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critic|all

V International Conference
on Architecture Design & Criticism

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01 Presentation

This 5th edition of Critic|all Conference consolidates the initiative that the Architectural Design Department of the Madrid School of Architecture at the Universidad Politécnica de Madrid (ETSAM-UPM) started ten years ago to provide an international forum for architectural criticism.

The Conference enhances its scope as a place for knowledge production from which to convene relevant voices around the proposed topic at each edition. This time, with a joint event co-organized with the Department of Architecture of the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment at the Delft University of Technology (BK-TU Delft).

We would like to thank all participants for their work and trust, as well as the members of the Scientific Committee for their effort and commitment.

We want to reinforce the idea contained in the conference's name. Critic|all is a *call on criticism*, and also a *call for all*. An appointment that, beyond the scope of each edition, we hope will be able to reinforce a more general debate on the role of architecture in the present context.

Silvia Colmenares
Director of Critic|all

02

Call for Papers

e(time)ologies or the changing meaning of architectural words

The study of the origin and history of words has played a central role in the recurrent search for a deep, allegedly forgotten, meaning of architecture. The strikingly persistent and often problematic influence of Martin Heidegger's *Bauen Wohnen Denken* proves the fascination of architects with the ancestral power of words. The same fascination explains the equally recurrent urge to explore new meanings and invent new terms in architecture, in order to alleviate the weight of old cultural prejudices and connotations. Hence, etymological lines extend in two opposite time directions: one pointing to roots and sources, the other to future visions and transformations. Architectural thought oscillates between the illusory stability of conventional, present meanings, the mystery of remote, often obscure, connotations, and the poetic, creative drive of language invention. Choosing between communication (order) and noise (entropy), the opposite terms used by Umberto Eco, becomes a typically architectural problem, one which relates both to words and forms, terms and materials.

The heavy architecture-is-a-language fever of the 1960s is long overcome. Robin Evans' "all things with conceptual dimension are like language, as all grey things are like elephants" might suffice to prevent its return. However, the multiplication and transformation of architectural words has probably accelerated since then, pushed by the development of competitive research production. In fact, every research problem is, at its core, a problem of language, of word use and word definition. Research on the contemporary urban and architectural condition can be no exception.

Meaningful arguments about the changing meaning of architectural words need to address the role of language in the description of current matters and realities as well as its potential to unchain innovative perspectives and actions. New situations call for new terms as much as new terms provoke new situations. Today's interface of architecture with other disciplines is exemplary in this sense. The growing need to establish meaningful communication between experts from different fields fosters both codification and distortion of language, the homologation of terms and its expansion through translation and borrowing. In the first case, the descriptive precision is favoured to produce an objective (codified) system, whereas misunderstandings, metaphors and inaccuracies can lead to the generation of new knowledge and actions in the second. Such complexities are especially evident in the terminology emerging from practice-based or design-based research. In fact, the translation between visual and verbal signs, which is at the core of architectural practice, tends to obscure the distinction between descriptions and actions.

While the transdisciplinary context might certainly lead to an intensified look, in the last decades architecture has engaged in a process of expansion and adjustment led, in part, by new combinations of old keywords (ecology, landscape, urbanism, infrastructure, logistics...). Beyond disciplinary discourses, contemporary debates addressing the social, ecological and political connotations of architecture are providing a new set of critical words. Adjectives ("post-anthropocentric", "non-human", "inclusive", "transcultural") names ("decolonization", "decarbonization") and phrases ("climate change", "race and gender identity"...), have gained increasing visibility over the last two decades, both to inform and transform architecture's critical thinking. The proliferation of prefixes in many of them (post-, de-, trans-), denotes the urge to build new words and concepts from existing materials, pushed by the speed of contemporary culture. The problem of meaning persistence and change, but also of the tacit positions inscribed in words, can be exemplified by the crucial differences between "post-colonization" and "decolonization".

These and other terms are generated by a sequence of adjustments and oppositions, distortions and borrowings. The study of such processes, not in strict etymological terms but in a broader sense including the complex relations between words, practices, disciplines, is key to unveil the cultural and ideological positions behind current architectural debates. We propose to carry out this critique as a tool to explore today's emerging terminologies, and the ones to come.

The 5th edition of Critic|all Conference welcomes contributions that critically address the uses and misuses, the creation and wearing, the transformation and timeliness of the words with which architecture is – or has been – described, historized or updated through time. We expect interpretive work that draws new relations between words, concepts, things and practices, not strict etymological studies.

The most basic structure should present the expression or word under scrutiny, explain the reasons that justify the choice, formulate new interpretations or perspectives stemming from it, support these with arguments in the main body and bring the paper to a conclusion.

