-living actors, material flows, climatic processes and social practices, referencing the approach of Terra-Forma (Aït-Touati, Arènes, Grégoire).

In the following editions, the modes of representation and exhibiting the work evolved in dialogue with the gallery space which housed the studio. Instead of standard architectural drawings, the results were

presented through immersive spatial installations occupying the gallery, where the exhibition itself became an active tool for research, dialogue and positioning. This format enabled a conversation on architecture as a practice which does not “address” planetary issues, but rather aims at staying with the trouble, developing sensitivities, and operating within Earth’s critical zones.

The KM3 studio thus opens a broader discussion on architectural education as a form of collective learning which embraces uncertainty, fragmentation and the unknown as the necessary conditions for new understandings of architectural responsibility and practice in the age of terrestrial crisis.

## BIOGRAPHIES:

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**Idis Turato**, PhD, is a Croatian architect and professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb. He is a partner in the studio MataijaxSipinaxTurato, recently awarded by the Zagreb Salon of Architecture for the project Reconstruction of Vitić: A Palimpsest of Authenticity Interpretations. As part of teams, he has represented Croatia in three editions of the Venice Architecture Biennale. He developed the KM3 studio in 2021, exploring new directions in architectural education. The inaugural year was presented at Pratt Institute and TU Delft in 2022.

**Mia Roth-Čerina**, PhD, is a Croatian architect and professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb. She is a partner in the studio roth&čerina which recently curated the Croatian Pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale. She is currently vice-president of the European Association for Architectural Education. In the context of the KM3 studio, she has been a guest critic of all five editions and a continued conversationalist on the topic and direction of its content and format.

**Krešimir Borošak** and **Matej Orkić** are recent graduates of the Faculty of Architecture, University of Zagreb, and were both students of the KM3 studio. Their student work was recognized in awards and

exhibitions. Krešimir continues his practice in architectural and artistic experimentation through exhibitions and workshops. Matej practices architectural design with a particular interest in shaping spatial relations with biogenic elements, and is an avid gardener.



# Critical Spatial Practices: Situated Environmental Knowledge

**Kateřina Křebsov**

*Academy of Arts Architecture and Design in Prague*

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Proposed paper is part of an ongoing PhD research project titled Critical Practices in Architecture, which investigates contemporary architectural initiatives expanding the traditionally defined boundaries of the field. Rather than working through commission-based processes (embedded in professional organizations), these practices develop their own briefs and modes of operation. They respond to environmental and social challenges by approaching architecture as an interdisciplinary, socially engaged, and process-oriented practice.

The research is situated within the framework of the environmental history of architecture, that highlights architecture's deep entanglement with extractivist systems and social injustices, while enabling a broader understanding of the global environmental crises shaping contemporary practice. At the same time, the research is grounded in a Central European context, addressing region-specific historical, political, and ecological conditions.

Methodologically, the research relies primarily on qualitative approaches, particularly in-depth interviews with selected practitioners. These interviews trace the development of projects over time, focusing on working methodologies, alliances with non-architectural actors, modes of collaboration, and the aesthetic and material character of their outputs.

Researched practices are divided into three groups:

- 1/ architectural investigations;
- 2/ situated environmental knowledge;
- 3/ spatial social justice.

This paper focuses on the second group—situated environmental knowledge. It examines projects that create spaces for ecological learning, dialogue, and experimentation, positioning architecture as a situated practice capable of communicating complex environmental issues through spatial and experiential means. These projects operate across physical architecture, temporary interventions, workshops, and alternative learning environments, framing architecture as an educational and mediating tool rather than solely as a building product.

In contrast to dominant sustainability paradigms focused on technological optimization, energy

efficiency, and circular materials—as anchored in European Green Deal, or building certification systems—these practices articulate alternative environmental discourses. They emphasize low-tech strategies, sensory and embodied experience, and experimental research methodologies that challenge techno-solutionist narratives.

