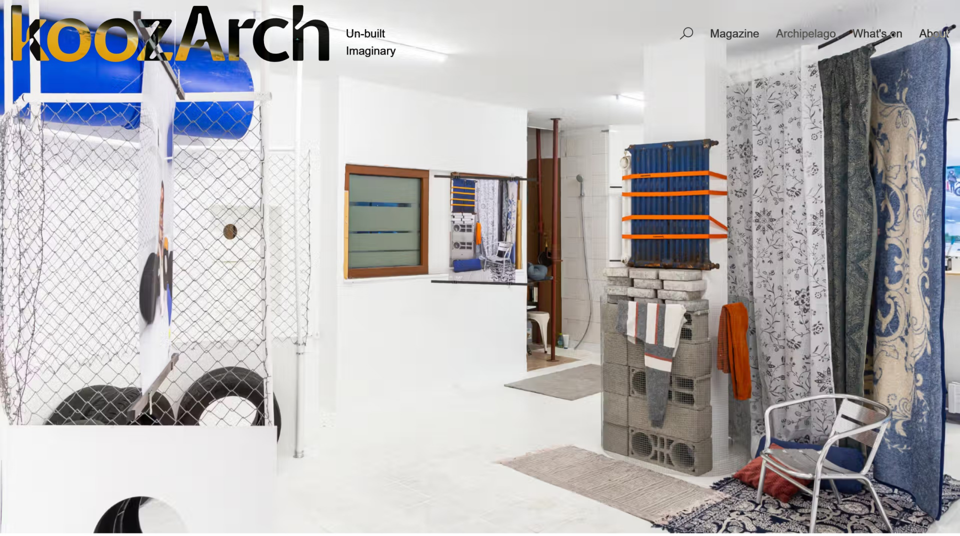


Conversations

No Alternative: when necessity overrides systems

Forced Reuse investigates adaptive reuse driven by acute community needs — when users, rather than architects or designers, independently repurpose materials and environments.

In this conversation, KOSMOS Architects, Gili Merin and Valentina De Luigi discuss architecture beyond the traditional architect and the meaning of temporality, permanence and flexibility behind the non-professional reuse of building elements and spaces.

FEDERICA ZAMBELETTI / KOOZ **Let's begin with the origins of this research. Could you explain how the concept of the Forced Reuse project was developed and whether it arose from individual interests or the specific focuses of your practices?**

ARTEM KITAEV In our case, research never begins with identifying important topics or specific problems. Rather, it's a long-term, slow observation of things that have intrigued us for years. This particular idea originated from the early days of KOSMOS, when we were not yet an office but rather a group of friends searching for alternatives to mainstream, designed architecture. Our interest was both aesthetic, exploring how things could look different, and practical, seeking to uncover the ingenuity behind often overlooked or hidden solutions.

Forced reuse, by its very nature, involves materials and practices that

Interviewee(s) Valentina De Luigi, Artem Kitaev, Gili Merin, Leonid Slonimskiy
Interviewer(s) Federica Zambeletti x KoozArch
Published 26 Mar 2025
Reading time 20 minutes
Share
Topics Exhibition
Re-use & Repair
Building as Research

Related Articles by topic Exhibition

Conversations 12 Mar 2025
Ripples, Traces, Drifts: Jingru (Cyan) Cheng and Chen Zhan on process-oriented practice

Conversations 03 Mar 2025

people would typically prefer to avoid. Behind these often ambiguous and unconventional solutions, we found fascinating and practical reinterpretations of materials and resources. This constant intrigue drove us to formulate our interest in the subject, which we explored further through various academic projects and artistic interventions.

> "Forced reuse, by its very nature, involves materials and practices that people would typically prefer to avoid."

- Artem Kitaev

LEONID SLONIMSKIY One intriguing aspect of Forced Reuse is that it challenges us to rethink how we build. It raises questions about whether we should be confined by conventional practices and the established limits of the architectural and construction industries. Forced reuse involves using spaces or constructing new objects from smaller elements. At its core, we aren't even referring to these things as materials or buildings — it's about spaces, elements, and objects. This perspective allows us to return to the fundamental principles of architectural construction.

