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**TITLE**

Operational Criticism and Architectural Archives: Connecting Research and Teaching; Blurring Boundaries between Past, Present and Future of Design

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**ABSTRACT**

More than two decades ago, critic and ETSAB professor Carles Martí Aris pointed out that the weakening of architectural thought and the shortcomings in architectural academic research were largely due to the uncritical adoption of extra-disciplinary frameworks. These approaches have led to a diminished understanding of the architectural project's potential to become a rigorous and objective research subject. This issue is particularly pronounced among architecture students, who are increasingly overwhelmed by technology and inundated with excessive information, often before they have developed the necessary skills to filter, process, and critically integrate that information into their education.

But the architectural project itself is a potential source of knowledge. In this sense, architectural archives reveal their significance. Combined with concepts like "operational criticism" ("crítica operativa")<sup>1</sup>, architectural archives are essential for developing design theory and creating a "micro-history of buildings."

The integration of archives and "operational criticism" greatly enhances teaching by seamlessly connecting three traditionally separate areas of pedagogy: Design, History,

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and Theory. The research seminar "Le Corbusier and the Loucheur Houses" at Fernando Pessoa University of Porto exemplifies this interconnected approach's effectiveness and educational potential. It immerses students in architects' archives, offering theoretical and practical perspectives on the project being studied. Thus, through profound observation, asking the right questions, and engaging in reflection, students can uncover the project's latent information.

This paper outlines the seminar process, the challenges encountered, and the outcomes achieved to illustrate the educational potential of working with architectural archives. It explores how archives can help reactivate a nonlinear narrative of architectural design, "re-witness" the past, and bridge the gap between architectural research and teaching. The seminar's central theme, focusing on minimal and flexible domestic spaces, engages students in a timely discussion that blurs the boundaries between design's past, present, and future.

1. A term coined by Carles Martí Aris to describe the study of architectural works and their creative process (*La cimbra y el arco*. 2ª ed, Fundación Caja de arquitectos, 2007, 18).