

ENABLE Series

Vol. 2

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Palimpsest Prilep: Towers, Houses and Gardens

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School of Architecture and Design
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ENABLE Series

Volume 2 by UACS

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НАЦИОНАЛНА АГЕНЦИЈА
ЗА ЕВРОПСКИ ОБРАЗОВНИ
ПРОГРАМИ И МОБИЛНОСТ



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PALIMPSEST PRILEP

TOWERS, HOUSES AND GARDENS

Edited by

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The ENABLE publishing series presents the outcomes of research developed within the Programme KA203 – Strategic Partnerships for higher education Call 2019 Round 1 KA2 – Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices. The ENABLE research – an acronym for Embedding collaborative platform for upskilling and networking towards sustainable cities – questions the interdisciplinary themes and processes that characterise the urban transformations of the 21st century, starting from the fragile territories in the marginal geographies of the world, where anthropological, productive, landscape and cultural diversities and complexities are often concentrated. The general objective is the exploration of those spaces, those themes of the city and the territory that can indicate new directions for building and redefining the existing, possible theoretical trajectories that look at the project as a cultural moment of places. This complexity requires an in-depth exploration of the relationship between man and the environment, between man and place, in a perspective of reducing the consumption of land and resources and enhancing the existing heritage, experimenting with different contaminations between research and teaching.

The ENABLE research is in line with Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities of the 2030 Agenda, which emphasises how necessary it is, given its implications for the transformation of territories, to make efforts to raise awareness in communities of the centrality of the issue of urbanisation and, at the same time, to verify that this issue is included in a strategic and multi-sectoral programme of national development. The ENABLE project starts from the aspiration to create an interdisciplinary and transnational academic environment in an attempt to overcome some traditional models of education, articulating two years of collaboration between universities and private research institutes from different disciplinary (engineering and architecture) and geographical (North Macedonia, Italy, Austria and Czech Republic) backgrounds. The final result is a methodological proposal – also tested in the form of a networked didactic course for the project’s three partner universities – based on a multidisciplinary approach to the topic of sustainable cities through a theoretical-design experimentation on a case study: the city of Prilep, in North Macedonia. The research assumes, as Paola Viganò also states, the architectural project as a “producer of knowledge”, and verification of the questions posed in the theoretical and investigative phase, in an attempt to relate epistemological horizons with the memory and identity of the city. In this sense, the work attempts to identify those tools necessary for the elaboration of a lexicon of modification capable of orienting interventions on the contemporary city. Drawing is assumed not as a mere instrument of representation but, in the words of Vittorio Gregotti, as a privileged moment of conception of the “design profession”, configuring itself as a synthesis in which knowledge, investigations and experience converge.

**Marina Tornatora
Maksim Naumovski**



INTRODUCTION

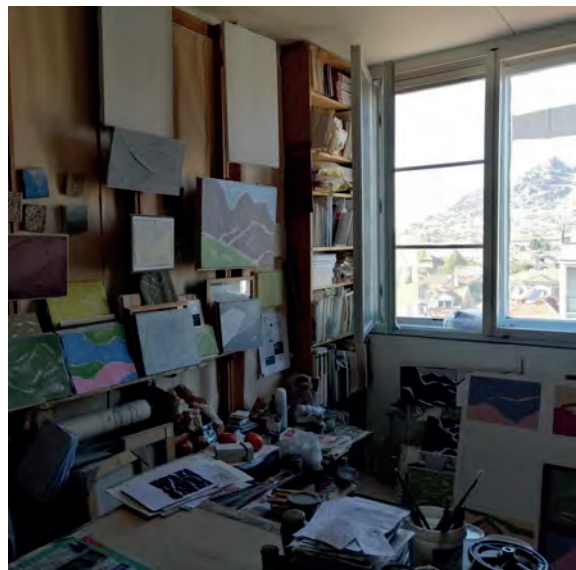
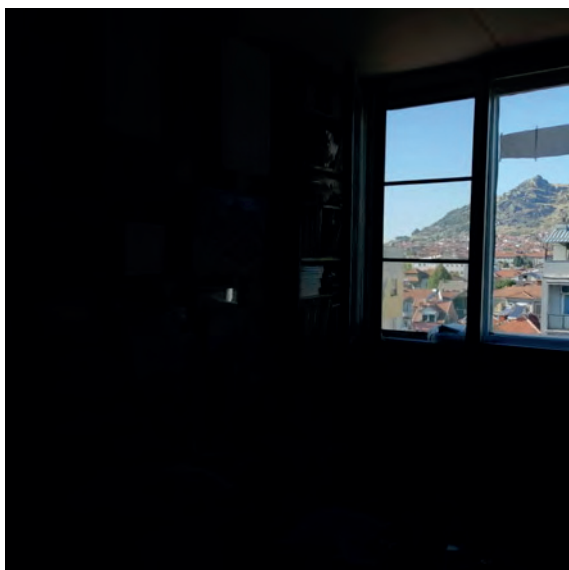
Maksim Naumovski
Pavel Veljanoski

