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# The Architecture Biennale as a Platform for Socio-Ecological Interventions

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Humans have shaped their surroundings according to their own ideas since time immemorial – even in locations that are unusual or hard to reach. One excellent example of this is the historic centre of Venice, which was built on a lagoon. And yet, the architecture of Venice – just like the city itself and its inhabitants – is facing a growing threat, not least due to this exposed position. Above all, Venice is struggling to deal with rising sea levels, recurring floods, mass tourism and the resulting exodus of its population.

It is not just in Venice that architecture, as a discipline, can contribute to solving such problems. Together with related disciplines – such as urban planning – and political decision-makers it shares responsibility for the functionality, use, distribution, accessibility and future viability of the spaces that are all around us. In this sense, architecture has a huge influence upon our human coexistence and our relationship with nature as well as, very concretely, the wellbeing of every individual.

However, rather than contributing to the solution of ecological and social problems, architecture – in combination with certain policies – frequently makes them worse. Growing levels of building development and the associated soil sealing are leading, in the short term, to more frequent flooding events and higher temperatures and, in the longer term, to the reduction in the amount of agricultural land and a loss of biodiversity driven by a simultaneous loss of habitat, together with a reduction in the ability of the ground to store CO<sub>2</sub>,

which is further accelerating climate change.<sup>1</sup> This, in term, is reinforcing social inequality – as exemplified by the fact that it is the more disadvantaged social groups that, by being compelled to live in poorly insulated homes in densely-built urban districts, are most exposed to rising temperatures.<sup>2</sup> Other social problems directly affecting the population include the housing shortage and homelessness, which are closely linked to the generally unfair distribution of space and the associated concentration of wealth and power in the hands of just a few people.

Having said this, architects are becoming increasingly aware of their considerable influence upon societal trends and their unique position among the visual arts. Unlike sculpture or painting, architecture is defined by its functionality, its relationship with its location, its public character and its characteristic sense of openness or enclosure, which can refer to not only spaces but also their degree of accessibility to different individuals.<sup>3</sup> The functionality of architecture principally concerns the basic need for a place to live, which makes it relevant to everyone. But a home and its location are also accompanied by a close psychological connection with these and other subjectively important built spaces. In addition to this, the public character of architecture also means that we are subject to a permanent sensory relationship with it – whether we want to be or not.

Hence, it seems to be even more significant that the Venice Architecture Biennale is playing an expanding role as a platform for socio-ecological interventions. In the spirit of architectural ethics, a school of thought within architectural philosophy that has developed rapidly in recent decades,<sup>4</sup> the discipline is able to go beyond a purely functionalist and/or aesthetic approach<sup>5</sup> or, at least, is able to regard the ethical aspect of construction as being of equal importance. Indeed, considering that, in contrast with the other arts, the solution

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1 University for Continuing Education Krems: Bodenversiegelung in Österreich. Bodenersiegelung in Österreich - less emissions (donau-uni.ac.at). accessed on 15.08.2024.

2 Tagesschau: Wie Klimawandel die soziale Ungleichheit verschärft. Wie Klimawandel die soziale Ungleichheit verschärft | tagesschau.de. accessed on 30.09.2024.

3 Baumberger Christoph: Architekturphilosophie. Eine Einleitung. In: Baumberger, Christoph (ed.): Architekturphilosophie: Grundlagentexte. Münster 2013. p. 7–29.

4 Ibid.

5 Harries Karsten: Die ethische Funktion der Architektur. In: Baumberger, Christoph (ed.): Architekturphilosophie: Grundlagentexte. Münster 2013. p. 167–179.

of ethical problems in architecture is a directly intrinsic and essential part of the work of architects, they are obliged to go beyond the merely functional and aesthetic.<sup>6</sup> As architecture (once again, unlike the other arts) both provides the framework for and impacts upon our daily lives, even its aesthetic aspects can hardly be addressed independently from its ethical aspects and their impact.<sup>7</sup> And yet, which ethical functions must architecture fulfil in the first place?