What's also noteworthy is the concept of shame associated with these practices. In our research, we often find information about forced reuse on so-called 'trashy' websites that mock these solutions. However, these sources provide valuable insights into innovative and practical approaches to architecture. These unconventional solutions are often more intelligent, ecological, conscious, and economical than traditional, designed architecture.

We have always been obsessed with this topic. Initially, we explored it through academic projects and artistic interventions. A few years ago, we conducted a design studio with architecture students, which was our first formal exploration of the topic. Over time, we realised the phenomenon's broader significance, leading to the formation of our current, structured research project with Gili, Valentina, and HEAD.

> "It's often marginal communities that are compelled to practice forced reuse, and this is where we find the most interesting examples of responsible, rational, and mindful reuse driven by survival rather than accolades."

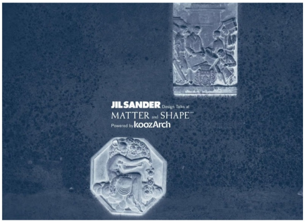
- Gili Merin

GILI MERIN What intrigued me about this project is the larger question surrounding the climate crisis, capitalism, and the construction industry. The current construction industry follows a very linear process that prioritises demolition and new construction, benefiting a few manufacturers while neglecting the need for circularity and reuse. Forced reuse shifts attention to contexts like refugee camps, post-colonial regions, and political situations where reuse occurs out of necessity rather than design. Unlike the shiny objectives of awards like BREEAM and LEED given to new buildings, forced

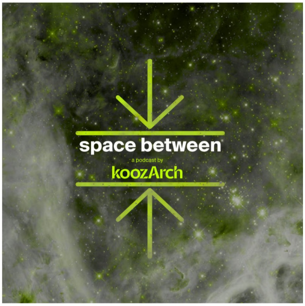
Before the film: storyboards and other elastic renderings at Osservatorio Fondazione Prada

Conversations 26 Feb 2025
A Farm in Gaza: Part Two

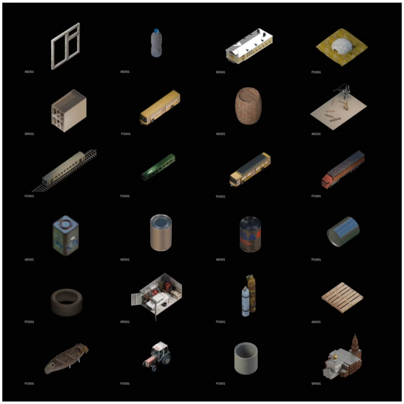
Conversations 14 Feb 2025
Translated Into Socialism: multinational ideologies at Salt Galata



OPEN
CALL
TEACHING
FELLOWSHIPS
APPLY UNTIL 1 AUGUST 2025



reuse focuses on the simple, adaptive reuse of everyday things. It's often marginal communities that are compelled to practice forced reuse, and this is where we find the most interesting examples of responsible, rational, and mindful reuse driven by survival rather than accolades. For me, the bigger context is not about creating new green buildings but repurposing existing structures in a less shiny but more impactful way.



1/3

Forced Reuse case studies, components before reuse. Drawings by Kosmos Architects

⟵ ⟶

VALENTINA DE LUIGI I joined the project later, after Leonid, Artem, and Gili had already initiated it. I became involved when we secured funding from the school, enabling us to conduct this research properly over a year and a half. My background is in sociology, as I am a social scientist. What intrigued me about this project was the idea of non-architectural people driving the force behind reuse.

Adaptive reuse, as we know it from an architectural standpoint, involves repurposing spaces. However, the concept of forced reuse goes beyond that. It's about people who are truly in need and make changes to spaces because they must. This necessity arises from crises — whether economic, political, or otherwise. As Gili mentioned, forced reuse occurs because these communities have no other choice.

KOOZ This leads to two questions. Leonid, the concept of non-pedigreed architecture was mentioned, as well as the idea of architecture beyond the traditional architect. How does this form of practice challenge the conventional norms that dominate architectural practice, and to what extent does it liberate the field from these conventions?

