



11TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

ON ARCHITECTURE
– CHALLENGES IN

DESIGN

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Preface

At the beginning of the 21st century, faced with the challenges of climate change, depletion of resources, high environmental pollution, and hints at an uncertain future, we are questioning the various roles of architecture. Whether technological development and the use of new concepts in design, the use of new materials in construction, the use of new tools in the creation of concepts can provide an answer, is the theme of the conference and exhibition “Challenges in Design”.

The new concept of architectural objects and the use of materials in the isolation of objects and the concept of facade envelope are an inspiration and a challenge in creation. Is art a part or is it against the concept of an architectural work – art vs architecture. Whether architecture and new media and the use of virtual and augmented reality can be tools in architectural design is the question of the position of architecture in the digital era – from parametric design to VR and AI, as tools in design. In addition to new buildings in the transformation of the city and the change in the structure of activities, there are many huge abandoned industrial buildings, which refers to the topic of reconstruction – reworking of the city and architecture – reworking of architecture and the city – reuse of abandoned buildings and places.

The conference will explore and discuss the complexity and different meanings of architecture. These topics will consider the essence of architecture through all its dimensions, always thinking of it as an art and a philosophical reflection on architecture. The essence will be considered through different points, processes and trends that contribute to new aesthetics and functionality: globalization, new approaches to design, innovative technologies, projects, and materials. A special block of topics is focused on the challenges in architecture and urban design in terms of how we can reshape the future in creating sustainability after the pandemic and how we can reset the sustainable development goals for the challenges of the pandemic – from the perspective of research, policy, or practice.

In the past year, many conference programs were focused on that topic, such as the [New European Bauhaus](#) initiative for green sustainable cities, or the [COP 27](#) UN conference on climate change and impacts, many also implemented educational programs at universities, as well as charters and declarations in associations. That is why it is particularly interesting how cities will be organized in future development, how to improve the quality of work and life, and how architecture can help through the organization of space and materialization. In particular, the further improvement of information technology, which has made an outstanding contribution, enabling the holding of study programs in the faculties, as well as the holding of conferences and meetings.

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ART

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The Essence of Place: Understanding *Genius Loci* Through PhenomenologyIva Lokas¹, Relja Petrović², Ivana Rakonjac²

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Abstract: The concept of *genius loci* is rooted in the idea that people who spend time in a particular place create its atmosphere and character. Phenomenology, a philosophical perspective that emphasizes the subjective experience of individuals, is particularly relevant in understanding and experiencing the *genius loci*. Phenomenology emphasizes the need to acknowledge existing patterns of space usage and reflect on the spirit of the place rather than imposing a homogenous design that aims to protect the built environment. By focusing on the lived experiences and perceptions of individuals within a place, instead of enforcing predetermined values or interpretations, we can better understand and preserve its *genius loci*. Based on the presented previous research in this paper, it is clear that the current approach to understanding *genius loci* should shift its focus from signifiers of the past to the users who actively shape and experience the place in the present. The theoretical framework of this paper is defined by Husserl's and Heidegger's perspectives on phenomenology – transcendental approach and hermeneutic approach. The aim of this paper is to emphasize the importance of understanding the unique qualities and characteristics of a location and integrating them into the design process. By focusing on the subjective experiences and perceptions of individuals, designers can create spaces that are meaningful, authentic, and reflective of the community they serve. The essence and uniqueness of a place are defined by the spirit of the place, which connects the tangible and intangible components of the environment. As the intangible quality that gives a place its unique character and atmosphere, the spirit of the place encompasses the feelings, moods, and attitudes associated with a place, as well as the cultural and historical context that shapes its identity. The outcome of this research showed that the essence of a place lies in the perceptions and experiences of its inhabitants, rather than its physical structures and historical artifacts.

Keywords: spirit of the place; tangible values; intangible values; atmosphere; transcendental approach; hermeneutic approach.

Introduction

The *genius loci* concept is one that has been around for quite some time and is often referred to as the "spirit of place". It has been used in literature, history, and even in the sciences to describe the unique energy and atmosphere that certain places have (Vecco, 2020; Stepanchuk, et al., 2020).

Studied by scholars of Roman history, geography, philosophy, and architecture, this concept refers to a sense of place, the unique character or spirit of a place, and the protection of place identity. Defined as *Stimmung*, or the atmosphere of particular areas, it addresses the intimacy of a place, its significance, its deepest essence, and its quintessential elements. It is also related to spiritual sites, which act as shields for *genius loci*, and can be understood as the "spirit of a place" (Christou, 2019). It speaks through the senses and the imagination stimulated by its environment, history, culture, and myths, and it can be experienced by attending a place for a long time and expecting until it reveals itself. This spirit of the place is the intangible (Masterson et al., 2017) quality that gives a place its unique character and atmosphere. It encompasses the feelings, moods, and attitudes associated with a place, as well as the cultural and historical context that shapes its identity. It is this spirit of the place that connects the tangible and intangible components of the environment, forming the essence and uniqueness of a place.

The concept of *genius loci* is rooted in the idea that people who spend time in a particular place create its atmosphere and character. These individuals, often referred to as the *genii* of a place, play an active role in shaping their environment and act as caretakers who constantly transform the space. By their presence, interactions, memories, and connections, they contribute to the creation of a unique identity and spirit for that place. The influence of people on *genius loci* extends beyond mere physical presence. It encompasses the shared experiences and perceptions of the "spirit of the place", which is defined by The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), as the top-down interpretation of monuments and sites as significant places that require conservation, protection, rehabilitation, or enhancement. However, when the interpretation of a place is limited to institutions, the essence of *genius loci* can be lost. The place becomes a signpost for predetermined values and loses its intrinsic meaning.

Robert Passfield (2005) defines *genius loci* as intangible heritage value and cultural resource. The author refers to the spirit of a place as an entity that makes an environment a vibrant living or working place, or inhabited landscape. Furthermore, the *genius loci* communicate the patterns, meanings, and images that bring together and arrange the setting's environmental components into a meaningful and understandable whole within conscious or felt boundaries, as Passfield stated "a gestalt that transcends the meaning of the sum of its constituent parts". By doing so, it helps the visitor to understand surroundings transmitting a sense of usefulness and continuity, and displays a traditional way of life that connects the past and the present. The *genius loci* is evoked by the physical characteristics of the cultural resource of the environment, and the activities dynamic at various levels - space usage. It communicates a strong sense of authentic place by illustrating the personality and value of the cultural resource in relation to surroundings.

