

VISUAL

After all, 'tutti Spinaceto!' Adrift, on Nanni Moretti's back

Daniel Maurício Santos de Jesus



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BIOGRAPHY

Daniel Jesus (b. 1969, Vila Real de Santo António, Portugal) is an architect, academic, and integrated researcher at the CIAUD research center at the Lisbon School of Architecture, Universidade de Lisboa. He holds a PhD in Theory and Practice of Architectural Design (2014), funded by the Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT), and a degree in Architecture (1994) from the same institution, the latter supported by a grant from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation.

His doctoral research, entitled (In)discipline of Architecture: Fictional Drift into a Didactic Statement, Resistant to Absurdity, laid the groundwork for his ongoing investigation into the correlations between architectural production and its social, political, and economic contexts. He currently coordinates SUSTENTA - Laboratory for Sustainable Project, an initiative that operationalizes this research into practical inquiry.

As a faculty member in the Department of Architecture/Project since 1999, Jesus teaches specialized didactics in the Master's program (2nd cycle), focusing on the course Architecture and Ideology. In this capacity, he also supervises Master's theses stemming from this thematic area. His academic work is further disseminated through regular participation as a lecturer and co-organizer of international seminars, as well as through publications in peer-reviewed journals and edited book chapters.

Prior to his full-time academic career, he practiced architecture for a decade (1994–2004). Significant from this period was his work as co-author of several public buildings in Timor-Leste, including the Diocesan Curia of Dili and the Baucau Maternity School, developed within the Group of Studies for the Rehabilitation of Timor Lorosae (GERTIL).



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Preamble

The year was 1994 (thirty-one years ago), and I was watching *Caro Diario* (in its original version) at cinema *King* – my first encounter with Nanni Moretti's filmography [Fig. 1a-1b]. One might say I was, quite literally, run over. By an intriguing dramaturgy, tangential to the Theatre of the Absurd (Ionesco, Beckett, Adamov, Pinter, etc), heightened by the cynical use of language and an exhilarating musical selection– *Batonga* (Angélique Kidjo), *I'm Your Man* (Leonard Cohen), *Didi* (Khaled), *The Köln Concert* (Keith Jarrett). It was infeasible not to climb onto the back of Nanni's Vespa, which became a mediating device for staging a *dérive*¹ through Rome (and Ostia), little knowing how premonitory it would be of a certain ontological predisposition. This first morettian film predisposed me to an avid search for his earlier works, a retrospective binge-watching spree, and poorly tempered anticipation for each new release.

"Ideological terrorist", "grand inquisitor", "ferocious portraitist"—the many definitions of Moretti's singular personality all stem from the author's relentless pursuit of language's mystifications and the absurdities of communication.²

After showering the auteur with praise, I enthusiastically shared his films with students: "The professor has it on DVD!"—a joke in an era of streaming and unchecked accessibility. From then on, a Nanni's film would punctuate every period, every revolutionary upheaval in my life. Nanni and I, *fratelli!*

Nanni, Architect in Rome

Even when I go to other cities, the only thing I enjoy doing is looking at buildings. How lovely it would be to make a film solely of buildings, of panoramic shots of buildings.³

The voiceover accompanied the scooter's journey through Rome, which, under the atypical August silence, offers itself as an alternative semantic field. The subtitled representation belies the arbitrariness of the *dérive*, summoning the viewer into a conflicting spacetime of contemplation, imagination, and evocation. Like someone selecting postcards for friends, the Rome of *Caro Diario* first insinuates itself conspiratorially to the viewer, implicating them as co-protagonists of the drift: "Garbatella, 1927; Villaggio Olimpico, 1960; Vigne Nuove, 1987; Monteverde, 1939". Fragments framed and sequenced by the

1 By direct reference to the "Theory of the Dérive" by Situationist thinker Guy Debord, the *dérive* constitutes a psychogeographical procedure, allowing the study of urban environments' effects on the psychological and emotional states of those who undertake it. In practice, beginning from a predetermined location, the individual or group embarking on a *dérive* will follow an undefined route, allowing the urban milieu itself to "reveal" the path at random. The theory was first articulated in 1958 and published in draft form in the *Internationale Situationniste* journal.

2 *O cinema e uma geração italiana* (Lisbon: Cinemateca Portuguesa, 1992), exhibition catalogue, Lisbon, March 21–April 13, 1992. Translation by the author.