According to Karsten Harries, architecture should assign us a place or offer us a home and 'rescue us from the meaningless homogeneity of space'.<sup>8</sup> Christian Illies offers more concrete detail in his proposal for the six fields of architectural ethics:

- (1) Professional behaviour and interaction during the planning, designing and construction phase.
- (2) The function and use of a building.
- (3) The impact on nature.
- (4) The impact on individual users: their health, safety, and general wellbeing, including their psychological wellbeing.
- (5) The influence on human behaviour, individually and collectively.
- (6) The cultural or symbolic meaning of buildings [...].<sup>9</sup>

While largely agreeing with Illies's points, Warwick Fox adds the concept of *design fit* as a further key consideration.<sup>10</sup> This refers to the purely creative suitability of a building, the extent to which it fits into its natural, social and built context. Fox took the *design fit* of a building, which he regards as being essential for an architectural ethic, as a basis for the development of his ethical theory, the *theory of responsive cohesion*, which can also be applied to architecture. This states that our well-founded and best-informed opinions regarding what is most valuable are underpinned by a specific organisational form, *responsive cohesion*, which we should see as an absolutely fundamental value that applies

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6 Lagueux Maurice: Ethik und Ästhetik in der Architektur. In: Baumberger, Christoph (ed.): Architekturphilosophie: Grundlagentexte. Münster 2013. p. 180–199.

7 Ibid.

8 Harries Karsten: Die ethical function of architecture. In: Selected Studies in Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy, vol. 11. 1985, p. 138.

9 Cf. Illies Christian: The moral relevance of architecture. In: IAPS Bulletin, Vol. 31. 2008. p. 3.

10 Cf. Fox Warwick: Architecture, ethics, and the theory of responsive cohesion. Flash (an zasca.net). accessed on 30.09.2024.

to every conceivable area, including the process of evaluation itself. As a result, it should structure our life and our actions. *Responsive cohesion* sits between the two extremes of *fixed cohesion* (in which things cohere rigidly, statically and without any communication between the elements – as exemplified, in politics, by dictatorship and autocracy, etc.) and *discohesion* (in which there is absolutely no cohesion between things – as exemplified, in politics, by anarchy) and reflects the order or organisation of things that are cohesive and whose elements and central characteristics communicate significantly with one another. In any particular field, the example that best represents *responsive cohesion* and its relational quality is generally regarded by informed judges as the best example of its kind.<sup>11</sup>

What does the *theory of responsive cohesion* mean for architectural ethics?

The theory provides architects with unambiguous decision-making criteria. Fox differentiates between *internal responsive cohesion* (cohesion and communication between individual elements within a system) and *contextual responsive cohesion* (cohesion and communication between two systems) and emphasises that the realisation of the organisational form of *responsive cohesion* should be aimed at the broadest possible context, which means that *contextual responsive cohesion* is to be preferred to *internal responsive cohesion*, although both should be strived for. He declares that the Earth, the very basis of our existence, is the broadest context to which *responsive cohesion* can apply and, hence, advocates the protection of the biosphere and of the integrity and responsive capacity of its constituent parts. As a result, the social, political, economic or, indeed, any other context is subordinate to the ecological context. In addition to this, every aspect of our broader society – everything that involves our living together as humans – is to be put before human-made artefacts. According to this theory, architects involved in realising buildings should attempt to achieve an outcome that is satisfactory for all specified contexts and, in case of doubt, should decide in favour of the greatest context of all – nature – or, otherwise, the next largest context.<sup>12</sup> This approach contradicts the three-pillar model regularly used in

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11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

architecture, in which economic, ecological and social aspects are regarded as being of equal importance.<sup>13</sup>

The most recent editions of the Venice Architecture Biennale offer particular proof that architects are beginning to understand their major impact on society and to seek architecture-related solutions for the broader contexts described by Fox, such as nature and social cohabitation. In contrast with purely aesthetic questions, these contexts are not only relevant to a small circle of art aficionados. While Venice has become a regular location for civil protests on behalf of a better environment and successful social cohabitation, the socio-ecological interventions of individual national pavilions at the Venice Architecture Biennale, one of the world's most significant artistic institutions, have the potential to deliver a much greater impact. After all, architects represent entire nations through their contributions in the pavilions and the Venice Architecture Biennale attracts an unbelievable number of visitors. In 2023, the total was 285,000.<sup>14</sup> Furthermore, the media response to the event is huge. The innovative approaches of the socio-ecological interventions also have a decent chance of being seized upon by politicians as a basis for political debate and, in individual and the best cases, playing a role in the drawing up of new legislation.