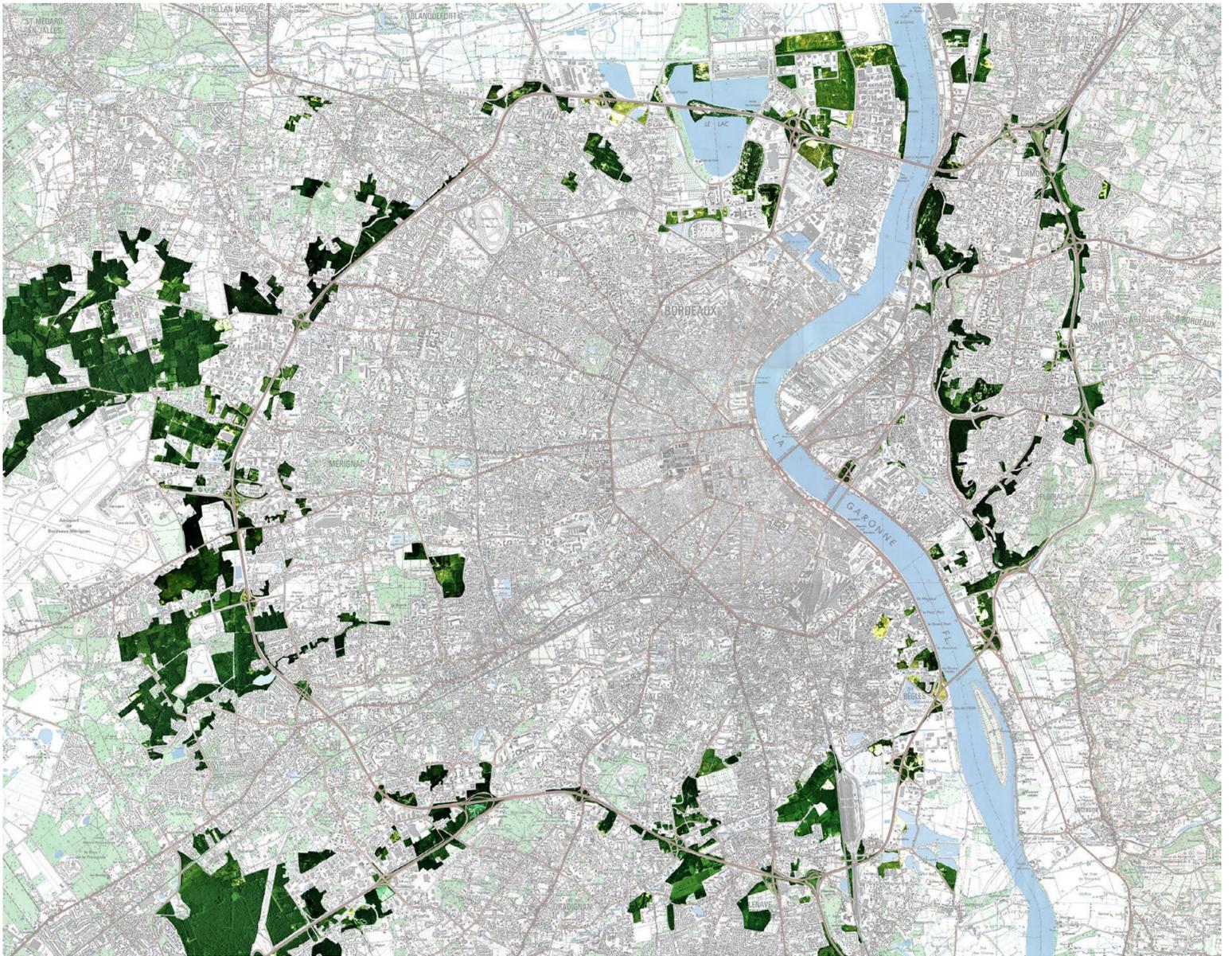
Through case studies such as Raumlabor's Floating University and Spolka's Never Never School, the paper argues that situated environmental knowledge enables locally grounded, socially inclusive, and politically conscious forms of ecological awareness. These practices demonstrate architecture as an open-ended process of learning and collective inquiry, offering critical alternatives to dominant paradigms.

Floating University by Raumlabor in October 2024,  
photo by Kateřina Krebsová

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Kateřina Krebsová** (\*1995) is an architect and researcher. Since 2022, she has been a PhD candidate at the Academy of Arts, Architecture and Design in Prague (UMPRUM), where her research focuses on critical spatial practices in contemporary architecture, addressing environmental and social issues in a Central European context. In 2023, she presented the outcomes of a research residency *Archaeology of Architectural Work* at the Czech exposition at the 23rd Venice Architecture Biennale. In 2025, she participated in the SHIFT sustainability transitions research (UMPRUM). She practices architecture at studio Amulet and is a member of the football team Random Radical.