Phenomenology, as a philosophical approach that focuses on understanding and describing lived experiences, perceptions, and consciousness, can be used in the interpretation of these phenomena. It seeks to uncover the essence of subjective experiences and explore the ways in which individuals interact with and make sense of the world around them. The notion of *genius loci* aligns closely with phenomenological principles by examining the relationship between a specific place and its unique identity. As mentioned above, the concept of *genius loci* delves into the tangible and intangible components that contribute to the distinctiveness of a place, including its physical characteristics such as landscapes, buildings, and natural elements, as well as the cultural and historical factors that shape its character. Phenomenology as a philosophical perspective has shed light on previously ignored phenomena of human experience, reformulated philosophical questions, and penetrated thought in almost all fields of scholarship over the last 100 years (Tymieniecka, 2002). The attempt to describe and understand phenomena such as caring, healing, and wholeness as experienced by individuals who have lived through them is at the heart of phenomenology (Draucker, 1999; Geanellos, 1998; Maggs-Rapport, 2000; Moran, 2000; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007).

This paper will present the meaning of *genius loci* by understanding how people influence their perception of the environment, emphasizing the necessity to shift the focus from signifiers of the past to the users who make the place in the present.

Phenomenology: Husserl VS. Heidegger

Phenomenology is the philosophical study of the meaning and objectivity of human experience (Wylie, 2015), used to explore the lived experiences of individuals (Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio, 2019). Developed by Edmund Husserl in the early 20th century and has since been adapted and applied in various areas of study (Wylie, 2015; Gallagher, 2022). Best characterized as a method rather than a set of doctrines (Gallagher, 2022), phenomenology involves developing an appreciation for the ontological and epistemological assumptions that underpin different approaches (Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio, 2019) and can be divided into two main approaches: transcendental and hermeneutic (Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio, 2019).

The transcendental approach is rooted in Edmund Husserl's philosophy and aims to uncover the essence of a phenomenon through the exploration of the experience of the individual (Gallagher and Brøsted Sørensen, 2006). The hermeneutic approach, on the other hand, is rooted in the philosophy of Martin Heidegger and focuses on interpreting the meaning of the individual's experience (Qutoshi, 2018). Therefore, understanding the key philosophical and methodological differences between these two approaches is essential for successfully conducting phenomenological research (Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio, 2019).

Husserl's approach to phenomenology is based on two key concepts: phenomenological reduction and the bracketing of preconceived ideas. These concepts play a central role in the process of his phenomenological research with the fundamental objective of uncovering the essence of phenomena through a process of eidetic variation and imaginative variation (Dowling, 2007). This process requires the reduction of natural attitudes and assumptions, as well as the bracketing of preconceptions in order to gain access to the phenomena in their givenness. Hence, Husserl's approach focuses on the analysis of consciousness and its intentional objects. This method emphasizes the importance of intuition and the reduction of empirical content in order to access the pure essences of phenomena. Therefore, Husserl's approach to phenomenology is characterized by a process of conscious awareness and the elimination of preconceived ideas in order to gain access to the essence of phenomena.

According to Husserl, the goal of phenomenology is to uncover the underlying structures of conscious experience (Dowling, 2007). He thus sought to make conscious experience more transparent and to reveal the essence of phenomena (Sadala and Adorno, 2002). Through a method of phenomenological reduction and bracketing, Husserl believed that the essential meaning of the phenomena could be uncovered (Reeder, 2010). To this end, he wrote extensively on the topic of phenomenology, and his work has been studied and discussed extensively (Zahavi, 2002; Pivčević, 1970; Porter, 1998; Patocka, 2018). In his book, *Husserl's Phenomenology*,

Spiegelberg (1960) provides a brief introduction to Husserl's work (as well as a thorough overview of his ideas and their implications) and presents an in-depth examination of Husserl's epistemology and approach to the scientific endeavor. Finally, Husserl's phenomenology has been used to shed light on the implicit preunderstandings of the world (Spiegelberg, 1960). This approach has been used to provide a clearer understanding of the individual's relationship to their society, as well as the implications of Husserl's phenomenology (Jennings, 1986). Furthermore, many nurse researchers have adopted Husserl's approach to phenomenology in order to study and understand the relationship between an individual and their society (Paley, 1997).

Martin Heidegger's *Being and Time* is a cornerstone of the phenomenological philosophical tradition (Mackey, 2005). Heidegger's interpretive phenomenological philosophy is encapsulated in his concept of being in the world. (Mackey, 2005; Heidegger, 2005). This concept suggests that when we are “thrown” into our world, we must interpret the world in order to make sense of it. In this interpretive process, humans relate to their world in terms of the possibilities that are available to them. Heidegger suggests that there is a distinction between the things that we encounter and the tools that we use to encounter them. For Heidegger, things are encountered as they are, and tools are used to shape our experience of them. His approach to phenomenology has sparked much debate among scholars and researchers alike. Heidegger introduces the concept of “Dasein” for which there is no English equivalent (Heidegger, 2005). It is a term used to refer to humans “existing” in the world (Heidegger, 2005). His perspective emphasizes the concept of “Dasein”, which refers to the individual's unique way of being in the world (Smith, 2013). This approach to phenomenology is closely linked to hermeneutics, which involves interpreting and understanding the meaning of a text (Koch, 1995; Watson, 1971). The idea of the “lifeworld” is also an important concept in Heidegger's phenomenology (Flood, 2010). This concept stresses the idea that each individual's realities are different and that the world is experienced and interpreted differently by each individual (Flood, 2010). Heidegger never wrote explicitly of phenomenology as a research method (Johnson, 2000) and his philosophy is situated within hermeneutics and his notion of “lifeworld” which suggests that individuals' reality is constantly changing (Flood, 2010). Heidegger's phenomenology is not associated with positivist approaches to social science, which further suggests that it does not have the methodological implications usually ascribed to it (Paley, 1998).

