

The Hidden Spaces of Everyday Life: Learning from the Quotidian

CLAUS PEDER PEDERSEN, NAIME ESRA AKIN

CPP: Aarhus School of Architecture

NEA: Beykent University, Faculty of Engineering
and Architecture, Department of Architecture

KEYWORDS

everyday, architectural education, place,
mapping, narrative, transformation

The paper explores the notion of the 'everyday' in architectural education through the examination of six educational and research projects from the academic institutions of the authors in respectively Istanbul, Turkey and Aarhus, Denmark. The paper unpacks how the projects engage with topics of the everyday in various ways. A comparative analysis orders the projects according to how specifically they address particular everyday situations and to what extent they aim to transform the spaces and social interactions of the sites they engage. The analysis is contextualised through social and architectural theories of the everyday by among others Henri Lefebvre. The conclusion argues for the importance of continuous re-engagement with the everyday for architectural education.



INTRODUCTION

A comparative study of teaching and research projects forms the foundation of our answer to the Zagreb EAAE 2019 Annual Conference. The projects originate from Istanbul, Turkey and Aarhus, Denmark, where we are academically engaged. We set out looking for ‘the subliminal quality of architectural education’ addressed by the call by attempting to identify particular ways of engaging with architectural topics or contexts beyond what an academic curriculum or an architectural assignment can describe directly. We looked for concepts or methodological approaches that would enable us to map out relations and trajectories beyond the specificities of the individual studio or research project.

This search turned out to be a challenging task. The projects we examined vary in many ways. They stem from different contexts. One line of study projects originates from the metropolis of Istanbul. A city with a deep and complex history, culturally layered and characterised by rapid urbanisation. Another range of projects originates from the context of Aarhus a comparatively small town in the western part of Denmark. From the perspective of Istanbul, Aarhus might appear as a quiet and ordered place with modest and manageable urban and architectural problems and challenges although the thoroughly regulated planning (post-)welfare society occasionally challenges architectural creativity. The projects, originating from the two locations, address the context in different ways responding to the unorganised in-betweenness of Istanbul or the well-organised planning of Aarhus. The studio and research projects reflect our various roles in architectural education. The Turkish examples stem from the bachelor and master education, including international workshops as well as a research project by one of the paper’s authors. The Danish cases are all carried out by PhD students. We aligned very diverse projects to plot trajectories of ideas and concepts through them. What appeared to us after some shuffling around was a common interest in learning from everyday life.

Interests in overlooked, ordinary and pragmatically organised spaces and events characterised the projects we selected. We wanted to focus on how these spaces and events outside, in the margins of, or even in opposition to, conventional architectural awareness and intentions provide a continuous source of architectural discovery and learning. After examining the teaching and research projects, we attempted different ways of organising them to highlight possible relations and shared interests. We discussed whether it might make sense to classify them according to design intent, design methodologies, or to scale. Finally, we decided that it would make the most sense to abandon the

idea of organising them according to a single overarching theme. Instead, we chose to present them like pearls on a string based on locally shared concepts or methodologies. It is important to stress that the linking is our reading of the projects using the everyday as a lens and an educational perspective. We make no claims of unpacking the projects in their totality and cherry-pick topics of relevance for the paper's discussion. The alignment of projects is a provisional tool that allows us to organise a path through several very diverse projects that will enable us to establish a more structured discussion of an architectural engagement with the everyday in an educational perspective.

PROBING EVERYDAY SPACES

The PhD research of Espen Lunde Nielsen directly address the everyday as stated in the title of the dissertation *Architectural Probes of the Infraordinary: Social Coexistence through Everyday Spaces* (2017). Nielsen researches the everyday informal