*Map of urban leftover spaces on the outskirts of Bordeaux (1999) – **Bruit du Frigo***

# REHEARSING PUBLIC SPACE on Bordeaux's Ring Road Fringe

**Hocine Aliouane-Shaw**

*ENSAP Bordeaux / UMR PASSAGES*

This contribution draws on a long-term, practice-led inquiry developed by the Bordeaux collective Bruit du Frigo to examine how a constellation of neglected peri-urban spaces located around the metropolitan ring road—remnant parcels, infrastructural edges and vacant plots—can move from being blind spots of conventional architecture and urbanism, lacking clear stewardship, to being recognised as public facilities and publicly accessible places, under specific conditions of shared use and care.

The inquiry began in 1999 with exploratory collective

walks, route scouting and mapping, combined with site documentation to record spatial structures as well as traces of informal practices. Over the years, routes were repeatedly walked, checked on the ground and rerouted when necessary to secure continuity across infrastructural breaks and access constraints, gradually forming a metropolitan-scale network of trails connecting sites gradually opened to the public. Further collective walks and on-site cultural and artistic events sustained attention on selected sites, producing shareable representations and records that helped prefigure possible futures and made them discussable with the public at large and local institutions.

This contribution asks about the concrete mechanisms through which spaces where stewardship is effectively “suspended” become legible, negotiable and actionable over time, through bottom-up approaches. The Bordeaux case identifies a three-step sequence. First, embodied reading and practices of depiction (walking and mapping, producing visible, shareable records) establish a common descriptive frame for places that remain difficult to grasp through conventional planning. Then tactical public rehearsals—collective public events and cultural or artistic activations—temporarily open these sites, bringing in wider publics and allowing new uses to be tested in situ. Finally, institutional uptake follows: the installation of an emblematic device, the Peri-Urban Refuge (inspired by mountain refuges, designed for temporary stays), triggers negotiations with local authorities, leading to durable authorisations, new uses, and agreed conditions of use and care in some of these unscripted places, including in sensitive natural areas. Later steps include the development of the Sentier des Terres Communes, a footpath-based network, in dialogue with the wider

emergence of similar initiatives in different countries, within the Metropolitan Trails network.

Set against the conference theme “Architecture in the Critical Zone”, the contribution foregrounds frictions inherent to this process: what becomes maintainable and governable, what remains subject to dispute and negotiation, and what may be lost when open-ended situations are stabilised.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Hocine Aliouane-Shaw** is an architect and urban planner with a PhD in urban planning and development (Université Bordeaux-Montaigne). He is Associate Professor at ENSAP Bordeaux and a member of CNRS laboratory Passages. His research is grounded in action research and collaborative spatial design, developed through situated pedagogies and field-based workshops (collective walks, critical mapping, narrative and performative tools). He co-coordinates the post-master programme Re-Building the World. He is also a founding member of the transdisciplinary collective Bruit du Frigo.



*DbD Community Geodesign Workshop supported by graduate UCD students – September 27th. Photo taken by Miruna Popa*

# FROM TECHNOLOGY TO CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: Addressing Climate Change through Dundrum by Design

**Chiara Cocco, Nathalie Weadick,  
Miriam Victoria Fernandez Lins,  
Miruna Popa, Carla Fidecaro**

Technology has played a key role in integrating the climate transition with people-centred urban design processes (Cocco et al., 2025; Kavouras et al., 2025). As society becomes increasingly urbanised and digitally advanced, governments have begun blending traditional approaches to citizen engagement with tools and methods that enhance participation across

all stages in the urban design process. While built environment professionals contribute to discourses involving climate adaptation, supporting community co-design in early urban design discourses can facilitate the growth and maintenance of green, sustainable neighbourhoods (Turilazzi et al., 2021; Buijs et al., 2024). Dundrum by Design (DbD) emerges as an initiative that combines technology with diverse stakeholders and a pedagogical approach to maximise the benefits of participation in community co-design. DbD, a collaboration between University College Dublin's (UCD) School of Architecture, Planning and Environmental Policy, Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council (DLR CoCo), and the community of Dundrum, is framed within the EU-funded PROBONO project. It immerses graduate and undergraduate architecture students in climate-sensitive, real-world problem-solving with the local community. To achieve co-developed context-specific solutions for Dundrum, it prototypes Geodesign, an innovative digital tool that offers a systems-thinking approach to community issues. It also equips students with the skills needed to support workshops and promote urban discourses. These diversified approaches to creating a people-centred urban design process critically blended local knowledge, student interventions and up-to-date expert analysis. By using diverse technological tools, DbD gathered substantial results in each phase of the initiative, enhancing the data and the community's desires in the ensuing phases. The effect of this approach provides UCD and DLRCoCo with contextually sensitive ideas for developing Dundrum and data-backed simulations for addressing gaps in a just climate transition. DbDs findings have equipped the local authority with Geodesign, which has set a foundation for a comprehensive enhancement

