

Index

	03	Editorial
INTRO	06	From Dirty Realism to Dirty Ecologies Manuel Gausa
DIALOGUE	14	Ecologies and Ecosophies: A conversation Areti Markopoulou and François Roche
PAPER	26	Another ecology: natural metropolitan connections Vicente Guallart
RESEARCH	34	Synthetic Landscapes Claudia Pasquero, Marco Poletto
RESEARCH	44	Slow Crisis IAAC MAA/ Rodrigo Rubio, Ruxandra Iancu
PAPER	56	Nikel. Dark Materiality of Arctic city Katya Larina, Tatjana Gorbachewskaya
RESEARCH	66	The Monarch Sanctuary Mitchell Joachim
RESEARCH	72	Robotic Habitats Noumena
DIALOGUE	76	Bio-integrated Design Marcos Cruz interviewed by Jordi Vivaldi
RESEARCH	90	LiveCycles IaaC Advanced Architecture Group
RESEARCH	96	Nature as Computing Matter Andrew Adamatzky
RESEARCH	102	Design Behaviors: Materially Responsive Architecture Areti Markopoulou
PAPER	116	Expanding Biodiversity Eduardo Kac
PAPER	126	Material Ecology Neri Oxman
PAPER	134	Matterlessness: On Architecture, Materiality and Form under the Allonomous Condition Jordi Vivaldi
	150	Credits



From Dirty Realism to Dirty Ecologies

Manuel Gausa

At the end of the 1980s, the magazine *Quaderns d'Arquitectura i Urbanisme* published an issue titled “New Narration” (Reality and Project),¹ with clearly critical intentions. Faced with the lyrical eclecticism of postmodern urban figuration, the publication reengaged with the expression “dirty realism”, coined by Bill Buford in *Granta* magazine (1983). It was originally used to refer to an important literary trend – particularly in the United States – which expressed the concerns of authors like Raymond Carver, Frederick Barthelme, Tobias Wolff and Jayne Anne Philips, who were interested in a new type of direct and ordinary scenarios, portraying dry, hard and “scratchy” everyday situations² through a new, naked, bare, bluntly lucid and explicit narrative.

The term “dirty” described a “realism” that was no longer just content with contextual naturalism, procedural habits and relativistic weighting (or simply pragmatic “common sense”) but was read in a less complacent way, depicting scenarios of conflictive and complex mutation.³ It revealed a broken city, at the limit of this situation – and its own definition – that was neither the conventionally standard domestic suburbs nor the most institutional developmental downtowns, but rather a new type of more open and irregular peri-urbanity. The cliché of that *periphéreia* was intended as an alternative landscape but also as a “latent project”: a disturbing context – in its indefinite condition – contrasted with an ideal, referential and/or symbolic center.

This definition was also picked up in Europe, in various urban investigations taking place at the time, positing a space of more ambiguous and dissolute profiles, in opposition to the post-modern eclectic and practical realism (compositional convention, ideological relativism, evocative recreation, etc.).

Previous page:
The Breath [0.7]: project of
IaaC, developed at Master in
Advanced Architecture 01 in
2013/2014. Researchers: Chung
Kai Hsieh, Luis León López,
Maria Laura Cerda; Faculty: Areti
Markopoulou, Alexandre Dubor,
Moritz Begle.



Der Himmel über Berlin,
Win Wenders, 1987.

The so-called dirty realism was not that of prosaic and contingent pragmatism but that of a new, sharp, more precise and resistant gaze (sometimes incisively minimalist), emmeshed with the “uncertain” condition of the new, changing environments.⁴

It is interesting to note the proximity of the publication of the *Quaderns* issue (at the end of the 1980s) to the Rio Summit preparations and celebration at the beginning of the 1990s (1992), in addition to the significant influence of the

involvement in a reality that was not only irregular and heterogeneous in its materializations but fragile and vulnerable in its own conditions,⁵ resulting thereafter in the emergence of a global awareness that was more attuned to environmental preservation (climate change, ecological footprint, single-cycle processes, green agendas, urban resilience, rational economy and management of resources, etc.).

In a short time, this awareness of sustainability became a necessity, adopted in the urban approach in a generalized way: the paradigm of a more ecological vision offered a new protocol, often not exempted from bucolic rituals, green coloring, corrective technologies, and a new prophylactic connection with nature, which evolved into a recreated, if not revisited, landscape.