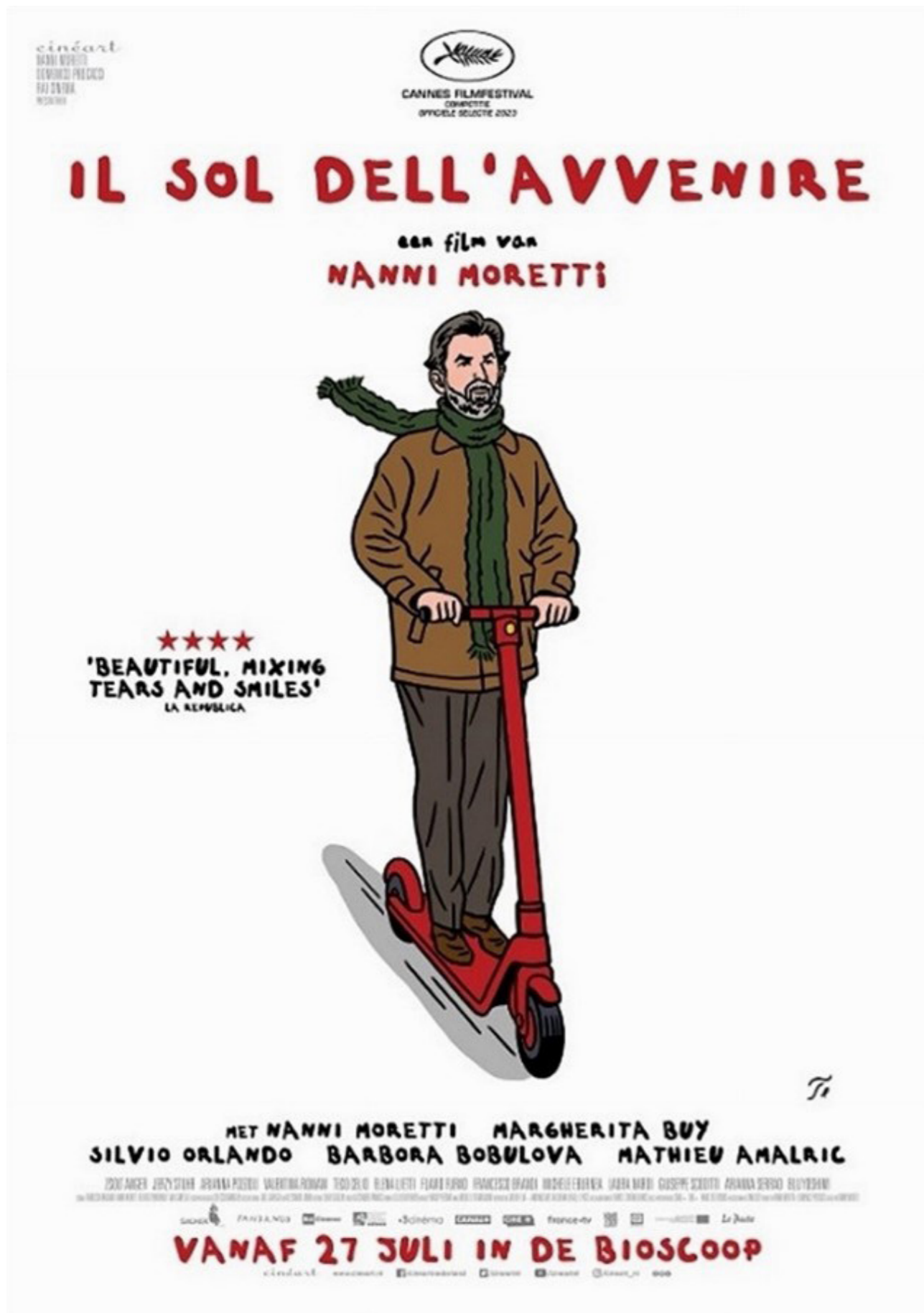
3 *Caro diario*, film, directed by Nanni Moretti (1993; Lisbon: Atalanta Filmes), DV. All translations in English were done by the author.



Fig. 1a-b

Left: Nanni Moretti (director). *Caro Diario* (Dear Diary). 1993. Film poster. Rome: Sacher Film, 1993. <https://www.sentire-ascoltare.com/news/caro-diario-poster-film-nanni-moretti-4k/>, Accessed May 15, 2025.
Right: Nanni Moretti (director). *Il Sol dell'avvenire* (A Brighter Tomorrow). 2023. Film poster. Rome: Sacher Film / Fandango, 2023. <https://ciaotutti.nl/italiaanse-taal/film/il-sol-dell-avvenire-nanni-moretti/>, Accessed May 15, 2025





1b

motorised lens invoke a topological reading of space, with no greater intrigue than the figuration of an intuited relationship between architectural forms and the memories of their making – an irresistible recipe for a neophyte in architectural practice, as I was in distant 1994.

But political tremors soon surfaced: “Sometimes, I’m not content. And I say I’m preparing a film. And the host asks, ‘What’s it about?’ A Trotskyist pastry chef in conformist 1950s Italy – it’s a musical.”⁴ The contemplative serenity of the *dérive* gives way to a sudden jolt, a direct interrogation of life and its *mode d’emploi*. Perec’s novel⁵ and its fragmented structure – a labyrinthine exploration of a Parisian apartment building through “Jigsaw puzzle” methodology (mapping lives through objects/architectural details) – translates directly to Moretti’s *Caro Diario* vignettes. Also, its focus on urban narratives, spatial critique, and ideological interpellation, mirrors the analysis of Moretti’s *derive* as an exposure of “colliding worlds”. Thus, the correlation between *Architecture and Ideology*⁶ is summoned by the political subjectivity of the curious inquisitor [Fig. 2]: the compulsive doorbell-ringer and the homeowner who answers – occupants of the exterior and interior spaces moulded by each unequal regime – interact on the threshold born out of both a theory of borders and a theory of property.⁷ Yet this



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interpretation only crystallised later, as I came to recognise the seminal nature of Moretti’s cinema. An equivalent proposition is refined further when the narrator invites the viewer to follow him to Spinaceto:

4 *Caro diario*, film, directed by Nanni Moretti.

