

CITYSENZ | CONFERENCE SERIES
OF COST ACTION CA23145

BOOK OF ABSTRACTS

SHAPING THE FUTURE LIVING PLACES

ACT1.
DEFINING ARCHITECTURAL
AND URBAN AMBIANCES

WEBSITE



03 - 04 JULY
LISBON - PORTUGAL



Funded by
the European Union

COST ACTION CA23145
Architectural and Urban Ambiances of European Cities

Conference Series of Cost Action CA23145

Shaping the Future Living Places

Act 1. Defining Architectural and Urban Ambiances

Dessine-moi une ambiance

foreword

Dear readers,

We are delighted to present this *Book of Abstracts*, a testament to the richness and diversity of the contributions gathered in Lisbon for the first act of the CitySenZ conference series, organised within the framework of COST Action CA23145. Under the theme “Shaping the Future Living Places | Act 1. Defining Architectural and Urban Ambiances”, the event brought together researchers, practitioners, artists, and students to explore, in theory and practice, the many ways in which architectural and urban ambiances shape our living environments.

The abstracts collected here reflect a wide range of approaches: conceptual investigations, experimental methods, case studies, artistic devices, and digital innovations. Together, they paint a vivid panorama of the sensitive questions currently traversing research and practice in the field of ambiance.

We warmly thank all authors for the quality of their contributions, the scientific and organising committees for their commitment, and our institutional and financial partners whose support made this international exchange possible.

As you turn these pages, may you find inspiration, new avenues for reflection, and opportunities for collaboration. May this publication feed the forthcoming debates we will hold within this Action, and carry forward the spirit of dialogue that animated our meeting in Lisbon.

Happy reading!

Mohammed Boubezari (Action Chair),

Damien Masson (Action Vice-Chair)

Disclaimer

This Book of Abstracts is a **draft version** prepared solely to accompany the CitySenZ conference. All content—including titles, author details, and abstracts—is **provisional** and may be updated during the final publication process. Please refer to the definitive published version for authoritative citation and reference purposes.

Table

OPENING FRAMEWORK	7
SAYING AMBIANCES MAY ALREADY BE DOING ARCHITECTURE: TOWARD A GENERATIVE POETICS OF DESIGN IN THE AGE OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE	10
<i>Mohammed Boubezari^{*1}</i>	10
PRODUCING, EXPERIENCING, MOBILIZING AMBIANCES INSIGHTS FROM ORDINARY URBAN MOBILITIES	11
<i>Damien Masson¹</i>	11
FOSTERING SENSORY DIVERGENCES IN AMBIANCE THEORY: FROM AURAL DIVERSITY DISCOURSE TOWARDS MULTISENSORY EXPERIENCE(S)	12
<i>John Drever^{*1}</i>	12
CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS OF AMBIANCES	13
POLITICS IN AMBIANCES: STATES OF BODY AND PUBLIC PRESENCE	14
<i>Rachel Thomas^{*1}</i>	14
CONTEMPORARY URBAN PROJECTS	15
<i>Théa Manola^{*1}</i>	15
THE POLYPHONY OF AMBIANCES: DESIGNING WITH MULTIPLE AGENCIES	16
<i>¹Paxinou Evangelia¹⁻², Nicolas Remy³⁻⁴</i>	16
FROM DEFINING AMBIANCES FROM THE FIELD	17
<i>Cristina Palmese¹, Ricardo Atienza, João Luis Carles, co-authors</i>	17
METHODOLOGICAL APPROACHES AND PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF AMBIANCES	18
MULTISENSORY URBAN LANDSCAPES: EXPLORING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN NATURE, AMBIANCE, AND WELL-BEING	19
<i>Inês Rodrigues^{*1}, Inês Cabral² and Sandra Costa³</i>	19
AUGMENTED REALITY AS A MEDIATOR OF ARCHITECTURAL AMBIANCES	20
<i>Katarina Andjelkovic¹</i>	20
DOCUMENTING LOCAL AFFORDANCES' REPERTOIRES BY INQUIRING ENGAGEMENTS AND ATTACHMENTS	21
<i>Olivier Ocquidant^{*1}</i>	21
EMPATHIC NARRATIVE INQUIRY AS A TOOL FOR EXPLORING LIVED HOSPITAL AMBIANCES, CASE STUDY: ALGERIAN HEALTHCARE FACILITIES	22
<i>Talantikite Soundouss Ismahane^{*1-2-3}</i>	22
METHODS AND TOOLS FOR DESIGNING THE AMBIANCES	23
IN-MOTION URBAN AMBIANCES: ASSESSING WALKABILITY, AND SAFETY PERCEPTION THROUGH IMMERSIVE VIRTUAL REALITY SIMULATION	24
<i>Barbara Ester Adele Piga^{*1}, Ziqi Cui[†], Gabriele Stancato¹, Andrea Picardi¹, Simone Piersigilli¹, Lorenzo Mussone¹, Marco Boffi², Carlotta Colonna², Chiara Maninetti¹, Riccardo Barbieri¹, Luca Mainardi¹, and Giandomenico Caruso¹</i>	24
NARRATING ARCHITECTURAL AND URBAN AMBIANCES: AN INTERDISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATION OF THE LIVING URBAN IMAGE THROUGH THE UNARCODE PROJECT	25
<i>Durmus Ozturk Serap^{*1}</i>	25
THE RELEVANCE OF THE BIOPHILIC APPROACH IN THE RETROFIT OF PORTUGUESE PUBLIC SCHOOL BUILDINGS. A SYSTEMATIC LITERATURE REVIEW	26
<i>Tânia Lopes^{*1}</i>	26
MULTIDISCIPLINARY METHODS FOR AMBIENCE DESIGN IN THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT	27
<i>Adam Thomas^{*1}</i>	27
AESTHETIC FRAMEWORKS AND CRITIQUES OF ATMOSPHERES	28
SOUND, NOISE, AND MASTER PLANS	29
<i>Bálint János Kiss^{*†1}</i>	29
THE THEORY OF AMBIANCE IN THE VISUAL ARTWORKS: A METHOD TO READ THE PICTURESQUE ATMOSPHERE	30
<i>Ike Hiçsönmezler^{*1}</i>	30
THE SR.11 GRAND TOUR: LESS IS BORE	31
<i>Mersida Ndrevataj^{*1}</i>	31

CASE STUDIES AND SITUATED DEVICES.....	32
MICROHISTORIES OF ARCHITECTURAL AMBIANCES: HERITAGE AND THE MATERIALITY OF THE BODY OF ARCHITECTURE IN THE OEUVRE OF EDUARDO SOUTO DE MOURA.....	33
<i>Mahdi Alizadeh*1,2, Clara Pimenta Do Vale2, and Anastasiia Kholopova3</i>	33
SENSITIVE ECOLOGIES: ARTISTIC INSTALLATIONS, URBAN AMBIANCES AND CRITICAL SPATIAL PRACTICES.....	34
<i>Isabel Barbas*1</i>	34
DANSBANA! AS URBAN HETEROTOPIA.....	35
<i>Teres Selberg*1,2</i>	35
RE-ILLUMINATING ANTIQUITY: NOCTURNAL AMBIANCES AND URBAN HERITAGE IN THE NIGHTTIME LIGHTING OF EPHEBUS.....	36
<i>Zeynep Aydin Polat*1</i>	36
MAPPING & ASSESSING THE URBAN ATMOSPHERE.....	37
TOWARD A PARADIGM SHIFT IN NEIGHBORHOOD EVALUATION: EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPATIAL GEOMETRY, SPATIAL PERFORMANCE, AND QUALITY OF SPACE.....	38
<i>Dalit Shach-Pinsly*1, Inês Lima Rodrigues*2, Idan Porat*3, and Or Amir*4</i>	38
LOCATING URBAN AMBIANCES: MAPPING SARAJEVO'S EXPERIENTIAL TERRAINS FOR SITUATED AMBIENCE RESEARCH.....	39
<i>Lejla Odobasic Novo*1 and Lejla Kresevljakovic*2</i>	39
ASSESSING RESIDENTS' SATISFACTION WITH THE PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT IN LARGE HOUSING ESTATES: INSIGHTS FROM NOVI SAD, SERBIA.....	40
<i>Dejana Nedučin*1 and Milena Krklješ</i>	40
HOW DOES IT FEEL, TO BE ON YOUR OWN (...) A COMPLETE UNKNOWN? THE LACK OF VISUAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN IN URBAN SIGNAGE.....	41
<i>Onna Segev*1</i>	41
ATMOSPHERES & ARTISTIC DEVICES.....	42
ATMOSPHERES& LISTENING BEYOND STANDARDS: UNDERSTANDING SOUND AMBIANCES QUALITIES WITH NON-STANDARD EVALUATION TECHNIQUES.....	43
<i>Petros Flampouris*1 and Nicolas Rémy1</i>	43
LIGHT NEVILLE STREET: FACSIMILIES, ECHOS AND ARCHIVES.....	44
<i>Sue Ball*1</i>	44
ANTHROPOMORPHISATION OF SENSES, EXPERIENCES, EMOTIONS AND MEMORIES: FUN PALACE AS A SUGGESTIVE ARTIFICIALLY INTELLIGENT ARCHITECTURE BY CEDRIC PRICE, 1961-1974.....	45
<i>Danyal Ahmed*1,2</i>	45
SENSITIVE DESIGN, HERITAGE & STORYTELLING.....	46
TRANSFERRING AMBIANCE: LESSONS FROM PERSIAN ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS FOR ENHANCING URBAN ATMOSPHERES IN EUROPEAN CITIES.....	47
<i>Mehrdad Hejazi*1,2</i>	47
DESIGNING WITH SENSITIVITY: TRAUMA-INFORMED DESIGN AS A HUMAN-CENTRED AMBIENCE STRATEGY.....	48
<i>Adrienne Csizmady*1</i>	48
SHAPING TUSHEMISHT'S URBAN AMBIANCE: PUBLIC ART, INFRASTRUCTURE, NATURE AND TOURISM.....	49
<i>Diana Mile*1</i>	49
URBAN AND ARCHITECTURAL AMBIENCE AT THE CULTURAL ROUTE IN SKOPJE, REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA.....	50
<i>Viktorija Mangaroska*1</i>	50
MAPPING AND DIAGNOSING URBAN.....	51
INTEGRATING ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION DATA AND AMBIENCE THEORY: EVALUATING PHYTOMINING IN.....	52
POST-INDUSTRIAL SPATIAL PLANNING.....	52
<i>Aida Bani*1 and Boriana Golgota2</i>	52
SENSORY EXPERIENCE AS A METHOD OF MAPPING A CULTURAL CITY.....	53
<i>Aslihan Ozturk1 and Deniz Bayrak*1</i>	53
EXPLORING THE AMBIANCES OF "INVISIBLE QUALITY PLACES" IN EUROPEAN NEIGHBORHOODS.....	54
<i>Dalit Shach-Pinsly*1 and Hadas Shadar1</i>	54
URBAN AMBIANCES AND SPATIAL AFFORDANCES: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF SPACES UNDERNEATH BRIDGES IN ISTANBUL.....	55
<i>Kübra Büyük Öksüz*1</i>	55
LISTENING TO THE AMBIANCES: ACOUSTIC APPROACHES.....	56
"POSTURE D'ÉCOUTE", HOW LISTENING BECOMES MORE THAN A SONIC POSTURE. IMMERSIVE DEVICES IN QUESTION.....	57
<i>Théo Marchal*1,2,3</i>	57
OPERA IN THE BATHHOUSE; EXPLORING AN ACOUSTICALLY LED APPROACH TO DRAMATURGY AND SCENOGRAPHY.....	58

<i>Pedro Novo</i> ^{*1} <i>Rosalind Parker</i> ^{*2}	58
EXPLORING ATMOSPHERES OF NOISE THROUGH TEXT-BASED METHODS: TOWARDS JUST AND SUSTAINABLE SONIC AMBIANCES.....	59
<i>Yildirim Aysegül</i> ^{*1}	59
DIGITAL, INCLUSIVE AND POLITICAL AMBIANCES	60
VIRTUALIZATION AS DIGITAL AMBIANCE: TOWARD A THEORY OF IMMERSIVE HISTORIOGRAPHY IN ARCHITECTURE	61
<i>Nicola D'addario</i> ^{*1}	61
NOT BUILT FOR ALL SENSES: IDENTIFYING ENVIRONMENTAL TRIGGERS AND CHALLENGING SPACES FOR SENSORY-SENSITIVE INDIVIDUALS	62
<i>Alice Price</i> ^{*1} , <i>Rebecca Oates</i> ¹ , <i>Petroc Sumner</i> ¹ , and <i>Georgina Powell</i> ¹	62
TIPPING POINTS – INDICATORS OF ATMOSPHERIC EFFICACY.....	63
<i>Bea Dieker</i> ^{*1}	63
ATMOSPHERES OF ANTI-SURVEILLANCE. TACTICS, MAPS, AND AFFECTS OF URBAN SPACE UNDER CONTROL.....	64
<i>Alberta Piselli</i> ^{*1}	64
METHODS AND DEVICES FOR DESIGNING	65
INHABITED ATMOSPHERES: PHILIPPE RAHM'S CLIMATIC AMBIANCES THROUGH THE LENS OF CARE.....	66
<i>Alessandra Bruno</i> ^{*1}	66
ENHANCING ETHNOGRAPHIC RESEARCH ON URBAN AMBIENCE AND AFFECTIVE GEOGRAPHY: TRANSDISCIPLINARY EXPLORATIONS IN THE URBAN PERIPHERIES OF HELSINKI, FINLAND.....	67
<i>Pekka Tuominen</i> ^{*1}	67
TOWARDS THE ATMOSPHERIC CITY: PSYCHOGEOGRAPHIC INTERACTIONS BETWEEN HUMANS, PLANTS AND URBAN FORM IN OUTDOOR AMBIENCES OF BARCELONA.....	68
<i>Cristian Suau Ibanez</i> ^{*1}	68
AUGMENTED LANDSCAPES. ICT AND THE NARRATIVE DIMENSION OF LANDSCAPE DESIGN TO ENHANCE URBAN AMBIENCES	69
<i>Matteo Clemente</i> ^{*†1}	69
WATER HERITAGE & SENSITIVE MEMORIES.....	70
AFFECTIVE MATERIALITIES IN THE SENSORY URBAN ENVIRONMENT OF ISTANBUL'S MEMORY SPACES	71
<i>Ayşe Ereğ</i> ^{*1}	71
FLOWING HISTORIES: THE AMBIANCE OF MILL RACES IN URBAN SPACE	72
<i>Katarina Kristianova</i> ^{*1} and <i>Juraj Illes</i>	72
ART NOUVEAU AND WATER – INTERDISCIPLINARY INVESTIGATION OF THE AMBIANCE OF A SPA	73
<i>Maria Bostenaru Dan</i> ^{*1}	73
INCLUSIVE CITY, CARE AND SOCIAL JUSTICE	74
SENSING THE MARGINS: AMBIANCES OF INFORMALITY IN A ROMA NEIGHBORHOOD IN İZMİR	75
<i>Mehmet Melih Cin</i> ^{*1}	75
ENTERING-IN, TUNING-IN: LINKING URBAN PUBLIC SPACE AND MIGRANT INTEGRATION FROM A PLACE AND DESIGN PERSPECTIVE	76
<i>Susan Qu</i> ^{*1}	76
MI CASA ES SU HOTEL: CITIES FOR MUTUAL CARE VS. VISITING PLACES	77
<i>Carmen Rosas-Pérez</i> ^{*1}	77
THROUGH HER EYES: A SISTERS JOURNEY INTO AMBIANCE AND ACCESSIBILITY	78
<i>Ella White</i> ^{*1}	78
DOMESTIC AND PUBLIC AMBIANCES.....	79
THE VISCERALITY OF EVERYDAY SOUNDS AND ACOUSTICS IN CONTEMPORARY DOMESTIC SPACES	80
<i>Alessia Frescura</i> ^{*†1}	80
DESIGNING FOR PLAY: AMBIANCES OF OUTDOOR SPACES IN AFFORDABLE HOUSING.....	81
<i>Seyedeh Saba Hejazi</i> ^{*1}	81
RECIPROCAL AMBIANCES: A DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE BUILT AND THE UNBUILT IN ÁLVARO SIZA'S CAMPO DI MARTE SOCIAL HOUSING PROJECT.....	82
<i>Mahdi Alizadeh</i> ^{*1,2} , <i>Clara Pimenta Do Vale</i> ² , and <i>Anastasiia Kholopova</i> ³	82
DEFINING AMBIANCES IN TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SPACES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS ACROSS CULTURAL, GEOGRAPHICAL AND HISTORICAL CONTEXTS IN ALGERIA	83
<i>Lilia Makhloufi</i> ^{*1}	83
AMBIANCESCLIMATE & ÉCOLOGIES	84
URBAN ECOLOGICAL AMBIANCES AS MEDIATORS OF ENVIRONMENTAL PERCEPTION: A MULTIMODAL ANALYSIS OF SKANDERBEG SQUARE, TIRANA	85

<i>Dervishi Sokol</i> ^{*I}	85
THE BLURRING OF SHADE: WHY ARE THERMAL COMFORT INDICES TOO PRECISE FOR DESCRIBING THERMAL AMBIANCE?.....	86
<i>Or Aleksandrowicz</i> ^{*I}	86
PERFORMING ARTS AND SOCIAL SENSITIVITY. HOW TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE WITH THEATER.....	87
<i>Michele Granzotto</i> ^{*I}	87
DIGITAL MEDIATIONS AND EVALUATION TOOLS	88
EXPLORING SPATIAL ATMOSPHERE ACROSS ANALOG AND DIGITAL MEDIUMS.....	89
<i>Gulce Kirdar</i> ^{*I}	89
A METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO URBAN AMBIENCE ASSESSMENT: EVALUATING THE ATMOSPHERE OF DUZCE PRUSIAS AD HYPIUM ANCIENT THEATER AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.....	90
<i>Kiyomet Uzun Yuksel</i> ^{*I}	90
COMMUNICATING LIGHT: TECHNOLOGICAL TOOLS FOR MEDIATING MULTI-SENSORY EXPERIENCING OF URBAN AMBIANCES.....	91
<i>Nataša Živaljević Luxor</i> ^{*I}	91

OPENING FRAMEWORK



Jean-Paul Thibaud

Keynote Speaker

The Enigma of Ambiance

Ambiance is an enigma. It belongs to a lesser, spectral mode of existence that resists any fixed definition. Rather than seeking to define it once and for all, we prefer to approach it through its powers, effects and uses. In arguing for a strong version of ambiance, the aim is to show how it contributes to sensitize the world. Ambiance weaves the very fabric of sensitivity. It has the power to intensify and transform our relationship with the world. Various perspectives will be sketched out to question the *modus operandi* of ambiance and identify the contemporary issues it faces.

Jean-Paul Thibaud is a sociologist. He is currently an honorary researcher and associate member of the CRESSON laboratory in Grenoble, France.

Before retiring, he was senior researcher at the CNRS (National Center for Scientific Research).

He founded the International Ambiances Network (www.ambiances.net) and co-founded the journal *Ambiances*. His research focuses on the theory of urban ambiances, contemporary sensibilities to socio-ecological issues, the anthropology of sound, ordinary perception in urban environments, the sensitive ethnography of public spaces, and in situ methodologies.

Jean-Paul Thibaud has published numerous articles and books, particularly on ambiances. Among these: *En quête d'ambiances. Éprouver la ville en passant*, published in 2015 by MetisPresses.

His latest book, to be published in September 2025 by Routledge, is entitled *Ambiances. A Sensitivity to Ordinary Situations*, co-edited with Nicolas Tixier and David Zerbib.

Saying Ambiances May Already Be Doing Architecture: Toward a Generative Poetics of Design in the Age of Artificial Intelligence

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Abstract

Far from being a mere secondary effect, ambiance is often what remains-or what imposes itself-in the lived experience of a place. Even when it has not been explicitly designed, it eventually manifests through use and perception. As Jean-Paul Thibaud emphasizes, atmosphere always emerges from a co-presence of spatiality, corporeality, and lived temporality. This article argues that it is both possible and necessary to place atmosphere at the beginning of the design process-not through simulation tools, but through language. *Describing an atmosphere* already means beginning to project it, to give it form. Language thus becomes a design instrument in its own right, capable of anticipating the sensory quality of a future space.

This central role of language aligns with a major shift introduced by generative artificial intelligence: for the first time, a machine no longer requires humans to adapt to its code, but instead strives to interpret human language. This paradigm shift restores natural language- including its poetic, sensory, and embodied forms-as a primary tool of design. AI does not think, but it generates; it does not understand, but it syntactically interprets. Its potential depends entirely on what we are able to say, name, and articulate.