of Dundrum. At the same time, it has provided UCD students with the necessary skills and tools, including communication, to facilitate discourses between the community and local authority. Furthermore, it has provided the community with the support needed to become active citizens in shaping their town. The findings also align with broader frameworks such as the Town Centre First Policy in Ireland and the New European Bauhaus. DbD's results provide other institutions with a scalable and adaptable structure to address divisions within their own towns, cities and administrative boundaries.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Nathalie Weadick** HonRIBA is an independent curator whose work spans Ireland, North America, Britain, Europe and Asia. Her practice explores the political, social and cultural dimensions of art and architecture. She is a Design Fellow at the School of Architecture, University College Dublin, and an occasional lecturer in the School of Cultural Policy. From 2007–2023 she was Director of the Irish Architecture Foundation, having previously served as Deputy Director of the Architecture Foundation London and Director of the Butler Gallery, Kilkenny. She recently completed a joint doctorate with Queen's University Belfast and RMIT Australia, and is co-curating a forthcoming 2027 RHA exhibition by Forerunner.

**Miruna Popa** is a graduate of UCD's Master of Architecture, Urbanism and Climate Action, where she earned first-class honours following her passions in spatial justice and nature-based solutions. She has worked as a research assistant at UCD on the Dundrum by Design initiative, a three-way partnership framed within the EU Horizon Probono project, utilising Geodesign and technology to involve local stakeholders in co-designing Dundrum during participatory planning activities. Her research interests include local actor empowerment and generating data-backed, context- and climate-sensitive solutions in early urban design discourses to foster long-term innovation in Irish planning processes.

**Miriam Lins** is a PhD Candidate at UCD funded by the EU-Project PROBONO, in which she leads activities related to digital tools for engagement and capacity building activities. She began her PhD research in May 2022 under the supervision of Dr Philip Crowe (APEP) and the co-supervision of Dr Margaret Samahita (School of Economics). Miriam has an Architecture background and holds an MSc in Urbanism, having 7 years of experience as a lecturer in Brazil. Her research explores how the integration of co-design experiences into architectural education can help equip students for the climate transition.

**Dr Chiara Cocco**, Assistant Professor in Digital Technologies and Environmental Design at UCD, whose research centres on Geodesign, participatory design and planning using digital tools and GIS, citizen science, serious games, and socially engaged architecture. Her expertise includes the development of geodesign methods and tools for urban transformation and climate adaptation, and the integration of these approaches within higher education and research contexts.

**Carla Fidecaro** completed their BS and MS in Architecture in Switzerland. They worked as a registered architect in Switzerland and in the UK, finally moving to Dublin to complete an MS in Architecture, Urbanism & Climate Action, through which they approached the relationship between research and policy making for the built environment. Since May 2025, Carla's research has been focusing both on whole-building life-cycle assessments and community engagement through GIS tools.

# SESSION 09

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## PHILOSOPHY / CRITICAL ZONES

CHAIR: ADRIAN FAVELL

### **NIHILISM AND THE MODERN**

**METROPOLIS:** The Emergence  
of Posthuman Agency

**Amir Shahhosseini Angas**

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### **AFTER “CRITICAL ARCHITECTURE”:**

Heteronomy, History and Weak Critique  
in the Anthropocene

**Mark Collett**

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### **ARCHITECTURAL AESTHETICS,**

Disconnection and the Terrestrial

**Pia Runge**

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### **CONTRARIAN SPATIAL PRACTICES:**

