

Editorial and Abstracts

Editorial. The New Geography of the World
Fernanda De Maio, Alberto Ferlenga

We often use the term *geography* in an imprecise manner, referring to the consequences of a modelling of nature shaped by physical or social events, and opposing it to *history* according to still widespread scholastic categories. In reality, the form of the world – its architecture and its design – derives equally from natural and historical factors, especially in places where human presence has deep historical roots. This equilibrium, however, has been significantly disrupted in recent decades by the increasing pressure of human activity. The relationship between geography and architecture – which for centuries has been one of interpretation and measurement of nature – now reveals evident imbalances. Cities, once the product of a deep integration between landscape and design, have become arenas of conflict, generating homogenization and a loss of qualitative values. The resulting landscape is marked either by the deterioration of existing structures or by their genetic transformation, often driven by quantitative logics. Transformations may be accelerated by favourable economic or military conditions, or conversely slowed by crises or epidemics, yet they rarely occur suddenly. Signs of change first manifest in sectors such as economics, agriculture, or sociology, and only later find concrete expression in architecture. Even if initially subtle, the differences that characterize emerging landscapes often signal deeper and more radical transformations. In the field of geography, Jean Gottmann already foresaw in the 1950s the new urban configuration of the *Megalopolis*, predicting developments – migration, environmental crises, and more – that are now dramatically evident. Similar anticipations are found in literature, from Calvino to Ballard. Yet architects have rarely played a central role in either predicting or directing such transformations. While major territorial changes could rely on longstanding technical knowledge of land and terrain, architecture has often followed behind, offering at best an aesthetic or symbolic interpretation of phenomena already in motion. Today, the chain that once linked emerging themes, technical solutions, and architectural responses has been broken. The acceleration of physical transformations, compounded by environmental degradation and the loss of specific knowledge of places, is producing unprecedented scenarios lacking both spatial and aesthetic value. In this context, it becomes urgent to return to a reading of reality that is both analytical and projective: to recognise and study – through the lens of architecture – the phenomena currently reshaping the form of the world. This is the central concern of the present issue of *Rassegna*: to understand the transformations underway as a prerequisite to guiding change. It also entails a reflection on the role of the architect, today increasingly marginalised, yet in fact crucial for addressing the present and future challenges of our built environment. There is a need to return to description and understanding – identifying the

new relationships upon which it is possible to intervene in order to convert what is currently mere quantity or disvalue into spatial and architectural quality. The list of phenomena examined in this issue is by no means exhaustive, but it does identify several critical nodes. Moreover, these phenomena are not always easily legible from a geographical standpoint, nor is it straightforward to find reliable data or produce accurate mappings. Among the emerging issues discussed in the “Debate” section are contemporary ruins, explored in *Eve of Destruction? So that Destruction Does not Become Landscape*, which examines the stabilised forms of destruction generated by twentieth-century wars and disasters. In *Geographies of Abandonment*, Fabrizia Ippolito investigates the complexity of urban abandonment and the new nature of marginalised places, while Silvia Dalzero, in *Waste or Refused? A Sad Degraded Territorial Geography* describes a global geography in decline, in which the planet becomes a landfill, and barriers multiply to block migratory flows. Alessandro Tessari’s *Global Informal Geographies* explores the spread of informal settlements in contemporary metropolises: produced by migratory influxes, these have become stable components of the urban fabric. The article by Mauro Marzo and Viola Bertini, *Times and Places of Tourism*, introduces the geographical dimension and urban and landscape transformations associated with a different type of migration – tourism and leisure-related mobility. The essay “*Putting the World to Art.*” *New Geographies of Art* reflects on the relationship between geography and contemporary art, considering biennials, street art, locative media, and the role of the artist as cartographer. Finally, Michele Tenzon, in *Temporalities, Landscapes, and Geographies of the Green Revolution*, analyses the new geographies of agriculture, deconstructing simplified narratives of speed and globalisation. In the “Research” section, Andrea Iorio’s *Waterways, an Opportunity for New/Ancient Geographies of Northern Italy* investigates the theme of so-called inland waters as a significant field for architectural and landscape design. Hydrogeography is also the focus of Chiara Cavalieri’s article *The “De-Urbanisation” of Water*, which addresses how urbanisation processes have progressively transformed natural watercourses into hidden infrastructural systems, erasing their cultural and social meanings. The urban, landscape, and architectural implications of growing energy demand are addressed by Daniela Ruggeri and Matteo Vianello in *Geographies of Energy. The Case of the Piave*, while Filippo Orsini and Carlotta Oliosi, in *Landscapes and Architectures for New Productive Geographies*, describe – through the lens of climate change – emerging spatial forms linked to food and energy production. Concluding the “Research” section are the article by Olivia Longo and Davide Sigurtà on the spatial dimension of military geography, *Subtracted Geographies. The Territorial Occupation of NATO Bases*, and Filippo De Dominicis’s *The Underworld: Cavities, Opacities, Events*, which presents the underground as the locus where major contemporary global issues intersect and overlap.

