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Bridging Rational and Poetic Realms in
Architecture -
An Exploration of Reima Pietilä's Open
Design Philosophy

Han Qiu

Tampere University

The Faculty of Built Environment

School of Architecture

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ABSTRACT

Han Qiu: (Talo:) Bridging Rational and Poetic Realms in Architecture – An Exploration of Reima Pietilä's Open Design Philosophy
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This thesis delves into the rich architectural philosophy and approaches of Finnish architect Reima Pietilä (1923—1993), a luminary whose work is characterized by lyrical and linguistic dimensions, organic expressionism, and most importantly, an open design approach, deftly straddling rational and irrational styles. As one navigates Pietilä's designs, this study unravels how the open design approach balances functional and poetic qualities in architectural spaces, shaping his architectural aesthetics.

The exploration begins by immersing in the phenomenological lens, dissecting the role of phenomenology in everyday life and unveiling its profound influence on architectural experiences. This leads to an in-depth examination of architectural phenomenology, particularly how Pietilä's creations become a canvas for the exploration of space, place, and memory, encapsulated in the concept of "Pietilä's *Genius Loci*."

The methodological journey involves insightful interviews with key figures, including Roger Connah and Annukka Pietilä, providing valuable perspectives to complement the qualitative analysis of three pivotal projects. These projects, namely "Kaleva Church," "Dipoli," and "Suvikumpu," serve as case studies, unraveling linguistic intricacies, exploring organic expressionism, and revealing the human experience within Pietilä's architectural realm.

Chapter four delves into the heart of Pietilä's openness philosophy, assessing its influence on architectural spaces. By balancing rational and irrational elements, the study plunges deep into Pietilä's architectural philosophy, evaluating its contribution to the establishment of poetic yet functional spaces. Architectural language, communicative power, and the broader implications of openness in Pietilä's philosophy are scrutinized, paving the way for discovering aesthetics beyond the visual in architecture.

In conclusion, this thesis culminates in a synthesis of insights drawn from phenomenological exploration to qualitative analysis, capturing the profound, multi-dimensional impact of Pietilä's open design approach. By bridging historical context with contemporary relevance, Pietilä's work is revealed not merely as unconventional but as an embrace of openness, unveiling beauty in every facet of design. This reframing invites a fresh angle for evaluating Pietilä's creations, transcending the limitations of mere irrationality or unusual styles.

Keywords: Reima Pietilä, architectural philosophy, open design approach, phenomenology, poetic space, human experience.

The originality of this thesis has been checked using the Turnitin Originality Check service.

Preface + Acknowledgments

Upon my return from my Spring holiday in 2023, I had the pleasure of meeting Annukka again and it was the first time we met outside of office. Our reunion took place right downstairs from her apartment in Viiskulma. Before my holiday, we had made an agreement to meet and catch up, as well as to have a preliminary discussion about my thesis after my return.

Even though I had known her for five years, it was on that day that I truly realized how much I could always learn from her as she seems to be always at the forefront of the trend - she smoothly paid for the drinks using her phone wallet, I awkwardly fumbled to type my pin code with my bank card for the payment.

I do not remember when it first occurred to me that my graduation thesis should perhaps revolve around exploring the connection between Annukka Pietilä and myself. I gradually realized that every time I went to the Tampere campus, the name "Pietilä" seemed to be everywhere: the tram passes by Kaleva Church shortly after its departure and eventually arrives in front of the Community Center complex in Hervanta. As I make my way towards the campus, I noticed even a road named after the "Pietilä". As the realization slowly sank in, the idea for my thesis began to take shape.

That being said, I must confess that writing has always evoked a sense of fear within me, it is possible that, after ten years of employment, my writing abilities have gotten worse rather than better. With this kept in mind, I made the resolute choice to return to school after a decade, my intention was to pick up where I had left off and strive for a fulfilling achieving to my academic journey.

In addition, architectural language can be tricky. It comprises symbols that are intelligible to humans, but as soon as they detach from our unconscious individual sensory experiences, they risk losing their meaning and becoming mere ornamental elements rather than expressions of beauty. On one hand, I am anxious about my limited reading and the potential impact it may have on my proficiency in self-expression. On the other hand, I am well aware of the extraordinary chance I have to get to know the of one of the most renowned family of architects, which is a true luxury.

I ought, therefore, to start writing. The depth of my gratitude for Annukka's leadership when I started my career as Finnish architect is beyond words. I would not have been able to have a full-time job and pursue a full-time master programme without her constant support, she has served as a role model and mentor in both my personal and professional life.

Last but not least, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to University Lecturer Pekka Passinmäki for his invaluable guidance throughout the completion of this thesis. His support has been instrumental in shaping this work. I am also immensely grateful to Professor Fernando Nieto Fernandez and University Lecturer Minna Chudoba for their invaluable insights and advices during the process.

Architecture is a cognitive and at the same time a cultural product with "sense of mind". A work must have its inner message and presentable form through which it communicates itself and its tale, telling its relationship to the values (even the negative ones) of our culture and to nature, both cosmic and earthbound.¹

¹ Broner-Bauer 2023:11.

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1. Introduction

Architecture serves as a concrete manifestation of human existence, encapsulating the very essence of the world in which individuals reside. From the majestic beauty of natural landscapes to the bustling energy of urban hubs, and from the celestial expanse above to the intangible realms of human sentiment and cognition, our experiences are intricately interwoven with the environment. In the examination of Reima Pietilä's architectural legacy, a thorough investigation into phenomenology is embarked upon to unveil the profound nexus between consciousness and spatial design. Drawing upon the profound theories of revered philosophers such as Husserl and Heidegger, a concerted effort is made to elucidate the philosophical underpinnings that guided Pietilä's approach to architectural design. Phenomenology presents a powerful avenue to delve into the essence of existence through the prism of Pietilä's architectural philosophy and methodology.

By embracing a phenomenological standpoint, an earnest endeavor is undertaken to unearth fresh insights into Pietilä's body of work, thereby shedding illuminative light on aspects that may have previously been overlooked or misconstrued. From the poetic intricacies of Pietilä's linguistic influences to the intrinsic organic expressionism woven into the fabric of his foundational principles, his architecture beckons forth an in-depth exploration of the dynamic interplay between rationality and irrationality, tradition and unconventional. Reima Pietilä's openness approach to architecture, with its emphasis on experientiality and integration with the surrounding environment, aligns closely with the principles of phenomenology. Just as phenomenology seeks to understand consciousness by examining the fundamental aspects of human experience, Pietilä's architectural philosophy strives to create spaces that resonate with the lived experience of occupants.

Given that this thesis is dedicated to examining Reima Pietilä's architectural philosophy and approaches, including an exploration of his entire life background starting from childhood, it inherently focuses primarily on him as an individual. However, it is crucial to acknowledge the contribution of Raili Pietilä (Nee Paatelainen). While Reima Pietilä is celebrated as the visionary thinker and courageous explorer of unconventional architectural realms, it is imperative not to overlook his role within the context of everyday life and partnership. Reima and Raili Pietilä formed the architectural firm Raili and Reima Pietilä Architects, embodying a collaborative endeavor that enriched the architectural creations with their combined vision, expertise, and experiences.

Additionally, in the construction of this thesis, the author acknowledges that the writing style may at times seem 'loose,' with a perceived tendency for focus to wander. This inclination is influenced by the writing and thinking styles of both Pietilä and Connah. The aim is to maintain an open approach in presenting the thesis, straying from a strictly formal tone while remaining within the bounds of academic standards. Therefore, the (sub)title of the thesis, "Talo" (dà lóu), is inspired by Pietilä's fascination with linguistics; the author selects this title because the Chinese term for "house/building" shares both its pronunciation and meaning with the Finnish language. Moreover, the author wishes to address that throughout the preceding eight months of intensive study and writing concerning Pietilä, a realization has emerged regarding the inexhaustible depth inherent within his body of work and

philosophical musings. It is apparent that the more one delves into Pietilä's oeuvre and underlying ideologies, the greater the breadth of insight to be uncovered. Thus, this thesis may merely serve as an initial exploration, offering but a glimpse of Pietilä's comprehensive essence, which undoubtedly conceals profound layers of complexity and depth waiting to be further elucidated.

P.S. Before proceeding further, I would like to acknowledge the assistance of AI tools, particularly Grammarly, QuillBot and ChatGPT, which I utilized extensively to enhance the grammar and sentence fluency throughout this thesis. However, it's important to note that the idea and structure behind this thesis are entirely my own. While AI tools have aided in the refinement process, the overarching concept and execution remain my sole creation.

1.1 Background and Context

Celebrating the centenary of Reima Pietilä's birth on August 25, 2023, offered a profound opportunity to reflect on the enduring impact of an architect who emerged as a distinctive voice in Finnish and international architecture. Born in 1923, Pietilä belonged to a generation that followed luminaries such as Alvar Aalto and Eero Saarinen, yet his architectural vision traversed new realms of spatial expression and philosophical exploration. Reima Pietilä's architectural legacy is deeply rooted in his innovative design philosophy, which seamlessly integrated nature, culture, and Linguistic Influences. One of the hallmarks of Pietilä's legacy is his commitment to organic architecture.

backdrop of post-World War II Finland, a period marked by transformative shifts in architectural discourse and practice. While his predecessors laid the foundations of Finnish modernism, Pietilä's work transcended conventional paradigms, offering a fresh perspective that blended tradition with innovation. Embracing Finland's abundant natural landscape as a wellspring of inspiration, Pietilä imbued his designs with an organic sensibility, creating spaces that resonated deeply with the elemental forces of nature. Pietilä's architectural vision was deeply influenced by Finnish culture, emphasizing linguistic phenomena, natural experiences, and atmospheric qualities. His exploration of architectural theory, coupled with his sensitivity to lines and forms, led to a rich body of written work and active participation in architectural dialogues both nationally and internationally.

Understanding Pietilä's architecture requires an acknowledgment of its metaphysical dimension, which eludes complete explanation. Pietilä's architectural theory, articulated through words, images, and built structures, was grounded in a profound relationship with nature and a deep cultural appreciation of it. He redefined classical concepts such as *mimesis*, infusing them with new interpretations that emphasized both cultural conceptions of nature and a poetic depiction of local identity. What set Pietilä apart was his deeply personal and multidimensional design methodology, which harnessed intuition and the imaginative power of language and visuals.

Pietilä's relationship with colleagues and contemporaries was characterized by independence and resistance to conventional ideas. Described as introverted and possessing a playful sense of humor, he didn't conform to the traditional idea of a "master" architect and preferred to navigate his own path. His approach to architecture blended intuition, interpretation, and

experimentation, rejecting the notion of a singular “master” and embracing ambiguity and fluidity in his creative process. He was deeply immersed in the exploration of space, language, and form, drawing inspiration from various disciplines. Pietilä’s **open design approach**² fostered an environment of innovation and creativity, allowing for the exploration of unconventional ideas and pushing the boundaries of architectural norms.

Despite the significant impact Reima Pietilä had on Finnish architecture, scholarly attention directed towards his oeuvre remains notably scant. Situated within the modern and functional stylistic paradigm, Pietilä fervently endeavored to inaugurate a novel architectural lexicon, thereby solidifying his position as one of Finland’s foremost architectural innovators. Notably, Pietilä’s architectural output, while comparatively modest in volume when juxtaposed with his globally renowned counterparts, garners considerable attention, both favorable and critical. This phenomenon prompts inquiry into the qualitative rather than quantitative dimensions of his architectural legacy, beckoning scrutiny into potential shifts in public perception over time.

Relative to luminaries such as Alvar Aalto, Pietilä’s scholarly examination remains notably underrepresented, thereby underscoring the imperative nature of all endeavors aimed at comprehensively elucidating his contributions. Critiques of Pietilä’s work often arose from the challenge posed by his speeches and writings, which were seen as difficult to comprehend. This complexity hindered many, particularly ordinary ones, from readily grasping the philosophical and visionary underpinnings of his ideas. Consequently, a climate of skepticism persisted within the Finnish architectural community. Unlike Alvar Aalto, Pietilä faced considerable resistance from peers who viewed his experimental expressionist and neo-regionalist designs with skepticism. Amidst this trenchant atmosphere, characterized by trench warfare over the definition of architecture, Pietilä’s dissenting voice was often marginalized or disregarded. In light of his pronounced unconventional disposition, this research aims to delve into Reima Pietilä’s design methodologies and performance, alongside an examination of his distinctive aesthetic sensibilities.

Ultimately, Reima Pietilä’s significance in the field of architecture lies in his groundbreaking contributions, which continue to inspire architects and designers worldwide. His impact on Finnish architecture was profound, challenging the dominance of modernist and functionalist styles prevalent in the post-World War II era. His legacy serves as a testament to the transformative power of architecture to reflect, engage with, and shape the cultural and natural landscapes in which it resides. Through his visionary work, Pietilä not only redefined architectural paradigms but also sparked ongoing conversations about the relationship between architecture, culture, and the environment.

² The term “open design approach” encompasses an architectural philosophy marked by a welcoming and inclusive approach to design, emphasizing collaboration, adaptability, and responsiveness to various contextual factors. In contrast to the traditional design attitudes prevalent during the studied era, characterized by rigid dogma or technological obsession, the open design attitude prioritizes an open-ended process of design. Moreover, this concept finds support in Pietilä’s own reflections, stating, “As a designer myself, I feel my own field of creative ideas lies elsewhere. I need less categorical conceptuality in my design approach. Those true design ideas come from the in-between zone between abstract and concrete things.” This statement underscores Pietilä’s inclination towards an approach that transcends rigid categorizations and embraces the dynamic interplay between abstract concepts and tangible realities.

1.2 Significance of Exploring Reima Pietilä's Architectural Philosophy

Reima Pietilä, a luminary in the realm of architecture, left an indelible mark on the world with his distinctive design ethos and philosophical approach. Pietilä crafted a unique architectural language that intertwined nature, culture, and human experience. His work, characterized by organic forms, sensitivity to context, and a deep respect for the environment, Pietilä's philosophy also embraced cultural identity and history, rooting his designs in the context of place and tradition.

At the heart of Pietilä's philosophy lies a profound connection to nature. He believed that architecture should not only harmonize with its surroundings but actively engage with them, blurring the boundaries between built and natural environments. His architectural philosophy, characterized by an openness approach that adeptly balances rationality and irrationality, holds profound significance in the contemporary discourse of architecture and design. Drawing inspiration from Finnish folklore, mythology, and vernacular architecture, he sought to create buildings that resonated with their users on a deep cultural level, continues to inspire architects and thinkers worldwide.

Moreover, Pietilä's philosophy underscores the importance of architectural language and communicative power in shaping our experiences of the built environment. His designs serve as eloquent expressions of his belief in architecture as a form of communication, capable of conveying emotions, narratives, and cultural identities. Pietilä's architectural creations were marked by a profound emphasis on the human experience, cultural context, and a seamless integration with the abundant natural environment. By scrutinizing the linguistic intricacies embedded within Pietilä's work, author gain insights into how architecture can transcend its utilitarian function to become a medium for storytelling and cultural expression, fostering dialogue and understanding across diverse fields.

Delving into the exploration of Pietilä's architectural philosophy unveils layers of insights and impacts that extend far beyond the mere appreciation of his creations. Central to Pietilä's architectural vision was the idea of "whole architecture" – an immersive experience that transcends mere functionality to evoke emotion and stimulate the senses. His buildings were not static objects but dynamic spaces that invited interaction and discovery. By embracing organic expressionism and prioritizing the human scale in his designs, Pietilä transcended conventional architectural paradigms, creating spaces that resonate with individuals on a deeply personal level. Through his emphasis on phenomenology and the concept of *Genius Loci*, he invited occupants to engage with spaces in a meaningful way, fostering a sense of belonging and connection that is increasingly relevant in an era marked by urbanization and social fragmentation.

Furthermore, exploring Pietilä's architectural philosophy contributes to a broader reevaluation of the role of aesthetics in architecture. By challenging traditional notions of beauty and embracing openness as a guiding principle, Pietilä invites individual to expand their understanding of architectural aesthetics beyond the purely visual. His emphasis on poetic spaces and the experiential qualities of architecture encourages one to consider the sensory, emotional, and even spiritual dimensions of built environments, prompting a shift towards a more holistic and inclusive approach to design.

In conclusion, the significance of exploring Reima Pietilä's architectural philosophy lies in its capacity to enrich our understanding of the interplay between architecture, culture, and human experience. By unpacking the layers of meaning embedded within his designs, people gain valuable insights into how architecture can transcend its physical form to become a catalyst for social change, cultural expression, and personal transformation. In an increasingly complex and interconnected world, Pietilä's philosophy serves as a beacon of inspiration, guiding one towards a more thoughtful, inclusive, and harmonious approach to designing the spaces people inhabit and reminding one of the profound power of architecture to inspire, enrich, and sustain the human experience.

1.3 Research Objectives and Questions

Central to Pietilä's philosophy was the belief that architecture should transcend mere utility and embrace the poetic aspects of human existence. He was a visionary who saw buildings as lyrical landscapes, a harmony of design that resonates with the natural world and the human spirit. His works often blurred the lines between the built environment and the surrounding nature, creating seamless transitions that fostered a sense of unity between the two realms.

Through the lens of phenomenology, the research aims to unravel the essence of Pietilä's philosophy and how it can be applied to the present architectural context. Exploring Reima Pietilä's architectural philosophy seeks to embark on a journey of exploration and introspection. The thesis aims to rekindle the spirit of humanistic care, where the design process becomes a dialogue between the architect, the natural environment, and the human experience.

By examining Pietilä's works, writings, and interviews, the thesis seeks to unveil the lyrical landscapes he envisioned. The goal is not only to appreciate the beauty of his designs but also to derive insights that can be applied to contemporary architectural practice. Research objectives as follow:

1 To Uncover the Key Elements of Pietilä's Architectural Philosophy: Central to Pietilä's design approach are several key elements, including linguistic influence, morphoogy creation and organic expressionism, etc. This objective entails a detailed examination of these elements, tracing their origins, evolution, and significance within Pietilä's body of work. Through a synthesis of literature review, case studies, and comparative analysis, seek to elucidate how Pietilä's philosophical ideals manifest in his architectural designs.

2 To Illuminate Pietilä's *Genius Loci* through Phenomenological Concepts lens: Delving into phenomenological concepts offers a pivotal avenue for grasping Reima Pietilä's notion of *Genius Loci* within his architectural works. Phenomenology, with its emphasis on lived experience and subjective perception, aligns closely with Pietilä's intent to imbue his designs with the essence of place. By understanding how individuals interact with and see architectural spaces, particularly through the lenses of intentionality and embodiment, one can unravel the layers of meaning embedded in Pietilä's creations. Through a thorough

exploration of Pietilä's designs within a phenomenological framework, author seek to uncover the rich tapestry of meanings that define his architectural legacy.

3 To Understand the Principles of Reima Pietilä's Open Design Approach: This objective focuses on understanding the intricate balance between rational and irrational elements in Pietilä's designs and how this balance contributes to the creation of poetic spaces. By examining the interplay between form and function, aesthetics and functionality, aim to unravel the complexities of Pietilä's design approach with particular emphasis on his openness philosophy.

4 To Investigate the Manifestation of Pietilä's Philosophy in Built Environments: This objective seeks to analyze how Pietilä's architectural philosophy manifests itself in his buildings, specifically exploring how his designs embody both functional design principles and poetic, expressive qualities. Through detailed analysis of selected projects and interviews, author aim to identify the unique features and design elements that characterize Pietilä's architectural compositions.

5 To Reinvent Architectural Aesthetics: This objective aims to redefine conventional notions of architectural aesthetics through the lens of Pietilä's innovative approach. By examining Pietilä's work, including his rejection of established norms and his embrace of unconventional styles, this research seeks to explore how his designs challenge traditional boundaries and inspire new perspectives.

To achieve these objectives, the research will conduct a qualitative analysis of three pivotal projects by Reima Pietilä, namely "Kaleva Church, " "Dipoli, " and "Suvikumpu." Through this analysis, the study aims to unravel the linguistic intricacies, explore organic expressionism, and reveal the human experience within Pietilä's architectural realm. Furthermore, the research will supplement the qualitative analysis with insightful interviews with key figures such as Roger Connah(Raili and Reima Pietilä's employee, assistant and friend) and Annukka Pietilä(Raili and Reima Pietilä's daughter).

By pursuing these research objectives, author aim to achieve a deeper understanding of Reima Pietilä's architectural philosophy and its significance in the broader context of architectural discourse and practice. In summary, by addressing these research objectives, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of Reima Pietilä's architectural legacy and the profound influence of his openness approach on the creation of spaces that embody both functional design principles and poetic, expressive qualities.

Research Question: How does Reima Pietilä's (architectural philosophy, characterized by an) openness approach situated between rational and irrational styles, influence the creation of spaces that embody both functional design principles and poetic, expressive qualities? Specifically, the research endeavors to elucidate the attributes and procedural intricacies of the open design method, and subsequently scrutinize its tangible manifestations within the architectural creations of Pietilä.

In exploring this approach, the research aims to understand the intricate balance between rational and irrational elements in Pietilä's designs and assess how this approach contributes to the establishment of poetic spaces. Furthermore, the study investigates the broader

implications of this openness philosophy, considering its role in bridging historical context with contemporary relevance in Pietilä's architectural legacy.

1.4 Scope and Methodology

The scope of this research encompasses a comprehensive examination of Reima Pietilä's architectural philosophy, with a particular emphasis on his openness approach and its influence on the creation of architectural spaces. The study will delve into the theoretical underpinnings of Pietilä's philosophy, analyze its practical manifestations in selected architectural projects, and explore its broader implications within the architectural discourse.

This research will adopt a multi-faceted methodology that combines qualitative analysis, case study research, and semi-structured interviews.

Qualitative Analysis: A qualitative analysis will be conducted to examine the theoretical foundations of Pietilä's architectural philosophy, drawing upon published books, scholarly literature, theoretical texts, and critical analyses. This analysis will provide insights into the conceptual framework of Pietilä's openness approach and its key principles.

Case Study Research: Three pivotal projects by Reima Pietilä, namely "Kaleva Church," "Dipoli," and "Suvikumpu," will be selected as case studies for in-depth analysis. These projects represent significant milestones in Pietilä's career and offer rich insights into the manifestation of his architectural philosophy. The case study research will involve a thorough examination of project documentation, architectural drawings, and scholarly critiques to elucidate the design principles and spatial qualities of each project.

Semi-Structured Interviews: Insightful interviews will be conducted with key figures such as Roger Connah and Annukka Pietilä, who possess valuable insights into Reima Pietilä's architectural philosophy and its impact on the built environment. These interviews will provide firsthand perspectives on Pietilä's design methodology, aesthetic sensibilities, and the socio-cultural context of his work.

Data Analysis: The data collected through qualitative analysis, case study research, and interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis techniques. This involves identifying recurring themes, patterns, and critical insights related to Pietilä's architectural philosophy and its manifestations in his buildings.

By employing this comprehensive methodology, the research aims to provide a nuanced understanding of Reima Pietilä's architectural legacy and the profound influence of his openness approach on the creation of architectural spaces.

2. Reima Pietilä's Architectural Philosophy: Unraveling His Design Palette

Reima Pietilä's life journey commenced on August 25, 1923, in Turku, Finland. His family's use both English and Finnish due to their time spent in the United States created a unique cultural and linguistic blend within their household. This environment fascinated young Pietilä, it provided him with a priceless opportunity to immerse himself in the rich tapestry of cultural disparities and linguistic intricacies.³ By the age of seventeen, alongside his regular education, he actively engaged in various courses offered at the University of Turku, delving into humanistic studies. Among these courses, one led by Paavo Rivila on "Finno-Ugric peoples" stood out. Paavo's interdisciplinary approach, merging philology and ethnology, captivated Pietilä's interest and drew him closer to the culture of the Finno-Ugric languages, exploring their words and meanings.⁴

As a result of his military service spanning from the age of 18 to 22, Pietilä started his architectural studies at the age of 23. He didn't graduate until the age of 30, which allowed him ample time to discover his own path and approach, possibly influenced by his extended time in school. In the meantime, Finnish architects predominantly received training in artistic and technical design, heavily influenced by the principles of the Bauhaus tradition. From his early stages, 1950's, Pietilä's work during especially his schooling years undoubtedly carries a hint of "fashionable" influence, one can see his interests in form and modernity. Nevertheless, as time passed, Pietilä's unique voice and style began to gradually emerge, forming his own distinct architectural language. However, it's essential to recognize that his perspective was profoundly molded by the tumultuous events he encountered during the War in the Karelia⁵ region. This geographical enclave, steeped in cultural and historical significance, became the backdrop for his experiences, leaving an indelible mark on his consciousness.⁶ Pietilä's diverse early experiences, coupled with his philosophical leanings and exposure to various linguistic and cultural settings, formed the solid foundation upon which he constructed his subsequent architectural methodology.