The conditions and emergence of complex environments required pedagogical approaches and methodologies especially those delivering international competencies and creative thinking towards building an international curriculum. **ENABLE** as an acronym and **Embedding collaborative platform for upskilling and networking towards sustainable cities** as the title of the winning research for Erasmus+ Call 2019 Round 1 KA203, Strategic Partnerships for higher education, requested for a networked syllabus as an academic approach by engagement of high education institutions with local authorities based on collaborative work in an international setting. The project is in line with Goal 11: Sustainable cities and communities from the Sustainable Development Goals. According to the 2018 review of SDGs national implementation, more efforts need to be undertaken to increase awareness to ensure that urbanization is integrated into national development planning from a strategic and multisectoral perspective.

The **process** contained two (2) years of international and interdisciplinary collaboration between entities from North Macedonia together with other EU based entities (Austria, Italy and Czech Republic) which completed this **international consortium** of higher education institutions and private research institutes. Faculties at the three higher education institutions (School of Architecture and Design at UACS, Institute of Spatial Planning at TU Wien and Department of Architecture and Territory at Mediterranean University Reggio di Calabria) engaged with the syllabus in a form of a regular courses in their master programs complemented by the practical experience transmitted by two other partner institutes (IECE Skopje and Czech Environmental Partnership Foundation Brno).

The **city of Prilep**, in North Macedonia, was identified as a case study for the development of a concrete experiment. In order to strengthen this collaborative platform capacity, we got in contact with the representatives of the municipality of Prilep, employees responsible for the European programs and communication as well the mayor of the city. They confirmed their participation in this project as associated partners and made the best effort to provide strategic direction and advice, reviewing and validating project progress and direction.

The **project objective** started from the aspiration of creating a networked academic environment with an intention to challenge the inherited inert high-education models in a south-east European context to an interdisciplinary and transnational educational network with diverse methods already developed in different European high education environments. Testing this objective in a higher education environment operating in the field of architecture, urban design, and spatial planning, we developed a didactical methodology for sustainable cities using a multidisciplinary approach tested in a form of a networked syllabus for the course implemented on the three project partner's high educational institutions in the fall semester, the year 2020.



Artist atelier
Kiril Gegoski, Prilep

The **project timeline** was structured through three (3) main activities representing the objectives of the project, developed in the time frame of 24 months:

I. Research and development of syllabus:

- Gathering archived knowledge enabled from field research, compiled, and selected information;
- Providing an interactive list of relevant stakeholders for online survey and conducting interviews;
- Compile and interpret compatible sustainability standards for syllabus recommendation;
- Create an international networked curriculum based on the structured methodology;
- Develop teaching and learning materials that include the overall project objectives in the content;
- Workshops for creating a syllabus for sustainable cities;
- Development of a collaborative platform for upskilling and networking toward sustainable cities;

II. Course studios implementation:

- Realize multiple blended learning modules during the course;
- A cycle of multidisciplinary lectures and conferences;
- Finish with an extended concept for sustainable cities as a methodology result;

III. Synthesis of the course production:

- Workshops for result synthesis of the course Studio
- Final event in Prilep with an exhibition and presentation of the results,
- Gather these fundamental strategic guidelines in a synthesized form of publications for the study case, the city of Prilep;

The objectives of the project were met through the development of **7 Intellectual Outputs** for the Development of concepts for sustainable cities using a multidisciplinary approach where all the partners collaborated in creating a collective synthesis of individual concepts for a sustainable city in a form of project proposals for the city of Prilep, articulated together in a hypothetical strategic plan.