The article explores how different architectural languages-mathematical, poetic, and bodily- can be restructured within this new relationship to the machine. It revisits foundational moments in architectural theory, from Vitruvius to Hillier, including Ibn al-Haytham's insights on light and perspective. These are placed in dialogue with contemporary contributions from Juhani Pallasmaa, Jean-Paul Thibaud, and Jean-François Augoyard, all of whom have emphasized the importance of sensation, perception, and situated experience in architectural understanding.

Drawing also from the author's doctoral research (*Les pratiques intuitives de maîtrise du confort acoustique*), the article introduces the concepts of *modi essendi*, *modi signandi*, and *modi significandi*-ways of being, signifying, and becoming a sign-as core components of a lived language of space. These embodied interactions act as projective structures even before formal design begins.

Rather than a technical tool, AI becomes an amplifier of human intention-provided that intention is expressed. This is why the article advocates for a pedagogy of design rooted not in stylistic repetition or procedural templates, but in the cultivation of expressive sensitivity. In a world where anything can be generated, the only true singularity becomes the way we say. And what if saying atmospheres was already a form of architecture?

Keywords: Ambiances, Embodied language, Sensory experience, Artificial intelligence, Human machine dialogue, Poetic design process

Producing, Experiencing, Mobilizing Ambiances Insights from Ordinary Urban Mobilities

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Abstract

How do ambiances influence everyday urban life, and in what ways do they shape experience and social conduct? What uses are made of ambiances by stakeholders responsible for spatial planning and urban governance, and with what objectives? Rather than asking what ambiances are, this paper explores what ambiances do: how they affect places and individuals, how they are conceived and produced, and with what intentions. Framed within a pragmatic perspective, this approach to ambiances illuminates the dynamics at play in ordinary urban environments. It posits that ambiances are not merely passive by-products of material settings and social contexts—they are also actively shaped by institutional aspirations and technical expertise. Moreover, ambiances are not neutral; they intervene in the tacit and formal ordering of public space, exercising forms of power over those who inhabit and move through it. To examine this, we focus on the sensory experiences of urban mobility, particularly within public transportation systems. Transit spaces are sites of encounter and interaction, and they mobilize affective and emotional registers. An ambiance-based approach offers a productive lens for analysing these dimensions, as it attends to both the material and affective infrastructures within which social life unfolds. Ambiances enable us to characterize situations of social interaction in relation to place and situated activity.

The paper proceeds in two main parts. First, we revisit key contributions from urban re- search on the sensory and highlight the specific contribution of an atmospheric approach. By defining ambiances (Thibaud 2003, Bohme 2013, Kazig and Masson 2015) and situating them within the context of urban mobility, we show how this perspective contributes to rethinking established paradigms in urban and mobility studies—particularly by foregrounding the sensory, social, and affective (Anderson 2009, McCormack 2008) dimensions of mobility experiences (Bissell 2010, Kazig, Masson, Thomas 2017). This orientation also calls for the development of innovative methodological approaches attentive to lived experience.

Second, we examine the ways ambiances are operationalized within urban transport spaces, through three complementary lenses, by using both examples from the scientific literature and situated investigations that we have conducted in Europe over the past years. First, we explore how transit users themselves contribute to the emergence and modulation of ambiances through their presence, gestures, and situated practices. Second, we analyze how transport authorities and spatial managers engage in the design and engineering of ambiances as part of broader strategies for facilitating movement and organizing flows. Third, we turn to the question of safety and security, showing how ambient interventions are increasingly mobilized as tools of soft governance—aimed at shaping conduct, modulating presence, and exercising subtle forms of control over bodies in space.

Keywords: Ambiances, urban fabric, mobility, security, power

Fostering sensory divergences in ambiance theory: from aural diversity discourse towards multisensory experience(s)

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Abstract

For this COST Action on urban ambiance to be relevant to the whole of society, truly capturing the complexity and diversity of lived, embodied experience, it is fundamental from the outset to address and probe its extant epistemological foundations which in turn will shape future developments. This paper will focus on sensory divergency, that is, divergence from sensory normalcy. It will take its lead from work already done around hearing and seeing, and the salient concepts around what has been defined as aural diversity (Drever 2017; Drever & Hugill 2022; Drever, Cobianchi, Rosas-Pérez 2023) and more recently, visual diversity (Radicchi & Henckel 2023). Within acoustics and related disciplines, the tendency was to model hearing derived to a healthy young subset of society (e.g., equal loudness contours are enshrined in policy and guidance through the ubiquitous application of dBA). Because of the adherence to this model, a large proportion of auditory experiences remain excluded (e.g., neurodivergence, PTSD, hearing loss, specific hearing needs, infants, the elderly), and this exclusion is replicated in related fields. Studies on sound perception, noise annoyance, and soundscape research considered in the major reviews on the topics base their outcomes on the assessment made by participants with “normal hearing”, being this a recruitment requirement. The diversity in other demographic aspects such as age or socioeconomic status tends also to be limited. These reviews inform policies on environmental sound, building acoustics, soundscape interventions, and epidemiological assessment on the effects of noise on health, and therefore have an impact on entire communities of humans and non-human species. In addition, most psychology and environmental psychology articles have an intrinsic bias in relation to researchers and participants: they are mostly from the Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic societies. In 2010, in a review of comparative databases from across the behavioural sciences, Henrich concluded that “WEIRD subjects are particularly unusual compared with the rest of the species – frequent outliers” (Henrich et al. 2010). The limited representation of the sensory experiences in research is translated into a limited consideration of the diversity of experiences of sounds in actual, complex societies and the design of their spaces. This exclusion is also present in the visual sphere. The needs of people with non-normative vision or visual sensitivities have been the subject of recent works that also highlight the main barriers in common spaces, as well as measures that can help increase visual accessibility. Here, we will share and transpose some of the key concepts underpinning aural diversity and present some of the recent initiatives that are encouraging designers to develop a more inclusive perspective. Finally, we will propose a reflection on how the typical (and usually required) methodological approaches and data analysis in sensory research are rooted in pre-conceptions based on sensory normalcy, and on the implications of epistemic exclusion in an “evidence-based” society. We hope this paper acts as a prompt to ask how we embed sensory diversity at the heart of our emerging conception of ambiance in theory and practice.

Conceptual and Theoretical Frameworks of Ambiances

Politics in ambiances: states of body and public presence

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Abstract

How do ambiances affect the “bodily states” of urban dwellers and inhabitants? What role do they play in shaping “corporeal tonalities” that condition how individuals take part - more or less - in shared sensory experiences of lived environments? In what ways do ambiances contribute to producing or reproducing forms of marginalization, readiness or unreadiness for action, for being, for participating in. what is happening.?

These questions are at the heart of a recent research program that aims to explore the political dimension of ambiances (Thomas, 2018, 2021). By “political”, I mean the capacity of ambiances - that “background from which our experiences unfold” (Bohme, 1995, 2020; Augoyard, 2011; Thibaud, 2012) - to activate affects and embodied modes of being in public that challenge ordinary forms of spatial presence and relationships between city dwellers.

Three case studies, drawn from fieldwork conducted with research teams in France and Brazil, will serve to develop this hypothesis.

The first will show how ambient configurations either enable or hinder physical access to spaces for certain user groups - here, persons with disabilities - and contribute to their visibility or invisibility in public. The second case aims to show how certain public space management policies - by destabilizing the ordinariness of ambiances and intensifying their level of conflict – contribute to states of stupefaction or estrangement that may lead to a withdrawal from space and undermine full participation in social life. This will be illustrated through the specific case of pacification policies implemented by certain federal states in Brazil targeting urban margins. Finally, a third case will explore how the radical transformation of a landscape - specifically that of the Romanche Valley in Is.re (France) - and its ambient qualities might create the conditions for cohesion in a context where divisions among inhabitants persist. This example considers the power of ambiances to rekindle forms of attachment and to render them shareable, to evoke new forms of presence and co-presence, and to intensify resonant sensitivities. It also posits the hypothesis that ambiances may foster a sense of ‘being concerned’ (Brunet, 2012)

Keywords: Ambiances, Politics, Bodily states, Corporeal tonalities

From Theory to Practice: Defining the Sensible in Contemporary Urban Projects

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Abstract

This presentation proposes to analyze the ways in which the notion of the *sensible* is defined by practitioners involved in the design processes of contemporary urban projects⁽¹⁾. Research in architecture and urbanism has long been engaged in defining terms such as *ambiance*, *sensible*, *affects*, and *landscape*, as well as their relationships and distinctions (cf. Amphoux, 1994; Augoyard, 1995; Roger, 1994). The scientific production on these concepts is well-established and continues to gain relevance today. This renewed interest is undoubtedly linked to the emergence of new frameworks of sensitivity and even profound disruptions in our daily lives (cf. Thibaud, 2018). According to numerous studies, *ambiance*, *affects*, and the *sensible* have multiple, often political, effects and relations (cf. Thomas, 2021) within the lived experience of everyday environments and in the evolving ways in which people inhabit and relate to their territories. These studies often focus on the experiences of inhabitants and users. However, it is equally important to note that operational and project-based urban actors engage with these notions on a daily basis—perhaps even more so than the people who live in these spaces—yet without necessarily articulating or even consciously acknowledging how they define them.

Both for scientific and applied issues, it appears necessary to interrogate the ways in which these terms are defined (explicitly or not, consciously or not) by practitioners involved in urban production. The ways in which operational actors define the *sensible* reveal several points of porosity between academic definitions and those emerging from practice, with their respective complementarities and divergences.

Part of the investigation carried out within the PROSECO project aimed to address this lack of definition. Accordingly, this presentation draws from data collected in the context of the PROSECO research project (*Sensitive Production of Contemporary Urban Projects. From Design to Experience: Environmental and Political Stakes of the Sensible* – ANR-20-CE22-0002-01 – Manola, ongoing). This communication focuses on discussions during three workshops conducted with practitioners involved in urban projects. Based on these discussions, the aim is to clarify how these actors define the term *sensible*. Findings indicate that the *sensible* is understood as a bodily experience involving the senses, but also, within project processes, as a professional posture—relating to contextual responsiveness, citizen involvement, and the transgression of normative frameworks. Furthermore, it is perceived as a “translator” that mediates the project, and as a form of care, both for the space itself and for the processes it undergoes.

- (1) The choice to focus here on the term *sensible* rather than *ambiance* stems from the fact that the former is considered a fundamental component of the latter (cf. Thibaud, 2014)

Keywords: Sensible, urban project, practitioners

The Polyphony of Ambiances: Designing with Multiple Agencies

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Abstract

In response to the increasing interdisciplinary interest in architectural and urban ambiances, this paper addresses the need for conceptual alignment that does not compromise complexity. Rather than pursuing definitive unification, it proposes a framework of polyphonic coherence—an approach that enables shared understanding while preserving disciplinary diversity, cultural specificity, and the subtlety of lived experience. Central to this contribution is a rethinking of ambiance through the lens of Bruno Latour's Actor-Network Theory (ANT). Within this perspective, ambiances are not static or predetermined qualities, but relational constructs shaped by the dynamic interaction of heterogeneous actors—human and non-human alike. Materials, weather, bodies, sounds, technologies, and institutional structures all act as agents that contribute to the production of atmospheres. Ambiance, then, is understood as a distributed and negotiated performance, always in the making through networks of translation and transformation.

The notion of sympathy—as developed in the work of Spuybroek and Ingold—is used here to deepen this understanding. Moving beyond empathy as static emotional identification, sympathy is framed as an ontological openness to the forces and agencies that co-compose space. It suggests a design practice that listens, responds, and adapts—not by asserting control, but by entering into resonance with the multiple agencies that shape spatial experience.

Participatory and performative experiments—such as Resounding Ruins, a methodology that reactivates abandoned or decaying sites through site-specific sound interventions and Sympathy Radio, a mobile, participatory sound platform that broadcasts environmental sounds fostering empathy through shared listening—demonstrate how resonance, in its sonic, affective, and spatial dimensions, can serve as a medium for alignment between diverse actors and perspectives. Such practices support a broader strategy: shifting from fixed definitions to evolving understandings of ambiance, grounded in its performative and relational nature. Their innovation lies in creating participatory sound infrastructures that integrate atmospheric qualities and more-than-human perspectives into responsive, site-specific experiences.

Grounded in the idea of polyphony—the coexistence of multiple voices, agencies, and modes of knowing—this paper challenges conventional architectural practices by proposing participatory, sonic/spatial infrastructures that reposition architecture as one of many agents in the co-creation of ambiance. Within this expanded framework, ambiance is not designed or imposed, but emerges from the entangled interactions of materials, bodies, environments, and technologies. Architectural practice thus becomes an act of relational attunement—less about reproducing predefined moods or stylistic effects, and more about cultivating conditions that foster coexistence, attentiveness, and shared resonance.

In facing today's ecological, social, and technological challenges, this approach offers a critical and creative pathway: one that embraces complexity rather than reducing it, and that understands ambiance not merely as atmosphere, but as a dynamic field of possibility co-authored by diverse agencies.

Keywords: Sensible, urban projet, practitioners

From Defining Ambiances from the field

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Abstract

This communication aims at setting the basis for the exploratory work of WG4, “Innovation Scouting”, specifically in connection with the topic of this congress, “Defining Architectural and Urban Ambiances”. The main objective of WG4 is to identify relevant urban projects, designs and artistic interventions that have successfully integrated or been able to reveal specific sensorial and ambiance dimensions, whether the concept itself (ambiance) has been considered or not.

A core question will feed this contribution: in which way can we contribute to the definition of ambiances with a more bottom-up strategy, one emerging from the physical field, from relevant cases and places, and building up a theoretical body? Would we define the concept of ambiances differently when departing from specific situated experiences and practices that can be considered as exemplary?

This approach poses a question mark on the concept of definition itself. To define is first to delimit an observation area and phenomenon, the production of urban space in this case. But many questions arise when trying to determine basic aspects such as who is entitled to define, what should be included or left out, or which are the lens to be employed to this end. Furthermore, the exercise of defining seems to be particularly complex when approaching such an elusive concept as the one of ambiances, which tries to depict a series of phenomena instable by definition. However, if we believe that ambiances are to be experienced and characterized as a site- specific phenomenon, then its definition should also include this immersive dimension. Beyond our theoretical framework, a situated approach to the challenge of how to define ambiances will contribute with a critical view on the task, together with potentially some elements of response. Observing and trying to characterize an ambiance in situ, experiencing it with our body and senses, or even disrupting it to better understand its underlying principles, provides an essential concrete and physical dimension, one that can only be gained and understood from the inside.

In this paper, we will discuss these questions on definition through a number of site- specific cases and observation methodologies which aim is to open a debate on the matter and give a start to the work of WG4. We will focus in particular on two projects by the contributors of this paper that focus on methodological approaches to urban environments and ambiances. Their results and potential contributions will be revisited in the light of the questions posed on how to define ambiances, both as a concept and as a situated experience: Cristina Palmese, Gülce Kırdar, José Luis Carles: A Multisensorial Approach to Urban Space: Placemaking through Sensory Insights. Ricardo Atienza, Robin Mcginley, Monica Sand: Atelier Art et re-action (Area) – Performing Urban Routines and Rituals.

Methodological approaches and practical applications of ambiances

Multisensory urban landscapes: exploring the connection between nature, ambiance, and well-being

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Abstract

In increasingly urbanised societies, the disconnection from natural environments has contributed to rising stress levels, reduced well-being, and a narrowing sensory experience. This research explores how nature-based solutions (NBS) can be designed for ecological performance and to enhance urban ambiance through multisensory engagement that reconnects people with natural rhythms, textures, and cues. By analyzing case studies across Europe and beyond, this work identifies innovative and replicable practices that combine environmental benefits with rich sensory input, addressing sight, sound, smell, and thermal comfort. The project draws on soundscapes that restore auditory balance in the city, such as bird-friendly infrastructure (e.g., swift boxes in Brighton or bee bricks in new buildings), and sound-based interventions like the Sea Organ in Zadar, Croatia, or wind-activated installations by artists like Doug Aitken. These examples show how nature sounds can reduce stress and support cognitive health when natural patterns are amplified.

Lightscares and visual interventions-such as green roofs, community gardens, colorful shading installations, or ecological artworks like Bordalo II's endangered species series- demonstrate how visual stimulation and placemaking can be combined with ecological awareness. These strategies beautify neglected areas, raise environmental consciousness, and invite community interaction.

Smellscares are explored through seasonal and weather-based phenomena, such as the scent of Petrichor or aromatic urban gardens. Projects like the edible city of Todmorden, and the Walsall Road Allotment Gardens in Birmingham reveal how urban gardening provides more than food; it generates nostalgic, calming olfactory experiences and fosters social cohesion, revitalizing post-industrial towns while promoting sustainable living. Thermal comfort, a key aspect of ambiance, is addressed through traditional and low-tech cooling solutions in historic southern European cities: shaded alleyways, vine-covered pergolas, fountains, and evaporative cooling techniques like jaalis and cooling towers. These heritage-based strategies offer low-cost, inclusive, and culturally rooted ways to create urban climate refuges. The research proposes a framework for identifying and categorizing exemplary projects integrating sensory design with sustainability, inclusiveness, and low-cost innovation. It considers documentation methods-photography and user feedback for performance evaluation-and explores how such projects can be compiled into an open-access database to inspire and inform future practices.

This presentation contributes to environmental theory by showcasing nature-based and urban art interventions that stimulate multiple senses. It emphasizes the need to seek innovation to connect experiences with urban design, helping various professional fields contribute to a more collective, sensory, and sustainable future.

These findings aim to support architects, planners, artists, and community groups in reimagining cities as ecologically functioning environments that feel alive, inviting, and restorative.

Keywords: Community Engagement, Co, Creation, Urban Green Spaces, Experimentation, low, cost innovation, sensory gardens, therapeutic gardens, multisensory architecture

Augmented Reality as a Mediator of Architectural Ambiances

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Abstract

Over the past three decades, architectural processes have been drastically reorganized by what historian Jonathan Crary calls “a transformation in the nature of visibility probably more profound than the break that separates medieval imagery from Renaissance perspective.”[1] Architecture's previously stable graphical conventions have dissolved and been replaced with an ever-expanding repertoire of computational mediums. Furthermore, the development of Augmented Reality environments testifies to the continuity in media practices that have generally been regarded as lying outside the domain of architecture, but which may now be used as complementary lenses that stage technologically mediated multi-sensory spatial experiences. With the arrival of Augmented Reality environments, representational experimentation has extended the set of techniques to integrate advanced virtual production infrastructure (from the movie render and photo editing applications) but also implemented specific Augmented Reality techniques to supplement the user view with images of virtual objects in a real-time mode. I argue the possibility of using immersive augmented reality environments for simulation to facilitate experiences of architectural ambiances. I bring image theoretical aspects into the spatial and experiential realm of architecture with an aim to discuss the aspects of reality and augmentation from the viewpoint of an architect. Special focus is on developing the analytical framework in which real-time image representation is actively used in the context of real prototypes of architectural ambiances.

The objective of this research is to correspond to the relevancy of digital technologies for simulating multi-sensory spatial experiences in ambiance-oriented design, and ethically inform paths for Augmented Reality practice in architecture by envisioning new formats of communicating architectural ideas through Augmented Reality environments.

In the first part of the presentation, I examine sensory augmentation by analyzing how our kinesthetic experience of the physical world has affected ways of seeing and understanding the world and specifically translating it into the digital environment. The focus will be on how Augmented Reality extends the body's kinesthetic relationship with space. I compare traditional architectural walkthroughs with Augmented Reality-enhanced experiences, such as using motion tracking to alter ambiance based on user movement. Then, I look at how the relationship of movement and stasis defines the immersive experience in the digital environment, while it expands and enhances our senses beyond the perceivable. In this regard, I discuss how Augmented Reality's real-time interactivity challenges static architectural representations (i.e., drawings, renders) and enables ambiance to evolve with user agency. In the second part of the presentation, I discuss the technical side of hardware and software that empowers representational experimentation in Augmented Reality technology. The focus is on investigating the creative use of media to expand and enhance virtual production toolsets for simulating architectural ambiances, and how it supplements the user's view with images of virtual objects in the augmented reality interfaces. I will conclude my presentation by discussing if current Augmented Reality systems truly simulate multi-sensory stimuli, or do they prioritize visual dominance.

[1] Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 1.

Keywords: Augmented Reality; architectural ambiances; multi; sensory spatial experiences; immersion; kinesthetic experience; real time image representation.

Documenting local affordances' repertoires by inquiring engagements and attachments.

Methodology of users experience inquiry to produce data for ambiental design.