Fig. 1: Landscape drawing by Pietilä, 5.5.1929

The origins and distinctive characteristics of Finnish culture had a profound impact on Pietilä's architectural philosophy. From a very young age, he drew inspiration from various linguistic phenomena and diverse natural experiences, including forests, landscapes, clouds, the sky, and the waves of the ocean⁷(see figure 1). The ever-changing weather and light, as well as bodies of water adorned with islands and boulders, were also important inspirations. Norwegian architect and theorist Christian Norberg-Schulz' article "The Way of Reima Pietilä" said: "The architects should have a good memory for natural phenomena, a morphic sensibility of material and spatial concretions."⁸ Pietilä possessed an acute sensibility for lines and shapes, which was reflected in his architectural

³ Quantrill 1985: 27.

⁴ Broner 2019a: 20.

⁵ Pietilä n.d./2023 : 87.

⁶ Broner 2019b: 118.

⁷ Pietilä, Annukka 2024, interviewed by author, April 2024, Helsinki

⁸ Norberg-Schulz 1988: 12.

designs. However, he was not limited to aesthetics alone; he also delved into theory, demonstrating a profound interest in the topic. As a consequence, he wrote extensively about architectural concepts in both the Finnish and English languages.

2.1 Lyrolinguistic Influences on Abstract Creations

Incorporated into the create process from the inception, the language tool became an integral aspect of each project to Pietilä, evident since one of the very first publications from him in *Arkkitehti* magazine 4/1957 “Haudatut koirat—Muodon muoto—Harjoitelmat.” Pietilä’s penchant for wordplay and humor began to emerge, notably reflected in the untranslatable puns that characterize his titles, such as “Haudatut koirat” (Buried Dogs) playing on “Haukkuvat koirat”(Barking Dogs). This normative tone, enveloped in circumlocution, seemingly provided Pietilä with both contemplative and expressive space, persistently accompanying his later projects. It is imperative to recognize that Pietilä’s occasional embrace of awkwardness does not necessarily denote clumsiness or inadequate translation. Pietilä consistently enjoy interjecting a pun, thereby reopening sentences closed in the context of potential architecture. Illustrative of this linguistic reflection, the slogans for each project served as preludes to their respective architectural events. For instance, Kaleva Church in Tampere bore the slogan “Hellitä mäkiyötä meridiaani” (Be gentler, mountain zone meridian), the Dipoli project in Otaniemi featured “Luolamiesten häämarssi” (Wedding march of the cavemen), and the Suvikumpu residential complex in Tapiola presented “Tuohivirsut juoksuhaudassa” (Strips of birchbark in a dug-out).

*No one can stop me from studying grammar, but it can of course be said that I don't understand the grammar of language at all they are metaphorical fields of interpretation by which I avoid going to the heart of the matter, ... , charting its surroundings carefully I content myself with interpreting the truth with metaphors, because in architecture it suffices to create a framework the truth, that which architecture frames -is inside the architecture.*⁹

“Fragments” and “Fictions” have been mentioned again and again in Roger Connah’s book *Writing Architecture*.¹⁰ It implies that there is a consistent focus on fragmentary elements in Pietilä’s architectural creations, as if his designs represent various iterations of a lasting vision that are only temporarily expressed. Despite the potentially disruptive and debatable nature of this meta-poetic approach and the inclusion of humorous comments, there is an underlying coherence discernible throughout Pietilä’s works. This coherence exists alongside a deliberate avoidance of a single, definitive interpretation, instead embracing multiple layers of meaning. This multiplicity of meanings may evoke a sense of uncertainty or indecision, yet it also opens up a wealth of possibilities for interpretation and exploration. Pietilä’s embrace of “fragments” and their inherent incompleteness serves as a catalyst, inspiring him to generate boundless ideas and forms. This encourages him to construct his own narratives of “fiction,” using fragments as stepping stones for his creative exploration. Pietilä has described his design method as he uses different approaches simultaneously, either in a serial manner or by grouping components into specific categories. The number of components doesn’t matter much to Pietilä; he can handle sequences ranging from one to ten or even more. These

⁹ Connah 1989: 118.

¹⁰ Connah 1989: 16.

techniques allow him to create sequences and organize them systematically, giving him a clear overview, similar to a table of contents in a book.¹¹

The pinnacle of Pietilä's exploration into architectural morphology took a theoretical form in "The Morphology of Expressive Form"(see figure 2), published in 1958 in *Le Carré Bleu* magazine. Notably, this period witnessed a dominance of discourse on architectural form centered around proportions, exemplified by figures like Le Corbusier. In contrast, Pietilä's approach to morphology diverged from the pursuit of universal harmony and order prevalent in proportional systems enthusiasts. Instead, his mindset and methodology leaned toward an entropic perspective, embracing singularity of experience as an "pluricompositional."¹² As he stated: "Personally I consider that the form language used in architecture nowadays is an ingenious combination of things old and new, a Euclidean and Non-Euclidean form complex."¹³ Pietilä viewed architecture not as belonging to the realm of "exact essences" akin to mathematics,¹⁴ he aligned it with what philosopher Edmund Husserl referred to as "morphological essences"¹⁵ —phenomena characterized by their complexity and resistance to reduction to a mathematical formula. In this perspective, everything in architecture was interconnected through intricate patterns and form, yet it never conformed to a singular system of mathematical order or semantic meaning. The accompanying "stick studies" illustrated how Pietilä envisioned form, emphasizing indeterminacy and variability in the design process. These studies revealed a process driven by intuition, where new forms emerged from mysterious sources of spatial infinity. Pietilä viewed forms as having a life of their own, existing beyond the control of creators, manifesting an endless feedback loop in the design process.¹⁶

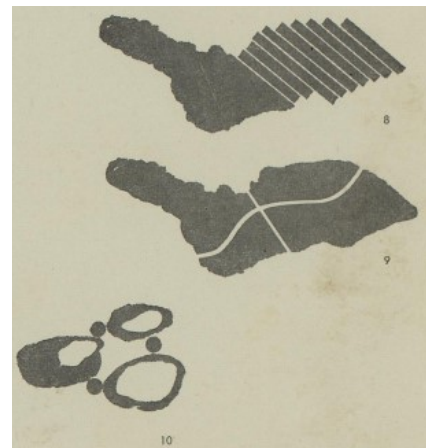


Fig. 2: Images from *The Morphology of Expressive Form* (1958)

Pietilä's inaugural exhibition, *Morphology-Urbanism*, hosted at the Pinx Gallery in Helsinki in 1960, aimed to unleash the productive capacity of form. The primary generative act involved displacing architecture into the realm of art. The chosen setting, an art gallery, conditioned viewers to suspend preconceived notions of architectural aesthetics, allowing the figures in the panels to be appreciated as art before being interpreted as urban and housing plans. The deliberate omission of scale and program information from models, celebrated the open-ended morphological fluidity, enabling forms to be interpreted in various registers simultaneously. Rather than relying on verbal and rational reasoning, Pietilä advocated for an architecture rooted in open-ended formal play.¹⁷ Cross-referencing media becomes both a generative design tool and a means of involving the viewer in the production of meaning. Rather than viewing himself as an individual author with a fixed expression, Pietilä navigates through history, ideas, images, and concepts fluidly across time and space.

¹¹ Broner 2019a: 40.

¹² Norri 1985a: 20.

¹³ Pietilä 1958: 3.

¹⁴ Pietilä 1958: 6.

¹⁵ Husserl 1982: §§71–75, 160-170.

¹⁶ Pietilä 1958: 2.

¹⁷ Pelkonen 2018: 89.

Roger interpreted that the reference to Pietilä's exhibition plates in *Morphology-Urbanism* from 1960 illustrates the abstraction quality. The plates are described as blurred by perspective, cut out, and flattened onto the canvas, allowing them to be interpreted almost like a scanner might read them. They form small modulating galaxies or models of neighborhood units, presenting a kaleidoscope of elements that come together in a calligraphic manner. Pietilä's exploration the focus on the contour of the landscape rather than the horizon, and on achieving lyrical harmony through the displacement and modulation of elements.¹⁸ In 3/1960 *Le Carré Bleu* magazine featured a special focus on "Morphologie – Urbanisme" (see figure 3). The publication's distinctive blue-themed design underscored Reima Pietilä's innovative "cross-media thinking," seamlessly integrating architectural drawing techniques into a magazine format. This fluidity extends to the exhibition's concept, transcending finality to become a platform for ongoing research and conversation across diverse media and registers.



Fig. 3: Reima Pietilä: Morphologie – Urbanisme page from 3/1960 *Le Carré Bleu* Magazine

In December 1967, Reima Pietilä inaugurated the "The Zone(Vyöhyke)" exhibition at their studio on Korkeavuorenkatu Street in Helsinki. Building upon the themes introduced in their previous exhibition, this showcase continued to explore urban morphology through abstract graphic compositions, while introducing a new element: language. The synchronization of visuals and auditory elements, as well as form and language, served as the central theme of this exhibition.¹⁹ The exhibition gained further exposure when it was featured in *Arkkitehti* magazine issue 1/1968. The term "Zone" referenced the convergence of two realms within architecture: theory and practice, encompassing research and its application. Pietilä advocated for the integration of both to achieve optimal outcomes, exemplified by the exhibition serving as a transition zone where theoretical constructs manifest in reality. Pietilä aimed to develop an architectural theory facilitating a comprehensive approach to the act of building. He sought to establish an independent theory augmenting existing ones and fostering the emergence of new architectural forms. The exhibition served as a tool for examining how forms convey and generate meanings and associations, incorporating the tool of language and marked a seminal moment in the crystallization of Pietilä's architectural poetics and spatial phenomenology.

Christian Norberg-Schulz²⁰ dives into the subtle similarities that exist between the fields of architecture and literature in the course of his research on the connections that exist between

¹⁸ Connah 1989: 149.

¹⁹ Pelkonen 2018: 89.

²⁰ Norberg-Schulz is also the person from whom Pietilä adopted the concept of *genius loci*. In addition, Norberg-Schulz is one of the key theorists applying Heidegger's philosophy to architecture. See Pietilä's article "Genius loci – two approaches:

the two art forms.²¹ He makes an intriguing comparison between architecture and poetry when he claims that, in the same way that experienced theorists may manage written words to transmit their intended ideas and provoke emotions, the field of architecture also shares certain similarities with poetry. It is a complex and difficult kind of art that goes beyond basic functionality, with the overarching goal of providing humanity with a living place that resonates with our most fundamental feeling of belonging. This art form goes beyond simply usefulness. In the same way that metaphors, symbolism, and rhythm are utilized in poetry to elicit feelings and express profound ideas, architecture, too, possesses the ability to communicate on a level that is deeply emotional and sensory. It has the potential to elicit feelings of wonder, warmth, and kinship. It has the ability to speak to our memories, culture, and ambitions, so generating a conversation between our own lived experiences and the constructed environment.

One could argue that Pietilä represents a departure from the modernist paradigm of Alvar Aalto, but merely labeling him “post-Aalto” fails to convey the complexity and uniqueness of his architectural vision. While Pietilä’s designs may exhibit characteristics associated with postmodernism, such as the incorporation of historical references, playfulness, and a rejection of the rigid constraints of modernist ideology, his work cannot be neatly categorized within the confines of a particular movement or label. It’s hard not to think of Aalto’s method which tried to deal with the flaws, irregularities, and inconsistencies that are part of design. He tried to find a balance between the ordered and the chaotic, tried to make a unified whole by putting pieces of different inspirations in a certain order. Within Pietilä’s extensive vocabulary, the term “fragment” assumed a distinct significance, representing a detached and impartial expression. For Pietilä, words carried profound weight, serving as vehicles for conveying fragments of space, ideas, and a larger whole that could never attain full completion. These fragments held inherent value, embracing the notion that they were part of a continuous process of exploration and understanding, forever remaining in a lyrolinguistic and abstract unfinished state.

2.2 Core Principles and its Morphology Expressionism



Fig. 4: *Space Garden* (1971)

Pietilä’s exhibition titled *Space Garden (Tilatarha)* (1971)(see figure 4), underscored space as a sensuous, physical, and heterotopic entity inseparable from life. Comprising twenty-five curved acrylic panels adorned with colored stick-on depictions of figures and words, the panels formed a spatial labyrinth. Organized around various thematic categories such as “Typological Space,” “Light Space,” “Contrast Space,” “Forest as Space,” “Regional Space,” “Space of Urban Events,” and “Foundations of Environment,” this exhibition expanded the two-dimensional graphs from previous exhibits into a three-dimensional setting. Visitors were encouraged to wander through the panels, experiencing a physical immersion in an environment comprising both

historical and modern”, in Quantrill, Malcom 1988, (ed.): *One man’s Odyssey in Search of Finnish Architecture. An Anthology in Honour of Reima Pietilä.* / *Suomalaisen arkkitehtuurin etsijä. Omistettu Reima Pietilälle*

²¹ Pietilä 1982: 23.

images and language. The exhibition simulated the mind's workings, absorbing and responding to a spectrum of information at once.²² Pietilä viewed architectural forms as akin to broken object aphorisms, and form-giving resembled an archaeologist working with fragments.²³ His notion of the environment retained mnemonic codes from other sites and past events, resembling a garden that incorporates various elements. Visitors, no longer mere observers, cohabited the complex environment with the displayed figures. It is unsurprising that the exploration into the origin and significance of architectural form culminates in an exhibition where the viewer is physically immersed in an environment of images and language, aptly named *Space Garden*.

As Pietilä's interpretation "A small exaggeration: in one building there is only room for a fragment of architecture. In one exhibition there is room for more thoughts of a spatial nature than in all the buildings together."²⁴ In *Space Garden*, he defined architecture as "research on spatial reality"²⁵ and advocated for increased awareness of the psychological meanings of architecture and the environment to enhance architectural quality.²⁶ Pietilä emphasized the necessity of anthropological, cultural-geographical, and cultural-ecological research to prevent environmental damage resulting from the unrestrained spread of a limited architectural genre. The exhibition included a visual-verbal analysis of northern environmental types, employing concepts like spatial morphology, landscape topology, and environmental typology. *Space Garden* communicated in the same language as daily work design discussions, while the pictures depicted the firm's everyday working methods.²⁷ Additionally, the exhibition acted as an early introduction to the phenomenology of architecture, long before the topic gained popularity, preceding its widespread discussion among Finnish architects.²⁸ He expressed the importance of a strong form language in modernist buildings and articulated his research focus on uncovering the undiscovered aspects rather than the typical or prevalent features of modernism.

The central tenet of Pietilä's morphological theory was that architectural form should not be arbitrary but rather derived from a comprehensive comprehension of contextual factors.²⁹ Pietilä aimed to create spaces that facilitated meaningful human experiences and interactions, going beyond mere aesthetics. His subsequent architectural projects became physical manifestations of his theoretical framework, demonstrating his ability to integrate form with its environment and imbue his structures with a sense of place and function. According to Norberg-Schulz "The existential purpose of building (architecture) is to make a site become a place, that is, to uncover the meanings potentially present in the given environment."³⁰ He also have addressed that "To Pietilä, then, every work of architecture is a *place*, possessing an identity which steams from nature and from man's dream"³¹

After graduating in spring 1953 I bought a canoe - a Finnish variation of the Eskimo type. I went canoeing amongst the numerous skerries around Helsinki. I tried to construct in my mind a clear concept of the pattern-scale relationships of the waves and form a memory of their own

²² Pelkonen 2018: 96.

²³ Reima Pietilä, Tilatarha, exhibition catalogue (Helsinki: self-published, 1971), 44.

²⁴ Norri 1985: 83. / *Space Garden* 1971

²⁵ Broner 2019b: 160.

²⁶ *Space Garden* 1971

²⁷ Passinmäki 2023: 40.

²⁸ Broner 2019b: 162.

²⁹ Pietilä 1958: 6.

³⁰ Norberg-Schulz 1980: 18.

³¹ Norberg-Schulz 1988: 14.

architecture on my body as It moved in the kayak. I particularly noticed the relationship of waves to the edges of the skerries and the behaviour of water amongst the rocks - the way water achieves a plastic form when meeting the polished hard granite shore line. Moving glass sculptures of very complex forms! Sitting in the kayak one's eyelevel is exceptionally low: rather unusual as one is partly sitting in water. The diminutive vertical scale module enlarges the dimensions of the surrounding objects so that the height of the waves grows enormously. The shapes of low skerries assume mountainous forms. The horizons more spacious. Clouds mightier.³²

Literary researcher, architect and former student of Pietilä, Lauri Louekari described Pietilä's special skill in transforming the forms of nature into building forms in his work *Metsän arkkitehtuuri* (Architecture of the Forest, 2006), Pietilä possessed a unique talent for translating his interactions with nature into distinct architectural forms. He keenly observed the harmonious blending of forms in natural settings and understood the spatial arrangement inherent in them. Translating these insights into architectural concepts was a crucial part of his process. Pietilä abstracted and geometricized natural features, perceiving them as regulated variations governed by precise rules of form. He then transformed these abstractions into visually understandable shapes, considering the practical constraints of technology and finance. This approach created versatile and practical architectural elements tailored to each project's needs, forging a profound connection between nature's inspiration and concrete design.³³

Pietilä elucidates the concept of nature "continues as architecture"³⁴, emphasizing the seamless integration of natural forms—shaped by dynamic changes influenced by natural processes—into architectural design. For instance, this notion is evident in Pietilä's design of Malmi Church (see figure 5). During the

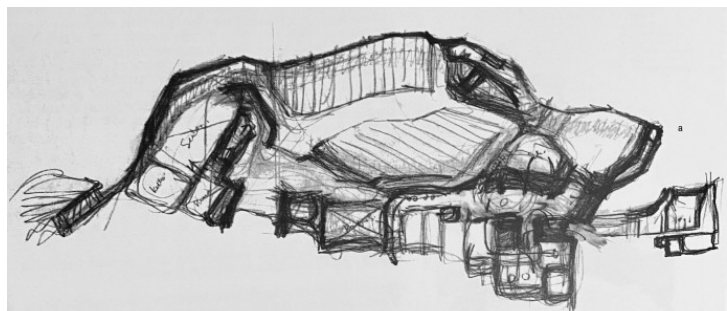


Fig. 5: The early geomorphic idea culminate in Malmi Church (1967)

design process, numerous decisions concerning shape and morphology must be made to translate the diversity of a natural landscape into reflective geometry. This integration occurs in tandem with, and sometimes in divergence from, the conventional principles of Euclidean geometry that traditionally govern architectural compositions. Pietilä's perspective suggests a deeper connection between the organic world and the built environment, where nature serves not only as a source of inspiration but also as a guiding force shaping architectural expression. By incorporating elements of nature, expand the vocabulary of design, offering new pathways for creative exploration and harmonizing human-made structures with the natural world. Hence, nature's influence extends beyond mere aesthetics, playing a pivotal role in shaping the functionality, sustainability, and overall ethos of architectural pursuits.

Pietilä's personal references to nature and culture are evident, he strives to ensure that they do not overwhelm the pure form of his architecture but permeate its overall ambiance. His ultimate aim is not to mimic an animal's appearance in his buildings but to create an interior

³² Connah 1989: 60.

³³ Louekari 2023: 25.

³⁴ Norri 1985a: 14.

experience that makes people feel as if they are inside an animal. When shaping the exterior experience, Pietilä draws inspiration from natural processes and phenomena, incorporating his personal experiences into a plastic, cohesive whole. As one scrutinize Pietilä's edifices, one find themselves perplexed by deviations from the customary norms that elude classification or explanation. In this way, Pietilä's designs challenge one to question and explore the very nature of architecture itself. Pietilä employs a distinctive approach in architectural design, emphasizing the connection between environment, history, and culture.³⁵

2.3 From Modularity to Openness in Pietilä's Design

In August 1954, the PTAH (Progres Technique Architecture Helsinki)³⁶ hosted a six-day summer course in Imatra. The focus of the course aligned with CIAM IX³⁷, emphasizing both the "problems of living" and the "theses of form."³⁸ Pietilä received an invitation from Aulis Blomstedt, a mentor from his early days, to attend his theoretical circle conference in Imatra. Since then Pietilä's empirical yet abstract research has persisted, focusing on repeated systems, modulations, movability, and the transformative potential of mass. Pietilä's objective, in contrast to Blomstedt's, was not the module system in and of itself, but rather the potential it presented for theoretical works on architecture. In its earlier years, it served as an outlet for artistic expression. When he describes abstract three-dimensional compositions made out of rectangular surfaces in his writing "*Transformoitavuus*" (Transformability) (1956) it becomes apparent that the aims he seeks to achieve go beyond merely material modulations; rather, he is interested in how light and perspective deformations "work" on the sculptures. "The mobility of the composition parts makes the composition changeable. The event of transformation and composition becomes centralized and the simultaneous relationships that occur in it become easily noticeable. The composition has also been treated with light, which is also a kind of transformer."³⁹

Pietilä's investigation of form started with early stick-studies and continued to grow in his subsequent works such as "Tortoise (1957)" and "Giant's Foot (1959)" (see figure 6), both of which contained mobile and arranged design elements. Experiments such as "Tortoise" provided a remarkable illustration of how tiny blocks might modulate into curves (akin to the way integrals in mathematics breakdown a curved surface), so reversing shape and modifying the ratio of solids to voids. When viewed in a different light or from a different angle, the material sculpture gives the impression of undergoing change and gives the impression of being "dynamic."



Fig. 6: *Giant's Foot* (1959)

³⁵ Quantrill 1985: 173.

³⁶ The PTAH was founded in 1953 by Pentti Ahola, Aulis Blomstedt, Aarne Ervi and Ilmari Tapiovaara, Blomstedt and Keijo Petäjä participated at the CIAM IX-congress at Aix-en-Provence. Other PTAH-members were Eero Erika"inen, Reima Pietilä, Heikki Siren, Esko Suhonen, Kyösti Ålander and the philosopher Simo Sivenius. <https://www.acsa-arch.org/proceedings/International%20Proceedings/ACSA.Intl.2003/ACSA.Intl.2003.3.pdf>, accessed in November, 2023.

³⁷ CIAM IX, held at Aix-en-Provence, France on 19-26 July 1953, was the first congress where the so-called 'younger' CIAM members.

³⁸ Devos & Kooning 2003:16.

³⁹ Pietilä 1956: 103.

These shapes can also be abstracted, stripped of their three-dimensional characteristics, thus inviting metaphorical interpretation through the manipulation of light, similar to the techniques employed by painters.⁴⁰ *Le Pied de Géant*, where a giant's foot becomes a subject for morphological analysis, exemplifies Pietilä's concept of "moments of transfer,"⁴¹ where insights from one phenomenon inform another. Pietilä outlines objectives and theoretical considerations for the creation of sensitive and oscillating forms, he emphasizes the selective use of basic elements shaped like corners at various angles, designed to occupy specific positions in space and allow for combinations based on defined ratios.⁴² Morphology, in Pietilä's perspective, aligns with linguistic morphology, celebrating the potential for "inflection," "derivation," and the formation of "compounds."⁴³

In these research, certain transformations were found to be limitless, while others had well-defined bounds, however all of them were regarded as "potential solutions." This morphological mindset views creativity boundlessly, welcoming surprises in the design process. Pietilä introduces two enduring themes that, despite being extensively explored over three decades, persist as perpetual and emphatic: the concept of "composition" as a malleable and ceaseless process, and the subsequent transformation of that very process; the open composition, where the composer engages with the emerging form, and the performer navigates the indeterminate aspects, oscillating between closure and openness, reference and abstraction.⁴⁴ These themes are evident across various mediums, including published articles, studies, and exhibitions, showcasing the breadth and depth of Pietilä's research core and creative exploration.



Fig. 7: Finnish Pavilion at World's Fair in Brussels in 1958

Pietilä present his debut design for the Finnish Pavilion at World's Fair in Brussels in 1958(see figure 7), named "Kierteissyinen" or "Spiral Grain," and it can be seen as an integration of Blomstedt's modular theories.⁴⁵ The pavilion is characterized by its configuration of staggered 22 pieces of parallelepipedal segments that create a continuous, unified interior space, while presenting an exterior facade with the appearance of fragmented volumes. The application of wooden cladding imparts a

sense of warmth and coziness, in line with Finnish design principles. Surprisingly, the internal and external expressions do not contradict one another. This harmony is achieved through the installation of a false inclined wooden ceiling, which effectively transforms the exterior's appearance of disjunction and discontinuity into a coherent and unified interior space. His clever use of systematic and rigorously structured configurations allows him to engage with spatial arrangements that may initially seem contradictory. In reality, his intellectual and

⁴⁰ Connah 1989: 149.

