A collective atlas of un**translatable** spaces

Mapping as a communal act

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"Culture is usually understood to be what defines place and its meaning to people. But place equally defines culture. (...) A 'sense of place' is the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere, one antidote to a prevailing alienation."

Lippard, L. R. (1998). *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society.* https://doi.org/10.1604/9781565842489

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Abstract

Nowadays, globalization is stressing local cultures and ways of living - what risks to be lost are the multiple forms of use of spaces and the meaning connected to their presence. There is an overall sensitivity over the conservation of buildings but less over little daily rituals and instinctual gestures connected with the real meaning of space: an immaterial heritage on the threshold of architecture and anthropology that both disciplines seem to have discarded. Forgotten by conventional conservation methods, I aim to portray this patrimony through collective mapping. Based on an analysis of historical examples of collaborative cartography, I intend to develop an analytical framework allowing anybody to contribute to this collection of images and stories of different societies of the world by submitting a space involving a name, a gesture, and a meaning related to a specific culture. The research results in an open-source, collective atlas - a new archive created by collecting contributions based on a questionnaire explaining features of untranslatable spaces necessary to identify them.

fot. Maria Napieralska

Introduction
All Over the Place

"Most educated people say where is it written? Our people say where is it lived?"
Steve Gonzalez

Figure 1. *Mattolaituri - public carpet washing pier.* From '24 Pesula', 2021 (https://24pesula.fi/mattojen-pesu-opas/#pll_switcher).

Lure of the Local

You might not comprehend a thing when first exploring Lisbon. The language, local habits, and spatial solutions become evident only after a year or two. Given how much Portuguese people love to converse, you can now understand why your home has built-in benches by the windows. You become aware of the subtle differences between their culture and yours, of things you cannot imagine happening in your hometown. There is a sudden realization of inseparably intertwined social and spatial 'untranslatables.' Because how am I going to explain to my Polish grandmother, who would never leave her laundry unattended in a public place for fear that someone might steal it, the existence of '*Mattolaituri*' (*fig.1*)?

In architectural discourse, the issue of translatability is not raised very often: a thorough search of Google Ngram showed that it had not been raised at all. It is an odd phenomenon, looking at how we fall for (or into) places more frequently than we do for people. Most of us move around a lot, often coming into contact with those who have yet to travel much or come from different places. Each time we go somewhere new, we add to the ingredients of existing hybridity, which is what all 'local' places are made of. By stepping into that hybrid, we transform it, and depending on the circumstance, we may have a different role to play, positioning lived experience at the center of the locality.

Globalization puts a certain amount of pressure on each of us. However, its physical impact can be observed most vividly in how it stresses local cultures, languages, and ways of living - what risks to be lost are the multiple forms of use of places and the distinctive meaning connected to their presence. There is widespread concern for building preservation, but less so for small daily customs, instinctual gestures connected with the true identity of a place, often recognizable by a group of people under the same name: an immaterial heritage on the cusp of architecture, linguistics, and anthropology that all those disciplines seem to have neglected.

Few of us in our profit-driven society know our place, somewhere we truly belong. Moreover, even if we can locate ourselves, we may have yet to consider how we relate to our current surroundings genuinely. In '*The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society*' (1998)[1], Lippard draws attention to the growing homogeneity of places, an inevitable outcome of the brisk expansion of capitalism. She defines places as "the intersections of nature, culture, history, and ideology," things that should be understood and preserved.Our sense of place is "the geographical component of the psychological need to belong somewhere, one antidote to a prevailing alienation." (Lippard, 1998)

1
Lippard, L. R. (1998). *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society.* https://doi.org/10.1604/9781565842489

Map and Territory

The practice of cartography has always been inextricably linked to any discipline that can be associated with place. Our understanding of the modern world is built on the relationship between a map and its territory. Lines drawn on a canvas have been used to establish nations, borders, and territories. The map functions as an analogous tool: what one finds at one point on the map is what one might anticipate finding at the corresponding real-world location, and vice versa. However, what a map does not show raises questions. The uncharted represents the unknown, but the unknown fuels our desire for discovery and comprehension.

2
Wood, D. (1992). *The Power of Maps.* Guilford Press.

Denis Wood, in '*The Power of Maps*' (1992)[2], argues that "No map can show everything" (…). "Could it, it would no more than reproduce the world, which, without the map, we already have. Only its selection from the world's overwhelming richness justifies the map." (Wood, 1992) Therefore, maps can be defined as portrayals of the world in the manner in which those preparing them would like the world to be understood. As Matthew H. Edney points out in his critical take on '*Cartography. The Ideal and Its History*' (2019)[3], "Each set of imagery entails a particular conception of the world, which it depicts with different strategies and techniques, to support specific functions; each set is produced and consumed within certain social institutions and contexts." (Edney, 2019)

3
Edney, M. H. (2019). *Cartography. The Ideal and Its History.* The University of Chicago Press.

In this manner, we begin to recognize the importance of mapping in the present-day setting. Homogeneity in cartography has evolved into the accepted norm in the capitalist age, where time is money. While quick, effective, and seamlessly integrated into the workflow of architecture and other spatial disciplines, uniformed surveying methods still need to be developed. In '*Everything Sings: Maps for a narrative Atlas*' (2010)[4], Dennis Wood imagines "an atlas with a structure ordered to tell a story greater than those told by each individual map" (Wood, 2010), giving his students specific instructions to pay attention to typically disregarded features of the landscape.

4
Wood, D., Glass, I. (2010). *Everything Sings: Maps for a narrative atlas.* Siglio.

The proposed thesis follows the conviction that, in an architectural context, the notion of 'untranslatability' acquires a special significance. By uniting a large-scale study of published books and traditional scholarly evaluation of extensive source material with an array of contributions collected through crowdsourcing, the presented research aims at establishing a link between the notion of 'untranslatability' and architecture. In an attempt at connecting places to the unique words that frequently hold their meaning, it points towards a variety of architectural expressions able to enrich collective thinking on a global scale.

Forgotten by conventional conservation methods, the mentioned patrimony is portrayed through communal mapping. Based on analysis of examples of collaborative cartography, a framework is developed, allowing anybody to collect, comment and contribute to a platform filled with images and stories of different societies of the world by submitting a space involving a name, a gesture, and a meaning related to a specific culture. The research results in an open-source, collective atlas - a new archive created by collecting contributions based on a questionnaire explaining features of 'un-translatable' spaces necessary to identify them.

Chapter 1
Found in Translation

"Translation passes through continua of transformation, not abstract ideas of identity and similarity."
Walter Benjamin

Figure 2. *Lost in Translation: The Tower of Babel.* From 'Wikipedia', by Pieter Bruegel the Elder, 1563. (https://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/f/fc/Pieter_Bruegel_the_Elder_-_The_Tower_of_Babel_%28Vienna%29_-_Google_Art_Project_-_edited.jpg)

Language, Thought and Reality[5]

Language can feel comfortable and familiar. The 'taste' of our native tongue instantly ties us to our origins, much like a beloved childhood cuisine. We live in a globalized world where many individuals speak multiple languages, and nationality-related concerns further ensure that the idea of the 'mother tongue' is political.[6] In her polemical plea for a new use of language in public discourse '*Sprache und Sein*' (Language and Being, 2020)[7], Kübra Gümüşay states: "I feel in four languages. (...) To me, Turkish is the language of love and melancholy. Arabic a mystical, spiritual melody. German the language of intellect and yearning. And English the language of freedom." (Gümüşay, 2020).

It does not surprise that the languages we speak shape how we express ourselves, as they determine what we can think about. '*Language, Thought and Reality*' (1964)[8] by Benjamin Lee Whorf tells "that the structure of the language one habitually uses influences how one understands his environment. The picture of the universe shifts from tongue to tongue." (Whorf, 1964). Daily experiences of skilled translators seem to support his line of thinking; for instance, Edmund S. Glenn worked his way through several U.N. transcripts in order to find differences in concepts due to language, having found cases in which an English speaker said '*I assume*,' the French interpreter rendered it '*I deduce*' and the Russian interpreter '*I consider*.'[9]

Suppose there already appears to be some level of ambiguity in understanding one another within the confines of Western culture, bringing us back to the myth of Babel (*fig.2*). In that case, it is not surprising that a much wider gap can arise between languages from entirely different parts of the world - for example, between the language of the Hopi Indians and English. This is the field intensively researched by Whorf, and on which he primarily based his concept of linguistic relativity, which holds that a language's structure affects its speakers' cognitive processes and that, as a result, people's perceptions are relative to the language they speak.

Based on Whorf's hypothesis, it would appear that mastering other languages could significantly enhance our creativity. Through expanding our vocabulary, we learn about cultural customs that, for the most part, we had no prior knowledge of. English has been 'adopted' as the universal language by a sizable portion of humanity. '*Kindergarten*,' '*Wanderlust*,' and '*Zeitgeist*' are just a few examples of more than eighty German terms incorporated into the English vocabulary without a translation. This results in new forms of understanding and occasionally crude simplifications of multiple forms of expression. Our language evolves every day.

5
Whorf, B. L. (1964). Language, Thought and Reality. *Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf.* The MIT Press.
The title of the chapter corresponds to the title of the book, which investigates how the languages we speak influence the ways in which we think.

6
Abukar, F., et al. (2021). *Untranslatable Terms of Cultural Practices. A Shared Vocabulary.* Archive Books.

7
Gümüşay, K. (2020). *Sprache und Sein.* Hanser Berlin.

8
Whorf, B. L. (1964). Language, Thought and Reality. *Selected Writings of Benjamin Lee Whorf.* The MIT Press.

9
White, P. T. (1955). The Interpreter: Linguist plus Diplomat. *New York Times Magazine.*

Words in Design

Since the dawn of the modern era, architectural design has been viewed as a discipline of the eye and the visual arts, giving rise to a deeply rooted distrust of words. In Henri Matisse's (*fig.*3) advice to aspiring artists mentioned by Jack Flam in his biography '*Matisse on Art*' (1995)[10] that addresses the development of Matisse's aesthetic values and theories, the traditional suspicion of language among visual artists is shockingly expressed: "You want to paint? First of all, you must cut off your tongue because your decision takes away from you the right to express yourself with anything but your brush." (Flam, 1995). Writing on architecture has also frequently been met with doubt, sparking a negative attitude towards words and writing among design professionals.

In his foreword to '*Urban Literacy: Reading and Writing Architecture*' (2014),[11] Juhani Pallasmaa notes that verbal expression in architectural practice has mainly been restricted to descriptions of the functional and technical aspects of projects and clarifying intellectual and conscious design intentions. As a result, language and writing have played a minor supporting role in architectural practice relative to the assumed visual essence of the art form. The architectural discipline can be complex, combining opposed points of departure and frequently competing interests. Given how much the structure of the languages we speak affects how we think about the world, it stands to reason that we occasionally turn to verbal skills to solve specific issues.

