

ARCHRYPT. THE ARCHIVE FOR THE POST-APOCALYPTIC FUTURE TO EXORCISE ARCHITECTURE'S END

ARCHRYPT. EL ARCHIVO PARA EL FUTURO POSAPOCALÍPTICO QUE EXORCISE EL FIN DE LA ARQUITECTURA

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Architecture has always interfaced with the constant threat of disasters, making its performative capabilities available. In contemporary times, the succession of different catastrophes has accelerated the perception of a global situation in a state of perpetual balance. Taking the threat of a more or less imminent end(s) of the world(s) to its extremes, this research explores the idea of collecting and archiving the architectural responses developed in contexts marked by specific criticalities, hypothesizing a time capsule to be entrusted to posterity in a future post-apocalyptic society. By embracing an intentionally speculative narrative, Archrypt aims to define a repertoire of theories and projects, delineating a cultural archive that simultaneously embodies both an operational and memory-preserving device for a distant and uncertain future. Archrypt is a critical work on the necessity of transmitting “the memory of architecture” and “the architecture of memory.” Archrypt is an active experimental device that interrogates the disciplinary role within a state of permacrisis.

architecture, archive, permacrisis, time capsule, transmission

La arquitectura siempre ha interactuado con la amenaza constante de desastres y, en esa interacción, ha dispuesto sus capacidades performativas. En la época contemporánea, la sucesión de catástrofes ha acelerado la percepción de un estado de perpetuo equilibrio a nivel global. Llevando al extremo la amenaza de un fin del mundo más o menos inminente, esta investigación explora la idea de recopilar y archivar las respuestas arquitectónicas desarrolladas en contextos marcados por situaciones críticas y plantea la hipótesis de una cápsula del tiempo confiada a la posteridad de una sociedad posapocalíptica. Adoptando una narrativa intencionadamente especulativa, Archrypt busca definir un repertorio de teorías y proyectos que delineen un archivo cultural que simultáneamente encarne un dispositivo operativo y, a su vez, uno para la preservación de la memoria para un futuro lejano e incierto. Archrypt es una obra crítica sobre la necesidad de transmitir “la memoria de la arquitectura” y “la arquitectura de la memoria”; un dispositivo experimental activo que cuestiona el rol disciplinar al interior de un estado de permacrisis.

arquitectura, archivo, permacrisis, cápsula del tiempo, transmisión

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INTRODUCTION

The persistent and urgent warnings from the scientific community about resource depletion, the irreversible effects of climate change, ongoing economic crises, deepening social inequalities, and the rise of new nationalisms and conflicts all contribute to a widespread perception of imminent global catastrophes.

At one time, the millenarian tradition entrusted the revelation of humanity's ultimate destiny to the advent of the apocalypse (Figure 1), in which "the end of the world" served an eschatological function. Today, however, the term seems rather to designate the perception of a tragic and hopeless destiny for the entire world(s)¹, with humankind as both the architect and the main victim of the disaster.

Figure 1

*The Four
Horsemen of the
Apocalypse*

*Note. Adapted
from Dürer
(1511/n.d.).
Chromatically
altered by the
authors.*



¹ The use of the plural form aims to explicitly situate the discussion within the heated and articulated contemporary debate: although the research focuses on the Western conception of the apocalypse, it is crucial to acknowledge that this term involves multiple fields of formulations, constructions, and reactive displacements of narratives, bodies, and dwellings (Danowski & Viveiros de Castro, 2016).

This realization, rooted in our collective fears about humanity's fate, reflects our existential anxieties. On the one hand, there is an ongoing debate about which strategies could be implemented to avert or delay such catastrophes. On the other hand, there is the urgent question of how to preserve the remnants of a world—indeed, of our civilization—that risks disappearing or being irreparably compromised to transmit to posterity those signs of our existence that could serve as instruments of knowledge for the archaeologists of the future.

The idea of transporting the traces of one's existence into the future intertwines with the concept of the time capsule. This device, deeply rooted within human history, has generated a complex taxonomy of objects and architectures shaped by the fear of an impending end and the drive to preserve the traces of humanity. A clear example of this relationship occurred in 1947 with the inauguration of the Doomsday Clock (Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, n.d). At that time, it was set to seven minutes to midnight, marking the proximity of world destruction by the atomic bomb. That same year, the opening scene of *The Beginning or the End* (Taurog, 1947) depicted the burial of a time capsule as a reaction to the perception of catastrophic annihilation driven by nuclear war anxiety (Beck & Dorrian, 2020).

Similarly, in today's climate of contemporary emergency and instability—when that distance has now shrunk to a mere 89 seconds—resorting again to this device as a means of projecting an architectural operational memory was the first idea that moved the project.

Architecture, traditionally dedicated to creating lasting evidence, can itself be interpreted as a time capsule—a *dispositif* that, as will be further explored, seeks to facilitate processes of selection, collection, and archiving to endure the transmission of memory (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Archrypt
(Manifesto Image)



Is it possible to organize a repertoire of knowledge, strategies, tactics, theories, and projects so that this heritage forms both a cultural archive and a potential operational toolkit, capable of offering our disciplinary thinking even in a remote and uncertain future? What processes could be triggered in the contemporary world through the design of such an object? (Croce et al., 2020a, 2020b, 2021a & 2021b).

Indeed, the need to transfer elements of one's existence into another dimension—beyond the temporal—is a deeply rooted cultural characteristic with far more ancestral origins. For instance, are not the Egyptian pyramids and Etruscan tombs primitive forms of time capsules? Furthermore, was the creation of enclosed spaces to safeguard the dead and their possessions—vessels meant to accompany them on their ritualistic and symbolic journey to the afterlife—not an exquisite architectural task? By revisiting this atavistic dimension of architecture, in conjunction with modern devices of memory transmission, Archrypt aims to transmit to future generations the theories and practices grappling with the paradoxical and apocalyptic aspects of contemporary reality. Thus, the urgency that drove the educator and university founder Thornwell Jacobs to document a world threatened by World War II echoes the same concerns that guide us in the architectural vision of Archrypt amid the potential catastrophes of our time.