⁴¹ Pelkonen 2017:167.

⁴² Pietilä 1959: 9.

⁴³ Pietilä n.d./2023 : 91.

⁴⁴ Connah 1989: 148.

⁴⁵ Devos & Koening 2003: 19.

reasoned approach simplifies the process, ensuring a harmonious integration between interior and exterior spaces while reducing the risk of design dissonance.⁴⁶

Rationally adhering to a geometric framework, it functioned within the confines of the modular principle without surpassing its boundaries. The logical geometry and the continuous stepped composition, however, effectively mitigated the monotony inherent in the initial modularity. Despite resulting in a somewhat restrained yet potential plasticity, the transformation of the starting point through the compositional process remained a significant aspect of Pietilä's poetic expression. The structuralism of the Pavilion demonstrates an artistic operation within this system, displaying a trend towards intellectual abstraction and harmonic composition with nature. This peculiar case, with its logically geometric exterior sculpturism and compromised structural system, serves as an exemplar for applying anti-functional functionalism⁴⁷ in Pietilä's other projects.

The period from 1950 to 1960 held a special significance in Finland's architectural history. On one hand, there was a prevalence of functionalism in response to the pressing need for urban housing following the post-war developments. This decade witnessed urbanization, the inception of social housing projects, and the creation of innovative architectural designs, exemplified by the famous "Serpentine house." Concurrently, architects were beginning to question the tenets of rationalism in architecture. Pietilä, perceptive to this cultural shift, his inclination towards the lyrical plasticity of modular studies is underscored, particularly in his rejection of universalist solutions during the socio-politically charged 1960s. There was a notable shift towards prioritizing the science of measurement and measurable aspects in building production, amidst the tension of this period in Finland. The prevalent use of pre-cast concrete units in housing construction resulted in a monotonous array of forms, a phenomenon Pietilä critically labeled as "box architecture."⁴⁸ The article titled "Kaavan kaava" from the 1960 exhibition *Morphology-Urbanism* cleverly played with words again, suggesting a translation like "Diagram of a Zoning Plan." This wordplay encapsulated the essence of the article, emphasizing the advocacy for formal autonomy. The central argument aimed to challenge the prevailing influence of narrow-minded functionalist and economic in Finland.⁴⁹

Pietilä gradually distanced himself from Blomstedt⁵⁰, from conventional architectural approaches, leading to the emergence of his distinctive style in subsequent projects. Blomstedt and Pietilä shared idioms underwent adjustments, yet the divergence lay not in abstraction but in content emphasis and the compose of architecture's perspective. Blomstedt's architectural focal point revolved around balanced proportions, lucidity, and pristine structure, while Pietilä's method centered on spatial dynamics, experiential qualities, modulation, and adaptability. As he described "My work resembles groups of goal vectors in space. I have no goals, only these groups of goal vectors."⁵¹ Here, permutation and the uncertainty principle, highlighting Pietilä's unique lens through which he viewed architectural creation. Pietilä's departure from traditional norms didn't signify a closure but rather an opening to new possibilities.

⁴⁶ Devos & Kooning 2003: 18-20.

⁴⁷ Connah 1989: 163.

⁴⁸ Quantrill 2008: 92.

⁴⁹ Koho 1995: 40.

⁵⁰ Norri 1985a: 9.

⁵¹ Broner 2019a: 38.

The predominant emphasis in the 1950s was on formalism, heavily influenced by studies in mathematics and logic, although Pietilä and his contemporaries were initially captivated by the form of modernity, focusing on its structure, mechanisms, and devices. However, while prevailing methodologies and ordering principles were under exploration, Pietilä was already operating within the interstices of these methodologies, actively resisting and challenging the.⁵² He seemingly saw that his most profound insights would emerge from assumptions that inherently contradicted his own perspectives. The notion that adherence to discipline, particularly within theoretical realms, could prove limiting, prompting Pietilä to seek a more open, liminal space. To Pietilä, “possible architecture” is architecture of “more”...⁵³ Everything is possible, with no foreseeable future or conclusion, except for a continuous, subtle oscillation akin to a breeze delicately lifting curtains that the day had allowed to descend. As time progressed, Pietilä envisioned a shift in architecture towards a poetic language, acting as a transitional zone between nature and culture. He embraces the unfinished and ambiguous nature of language, viewing it as integral to his pursuit of meaning.

2.4 Embracing Phenomenology in Pietilä’s Open Design Philosophy

When delve into the world of Pietilä, the task of encapsulating his true essence or providing a comprehensive explanation of his work becomes undeniably challenging. He was highly active in elucidating his practical pursuits through theoretical reflections. Nevertheless, the prevailing dichotomy often associated with him is that of “rational” and “non-rational,” largely a product of the era he inhabited. It was a time when modernism held sway as the norm, making anything divergent from this standard appear anomalous. In light of Myers-Briggs Type Indicator’s⁵⁴ concept of “sensing” and “intuition”, sensors focus on immediate, tangible data, relying on their senses, they excel at specific, sequential tasks and need clear, tangible outcomes; while Intuitives trust their intuition and find meaning in disparate facts, they excel at reading between the lines and making connections, value innovation, imagination, and think in abstract terms.

Architect Kjell Lund, in his contribution to “The Future of Architecture” at the Helsinki Seminar of European and American Architecture in 1980, may have provided a comprehensive summary of Pietilä’s architectural philosophy. “... a relationship between Structuralism and Spontaneity, might be desirable, producing an infant at once young and old, an architectural synthesis of the rational and the irrational, of the prosaic and the poetic. I believe the subtle dialogue Reima Pietila pursues with himself in his latest projects confirms my hope that conception has taken place.”⁵⁵ Indeed, attempting to fit Pietilä neatly into either of these categories proves to be a futile exercise. His body of work defies easy categorization, blending the realms of abstract openness in design with a rigorous commitment to mathematical precision. Pietilä resists simplistic classification, dwelling in the captivating realm of the middle ground, steadfastly refusing to be confined to a particular label.

⁵² Norri 1985a: 10.

⁵³ Norri 1985: 33.

⁵⁴ The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) is a measure of personality type based on the work of psychologist Carl Jung. - National Institutes of Health (NIH), accessed in November, 2023.

⁵⁵ LE « CARRÉ BLEU » AND REIMA PIETILÄ - *Le Carré Bleu* 2/1981: 2.

It's not surprised to observe Pietilä's distinctive design approach, which often involves the introduction of a concept followed by a question mark, only to revisit, reevaluate, and delve deeper into it.⁵⁶ Here, one encounter the intriguing dichotomy of Reflectivity versus Reflexivity. Reflective Practice involves introspection, where an individual reflects on what the've learned and how to apply or further their understanding. In contrast, Reflexive Practice goes beyond personal reflection, as it encompasses considerations of how one's newfound insights can impact the broader context in which they operate. Fundamentally, it seems as though two substantial parallel streams of perception are developing, each with its unique direction and implications within Pietilä's architectural philosophy. The intriguing prospect is that these streams might intersect, exchange, and ultimately transform into a unified approach.

Pietilä introduces the concept of "anthropomorphic topology" as a creative game influencing the evolution of his design approach.⁵⁷ In essence, Pietilä's methodologies epitomize a commitment to unconventional, experiential, and context-driven design, exemplified through his expressions. These "games" exemplify a departure from established norms, encouraging architects to draw inspiration from the organic, the historical, and the culturally significant. This emphasis on playful and innovative approaches underscores Pietilä's unique contribution to the field of architectural creation. Just as he addressed: "Language has many spatial qualities equivalent to nature, a veritable architectural topology. For many years I have composed imaginary topological relations with Finnish using its suffixes as determinants for location. Original and sensitive forms can be achieved. Some such exercises exist wholly in the verbal sense and cannot be imagined spatially."⁵⁸

For Pietilä, topological language serves a dual purpose, both guiding the methodological structure of inquiry and acting as a substantive focus within his architectural compositions. This philosophical underpinning aligns closely with phenomenology, emphasizing the dynamic interrelation between the structure of place and the nature of philosophical inquiry. Notably, Pietilä's topology challenges the conventional prioritization of subjectivity over place, introducing the idea that place, or *topos*, does not function as an underlying substrate in the same manner as subjectivity. Instead, *topos* is deployed to undermine notions of underlying structures, pointing towards a departure from traditional metaphysical subjectivism. Additionally, Pietilä's topology integrates and links a variety of elements, including the physical, environmental, spatial, temporal, objective, and subjective aspects. This shift represents an evolution from his previous emphasis on morphology. It now provides a framework for comprehending the overall properties of spaces and surfaces, irrespective of their particular geometric characteristics. This inclusive perspective suggests that Pietilä's topology transcends specific aspects, contributing to a broader understanding of architectural philosophy and design.

Topology seeks to envisage this spatiality in its pristine and unadulterated essence, as exemplified in Pietilä's work and sketches, such as "Immanent Things"(see figure 8). The approach stands out for its consideration of the inherent nature of space on its own terms. This philosophical stance posits that the manifestation of a space, along with its concomitant features, should not be construed as the mere appearance of a predetermined subject

⁵⁶ Connah 2023: 40. "Pietilä was nothing if not self-reflexive" In various writings, Roger Connah has discussed Pietilä's method involves initially addressing a question, followed by revisiting and reviewing that question at a later stage.

⁵⁷ Pietilä n.d./2023 : 89.

⁵⁸ Pietilä n.d./2023 : 91.

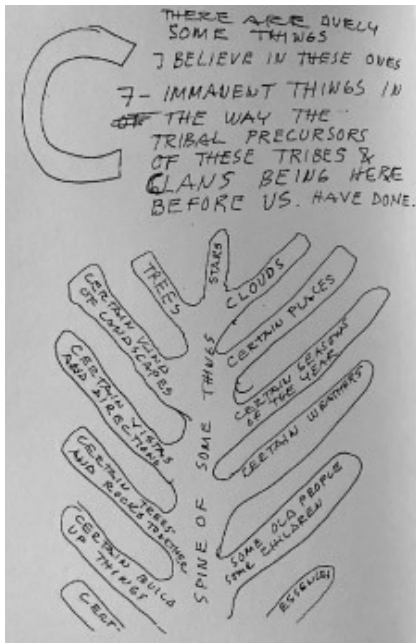


Fig. 8: "Immanent Things" - Pietilä's drawing in a letter on 2.3.1987

juxtaposed against an object or as an array of sensations and subsequent ideas.⁵⁹ Pietilä's approach to topology in his architectural design reflects a profound philosophical foundation that extends beyond conventional spatial considerations. At its primary manifestation, a space unfolds as a distinct, demarcated region, possessing both boundaries and a coalescent unity wherein individuals coexist with the objects in their surroundings—an elemental concept underpinning Heidegger's *Ereignis*.⁶⁰ The profound correlation between topology and phenomenology emanates from their shared preoccupation with contemplating space as the very site of thought. This correlation is exemplified in Heidegger's foray into phenomenology, serving as a medium for a renewed engagement with life.⁶¹

2.4.1 Phenomenology's Role in Everyday Life

What is phenomenology? It is a philosophical perspective delves into the intricate relationship between the human mind and body, acting as the bridge through which individuals connect with their environment. In this framework, human experience is recognized as profoundly intricate and multifaceted, marked by its richness and its enigmatic, hard-to-pin-down essence. Stemming from the deeply personal and subjective nature of human existence, it is shaped by each individual's unique perspective. At the heart of this philosophy lies the notion of the "lifeworld" (*Lebenswelt*), the domain where conscious "Beings" dwell, encapsulating the unfolding of events, objects, and emotions in everyday life. Phenomenology's fundamental tenets are tightly intertwined with the vast web of connections among individuals and diverse artistic expressions, spanning visual arts, literature, live performances, music, film, and more. At the essence of this philosophical framework lies the acknowledgment that human experience is inherently subjective and intricately tied to individual consciousness. Therefore, when encountering art in its myriad forms, individuals interpret it through the multifaceted lens of their subjective phenomenological encounters, a truth that resonates across all artistic mediums.

In the research study titled "Being Moved by Art, A Phenomenological and Pragmatist Dialogue" ⁶² explores the profound experiences individuals have when encountering art. The study conducting phenomenological interviews with museum visitors to delve into the concept of being emotionally affected by art. The method of this research is involves qualitative interviews with museum visitors about their intense or meaningful experiences with art. It aim to elicit rich descriptions of these experiences and are conducted in a semi-

⁵⁹ Malpas 2011: 16,17,28.

⁶⁰ Malpas 2008: 28. "Heidegger sees the physicalist conception of space as secondary to more existential conceptions. Thus in *Being and Time*, as we shall see, there is a notion of space that is directly involved with the character of *Dasein* (being-there) as 'being-in-the-world.'"

⁶¹ Malpas 2008: 1-17. Introduction part.

⁶² Høffding 2022: 85-102.

structured manner to encourage detailed responses. During interview, the person explicitly states her motivations for visiting art museums and why she repeatedly seeks out certain artworks, like Olafur Eliasson's pink room(see figure 9). These artworks, which convey immediate meaning, enable her to tap into existential emotions, helping her better manage her emotional life and overall situation.

*Without really thinking too much about it, I just let myself experience the work of art, then it happens quietly by itself [...]. I just try to let my body and my senses just experience it [...]. And then it can happen now and again that a thought appears, and I have an "a-ha" experience, but it is not something I try to force or make appear [...]. I can of course analyse them, and I know how to do such stuff, but that does not mean much to me [...] but these pictures [...] or works of art which just say something immediately, with them I am not busy with anything else but just experiencing them.*⁶³



Fig. 9: Olafur Eliasson & Ma Yansong – Feelings are facts (2010)

The museum visitors who were interviewed, chosen specifically for their ability to offer detailed accounts of their experiences, expressed a traditional perspective on art. While their viewpoints may align with romantic and elitist art norms, it's recognized that qualitative research doesn't aim to eradicate biases. Rather, its goal is to capture lived experiences in their entirety, including any predispositions and biases. Adhering to a particular norm doesn't negate its genuine influence on one's experience. Qualitative researchers aim to gather detailed experiences, while philosophers and psychologists analyse them to understand their nature and structure.⁶⁴ The interviews conducted for this study reveal that individuals often undergo deeply emotional and existential encounters while engaging with artworks. These interactions possess the potential to genuinely alter individuals, shaping not only their self-perception but also their perspective on the world around them.

Literature, in its various manifestations such as written, spoken, or digital formats, engenders a realm of linguistic constructs wherein readers submerge themselves. Novels, poetry, essays, and stories serve as mediums through which authors delve into the intricacies of the human condition and the complexities of human awareness. However, the potency of literature resides not alone inside the author's storytelling, but also within the reader's distinct interaction. Each reader possesses a unique set of personal experiences, cultural background, and emotional disposition, which inevitably influence their interpretation and comprehension of the written text. Consequently, a solitary piece of literature has the capacity to elicit a plethora of interpretations and sentiments, which are as varied as the individuals who interact with it.

Delving into the intricacies of language transcends rigid methodologies, presenting unique challenges as one probes its essence. At the core of this inquiry lies a paradox: comprehension of language necessitates its utilization—a nuanced interplay of words and symbols that simultaneously unveil and obscure its true essence. This paradox, a cornerstone of linguistic

⁶³ A middle-aged woman, despite lacking formal art expertise, frequents art galleries. While she describes two specific artworks, her experiences are consistent. She feels disconnected from exhibits that are overly didactic or agenda-driven but experiences intense emotions when deeply moved by art.

⁶⁴ Høffding 2022: 89.

philosophy, evokes the analogy of navigating with a map that doubles as the terrain it depicts. In everyday interactions, effortlessly maneuvering through the labyrinthine structure of language enables the construction of sentences to convey thoughts and emotions. However, when tasked with articulating the fundamental nature of language, individuals often encounter difficulty in finding appropriate expression, encountering what can be termed the “private language argument.”⁶⁵

This enigmatic aspect of users relationship with language creates what can be described as a perpetual lag behind their own inquiry. A journey where the destination keeps shifting, where the map user draw is both a record of their progress and a reflection of their limitations is embarked upon by user like explorers attempting to map a vast and intricate landscape with limited tools and incomplete knowledge. To illustrate this perpetual lag, the concept of “love” can be considered. Love is experienced and understood by people all to some degree, and the word “love” is routinely used in one’s conversations and writings. However, when asked to define the nature of love—what it truly means and how it manifests—one often find ourselves struggling to capture its essence. Love, like language, is a concept known to one intimately as users, yet articulating its fundamental nature remains elusive.

However, the innate receptivity of cognition to literature allows individuals to explore personal notions among languages. When approached with an open mindset attuned to linguistic nuances and conceptual themes, combined with introspection, can evoke profound contemplation, fostering a sense of interconnectedness with the world and leading to joy and fulfillment. These sources of knowledge illuminate a path of deep reflection previously overlooked, stimulating a unique cognitive experience within an unexplored intellectual realm. The human nature does not inherently define what is perceived as rational, irrational, or non-rational, but rather, these differences are produced in human language and action. Put another way, there are no fixed and timeless criteria of rationality that one can ever explore.



Fig. 10: Film Scenes from Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979)

In contrast to static art pieces or written literature, film presents a unique experience as it unfolds over time, enabling viewers to engage in a gradual voyage of perception, in contrast to the immediate comprehension of emotions or messages often associated with static art or literature. Phenomenology in film, potentially for individuals to inadvertently overlook the narrative, sequence of events, or even particular elements within a film, yet retaining a lasting

and profound impression in the form of an enduring emotional experience. Exemplified by directors like Andrei Tarkovsky⁶⁶(see figure 10) and Bergman⁶⁷, lies in its ability to evoke enduring emotional experiences, transcending the narrative details. These filmmakers

⁶⁵ The private language argument argues that a language understandable by only a single individual is incoherent, and was introduced by Ludwig Wittgenstein especially in the *Philosophical Investigations*, introduced the notion in §243, and argues for its impossibility in §244-§271. Key passages occur in §256-§271.

⁶⁶ Russian film director and are noted for their slow pacing and long takes, dreamlike visual imagery, and preoccupation with nature and memory

⁶⁷ Swedish film and theatre director and his films have been described as "profoundly personal meditations into the myriad struggles facing the psyche and the soul"

intricately weave human experiences into their cinematic universes, prompting introspective engagement with the complexities of the human condition. The phenomenology of renowned directors such as Tarkovsky and Bergman, focusing on themes like symbolism, perception of time, introspective dialogue, and spirituality. Their films, known for profound explorations of spiritual and metaphysical dimensions, employ a distinctive visual style that leaves a lasting impact, often evoking dreamlike imagery and engaging viewers in contemplation of the mysteries beyond the tangible world.



Fig. 11&12: Film Scenes from *Persona*, Ingmar Bergman (1966) and *The Lighthouse*, Robert Eggers (2019)

Memory plays a pivotal role in the world of cinema, bridging the gap between audience experiences and connecting films to each other. Whether it's a snippet of dialogue, a striking image, or a lingering feeling, memory weaves a complex net of intertwined experiences. *The Lighthouse* (2019) serves as a prime example, blending personal recollections with a reservoir of cinematic memories to create a rich narrative collage. Viewers often draw parallels between Bergman's *Persona* (1966) and *The Lighthouse* (see figures 11&12), showcasing how memory evokes associations and deeper reflections. In both films, thematic similarities emerge despite differing narratives and settings. Both explore the dynamics between characters of the same gender, traversing through stages of hostility, intimacy, betrayal, and violence. Through the lens of memory, audiences discern common threads like the exploration of self and fractured identity, inviting introspective journeys beyond each film's boundaries. Memory enriches the cinematic experience by revealing influences like mythology and psychological horror in *The Lighthouse*, adding layers to its narrative depth.

Interpreting the conclusion of *The Lighthouse* poses a challenge due to its inherent ambiguity, permitting multiple valid interpretations. The lighthouse can be seen as a metaphor for the protagonist's purgatorial journey, a narrative on psychological toll in isolation, or a Lovecraftian exploration of lurking horrors.⁶⁸ The deliberate open-endedness offers no definitive answers, reinforcing the beauty of phenomenological examination in film. This ambiguity mirrors life's complexities, making *The Lighthouse* a compelling subject for phenomenological analysis. Through this lens, film becomes a means to explore the intricate facets of consciousness and the enigmatic aspects of existence, enhancing our understanding of cinema and the human experience. The film's open-ended nature encourages viewers to delve into their own consciousness, aligning with phenomenology's essence, which explores the intricacies of human experience. In film and phenomenology, ambiguity serves as a

⁶⁸ Lovecraftian horror, also called cosmic horror or eldritch horror, is a subgenre of horror fiction and weird fiction that emphasizes the horror of the unknowable and incomprehensible more than gore or other elements of shock. – "Lovecraftian horror," *Wikipedia*, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lovecraftian_horror, accessed in April, 2024.

powerful tool, engaging viewers on a deeper level and inviting active participation in the interpretation process for personal connections and reflections.

2.4.2 Interpreting Phenomenology Development

The term “phenomenology” was coined by Johann Heinrich Lambert in 1764, derived from the Greek word *φαινόμενον*, initially meaning “manifest luminously” or a “facet of the natural world.” Lambert’s work in optics, particularly his 1760 publication *Photometria*, linked empirical discoveries to philosophical discussions. Franz Brentano, influenced by physicist Ernst Mach, applied phenomenology to explore encounters with physical phenomena, paving the way for Husserl’s concept of “intentionality.” Husserl formally defined phenomenology in the early 20th century, focusing on immediate experiences, perception, and engagement with the environment. He characterized phenomenology as a “set of infinite tasks,”⁶⁹ establishing foundational principles and concepts that evolved into the phenomenology known today—an exploration of consciousness from a subjective standpoint, studying the “structures of consciousness, as experienced from the first-person point of view.”⁷⁰

Phenomenology, as seen through Husserl’s lens, explores the paradox between the depth of essence and the surface’s superficiality. Husserl views appearances as a threshold for understanding what manifests but emphasizes they don’t fully capture an object’s essence. Appearances are dynamic and transformative, constituting objects and providing access to their deeper essence. This perspective prompts investigation to unveil reality beneath appearances, revealing the intricate connection between perception, truth, and reality. As poet Ovid illustrates in his *Metamorphoses*, Narcissus (see figure 13), a handsome youth, falls in love with his own reflection, demonstrating the allure and deceptive of appearances. “These appearances neither are nor genuinely contain the objects themselves. Rather in their shifting and remarkable structure they create objects in a certain way.”⁷¹



Fig. 13: *Narcissus* by Caravaggio, painted circa 1597–1599

Husserl’s phenomenology delves into the fundamental structures of consciousness, exploring both transcendental and psychological dimensions. It unveils intentionality, self-awareness, temporality, attention, embodiment, and intersubjectivity as foundational elements shaping our consciousness. Phenomenology sees the world beyond objective nature, embracing intersubjective accessibility, subjective values, and organization influenced by practical endeavors, providing a nuanced understanding across times and spaces. In Husserl’s examination, intentionality is pivotal, engaging in the dynamic relationship between meaning,

⁶⁹ Husserl was famously called the “philosopher of infinite tasks,” as he constantly remade his own life’s work to get at very root of things - <https://infinite-tasks.wordpress.com/about/>, accessed on January 16, 2024

⁷⁰Smith 2013 “Phenomenology”, plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2013/entries/phenomenology, accessed in October 2023

⁷¹ Husserl 1970: 56.

its substance, and the target of intention.⁷² Consciousness, a dynamic process, entails deliberate scrutiny into meaning and intentionality, covering consciousness itself, conscious experiences, functionality, and associated phenomena. Primarily expressed through psychological processes, consciousness holds significance in self-awareness and engaging with external entities, influencing perception and comprehension through cognitive abilities.⁷³ Cognitive self-awareness contributes to generating and interpreting sensory experiences, shaping deliberate encounters that influence behaviors and interactions with intended entities. Cognitive processes facilitate the integration of purposeful functions with the external environment through subjective encounters.