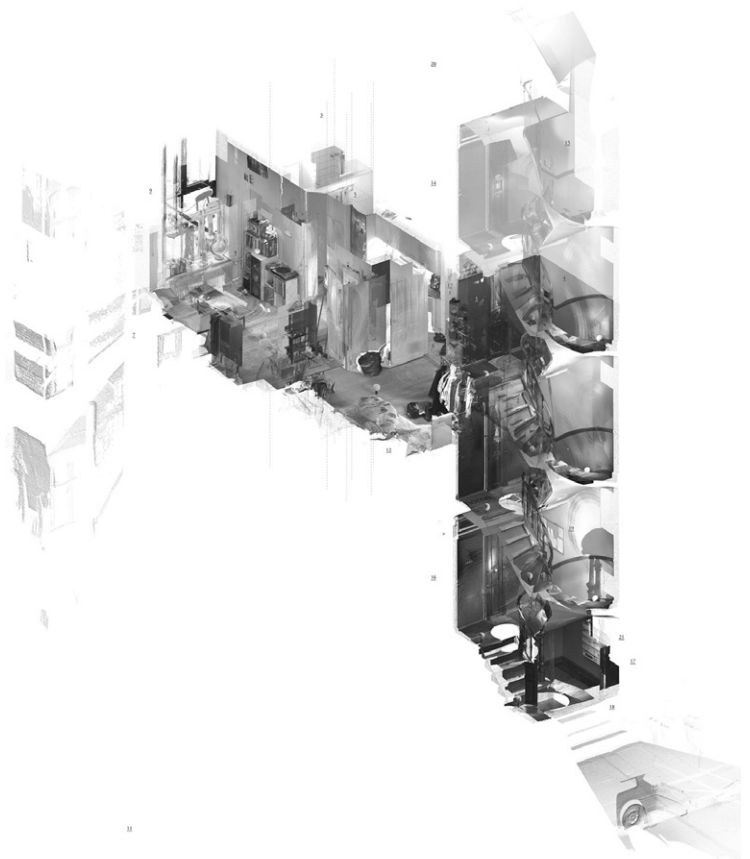


Fig. 1

spaces such as stairways, the laundry, or the fast-food place. He explores the role of these neglected spaces in social coexistence and exchange. The portraiture of such spaces in literature, film and other art forms inform the research. It displays a deep fascination with the spaces as they exist, and the research does not show any overt ambition of changing or improving them. The work appears instead to be informed by adoration and perhaps a touch of nostalgia for these quiet, overlooked and slowly disappearing spaces. It celebrates the importance of the unplanned and unpretentious in-between. As part of his research practice, Nielsen designs and constructs appliances that record and document



Fig. 2

spaces. The devices may be a door spy camera or a hot-dog stand surveillance camera that records and prints an image on a thermal strip every time a customer makes a purchase. The meticulously crafted apparatuses are far more than passive tools of documentation. They become autonomous works of art that enter into complex relationships with the everyday spaces they record and becomes part of critical practice.

NAMING EVERYDAY LANDSCAPES

Katrina Wiberg's PhD *Waterscapes of Value: Value creation through climate adaptation in everyday landscapes* (2018). She examines the necessary climate adaptations of towns that result from increased precipitation caused by climate change to discover the potential for urban design that the adaptations might hold. The research project engages the topic through multiple methods, but in the context of this paper, we chose to focus on the mapping of 'The Wet City'. This name refers to the wet or frequently flooded areas of a city concealed behind place names, contour maps and watersheds. Industrialisation introduced drainage and sewer systems that made these areas habitable. The distinction between wet and dry regions does, however, become relevant again as increased rainfall due to climate change overloads the drainage systems and leads to renewed flooding of the previous wet areas. Wiberg explores how toponyms already embed information about flood-prone areas through their reference to the presence of water such as 'moor', 'brink', 'brook' and 'spring'. The rediscovery of this common collective knowledge of the landscape is mapped onto geodetic maps to contribute to contemporary engagement with flood-prone cities.