The focus was put on making the process accessible and comprehensible to teachers, students and stakeholders. As a tool for further information exchange an interactive collaborative platform for upskilling and networking toward sustainable cities was set up to provide opportunities for using innovative learning methods, as well as possible to have webinars, forums, and blended learning possibilities. The online collaborative platform enabled students to easily participate in conversations, quickly share the most up-to-date documents and collaborate anywhere, anytime, on any device. The main purpose of the collaboration platform was to enhance the internationalization of the students, improve their communication skills and motivate them to explore multidisciplinary aspects of their projects. This platform enabled extended strategic cooperation and collaboration beyond the duration of this specific project.

Due to the new Covid19 situation all around the world, there was a need for a **articulation** of the work related to the impossibility of realizing a study trip to Prilep. In order to introduce the city to the students working on this project, it has been decided to reorganize the activities and provide video materials that present the elements of the city from the central area but also from its outskirts. This material is available on the project website and Youtube channel. Together with this, a documentary video of Prilep was produced which provides a synthesis from all produced video materials on drone footage.

Most of the **participants** for the ENABLE networked syllabus were recruited within the students of the project consortium high educational institutions with the aim to increase the competencies of the students within the faculties. For the need of this course a total number of 64 student were involved from which 27 students from UACS, Skopje, 10 students from UNIRC, Reggio Calabria and 27 students from TUW, Vienna. A list of relevant stakeholders was created and this target group was contacted during all phases of the projects. This list is consisted of local experts from the field of the urban planning of the city of Prilep, 246 respondents from 69 different cities, 53 participants from the field of architectural academia and local industrial sector and thousands of people reached through social media, engineering networks, magazines, and public presentations.

Networked international syllabus in the process of its implementation created this crucial innovation in this project but also created a change in the educational concept we know. In this way the project, as it is defined, had the opportunity to show the real benefits and opportunities of restructuring and confronting classical introverted educational systems. Previous experiences of participating organizations were similar but mostly organized as complimentary educational programs not connected with the obligatory part of the faculty's curriculum. Innovation was also set up with the connection between academia (represented by the universities), industry (represented by the private institutes), and society (represented by the representatives of the study case, city of Prilep). This form of collaboration put all actors in the project, especially the students of architecture in a really responsible position because they had to provide fundamental strategic guidelines that will be used as a basis in the further development of planning sustainable cities. The **results** were obtained and evaluated as being very relevant to the expectations and needs of the students. The courses outcome is currently compressed and presented in ENABLE publishing series presenting all the collective and individual projects of this educational program. No objectives initially pursued were changed.

The **second volume of the ENABLE publishing series** collects a synthesis of the outcomes of the research developed by the unit of University American College Skopje, connected to the didactic experimentation conducted in the Erasmus studio LIVING AND WORKING: Towers, houses and gardens in Prilep. In particular, the work has been realized within a horizontal integration of two courses (Studio Design 1 and Urban Design 1) in the first year of master studies. They may have different focuses, but they are also very complimentary. Tackling at the same time topic of housing and territory allowed students to understand and cope with the complexities of urban transformation. The goal of the Erasmus Studio was to deepen students' knowledge of the everyday that shapes changes in today's cities. We worked through different scales, from detailed observations of housing conditions to the visible and invisible processes of the city territory. As a reference, we looked for overlaps in everyday life that are visible as individual reactions and reflection at the level of architecture and complementary at the level of the territory we observed the city in its specific socio-economic contexts. The case study for this subject was the city of Prilep, which we perceived as a fragment of the modern city. In it we look for the new reality and dominant theme of everyday life. Through observation we created a narrative, and through that narrative we extract the elements that are appropriate for a project.