Both “noesis” and “noema”⁷⁴ find their roots in the Greek word *nous*, meaning “mind” or “spirit.” Together, they elucidate the workings of transcendental consciousness, also known as the transcendental subject or self. “Noesis” refers to the transcendental process of thought or, simply put, the act of thinking within consciousness, resembling “the light”. On the other hand, “noema” represents the object or subject matter of consciousness’s thoughts, akin to “the lit” (see figure 14). These two components constitute the dual facets of intentionality, a

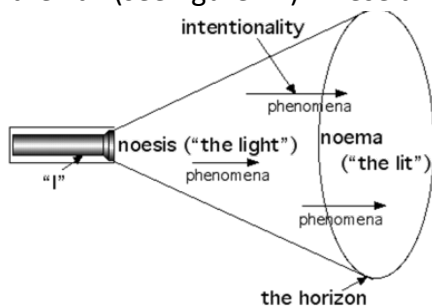


Fig. 14: Basic phenomenological concepts

central concept in Husserl’s philosophy. Intentionality highlights that consciousness is always directed toward something and cannot be without an object. This directedness can take various forms, such as perceiving an object, like a bird. In Husserl’s transcendental phenomenology, “noesis” engages in the act of perception, while “noema” represents the bird or the sense/essence of a bird within consciousness, not as an external object.

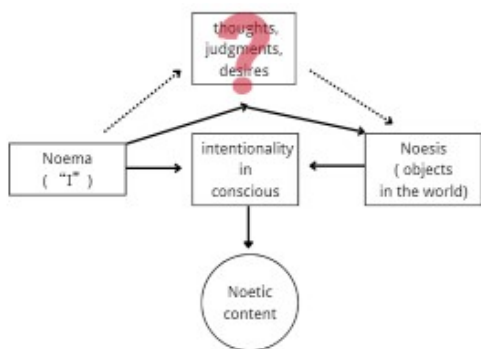


Fig. 15: Noetic content approach

*noesis (plural: noeses, adjective: noetic)

noema (plural: noemata, adjective: noematic)

Intentional directedness is characterized by the presence of matter/quality (or subsequently, noematic) structure, not exclusive to internal mental objects.⁷⁵ A question emerges about the relationship between perceptual experiences and observed objects, introducing the concept of “separability” from the external world(see figure 15). Husserl believed that even in a hallucination where there is no object of the experience, whether mentally immanent or otherwise, it would still maintain its intentional nature.⁷⁶ The “transcendental-phenomenological reduction” distinguishes phenomenology by examining

⁷² Husserl 2001b: 120. “This reference to an object belongs peculiarly and intrinsically to an act experience, and the experiences manifesting it are by definition intentional experiences or acts.”

⁷³ Husserl 1982: 154-155. Husserl questions if the pure Ego’s attention is on mental processes and if it actively seizes presented data. “Perceptually given” may imply readiness for perception, not active perception. Similarly, “given in the mode characteristic of phantasy” doesn’t necessarily mean active engagement but preparedness for such involvement.

⁷⁴ Husserl 1982: 312.

⁷⁵ Husserl 2001a: 191-200(§9-14)

⁷⁶ Husserl 1982: 106,107. “... An object existing in itself is never one with which consciousness or the Ego pertaining to consciousness has nothing to do. The physical thing is a thing belonging to the surrounding world even if it be an unseen physical thing, even if it be a really possible, unexperienced but experienceable, or perhaps experienceable, physical thing.”

consciousness without explicit commitments. Husserl asserted that a mental state becomes conscious when it becomes an experience (known as *Erlebnis*)⁷⁷ and is part of a continuous “stream of consciousness.” Present moments encompass past and future without reducing them to the present, giving consciousness its temporal character. Individuals possess a rudimentary consciousness of personal experiences, but consciousness doesn’t consistently entail deliberate introspection(see figure 16).

Husserl introduced the living-present as an absolute, non-temporal, self-sustaining form of consciousness, challenging the traditional model of intentionality. The living-present’s double-intentionality raises debates among contemporary phenomenologists.

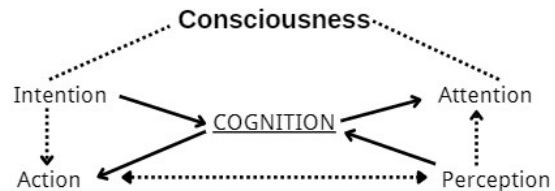


Fig. 16: Cognition Map

Phenomenology, initially characterized as meta-epistemological, seeks to comprehend one’s innate drive to understand reality. The departure of Heidegger from Husserl’s position is pivotal, as Husserl establishes the transcendental ego as the fixed point for sense-making processes, considering it a prerequisite for any experience. In contrast, Heidegger challenges the Husserl’s notion that this subject is inherently fundamental and beyond analysis,⁷⁸ using phenomenology to explore ontology, the study of “Being”. Bracketing remains a valuable tool to initiate an exploration of the question of “Being”⁷⁹, given the numerous preconceived notions that hinder a proper investigation of ontology. Heidegger argues that Western philosophy, spanning from Plato onward, has overlooked the deep inquiry into the meaning of “Being”. This neglect has led to the characterization of “Being” (Sein) as an ultimate entity, obscuring the essence of “Being” (Da-sein: there-being)⁸⁰. Heidegger’s mission is to resurrect the fundamental question about the significance of “Being” through a phenomenological exploration of everyday human experiences.⁸¹

Heidegger’s philosophy introduces the concept of “readiness-to-hand,” offering a distinctive phenomenological perspective. In this framework, skilled engagement in an activity leads to a unique perception of tools and equipment. The individual, in such moments, does not consciously treat these tools as separate, independent objects with fixed properties. Phenomenologically, the experience involves an intimate intertwining of the person and the tool during the ongoing task. Heidegger’s exploration asserts the primacy of ontology over epistemology, emphasizing that theoretical knowledge is secondary to understanding “Being”, which is fundamental to our comprehension of the world. In Heidegger’s view, when working skillfully, there’s no clear separation between the carpenter and the tools; it’s a constant, essential aspect of their “Being”. The “Being-in” of carpentry shapes how they relate to the world, and it’s not something he can simply switch on or off. *Dasein*’s “Being-in” is not a

⁷⁷ Husserl 1982: 217-221(§90)

⁷⁸ Heidegger 1962: 37,38. Heidegger rejected the notion of the human being/subject as a spectator of objects espousing that both subject and object were inseparable. For Heidegger, “being” was thus the descriptions or accounts that “*Dasein*” (being-there or man’s existence) provided of their everydayness or ordinary existence.

⁷⁹ Heidegger 1962: 31. Heidegger stated that ontology is incomplete without first understanding the meaning of Being, which should be its fundamental task.

⁸⁰ Heidegger 1962: 27. “In this work, ‘*Dasein*’ holds significance, especially for those acquainted with Heidegger. It remains untranslated, except when Heidegger himself hyphenates it as ‘*Da-sein*’ to indicate its etymological meaning: ‘Being-there.’ Heidegger aligns with everyday usage, employing it more narrowly to represent the type of Being specific to individuals. He extends its use to refer to any person possessing such Being, considering them an ‘entity.’”

⁸¹ Heidegger 1962: 193. The question of the meaning of *Being* is concerned with what it is that makes beings intelligible as beings, and whatever that factor (*Being*) is, it is seemingly not itself simply another being among beings.

detached property but an essential and constant aspect of one's existence, shaping how they relate to the world around them.

Heidegger challenges the traditional approach to ontology, asserting that a thorough clarification of the concept of "Being" is essential for any meaningful ontological pursuit. This statement underscores the foundational significance of understanding the nature of "Being" as the core pursuit in ontology. Delving into the meaning of "Being" (*Da-sein: there-being*), Heidegger suggests translating "Da" as "open" rather than "there." This openness is seen as the potential for assuming, a pre-intellectual receptiveness crucial for engaging with beings in practical, theoretical, or aesthetic contexts. Heidegger's concept of "Being-in" rejects the idea of it as a detachable quality; instead, it is an inherent and constant aspect of *Dasein's* existence. In essence, *Dasein's* relationship with the world is not a sporadic or optional activity but is an integral and constant aspect of its existence.⁸²

Heidegger introduced the concept of *Dasein* as a "living being" actively engaging with the world, emphasizing its unique essence with both ontic and ontological dimensions.⁸³ He posited that the "understanding of Being" is a fundamental characteristic of *Dasein*. He explored *Dasein's* essential structure through the concept of "average everydayness,"⁸⁴ highlighting the ordinary, lived experience within the world. Heidegger challenged the philosophical notion that reflections on existence occur in solitary contemplation, arguing that the most crucial aspect is *Dasein's* unconsidered, everyday mode of "Being". Heidegger argues that *Dasein*, or our way of "Being", is closely linked to one (it is essentially how individual experience our existence)⁸⁵, which creates a paradox of "what is closest to us ontologically is at the same time the furthest away"⁸⁶ underscores the need to recognize and characterize this aspect of our existence positively. Understanding this fundamental facet of *Dasein* involves articulating it in a way that highlights its significance and doesn't overlook what's right in front of us⁸⁷. In essence, *Dasein's* "average everydayness" is not just a facet of its being; it defines how *Dasein* engages with existence itself. This mode of "Being" can be seen as embodying patterns and structures, which Heidegger refers to as "pregnant structures."⁸⁸

2.4.3 Architectural Phenomenology: Exploration of Architectural Settings

As previous chapter mentioned, phenomenology, as a philosophical framework, delves into the depths of subjective human experiences, exploring the intricate nuances of one's perception and interpretation of the world that envelops people. It delves into the realm of conscious awareness, placing utmost importance on the subjective viewpoint and the embodied encounters of individuals. Within the realm of architecture, phenomenology is a theoretical framework that centers its attention on comprehending the intricate interplay between individuals and the constructed physical surroundings. Given the numerous ways in

⁸² Heidegger 1962: 84. "Taking up relationships towards the world is possible only because *Dasein*, as Being-in-the-world, is as it is."

⁸³ Heidegger 1962: 32,33.

⁸⁴ Heidegger 1962: 69.

⁸⁵ Heidegger 1962: 36,37.

⁸⁶ Heidegger 1962: 36.

⁸⁷ Heidegger 1962: 69.

⁸⁸ Heidegger 1962: 70. "pregnant structures" are hidden patterns in *Dasein's* existence, *Dasein* engages with its *Being* through the lens of average everydayness, and this awareness is sensed by *Dasein* even before it can be consciously expressed.

which the term may be used and applied, it can be difficult to articulate the nature of the connection that exists between architecture and phenomenology. The term “phenomenological approach” has been increasingly prevalent in modern architectural discourse, and it is now commonly used to describe any architect’s interest in the experience and sensory qualities of a particular location. In order for architecture to be involved with phenomenology, a more in-depth investigation of the subjective and embodied experiences of persons is required. The study of phenomenology from a philosophical viewpoint digs into the first-person perspective, placing an emphasis on lived experiences, perception, and the embodied quality of human life.

*Phenomenology concerns the study of essences; architecture has the potential to put the essences back into existence. By weaving form, space, and light, architecture can elevate the experience of daily life through the various phenomena that emerge from specific sites, programs, and architectures. On the one level, an idea-force drives architecture; on another, structure, material, space, colour, light and the shadows intertwine in the fabrication of architecture.*⁸⁹

Understanding Phenomenology in Architecture: The concept of appearance is intricately intertwined with the recognition that a singular phenomenon has the capacity to materialize in diverse manners, which can be denoted as “modes of givenness.”⁹⁰ The vast array of appearances is reflected in the multitude of ways in which consciousness engages with and comprehends its surroundings. The divergence observed in both the visual manifestation and cognitive perception of a phenomenon serves to emphasize the fundamental separation between mere appearance and the essence of the phenomenon itself. In the analogy put forth by Husserl,⁹¹ the tree stands as a potent symbol, he distinguishes between the tree itself and one’s perception of it, asserting that our perception serves as a means of accessing the essence of the tree. In this contemplation, Heidegger directs our attention towards the profound notion that a phenomenon, in its essence, possesses the ability to reveal itself to one in various guises, contingent upon the manner in which one approaches and engages with it.⁹² The crucial aspect lies in the position from which the experiencing subject engages with the appearance of the phenomenon. Equally important is the openness to possibility, which acts as a prerequisite for attaining a phenomenological understanding.



Fig. 17: Yale University Art Gallery,
Louis I. Kahn 1953

Undoubtedly, architecture encompasses more than mere visual perception, as it encompasses the holistic encounter with space (see figure 17). The utilization of environmental endoscopy enables the examination of the spatial components and arrangement of the environment. However, in order to attain a comprehensive comprehension and depiction of the environment, it is imperative to take into account the genuine encounters individuals have within it. It explores a few distinct levels of spatial experience, namely environmental

⁸⁹ Holl 1996: 11.

⁹⁰ Heidegger 1962: 151.

⁹¹ Husserl 1982: 215, 216.

⁹² Heidegger 1962: 51.

orientation, spatial elements, and the comprehensive perception encompassing identification and representation, etc.⁹³ Gaining insights into how individuals interact with and experience their surroundings can be facilitated by comprehending these levels. In architecture, space can be examined from various perspectives: architectural space (interior and exterior), urban space (entire built environment), existential space (human-environment relationship), etc. This includes the perceptual environment, spatial interaction, and cognitive space theory. Understanding a place's experiential aspect is crucial for grasping how individuals connect and attribute meaning in the built environment.

Exploring the Concept of *Place*: Introducing the concept of *Genius Loci*, Norberg-Schulz delved into the tangible essence and metaphysical nature of places, emphasizing the atmospheric qualities that contribute to their distinct ambiances. The concept of "place" encompasses a distinct and profound encounter with spatial surroundings for individuals. It encapsulates the essence of a particular geographical setting and its historical roots, thereby exemplifying the profound interrelationship between individuals and their surrounding ecosystem. The comprehension of the experience of place is of utmost importance in order to gain an understanding of how individuals establish connections and derive significance within the constructed surroundings. Norberg-Schulz's profound exploration of phenomenology within architectural theory emanated from his astute acknowledgment of the etymology of the term "dwell" as expounded by Heidegger. This discernment unveiled the inherent bond between dwelling and the profound act of assembling the world into a palpable structure or entity. In the archetype of a separate dwelling, the focus lies on establishing a general spatial order by configuring spatial elements and their connections. Conversely, in the archetype of a town, emphasis is placed on defining place, including the significance of boundaries and notions of belonging or exclusion. Nevertheless, heavily relies on etymology and language-centered interpretations of dwelling concepts. This approach may inadvertently overlook the unique qualities and diverse interpretations of dwelling concepts found in alternative languages and cultures.

Finnish architect and writer Juhani Pallasmaa said: "Authentic architectural experiences consist, then, for instance, of approaching or confronting a building, rather than the formal apprehension of the facade; of the act of entering, and not simply the frame of the door; of looking through the window, rather than the window itself; or occupying the sphere of warmth, rather than the fireplace as a visual object."⁹⁴ It suggests that true engagement with architecture goes beyond merely perceiving the external features, instead, it encourages actively approaching or confronting a building, entering a space rather than just acknowledging the door frame, looking through windows rather than focusing solely on the window itself, and experiencing the warmth of a space rather than treating the fireplace as a mere visual object. The idea is to stress the importance of immersive, sensory engagement with architectural elements, considering the holistic experience rather than isolated visual aspects.

Architectural Experience: Architecture, inherently problem-solving and akin to art in its aesthetic nature, is fundamentally encountered and experienced mentally rather than solely through its physical manifestations. While conventionally regarded as primarily visual, architecture is increasingly recognized as being perceived and lived through all senses.

⁹³ Stenros 1993: 77.

⁹⁴ Pallasmaa 1996: 45.



Fig. 18: human experience approach

Perceptions interact with memory and imagination, culminating in meaningful experiences that evolve over time (see figure 18). The intricate nature of architecture, which blends rationality with emotion, challenges a linear, theory-based design process.⁹⁵ Architectural experiences

encompass elements like perception, cognition, and spatial behavior, all of which are integral components of human experience. The perception of space, shaped by our five senses, leads to cognitive processes where individuals consider, recall, and assess information about the environment. Architecture enhances our sense of reality when various senses work together harmoniously. By incorporating sight, touch, sound, and smell, architecture creates a holistic and immersive experience, intensifying occupants' connection to the environment. Architecture, seen as integrated entities, involve a profound exchange between humans and space.

The human body has been used to provide the basis for the development of architectural space, analogous to birds constructing nests through bodily motions.⁹⁶ As Pallasmaa puts it: "Phenomenology thus means examining a phenomenon of the consciousness of its own dimension of consciousness."⁹⁷ Phenomenology, rooted in the concept of "experience," forms the foundation for understanding architecture's impact on human emotions and senses. Architectural experiences are intentional and directed toward specific objects, involving the effects of color, shape, light, and shadow. The aesthetic quality of architecture is understood through individual consciousness, and the significance of a piece evolves over time in relation to cultural values. One's perception of architectural spaces is not limited to visual elements; it extends to encompass emotional responses. Understanding the continuum between material and mental worlds is crucial, as architecture shapes neural, experiential, and mental realities.

2.5 Pietilä's *Genius Loci*

When Pietilä interpreted *Genius Loci*, he puts like this: "Many insights can be gleaned but the idea still remains open-ended. It is a gestalt concept, like Heidegger's "thing". GL is a variable factor in the architectural equation, varying within its own frame."⁹⁸ In accordance with Merriam-Webster's Online Dictionary (2010), the term *genius loci* is defined as the *genius* or presiding divinity of a place, representing the pervading spirit of that location. This concept is akin to the guardian "spirit of place" encapsulating the distinctive atmosphere associated with a specific locale. In Roman mythology, *genius loci* is intricately linked to the protective spirit of places and is often symbolically depicted as a snake. The discussion surrounding the *genius loci* is marked by a diversity of theoretical approaches across various disciplines such as philosophy, human geography, architecture, and cultural anthropology.⁹⁹

⁹⁵ Pallasmaa 2018: 9-12.

⁹⁶ Bachelard 1994: 92,93.

⁹⁷ Pallasmaa 1986: 22-25.

⁹⁸ Pietilä 1982: 22.

⁹⁹ "Genius loci." Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary, Merriam-Webster, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/genius%20loci>, accessed in April, 2024.

Norberg-Schulz delves into a comprehensive definition of “place,” portraying it as a “space with a distinctive character”¹⁰⁰ where the *genius loci* becomes a tangible reality encountered in our daily lives. This character is intricately woven from concrete elements—material substance, form, texture, and color—that collectively form the “environmental character,”¹⁰¹ constituting the very essence of a place. This essence, denoted by the overall “atmosphere,”¹⁰² is a pervasive property constantly evolving with temporal factors such as seasons, the course of the day, and weather conditions.¹⁰³ The multidimensional nature of a place is influenced by geographical, historical, cultural, architectural, economic, and social factors, shaping it into both a tangible and intangible entity. This holistic perspective introduces *genius loci* as a meta-concept, marking a shift from a traditional to a more comprehensive viewpoint. The concept of “place” is laden with character and attributes, contributing to its distinctive presence or *genius loci*¹⁰⁴, which in turn, is molded by a culture’s ascription of textures, forms, and meanings to its surroundings. Unlike Norberg-Schulz’s earlier works, the explicit focus on interpreting phenomenology in architecture in *genius loci* acknowledges inspiration from Heidegger’s ideas, particularly drawing on his work, *Poetry, Language, Thought*.

Orientation and Identification: The concept of dwelling, as explicated in Heidegger’s essay “Building Dwelling Thinking,” assumes a crucial significance in Norberg-Schulz’s interpretation of place. According to Norberg-Schulz, the concept of dwelling entails an individual’s ability to establish a sense of orientation within a given environment and establish significant connections with it. The concept entails the process of recognizing and affiliating oneself with a specific spatial environment, resulting in the experience of a profound sense of belonging and connection to said location. The act of identifying with a place entails a commitment to a particular mode of existence within the world.¹⁰⁵ The significance of *identification* and *orientation* provides architects with valuable guidance for urbanization initiatives. However, the difficulty of nurturing *identification* increases when the site lacks intrinsic elements with which people can identify. Norberg-Schulz’s acknowledges the significance of time and change in realizing the *genius loci* by stating, to catch the “genius” of a place implies *identification* with it. “To identify with a place primarily means to be open to its character or “genius loci” and to have a place in common means to share the experience of the local character. To respect the place, finally, means to adapt new buildings to this character.”¹⁰⁶

Every architect’s unique perspective on *genius loci* reflects the same underlying meaning—an embodiment of a location’s true nature or spirit, a distinctive element for humanity to embrace; The uniqueness of each place is shaped by the *genius loci*, influenced by diverse textures attributed to it by culture. As a cultural artifact, the *place* unveils the transformative impact of individual or collective actions of its inhabitants. Comprehending the *genius loci* in relation to human perception and sensation has led to theories like Kevin Lynch’s assertion that spatial structure consists of tangible elements with distinct personality and significance.¹⁰⁷ Objects identified with from childhood allow individuals to familiarize

¹⁰⁰ Norberg-Schulz 1980: 5.

¹⁰¹ Norberg-Schulz 1980: 6.

¹⁰² Norberg-Schulz 1980: 8.

¹⁰³ Norberg-Schulz 1980: 6, 8, 11,14.

¹⁰⁴ Norberg-Schulz 1980: 7.

¹⁰⁵ Norberg-Schulz 1980: 6, 8.

¹⁰⁶ Norberg-Schulz 1985: 63.

¹⁰⁷ Lynch 1960: 143. He notes that these definitions are not exclusive and that some elements may serve different roles for different people.

themselves with specific environments. Norberg-Schulz extends this argument, proposing that every human must have orientation and identification schemas.¹⁰⁸ One of the key phenomenological analyses draws directly from individual early childhood memories, serving as the “raw material”¹⁰⁹ for understanding architecture’s essence. It highlights architecture’s aim to uncover the inner language of buildings and how people engage with art, exploring its dimensions, its space, which can be seen as memory level experience.

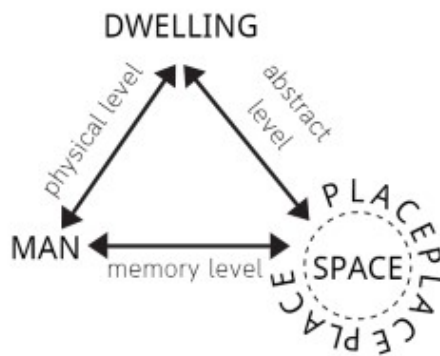


Fig. 19: The relation among man, dwelling and space/place

When reflecting on our connection to a place and our encounter with it, place emerges in a dual manner, reflecting *Heimat* (“home” or “homeland”)’s twofold nature. Firstly, it refers to an underlying ontological structure essential to human existence, uniquely instantiated everywhere but fundamentally the same. This universal aspect, seen by Heidegger, transcends specific locations, encapsulating the essence of “Being”. Secondly, place denotes the specific, situated character of human existence shaped by individual places where one live and navigate. While no particular place is privileged in revealing “placedness,” there’s recognition

of the significance of places in shaping identities.¹¹⁰ This dual perspective aligns with Heidegger’s *Da of Dasein* and *Heimat*, emphasizing the proximity of being and the historical dimension of place. The interplay between these two senses of place enriches the human experience, fostering encounters with both the foreign and familiar within the intricate tapestry of existence. For a visual depiction elucidating the relation between “dwelling, ” “man, ” and “space/place, ” please refer to figure 19.

This place situated between 60° & 70° latitudes in the northern hemisphere. Between 20° & 30° longitudes east of Greenwich. This is where I am from. I come from here as “genuinely” as anyone can come from their own place. In the internationalized atmosphere of the 60ies, being of such origin was considered provincial but I do not mind if others smile quietly to themselves. An architect is bound to be from some precise coordinate. He has the right to confess his originality within his work and his philosophy. Perhaps this identification with one’s own roots will be readily accepted as belonging to a basic quality of architecture.¹¹¹

Pietilä’s architectural philosophy, deeply rooted in his Nordic origins, reflects a profound sense of orientation and identification with the environment. The geographical coordinates of 60° to 70° latitudes in the northern hemisphere and 20° to 30° longitudes east of Greenwich delineate the specific place he proudly identifies as his own. This unregretful acknowledgment of his origin becomes a foundational aspect of his architectural identity. Pietilä’s orientation is not merely geographical but extends to a philosophical stance that emphasizes a harmonious coexistence between built structures and the natural surroundings. His identification with the Nordic landscape is evident in his deliberate integration of landscape elements into his designs, showcasing a commitment to a sense of place. In embracing his roots, Pietilä creates designs that serve as a testament to the essential qualities of architecture—orientation, identification, and a harmonious relationship with the surrounding

¹⁰⁸ Norberg-Schulz 1980: 19.

¹⁰⁹ Pallasma 1986: 22-25

¹¹⁰ Malpas 2008 :23. Heidegger’s ideas on “people” and “homeland” weren’t rooted in biological concepts like race. Instead, he focused on notions of “spirit,” “culture,” and “community.”