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Abstract

During a four years ethnographic fieldwork, I studied the experience of a post-industrial city – Saint-Etienne – through commented walks (Thibaud, 2015), observations, in depth interviews, videos and photographs (Ocquidant, 2022). Thanks to this methodological- theoretical toolkit, I seized processes of valuation involved in ordinary experience (Bidet et al, 2011; Dewey, 2005), i.e. attachments and motives of ease or discomfort in their making (Joseph, 1998; Hennion, 2009; Yaneva, 2020). By this way, it becomes possible to understand ambiances and environment by a repertoire of entities that produce these affordances (Gibson, 1979). To inquire ambiance in then to track these local compositions of experience interrogating precisely their affordances (and counter affordances), their continuity and robustness or fragility. These attachments and experiential engagements rely on all types of elements – sensitive, dimensional (width and continuity), pragmatical, socio-historical or interactional – as long as they support their continuation. Experience and engagement are constantly modulated but are still following the yarn of a “mobile wave of relevance” (Goffman, 1971). These intrigues of engagement are graspable by a photographic inquiry by walking (Petiteau, Renoux, 2018), seizing configurations of set of elements that afford ease, attachments, and inquiring about their interdependency through the framing process (Ocquidant, forthcoming). This is a way to inquire and document “landscapes” as an art of propagation of different entities (Corajoud, 2010), which remains quite close to its ecological acceptation as a matrix of heterogeneous and interdependent elements crossed by corridors (Dajoz, 2019). At last, studying gazes in movement with eye-tracker permit to locate and interrogate the continuity and the loss of engagements, by examining patterns of eye’s movement (Spanjar, Suurebroek, 2020; Cerclet, Kapoula, 2020; Hollander et al, 2019). When walkers lose the yarn of their engagement, a phenomena of speed and seeking gaze can be observed (Fotios et al., 2015; Cerclet, Ocquidant, 2023). The stability of engagement is observable at the opposite by a quite regular gaze movement and long enough pauses (Simpson et al, 2019). This article will aim to exemplifying these assumptions with cases studied as a relevant methodology to document ambiances. Such an approach could be leaded with an interdisciplinary team, social scientist (to grasp the user experience), photographs (even amateurs), and ecologists or geographers and computer scientist to map the surveyed zones. It could lead to constitute a database for architects, landscapists and polic actors, and more widely could strengthen a landscape public culture construction (Trom, Zimmerman, 2001). It would also be a way to mobilize dwellers as landscapist amateurs’ in a participative science approach (Manceron, 2025).

Keywords: Experience, attachment, ethnography, photography, eye, tracker

Empathic Narrative Inquiry as a Tool for Exploring Lived Hospital Ambiances, case study: Algerian healthcare facilities

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Abstract

This study emerges from extensive doctoral research conducted across multiple Algerian healthcare facilities and presents a reflective examination of methodological approaches to access the lived experiences of patients in psychiatric and neurological settings. After evaluating several field research techniques, empathic narrative inquiry incorporating both visual and oral and written components emerged as the most compelling and effective methodology. This paper aims to thoroughly document this empathic narrative investigative method, its practical application in clinical environments, and the nuanced conditions required for its successful implementation.

Two complementary questionnaires were carefully developed through an iterative process: the first, designed specifically for patients, explored their multisensory perception of spatial ambiances (including light quality, acoustic environments, thermal comfort, material textures, architectural design, and spatial organization); the second, tailored for healthcare professionals, investigated the relational dynamics and organizational frameworks that shape the hospital environment. The empathic narrative approach was deliberately applied only to the patient questionnaire, creating a methodological space that encouraged participants to express their sensory and emotional experiences of hospital spaces with greater depth and authenticity.

Interviews were strategically conducted as empathic narrative sessions in carefully selected environments that fostered a sense of security and calm for participants. In alignment with rigorous ethical standards and cultural sensitivities, the visual and oral empathic narrative techniques were implemented with minimal intrusive equipment. The progressive implementation of this empathic narrative inquiry methodology followed a structured timeline: initially, in October 2018, 19 questionnaires were distributed within the neurology department of CHU Ibn Sina in Annaba; subsequently, in February 2019, 34 responses were gathered at CHU Benbadis in Constantine's neurology unit; finally, the research culminated in June 2019 with 322 semi-structured empathic narrative interviews combining visual and oral techniques conducted across various psychiatric units of the specialized El Razi Hospital in Annaba.

The empathic narrative approach, fundamentally centered on researcher-participant emotional resonance, visual cues, situated speech, and active, compassionate listening, facilitated the collection of exceptionally rich qualitative data deeply embedded in lived spatial experiences. These empathic narratives underwent rigorous analysis through a sophisticated qualitative methodology employing thematic coding frameworks and discursive interpretation models.

This analytical process revealed significant patterns including perceptual invariants across different patient populations, clearly defined zones of comfort and discomfort within hospital spaces, and specific sensory friction points related to architectural and design elements of the healthcare environment.

This contribution makes a compelling case for the recognition and broader adoption of empathic narrative inquiry as a sophisticated investigative tool for accessing and understanding user experiences within healthcare facilities. The findings demonstrate how this empathic visual-oral narrative approach bridges the gap between objective spatial measurements and subjective experiential qualities that significantly impact patient wellbeing. This research opens promising avenues for more sensitive and inclusive approaches to healthcare facility design, positioning itself at the productive intersection of architectural theory, environmental psychology, medical sociology, and cognitive sciences.

Methods and tools for designing the ambiances

In-motion Urban Ambiances: Assessing Walkability, and Safety Perception Through Immersive Virtual Reality Simulation

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Abstract

Urban environments are essential for fostering a comfortable and healthy walking experience. Nonetheless, many cities prioritize traffic efficiency through a functionalist perspective, often neglecting pedestrian needs (1). Assessing walkability by considering a person's experience in motion is challenging; indeed, unlike other indicators (e.g., solar radiation), it lacks unified and objective standards, as personal experience can vary significantly within a ten-minute walk (2). Building on these considerations, this study proposes a method to assess pedestrian experience, evaluating walkability and perceived safety in urban crossing areas. The approach integrates experiential simulation via Immersive Virtual Reality (IVR) with the exp-EIA© (experiential Environmental Impact Assessment) method. A data collection and analysis protocol were developed, using IVR navigation as a stimulus to capture users' responses to different environments. The resulting insights aim to support people-centered approaches in urban and mobility planning. The contribution outlines the rationale of the protocol for data collection developed to investigate people's walking experiences along an urban path.

The data collection protocol included: (1) the development of a high-fidelity simulation representing both static and dynamic environmental elements, including visual and sound components; (2) the use of an effective participant-guided locomotion system in the experiment; (3) the involvement of a representative sample of the local population under investigation; and (4) the integration of psychological, behavioral, and physiological data to investigate the personal experience along the route. To demonstrate its applicability, the experiment focuses on a two-lane street in Milan—a critical pedestrian corridor between two university campuses in a dense historic area that is frequently occupied by parked vehicles. A high-fidelity 3D digital model was developed to represent current conditions and alternative designs of the signalized crossing area. Before the final phase of the study—with participants of different ages, genders, and levels of area familiarity—a preliminary test was conducted with a small number of participants navigating the scenarios in IVR.

During this experiment, psychological data (i.e., emotions, environmental preference, and restoration) were directly collected via a questionnaire in IVR, while physiological data (heart rate, skin conductance, and eye-tracking) were recorded via wearables to assess participants' experiences. Additionally, the study takes into consideration macro-level environmental data (e.g., urban morphology), micro-level street elements (e.g., sidewalks, crosswalks and traffic lights), and dynamic environmental factors (weather conditions and traffic flow) in order to accurately depict the contextual urban conditions of the experiment enhance its overall ecological validity, and relate the study outcomes to the specific urban and street typologies. In the next stage, correlation analysis will be conducted to identify potential relationships between environmental variables and pedestrian responses. Ultimately, findings from the broader application of this protocol will serve as a foundation for a decision-support system aimed at informing design strategies and policy-making for inclusive urban development.

(1) Southworth, M., 2005. Designing the Walkable City. *Journal of Urban Planning and Development* 131, 246–257. [https://doi.org/10.1061/\(ASCE\)0733-9488\(2005\)131:4\(246\)](https://doi.org/10.1061/(ASCE)0733-9488(2005)131:4(246))

(2) Piga, B.E.A., Rainisio, N., Stancato, G., Boffi, M., 2023. Mapping the In-Motion Emotional Urban Experiences: An Evidence-Based Method. *Sustainability* 15, 7963. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su1510796>

Keywords: Urban Walkability, Immersive Virtual Reality, Protocol Development, Safety Perception

Narrating Architectural and Urban Ambiances: An Interdisciplinary Investigation of the Living Urban Image through the UNARCODE Project

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Abstract

In the evolving discourse of architecture and urban studies, the concept of ambiance has become increasingly central for understanding how built environments are experienced through sensory, perceptual and spatial dimensions. The UNARCODE (Urban Narrative Codes) project engages with this concept through an interdisciplinary lens, investigating how ambiances are not only perceived bodily and spatially, but also encoded narratively. The project poses the central research question: How can narrative-based methods help reveal and communicate the architectural and urban ambiances?

Funded by TÜBİTAK and based in Trabzon, UNARCODE investigates how the “living image” of the city is shaped and transmitted through sensory and affective practices and atmospheres. UNARCODE is grounded in the premise that cities are not solely collections of physical infrastructure, but are also living texts shaped by historical layering, cultural practices, and subjective interpretations. Ambiances, in this view, are not passive atmospheric backdrops, but active, sensory and affective fields that reflect and influence urban life. This perspective expands the scope of ambiance theory by integrating narrative as both a method and a phenomenon of ambiance itself.

The project's methodology is rooted in multi-modal, in-situ observation combining spatial theory, sketching and narrative inquiry. Five rounds of fieldwork have been carried out since the fall of 2024 at 20 nodes along the selected experience route in Trabzon city center, each chosen for its layered urban fabric and unique atmospheric qualities. This methodology emphasizes the importance of embodied and situated experience for ambiance research, responding to the limitations of purely visual or quantitative approaches. It also facilitates cross-disciplinary dialogue, with contributions from architecture, narratology, linguistics, sociology, and computer-data engineering. UNARCODE thus serves as a model of transdisciplinary collaboration, where methodological diversity is not only tolerated but essential to capturing the complexity of lived ambiances.

Preliminary findings suggest that urban ambiances are hybrid formations, consisting of sensory stimuli, material textures, spatial rhythms, and deeply embedded narratives. Some aspects—such as sketches and architectural concepts—can be measured and analyzed. Others, including mood, memory, or affective resonance, are more effectively captured through narrative inquiry. Rather than imposing rigid definitions, UNARCODE advocates for a plural, layered understanding of ambiance: one that values subjective perception and lived experience as vital components of spatial analysis.

In conclusion, urban ambiances are not only multi-sensory but also narratively coded—emerging through individual and collective acts of meaning-making. UNARCODE contributes to the development of ambiance theory by proposing a narrative- sensory approach to studying urban environments.

It argues that ambiances are not only experienced but also told—and that these stories shape our understanding of place as much as architecture or infrastructure. The project offers tools and insights for spatial designers, urban planners, and scholars seeking to engage more deeply with the experiential and narrative dimensions of space. Ultimately, it calls for an ambiance-sensitive design culture that listens to the stories cities tell—and helps tell new ones in return.

The Relevance of the Biophilic Approach in the Retrofit of Portuguese Public School Buildings. A Systematic Literature Review

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Abstract

The rehabilitation of existing public schools, within the current context of climate urgency and resource scarcity, has become an essential strategy for the qualification of learning spaces. Within this framework, the biophilic approach – which promotes the integration of natural elements into the built environment – offers a relevant contribution to the architectural retrofit of school buildings, by potentially enhancing benefits in terms of thermal comfort, psychosocial well-being, and cognitive performance of users.

The research was structured through a Systematic Mapping (SM) and a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) of the last five years, with the aim of gathering and classifying research methods related to the assessment of the impact of these disciplines in school environments, sample selection criteria, and result presentation. The SCOPUS, EBSCO, and Google Scholar databases were utilized, with searches based on the keywords "biophilic school buildings," "public school architecture," "well-being," "connection with nature," "learning environment," and "retrofit."

The objective is to identify design guidelines that can orient regenerative interventions in existing schools, based on a holistic approach – the Biophilic Well-being Systems Approach (BWSA) – which articulates environmental sustainability, constructive efficiency, and emotional connection with nature. The analysis includes four international reference case studies, which illustrate the effectiveness of biophilic architecture in diverse educational contexts, offering applicable insights to the Portuguese territory, where such studies are still scarce. The results underscore the strategic opportunity that biophilic retrofit represents for transforming obsolete schools into healthy, sustainable, and pedagogically innovative environments.

This study seeks to identify biophilic architecture strategies in schools and their reported impacts on the school environment in the literature, contributing to the definition of intervention guidelines that promote healthier and more nature-connected public schools, aligned with the contemporary needs of education.

The results show a broadening in the diversity of strategies, although their application in the Portuguese built environment is still quantitatively insufficient.

Multidisciplinary methods for ambience design in the built environment

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Abstract

For ambience to be incorporated into the built environment's design process, practical co-collaborative methods must be developed that can integrate multidisciplinary design to enable holistic experiential outcomes.

The paper discusses an adopted method for incorporating ambience into design practices, which uses a flexible framework that focuses on the human experience of individuals, and their interaction with the built environment.

The importance of sensory perception, cultural context, knowledge/meaning, and emotional response are discussed in relation to an experienced place and desired ambience outcomes. The need for holistically considered multidisciplinary outputs that co-ordinate specialist disciplines practices and expertise alongside planned programming and management of spaces is also discussed in terms of developing considered ambience design interventions. The paper will focus on the first two stages of the framework where the work has been practically trialled and evaluated. The first stage of the framework is to converge on the desired ambience/experiential outcomes early in the project's inception between stakeholders. It will also reflect on the need for an understood lexicon of perceptual attributes for a specific project and team to work with. The second stage provides a method of in situ co-collaborative stakeholder engagement. The Experiencewalk method evaluated in its application to specific project case studies, to derive input on the required ambience/experience of an urban place or setting, from identified important stakeholder groups. The latter stages of the framework are discussed and reflected upon, but not evaluated, as these stages have not been fully tested within a project design. Suggestions of applications are made relating to testing and iteration of designs/interventions. Looking to develop methods that ensure effectiveness and adaptability in various project stages and contexts.

Finally, the need for establishing a suitable project specific experiential / ambience design brief is argued. One that can be incorporated into a projects wider design brief, completion testing, occupation, and growth within its setting. The challenges of integrating well defined ambience and experiential holistic outcomes into the established workflows that relate to planning and procurement of built environments are discussed.

The intent is to provide an opportunity for discussion and debate around the practical challenges of integrating ambience research into the design and construction of the built environment. To learn from sharing this information, and ultimately to refine and develop the framework further.

Keywords: Ambience, Design, Multidisciplinary, Engagement, Human experience

Aesthetic frameworks and critiques of atmospheres

Sound, Noise, and Master Plans

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Abstract

This paper explores six European urban development plans, evaluating the quantity and quality with which they address sound-related issues. The development plans include three from Northern Europe (Copenhagen, Helsinki, and Stockholm) and three from Central Europe (Budapest, Vienna, and Warsaw). The study focused on textual information of the development plans – all non-textual information was disregarded (e.g. maps, charts etc.). To identify sound-related content, three search terms were used: soundscape, sound, and noise. These terms were analysed in both their immediate and broader contexts in all the documents. Significant differences were found between the frequency of the word noise in the master plans. The word soundscape did not appear in either. In the immediate context, a strong association emerged between noise and air pollution. Through the broader context, three primary motivations for sound-related measures were identified: environmental protection, health of inhabitants, and restorative quietness-the promise of freedom from noise. To better define these motivations, a conceptual framework of motivators was developed; these motivators were then critically examined through the lens of soundscape research. Almost all studied city plans were found to exclusively follow the Environmental Noise Management Strategy (ENM, coined by Bild et al., 2016) and conceptualize sounds as “pollutants” (following Steele, 2018) with a few exceptions from Stockholm City Plan. The plans generally displayed a loose definition of noise and were typically found to create a merger between noise and air pollution. Although the concept of soundscape, or sounds as resources, were not found to be part of the studied planning documents, noise was widely recognised as a problem and, as such, seems to be the gateway to sound-related discourse in city-scale urban planning. The aim of this study is thus twofold: to inform soundscape researchers about current trends and narratives in urban planning, and to offer professionals of the built environment new perspectives on the role of sound in urban spaces.

Keywords: soundscape, environmental sound, urban planning, noise

The Theory of Ambiance in the Visual Artworks: A Method to Read the Picturesque Atmosphere

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Abstract

The picturesque as a term of the eighteenth century has the stage for different debates regarding its interdisciplinary applicability covering the art, architecture, and urban design. As such, the term has brought debates between the beautiful and sublime dichotomy in aesthetic context with its multi-faceted identity. The aesthetic effects and appreciation of the picturesque meaning “picture-like” were reduced to a design language that can only be understood by the sense of sight, at best. At worst, it was formalized as a third way of aesthetic feeling in the dual categorization or something shaped by mixing the design elements and contexts leading subjects to the judgments of the beautiful and sublime. However, this multi-faceted meaning of the term and its interdisciplinary applicability allow it to be read with one of the most known theory of ambiance, that is, spatial atmosphere, based on empiricist idealism rather than the beautiful/sublime judgments stemming from the rationalist approach. The rambling, viewing, and reading subjects of the picturesque spatiality were also invited to this scenario as the storytellers/perceivers of a multi-sensory and para-sensory ambiance. The ambiance of the picturesque takes on the task of creating an experience for a human with its potential of being a concept generated “whereby” (Rauh, 2019) the mind and object, thereby not only covering the artistic inclusions but also physiological changes of brain such as neuroaesthetic theory. Therefore, I may claim that the concept of picturesque depends on an even synesthetic structure leading subjects to feel more than the beautiful and sublime, by making them a part of the overall scene, narrating, and creating the scenario of a spatiotemporal atmosphere. In this paper, I criticize the eye-based approach towards the picturesque because I may claim that the picturesque is much more than being an eye-based concept that only has a visual quality. In other words, I would like to denote that the picturesque has its atmospheric layers that help to create strong inter-subjectivities and inter-objectivities via these layers, and therefore, it might be accepted as a root of twentieth-century understanding of the environmental atmosphere having empiricist ties. Based on this formation, I aim to provide a symbiotic reading path linking eighteenth- and nineteenth-century aesthetic concepts to our contemporary atmospheric discussions in both past and current days. By looking inside the frame and outside of it at the same time, and to use the picturesque theory and design as a bridge by proposing a reading model for atmospheric analyses with the picturesque term. I examined the term via eighteenth- and nineteenth-century representations of gardens in England through visual artworks. My analysis has shown that the picturesque atmosphere ascribes a spatiotemporal meaning to its own being, aiming to eliminate the tensions of the eighteenth century and twentieth/twenty-first centuries at the intersection of aesthetics and architectural disciplines.

Rauh, A. (2019). The Atmospheric Whereby: Reflections on Subject and Object. *Open Philosophy* 2(1), 147-159. <https://doi.org/10.1515/opphil-2019->

Keywords: picturesque atmosphere, spatiality, visual artworks, the theory of ambiance, eighteenth-century aesthetics

The SR.11 Grand Tour: Less is Bore

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Abstract

This essay explores the reification process at work along a stretch of SR. 11 - Strada Regionale 11 (Regional Road 11) in Veneto, Italy. Its aim is to highlight how the commodification of space presents its concreteness only when the usual (in this case: automobilistic) modes of travel are abandoned.

Starting from the practices of urban derive inaugurated by Guy Debord - which involve the abandonment of the usual functional reasons for travel and privilege the solicitations of the terrain and the encounters that correspond to them - the essay assumes the space of SR. 11 as an abstract space. It does so both in the sense proposed by John Brinckerhoff Jackson (a landscape whose meaning is largely accessible only through the windshield of a car), and in the sense proposed in Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis (a space ordered by something that comes from elsewhere, that is not visible).

Drawing on the distinction proposed by Lefebvre between the carnal/total body and the social body, the essay aims to reveal the concrete nature of SR.11 and unveil the forces that shape it.

To achieve this, the essay proposes two research approaches.

The first approach is of a rhythmanalytical kind and originates from the researcher's awareness of being surrounded by a myriad of human and non-human things and actions in motion that produce complex rhythms, sometimes harmonious, sometimes disharmonic. These are rhythms that, subjected to a subjective and transfiguring gaze - that of the body freed from the motorised envelope/device - materialise themselves physically and temporally in ruins because they are subject to processes of spiritual obliteration and consequent morphological transformation.

The second approach, which is auditory in nature, is based on active listening to the soundscapes along the SR. 11. Through sound recording techniques, this method highlights the relationships between sound, the built environment and bodily experiences, revealing how sounds - often overlooked - are an integral part of the spatial production process. Furthermore, it allows us to explore the sound variations and nuances that characterise SR. 11, helping to make tangible, through sounds, the concrete nature of a place shaped by the logic of the market.