We performed linear methodological approach structured in the following activities:

1. **Conversations, interviews and readings;**
2. **Operative archive;**
3. **Cartographic inscriptions and documentation of samples.**
4. **Behavioral forms - housing typology;**
5. **Epistemological and historical study**
6. **Topic: Living and working**

Conversations, interviews and readings

The proposed model of documentations of the build and natural totality was crucially initiated with the Field Trip and was, in fact, established during the course of a variety of meetings and interviews which took place in collaboration with local partner institutions and individuals. During and after the field trip the information was transformed into transcripts from which a process of compiling and selecting information followed. It represented a process of reconstruction of individual and collective memories, reconstruct the events from the past again from the processes that follow. For that purpose, we took records of this memories and traces, took photos and inscribed this in the form of instructions and diagrams on maps in different scales. This way, we could interpret them again, and allow for the constant production of new and surprising relationships.

Operative archive

Conventional archives tends to define themselves through content-specific, quantitative accumulation of matter, subscribing to an existing, pre-established order. They rarely transform their structures. In contrast to such an accumulative model of archival practice and preservation, the operative archive offers an open framework, which actively transforms itself and therefore allows for the constant production of new and surprising relationships. Exploring non-traditional archives that are focused not only on the accumulation of material, but also on the setting up of different relationships between parts of that material, this project and inquiry attempts to offer new perspectives on archival practice. This process was implemented through various activities such as: field research, gathering, compiling and selecting information, identifying environmental systems and represent them through maps, filtering relevant information and use comparative references, identify territorial forms that reflect cultural issues of ecology, economy, history and geography.

Cartographic inscriptions and documentation of samples

Further on the research calls for experiments in different scale, through the process of mapping to possible architectural positions. The research and inscription method we applied in the cartographic materials aims to render visible the processes of today's natural and constructed territories as a complex socio-natural contexts. We can then analytically observe each cartographic exercise as a pretext and open platform that can be endlessly complemented and precede each new initiative. Confronting the totality of the build and natural territory provides information about the first settlements, social dynamics, implementation of plans, changes in the landscape, etc. By recording and overlapping the autonomous characteristics of the territory, we tried to develop models of documentation that allow for possible progressive transformations.

Behavioral forms - housing typology

As part of the research, we focused on spatial forms that respond appropriately to the program as well as to the environment to emphasize the process: place, space, structure, setting, behavior. We were also observing the one family typology as a prototypical environmental object, that addresses the socio-economic system and above all, it's potential to be re-adapted and reused. Observing the house, within the contextual boundaries of Prilep, we perceive its duality, on the one hand as a basic spatial unit of housing, but at the same time a basic productive unit. It is this duality that seems to be lost and marginalized in the contemporary perception and practice of housing. Through the Erasmus studio, we tried to restore that essential relationship, with the basic assumption that the house still possesses that potential, to be an autonomous unit, but as such to create a complex synergy at the community level.

Epistemological and historical study

An analytical review of the typo-morphological condition was conducted through which we considered the chronological development of the city of Prilep. This historical overview is based on the epistemological study of the cadastral plans from the following periods: 1934, 1957, 1986 and 2013. By overlapping these 4 substrates, we noted the relation of the exhistig features, corridors and zones of the current city and the non-existing elements, built structure and urban voids of the city in the past, which are gone as a results of different historical, political and social circumstances. Recognized was a case study that inscribe the transformation of one river-street element into street-infrastructure which happened with the regulation of the Dabnichka River in the 80's. The principal aim of morphological analysis of the current fabric was useful to understand the city changes and the reasons that have led to this creation and it could be done only by identification of these invisible urban elements and typological transformations.