03

Conference Program

TUESDAY 10-10-2023

All schedule indicates local time in Delft, NL (UTC/GMT +2 hours)

| | | |
|--|---------------|--|
| | 09:15 - 09:30 | Welcome and Presentation |
| panel #1 Revisited Terms | 09:30 - 11:00 | Faculteit Bouwkunde TU Delft Berlagezaal 1 |
| Elisa Monaci Università Iuav di Venezia, Italy | 09:35 | Kitsch. Learning from Ordinary Dreams of Architecture |
| Francesca Gotti Politecnico di Milano, Italy | 09:50 | Critical Spatial Practices: Inhabiting an Ever-changing Term |
| Jana Culek Delft University of Technology, Netherlands University of Rijeka, Croatia | 10:05 | (Re)Defining Utopia. The Changing Concept of an Ideal World |
| Carla Molinari (1) and Marco Spada (2) (1) Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom (2) University of Suffolk, United Kingdom | 10:20 | Past and Future of Townscape. For a Humane Urbanism (*) |
| Session Chair: Marcos Pantaleón Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain | 10:35 - 11:00 | Discussion |
| Welcome by BK Dean Dick van Gameren | 11:00 | Berlagezaal 2 |
| Coffee Break | 11:00 - 11:30 | Berlagezaal 2 |
| panel #2 Modern Genealogies | 11:30 - 13:00 | Berlagezaal 1 |
| J. Igor Fardin and Richard Lee Peragine Politecnico di Torino, Italy | 11:35 | The promise(s) of sustainability |
| Cássio Carvalho and Alexandra Alegre Universidade de Lisboa, Portugal | 11:50 | Visions on Democratic Architecture |
| Frederico Costa Universidade Estadual de Campinas & Fundação de Amparo à Pesquisa do Estado de São Paulo, Brazil | 12:05 | Nostalgia for Backwardness. Investigating the Persistent Influence of Modernity on Brazilian Contemporary Architecture |
| Öykü Şimşek Istanbul Technical University, Turkey | 12:20 | Vulnerable architecture as a/n (im)material assemblage |
| Session Chair: Heidi Sohn Delft University of Technology, Netherlands | 12:35 - 13:00 | Discussion |
| Lunch Break | 13:00 - 14:00 | Berlagezaal 2 |
| panel #3 Situated Terms | 14:00 - 16:00 | Berlagezaal 1 |
| Mohammad Sayed Ahmad (1) & Munia Hweidi (2) (1) Tohoku University, Japan (2) Sophia University, Japan | 14:05 | Space, Makan, Kūkan. Phenomenology of Space through Etymology |
| Khevna Modi CEPT University, India Carnegie Mellon University, USA | 14:20 | Word, Associations, and Worldviews. A case of pol Architecture of Ahmedabad (*) |
| Marine Zorea Kyoto Institute of Technology, Japan Bezalel Academy of Art and Design, Israel | 14:35 | Speaking of Collective Dining. The Spatial, Social and Semiotic Realities of the Kibbutz Dining Room |
| Lola Lozano Architectural Association, UK | 14:50 | Redistribution: Domestic space and Land Sharing in Mexico City's urban centre |
| Hanxi Wang Cornell University, USA University College London, UK | 15:05 | HOME-steading. Subversions, Reversions, and Diversions of the Moral Right to Space |

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|---|----------------------|--|
| Session Chair: Janina Gosseye Delft University of Technology, Netherlands | 15:20 - 16:00 | Discussion |
| <i>Coffee Break</i> | 16:00 - 16:30 | Berlagezaal 2 |
| panel #4 Expanded Meanings | 16:30 - 18:30 | Berlagezaal 1 |
| Clarissa Duarte and Mariana Magalhães Costa Université Jean Jaurès (UT2J), France | 16:35 | From sustainable development to sustainable (urban) engagement: The evolution of a concept |
| Haitam Daoudi Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, Spain | 16:50 | A relational approach to performance. Composition of meaning through Price and Ábalos |
| Grayson Bailey Leibniz Universität Hannover, Germany Association for the Promotion of Cultural Practice in Berlin, Germany | 17:05 | Architecture / architectural |
| Zeynep Soysal Atılım University, Turkey | 17:20 | Platform: as an Architectural Ecotone Transtemporal |
| Maria Kouvari and Regine Hess ETH Zurich, Switzerland | 17:35 | Unlocking Time in the Architectural Discourse |
| Session Chair: Alejandro Campos Delft University of Technology, Netherlands | 17:50 - 18:30 | Discussion |
| <i>Dinner</i> | 19:00 - 21:30 | Huszár, Delft |

(*) presenting remotely

(**) by express desire of the author the full article is not included in these digital minutes

WEDNESDAY 11·10·2023

All schedule indicates local time in Delft, NL (UTC/GMT +2 hours)