¹¹¹ Connah 1989: 49.

landscape. As he puts it: “a geographical place which in relation to its surrounding has its own particular individual atmosphere, which differs sufficiently from surrounding landscape”.¹¹²

(Re)Perception: The act of perceiving is crucial for our existence within the world, as it allows one to engage with and experience one’s surroundings. Perception serves as a means through which individuals comprehend and gain knowledge about reality, facilitating their engagement with the surrounding environment. The experience of architecture is rooted in the process of perception, encompassing spatial orientation, identification, and representation. These elements collectively facilitate one’s engagement with the built environment.

In phenomenology, a crucial distinction arises between “presentation” and “representation.” Presentation(as input), at its core, entails the profound act of direct perception, where the object is directly bestowed upon our consciousness without intermediaries. This refers to the external perception of a location, its spatial arrangement. Conversely, representation(as output), with its nuanced nature, involves indirect perception, where memory, imagination, and artistic pursuits intertwine to create a mediated understanding of one’s surroundings, the figuring of place.¹¹³ This intricate interplay allows one to navigate the vast landscape of interpretation, striving to comprehend the essence lying beyond the immediate grasp of one’s senses. Architects design spaces that evoke profound meaning for users through the incorporation of imagination, memories, experiences, and spiritual connections. The phenomenological approach transcends visual aesthetics, aiming to engage with the emotional and potentially spiritual aspects of human experience.

*I think in my native language Finnish . I talk whilst I draw the rhythm and intonation of Finnish govern the movements of my pencil . Do I draw in Finnish ? My language rhythm influences my drawing shapes , phrases my lines , outlines my surfaces . The local cases and regionalistic vocabulary of the Finnish language are the elements of my genuine way to express topological architecture and space.*¹¹⁴

Viewing language, particularly his native Finnish, as possessing spatial qualities, Pietilä underscores its importance in constructing what he terms a “veritable architectural topology.” This distinctive approach not only showcases his creative ingenuity but also implies a profound connection between linguistic elements and the spatial arrangements of his architectural creative process. The Finnish language, functioning as his pen, (re)perceives a pivotal role in converting linguistic exercises into tangible, original, and sensitive architectural forms, representing his *genius loci*: topological nature. This process is characterized by openness, allowing for continuous exploration and evolution. The concept of *genius loci* became familiar to Pietilä in the 1980s. However, one can discern a notable influence of a similar mindset, akin to *genius loci*, on Pietilä’s design methodology even prior to his acquaintance with the concept. Iconic projects “Kaleva Church,” “Dipoli,” and “Suvikumpu,” as well as the Finnish Embassy in New Delhi stand as manifestations of his interpretation of *genius loci* during the 1960s.

¹¹² Norri 1985a: 14.

¹¹³ Stenros 1993: 78-79

¹¹⁴ Norri 1985: 8.

3. Applying Pietilä's Philosophy: Qualitative Analysis and Interviews Insights

The 1960s proved to be a pivotal period for Pietilä, during which he gradually shaped his design philosophy. Influenced by Blomstedt since his early involvement in the Imatra research group, Pietilä showcased his modular style at the onset of his career. Simultaneously, he participated in various exhibitions, showcasing his prowess in morphological creation. Additionally, he actively published writings on his architectural process and thoughts, revealing the core of Pietilä's design strength. As he departed from Blomstedt in 1958,¹¹⁵ his "image" became distinctly vivid. He expressed his departure by stating, "Aalto said in Helsinki 1960. New architecture was censored: its spirit frozen. But I had already jumped from the train that led to the Modern Universal Middle (MUM). I could only wave to the passengers sitting in the carriages. I had to travel on foot to find my path, to create my own concept of the OPEN APPROACH."¹¹⁶

Within the discourse surrounding Pietilä's architectural framework, the inquiry into the validity and authenticity of his engagement with structuralism holds little interest. While contemporaries were grappling with methodological considerations and the development of ordering principles, Pietilä navigated the interstices of these frameworks, exhibiting a predisposition to question conventional methods and structures. Implicit in his approach was a profound awareness that his most profound insights would stem from challenging assumptions inherent in prevailing methodologies. The discussion extends to the concept of open design approach, wherein traditional notions faced a paradigm shift during wartime, prompting a reevaluation of theoretical constructs. This nuanced exploration posits Pietilä in the liminal space, characterized by openness and innovation. The notion of being in the "liminal," whose essence is inherently open, reflects Pietilä's departure from conventional paradigms. Hence prompting the author to select three specific instances that best represent his innovative contributions from the 1960's since it stands out as a defining era for Pietilä's design approach.

3.1 Project 1: Unraveling Linguistic Intricacies - Kaleva Church: Hellitä mäkiyötä meridiaani (Be gentler, mountain zone meridian)

In 1959, an extensive design competition was organized for the Kaleva parish church in Tampere, specifically tasked with creating a monumental church building. Subsequently, the proposal associated with the name "Hellitä mäkiyötä meridiaani" secured victory in the tender process and was selected as the foundational framework for subsequent development. Pietilä manifested his design vision through the creation of a unified space measuring 50 meters in length at its maximum extent and standing at a height of 30 meters. This space was enveloped by a vertical structure comprising fractured walls composed of concrete and panes of glass. Notably, Pietilä's initial plan underwent numerous modifications before the commencement of construction. These alterations included adjustments to the exterior walls, which were originally intended to be concrete as per the initial design while brick walls as

¹¹⁵ Norri 1985a: 10.

¹¹⁶ Norri 1985: 47. / Marseilles, 1982

interior wall.¹¹⁷ However, the architectural plan underwent alterations due to the unexpected setbacks encountered along the way,¹¹⁸ contrary to the original design.¹¹⁹

The church's exterior is embellished with light yellow-brown tiles, while its interior exhibits an unpolished concrete finish, the church's floor, made of the similar light yellow-brown tiles as the façade walls. Although originally intended to have concrete exteriors, this architectural plan underwent a modification during the construction phase, a deviation motivated by the imperative to forestall the accrual of rust on the external concrete surface over temporal progression.¹²⁰ Kaleva Church stands out as an early proponent of embracing a coarse surface resulting from the raw casting of concrete, although the initial plan for a concrete facade was not realized.¹²¹ The church's aesthetic aligns with brutalism, evident in its intentional preservation of a raw concrete finish. This stylistic choice lends a palpable sense of strength, simplicity, and authenticity to the architectural expression, further enhancing the church's mystical aura. Despite these adjustments, Kaleva Church largely retains Pietilä's architectural vision from the original competition proposal, encompassing its overall appearance, spatial solutions, architectural elements, and certain interior designs.

Pietilä innovatively devised the "shape element method" for the wall structures of Kaleva Church, rooted in the angle line. This method guided the planning of individual arched wall gutters and the groups formed by them¹²² (see figure 20) illustrates Pietilä's sketch of the "embryos" and their corresponding wall gutter "elements," marked with letters.¹²³ Pietilä's form element method, grounded in both geometry and logic, suggests that the timelessness of Kaleva Church's architecture can be positively influenced by the precision and regularity inherent in mathematically "correct" forms. The church hall's inner walls underwent a finishing process, eliminating the grooves formed during slip casting to create a soft surface effect. Pietilä likened this hand-rubbing technique to the medieval practice of plastering church walls with a piece of leather.¹²⁴ Even if Kaleva Church visitors are unaware of the processing background and the added value it imparts to the building, it is plausible that this treatment contributes to the architectural aesthetic and experiential delight, especially under varying lighting conditions, resembling a textured sliding surface.

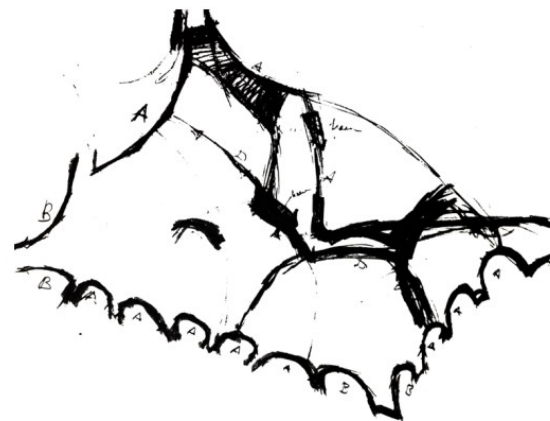


Fig. 20: "shape element method" for the wall structures of Kaleva Church (1966)

I tried to achieve a visual weightlessness by using rhythmic and light kinetics of broken line chains in constantly evolving series. It is similar to the quick sequences in organ music. Kaleva Church fights against the traditional idea of wall heaviness.¹²⁵

¹¹⁷ Johansson 2008:67

¹¹⁸ ibid

¹¹⁹ Quantrill 1985: 196.

¹²⁰ Johansson 2008:67

¹²¹ Koho 1995: 29.

¹²² Koho 1995: 29

¹²³ ibid

¹²⁴ Koho 1995: 33

¹²⁵ Quantrill 1985: 33.

The spatial journey toward the entrance featured large convex concrete pieces shaping the access space, guiding visitors, and introducing them to a unique architectural experience. The layout of the floor plan and the openings located on all sides of the building, interspersed among its wall-slabs, undermine the idea of a main facade or fixed orientation for the structure. Natural light is able to permeate the nave from any direction, facilitating dynamic and expressive illumination throughout the day. Conversely, during the prolonged Finnish winter nights, this design allows light to radiate outward into the surrounding darkness. The leaf-shaped floor and ceiling¹²⁶(see figure 21), in contrast to a box-like structure, eschews the delineation of a conventional “frontside” and “backside,” and the expression of the facade seamlessly envelops the entire building. The allure of this architectural journey lies in its



Fig. 21: Kaleva Church (1966) ceiling photo

diverse spatial sequences, transitioning from the urban monotony to a more natural setting. Shrubs and deciduous trees contribute to the variability of the natural environment, creating visual and atmospheric rhythms around the church. The experimentation with building form directly addresses the scale demanded by the project, incorporating the landscape as a new variable. Pietilä disrupted the conventional scale system by introducing nature as an integral component.

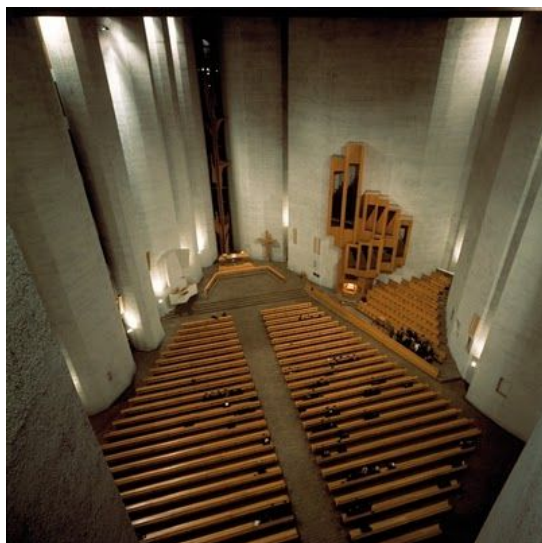


Fig. 22: Kaleva Church (1966) interior photo

The church’s interior features a bare finish(see figure 22), highlighting the rough, greyish texture of the concrete walls that define the expansive main space. As visitors step inside, they encounter a singular, overwhelming space distinct from the external reality. The acoustic structures within the church hall were strategically placed within the beam gaps of the one-way beams on the upper ceiling, despite the interior original design was adorned with acoustically functional brick.¹²⁷ The interior, characterized by a continued slope, culminated in a wooden altar piece before the expansive north-facing window, reconnecting with the natural landscape outside. The niches within the interior of the church, formed at the intersection of two

concave shapes, imbue the solemn space with vitality. The vertical walls, rhythmically arranged around the perimeter, create order for the windows, establishing a connection between interior and exterior spaces, reintegrating individuals with the natural landscape. The green backdrop outside the windows immerses visitors in a foreign, natural environment, filtering light and contributing to an interior experience where light activates the space. The intricate vertical geometry resembles a forest landscape, fusing the lowest trees and tallest stems into a unified image.

¹²⁶ Koho 1995: 34.

¹²⁷ Arkkitehdit Reima Pietilä ja Raili Paatelainen 1966: 152.

Kaleva Church exhibits a unique architectural expression, marked by a departure from rigid patterns as it unfolds into a diagonal landscape. In contrast to typical four-sided structures, the church maintains two distinct facades: a visually streamlined main facade offering an overview and a diverse back facade. For Pietilä, nature was integral to his design philosophy, the church's both interior and exterior geometry echoes the tree trunks in forests.¹²⁸ The connection between these sides mirrors the vertical geometry found in the forest terrain, creating a cohesive visual akin to the intertwining of lower and tall tree trunks in nature. Pietilä constructs a forest-like environment within his church(see figure 23&24), surrounded by horizontal illumination. This illumination, combined with a series of vertical elements, generates a sense of weightlessness. The forest becomes more dense as one venture farther into it, due to The convexity of the walls causes the space to be compressed, allowing the light to glide slowly over them.



Fig. 23&24: Kaleva Church(1966) interior vs Kristoffer Albrecht, Smoke in the forest photo 2010

Approaching Kaleva Church is like conducting a symbolic narrative through its architecture. It begins with a distant, box-like silhouette, but gradually transforms into a dynamic, adaptable structure, devoid of traditional angles or uniform wall gutters. The rhythmic sequences of organ music played a role in shaping the vertical motifs of the church, including the lofty wall arches and ribbon windows. The sculptural Kaleva Church might encapsulate some of the enduring qualities characteristic of art—freedom of interpretation and eternity, transcending time and era. Pietilä orchestrated the design of both exterior and interior architecture comprehensively, including the belfry, fixed furniture, organ, altar, altar sculpture, pulpit, and other conceivable detail.¹²⁹ Through their comprehensive planning, Pietilä achieved a unified and distinctive aesthetic entity that harmonizes with the prevailing architecture and aesthetics of Kaleva Church. By maintaining a cohesive and consistent aesthetic vision, the visual allure of Kaleva Church is heightened, solidifying its perception as a sacred architectural gem.

“Yes, I think that is well said. A church is an instrument designed to function in a desired way. Its purpose is to help one enter something. But in order to enter something one must come out from something. This may sound rather irrational, but this is also where the question of transcendence arises.”¹³⁰ In the context of a church, both the *Genius Loci* and the physical edifice possess symbolic qualities. In essence, architectural imagery serves to expose and communicate a specific message. The church serves as a metaphor of liminality, embodying

¹²⁸ Pietilä n.d./2023 : 87.

¹²⁹ Johansson 2008: 67.

¹³⁰ Connah 1989: 185.

the transitional state between two worlds, embodying the notions of being on one side and being on the other side.¹³¹ Kaleva Church, in its spiritual capacity, not only carries symbolic meaning inherent to its religious purpose but also adds an extra dimension of *genius loci*. Considering Kaleva Church as a functionalistic structure is fitting due to its purpose of symbolizing metaphysical ideas, allowing its artistic design to align with that concept. In Pietilä's own words: "Kaleva Church is functionalistic building if one accept that its function is to be a metaphor of metaphysical idea and that its artistic form can then follow that!"¹³²

In Pietilä's description of the Baroque influence on his church, where he mentions that "Concave forms were directed towards the exterior. Behind this lies the notion that the religious spirit is extending into the worldly but trivial daily existence outside,"¹³³ he essentially elucidates his broader perspective of "enter something one must come out from something." The concave forms, symbolizing the religious spirit, extend beyond the church's confines into the external, everyday world. The church, with its distinctive concave and convex surfaces resembling natural forms, becomes more than a physical structure; it transforms into a place imbued with a unique sense of belonging. Pietilä's concept of "nature architecture"¹³⁴, as epitomized in the design of Kaleva Church, intricately intertwines with Heideggerian notions of human existence and place. Kaleva Church, as a place, resonates with the existential experience of individuals by offering a spatial narrative deeply rooted in the natural world.

*Like so many natural phenomena, the forest space is ambivalent. It is a multiple space, both inside and outside at the same time. It is also unique to each particular place. To construct a forest architecture, one must train one's fantasy to give significance to the vague undefined shapes. I have an ambitious dream of translating the perception of "positive" and "negative" forest spaces into architecture. To rationalize this subjective insight [...] into tangible built form is particularly important for any sensitive operation and attempt to design in harmony with nature.*¹³⁵

When questioned about Kaleva Church's concept, his responses vary, for instance it draws inspiration from his summers spent canoeing, where the low vantage point of a canoe immersed in water transforms rocks into mountains and clouds into mighty formations, this represents his initial concept of what he subsequently referred to as "nature architecture" in the field of design¹³⁶; Or at times citing the archaic labyrinth as a driving force, symbolizing the basic configuration in Lutheran religion; or likening the plan to a fish trap—a Christian metaphor for fish; or as Pietilä mentioned he drew inspiration for Kaleva Church's forms from Italian painter and sculptor Umberto Boccioni's sculpture "Development of a Bottle in Space" (see figure 25) that he named the work as a tribute to the sculptor. Or perhaps, likening the church to a deeply split birch log or a

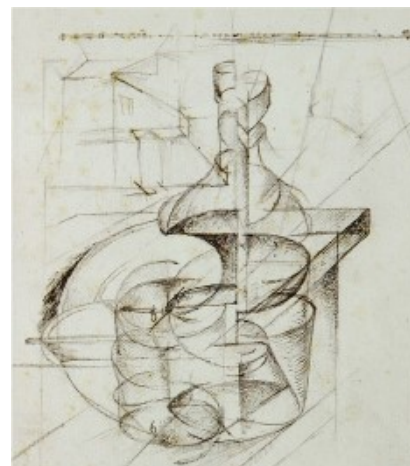


Fig. 25: Umberto Boccioni, Development of a Bottle in Space, 1912, pencil on paper

¹³¹ Broner-Bauer 2023: 22.

¹³² Norri 1985: 42./*Genius Loci* – Personal interpretations. SAFA seminar on architecture and urban planning 1982

¹³³ Pietilä n.d./2023 : 88.

¹³⁴ Norri 1985a: 15. Pietilä explained it still unknown in our language. He use it to signfy the way in which nature and architecture interact as elements of genius loci.

¹³⁵ Pietilä n.d./2023 : 87.

¹³⁶ Broner 2019b: 136.

clump of trees in a pine forest—a reflection of his contact with the Finnish forest during wartime. Either way, his forest architecture concept, rooted in the ambivalence of natural spaces, highlights his ambitious dream of translating the perception of “positive” and “negative” forest spaces into tangible architectural forms, underscoring his commitment to designing in harmony with nature.

Kaleva Church project epitomized Pietilä’s deep dive into architectural form, a journey refined through years of dedicated exploration. While his earlier work Finnish Pavilion in Brussels, marked by lego-modulation and closed indeterminacy, might have been seen as purely intellectually stimulating, Pietilä transcended these achievements with Kaleva Church. Despite maintaining a logical geometric foundation rooted in modular principles, the church breaks free from conventional constraints. The partial modulations of curves within the church serve as a starting point, Pietilä’s creativity refuses to be confined by such structural limitations. Instead, it effortlessly draws inspiration from the surrounding forest, blurring the boundaries between interior and exterior, resulting in a unified and boundary-less entity. Depending on each individual’s perspective, the church might embody a “modernized” version of a traditional structure, with a brutalist aesthetic challenging established norms. Alternatively, Pietilä may regard it as a coincidental creation among numerous models¹³⁷, each devoid of a specific purpose. This architectural exploration resembles an open-ended novel, an ongoing narrative that evolves continuously without a fixed conclusion.

3.2 Project 2: Exploring Organic Expressionism - Dipoli: Luolamiesten häämarsi (Wedding march of the cavemen)



Fig. 26: Dipoli (1966), photo by Tuomas Uusheimo

In 1961, the student union of the Helsinki University of Technology orchestrated an architectural competition to address the demand for a student union building necessitated by the university’s relocation to Otaniemi. Dipoli(see figure 26), the resultant structure, emerged as a dynamic venue for student interactions, accommodating evening gatherings, meetings, and diverse celebratory events. The intricacies of the design challenge posed during the competition were formidable, while no first prize was awarded, leading to a joint second-place accolade for Osmo Lapo and Reima Pietilä. Subsequently, Reima Pietilä’s

proposal titled “Luolamiesten häämarsi” (Cavemen’s Wedding March) clinched victory in the ensuing phase, propelled by its popularity among the student body.¹³⁸ The architectural vision embodied in Dipoli transformed it into a vibrant and integral meeting space, reflecting the evolving needs of the university community in Otaniemi.

An early competition sketch from Dipoli: initially the design was “loaded” with conflicting purposes. Amongst these were the simulation of the microgeography of the site, the experiments

¹³⁷ Pietilä n.d./2023 : 86.

¹³⁸ Broner 2019b: 140.

*in image games on the mental level accompanying the creative process, and also aspects of contemporary art and architectural aesthetics. Hundreds of image sketches were drawn to settle what appeared at first to be internal contradictions. Dipoli naturally possesses many implicit traits as yet unexploited or undiscovered by the user.*¹³⁹

The Dipoli conceived in 1961, is metaphorically likened to a creature crouching low upon the rock that supports its substantial mass.¹⁴⁰ Evocative of moss or lichen gradually colonizing the granite site, the center organically extends its rooms and functions into a horizontal maze. While appearing as an elevation emerging from the stone in a top view, the structure, when observed from ground level, presents itself as an extension of the surrounding forest.¹⁴¹ The character of the façade is delineated by wooden and copper window frames, with the geomorphological roof's shape exerting substantial weight on these slender vertical elements. Pietilä mentioned that Dipoli was intentionally designed to achieve the "poetry of the wilderness."¹⁴² The design draws explicit inspiration from the "local and regional morphology of the landscape." He envisioned the original granite shield surface uplifted six meters to form the building's roof. Wooden window frames were strategically incorporated to disrupt the artificiality of the expansive glass, introducing irregularity to reflect a natural state.¹⁴³

Luis Miguel Cortés Sánchez, in his work "THE DIPOLI PROJECT: RESPONSES TO LANDSCAPE THROUGH FORM AND MATERIALITY," has conducted a thorough analysis of Dipoli. The following examination is partially informed by their insights. Unlike the simplistic choice of materials typically seen in Kaleva Church, Dipoli stands out with its abundance of intricate details and decorative elements. The integration of Creosote-impregnated hardwood windows (see figure 27), meticulously crafted to reflect the surrounding woodland scenery, enriches Dipoli's distinctive and visually captivating architectural style.¹⁴⁴ Inside, concrete cast within a board mold is complemented by finely crafted hardwood planking. This formwork not only imparts a texture akin to tree trunks but, being linear, visually extends the lines of the roof between spaces, reinforcing the notions of continuity and unity. Rather than aiming to blend in seamlessly, the structure opts for a reinterpretation of existing elements. This conceptual approach eschews mimicry in favor of elements capable of embodying multiple identities simultaneously. The building's exterior serves as a point of intersection between its form and the evolving context of its surroundings. Nature's rhythms, lines, and patterns were incorporated, creating a fluidity of form that resonated with the natural rhythms, movements, and sensations of human experience.



Fig. 27: Dipoli (1966) interior, photo by Anna & Eugeni Bach

¹³⁹ Norri 1985: 120.

¹⁴⁰ Quantrill 1985: 50.

¹⁴¹ Johansson 2008: 73.

¹⁴² Norri 1985a: 12.

¹⁴³ Quantrill 1985: 56.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid: 56.

The complexity of the building arose from its diverse program, covering over 14,000m². The program necessitated the organization of spaces on various scales, including multipurpose rooms for large events, a university canteen, work areas for students, and departments for professors. The intention was to create a highly diverse and flexible program that maintained a sense of unity and spatial fluidity, as evident in the floor plans (see figure 28). The building featured two areas divided by a large diagonal circulation space facilitating this fluidity. The building features orthogonal functional cores on both floors, while rooms extending into the landscape in the South and East are expansive and cavernous spaces. The adaptable spaces for social gatherings, such as foyers, theaters, halls, restaurants, and taverns, are organically shaped and spread into the forest. These spaces contribute to Dipoli's unique exterior, characterized by faceted glass surfaces and deep recesses that seamlessly integrate with the surrounding woods. A model of the roofscape illustrates how large spaces emerge from solid rock, defining cavernous rooms within. The undulating freeform shape extends vertically until meeting the precisely defined edges of secondary spaces, making a clear distinction between organic and artificial elements.