5 See Georges Perec, *La vie mode d’emploi* (Paris: Hachette, 1978).

6 Faculty of Architecture, University of Lisbon. “Didactic Theme and Correspondent Teaching Module Developed within the Context of the 5th Year MIARQ [Integrated Master’s in Architecture].” https://www.fa.ulisboa.pt/images/20242025/Temas_5_ano/TURMA_C_Daniel_Jesus.pdf, Accessed April 30, 2025.

7 Thomas Piketty, *Capital and Ideology*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), 15.

Fig. 2

Daniel Jesus, title sheets and expository captions for academic briefs in the 5th year of the Integrated Master’s in Architecture at the University of Lisbon, academic years 2023/24 and 2024/25. Theme: *Architecture and Ideology*

a recently built neighbourhood; always invoked pejoratively: What, are we in Spinaceto now? Where are you from? Spinaceto? Then I recall reading a script titled Flight from Spinaceto, about a boy who escapes that neighbourhood, leaves home, never to return. So, let's go see Spinaceto!⁸

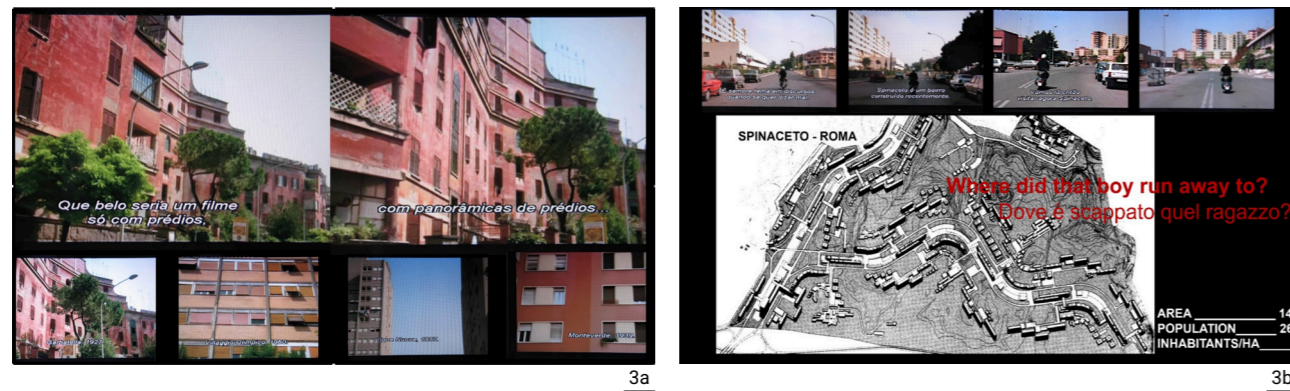
The road leads to the neighbourhood, but a retaining wall blocking the Vespa's path stages an absurdist exhaustion of intrigue—Spinaceto's concrete estrangement versus the fugitive boy's origins. Yet, in passing, a fleeting exchange occurs with an occasional interlocutor—a lazy Estragon in sunglasses, perched on the boundary wall—waiting for Godot?⁹:

I imagined Spinaceto much worse. It's not that bad.

Exactly! I was just thinking the same!

Ciao!¹⁰

With the interaction concluded—the point was made: damn modern urbanism—we release the narrator to drift along gentler paths (*dérive*: feminine noun, evolving with the waves; at the mercy of the current; adrift; without a way of life; without governance) while we linger a little longer (at a safe distance) near Spinaceto, parsing the text as a transitive verb—to *dérive*, to deviate from the normal course [Figg. 3a-3b].



The Late Triumph of L'unité, Back From an Early Origin

From the strict observation of buildings, or panoramic shots of buildings, one discerns how the Spinaceto neighbourhood—occupying 187 hectares and housing roughly 26,000 inhabitants—equates to, say, the Nuovo Corviale building: 986 metres linearly accommodating 1,600 units, designed from 1972 onwards and constructed in Rome between 1975 and 1984 to house around 4,500 people. They are equivalent in marking the epilogue of a period of heroic modernist achievements, materialising the political agenda of the Modern Movement – laudable in its aim to universalise access to housing. Large-scale, concentrated

⁸ Moretti, *Caro diario*. Translation by the author.

⁹ Samuel Beckett, *En attendant Godot* [Waiting for Godot] (Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1952), act 1.

¹⁰ Moretti, *Caro diario*. Translation by the author.

Fig. 3a-3b

Frame analysis from *Caro Diario* (Moretti, 1993), Chapter 1: *In Vespa* - with comparative urban analysis diagrams examining the circulatory hierarchy and socio-spatial configuration of Spinaceto, Rome's postwar neighbourhood (*quartiere*).

housing projects erupted as the ultimate technical response to the socialist project initiated in the 19th century. The application of Taylorist mass-production strategies, based on unity and large-scale urban repetition, would later be demonised as the nefarious effect of a conception that sociologically and economically quartered the lived fabric of the city. The gradual abandonment of this mandate from the 1980s onward was replaced by neoliberal optimism in the market economy as the necessary and sufficient instrument to address historical universal aspirations. And it left these heroic Noah's Arks adrift, as ruined testimonies of a time when the imagination of an egalitarian and just possibility once seemed attainable.