ARCHITECTURE IN THE AGE OF PERMACRISIS

As we approach the first quarter-century of the new millennium, this era has been marked by a succession of dramatic events, beginning with one of the defining catastrophes of the Western world—the September 11, 2001 attacks and the spectacular implosion of the Twin Towers. Since then, the world has faced severe economic crises, pandemics, environmental disasters, and new global conflicts that have been instrumental in the reciprocity and interdependence of the respective crises. This profound interconnectedness of crises has led to the widespread use of the term *permacrisis*,² which Collins English Dictionary (n.d.) defines as “an extended period of instability and insecurity, especially one resulting from a series of catastrophic events.” The awareness of such a tragic condition is obviously found not only in the social sciences but also in the arts, which offer stark or exaggerated manifestations of environmental, political, and social disasters. Thus, numerous narratives and interpretations have emerged, based on the awareness of an environment now compromised by the effects of the Anthropocene and its interactions and alterations with the lives of its makers. These range from the scalar implications of hyperobjects (Morton, 2013) to the necessary and inevitable coexistence with contamination (Haraway, 2016) and apocalyptic pessimism (Thacker, 2011). In this context, the arts have returned by emphasizing their concerns about an unstable and critical condition (Ataria et al., 2016; Bauman, 2006; Berardi, 2017; Jha, 2011; Latour & Weibel, 2002; Virilio, 2004); sometimes as pure decadent spectacle—evident in the proliferation of apocalyptic cinematography—while in other instances, as expressions of disciplinary responsibilities, orienting new forms of coexistence and survival (Sheppard & Przybylski, 2016). Works such as *Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet: Ghosts and Monsters of the Anthropocene* (Tsing et al., 2017) reclaim an epistemological shift toward entangled histories, situated narratives, and thick descriptions to frame a collaborative multispecies livability.

This specific and urgent perspective also affects architecture and design disciplines, prompting their critical understanding through a speculative attitude in both the theoretical discourse and the sphere of praxis (Figure 3). Among the various approaches, this renewed awareness of architectural discipline in addressing the challenge of

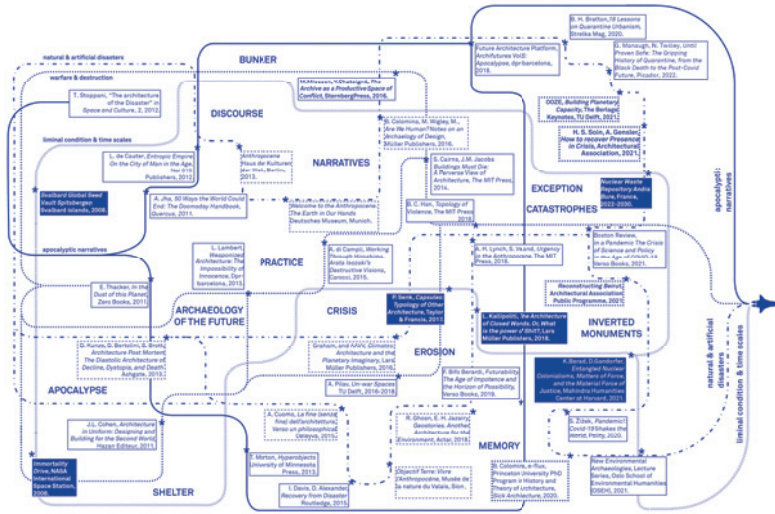
² In 2022, Collins English Dictionary declared that *permacrisis* was the word of the year (Shariatmadari, 2022).

Figure 3

Permacrisis and Architecture: Navigating Theories and Mapping Perspectives (State of the Art Mapping)



Scan the QR code to view the figure online



The first position questions the crisis into architecture, examining architectural thinking, design strategies, and tactics that respond to disasters and their effects (Kafka et al., 2018; Stoppani, 2012), while also explore new ways of enduring and inhabiting crisis conditions (Doglio & Zardini, 2021). Rather than finding tangible solutions, this archiving attitude is committed to raising questions and creating a “productive space of conflict” (Chateigné & Miessen, 2016), reframing design principles and theoretical foundations, and engaging in the production of architectural knowledge.

The second position questions the crisis through architecture, exploring its representation and narration while critically experimenting with architectural tools to make the condition of the permacrisis visible. In such a context, speculative design serves as a strategic posture within the fields of art and architecture to delineate narratives about a dystopian future. This approach—prompting to confront environmental crises—emphasizes the discipline’s capacity to render visible distant transformative scenarios, thus triggering a renewed awareness of the architect’s key role. Additionally, it offers ways to develop strategies to

address critical scenarios. As exemplified by Design Earth in its projects *Geostories*, *The Planet After Geoengineering* and *Climate Inheritance* (Ghosn & Jazairy, 2018, 2021, 2023), the speculative fiction approach, by merging informed predictions about emerging technologies with cultural insights, encourages discussions about the implications of careless decisions on humanity. Within this navigation through permacrisis, the work of Common Accounts (2016) stands out: the studio, critically exploring the issue of death and its related material consequences, formulated the project *Closer Each Day*. By provocatively experimenting with the transformation of deceased bodies into fertile substances to sustain a memorial garden, the project reimagines a possible relationship between death and memory.

The third position questions the crisis for architecture, exploring how the crisis can be articulated architecturally and made transmissible within society. This approach implements and combines several operational design and spatial practices, such as artefacts, exhibitions, happenings, performances, and more. Once the discipline has acknowledged and learned from the state of permacrisis, its focus appears to shift toward transmitting revealed knowledge and awareness by reformulating architecture's agency as a practice of "everyday utopianism of care" (Crijns, 2023). While the abovementioned archival and speculative approaches delve into architectural theory and epistemology, this position enhances the field of praxis. Rather than withdrawing from the complex spatial challenges of contemporaneity, it suggests alternative and critical ways of doing architecture (Architecture is Climate, n.d.; Awan et al., 2011).