Fig. 28: Dipoli (1966) floor plan by ALA Architects

It is imperative to conduct an examination of Pietilä's work titled "The Morphology of Expressive Form" again. In this article Pietilä discusses the traditional architectural morphology has been based on Euclidean geometry, using principles like the golden section and geometric ratios. However, they observe that the evolution of mathematical sciences has had little impact on architectural morphology. He argues that architectural composition should consider applied psychological and physiological data along with morphology. Pietilä suggests that the traditional morphological approaches do not explicitly address the character of present-day architecture, despite the significant transformation it has undergone. Pietilä proposed a shift in thinking, proposes integrating both Euclidean and Non-Euclidean forms and emphasizes the potential of modern mathematics in architectural morphology. He acknowledges the limitations of fully mathematizing architectural morphology and advocates for a balanced approach that includes non-mathematical concepts. He suggests developing a practical theory combining division and combination with mathematics to enable diverse morphological methods aligned with artistic intent.¹⁴⁵

It is unsurprising to observe that Dipoli's aerial view exhibits a distinct separation, with one section characterized by organic shapes while the other half adopts a rectangular form. This portrayal captures both Euclidean and Non-Euclidean forms within Pietilä's architectural vocabulary. The roof stands out as a dynamic element capable of generating unique spaces with multifaceted functional possibilities beneath it. Analogous to forest landscape, the roof

¹⁴⁵ Pietilä 1958: 6.

is not conceived as a uniform plane but embraces variability to create areas of tension, compressed spaces, and spatial openings. The roof's support buttresses, reminiscent of the initial sketches(see figure 29), evoke a sense of cavity, enabling large spans and minimizing supports on the facade to create an open connection with the surroundings. The structure, in this case, is not just a component as an integral part of the project rather than a separate element. Externally, it is concealed under greenish aged copper plates that harmonize with the trees, while internally, it remains exposed, revealing concrete colour in tree trunk-like stencils.



Fig. 29: Dipoli (1966) sketch

*Pietilä's Dipoli (designed as a student Union Activity Centre) preludes a return to nature. Pietilä wanted to express the dream of the forest. To gain his end he used a new kind of topological space which visualizes the structure of the Finnish landscape, and the choice of materials and forms gives the intention a most convincing presence.*¹⁴⁶

The building is conceptualized as an integral part of the landscape, with design principles generated through seamless integration into the site. The formal and material connection with the context is achieved through experimentation with various forms and materials, including rock, copper, wood, and concrete. Pietilä delineates his conceptualization of Dipoli as a monolithic symbol, wherein substantial granite elements coalesce to define the roof, functioning as a “geomorphic force” to underscore Dipoli’s characterization as a “landform sculpture.”¹⁴⁷ The distinctive and irregular roof morphology resonates with the deliberate placement of substantial boulders in the vicinity of the structure. Undoubtedly, the spatial relationships crafted within and around Dipoli yield an experience so distinctive that it defies easy categorization of the Pietilä’s within a specific architectural style. Their ventures into plasticity and phenomenology compel the viewer to anchor their experience. However, Dipoli maintains a discernible sense of place, articulating the *genius loci* of the site as an intrinsic contextual element within the broader framework of Finnish architecture. The design establishes a direct link with the pre-construction state of the site, and Pietilä found inspiration even in the aftermath of the initial human intervention, considering Dipoli is a landscape transformation.¹⁴⁸ Pietilä does not distinguish between the natural and the humanly modified, drawing inspiration from any image encountered in the environment. Cave and creature motifs permeate Pietilä’s descriptions of Dipoli’s interiors, prompting contemplation on mythological and glacial origins.¹⁴⁹

The question was, IS IT POSSIBLE TO DESIGN A SURREALISTIC BUILDING THAT IS FUNCTIONALLY ADEQUATE? A sample of guide line sketches that were produced before any kdesign show how the design approach became formed. Before the submission we changed however the elevations so that the project began to look more like a “real building”. We thought

¹⁴⁶ Pietilä 1982: 32.

¹⁴⁷ Pietilä n.d./2023 : 89.

¹⁴⁸ Connah 1989: 37.

¹⁴⁹ Quantrill 1985: 55.

that the jury would actually reject our entry. Mr. Aalto who was a member of the jury asked me after the competition. "Why did you not design it sculpturally throughout?" I understood that we had compromised without reason.¹⁵⁰



Fig. 30: Dipoli (1966) interior, photo by Tuomas Uusheimo

In the case of Dipoli, the replication of natural forms or at least a reminiscent semblance is achieved through a meticulous process that involves the study of the landscape and incorporation of natural processes. The success of Dipoli lies in its ability to transcend mere imitation, offering a phenomenological experience that simulates the qualities of a natural organism. Here, form does not merely derive from function but rather emerges from an integrated approach that merges phenomenology and organic architecture. Sections of the building showcase the thickness of the roof primarily for structural reasons, emphasizing its conceptual and functional significance. The lattice beam structure, topped by upper and lower slabs, forms the perforated structural shell, allowing light to filter through large skylights in the primary spaces (see figure 30). The roof's ability to organize the program is evident in its folds, dimensions, and arrangement of openings. Far from arbitrary, these elements reflect a profound spatial reflection that aligns programmatic needs with space and light. Dipoli, as a student center, surpasses the fulfillment of its primary utilitarian function. It aspires not only to provide students with an adaptable, multi-use structure but also to evoke an experiential response through its organic forms that resonate with nature, the intrinsic essence of the Finnish landscape, and the occupation of these spaces. The irregular and organic nature of Dipoli stands in stark contrast to the preceding Modernist movement, yielding a novel conception of form that is not strictly contingent on function but is profoundly influenced by a distinctive architectural approach. As Pietilä interpreted: "Dipoli breaks the boundaries of good functionalist aesthetics by aiming at nature's own way of making architecture"¹⁵¹

Pietilä expressed his distinct perspective on Dipoli, evident in his article "Literal Morphology," published in the *Arkkitehti* magazine in September 1967. At its core, Dipoli emerges not merely as a physical structure but as a philosophical and artistic exploration—a manifesto of sorts that defies categorization and embraces ambiguity. The text exudes a sense of question to traditional architectural norms, advocating for an architecture that is not bound by preconceived notions of good taste or stylistic conventions. Instead, Dipoli is portrayed as an ongoing experiment, a work in progress that embodies a fluidity of form and function. It is described as a "beginning," a "torso," that resists easy classification¹⁵². One of the key themes that emerges from the text is Dipoli's role as an expression of attitude—an attitude that challenges the status quo and celebrates diversity in design. It rejects the notion that architecture must adhere to a singular style or set of rules, instead embracing a multiplicity of forms and influences. Dipoli's aesthetic is described as "classless" and "candidly undoctinaire,"¹⁵³ reflecting a conscious effort to blur boundaries and boundaries and define

¹⁵⁰ Introspective Interview A+V. 9:74

¹⁵¹ Norri 1985a: 13.

¹⁵² Pietilä 1967:67

¹⁵³ Pietilä 1967: 69.

the expectations. Central to Pietilä's discourse is the idea of Dipoli as a canvas for exploring attitude—an architectural manifestation that challenges preconceived notions of taste and style. By embracing a philosophy of individuality and nonconformity, Dipoli embodies the spirit of organic expressionism, pushing the boundaries of architectural discourse and inviting a more open-minded approach to design.

According to Pietilä: "DIPOLI IS AN EXPERIMENT IN ATTITUDE Dipoli is contrary to preconceived good taste; styleless (In as much as style is the consistency of convention)."¹⁵⁴ Dipoli's design embodies a fluid and evolving process that welcomes multiple valid solutions that employs imprecise lines to facilitate the continual exploration of potential design avenues. The underlying concept conveyed revolves around the dynamic nature of Dipoli's architectural form, much like the malleability inherent in sketches. Consequently, the architectural form of Dipoli is not conclusively finalized, echoing the perpetual openness and incompleteness characteristic of a sketch. Pietilä's innovative utilization of sketches extends beyond the initial design phase, influencing the ultimate realization of Dipoli's construction. The act of constructing Dipoli serves as a temporal freeze-frame, capturing a specific moment in the ever-evolving design process.¹⁵⁵ Despite achieving the status of a tangible, constructed building, Dipoli preserves the essence of an unfinished sketch, a fresh approach to evolving topological space, embodying a continuous and dynamic exploration of diverse design possibilities. This perspective challenges conventional notions of architectural finality, emphasizing the enduring vitality and adaptability embedded within the built environment.



Fig. 31: Dipoli (1966), photo by Tuomas Uusheimo

Dipoli is presented as an exploration of morphology, space-filling, materiality, setting, and execution. Each aspect of its design is approached with a sense of curiosity and experimentation, with no predetermined outcomes or rigid constraints. The building's relationship with its environment is particularly emphasized,

highlighting the dynamic interplay between architecture and nature. By blurring the boundaries between the built environment and the natural landscape, Dipoli becomes an organic extension of its surroundings, embodying the principles of organic expressionism through its harmonious relationship with nature (see figure 31). Pietilä aptly states, "It needs to be built into it in order to create the idea of nature's *genius loci*: the continuation of nature as architecture."¹⁵⁶ The internal spaces seamlessly transition into exteriors, creating a varied environment that immerses individuals in nature. These sheltered interiors transform into open exteriors, offering diverse spaces that enable people to discover, experience, and, above all, claim nature as their own. The profound sense of freedom and creativity that permeates Dipoli's design philosophy, in its natural "Being"¹⁵⁷ challenges one to reconsider one's own assumptions about architecture and encourages one to embrace a more open-minded

¹⁵⁴ Pietilä 1967: 67.

¹⁵⁵ Royo 2023: 53.

¹⁵⁶ Norri 1985: 15.

¹⁵⁷ Quantrill 1985: 187.

approach to design. As Pietilä's own interpretation: "What would be said of Dipoli should be said if one could say it. That it is a beginning. That it is coming., Don't speak of it as a complete and final thing, but rather as an attempt, a direction;..."¹⁵⁸

3.3 Project 3: Engaging the Nature Being – Suvikumpu: Tuohivirsut juoksuhaudassa (Strips of birch bark in a dugout)

In 1962, the Asuntosäätiö invitational competition was organized for the Suvikumpu residential area, with Pietilä securing victory with their proposal "Tuohivirsuja juoksuhaudassa". Despite facing challenges and delays in the construction project, Suvikumpu became one of Pietilä's significant project at that time. The residential area, built in three parts(see figure 32) starting in 1967, featured additions like Suvituuli in 1980–1982 and the flower shop, each contributing to the unique morphology rooted in the surrounding forest.¹⁵⁹ The undulating, wooded terrain of Suvikumpu features a small rocky hill, remnants of fortified positions from World War I¹⁶⁰. Pietilä secured a competition win for this site in 1962, however leading to the construction of the current complex in three distinct phases over the subsequent two decades. While the program, building technology, and material choices evolved over time, a consistent adherence to the original site and building strategies resulted in a highly cohesive complex.¹⁶¹



Fig. 32: Suvikumpu (1982), photo by MFA

Suvikumpu is a part of Tapiola and follows the architectural tendencies of the 1950s that focus on restoration (of garden city). This connection to old Tapiola was realized by positioning an urban strip of buildings amidst untouched trees, creating a forest city concept. Notably, the Tapiola garden city aspired to harmonize urban living with nature, Suvikumpu represents the final phase of construction in the original Tapiola garden city. The three apartment buildings completed in 1969 ascend the wooded slopes, emphasizing height variations. Pietilä's description underscores how the placement of building masses aligns with the terrain's topography, resembling irregularly worn rock formations.¹⁶² In contrast to Dipoli, which ascends from the terrain in a somewhat unconventional manner, Suvikumpu aligns with topographical shapes and tree lines, adopting modular forms that accentuate functionalism. It aims to represent a contemporary home model influenced by the Finnish Pavilion modular structures seen during the Brussels' World Fair.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁸ Pietilä 1967: 67.

¹⁵⁹ Quantrill 1995: 165.

¹⁶⁰ Johansson 2008: 78.

¹⁶¹ Suvikumpu Collective Housing-Journal - Atlas, Hidden Architecture

¹⁶² Norri 1985: 51. / Genius Loci, Personal interpretations. Helsinki 1982

¹⁶³ Connah 1989:291.

The initial cluster of three buildings—Suvikulma, Suvikeskus, and Suvikäri—comprise a stepping ell shape positioned on the north and west corner of the site. This arrangement frames an open space to the south and provides views of the central rocky outcropping. Although the complex appears continuous, it consists of three separate buildings that vary in height, stepping from 9 floors at the east end to 3 floors at the south end.¹⁶⁴ The group of buildings to frame the hill along the north side of the site, another group extending perpendicular to the hill along the lower space of the site to the south, and a third group of communal spaces marking the intersection of the two groups on the west is clearly evident both in the competition model(see figure 33) and in the completed project. The stepping form in the plan serves dual purposes: delineating individual dwellings and serving as the formal mechanism for creating entrances, balconies, and windows. This ensures that the overall

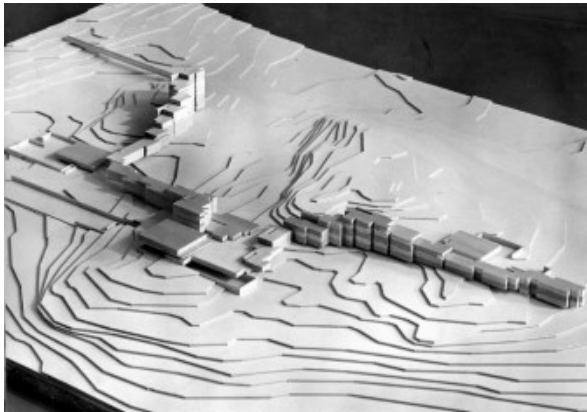


Fig. 33: Competition scale model Suvikumpu(1982),
Eero Troberg(MFA)

stepping form is expressed cohesively in the building mass, plan and section, and the detailed development of individual dwellings. This concept is evident in the plan, which is both repetitive and modular, yet individualized and seemingly chaotic.¹⁶⁵ Pietilä explained the concept as “The disposition of the mass of buildings is isomorphic with the topographical forms of the site. The mass is broken down like the irregularly eroded rock, responding in the isomorphoses of the horizontal and vertical directions to the form of the rock itself.”¹⁶⁶

The original design included housing for about 500 people but space for only about 300 was actually built in the first phase of construction between 1964 and 1969. Another 32 dwellings were built in the second phase between 1981–82.¹⁶⁷ The variety of dwelling types and sizes within the plan enhances the impression of repetitive variety. The plan’s repetitive, concatenated form is essentially an arrangement of connected point access towers, each hosting a stair surrounded by a zone of service spaces that back up to the north and west, opening to living spaces and balconies on the south and east. The subsequent group comprises two connected stepping buildings that extend south beyond the western side of the rock outcropping, constructed in 1981–82 using precast concrete panels, a common approach in contemporary Finnish housing construction. The third phase included the small shopping center, flower shop and several apartments and was built in 1982.¹⁶⁸

*The concrete shuttering consisted of horizontal boards of various widths and heights. The relief pattern of the surface is rhythmical, freely irregular, naturalized. The same theme is repeated in the balcony walls that are faced with real boarding and painted with a fourth shade of green. Why is this so? In this way the boundary between nature and building is eliminated. The colours and light of the surrounding forest landscape continue into the architecture. Suvikumpu is naturalistic architecture. It simulates nature.*¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁴ Johansson 2008: 79

¹⁶⁵ Suvikumpu Collective Housing-Journal - Atlas, Hidden Architecture

¹⁶⁶ Norri 1985: 51. / *Genius Loci*, Personal interpretations. Helsinki 1982

¹⁶⁷ Quantrill 1985: 65.

¹⁶⁸ Suvikumpu Collective Housing-Journal - Atlas, Hidden Architecture

¹⁶⁹ Connah 1989: 292.

In Pietilä's explanation of his approach¹⁷⁰ to expressing the inherent qualities of materials, textures, and colors in architectural designs, he emphasizes the importance of structural elements. Using the Suvikumpu project as an example, he highlights the deliberate selection of materials and colors to establish a connection with nature. While ordinary white plaster covers the rectangular surfaces, the concrete stands out with its unique green hue, deviating from conventional norms. Pietilä justifies this choice by stating that the concrete serves as a link to nature, with three shades of green carefully selected to mirror the colors of birch, spruce, and pine trees. The construction method, including the use of horizontal boards for concrete shuttering, creates a rhythmic and irregular relief pattern, enhancing the naturalistic aesthetic. This thematic integration extends to the balcony walls, which feature real boarding painted in another shade of green, promoting a seamless blend between the built environment and the surrounding landscape.

Similar to Dipoli's material choices, the use of concrete and wood aimed to establish a profound connection with nature. Green-painted concrete surfaces and window frames further reinforced this connection, introducing the nature-inspired color component into the building's interiors. Thereby blurring the boundaries between the built environment and nature, evoking the sensation of being amidst two forests.¹⁷¹ The design principle aimed to craft a quality product from the foundational elements of modernism, echoing the search for a new housing architecture style from the 1920s to 1930s.¹⁷² The color scheme of the facades in Suvikumpu correlates with the green hues of surrounding wood species (see figure 34). This landscape architecture approach ensures that the white and dark surfaces blend seamlessly with the neighboring forest masses, with the facade surfaces freely intersecting at the eaves height to enhance cohesion with the environment. Coloring choices also reflect seasonal changes, with white facades integrating with winter snow on tree branches and the ground.¹⁷³ As Pietilä mentioned: "Landscape architecture and town plan: the main theme is the form of the central hill, which is repeated in the vertical and horizontal masses of the buildings. Landscape architecture of the facades: white and dark surfaces appearing as irregular splashes of colour, contrasting in size to the surrounding foliage masses. The surface areas of the facades are broken up freely at eaves level the aim is the maximum possible material unity of buildings and surrounding forest."¹⁷⁴



Fig. 34: The nature-inspired colouring façade, photo by Ville Tietäväinen

Suvikumpu stands as a crucial piece in Pietilä's oeuvre. While its modernist facade features white stucco, pre-cast concrete panels, and elements from the De Stijl¹⁷⁵ movement (see figure 35&36), it also integrates Nordic vernacular traditions. Nestled within a forest, the

¹⁷⁰ Norri 1985a: 13.

¹⁷¹ Johansson 2008: 78.

¹⁷² Koho 1995: 45.

¹⁷³ Norri 1985: 51. / *Genius Loci*, Personal interpretations. Helsinki 1982

¹⁷⁴ Norri 1985: 52. / Suvikumpu. *Arkkitehti* 1/70

¹⁷⁵ Quantrill 2008: 105. (De Stijl :Neoplasticism, was a Dutch art movement founded in 1917.



Fig. 35: *De Stijl* example, *Contra-Construction Project*, by Theo van Doesburg, 1923



Fig. 36: *Suvikumpu* (1982), photo by author

residential complex recalls rural farm buildings, maintaining a close bond with its natural surroundings. The interplay of light and shadow in the woods creates a mystical connection with the building's stepped form, forging a symbiotic relationship with the landscape. Techniques such as rendering cast concrete to resemble horizontal wood siding, painting the concrete in pastel greens to mimic forest colors, and employing formal strategies that distinguish articulated elements from undifferentiated surfaces all contribute to domesticating an underlying functionalist doctrine, shaping it to harmonize with the pre-existing landscape. The organic/tectonic dialogue and meticulous corner articulation emerge as fundamental aspects defining the architectural essence of Suvikumpu. In the context of ongoing skepticism towards the impressionistic element in Pietilä's naturalism, the strong connection between nature and society in Finland poses challenges in distinguishing ethical naturalism, empirical expressionism, and ethical intuitionism.¹⁷⁶

*During the last three decades Reima Pietila has determinedly developed an architecture of the Finnish forest. He has analyzed the morphology of Finnish landscapes and developed motifs of architecture, regionally anchored to its place. Prevailing urban and universal ideals in Finnish architecture have recently been challenged by more romantic and regionalistic tendencies. Authentic art has its origin, by inner necessity, in its cultural context, not in rationally defined programmes. The challenge for new Finnish architecture is to reflect and revitalize the peasant and forest images engraved in the Finnish soul.*¹⁷⁷

Pietilä discusses the philosophical underpinnings of the Suvikumpu dwellings¹⁷⁸, he highlights that the project represented the first attempt to apply the concept of "vicinity space," emphasizing the importance of integrating the built environment with its natural surroundings. Pietilä explains that the design approach was influenced by the principles of Dipoli, where elements derived from the Arctic forest were used as design determinants. Elements such as scale, mass, pattern, and shape were carefully considered to simulate the forest environment. The concept of "vicinity space of vegetal homonymy" was introduced to describe the space between the building and its surrounding natural environment, reflecting the planning ideology of Tapiola. Pietilä emphasizes the importance of designing housing in a way that allows the natural forest to continue growing around the buildings, aligning with the

¹⁷⁶ Author believe that in Connah 1989: 291. "...They believed that the literary aspects of their work were only supporting scientific models experimentally and intuitively. As a result, Pietilä was labeled a pseudo-theorist. The idealists didn't appreciate Pietilä's intense and sensory approaches, viewing them as a repetition of 19th-century aestheticism. It's crucial to highlight the ongoing skepticism towards the impressionistic element in Pietilä's naturalism... "as to respond Pallasmaa 1987: 452.

¹⁷⁷ Pallasmaa 1987: 452.

¹⁷⁸ Connah 1989: 238.

original mythology-inspired vision of Tapiola as a kingdom of animal and forest spirits.¹⁷⁹ Suvikumpu stands as the prime example of Pietilä's naturalistic architecture.

The subtle alteration in the concrete colour allowed it to blend seamlessly with nature, as the painted green surface defied the traditional norms of gray or black. The newer Suvituuli and the flower house, built in the 80s, demonstrated updated construction techniques with visible element seams and traces of board molds. The older part of Suvikumpu, with its clean, white plastered surface, retains a closer connection to the original concept, providing an authentic and enduring feel. Pietilä's considerations extend beyond the seamless integration of buildings with nature to encompass the practical utilization of indoor spaces. He observed the peculiarity of narrow frame widths in 1960s apartment buildings and recognized the architectural trend toward wider 12-meter apartments by the 1970s. Consequently, he deliberately widened the structural frame of the apartment building to enhance the flexibility of the apartment space program.¹⁸⁰

The exhibition "The Zone" (see figure 37) in 1967 that almost synchronous with Suvikumpu construction time. The exploration of the interplay between visual and auditory elements, form and language, was the focus of this exhibition. The exhibition comprised around forty 2.5m × 2.5m transparencies adorned with vibrant patterns, accompanied by what can be described as "language poems." These poems played with analogies between forms and sounds, often in a humorous manner. By emphasizing the oral dimension, Pietilä highlighted the unique ways different languages express architectural concepts, reflecting his interest in semiotic systems. "The Zone" served as a meeting ground for visual and linguistic realms, blurring the boundaries between thinking and seeing. Pietilä envisioned a continuous flow of associations between visual imagery and linguistic concepts, shaping thoughts and perceptions even outside the exhibition's confines. This dynamic interaction between forms and language held radical social potential, as it suggested that architectural forms could influence cognitive processes. Pietilä recognized architecture as a cultural practice characterized by its openness and capacity for movement, a concept fundamental to his understanding of the discipline.¹⁸¹

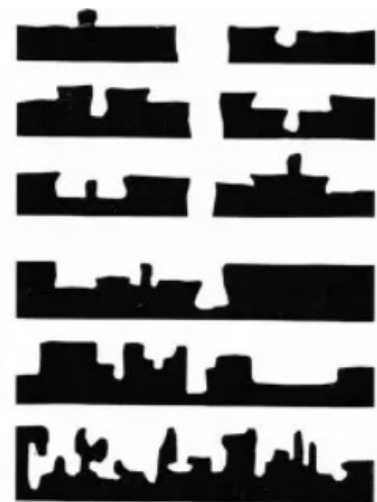


Fig. 37: *The Zone* (1967)

The project title explores the relationship between architecture and nature, an example of architectural precision intertwined with natural indistinctness. It creates metaphorical portal while challenging conventional norms and embracing a poetic ethos. Through the pseudonym "Birch-bark-shoes in the trenches," Pietilä imbues his work with a narrative resonance, transcending mere functionalism to evoke deeper experiential dimensions. Suvikumpu's architecture incorporates the temporal dimension of the site. In winter, the white surfaces interact with the snow, blending seamlessly with the environment. This integration of

¹⁷⁹ Norri 1985: 52. / Suvikumpu. *Arkkitehti* 1/70

¹⁸⁰ Koho 1995: 41.

¹⁸¹ Pelkonen 2018: 93-95.