Yet, the boy resolved to abandon Spinaceto must be granted the right to disillusionment with the lived response materialised by modern architecture and urbanism. And he must be granted the initiative to head south in search of a milder, more convenient future, inspired by Mediterranean geography and climate as cradles of Epicurean good living. However – as travel literature attests, from its archetype, Homer's *Odyssey*, to successive iterations like Voltaire's *Candide* – we learn that journeys are made of misadventures and deceptions. The case in point: a boy escaping Spinaceto would be no exception to this age-old literary praxis.

And so he did, this spinaceto: first, enlisting the help of a cousin in Naples' import-export business to secure temporary passage on one of the two remaining buildings of the Vele di Scampia, a residential complex in Naples, within an area of 115 hectares. It was constructed between 1962 and 1975, but five of these buildings were successively demolished in 1997, 2000, 2003, 2020, and from the two remaining, only one will be redeveloped. Too bad, our hero eventually traded the deluge of the social project, leaving the last of the stranded flotilla of ships, for boarding the "real" cruise ship MSC World Europa – a greater deception, one might think, many of us have fallen for in our time, lured by promises of a more modern, prosperous vessel, a more democratic and fraternal voyage. How, then, to fault his confusion in directly associating collective housing with transatlantic travel, joining the long list of victims of Le Corbusier's prestidigitation, the same sleight of hand that mistook house arrangements for cities, and cities for mechanical devices like cruise ships.

It is well known how ocean liners enthralled the *architect of architects*, who found in efficient technological formalisation the ideal metaphor for his "machine for living." Fascinated by the technological forms of cars, planes, and ships, relying on technical rigour and unequivocal efficacy, he invoked the transatlantic liner as a recurring paradigm in his theoretical output. The device interested him as a manifestation of "indisputable functionality," a premise foundational to validating modernist dogma in architecture. He saw this technological figuration as a possible analogy – expressed literally on various occasions and scales in his built work, notably in the Unité d'Habitation project. The ship-building, successively anchored to post-WWII aspirations of dignified universal residence—first incarnated in Marseille, later reborn as Spinaceto, Corviale, or

Scampia—became the faithful custodian of the Arcadian nature informing the modernist imaginary [Figg. 4a-4b].

In “The Unité d’Habitation at Marseille as a Collective Housing Prototype”, William Curtis declares Le Corbusier’s Marseille prototype pivotal in the evolution of thought and materialisation of collective housing:

It was a difficult building to ignore for any later architect facing analogous tasks. To chart the lessons learned from it, and the various reactions to it, is to provide an extraordinarily clear summary of Western architectural attitudes over a period of nearly a quarter of a century.¹¹



4a



4b

If formal analogy is indisputable under the expressive freedom of the architect-author, the lasting effects of the rhetoric extolling machine efficiency – i.e., promoting the symbiotic relationship between form and function in transoceanic vessels—deserve renewed interpretation in light of present conditions.

11 William J. R. Curtis, *Modern Architecture since 1900*, 3rd ed. (London: Phaidon Press, 1996), 437.

Fig. 4a-4b

Formal and symbolic analogy between residential typology and cruise ship “architecture”: Case study of high-rise buildings in Vele di Scampia, Naples (sourced online, 15 May 2025)

Indeed, Le Corbusier used the *machine* primarily as a rhetorical device: stripped of functional value, became modernist rhetoric – a semiotic stand-in for progress, as ornamental as the styles it scorned.

The machinic gaze symbolising the modern world as an era of revolution and transition (cf. Dziga Vertov’s *Man with a Movie Camera*)¹² was long ago observed as a totalising symphony, where mechanical devices humanise and humans automate. As if the artificial and organic could meet at some imaginary future point, sharing the same dynamics and purpose. It is in this oneiric, symbolic vein that the nautical-mechanical analogy dear to Le Corbusier (and contemporaries) gains evocative power. To the common man, the ocean liner presented itself less as a technological object than as emancipation from an unsatisfactory existence. The redemptive voyage to the New World—or merely to a *new world*, as Spinaceto desired—became meaning inscribed in the transatlantic signifier, filling the collective imaginary across successive epochs.

Yet the experience of the crossing itself varied radically according to passengers’ economic circumstances – different for the proletarian and the affluent bourgeois (or aristocrat). This held true for aquatic vessels but became far more radical in the static zoning of terrestrial ships organised by functionalist urbanism. Regardless, for all parties, the transoceanic voyage’s imaginary retained a cinematic, oneiric dimension – captured by Federico Fellini in *Amarcord* (1973)¹³ or later in *E la nave va* (1983)¹⁴. Whether it signified sophisticated leisure or, at the opposite extreme, redemption from an unworthy existence, both designs are paradoxical to machinic homogenisation and repeatability.