Architecture as a Language System

Despite the clear distance with which architects approach the topic of language, architecture can be viewed as a language system. This perspective was developed in 1954 by Liang Sicheng, the leading expert of his time in Chinese architecture. His theory of 'architectural translatability' contends that buildings can be converted from one architectural system to another by understanding a general linguistic principle that unifies all architectures. Accordingly, modernizing Chinese architectural tradition meant translating its vocabulary and grammar using contemporary technology and materials while retaining its fundamental formal elements.[12]

Liang considered translation, both linguistically and visually, one of the most crucial ways to preserve architectural heritage. Throughout Liang's career from the 1930s to the 60s, he constructed the terms of translation based on the linguistic equivalence between old and new, East and West. However, the very basis of equivalence was never carefully examined. Translation, according to linguists, must inevitably alter and distort the original to be thought

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Flam, J. D. (1995). *Matisse on Art.* University of California Press.

11
Havik, K. (2014). *Urban Literacy: Reading and Writing Architecture.* nai010.

12
Wang, Ch. (2014). Translating Shanghai: The Untranslatable in the translation of a city. *Translation Spaces*, 3(1), 25–50. https://doi.org/10.1075/ts.3.02wan

Figure 3. *Henri Matisse drawing with bamboo pole tipped with charcoal in his studio.* From 'The Robert Capa and Cornell Capa Archive', Gift of Cornell and Edith Capa, 1992.

13
Liu, L. H. (1995). *Translingual Practice: Literature, National Culture, and Translated Modernity - China, 1900-1937.* Stanford University Press.

of as anything other than a transparent transfer of meaning between languages.[13] In Liang's case, it was through translation that the meaning of traditional Chinese architecture was reconsidered and reinvented in the new context of modern China (*fig.4*).

Similarly to Liang's writing, this work portrays translation as a tool to protect the architectural heritage that traditional conservation techniques have neglected. Translation enables the comprehension and preservation of various site-specific spatial solutions whose names are so distinctive in their language that they cannot be directly rendered into other dialects. In this sense, this essay is ultimately a critical approach to the architect's distrust of words. It understands language as integral to our understanding of contexts in which we operate and existing local architectures, considering words as a critical part of the spatial design processes.

The formulated arguments set the stage for language to counter the increasing genericness and homogeneity of places worldwide, by extension, fighting against the trends of the dominant capitalist culture. The awareness and a certain degree of understanding of local cultures and their languages can expand our thinking about the world and our spatial imagination as we design. Such knowledge can be viewed as a contextually applicable skill that is both scientific and sensual, capable of revealing idiosyncratic spatial truths and peeling the many layers of our perceivable reality.

Figure 4. *Ink rendering of the timber pagoda in Shijiata.* From Society for Research of Chinese Architecture, 1934.

山西應縣佛宮寺釋迦木塔

Chapter 2
Untranslatable Spaces

"Nothing is exactly the same in one language as in another, so the failure of translation is always necessary and absolute."
Barbara Cassin

Figure 5. *Kuuk Thaayorre.* From 'Voices', by Lera Boroditsky, 2021. (https://voices4youthblog.files.wordpress.com/2021/07/bedc4ddc-a213-42a5-999a-3d2b63c6b001_1499411038.jpeg)

The Limits of Translatability

The limits of translatability are a frequent linguistic conundrum; notably, Catford, in his work 'A *Linguistic Theory of Translation*' (1965)[14] states that translatability seems "to be a cline rather than a clear-cut dichotomy" (Catford, 1965). As a result of Homi Bhabha's introduction of 'cultural translation' in his '*Location of Culture*' (1994)[15], translation no longer seems to imply the eradication of preexisting cultural differences. Because these polarities follow translation rather than precede it, cultures are seen as hybrids instead of pure, independent entities. Without retaining its internal differences, a culture cannot assimilate into another culture as much as it cannot liberate itself from another culture without taking on its imprint.[16]

When translating between languages, more than just words must be found a counterpart. Instead, you require an equivalent for broad, complicated, and multidimensional circumstances. When biologist Robin Wall Kimmerer first read the word '*Puhpowee*' - "the force which causes mushrooms to push up from the earth overnight" (Kimmerer, 2015) - a word from the language of her indigenous North American ancestors, she was astounded that such an expression even existed.[17] She sensed the void that the lack of this word in other languages had caused in her as a professional and in science as a whole. Why does the word '*Puhpowee*' create such dissonance? How does it change the way you perceive the world?

It would be more appropriate to ask: From whose perspective does it make you view the world? You suddenly take in your surroundings from the viewpoint of the ground, looking up into the sky and past the human beings who perpetually think they are at the very center of things. It is easy to imagine how our relationship with nature would change if we lived in a language circle that revealed the world to us from the Earth's perspective. A language like that of the Citizen Potawatomi, where plants are referred to respectfully rather than derogatorily as 'it' because they are understood to be living beings with their own viewpoint on the world.

Regarding the perception of space and time, the language of the Thaayorre (*fig.5*) in northern Australia is particularly fascinating. The Thaayorre utilize cardinal points instead of words representing the left and right, expressing themselves in ways such as: 'There is an ant on your northwest arm.' It is customary for tribe members to ask each other where they are heading when they greet one another. This encourages the speakers to specify the cardinal directions during the small talk because it is a basic and obvious aspect of their perception and language. As an English speaker, how do you feel the passage of time?

14
Catford, J. C. (1965). *A Linguistic Theory of Translation*. Oxford University Press.

15
Bhabha, H. K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge.

16
Biti, V. (2021). Translating the Untranslatable: Walter Benjamin and Homi Bhabha. *Post-imperial Literature: Translatio Imperii in Kafka and Coetzee*, 43-58. De Gruyter. *https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110732245-003*

17
Kimmerer, R. W. (2015). *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teachings of Plants*. Milkweed Editions.

If you had to position photographs of a person in chronological order from birth to old age, you would start with childhood pictures on the left and move them rightward by age. All Latin languages are written and read from left to right, and time is interpreted similarly. How would the Thaayorre, however, arrange the images? Depending on how the subject is seated at the time, the answer could vary from right to left, from front to back, or from back to front. For Thaayorre, time flows from east to west. Ultimately, everything evolves around us; the 'I' and its individual perception.[18]

Untranslatable Terms

The act of translation often assumes a certain equivalence between subjects in question, behind which stand political, cultural, and social as well as architectural 'untranslatables' that emerge at the moment of translation. The challenge of 'translating the untranslatable' constantly confronts many practitioners and researchers, particularly editors. This immediately implies diving into the Benjaminian problem of translatability in general, qualified by Samuel Weber (2010) in terms of Walter Benjamin's activation of translation's '-abilities' (the '*barkeit*' as a part of *Übersetzbarkeit*), requiring the conversion of translation failure into something of value and interest.[19]

The notion of 'untranslatability' was first introduced by Walter Benjamin in his essay '*The Task of The Translator*' (1996)[20] with following words: "The imperfection of languages consists in their plurality; the supreme language is lacking. Translations, in contrast, prove to be untranslatable not because of any inherent difficulty but because of the looseness with which meaning attaches to them." (Benjamin, 1996). This said, it is by no means self-evident what 'untranslatability' means. This is how Jacques Derrida's '*Monolingualism of the Other*' (1998)[21] approaches the term: "In a sense, nothing is untranslatable; but in another sense, everything is untranslatable; translation is another name for the impossible." (Derrida, 1998).

This essay becomes increasingly drawn to the paradoxical premise of the 'untranslatable' as the interminably (not) translated, seeking out several spatial terms that resist simple - or any - translation across different cultural and linguistic contexts. One of the dangers of using the word 'untranslatable' carelessly is the implication that absolute equality is always absent. Nothing is the same in one language as in another, so the failure of translation is necessary. This proposition rests on a vision of perfection that we cannot even hope to have, aside from disregarding that some reasonably good equivalencies are available.

18
Abukar, F., et al. (2021). *Untranslatable Terms of Cultural Practices. A Shared Vocabulary.* Archive Books.

19
Weber, S. (2010). *Benjamin's -abilities.* Harvard University Press.

20
Benjamin, W. (1996). The Task of the Translator. *Selected Writings*, 1, 253-263. Harvard University Press.

21
Derrida, J. (1998). *Monolingualism of the Other: or, The Prosthesis of Origin (Cultural Memory in the Present).* Stanford University Press.

If there were a perfect equivalence from language to language, the result would not be translation but a replica. Furthermore, if such replicas were possible regularly, there would not be any languages, just one vast, blurred international jargon, a late cancellation of the story of Babel. When faced with material that they do not want to translate or see translated, the translators experience a private agony that the 'untranslatable' as a construct makes space for. The poverty resulting from such translation attempts might be distressing, but we can, in any case, be helped to see what we are missing.[22]

Shared Vocabulary

By definition, cosmopolitanism is "the idea of a common world, a common humanity, a history and a future that is open to us only if we share it," as written by Achille Mbembe in his stirring essay '*Ausgang aus der langen Nacht*' (*Out of the Dark Night*, 2016).[23] It is an invitation to take responsibility, transforming this "common past into a shared past" (Mbembe, 2016), which Mbembe exhorts us to do. The nation-state mentality, the exploitation of natural resources and human beings by a select few are left in the past, replaced by more equitable distribution and mutual respect. Language, one of our most essential tools for cognition and action, may profoundly convey this regard for one another.

A critical gaze supports the idea of a common vocabulary. It is vital to grasp particular terms' contexts of origin and comprehend distinctions to avoid slipping into universalism. Coexistence takes the place of duality. The goal is not to develop a universal spatial language or a new architectural Esperanto but rather to provide a broad and sensitive vision of language and the world, for relationships to each other can only arise through differences, however small.[24] As an interconnected planetary community, acquainting ourselves with concepts familiar to other cultures is essential. In her contribution to the '*Shared Vocabulary*' (2020)[25], Simar Pret Kaur writes:

"Given the awkward consequences of individualism in our hands, a vocabulary for a transformative future would have to lean toward practices that address the species as a whole. Words of inclusion that acknowledge our interconnectedness." All individuals and architects, in particular, can significantly benefit from discovering unique ideas that emerged due to specific geographical, social, and economic conditions and learning how to translate them into the contexts in which they operate. Being in the same setting each day makes it nearly impossible to find inspiration: a problem designers face daily with the reality of working behind a desk.[26]

22
Cassin, B., Apter, E., Lezra, J., Wood, M. (2014). *Dictionary of Untranslatables: A Philosophical Lexicon.* Princeton University Press.