Fig. 38: Suvikumpu (1982),
photo by author

architectural elements with natural phenomena blurs the boundary between nature and the building, achieving a sensory resemblance without literal imitation. Suvikumpu's sensory operation aims to create maximal material unity with the surrounding forest, not to make the building disappear, but to establish an identity through assimilation (see figure 38). However, this assimilation does not result in a fixed identity; instead, it embodies indeterminacy, reflecting the dynamic relationship between the architecture and its natural context. In a way it coherent with Pietilä's statement that "Buildings should, with their whole 'Being', announce this status quo as the principle."¹⁸²

3.4 Interviews with Roger Connah and Annuikka Pietilä

Over the course of two decades, relationship between Roger Connah (see figure 39) and Reima Pietilä underwent a series of transformations. Starting as an intern, Connah progressed through roles as an employee, an assistant, a designer, and a fellow traveler. As their collaboration deepened, Connah's responsibilities expanded, eventually encompassing duties as a writer, personal assistant, friend, and confidant to Pietilä. In Roger Connah's *Writing Architecture: Fantômas Fragments Fictions*, he situates Pietilä's buildings and writings within the context of international cultural theory, art, and philosophy, offering readers an insightful understanding of Pietilä's significance. Through meticulous analysis, Connah renders Pietilä's complex conceptual exercises accessible within modern architectural theory, accompanied by enriching illustrations. More than a conventional monograph, Connah's work delves into metaphysical inquiry, inviting readers to explore architecture as a cultural composition drawing from diverse influences. He provides a unique perspective, tracing the Pietilä's distinctive approach to architecture and culture.



Fig. 39: Roger Connah with Pietilä couple

When the author engages in an interview with Roger Connah regarding Reima Pietilä's distinctive architectural style, seek insights into Pietilä's unconventional approach and a deeper understanding of the fundamental architectural principles that underpinned his work. Roger Connah describes Pietilä's unconventional nature and distinctiveness in his thinking and character. Pietilä was not the typical architect who engaged in casual discussions or social gatherings. Instead, he was deeply focused and concentrated on his work. Despite his quiet demeanor and tendency to mumble, Pietilä's discussions

¹⁸² Norri 1985a: 15.

ranged across various topics beyond architecture, including language, music, and poetry. The interviewee recalls finding their early poems translated into Finnish by Pietilä, demonstrating his meticulous approach and interest in language. Pietilä's originality stemmed from his fascination with words and their origins, often creating new interpretations and connections. His approach was not well understood or appreciated by his contemporaries in Finland, who adhered more to rational architectural solutions. However, internationally, Pietilä's writings and critiques gained attention, highlighting his sharp wit and inventive use of language in both his architecture and writings. This unique perspective and humor set him apart from his Finnish peers.

Pietilä's architecture often seemed to reflect its surrounding context. Connah's suggests that Pietilä's method of integrating architectural form with the contextual environment was intricately tied to his thorough examination of sites and surroundings. This approach frequently led to Pietilä's architecture seamlessly reflecting its surrounding context. He anticipated concepts like "setting" in architecture, which gained prominence later through scholars like Kenneth Frampton. Pietilä's exhibitions and early competitions focused on contextualizing buildings within their surroundings, examining contours, and envisioning how structures could harmonize with their environments. For example, in Dipoli, he elevated the contours to form the building's roof, a concept vividly captured in his poem "Literal Morphology" from 1967. This poem, with its concise lines and drawings, encapsulates the essence of Dipoli's design language. Even in projects like the Finnish Embassy in New Delhi, where the surroundings were vastly different, Pietilä strived to create a contextual environment within a decontextualized space. While interpretations of his work often evoke images of the Finnish landscape, Pietilä's designs were not solely driven by poetic associations. Rather, they represented nuanced responses to environmental factors, blending aesthetic sensibilities with functional considerations.

Regarding to Pietilä's architectural thinking contribute to architectural discourse during his time. Connah observed that when reflecting on Pietilä's architectural influence during his time, it's evident that his unconventional approach and critical reflection set him apart from his contemporaries in Finland. While his work contributed to broader questioning within architectural discourse, it faced resistance and skepticism within the national architectural community. Many regarded Pietilä's designs as unconventional or even non-architectural, lacking a clear place within established architectural paradigms. His work often faced misinterpretation and marginalization within Finland, where it is seen as odd or even humorous. Despite this, Pietilä remained connected to international intellectual discourses, drawing inspiration from broader architectural traditions and philosophies. The extent of whether Pietilä's influence beyond his own era is a more complex matter. Research papers and essays on Pietilä are more commonly found outside Finland, indicating a broader appreciation of his contributions internationally. While there is growing recognition of his work abroad, particularly in academic circles and architectural research, his legacy remains somewhat overlooked in Finland. Within Finland, there is still a lack of deep understanding and acknowledgment of his architectural significance. Despite exhibitions and publications dedicated to his work, there is a sense that his true impact is not fully appreciated or understood within his homeland. Thus, while Pietilä's influence is gradually extending beyond his era, there remains a disconnect between international recognition and domestic appreciation, highlighting a continued vacuum in understanding and appreciation within Finland's architectural community.

In the interview with Annukka Pietilä (see figure 40), she shares childhood memories and anecdotes that offer insight into Reima Pietilä's personality and interests beyond architecture. She recalls trips taken on an old-fashioned wooden fisherman boat in the southern archipelago of Finland, exploring islands with unique topologies and geological features. Reima's early experiences sailing in the archipelago and his interest in geology, likely influenced his appreciation for the natural landscape and its forms. Annukka suggests that these experiences may have played a role in shaping Reima's architectural vision, providing him with initial inspiration for his designs. Annukka highlights Reima's belief in exploring alternative perspectives and solutions, emphasizing that he valued the process of questioning over reaching a singular truth. Annukka recounts everyday scenarios that exemplify Reima's playful nature and his ability to find humor in ordinary situations.



Fig. 40: Reima Pietilä and Annukka Pietilä

Annukka also discusses Reima's informal behavior and his tendency to challenge authority, as demonstrated in an amusing encounter at an airport in East Berlin. Despite facing scrutiny from airport officers, Reima responded with unexpected behavior, barking like a dog in response to their commands. This anecdote highlights Reima's rebellious spirit and his inclination to defy conventional norms in humorous ways. Overall, Annukka portrays Reima as someone who embraced creativity, curiosity, and a playful spirit throughout his life.

Annukka delves into the formative experiences that shaped Reima Pietilä's architectural approach. She recalls how Reima's upbringing, assisting his father in building houses, provided him with a hands-on understanding of design from a young age. Wartime experiences constructing timber shelters further fueled Reima's interest in architectural techniques. Annukka also highlights the influence of modern art and literature in the 1950s, noting Reima's first wife's background in poetry, which enriched his appreciation for language and culture. Despite the era's standardized housing trends, Reima remained dedicated to originality and resisted mainstream architectural norms. His multidimensional approach, integrating various influences, defined his unique architectural style and facilitated success in securing commissions. Annukka further explores Reima's school years, where exposure to philosophical thinking, particularly through teacher Valter Kilpi. Reima's interest in philosophy was further cultivated by his circle of friends, who met regularly to discuss philosophical topics, including the works of philosophers like Wittgenstein. Despite initial considerations of studying philosophy, Reima ultimately pursued architecture, influenced by wartime experiences and familial expectations. Annukka also touches upon Reima's published articles, revealing his broad interests and frustration with the lack of engagement with his architectural writings from readers. Furthermore, Annukka highlights Reima's linguistic creativity, noting his fondness for wordplay and puns in both personal interactions and professional undertakings. Reima's fascination with language extended to his exploration of

etymology and his study of foreign languages, reflecting his curiosity and intellectual pursuits beyond architecture.

Annukka reflects on the values and principles that guided Reima Pietilä's approach to architecture and design. She suggests that Reima embraced principles marked by flexibility and a reluctance to adhere strictly to rigid rules or boundaries. According to Annukka, Reima's principles were adaptable rather than fixed, allowing him to continually question and reflect on his ideas. She describes his iterative design process, where he would develop ideas across multiple projects, often revisiting and refining them over time. Reima prioritized innovation and progression, aiming to avoid repetition and constantly seeking new avenues of architectural expression. Annukka also highlights Reima's philosophical outlook on architecture, emphasizing his belief in the impermanence of buildings and the importance of always looking forward rather than becoming attached to past creations. Despite acknowledging certain buildings as favorites at different points in time, Reima maintained a forward-thinking mindset, continuously evolving his architectural language and pushing the boundaries of design. Annukka observes that Reima's architectural trajectory was not linear but rather diverse, influenced by a range of factors. Ultimately, Annukka suggests that Reima's architectural journey was deeply personal and guided by his intuition and creative impulses rather than external expectations or trends.

Both Roger Connah and Annukka Pietilä provide insightful perspectives that complement each other, offering a comprehensive profile of Pietilä's open design approach. Connah highlights Pietilä's originality, which stemmed from his deep fascination with words and their origins, leading him to create new interpretations and connections. This unconventional approach was not always well understood or appreciated by his contemporaries in Finland, who favored more rational architectural solutions. Pietilä strived to create contextual environments within seemingly decontextualized spaces, challenging traditional perceptions of architectural design. On the other hand, Annukka emphasizes Pietilä's playful and creative nature, portraying him as someone who embraced flexibility and resisted mainstream architectural norms. She describes his iterative design process, wherein he continuously revisited and refined ideas across multiple projects, prioritizing innovation and progression. Pietilä's architectural trajectory was characterized by diversity, influenced by various factors and guided by his personal intuition rather than external expectations or trends. These perspectives collectively provide a nuanced comprehension of Pietilä's open design ethos. His readiness to venture into uncharted territories, defy norms, and fuse a variety of influences delineated his distinctive architectural style.

4. Influence of Openness Approach in Pietilä's Architecture and Beyond



Fig. 41: Reima Pietilä and Raili Pietilä

Year 1963 marked a significant turning point in Pietilä's life as he entered into matrimony with his partner Raili Paatelainen (see figure 41). This union not only formalized their personal relationship but also solidified their professional collaboration. As early as 1961, they established a joint architectural office, known as Arkkitehtitoimisto Reima Pietilä ja Raili Paatelainen, laying the foundation for a fruitful partnership. By 1975, the office underwent a symbolic transformation and was renamed Raili ja Reima Pietilä Architects. Raili Pietilä's role in her husband's career cannot be overstated, she played an integral role both in Pietilä's work and his life. Her deep understanding of his ideas and unwavering support provided a steady anchor amidst the complexities of architectural innovation. Reflecting on their relationship, Raili remarked, "Well, it was strange, but I had already got to know Reima in his student years. Everybody said then that you can't

make head or tail of what he says. But to me the obscurity was so clear that it was strangely soothing."¹⁸³ Like many architect couples, navigating the division of labor between them proved challenging and, perhaps, ultimately unnecessary.

The Pietiläs' joint career unfolded across distinct phases, each characterized by unique challenges and creative evolution. In the 1960s, distinguished by their harmonious integration with nature and striking sculptural forms, defied the prevailing architectural trends of rationalization and standardization. They embarked on a series of groundbreaking projects, start from Dipoli building, Suvikumpu apartment block till the Finnish Embassy in New Delhi. The design journey for the Finnish Embassy in New Delhi was notably protracted and intricate. In 1963, the Pietilä couple faced setbacks when the commission was awarded to architect Lauri Silvennoinen (1921–1969), whose proposal had earned second place. Following Silvennoinen's untimely passing, the project remained stagnant for a decade until, in 1980, the Pietiläs were finally entrusted with the commission. It took approximately twelve years from their triumphs in the Dipoli and Suvikumpu competitions before securing another major project in Finland. "Reima thought that it was actually quite OK," remarked Raili, "as he was writing and thinking of new buildings, and you can always think and sketch."¹⁸⁴

During Pietilä's tenure as a professor at the University of Oulu from 1973 to 1979, he advocated for regionalist architecture, inspiring a new generation of architects. The resurgence of his architectural practice in the mid-1970s saw the manifestation of postmodern influences in projects like the Hervanta central axis and the Sief Palace Area.¹⁸⁵ During his lectures in Oulu, which were subsequently transformed into an exhibition and publication known as *Notion Image Idea*, Pietilä's discourse hinted at the transformative role

¹⁸³ Niskanen 2004: 35.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid: 31.

¹⁸⁵ <https://finnisharchitecture.fi/architect/raili-and-reima-pietila/>

of this concept in prompting students to embrace a novel thinking paradigm. Delving into the pages of his notebook, it becomes evident that Pietilä's intention was to delineate and explore specific boundaries, with the ultimate goal of erecting a philosophical scaffolding to facilitate discourse on architectural concepts and strategies.¹⁸⁶

4.1 The Openness Approach: Situated Between Rational and Irrational Styles

In the preface to his seminal work *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, published in 1921, the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein expressed a sentiment of potential cognitive exclusivity: "Perhaps this book will be understood only by someone who has himself already had the thoughts that are expressed in it—or at least similar thoughts." This statement encapsulates the profound depth of Wittgenstein's treatise, which stands as a pivotal text in 20th-century Western philosophy. The core of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* revolves around the concept of logical analysis and the limits of language in representing reality. The book is structured around a series of propositions that aim to elucidate the nature of language, logic, and the relationship between language and the world. A central theme in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* is that language demarcates the frontiers of meaning. The assertion from Wittgenstein "The limits of my language are the limits of my world,"¹⁸⁷ elucidates the concept that the scope of our cognizable reality is contingent upon the linguistic framework through which it is articulated.

Pietilä offers a distinct perspective on this matter, despite being influenced by Wittgenstein. He expresses a preference for inhabiting the ambiguous territory that lies between the opposing ideologies of Rationalism and Irrationalism. While Wittgenstein's framework tends to focus solely on verbal or non-verbal communication, Pietilä intrigued by the existence of in between situation, he said: "... I prefer to dwell in that No-man's land between opposing parties, Rationalism Irrationalism. Wittgenstein has excluded the non-verbal means of communication existing in addition to those two polarities: verbal/non-verbal. What I do, and what actually matters in Notion Image Idea is that the 'There-Between' is accepted as a form of real world phenomena. My position in between the fighting fronts of rational-irrational culture can be seen thus:

$$\begin{array}{c} \text{Limits of Rationalism; Common Rationalism} \\ + \\ \text{Pietilä's 'In-between' of transrationalism, metarationalism, suprarationalism} \\ = \\ \text{Common Irrationalism " }^{188} \end{array}$$

He rejects the rigid categorization of architectural thought into purely rational or irrational camps, preferring to navigate a middle ground that transcends these binary distinctions. In navigating this delicate interplay, Pietilä skillfully avoids committing entirely to one extreme or the other, opting instead to occupy a space of existence that allows for both rational discipline and poetic freedom to coexist harmoniously. Pietilä's design for the Dipoli building

¹⁸⁶ Quantrill 1985: 161.

¹⁸⁷ Wittgenstein 1922: 74.

¹⁸⁸ Quantrill 1985: 167.

(1966) in Otaniemi, Espoo. While the structure exhibits rational elements in its functional layout and use of materials, it also incorporates sculptural forms and expressive details that defy strict rationality. Pietilä emphasizes the importance of acknowledging the intermediate space between opposing ideologies as a valid aspect of reality, thereby accentuating the holistic nature of existence. This notion is evident in his Suvikumpu apartment block (1969) in Tapiola, Espoo. Here, Pietilä blends organic shapes with functional considerations, creating an environment that exists in the “There-Between” realm of nature-inspired design and practical living spaces. In this sense, his approach bears a striking resemblance to Heidegger’s notion of oscillation(*Erschwingung*)¹⁸⁹, where he gracefully hovers between contrasting states, crafting a dynamic architectural experience that challenges conventional boundaries.

Pietilä advocates for a more organic approach to architecture, where order is added as necessary to support functionality without imposing unnecessary constraints. The shift in concept becomes apparent in Pietilä’s early significant projects, such as the Finnish Pavilion (1956) and the Venice Pavilion (1959). While these structures exhibit planar characteristics in terms of their scale and dimensions, they also introduce variations in storey heights, imparting a warehouse-like feel. This aesthetic might be influenced by Pietilä’s experiences during the war in Karelia. His exploration of randomness and sequence, as seen in the Composition studies in wood (Stick Studies 1957)(see figure 42), facilitated the emergence of indeterminacy in his work. This paved the way for Pietilä to intertwine his work on transformation with indeterminacy, giving rise to the rhythmic alterations of embryonic units witnessed in Kaleva Church project of 1958.



Fig. 42: Pietilä's Stick Studies Compositions (1957)

Wittgenstein said: “Architecture is a gesture. Not every purposive movement of the human body is a gesture. Just as little as every functional building is architecture.”¹⁹⁰ The precision and structural organization inherent in mathematics serve as a catalyst for Pietilä, rather than an impediment. This framework provided Pietilä with a viable pathway to navigate the prevailing right-angled paradigm advocated by many of his theoretical counterparts, albeit with his distinctive personal touch. When queried about his predilection towards regularity and irregularity,¹⁹¹ Pietilä unequivocally elucidated his stance by affirming: Instead of starting from a standpoint of order and hierarchy, proposes beginning with a chaotic agglomeration of forms and spaces, then adding order-components as needed. By resourcefully considering the possibility of doing without redundant order, a building can satisfy hierarchy requirements without becoming oppressive. Otherwise, redundant order begins to manipulate people’s behavior.

“The Morphology of Expressive Form” explores the intricate relationship between morphology and mathematics in architectural design. Mathematical principles are applied to

¹⁸⁹ DeWiel 2015: 14. Heidegger repeatedly describes “Being” or “Seyn” as “oscillation” between existence and nothingness, “Dasein’s” connection to “Being” resembling a primal oscillation, symbolizing pure becoming.

¹⁹⁰ Wittgenstein 1998: 49.

¹⁹¹ Connah 1989: 236.

spatial organization, connecting geometry and spatial abstraction, particularly through topology (see figure 43). This multidimensional approach considers functionality from various perspectives, including mathematics, psychology, and practical operation. In architectural practice, challenges arise from the existence of multiple valid solutions for a single design objective. This refinement process mirrors mathematical iterations, where form and functionality constantly fluctuate, creating a fluid operational dynamic. The complexity lies in the coexistence of numerous viable solutions, leading to multiple correct outcomes. Pietilä

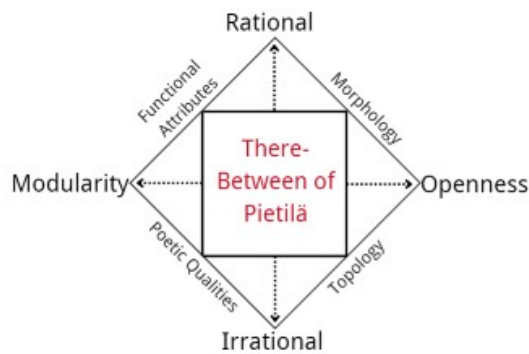


Fig. 43: *There-Between of Pietilä*

diverges from traditional architectural discourse by embracing complexity, indeterminacy, and the singularity of experience. His exploration of morphological essences exposes observers to a transfinite dimension of reality, challenging established paradigms and fostering new avenues for artistic expression. Consequently, due to this complexity-driven approach, Pietilä is often regarded as an architect whose work is too complex to fully grasp, often labeled with the term “Irrational Styles.”

Pietilä’s enigmatic persona derives not solely from the intricate nature of his architectural compositions but also from the inherent openness characteristic of his body of work. This openness is often manifested through the incorporation of fragments and allusions drawn from diverse intellectual realms, including meticulous investigations into linguistics, inspiration from movements such as expressionism or surrealism, and engagement with early philosophical discourse. Moreover, Pietilä’s formative experiences, including his involvement in the war in Karelia, the pervasive national romanticism prevalent in Finnish architectural circles, the post-war advocacy for pragmatic architectural approaches in Finland, and the well-established Aalto trend with its global renown upon Pietilä’s entry into the architectural sphere, all serve as crucial contextual backgrounds and prerequisites that cannot be overlooked. Throughout his career, Pietilä has navigated an environment marked by uncertainty, which serves as his tool for engaging with and adapting to the prevailing milieu. This uncertainty becomes an integral aspect of his creative process, enabling him to confront and address the complexities inherent in his architectural pursuits.

Pietilä places a strong emphasis on the importance of inquiry, thorough research, and open-endedness throughout the design process in his architectural philosophy. It is possible for architects to cultivate a better awareness of the design environment by actively searching out novel ideas and by asking important questions. This can result in architectural solutions that are more meaningful and contextually sensitive. Pietilä’s design methodology consisted of looking for insights and connections that went beyond what was immediately apparent on the surface level. He saw “the other side” of the mirror image¹⁹² as a metaphor for acquiring a clairvoyant insight that would lead to the essential interior connection in order to discover a solution to the architectural form. The architectural approach used by Pietilä was distinguished by a profound concern for the human experience, an investigation of the dimensions of space, and a sensitivity to both the poetic and the contextual. Which can be seen from 1950s, he began to distinguish intuitively between the “interpretive act” and the

¹⁹² Quantrill 1985: 165.

“operative act”; between the “essence” and the “appearance.”¹⁹³ In his words: “*Genius loci* idea! The “thing” is both abstract and concrete at the same time. Inherent within it are characteristics and identities. I can imagine it as well as think it. The “thing” is a synthesis of rational and irrational realities.”¹⁹⁴

During his teaching period in Oulu, Pietilä's pedagogical approach, as exemplified in his booklet and exhibition *Notion Image Idea* (see figure 44), aimed to reintroduce students to the language of architectural design.¹⁹⁵ His goal was to provoke them to think differently about architecture, encouraging them to reject simplistic interpretations and confront the complexities of design. He emphasizes that his role is not to provide solutions but to pose problems, fostering a discourse that encourages students to



Fig. 44: *Notion Image Idea* (1975)

explore alternative perspectives. Pietilä's approach is characterized by its openness and flexibility, rejecting rigid frameworks and embracing what he terms “intermobility” in design solutions. He advocates for a discursive rather than a strictly methodical approach, one that allows for creative exploration without the constraints of conventional thinking.¹⁹⁶ His way of finding solution in design is a “intermobility” way that “I do not use any definite elements and operations because any aspect is a good starting point, any operation as good as any other. We can begin with the most unapproachable things eg “quality of beauty” and advance from there.”¹⁹⁷

Central to Pietilä's philosophy is the notion of “freedom of thought,” which he believes is essential for true understanding and innovation in architecture. He employs literary devices, such as jokes or whimsical remarks, to underscore philosophical truths and challenge truisms, creating an atmosphere of atypicality in architectural discourse. Furthermore, Pietilä emphasizes the importance of verbal signposts or “metaphoric fragments” in navigating the architectural universe, allowing students to detect underlying patterns and connections. He rejects the notion of a predetermined order, instead advocating for a focus on broader contexts and the evolution of structuralization within architecture itself. In a sense, Pietilä may have been encouraging his students to utilize what could be termed as the “Pietilä's ladder.”¹⁹⁸

4.2 Manifestation: Balancing Functional and Poetic Qualities in Architecture

Pietilä once said: “My architectural career has an additional feature in that originally my intention was to study philosophy and perhaps my basic attitude has always been an attempt to add a philosophic aspect to the pragmatic orientation.”¹⁹⁹ He has discussed about delves into philosophical inquiries regarding the essence of architecture in *Arkkitehti* magazine

¹⁹³ Connah 2023: 44.

¹⁹⁴ Pietilä 1982: 24.

¹⁹⁵ Quantrill 1985: 169.

¹⁹⁶ Quantrill 1985: 161.

¹⁹⁷ Quantrill 1985: 162.

¹⁹⁸ “In philosophy, Wittgenstein's ladder is a metaphor set out by Ludwig Wittgenstein about learning”-*Wikipedia*, accessed on April 16, 2024.

¹⁹⁹ Connah 1989: 55.

6/1993²⁰⁰, the relationship between form and meaning, and the role of the viewer in interpreting architectural works. He emphasizes that meaning in architecture is complex and cannot be reduced to simple classifications, highlighting the architect's role as a creative draftsman in navigating these multifaceted meanings. This prompts Pietilä to contemplate the nature of architecture and its identity, proposing that significant form is comprised of multiple overlapping factors such as materiality, functionality, suggestivity, desires, impressions, and self-portraits of the object. Pietilä stance on the relationship between form and function in architecture, emphasizing his open-mind approach to design and his rejection of rigid architectural dogma. Pietilä had addresses the misconception that a formalist approach in architecture inherently compromises functionality. He argues that being a formalist does not necessarily mean neglecting functionality. Instead, he suggests that a sophisticated understanding of form and function can coexist in architectural design. Pietilä emphasizes that he does not adhere to a loose aesthetic styling or rely on technological module frames as if there exists a universal architecture. Pietilä challenges the notion that the sole purpose of architecture is to provide space and means, highlighting the broader significance of function.²⁰¹

Pietilä frequently employs the term "gestalt"²⁰² to elucidate his design process. In one interview²⁰³ when asked about his goal in architecture, Pietilä reflects on the complexity of form and the importance of "all-expressive form" and gestalt shaping, he describes his goal as moving towards a "troika," where multiple elements with their own characteristics work together harmoniously under the architect's direction. He emphasizes the irrationality of architectural language, which may not always make sense verbally but is unified and rational in its synthesis as an action or deed. Regarding specific projects, Pietilä explains his approach to designing churches, focusing on the role of light in creating atmosphere and conveying Lutheran symbolism. He compares the Mukkula and Malminkartano church designs, highlighting how light interacts with the spaces differently in each. In Mukkula, light swirls upwards, creating a dynamic and symbolic effect, while in Malminkartano, light is projected evenly onto surfaces, illuminating the space more uniformly. Pietilä emphasizes the importance of manipulating light creatively to convey the desired atmosphere and symbolism, rather than simply adding openings in the walls.

