

Subbecofu di San Nicolas

The Hauntings of Colonization

Research Plan — Explore Lab 39

Carlo Profet

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Prologue Prologue

We—San Nicolas—are dying, and we have something to declare!
colonial specters, ever haunting
homogenizing selves, habitats
repressing desires, emotions
forgetting stories, memories.

We prefer not to endure asphyxiation.
We are dying instead!

We—San Nicolas—are dying, and we have something to confess!
estranged, not by choice
sentimental becoming, collectively,
perpetual pining, remembering
that which once was, not.

We prefer not to be hypnotized by nostalgia.
We are dying instead!

We—San Nicolas—are dying, and we have something to reveal!
oppression, a familiar poison
deliberately injected, eternal agony
shrouded in solitude, withering
and still, our body resists!

We prefer not to be relentlessly confined.
We are dying instead!

We—San Nicolas—are dying, and we have something to desire!
Ban *bira* fucu! Ban core *hunto* cu fucu!¹
A spectral leap, plunging into
passions, potentials, memories
abundantly overflowing.

We are dying
instead!

¹ Translated from Papiamentu: Let's *become* specters! Let's *run with* the specters!



One
HAPPY
ART Island

BODEGA

Caught between the liquid black gold and the white sandy beaches, for decades, Aruba imposed a simulacrum on herself as Aruba: “One Happy Island”.² At first glance, it seems like a fun and positive slogan targeting tourism. However, this fixed Disneyfied mantra that we—Arubans—proudly live by constantly haunts us. Yet are we conscious of its ramifications? Unable to resist internalization, we are forced to negate differences and repress our desires and emotions. Always One. Always happy. But what lies beneath this simulacrum? How do the locals experience their daily lives? How and where do they express themselves? How do they endure such oppressive forms of colonization?

Similarly, San Nicolas—the second largest city, located on the eastern end of Aruba—is affected by such oppressive powers. Since the closure of the Lago oil refinery in the late 80s—and the simultaneous acceleration of the tourism industry—the government and stakeholders have lost interest in San Nicolas. In the process of enhancing Oranjestad and Palm Beach, San Nicolas slowly but surely became a has-been. To my recollection, they have always been in the shadows of Oranjestad—or even of the rest of the island, for that matter. Always oppressed, othered, and left to decay... except for when it comes to their sex workers, beaches, and carnival. During the last five years, San Nicolas has been progressively injected with a dose of branding in attempt to allegedly *revitalize* and *activate* the city. The Aruba Tourism Authority (ATA) calls San Nicolas, the “Sunrise City”, as a place with “an authentic Caribbean flair and flavor” that “offers iconic beaches and island charm far removed from the glitz and glam of the Palm Beach resorts”.³ Before we knew it, museums, (street) art and more restaurants catering tourists were imposed on the city. But what about the locals? How do they experience the city? Where do they gather? What about their stories and desires? San Nicolas remains continuously haunted by the fucus (specters) of colonization. To some the urgency to take on this problem is evident, yet most of us remain oblivious or care-less.

² Aruba Tourism Authority (ATA), “The One Happy Island of Aruba,” Aruba.com, 2024, accessed October 20, 2024, <https://www.aruba.com/uk/our-island/one-happy-island>.

³ Aruba Tourism Authority (ATA), “Discover San Nicolas, Aruba,” Aruba.com, 2024, accessed October 20, 2024, <https://www.aruba.com/uk/our-island/regions/san-nicolas>.