LS I'd like to mention that the term is a kind of reference to the work of Bernard Rudofsky. This expression carries a somewhat pejorative connotation, implying that a well-educated architect is looking down on 'non-pedigreed' architects. Our research aims to break away from this convention. While there are many skilled individuals in the profession, we believe the terminology itself needs to be rethought.

AK I think it's indeed a very important word, and it probably reflects the entire development of architecture in the last century. Western society has done an excellent job of constantly developing new construction methods to create the safest, most comfortable, and most beautiful houses. However, this paradigm has only been possible with almost unlimited material resources. As soon as we consider resource availability, many existing conventions become unsustainable.

If we take a global view, some countries have achieved the highest

No to demolition.
houseeurope.eu
Yes to renovation.

Subscribe to the Newsletter

Craving a bit of KoozArch in your inbox? Sign up to our newsletters and we'll keep you posted with everything great going on in the realm of the un-built.

Name
Lastname
Profession
E-mail address

☐ I have read and agreed to the Privacy Policy

Subscribe

building standards at the expense of extreme resource demand. This is not a sustainable development model, as the planet cannot support such standards universally. Within the professional community, it is now clear that we need an alternative. We look for alternatives in well-organised practices with longer traditions, like vernacular architecture, or what we call contemporary vernacular. These practices were not designed and institutionalised in the same way modern educational institutions operate, but they represent an attitude towards resources and ingenuity passed down through generations without having a clear authorship of a particular person or group of people.

It's not just about specific examples, like building with empty olive cans or concrete rings; it's about recognising potential in places where it would normally go unnoticed. The main ambition of this research is to offer ways to do things differently, to challenge conventional approaches, and to discover new attitudes toward resource use.

> "For us, the political and social context is crucial in understanding what propels people to reuse and the obstacles they face, such as legislation."
>
> - Gili Merin

GM As Artem mentioned, the idea of doing things differently often involves looking beyond traditional architects. The term 'non-pedigreed,' as Leonid noted, doesn't imply a lack of professionalism but rather a different kind of expertise. This knowledge, often passed down through generations, can produce some of the best work because it isn't constrained by conventional norms.

Regarding Bernard Rudofsky, he used the term 'without architects' which carried a sense of transgression, even exoticism. His work, while visually stimulating, often lacked the political and social context that led to these examples. Our research aims to contradict this by understanding the reasons behind these practices. We focus on contexts such as refugee camps, migrant communities, nomadic tribes, and post-Soviet regions. For us, the political and social context is crucial in understanding what propels people to reuse and the obstacles they face, such as legislation.

In our work, we prioritise understanding these contexts and rely on photographs taken by local users since we decided to opt-out of unnecessary trips — instead, we wanted to speak to locals. We also create our own drawings and mock-ups to comprehend these practices. Our approach leans towards creating blueprints and manuals, aiming to provide this practical intelligence for future use, rather than just producing a visually appealing atlas.

VDL The political, sociological, and legislative context is really important. We've found that most examples of forced reuse arise in spaces where the legislation allows for such practices, often where the regulations are less strict. For instance, in Switzerland, we found fewer examples due to stricter legislation. In other countries, however, the regulations are more relaxed, allowing for more creative reuse.Regarding the visuals, as Artem mentioned, it's about recognising potential without necessarily focusing on traditional notions of architectural beauty. We don't look for picturesque images but rather seek to understand and highlight the ingenuity and practicality behind these solutions.

AK So, it's more about understanding the logic and attitude towards resources rather than focusing on specific design solutions. It's an approach, a mindset, rather than a particular tool or instrument for design.

1/5

From the demolition of Um Mitnan, Photo by Suzan Abo Kosh (2024)

⟵ ⟶

KOOZ I recently reviewed a conference by an archaeologist discussing reuse practices in Pompeii. Figures within the Roman Empire were dedicated to salvaging and reusing building parts, including various materials such as crushed vases used in mosaics. How far back and wide does your research extend in terms of temporality and geographic scope? Additionally, since you are not traveling to these locations, what materials and methods do you use for analysing and identifying these practices?"