Transformative Agency Applied to Scalable  
Technology Humanitarian Challenges

**Saul M Golden**



*Metropolis by Fritz Lang (1927) – IMDB.com*

# NIHILISM AND THE MODERN METROPOLIS: The Emergence of Posthuman Agency

**Amir Shahhosseini Angas**

*Department of philosophy, University College Cork*

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The modern metropolis constitutes a spatial and existential terrain in which the subject becomes fundamentally disorientated. As Simmel argues (2016), the intensification of metropolitan stimuli fragments perception, overwhelms interpretive capacities, and erodes the individual's ability to locate meaning within the systems modernity itself has produced. This disorientation is amplified by architectural modernism, whose universalising

ambitions and abstract formal strategies externalise rationality into the built environment. For Cacciari (1993), such environments produce an urban order that no longer requires the humanist subject it once presupposed. The result is a nihilistic condition: a city in which symbolic depth collapses, values lose coherence, and meaning becomes suspended within a field of relentless circulation.

This paper argues that the nihilistic metropolis must be understood as a terrestrial condition rather than a purely cultural or psychological one. The urban environment functions not as a neutral backdrop but as an active, material assemblage in which infrastructures, technologies, atmospheres, and bodies continuously interact. In this sense, the metropolis resembles Latour's notion of the terrestrial – not an abstract “Earth” viewed from above, but the dense, situated ground of entanglements through which life is organized and constrained. Within this terrain, subjectivity is no longer sovereign but becomes redistributed across spatial and material processes that exceed intentional control.

Drawing on posthuman theory, particularly Braidotti's critique of human exceptionalism (Braidotti, 2019) and Barad's concept of agential intra-action (Barad, 2003), the paper proposes that posthuman agency emerges from within this terrestrial entanglement. Rather than positing agency as an attribute of autonomous individuals, it is understood as a dynamic, circulating force shaped by urban infrastructures, material rhythms, and environmental intensities. Nihilism thus reveals not the absence of agency but its transformation: from a centred human property to a relational capacity embedded within the city's heterogeneous field.

By reframing the modern metropolis as a nihilistic and terrestrial condition, the paper contributes to contemporary debates in architectural theory and urban philosophy. It demonstrates how disorientation, far from being a mere symptom of crisis, exposes the deeper reconfiguration of subjectivity in a world where human and nonhuman forces co-produce the rhythms, limits, and possibilities of urban existence.

## BIOGRAPHY:

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**Amir Shahhosseini Angas** is a full-time researcher and a PhD student at the department of philosophy, at University College Cork, working at the intersection of architectural theory, phenomenology, and critical urban studies. Holding BA and MA degrees in Architecture, he examines how modernity, sensory experience, and the built environment shape forms of subjectivity. His doctoral project, *Merleau-Ponty and Pallasmaa: Bodily Experience in the Architectural Phenomenology of Blindness*, critiques ocularcentrism and explores multisensory spatial perception. His broader work engages nihilism, posthuman agency, feminist epistemologies, and the philosophical conditions of contemporary metropolitan life.



*Morris, J. 2003. Butabu: Adobe Architecture of West Africa.  
New York, NY: Princeton University Press*

# **AFTER “CRITICAL ARCHITECTURE”: Heteronomy, History and Weak Critique in the Anthropocene**

**Mark Collett**

*Head of research, Adjaye Associates*

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This paper asks what, if anything, criticality can mean for architecture under Anthropocene conditions, given that architecture is, by definition, the most heteronomously determined of the arts. Starting from Adorno and Tafuri, I take seriously the claim that strong, autonomous “critical architecture” is structurally impossible. Bound to land, finance,

regulation and use, architecture lacks the distance that underwrote the classic model of aesthetic critique. I briefly situate this against the discipline's own attempts to rescue criticality – from Frampton's "critical regionalism" to the formalist "critical architecture" of the 1980s–90s – and argue that, under the new climate regime, these projects are historically instructive but exhausted.

The paper then turns to the Latourian frame that animates the conference. Latour's move from "the globe" to patchy "critical zones", and from God's-eye modernity to situated terrestrial entanglements, is treated as a genuine advance for architectural thinking. Equally, his critique of "critique" as lazy debunking is acknowledged. However, drawing on Andreas Malm and Achille Mbembe, I argue that a purely compositional, network-oriented understanding of the "critical zone" obscures the antagonisms that actually structure the Anthropocene. A viable architectural response must therefore retain a sharpened, adversarial sense of critique capable of naming culprits and contradictions rather than dissolving them into undifferentiated actor-networks.