In truth, the formal and dimensional reality of functionally optimised physical space – methodologically, from a strictly rational standpoint, the very traits that served as reference for Le Corbusier and his modernist peers – would contradict the benevolent imagination [Fig. 5]: “one does not travel; the ship is a floating factory. Outside, the infinite ocean seems too vast, and the sailor’s cabin too small. Prolonged confrontation with this incommensurable difference drives all sailors mad”.¹⁵

So retorts Bruno Ganz’s character in Alain Tanner’s *Dans la Ville Blanche* (1983), the story of a Swiss sailor (an oddity in itself) who docks and stays (spoiler alert) in Lisbon. One imagines the global architectural vanguard, gathered aboard, a ship, for fourteen days between Marseille and Athens during the First (Maritime) International Congress of Modern Architecture, saw no major flaw in the correlation. The Unité’s replication ad nauseam mirrors the sailor’s cabin’s *existenzminimum* – hypertrophic agglutination betraying its emancipatory promise.

12 *Chelovek s kinoapparatom* [Man with a Movie Camera], film, directed by Dziga Vertov (1929; Moscow: VUFKU), 35mm, black and white, silent, 68 min.

13 *Amarcord*, film, directed by Federico Fellini (1973; Rome: F.C. Produzioni), 35mm, color, 123 min.

14 *E la nave va* [And the Ship Sails On], film, directed by Federico Fellini (1983; Rome: RAI Televisione Italiana/Vides Produzione), 35mm, color, 132 min.

15 *Dans la ville blanche* [In the White City], film, directed by Alain Tanner (1983; Geneva: Citel Films), 35mm, color, 108 min.



5

But none of this should trouble a Spinaceto survivor too much, for the confines of such housing are scarcely felt aboard today's colossal cruise ships—perfected as globalised temporary housing units, modelled on paradigms of hotel luxury and comfort.

At journey's end, whether imposing ships or other efficient machines photographed and metaphorised by modern architectural conceptualisation, they attained their fullest meaning as futurist symbols of dream and liberation—not through the efficiency that seduced functionalist thinkers. That efficiency had long conformed the space and time to which modern man submitted in the industrial city since the 18th century, trapped in forced ritualisation, repetition, and normativity, within a context that only ever *appeared* to offer opportunity and freedom.

And Yet, Alis Ubbo

Alis Ubbo is the title of a Portuguese documentary film,¹⁶ and would have been the name of the Phoenician trading post at the mouth of the Tagus River—a *Porto Seguro* (Safe Harbour), translated from the original tongue. A reliable place, then, for our refugee to disembark, stowed away on a Mediterranean cruise ship from Sorrento to Lisbon (a mere few pool-lengths away). Thus, we cross Moretti's mythical *Flight from Spinaceto* (from *Caro Diario*) with the fate of Tanner's sailor in *Dans la Ville Blanche*—both landed in Lisbon. Fiction's advantage: it allows all timelines to converge.

The flight from Spinaceto—rooted in emancipation from the concentrational condition imposed by subsidised Unité neighbourhoods, large-scale residential conglomerates—is recursively transposed onto the nautical technological device that inspired it. The supreme irony: today's cruise ships celebrate the self-sufficiency and ubiquity of the Unité d'Habitation, unmoored from place, indifferent to urbanistic constraints. A modern, global space/time unit, sailing

16 *Alis Ubbo*, film, directed by Paulo Abreu (2018; Lisbon: Filmin), streaming video.

Fig. 5

The Corbusian Dialectic, as Jekyll & Hyde: Poetic Form-Maker versus Urban Eraser - From the Phenomenological Light of Ronchamp to the Cartesian Grid of Plan Voisin (Digital Collage Study, author's photomontage, 2014)

to historic cities where such architectural inscription would be unimaginable (discounting dystopian speculations like the Plan Voisin for Paris or the Plan Obus for Algiers). The corollary of this potent, grandiose idea moves from city to city with unrepentant regularity—far from celebratory—making front-page news only when a liner *fails* to dock in Lisbon.

The Tagus estuary, once the "Atlantic starting point of what, under puerile reasoning, was imagined as a Portuguese sea," and the city that grew along its banks now stand as undisputed attractions on global tourist itineraries. Architecture, capitalised, seized the opportunity to design a new cruise terminal at the foot of the historic landscape, institutionalising "the best of all possible worlds through the best of all possible architectural figurations."¹⁷ Confident that "the best architects design the best cruise terminals" and aware that "la nave ritorna tutti i giorni" (the ship returns every day), we are left with the cruise 'floating city' grotesquely juxtaposed to Alfama's hillside fabric—a collision of transience and permanence, staged by global tourism [Figg. 6a-6b].

Whether this triumphal realisation of the new terminal does justice to or undermines the theory underlying the 1931 *Athens Charter*¹⁸ (which affirmed the importance of historic ensembles) or the 1987 *Washington Charter*¹⁹ (protecting cities from pollution and vibrations) is debatable. But the temporary, inhabited walls of cruise leviathans juxtaposed with Alfama's delicate topography demand spatialised critique.