The relationship of humans with their broadest possible context<sup>15</sup> – nature and the environment – has been central to a number of contributions in recent years. In 2016, for example, at the Venice Architecture Biennale entitled *Reporting from the Front*, a special project that was not associated with any national pavilion reported on *The Forests of Venice*.<sup>16</sup> On the one hand, the project is a reference to wood as a natural resource and to the ten million timber posts upon

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13 Dücks Martin: *Architektur für ein gutes Leben. Über Verantwortung, Moral und Ethik des Architekten*. Münster/New York/Munich/Berlin 2011. p. 180–197.

14 La Biennale di Venezia: *The Biennale Architettura 2023 closes with 285,000 visitors*. Biennale Architettura 2023 | *The Biennale Architettura 2023 closes with 285,000 visitors* (labiennale.org). accessed on 30.09.2024.

15 Cf. Fox Warwick: *Architecture, ethics, and the theory of responsive cohesion*. Flash (an zasca.net). accessed on 30.09.2024.

16 Aravena Alejandro: *Reporting from the Front: 15*. *Mostra Internazionale Di Architettura: Biennale Architettura 2016*, 28.05-27.11. Venice. Participating countries, collateral events. Venice 2016. p. 162–163.

which Venice was built. On the other hand, it conceptually turns the appearance of Venice on its head by proposing ten million new trees as a solution to ecological problems. And even if the idea of planting so many trees initially appears utopian, we need precisely such powerful visions of how cities can be reconciled with nature in future. This proposed project sees Venice as a future symbol and as a model for the intact relationship or symbiosis between built cities and their natural surroundings.

The Peruvian contribution of the same year, *Our Amazon Frontline*, refers to the title of the Venice Architecture Biennale and reports on the ‘last frontline’ that has to be overcome.<sup>17</sup> This runs between the vision of the earlier inhabitants of the Amazon region and the approach of modern Western society that, through its massive interventions in the rainforest, represents a threat to biodiversity, the production of oxygen and the regulation of the climate. In this light, we have to learn from the knowhow of the native people in order to obtain valuable insights in the fields of medicine, nutrition and sustainable production. In line with this intention, the Peruvian pavilion addressed *Plan Selva*, a largescale public programme that rebuilt hundreds of schools in corners of the Amazon region that are difficult to access and lacking in infrastructure. The educational programme in these schools is also dedicated to overcoming cultural challenges. They promote multiculturalism and Indigenous languages. The architecture itself consists of elements that can be adapted to specific local climatic and topographical conditions and individually and flexibly transported by boat.<sup>18</sup> The newly-built schools strengthen the social fabric that connects the various cultures. And their construction, with its knowingly minimal intervention in the natural context, is justified by the expectation that they will have a positively retroactive impact on the natural environment.

In 2016, the Montenegrin pavilion presented the project *Solana Ulcinj*.<sup>19</sup> One of the country’s largest and historically most important salt works was artifi-

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17 Ibid. p. 90–91.

18 Youtube: BiennaleChannel. Biennale Architettura 2016 - Peru (youtube.com). accessed on 01.10.2024.

19 ArchDaily: Montenegro Pavilion at 2016 Venice Biennale to Investigate One of Europe’s Largest Post-Industrial Landscapes. Montenegro Pavilion at 2016 Venice Biennale to Investigate One of Europe’s Largest Post-Industrial Landscapes | ArchDaily. accessed on 01.10.2024.

cially created close to the town of Ulcinj in the 1920s. In 2005, however, production ceased to be supported by a state monopoly and Solana Ulcinj was declared bankrupt. Since then, the ownership status of Montenegro's salt works has been uncertain and there has been no clear strategy for the use of the facilities. Salt production ceased in 2012, but the salt pans have since inexorably developed into a huge biotope. The production of salt created a range of chemical conditions that has generated enormous biodiversity and Solana Ulcinj is also home to around 250 species of bird, which use the former salt production facility as a resting place during long migratory journeys or as a breeding ground. A total of four different projects addressed the possible future structure of the ecologically significant area. The project by *LOLA Landscape Architects* of Rotterdam was particularly notable for the way in which it considered a range of contexts before prioritising the expansion of the biodiversity of Solana Ulcinj by pumping salt water all-year-round rather than just during the warmer months. The aim of the idea was to attract new species of birds. At the same time, the area covered by the pumping was reduced and modern technology was employed in order to produce particularly high-quality salt that can be offered on the global market without having to compete with cheap Chinese salt. The area was also opened for leisure activities such as birdwatching, floating on the salt water or taking mud baths, with the aim of stimulating the social life and entrepreneurial instinct of the region. Existing buildings were used and only a handful of new ones erected where absolutely necessary. Paths were also laid around the perimeter of Solana Ulcinj, while its heart remained inaccessible and untouched. And while the project was not realised in exactly this form, the area has still been a nature reserve since 2019.<sup>20</sup>