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| panel #5 Projective Language | 09:00 - 11:00 | Berlagezaal 1 |
| Cathelijne Nuijsink Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA | 09:05 | Redefining Architecture from an Undecidable 'Anybody'. The Anybody Conference in Buenos Aires, 1996 (**) |
| Caterina Padoa Schioppa Sapienza University of Rome, Italy | 09:20 | Composting Death. Towards a Body Sublimation |
| Federico Broggin and Annalisa Metta University of RomaTre, Italy | 09:35 | Mundus. Designing landscape as wholeness, thickness, and fertility |
| Silvia Calderoni CIRSDe, Interdisciplinary Centre for Research and Studies on Women and Gender, Italy | 09:50 | Architecture, transfeminism, queerness: reimagining the urban space |
| Marco Spada (1) and Carla Molinari (2) (1) University of Suffolk, United Kingdom (2) Anglia Ruskin University, United Kingdom | 10:05 | Industrial Pastoralism. Post-productive arcadias in machine-modified landscapes |
| Session Chair: Mariana Wilderom Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil | 10:20 - 11:00 | Discussion |
| <i>Coffee Break</i> | 11:00 - 11:30 | Berlagezaal 2 |
| Keynote Lecture Albena Yaneva | 11:30 - 12:30 | Berlagezaal 1 Don't Fly, Don't Jump: Critical Proximity in Architectural Research |
| <i>Lunch Break</i> | 12:30 - 13:30 | Berlagezaal 2 |
| panel #6 Translated Terms | 13:30 - 15:30 | Berlagezaal 1 |
| Xuerui Wang Tongji University, China | 13:35 | The Term "Architectural Art" in the 1950s Chinese Architectural Theory. A Semantic Transplantation (*) |
| Miho Nakagawa University of East London, United Kingdom | 13:50 | Analysing English translation of ma interpretations between the 1960s and 80s (**) |
| Mustapha El Moussaoui Free University of Bolzano, Italy | 14:05 | Going Back Home/House. Unravelling Linguistic and Existential Differences |
| Marcela Aragüez IE University, Spain | 14:20 | From Kankyō to Environment to Enbairamento. A Mutating Concept Between Intermedia Art and Architecture in Post-War Japan |
| Ye Chen Nagoya Institute of Technology, Japan | 14:35 | Comparison of Jiàngòu and Kekkō. Differences in Terminology Translations of Tectonic Between China and Japan in <i>Studies in Tectonic Culture</i> |
| Session Chair: Marcos L. Rosa Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil | 14:50 - 15:30 | Discussion |
| <i>Coffee Break</i> | 15:30 - 16:00 | Berlagezaal 2 |
| Round Table | 16:00 - 17:15 | Berlagezaal 1 |
| <i>Break</i> | 17:15 - 17:45 | |
| Keynote Lecture Adrian Forty | 17:45 - 18:45 | Oostserre Words and Buildings Revisited |
| <i>Closing Ceremony</i> | 18:45 - 19:45 | Oostserre |

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05

Papers

Past and Future of Townscape For a Humane Urbanism

Molinari, Carla¹; Spada, Marco²

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Abstract

The complexity of the term Townscape is linked to its authorship shared on the pages of the *Architectural Review*. The first article in the Townscape column was published in 1948 and was written by Gordon Cullen. In 1949 H. De C. Hastings wrote the editorial "Townscape" and thus officially opened one of the most critical campaigns promoted by the British magazine, which will continue for over twenty years thanks to various authors, and culminated in 1961, with the publishing of the book *Townscape* by Gordon Cullen.

A few years after the publication of Cullen's text, the Townscape agenda became the subject of intellectual battles between critics such as Colin Rowe and Peter Reyner Banham. Then, in the 1970s, the term began to be associated with new forms of historical revisionism until it became the theoretical justification of Poundbury and Nansledan's schemes promoted by then Prince Charles.

Some recent studies analyse the origins and developments of the Townscape's agenda (Mathew Aitchison, Clément Orillard). At the same time, no one has yet focused on the historical origins of the term or the future potential of this urban theory, which associates tradition with modernity and rurality with the city, focusing on the richness of the human scale and experience.

This research is based on a literature review of the term Townscape from the XIX century to the present. By selecting the most relevant publications and comparing the different meanings, this paper aims to reconstruct an awaited framework of the term, its evolutions, nuances, and future potential. The final aim is to suggest Townscape as a fruitful term to theoretically frame the contemporary challenges of urban design, providing possibly innovative and critically sound strategies for addressing the lack of sense of belonging of our townscapes.

Key words: Townscape, Architectural Review, Gordon Cullen, Picturesque, Urban Design.

