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Short Essays on Earth, Clay, and Stone Architecture

ANDREA ALBERTO DUTTO WITH LEONIE BUNTE AND HENNING STORCH

In the following pages we present four short essays written by students and researchers who contributed to the research that took place as part of the transnational cooperation between the RWTH Aachen University (Department of Architectural Theory) and the Indian Institute of Technology Roorkee (Department of Architecture and Planning). Each essay elaborates on a particular issue pointing towards a selection of case studies collected in the online digital inventory "Experimental Architecture and Material Culture" (EAMC) collectively constructed by the research participants over a period of several years. Operationally, the EAMC served as a repertoire of useful examples in order to formulate a body of research addressing the use of stone, earth, and clay. In addition, each author also established cross-cultural connections, points of convergence, and thematic cues for activating an exchange with other authors involved in the research as well as scholars involved in different cultural and disciplinary domains.

The identification of a specific issue intervened as an additional level of problematization for the analytical categories on which the EAMC online digital inventory was built. In fact, it is important to note by way of introduction that the authors of the following essays were able to take advantage of a repertoire of case studies, already filtered by an analysis conducted on the basis of the following categories: the physical properties of the material, its structural aspects, surfaces, architectural elements, typologies, workmanship, environmental aspects, and building codes. From these data, authors were able to proceed with the elaboration of their own questions and to formulate

arguments about the possible applications of analytical knowledge to the practices of building, communicating, and observing architecture. Thus, each of the essays testifies to an attempt to formulate a point of view that is at once rooted in analysis and oriented toward a practice.

The first three essays pose questions about earth and clay architecture. Ting-Chun Yang's essay explores the question of depth of view intervening as an effect of the typically curved forms of interior architecture made of earth and clay; in particular, her observations focus on Revathi Kamath's house in Anangpur and Chitra Vishwanath's Sans Souci House in Bengaluru.

The essay by Merle Yilmaz questions bureaucracy in the context of contemporary practices dealing with earth and clay and, in particular, the role that collectives assume in responding to regulatory constraints; in addition to a brief examination of the main regulations in operation in Germany and France, Yilmaz offers some reflections on several recently-constructed public buildings and also provides a comparison with the Indian context.

The third essay is by Theresa Bandmann and has as its subject the issue of illustrating construction procedures in earth and clay in order to provide practical "how-to" instructions, but also to simultaneously formulate a representation of the social context in which the same practices are undertaken; Bandmann's remarks focus on analyses of vignettes published in Gustav von Bodelschwingh's handbook *Der Dünne Lehmbrotebau*, and hint at the growing impact of video tutorials.

The concluding essay by Suryendu Dasgupta questions stone as a synthesis of historical, economic, cultural, and architectural features in the case of the historical town of Jaisalmer (India); Dasgupta draws from Heidegger's phenomenological reinterpretation of the matter–form distinction and Derrida's "architecture of architecture," and draws a parallel with the materiality of Jaisalmer Limestone and the aesthetics of Jaisalmer.

Theresa Bandmann
is studying architecture in the master's program at RWTH Aachen University and works as a freelancer in architecture. Previously, she completed her bachelor's degree and worked at Spine Architects in Hamburg.

Leonie Bunte
is Research and Teaching Associate at RWTH Aachen University—Chair of Architectural Theory. Before completing her master's degree at RWTH Aachen University she received the UROP scholarship and conducted research with Professor Vikram Bhatt on the topic of "Low Cost Housing" at McGill University in Montréal in 2019.

Suryendu Dasgupta
is an architect and urban designer working in the field of urban built heritage. He works as Project Fellow at IIT Roorkee, where he completed his PhD and his master's in architecture. His doctoral research led to the development of a comprehensive heritage management approach for colonial hill stations in India, within the context of Darjeeling.

Andrea Alberto Dutto
is Research and Teaching Associate at RWTH Aachen University—Chair of Architectural Theory. His research activity is sponsored in part with DAAD funding. In 2017, he completed his PhD at the Politecnico di Torino in co-tutelle with the RWTH Aachen University. Between 2018 and 2020 he worked as Postdoctoral Researcher at Politecnico di Torino, where he was also appointed as Adjunct Professor.