Problem-Questions Problem-Questions

This brings us to the following research question:

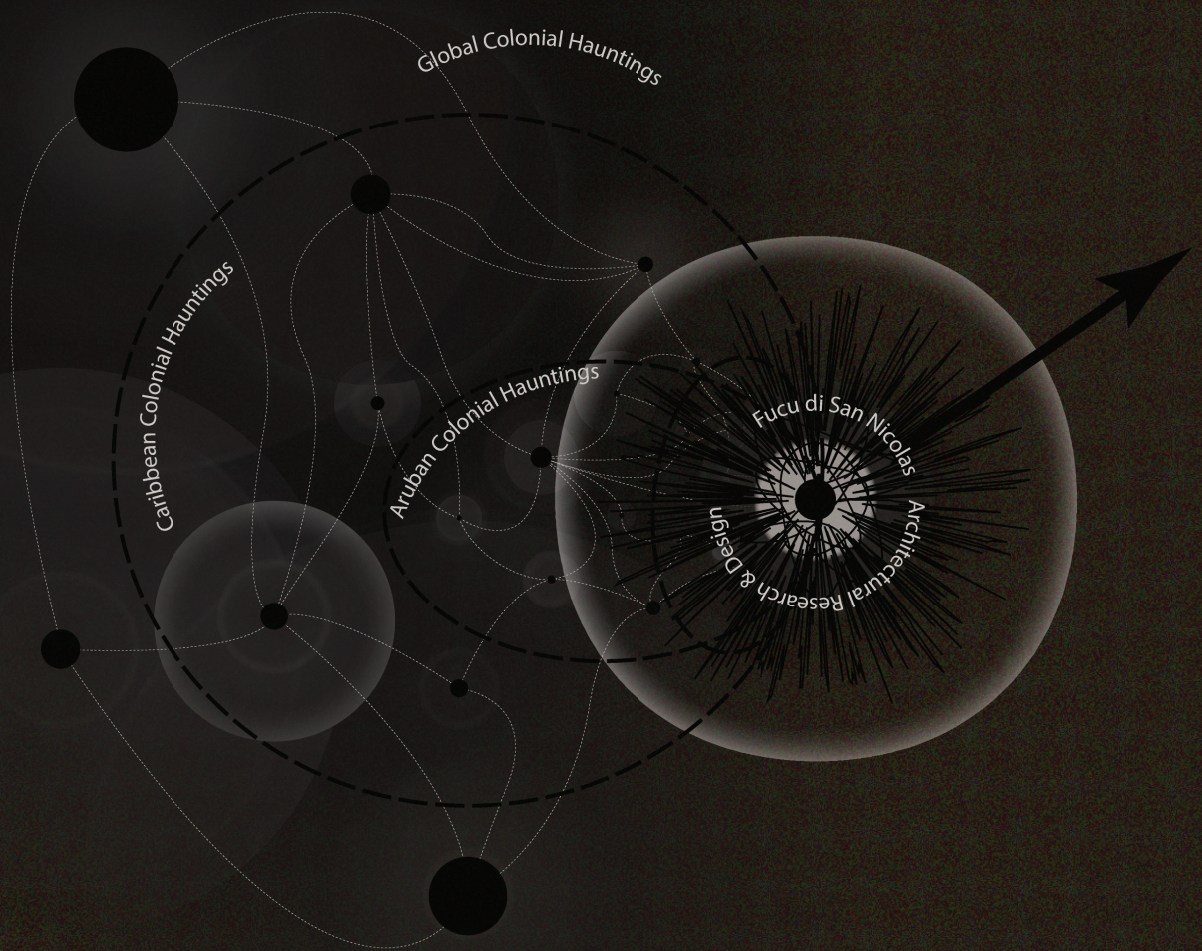
How can hauntology help foster affective architecture that imbues response-ability towards the resulting injustices of colonization?

To answer the main question, the following sub-questions will be investigated:

- * How do we become focus (spectres)? Why does hauntology matter?
- * How do focus (spectres) express themselves in the material and immaterial flows of the daily dynamics? How do they affect us?
- * How can we rethink these focus (spectres), refashion their politico-aesthetic potentials, and produce architecture ethopoietically?
- * How can architecture ground itself into the assemblage of a San Nicolas yet-to-come?