1. An Introduction to Townscape: investigating the term's origins

It is not known who first coined the term Townscape, and there are undoubtedly several authors - including critics, architects, and urban designers - who have used it as their own over the years. This uncertain and shared authorship has perhaps partly contributed to amplifying the multivalence of the concept to the point of almost completely modifying its original meaning. "By the twenty-first century, over three decades past its decline, Townscape's meaning is anything but clear. [...] the widespread perception that Townscape was anti-modern reveals how much has been forgotten about the campaign since its inception in the 1940s."¹

This paper attempts to reconstruct a detailed picture of the term Townscape by focusing on the word, its meanings, and the potential that this concept can still reserve for the future of urban design².

The Oxford English Dictionary suggests 1867 as the first year in which the term appears in print about a "thoroughly characteristic Spanish Townscape" in the pages of *Hunt's Yachting Magazine*. A few years later, in 1880, the word appears in the text *The Figure Painters of Holland* by Ronald S. Gower, describing an urban landscape in a painting. And then again in 1889, in *A Tour in a Phaeton: Through the Eastern Counties*, by James John Hissey, who writes: "Why will not painters give us glimpses of some of the quaint townscapes (to invent another word) of our romantic, unspoilt English towns?"

It can be stated then that the term Townscape was invented towards the end of the 19th century to describe the urban landscape in the British context. Although sporadic, these first quotes already clearly identify some of the essential characteristics of Townscape. First, it is a concept linked to the visual and representational sphere, as the concept of the landscape itself is. Often, the term is associated with paintings, and when it relates to the physical environment, it usually refers to the experience of eyes. Secondly, there seems to be a close relationship between Townscape and the idea of characteristic, traditional: the urban landscape defined as Townscape is "romantic, unspoilt" and, therefore, it represents some original, local architecture.

In this sense, the original meaning of the term is highly effective and intuitive: Townscape indicates the possibility of conceiving urban space as a landscape, as an element with its own specific and unique identity, and as such, suggests it as an object that deserves to be studied, represented and designed. Nevertheless, its effectiveness and critical fame only became so later, on the pages of the *Architectural Review (AR)* under the guide of Hubert de Cronin Hastings³. Since the 1930s, the London magazine has dedicated itself to promoting and critically debating modern architecture. One of the most shared dilemmas of that period was the search for a national architectural identity that could reconcile the irreverent modern aesthetics with the more traditionalist essence of the English landscape and Townscape has been suggested for several years as a solution to the dilemma by the *AR*. Hastings gathered different authors and critics with this primary purpose: he wanted to promote the minimalist lines and revolutionary use of materials of modern architecture, but he was, together with most of the authors, suspicious of the modern utopistic approach to urban design. Furthermore, he enormously enjoyed eclecticism, as perfectly represented by the *AR*'s private pub he created: the Bride of Denmark. Townscape provided the perfect opportunity to merge the British character of small towns and picturesque landscapes with the necessity of modern urban developments. The term represents, in this sense, a theoretical compromise associated with the period's societal and architectural historical changes.

2. Townscape and the AR

Although it is impossible to identify a single person as the author of the term, as already clarified, we can still be confident that this word was coined at the end of the 19th century and reinvented and promoted in the 1940s by the *AR* after years of heated debate on the limits of the urban design of the modern movement.

The term Townscape appeared for the first time on the *AR* in 1939, when J.M. Richards⁴, the journal's longest-serving editor, published an article titled "Wisbech." However, throughout this article, Richards uses the term with little care or emphasis; he writes: "That universal Croydon towards which the townscapes of England are tending."⁵ Townscape has yet to be defined as a practice but is used mainly as a noun, as a term to describe the English urban landscape. In any case, the dilemma of modern urbanity, of the universalization of an otherwise characterized and characterizing landscape, is already evident in Richards' text.

In fact, the conceptual potential of Townscape has already been partly explored on the pages of the London journal long before the term itself is finally defined and officially adopted as an agenda. The work of Nikolaus Pevsner, in particular, and Thomas Sharp, John Summerson, and several other authors gathered by Hastings had a shared aim to find alternative options to the modern design of urban spaces, starting from the rescue of the English architectural tradition. Articles such as "Price on Picturesque Planning" by Pevsner or "Exterior Furnishing or Sharavaggi: the art of making urban landscape" by Hastings, both published in 1944 on the *AR*, become emblems of this persistent attempt and ambition of redemption of the English landscape design, finally identifying the Picturesque as a critical method for an autochthonous development of modern architecture. Pevsner, more specifically,

dedicated several texts, including a posthumous-published book, to the Picturesque and its profound English ethos, starting from a thorough historical analysis of the term. Despite several authors theorising the Picturesque beginning from the 16th Century, it is indicative that the *AR* mainly refers to Uvedale Price. This is because Price was the first that theorised the Picturesque as an aesthetics category, independent from the Beautiful and the Sublime. Although neither Pevsner nor Hastings directly referred to Townscape as an aesthetics category, it is essential to note that both of them defined Townscape as the logical development of the Picturesque.