Although these three positions have been outlined as distinct and distinguishable, in a discipline as inherently ambiguous as architecture—where the relationship between theory and practice continuously shifts and evolves—these approaches intertwine, hybridize, and multiply with different nuances and frictions. This is particularly evident in the spatial device of the exhibition, a privileged stage where art and architecture express their role in representing contemporary tensions. Examples include *Broken Nature: Design Takes on Human Survival* (Antonelli, 2019), which explores the restorative role of design; *We Will Survive* (Koivu & Kugler, 2024-2025), which presents survival tactics for an uncertain future; and *Everybody Talks About the Weather* (Roelstraete, 2023), which serves as a semantic bridge between scientific and cultural discourses on climate urgency.

What emerges from the intersection of these shifts and tendencies is that the specific perspective of permacrisis drives the reshaping of architectural knowledge—its experimentation, its transmission, and the posture of its thinkers and practitioners in multiple ways. Far from exhaustively tracing or mapping these efforts, or deterministically criticizing them, our contribution aims to engage in the debate and embrace this apocalyptic impetus for disciplinary renewal by offering collective, iterative, and situated design experimentation, making visible the chaotic, non-deterministic, and exploratory nature of research into, through, and for architecture in the age of permacrisis.

REFERENCE AS METHODOLOGY

The time capsule, defined as “a container used to store for posterity a selection of objects thought to be representative of life at a particular time” (The International Time Capsule Society, n.d.), dates back to 1876 with Deihm's The Century Safe. One of the most famous examples is Jacobs' Crypt of Civilization (1936), along with the coeval Westinghouse Time Capsule (1939) (Jarvis, 2002) (Figure 4). It is acknowledged that the reconstruction of the lost past is achieved through the study and interpretation of archaeological finds, with the concomitant limitations this entails. In response, Jacobs programmed a time capsule to collect objects from his most disparate era, intending to create a crystallized archive to be handed down to posterity. In designing his message in a bottle for posterity, Jacobs followed a rigorous process, specifying the opening date, the archivist, the burial location, and the spatial features. Our research project explores this conceptual device from an architectural perspective, experimenting with a similar attitude (Figure 5). Jacobs set 8113 as the opening year of his capsule, aligning it with 4241 BC (Oglethorpe University, n.d.), the beginning year of the oldest known calendar in history, the Pharaonic one. As a result of these observations, our study adopted 8291 as the inaugural date, according to the abovementioned criterion. While Jacobs designated inventor and photographer Thomas Kimmwood Peters as the archivist, this research claims that architects played the dual role of designer of both the container and its contents.

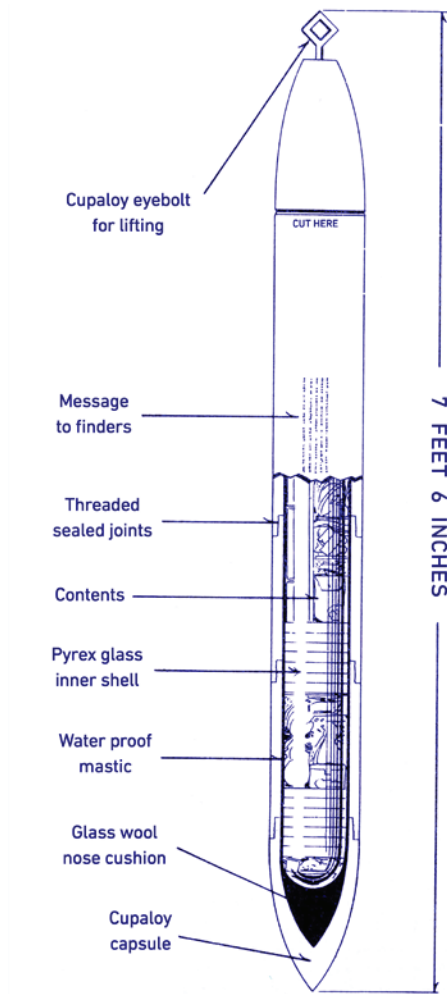


Figure 4

Cupaloy (Time Capsule Sketch)

Note. Adapted from Pendray (1939). Chromatically altered by the authors.

In the case of Jacobs's capsule, located in the former underground swimming pool of a university campus, the question of the container was resolved selecting a generic, covered, and enclosed space. However, as architects, we are supposed to consider the elaboration of a meaningful space that emerges from the relationship between form and content. Jacobs's capsule included various materials, ranging from the sublime to the popular, collectively representing the world culture of that era. This selection highlights strategies and projects at different scales, using different analogue media to transmit knowledge that could potentially become operational tools for dealing with extreme future conditions.

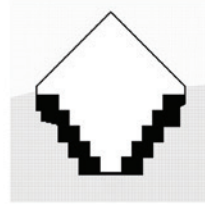
Figure 5

*Time Capsule
Devices Through
the Eyes of
Architects:
From Jacobs's
Hypogeal Room to
Archrypt's Spatial
Configuration and
its Translation into
a Performative
Space
(Methodological
Diagram)*

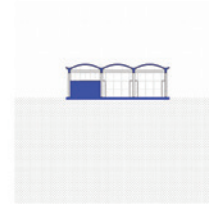
Jacobs' Crypt



Archrypt



Apocalipsis cum figuris



The term *Archrypt* refers to the ancestral dimension of architecture, linked to its function as a time capsule *ante litteram*: it seeks to provide a critical operational work on the necessity of transmitting the memory of architecture through the architecture of memory. While Jacobs's crypt materialized as the outcome of a generic accumulative operation—a museum-like repository intended for posterity—Archrypt aspires to create an operational archive capable of triggering processes and practices that could be adopted in a distant future.