HUNTING FOR EVERYDAY SPACES

The research paper *Social Media as a Source of Design in Architecture* by one of this paper's authors maps everyday experiences somewhat similar to Wibergs' (Akin, N.E. and Dagdelen C, 2019). The research discusses how social media posts can become a tool for collecting everyday observations and experiences of numerous users. The shared SoMe posts are distributed on graphical maps based on geotagging to discover urban areas of particular interest for urban improvement or development. The central concept of the research is to tap into the collective knowledge of inhabitants. The aim is to uncover detailed information about space that will provide input to the decision-making processes of artists, architects, entrepreneurs or local authorities to better meet the existential needs of people living in the city. The research proposes that the

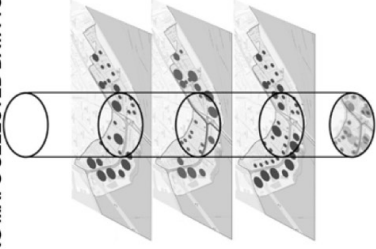
SPATIAL HUNT

MERGED MAP OF THE SELECTED DATA TOPICS



SPATIAL HUNT

SUPERIMPOSING MAPS SELECTED DATA TOPICS



Space Quality

Accessibility

Objects

SPATIAL HUNT

LOCATION

BOUNDARY LINES
 BUILDING FOOTPRINTS
 BUILDING MASS
 BUILDING HEIGHTS
 BUILDING VOLUMES
 BUILDING WALLS
 BUILDING WINDOWS
 BUILDING ROOFS
 BUILDING DOORS
 BUILDING TERRACES
 BUILDING STAIRS
 BUILDING BALCONIES
 BUILDING PORCHES
 BUILDING PATIOS
 BUILDING TERRAZZOS
 BUILDING TERRACES
 BUILDING STAIRS
 BUILDING BALCONIES
 BUILDING PORCHES
 BUILDING PATIOS
 BUILDING TERRAZZOS

TIME

SPATIAL HUNT

URBAN DATA TOPIC(S)

Space Quality
 Accessibility Points
 Accessibility
 Visibility
 Programs
 Movement
 Objects
 Hierarchy and Landmarks

Fig. 3

classification systems developed by Christopher Alexander in *A pattern language: towns, buildings, construction* (1977) might serve as a starting point for sorting information and identifying relevant domains and areas for the SoMe-driven ‘spatial hunt’.

TRIGGERING EVERYDAY SPACES

The *Network Architecture City 2015–16* Spring Semester Elective course at the Istanbul Kultur University Department of Architecture is another example of employing digital technologies to engage with the everyday. The design studio supported the development of architectural design practices that can improve city life. The studio explored this through a focus on the repetitive activities of everyday life within defined urban areas. It offered an opportunity to investigate the dynamics of the city, create maps, identify problems and produce innovative solutions. The solutions aimed at improving urban life and social interaction through information technology and social media rather than through the design of buildings. Students were asked to develop concepts for apps and writing projects that were ready to apply for funding to start a practice. Mustafa Enes Çiçekçi’s *Water network* is one of the resulting projects. His project proposes to reactivate the historic water fountains distributed all over Istanbul. The project designs an app that makes users aware of nearby fountains and reminds them to drink water. The fountains have been redesigned to require several users to collaborate in activating different levers to release drinking water. The physical and digital design simultaneous address health issues, historical awareness and social interaction by inviting citizens to join playful everyday activities.