LS In our general research project discussions, we acknowledged that the practice of reuse is an ancient one. There is even a famous diagram called the "temporary loss of common sense," which illustrates how people have historically tried to repair and reuse objects. However, during the industrialization and post-industrialization periods, this practice shifted towards demolition.

AK I'd like to add that the practice of reuse was never truly lost; it has always been driven by economics. As long as the cost of materials was higher than the labour cost for salvaging, repurposing, repairing and disassembling, reuse made sense. The advent of fossil fuel machinery in the 20th century brought a revolution, making it cheaper to remove and extract new materials. Consequently, the cost of human labour for disassembly and repurposing became comparatively higher, pushing reuse into the luxury category. It's important to understand that as we face different resource availability now, we need to prepare for new practices.

It's important to rethink how we could organise our practice now, considering the current state of the industry. We are no longer in an era when thousands of people were required to build things by hand, but rather at examples relevant to contemporary practice.

LS That's a very good proposition. As Gili mentioned, the term "manual" is something we've discussed. We haven't officially named it yet, but we refer to it as Forced Reuse Research. We've considered whether the project should become a type of manual or include an appendix called "manual." We envision this research not just as theoretical literature but also as a practical book we can refer to and use to refresh our approach to construction. For instance, in a recent meeting at our office, we mentioned that when the book or brochure is finished, our colleagues at KOSMOS can always refer to it. It's not like a grand work of Le Corbusier or some 18th-century famous architect. Our focus is on the last 20 to 30 years, encompassing contemporary practices.

"It’s simple: forced reuse means that external conditions have changed, compelling people to adapt. We don't refer to conventional adaptive reuse."

- Artem Kitaev

GM This research is, in a way, an alternative or even a resistance to conventional guides like Neufert's and other construction manuals from early modern Europe. These manuals dictate regulations for building chairs, rooms, houses, and buildings. Our approach is an alternative to such traditional guidelines, and it draws on historical practices, like the Roman reuse of building materials. Discussing these historical examples helped us create categories for reuse.

Our focus is on forced reuse driven by necessity, rather than symbolic acts like moving an obelisk or a column for statement purposes. Forced reuse involves repurposing materials and spaces due to ideological downgrading or excess availability. For instance, luxury homes in Havana were subdivided into multiple apartments due to their high ceilings, similar to how a dictator's palace in Africa was converted into a market due to its spacious design. Understanding these categories and the differences between forced reuse and conventional adaptive reuse helps us compare practices across different geographical contexts.

AK It’s simple: forced reuse means that external conditions have changed, compelling people to adapt. We don't refer to conventional adaptive reuse, like converting a parking lot into a theater due to city planning developments. Instead, we focus on broader reasons, such as economic conditions that turn a theater into a parking lot, or political regimes that repurpose vast spaces. For instance, in Soviet cases, ideology changes led to the purposeful disgrace of churches and cathedrals to undermine religious authority.

One of the ultimate goals of our research is to reveal current legislation that prevents efficient, practical use of resources. Legislation has never been as strict as it is now, limiting our ability to conduct practical reuse. The system often consumes vast resources, and attempts to regulate reuse are experimental and complex. Many radical adaptations can only be labeled as experiments and are not implemented in everyday life due to legislative limitations.

LS This topic of legislation and bureaucracy is critical. Legislation can change over time, but bureaucracy often adds an extra layer of difficulty, using paper processes to prevent certain actions. It's interesting that many examples of forced reuse would never receive official permission if people followed formal procedures. For instance, building a bridge out of an old train would likely be prohibited, even if no laws explicitly prevent it.