The main objective of this research is to decolonize hegemonic and oppressive structures that influence our habits and therefore our spatial practices in San Nicolas, Aruba. From an ethico-onto-epistemological perspective, it aims at decentering the hegemonic universal image of '*Man of Reason*'⁴ as the measure of all things: he who is cis-male, heterosexual, white, Western, oblivious to the exclusion of others. It is important to disrupt essentialist and transcendental habits—e.g. concept of identity, time, and memory—and understand the reciprocal relationship between the environment, architectural interventions, and processes of subjectification. Moreover, this research aims at revealing and acknowledging injustices; reclaiming marginalized, forgotten stories and memories; and providing knowledge on how to produce architecture ethopoietically for a San Nicolas yet-to-come. These are relevant problems that are ubiquitous, also beyond San Nicolas. That makes this research most opportune. It is worth addressing these issues that transcend borders, reflect on our collective colonial past, and aim at imagining potential alternative futures. Furthermore, having a transdisciplinary approach, this research touches on the following fields of knowledge: philosophy, phenomenology, praxeology, memory studies, and ethology.

⁴ Rosi Braidotti, "Feminism Is Not (Only) a Humanism," in *Posthuman Feminism* (Polity Press, 2022), 17–42.



"The time is out of joint"

Shakespeare, *Hamlet*, Act 1, Scene 5.

Research Framework

Key Concepts

Hauntology: An approach to explore the specters as the hauntings of colonization in the San Nicolas assemblage. *Hauntology* aims at decolonizing the hegemonic concept of a linear time (past-present-future) and instead encourages us to embrace the *spectrality* of a more dynamic concept of time: one that is *disjointed*. Specters are the simultaneous ghostly apparitions that haunt us *a praesenti*. Specters of what is lost—memories, traces, remnants—and of imaginaries of what is yet to come due to any form of oppression and exclusion caused by colonization. They sneakily disobey time, yet together they shape our lives in the present. In order to reconcile with colonial injustices, we should take the responsibility to engage with these specters. They are forces to be reckoned with.⁵ Because by remembering our *virtual* histories—honoring forgotten memories—in the *actual*, we can truly acknowledge who we wish to become and how we wish to collectively virtually remember a San Nicolas yet-to-come.

Fucu: *Core cu fucu* is a saying in Papiamentu that translates to: *chase away the evil spirits*. Traditionally, it is a cleansing ritual that locals do with the smoke of cigars, sage, and fireworks. To manifest good and prosperous new beginnings. In this research the evil nature of the fucu (specter/spirit/ghost) is not considered as something bad nor good, but rather *indiscernible*.⁶ That is, something confusing, unknowable, and invisible. For the sake of this research, we will interpret the saying otherwise. We prefer *Core huntu cu fucu* (*Run with the specters*). The fucu becomes a multitude of actors, *conceptual personae*, that will haunt as an agent for mythmaking throughout this research. It can be interpreted as the virtual potentials, desires, and memories encountered in possible processes of (trans)individuation.

Death: In the process of *dying*, we will become fucus, become specters. We will run together with them, *plunging into the virtual*. This is a take on Foucault's '*Death of Man*',⁷ it does not mean the literal act of dying. However, it encourages us to dare to face death and—to a certain extent—*becoming-chaos*, embracing chaotic experiences. To opening ourselves up, unfolding into the absolute *becoming-creative* of life. Simultaneously though, remaining slightly shielded and in touch with ourselves in order to assure our *return*. In so doing, *becoming-death* negates *reactive becomings*—which is abundantly *stupid* and negates life by imploding into a *reactive death* instead.⁸

⁵ Jacques Derrida, "Exordium," in *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International* (Routledge, 2006), xvi–xx.

⁶ Daniel W. Smith, "Platonism. The Concept of the Simulacrum: Deleuze and the Overturning of Platonism," in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 13.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences*, 2nd ed. (Routledge, 2002).

⁸ Quentin Meillassoux, "Subtraction and Contraction: Deleuze, Immanence, and Matter and Memory," in *Collapse III*, trans. Robin Mackay (MIT Press, 2007), 98–107.