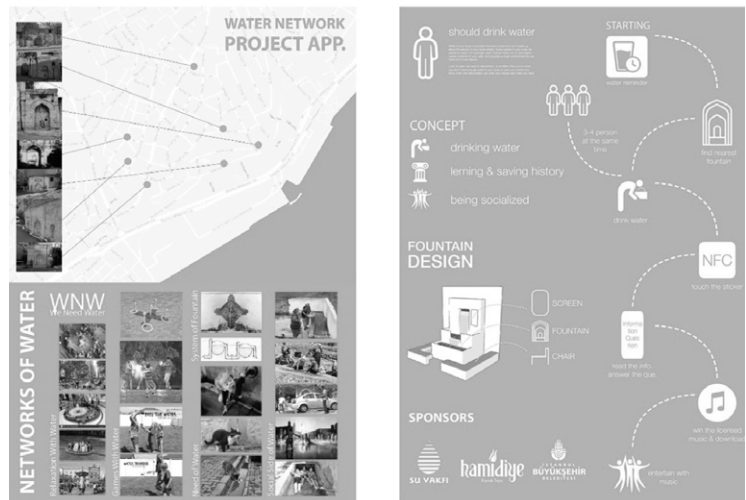


Fig. 4

THE NARRATIVES OF EVERYDAY SPACES TRANSMUTATION

Istanbul also forms the context of the *Network Architecture City* workshop, which was an international ERASMUS-funded interdisciplinary study of urban patterns. Orhan Pamuk's novel *The Museum of Innocence* (2010) and the museum of the same name formed a starting point for the workshop. The museum is located in Çukurcuma in Istanbul where the novel also takes place. The museum exhibit objects collected by Pamuk in the 1970s. It weaves tangible everyday objects intimately together with the fictional love story of the protagonists Kemal and Füsun in the domestic and public spaces of the Çukurcuma. The students of the workshops were invited to explore the city and make an architectural survey of the traces and patterns of everyday life as it unfolds in the area. Dilan Celik, Eline Billiet, Marije Ruisrok and Eszter Barna responded to this invitation by exploring the worlds hiding behind the facades of the buildings of Çukurcuma. They were looking for differences in the life lived in the individual apartments as well as the contrast between the inner domestic life and the outdoor street life. Interviews with local inhabitants uncovered personal stories that influenced the design. Large drawings of the interior spaces mounted on the public facades formed the final presentation. They offered a glimpse of the richness of the secret inner lives of the city to the passers-by.



Fig. 5

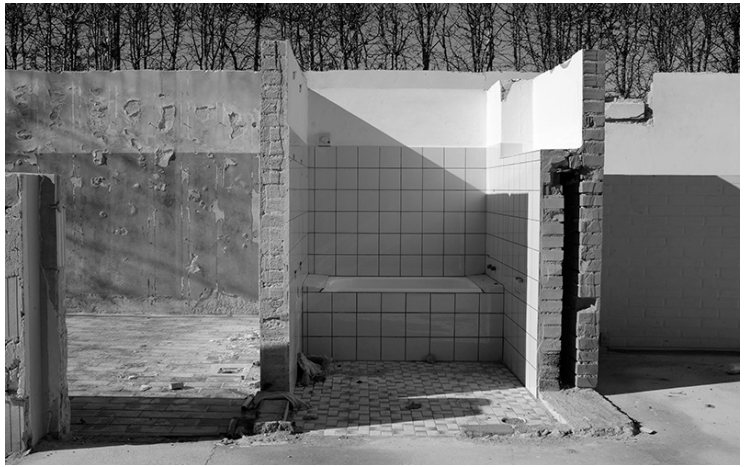


Fig. 6

THE TRANSFORMATION OF EVERYDAY SPACES

Mo Michelsen Stochholm Krag's PhD *Transformation on Abandonment: a new critical practice?* (2017) carried out research on the change of peripheral areas in small urban communities in Thy in the western part of Denmark. These communities are subjected to migration towards the denser urbanised eastern regions of Denmark, which leaves behind abandoned and decaying urban areas and buildings. Currently, authorities respond to this development by tearing down the abandoned houses, and the empty plots remain as scars in the urban fabric. Krag challenges this practice by developing alternative ways of engaging the problem. The houses scheduled to be demolished are torn down partially, cut up and left behind as sculptural ruins. The demolitions are carried out by students as part of teaching workshops, which allows the students to 'design' the ruins, experience traditional building techniques and enter into dialogues with local inhabitants who are invited to share memories of the place through theatrical installations and citizen meetings. Krag enters into dialogue and document the citizens' responses and interactions as part of his research on contemporary engagements with architectural heritage.