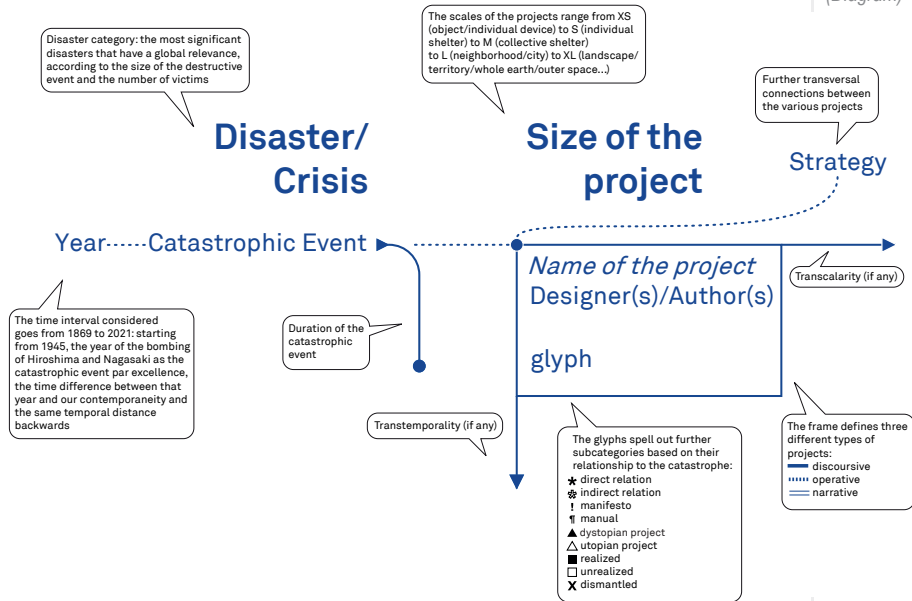
INTO ARCHITECTURE: SELECTING, COLLECTING, AND TRANSMITTING THE ARCHIVE FOR THE POST-APOCALYPTIC FUTURE

Architecture and—more generally—built space function as time capsules resulting from perennial rewriting: they are palimpsests in which the vicissitudes of their transformations, whether additive or subtractive, have been superimposed. In historical buildings—but not exclusively—these processes have led to the accumulation and, at times, the discordant coexistence of disparate construction elements. They have also resulted in the inversion of meaning and function of the building itself, transforming full to empty, interior to exterior. This capacity of architecture to include and preserve past processes and experiences—while recombining them with novel configurations and new meanings—forms the basis of Archrypt's conception of the archive. Here, the accumulation and preservation

of its content are not a separate element from the container but rather an integral and interdependent part. Indeed, since antiquity, the function of the archive has been hybridized with five functions: *grapheion*, *agoranomeion*, *bibliothēkē*, *katalogeion*, and *mnēmoneion* (Cockle, 1984, p. 110), simultaneously referring to both the place where documents are stored and the documents themselves (Leavitt, 1961, p. 178). Spoliation and reuse establish a pragmatic relationship with ruins while simultaneously serving as testimony to the crises and disasters from which the remains emerged. Similarly, the Archrypt archive retrieves, reuses, and recombines the ideas, approaches and processes, forming a sort of repertoire of theories and projects that have interfaced with crises, disasters, and apocalyptic fears. On the one hand, this is intended as concrete evidence for archaeologists of a remote and uncertain tomorrow of the relationship between architecture and crisis. On the other, it acts as a potential generative toolkit for a hypothetical architecture of future crises (Brand, 1968; Wright, 2014) (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Archive
Methodology:
Categorizing
Criteria and Tools
(Diagram)



The construction of the archive (Figure 7a and 7b) starts by defining a specific time frame in which to draw up the research field. Acknowledging that modern era advancements have improved human well-being while simultaneously increasing existential threats, the

collection places itself within a period that uses 1945—the year of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki—as a watershed moment. Between 1865 and 2025, the most significant crises and disasters are highlighted based on their scope, number of victims, impact, and global relevance. Against this backdrop of critical events, the archive traces the projects, theories, techniques, and manifestos that the discipline produced as a more or less direct response to those events. Mapping these design approaches to catastrophe reveals a wide range of trends, themes, and devices that comprise the archive's extensive corpus. Its physical construction is determined by the size of the projects—ranging from objects designed for individual use to urban or territorial designs, categorized from XS to XL—and by the tactics they employ, such as sheltering, camouflaging, isolating, and reusing (Figure 8). The archive is therefore determined by the scaled order of the projects collected according to a vertical scansion, in which each floor, varying in size, corresponds to a specific scale: XS on the lower floor and XL on the upper floor. The necessary inversion of the scale of depiction—1:1 for XS and 1:1000 for XL—is revealed through the dimensional ratios in the introductory strip. On each floor, the designs are not kept as maquettes or replicas inside cemetery chests but rather as an integral part of the archive itself: a system of galleries at varying depths houses tangible, three-dimensional reproductions fused into the walls and hybridized with one another, engaging in a continuous dialogue among projects. For example, the archive includes works such as Michael Rakowitz's *paraSITE* and Enzo Mari's *Autoprogettazione* (XS); OFIS's *Habitation in Extreme Environments* and Buckminster Fuller's *Dymaxion House* (S); Alejandro Aravena's *Elemental* and J. B. Godin's *Familistère* (M); *Depthscrapers* and Kisho Kurokawa's *Floating City* (L); and *Yucca Mountain Nuclear Waste Repository* and Archizoom's *No-Stop City* (XL). These elements are constructed from the same material as the archive itself—reinforced concrete—i.e., the material that enabled the heroic and monumental feats of modernity but has also exacted a significant environmental toll. In addition to its symbolic and controversial significance, concrete offers the highest probability of preservation over time, ensuring the endurance of these architectural simulacra. The archaeology of the future needs material and tangible traces, not merely virtual means, which depend on specific ephemeral digital media that neither imply nor render architecture superfluous.