DEBATE

Eve of Destruction? So that Destruction Does not Become Landscape

Alberto Ferlenga

Among the many material transformations the world has undergone in recent decades, the increasingly prominent emergence of destructive scenarios is perhaps the most concerning. The causes are varied: wars, environmental disasters, abandonment; however, the effects are similar, presenting us with images of destroyed homes, desolate lands, and deserted cities. This presence is so strong that destroyed architecture seems to replace constructed architecture in prevailing media exposure. The relationship between destruction and construction has always been part of architectural history, starting from the Renaissance revival of Roman ruins. However, in the past, it was part of alternating cycles of decay and reconstruction, inherent in every developmental process. The 20th century, with its wars and catastrophes, extended the temporal presence of destruction, bringing us to the present day with forms of stabilization that represent a tragic novelty in the geography of the contemporary landscape. This novelty does not only concern places affected by war or disasters but also the most developed parts of the world, where it grows with the widening gap between wealth and poverty. Today, destruction shapes entire territories, and understanding its mechanisms and effects from an architectural perspective means not only bridging a knowledge gap about contemporary reality but also rethinking architecture as a tool for healing the world.

Geographies of Abandonment

Fabrizia Ippolito

In an era of global and accelerated urbanization (now 54%, in 2030 70% of the population will live in cities) a geography of abandonment phenomena and situations can reveal the complexity and contradictory nature of the urban condition. Being a counterbalance, but also a collateral effect of the intensive growth of cities, the abandonment of marginalized and changing places (from small uninhabited centers to unfinished, abandoned, depreciated suburban settlements, to shrinking urban areas, to deserted or wild regions, up to places which are excluded from development dynamics or undermined by natural disasters and political, economic and social crises), significant in quantity, traces incidental itineraries and leaves residual architectural and urban materials. Despite being eccentric if compared to the standardized image of contemporaneity, they are the center of a representation that highlights, in a plurality of peculiar situations, alternative spaces, times and destinies of the urban world. As geography can either confirm or subvert dominant visions, a geography of abandonment can serve to question the current narrative of the global city.

Waste or Refused? A Sad Degraded Territorial Geography

Silvia Dalzero

Under the pressure of globalization and inequality, our planet is transforming into an enormous global landfill,

where the lands divided by walls are multiplying. This aims to stem the migratory flow of rejected humanity or waste, in a process of progressive distancing that alters nature and gives voice to the essence of the city or urban environments in an embryonic state. Starting from this consideration, this paper proposes a reflection on the dichotomy of "Waste and Rejected," in which reality manifests as a mass of waste – material and physical, but also human, moral, political, and cultural – that reformulates an anachronistic idea of limit, recognising the power of the wall that excludes from the ordinarily inhabited lands contaminated by waste or those invaded by fleeing multitudes. This singular interpretation, composed of "Waste and Rejected," may appear to be a gamble, if only for the assimilation of different realities. Yet, these interconnected phenomena are reconfiguring the political and territorial geography of the world, beginning with the production of a new generation of barriers aimed, on the one hand, at stemming migratory flows (the Rejected of today) and, on the other, at creating a mountain of Waste that becomes a fortress.

