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**TITLE**

Growing from What Remains: Reuse at the Center of Practice and Education through the Carrier Bag Theory of Architecture

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**ABSTRACT**

This paper presents a case study of a repurposed swimming pool to introduce the *Carrier Bag Theory of Architecture* – a framework advocating for the reuse of existing buildings rather than their demolition and reconstruction. Evolving from Ursula K. Le Guin's *Carrier Bag Theory of Fiction*, this theory reimagines architecture not as a heroic act of creating from empty plots, but as a relational and collaborative process that flourishes through existing structures.

The focal case is a transformation project in the Florya Atatürk Forest, a significant landscape project established by Atatürk in the 1930s. After years of forestation efforts, bureaucrats occupying the forest for private use constructed villas and a swimming pool in the 1990s. Following a political shift in 2019, when a new mayor committed to reclaiming the forest for public use, the private villas were converted into offices for the Istanbul Planning Agency, and the swimming pool was repurposed into a public event space. In this context, the modest pool becomes a powerful tool for reclaiming public land and fostering collective engagement.

While the paper begins with this case study, it expands into a discussion of the 14 principles of the *Carrier Bag*

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**KEYWORDS**

reuse; architectural education; adaptive transformation; Carrier Bag Theory; existing structures

*Theory of Architecture*, as exhibited in the Venice Architecture Biennale, in 2023. The theory critiques the construction industry's addiction to building – often driven by economic reasons rather than spatial necessity – resulting in an excess of unused structures. This excess calls for reuse-focused strategies in both practice and education.

Although adaptive reuse has gained traction in recent decades, architectural education largely remains fixated on designing new buildings. When studio projects involve existing structures, students often struggle, as if architecture's value could only be measured in novelty or scale. Yet, existing structures are relational; they introduce complexity, messiness, and resistance – qualities that, paradoxically, make architecture more robust.

This paper asks: can the transformation of existing structures take center stage in both the construction industry and architectural education? Writing as the designer of the pool project, the author of the *Carrier Bag Theory*, and an educator working to restructure the architectural curriculum, I offer a multi-layered perspective on the possibilities of prioritizing reuse over destruction.