Edmund Husserl's phenomenology, on the other hand, is a branch of philosophy that focuses on the study of experience (Dowling, 2007), and it is often used in a variety of disciplines (Sadala and Adorno, 2002). At the core of Husserl's approach lies the notion of phenomenological reduction (Reeder, 2010), which is the process of suspending the belief in the existence of the world in order to examine the experience of the world (Zahavi, 2002). This is a key concept in phenomenology that sets it apart from Heidegger's approach, as it allows Husserl to focus on the essential structures of consciousness, as opposed to Heidegger's focus on the concrete aspects of experience (Pivčević, 1970). In addition, Husserl's approach to phenomenology is largely concerned with epistemology and scientific endeavor (Porter, 1998), whereas Heidegger's approach is concerned with the individual's relationship with his or her society (Spiegelberg, 1960). Furthermore, Husserl's approach is characterized by an emphasis on clarifying our implicit preunderstandings of the world (Jennings, 1986), which differs from Heidegger's focus on interpreting the world (Patocka, 2018). Finally, Husserl's approach to phenomenology is often used in nursing research (Paley, 1997), as it allows the researcher to explore the subjective experience of the patient in a more detailed manner. To summarize, Husserl's approach to phenomenology differs significantly from Heidegger's in its focus on the essential structures of consciousness, epistemology, and the preunderstandings of the world. (Figure 1)

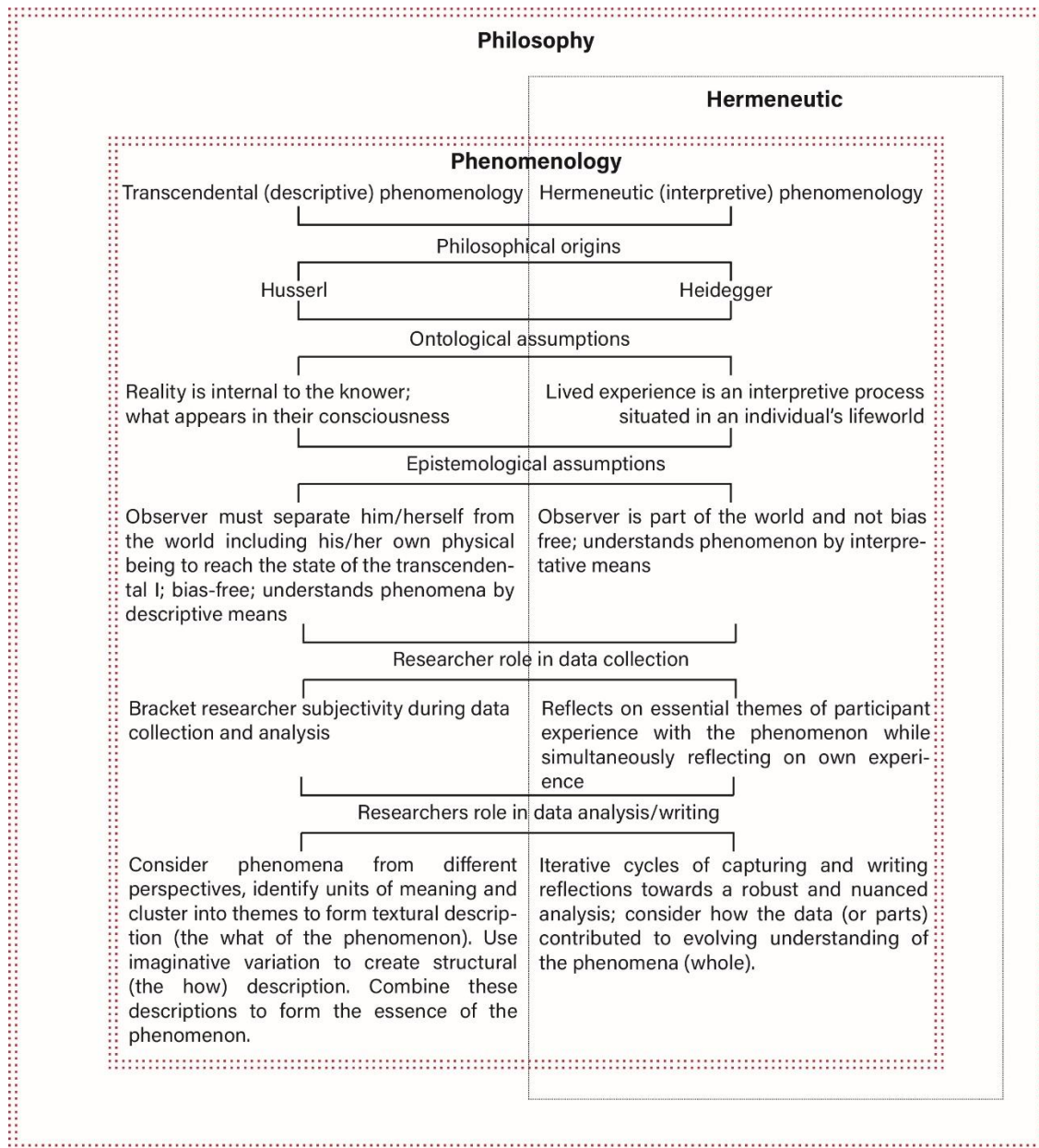


Figure 1. Comparison of transcendental and hermeneutic Phenomenology (Neubauer, Witkop and Varpio, 2019)

Heidegger's approach to phenomenology can be clearly distinguished from Husserl's in terms of their respective philosophical tones. Heidegger's phenomenology is more interpretive in nature, while Husserl's is more positivist (Paley, 1998). Husserl's phenomenology follows a more scientific approach to research, making use of experimentation and empirical methods. However, Heidegger's phenomenology takes a more interpretive approach, focusing on the individual's experience and interpretation of the world (Heidegger, 2005). Thus, Heidegger's approach to phenomenology is distinct from Husserl's in terms of its interpretive and hermeneutic nature (Johnson, 2000).