Topic and approach: PALIMPSEST PRILEP. Towers, houses and gardens

Through the Erasmus studio we tried to renew that essential relationship with the basic assumption that the house still has that potential, to be an autonomous unit but as such to create a complex synergy at the community level. Creating a new local habitable, productive layer of the city is tested by working with the recognised elements such as the towers that appear in strategic points, the house as a basic spatial unit of housing but also a basic productive unit and the gardens, with the intensive daily activity of the gardeners in their yards or in the certain extensions of the city.

The peculiar relationship between the houses and the open space was supplemented with the topic of water through the invisible river that has been gradually hidden, channelled and redirected through a different administrative and political decision. Particular attention was paid to the character of the palimpsest of the site, through observations in 4 different fragments and the successive modifications that have shaped it.

A summary of the application phase of the research developed by the UACS unit is presented in detail in the *Chapter 3* of this publication.

1. PALIMPSEST

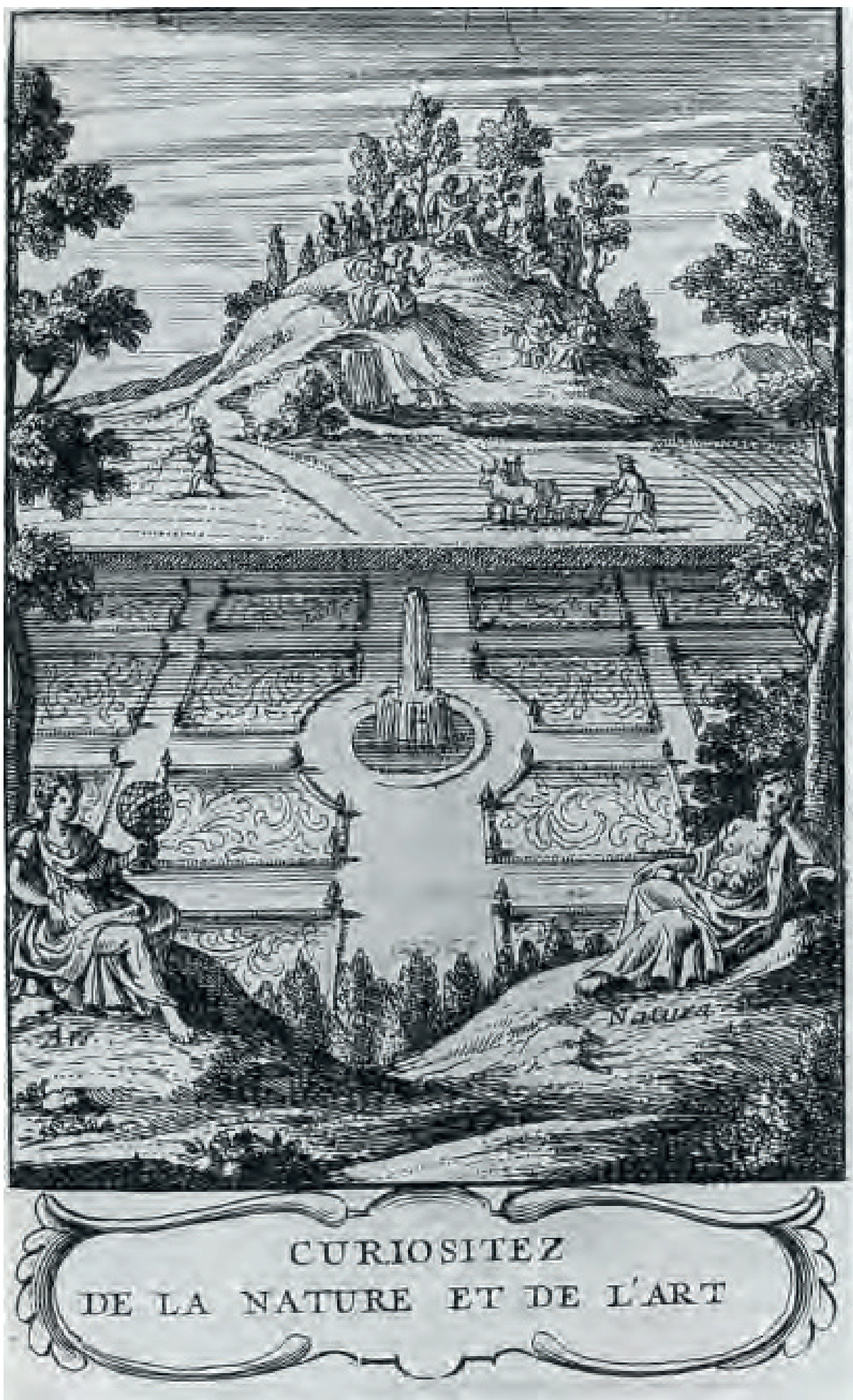


Fig. 1 Cover illustration from l'Abbé de Vallemont's *Curiositez de la nature et de l'art* (1705)

Moving through the picturesque garden

"A garden is a planned space, usually outdoors, set aside for the cultivation, display and enjoyment of plants and other forms of nature. The one characteristic that identifies even the wildest garden is control. The garden can contain both natural and artificial materials."

*Garden. (2022, December 12).
In Cambridge Dictionary (Online ed.).*

Garden, the basic function

The etymology of the word garden refers to fencing: it comes from the Macedonian word grad – fortification, the Middle English word gardin, from the Anglo-French garden, jardin, of German origin, similar to the Old German garda, gard, enclosure.

The sensations and peculiarities of the place, natural and constructed in relation to the topography, local tradition, mythology and local skills establish the relationship of man and the natural landscape and create a 'place' as a basis for personal or collective identification. Modifications and transformations represent a reciprocal adaptation between the territory and the population. In these places, we can notice an unexpected