Global Informal Geographies

Alessandro Tessari

The contribution explores the phenomenon of the entrenchment of informality in contemporary metropolises, where informal settlements, initially perceived as precarious or temporary, progressively transform into stable and permanent components of the urban fabric. These spaces, originally established in marginal or abandoned areas, evolve from discarded territories into vital and productive places. The process of entrenchment challenges traditional distinctions between formal and informal cities, suggesting a rethinking of the very concept of the city. Informal areas, often the result of residents' autonomous initiatives, are increasingly integrated into urban fabrics through dynamics ranging from simple self-organization to more structured interventions, sometimes supported by government policies or redevelopment projects. The emergence of these complex and hybrid settlements calls for reflection on the need to adapt and include urban policies, aiming to make metropolises more capable of integrating informality as a resource rather than merely a problem. In this context, the entrenchment of informality is no longer just a response to deficiencies or emergencies but an integral part of the transformation and evolution of global cities, requiring flexible solutions based on dialogue between local communities and institutions.

Times and Places of Tourism

Mauro Marzo, Viola Bertini

The literature on tourism as a phenomenon capable of radically reshaping the layout and nature of places is vast and nuanced. The effects of mass tourism on renowned locations are a subject of ongoing debate, as these areas experience a progressive deterioration of public spaces and quality of life. Conversely, touristification processes are increasingly affecting once marginal or less significant areas, which are similarly transformed. In today's global context, where tourist flows are more complex and widespread, the times of arrival, transit, or visit – whether brief or extended – serve not only as interpretative tools for understanding the nature of places but also as key elements in architec-

ture, urban, and territorial design. Within this framework, tourism, through its new geographies, offers multiple perspectives for observing the world. This essay seeks to explore, through the relationship between time and space, a social and cultural phenomenon – prior to being an economic one – that is among the most significant and transformative of our era.

“Putting the World to Art.” New Geographies of Art
Fernanda De Maio

This article examines the evolving relationship between geographical thought and contemporary art since the late 1980s, a period marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall, the advent of the World Wide Web, and the seminal exhibition *Magiciens de la Terre* at the Centre Pompidou. It identifies three key trajectories in this relationship: the proliferation of biennials, which redefined the spatial and institutional geographies of art beyond the traditional museum; the emergence of practices such as land art and street art, which foreground art’s engagement with space as process rather than product; and the conceptualization of the artist as cartographer, mapping and reimagining spatial narratives through artistic practice.

Temporalities, Landscapes and Geographies of the Green Revolution
Michele Tenzon

The collective imaginary surrounding the new geographies and landscapes of the global agricultural world is shaped by two main factors: on the one hand, the remarkable acceleration of agricultural productivity in the second half of the twentieth century – the so-called Green Revolution – and, on the other, the growing integration of rural spaces into international circuits of goods, capital, and knowledge. This representation fuels theories that exclude the possibility of conceiving rural space as an “outside” in relation to the city, thereby assuming a planetary and ubiquitous urbanization. The risk of such approaches lies in flattening perspectives, overlooking local specificities and historical complexities. The recent history of rural development programs in Africa, marked by grand ambitions, extraordinary promises, and countless failures, highlights the need to deconstruct narratives based on simplified notions of speed and universality, and to instead acknowledge the value of the multiple chronologies (or temporalities) and geographies through which the rural is shaped on a global scale.

RESEARCHES

Waterways, an Opportunity for New/Ancient Geographies of Northern Italy
Andrea Iorio

The topic of inland waters, especially when considered in relation to navigation, represents an extraordinary yet overlooked field of research for architectural and landscape design, offering valuable insights for understanding and reimagining the “new geographies” of the contemporary world. The territories we know today are the result of a long sequence of anthropic, material, and cultural

efforts to modify the existing environment, where inland navigation has played a role no less significant than that of inhabiting the mainland. Considering inland navigation today as a design field means reinterpreting the relationships between infrastructure, geography, and history, as well as those between cultural, urban, landscape, and environmental aspects. This perspective represents a form of “caring for” territories while rediscovering the complex richness that has shaped them over time.

The “De-Urbanisation” of Water
Chiara Cavalieri

Over the centuries, the process of urbanisation has progressively altered and modified natural water courses, building ever larger and more complex infrastructures. In urban landscapes and cities – western ones –, most of these same infrastructures (sewage, drainage and more generally flow control systems) are often hidden and resolved underground, thus eliminating water not only as an urban element, but also as a cultural and common resource. The connections between water and urbanisation have been concealed to the extent that today it is possible to read a map of urbanised places through the systematic absence of the surface water network. If today, in the light of the consequences of climate change, the infrastructure of – urbanisation of – water is being debated as no longer capable of supporting a sustainable and coherent development of the city and the territory, some European experiences of recent transformation are beginning to build the premises for a theory of disurbanisation: new urban rivers, rain gardens, infiltration parks are just some of the terms that are constructing a new vocabulary of water disurbanisation. This article aims to trace the milestones of this transition through some historical and contemporary examples.