Essence of Place: Designing with *Genius Loci*

Designing with genius loci involves understanding the unique qualities and characteristics of a place and integrating them into the design process (Grazuleviciute-Vileniske et al., 2021). This approach requires a deep exploration of the history, culture, and context of the place, as well as an understanding of the needs and desires of the users (Roszczyńska-Kurasinska et al., 2021; Daugelaite et al., 2021). By studying the spirit of the place, designers can develop a deep appreciation for its essence and create designs that resonate with its users. It is undeniable that the long-standing concept of *genius loci* has been re-emerging in the literature (Strecker, 2000). Although the notion has its foundations in the ancient world, it has been re-interpreted in the modern era

(Norberg-Schulz, 1979). German thought has identified *genius loci* as “*Stimmung*”, which translates to the atmosphere. This article discusses the concept of *genius loci*, proposing a reflection on its meaning. Additionally, it reviews the changes that have occurred in understanding the concept over the last forty years (Barnes, 2004). Pretzet spoke about *genius loci* – The Spirit of Monuments and Sites in Quebec at the 16th General Assembly of ICOMOS, Scientific Symposium (Pretzet, 2008) about how the *genius loci* of destinations is not a static phenomenon, but rather a complex, living thing that is shaped by the intangible and tangible elements in its environment. The results of the study are a set of recommendations, taking into account the preservation of *genius loci* and the formation of urban environment identity (Stepanchuk, et al., 2020). Loukaki (1997) suggests an example – the Acropolis of Athens, that presents different schools of thought on *genius loci* and shows the purposefulness of the analysis of contested ideas. Hence, in order to better understand the concept of *genius loci*, it is important to consider the various schools of thought that have shaped it (Girard & Vecco, 2019; Pretzet, 2008). One of these schools of thought is the instrumental value school, which views *genius loci* as something that can be used to enhance the environment and the experiences of those who inhabit it (Strecker, 2000). Another school of thought is the intrinsic value school, which views *genius loci* as something that can be experienced and appreciated on its own (Norberg-Schulz, 1979; Prokopis A. Christou, 2019). Finally, there is the German school of thought, which views *genius loci* as something that is deeply rooted in the culture and history of a place. All of these schools of thought have contributed to the modern conception of *genius loci*, which is now seen as something that shapes the way people experience places (Barnes, 2004; Loukaki, 1997).

Designing with *genius loci* (Królikowski et al., 2019) also requires a shift in focus from imposing a predetermined design onto a place to actively listening and responding to the needs and aspirations of the community. This approach requires a collaborative and participatory design process, where designers engage with the community in meaningful dialogue and co-create spaces that reflect their values to uncover the unique qualities and characteristics of a place. (Tsenova, et al., 2022, Theodora, 2020; Zaleskienė and Gražulevičiūtė-Vilenišké, 2014). Applying phenomenology to the concept of *genius loci* is a powerful tool for understanding the significance of a place (Alhazmi and Kaufmann, 2022; Randles, 2012). Phenomenology in this context can be used to explore the experiences of the people who inhabit a certain place, as well as the personal and cultural meanings that they have attributed to it (Jimenez, 2013). Through the hermeneutic approach, the researcher can gain insight into the nuances of the place and the perspectives of those who inhabit it (Randles, 2012). Through this process, designers can create spaces that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also meaningful and relevant to the people who inhabit them. For designers, it is necessary to consider the historical and cultural significance of a place, as well as its physical features and spatial organization. They can draw inspiration from local materials, architectural styles, and traditional design elements to create a sense of place and cultural identity. By involving the community in the design process, designers can gain valuable insights and perspectives that enrich their understanding of the spirit of the place. Incorporating these insights into the design process can result in spaces that foster a sense of belonging and connection, as well as promote sustainability and resilience in the community (Jayakody et al., 2018; Khemri et al., 2020). Hence, by understanding the spirit of the place, designers can identify key elements and patterns that contribute to its unique character and atmosphere. The limitation of this approach is visible in the qualitative research method that investigates subjective experiences, and while it can provide valuable insights, there are certain drawbacks associated with its use (Sheets-Johnstone, 2019). The collected data cannot lead to results generalization and the outcomes of this type of research are only applicable to the specific contexts and cases being studied. When comes to the interpretation of personal experience, there is a risk of bias and subjectivity it may not be suitable for studying large-scale social phenomena. It is important to consider the cultural and historical contexts of the subject in order to conduct meaningful research and draw valid conclusions. The designers should engage in a process of active observation, participation and immersion in the local context. All mentioned steps of the process result in designs that are in harmony with the spirit of the place and enhance existing qualities of space. The shift in focus from signifiers of the past to users of the present is a key aspect of designing with *genius loci*.

The essence of a place is a nebulous concept. There is no rigorous definition of the concept in the literature. Nonetheless, some characteristics can be considered. A place's spirit reflects the structure of interdependences among multiple components at various scales, linked in a latent order that should be interpreted using hermeneutic processes (Zeleny, 2007). Because of their nature, places express the relationship between history and present life. Despite the constant change of physical assets, this order remains a permanent element in urban dynamics. Returning to the initial value distinction, we know that hard values are tangible and reflect specific relationships and correlations in the space between multiple elements, whereas soft values are intangible (Vecco, 2020) (Figure 2).

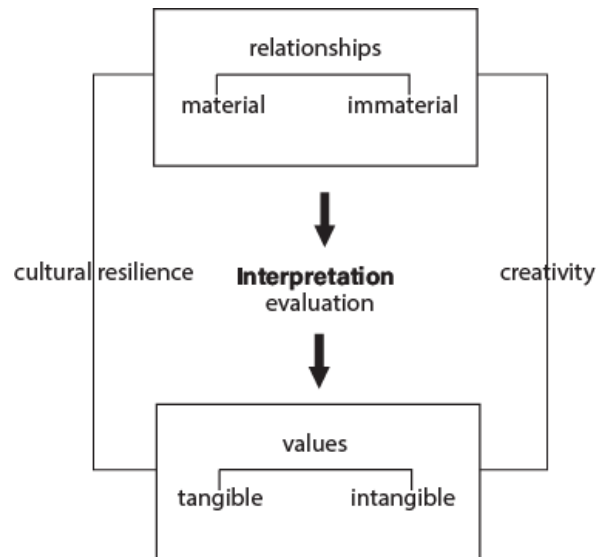


Figure 2. Interaction among relationships and values. (Vecco, 2020)

The influence of people on *genius loci* extends beyond mere physical presence. It encompasses the shared experiences and perceptions of the “spirit of the place”, which is defined by The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), as the top-down interpretation of monuments and sites as significant places that require conservation, protection, rehabilitation, or enhancement.