23
Mbembe, A. (2016). *Ausgang aus der langen Nacht: Versuch über ein entkolonisiertes Afrika.* Suhrkamp Verlag.

24
Amanshauser, H., et al. (2020). *Navigating the Planetary: A guide to the planetary art world - it's past, present and potentials.* Verlag für moderne Kunst.

25
Abukar, F., et al. (2021). *Untranslatable Terms of Cultural Practices. A Shared Vocabulary.* Archive Books.

26
Liro, M., Muryń, R., Nibbering, S. (2023). Escaping Efficiency. *Bnieuws,* 56(3), 10-15. https://www.bnieuws.nl/read/escaping-efficiency-script

During our travels, we frequently encounter places with names so distinctive in their language that they cannot be directly translated into other dialects but are common in all cultures. They can be objects or buildings that hold a shared meaning within a specific context or region of the world. More often than not, their uses and features are evident to locals. They come in a variety of forms, so if you are a newcomer, you probably will not be aware of them until you start to notice a particular pattern - 'untranslatable' spaces can be found in several versions which share similar characteristics and are recognizable by a group of people under the same name.

For example, late-night shops or cheap local bars are typical across most cultural circles. In Berlin, a supermarket, meetup spot, internet café, bakery, drugstore, lottery office, post office, and bar all in one is known as '*Späti*' (*fig.*6). In contrast, a similar concept of a small convenience store open 24/7 that sells staples like chips, candy, coffee, sodas, lottery tickets, and over-the-counter remedies, was developed in New York under the name '*Bodega*.' Numerous variations and distinctive qualities can be used to distinguish one low-class bar from another in different cultures - '*Taguara*' in Venezuela, '*Birt*' in Romania, '*Keet*' in the Netherlands, or '*Guachinche*' in Tenerife.

This essay proposes a new vocabulary of places yet to be translated from their language. These words represent idiosyncratic spatial solutions and cultural practices, attitudes, and value systems. Terms are presented that broaden perspectives, facilitate new directions, and thus enrich collective thinking. Drawn from more than a dozen cultures, places such as '*Conversadeiras*' (Portugal - benches built in next to a window in order to converse), '*Tabià*' (Italy - a mountain hut typology), '*Minga*' (Chile - a moving house tradition shown in *fig.*7), and '*Mattolaituri*' (Finland - a communal carpet pier) are listed in all their spatial, cross-linguistic and cross-cultural complexities.

The terms collected in the atlas (see *Appendix* 2 for the atlas of untranslatable spaces and *Appendix* 1 for the questionnaire used to collect contributions) are united by their transformative potential. They are significant and pertinent for thinking out new strategies for getting around, experiencing the sites, and coexisting peacefully with one another as we do. This thesis supports the idea that a 'Shared Vocabulary' might help us navigate together by exchanging attitudes, value systems, impressions, and observations from the various contributors, creating a sense of community and solidarity that integrates nonverbal cohabitation within our thoughts, emotions, and actions.

**Figure 6.** *Späti in Prenzlauer Berg.* From 'Berliner Zeitung', by Ian Lovett, 2021. (https://www.berliner-zeitung.de/en/dont-worry-go-to-the-spaeti-li.180557)

Figure 7. *The tradtion of Mingas.* From 'Voyage Addicted', by Jose Ferri, 2014. (https://voyageaddicted.files.wordpress.com/2014/01/minga_tira-das-de-casas-2.jpg?w=2500&h=)

Chapter 3
Other Worlds, Other Maps

"Cartography is Dead (Thank God!)"
Matthew H. Edney
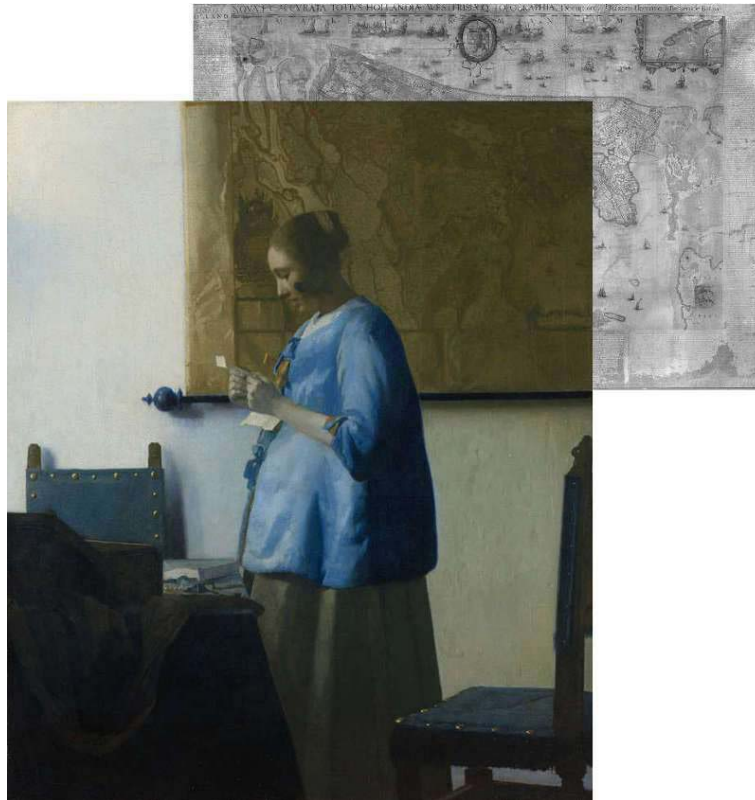
Figure 8. *Vermeer's 'Woman in Blue Reading a Letter' with part of Blaeu's map of Holland and West Friesland that does not appear in the composition.* From 'Essential Vermeer', by Jonathan Janson, 2001-2022. (http://www.essential-vermeer.com/maps/vermeers-maps/bluye-and-map.jpg)

The Art of Mapmaking

There are many ways to characterize cartography. Like all real maps, it is human-made and produced by cultural and social forces. The development of mapping techniques can be roughly split into four eras: the ideal of cartography was partially foreshadowed in the eighteenth century, emerged in the nineteenth, and reigned supreme for most of the twentieth century; it now appears to be degrading. Even though this periodization is erratic and unreliable, it is nevertheless possible to spot distinct patterns in the rhetoric and practice.[27]

Mapmaking and visual arts were always closely related disciplines: many cartographic elements, such as images, color, and lettering, were shared with art; tools and methods used to produce maps and artistic works were very similar in printmaking and in mapmaking: copperplate engravings required specific artistic skills, therefore maps and artworks were often performed by the same artists, engravers and publishers who worked for both areas; artists, engravers and mapmakers belonged to the same group of society that determined the development of culture in many areas.[28]

Maps were created not only for functional objectives but also for prestige and, less formally, for house adornment (*fig.8*). Wall maps were a simple but effective method to decorate plain whitewashed walls in Vermeer's time. They certainly struck a chord with people from all walks of life in the Netherlands, whose enthusiasm had allowed their tiny nation to dominate a significant portion of global trade. Being a noted art dealer, Vermeer likely purchased as well as sold maps, which during the seventeenth century were regarded as independent pieces of art.[29]

Cartography by non-cartographers

Modernism's emergence at the turn of the 20th century caused a paradigm shift in thinking strategies throughout most disciplines. Being primarily a reaction to traditionalist ideologies, it had a predisposition for resistance. In architecture, it manifested as rejecting traditional form and substance and a retreat to the bare and the essential. Dada, Surrealism, Gerrit Rietveld, Kurt Weill, and Bertolt Brecht debuted in the visual arts during this period. Nevertheless, the field of cartography as a vocation remained substantially unaltered.

Most of the time, it could not capture the profound cultural shifts at the turn of the 20th century. Strangely, as conceptual art gained popularity and new forms and media, including discovered objects and documents like maps, entered the art world, the presence

27
Edney, M. H. (2019). *Cartography. The Ideal and Its History.* The University of Chicago Press.

28
Welu, J. A. (1987). The Sources and Development of Cartographic Ornamentation in the Netherlands. *Art and Cartography: Six Historical Essays*, 147–173.

29
Smith, J. (1701). Of the Practice of Colouring Maps. *The Art of Painting.*

of cartography increased substantially. During this period, cartography began becoming more conscious of its capacity to inspire novel ways of thinking and feeling about space via the lens of the discipline of art. In the early 1960s, Stanley Brouwn asked strangers for directions as part of his project '*This Way Brouwn*,' and then displayed all the maps they had created for him (*fig.9*). In 'A *Line Made by Walking*,' Richard Long used repetitive walking to carve a line into a landscape (*fig.10*).

Mapping the Unmappable

Like any other scientific tool, the map enables us to process somewhat limited environmental parameters. Like the thermometer or the clock, the map is only truly effective when it is brief and straightforward. Regarding specificity in maps, the word 'atlas' becomes particularly pertinent. In his book '*Atlas sive cosmographicae meditationes de fabrica mundi et fabricati figura*' (Atlas, or Cosmographic Meditations on the Fabric of the World and the Figure of the Fabrick'd, 1595)[30], Gerardus Mercator is credited with coining the phrase. According to him, maps should not be considered separate items any longer. Instead, they should be viewed as distinct instruments that each capture a different part of the world, and they can only fully depict reality when assembled into an 'atlas.'

The purpose of Dennis Wood is akin to that of Mercator, who sought to depict the world accurately; the primary distinction between the two is that Wood focuses on a particular area near Raleigh, North Carolina, dubbed 'Boylan Heights,' rather than the entire world. What results is a collection of maps that each depict the same region and act as "fragments of a much longer poem out of which a passable semblance of the whole has been reconstructed." (Wood, 2010). The project includes various maps, from simple ones (such as a map illustrating the mailman's daily route) to more complex cartographies (such as a map visualizing how many times specific locations have been named in a newsletter - *fig.11*).[31]

Each map is created on different levels of abstraction and for different purposes. They all attune the eye to the invisible, the overlooked, and the seemingly insignificant. In his pursuit of 'poetics of cartography,' Wood prioritizes the experience of a place. He subverts the traditional notions of mapmaking to discover new ways of seeing both the analyzed neighborhood and the nature of place itself (*fig.12*): "Neighborhoods are experienced as a collection of patterns of light and sound and smells and taste and communication with others, and here, in this atlas, I have tried to catch those patterns in black and white and arrange them so that the larger pattern, the pattern of the neighborhood itself, can emerge by flipping through the pages." (Wood, 2010).

30
Mercator, G. (1595). *Atlas sive Cosmographicae meditationes de fabrica mvndi et fabricati figvra.* Dvisbvrgi Clivorvm.