AK But if you supply drawings of a metal frame of the train as a bridge structure, you would get the permission, even though structurally it could perform identically. Another important aspect is the craftsman or artisan culture. In many Western European countries, there are simply no trained hands capable of reuse because the construction industry is organised around prefabricated solutions. Few people can craft unconventional designs, build by hand, and connect things in unpredictable ways. If such craftsmanship exists, it's usually extremely expensive. It's much easier to buy prefabricated construction solutions and assemble them. However, as soon as you need to cut and fit things, it becomes a disaster on the construction site. Most likely, it either wouldn't be built, would be extremely expensive, or would have significant mistakes. This highlights the capability to build — or lack thereof —

of current European industry.

1/6

San Ignacio no. 360 in Plaza Vieja, Havana. Photo by Frederikke Friderichsen (2006) from the publication Editing Havana: Stories of Popular Housing, nby Maja Asaa, Ernesto Oroza, and Mira Kongstein.

KOOZ This brings us back to something Gili mentioned at the beginning: the idea of agency and shifting it from a few individuals or contractors back to the people or a different market. Could you expand on this concept and how contextualising it helps understand the potential for rerouting labour?

GM One of the most interesting cases for me relates to the idea of legality. There's a case study of the Bedouins in the Naqab/Negev desert, where it was deemed illegal for them to build any kind of housing. They're forced to use whatever materials they have to build their homes, often creating semi-nomadic tents using fabrics, straw, and salvaged materials. They face constant demolition and displacement.

In this context, the materials' light and easy-to-assemble nature allows them to disassemble and reassemble their homes when displaced. This connects to previous nomadic practices but under the ethnocratic framework of a country like Israel where Bedouins are not allowed to move freely. It raises questions about what constitutes a home — whether it needs to be enclosed or can simply be a space for living and cooking.

In this sense, agency is given to people who must find solutions for different forced reasons. As architects, we should shift our focus to these areas, listen to these communities, and create blueprints to combat bureaucratic obstacles to reuse. There are numerous obstacles to reusing materials — economic, bureaucratic, supply chain, and aesthetic reasons. We need to translate these practices into operational guidelines to overcome these obstacles.

AK We're questioning how we should organise the industry. If we have a bus that could work as a bridge, why should we go through all the bureaucracy if we need that bridge tomorrow? This is a complex discussion, and we don't claim to have all the answers or offer a clear structure for changing the industry. Instead, we aim to spark ideas and discussions about whether the current system, including the legal and bureaucratic aspects, is organised in the most efficient way. While we understand the importance of safety and legal rights, we're introducing alternative visions of how things could be done.

LS Which is the vision for the crisis situation. As we said, there aren't many examples of such practices in countries not experiencing an urgent crisis, but when a crisis does happen, it also appears in countries like

Germany, the United States, and Switzerland. Then, stadiums become houses for refugees, and people start sleeping in improvised solutions.

When society at large faces such problems, they return to the concept of forced reuse. They start discarding superficial and bureaucratic concerns and focus on common sense solutions. We speak about the resource crisis, but many don't see it as an actual crisis like a pandemic, war, or earthquake. When a problem arises, people revert to these solutions, which we see as genuine moments.

As architects, we try to see the beauty in these moments. We look at crises not just as unfortunate events but also as opportunities for smart, interesting, and sometimes humorous solutions. These moments of crisis bring about innovative ideas that we, as architects, can learn from. We can appreciate their intelligence and wit, proposing something really meaningful in limited situations.

> "We speak about the resource crisis, but many don't see it as an actual crisis like a pandemic, war, or earthquake. When a problem arises, people revert to these solutions, which we see as genuine moments."

- Leonid Slonimskiy

GM I think this question of the crisis is really important. Many times, the world tries to tackle the climate crisis by looking at the Anthropocene, which is how humans have shaped the world into a new geological era. However, our lens tries to look at it from the perspective of the Capitalocene, a term Jason Moore and Donna Haraway use. This is not the Anthropocene because not all humans are to blame for this current crisis. We don't all have the same ontological relationship with the environment; it's actually the era of capitalism defined by exploitation, colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy on a global scale.

