

# Envisioning Transitions

Alma Mater Studiorum  
University of Bologna  
Department of Architecture

Architecture and Design  
Cultures PhD programme



ALMA MATER STUDIORUM  
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA  
DIPARTIMENTO DI ARCHITETTURA

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Bodies, buildings, and boundaries

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ISBN 9788854971141

DOI 10.6092/unibo/amsacta/7324

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## Bodies, buildings, and boundaries

*International Conference, 16<sup>th</sup> December 2022*

“**Transition**” is the dynamic process of changing state, going beyond, crossing over, and passing from one point to the next. The signification of the word is close to that of **evolution, modification, mutation, and transformation**, all of which are confined into a strictly restricted timeframe.

Etymologically, “transitions” can be nothing else than temporary: they appear silently, burst, violently establish, and gradually disappear into reality. In their blinding momentariness, “transitions” bear with them the positive undertone of change and renewal, along with the hopefulness of that which is unknown.

If the term “transition” recurs regularly in the contemporary vocabulary of **architecture and design cultures**, this repetition reveals a period characterized by **overlapping and sequential changes**. The word is without a doubt overused, but not without reason. Indeed, we find ourselves in an unusually extended period of consecutive “transitions”, overwhelmingly undefined in temporality and ambitions. As we are witnessing societies go through stark demographic, political, economic, and cultural changes, the intersecting problematics (e.g., ecological, digital, pandemic, etc.) form a rather complex topography of change, negatively charged by the instability of dilated time and the uncertainty of undefined destination.

The word is employed with the confidence of a natural process, as if it were a storm, and while we affirm our existence in “transition”, we nod our troubled times away. Whether positively or negatively perceived, “transitions” form bridges between histories. **Yet, what does it actually mean to be in “transition”?** Can we define it as an autonomous and productive period whose importance could go beyond a starting and an ending date? How are “transitions” impacting and being impacted by human spaces, the built environment, and design cultures? What are some concrete, practical case studies that demonstrate how “transitions” could affect architecture and design cultures while emphasizing the role that these disciplines play in transitional processes?

It is within this backdrop that we put forward the theme of “transition”—in all its simplicity and complexity.

## SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

The Scientific Committee is composed of the members of the Academic Board of the PhD Programme in Architecture and Design Cultures, Department of Architecture, Alma Mater Studiorum - University of Bologna.

More information: <https://phd.unibo.it/architettura/en/people>

## ORGANISING COMMITTEE

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## INTRODUCTION

Prof. Annalisa Trentin, University of Bologna

This publication collects the contributions selected and presented at the international conference, *Envisioning Transitions. Bodies, buildings and boundaries*, organized within the 36th cycle of the PhD course in Architecture and Design Cultures of the Alma Mater Studiorum of the University of Bologna, held in December 2022.

The international conference, organized by the doctoral students, has become an annual appointment, developed for the discussion on topics of interdisciplinary nature, useful for expanding knowledge and research goals, carried out within doctoral research and within the Unibo Department of Architecture.

The PhD program in Architecture and Design Cultures is multidisciplinary in nature, bringing together the specificities of architectural composition, urbanism, history, aesthetics, design, cultural heritage, technology, and design, combining fundamentals and applied research in an interdisciplinary perspective. The research activity is therefore developed according to thematic areas that, given the nature of the PhD program, aim to develop studies in the field of architecture and design cultures as wide as possible.

The international conference *Envisioning Transitions. Bodies, buildings and boundaries*, which follows those organized in previous years as: *The Matter of Future Heritage; CHANCES Practices, spaces and buildings in cities' transformation; The Ecological Turn. Design, architecture, and aesthetics beyond "Anthropocene"* and *Ground(s) - Mapping, designing and caring: Towards a convivial society*, once again focuses on topical matters trying to open a debate on contemporary issues.

The topic of transition and its relevance in the field of architecture and design, identified by PhD students of 36<sup>th</sup> cycle: Andrea Cattabriga, Valentina De Matteo, Francesco Di Maio, Lorna Dragonetti, Arshia Eghbali, Clara Giardina, Marco Iannantuono, Jing Zou, Giulia Marzani, Angelo Massafra, Claudia Nigrelli, Serena Pagliula, Marco Palma, Dafni Retzepi and Yuqing Zhu, was identified in three tracks with the intention of answering specific questions: the first track 'Bodies' questions on how to relate bodies and transitions; the second track 'Buildings' focuses on how architecture is adapting to the demanding framework of transition, and finally the third track 'Boundaries' focuses on how territories, cities, and various spaces of interactions are transforming and therefore the boundaries between people and objects, spaces, and different relational dimensions.

The selection of papers collected in this publication with the relevant contribution of keynote speakers Paul Emmons, Jean-Baptiste Fressoz, Laura Kolbe and Ami Skånberg Dahlstedt, testify an effort to combine contributions from different disciplines and provide different visions and interpretations on Transitions.

Annalisa Trentin

Coordinator – Unibo PhD program in Architecture and Design Cultures

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