31
Wood, D., Glass, I. (2010). *Everything Sings: Maps for a narrative atlas.* Siglio.
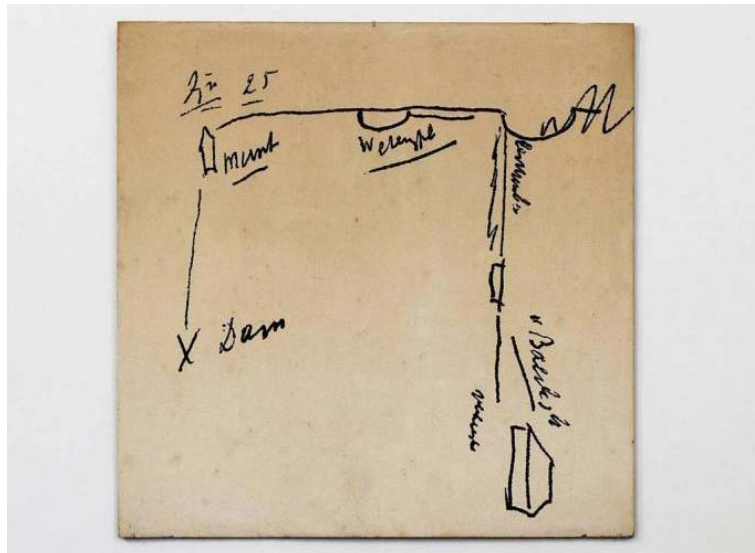
Figure 9. *This Way Brouwn.* From 'Kröller-Müller Museum', by Stanley Brouwn, 1968. (https://krollermuller.nl/stanley-brouwn-this-way-brouwn-3)

Figure 10. *A Line Made by Walking.* From 'Goodland', by Richard Long, 1967. (https://hellogoodland.com/blogs/news/walking-in-line)

Figure 11. *Newsletter Prominence.* From 'Everything Sings: Maps for a narrative atlas,' by Dennis Wood, 2010.
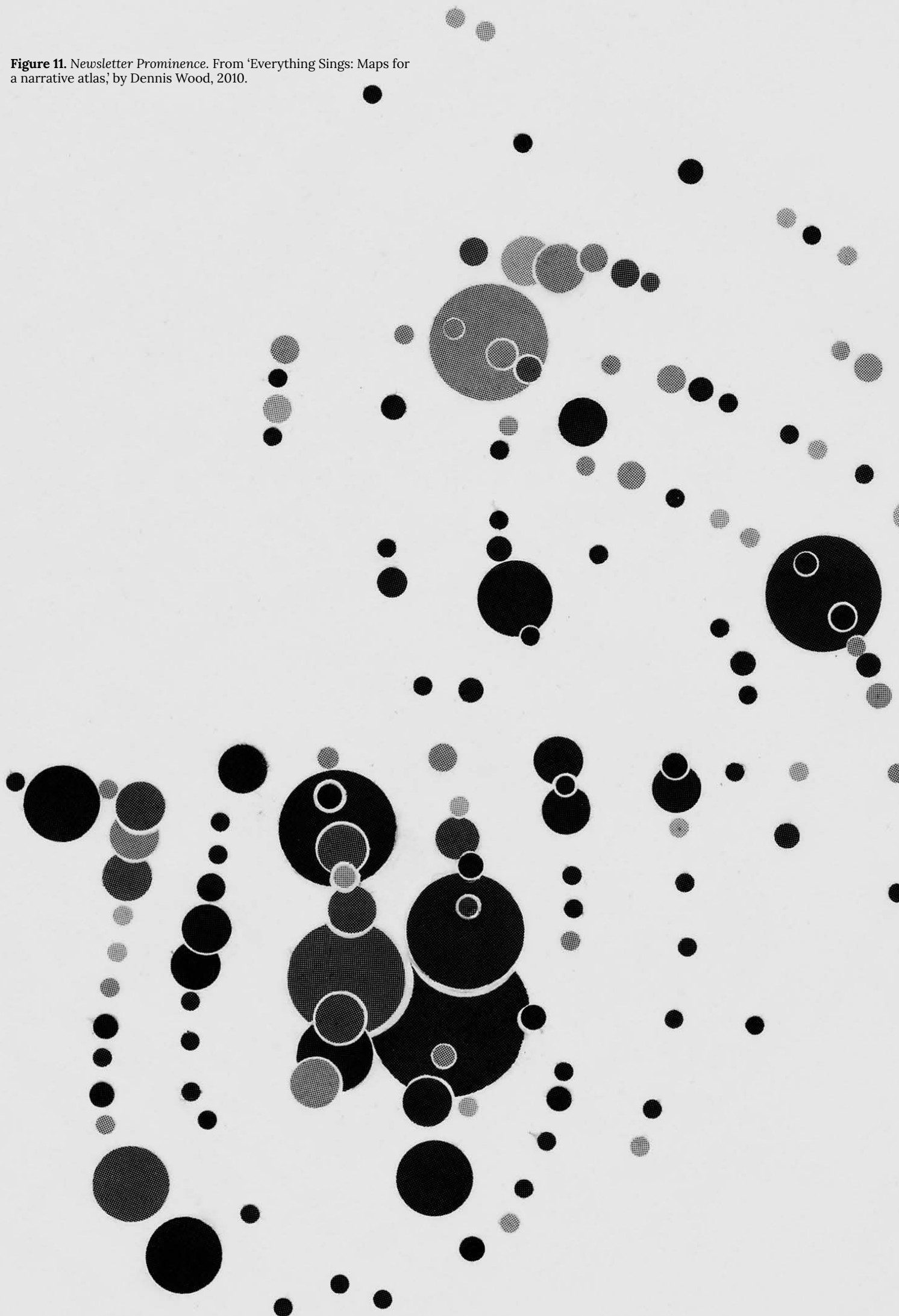
Figure 12. *Jack o' lanterns.* From 'Everything Sings: Maps for a narrative atlas,' by Dennis Wood, 2010.

Chapter 4
Collaborative 'Worldmaking'

"Maps are pictures.
Maps are self-portraits.
Maps are manifestations of perceptions.
Maps are portraits of the world in the manner in
which those preparing them would like the world to
be understood.
Maps are subjective.
Mapping is... an act of power."
Jai Sen

Figure 13. *A close-up to a fragment of Africa.* From 'Radio Aporee,' Author Unknown, 2019. (https://aporee.org/maps/)

Participatory Mapping Methodologies

According to Zeynep Devrim Gürsel, "worlds are made. Moreover, they are made through seemingly banal practices." The phrase 'worldmaking' implies that we may comprehend and create the realities in which we live through representation. In the article '*Worldmaking frame by frame*,' (2016)[32] written by Gürsel, she defines 'representation' as the visual representation of something through photography. Using techniques used in open-source photography workshops held in certain localities, where the creation of a 'world' focuses on the contribution of photographers' works shot in such places, Gürsel posits that "worldmaking incorporates both ideological and material structures." (Gürsel 2016).

In this way, the exercise in 'worldmaking' transforms into a mode of documenting where a group of contributors share a common medium of documentation, in this case, photography. This approach has a lot to teach the field of mapping. Based on the previous chapter and the understanding that the 'atlas' is a collection of various fragments of what we perceive to be 'reality,' mapping should aim for an open-source system where the contributors have an equal playing field and where they only contribute to a single small-scale fragment. The input of the participant is thus entirely qualitative and documentative.

An online map created as part of the Green Map System[33] environmental movement in 1999 was one of the pioneering attempts in digitally driven participatory mapping approaches. The project involved mapping the Loe Pool in Cornwall, Great Britain, and the cartography used a crowd-sourced system made up entirely of first-hand experiences of the area. The methodology of the map incorporated three distinct disciplines: first, psychophysical geography, which ensures that the map is emotive and personal; second, phenomenology, which favors sense-driven first-person documentation; and third, ethnography, which ensures a collaborative and open mapping system. They work together to form a methodical framework for gathering and sourcing open data.

Similarly, Radio Aporee[34] is a more recent, larger-scale implementation of such an open-source mapping technique. It is a cartography of recordings from around the globe made up of over 17,000 field recordings from various urban, rural, and natural environments, all of which were contributed by users. According to the project's creator Udo Noll, the collaborative method is essential to the map's scale because if the criteria are too strict, potential participants may be deterred from delivering their sounds. You may determine what other people have been interested in acoustically by moving closer to a location on the map (*fig.13*). Contributors can offer

32
Gürsel, Z. D. (2016). *Worldmaking frame by frame. In Image operations.* Manchester University Press.

33
Green Map. (1999). https://www.greenmap.org/

34
Radio Aporee. (n.d.). https://aporee.org/maps/

a fresh perspective, a specific detail, or a recording at a different time of day With this method, individuals who may not be acquainted but are interested in a location might form ad hoc sound study groups. In this regard, the collected data represents pure documentation rather than opinion-based research. It is easy to see how this structure may become a helpful resource if such a practice were sustained over a long period.

As further explained by Noll, when a landscape is co-created, "there are traces inscribed into it, traces of the presence of others, what they have heard. From talks with other contributors, I know that many others share the same experience, the field is an extended one. It's shaped by personal connotations, our experience, and hints we may receive from others. Sonic surveys in a landscape of consciousness. [...] These thousands of recordings are taken from real environments. It is real time spent out there listening: shared time, shared ears." (Noll, 2017).

In recent, much more turbulent times, more radical cartographies have also occurred. In their collection of essays, '*An Atlas of Radical Cartography*,' (2008)[35] multiple contributors review their experiments in making visible through mapping those who are traditionally made invisible by mapping. One of the essays explains mapping the unintended settlements that developed in Calcutta between 1978 and 1986. These maps aimed to document and celebrate the reality of the city's development, an aspect hidden in official and commercial maps.

35
Gordon, A., et al. (2008). *An Atlas of Radical Cartography.* Journal of Aesthetics and Protest Press.

In a conversation with Quentin Nicolai, included in one of the most recent issues of '*Accattone*' (2019)[36], he describes his work mapping the sacred courtyards in South Benin (*fig.14*). His process relied on the crucial work of American geographer Kenneth Olwig, who made him realize that the forces that defined the landscape as an artistic representation, which until recently dominated landscape theory, obscured and still obscure exchanges on the African coasts, and have also contributed to concealing or excluding the modes of organization of African countries and their landscapes.[37]

36
Nicolai, Q. (2019). Sacred Forests and Courtyards in South Benin. *Accattone*, 6, 60-81.

37
Olwig, K. (2002). *Landscape, Nature, and the Body Politic: From Britain's Renaissance to America's New World.* University of Wisconsin Press.