monumentality of the layered traces. Elements such as old trees, walls, paths, infrastructural elements that Robert Smithson calls unintentional monuments that create a narrative that, according to James Lingwood¹, continuously shifts between different layers of time: the physical presence of man, the social presence of culture and its symbols and the timing of geological changes.

Andre Corboz² strengthens the assumption of coherence and continuity in the relationship between man (social groups) and the territory with his supposition that the soil is not exclusively physical in nature, but different mythological and political intentions are also attributed to it. He does not define the soil through a single criterion but includes numerous factors that differ depending on the context and have been combined in different ways throughout history.

Hence, the concept of garden in this essay is observed through our relationship with the soil and the alterations of nature as a "sophisticated product", which according to John Dixon Hunt³ offers a refined, intense and complex expressiveness of human experiences. Hunt in the text "What on earth is a garden"⁴ defines this small outdoor space in relation to the "locality" in which it is situated. For Hunt, locality represents the combination of organic and inorganic materials that make a certain association with the wider territory for what he states are 'explicit

and implicit expressions' of local culture such as practical, sociological, spiritual or aesthetic. However, Hunt emphasizes, the garden is clearly separated from neighboring territories by defining a boundary (real or abstract) in the form of a wall or through the internal logic or organization of the space.

The most explicit example where the enclosure (as a recognizable element) gives us the meaning of the space and allows it to be imagined can be found in the medieval representations of paradise. Herman van Bergeijk etymologically derives the word paradise from the Persian *pairi-daeza* (*pairi-daeza*), which means an enclosed, fenced, closed, surrounded, limited garden; a reserved place that can be separated from the outside world in three ways: by water, by hedges or bushes, or by walls. According to van Bergeijk⁵, the garden inherently represents everything opposite of architecture, i.e. it has no tectonic qualities, and thus the wall remains the only architectural element that enhances the curiosity and temptation of people outside it.