Against both Latourian composition-without-enemies and Tafurian "no exit", I propose a weakened, immanent form of criticality appropriate to architecture's structural unfreedom. Here "critique" names the capacity of architectural practice to register, intensify or de-intensify, and partially reconfigure the socio-ecological antagonisms of specific sites. The core of the paper works this out through vernacular architectures in Africa and Ireland, understood neither as pre-modern idylls nor as mere stylistic reservoirs, but as historically damaged archives of terrestrial intelligence. Read through

Benjamin's schwache messianische Kraft and Bloch's Noch-Nicht, African compounds and Irish clachans appear as fragments in which other ways of living on and from land flicker within histories of scarcity, landlordism, colonial extraction and ecological damage.

The place of critique within architectural practice is here imagined as a form of solder, through which Tafuri's negative knowledge of heteronomy, Latour's geophysical concreteness, Malm's and Mbembe's antagonistic mapping, and the utopian surplus of vernacular forms may be deployed as fragile but operative joints within actually commissioned projects. Architecture in the critical zone cannot redeem the climate crisis, but can still, in situated ways, reduce emissions and unequal exposure while making the histories and alternatives sedimented in vernacular terrains legible, permitting weak, terrestrial glimmers of another way of living on and from the Earth to break into light.

## BIOGRAPHY:

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**Mark Collett** is Global Head of Research at *Adjaye Associates*.



*Title of the Photo: Terrestrial Shelter Source: Joshua Delissen Photography*

# ARCHITECTURAL AESTHETICS, Disconnection and the Terrestrial

**Pia Runge**

*German Environment Agency*

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Based on Michel Foucault's understanding of architecture as a structure of power, knowledge and dispositives, 'Architectural aesthetics, Disconnection and the Terrestrial' examines how architecture, space and aesthetics have contributed to the disconnection from the terrestrial – and how it can be rethought in the face of planetary boundaries. Foucault understands architecture not merely as an aesthetic object, but as a politically effective arrangement

that shapes perception and behaviour (Foucault, 1993). Regarding Bruno Latour's concept of the terrestrial, which understands humans as embedded in finite, vulnerable living conditions, it seems that architecture systematically positions humans as external observers, seeking shelter within hermetic building envelopes and climatic isolation that propose an aesthetic of independence. Peter Weibel understands architecture as a perceptual apparatus: what we perceive as high quality is programmed visibility. It is therefore crucial to investigate how terrestrial architecture can establish new aesthetic as spatial evidence of dependence (Weibel, 2003).

Using the stated external observer's perspective this project aims to document architecture within the existing European building stock to examine their aesthetics and whether they ensure habitability or create distance. The scope of the architecture is defined by a study conducted as part of the 2018/19 German Building Culture Report. In the municipal survey, only 15% of those questioned rated their building stock from the 1970s to the 1990s as valuable in terms of building culture (Nagler et al. 2018). The European cities of Kiel (Germany) and Rotterdam (Netherlands) are prime examples due to their high density of post-war architecture. These structures must be dealt with in the course of the EU renovation wave (EC, 2020). Does the disconnection of the aesthetics of these buildings from the terrestrial play a role in the question of acceptance and value for building culture? How can building within existing structures address both the problem of building within our planetary boundaries and the question of how to promote acceptance through aesthetics? Can architecture thus become legible in a new way – as a political practice in an age of

planetary limits? The questions are explored through photographic documentation, analysis and critical cartography of the existing buildings. Furthermore, interviews with residents of the scope architecture on aesthetics and perception as well as with experts within architecture. The aim is to investigate how architecture thus can become legible as a political practice in an age of planetary limits and define an architectural aesthetic that ensures habitability within the terrestrial.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Runge Pia**, born: 19.07.1993 in Kiel, Germany. Education: 2013-2017 – University of Applied Sciences Wismar, Bachelor of Arts in Architecture; 2015-2016 – Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University Istanbul, Erasmus Semester; 2017-2020 – Münster School of Architecture, Master of Arts in Architecture. Work Experience; 2020-2025 – LH Architects, Hamburg, project architect. 2025-present – German Environment Agency, Dessau, as a Research Assistant within the interdisciplinary research project ‘Advancing the New European Bauhaus’. Teaching Experience; 2021-2022 – Technical University Lübeck, teaching assignment, Chair of Urban Planning, 2024 – Münster School of Architecture, Impromptu Design Workshop, Guest critic at Technical University of Dresden (2025) and Münster School of Architecture (2020)