Through his attempt at mapping, Nicolai strived towards an objective outcome, engaging the local community in his work: "I realized that to be able to progress in my research, going directly to the site, without prior knowledge, was not the best option. So I moved into Constant Legonou's house in Abomey. I drew, then with the people who were receiving us, we would move from one plant to another, citing their names and main uses. I often first created the structure of the drawing in a A3-sized notebook, and then I would add a tracing sheet to draw plants, objects, tracks. It was the idea of being able to superimpose different versions." (Nicolai, 2019).
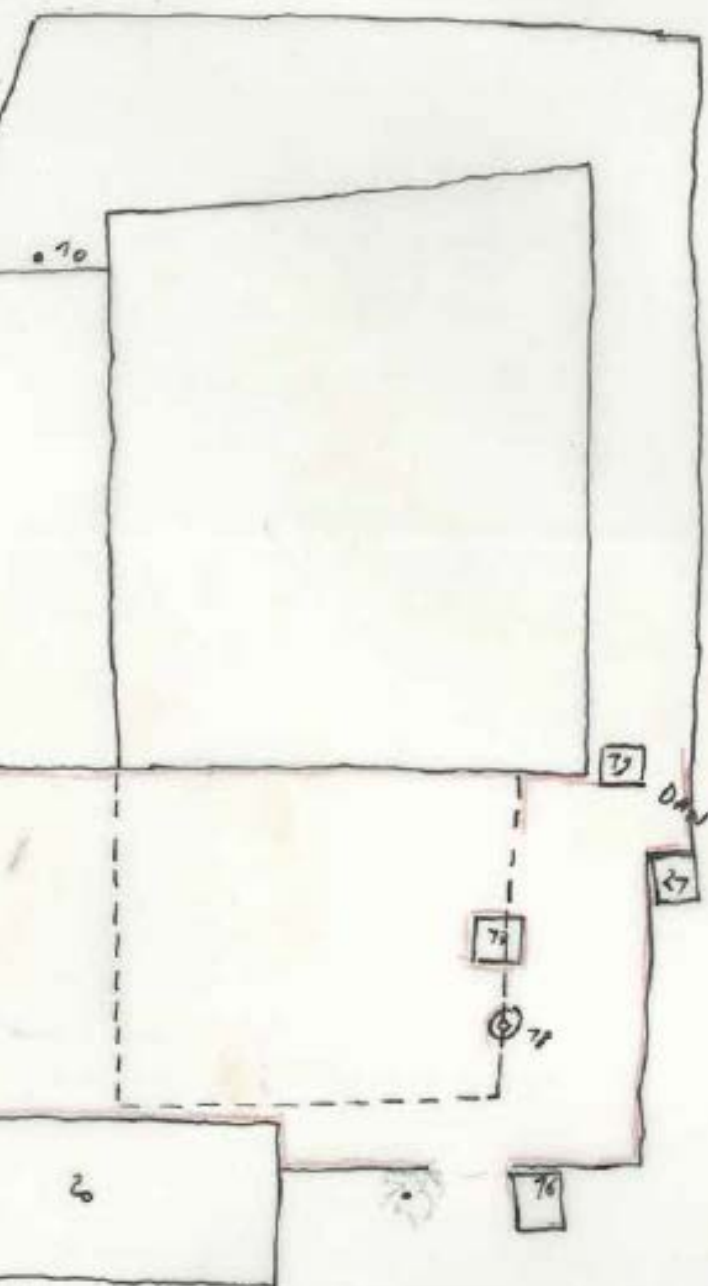
(leurs jaunes, fleurs d'épanouir importés)

DOBOLIBA

orange sec, mort

Godo

ZOMAN (zo = feu)

ASEN

Hoxo

15. MINONAN
16 LEGBA
17. LISSA
18 GOU
19 DAN
20 SAKPATA

27 DAN

Figure 14. *Courtyard of Aristide Legonou's house (Constant's father). From 'Accattone' (6th ed., p.69), by Quentin Nicolai, 2015-2016.*

Conclusion

Throughout the writing of the essay, the process of defining a transparent approach to 'untranslatability' in a spatial sense was one of constant conversation between the practice of architecture, linguistics, and the geographical space that ultimately defines both: the map and its territory. Subconsciously, the writing process was formulated by a constant reiteration between the three states. Despite the scope of the essay ultimately being an introduction to the notion of untranslatability within the architectural discourse, it was only possible to formulate an argument by referring to the sphere of language and cartography. The reductionist approach of fragmenting the topic into separate chapters proved fundamental in formulating the crux of the essay's argument. Breaking down the components of 'untranslatable' spaces helped outline the framework for collecting contributions. Every chapter was an extraction of the process, which could be critically analyzed as a separate, unconnected entity, each being distorted individually.

Figure 15. *Construction of the 'Levadas' on the island of Madeira.* From 'Cultura Madeira', by Museu de Fotografia da Madeira, 1947-1952. (https://cultura.madeira.gov.pt/images/Vicentes/grupo2.jpg)
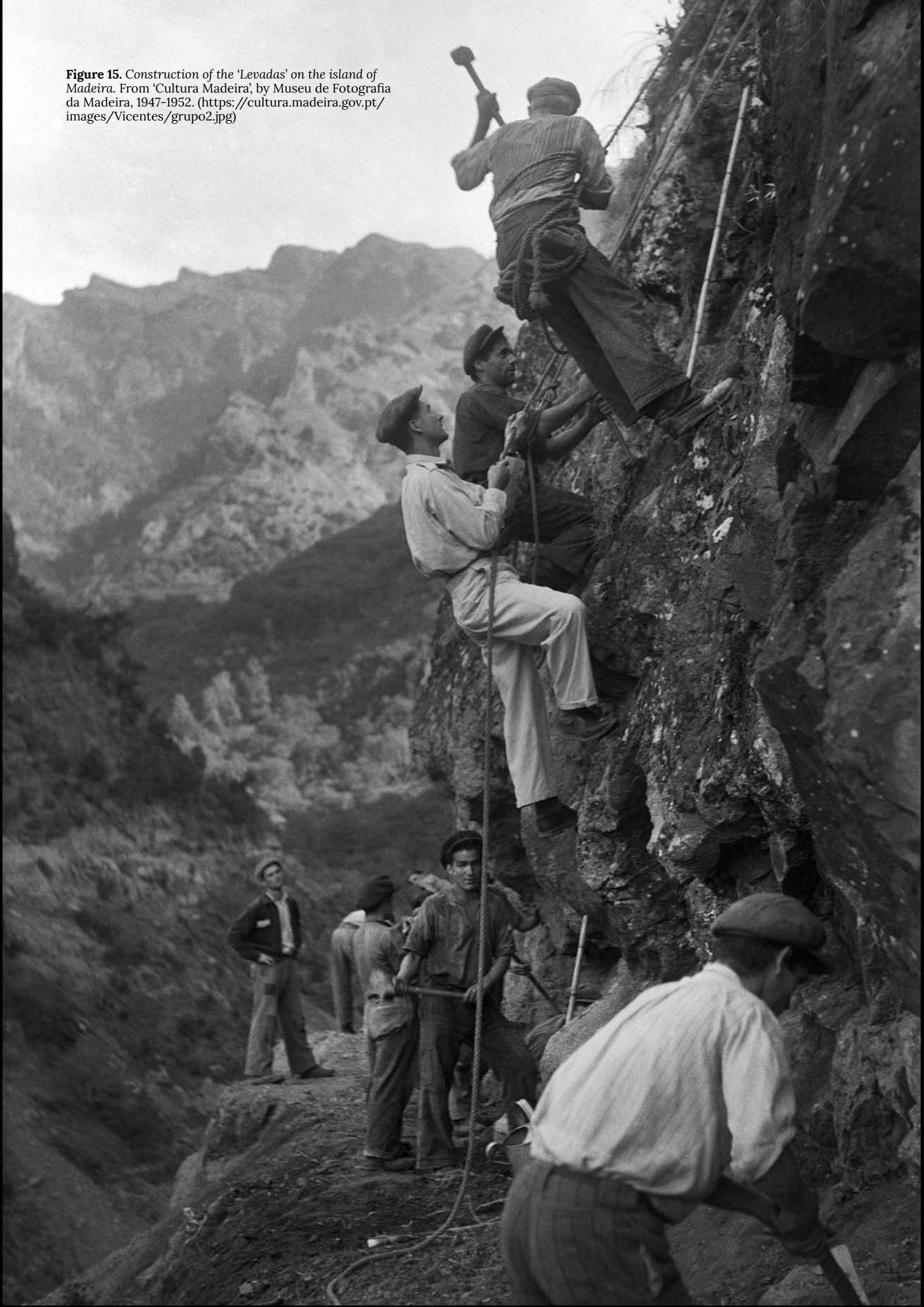
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Appendix 1
Methodology

Framework

Aside from the written part, the project involved mapping 'untranslatable' spaces worldwide. The cartography used a crowd-sourced system made up entirely of the first-hand experiences of numerous contributors treated as equal project developers. The methodology of the 'atlas' incorporated three distinct disciplines: first, psychophysical geography, which ensured that the map is emotive and personal; second, phenomenology, which favored sense-driven first-person documentation; and third, ethnography, which ensured a collaborative and open mapping system, all working together to form a methodical framework for gathering and sourcing open data.

As a result, an online platform was created. The mode of documenting aimed at a group of contributors to have a standard, easily accessible medium of documentation and the possibility to access and comment on already collected data. In this case, a three-level framework was developed: firstly, an online questionnaire explaining the features of untranslatable spaces necessary to identify them was sent to a mailing list of possibly interested professionals; secondly, the questionnaire allowed access to a shared, regularly updated Google document where contributors could try to translate the already collected spaces to their respective languages, therefore proving or refuting their 'untranslatability.'

Finally, the collected spaces were published through a public Instagram page (@un.translatables), allowing those interested to send their ideas and see other people's work, significantly widening the project's reach. All those elements considered, the mapping allowed all contributors to have an equal playing field where they only contribute to a single small-scale fragment of the 'atlas.' The input of the participant is thus entirely qualitative and documentative. The collaborative method was essential to achieve an objective character of the thesis and create a novel archive of over 40 contributions.

The project is of great interest to me and will continue after this specific paper is completed. One of the future considerations could be to create a well-developed webpage and develop a brand for the project, where one could search for spaces more quickly, making it more recognizable. Widening the reach would be essential for the future of the 'atlas,' as the involvement of several people worldwide could significantly enhance the number of possible translations and undiscovered spatial solutions that remain obscure and could be forgotten due to the slow process of extinction of languages.

tabià lavadouro noren ambona piola

Call for contributions

To a collective atlas of untranslatable spaces

majaliro@gmail.com Przełącz konto

Gdy dodasz pliki i prześlesz ten formularz, nazwa oraz zdjęcie powiązane z Twoim kontem Google zostaną zarejestrowane. Tylko wpisany adres e-mail jest częścią odpowiedzi.

* Wskazuje wymagane pytanie

Adres e-mail *

Twój adres e-mail

What is an untranslatable space?