In the context of the profane interpretation of the garden and fencing, Pier Vittorio Aureli connects the garden with the feeling of closeness and orientation through the process of interpreting nature on a human scale in relation to the extension of the home. This delimitation, separation according to Aureli⁶ gives the dialectical form of the garden - closed and yet in relation to the context. In the Renaissance period with the 'framing' of the garden in a perspective view, the mystical appeal and the multitude of narratives that are present in the medieval expression according to van Bergeijk are replaced by the view of the garden as a theater, i.e. erotic pleasures where one can read the relationship between the house and the garden in the context of the exercise of basic human instincts. Through this gesture of changing the narrative of the presentation of the garden, according to Aureli, it loses its critical power and begins to mix and intertwine with another form, i.e. the form of the park. Aureli emphasizes the critical period of changing the garden, that is, canceling the specific references of "habits, rituals and beliefs of those users". Parks actually represent neutral spaces that should solve the problem of hygiene that appeared because of industrialization in the middle of the 18th century.

The garden, either in the depictions of the Middle Ages or the Renaissance interpretation, is an imitation of the elements of nature and culture inherent to the surrounding territory. As such, we can use the garden as a medium for semanticization that organizes space in terms of its natural, sociological, and mythological representations.

The theoretical basis of the term

In continuity with the definition of the basic function, the theoretical framework of the notion of garden is not considered autonomously from the wider territory but as part of the context which is at the same time real and conceptual. As a metaphor for the various human interventions in the landscape, the term garden is multi-meaning, on the one hand it refers to the in-depth reading of the territory and on the other hand it is continuously associated with

the dynamism and functionality of the landscape.

Contrasting these two ideas of palimpsest and infrastructure we consider the categorization of the notion of garden by John Dixon Hunt⁴ whose theory places the garden in a certain mythological framework and tradition of cultural heritage in three categories citing Jacopo Bonfadio (1508 – 1550) 'first nature' i.e. the territory of immediate nature or what we know or associate as wilderness. The 'second nature', what today we call a cultivated landscape, which includes agriculture, urban development and growth, infrastructure, or as Cicero says (Cicero, cited in Hunt, 2000) an alternative nature, putting it in relation to the first nature. The 'third nature' that of gardens states Hunt is a sophisticated, thoughtful human intervention that steps out of the basic need to 'use' the landscape through its settlement or cultivation, a kind of combination of nature and culture. Hunt points out that the order of the three natures is symbolic and is an expression of what our relationship is to the territory without a hierarchical trace of the three classifications. The 'third nature' as a combination of the poetic and the mysterious is emphasized by Ferdinand Bac⁷ who interprets his gardens in Les columbieres:

"In this small domain, I have done nothing else but joined the millenary solidarity to which we are all subject: the ambition of expressing materially a sentiment, common to many men in search of a link with nature, by creating a place of repose of peaceable pleasure "

The idea or conflict of the three natures highlighted by Hunt is also recognized in the work of 1964 by Leo Marx - "The Machine in the Garden" in which he emphasizes the conflict between the picturesque garden and the "progressive" ideas of industrialized and urbanized territorial systems. On one hand, as Joel Clemmensen⁸ says, is the emphasis on performativity, functionality and horizontality promoted by contemporary architectural and urban discourse. On one hand, we set up this narrative that explains the landscape as infrastructure, and on the other hand, we have the garden, which we emphasized earlier in the research as a state of thinking, questioning and doubt, that is, as a way of observing the sectional matrix of the landscape. On one hand the natural, social and mythological layering and on the other hand what Bellinger (Bellinger, cited in Clemmensen, 2019) calls surface systems. In an attempt to master the complexity and dynamism of the territory as emphasized by Clemmensen, the metaphor of infrastructure increasingly suppresses/rejects the palimpsest under the pretext of 'necessary functionality', thus turning the landscape into 'second nature' aligning the real and multi-meaningful layering of the landscape. In this context, we refer to Strang (Strang, quoted in Clemmensen, 2019) who says: "maybe architects should be less like farmers and more like gardeners?".

This reflection of the "spirit of the place" through the discovery of its layering is inevitably connected with the notion of picturesque (picturesque), a dialogue with the landscape, i.e. nature in which, as Inaki Abalos⁹ says (Abalos, 2022), the place assumes the role of an active



Fig. 2 Richard Serra, Toronto, Canada 1972 (foto Gianfranco Gorgoni)