Geographies of Energy. The Case of the Piave
Daniela Ruggeri, Matteo Vianello

In the Anthropocene era, it is increasingly evident how energy production has required and continues to require space, giving rise to hybrid geographies that are neither exclusively topographic nor exclusively anthropogenic. The energy crisis, resulting from the exploitation and extraction of natural resources, alongside climate change, makes it necessary to rethink current models of energy production and distribution, and consequently, their relationship with space and geography. Rivers, geographic elements that have intertwined with urban development since prehistory, are perfect examples of “organic machines” that convey flows of energy and materials. The Piave River basin represents a significant case study, as it is the most altered hydrological system in northeastern Italy, with a long history of transformations since the pre-industrial era. In fact, its course has undergone significant diversions both under the Serenissima Republic and in the Modern era, becoming a formidable machine for energy production. Since the early 20th century, the Piave has been literally “industrialized,” transforming into a geography of the “Capitalocene,” a producer of energy to this day. Today, the Piave remains one of the most important sources of hydroelectric power for the Veneto region. The European Union’s climate neutrality goals for 2050 bring renewed focus to the relationship between hydroelectric

technologies, energy distribution networks, energy storage, territory, and the uncertainty of renewable resource availability. While the EU's support for such technologies can activate new potential energy scenarios for Veneto, it also raises architectural, urban, and landscape-related questions and urgencies. Starting from the Piave case study, this paper aims to explore the relationships between energy geographies and the energy transition from an architectural perspective: from the historical and cultural issues surrounding the infrastructures to those related to integrating energy spaces with the landscape and extending to the design trajectories of yesterday and today.

Landscapes and Architectures for New Productive Geographies

Filippo Orsini, Carlotta Oliosi

The challenges posed by the climate crisis, demographic expansion and digitisation call for a radical revision of the relationship between architecture, landscape and productive infrastructure. The energy, food and digital transition calls for innovative solutions that combine productive efficiency and respect for the environment, through the use of renewable sources, high-tech technologies and the reuse of disused structures. In the future, the synergy between architectural design and landscape planning will be crucial to ensure the sustainability of urban and suburban spaces, reducing environmental impact and promoting land regeneration. Only a multidisciplinary approach, capable of integrating technological innovation, energy efficiency and landscape sensitivity, will be able to respond effectively to the complex challenges of our time.

Subtracted Geographies. The Territorial Occupation of NATO Bases

Olivia Longo, Davide Sigurtà

This contribution addresses the complex relationship between decommissioning, adaptive reuse, and the cultural heritage of NATO bases. It highlights how many of these facilities, rendered obsolete due to technological advancements, can be transformed into civilian and cultural spaces. The study extends to current military strategies, with a focus on the rapid transformations occurring between 2022 and 2024, which have involved some geographical regions for the expansion of strategic bases and deterrence operations in response to the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. In Italy, the principal NATO bases exemplify the country's historical and strategic role, with economic, social, and environmental impacts that reflect the intricate dynamics between security, sovereignty, and local development. If decommissioned, this heritage could be requalified, thus preserving historical memory, fostering intercultural dialogue, and contributing to a broader reflection on the culture of peace and the geopolitical transformations of our time.

The Underworld: Cavities, Opacities, Events

Filippo De Dominicis

Recent tendencies have led to the consideration of the atmosphere as the most contested and contended environment. However, this paper offers an alternative perspective, proposing the underworld as the nexus where major global

contemporary issues intersect and overlap. Drawing on examples ranging from Cold War nuclear anxieties to the current data landscape, this paper explores subterranean cavities as territories where alternative, non-human futures can be imagined, especially when subterranean opacity is considered in relation to issues such as warfare, data extraction and preservation, and advanced physics research. All of these, in fact, are associated with events that have the potential to radically alter the course of Earth's future history. While challenging imperial narratives based on horizontal cartography, subterranean spaces and events seem to confirm new forms of colonization and hegemony. But also new trajectories of knowledge. Whatever their nature may be, however, these forms are intended to reposition humanity and somehow reshape the world, both physically and epistemologically.