At the turn of the century, the irruption of the digital age and of a new informational and substantively interactive logic, contributed decisively to strengthening that attentive perspective towards the environment, through the reactive, responsible and responsive optimization of processes: in other words, through a greater relational engagement/connectivity within the medium, with the medium, and between different media. The periphery as an alternative landscape also gave way to the parapheria as a “multi-relational” environment.⁶

In the 1990s, this increase in a progressively interactive and “informational” exchange enhanced the exploration of hybrid combinations between programs, topologies and typologies (Land-Links, Land-Arch, Lands-in-Land, etc.⁷) and today, in the 21st century, between metabolisms and bioactive organisms. Due to technological and scientific progress, micro-organisms inserted in matter, conjugated bacteria and building energy, nano-technology applied to buildings, and evolutionary spatial crops have come to constitute some of the current fields of research.

In this progressive logic of intersection, exchange and cutting, architecture is increasingly formulated as a living and ambivalently “naturartificial” device, in a situation that amplifies the *natufices*⁸ of the 1990s and expands them towards a new type of foreign metabolism, which is not only hybrid, but definitively mutated.

The new specimens thus generated do not belong to the imaginary of an agreed ecological outcome, but to a new type of non-homologated “bold ecology”,⁹ with strange, disturbing, turbid, dark, and often crude and unforeseen shades; in it, bio-matter processes can be generated beyond convention. The expression “dark ecologies” – coined by Timothy Morton in 2007¹⁰ – referred to this emerging interest in exploring a “new nature”, not only related to architectural space but within the framework of the environment itself, further removed from the generalized vision of the “ecological”.

The adjective “dark” translates this condition of an increasingly “para-natural” nature that is “murkier” and “more perverse” (“disturbing”, but also “tainted”). The term “black ecologies” as it is used in these pages forces that uneasy and disturbing quality of hard-context scenarios (those of the periphery) that were so wicked, compared to the approved “centrality”.

But, it also brings them closer to the investigation of conditions (both fertile and conflictive) that are far removed from the bucolic, Platonic and/or Apollonian ideals: “environmental conditions” where parameters of contextual “noise”, pollution, attrition, corruption and/or hybridization are considered to be a substantive part of the processes themselves.

These should become the center of research focused on potentially innovative models and materials, through which the “new dreams of old realities” would be built.¹¹

Timothy Morton himself (paraphrasing Arie Altena¹²) emphasized this proximity to the “black series” of films and research novels, in which objectivity and subjectivity, analysis and narration, are simultaneously interwoven in a lucid, as well as implied, manner.

They approach the ecological issue not only from a natural point of view, but also from a relational one, as an interdependent system of open, non-predetermined, unprejudiced relations.¹³

“Dark ecology puts hesitation, uncertainty, irony, and thoughtfulness back into ecological thinking.

The form of dark ecology is that of noir film.

The noir narrator begins investigating a supposedly external situation, from a supposedly neutral point of view, only to discover that she or he is implicated in it.

The point of view of the narrator herself becomes stained with desire.

There is no metaposition from which we can make ecological pronouncements. Ironically, this applies in particular to the sunny, affirmative rhetoric of environmental ideology. A more honest ecological art would linger in the shadowy world of irony and difference. The ecological thought includes negativity and irony, ugliness and horror.”