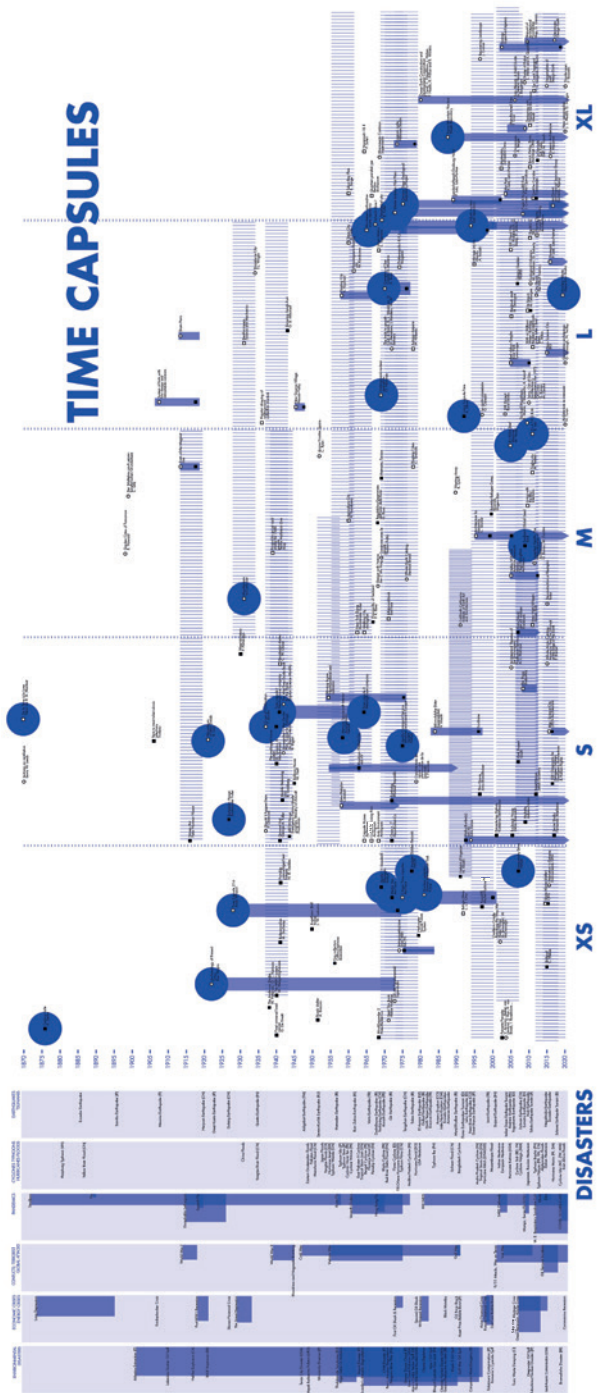


Figure 7a
The Process of Archiving: Preliminary and Advanced Diagrams (Zoomed-In Views)

Note. This diagram illustrates the permacrisis-architecture nexus, chronologically mapping disasters, projects, strategies, theories, and time capsules (marked with blue dots) within the time frame of 1865–2025, as well as by scale (XS, S, M, L, XL).



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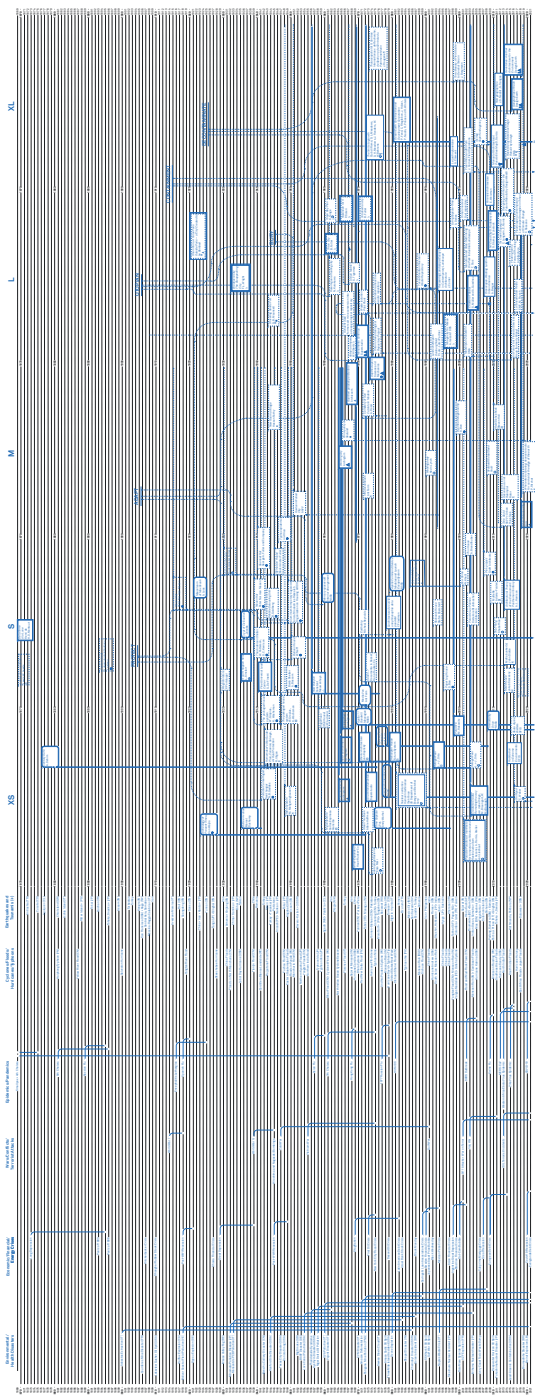
Figure 7b

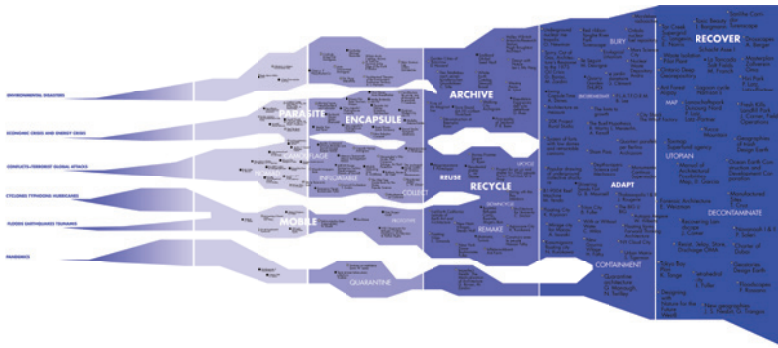
*The Process
of Archiving:
Preliminary
and Advanced
Diagrams
(Zoomed-In Views)*

Note. This diagram
further refines
the proposed
cartography,
incorporating
the archiving
categories adopted
in a more advanced
phase of the project
research (Figure 6).