In 1948, the term Townscape appeared twice: in the book by Thomas Sharp, *Oxford Replanned*, published by the *Architectural Press (AP)*, and on the pages of the *AR* to introduce the article by Gordon Cullen, "Legs and Wheels". A year later, in 1949, the *AR* again officially launched its "Townscape" campaign, with a cover and case book by Cullen and an opening piece by Hastings. From this moment on, Townscape takes on a much more complex meaning and becomes a practice, an agenda supported by several fronts.

3. Thomas Sharp, *Oxford Replanned*

Thomas Sharp is a town planner, and author of essential texts on the English urban landscape, including *Town Planning* published in 1940. He also writes some articles for the *AR* and actively collaborates in the Townscape campaign. Between Sharp, Hastings and Cullen, as between all people included within the sphere of the *AR*, various professional relationships are established. Therefore, it is no coincidence that Cullen is the author of the cover for two books by Sharp, *Oxford Replanned* and, later, *English Panorama*.

In *Oxford Replanned*, the author defines the term Townscape very authoritatively, even using the term "christened". Sharp writes, "[...] by an analogy with an equivalent art practiced by the eighteenth-century improver of land, it might be christened Townscape. Always remembering that a town is a mobile thing, that streets, like buildings, move as one drawn through them even if one is drawn on one's feet, whereas a photograph records a static object, it would be worth considering every illustration in this book on its merit as a piece of Townscape."⁶

The definition already contains several key elements that underlie a much more complex idea of Townscape than the one used until then. First, Townscape refers to the past – this is also a fundamental point for Hastings: the term is loaded with the value of historical continuity. It becomes the heir of an English identity. In this sense, the implied landscape – so significant that it does not need to be explicitly mentioned – is the ancestor par excellence from which Townscape was born and named. Sharp then focuses on the concept of movement and how a city is an object that cannot correctly be told with static elements because the buildings and streets move as we cross the space. This point, more related to understanding Townscape as an operative method, is closest to Cullen's vision, which he constantly reiterates with his magnificent drawings and short but effective words.

Still analysing Sharp's definition, we finally encounter a transformation of the term from a simple noun to describe some feature to a noun that implies action. Townscape is an "art"; it is a practice that aims to improve the town. This passage is as fundamental as it is difficult to sustain, and it is interesting to note how the various authors and promoters of Townscape then experimented with different ways to justify this idea, trying to explain how the theory can be transformed into practice. Sharp, precisely, does it as a perfect urban designer. *Oxford Replanned* opens and closes with glossy pages with black and white photographs and short essays that seem to come directly from the *AR*. However, this is a small part compared to the book's central section, which is dedicated, as suggested by the title, to a bold proposal to modify the urban space of Oxford, starting from a study of a new road system for cars and pedestrians. Here Sharp proposes a comprehensive examination of the city, of how it has changed over the last few centuries and how this change could be even more radical in the future, affecting those qualities of visual value and urban character which he precisely defines as typical of the art of Townscape. So again, modernity, in this case in the form of mobility, represents a threat to urban space, and Townscape is the answer to the problem. However, Sharp's method of using Townscape is specific and is that of the urban planner rather than a designer, who works on maps (some of which are beautifully represented and included in the book on double pages) and on masterplans⁷.

4. Gordon Cullen, "Legs and Wheels"

This article by Cullen, usually not analysed, is particularly significant for many reasons. Cullen is younger than Hastings and Sharp, but since 1935 he has been collaborating occasionally with the *AR*, above all with the role of illustrator. In 1947 he became assistant art editor of the magazine. In the following months, he published two articles, "A square for every taste" and "Hazards", which focused on the quality of urban spaces from a pedestrian perspective and were printed on light-blue paper.

For some years the *AR* has been experimenting with an innovative graphic style. This style is primarily the will of Hastings, who transformed the *AR* into an avant-garde journal in those years, on par with the most prestigious architecture magazines in the world. Graphics become a fundamental means of transmitting content, and therefore there is an essential search for a specific language consistent with

the articles' philosophy. In this sense, the choice falls on an ambiguous yet compelling mix of styles, fonts, and colours, trying, on the one hand, to give space to traditional projects and ideas, on the other, to promote the revolutionary and diametrically different approach of modern architecture. In this sense, the graphics transmit the journal's philosophy and its authors: an idea of mixing styles and embracing the richness and diversity of the built environment. There are several people Hastings manages to attract to the *AR* to reinvent graphics. Cullen is one of them, and his induction as art editor (a figure that did not exist before) points to this goal.