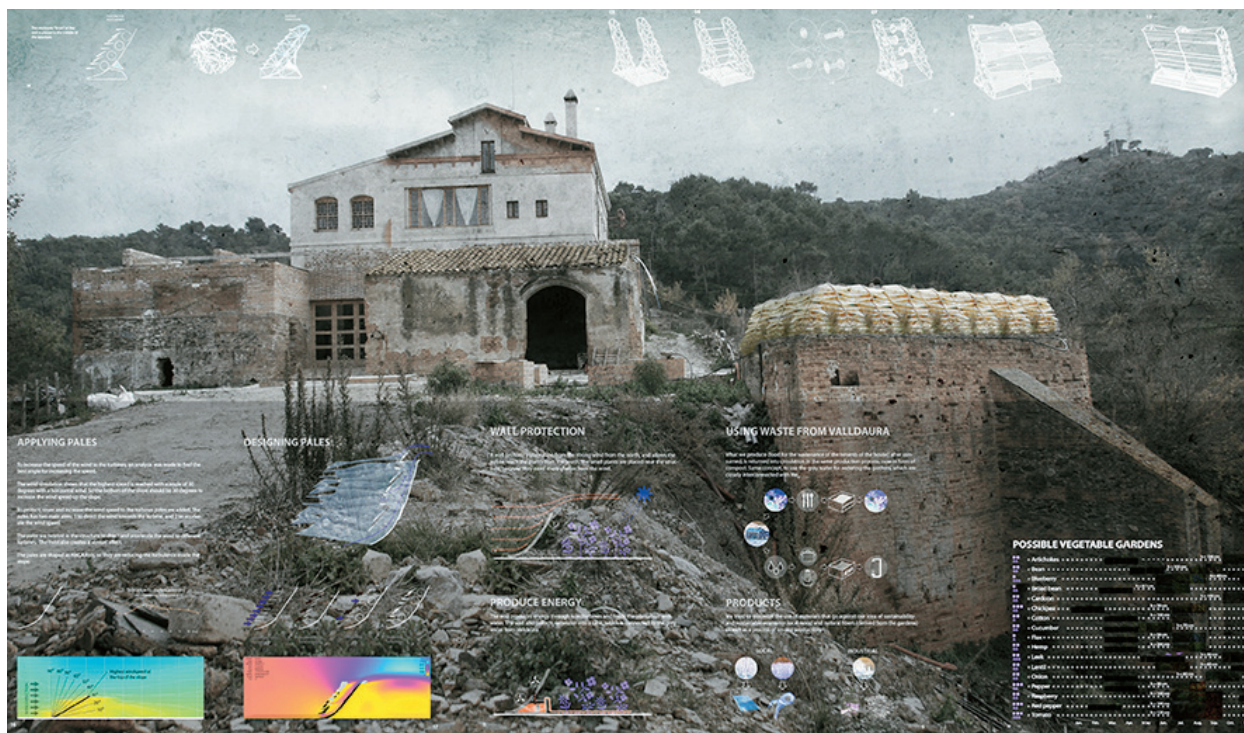
The current influence of Bruno Latour (*Politics of Nature, 2000 / An Inquiry into Modes of Existence, 2001*) is evident in that unprejudiced view of new emerging processes: actants and/or inter-actants. It is interesting to compare the proactive and provocative force of Latour’s vocationally holistic (and interactive) perspective with the most distanced and fragmented vision proffered by Derrida in the 1980s, and its intellectual and cultural influence on the investigations of the broken and unstructured city¹⁴ being carried out at the time.

Then, stark, dry, hard, “dirty” minimalism – and *c(l)inical de-constructivism* – were the responses to a decidedly “non-harmonic” reality. The use of the word “dirty” could be also be applied today to a new eco-systemic thinking. The “dirty ecologies” built around experiences at IaaC (and its involvement in new experiments under way today) reflect many of the considerations exposed above; nevertheless, they are also tinted with a productive and operative agenda of involvement in a reality (economic, social, material, etc.) that is definitively “rough”. They are not intended to be laboratory experiments (endogenous prototyping) but rather “pilot experiences” (exogenous prototypes open to use, modification, adaptation, etc. but also to mutation and evolution, materially and formally). Rather than *hyper-objects*¹⁵ one might talk of *proto-environments*, decisively called on to operate (and, therefore, to get dirty) somewhere in between.

It is curious to observe how the new “dirty ecologies”, contrasted with the minimalist and stark responses of “dirty realism” (the quasi-abstract debugging of a loss-making reality), translate the dynamic, prolix, effusive, often exuberant (quasi-baroque) drive of a new logic (digital and material at the same time), called on to celebrate a new proactive and productive reality; perhaps because the former evidenced the definitive death of a dream (the “American Dream”) and the latter revealed the emergence of a new vital energy (that of the fertile cultivation of a new informational age). That new energy is capable of generating more efficient (optimized and techno-environmentally “mediated”) novel experiences – and new spatialities – between habitat and habitats, mean and means; standing up to convention through a critical-productive reading that would refer to the one generated between “reality” and “realities”, from three decades ago, and nevertheless projecting it towards less skeptical and more promiscuously generative new dimensions.

We5: project of IaaC, developed at Master in Advanced Architecture 01 in 2013/2014. Researchers: Alessio Verdolino, Hriday Siddharth, Alejandro Martínez del Campo, Tobias Grumstrup Lund, Ricardo Perez; Faculty: Javier Peña, Rodrigo Rubio, Oriol Carrasco, Stefanos Levidis.

Following double page: Industrial background of a surface mine storage place, with mining minerals and brown coal in Poland. Photo: Mariusz Prusaczyk on Unsplash.