Is there any place you encountered during your travels that had a simple, yet unique name in the local language that made you think 'wow, *that'd need a whole sentence to explain it in english*'?

That's exactly what untranslatable places are - they can be objects or buildings that hold a shared meaning within a specific culture. Their names are distinctive in their own language and are not directly translatable to other dialects. More often than not, their features and use are obvious for people who are familiar with the area, but if you're a newcomer? You probably won't know about it, unless you start noticing a certain pattern - untranslatable spaces can be found in several versions which share similiar characteristics and are recognizable by a group of people under the same name.

As an example, on Polish countrysides *ambona* is a frequent sight. The closest phrase to explain its meaning in english could be a *hunting station*, although there's more specificity to it than just that. It's a free-standing tower structure located above ground level used as a lookout for hunters as well as observation of animals for health status assesment. It's built usually on the edge of a forest or on a clearing.

↘ Got an idea for a new space? Great! Fill in the form below and contribute to the atlas!

↘ No ideas come to mind? Take a look into the document linked below and try to play a game of translating the names of already collected places to your own language. Maybe a similiar place exists in your region and it's not as unique as I thought?

↘ Spaces collected so far
https://docs.google.com/document/d/1jN7vAEoVahj5XvLwTJ1tfdITWUy8wzs2vUZEpKFHoz0/edit?usp=sharing

Figure 16. *The questionnaire used to collect contributions, explaining the features of 'untranslatable' spaces necessary to identify them.*

JAPAN

Noren
暖簾

EN: Fabric dividers
?:

Traditional Japanese fabric dividers hung between rooms, on walls, in doorways, or in windows. They usually have one or more vertical slits cut from the bottom to nearly the top of the fabric, allowing for easier passage or viewing. They are traditionally used by shops and restaurants as a means of protection from sun, wind, and dust, and for displaying a shop's name or logo.

Figure 17. *Editable Google document allowing contributors to access and comment on collected data.*
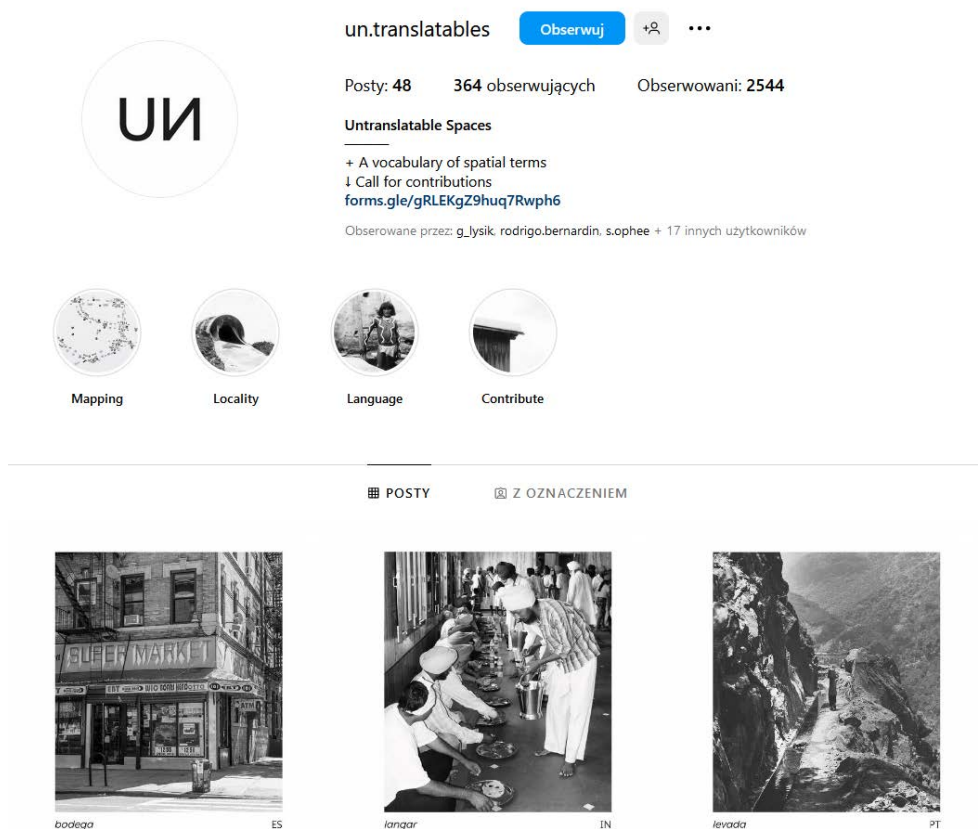
Figure 18. *Instagram page publicly sharing the contributions, allowing for a wider reach and accessibility.*

Atlas of Untranslatable Spaces

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Apacheta

Ambona

Birt

Bodega

Boteco

Conversadeiras

Christiania Bike

Familiok

Ginkien

Guachinche

Kaki Lima

Keet

Komorebi

Kpatin

Langar

Lavadouro

Lemnărie

Levada

Lizieră

Madia

Mattolaituri

Mihrab

Minga

Noren

Ometto

Paniyaru

Periptero

Piola

Qilou

Quiosco

Rorbu

Somari Katte

Späti

Stube

Tabià

Taguara

Tanque

Teledisko

Torii

Toro

Veeschuit

Yatai

Apacheta

'Apachetas' are small piles of stones made by ancient travelers as an offering to Pachamama (Mother Earth) asking for permission to enter unknown lands, later used as orientation signs. Some investigations say that the 'apachetas' were born from the need to maintain order within the routes along which the tribes moved.

Ambona

A free-standing tower structure above ground level which is a lookout for hunters and observation of animals for health status assessment. It's usually built on the edge of a forest or in a clearing.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Birt

Location or Culture: *Romania*
Contributed by: *Ramona Buia*

A small cheap pub, known as the place where men usu-ally gather during the evening to drink beer together. It is a common feature of Romanian villages or small towns where, generally, all the residents know each other. The men that frequent this place are regular drinkers; thus, they have a poor reputation among their cohabitants, giving a similar connotation to the 'pub' itself.

Bodega

'Bodega' is a small convenience store open 24/7 that sells staples like chips, candy, coffee, sodas, lottery tickets, over-the-counter remedies, and household items like laundry detergent and trash bags. 'Bodega' originates from the Spanish word - which can mean 'storeroom,' 'wine cellar,' or 'grocery store.' Most of them were opened by immigrants who came to New York after World War II.

A **B** C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Boteco

Location or Culture: *Brazil*
Contributed by: *Ana Carolina de Souza Mello*

A certain type of Brazilian bar. They are informal spaces that are common in most Brazilian cities. They normally open early in the morning, serving the traditional 'pingado' (white coffee). In the middle of the day, people have a break from work to have lunch ('PF') there. And they are only closed at dawn when people normally drink cold beer ('litrão'). 'Botecos' are a part of the Brazilian everyday life culture. Because of that, they often have a very friendly atmosphere since the customers become regulars and sometimes even friends of the workers in the bar.

Conversadeiras

Location or Culture: *Portugal*
Contributed by the author

Two opposing benches, usually made of stone and built into a wall next to a window or balcony. They are called 'conversadeiras' as they serve to talk more closely. Known under another name, 'namoradeiras,' they could be flirtatious too, as this was where young couples sometimes sat, getting to know each other better under the watchful eyes of parents or nannies.

A B **C** D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z
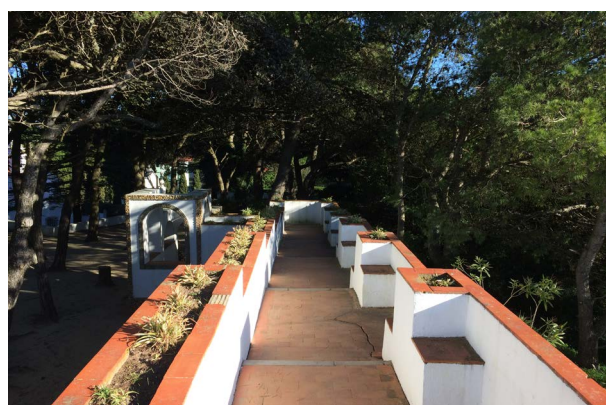
Christiania Bike

Location or Culture: *Denmark*
Anonymous contribution

Other translations:
Not found

In Denmark, transporting children, partners, animals, and flowers by using a cargo bike had become a normal way of moving heavy goods. In the case of children, not only is it a safer way to have them with you, but it also allows for having direct contact with them, making for a more enjoyable way of traveling through the city.

A B **C** D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Familiok

Location or Culture: *Poland*
Contributed by: *Jakub Biernacki*

'Familoki' were part of heavy industry workers' housing estates and, in their classic form, were built on the brink of the 19th and 20th centuries in towns where sufficiently large industrial plants were established. They were constructed from brick without plaster (hence their characteristic colors - dark reds and browns), and they had two or three floors with a habitable attic. Most buildings had gable roofs with a slight slope, and their walls were secured against mining damage with steel tie rods (in various horizontal stripes) anchored to retaining rosettes.

A B C D E **F** G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Ginkien

Location or Culture: *Netherlands*
Contributed by: *Nathan Kramer*

A 'ginkien' is the name for a very narrow alleyway on the former island of Urk. If the alleyway is a little wider, it is dubbed a 'glop.' This distinction was based on modes of transportation: a carriage could pass through a glop, but not a ginkien. Ginkies, therefore, play an essential role in the town's social fabric due to their sole pedestrian purpose.

Guachinche

Location or Culture: *Tenerife*
Contributed by: *Natalia Hładczuk*

Typical to the island of Tenerife, 'guachinche' is a local establishment where traditional Canarian food and homemade wine are served. The typology appeared out of the need of the local wine producers to sell their products directly to customers. In the 17th century, the owners of the vineyards offered wine samples to English traders to get them exported. Supposedly, the merchants told the winegrowers, 'I'm watching you.' Whether that was out of interest or to make sure they weren't being short-changed is unclear, but over time 'wat-ching-you' became 'gua-chin-che.'

Kaki Lima

Location or Culture: *Indonesia*
Anonymous contribution

In Indonesia, one can buy street food readily and cheaply, often from two-wheel carts which ply the streets, colloquially called 'five-feet.' This term has been used since the Dutch colonial period when the government mandated that every roadway built to provide facilities for pedestrians be five feet wide.

A B C D E F G H I J **K** L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Keet

Location or Culture: *Netherlands*
Contributed by: *Joey Lageschaar*

A renovated barn section, caravan, container, or part of a former home that now functions as a place where friends, colloquially 'kameraden' gather for mainly drinking beer. These spaces are often decked out with homemade furniture, self-connected electricity, heating, and, most importantly, a working fridge. Their existence arises from a lack of nearby nightlife establishments ubiquitous in rural regions.