Scan the QR code to
view the figure online



**Figure 8**

*Archrypt Collection
Criteria: Crises
(Environmental,
Economic,
Conflicts, Extreme
Environmental
Conditions,
Pandemics) and
Design Strategies
and Tactics
(Sheltering,
Camouflaging,
Isolating, Reusing,
etc.) (Diagram)*



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view the figure online

THROUGH ARCHITECTURE: RETRACING, DESIGNING, AND NARRATING THE ARCHIVE FOR THE POST-APOCALYPTIC FUTURE

Designed as a medium for transmitting memory, Archrypt emerges from a process of mediation between content—the theoretical recognition and archiving of projects and theories—and container—the architectural object that preserves and transmits this knowledge. Addressing the challenge of resisting throughout a long-term temporal dimension, the design process intertwined practical considerations such as materiality and scale with more speculative ones necessary to envision hypothetical scenarios where this object would exist. In this sense, speculative design became a crucial narrative tool for envisioning apocalyptic futures, projecting various settlement hypotheses from urban centers to remote locations, and experimenting with the issues of recognizability and protection.

How can we make the archive visible and accessible to people in the distant future? What kind of architecture can withstand the continuous erosive effects of time and remain recognizable and visitable even in the far future?

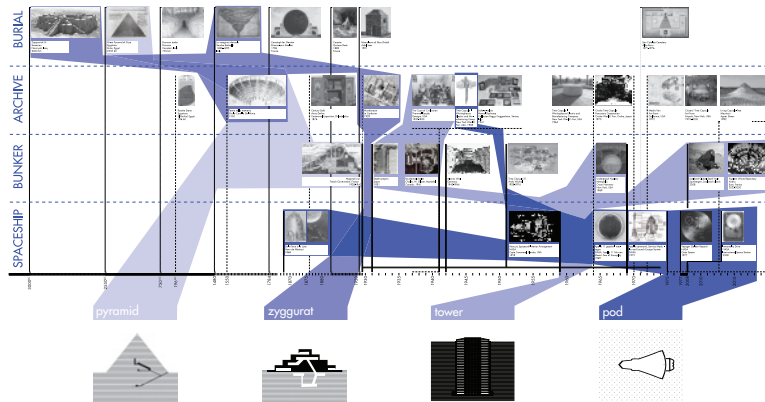
These questions arose from an examination of the archetypal architectures humans have employed since the dawn of civilization to preserve their memories and cultures for future generations. Five categories emerged that, though differing in size and configuration, share the common goal of protecting and transmitting their contents across time: archives, burials, bunkers, spaceships, and nuclear waste repositories (Figure 9).

Figure 9

*Archrypt
Genealogy:
Re-Mapping of
Archetypical
Archiving Spatial
Devices to Shape
the Form of the
Archive's Container
(Diagram)*



Scan the QR code to
view the figure online



The first category embraces the archives, which are relational objects that, through stratification, selection, and categorization of their content, simultaneously perform a mnemonic displacement to transmit information to the future and a political choice that selects which side of the story will be preserved (Giannachi, 2016). Embodying how the formal organization of space can affect the learning process, archives can take various forms, ranging from Giulio Camillo del Minio's amphitheater in *Teatro della Memoria* (1550) to Ant Farm's buried vehicle in *Citizens' Time Capsule* (1975–2000) and even Agnes Denes' mountain-like artwork in *Tree Mountain – A Living Time Capsule* (1992).

Burial sites, shaped by social and religious beliefs, are funerary architectures built to accompany the deceased on their transitional journey to the afterlife while ensuring their memory for future generations. Across various cultures and epochs, they seek to create recognizable and iconic forms, including the Ziggurat of Ur in Iraq (3000 BC), the Pyramid of Giza in Egypt (2550 BC), the Cenotaph for Isaac Newton by Étienne-Louis Boullée (1784), and the San Cataldo Cemetery by Aldo Rossi (1971–1976). A further category is the bunker, originally intended to protect cargo but repurposed during the World Wars to safeguard human lives. These concrete structures have been adapted into various defensive objects (Virilio, 1994), appearing in cities as underground domestic appendices or as extensive fortified landscapes, such as the Maginot Line in France (1928–1940).

Another category includes nuclear waste repositories, which are designed to securely contain highly hazardous materials—specifically nuclear waste and its radiation—deep underground while experimenting with monumental surface structures designed to convey a warning message to future generations.

Spaceships represent a distinct category within this framework. They operate in time and enable human exploration of outer space, embodying core concepts such as drifting, discovering, and venturing into new worlds. Providing a safe cockpit in uncertain environments, spaceships have been used for launching humans and animals into space as well as transporting time capsules and messages beyond Earth, as exemplified by the Immortality Drive (NASA, 2008).

Thus, Archrypt emerges through negotiation and hybridization within the detected genealogy, constructing a recognizable space for a post-apocalyptic future. It is defined as a ready-made operation by combining a ziggurat (the body of the archive) with a pyramid (a strong exterior landmark) and a space shuttle (a symbolic underground entrance), superimposed at the extremes of this volume. This configuration aligns with the transversal and universal need for the symbolic recognition of a container that conveys the message (Figures 10 and 11).

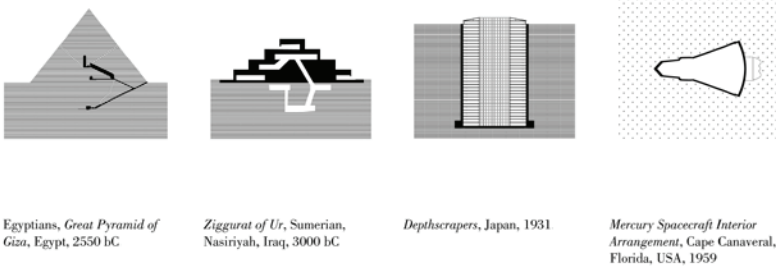
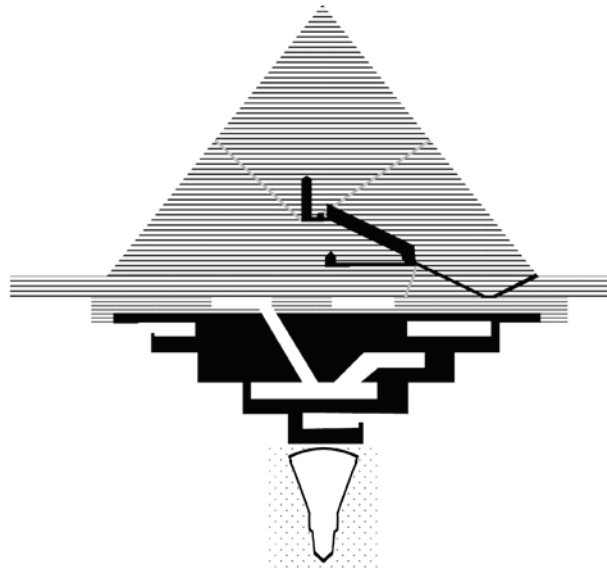