This shift in interpretation recognizes that the essence of *genius loci* lies in the experiences and perceptions of the people who interact with a space. The contemporary understanding of this phenomenon is centered around the idea that a place's unique character and atmosphere are shaped by the people who have a close relationship with it. Because cultural heritage is fundamental to human development, contemporary conservation doctrine is generally open to many areas and trends of contemporary thought, attempting to absorb and integrate a wide range of theoretical notions from philosophy, cultural anthropology and sociology, human geography, political and economic sciences, humanities, and so on.

The notion of space and place has been a fundamental concept in the philosophy of humankind and is deeply rooted in the collective imagination. Space is defined as a physical area or volume that exists or is thought to exist within the universe (Murray and Rov, 1985). It is an essential element in our physical and virtual landscapes and it plays an important role in the way we perceive the world. Space allows us to make sense of our environment and to measure distances between objects. The place is the result of a specific combination of different tangible and intangible elements, ancient and newly built environments (architecture), stones and people, therefore they become fundamental elements for the resilience capacity. The concept of *genius loci* is used to capture the essence of a place by means of design (Vecco, 2020). The places are characterized by their unique and different economic, cultural, social, and emotional qualities and relations. Hence, they are considered social aggregates of communication, community, and numerous values, which become essential for their *genius loci*. Therefore, the destruction of the tangible dimension of a place does not necessarily mean the disappearance of *genius loci*. From space to place to *genius loci* and *essence of place*, the correlation between each element plays a fundamental role in creating our lived experience of the world around us. It is believed that a place emerges from an interaction of the environment and the human sensorium, in such a way that not only seeing but also the other senses, like hearing and smelling, have a role to play (Strecker, 2000). Phenomenology gives us the means to examine and analyze intangible elements of our lived realities (Figure 3).

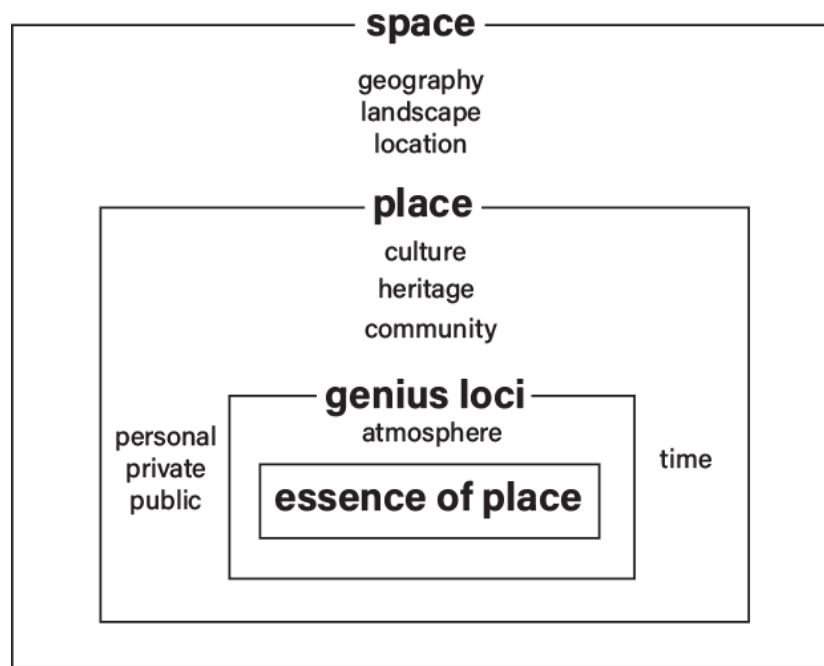


Figure 3. Interplay of Space, Place, and Genius Loci

Lived experience represents a series of events in an individual's life. The essence of identity is the ownership of these events, and metaphysical learning sees identity as a fundamental characteristic of being (Hajdeger, 1982). The perspective of Weichhart, Weiske, and Werlen in the *Place Identity and Images* (2006) focuses on users as bearers of place identity (Kalandides, 2012). The authors distinguish three types of place identity: (1) *identification* refers to the ways in which people (groups or individuals) understand and recognize places, as they do other objects, assign them characteristics and particularities; (2) *being identified as* addresses the ways people are recognized in their relations to place or origin, and (3) *identification with* is about the ways that people incorporate place into their own identity construction. In this context, place identity includes both, inseparable aspects, the external physical characteristics of an environment and the subjective perception of those characteristics. The image of the place, which represents the collective mental perceptions of a place, is inherently intertwined with place identity and should not be separated from it.

Constructing the identity of a place doesn't stem from inherited memories but rather arises from the users of the space and their events in the present moment, thus shaping the *genius loci* of their environment. This perspective recognizes that the spirit of a place is not fixed or static, but constantly evolving and shaped by the people who inhabit it.

In order to fully grasp the essence of *genius loci*, it is crucial to recognize the importance of the subjective experiences and perceptions of individuals within a place. This approach allows us to delve into the unique qualities and intangible aspects that contribute to the spirit of a place, beyond its tangible elements. People are embedded in their world, implicated in a constant process of action and response, as Arnold Berleant (2002) states continuing Yi-Fu Tuan (Tuan, 1979): *a physical interaction of body and setting, a psychological interconnection of consciousness and culture, a dynamic harmony of sensory awareness all make a person inseparable from his or her environment. Traditional dualisms, such as those that distinguish between the idea and the object, the self and others, inner consciousness and the external world, dissolve in the integration of person and place.* People who share a close relationship with a particular place also share experiences and perceptions of what is commonly referred to as “the spirit of the place” (Alyani and Herlily, 2019). Therefore, experiencing *genius loci* requires a shift in focus from the physical and historical aspects of a place to the lived experiences and subjective perspectives of its inhabitants.