6a



6b

Unfortunately, the triumphal, periodic colonisation by these floating housing units, whether docked in Lisbon or Dubrovnik, transcends mere scalar counterpoints or figure-ground relations. The juxtaposition of both labyrinthine devices in conflicting figurations—alleys and buildings vs. corridors, decks, and bulkheads

Fig. 6a-6b

Lisbon's cruise interface: Carrilho da Graça's terminal as threshold between tourist flow and historic urban fabric. The new welcome infrastructure for occasional shipping tourism, a landmark of contemporary architecture, winner of the 11th Secil Prize for Civil Architecture (Arch. João Luis Carrilho da Graça, inaugurated 2017) (Images sourced online, 15 May 2025).

17 Voltaire's *Candide* satirizes Leibniz's principle of compossibility—and its distillation into the "sufficient reason" doctrine, which posits as its corollary that "everything is for the best" and that we inhabit the "best of all possible worlds." See Voltaire, *Cândido ou o optimismo* (Lisbon: Guimarães Editores, 1999).

18 First International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, *The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments* (Athens, 1931).

19 ICOMOS, *Charter for the Conservation of Historic Towns and Urban Areas* (Washington Charter) (Washington, D.C., 1987).

– cinematically expresses a divergence between concatenated worlds: the city, willingly or not, becomes a site where affluence and precarity, permanence and transience, opportunity and desire collide. The construction cranes in the background testify to the complementary process of “ongoing gentrification” alongside cruise tourism. They reveal how the historic city’s material renewal surrenders to this invasive, “modern” form of discovery and appropriation: each home converted to short-term rental smartly commodifies the entire city – possible joys no more than 15 minutes apart, minus the time drivers and tour operators take to shuttle between potential domiciles and daily *mise-en-scène*.

Discounting the (increasingly sparse) permanent residents’ residual attention to this phenomenon, let us imagine, for argument’s sake, tourists marvelling at each other in an endless flow, indifferent to the specificity of days or seasons. One cannot say how many still gather by the river as spectator-navigators, observing from their floating stage the assault and invasion undertaken by their disembarked counterparts, now boarding a swarm of tuk-tuks for conquering the adjacent hills: a true Teatro del Mondo²⁰ drama unfolds. Nor can one guarantee that these others, after their mechanised, breathless ascent to the river viewpoints interspersed like alveoli among the houses, are able to distinguish the simulacrum mirrored in this make-believe discovery.

It is in this tragicomic, antithetical framing that we reunite with our Candide (renamed for analogical and literary convenience), “freshly escaped



7a



7b

from Spinaceto.” Disembarking in Lisbon thirty years later, leaving behind a then-empty summer Rome, he finds a city perpetually full, bursting at the seams. He may retrace Nanni’s *dérive* on a Piaggio, but solipsism is now impossible. In Lisbon, the Italian Vespa mimics into an *Asian wasp!* Instead of riding pillion, the tourist industry thrives on generalised plagiarism, re-enacting convenient transport through hills and alleys [Figg. 7a-7b].

20 Floating art installation designed by Aldo Rossi, inaugurated in Venice in 1979 for the occasion of the 1980 Venice Biennale.

Figg. 7a-7b

Film frames still from *Caro Diario* (Moretti, 1993), Chapter 2: *Isole* – juxtaposed with author’s photography (2025) of parked *tuk-tuks* at Miradouro da Senhora do Monte, Lisbon

And again, inspired by Nanni Moretti, who updates his Vespa drift (and our hope) in *Il sol dell’avvenire* (A Brighter Tomorrow),²¹ now on electric scooters rekindling a distant communist harmony, Lisbon’s tuk-tuks proliferate – *eco-friendly* – placing the city’s picturesque within reach of all proletarians-by-desire. In Lisbon, when the sun rises at *Portas do Sol* or sets at *Senhora do Monte* belvederes, it is always for the many.

Eppure Si Muove (And Yet It Moves)

Contrary to Tom Wolfe’s satire on architectural modernism,²² Le Corbusier was not the first architect to build “a Radiant City inside his skull.” His pamphleteering utopian vision found relative cultural and social receptivity in its time. In architecture’s specialised domain, his ideas endure, with some typologies now repurposed for globalised tourism’s million-dollar maritime business.

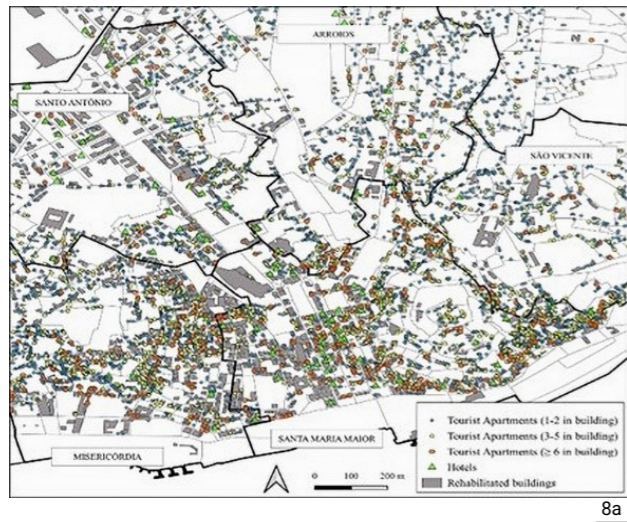
The transatlantic liner, as device and metaphor of industrial-technological progress, still plays a dual role: a nomadic housing unit, scaled up to embody passenger fantasies of freedom and escapism; and a ghostly apparition to port-city residents, invaded by its grotesque, polluting presence and the periodic tourist depredation it unleashes.