Salt was also an important element of the contribution by the United Arab Emirates to the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2021,<sup>21</sup> whose motto was *How will we live together?* This investigated the development of an environmentally-friendly alternative to cement production, which is responsible for around 8% of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. With the help of salt obtained from the *sabkhas*, the

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20 Ulcinj Salina: An analysis of legal and institutional challenges in the process of EU integration and closing Chapter 27. Solana-izvjestaj\_ENG-final-min.pdf (czip.me). accessed on 01.10.2024.

21 Margutti Flavia Fossa/Pietragnoli Maddalena (eds.): *How will we live together?: Biennale Architettura 2021. Participating countries and collateral events.* Venice 2021. p. 126–127.

coastal deserts that can be found in the UAE, and the use of brine, which is a common by-product of the desalination of sea water, it is possible to produce environmentally-friendly building materials that can replace cement. If new human artefacts still can or should be made, even considering and weighing up the broader context, it is particularly important to build them using recycled materials and to avoid waste.

The reuse of materials was also a central element of the German pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2023, which had the theme *The Laboratory of the Future*.<sup>22</sup> The contribution addressed the care, repair and preservation of buildings and public spaces and, in particular, of the German pavilion itself. More specifically, the pavilion was to remain in its current condition and no additional materials were to be employed, which means that the project countered the prevailing logic of the market economy and its demand for the permanent creation of new things. Material from more than 40 different national pavilions from the Venice Art Biennale of 2022 was recycled and integrated into the new design. This triggered a central question: How can creativity be conceived to be environmentally-friendly? In addition to this, the interventions in the building also considered socio-spatial needs. Attention was paid to those spaces and infrastructural elements that enable the most vulnerable groups to participate fully in society and underline the importance of often unseen caring work: a meeting room, a tea kitchen, a material store – or, for example, a workshop. Here, elements of Venice's social infrastructure were cared for, repaired and made usable again. In this sense, the pavilion addressed the broadest possible context, the environment, but also the underlying level of social relationships.

Further architectural contributions of recent years have directly continued this theme of social relationships. And in doing so, while not always explicitly addressing the ecological context, they have also avoided any unplanned negative ecological consequences. These social interventions often concern the possibility of and the need for public participation by less-privileged individuals. In this process, the public realm is not primarily regarded as the opposite of the private realm but, rather, as a series of social and spatial spheres that can essentially establish themselves anywhere in line with the density and form

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22 Arch+: Open for Maintenance – Wegen Umbau geöffnet. Open for Maintenance – Wegen Umbau geöffnet | ISBN 9783931435752 | ARCH+ (archplus.net). accessed on 01.10.2024.

of social relationships<sup>23</sup> and that include such issues as inclusion or democracy.<sup>24</sup> The private realm, on the other hand, is associated with property and ownership rights. And it is also accompanied by ever more obvious inequality in the areas of both property ownership and social participation, which is resulting from the accumulation of space by an increasingly powerful minority. As the enablers of such a problematic situation, political decision-makers are also challenged to counter it.

The objective of *Beteiligung*, the Austrian contribution to the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2023, was to open the Venice Biennale to the city. The idea was to place one half of the interior of the pavilion at the disposal of the neighbouring district of Castello, which is still primarily inhabited by local people, for use as a public meeting space. In order to achieve this it would have been necessary to circumvent the wall around the Venice Biennale site, which passes alongside the pavilion. The architectural collective AKT and the architect Hermann Czech, who were responsible for the project, initially planned to break through the wall. However, the Venice Biennale organisers and the city authorities rejected both this idea and a subsequent proposal to cross the wall using a bridge. As the possibility that the idea of opening up to the city would be rejected had been recognised from the outset, the alternative show in the completed pavilion documented the failure of the project. This triggered a discussion about not only the power to determine the use of space in a city in which land is limited, but also the notion of social sustainability in the context of the constant expansion of the Venice Biennale in the historic centre of Venice. The truth is that this expansion of the Venice Biennale is being accompanied by the exclusion of local people from the spaces used by the event. In 2023, the Austrian pavilion demanded at least a partial reversal of this expansion.<sup>25,26</sup>

23 Lofland Lyn H.: *The Public Realm: Exploring the City's Quintessential Social Territory*. New York 1998. p. 11.

24 Hannemann Christine/Hilti Nicola/Reutlinger Christian (eds.): *Wohnen: Zwölf Schlüsselthemen sozialräumlicher Wohnforschung*. Stuttgart 2022. p. 63.