Discussion and Conclusions

The conceptual framework of this paper presents the shift in focus from imposing a predetermined design, and preservation of built heritage, to emphasizing qualitative values of place. The presented research implies that experiencing *genius loci* requires a shift in focus from the physical and historical aspects of a place to the subjective perspectives of its inhabitants and lived experiences.

Phenomenology, as a theoretical starting point in research, is a philosophical approach that emphasizes the study of lived experiences. The necessity to address the active role of individuals in shaping the *genius loci* of a place is essential in contemporary interpretations. The influence of individuals, their experiences, perceptions, and interactions with a place are fundamental in shaping the spirit of the space. The unique character and atmosphere of the surroundings encompasses the feelings, moods, and attitudes associated with a place. Furthermore, the cultural and historical context shapes its identity and connects the tangible and intangible components of the environment forming the essence of the place. The true essence of a place lies, not in its physical structures or historical artifacts, but in the people who inhabit it and shape its atmosphere.

Genius loci is commonly associated with the concept of authenticity, and refers to both tangible and intangible qualities of sites, as well as fabric and human activities, associating this with inherited values. Hence, rather than imposing a homogenous design that merely aims to protect the built environment, this paper emphasizes the user's perspectives on the value of the surroundings. The research outcomes in the theoretical field of *Designing with genius loci* implied that the existing patterns of space usage play a significant role in the perception of the spirit of the space. The ways people use space and interact with elements of the environment, the activities they engage in, and the social dynamics that unfold within, all contribute to the essence and character of a place. These patterns of space usage reflect the values, preferences, and cultural practices of the community, and contribute to a sense of belonging and identity. By preserving and enhancing the existing patterns of space usage, designers can ensure that the spirit of the place is not lost in the pursuit of progress. The presented research showed that engaging in dialogue with the community and involving users of the space in the design process ensures that the design reflects the values, aspirations, and identities of the community, creating a sense of ownership and pride. Through this shift in focus, the design process becomes a means of empowerment, allowing the community to shape their environment and express their cultural identity. This approach recognizes that a place is not a static entity, but a dynamic and evolving organism shaped by the actions and interactions of its inhabitants. Therefore, the design process should be adaptable and responsive, constantly seeking feedback from the community. The goal of the process should be to adjust to an ever-changing context and space usage in an urban environment. This collaborative and participatory approach allows designers to create meaningful and relevant spaces for the people who inhabit them. The focus is to capture and represent these intangible qualities in the design, creating spaces that evoke the spirit of the place and resonate with the community. The presented paper is limited to theoretical. In the future, research could follow the direction of improving guidelines in architectural design for the areas of great significance for the identity of the environment.

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Marko Aksentijević graduated from the Faculty of Political Science in Belgrade. The primary areas of his work include democratic development, deliberative mechanisms in decision-making, just city development, public resource management and housing affordability. The aim of his work is widespread participation of citizens, especially those less affluent, in developing communities in which they live in a way that will empower everyone.

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B

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Erez Ella (1971, Jerusalem) founded HQ architects in Tel Aviv in 2008 after spending several years in New York as an Associate at OMA, where he led the TVCC project in Beijing, (1999-2005) and as Co-founder and Principal at REX (2006 – 2008). He has extensive international experience as – director and manager of several Urban, Transportation and Public projects with a strong focus on technology and innovative solutions.

Erez's involvement extends far beyond the world of architectural design. He co-curated the Israeli Pavilion at the 2012 Venice Biennial of Architecture and In 2011, he established and led for over a decade the 'Mechanism of Design and Urbanism' research unit at the Bezalel School of Architecture.

Davor Ereš is research assistant at the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade, active in the fields of architectural design, teaching, and research with focus on the models of learning through architecture and the questions of contemporaneity. Since 2016 he is guest teacher at Confluence Institute Paris.

F

Ivan Filipović, Ph.D. (1987), a trained architect who pursues interdisciplinary research within the intersection of urban governance, identity and ideology. The combination of his training and practical experience give him a unique perspective that has been utilized to establish and work within a new field of academic study - soft power architecture.

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K

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Dr **Mateja Kurir** is a philosopher, researcher, and editor. She was a visiting researcher at the Department of Architecture, KU Leuven (2015), and postdoc fellow at the University of Rijeka (2017). Currently she is the manager of The European Architecture platform LINA. Her work has been published as radio broadcasts, articles and books. She published *Arhitektura moderne in das Unheimliche* (2018) and co-edited *Garden and Metaphor* (2021, forthcoming in English in 2023). As the editor of *On Power in Architecture* (Slovenian 2021, forthcoming in English in 2024), Kurir received the Plečnik's Medal 2022 in the field of architectural theory, criticism, and publication.

L

Nora Lefa M.A., MSc., PhD, Associate Professor, University of Ioannina -Dept. of Fine Arts and Art Sciences, is an architect and visual artist. She has lectured at the Agricultural University of Athens, at the Technical University of Crete, at the Universities of Sarajevo, Belgrade, and Montenegro; she is now Associate Professor at the School of Fine Arts, University of Ioannina. She has presented her work in several solo and group exhibitions in Athens, Sarajevo, Belgrade, New York, Miami, Barcelona, Zurich, Paris, London and Venice. She has won distinctions for her architectural and artistic work. She has presented papers in several international conferences and has authored two books: *Sarajevo Again* (Athens: Plethron 2020), and *Buildings Used* (Abington: Routledge 2019 -co-authored). She has co-organized international conferences and exhibitions and was a member of the respective scientific committees and jury. She has translated into Greek Serbian and Bosnian poetry.