The essay concludes by considering how the use of the researcher's senses could be transformed into a practice necessary to show not only how subjection to preconceived rules and lifestyles is indispensable to demonstrate how a certain type of economic development has shaped a specific local society, but above all to understand how this type of economic development has acted as a system that has established itself on the disregard of the body and its time and living spaces.

Case studies and situated devices

Microhistories of Architectural Ambiances: Heritage and the Materiality of the Body of Architecture in the Oeuvre of Eduardo Souto de Moura

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Abstract

In recent years, various definitions have sought to articulate the notion of ambiance or atmosphere within the fields of Architecture and Urban Studies. This interest has reached the point where architects such as Peter Zumthor have even published works under this title. The ambiance or atmosphere of a space is often perceived as the overall feeling associated with the immediate, first-hand experience of each individual. While the connection between experience and ambiance is highly relevant, what is often overlooked is the interrelated importance of heritage and identity in shaping ambiance. In this regard, the renowned Portuguese architect Eduardo Souto de Moura argues that “heritage is not an object; it’s a geography, an environment, an ambiance.”

Following this line of thought, Carlos Machado, in his essay *The Presence of the Past*, argues that for Souto de Moura, architecture should be like a painting Cézanne sought to create: solid and enduring. Hence the significance of Souto de Moura’s question: how can an architect design an environment? To approach this question, Souto de Moura returns to the essentials, just as Cézanne sought answers through the abstraction of forms. Complementing this return to the essence of architecture as geometry is the careful selection of materials in harmony with the microhistories of the site. Through the interpretation of pre-existing environments, these choices capture and shape the continuous heritage and identity of the built artefact. In other words, architecture in the work of Eduardo Souto de Moura is not perceived as an isolated object, but as part of an ambiance—one that both shapes and is shaped by its context. It is in this framework that one might refer to Maurice Merleau-Ponty, who stated, “we come not to see the work of art but the world according to the work.”

The aim of this article is therefore to build upon the concept of heritage within the context of ambiance theory, through an analysis of the work of Eduardo Souto de Moura. The article explores the notions of microhistory and materiality in architecture as expressions of the identity of the built environment. It draws on both primary and secondary sources, relevant citations, and academic bibliography, focusing in particular on two of Souto de Moura’s projects: the Ruin Restoration in Gerês and the Casa das Histórias Paula Rego Museum. The primary methodology adopted is qualitative research, offering a reflection on the concepts discussed.

Keywords: Ambiance, Microhistory, Heritage, Materiality, Souto de Moura, Architecture

Sensitive Ecologies: Artistic Installations, Urban Ambiances and Critical Spatial Practices

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Abstract

This paper reflects on artistic installations in public space as poetic and critical devices for producing urban ambiances, with a focus on environmental issues and the sensitive ecology of space. Drawing on ambiance theory (Thibaud; Bohme) and integrating critical perspectives on the production of space (Lefebvre), situated spatial practices (Rendell), and public art as sociopolitical mediation (Miles), it argues that these interventions operate as micropolitics of presence and perception.

In the context of climate crisis and environmental degradation, many recent artistic practices abandon monumental or purely aesthetic gestures in order to activate multispecies relations, material and affective ecologies, urban rhythms, and natural cycles. Installations that harvest rainwater, render atmospheric flows visible, expose pollution, or propose ephemeral gardens become atmospheric experiences that engage the body, listening, and attentiveness

- and, in doing so, call for ethical and political responsibility.

These works do not merely represent the environment but reconfigure the very idea of urban cohabitation, challenging the functionalist and anthropocentric logics of planning (Latour; Tsing). With Lefebvre, urban ambiances are understood as socially produced spaces, where conflict, memory, and possibilities of transformation unfold. With Miles and Rendell, these practices are framed as critical and situated forms of symbolic resistance, opening cracks in the dominant narrative of the neoliberal city and reimagining more livable futures.

This contribution helps to define architectural and urban atmospheres by proposing an expanded and critical understanding of ambiance as a sensitive, ecological, and politically situated production. By examining public art installations as critical spatial practices (Olafur Eliasson; Andrés Jaque/OFFPOLINN/; Agnes Denes; Isabel Barbas; among others) it argues that these works not only create atmospheres but interrogate their very conditions of possibility - activating new forms of cohabitation, attentiveness, and urban transformation. Atmosphere, thus, is no longer merely an aesthetic effect, but a contested field and a site for reimagining contemporary forms of inhabitation.

Keywords: Urban Ambiances, Artistic Installations, Critical Spatial Practices, Environmental Art, Atmosphere, Public Space, Multispecies Urbanism, Sensitive Ecologies, Political Aesthetics.

Dansbana! as urban heterotopia

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Abstract

As our urban cities have become more diverse, it is of outmost importance to provide places where people from different backgrounds can meet through cultural exchange. However, public realm mainly represents traditional and national norms rather than the cultural or social demography of its' inhabitants. Furthermore, gender inequality is still one of the biggest challenges for a sustainable urban development. Using the work of the organisation Dansbana!, creating public spaces together with focus groups of young girls as a point of departure, and in particular the newly built urban square Rosa torget (the pink square) in Malmo, Sweden, this paper aims to visualise ways to create norm creative public space through multidisciplinary site investigations such as 'test-dancing' to include in situ and participatory perspectives. Rosa torget is an outdoor interior, a public exterior space with interior qualities, contrasting the surrounding urban landscape through a play with scales, materiality and colour. Building on the tradition of public spaces in classical European cities as a place for action with connotations to the theatre, or in Hannah Arendt's words, "a space of appearance", the organisation Dansbana! aims to create the sensorial feeling of being in a space of its own, by Foucault defined as a heterotopia, to invite personal expressions to take place in the public sphere.

Could theories of heterotopia be applied on urban planning to create more norm creative public spaces?

What role(s) does the architect need to take to be able to create a sensorial feeling of a heterotopia in public space?

What type of places makes people want to dance in public?

Keywords: public space, dance, participation, heterotopia, urban interior, exterior interior, Rosa torget

Re-Illuminating Antiquity: Nocturnal Ambiances and Urban Heritage in the Nighttime Lighting of Ephesus

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Abstract

This paper explores the transformation of spatial and sensory experience in the ancient city of Ephesus through its contemporary nighttime lighting design. As one of the most visited archaeological sites in the Mediterranean, Ephesus presents a unique case for investigating how artificial lighting redefines the perception, atmosphere, and use of urban heritage after dark.

Drawing on theories of urban ambiance and architectural phenomenology, this study examines how lighting interventions mediate the relationship between visitors and ancient ruins. Through on-site observations, light mapping, and photometric analysis, the paper analyses the ways in which light choreographs movement, evokes emotions, and reconfigures the spatial legibility of key monuments, such as the Library of Celsus and the Marble Road.

By situating Ephesus within the broader discourse on cultural heritage lighting, the paper addresses questions of authenticity, temporality, and sensory engagement. It argues that nighttime illumination can either enhance or compromise the interpretive depth of historical sites, depending on its sensitivity to context and narrative.

This research contributes to ongoing discussions within COST Action CA23145 by foregrounding the role of ambiance in the nocturnal reanimation of archaeological landscapes. It invites a rethinking of light as not merely a technical tool but a cultural medium that shapes our urban memory and architectural imagination.

Mapping & assessing the urban atmosphere

Toward a paradigm shift in neighborhood evaluation: Exploring the Relationship Between Spatial Geometry, Spatial Performance, and Quality of Space

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Abstract

This paper presents a quantitative and qualitative analysis of middle-class mass housing (MCMH) neighborhoods built in Europe between the 1950s and 1970s. Using a structured and carefully designed template, we developed a methodology for analyzing MCMH case studies, enabling a comparative assessment of the urban and sustainable dimensions of prominent MCMH neighborhoods across Europe. The goal is to identify the urban and architectural characteristics that align with the core concepts defining MCMH. As a result, we were able to map over 110 MCMH neighborhoods across multiple cities in 30 European countries.

The analytical process facilitated by our tool comprises two key steps: 1) qualitative analysis, which allows for the integration of contextual information related to social infrastructure, public space, community engagement, and environmental sustainability. The results generated by our tool demonstrate correlations between space usage and measurable neighborhood parameters, and 2) spatio-geometry analysis, which focuses on quantifying and analyzing measurable parameters of building form, urban layout, and spatial relationships.

The data collected through the templates was integrated into the GIS platform to enable multi- perspective analysis of the built environment. Within this framework, a compelling research project has emerged, leveraging the exploratory capabilities of advanced analytical tools. The integration of all case studies into the GIS platform allows for original analyses across a range of themes, including the distribution of land uses (e.g., open spaces, building typologies, green areas, parking) and the generation of comparative statistics across all case studies. To evaluate the qualitative data, we developed a unique methodology that analyzes recurring themes, variations in terminology, and clusters of related concepts. This approach revealed common patterns across MCMH neighborhoods, including frequently observed characteristics as well as those specific to certain cases. These include distinctions such as walkable versus less walkable neighborhoods, and varying degrees of connectivity to central areas- whether by foot, car, or public transport. The findings also reveal recurring patterns in the use and design of open spaces within many MCMH neighborhoods, including the presence of public, semi-public, and private areas, as well as the generally modest size of these spaces. Many neighborhoods feature recreational and sports facilities, are located near rivers, and include playgrounds for children. Notably, green elements emerged as critical components, contributing significantly to the character and quality of these environments.

Our analysis of quality of life and other qualitative aspects highlighted a recurring “sense of identity” across numerous neighborhoods.

This sense of identity often correlates with additional factors such as the presence of expansive green spaces, a variety of apartment sizes, and distinctive designs of open areas. Furthermore, we explored neighborhood diversity and spatial readability-both of which were extensively discussed in relation to the MCMH context. Our digital tool enables researchers and practitioners to systematically analyze spatial and geometrical indicators across multiple scales ranging from individual buildings to entire neighborhoods. This facilitates exploring complex relationships between built form and social outcomes, providing insights into how spatial patterns influence functionality, social performance, and overall quality of life.

Keywords: MCMH (Middle, Class, Mass, Housing), urban quality, GIS, urban documentation, urban analysis

Locating Urban Ambiances: Mapping Sarajevo's Experiential Terrains for Situated Ambiance Research

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Abstract

As the discourse on *ambiance* gains increasing prominence in architecture and urban studies, there is a pressing need to move beyond generalized theoretical abstraction and toward empirically grounded, context-sensitive inquiry. This paper engages Sarajevo—a city marked by dense historical layering, socio-political rupture, and multisensory complexity—as a critical site for identifying spatial contexts where urban ambiance may be meaningfully perceived, analyzed, and theorized.

Rather than advancing a comprehensive theoretical model, the paper undertakes a preliminary cartography of Sarajevo's ambient zones through a selective analysis of urban sites corresponding to four key historical strata: the Ottoman-era Bašaršija, Austro-Hungarian civic quarters, socialist housing districts such as Alipašino Polje, and contemporary post-war developments. Each typology is examined in relation to its sensory textures, historical resonances, cultural semiotics, and patterns of everyday use.

By proposing these locations as *spatial anchors* for future ambiance research, the paper articulates a set of interpretive criteria—multi-sensorial density, historical sedimentation or rupture, symbolic charge, and lived social dynamics—that may guide subsequent investigations. This mapping constitutes a methodological prelude for future research methods including sensory ethnography, acoustic and olfactory documentation, and participatory urban walks.

In identifying Sarajevo's key experiential terrains, the paper aims to establish a foundation for a place-based, materially embedded ambiance theory—one capable of capturing the affective and mnemonic dimensions of urban space in transitional and post-conflict settings.

Keywords: Urban ambiance, Sensory urbanism, Historical Layering, Spatial typologies

Assessing Residents' Satisfaction with the Physical Environment in Large Housing Estates: Insights from Novi Sad, Serbia

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Abstract

Large housing estates (LHEs) in Central and Eastern European (CEE) cities represent a spatial legacy of the socialist era and continue to comprise a substantial share of the region's urban housing stock, thus remaining central to local housing markets. Since the collapse of socialism, their development has taken divergent paths across the region, largely shaped by the degree of government intervention. Two broad approaches can be identified: planned, policy-driven regeneration, typical of Baltic and Central European cities, and a more laissez-faire model, prevalent in Eastern European and Balkan contexts. The latter often results in market-led infill developments and/or spontaneous, often DIY, refurbishments, but typically fails to prevent physical deterioration, leaving many LHEs at a "crossroads between regeneration and degradation." While the physical condition of the built environment remains a critical aspect of neighborhood assessment, it is equally important to consider how residents perceive and experience their neighborhoods.

In the pursuit of more livable neighborhoods, researchers have long sought to understand how best to meet residents' expectations. Neighborhood satisfaction, defined as the degree of "congruence between one's neighborhood aspirations and one's actual residential circumstances" (Campbell et al., quoted in Lee & Guest, 1983: 288), or as "a measure of the overall contentment with one's neighborhood" (Mouratidis & Yiannakou, 2022: 1), has emerged as a key indicator of neighborhood livability. Investigating the factors that influence neighborhood satisfaction can help shape more responsive housing and urban policies, while identifying sources of dissatisfaction can guide decision-makers in prioritizing targeted improvements. The paper examines residents' satisfaction with selected features of the neighborhood physical environment (NPE: pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, playgrounds, sports fields, open-air gathering places, greenery, street furniture, and aesthetics) and their overall neighborhood satisfaction in two LHEs "at a crossroads" and one post-socialist residential district, which exemplify the two prevailing multifamily housing typologies in Novi Sad, Serbia's second-largest city. Shaped under distinct socio-political conditions, these districts reflect fundamentally different land use regulations, planning approaches, and design practices, thus providing a basis for comparing residents' satisfaction with their dwelling environments.

Research data were collected through 162 structured face-to-face interviews, using a Likert-scale questionnaire complemented by open-ended questions. The data were analyzed using SPSS 23.0. ANOVA, Scheffé post hoc tests and Cronbach's alpha.

The findings reveal that most residents of the LHEs are satisfied with their NPE, report higher levels of overall neighborhood satisfaction, and do not intend to move, suggesting a relatively attached population and a high degree of residential stability, despite the absence of regeneration efforts.

In contrast, residents of the post-socialist district evaluate their NPE less favorably, with a majority expressing a willingness to relocate - often naming the LHEs as their preferred alternative. Notably, they miss the physical features associated with socialist-era planning the most.

Lee, B. A., & Guest, A. M. (1983). Determinants of Neighborhood Satisfaction: A Metropolitan-Level Analysis. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 24(2), 287–303.

Mouratidis, K., & Yiannakou, A. (2022). What makes cities livable? Determinants of neighborhood satisfaction and neighborhood happiness in different contexts. *Land Use Policy*, 112, 105855.

Keywords: physical environment, large housing estates, neighborhood satisfaction, Central and East European cities

How does it feel, to be on your own (...) a complete unknown? The lack of visual representation of women in urban signage

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Abstract

Inspired by Bob Dylan's lyrics, the question of how does it feel to be unseen and ignored as a woman in public space holds a significant relevance in the world in which we are living, while women are still being excluded in public space, defined as "the other". Emphasizing the importance of a just, safe and equal ambience for women in public space, this paper reports research results which explore the visual representation of women in official urban signage (OUS) documented in Dizengoff street in Tel Aviv, presenting implications with great importance worldwide.

OUS is a collective term coined to refer to all signage systems placed by the authorities that inform, warn, direct, and guide us. Research assumption was that OUS, which are bound to regulations and function as a service to the public, should be bias- and prejudice-free, unaffected by any intentions or hidden agendas, except for "doing their job". The alleged neutrality and transparency of OUS make it a much more interesting case study, inviting the attempt to unmask its seeming objectivity. OUS also index the municipal regulatory powers that maintain their functioning. When we react to a sign or traffic light, we index ourselves in respect to the regulatory powers, as law-abiding citizens (Scollon & Scollon, 2003, p. x). Thus, another significant element of OUS, in addition to its seeming objectivity is indexicality.

Research question focuses on the visual means in which gender inequality is perpetuated in public space. The research comprises three parts: (1) historical overview of OUS worldwide

(2) multimodal analysis of OUS documented in Dizengoff street during 2018-2019, based on geo-semiotics (Scollon & Scollon, 2003) (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2006) (Jewitt & Henriksen, 2016) integrated with feminist perspectives (De Beauvoir, 1949/2000) (Butler, 1991) among others. Based on the analysis of both past and current fashion of OUS the research presents

(3) a list of visual communication insights to be implemented worldwide. These insights demonstrate various design principles promoting just ambience in public space for the sake of all inhabitants.

Keywords: visual representation, public space, gender, inequality, urban signage

Atmospheres & artistic devices

Atmospheres & Listening beyond standards: Understanding Sound Ambiances qualities with non- standard evaluation techniques

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Abstract

As contemporary urban and environmental challenges become increasingly entangled and layered, the concept of ambiance offers a vital framework for understanding how sensory, cultural, and spatial conditions shape lived experience. This research investigates how sound- perceived within specific architectural contexts-can become a primary and generative force in spatial design, rather than a post-design technical adjustment. In line with the goals of the COST Action CitySenZ CA23145 – Architectural and Urban Ambiances of European Cities, the study contributes to refining Ambiance Theory by exploring how sonic perception reveals embedded social, material, and historical dimensions of space.

Traditional acoustic design methodologies prioritize measurable parameters such as reverberation time, decibel levels, and frequency response. While valuable in certain functional settings, these metrics often fail to capture the richness and subtlety of in-situ sonic experience. This project proposes a framework of non-standard acoustic techniques aimed at uncovering the sensory and affective dimensions of what we call sound ambiance. These include the temporal unfolding of sound as it reverberates and dissipates, the interaction between sound and material surfaces, the spatial directionality and diffusion of acoustic waves, and the tonal coloration that gives each space its particular sonic signature. In many cases, these sonic attributes convey emotional and atmospheric qualities-such as tension, intimacy, fragility, or openness-that shape how a space is remembered, navigated, (and)or even socially understood.

The research methodology discusses and tries to integrate measurement devices and custom- built DIY tools such as modified microphones, directional sensors, and speaker arrays. Through site-specific recordings, impulse response testing with environmental sounds, and participatory listening practices, the project captures context-sensitive sonic phenomena that evade conventional acoustic analysis. These methods are deployed not to satisfy predefined technical goals, but to discover latent acoustic qualities-particularly in environments that are materially incomplete, historically layered, or socially improvised. This approach responds directly to the conference's guiding questions concerning multi- sensory, in-situ observation and interdisciplinary methods for studying ambiance. It emphasizes listening as both a perceptual and critical spatial practice capable of revealing over- looked dimensions of the built environment. By drawing from architecture, sound studies, urban design and sound arts the project advances inter- and transdisciplinary collaboration, creating space for dialogue between diverse epistemologies while proposing sound as a shared medium of inquiry.

The research also engages with the broader challenge of unifying terminology in ambiance studies. By distinguishing between what can be quantitatively measured, subjectively experienced, and narratively expressed, it contributes to conceptual alignment without erasing the diversity of disciplinary and cultural perspectives. The framework developed offers not only analytical tools but also a language for articulating the lived complexity of sonic environments.

Ultimately, this project argues that sound ambiance is not ancillary to space but central to its construction, perception, and transformation. By positioning sound as both indicator and interpreter, we reimagine architecture and urbanism as practices grounded not only in what is seen and built, but also in what is heard, felt, and resonantly lived.

Keywords: Sound ambiance, ambiance theory, acoustic perception, spatial design, embodied listening, resonance, diy, evaluation, non, standard

Light Neville Street: Facsimilies, Echos and Archives

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Abstract

The paper will outline the process and issues arising from archiving the designed immersive environment of Light Neville Street.

Light Neville Street, an engineered 100-metre-long tunnel thoroughfare into the city of Leeds incorporated a light and sound installation by artist Hans Peter Kuhn (DE) that engaged audiences as a ‘non-object’ based work of contemporary public sculpture, notable for its substantial incorporation of sound as a central component.

In partnership with the Henry Moore Institute (UK) Sculptors Papers archive, a resulting ‘live archive’ programme of interventions includes accessioning a comprehensive body of project documentation, drawings and audio works; VR facsimiles of the work in-situ; inter-views with the originating interdisciplinary art/design team; gathering public feedback; and the re-deployment of the Meyer speaker kit for non-profit use. The archive process has been curated by the author to prevent the cultural amnesia of a significant work of immersive art and design.

For over a decade, the interplay of light and sound transformed the gateway tunnel into an immersive urban landscape for its 19,000 everyday users, particularly those on foot. A Light and Sound Transit is one of only a handful of permanent sculptural works in the world that comprised sound and one of even fewer that engaged computing technologies.

Mixed with the ambient noise-scape, Kuhn’s composition of randomly selected sound files were heard in movement along the tunnel length via a high-performance 24 speaker system embedded within highly engineered wall panels designed to acoustically dampen vibrational frequencies of the traffic at low and high range. The artist described the intention for the work to create ‘*curiosity for the everyday user*’ (1), ‘*a smoother acoustic*’ blending the discordant traffic noise into a personal urban composition which was observed ‘to almost slow down *that environment*’ (2).