Once we shift to this lens, it's not about humans but about capital extraction. This allows us to identify different obstacles we can fight against, such as the supply chains consolidated by a few, causing stagnation in the industry. By changing our perspective, we can see the scalability of forced reuse. As Leonid mentioned, it's about small elements that make a big thing. We can look at forced reuse, whether it's a car tire or a cathedral, to understand the logic of the phenomenon. It's not about geography, typology, or chronology, but about logic. By understanding this logic, we can implement it in industrialised countries to counter the current crisis.

VDL It's really about ingenuity. Sometimes it's a train wagon, sometimes it's a Coca-Cola bottle. We really try to look at how the original purpose changes significantly. While a bottle might remain a bottle, other items transform the final space to another level. It's a mix of the forced context, people's ingenuity, and the materials available to them.

> "It's really about ingenuity. Sometimes it's a train wagon, sometimes it's a Coca-Cola bottle. We really try to look at how the original purpose changes significantly."

- Valentina De Luigi

1/6 Buses reused in “Avtobusniki” village on the outskirts of Moscow. Photos: Alexey Naroditskiy (2012) ⟵ ⟶

KOOZ Going back to temporality, we now build buildings to have a lifespan of 30 or 50 years, depending on the location. There are moments, like the COVID pandemic, that create the needs for a forced reuse over a specific amount of time. The temporary nature of these interventions can sometimes become more permanent. How does your research position itself in relation to this temporality, and what happens when an urgency has passed, but the legacy of that urgency remains?

AK It's interesting to consider not only how the temporary becomes permanent but also how the permanent becomes temporary. Many structures we consider permanent are often used for years or months without change, but one of architecture's essential qualities is its ability to change and adapt alongside society. It's almost impossible to plan facilities that will remain unchanged for decades, especially as we face so many shifts and challenges, including resource crises, social crises, and political crises.

We probably need to shift our design approach towards more temporary solutions and see how these temporary solutions receive more permanent meaning. This is not only relevant to our current research but also to other projects where we investigate how permanent our designs should be for temporary needs.

LS We often think about this contradiction, which we call "permanently temporary." For example, hospitals or banks built twenty years ago with valuable materials are now demolished due to urban regulations, energy regulations, or economic reasons. At the same time, refugee camps stand for fifteen or twenty years with people living in makeshift houses of plastic bags and tires.

These contradictions lead us to important questions. One interesting solution is to learn from cases like the Bedouins, as Gili mentioned. Temporary shouldn't mean low quality or poisonous materials. Instead, temporary should be about a constant, permanent development of architecture using good quality, ecological materials. The economy, politics, and climate will change, and buildings should adapt.

> "Temporary should be about a constant, permanent development of architecture using good quality, ecological materials. The economy, politics, and climate will change, and buildings should adapt."
>
> - Leonid Slonimskiy

This adaptability may not be the key point of our research, but it's constantly visible in these cases. It opens our minds because when you consider materials or spaces as monofunctional, you fall into the idea of wastefulness. A wall can only be a wall in one typology, or a space can only be a gym or a hotel. When you shift this paradigm and understand that a gym can be a hotel or a ship can become a gym or hotel, you start thinking beyond conventions.

GM It goes back to the question of language we began with. The word "temporary" often has a negative connotation, implying something bad or cheap. However, we should think more about adaptability, fluidity, and responsiveness. These are the words we use for this research, and they should lead us forward, thinking about buildings as adaptable, fluid, and responsive to people's needs. Maybe we'll need server farms in the future, and that's it — places to put our deep-seek chips. But the idea is to build them in a way that they can be changed, adapted, and repurposed into new things. So you're not building a temporary pavilion or temporary building; you're building something from materials that are good and can be reused for many purposes. The idea of both temporary and permanent should be replaced with adaptability and fluidity, to really change the language.

AK It's an important shift. I'd highlight why these categories are crucial for us because they allow us to look at spatial configurations and how they could be reinterpreted, construction techniques and how they could be reinterpreted, and the resources where we could source materials for construction through urban mining and the leftovers of different industries. Therefore, we structure our research according to these three categories, as it's crucial to grasp them together for a more general overview of what's possible. We're speaking about a learning attitude, not exactly solutions, but how we could be more free and precise in the development of the contemporary built environment.