*Inequitable clash of domains: observed anthropogenic impacts on natural and built environments, Katapei, Ghana (Author)*

# **CONTRARIAN SPATIAL PRACTICES:** Transformative Agency Applied to Scalable Technology Humanitarian Challenges

**Saul M Golden**

*Belfast School of Architecture and the Built Environment, Ulster University*

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The philosopher Bourdieu defined agents' interest in what they do as a game wherein individuals learn to survive and operate within discipline-specific 'unwritten' rules – 'doxa' (2000:15) – part of power struggles within a given 'field' or

discipline. Bourdieu suggests agents (professionals in a field) can choose, through their own practical and political experience, whether to sustain their practice in support of or in opposition to their field's established norms or dogma. This paper takes Bourdieu's sociological treatise as a framework to examine architectural (read as urbanist) agency within contested practices connected to local investment, buy-in, and governance for projects deemed vital to mitigate anthropogenic global anthropogenic impacts, including climate change, on people and the environment (Gupta et al., 2025). Drawing on wider research into critical practice and the changing architecture profession, the paper focuses on connections between sustainable design, technology, and more equitable shared spaces in global urban settlements. Discussions focus on connected practices and critical frameworks drawn from selected practitioners that are referred to as contrarian in the context of contested international development and architectural roles. The conceptual approach extends Bourdieu's 'assault' on 'all notions of absolute, universal cultural values' (Garnham and Williams, 1980: 117) to an 'intelligentsia' of commercially driven agents (architects and planners) using economic and political constraints as a defence for actions on behalf of clients' material and symbolic capital, over social outcomes. The notion of a contrarianism draws from interviews with architects as part of the author's prior doctoral research. At varying scales of human settlement and networking, the paper presents work and reflections on work connecting low-impact technology and community engagement to sustainable outcomes in Kenya and Ghana, large-scale digital infrastructure proposal in London, and polemical proposals including

within the Venice Biennale. Discussions across these scales are linked by agents' tactics to challenge inequitable development tracked across a nexus of water, energy, and food security (Behera et al., 2019) and to communications, housing and waste (human and product based) as wider domains impacting economic well-being (of individuals and society), health, and land-use in terms of ecological diversity (Niet et al., 2021). Findings frame these tactics within decision-making, policy, processes, and management systems across/within disciplinary/geographic boundaries.

## BIOGRAPHY

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**Saul M Golden** RIBA MRIAI(IREL) SFHEA. A Senior Lecturer in Architecture & Spatial Design at Ulster University, Saul has over 25 years of built environment practice and research-informed teaching experience. Published widely, Saul leads British Council, UKRI (AHRC), and PEACEPLUS funded projects focused on sustainable shared urban space, quality of life and mental health, air pollution, and liveable communities as Chair of the All-Ireland Centre for Global Research Built Environments & Health Equity Cluster. External to Ulster, Saul is a Trustee of Ulster Architectural Heritage, appointed member of the Belfast Maritime Trust Waterfront Design Panel, and visiting academic with The Bamford Centre for Mental Health & Wellbeing.



# GRADUATE

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# STRAND

# LIVING CO-LAB

## **MAPPING THE CRITICAL SHARED COMMONS:** A Mutual Learning Exercise within the AIARG conference with **Maroun C. Tabbal & AT6012** MArch Cohort 2025 – 2026

*Cork Centre for Architectural Education (MTU/UCC)*

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**The session itself is the designed artefact:** a Co-Lab where conference participants engage directly with students as co-researchers investigating Marseille as a Critical Zone field site.

### Student Co-Researchers

**TECHNOFOSSILS:** Geological Evidence

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Ciara O'Connell, Kate Crowley, Julia Przado, Roisin Hayes

**WATERSCAPE:** Water Ecologies

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Kevin O'Shea, Broghan Mc Carthy, Enda Traynor, Mark Bracken, Marko Vidic

**AUTO AMELIORATION:**

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Grace Kiernan, Sarah Murphy, Gabriela Belbot, Cornelius Joseph Cotter

**AI-DRIVEN HOUSING ANALYSIS:**

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Sean Ryan, Caitriona Ryan, Eadaoin Coghlan, Sean O'Neill

# MAPPING MASTERCLASS

Graduate students present their emerging research and participate in a mapping masterclass with  
**Alexandra Arenes**