Flows: *Flows* are the movement of the material and immaterial. The *transmissions* (the incomings and outgoings) of e.g. flows of earth, people, and thought. They are assembled, anticipating the interception of individuals or collectives, and then cut off when a desire is satisfied. Flows are expressed through *codes (recordings)* and managed as *stocks (accumulated/decreased consumption)*.⁹ Furthermore, where there are flows, there are *desires*. Desires constitutes the social infrastructure (political and libidinal economy) generate flows.¹⁰ Always overflowing, always abundant, always social.

Politico-Aesthetics: *Politics* and *aesthetics* operate simultaneously in processes of *subjectification*. Aesthetics is the configuration of *senses*, the affective relation between *affects* and *percepts*. It conditions politics. Moreover, when it comes to politics, it concerns how aesthetics is conditioned and flow socially. A reciprocal relation that contributes to *transindividuations* in processes of subjectification.¹¹

Response-ability: By *acknowledging* our positions in the assemblage of life—and our relationality with the *zoe/geo/techno-agents*¹² in which we find ourselves *entangled* with—we become capable of taking *responsibility* for the lives we live. To “intra-act responsibly”, is to live as part of the world. Remaining *accountable* and *responsive* to each other and our collective potentials.¹³ As matter, we should understand that we are shaped reciprocally with said agents. Making us ever *intra-acting* and therefore ever mutually *response-able*.¹⁴

Ethopoiesis: Deriving from the Spinozist ethics, *ethopoiesis*¹⁵ is believed to be the radically ethical production of *encounters*. Stimulating processes of individuation that *empower* individuals by increasing their *capacities* to act in connection with their full *potential*.¹⁶

⁹ Daniel W. Smith, “Politics: Flow, Code, and Stock: A Note on Deleuze’s Political Philosophy,” in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 160–72.

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (Viking, 1977): 104, cited in Daniel W. Smith, *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 162.

¹¹ Sinan Cem Kızıl, “Architecture as Territory: Politico-Aesthetic Constructions and Representations of Space-Time” (Ph.D. - Doctoral Program, Middle East Technical University, 2024), 182.

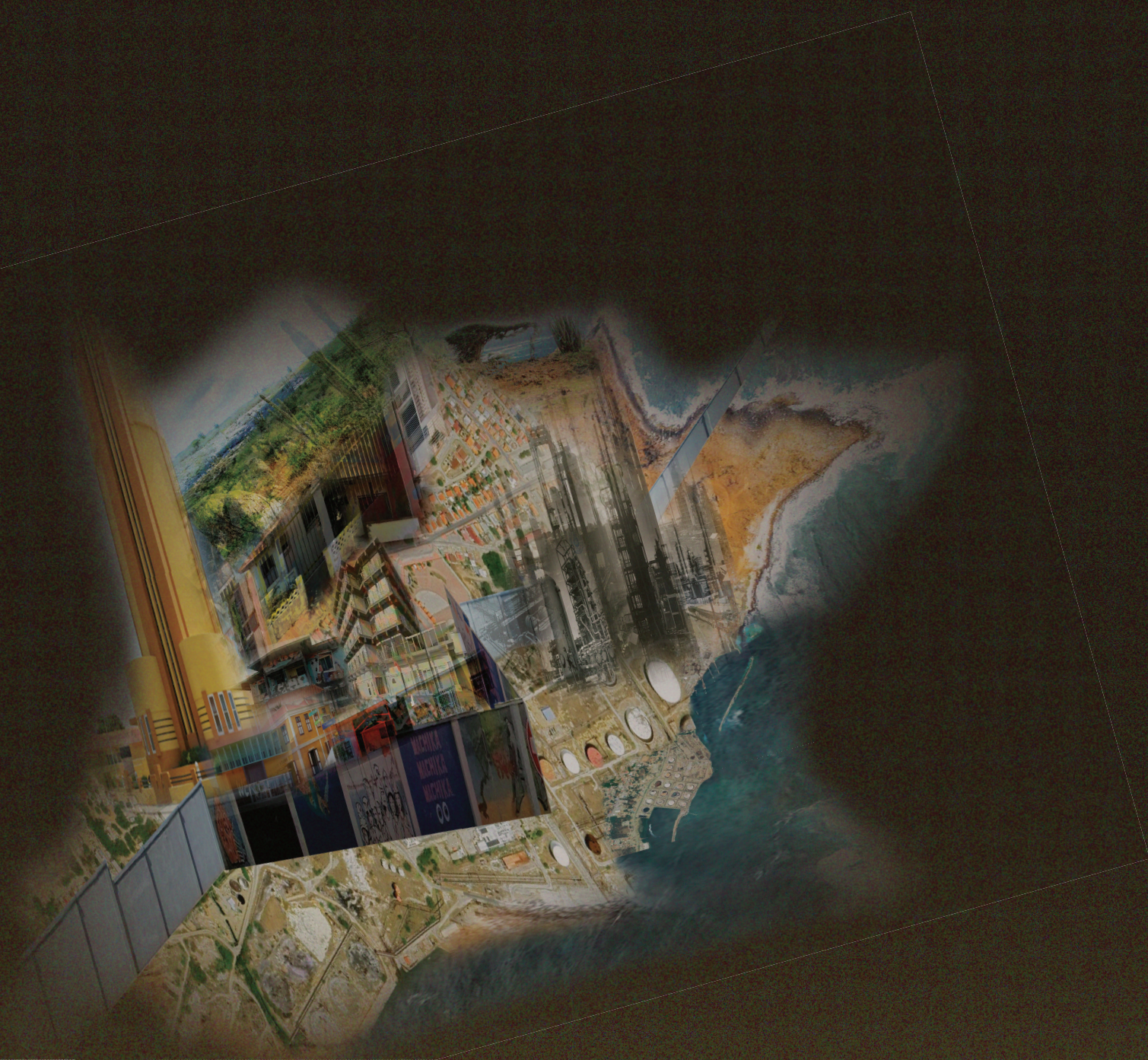
¹² Rosi Braidotti, “New Materialism and Carnal Empiricism,” in *Posthuman Feminism* (Polity Press, 2022), 126.