25 *La Biennale 2023.at: Partecipazione / Beteiligung*. *Partecipazione / Beteiligung* — 18. Internationale Architekturbienale in Venedig 2023 (*labiennale2023.at*). accessed on 01.10.2024.

26 *Kleine Zeitung: Architekturbienale: Österreichs Beitrag stößt in Venedig auf feste Mauern*. *Architekturbienale 2023: Österreichs Beitrag stößt in Venedig auf feste Mauern* (*kleinezeitung.at*). accessed on 01.10.2024.

In the same year, the so-called *Unfolding Pavilion* took place for a fourth time. This is a pop-up exhibition about the specific space that it is occupying at that moment. The *Unfolding Pavilion* has never been part of the Venice Biennale programme, but this time it was located in the area in front of, behind, around and along the perimeter of the Giardini. The Giardini are home to most of the national pavilions that form part of the Venice Biennale. The *Unfolding Pavilion* had the motto #OPENGIARDINI and, in a similar way to the Austrian pavilion, rejected the spatial conditions created by the organisation of the Venice Biennale and the exclusion of people from an area that is actually public. The fact is that, in 1807, Napoleon built a public park (the Giardini Pubblici), which came to be occupied by permanent exhibition buildings after the first international art exhibition in 1895. The section of the park used by the Venice Biennale is still not privately owned but, rather, public land that is merely placed at the disposal of the institution by the city of Venice. Only one third of the total area of the park is permanently accessible to the public free of charge, while the rest of the Giardini can only be entered during the visiting hours of the Venice art and architecture biennales upon payment of an entry fee. However, the primary target of the criticism of the *Unfolding Pavilion* was the inaccessibility of the Giardini during the six months of the year in which no exhibition is taking place. Because the public is unable to enter the Venice Biennale area in the Giardini all year round due to a 'system of gates, walls, fences, CCTV cameras, metal spikes, barbed wire and armed guards'.<sup>27</sup> The interventions curated by Daniel Tudor Munteanu and Davide Tommaso Ferrando included a sticker campaign, a photo project by the photographer Laurian Ghinițoiu and a huge banner demanding the opening of the Giardini that was placed in front of the entrance to the Venice Biennale. In addition to this, boat owners who suffer due to the border devices created by the Venice Biennale were helped to get to their boats. Some of these boat owners who rent mooring points from the city are assigned, purely by chance, points that are located on the perimeter to the Venice Biennale. This perimeter includes high barriers, ladders suspended above the water, spiked fences and walls topped by broken glass –obstructions that the artists countered by creating, among other things, three ladders for overcoming the height differences, inflated clown's noses that covered the spikes on the fence and a soft grip that enabled the boat owners to swing around the barrier.<sup>28</sup> Hence, while the Venice Architecture Biennale offers, as we have seen above,

27 Unfolding Pavilion: Press release. Unfolding Pavilion. accessed on 01.10.2024. p. 3.

28 Ibid.

a suitable platform for contributions addressing socio-ecological subjects, the organisation itself does not always meet its socio-inclusive aspirations.

The Luxembourgish contribution to the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2018, *The Architecture of the Common Ground*, condemned growing privatisation and land speculation in the country.<sup>29</sup> As in other European cities, hardly any building land is available in the city of Luxembourg. The aim of the exhibition was to define and present land as limited, essential and as an inalienable public asset. Only when we understand this can we think about cities in ecological and social terms and develop them further from first principles. The exhibition presented a range of projects from the history of architecture as well as contemporary ideas, all of which seek to use land in the public interest and, in particular, occupy very little space on the ground and at the lower levels. The designs and buildings presented in the exhibition were high-rise projects, whose social quality results from their functional flexibility as both living space and public facilities, while their ecological quality results from their creation of large open areas at ground-floor level. As a result, the projects also suggest how new buildings can counter the problem of excessive soil sealing.