Some destruction is necessary, but much violence is compulsive. There is no “non-violence” – the city has always staged class struggles, conflicting motivations, and divergent aspirations. And as power – as it stands – protects an order now determined by capital replication and the sacrosanct value of property, we discern, backstage at the *Grand Hotel Lisboa*, growing demands for *homes to live in*. [Figg. 8a-8b]

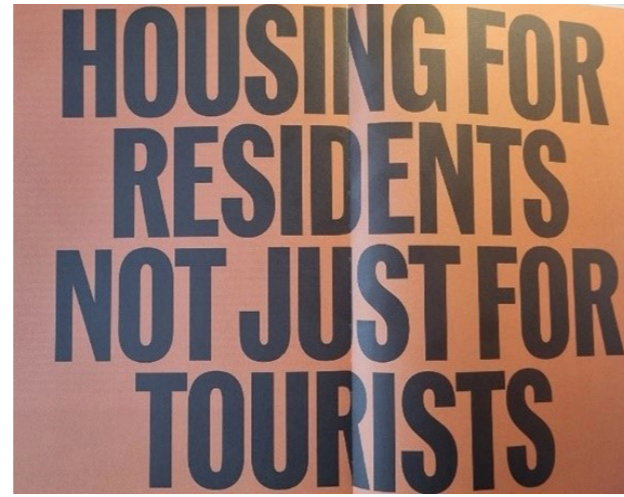
Yet there is no cause for despair. In some other chapter of *Caro Diario*, an academic solely devoted to studying James Joyce’s cryptic novel *Ulysses* for decades—and a longtime sceptic of television’s utility—eventually wrote a letter to His Holiness defending soap operas as a means to foster interest in the fates of distant, unfamiliar families. Similarly, *asian Vespas*, too, rebranded as *tuk-tuk*, bring to my doorstep origins far removed from my own, welcoming voyagers to Lisbon! Like the famed protagonist of *Candide*, whom Voltaire had arrive in Lisbon just in time to witness (and suffer disgrace in) the devastation of the 1755 earthquake, we are all heirs to Ulysses’ inaugural literary journey and to a historical web of human trafficking—so much so that the Aperol Spritz has become the most sought-after drink in the once-working-class neighbourhood of Graça. And why not? Spinaceto, too, are welcome, and will find itself, upon crossing the Tagus estuary, amid a full-blown real estate earthquake: access to permanent housing swept away by a speculative tsunami, where buying or renting alike collapse into the same vast wasteland. Now, the artifice of human

21 *Il sol dell’avvenire* [A Brighter Tomorrow], film, directed by Nanni Moretti (2023; Rome: Sacher Film, Rai Cinema, and Le Pacte).

22 Tom Wolfe, *From Bauhaus to Our House* (London: Picador, 1993), 29.



8a



8b

transformations – much like Nature herself – is an irredeemable process, where no action lacks a reaction, no product arrives without residue.

Under the lens of technological apparatus as social determinant, Jean-Luc Godard's *Film Socialism* (2010) frames the cruise ship as a representation of contemporary capitalism, reimagining it as an encapsulated, savage accumulation of divergent impulses. Here, "socialism" is posited as an undeclared alternative to the ills plaguing society under capital's domination.

Let us, then, embrace Moretti and Godard: their cinematic pavés recast cruise ships as *Battleship Potemkin*²³—stormed for revolution, with cabins redistributed "according to possibility, by measure of need."²⁴ In accordance with this gauge, the Unité's failure lies in its Taylorist "ability"-based efficiency—betraying Marx's "measure of need"—while cruise ships literalize its inversion: luxury for some, precarity for others. With each daily sunset, in service to the emancipatory freedom of real estate investment – excluded from the chain of surplus-value appropriation, we are left to gaze from afar at refurbished "penthouse apartments we will never afford"²⁵—all that remains for us *spinacetos* is to demand an exchange: for every Alfama courtyard lost, we demand a floating cabin—a tidal-energy Potemkin with laundry strung across balconies, storks nesting in smokestacks [Fig. 9a-9b].