1/7

Forced Reuse Exhibition, January 2025, Foundation Clarté, Geneva. Photo: Raphaelle Mueller

⟵ ⟶

KOOZ **I appreciate your focus on intelligence and approach rather than solutions. I'm interested in how you aim to bring this repertoire, partially defined as a manual, forward in the coming months and years. Additionally, your research has the potential to engage citizens and other discourses — which audiences do you seek to engage?**

LS We just finished our draft exhibition in Geneva, where we first printed our research drawings, made physical models, and prototypes. We invited colleagues and friends to discuss and test how everything looked, allowing us to see the amount of produced research in a physical way. The second part of our project will hopefully take place in a couple of months in Milan, in a reuse space under the Milano train station, a space under the train tracks that used to be the old fruit and vegetable market. It's interesting to think about how the market, once central to the city's food distribution, is now becoming a space for education and new purposes.

We actually wanted this space more than a museum because of its symbolic importance. Speaking about the audience, I think this research is quite aimed at professionally trained architects. For instance, we teach at universities, and this can help break the idea that there are rigid ways to do architecture, as described in manuals like Neufert's or "Constructing Architecture." Our goal is to provoke a mentality shift in professionals, helping them see that unconventional solutions, like using a well-insulated boat as a shed, can be practical. While this topic can reach a larger audience due to its curious cases, I believe it is especially relevant for our field and colleagues. It can help them think beyond conventional approaches and embrace innovative solutions.

VDL We recently completed a semester with students on this subject. It helped them understand there is another way to build and visualise spaces. It's important to bring this question into the studies so future professionals can see alternative ways to create spaces, including interior spaces. Although we're in a school of interior architecture, the manual or handbook we produce afterward will be readable for everyone. It won't be too technical with plans and diagrams but rather something approachable for a broader audience.

AK We will never know how it will work out, but the highest ambition of publishing the book or research is to change the understanding of how things can be done. We have several categories in mind. One of the important players is politicians, who need to understand what has to be changed and reorganised in legislative aspects and general practice.

Secondly, the clients should see the beauty, smartness, and alternatives in such solutions through this research. It's about revealing that these solutions are not naive or stupid but have value and intelligence.

The third category is the professional community, including architects and designers, who might see potential where it wasn't seen before. We've learned a lot from this research, and it has been a focus from the beginning of our practice, inspiring many of our projects. The ultimate ambition is to reach both those who control the organization of the industry and those who consume it.

LS People leading the conventions, like those at construction fairs, often claim they know how to build. I respect their profession and business, but when I hear that, I want to oppose. They don't necessarily know how to build; it's about economic links and chains that dictate getting materials from far away countries, adding specific types of plastic, and selling under certain brands.

These are perhaps the third category important to address — after professionals, students, or architects. They might be prompt to oppose, the last to accept this research and its ideas, even more than politicians and clients.

> "Our ultimate goal should be to maintain balance, a key concept when discussing sensitive aspects like sustainability."
>
> - Artem Kitaev

AK We need to introduce new practices, not just add an ecological certification to products. It's important to discuss how things can be built differently because many sustainability standards are contradictory and sometimes lose common sense. Producers often try to meet these standards, but in doing so, they sometimes cheat the system. Our ultimate goal should be to maintain balance, a key concept when discussing sensitive aspects like sustainability. Often, proposals go against common sense to achieve certifications, leading to architecture that looks bizarre. To conclude, refreshing the meaning of common sense and balance is crucial. We see structures as constellations of many factors and challenges. We creatively and sensitively reinterpret available resources, whether material, construction, or space, to propose adequate solutions.

GM Just as a last side note, the way the research is composed in terms of visual media and textual representation also correlates with these audience categories. We have one-to-one mock-ups that can be understood by people who build, as they can see how these elements come together. We have colourful, beautiful drawings by the KOSMOS team, approachable for architects and students who don't yet know how to read blueprints.The 3D printed models also help in understanding the form and volume, making them visually accessible to students and young professionals.