The Hungarian pavilion from 2018 also addressed the subject of – and the potential for sharing – open space by reporting on the temporary occupation of the Liberty Bridge in Budapest by the wider public.<sup>30</sup> During a period of road-building works, cars were unable to cross one of the oldest bridges over the Danube. The population took advantage of this by enjoying the freed-up space. Barbecues, yoga sessions and even weddings took place. And while these people may not have been explicitly criticising planning policy, the events that they organised can be regarded as an implicit criticism of the urban development framework. In other words, the Hungarian pavilion was asking such questions as what makes an open space free and how can people reclaim the right to use such spaces that they have lost in the name of development and economic progress.

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29 Architecturebiennale.lu: Presskit. LUX\_presskit\_DEF-1.pdf (architecturebiennale.lu). accessed on 16.08.2024.

30 Margutti Flavia Fossa/Pietragnoli Maddalena (eds.): Freespace: Biennale architettura 2018. Participating countries and collateral events. Venice 2018. p. 58–59.

In 2018, the pavilion of the Czech and the Slovak Republics argued explicitly for an urban planning approach that enables as many people as possible to exercise social influence. The two countries presented the project *UNES-CO*.<sup>31</sup> This focussed on the depopulation of the centres of Český Krumlov and Venice, which can be traced back to mass tourism and its associated economic structures. Rising rents and an infrastructure that fails to meet local needs are the immediate cause of the exodus, the exclusion, of these people. City centres lack suitable spaces in which they can lead fulfilling lives. The project sought to counter this by inviting people to live in the centre of Český Krumlov for three months, free of charge, and to participate in activities that would be considered quite normal in other places. In addition to this, the participants also received a salary that truly enabled them to lead a *normal* life. Visitors to the exhibition were able to leaf through a list of everyday activities and follow these activities in Český Krumlov by live feed. It was very important to the initiator Kateřina Šedá that locals and tourists enjoyed an equal status in the city. And she also wanted to make a concrete suggestion for addressing the numbers of people moving away from threatened cities.

People may not enjoy a universal right to live in a place of their own choosing, such as the centre of a heavily visited city, but there is a human right to adequate housing. This is part of the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations (ICESCR)*.<sup>32</sup> But many people are unable to exercise this right. For decades, the housing policies of most Western democracies were determined by the interaction between the free market and public institutions. Recent decades, however, have seen a neoliberalisation of housing policy that has been characterised by the marketisation of living due to the privatisation of public housing, the retreat of social housing providers and the liberalisation and financialisation of housing provision.<sup>33</sup> Sablowski describes financialisation as the widespread penetration and shaping of socio-economic relationships by the logic and the institutions of the financial

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31 Ibid. p. 36–37.

32 Deutsches Institut für Menschenrechte: Sozialpakt (ICESCR). Sozialpakt (ICESCR) | Institut für Menschenrechte (institut-fuer-menschenrechte.de). accessed on 01.10.2024.

33 Hannemann Christine/Hilti Nicola/Reutlinger Christian (eds.): *Wohnen: Zwölf Schlüsselthemen sozialräumlicher Wohnforschung*. Stuttgart 2022. p. 386.

markets.<sup>34</sup> The neoliberalisation of housing policy is leading to rising housing costs, the squeezing out of less well-off tenants and the dominance of more upscale housing projects.<sup>35</sup>

*Not for Sale!!*, the Canadian pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2023, took up this problem and protested against the lack of affordable homes, inadequate housing conditions and homelessness in Canada.<sup>36</sup> The pavilion identified real estate speculation as being responsible for Canada's housing crisis. Apartments are transformed into financial assets and their form, function and aesthetics are adapted for the purposes of value retention and speculation. However, the roots of these current problems can be traced back to the expropriation of land during the colonial era. Indigenous knowhow and behaviour were replaced by the notion of land and space as private property. The ten demands of the Canadian pavilion refer in part to the Indigenous population.<sup>37</sup> For example, one such demand was that the Canadian land used by the crown should be returned to Indigenous peoples. The pavilion also took up David Madden and Peter Marcuse's concept of *residential alienation*.<sup>38</sup> This describes the alienation of people from the land they inhabit, the social world that supports them and the ability to creatively shape their environment.<sup>39</sup> This alienation resulted from the downgrading of residential space into an exchangeable good<sup>40</sup> that, with reference to Karsten Harries's architectural ethics, is thus unable to offer us a sense of home.<sup>41</sup> By setting out these demands, the pavilion sought to overcome this alienation and to not only enable

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34 Sablowski Thomas: Krise und Kontinuität des finanzmarktdominierten Akkumulationsregimes. In: Zeitschrift für Wirtschaftsgeographie, vol. 55, 1–2/2011. p. 50–64.