Intended to be in situ for 15 years, the acoustically designed tunnel environment with art-work was decommissioned in 2023.

Through the process of accessioning project documents, concerns arising include how to ensure the preservation of digital files in content management systems available (and affordable) in 50 years time or beyond. Working with the Sculptors Papers archivist, we have also explored how to enhance user experience, authenticity and narrative development.

Taking these findings into a transdisciplinary dialogue, a seminar ‘roundtable’ (28 May),

ARCHIVING THE INTANGIBLE MATERIALS OF PUBLIC SPACE AND SCULPTURE; ‘LIGHT’ NEVILLE STREET, with practitioners and academics will inform the conference paper.

Invited due to individual knowledge and practice in topic areas of archives and collections, acoustic architectural space, sound and immateriality, and public art & urban design, keynote questions are:

· What methods can be used to archive intangible materials, such as sound and space, as a preservable medium and what are the impacts of such? · How can accessioning and archival processes of such projects be future orientated to engage stakeholders and the public?

The archive can be found online on the Henry Moore Institute’s website, (henry-moore.org/light-neville-street).

(1) Kuhn HP (2009) Light Neville Street Archive <https://henry-moore.org/henry-moore-institute/research-library-and-archive/archive-of-sculptors-papers/archive-collections/light-neville-street/>

(2) Participant Respondent 29 May 2024 ReUnion Event Light Neville Street Archive <https://henry-moore.org/henry-moore-institute/research-library-and-archive/archive-of-sculptors-papers/archive-collections/light-neville-street/>

Keywords: SOUND, ARCHIVING, INTANGIBLE MATERIALS, URBAN DESIGN, ART, TRANS-DISCIPLINARITY

Anthropomorphisation of senses, experiences, emotions and memories: Fun Palace as a suggestive Artificially Intelligent Architecture by Cedric Price, 1961-1974

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Abstract

Politeness, interpersonal distance, flattery, judging others and ourselves, personality of characters and interfaces, imitating personality, good versus bad, negativity, arousal, gender, voices, source orientation, image size, audio fidelity, synchrony motion, scene changes, subliminal images - if we want to give all of these characteristics a name with reference to urbanised and architecturalised environment, that would definitely be a *Fun Palace* (1961- 1974, unbuilt) by English Architect and Planner Cedric Price (1934-2003). Based on the senses, experiences, emotions and memories of its participants, the spatial layout of the Palace kept on modifying itself. As a consequence, how did its users felt once experiencing a space with infinite or no urban or architectural boundaries and how did the system in return responded to the requests made by these 24/7 information and communication absorbers? While preceding the Embodied Cognitive Science paradigm with its situated, embodied, intelligent and emergent behavioural characteristics, what could we learn from Fun Palace as a non-urban and architectural space within the context of swinging sixties and seventies Britain? This paper discusses and explores the phenomenon of Fun Palace while placing it in the context of continuously changing atmospheres of senses, experiences, emotions and memories and attempts to visualise an urban/non-urban and architectural/non-architectural approaches presented by Price to its admirers.

Keywords: Cedric Price, Fun Palace, Embodied Cognitive Science, Phenomena, Cybernetics

Sensitive design, heritage & storytelling

Transferring Ambiance: Lessons from Persian Architectural Elements for Enhancing Urban Atmospheres in European Cities

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Abstract

The concept of “ambiance” has become a critical lens through which the spatial, sensory, and cultural dimensions of architectural and urban environments are understood and reimagined. In the context of European cities confronting complex climatic, social, and spatial transformations, there is a growing need for design strategies that enhance urban atmospheres in human-centred, place-sensitive, and sustainable ways. This paper explores how historical architectural elements from Persian architecture—developed over centuries in response to environmental and cultural needs—can offer valuable insight for ambiance-oriented design in European cities today.

The central research question guiding this investigation is: how can spatial strategies embedded in Persian architectural heritage inform the enhancement of urban ambiance in contemporary European contexts, particularly in response to climatic and social challenges? Focusing on key architectural features such as the *ivan* (vaulted semi-open hall), *badgir* (wind tower), *central courtyard*, *sahn* (open prayer courtyard), and the *chahar bagh* (quadri-partite garden), the study examines how these elements foster multi-sensory experiences and spatial richness through passive environmental regulation and symbolic spatial articulation.

Methodologically, the research is based on comparative architectural analysis, drawing from scholarly literature, historical treatises, and architectural documentation. The selected Persian elements are analysed in relation to their thermal performance, light modulation, acoustic dynamics, and visual composition, as well as their ability to express symbolic and social meaning through rhythmic spatial sequencing. The *ivan*, for example, not only facilitates climatic comfort but also symbolises a threshold between realms—sacred and mundane, public and private—offering a rhythmic and ceremonial transition that enhances spatial legibility and affective engagement. Similarly, the *chahar bagh* introduces metaphysical narratives into physical space, fostering reflective and collective inhabitation through its symmetry, water channels, and plantings.

These insights are set against the backdrop of current European urban design concerns, particularly in Southern Europe, where dense historical centres and rising temperatures increasingly strain public spaces. The study does not advocate literal replication of Persian forms but rather their conceptual adaptation—rethinking spatial transitions, enclosure strategies, and sensorial layering in terms relevant to contemporary materials and societal needs.

The anticipated findings suggest that Persian architectural principles can enrich ambiance-sensitive urban design in three key ways: (1) by offering passive microclimatic strategies that promote sensory comfort; (2) by fostering rhythmic and symbolic spatial transitions that support orientation, memory, and belonging; and (3) by embedding cultural narratives into the spatial fabric, creating emotionally resonant environments.

Ultimately, this paper contributes to ambiance theory by integrating cross-cultural architectural knowledge into the discourse on European urban futures. It challenges the spatial provincialism of conventional design approaches and opens pathways for intercultural dialogue in the making of ambiance-aware cities. By learning from the past—without replicating it—the research proposes a creative, adaptable, and inclusive model for reimagining the atmospheres of tomorrow’s living places.

Keywords: Architectural ambiance, Persian architecture, Urban atmosphere, Climate, adaptive design, Multisensory spatial experience, European urban contexts

Designing with Sensitivity: Trauma-Informed Design as a Human-Centred Ambience Strategy

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Abstract

As urban and architectural design increasingly grapple with the psychological and emotional impacts of space, Trauma-Informed Design (TID) offers a compelling framework for understanding how built environments can either harm or heal. Emerging at the intersection of architecture, psychology, and social care, TID emphasises the creation of spaces that promote safety, dignity, agency, and well-being, especially for individuals who have experienced adversity or trauma. While rooted initially in health and social care, the principles of TID are now being adapted across various design contexts, including housing, education, justice, and urban public spaces.

This paper explores TID as an applied ambience-oriented methodology that enriches the theoretical and practical dimensions of spatial experience. Rather than merely attending to functional requirements, TID engages with the sensory, emotional, and social atmospheres of a space, asking how users feel, interact, and navigate within them. It considers how elements such as natural light, calming colour palettes, adaptable furniture, and intuitive wayfinding can shape perceptions of control, reduce anxiety, and foster a sense of belonging. These qualities resonate deeply with ambience theory, which investigates how spatial configurations, materiality, and context give rise to lived atmospheres that are embodied, cultural, and affective.

The case studies from Hungary and Central-Eastern Europe illustrate the transformative potential of trauma-informed spatial strategies. Examples include Budapest's trauma-aware shelter services for women experiencing homelessness, which apply environmental psychology to support mental and physical recovery, and the Nordic Therapy Garden initiative in Kyiv, designed to assist individuals with PTSD in post-conflict settings. They demonstrate how local adaptation of TID can address region-specific legacies of social instability, displacement, and institutional mistrust.

The research highlights how trauma-informed spaces are not only beneficial to vulnerable populations. By prioritizing emotional safety, flexibility, and sensory balance, TID can improve experiences for all users. Open communal areas, access to nature, quiet retreat zones, and inclusive layout strategies collectively enhance spatial quality, contributing to healthier and more empathetic urban environments.

The methodology of this ongoing research draws on interdisciplinary tools, including architectural analysis, post-occupancy evaluation, ethnographic interviews, and neuroscientific insights into stress and cognition. These methods help measure intangible ambience effects and support participatory design processes where users, often marginalised in conventional planning, are recognised as experts in their own lived experiences. TID's insistence on listening, co-design, and adaptability makes it particularly relevant in contemporary urban contexts where diverse needs must be balanced with limited resources and increasing demands for inclusion.

The paper argues that TID should be seen as an ethical design lens aligned with ambience-sensitive practices. In urban regions still marked by socio-political ruptures, such as in post-socialist Central Europe, TID has the potential to restore trust in public space, rebuild social connections, and promote emotional sustainability. It invites us to reimagine architecture not as a static product, but as a dynamic system capable of responding to both human fragility and resilience.

The paper positions Trauma-Informed Design as a necessary innovation within the discourse of ambience, one that foregrounds care, justice, and healing as integral components of the spatial experience.

Keywords: Trauma, Informed Design, Psychological Well, Being, Inclusive Spatial Design, Post, Socialist Urbanism

Shaping Tushemisht's Urban Ambiance: Public Art, Infrastructure, Nature and Tourism

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Abstract

In 2012, an innovative urban revitalization project was initiated in Tushemisht, a picturesque village near Pogradec, Albania. Initially centered on the installation of a statue depicting “Teto Ollga”, a beloved fictional character from the iconic Albanian film “Zonja nga qyteti,” the project quickly evolved into a broader urban transformation. This intervention aimed not only to honor local cultural heritage but also to significantly enhance the village’s public spaces, making them attractive destinations for tourism while preserving local identity.

Through the strategic integration of public art, upgraded infrastructure-including pedestrian- friendly streets, renovated public squares, improved lighting, and carefully designed traditional urban furniture-and enhanced natural elements such as the preservation and integration of local apple trees, the village’s ambiance was entirely reshaped. The initiative created a cohesive urban atmosphere that attracted increased visitor numbers, boosting economic activity and revitalizing community pride.

However, the rapid growth in tourism resulting from these interventions has also presented new challenges. Increased tourist activity has placed additional pressure on existing infrastructure and raised concerns about environmental impacts and sustainability. Moreover, the local identity and community authenticity face risks associated with commercialization and the pressures of mass tourism.

This paper explores the multifaceted nature of Tushemisht’s transformation, analyzing how art, infrastructure, and the natural environment synergistically shaped an appealing urban ambiance, while also critically examining the emerging challenges linked to tourism growth. The study aims to demonstrate that urban ambiance transformations must consider holistic approaches balancing cultural, infrastructural, natural, and economic dimensions to achieve sustainable development.

Urban and Architectural Ambience at the Cultural Route in Skopje, Republic of North Macedonia

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Abstract

The Cultural route in Skopje, the capital of North Macedonia, offers a fascinating blend of urban and architectural ambiances, in which history, culture, and modernity coexist in a unique way. This scientific paper investigates the concept of urban and architectural ambience along the Cultural Route in Skopje as a strategy for urban development of cultural buildings. It also identifies urban mapping strategy for restoring circulation by activating social aspects and developing cultural activities at cultural buildings, monuments, and urban squares along the Cultural Route. Urban ambience of the Cultural Route includes historical layering, where the route takes the visitors through several centuries of history, showcasing a mixture of Ottoman, Byzantine, and neoclassical styles, along with more contemporary structures that reflect modernization. The cultural and architectural ambience in Skopje is deeply influenced by its diverse heritage, as the city has been a crossroads for many cultures and civilizations over the centuries. The methodology of this scientific paper identifies the Case Study of the urban concept for urban and architectural ambience of cultural buildings through the Cultural Route in Skopje, which contributes to the creation of a comprehensive and inclusive cultural identity to the contemporary and incoming features of the inhabitants and visitors of Skopje and the Republic of North Macedonia, which is identified as a new structural revival of intensive urban life, by providing increased circulation and movements of visitors and tourists, emerging cultural and educational activities and events. Within the proposed dynamic models of architectural and urban solutions strategy of the Cultural Route, identification of urban network and uniting museums along the cultural route, provided would be inter-connections between cultural institutions and public places in the field of culture, architecture and artistic activities.

Keywords: Urban and Architectural ambience, Cultural Route

Mapping and diagnosing urban

Integrating Environmental Contamination Data and Ambiance Theory: Evaluating Phytomining in Post-Industrial Spatial Planning

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Abstract

This study investigates the intersection of environmental contamination and spatial perception by advancing Ambiance Theory within post-industrial landscapes affected by heavy metal pollution. Focusing on the former metallurgical combine site in Elbasan, Albania, where decades of industrial activity have caused significant soil and agricultural contamination by heavy metals such as nickel (Ni), chromium (Cr), zinc (Zn), iron (Fe), and manganese (Mn), the research explores how these material and sensory traces of pollution contribute to the construction of ambiance-defined as the complex interplay of sensory, affective, and spatial qualities shaping human experience and place identity-and how these can be addressed through nature-based remediation, primarily phytomining.

The central research question asks: How can Ambiance Theory be refined to integrate empirical environmental data on heavy metal contamination, and how can this integrated framework guide the evaluation and prioritization of remediation projects based on innovation, sensory relevance, impact, and sustainability? This question recognizes that post-industrial sites are not only physically contaminated but also culturally and affectively charged environments where pollution shapes perception, memory, and social interactions.

Methodologically, the study employs a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative environmental analyses include Mehlich-1 extraction and atomic absorption spectrometry to measure heavy metal concentrations in soils and common food crops (onion, salad, potato, pepper, strawberry) grown near the metallurgical site. Bioconcentration factors (BCFs) assess metal uptake by crops, revealing potential health risks through food consumption. Complementary water and fish analyses from the Shkumbini River reveal elevated Cr and Ni levels exceeding regulatory limits, impacting aquatic biodiversity, including critically endangered species like *Anguilla anguilla*. Concurrent phytomining trials with the nickel-hyperaccumulator *Odontarrhena chalcidica* yield empirical data on biomass production (up to 9.96 t/ha) and nickel extraction efficiency (up to 145 kg Ni/ha) under organic and mineral fertilization on contaminated soils and industrial wastes.

Integrating these environmental data with Ambiance Theory enables a nuanced understanding of the site's post-industrial ambiance as a layered sensory and material phenomenon.

Heavy metal pollution manifests not only as a chemical hazard but also as a latent affective condition, shaping how spaces are perceived, inhabited, and socially negotiated. Sensory dimensions-including visual degradation, altered vegetation, soil toxicity, and olfactory cues-create an ambiance of toxicity and abandonment that challenges conventional spatial planning and design.

To evaluate and prioritize remediation projects, the study proposes a framework combining innovation (phytomining as an emergent nature-based solution), sensory relevance (restoring multisensory landscapes), impact (ecological and public health improvements), and sustainability (long-term soil rehabilitation and economic viability via metal recovery). This framework emphasizes phytomining's dual role as an ecological technology that mitigates pollution and a design intervention that transforms ambiance, facilitating community re-engagement and spatial identity renewal.

Ultimately, this research advances Ambiance Theory by embedding environmental contamination data into spatial perception and design practices in post-industrial settings. It advocates interdisciplinary approaches where ecological science informs spatial design, fostering sustainable remediation strategies that acknowledge and transform the sensory, affective, and material legacies of industrial pollution.

Keywords: Ambiance Theory, Post, industrial landscapes, Environmental contamination, Spatial perception, Toxic ambiance, Ecological technology

Sensory Experience as a Method of Mapping a Cultural City

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Abstract

The city is a collection of spatial pieces that gain meaning in the mind and take a place in the memory as they are experienced. When these experiences are guided by conscious sensory perception, they take on a new dimension. For instance, if one deliberately walks a familiar route focusing solely on the sense of hearing, previously unnoticed experiences may emerge, offering a new perspective. In this context, the present study focuses on urban space experiences gained through the senses and explores a mapping-oriented research approach. The methodology was previously implemented multiple times in the city of Trabzon as part of the undergraduate course "Sensory Atmosphere in Spatial Experience," resulting in the production of various maps with university students. A similar approach will now be applied in Bayburt, another city in Turkey.

A workshop is planned to be held at the Baksi Museum with the participants involved in this research. The study consists of two methodological stages: a "participatory approach", where participants engage with the local community, and a "sensory mapping method", where they create maps based on their experiences. In this context, students will be divided into groups and asked to conduct interviews with local residents and map the city based on their findings. These mapping outputs will culminate in the creation of a "Cultural Space, Sensory, and Experience Map." The workshop aims to enhance the city's visibility and so- cio-cultural value and to offer a new touristic vision by engaging architecture students in a hands-on, research-based process.

In the first stage of the workshop, participants will identify and investigate key places embedded in the city's memory-such as restaurants, shoemakers, craft ateliers, and parks-as well as traditions and oral history elements rooted in the past. Local residents will also be interviewed, as they hold the lived memory of the culture. This will ensure active and interactive participation of the community in the research process. The local community will also be asked about the contributions of these two museums to the city, tourism, and cultural heritage. In the second stage, each group will explore a designated cultural axis in the city center using one of the five senses. The ten students will be divided into five groups of two, with each group assigned a different sense to guide their exploration. Accordingly, each group will produce a sensory map based on their experience.

At the end of the workshop, these five maps will be integrated to form a comprehensive "Cultural Space, Sensory, and Experience Map" for the selected axis. The route developed through this sensory experience map will contribute to Bayburt's tourism and cultural promotion.

Keywords: Culture, sensory mapping, participatory approach, experimental space

Exploring the Ambiances of “Invisible Quality Places” in European neighborhoods

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Abstract

The quality of the built environment affects quality of life and plays a critical role in every neighborhood setting. At first glance, the quality of neighborhood spaces may appear to be assessable through standard planning tools-such as plans, sections, and layouts. However, such an approach often overlooks a key element: the high-quality places that are identified, developed, and shaped by the residents themselves, informally and without professional planning. These are often “invisible quality places,” hidden from view and difficult for outsiders to recognize. In contrast, neighborhood residents discover and appropriate these places through their everyday wanderings and interactions within the neighborhood.

The aim of this paper is to uncover the “Invisible quality places” found in mass housing neighborhoods, concealed from public view and known primarily to the local community. The argument is that the ideological, economic, and professional approaches that shaped the initial planning of these neighborhoods created the conditions for the emergence of such quality communal spaces. Furthermore, we argue that evaluating urban location, spatial and human diversity, intra-neighborhood visibility, and pedestrian accessibility can provide insights into the neighborhood’s qualities and human activities, revealing the potential for the formation of these beneficial “Invisible quality places”.

An example of such spaces can be found in places where clusters of seating items-such as couches, chairs, and tables of various sizes-appear to have been placed using placemaking methodology. However, in reality, they were arranged in an “unprofessional” local manner by the residents themselves. In doing so, a “space/place” is created-one that the neighborhood residents have formed, return to again and again, identify with, and consider as *their* place in the neighborhood. Another example refers to play areas for children. These are the neighborhood’s quality places-locations identified by the residents themselves, later developed by them, and used by them.

The paper examines the spatial and ideological characteristics of neighborhoods built through state initiatives in various countries, particularly in Europe, between 1945 and 1980, in the post-World War II years. We argue that despite being aging and subject to economic, professional, and ideological criticism, these neighborhoods contain beneficial physical spaces that became especially evident during the COVID-19 pandemic. These spaces provided opportunities for well-being, relaxation, and community-building during lockdowns and restrictions on movement in the built environment. Residents discovered these spaces-referred to here as “Invisible quality places”-through a bottom-up process, and they largely remain unknown planners or other external stakeholders.

In this article, we present several “invisible quality places” case studies from various neighborhoods across Israel. We demonstrate how these places contribute to neighborhood well-being and, more specifically, how the spaces in which they emerge can be objectively assessed. In other words, we seek to identify the spatial qualities within neighborhoods that foster the emergence of such places.

Keywords: Invisible quality places, quality spatial analysis, neighborhoods analysis

Urban Ambiances And Spatial Affordances: A Phenomenological Study Of Spaces Underneath Bridges In Istanbul

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Abstract

Due to its multidimensional nature, the concept of urban ambiance lacks a universally agreed definition. This study is grounded in the hypothesis that urban ambiances are closely related to the action-based affordances of space as perceived through embodied cognition. It proposes a research approach based on this framework. Within Gibson's (1979) theory of direct perception, affordances are defined as the action possibilities that the environment offers to a perceiving agent, which are directly perceived without requiring mental representations. These affordances are not static but are enacted and interpreted by the subject through learned and generative behavioral models, shaped by previous experience, bodily capacities, and cultural context.