We also plan to include essays in the manual for those wanting to dive deeper into the ideas and theories, potentially implementing them on a more global scale. Additionally, we have photographs that can speak to a broader audience, including those who might not be familiar with architecture. The combination of mock-ups, photographs, drawings, and textual essays covers all these categories of audiences we aim to reach.

Bios

Valentina De Luigi is a sociologist, interior designer and researcher, and is the deputy to the head of the interior architecture Department at HEAD – Genève, HES-SO. She has a Master in Social Sciences (University of Lausanne) and a Diploma of Specialised Higher Studies (DESS) in Globalisation and Social Regulation (Universities of Lausanne and Geneva). She also has a graduate diploma in interior design from the Chelsea College of Arts and Design (University of the Arts London). For Forced Reuse, Valentina is responsible for researching the anthropological and social background of the case studies and the grounding of the work in contemporary literature.

Artem Kitaev is an architect, architectural researcher, academic, and a founding partner of KOSMOS Architects. Artem is currently completing his PhD at TU Wien and serves as a member of the advisory board for Haus der Architektur in Graz. Prior to founding KOSMOS, he worked for four years at Herzog & de Meuron in Basel and three years at Meganom Architects in Moscow. Artem’s doctoral dissertation, “Continuous Transformation" explores the potential that arises during inter–typological transformation to new standards of use and the adaptation of obsolete structures to meet contemporary housing needs.

Gili Merin (PhD) is an architect, photographer, and academic based in Vienna. She studied architecture in Jerusalem, Tokyo, and Berlin, and obtained her PhD from the Architectural Association (AA) in London with Pier

Vittorio Aureli. She is the author of “Analogous Jerusalem” (Humboldt Books, 2025). Formerly the head of history and theory of architecture at the Royal College of Arts (RCA) and a Diploma Unit Master at the AA, she currently holds a post–doctoral position at the TU Vienna and is a researcher at HEAD – Genève, HES-SO.

Leonid Slonimskiy is an architect, architectural researcher, academic, and founding partner of the award–winning office KOSMOS Architects. Leonid is a professor at HEAD – Genève, HES-SO (Geneva University of Art and Design), where he leads the Forced Reuse research project. He received his architectural education at Moscow Architectural Institute and Columbia University GSAPP in New York. Leonid was previously a collaborator of OMA*AMO in New York and Herzog & de Meuron in Basel.

Federica Zambeletti is the founder and managing director of KoozArch. She is an architect, researcher and digital curator whose interests lie at the intersection between art, architecture and regenerative practices. In 2015 Federica founded KoozArch with the ambition of creating a space where to research, explore and discuss architecture beyond the limits of its built form. Prior to dedicating her full attention to KoozArch, Federica collaborated with the architecture studio and non-profit agency for change UNA/UNLESS working on numerous cultural projects and the research of "Antarctic Resolution". Federica is an Architectural Association School of Architecture in London alumni.

Related Articles by topic Re-use & Repair

Essays 18 Feb 2025

Rethinking the ready made: The OBEL Award 2025

By Federica Zambeletti x KoozArch

Editorial Partnership Building as Research Re-use & Repair

Conversations 09 Dec 2024

On Monumental Inheritance: Miriam Hillawi Abraham and Javier Ors Ausín on Lalibela

With Miriam Hillawi Abraham, Javier Ors Ausín

Heritage Re-use & Repair Art

Conversations 09 Nov 2024

Dynamic Cycles: Mio Tsuneyama on metabolic management

With Mio Tsuneyama

Re-use & Repair Building as Research Buildings that Matter

Conversations 04 Oct 2024

Following Fellows: Cycles of Transformation

With Jade Apack, DOING.pt , George Guledani, FFRU, Studio ACTE, Margarida Waco

Partnership Re-use & Repair Regeneration

Subscribe to the Newsletter

Craving a bit of KoozArch in your inbox? Sign up to our newsletters and we'll keep you posted with everything great going on in the realm of the un-built.

Name Lastname Profession

E-mail address

☐ I have read and agreed to the Privacy Policy Subscribe

©2025
KoozArch