A B C D E F G H I J **K** L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Komorebi

Location or Culture: *Japan*
Contributed by: *Stefan Gzyl*

Komorebi is not so much a space as a spatial condition. It is a word that describes the distinct quality of sunlight that filters through leaves and branches of trees.

A B C D E F G H I J **K** L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Kpatin

Location or Culture: *South Benin*
From: *Nicolai, Q.* (2019). Sacred Forests and Courtyards in South Benin. *Accattone*, 6, 60-81.

In Benin, a child who wants to become independent and build a house away from his parents will have to respect certain ceremonies; otherwise, their independence will not be recognized. For instance, the head of the house must give them the 'kpatin,' literally 'the tree to make the fence,' to plant it on their land and set up their future house. They will always be part of the family home, even if they live several kilometers away. They must come back at least once a year to feed their ancestors. This is also theoretically true for family members who live abroad, although this has become complicated in practical terms.

Langar

Location or Culture: *India*
Anonymous contribution

The communal kitchen of a 'gurdwara,' known as a 'langar' in Sikhism, provides free meals to anyone who requests them, regardless of caste, gender, race, or economic standing. The kitchen is tended to and served by volunteers from the Sikh community, and people eat together while seated on the floor. Every meal provided at a 'langar' is vegetarian.

A B C D E F G H I J K **L** M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Lavadouro

Location or Culture: *Portugal*
Contributed by: *Maria Napieralska*

The name represents a public washhouse and the stone on which washerwomen soap clothes.

Lemnărie

Location or Culture: *Romania*
Contributed by: *Ramona Buia*

The way Romanians call a small and usually wooden construction in which firewood is stored.

Levada

Location or Culture: *Portugal*
Contributed by: *Katarzyna Malinowska-Burchardt*
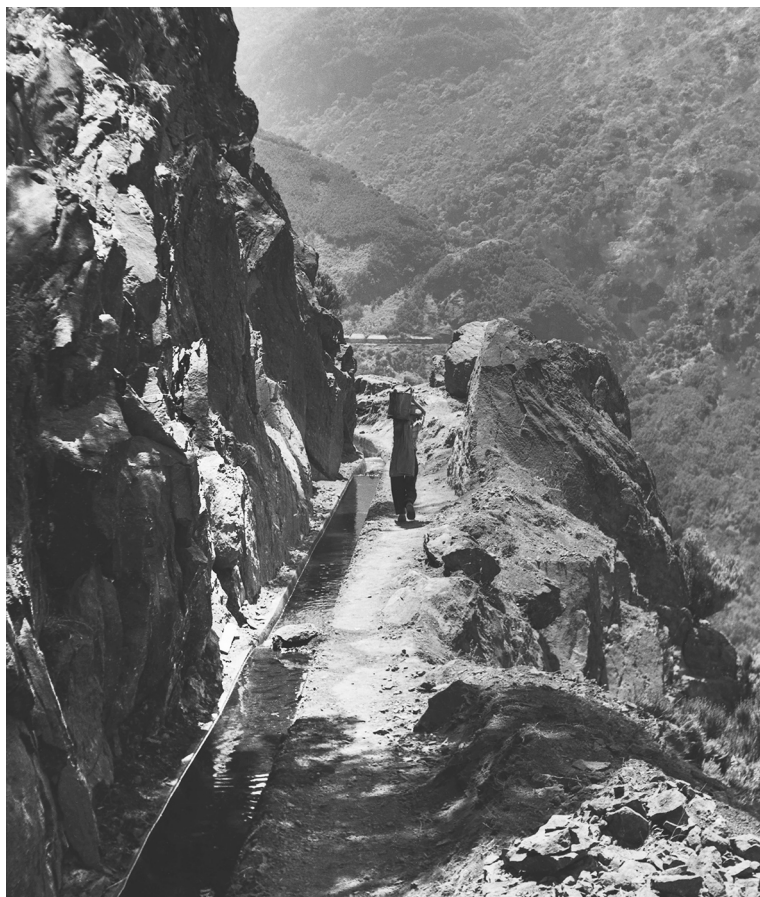
On the island of Madeira, an irrigation canal or aqueduct flanked by a pedestrian route is known as a 'levada.' These waterways serve as living proof of the extraordinary efforts made to supply the mountain slopes and valleys with plentiful water that surges from high springs. They pass through several natural regions under protection, including the Parque Natural da Madeira and the Parque Ecológico do Funchal.

Lizieră

Location or Culture: *Romania*
Contributed by: *Ramona Buia*

The word describes the exact threshold between a forest and the 'open' area around it. It is the edge of the forest, the moment in which one steps out of the woods.

A B C D E F G H I J K **L** M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

Madia

A standing cupboard, the 'madia' stores food and dishes, particularly bread, and was sometimes used as a bread trough during the High Renaissance period in Italy. It is usually found in the kitchen.

Mattolaituri

Location or Culture: *Finland*
Anonymous contribution

Platforms for outdoor carpet cleaning. They are the urban variant of a longstanding tradition in Finland: washing laundry in rural lakes. Today, Finns still practice the custom, bringing household carpets to these unique washing stations with pine oil soap. They wash their rugs, rinse them in seawater, and hang them over the piers to dry in the sun while they enjoy the rest of the day.

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Mihrab

Location or Culture: *Arabia*
Anonymous contribution

A nook in a mosque's wall that shows the 'qibla,' or the direction Muslims should face when praying, which is the direction of the Kaaba in Mecca. The 'qibla wall" is where a 'mihrab' can be seen. The 'minbar,' an elevated platform to the right of the 'mihrab,' is where the imam addresses the crowd.
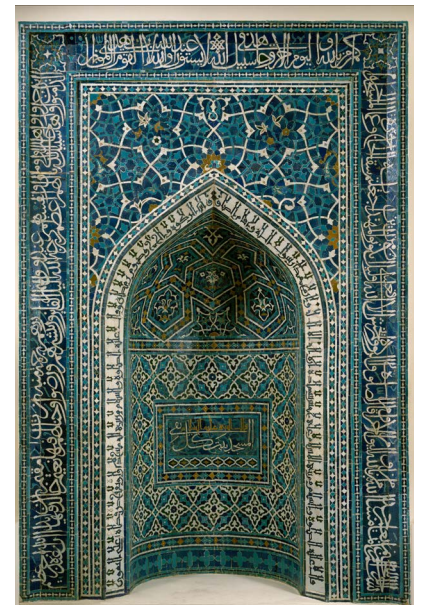
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Minga

'Minga' is one of the traditions that best defines the spirit of fellowship in Chiloé. These are collective works organized mainly to harvest potatoes, build a church, or transport a house. When a family moves from one place to another, sometimes they do so with their physical home. For this, they ask for a 'minga,' and the neighbors arrive to 'tie up the house' with the teams of oxen; they mount it on wooden stilts and roll it on a carpet of logs in order to move it. When they reach the sea's edge, they fill the house with barrels so that it floats, and several boats take it up to the new island, where the residents are waiting to take it to its final destination, where the housewarming party will begin.

Noren

Japanese-style cloth partitions that hang across rooms, walls, entrances, or windows. In order to facilitate easier passage or viewing, they typically have one or more vertical slits cut from the bottom of the fabric to almost the top. Shops and restaurants traditionally use them to protect from sun, wind, and dust and display a shop's name or logo.

Ometto

A ' little man' built from stone by hikers to indicate the path or to mark a summit.
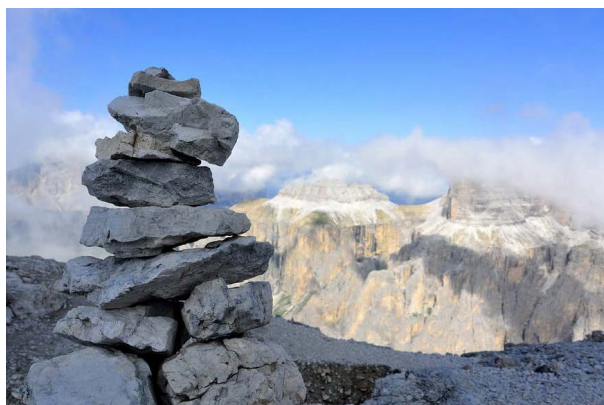
Paniyaru

Location or Culture: *India*
Anonymous contribution
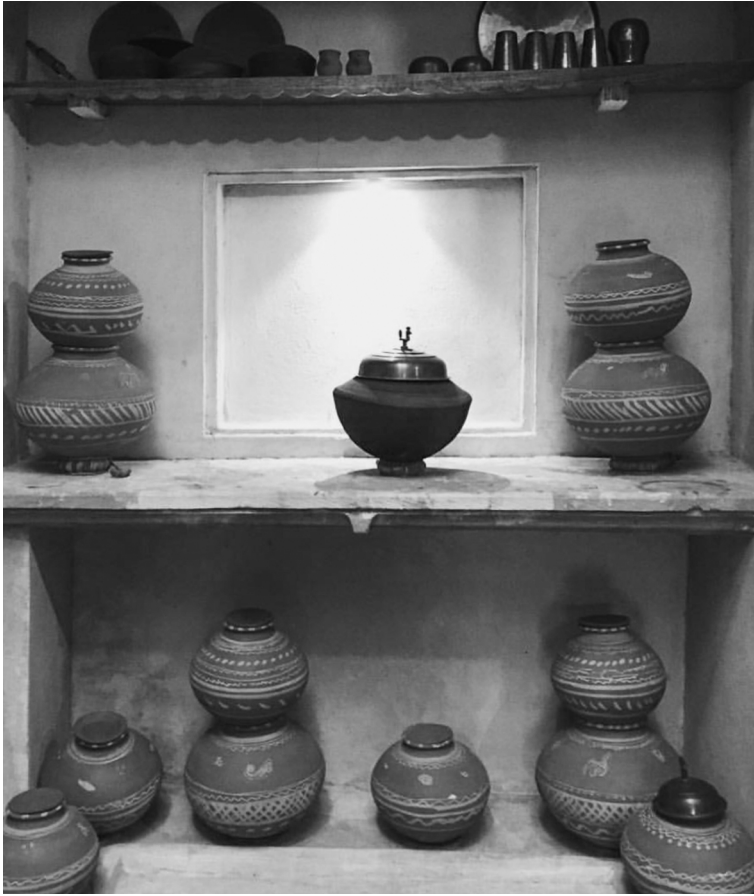
An essential and integral part of every home in Gujarat. It could be a raised platform or a stone table mounted above ground level with curved circles to place pots and floral motifs decorating the front. The space is used to store water in clay and brass pots placed on one another for drinking and cooking. 'Paniyaru' is considered a sacred space; therefore, a lamp is lit before it every evening at sunset. Each house would have one or two 'paniyara': one for the family and another for visitors, travelers, and outsiders.