The text of "Legs and Wheels", printed in 1948 on the same light-blue paper as "A square for every taste" and "Hazards", is the first article on the *AR* that is labelled with the Townscape banner. The article is short and focuses on urban land and how this is now occupied and dedicated only to cars. It is probably no coincidence that both "Hazards" and "Legs and Wheels" focus on problems of urban space related to traffic, like Sharp's book. Cullen briefly mentions pedestrian risk issues but then focuses on two points: "(a) the suppression of variety and character in the ground surface; (b) the invasion of the pedestrian reserves."⁸ The two concepts are anything but trivial. The variety and character of the urban dimension are critical terms for the Townscape agenda, which are taken directly from Price's definition of the Picturesque. The defence of the pedestrian (of the man who has experience of the city by crossing its spaces) is a theme that seems to constantly return in Cullen's approach to Townscape. In addition, Cullen has a personal interest in human psychology. His words, diagrams, and drawings often focus on the realm of human, subjective urban experience⁹.

The photographs accompanying the text are part of the well-established *AR* style, capturing black-and-white details of an unidentified urban landscape, images that are proposed as examples of situations that can be found in every English town. In the same way, the drawings by Cullen's hand also show urban scenes of common and possible urban glimpses that the reader is not given to know if they are real or invented. However, unlike photographs, used similarly by all the authors of Townscape (including Hastings and Sharp)¹⁰, Cullen's drawings offer points of view based on the human experience. If the shots want to focus attention on elements of the urban space that are usually overlooked, and for this reason, they are mostly taken from non-natural or non-spontaneous points of view, the drawings instead show the perspective of the pedestrian. Cullen's famous quick yet effective stroke, as well as the very accurate choice of the urban frame to depict every time, help to create a visual apparatus that, from a simple representation, first becomes a story and then slowly design. Drawing in this sense is, to all intents and purposes, the operative part of Cullen, his way of transforming and putting Townscape into practice.

5. Hubert de Cronin Hastings, "Townscape: A Plea for an English Visual Philosophy Founded on the True Rock of Sir Uvedale Price"

With the 1949 text by Ivor de Wolfe (Hastings' pseudonym) the Townscape campaign on the *AR* officially opened. The cover of the issue and a second article, "Casebook", both authored by Cullen, are also dedicated to Townscape.

Hastings' text is dense, full of references from outside the world of architecture, and with a polemical tone. This is the characteristic style of Hastings' articles, always provocative as eloquent. Only one image accompanies the text: an opening photograph of a road detail well connected to Cullen's "Legs and Wheels", published only a few months earlier. The goal of the essay and its author is clear from the very first lines: "But the first requirement, the creation of a vocabulary, isn't a thing the artist himself ought to have to struggle with alone; it is rather a matter for the art critic, the historian, the poet – in fact, the man of letters [...]"¹¹. Hastings, therefore, a man of letters, sets himself the goal of creating this vocabulary for the landscape and its design and, after a long and reasoned discussion, concludes his text by proposing Townscape as a new and significant term.

The article can be divided into three main parts. In the first part, Hastings refers to an interpretation of national culture starting from ethical-political questions, citing, among others, Machiavelli, Rousseau, Hoffman, Locke and Plotinus. This hypothesis, which Hastings elaborated together with Pevsner for several years before and after the publication of this specific article, refers to the idea of an English democracy that he defines as "radical liberal". According to Hastings, the political tradition of the UK promotes a society that incites the expression of the individual as different and unique. On the contrary, "rational liberal" democracies, such as the French one, aspire to the freedom of the individual towards achieving a truth that is the same one for everybody, a shared, collective truth.

The second part of the article, on the other hand, questions the possibility that this characteristic of English society of aspiring to complexity and diversity can be found in the urban and landscape reality, in the "out there". Here, referring first of all to Price but also citing William Kent, Capability Brown, Palladio and Plato, Hastings suggests that the English sense of beauty (or sublime), nourished precisely by this philosophical approach, and does not aspire to an idea of uniform and compliant beauty, but on the contrary to seeking differences and variety. This aesthetic trend is found in Price's Picturesque, which therefore allows Hastings to trace a clear line of English tradition in the approach to the landscape¹².