Rescued from realist quotidian, the cruise ship docked to the Tagus' banks, bound by environmental and social imperatives – offering a fitting epilogue to Corbusian fabulation – is hardly an implausible image. The Cruise Terminal in Alfama, a landmark of contemporary Portuguese architecture, can also be repurposed as a public market— cabbages from Caneças versus bivalves from the Mar da Palha, for the customer to decide—or rehabilitated as a public school,

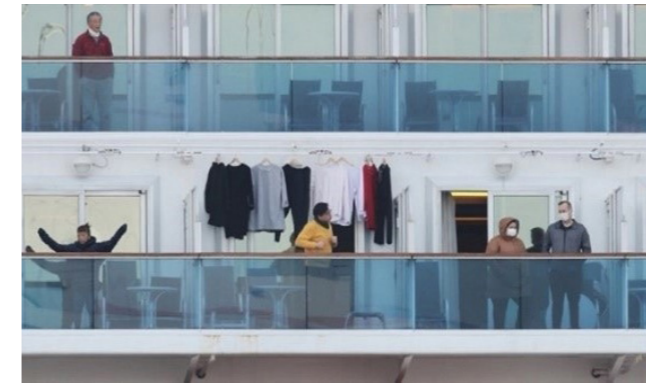
23 *O couraçado Potemkin* [The Battleship Potemkin], film, directed by Sergei M. Eisenstein (1925; Moscow: Goskino), 35mm, black and white, silent, 75 min.

24 Adapted from "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs!" in Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, 615.

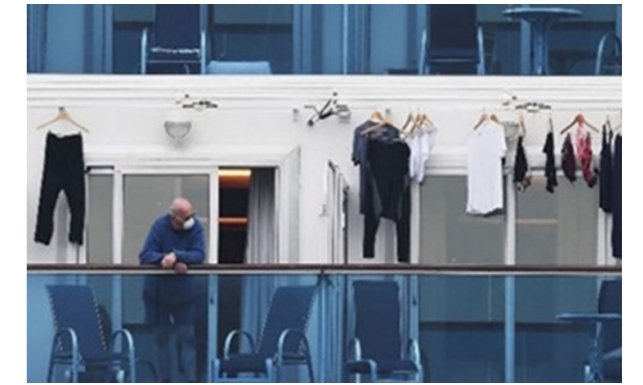
25 Moretti, *Caro diario*. Translation by the author.

Fig. 8a-8b

Double exposure: short-term rental heatmap vs. housing rights protest (documentation from *Habitar Lisboa: Uma Perspetiva Arquitetónica sobre uma Crise Contemporânea* (Lisbon: Monade, 2023)



9a



9b

open to children from Mediterranean ports and beyond. The river has always been an open door, a stage for Spinacetos' departures and arrivals. And in the same stroke that vanquishes global tourism's "entrepreneurs and collaborators," the insurgency of the world's proletariat will germinate (onboard) – still to unite!

And if, by some twist of fate, we were to find ourselves aboard with a Trotskyist pastry chef – or, more modestly, with some Marxist banker—the conditions would be ripe for a splendid musical film set to the tune of *Lo Stato Sociale*:²⁶

[verse 1]

E fai il cameriere, l'assicuratore
 Il campione del mondo, la baby pensione
 Fai il ricco di famiglia, l'eroe nazionale
 Il poliziotto di quartiere, il rottamatore
 Perché lo fai?
 E fai il candidato, poi fai l'esodato
 Qualche volta fai il ladro o fai il derubato
 E fai opposizione, e fai il duro e puro
 E fai il figlio d'arte, la blogger di moda
 Perché lo fai?
 Perché non te ne vai?

[chorus]

Una vita in vacanza
 Una vecchia che balla
 Niente nuovo che avanza

26 *Lo Stato Sociale*, "Una vita in vacanza," on *Primati* (Garrincha Dischi, Universal Music Italia, 2018).

Fig. 9

Domesticity in confinement: improvised laundry systems on the *Diamond Princess* (2020 Quarantine) <https://inews.co.uk/news/health/coronavirus-japan-cruise-ship-passengers-test-positive-diamond-princess-395341>, Accessed May 15, 2025

Ma tutta la banda che suona e che canta
Per un mondo diverso
Libertà e tempo perso
E nessuno che rompe i coglioni
Nessuno che dice: "Se sbagli, sei fuori"
Sei fuori, sei fuori
Sei fuori, sei fuori

[verse 2]

E fai l'estetista e fai il laureato
E fai il caso umano, il pubblico in studio
Fai il cuoco stellato e fai l'influencer
E fai il cantautore, ma fai soldi col poker
Perché lo fai?
E fai l'analista di calciomercato
Il bioagricoltore, il toyboy, il santone
Il motivatore, il demotivato
La risorsa umana, il disoccupato
Perché lo fai?
Perché non te ne vai?

[chorus]

Una vita in vacanza
Una vecchia che balla
Niente nuovo che avanza
Ma tutta la banda che suona e che canta
Per un mondo diverso
Libertà e tempo perso
E nessuno che rompe i coglioni
Nessuno che dice: "Se sbagli, sei fuori"
Sei fuori, sei fuori
Sei fuori, sei fuori

[bridge]

Vivere per lavorare
O lavorare per vivere
Fare soldi per non pensare
Parlare sempre e non ascoltare
Ridere per fare male
Fare pace per bombardare
Partire per poi ritornare

[chorus]

Una vita in vacanza
Una vecchia che balla
Niente nuovo che avanza
Ma tutta la banda che suona e che canta
Per un mondo diverso
Libertà e tempo perso
E nessuno che rompe i coglioni
Nessuno che dice: "Se sbagli, sei fuori"
Sei fuori, sei fuori
Sei fuori, sei fuori

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