TWO SHARED TOPICS ACROSS THE PROJECTS — THE PARTICULARITIES AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE EVERYDAY

When we examined the diverse group of projects more closely, we identified two themes addressed explicitly or implicitly by the projects. The first theme relates to the particularity in

engaging with the everyday. Some projects are interested in the specific character of a particular site and its users as they unfold in the everyday. Espen Lunde Nielsen's imaginative apparatuses meticulously capture and document the detailed in-between spaces of everyday life. The Network Architecture City workshop similarly engage in the individuality of the daily life of the inhabitants in Çukurcuma — whether they are real or fictional. Both projects employ narratives as an architectural tool to explore the hidden, forgotten, or even imagined and dreamed up stories of social relations and spatial patterns. They adopt narratives as an architectural tool as it provides a more relatable structure to singular events.

Other projects are more interested in extracting generalised information from the myriad of activities and interactions of individuals engaged in their daily lives. Wiberg focuses on the hidden waterscapes of the city revealed in toponyms. Akin et al. analyse social media and big data to uncover concealed preferences of urban inhabitants. They are both occupied with the collective intelligence arising out of the manifold and commonsensical engagement with the everyday and not least how it can be mapped to inform future architectural design and planning processes.

A second theme relates to how the projects engage with the everyday. Some projects appear content to observe and document the everyday without any explicit intention of transforming it. Nielsen's probes celebrate the everyday spaces but make no suggestions for alterations or improvements. Perhaps, the fascination with these lived-in spaces relates exactly to their existence outside the domain of architectural design and order? Wiberg and Akin's research does also not point to specific changes in the everyday but from another perspective. They are less concerned about celebrating the everyday and instead takes it as a starting point for mappings that lay the ground for future transformations based on further interpretations. Other projects aim directly for change and improvement. Krag's project is an example of the latter. The partial demolitions of buildings engage, and perhaps even provoke, the local inhabitants. They are challenged to face the demographic and spatial changes in their urban context. Still, they are also encouraged to share their memories and build a renewed collective understanding of their village. The *Water Networks* project employ a somewhat similar strategy. Istanbul's inhabitants are invited to form new social relations and deepen their public awareness as they engage collectively with the city's historic water fountains.

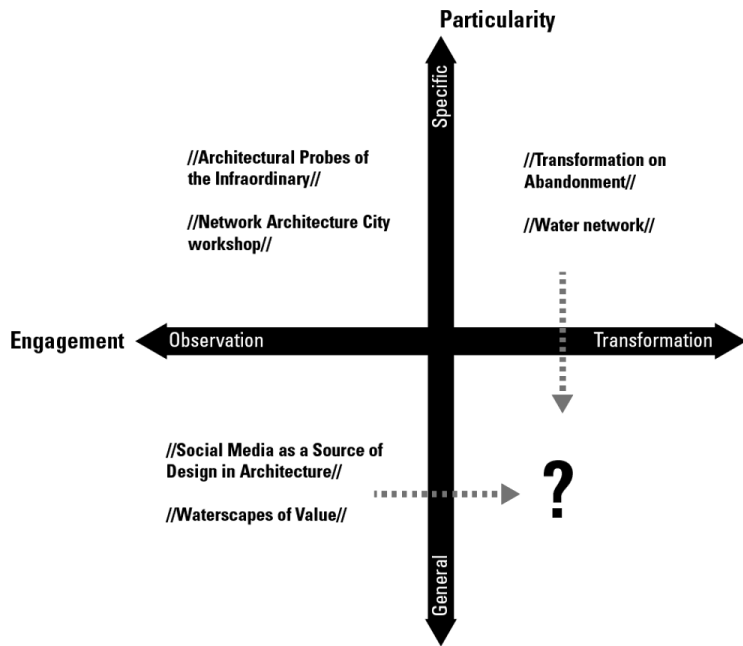


Fig. 7

We can place the six projects in a diagram with four quadrants reflecting the two themes: engagement and particularity. Nielsen and *The Network Architecture City Workshop* takes up the first quadrant due to their focus on their study of specific everyday spaces through observation and narratives. The projects of Krag and Çiçekçi also engages with specific everyday spaces but actively seek to transform buildings and social behaviours. Akin and Wiberg map general aspects of the everyday through observation without proposing immediate transformations of these spaces. None of the projects is placed in the fourth quadrant of projects aiming to transform the everyday on a general level. We might, however, speculate that the mappings of Akin and Wiberg would help inform architectural design that would lead to transformations of the everyday on a more general level. Or that the specific transformations of Krag and Çiçekçi might form models or precedents that would have a widespread impact beyond the engagement with a particular building.