Florian Eschner
is a research assistant at the Department of Architectural Theory at RWTH Aachen University since July 2020. Before, he finished his master studies at RWTH at 2019. During his master's degree he went for a six-month Erasmus study program to the Universidad de Alcalá de Henares. After his Master's degree, he received a scholarship for the research project "A New Passage to India" and spent half a year researching the topic of earthen construction for the teaching and research area of architectural theory in India.

Bernadette Heiermann
teaches at the Chair of Building Theory at RWTH Aachen University alongside her work at her Cologne-based office Heiermann Architekten. Together with colleagues, she founded the design_develop_build (ddb) studio at RWTH Aachen University in 2005. Since then, she has realized her holistic teaching approach from the conceptual design to the technical implementation, together with ddb, in hands-on projects worldwide, including numerous cultural and educational buildings.

Narinderjit Kaur
is a doctoral research scholar at IIT Roorkee. Her research focuses on native Indian settlements and culture as a collaborative effort of underlying design thinking and responding to different contexts. Alongside this she has worked as an architect and environmental planner in the field of urban settlements and the built environment for over two decades.

Vanessa Koepper
is an architect working at Jankowski Bürgener Architekten in Cologne. In 2020, she completed her master's degree at RWTH Aachen University. Previously, she worked as a student assistant at the Chair of Architectural Theory at RWTH Aachen University and was involved in the collaborative project "Earthen Architecture and Material Culture" between RWTH Aachen University and IIT Roorkee.

Gernot Minke
is an architect and retired professor from the University of Kassel (Germany). Here he founded the *Forschungslabor für Experimentelles Bauen* (Building Research Institute) in 1974. At the FEB he directed fifty research and development projects in the field of low-cost-housing, sustainable architecture, building with earth, straw bales, bamboo, and green roofs. He was invited speaker at more than sixty international conferences and gave lectures and workshops in all continents. He published more than 300 scientific articles and is the author of several textbooks. Most known are: *Building with Earth*, which was published in twelve languages, *Building with Straw*, and *Building with Bamboo*.

Smriti Saraswat
was trained as an architect and interior designer. She is currently assistant professor in the department of architecture and planning, and a joint faculty member in the department of design, at IIT Roorkee. Before, in 2010, she was awarded with a Letter of Merit for academic excellence in master of interior architecture and design, from the CEPT University at Ahmedabad. She is a DAAD fellow and grantee. Her PhD is an attempt to explore and investigate material culture, traditional architecture, and building crafts of the Himalayan state of Uttarakhand in India.

Ramona Schaefer
is currently studying architecture in the master's program at RWTH Aachen University. After completing her bachelor's degree (B.Sc.) in 2018, she continued her studies for one year at l'Università degli Studi Roma Tre. In October 2019, she received a scholarship for the research project "A new passage to India," with which she travelled to India for half a year to conduct research on earthen construction methods.

Frédéric Schnee
is currently a research associate at the Institute for Architecture, Construction and Theory at the Technische Hochschule (TH) in Cologne and is working on his PhD on mutualism in building processes. Previously, he completed his master's degree in architecture at RWTH Aachen University. Alongside this, he worked for BeL in Cologne, INABA Inc. New York, and OBRA Architects and is currently working on projects in Beijing with his own practice.

Axel Sowa
is professor in the Chair of Architectural Theory at RWTH Aachen University and editor of the *Candide Journal for Architectural Knowledge*. Between 2000 and 2007, he was editor-in-chief of *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* in Paris.

Henning Storch
is currently studying architecture in the master's program at RWTH Aachen University and is a Research Assistant to the Chair of Architectural Theory. In addition, he works as an intern at SMAA Architekten and is freelancing.

Ting-Chun Yang
is a master's student in architecture at the RWTH Aachen University. During her undergraduate studies at Detelling Aachen she worked as a student assistant and completed an Erasmus year at University of Porto.

Merle Yilmaz
is currently completing her practical semester at Heupel Architekten in Münster. Previously, she worked at HJPlaner Aachen and won the first prize in the ReBau competition for the development of the community of Schophoven handing in her bachelor thesis. In 2021, she began her master's studies at RWTH Aachen University.

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