¹³ Karen Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning* (Duke University Press, 2007), 396.

¹⁴ Karen Barad, “On Touching—the Inhuman That Therefore I Am,” *Differences* 23, no. 3 (December 1, 2012): 215, <https://doi.org/10.1215/10407391-1892943>.

¹⁵ Stavros Kousoulas, *Architectural Technicities: A Foray Into Larval Space* (Routledge, 2023), 95.

¹⁶ Ibid. & Rosi Braidotti, “Nomadic Ethics,” *Deleuze Studies* 7, no. 3 (July 24, 2013): 342–59, <https://doi.org/10.3366/dls.2013.0116>.



Methods & Methodology

A **literature study** on the philosophical concepts mentioned above will be conducted as a methodology to help shape the theoretical framework and to understand the reciprocal relation between architectural intervention, the environment and processes of subjectification. That is, that between our technicities, habitats, and habits. Both primary and secondary literature on concepts of *Deleuze & Guattari, Simondon, Bergson, Stiegler, Derrida* etc. will be used. Given the transdisciplinary, theoretical approach, literature study is crucial and compatible with this research.

Simultaneously, on a practical note, I will do **observations** as a methodology. I will dissect the San Nicolas assemblage into singularities-events, agential actors, and their affects. For the observations I have selected the following elements to further analyze alongside spatial ones, namely: *people, cultural expressions, urbanity, flows, power, and decay*. I have also selected some senses that I find resonate with my experiences of San Nicolas: *oppression, repression, exclusion, estrangement, melancholy, nostalgia*. When investigating their relations, I will make couplings of senses and aim at understanding their genealogical developments. How are these senses conditioned by the (spatial) elements? How these affect the other elements? How they are experienced? And hope to understand the spectrality of such senses. Throughout this process, I can progressively determine architectural problems. Though sensing needs to be actively done in the real world, I have started sensing by observing my lived experiences of San Nicolas, through my **memory**. During the second quarter I will go to Aruba for fieldwork. Then I will be able to **actively observe** and **sense** on site. I will wander around the city and notice how I affect and am affected. The following media will be used as modes of recording:
log/photography/sketches/soundscaping/film.