CRITIQUE OF EVERYDAY LIFE

In a broader perspective, we can align these findings to the discussion of the everyday as it has unfolded since the mid-twentieth century. This discussion originates in Lefebvre’s ‘Critique of everyday life’ (1991 (1947)) followed later by ‘The Production of Space’ (1991), but also unfold in Vaneigem (1983 (1967)), De-

bord (1991 (1974)), and de Certeau (1980). In Lefebvre, we find an understanding of the everyday as more than the ordinary and trivial occurrences of uneventful daily life. It is an ideologically charged field always under threat of being subjected to commodification and control by commercial and political interests who wish to pacify the population. As a consequence, the everyday also holds potential for freedom through rejection and resistance to the normativity of mass culture.

More recently, the engagement with the everyday resurfaced in the late 1990'es. Books like 'Architecture of the Everyday' (1997) edited by Steven Harris and Deborah Berke makes a plea for an architecture that is emphatically un-monumental, anti-heroic, and unconcerned with formal extravagance. 'Everyday Urbanism' (1999) by Margaret Crawford and John Kaliski argues against the aesthetic concerns of 'New Urbanism' focusing instead on the specific activities of daily life. The authors propose an empirical approach that strengthens unnoticed existing situations and experiences that occur in everyday life. Crawford and Kaliski are interested in the concerns, activities and visual cultures operating on the outside of the prevailing norms of architectural culture.

We see a resonance of these discussions in the projects discussed above. Their different foci and methods enter into cautious and nuanced engagements with the everyday. They demonstrate an awareness of the everyday as a charged field. This field holds the potential to inform and qualify architectural design and secure its relevance to the needs and interests of its users. But also, an area that architects should approach cautiously in order not to overdesign and determine the use of space, leaving little freedom to its users.

THE HIDDEN SCHOOL OF EVERYDAY

The everyday is certainly not hidden due to lack of attention or awareness. It is also not absent from architectural curricula as the examples show. But the everyday provides a hidden, subliminal quality to architectural education as an open invitation to engage and re-examine its charged field. It allows students to question and define the purpose of architecture in curious encounters with everyday lived life, whether it focuses on understanding, housing, or empowering its users. The discussions of the everyday include questions of authorship and inclusiveness: who are designing and for whom. But also, of the limits and boundaries for architecture. Should architecture attempt to support the intimate details of everyday life or instead provide open frameworks for the unfolding of individual needs and expressions? It also encourages students

to develop new methods and tools. The most relevant architectural response to everyday life space might not always be the design of new buildings. It might lead to other forms of expression, different outcomes as alternative forms of solutions to an architectural approach to urban problems. Maybe it is better to destruct in meaningful ways than building? Perhaps the design of an app that helps ease life in a rapidly growing metropolis is more relevant than an architectural design? Maybe there are insights to be gained from concepts and approaches from other fields outside of architecture like art, literature, politics, activism or performance?

This drive to discover and include what is not part of architecture might still be considered as a hidden aspect of architectural education. It may be straightforward to encourage the curiosity of students and ask them to look for new ways to understand and reformulate architectural relevance and programs. Still, it is far more challenging to create space for the unpredictable outcomes of this curiosity in an architectural curriculum. It might happen through particular studios or electives driven by inspired and motivated supervisors, or it might arise as bottom-up initiatives from students that criticise a perceived lack of relevance of their architectural education. It might happen through meticulous observation of the surroundings or by engaging the dreams and desires of users. In any case, the hidden aspect of architectural education relates precisely to the need for constant discovery and critic of existing ways of understanding architecture.