Finally, in the last part of the article, the editor of the *AR* focuses on the concrete possibility of applying this distinctive national aesthetic and philosophical approach to the contemporary context of urban design. So again, the authors of Townscape invite us to imagine the term as a concrete possibility of action and practice. However, Hastings does not make the attempt himself and refers instead to Cullen's case-book, which follows his article, emphasizing how, in his opinion, the art of Townscape must start from the collection and understanding of precedents. "To bring the thing down to practical politics the section which follows tries to demonstrate in a purely token what the Case-Book idea applied to town planning as a visual art, termed by Thomas Sharp Civic Design and the Review, I think, Townscape. Technical questions can here be ignored, but it is not for this reason the subject is chosen, but rather because it demonstrates the modern conception of Landscape as the field of vision wherever and in whatever position happens to be."¹³

6. The critical (un)fortune and of Townscape

After 1949, the Townscape's agenda was officially launched on the *AR*. Hundreds of articles are written with its banner, in the first years signed by Cullen, but then also by many other authors. The campaign is one of the most successful of the *AR* but also one of the most controversial. The term Townscape gained further significant recognition and widespread usage with the publication of Gordon Cullen's influential book, "Townscape," in 1961. Subsequently republished in an abridged form as "The Concise Townscape" in 1971, Cullen's work synthesised his earlier articles on the *AR* in the 1950s. The book also hosts some additional texts by Cullen, which, however brief, deserve a more in-depth future examination. A few years later, Sharp and Hastings also published books whose titles focused again on Townscape: Hastings (under the pseudonym of Ivor de Wolfe) published "The Italian Townscape" in 1963, and Sharp "Town and Townscape" in 1968. Both the books, together with that of Cullen, offer new nuances, perhaps exaggerating in the enrichment of the term which, inexorably, will be emptied and trivialised from that moment.

Towards the end of the 1960s, in fact, something changed; the term began to be misunderstood and became the subject of heated debates. The most significant is perhaps what happens, again on the pages of the *AR*, between Colin Rowe and Reyner Banham¹⁵. The two acclaimed architectural theorists find themselves fighting with letters-articles, one of the many battles of the war between modern and postmodern. A war without winners (or perhaps without losers), which saw exciting moments and twists; like Rowe's cross-benching, which, according to Banham, after having supported the *AR* for years, then accuses the journal of defending vernacularisms.

As narrated by Aitchison, Rowe was always very critical regarding "the insufferable tedium of Townscape, the dreary accumulation of publish house chi chi, and the insipid neo-Regency aesthetics with which we have been blanketed since the war"¹⁶. Maybe also for this reason, when he published the essay "Collage City" in 1975 with Fred Koetter, the *AR* published a series of articles reviewing Rowe's work, most strongly criticising his text for lack of originality and what we would call today missing referencing. Nathan Silver, Charles Jencks, and Reyner Banham were among the authors accusing Rowe of copying ideas already published by others. Banham, in particular, entitled his article "De Wolfe the Author?" referring to Hastings as the main, first author of these ideas, since the publication of the "celebrated article 'Townscape... a visual philosophy founded on the true rock of Sir Uvedale Price', equally suspicious of universal utopias and equally delighted by the juxtaposition of fragmentary designs. And that was in the *AR* for December 1494. Professor Rowe's attitude to these ideas at the time was consistently hostile. [...] Unless this leopard has genuinely reversible spots, Rowe's claims to authorship [...] are far less convincing than those of 'Ivor de Wolfe'"¹⁷. Rowe published a letter answering all accusations, stating that his and Koetter's project started in the early 1970s.

However, this clash between these architectural theory's titans continued for years, and probably determined part of the critical (un)fortune of the term, which was slowly emptied of its theoretical and practical aspects and transformed into a restorationist or jingoistic label in order to foray the revival of Poundbury and similar schemes. The Townscape term, at this point, finally became the perfect, catching word to describe the New Urbanism tendency and King Charles's faux traditional towns, helping certain councils to defend the superficiality of rushed urban development projects¹⁸.

7. Conclusions

The concept of Townscape underwent significant developments between 1948 and 1949, thanks to the contributions of Sharp, Hastings, and Cullen. This paper explored how these scholars expanded the scope of Townscape beyond its visual aspect, establishing it as a critical term in the history of architecture. Their innovative interpretation emphasized the integration of movement and visual experience of the urban landscape. Moreover, they advocated the notion of Townscape as an "art" or "practice" capable of shaping alternative futures and contributing to urban improvement. By doing so, they highlighted the active role that individuals, particularly architects and planners, should play in shaping the urban environment. In this way, Townscape represented the societal changes of the time,

moving from the aesthetics philosophical category of Picturesque to a collective, proactive possibility to intervene in urban space.