Referencias :

- Mateo, Josep Lluís, "Reality and Project", in *Quaderns d'Arquitectura i Urbanisme*, nr. 177 *New Realities* (1988), pp. 12-17. The "new objectivity" advocated by Quaderns would compare the "metropolitanism" of the modern city to the urban lyric of the traditional city. The issues 17 (Rigor), 1987, 176 (Voces cruzadas), 177 (Deslizamientos) 178 (Nueva Narración), 181- 182 (Geografías) and 183 (Sobre la ciudad) would be paradigmatic of that moment. See also Mateo, Josep Lluís. "No existe el centro", in *Quaderns d'Arquitectura i Urbanisme*, nr. 175 (1987).
- "Dirty Realism is the fiction of a new generation of American authors. They write about the belly-side of contemporary life – a deserted husband, an unwed mother, a car thief, a pickpocket, a drug addict – but they write about it with a disturbing detachment, at times verging on comedy. Understated, ironic, sometimes savage, but insistently compassionate, these stories constitute a new voice in fiction." Appointment of Bill Buford. See Buford, Bill. "Editorial". In *Granta Magazine*, nr. 8 (1983).
- "Dirty realism" (realismo sucio) is the name by which the English-speaking critic has ended up baptizing the new literary style imposed on its country by the last generation of North American writers. The new style (...) owes a large part of its success to its capacity to bury its deepest roots into the heart of a society undergone, for many years now, by the disillusionment of consumerism and by the despair that the death of the great American dream provoked. The novels of young and dirty realists are bare and stark stories, spectral and mechanical landscapes inhabited by lonely people without a past or a future: their life is reduced only to survive in the best possible way in a society that condemns them to isolation and anonymity beforehand, in a world from which all idealism has already been banished". See Llamazares, Julio. "Dirty Realism". In *El País* (1987, May 20).
- Mateo, Josep Lluís. "Reposiciones hacia el fin de siglo". In *Quaderns d'Arquitectura i Urbanisme*, nr. 164-165 (1985), p. 38. See also Meili, Marcel. "Periferia. Una carta desde Zürich". In *Quaderns d'Arquitectura i Urbanisme*, nr. 177 (1988); Solà-Morales, Ignasi. *Territorios*. Barcelona: Gustavo Gili, 2003.
- Brundtland, Gro Harlem. *Nuestro futuro común*. Madrid: Alianza (1992), p. 765; Meadows D., Meadows D.L., Randers J. *Más allá de los límites del crecimiento*. Madrid: El País Aguilar (1992), p. 355; Romero, José Juan. "Los límites del crecimiento después de Río 92: ¿más allá del "desarrollo sostenible"? In *Revista de Fomento Social*, nr. 48 (1993), pp. 11–40.
- The old urban notion of "periphery" (peri-feros, the city displaced around it) seems to give way to a new concept, the "para-feria" (para-feros, the city displaced by the margin ... and on its margins) in which the city would pass from being a single place to a "place of places", really and virtually diverse, irregular, differential and (potentially and qualitatively) (re)orientable and/or interlaceable.
- See the concept "Land Links" in Brayer M. A. and Migayrou F. *Archilab 01*. Orleáns, 1999; as well as in various texts appeared in the issues 217 (Land-Arch), 219 (Topografías operativas) y 224 (Destellos) of *Quaderns d'Arquitectura i Urbanisme*.
- The expressive term Natuficios is due to Eduardo Arroyo (Nomad Archs). See Gausa M., Guallart V., Muller W. "Natuficios". In *The Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture*. Barcelona: Actar, 2001.
- See the term "Bold Ecology" in *The Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture*, edited by Gausa, Guallart, Muller, Soriano, Porras, Morales. Barcelona: Actar, 2003.
- See Morton, Timothy. *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. See also Morton, Timothy. *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007 and Morton, Timothy. *The Ecological Thought*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010.
- In reference to "What dreams are made of": "We are such stuff as dreams are made on, and our little life is rounded with a sleep" (William Shakespeare in "The Tempest") collected in the final phrase of the film noir "The Maltese Falcon" (John Huston, 1941): "it's of the stuff that dreams are made of".
- See the reflections of Arie Altena: <https://ariealt.net/2014/10/06/dark-ecology-attempt-at-a-reading-list/>.
- See Morton, Timothy appointed by Arie Altena.
- From Latour work see Latour, Bruno. *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences into Democracy*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004; Latour, Bruno. *An Inquiry Into Modes of Existence*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013. From Derrida see Derrida, Jacques. *La dissemination*. Madrid: Fundamentos, 1997; Derrida, Jacques. *La voz y el fenómeno*. Valencia: Pre-textos, 1985 and Derrida, Jacques. *La escritura y la diferencia*. Barcelona: Anthropos, 1989.
- In reference to the hyper-objects proposed by Latour and other authors.