Iva V. Lokas, (nee Šibalić) was born in Belgrade in 1995, where she graduated from the School of Design in 2014 as a student of the generation and with an awarded graduation thesis. She completed the Bachelor Academic Studies in Architecture (2019) and the Master Academic Studies in Interior Architecture (2021) at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade. She is currently a student of Doctoral Academic Studies in Architecture and Urbanism. She begins her research work by preparing a Master's final thesis under the theme "Contemporary Spectacle -

Currents of Culture" which she successfully defended with a grade 10 of 10. The focus of the research work, in doctoral studies, is defined by examining the influence of subculture on the shaping of space. She is engaged in research work as Research scholar of Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation in Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia, Serbia (since 2023).

M

Milica Mađanović is a Research Fellow at the Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, University of Belgrade. She holds a PhD in Architecture from the University of Auckland (New Zealand). Milica specializes in nineteenth and early-twentieth-century architecture and urban design. Her research interests also include disabled studies and universal design.

Dr **Marija Maruna** is a full professor at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade. She is the head of courses in the field of planning theory, urban governance and strategic urban design. As a guest teacher, she participated in the study programs at ETH Zürich, TU Berlin, Universität Stuttgart, Universidad de Granada, Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, Politecnico di Milano and others. She is the head of the Laboratory for Planning Culture and Spatial Policy Design at the Faculty of Architecture in Belgrade. She is the author of the books *Planning Theory: A Contribution to Critical Thinking in Architecture* (2019), *Urbanism of Belgrade: A Handbook for Researching the Process of Space Production* (2013) and co-author of the monograph *Strategic Urban Design and Cultural Diversity* (2009) (with Nada Lazarević Bajec). She is the editor of several monographs of national importance. She is the winner of several awards and recognitions for her scientific, research, professional and mentoring work.

Milos Milovanovic is a high-rise residential architect at Arcadis IBI Group, based in Calgary, Canada. Researcher and Assistant Professor at Union University – Nikola Tesla in Belgrade. He teaches courses related to urban planning, presentation techniques and project design on undergraduate studies. Participated in several exhibitions in Belgrade, Zagreb and Sarajevo. He was the winner of the "Project portfolio 33" competition and joined several conferences, most notable "On Architecture" and "Facing the Future". In his research, he encompassed the theme of mythology in architecture and developed "RELATE – Learning elsewhere, learning otherwise" project with Marta Brković Dodig.

Jelena Milošević received her Ph.D. (2016) from the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture. She has been employed at the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture since 2011. Her scientific research focuses on structural systems and spatial structures, structural design, structural morphology, form-finding, and optimization of structures. She is a participant in national and international scientific research projects. She is the author of papers published in journals, proceedings, and monographs. The focus of her professional engagement is architectural design. She is the author of several competition designs and has participated in several exhibitions. She was a member of organization boards, scientific boards, and selection committees. She

is a member of the Serbian Association for Geometry and Graphics (SUGG), the Serbian Association for Earthquake Engineering (SUZI), and the International Association for Shell and Spatial Structures (IASS).

Mila Mojsilović, PhD Arch, architect, currently lectures as a Teaching Assistant at the Department of Architecture – University of Belgrade, Faculty of Architecture. She is educated in Belgrade (Faculty of Architecture) and Paris (Ecole d'Architecture de Paris-Val-de-Seine). She received her PhD from the University of Belgrade in 2020. She is involved in scientific research in the field of architectural philosophy and aesthetic. The main framework of her theoretical research is contemporary design, theory of form and the aesthetics of fragmentation. Currently she is working on the Momo Kapor Pavilion in Belgrade. She has participated in the organization of the Balkan Architecture Biennale (BAB) - international exhibitions (2015/17/19) and has served on juries in several international and national architectural competitions.

N

Marina Nenković-Riznić is a Senior Research Associate in the Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia. Her research fields are spatial and urban planning, municipal solid waste management, location theory, methodology for SEA and EIA–multicriterial analysis and modelling approaches, resilient cities, location theory, application in GIS. Managed several national and international scientific projects (INTERREG, Horizon 2020). Participated and managed the preparation of planning, project and study documentation and SEA as a lead planner. Published more than 200 papers in national and international scientific journals and on conferences. As a co-author or author, she has won several awards and recognitions at international and domestic competitions and exhibitions. [linkedin.com/mnenkovicriznic](https://www.linkedin.com/mnenkovicriznic)

Iacopo Neri explores the intersection of architecture, computer science, and urban planning through his research. Currently, he serves as scientific collaborator at Digital Visual Studies DVS (MPG, UZH), and as computational lead and co-director for the Master in City and Technology at IAAC, and as web-developer at Noumena, Barcelona

Sanja Nikolić, (Belgrade, 1995) Currently engaged as Research Scholar at Institute of Architecture and Urban & Spatial Planning of Serbia. Student of PhD Program at University of Belgrade, Faculty of Architecture, where obtained bachelor's degree and master's degree at Politecnico di Milano. Worked as an intern at ATI Project, Milan and VMX Architects, Amsterdam.

P

Eleftheria Papadosifou, Architect, graduated from the Technical University of Crete's School of Architecture, interested in sustainable design, honed by attending multiple workshops on natural building materials. She has collaborated in an international competition for historical building renovations and has co-authored two

research publications centred on the rethinking of design principles. Presently, she is collaborating as an architect-designer in Milan specialized in comprehensive architectural services from initial design to execution.

PhD **Bojana Pašajlić** (1990, Kragujevac) Assistant professor, University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Philology and Arts, Kragujevac, Serbia. She holds a Phd from the Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Novi Sad in 2020, with doctoral dissertation "Trade buildings created from the turn of the XIX to the first part of XX centuries in Kragujevac - identity and role of the media". Since 2021 she works as assistant professor at Faculty of Applied Arts, University of Kragujevac, Department of Interior Architecture, teaching a group of courses in the field of Stylistic Architecture. During the past years, she was a participant in numerous collective exhibitions in the country and abroad. She is involved in scientific research in the field of architectural history and philosophy. The main framework of her theoretical research is History of architecture in 20th century, Architectural heritage and Cultural Heritage, especially in the area of Kragujevac. She is engaged in independent practice in the field of Interior Architecture and Design.