For these reasons, among the numerous authors who have written about Townscape over the years, Sharp, Hastings, and Cullen stand out for their significant contributions to reinventing the concept and proposing new values and meanings. While they shared a common intention to redefine Townscape critically, their perspectives differed in nuanced ways. Sharp's contribution lies in his rigorous approach to the discipline of urban planning, which emphasizes systematic and meticulous urban analysis for effective implementation. On the other hand, Hastings enriched the concept with social-political and historical-critical dimensions, highlighting the broader societal implications and contextual relevance of urban spaces. Lastly, Cullen's pivotal role involved translating abstract concepts into essential graphical representations and intuitively recognising the necessity of changing the design's scale and perspective.¹⁹

What can be the future of Townscape today? New studies are finally contributing to the understanding and analysis of its complexity, finally shedding light on the AR campaign and the various actors who took part in it. The common sense of the term remains linked to a partly historicist and characterising, rather than characteristic, idea of urban space. A quick search of the word online reveals its popularity and how it is used as a catchy title by design firms, urban development consultants, and even games. Although disappointing, this trivialisation also reveals what Hastings, Sharp and Cullen, first of all, have recognised: the effectiveness of the word and its immense immediacy. In this sense, Townscape can maybe still have some meaningful potential, maybe this time embracing the variety and complexity of the English tradition up to including the banal as the deep.

Notes

1. Mathew Aitchison, "Townscape: Scope, Scale and Extent," *Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 5 (2012), 627. In this article, Mathew Aitchison analyses the different voices that contributed to define the Townscape agenda and expresses an interesting perspective of why the concept lost significance during time.
2. Several recent studies have been recently published regarding Townscape agenda and its effects and development. Refer in particular to Erdem Erten, "Thomas Sharp's Collaboration with H. De C. Hastings: The Formulation of Townscape as Urban Design Pedagogy," *Planning Perspectives* 24, no. 1 (2009), 29-49.; Anthony Raynsford, "Urban contrast and neo-Toryism: on the social and political symbolism of The Architectural Review's Townscape campaign," *Planning Perspectives* 30, no. 1 (2015), 95-128; and the entire issue of the *Journal of Architecture* on Townscape edited by Mathew Aitchison, *Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 5 (2012).
3. Hastings was the owner of the Architectural Review and the Architectural Press, and editors of both for decades. For a more focused portrait of his controversial and powerful figure, refer to Mathew Aitchison, "Who's Afraid of Ivor de Wolfe?," *AA Files* 62 (2011), 34-39.
4. A thorough article has been recently published on J. M. Richards and his role as one of the AR's editors on the 1500th anniversary issue of the AR: Jessica Kelly, "Reputations: James Maude Richards," *The Architectural Review*, no. 1500 (2023), 14-17.
5. J.M. Richards, "Wisbech," *The Architectural Review*, no. 86 (1939), 236.
6. Thomas Sharp, *Town and Townscape* (London: John Murray, 1968), 36.
7. For a more comprehensive investigation regarding Thomas Sharp and his contribution to the development of the Townscape agenda, refer to Erten, "Thomas Sharp's Collaboration with H. De C. Hastings: The Formulation of Townscape as Urban Design Pedagogy," 29-49.
8. Gordon Cullen, "Legs and Wheels," *The Architectural Review* 104, no. 620 (1948), 77-80.
9. In the article, Clément Orillard, "Gordon Cullen beyond The Architectural Review: some new perspectives from his personal archives," *The Journal of Architecture* 17, no. 5 (2012), 719-731, can be found a well-documented investigation of Cullen's interest on human psychology, based on archival research.
10. It is important to note that the AR and the AP shared a massive photographic collection and all authors contributing to publications were able to use these images. In this sense, it should not be a surprise that several books and articles related to Townscape were in some cases illustrated by the exact same photographs.
11. Ivor de Wolfe [Hugh de Cronin Hastings], "Townscape: A Plea for an English Visual Philosophy Founded on the True Rock of Sir Uvedale Price," *The Architectural Review* 106, no. 636 (1949), 355-62.
12. The same principle has been expanded by Nikolaus Pevsner on several occasions. For instance, during his Reith lectures, entitled *The Englishness of English Art* and broadcasted in 1955.
13. Wolfe, "Townscape: A Plea for an English Visual Philosophy Founded on the True Rock of Sir Uvedale Price," 362.
15. A more detailed narration of the letters' exchange between Rowe and Banham can be found in Aitchison, "Who's Afraid of Ivor de Wolfe?," 34-39.
16. Colin Rowe, "Connel, Ward and Lucas," *Architectural Association* 73, no. 808 (1956), 163.
17. Reyner Banham, "De Wolfe the Author?," *The Architectural Review* 158, no. 944 (1975), 322.
18. For a recent and stimulating view regarding the contemporary debate around British new urban schemes, refer to Alistair Barr, "Behind the façade," *The Royal Society of Arts Journal*, no. 1 (2023), 40-43.
19. Cullen was a magnificent and well-recognised illustrator. Norman Foster, in the introduction to Gosling's monography on Cullen, wrote: "Cullen was like a wizard as with a few deft strokes he would make a social commentary". David Gosling, *Gordon Cullen: Visions of Urban Design*, (London: John Wiley & Sons, 1996).

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Biography

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