While traditional cognitive models rely on abstract information processing based on mental representations; ecological psychology, embodied cognition and radical embodied cognition theories emphasize the immediate, non-representational interaction between the body, mind, and environment. In this context, the concept of affordance is also linked to empathy, particularly in the interdisciplinary field of neuroscience and architecture. According to Mallgrave (2013), mirror neurons enable individuals to internally simulate spaces in a multisensory way. This neural mechanism allows the individual to anticipate the action-based affordances that may emerge during interaction with the environment, even before any direct physical engagement occurs. The affordances directly perceived by users through embodied cognition can be revealed through phenomenological methods.

In this study, the focus is on Istanbul—a large and highly stratified metropolis. Due to its layered urban fabric and spatial complexity, the phenomenon of spaces underneath bridges is chosen as a representative case. The study investigates spatial arrangements created in the spandrel [1] areas of three selected bridges in Istanbul. These include: (1) the row of restaurants beneath the Galata Bridge in historical peninsula, (2) the shopping and food hall area under the viaduct of the Söğütluçeşme train station in Kadıköy, and (3) the open-air sports facilities beneath the Haliç Bridge.

As part of the methodology, one-minute walking videos will be recorded from the surrounding area toward the underside of each bridge. Participants will be asked open-ended questions regarding the perceived action-based affordances of these spaces. In addition, they will be invited to describe the atmospheric/ambient features of the spaces using their own terms. To assess participants' sensory responses to these environments, levels of Excitement (Arousal), Interest (Valence), Stress (Frustration), Engagement/Boredom, and Meditation(Relaxation) will be measured using a Likert-scale questionnaire.

The study, to be conducted with approximately 60 participants, aims to explore the relationship between the action-based affordances offered by these spaces and participants' atmospheric appreciation. It is anticipated that the participants' evaluations will generate diverse findings that allow for a multi-dimensional discussion of the selected urban places.

These areas provide a unique opportunity to compare transitions from public to private use, from collective/public action to commodified/capital-driven activity; accordingly, this study aims to analyze this spectrum of actions—as well as context-driven potentials for diverse uses—through the lens of participants' evaluations. The research aims to deepen the understanding of urban ambiances by revealing how affordances shape diverse modes of spatial experience [2]

Keywords: urban ambiance, public art, infrastructure, tourism impact, sustainable development, cultural identity

Listening to the ambiances: acoustic approaches

“Posture d’écoute”, How listening becomes more than a sonic posture. Immersive devices in question

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Abstract

The “listening posture” (*posture d’écoute*) refers to a mode of active, situated attention grounded in sonic experience, yet extending far beyond it. In French, *être à l’écoute* not only means to listen but also to adopt an attentive stance - to be receptive and present. This double meaning allows listening to emerge as a perceptual and epistemic posture that transforms conventional sensory hierarchies and foregrounds embodied, relational ways of being in the world. Listening, as we propose it, is not merely auditory. It implies a suspension of distanced, of- ten visually-dominated engagement with space, and instead invites affective, immersive, and moving perceptions of the environment. Sound, with its diffuse and non-figurable nature, acts here as a medium for de-framing perception and cultivating. The listening posture thus becomes a gateway to *multi-sensory observation* of ambiances, opening space for light, temperature, rhythm, density, and other qualitative aspects of experience to surface and be investigated.

This communication will present a series of research projects using **sonic immersive devices** as methodological tools to explore and share the listening posture. We will focus in particular on a recent collective project conducted in Grenoble, which brought together architects, bioacousticians, anthropologists, and musicians to explore how sound can make perceptible the convivial entanglements of urban life. Field recordings from an urban park were diffused through a spatialized multichannel setup that welcomed *ex-situ* musical performances. The multiple experiments did not aim to reproduce a sonic environment, but to activate new relations to it - transforming sonic material into a speculative and perceptual tool for inhabiting the city differently. Awareness. By analyzing these immersive devices and their effects - on both spatial perception and shared attention - we aim to contribute to three critical discussions:

- On in-situ perception: how sonic immersion and listening posture allows us to access complex, embodied, and more-than-human experiences of urban environments.
- On transdisciplinary practice: how musical creation, ethnography, and spatial design can be jointly mobilized to produce sensitive knowledge.

On modeling ambiances: how such dispositifs, while resisting objectification, help generate situated narratives and perceptual shifts that enrich our ways of understanding and co- composing urban environment. By folding sound, space, and time, we then propose to think the listening posture as new arrangements of attention, capable of revealing latent ecological relations and opening up alternative modes of cohabitation.

Keywords: Listening, sensitive, écoute, acoustic, spatialization, immersive, sound

Opera in the Bathhouse; Exploring an acoustically led approach to dramaturgy and scenography

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Abstract

This paper investigates the concept of acoustic intimacy through a project at the Gala Pool in Moseley Road Baths, Birmingham, UK examining the pool's acoustic characteristics from both intuitive experiences and technical analyses. The project begins with public workshops to explore the space's natural acoustic qualities, revealing how sound shapes occupants' experiences and emotional responses. Progressing these insights, a multidisciplinary team engaged in the creative potential of the space, pinpointed early reflections (i.e., sound reflections arriving shortly after the direct sound) as eliciting acoustic intimacy, as evidenced by precise 3D impulse response measurements.

The research demonstrates the significant role of acoustic intimacy in enhancing the spatial experience of large, reverberant environments, challenging conventional understandings of intimacy and engagement in such spaces. By blending artistic exploration with scientific inquiry, the study offers new perspectives on opera direction and architectural acoustics, showing how sound can create a sense of closeness and interaction.

This interdisciplinary approach enriches both theoretical understanding and practical applications in performance arts, highlighting innovative ways to integrate acoustic properties into the creative process. This paper is based on the chapter with the above title published in 'The Routledge Companion to the Sound of Space' edited By Emma-Kate Matthews, Jane Burry, Mark Burry, 2025.

Exploring atmospheres of noise through text-based methods: Towards just and sustainable sonic ambiances

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Abstract

Environmental noise has been presented (and represented) as an inevitable part of the contemporary urban lifestyle. This predicament incorporates into urban design understandings, with the experience of the sonic ambiance generally factored in as an afterthought. Advancing this line of inquiry, Jean-François Augoyard (2007) asks: “Is everyday life to be reduced to a reproduction?” Based on Augoyard's concern, this paper questions the reproduction of the atmospheres of noise as pollution in everyday urban spaces and advocates for wider acknowledgement of it as a global environmental threat. This attitude needs incorporated into the future imaginations of the urban sonic ambiances. In doing so, it highlights the analysis of noise as a direct atmospheric phenomenon. It also suggests methods, the diary method in particular, to reveal its destructive effects with all its material and immaterial effects on the body and social milieu.

Marina Peterson (2021) suggested that the ephemerality of noise makes it atmospheric by definition. In the case of aircraft noise, in particular, it makes bodies attuned to nothing but noise, making aerial tangible (ibid). Atmospheric noise prompts us to think about its elements which move together: the materiality of noise, noise regulations and politics, the disproportionate distribution of noise as well as its socially produced and negotiated meanings. But before (or alongside) any meaning, noise occurs as affect, beyond any representation (Gallagher, 2016). From that respect, it acts like an atmosphere: an intermediary between subjective and objective, having immediate effects on individuals (Böhme, 1993). Noise has a direct and tangible impact on the body manifesting as various effects felt as sensation, emotion, and impression before being captured as any persistent physical and mental health issue. The occurrence of these feelings is beyond representation, including those surrounding the ideology of the mainstream urban design and soundscape. Part of the atmosphere, revealing these feelings helps get closer to the individual experience of noise, which needs to be considered to develop a critical stance on the ideological order in urban design (Augoyard, 2007).

With the oversaturation of noise representations, revealing individual experiences is particularly valuable. Text-based methods like the solicited diaries and autoethnography are well-placed to research and analyse what is deeply felt on the individual level in all its complexity. Diaries provide an intimate space whereby the feelings of noise atmosphere can be expressed. The pages can facilitate honest expressions of vulnerability, moods, and emotional tides. The accessibility of written format facilitates wider circulation of the research outputs which can reach academic and non-academic audiences, provided that the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants are observed. Finally, the use of diaries can also be applied to other areas of sonic ambience research, or be combined with other methods like soundwalks, providing enriched and insightful expressions of the experience.

This paper contributes to our understanding of the direct experience of the atmospheres of noise as a fundamental issue to be recognised in imagining sonic ambiances, highlighting the usefulness of the diary method in obtaining empirical data on such experiences.

Digital, inclusive and political ambiances

Virtualization as Digital Ambiance: Toward a Theory of Immersive Historiography in Architecture

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Abstract

In recent years, digital technologies have profoundly transformed architectural practice, pedagogy, and heritage studies. Yet amidst this proliferation of tools, architecture still lacks a robust theoretical framework for understanding *virtualization*-not merely as digital re- production or simulation, but as a distinct epistemological and ontological condition. This paper proposes that virtualization marks a fundamental shift within architectural representation: from symbolic abstraction to embodied epistemology; from drawing to presence; from archival logic to immersive historiography.

Positioned at the intersection of ambiance theory, phenomenology, and digital humanities, this work reconceptualizes virtual environments not as surrogates of built space, but as media of historiographic knowledge. Drawing upon architectural phenomenology (Norberg-Schulz 1980; Pérez-Gómez 2007), critical representation theory (Zevi 1948; Evans 1997), and media epistemology (Carpo 2011; Drucker 2014), this paper proposes that immersive simulation enables the (re)constitution of ambiance not as affective surplus, but as a form of situated cognition. In this sense, ambiance becomes epistemic: a mode of experience structured by presence, temporality, and embodied spatial intelligence-what Walter Benjamin described as "*Jetztzeit*", a "time filled with presence."

The central claim is that digital ambiance can be theorized as an epistemic modality made legible through virtualization. Unlike digitalization, which transcribes existing material into new formats, virtualization stages a phenomenological reenactment of space-including that which is erased, imagined, or unbuilt. This condition foregrounds mediation as intrinsic to architectural knowledge: architecture is always already a representation-whether as draw- ing, building, data, or immersive model. Each modality entails specific dimensionalities (2D to nD), epistemic encodings (symbolic vs. spatial), and forms of information transmission (form, scale, tangibility).

This theoretical framework has implications for ambiance studies. Whereas ambiance has typically been explored through in-situ methods-sensory walks, affective cartographies, or ethnographic mapping-this paper introduces the notion of a *virtual in-situ*: a historically and cognitively situated form of engagement enabled by immersive technologies. Following Chalmers (2022), who argues that virtual reality constitutes a genuine form of reality, I con- tend that virtual ambiance is not a diminished copy of physical presence, but a differently real condition. It permits critical inhabitation of erased or speculative architectures, enabling what may be termed *historiographic ambiance*-a spatialized mode of historiographic inquiry.

Methodologically, the paper offers a theoretical synthesis across architecture, media studies, and digital humanities, aiming to ground immersive practices in historiographic critique rather than technological novelty. The goal is to reposition virtualization as an epistemic transformation in architectural thought-one that redefines how ambiance is conceptualized, constructed, and transmitted in the age of digital presence.

This contribution is intended for scholars of ambiance theory, architectural historians, digital humanists, and designers interested in immersive environments not as tools, but as cognitive and historiographic media.

Keywords: virtualization, immersive environments, Architectural Historiography, Architectural Phenomenology, VR, Digital Ambience

Not built for all senses: Identifying environmental triggers and challenging spaces for sensory-sensitive individuals

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Abstract

Ambiences are not universally shared; for individuals with heightened sensory sensitivities, the urban and architectural environment can become a source of overwhelm rather than cohesion. Visual information, sounds, smells, and textures can cause discomfort, distraction or aversion in those affected.

This study used template thematic analysis to understand how individuals with sensory sensitivities experience everyday spaces, including which environments or features they find challenging, how they react to this, and how they cope. Analysis of 765 participants' written responses found that supermarkets, education and work settings, and public event spaces were among the most identified as challenging. Differences in noise, brightness, lighting, movement, and smells were described as disrupting participants' ability to inhabit these spaces socially and functionally. Coping mechanisms ranged from modulating the environment (e.g., controlling lighting or sound exposure) to withdrawal or avoidance of the situation entirely. Impacts on quality of life were clearly described, with sensory features of the built environment cited as limiting participants' social and functional capabilities and being experienced as effortful and exhausting. By highlighting how people with sensory sensitivities experience and navigate these spaces, this study draws attention to the often-overlooked sensory dimensions of urban and architectural space. It shows that ambient conditions (e.g., noise, light, and crowding) are not neutral, but can be excluding or overwhelming for some individuals. This work invites a collaborative approach from architects, designers, policy makers and researchers to consider how we can make built environments both functional and accessible to diverse needs.

Keywords: Sensory overload, sensitivity, qualitative, inclusion, neurodiversity

Tipping Points – Indicators of Atmospheric Efficacy

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Abstract

My contribution explores the power of atmospheres from a practical, experience-based, and cross-disciplinary perspective. It begins with an observation from everyday life: how difficult it is to intentionally shape atmospheres—whether in architectural, social, or design contexts. This observation leads to the central question of my contribution: Do atmospheric forces exist?

To address this question, I build a bridge between different cultural and disciplinary positions. My reflections culminate in the Atmospheric Efficacy Model. It is not meant as a “grand theory” in the academic sense, but rather as a working model for understanding, reflection, and practical application. It draws on linguistic, conceptual, and experiential correspondences.

Linguistic correspondences

Abstract German nouns ending in -heit or -keit—such as Gemütlichkeit, Geborgenheit, Einsamkeit, Verkommenheit, or Trostlosigkeit—describe atmospheric qualities: states, relations, and effects that can be bodily sensed but not be measured. Equivalents exist in other languages.

Conceptual correspondences

Across disciplines and cultures, several shared ideas about atmospheres are emerging 1:

1. Atmospheres are spatial phenomena.
2. They are bound to situations and environments.
3. They are bodily sensed, not just cognitively grasped.
4. They can be experienced simultaneously by multiple people.

Experiential correspondences

A formative childhood experience drew my attention to the phenomenon: I watched as passersby gathered in the entrance of my parents' shop when it began to rain. Strangers became a momentary community—as if by magic, an atmosphere of connectedness emerged. Architecture, weather, people, and social interaction produced something new. Such atmospheric tipping points indicate atmospheric forces.

I have identified five forces that combine multiple dimensions: aesthetic and social, material and immaterial, abstract and concrete, subjective and objective—thus overcoming disciplinary divisions. Each force has a spatial nature. Every atmosphere arises through these five forces. Culture is understood not as an external context, but as a force inherent in atmospheres themselves.

The five forces are:

- Place: Where we are always matters atmospherically—spatially, emotionally, socially. A conversation shifts when we move between rooms. A place can be bodily sensed as constriction or expansiveness.
- Relational beings: Whoever or whatever is present is atmospherically significant—living beings, institutions, or even nonhuman agents like AI. Feeling exposed to a machine, or supported by others, creates feelings of constriction or expansiveness.
- Occurrences: Things that happen—a weather change, a phone call, a festivity, an accident—are atmospherically relevant. Events are an overlooked atmospheric force. The COVID 19 pandemic made this tangible—as constriction, stillness, or impossibility.
- Sensory qualities: When they spatially surround us, sensory impressions are not just perceived—they are bodily sensed. A soft bed or a brightly lit apartment may evoke atmospheres of security or lightness.
- Culture: Cultural codes and values are atmospherically decisive. Mastering or misreading them shapes whether we feel safe or lost—linked to spatial feelings of constriction or expansiveness.

This contribution offers a tangible foundation for a practice-oriented understanding of atmospheres and opens up new impulses for designing future living environments.

¹ Schmitz, Boehme, Hasse, Griffero, Thibaud, Löw, Hisayama, and others agree on this point.

Atmospheres of Anti-Surveillance. Tactics, Maps, and Affects of Urban Space Under Control

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Abstract

In recent decades, the expansion of digital and algorithmic surveillance systems has profoundly transformed the ways in which urban space is perceived and inhabited.

Drawing on Ben Anderson's (2009) reflection on "affective atmospheres" and Matthew Gandy's (2017) work on "urban atmospheres," this contribution aims to explore the intersection between the atmospheric dimension of the city and the invisible infrastructure of contemporary surveillance. Both – atmosphere and surveillance – are configured as diffuse, pervasive, and elusive presences: "entities in the air," semi-imperceptible, yet capable of deeply shaping urban experience.

The guiding research question of this study is: how does the increasing implementation of algorithmic and artificial surveillance technologies transform urban atmospheres? And what are the spatial, perceptual, and political implications of this transformation?

As a theoretical premise, the work is grounded in the concept of "reflexivity" developed by Steve Mann (2003), understood as the possibility of making otherwise invisible surveillance devices visible. This visibility becomes both a political and perceptual act: it allows the recognition of control while simultaneously activating spatial practices of resistance. Within this framework, the anti-surveillance strategies identified by Ullrich and Knopp (2018) – such as disguise, diversion, or visual interference – are read not only as defensive techniques but as practices capable of transforming the urban atmosphere itself, generating new regimes of visibility and new affective conditions of collective life.

This contribution analyses several examples of tactics and critical mapping practices developed by artists, activists, and collectives that challenge the presence of surveillance in public space. These projects do more than simply denounce surveillance; they function as case studies to understand how the visibility (or invisibility) of surveillance transforms urban atmospheres, influencing the ways space is perceived, related to, and used.

Among the exemplary cases analysed are the Surveillance Camera Players (1996–2006), who performed theatrical acts in front of surveillance cameras to subvert the asymmetry of visual control; James Bridle's Drone Shadows (2012), which makes the aerial threat tangible by drawing life-size silhouettes of military drones on the ground; and Maarten Inghels's The Invisible Route (2020), which constructs a route through the "blind spots" of the city of Antwerp to evade the digital gaze. These practices are read in light of their capacity to act upon the urban affective environment: they not only reveal hidden infrastructures but also produce new collective perceptions of space and new forms of sensitive agency.

The expected outcomes include the development of a critical taxonomy of urban atmospheres influenced by digital surveillance, and the definition of a repertoire of spatial practices capable of reactivating the public and shared dimension of urban space by making visible what operates in invisibility.

Through the intersection of affective geographies, critical spatial theory, and artistic practices, this contribution proposes new interpretative frameworks to understand the atmospheric and political transformation of the contemporary city.

Keywords: atmospheres, surveillance, tactics, countermapping

Methods and devices for designing

Inhabited Atmospheres: Philippe Rahm's Climatic Ambiances through the Lens of Care

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Abstract

The research aims to orient both design and theoretical thinking towards the production of ambiances through a design-driven approach, by critically analysing the oeuvre of Philippe Rahm as a milieu where ethical and environmental concerns intersect with implicit spatial manipulations. Given the relevance of the issue in the current architectural debate, the paper addresses a central question concerning the social and political implications of designing and atmosphere-or an atmosphere-specifically when it has to comply with a set of normative standards.

In particular, Rahm's work aligns architectural practice with the individual's spatial and bodily perception, understood not as accidental or purely subjective, but rather as precisely and intentionally crafted. Hence, by acknowledging the role of the architect as a craftsman of atmosphere-conceived here as a set of climatic conditions-Rahm unveils the political responsibility inherent in shaping manipulative environments, and reframes the awareness and self-control of the individual as an active perceiver. The design thus emerges from the decomposition and the attunement of environmental parameters-air, light, temperature, humidity-into an embodied spatial experience, without collapsing into a two-dimensional image for the visual satisfaction. In this realm, Rahm's experiment of a *Domestic Astronomy* and its later actualization in the *Evaporated Rooms* explicitly articulates these atmospheric variations, while simultaneously addressing the set of normative requirements for sustainability and energy efficiency. His manipulation of space responds to and employs the intrinsic physical behaviour of air to strategically arrange the furniture across different planes of use. In so doing, the design meets the Swiss Standard for Construction (SIA) recommendations on differentiated heating within the domestic environment, according to the envisioned activities and clothing of the user. Within this framework, spatial manipulation is approached through the lens of care, considering the occupant's body as a responsive organism situated within a dynamic space, that shapelessly ranges between 15°C and 22°C, and reproduces an indoor natural landscape-a climatic, atmospheric ecosystem of astronomical, temporal, and biological forces. As a result, the inhabitant, from being a passive recipient of the built environment, becomes in each and every moment aware of its continuous modulations. Consequently, the case study offers a sustainable response to the modernist precept of spatial continuity by reframing it with the adaptation to the strict bodily experience. This approach overcomes the often unfeasible, inefficient, and inhabitable environments generated by the dogmatic FormxFunction logic, proposing instead a model grounded on a renovated paradigm of AmbiancexUse.

In conclusion, an apparently vague and indeterminate entity such as atmosphere becomes, in this context, dissectible into its physiological components. Without defining precise and contoured boundaries of the space, yet still allowing the recognition of a spatial sequence attuned to human rhythms. By challenging the concept of unconfined space and integrating it with the project constraints, Rahm's architecture is a manifesto of fluidified relations and reciprocal mutation, which fosters embodied awareness through a logic of care. Without fragmenting but relating the parts, in adherence to individual needs and elective affinities.