35 Hannemann Christine/Hilti Nicola/Reutlinger Christian (eds.): Wohnen: Zwölf Schlüsselthemen sozialräumlicher Wohnforschung. Stuttgart 2022. p. 386.

36 Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia/Kulturstiftung (eds.): Biennale Architettura: The Laboratory of the Future. Venice 2023. Venice 2023. p. 22–23.

37 AAHA: Manifesto. AAHA. accessed on 01.10.2024.

38 Madden David/Marcuse Peter: In defense of housing: the politics of crisis. London/New York 2016.

39 Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia/Kulturstiftung (eds.): Biennale Architettura: The Laboratory of the Future. Venice 2023. Venice 2023. p. 22–23.

40 Ibid.

41 Harries Karsten: Die ethische Funktion der Architektur. In: Baumberger, Christoph (ed.): Architekturphilosophie: Grundlagentexte. Münster 2013. p. 177.

people to re-establish their roots in their land and their social context, but also re-enable them to have a creative impact on their surroundings.<sup>42</sup>

Refugees are accompanied by a particular sense of homelessness. The Austrian pavilion at the Venice Architecture Biennale in 2016 wanted to create *Places for People*.<sup>43</sup> As a reaction to the refugee crisis of 2015, three teams of Austrian architects were commissioned to design spaces for refugees that offered adequate privacy while encouraging social interaction. For example, the architects *CARAMEL* intervened by accommodating a total of 280 refugees in an office building in Vienna.<sup>44</sup> As part of their project *HOME MADE* they created a modular spatial structure that used a large umbrella as a basic framework and fabric walls that safeguarded the privacy and the intimacy of the refugees. These new residential units, which consisted of a main area for two beds and two connected but spatially separated secondary areas, each containing one bed, were enhanced by a provisional doorbell with a nameplate. In one of many interventions introduced by the architects in consultation with the local authority, the building was opened to the outside world and the local community in the form of an area with seating benches, a children's playground and planters that was created on the public space next to the building. The architects were particularly keen to encourage constructive exchange with the residents and to involve them in the various interventions. The three different projects shared the aims of rapidly improving the living conditions of the refugees and addressing general questions about the future design and use of our cities, homes and public spaces.<sup>45</sup>

The exemplary approaches presented above illustrate the growing aspiration of architects and urban planners to act in an ethical and socio-ecological manner. The projects demonstrate creative ways of strengthening ecosystems, reusing

42 Fondazione La Biennale di Venezia/Kulturstiftung (eds.): *Biennale Architettura: The Laboratory of the Future*. Venice 2023. Venice 2023. p. 22–23.

43 Aravena Alejandro: *Reporting from the Front: 15. Mostra Internazionale Di Architettura: Biennale Architettura 2016, 28.05-27.11*. Venice. Participating countries, collateral events. Venice 2016. p. 16–17.

44 *Orte für Menschen: Intervention 1, Home Made (Caramel Architekten), Traces of Improvisation*. *CARAMEL.pdf*. accessed on 01.10.2024.

45 Aravena Alejandro: *Reporting from the Front: 15. Mostra Internazionale Di Architettura: Biennale Architettura 2016, 28.05-27.11*. Venice. Participating countries, collateral events. Venice 2016. p. 16–17.

materials, meeting our basic housing needs, improving access to and the inclusivity of the world around us and reimagining the distribution of space. If architects and urban planners are to develop such approaches further, the creation of the right framework is a task for society as a whole. Politicians, as the brokers of our social structures, must therefore first address the ecological context and the need to safeguard the very bases of our existence, and then immediately focus on social cohabitation. The role of art, science and civil society is to take every opportunity of their own to put pressure on these political decision makers. The contributions to the Venice Architecture Biennale discussed above can hopefully help to trigger the implementation of political measures. As the home to one of the world's most important major cultural events, the city of Venice has developed a growing role in recent years as a source of stimuli and ideas for social change.