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Periptero

Location or Culture: *Greece*
Contributed by: *Alessandra Fassoula*

One can always be found within walking distance at random: in the middle of the street or places such as famous monuments and tourist destinations. They sell everything and anything: cigarettes, newspapers, chewing gum, drinks, and snacks. 'Periptero' is also open at night, much like a pharmacy.
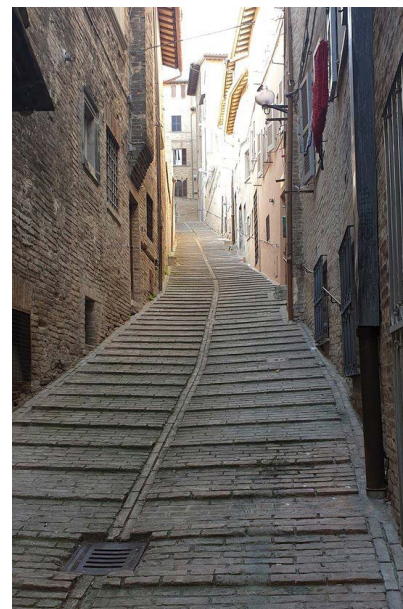
Piola

Location or Culture: *Italy*
Anonymous contribution

In the Italian town of Urbino, 'piola' is a particular step done with bricks in relief in order to avoid slipping when there is snow during the winter.

Qilou

Location or Culture: *Taiwan*
Contributed by: *Alessandro Martinelli*

The term stands for peculiar urban walk-up buildings. Their ground floor is characterized by shops or work-shops, with the street-facing part turned into a portico for pedestrians, while one can find the living quarters upstairs. Primarily developed in the 20th century within dense urban environments, their alignment along the street space creates extensive urban porticoes with semi-private character. Most often, the pavement of these porticoes across different properties is discontinuous but connected by small ramps, given that the properties built later tend to be higher to manifest the social achievement of the new construction. They are primarily found in Taiwan. Within Taipei, the central city, they characterize a large part of the modern urban fabric and can create covered urban spaces long hundred meters on both sides of a street. They are crucial for the local social life and the city's functioning, given that they offer space for a range of temporary functions typical of the urban space, such as the parking of motorbikes, small jobs, or micro-economic exchange.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P **Q** R S T U V W X Y Z

Quiosco

Location or Culture: *Spain*
Contributed by: *Agnieszka Szklarczyk*

'Quiosco' is a circular, semicircular, or polygonal structure set in a park, garden, or pier, designed to accommodate musical bands performing open-air concerts. A simple construction creates an ornamental focal point and serves acoustic requirements while providing shelter for the changeable weather.

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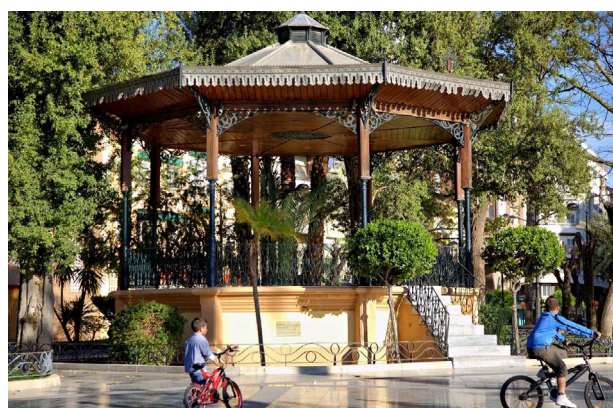
Rorbu

Location or Culture: *Norway*
Anonymous contribution

Traditional fishermen's homes, known as 'rorbu' in Norway, are usually found in fishing villages. The structures are built on land, but one end is supported by poles in the water, making it simple for boats to approach them. On Lofoten, this fashion is most prevalent. Although 'rorbu' is no longer primarily used for fishing, it is now primarily rented out to visitors.

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Somari Katte

Location or Culture: *India*
Anonymous contribution
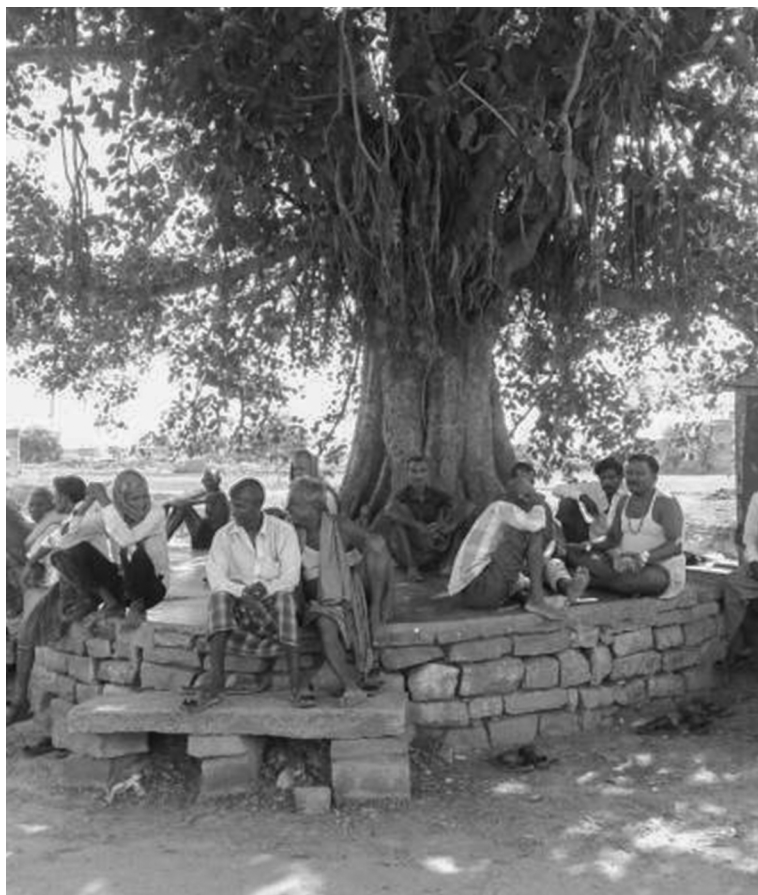
'Somari Katte,' loosely translates to 'lazy man's corner,' refers to an outdoor bench usually built around an enormous banyan tree in the village. It is meant for older men to sit in the shade, relax and watch the world go by.

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Späti

Location or Culture: *Germany*
Contributed by: *Karolina Kotyrba*

'Späti' is an integral part of Berlin's neighborhood culture. It is a supermarket, meetup spot, internet café, bakery, drugstore, lottery office, post office, and bar all in one. 'Späti' comes from 'Spätkauf', more precisely from 'Früh und Spät' or 'late sales outlets' in the GDR. Regular customers often stand or sit in front of the shop while the walk-in passersby enter and leave the store quickly.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R **S** T U V W X Y Z

Stube

Location or Culture: *Italy*
Contributed by: *Emilie Stecher*

It was the only warm room in a South Tyrolean farm-house for a long time: the living room, well heated with a farm stove. The typical distinguishing feature of such a parlor is that it is wholly lined with wood. The oven with a built-in bench is the centerpiece, allowing the family to gather around it.

Tabià

Location or Culture: *Italy*
Anonymous contribution

Rural buildings built by mountain people in the past centuries to shelter livestock and store hay; the stable was created in the stone part on the ground floor while the remaining levels, made of wood with a structure of beams and pillars covered in larch boards, were used as a barn and warehouse. Today sheep farming is no longer practiced in the valleys, and these artifacts, emptied of their original function, are partially used as a storage or tool shed. In some cases, according to a new consolidated practice, they are renovated and destined for residential use.
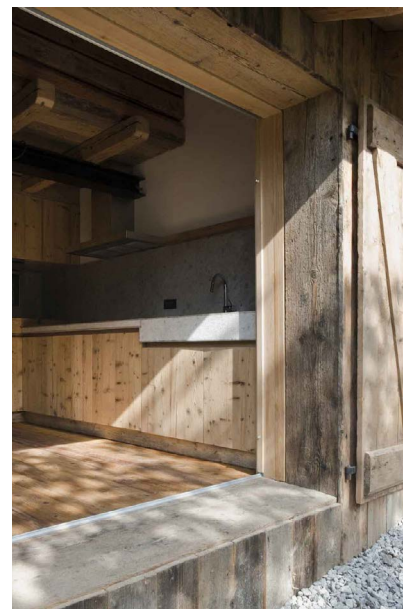
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Taguara

Taguara means a low class bar where alcoholic drinks are served at minimum costs.

Tanque

Location or Culture: *Portugal*
Contributed by: *Chloé Darmon*

Tanque is an individual basin in concrete that originated in the 1950s from the modern typology of washhouses. They are artifacts used by women to wash their clothes and represent the quotidian life of the 'ilhas' of Porto. Nowadays, many of them are obsolete because they are slowly being replaced by washing machines, and their uses have changed.
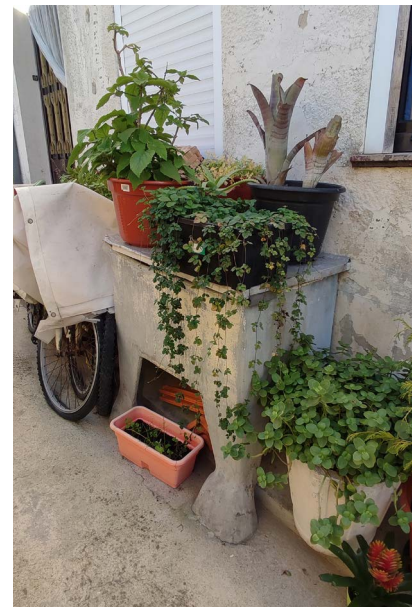
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Teledisko

The most miniature public disco in the world. It consists of a converted phone booth with many features of a regular-sized club: a sound system, a smoke machine, a disco ball, and strobe lights. It can fit three people at a time, and like any conventional photo booth, it is also possible to take a strip of four photos while having a party inside.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S **T** U V W X Y Z

Torii

A gate marking the entrance to the sacred space surrounding the temple.

Toro

Location or Culture: *Japan*
Anonymous contribution

Traditional Japanese lanterns that are made of metal, stone, or wood.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S **T** U V W X Y Z

Veeschuit

A collective name for various farm barges used for transport purposes within a livestock farm. A striking feature of these ships was the bow along which the cattle were boarded and disembarked. They had a front plate of which a part was removable, forming an opening through which the animals came in and out of the boat. 'Veeschuiten' transported cattle between the different pastures and carried hay and fellow farmers, forming an essential link with the livestock markets.

Yatai

A small, foldable mobile food stall that typically sells ra‐
men or other street food.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X **Y** Z

A collective atlas of un**translatable** spaces

Mapping as a communal act

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