Keywords: Atmospheric Design, Climatic Architecture, Philippe Rahm, Domestic Astronomy

Enhancing Ethnographic Research on Urban Ambience and Affective Geography: Transdisciplinary Explorations in the Urban Peripheries of Helsinki, Finland

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Abstract

This paper approaches the everyday realities of urban ambiances using ethnographic methods. My anthropological study concentrates on spatially ordered differences between the affective geographies of Helsinki, Finland. It examines how various imaginaries and materialities shape our understanding of ambience in a city undergoing rapid urban transformation. I especially focus on the experiential dimensions of everyday life in the urban peripheries of Helsinki. I have conducted long-term ethnographic fieldwork in a marginalised district of Kontula, which has had a widespread reputation since its construction beginning in the 1960s, associated with poverty, social problems, and more recently, issues related to failed immigration. However, many of these prejudices do not reflect the experiences of its residents. Contrary to the representations of chaos and lawlessness, many find the district as vivid, curious, and welcoming. At the same time, its urban ambience deviates radically from the central districts, often in ways that the residents find difficult to describe.

I have written about the tension between absurd and ordinary in the urban ambience of Kontula as shaping the ordering principles of the affective geography in Helsinki (Tuominen, 2024). In this conference, I aim to extend my inquiry into how the ethnographic study of ambience, based mostly on shared narratives and analyses of quotidian encounters could be enhanced by transdisciplinary perspectives and diverse research methods.

Tuominen, P. (2024). The Absurdity of the Ordinary: The Fragile Affinity Between Imagination and Materiality in the Finnish Urban Periphery. *Space and Culture*.

BIO: Pekka Tuominen is a social and cultural anthropologist specialising in urban transformation, the sociocultural qualities of space, and the moral dimensions of urbanity. He is currently an Associate Professor and Senior Research Fellow at the University of Helsinki. His current research concentrates on segregation and citizen participation in Helsinki. He organises Kontula Electronic festival for music and arts and has worked as researcher in projects in diverse fields such as AI-enhanced analyses and collective intelligence, multi-species encounters, and performance art.

Keywords: Urban ambience, ethnography, marginalisation, affective geography

Towards the Atmospheric City: Psychogeographic Interactions between Humans, Plants and Urban Form in Outdoor Ambiences of Barcelona

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Abstract

Urban ambiances animated by plants: Ambience theory examines the influence of a place's atmosphere on people's experiences and interactions. Neither urban form nor urban ambience are just about aesthetics. Urban form influences the microclimate, thermal comfort, and overall perceived quality of our built environment. Nonetheless, the urban form *'per se'* understood as grey infrastructure is unable to secure a comfortable microclimate in cities. To increase thermal comfort, cities require the atmospheric animation of plant communities like forest, parks, gardens and street trees to increase shaded areas, produce humidity in exposed surfaces, and reduce air temperature, thus lower the effects of urban heat island. **The ambience of plants:** This study considers cities not just as geographical spaces but as complex lived environments where plants actively shape our sensory experiences and perceptions through open spaces, particularly its immediacy to evocative surrounding (immediate ambience) and its emotional attunement. A site is not a place. On one hand, non-places (Augé, 1992) are spaces that lack a strong sense of identity, history, or social connection. On another hand, ambience is a key concept in psychogeography, which refers to the perceived atmosphere or feeling of a place through an unintentional journey, which can be influenced by multiple sensory dimensions from climate, architecture and plants.

Research questions

1. What are the spatial interactions between proxemics (Hall, 1966) and ambience theories?
2. What are the interpersonal distances between dwellers, plants and urban form in outdoor ambiances?
3. How do ambience-related concepts interplay in the unfolding of outdoor architecture of enjoyment?

Assumption: The hypothesis is twofold: (a) Ambiences can be used to shape the sensory experience of non-places, transforming them from a 'site' to a 'place'. (b) A high level of ambience implies a high level of placeness.

Research objective: Main objective of this study is to examine the impact of greenspaces on individual emotions and behaviour, essentially studying the atmospheric traits of places with plants versus without.

Visual and multisensory methodologies. **A. Qualitative approach:** reflect on the Ambience Theory through environmental psychology -character and atmosphere of a place-using psychogeographic methods (Debord, 1957) in the core of Barcelona. Proposed psychogeographic maps, ideograms, and sketches are not literal depictions of iconic places, but rather subjective interpretations of an emotional landscape, highlighting the multiplicity of ambiances and zones of comfort. **B. Quantitative approach:** observe and compare distinctive types of greenspaces -i.e. gardens, plazas and parks- in the core of Barcelona city as catalysts of outdoor ambience in public spaces to cool down impervious and dark surfaces by providing areas for shading, evaporation and cooling. For appraisals, spiderweb diagrams will help exploring the core concept of outdoor ambience through (i) climate (zones of comfort), (ii) proxemics (sensory use of space), (iii) greenspaces (plant density), (iv) urban form (streetscape design), (v) social interaction (occupancy), (vi) liveability (geometry of social life), and (vii) sense of place (appropriation).

Expected results: Findings will converge in a design framework for further exploration of ambience-responsive open spaces in an instinctive and intuitive way: an anarchic urban game-plan.

Keywords: urban geography, cultural anthropology, environmental psychology, architecture, greenspaces, placeness

Augmented Landscapes. ICT and the Narrative Dimension of Landscape Design to Enhance Urban Ambiences

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Abstract

Beyond its ecological and material dimensions, the landscape is a symbolic and relational system shaped by the meanings that individuals attribute to places. It can be interpreted as a continuously evolving palimpsest—a living archive of cultural values, memories, and social practices (Corner, 1999). Within this framework, the city emerges as a sensory and narrative theatre where material elements—architecture, colors, vegetation, sounds, and smells—contribute to the formation of an *atmosphere*. This atmosphere is not merely a backdrop for human activity but an immersive, multisensory experience.

The concept of *ambiance*, developed by theorists such as Gernot Bohme (1993) and Tonino Griffero (2013), emphasizes the corporeal and perceptual dimensions of urban space. The environment is seen as a performative medium, a trigger for sensations, memories, and imagination. Experiencing the landscape thus entails a full bodily engagement—an interaction of movement, emotion, and physical presence, in a dynamic interweaving of bodies, spaces, and stories.

Landscape design operates on two interconnected levels: the physical configuration of space, aiming to support human activities through comfort and usability; and the symbolic dimension, working on the cultural, social, and identity values of places. Through a narrative approach, it seeks to activate cognitive processes related to memory and emotional bonds between people and environments.

In today's context, Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) offer powerful tools to amplify this narrative potential of public space, giving rise to “augmented landscapes.” ICT allows the layering of informational, experiential, and participatory content onto the physical environment. Augmented reality (AR), interactive installations, sensors, and digital platforms allow for narrative overlays that deepen understanding and emotional involvement (Manovich, 2006).

This paper explores how ICT can enhance the narrative and affective dimensions of landscape, contributing to the creation of hybrid spaces that combine physical and digital realities. Through a multidisciplinary lens—combining environmental aesthetics, landscape semiotics, and technological innovation—the article analyzes case studies and design tools that illustrate this integration.

Several applications are discussed, including: (i) the use of interactive technologies to enhance public engagement in urban spaces; (ii) the integration of AR and interactive devices in parks, gardens, and archaeological sites to deliver contextual information and immersive experiences.

However, the paper also addresses the potential risks of digital narration. When not grounded in a careful reading of the local context, digital overlays may lead to simplifications and generalizations, weakening the authentic ties to the historical and cultural layers of the landscape (Augé, 1992). The effectiveness of ICT in landscape design depends on its ability to integrate with existing atmospheres, respecting historical memory and environmental and cultural complexity.

Ultimately, narrative and sensory-rich urban atmospheres can foster well-being, reinforce local identity, and promote environmental responsibility. In this sense, ICT-enhanced landscape design holds the potential to create responsive, interactive, and emotionally engaging urban environments. In an era marked by ecological urgency and digital saturation, the ability to tell stories through space—and to hear the stories spaces offer—may be essential to imagining more livable and meaningful cities.

Keywords: Augmented Landscapes, Narrative Landscapes, Urban Ambience, ICT in Landscape Design, Public Engagement

Water heritage & sensitive memories

Affective materialities in the sensory urban environment of Istanbul's memory spaces

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Abstract

This paper invites to reflect on Istanbul's urban space as oppositions, disturbances and dispersions, drawing on the interplay between critical reflection and storytelling by way of a walking application. KarDes mobile walking application, is a virtual tour guide to the city's multicultural heritage and communal memory spaces, objects and people, contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the city's diverse and pluralistic narrative. This experience is also shaped by the interaction of all our senses – sight, sound, smell, touch, and even our sense of movement and balance. Facilitating the interaction between storytelling and the sensorial qualities of the physical environment, the application rely on the participatory dimensions of act of walking, encouraging the free flow of memories, associations, inspirations, and aesthetic experiences. While physical elements are important, the ambiance of the urban environment as such, encompasses intangible aspects like the emotional tone, the feeling of a place, and the historical or cultural associations it carries. The significance of imagination in the processes by which citizens engage with their environment is frequently undervalued, however it provides frameworks for potential co- creation and aims to bridge the ecosystem of knowledges. Here, storytelling serves as a mechanism to enhance imagination, which can be viewed as a political act due to its capacity to facilitate diverse interpretations and interactions with space.

This paper tries to take a retour from the deterministic narrative to one where reflection and longing, estrangement and affection go together, to unearth the fragments of nostalgia (Boym), to refigure spatial associations to access the often-unheard and unseen layers of the urban landscape. Against the tendencies toward the public consecration of essentialist place-identities, it seeks to rescue “a progressive sense of place” (Massey) that would enable conflicting and diverse heritage narratives to be recognized and celebrated.

Keywords: ambiance, memory spaces, built environment, sensory experience, walking

Flowing Histories: The Ambiance of Mill Races in Urban Space

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Abstract

Mill races-once integral to pre-industrial water infrastructure-persist as subtle yet evocative features in many urban landscapes. Though often overlooked, these linear waterways generate distinctive multisensory ambiances shaped by flowing water, spatial rhythm, historical memory, and ecological resonance. The paper explores the ambient qualities of urban mill races through case studies from Slovakia and the Czech Republic, revealing how their presence mediates between natural and built environments. Drawing on methods of multi-modal sensory and in-situ observations, and semi-structured interviews, we examine and capture the aspects of experiencing the presence of mill race channels in the urban fabric. The results show that the mill races are perceived not merely as nostalgic remnants but as living systems that enrich urban ambiance and identity. The sounds of flowing and falling water, the sounds of water wheels, the feelings of improved humidity and microclimate, and the re-imagination of historical memory are observed as the main features contributing to the ambiance of urban space along mill race channels. On the other hand, the lack of water quality and the smell of polluted water in cases of improper maintenance generate negative attitudes toward the presence of water in urban spaces. The work advocates for a more attentive and imaginative engagement with urban hydrological features in shaping atmospheres in urban spaces.

Keywords: waterscapes, mill races, blue infrastructure, heritage, ambiances

Art Nouveau and Water – Interdisciplinary investigation of the ambiance of a Spa

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Abstract

The Gellert hotel, spa and restaurant in Budapest is one of the remarkable creations of Art Nouveau. Budapest is an Art Nouveau city. Budapest is also a city remarkable for its spa's, some of them being built during the Turkish occupation (under Mustafa Sokollu Pasha), still functioning as in the 16th century, unlike other locations where these are archaeological sites, as the Roman time baths are, while some others at turn of the century. A special case is the Racz bath, where the Turkish bath has been extended by Miklos Ybl. Building of spa's and of the respective resorts, some of them UNESCO listed, has been a core idea in Art Nouveau architecture, and we visited some other cities related to this kind of architecture, for example San Pellegrino terme in Italy and Baile Herculane in Romania. During a DOMUS scholarship funded by the Hungarian Academy of Sciences we had the occasion document spa's. A first item of interior-exterior consistency at this bath is the fenestration in the ceiling: vault ceilings with glass bricks above all pools and also above the hall and dressing rooms. A second item is the interior-exterior connection, the bath also featuring an outdoor pool. Water, not vegetation, is the one assuring the connection. We will reflect on the connection between architecture and water, here represented like a healing element (but also in other contexts, as endangered habitat or as danger/hazard in excess/flood or lack/drought). The water-building connection renders a special ambiance. The Gellert spa is also situated on the Danube shore in Budapest, another connection to water. The issue of blue-green infrastructure has to be highlighted, as the vegetal element is connected to water as source of its life, and we see here vegetal elements in the decoration. We analysed to which amount the function of the spa has been adapted to meet the Art Nouveau requirements by training currently the building of a contemporary spa. For the contemporary project we recommend more thinking on green walls (as in the Genova aquarium). We also put in context the opening of Art Nouveau to more light compared to the antique Roman baths (of which we made a building survey) and to the Turkish ones. Light an element of ambiance determined by the Art Nouveau fenestration and eventually fountains, which bear sound as well, and so different of Ottoman architecture which brought them there. Temperature and humidity are felt ambiances by breathe, like smell, and skin, which cannot be reproduced like visual and sound (although the sound of water is notable) elements and determined by water. They are also the ambiance for plants, should green walls be included. This is why spa-s are an element of well-being, more directly linked to health than vegetation, and part of the green-blue infrastructure. To the investigation of the effects felt on the body, beyond the tactile senses, is also the hydrogeological composition of water, which deserves more interdisciplinary investigation. So (landscape and interior) architecture, archaeology, geology, medicine shall be included.

Keywords: water, senses, spa

Inclusive city, care and social justice

Sensing the Margins: Ambiances of Informality in a Roma Neighborhood in Izmir

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Abstract

This paper explores how urban ambiances take shape in everyday life, focusing on the lived experiences and spatial practices of a Roma community in Izmir's Ege Neighborhood. Drawing on previous ethnographic fieldwork of the neighbourhood, the study approaches ambiance not as something designed from above, but as something felt, built, and trans- formed through daily interactions with space-often in conditions of marginalization.

The research combines perspectives from architecture, urban sociology, and sensory ethnography to ask: what does it mean to create atmosphere in a place that exists largely outside formal urban planning? In Ege, narrow streets, improvised structures, vibrant street life, and everyday gestures form a textured sensory world-a world where sound, smell, light, and movement are deeply entangled with rituals, identity, and survival.

Through five key themes of Thibaud-sensory engagement, emotional tone, spatial coherence, temporal care, and subtle transformation-the paper traces how the Roma community co-produces an urban ambiance that is as much about social resilience as it is about physical space. These atmospheres are not incidental. Since, ambiances blur the line between designed space and lived space, so it accommodates in between the intervention of technocrats and everyday inhabitant experience. Physical spaces are cultivated and sustained by people navigating exclusion with creativity and care.

By foregrounding these lived ambiances, the study offers a counter-narrative to dominant views of informal urbanism as chaotic or deficient. Instead, it highlights the Roma neighborhood as a space rich in meaning, rhythm, and sensory expression. Ultimately, this work argues for a more inclusive understanding of ambiance-one that values how people on the margins shape the city, not just through what they build, but through how they live, feel, and hold space together.

Keywords: Roma Community, Lived space, sensory experience, ambiance

Entering-In, Tuning-In: Linking Urban Public Space and Migrant Integration From a Place and Design Perspective

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Abstract

This paper identifies migration integration as an important theme in migration studies that has been multiple-dimensionally conceptualised, especially from a social, economic, cultural, and political aspect, but pre-existing studies lack explorations of the role of urban public or urban design in the integration, though such space is critical to democratic life and cultural diversity. I review leisure, spatial studies and geographies literature on urban public space and urban experience and present how such space can relate to migrant integration as a socialising stage or entertaining hub, as well as the potential of adopting the human- environment nexus embodied in urban experience to understand social (non-)inclusion and migrant integration. In view of these linkages, integration is arguably redefined from a people–place interactive, spatial and design perspective, with the everyday experience of migrants and influence of urban public space's (in)visible features on human bodies and minds, behaviours and emotions noted. Place integration as a new dimension indicated by sense of place such as place attachment/belonging is proposed that can contribute to place- based politics of belonging.

Keywords: aesthetic experience, belonging, displacement, migrant integration, place attachment, place integration, sense of place, urban design, urban public space

Mi Casa es su Hotel: Cities for Mutual Care vs. Visiting Places

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Abstract

Proponents of concepts such as the "caring city" or universal design have highlighted how many of the shared spaces we use daily in Western countries have been designed by and for abled, young men with specific occupations, catering to their particular preferences and needs. These concepts advocate for transforming some of the exclusionary foundations of design to promote inclusivity, accessibility, and care, particularly for the most vulnerable and non-normative members of a community. In this paper, I will summarize some of these proposals, observing them from the lens of my research on sound perception, auditory sensitivities and neurodivergence. I will also discuss some of the dynamics present in common sensory arenas, particularly how social hierarchies or gendered uses of public spaces can foster either a sense of community and belonging or feelings of alienation and displacement, affecting perceptions of the expectation (or lack thereof) of caring about each other and taking care of each other. These expressions attempt to emphasise the need for active and collective engagement in the act of caring, as cities can only be as caring as their designers and residents are. But this raises two necessary questions: Who are these designers? And who are these residents? In the context of a project on designing living places, I feel that a way of caring would be to bring to the forum the reality currently faced by citizens in many parts of Spain, and mirrored in places like Portugal, Italy, or Greece. As a case study, I will discuss how cities and many small towns are undergoing an extreme process of Disneyfication that is having a major impact not only on the possibilities of the population to access housing of any price and secure livelihoods, but to belong to a caring, diverse community. The phenomena associated with increasingly large groups of people visiting living places all year round for leisure consumption are intensely shaping urban ambiances and the quotidian interactions with them. Public spaces are privatised to increase the opportunities for the development of activities with an intense mark on the outdoor soundscapes during all day and night, as well as on the residential indoor soundscapes, generating important conflicts between residents, visitors, business owners, and authorities. These tensions, brought up as well by participants in my research, are also inevitably moderated by power dynamics and cultural (and mutable) conceptions of what is normal and acceptable. Acknowledging the role of residents as the experts in design processes is of great importance to create inclusive, diverse living places. This role is especially necessary for what cannot be seen nor measured in immediate ways, which is often what we should look at to avoid exclusionary practices. But if residents are excluded from the decisions on their cities and from their cities, we need to be aware that we will be designing visiting places.

Through Her Eyes: A Sisters Journey Into Ambiance and Accessibility

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Abstract

What does it mean to design a space with humanity - and for whom is that space designed? This paper uses a critical and personal lens to investigate practical ways to approach ambiance design in architecture, not as an elusive or ephemeral byproduct of architectural form, but as a daily embodied concern. While it has been extensively explored through a more neutral aesthetic and philosophical discourse, it remains largely unchallenged as an invisible mechanism through which design enforces control and access. Moving beyond functional and exclusionary paradigms, this research posits that by reexamining the ethical responsibility of ambiance design it can be better utilized as a design tool for human-centric spaces. This investigation is rooted in both a professional and deeply personal inquiry: how can ambiance be cultivated to create spaces that are emotionally and socially resonant. Growing up with a deaf and a disabled sister, I have been embedded with strong insights into a multitude of perceptual worlds. In their eyes, ambiance becomes more than an artistic flourish; it becomes a question of care. Through this I came to recognize how subtle design choices have a profound impact on a person's experience of architectural space.

To ground this critique, the paper draws on and presents a number of practical strategies for ambiance based design:

Sensory Mapping: A tool for representing how a space may be felt by those with heightened or divergent sensory responses, informed by real observations from my sister's life.

Narrative Intent: This involves treating ambiance not as a fixed outcome but a negotiated experience by creating spaces that incorporate the user's personal narratives. **Scaling down:** Good ergonomic design begins with one person and by designing from the interior, architectural spaces can develop around the flow and movement of the individual.

Micro-adjustment Prototyping: A method for testing ambiance at the scale of texture, sound absorption, lighting temperature, and movement flow - key for spaces of care and comfort.

Material Considerations: Selecting materials based on affective and tactile properties and using light and colour to sculpt perceptual rhythms has considerable power in how a space is experienced.

Ultimately, this paper does not claim to offer a universal model, but rather to advocate for a more situated, inclusive, and emotionally attuned approach to ambiance in architecture - one that recognizes how design is felt first in the body, and how the most meaningful atmospheres are often the most quietly transformative. By starting with personal experience and expanding toward critical practice, this research aims to transform ambiance design from a background effect into a foreground ethic. Ambiance is not merely how a space feels, but how it feels to someone. My sister taught me this, without ever using words.

Keywords: disabled, access, exclusionary, perceptual, strategies, inclusive

Domestic and public ambiances

The Viscerality of Everyday Sounds and Acoustics in Contemporary Domestic Spaces

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Abstract

This contribution aims at discussing contemporary assets and challenges imbued into the auditory dimension of the living place par excellence: the home. While navigating challenges posed by the environmental sustainability narratives, residential spaces still stand as critical places where acoustic sustainability may play a key role in supporting a restorative and healing ambience for its inhabitants. For instance, contemporary high rise wood residential buildings pose a challenge as the acoustic permeability of the structure invites everyday sounds from neighbours, including footsteps, conversations, or domestic activities, into the lives of multiple residents.