Relja L. Petrovic, born in Belgrade (1996). He completed his Bachelor (2020) and Master Academic Studies (2022) at the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture. During the 2019/20 academic year, he held a post as a teaching assistant (demonstrator) on the module within the artistic field of *Fine Arts* at the Department of Architecture. He is an active participant in professional workshops, summer schools and congresses. Relja volunteered at the 44th Salon of Architecture (Museum of Applied Art, Belgrade) where, after completing his studies in 2022, he began his professional career as an intern curator at the Collection of Architecture, Urbanism and Architectural Design. Currently, he is employed in the field of construction projects focused on the preservation of architectural heritage, and he has applied for doctoral studies at the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture. He is an associate member of the Association of Conservators of Serbia (DKS) and a full member of the Association of Belgrade Architects (DAB).

R

Ivana M. Rakonjac, born in Belgrade, graduated from the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Architecture, got B.Arch., M.Arch. and a Ph.D. degree in the field of Architectural Design and Contemporary Architecture (2016). Employed at the same faculty at the Department of Architecture as an Assistant Professor. Her work is oriented toward making connections between theory, scientific research, and practice. She has published numerous papers in publications, scientific conference proceedings, as well as several articles in an internationally rated journal. As an author and a member of the team, she designed numerous architectural projects – multiple completed interiors, as well as several built buildings and open public spaces. She regularly participates in national and international architectural exhibitions. She is a founder of Meteor studio – architectural practice in the field of architectural, interior, lighting design, and urban planning.

S, Š

Miloš Stojković Minić, m. arch., Teaching assistant at the University of Belgrade – Faculty of Architecture, Department of Architecture (2017-2023), and PhD student at the same faculty. In addition to the development of professional practice and teaching experience, he is also engaged in scientific research work related to the topic of water in architecture – aquitecture. He regularly and very successfully participates in architectural competitions, workshops, art and architecture exhibitions and conferences in the country and abroad. He is the founder of the *Atrio* group for architectural and artistic operational practice and the MIST Arh architectural studio.

Nikolina Sekulović, M. Arch, Teaching Assistant at University of Montenegro, Faculty of Architecture. She received multiple student scholarships and recognition in architectural competitions. Currently she is a phd student at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade. Her fields of interest include research on the position of architectural practice and contemporary architectural design challenges.

Igor Svetel graduated from the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Belgrade. During the studies he started to be interested in applying computers in architectural design. In 1987 he was one of the team members who developed the GIMS Expert, a computer system for designing prefabricated buildings. During the 90's, he has developed numerous experimental programs for computer assisted architectural design with the emphasis on modelling the design process. From the middle of 2000, he focused his attention on BIM technology and led two technological development projects with the topic of using BIM technologies in architectural design. Now, he is a member of the subcommittee for standards KS U442, Information modelling of objects – BIM. He is the author of numerous papers in domestic and foreign publications.

Božena Stojić is an urban planner. She graduated from the master's course in Integral Urbanism at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Belgrade. Through her work, she deals with issues of the role and of the urban planner in the processes of city development, rethinking the model of the planning system and local self-government, as well as developing new mechanisms for citizens' participation in the process of planning and city development.

Kosta Stojanović (2000, holds a B. Arch degree from the University of Belgrade's Faculty of Architecture. He's currently a second-year master's student and a student teaching assistant at the university. His research areas include new technologies, identity, urban planning, and politics. He has exhibited his work at international architecture and design shows, winning a special prize at the 2021 Micro Eco House Competition.

Monika Štiklica, PhD in the field of architecture and has been actively working in interior design for over 20 years. Her rich career began during her studies for a bachelor's degree from the Faculty of applied arts in Belgrade and has since then been systematically building the reputation as a versatile architect and designer.

Continuously and diligently contributing to the culture of studies and education, Monika Štiklica lectures bachelor as well as master's degrees in the University of Novi Sad, as an associate professor, passing down her vast knowledge and experience built upon the experience of over 150 successful projects of which she was the author. She is the founder and lead architect of Amo design studio which designs interiors for both residential and public spaces.

T

Jovana Timotijević has a background in architecture and political studies. She is currently doing a PHD on the potential of deliberative processes to democratize urban development, at the Faculty of Political Sciences, University of Belgrade. She has been engaged in pioneering deliberative formats in the local context in numerous areas, one of which is urban planning.

Jovana Tošić obtained her Ph.D. at the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture in 2022. Her academic practice began as a teaching fellow at the University of Belgrade - Faculty of Architecture. Currently, she works as a Professor of Vocational Studies at Information Technology School – ITS in Belgrade.

Giannis Nikos Tsaras, Architect, Associate Professor, department of Architectural Technology and Construction, School of Architecture, Technical University of Crete.

He completed his studies in AUTH (Aristotle University of Thessaloniki), got his master in ETSA in Barcelona (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya), and his PhD title in Architecture Technology and Design in AUTH. He has taught classes of Design Studios, Architectural Technology and Building, Architectural Acoustic and Digital Representation courses, in Department of Architecture of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Democritus University of Thrace and in School of Architecture and Design of Bacheşehir Üniversitesi in Istanbul.

He is an active architect since 2002, specialized in design of private houses, hotels and places of performance. He has won several prizes in international and national competitions.

V

Dragana Vasilski is Full-time Professor and Head of the Department of Architecture and Urban Planning on the University Union Nikola Tesla, in Belgrade, Serbia. She is engaged in theoretical research. Her scientific competence is reflected in more than a hundred scientific papers. *Peculiarly* field of her interest is Minimalism in architecture, as the life changing architecture (<http://miadraganavasilski.wordpress.com>).

W

Christiane Wagner has been a research professor at the University of São Paulo, Institute of Advanced Studies (IEA USP), and an affiliated researcher at the Institute for Cultural Inquiry Berlin (ICI Berlin). Her research project addresses the USP Global Cities Program on Expanding Public Spaces: Smart City's Empirical Research in São Paulo and Berlin. The implementation of this project targets the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which includes the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), focusing on the 11th goal of sustainable cities and communities. High up on her list of publications is the book *Visualizations of Urban Space: Digital Age, Aesthetics, and Politics* (Advances in Urban Sustainability, London and New York: Routledge, 2022).