**DEEP TIME LEGACIES:** Landing in Marseille  
**Róisín Hayes & Ciara O'Connell**

*Cork Centre for Architectural Education (MTU/UCC)*

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**VIBRANT MATTER:** Human Temporality,  
Geological Permanence

**Julia Przado & Kate Crowley**

*Cork Centre for Architectural Education (MTU/UCC)*

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**THE UNCOMFORTABLE EVERYDAY**

**Darren O'Connor**

*University College Cork, M.Sc.*

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**A BRICK WALL AROUND THE COUNTRY:**

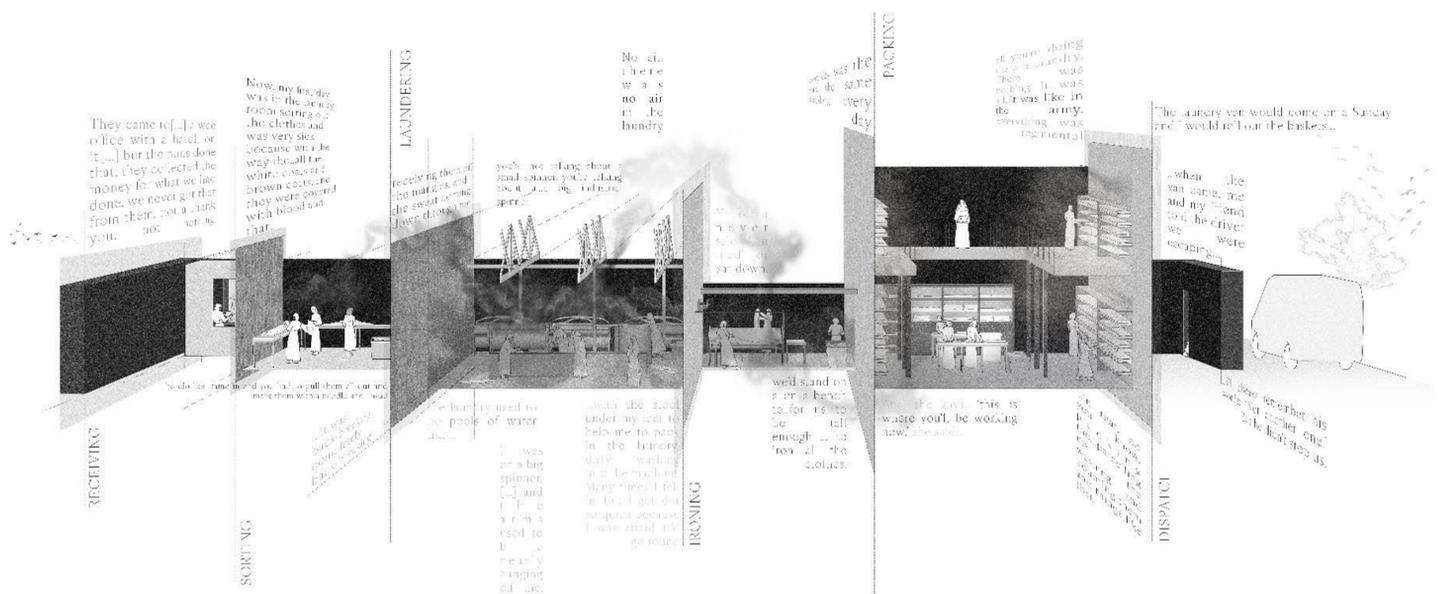
The influence of Irish Economic Policy  
on the Architecture of Electricity  
Infrastructure

**Evin Ryan**

*Technological University of Dublin*

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# GRADUATE KEYNOTE



## CONFINING THE OTHER: Gender and Architecture

*Recipient of a commendation in the 2025 RIBA Presidents Medals for Dissertation*

**Ellie O'Connell**

*Cork Centre for Architectural Education (MTU/UCC)*

This paper examines Ireland's Magdalene Laundries as architectures of gendered othering, where institutional space operated as an active agent in the regulation and exclusion of women. The research examines the chosen site as a critical zone of orchestrated spatial and social disconnection, in which architecture actively mediated relations of power, care, and control. Situating the institution within a political and socio-religious order that punished women and girls perceived as transgressive, the work uses the site to investigate how institutional architecture isolated, controlled, and othered Irish women as a spatial response to wider cultural and historical conditions.