Figure 10

*Archrypt
Ready-Made:
Manipulating
Archetypical
Spatial Devices
to Assemble
the Archive's
Container
(Diagram)*

Figure 11

Archrypt Ready-Made: Manipulating Archetypical Spatial Devices to Assemble the Archive's Container (Diagram)



The ziggurat and the stepped skyscraper reverse their direction and density, obtaining a cavity to organize the archive through an articulated scanning of architectural content. The progressive degradation of the ziggurat's shape follows the archive's logic: its spatial sequentiality accompanies and integrates the different sizes of the selected projects, transitioning from larger urban and territorial scales to gradually smaller dimensions, culminating in the individual domestic shelter and, finally, the object. Furthermore, this study seeks to examine how to construct a message that anyone, even ten thousand years from now, can understand. To address this, it analyzes the theoretical positions proposed by Carl Sagan in his *Voyager Golden Record* (1977), which included a deciphering key for its translation. Based on this premise, the project foresees spatial decoding consisting of a dimensional reference system to different units, such as the metric system and the Modulor measurement system. Moreover, since the issue of transmission plays a central role in defining the archive's physicality—requiring it to transcend verbal communication—its content needs to be embodied and conveyed materially and tactfully. This is achieved through concrete maquettes that the future visitor can directly experience, including drawings, diagrams, models, visions, texts, and samples of both anthropic and natural materials. These elements collectively compose a potential

ready-made for the hypothetical discoverers of the future. In contrast, vertical connections cross the different scales, identifying thematic pathways related to the six disaster categories. These connections end at the upper level, where the message intended for future humans is located, alongside the dimensional references necessary to decode all the archive's projects (Figures 12 and 13).

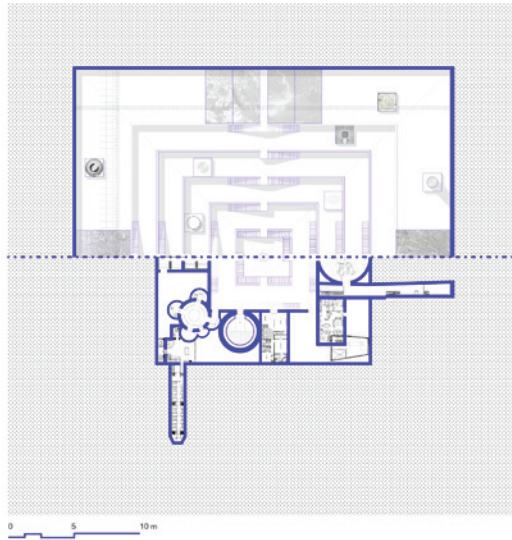


Figure 12

*The Resulting
Cadavre Exquis:
Archrypt Archive
Project (Plan)*

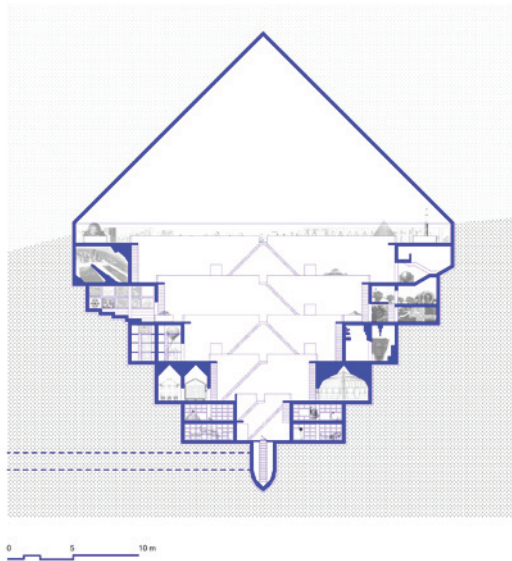


Figure 13

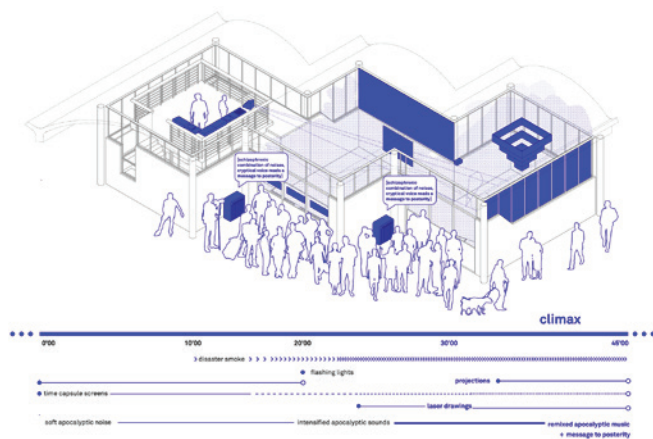
*The Resulting
Cadavre Exquis:
Archrypt Archive
Project (Section)*

FOR ARCHITECTURE: ACTIVATING, PRACTICING, AND PERFORMING THE ARCHIVE FOR THE APOCALYPTIC PRESENT

The systemic inquiry and design synthesis undertaken in this study resulted in learning from the permacrisis, generating knowledge and rethinking architecture to cope with its renewed status. This process involves reframing the tools necessary for such adaptation and experimenting with the question of transmission as an everyday spatial practice within the apocalyptic present. On the one hand, the design experimentation enacting the crisis for architecture offered the challenge of disseminating knowledge produced from a research-led academic context to a wider yet situated community. On the other hand, it provided the spatial and temporal framework for deconstructing the crisis at stake while making it visible, thereby enhancing subjective imagination and fostering collective reformulation through design practice.