These everyday sounds, although not emotionally charged in themselves, can evoke complex emotional, psychological, and physiological responses when heard in the domestic context. Drawing on empirical findings from five different studies, this research explores how individual differences, such as noise sensitivity, circadian rhythm type, and attitudes toward the sound source, influence the subjective experience of domestic sonic environments.

Physiological responses elicited by sounds from neighbouring units will be introduced, including somatic, peripheral, and brain activity responses collected in a range of laboratory experiments. These will be discussed in relation to both acoustic parameters (e.g., spatiality and loudness) and non-acoustic parameters (e.g., personal characteristics). The affective dimensions evoked by exposure to everyday sonic events in residential spaces will be discussed as, perhaps, a relevant element for the multi-modal definition of Ambience theory.

Keywords: Emotions, Home, Everyday Sounds, Acoustics

Designing for Play: Ambiances of Outdoor Spaces in Affordable Housing

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Abstract

Children's play is vital to their physical, cognitive, and emotional development. Yet in many residential environments-particularly in affordable housing communities-the spatial design of outdoor areas can either foster or hinder children's opportunities for play. This research explores how the architectural configuration of outdoor spaces in residential settings influences the quantity, diversity, and nature of children's play. The study draws on observations from affordable housing complexes in Rome, Italy, as a case through which broader spatial and experiential dynamics are examined.

The central research question driving this study is: *How effectively do the open spaces in affordable housing complexes support children's play, and how do spatial and sensory qualities- what may be termed "ambiance"-shape these experiences?*

To address this question, a qualitative methodology was employed, combining systematic observation with behavioural mapping techniques. These methods enabled a detailed analysis of how children interact with their environment, and how specific spatial characteristics shape patterns of play. The cases from Rome offer varied examples of urban layouts, material conditions, and social uses of space, providing a lens through which to explore how design elements affect play affordances.

Key findings indicate that spatial diversity, pedestrian-oriented infrastructure, and the presence of multi-use open spaces are significant enablers of children's play. In contrast, environments lacking dedicated play facilities, containing poorly designed green areas, or characterised by monofunctional spatial layouts tend to limit opportunities for active, diverse, and spontaneous play. Crucially, the study reveals that children's engagement is influenced not only by tangible structures but also by the broader ambiance of a space- factors such as visual openness, social visibility, and spatial interconnectedness-which together facilitate unstructured, exploratory play.

This research contributes to a growing interdisciplinary discourse at the intersection of public health, architecture, and urban design by offering empirically grounded insights into how the built environment can support or constrain children's play experiences. It further proposes a framework for evaluating residential outdoor spaces not only through quantifiable physical attributes but also through their potential to create inclusive, dynamic atmospheres that encourage play, interaction, and discovery.

In conclusion, the study advocates for a shift from prescriptive, function-driven planning towards ambiance-oriented design thinking-an approach that prioritises the experiential and behavioural dimensions of space. This paradigm is particularly crucial in the context of high-density, economically constrained urban developments, such as those found in Rome and beyond, where thoughtful design interventions can yield low-cost yet high-impact outcomes for children's well-being and the overall livability of urban environments.

Keywords: Urban Ambiances, Built Environment, Children's Play, Affordable Housing, Outdoor Spaces, Spatial Experience

Reciprocal Ambiances: A Dialogue Between the Built and the Unbuilt in Álvaro Siza's Campo di Marte Social housing Project

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Abstract

This paper explores the delicate interplay between built and unbuilt ambiances in Álvaro Siza's Campo di Marte project in Venice, proposing a phenomenological and architectural reading that foregrounds atmosphere, memory, and urban context. Siza's proposal, developed in the early 1990s as part of a wider planning initiative for the abandoned military zone of Campo di Marte on the island of La Certosa, remains unbuilt. Yet, it is precisely this condition, the tension between the imagined and the real, the drawn and the constructed, that renders the project particularly fertile ground for architectural reflection.

Rather than examining Campo di Marte as an unrealized work in isolation, this study frames the project within Siza's broader architectural ethos, which frequently engages with context, continuity, and restraint. The site, marked by a historical layering of militarization, abandonment, and ecological transformation, becomes in Siza's hands a palimpsest in which architecture is not imposed but rather delicately suggested. The proposal consists of modest interventions that aim to restore a dialogue with the lagoon landscape, respecting both its fragility and its latent spatial narratives. Drawing upon theories of atmosphere and spatial perception, particularly the writings of Juhani Pallasmaa, this paper argues that Siza's Campo di Marte is a manifesto of architectural presence through absence.

The project's argument lies not in what it builds but in how it frames what remains unbuilt. Its low walls, sparse pavilions, and quiet geometries evoke a form of architectural silence that amplifies the natural ambiance of the site. In this sense, Campo di Marte becomes a spatial meditation on emptiness, slowness, and anticipation. Furthermore, the paper situates the project within the Venetian context, a city defined as much by its voids canals, campos, and light as by its buildings. Siza's intervention resonates with this logic, seeking not to monumentalize but to reveal. It participates in a broader lineage of modern interventions in historical environments that embrace incompleteness and ambiguity as productive forces in architectural thinking. Through a close reading of the project's drawings, models, and written reflections by Siza himself, the paper considers how the notion of ambiance, understood here as the atmospheric, affective quality of space, emerges as a key design parameter. It also reflects on the implications of the unbuilt: how architecture exists beyond construction, in the realm of representation, memory, and imagination. Ultimately, this paper contends that Campo di Marte offers a compelling vision of architecture as a medium for reactivating latent landscapes, one that cultivates a dialogue between presence and absence, gesture and restraint, built form and open space. In doing so, it provides a critical lens for rethinking the role of architecture in sites marked by transition, fragility, and time.

Defining ambiances in traditional public spaces: a comparative analysis across cultural, geographical and historical contexts in Algeria

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Abstract

Place of memory but also of history, the Algerian old towns are characterised by a traditional urban structure, a powerful commercial device of old vocation, the lot associated to a big sense of community. Today, while construction develops along with any style, these old towns stay the symbol of a previous way of life that remains meaningful, and even if they are declared decayed or in state of ruin, they continue to be perceived by the five senses. What are the lessons that one can draw from this heritage, inexhaustible source concerning architectural and urban ambiances? The methodology is based on a comparative analysis between two case studies: the first one is the Kasbah of Algiers looking onto the Mediterranean Sea and the second one is the Ksar of Ghardaïa commonly called the gate of the desert. The results arise from an academic research project concerning ambiances in Algeria, and highlight the existence of many different spatial references that help to conceive ambiances as a dynamic crossing point between tangible and intangible parameters, urban ambiances being a privileged support of identity.

Keywords: Old town, public spaces, ambiances, culture, identity, sensory heritage.

Ambiances climate & écologies

Urban Ecological Ambiances as Mediators of Environmental Perception: A Multimodal Analysis of Skanderbeg Square, Tirana

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Abstract

As cities rapidly grow and face increasing environmental challenges, integrating natural systems into urban design has become essential for sustainable planning. This study examines the role of urban nature “including air quality, water, vegetation, biodiversity, and microclimate” in shaping the sensory and emotional qualities of urban spaces, referred to here as *ambiance*. The research focuses on Skanderbeg Square in Tirana, Albania, a public square recently redesigned to blend ecological design, climate adaptation, and human-centered urban planning. The main goal is to understand how both architectural and ecological features create specific ambiances that influence how people perceive and use the space.

The study is grounded in *Ambiance Theory*, which views *ambiance* as the outcome of complex interactions between sensory inputs, spatial arrangements, and social or cultural practices. *Ambiance* is treated here as both a perceptual and emotional experience, co-created by people and their environment. The key research question asks how ecological and material elements such as surfaces, plant types, water features, and open spaces affect the quality and experience of *ambiance* in public areas. To investigate this, the study uses a mixed-methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative techniques. These include systematic on-site observations, environmental measurements (air temperature, sunlight exposure, and sound levels), sensory-spatial mapping, surveys of users, and interviews with architects, ecologists, and urban planners.

By integrating these data, the research provides a detailed picture of ambient conditions and how they relate to user experience. Preliminary results show that Skanderbeg Square's design encourages multiple and adaptable ambiances supported by ecological elements and spatial openness. Variations in thermal comfort, sound environments, and vegetation density correspond with differences in how users perceive and behave within the space. Features like shaded areas, reflective water surfaces, and native plants create ambiances that improve environmental clarity, psychological comfort, and social engagement. This research offers practical insights for urban designers and policymakers by demonstrating how multisensory, nature-based design strategies can enhance the quality of public spaces. By combining ecological data with user perceptions, the study advances the understanding of *ambiance* as both a scientific concept and a practical tool. It directly supports the aims of the COST Action CitySenZ CA23145 by proposing *ambiance* not only to analyze urban environments but also as a guiding principle for designing healthier, more responsive, and sustainable living places.

The blurriness of shade: Why are thermal comfort indices too precise for describing thermal ambiance?

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Abstract

One key element dominating urban atmospheres is the ambient climatic conditions, which heavily depend on regional geographic features and daily and seasonal weather fluctuations. While this may suggest that urban design can have little impact on urban climates, recent years have shown that as global warming has led to increased awareness of urban heat, a variety of design features have been proposed to cool down cities. Such claims are supported by research in urban climatology, highlighting the role of science in guiding design decisions based on quantifiable metrics. However, precisely because of their apparent objectivity, these metrics may be less effective in capturing the variance in subjective perception of thermal sensations among different people. While heat can be described using measurable physical phenomena like air temperature, its effects on humans are harder to evaluate since they involve personal experiences, preferences, expectations, and physiological conditions. Science has long recognized this dual aspect of the climate-human relationship by defining the concept of "thermal comfort" as a "condition of mind that expresses satisfaction with the thermal environment" (ASHRAE 55 standard). To address this inherent subjectivity, scientists sought to find statistically significant relationships between measurable climatic metrics (air temperature, mean radiant temperature, relative humidity, wind speed) and reported levels of comfort or discomfort among large groups of people. This approach has a paradoxical effect: by relating reports on changing levels of thermal discomfort to a fixed set of objective metrics, we create an illusion of precision and control. However, while bioclimatic indices use clear-cut thresholds to describe, for example, the change from "moderate heat stress" to "strong heat stress," our experience teaches us that the dividing lines between different states of thermal sensation are much blurrier. This may indicate that in mapping the thermal component of urban ambiance, we should shift from quantifying comfort to identifying the availability of physical properties closely associated with positive or negative climatic experiences.

In the case of heat, such a property can be described as "shade." Simply put, a shaded location is created when direct solar radiation is blocked before it reaches that area, regardless of the exact level of illumination it provides. Yet, in hot weather, shade is viewed as a climatic asset that conveys a sense of relative coolness or thermal relief. What makes shade particularly relevant to design is that, unlike air temperature, relative humidity, and wind speed, it entirely depends on planning and design choices. Therefore, mapping its provision over different times and dates can deliver a reliable picture of the thermal affordance of urban spaces. Moreover, by applying a method we have developed for producing high-resolution urban shade maps, we can apply the concept of shade mapping to characterize the thermal affordance not just of individual locations, but also of extensive networks of streets, open spaces, and neighborhoods, relating them to specific design features. In doing so, shade maps can not only illustrate the existing thermal ambiance in cities but also provide insights on how we can recreate it through design.

Keywords: shade maps, thermal comfort, urban heat, thermal ambiance

Performing Arts and Social Sensitivity. How to address climate change with theater

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Abstract

Why, if we know, do nothing? Often, we do not behave consistently with what we know. For example, we know that some of our lifestyles and the products we consume daily are part of a production chain that exploits workers and harms the environment (smartphones and fast fashion, for instance). My research hypothesis is that this question challenges a certain social sensibility shaped by the social atmosphere we inhabit.

Through a performing arts workshop for the blind and visually impaired, I will study how atmospheres are perceived and expressed regardless of vision, and how theater and performing arts can activate general social change through a type of knowledge that goes beyond mere information (rational and conscious), involving the body and affective involvement.

In the first part of this paper, I will focus on the theoretical aspect and pose a reflection on the dialogue between Neue Phänomenologie and Performance Studies. In particular, I will discuss Erika Fischer-Lichte's concept of *auto-poietic feedback loop*. I will emphasize also the pathic aspect of social action and question the role of the *patheur*, discussing the neo-phenomenological sociology of Robert Gugutzer.

The second part will focus on the methodological aspects of using a performing arts workshop for social research and the theoretical aspects of atmospheric processes that generate affective involvement and awareness. In a theater workshop context, participants physically experience the atmospheres that pervade and are expressed by the space. In a sense, we can say that theater trains a certain sensitivity.

In the third part, I will present some excerpts from my workshop diaries with blind and visually impaired individuals as an example. These excerpts demonstrate how the participants' experiences highlight the awareness gained through theater practice.

Lastly, I will discuss the importance of sensitivity in relation to climate change and environmental sustainability and explain how sensitivity can be developed through theater. In this sense, theater and the performing arts build a bridge between physical reality and emotional experience (Böhme), giving emotional substance and anchoring specific atmospheres to ideas, concepts, and information that are otherwise presented in a numbing, unengaging way.

To answer the question posed at the beginning, we can therefore assume that some information does not involve us affectively because we are numb to it, as inhabitants of an atmospherically connoted social that shapes our sensibilities. Theater practice has the capacity to train sensitivities and can therefore play a significant role in countering climate change.

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Keywords: Neue Phänomenologie, Performing Arts, Social Sensibility, atmospheres, patheur.

Digital mediations and evaluation tools

Exploring Spatial Atmosphere Across Analog and Digital Mediums

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Abstract

Emerging digital technologies and computational tools are reconfiguring architectural design by expanding possibilities for designing, representing, and making practices. While these innovations enhance visualization, systematization, and prototyping, they also introduce challenges related to digital literacy, technical expertise, and the limited capacity to engage with intuitive and atmospheric dimensions. A critical issue is how advancing digital practices influence spatial perception, sensory engagement, and atmospheric qualities. The visual-centric focus of digital practices may undermine the tactile and embodied experience of space, described as "disembodied design."

This study offers a comparative examination of two pedagogical approaches in architectural education, each exploring spatial atmosphere through distinct methods. It investigates how design models-developed in conventional and digital environments-influence spatial perception and atmosphere. The first approach engages students in a tactile, exploratory design process based on Zumthor's principle of atmosphere, using sketching, diagramming, and physical model-making. The second approach involves a digital workflow where students employ computational design tools (Grasshopper), digital fabrication (3D printing), and AR visualization to develop and communicate spatial ideas.

A comparative methodology examines these two pedagogical approaches. The analog process, conducted in a first-year design studio, tasks students with "from trace to space," translating geometric compositions of geometric abstraction artists into spatial models through shape operations. The digital process, with advanced students, uses parametric design, digital fabrication, and AR visualization, algorithmically transforming "traces" into "spaces." Models are prototyped via 3D printing and visualized in AR, enabling discussions on spatial atmosphere and perception.

Analysis of student outcomes reveals distinct experiential differences. Analog explorations show students engaging with atmospheric qualities through physical model-making, experimenting with shape articulations and material combinations. They explore material compatibility and thermal qualities through variations in textures and types, examine intimacy through shifts in dimension, proportion, and scale, and investigate interior-exterior relationships through formal manipulations. They emphasize the role of light in shaping spatial experiences, documenting its effects through model photographs. Through this, students gain experience exploring atmospheric qualities through the interplay of light, material, scale, and spatial relationships.

In contrast, digital practices facilitate visual communication, 3D visualization, and collaboration, but students encounter limitations in engaging with sensory aspects of atmosphere (light, material texture, temperature, and sound). While AR models enable immersive visual representations and partial engagement with scale and interior-exterior relationships, they lack the depth of sensory and perceptual experience.

Findings underscore that analog and digital design processes shape spatial atmosphere differently: analog methods foster intuitive, embodied, and sensory engagement but limited form generation, while digital approaches enable systematic exploration of formal diversity yet struggle with sensorial qualities. The analog process emphasizes materiality, light, and temperature, whereas the digital process highlights formal aspects like interior-exterior tension and scale. The findings call for hybrid approaches that integrate analog and digital methods to promote a more holistic, multi-sensory understanding of spatial atmosphere. Future research will explore cross-group studio settings to investigate hybrid workflows and inform design strategies that prioritize atmosphere. This study contributes to the broader discourse on designing future living places that integrate atmosphere with computational methods.

Keywords: spatial atmosphere, sensory engagement, analog explorations, digital design practices, computational design process, augmented reality, physical model making, design pedagogy

A Methodological Approach to Urban Ambience Assessment: Evaluating the Atmosphere of Düzce Prusias Ad Hypium Ancient Theater and Its Surroundings

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Abstract

Urban ambience studies is a rich theory that offers different perspectives for planning and designing cities from the bottom up. It plays a particularly important role in the planning and design of historic areas. The aim of this study is to contribute to urban ambience studies in historic areas and to provide a basis for future plans and projects.

Research question

In this context, the following research questions were asked; by which parameters can urban ambience be measured? Are there different ambience areas on different streets on a given route? How can this be determined and how can this ambience be measured based on user experience?

Method

Urban ambience is the felt atmosphere of a place, the whole of natural and structural elements shaped by the emotions and perceptions of users. For this reason, the following parameters will be used in this study, which will be conducted in and around the ancient theater of Prusias Ad Hypium located in the Konuralp region, which emerges with both historical-cultural and natural features in Düzce City of Turkey: (1) aesthetic appearance and visual quality, (2) perception of safety, (3) comfort and accessibility, (4) social interaction and vitality, (5) access to nature and green areas, (6) silence and noise level, and (7) functionality and ease of use. These parameters will be made available for the participants to evaluate through a Likert scale - for example from 1 to 5 (1 = Very Negative, 5 = Very Positive). Participants will be composed of people who know, experience and research in the area.

Expected Results

One of the expected results of the study is the classification of ambience areas. Which area is cultural-historical, which area is natural-ecological, which area is economically dominant will be revealed. This will contribute to the mapping of ambience areas. In addition, the comments made by users under these 7 headings will provide a rating about the area.

Another result is that by providing a clear picture of user perception and experiences in various areas of Düzce Konuralp Ancient Theater and its surroundings, it will provide information that will contribute to the urban planning and design criteria of the region. Determining the differences in the ambience of different streets and areas will form the basis for sustainable and user-oriented arrangements. In addition, design solutions that are compatible with user perceptions will provide a basis for improving the quality of life of local residents and visitors by increasing the cultural and touristic values of the region.

Keywords: urban ambience, mapping ambience, likert scale, historical places, Düzce

Communicating Light: Technological Tools for Mediating Multi-Sensory Experiencing of Urban Ambiances

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Abstract

As cities evolve into increasingly complex sensory environments, technology's role in shaping urban ambience is becoming central to architectural and urban design. This paper explores how technological tools mediate multi-sensory experiences in public urban spaces, transforming how inhabitants perceive and interact with their surroundings. Through a critical review of landmark projects to small local intervention, over, immersive installations at Europe which numbers increases, the common point is sensor-responsive lighting, and therefore this study investigates how these technologies contribute to creating dynamic, human-centred urban ambiances. Positioning light as both a material and symbolic medium, the paper examines how immersive light installations and responsive digital systems shape spatial narratives and sensory ambience.

Methodologically, a qualitative content analysis synthesizes project documentation, designer insights, and user interactions, focusing on technologies including LED screens, sensor networks, projection mapping, and augmented reality employed in public urban settings. Thematic coding reveals key design strategies such as real-time environmental responsiveness, multi-sensory layering, and temporal orchestration of light patterns, spanning scales from bits to yottabytes. For example, Berlin's *Ampelmännchen* effectively contributes to urban ambience, as does Times Square's continuous flow of illuminated media, creating a sensory-rich environment that influences pedestrian movement and emotional engagement. Ephemeral, Europe's *Lumiere Festivals* transform urban architecture through interactive projections that enliven public spaces, while in Japan, installations like Tokyo Midtown's sensor-driven light displays and the immersive digital environments at TeamLab Borderless generate continuously evolving ambiances, blending art, technology, and urban life.

Findings suggest that light functions as a relational interface in urban contexts, in various interpretations of its meaning, mediating between users, space, and environmental factors to cultivate meaningful and adaptable ambiances. The analysis also highlights challenges, including balancing technological innovation with environmental sustainability and ensuring inclusivity in public space design.

By framing light-based interaction design within ambience theory and urban studies, this paper contributes to understanding how technological mediation reshapes future living places. It offers a conceptual and methodological foundation for communicating the design of multisensory, adaptable, and human-centred urban ambiances.