APPENDIX

The study project *Network Architecture City (NAC)* was an Intensive Program project which was supported by the European Union/ERASMUS program for the 2012–2013 academic year. Forty students and 10 teachers attended from the Technical University of Delft, Sint Lucas University, Pecs University and Istanbul Kultur University that acted as host. Third and fourth-year BA students participated. Participants: *Istanbul Kultur University, Turkey (host)*: Esra Fidanoglu (Project Leader), Gonca Arik. *The Technical University of Delft, The Netherlands*: Susanne Komossa, Nicola Marzot, Alper Alkan, Jorge Mejia Hernandez. *Sint Lucas University, Belgium*: Tomas Ooms, Johan Verbeke. *Pecs University, Hungary*: Bálint Bachmann, Tamás Molnár.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Akin, N. E. (2018). Innovational and Interpreneurial Approaches in Architectural Education. *TMD International Refereed Journal of Design and Architecture*, (14), 144–174.
- Akin, N. E., & Dagdelen, C. (2019). Social Media as a Source of Design in Architecture. In: M. N. Yildiz, M. Fazal, M. Ahn, & S. Ozdemir (Eds.), *Handbook of research on media literacy research and applications across disciplines*. Hershey: IGI, Information Science Reference.
- Alexander, C., Ishikawa, S., & Silverstein, M. (1977). *A pattern language: Towns, buildings, construction*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Certeau, M. de. (1984). *The practice of everyday life*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Chase, J., Crawford, M., & Kaliski, J. (Eds.). (2008). *Everyday urbanism* (Expanded ed). New York: Monacelli Press.
- Fidanoglu (Akin), N. E. (2008). Architectural Design Studio and Everyday Life: CONTACT Project. *Mimarist*, (27), 76–84.
- Fidanoglu (Akin), N. E. (2015, July 5). Architecture and Literature Work Together: Re-reading an Environment Through a Historical Novel. Presented at *IAFOR/ECE 2015, The Third European Conference on Education*, Brighton, UK.
- Harris, S., & Berke, D. (Eds.). (1997). *Architecture of the Everyday*. New York, N.Y: Princeton Architectural Press.
- Kragh, M. M. S. (2017). *Transformation on Abandonment: A new critical practice?* Retrieved from <https://aarch.dk/transformation-on-abandonment/>
- Lefebvre, H. (1991). *Critique of everyday life*. London ; New York: Verso.
- Lefebvre, H., & Nicholson-Smith, D. (2011). *The production of space* (Nachdr.). Malden, Mass.: Blackwell.
- Lichtenstein, C., Schregenberger, T., & Museum für Gestaltung Zürich (Eds.). (2001). *As Found: The discovery of the ordinary*; [British architecture and art of the 1950s]. Baden/Schw: Müller.
- Lunde Nielsen, Espen. (2017). *Architectural Probes of the In-fraordinary: Social Coexistence through Everyday Spaces*. Aarhus, Denmark: Arkitektskolen Aarhus.
- Pamuk, O., & Freely, M. (2010). *The Museum of Innocence*. London: Faber and Faber.
- Pedersen, C. P. (2018). Research Through Architecture. In C. P. Pedersen & C. Bundgaard (Eds.), *FORSKI! When Architects Research* (pp. 10–15). Aarhus, Denmark: Arkitektskolen Aarhus.
- Toy, M. (Ed.). (1998). *The Everyday and Architecture*. London: Acad. Ed.

- Van den Heuvel, D. (2015). Between Brutalists. The Banham Hypothesis and the Smithson Way of Life. *The Journal of Architecture*, 20(2), 293–308. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602365.2015.1027721>
- van den Heuvel, Dirk. (2002). As Found: The Metamorphosis of the Everyday. On the Work of Nigel Henderson, Eduardo Paolozzi, and Alison and Peter Smithson (1953–1956). *Oase*, (59), 52–67.
- Vaneigem, R. (1983). *The Revolution of Everyday Life: A new translation, etc.* London: Left Bank Books.
- Wiberg, K. (2018). *Waterscapes of Value: Value creation through climate adaptation in everyday landscapes*. Retrieved from https://adk.elsevierpure.com/files/62156144/Katrina_Wiberg_Thesis_2018.Aug_LQ.pdf