In response to the outbreak of the COVID-19 crisis, the multimedia installation and performance, *Apocalipsis Cum Figuris: The Time Capsule as Architecture for the End Times* (Croce et al., 2020a) faced a real catastrophe, positioning architecture as both a material object and an immaterial medium for experimentation. Evoking the apocalyptic gaze of Dürer's woodcuts (ca. 1498) and the desecrating tone of Tafuri's prelude in *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* (1987), the design experimentation aimed at simulating the Archrypt *dispositif* by activating its content, redesigning its container as a site-specific event, and performing the apocalypse as a collective ritual. This act sought to architecturally exorcise both the potential end(s) of the world(s) or end(s) of architecture in the age of permacrisis (Figure 14).

Figure 14
Multimedia
Installation and
Performance
Axonometric



The imposed social distancing implied the reformulation of archive transmission, activating its performativity. Thus, the time capsule is conceived as a performative and narrative apparatus, where the dynamic stream of interactive information produces an inversion: architecture no longer serves as a container but speaks for itself. Consequently, the site for the expositive installation—the former petrol station known as Stazione Rogers, named in honor of one of its architects, Ernesto Nathan Rogers of the architecture firm BBPR, and today repurposed as a cultural hub—was temporarily reshaped into a time capsule following four main design principles: inaccessibility, extension of architectural elements through different media, simultaneity of representation, and dynamic interaction with environmental conditions.

The time capsule is inherently inaccessible, a condition intensified by the pandemic, which necessitated physical distancing and influenced the artefact's design. By testing Stazione Rogers as the container, the performance established a conceptual and physical link between the vessel and its contents. This inaccessibility fostered novel modes of engagement, shifting from traditional exhibitions to multimedia installations and performances. As a result, Stazione Rogers was transformed into a modern time capsule and a virtual magic lantern. Architecture is reimagined as a dynamic medium of representation, integrating physical and digital elements. The structure transcends static spatial sequences, merging moving images, drawings, models, and sensory elements such as lights and sound to create a layered, transformative environment. This interplay adapts to daylight variations, turning the surrounding context into an interactive influence field. The installation orchestrates simultaneous interactions among images, sounds, lights, objects, people, and environmental elements like cars and boats. These components converge into a multidimensional, synesthetic experience, blending representation with the surrounding environment to evoke an apocalyptic narrative (Figure 15). The project culminates in a multimedia performance that merges research on the apocalypse with an immersive narrative, synthesizing lights, sounds, and spatial elements into a dynamic, interactive portrayal of end-time scenarios.

Figure 15

*Multimedia
Installation and
Performance
Pictures*



AN OPEN EPILOGUE: UNFOLDING THE DEATH OF ARCHITECTURE TO STATE THE REBIRTH OF ARCHITECTURAL CRITICAL THINKING

The issues that guided us in conducting this research started from a broader and more general reflection on the current disciplinary condition. After the end of the grand narratives of the 20th century, postmodern relativism created the illusion of a world pacified by an infinite horizontal galaxy of *Weltanschauung*. However, history is by no means over; it has reawakened, offering evidence of uncontrolled development and the explosion of latent and only momentarily dormant conflicts. The return to a reality principle has not brought back the heroic era of metanarratives, new worldviews, and hopeful visions for the future. Instead, it has only brought the awareness of an anomalous state of general crisis, akin to Gramsci's concept of interregnum. In this uncertain context in which concepts such as sustainability, resilience, green design, and other commercial labels only function as palliative and naive slogans, we are forced to reflect on the role of architecture immersed in an unstable dimension.

What kind of architecture, then, should emerge in such a context, given that the most sustainable building is the one that is never constructed, the built environment is the outcome and mirror of social inequalities and injustices, and the discipline lies between moral qualms and Faustian bargains? Every moment of crisis demands an interval of contemplation. If we push the scale of catastrophes to its extreme, we can only elaborate on the grave of a discipline that, trapped in a perennial state of crisis, seems doomed to an indefinite impasse. In collecting the scraps of architecture's attempts to produce immediate, hypothetical, or utopian answers to problems beyond its sphere of influence, we are once again reminded Tafuri's lapidary words and his wish for an "architecture

obliged to return to pure architecture, to form without Utopia; in the best cases, to sublime uselessness” (Tafuri, 1976, p. ix).

In the face of a tragic condition in which a state of permacrisis offers no clear path to redemption and the world seems to be on the brink of collapse, any utopian disciplinary vagueness or the mere illusion of being able to make an impact within an exacerbated situation appears to be nothing more than the affable narrative of the captain aboard a sinking ship. Rather, we believe that within the paradox set by permacrisis, the only remaining course of action is to reset every function, every ideology of the project, transfiguring projects and theoretical hopes into their recombined fragments (Tafuri, 1974).

With the awareness that the archive is always a relational device (Giannachi, 2016) capable of orienting unprecedented processes, the idea of reworking architectural projects and theories related to crises—and recombining them in collages and *capricci*—aims to undermine the determinist approach of the cause-effect relationship. Even if the projects are selected as a direct or supposed responses to specific crises and catastrophes, their decontextualized and hybridized recombination of a fragment—such as Dymaxion House with pieces of *Monumento Continuo* (Superstudio, 1971)—triggers alienating spatial relationships. Precisely for this reason, it generates multiple frictions and unexpected results. The selection, narration, and activation of a collage of unexpected fragments, unhealed rifts, ruins, and neglected leftovers reveal how the collapse of the ideological premises of architecture may turn into its figurative and speculative potential reformulation. In the age of permacrisis, rather than focusing on actual solutions, architecture may critically serve to render problems more visible. We do not believe it is architecture’s role to save the world(s). However, we do believe that the discipline must find ways to navigate uncertainty and define distant speculative scenarios. By embracing an intentionally speculative narrative, Archrypt emerges as a critical work on the need to transmit the memory of architecture and the architecture of memory—an active, experimental device that questions the discipline’s role within a perpetual state of crisis, simultaneously operating a memory projective device for a remote and uncertain future³.

³ This study provides a fresh and systematic reformulation of the collective research project undertaken by the authors alongside their individual research as PhD candidates at the University of Trieste and the University of Udine, Italy, from 2019 to 2022. Preliminary results and findings have been previously presented, published, and exhibited (Croce et al., 2020a, 2020b, 2021a, 2021b).

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