Besides my own observations, I would like to observe habits of others encountering San Nicolas to further gain different perspectives. I will conduct a brief **architectural ethnography** as a complimentary methodology. By observing residents, locals, tourists, I would like to study how they perform in space? How do they appropriate places? Where and how do they gather? How do different collectives interact, if they do?

By means of a small complementary **workshop** with **three to five residents: a heterogenous group of marginalized persons**. I wish to engage collectively with their memories and imaginaries of the city, moving away from dominant narratives. What are folklores, myths, ghost stories, rituals etc. that they share? How are they expressed? What has been forgotten and why and how do they still haunt them? What are events of the past that have collective meaning, how are these remembered or why are these forgotten? How do these affect them? In addition, I wish to **interview** the same three to five residents individually. In this case, I wish to have an informal walking interview through their neighborhoods. To walk along places that are meaningful to them, or maybe those more conflicting. I wish to understand how do they produce such meanings? How do they experience time and space there? And to reflect on how they are affected.

(Oral) cultural expressions: Folklore, Myths, Legends, Rituals, Beliefs

With the intention of making the fucu (or specter) an operative technicity, I will explore marginalized perspectives by means of local and regional cultural expressions. In this way I hope to understand how they haunt. How are desires (social values, perception, memories etc.) expressed and find meaningful connections to current conditions in the San Nicolas assemblage? What do they say about the place and their people and how do they (trans)individuate? How do they relate to the power dynamics of the neighborhood, city, country, even region? How do they affect the daily lives of San-Nicolas-becomings? Furthermore, these will help inspire and contribute to the mythmaking process of this research. For now, the selection of colonial cultural expressions are: *myth of Anansi, legend of Seroe Preto, legend of the Soucouyant, legend of the Flying Dutchman, ghost stories of the French Men's Pass*. However, I will remain open to collect more stories through possible literature in archives as well as oral stories acquired through the workshop and interviews when I am on Aruba.

Archival Images I will also collect images from the *National Archive of Aruba*. In this way, I hope to encounter haunting informations, memories and stories of a San Nicolas that once once was.

Speculative thinking as an overall method for this research, where speculative thinking will be used as an experimentation of rethinking, refashioning conditions and extrapolating potential solutions (for the **speculative design** process).

Potential Outcome Research

Upon completing this research, I wish to express the findings in the form of a *visual essay* that problematizes and dramatizes the fucus (specters) of San Nicolas through *mythmaking*.

Potential Outcome Design

I would like to introduce a possible emerging cultural technicity—a place of experimentation: a place to dare (almost) dying, to dare becoming fucus. Engaging, running with them. *A place of intuitions, remembrance, imagination.*

I can imagine a *dynamic* and *poetic landscape* carefully situated in San Nicolas. To produce a posthuman archive that shapes the actual and virtual. To play with the *spectral melancholy*—the fucus or in-betweenness—through a set of *enabling constraints, boundaries and thresholds*. The following continuums could shape possible space-time qualities:

liberate—confine, collective—private, include—exclude, connect—disconnect, gather— isolate, determinate—indeterminate, porous—solid, loud—silent, hot—cool, light—shadow, rough—smooth etc.

The intention would then be to allow actors to unfold into the environment. To engage with different intensities, testing their limits. To becoming aware of how they affect and are affected by them. Always in motion, always transforming. Losing themselves in the virtual. Between being aware and unaware of their duration in space. With breaks of rest and contemplation, with the hope of liberating the following emerging desire.

Relation Research & Design

Throughout this project the researcher and designer take a decolonial position and inform each other on their findings. To provide new perspectives on the reciprocal relationship between architecture, the environment and processes of subjectification. To inform on the problem on the complex assemblage of San Nicolas. To propose a potential concept, program, strategies for the design. And to inform how to continue sensing and problematizing during the speculative design process.

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