"Architecture can be structured according to the linguistic model."²⁰⁴ This concept can perhaps reviewed since the stick-studies series, it served as a practical exploration of Pietilä's initial concept of transformability. This notion encompassed the dynamic adjustments of both unit and form, involving shifts and glides, alterations in direction and dimension. These changes occurred in small, gradual increments, leading to the deformation of the initial point. This concept was encapsulated by the term "Transformoitavuus" (Transformability). The seemingly awkward creation of a new term in Finnish should not hastily lead one to attribute to Pietilä a deliberate desire for obscurity, a perception he would face criticism for later. Pietilä shared the view that the Finnish language lacked a vocabulary for articulating the concepts of form,²⁰⁵ it did not possess sufficiently developed tools to express the intricate and interconnected process by which architecture acquires idea. Influenced by this realization, he

²⁰⁰ Jormakka 1993: 41.

²⁰¹ Connah 1989: 236.

²⁰² Quantrill 1985: 69.

²⁰³ Broner-Bauer 1993: 34.

²⁰⁴ Connah 1989: 235.

²⁰⁵ Norri 1985a: 8.

embarked on developing his own revised terminology, aiming to describe the fundamental nature of architecture and the processes through which it emerges.

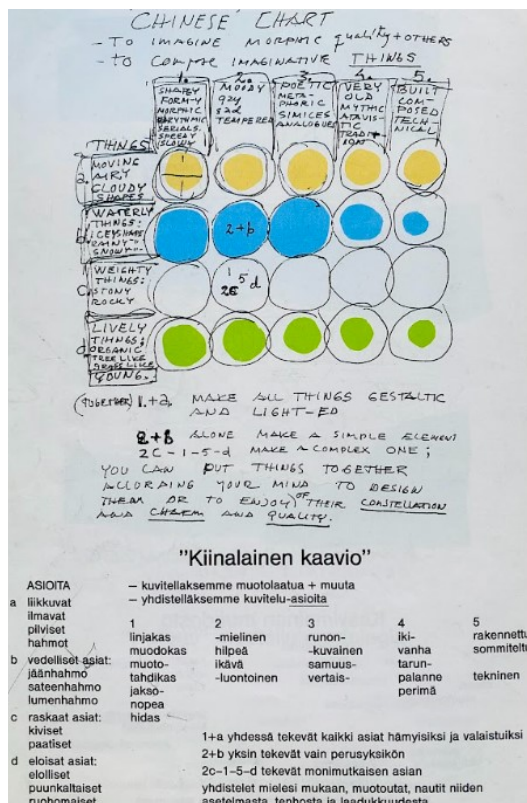


Fig. 45: Chinese Chart

Pietilä's stance on the cultural function of architecture becomes unmistakably evident when considering his prioritization of morphology over semantics. His perspective on architecture was characterized by its fluidity, fostering dialogue, and a sense of perpetual incompleteness.²⁰⁶ One can see his idea, for instance, from his own diagram named "Chinese Chart"(see figure 45), where "things" intersect and combine to form different states. Essentially, Pietilä viewed architecture not merely as static structures but as dynamic entities that actively engage with human experiences and broader cultural contexts. His approach encourages individuals to delve beyond superficial observations, enabling them to interact with architecture in a profound and vibrant manner. Pietilä's recognition of the inherent ambiguity and incompleteness of language underscores the necessity for readers to engage in a continual process of reinterpretation. Like many of his other works, Pietilä's works demand readers to discern meanings in a manner that is uniquely their own.

Pietilä's architectural philosophy, rooted in the "nature school,"²⁰⁷ underscores nature's crucial role in shaping the *genius loci* of a site. He emphasizes that a place's uniqueness stems from the dynamic interaction between the site and its environment, forming a distinctive character that enhances the space's overall identity. Additionally, Pietilä emphasizes that architecture extends beyond physical form; it embodies a cognitive and cultural creation imbued with a profound "sense of mind." This perspective similar with Chinese Taoist²⁰⁸ thought, where consciousness arises from a primal self-affection, symbolizing an ever-present yet intangible vortex of life's dynamism. In Chinese gardens, this concept manifests as a deep sense of absence, probing the inner depths and reflecting the boundless expanses of life unfolding in real time. The garden encapsulates the space-time continuum of the living body, encompassing both the vast and minute dimensions, within and beyond everything. As a result, Chinese gardens exhibit a layered landscape yet a chaotic agglomeration, blending seamlessly with their surroundings while evoking a sense of depth(see figure 46). This experience prompts an exploration of the inherent qualities within the confines of phenomena, unveiling a tranquil dynamism mirroring the inner workings of corporeal awareness. Such wareness, saw as an ongoing transformation within the encompassing yet distinct whole, demands not only visual perception but also a spiritualized sensitivity, embodying its profound structural essence.

²⁰⁶ Connah 1989: 37.

²⁰⁷ Norri 1985a: 25.

²⁰⁸ "Taoism or Daoism is a diverse tradition indigenous to China, variously characterized as both a philosophy and a religion." – Wikipedia, accessed on April 14, 2024.

Same goes to Chinese *Xieyi*²⁰⁹ painting(see figure 47) as well, which transcends the requirement for representational specificity, temporal contextualization, and spatial confines, this methodology exclusively prioritizes the expressive capacity of abstract brushstrokes. In this manner, it effectively communicates enduring aspects of human temperament such as emotion and mood, resonating across diverse historical epochs. An intriguing linguistic fact, the translation of “phenomenon” into Chinese unveils “xian xiang.” Within this linguistic nuance, “xiang,” often interpreted as “image” or “phenomenon,” assumes a profound significance. Unlike the Western dichotomy that rigidly segregates entities into physical and mental realms, “xiang” occupies a liminal space, acting as a bridge between the visible and the invisible. The intrinsic essence of “xiang” intricately molds artistic expression in Chinese tradition. Rather than adhering to static states, Chinese artists embrace the fluidity of existence, portraying subjects in constant transition, blurring the lines between form and formlessness. This dynamic approach sparks contemplation in viewers, urging them to explore the delicate balance between the seen and the unseen, enhancing their perceptual experiences. Pietilä's philosophy found resonance with a distant Oriental ethos, harmonizing in unexpected ways.



Fig. 46: Chinese Garden



Fig. 47: Chinese Xieyi Abstract Painting Lotus.

Metaphors have served as a catalyst for transformation in Pietilä's design pursuits, evolving from verbal to visual manifestations. He envisioned contemporary architecture not merely as a pragmatic pursuit, but as a narrative medium enriched with metaphorical complexity. His objective was to imbue architectural environments with layers of significance, encouraging observers to interact with the constructed landscape on various levels. Kaleva Church encapsulates Pietilä's poetic essence, eliciting diverse interpretations of its structure. Some observers see resemblances to the Christian fish symbol, others identify the graceful outline of a leaf, while some draw parallels to elements in the works of Umberto Boccioni, the Italian futurist artist. Could Kaleva Church also evoke “The blank signature”(1965) by René Magritte? Or perhaps evoke the ambiance of the science-fiction dystopian black comedy film *Brazil* (1985)²¹⁰(see figures 48,49,50). Even more, It could be a latent, yet recognizable, reminiscent of a dream lost to memory.

What makes these interpretations particularly intriguing is their fluidity and variability. They are never fully complete or fixed, but instead, they shift and evolve depending on the viewer's perspective and context. Yet, far from being a limitation, this inherent ambiguity is precisely what allows Pietilä's designs to resonate so deeply. Through this fluidity, Pietilä's architectural creations are able to express themselves fully, encompassing a myriad of meanings and

²⁰⁹ “Xieyi indicated the fact of drawing the spirit of the ‘Beings’”- Chine-Culture.com, accessed on April 10, 2024.

²¹⁰ Connah 1989: 183.

possibilities. They become dynamic spaces that invite exploration and interpretation, echoing the metaphorical intent that lies at the heart of Pietilä's design philosophy.

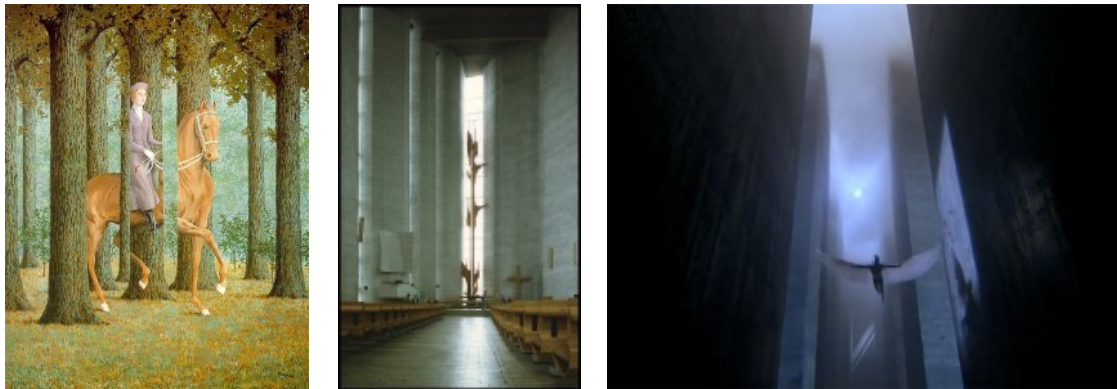


Fig. 48,49,50: *The blank signature* (1965) *Kaleva Church* (1966) interior, *Film scene from Brazil* (1985)

Pietilä's architecture is not merely a matter of functional design or formal expression; rather, it embodies a deliberate strategy wherein architectural fragments and heterogeneity remain unspoken yet integral to the overall narrative. This approach reflects a deep cultural engagement, existing at the periphery of mainstream architectural discourse while participating in its inner dialogue with modernity and the complexities of the era. The discourse surrounding Pietilä's work resists easy classification, defying the academy's attempts to label it within predetermined categories. Despite the proliferation of architectural theories—from deconstruction to neo-modernism—Pietilä's architecture eludes definitive interpretation, inviting a multiplicity of readings that challenge established norms and conventions.

*No one can deny that my creations are poetry; I would not claim that they are verse. I tried to force certain recalcitrant poems into a rhythm, and in so doing discovered that I possess the full power of word and image only in complete freedom, ie., at the expense of rhythm. My poems should be understood as careless handwritten notes. As regards the content, I let my instinct build up what my intellect is passively observing. My firm self-confidence depends on the fact that I have discovered my own dimensions. It behoves me not to make myself smaller than I am.*²¹¹

Pietilä's use his own restlessness re-write architecture and expression. The research-by-design resembling practice gradually carried out by Pietilä can be located at the point of junction between a language-of-form and a form-of-language or form of form . His approach to architectural design took into account both the expressive aspects of architectural forms and the communication possibilities of architectural language. Not only did he concentrate on the formal parts of design but he also dove into the symbolic and communicative components of design, investigating how architecture might communicate meaning and interact with its users. Pietilä's one-of-a-kind approach to study and design was defined by a dual perspective that combined the language-like expression of architectural forms with the form-like language of architectural communication. As Connah puts it: "Pietilä turning discursive practice into sketch, sketch into space, space into writing, and writing into architecture. Always observing, always detached, always risking the unsettled, the incomplete."²¹²

²¹¹ Connah 1989: 215.

²¹² Connah 1989: 46.

Pietilä's thoughtful initiative aims to establish a symbolic order, combining theory and experimental ideas since Finnish Pavilion in Brussels. The progression involves a transition from semi-modular concepts, where the logic of modular units undergoes further contortion. This evolution culminates in an architectural manifestation that functions as a choreography for a symbolic event. Within the realms of poetry and morphology, this progression is seen as a linguistic transformation over time. In this context, "symphony" encompasses diverse elements working collectively to form a cohesive whole, transcending the dramatic and avoiding forced linearity. Within the poetic realm, the audience contemplates the attribution of meaning to both the source and the entirety as an artistic fragment. Within the realm of poetic expression, both Tarkovsky's films and Pietilä's architecture captivate audiences with their profound resonance. Just as Tarkovsky's movies are imbued with poetic depth, so too are Pietilä's architectural creations, evoking a sense of lyrical beauty and profound meaning. If Pietilä's art were to transition to the screen, it wouldn't be surprising to witness a film exuding architectural elements reminiscent of Tarkovsky's profoundly poetic style.

4.3 Open Design in Pietilä's Buildings: Reinventing Architectural Aesthetics

Pietilä's openness in architecture is characterized by his willingness to challenge the established norms and conventions of the architectural world. He transcends the constraints of traditional liberalist architecture and dares to create what he calls "patchworks" that are devoid of central or original notions. His approach stands in stark contrast to the mainstream, and he doesn't shy away from being contrary to what is often considered "good taste"²¹³ in architecture. Pietilä's architectural philosophy is marked by a bold rejection of conformity. He does not take the modern or functionalist rules for granted, as Aalto does when refining them to align more closely with humanistic care perception. Instead, Pietilä asserts that architecture should "defend the right to be different," positioning his buildings in an absolute realm of "difference." In this space, his creations do not adhere to established norms but rather exist as unique entities in a "No-Man's-Land"²¹⁴ between opposing parties.

For Pietilä, the concept of striving for a "styleless"²¹⁵ or anti-label approach is not a mere stylistic choice; it serves a more profound purpose. It represents a deliberate attempt to foster a sense of aesthetic, conceptual, and architectural bewilderment. In his architectural philosophy, he challenges conventional notions and expectations, pushing the boundaries of creativity and exploration. Pietilä has expressed: "Control is a tired term in architectural design practice. It means a formal and functional integration of elements. I would call my own situation a fight against the established conventions of modern aesthetics. I CONTROL in such a way that those conventions do not empoison my design, allowing my design philosophy to achieve the CORRECT EXPRESSION OF FORM. Thus what I do appears as (an) anarchy when compared with normal architectural control."²¹⁶ In Pietilä's vision, places like Dipoli stand as exemplars of this novel approach. They are spaces devoid of preconceived, off-the-shelf unit areas, and there is no strict, one-size-fits-all design pattern dictating how the space should take form. Instead, the architecture is an ever-evolving, adaptive entity, in harmony with the

²¹³ Pietilä 1967: 69.

²¹⁴ Norri 1985a: 32.

²¹⁵ Pietilä 1967: 69.

²¹⁶ Connah 1989: 79.

environment and culture, which allows for a fluid, responsive interaction between the built and natural worlds.

In this imagined world, the objective is no longer merely to passively observe and remember a morphological occurrence through a casual glance. Pietilä compels people to confront the unfamiliar, to encounter something so unique and unconventional that it defies easy categorization or labeling. It is in these encounters with the strange and the unfamiliar that a sense of “defamiliarization”²¹⁷ emerges. This concept, involves seeing the world in a new light, stripped of preconceived notions and habitual expectations. It encourages one to question our surroundings, to look beyond the surface, and to discover the hidden depths and nuances within them. In embracing “defamiliarization,” Pietilä’s architecture goes beyond mere aesthetics; in doing so, he challenges the conventional boundaries of architecture and design, inviting one to see the world in a way that is both enlightening and transformative. Take Dipoli as example again, one is enveloped in an atmosphere that evokes a strangely familiar yet enigmatic sensation upon entering some spaces. The ambiance recalls cinematic experiences akin to series films like *Blade Runner* or *Dune*(see figures 51&52), where futuristic or timeless landscapes blur the lines between reality and imagination. The building itself exudes an aura reminiscent of a spaceship, as if beckoning people to embark on a journey into the unknown. This fusion of familiarity and otherworldliness creates a captivating allure, inviting visitors to explore the depths of Dipoli’s architectural narrative.

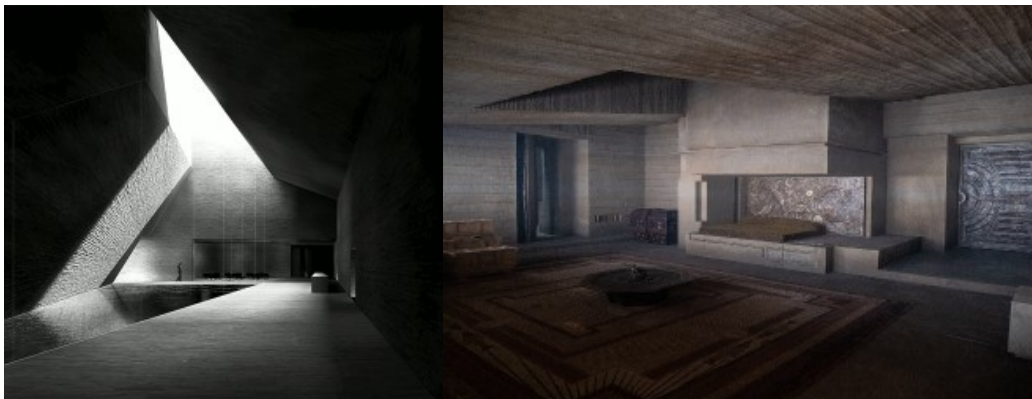


Fig. 51&52: Film scenes from *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) and *The Dune* (2021)

“As a designer myself, I feel my own field of creative ideas lies elsewhere. I need less categorical conceptuality in my design approach. Those true design ideas come from the in-between zone between abstract and concrete things. There is a broad domain of creative metamorphosis in architecture still as yet unexploited by the pioneer generation or by ourselves. The future, and any progress it holds, lies in that domain.”²¹⁸ The unique architectural openness, characteristic of Pietilä’s work, is imbued with a profound sense of playfulness. It deviates from the deliberate arrangement of architectural elements often found in rational post-modernism. Instead, Pietilä allows these elements to collide in unexpected and unconventional ways, resulting in a truly distinctive architectural experience. This approach transcends the confines of traditional notions of alienation and empathy, offering something genuinely exceptional. It celebrates the unfamiliar and harnesses it as a vehicle for expressing remarkable innovation. Rather than adhering to a rigid division

²¹⁷ “Defamiliarization or ostranenie is the artistic technique of presenting to audiences common things in an unfamiliar or strange way so they could gain new perspectives and see the world differently. According to the Russian formalists who coined the term, it is the central concept of art and poetry.”- *Wikipedia*, accessed on April 9, 2024

²¹⁸ Pietilä 1982: 26.

between humans and architecture, Pietilä invites one to revel in the *Dasein*, the unique way of being that emerges from the interaction between people and the built environment. He creates this dream world that has no real substance, no subjects and objects,²¹⁹ reminiscent of Heidegger's notion of “pregnant structures.”

For Pietilä, both his sketch(see figure 53) and design inhabit this realm of openness. The envisioned building does not merely occupy physical space but instead becomes a part of a continuous open space, seamlessly connecting boundless external content with the confined and controlled internal content. Pietilä's architecture embodies the intricate interplay between openness and closure, this architectural approach confronts this inherent tension head-on, offering a unique form of architecture that primarily serves as a means of expression. It boldly proposes functionality without the constraints of a fixed form, demanding more from the very essence of form itself. In Pietilä's vision, form becomes not just a structural element but a versatile tool and a dynamic medium of expression, transcending the traditional boundaries that have defined architectural practice.

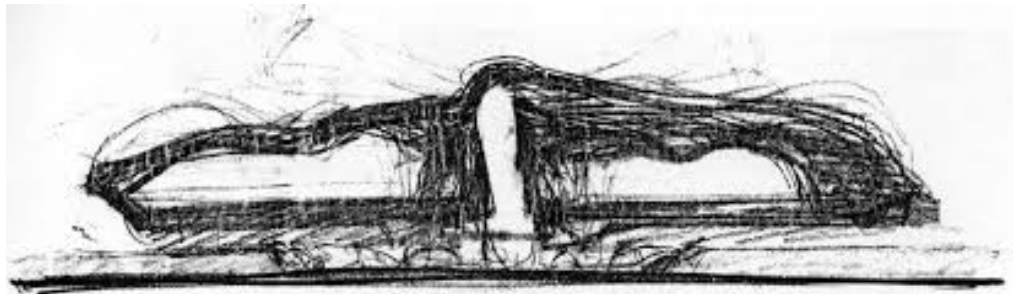


Fig. 53: Monte Carlo Multi Purpose Centre. Competition project 1969

My colleagues say that I am not communicating in the way that common people could understand, or that my image is language only for myself having not much to do with current practice. My answer to the critics is that my subject is so unpopular because visual design is wrongly identified with architectural aesthetics. When one is trying to conceive the wider context than the usual functional and technological forms of physical environments the subject is hard to discuss even in professional circles.²²⁰

Pietilä's design philosophy transcends conventional boundaries, venturing far beyond the familiar concepts of “defamiliarization” or “alienation”²²¹. His architectural works are not content with merely distancing one from existing forms, nor are they designed for immediate, empathetic comprehension. Instead, they embark on a mission to challenge the traditional avenues of perception and understanding, that oftenly these common architectural creations resist memorability through superficial observation. In this context, Pietilä's architectural openness finds its roots in a radical form of deconstruction and abstraction. Transposing this assessment to Pietilä's hypothetical pursuit as a painter, his oeuvre evokes a resonance reminiscent of the aesthetic ethos embodied by Francis Bacon(see figure 54). It boldly disrupts the established norms of “good taste” by presenting an unconventional style that staunchly resists cultural conformity. He encouraging viewers to engage in a more profound dialogue with the built environment. Paradoxically, this unorthodox approach possesses the potential to become a source of admiration for those with discerning taste, precisely because

²¹⁹ Norberg-Schulz 1988: 14.

²²⁰ Connah 1989: 215.

²²¹ Quantrill 1988: 158. Quantrill refers to Pietilä's own description of the Tampere city library metso, as a “spaceship”.

it defies the status quo and challenges our preconceived notions of what architecture should be.



Fig. 54: Francis Bacon. *Head I* (1948)

*Language has many spatial qualities equivalent to nature, a veritable architectural topology. For many years I have composed imaginary topological relations with Finnish using its suffixes as determinants for location. Original and sensitive forms can be achieved. Some such exercises exist wholly in the verbal sense and cannot be imagined spatially.*²²²

Finnish, as a synthetic language, diverges from the prepositional reliance observed in many linguistic systems. Instead, it employs direct suffixation onto the modified words to convey relational meanings. For instance, the English phrase “in the house” finds its counterpart in Finnish as “talo-ssa,” where the suffix “-ssa” denotes the locative case. The intricacies of prepositional usage often present comparable complexities across linguistic contexts. Secondly, the process of suffix attachment entails potential alterations in the base word, further complicating mastery. Just as Finnish accommodates diverse sentence structures and situational nuances through its open-ended nature, Pietilä’s philosophical stance embraces a similar ethos of receptivity to change and multiplicity of perspectives. Despite Pietilä’s deep initial roots in Finland, steeped in its language and culture, he set out on a departure long ago. Pietilä’s approach distinctly diverges from the established norms of Finnish architectural tradition, his identity deeply Finnish yet somehow not, embodying a notable paradoxical essence reminiscent of a wandering enigma.

“Language is the house of Being. In its home, man dwells,”²²³ Heidegger elucidates the profound role of language in human existence. This metaphorical expression posits that language serves not merely as a tool for communication but as the very framework through which we understand and experience existence itself. Herein lies the suggestion that language provides a dwelling place for the essence of “Being,” shaping our perceptions and interactions with the world. Pietilä’s architectural language evoke an ongoing monologue, akin to the narrative style found in contemporary poetic undertakings within architecture, where the architecture itself assumes the role of storyteller. Characterized by a self-reflective, poetic, anagrammatical, and metaphorical tone. Pietilä’s approach encompasses a broad spectrum of subjects ranging from morphology to semantics, from metaphysics to mathematics, and from epistemology to hermeneutics. Furthermore, his writing style frequently involves transitions between concepts, interspersed with puns and meta-irony, serving to express intricate and multifaceted ideas.

Given this premise, the author endeavors to construct a diagram aimed at interpreting and comprehending Pietilä (see figure 55). The spiral diagram originates from the foundational core elements, namely language and nature, which progress in parallel. The inner (red) text

²²² Pietilä n.d./2023 : 91.

²²³ Heidegger 1998: 239.

line commences from language as its root, extending towards an open design approach. Concurrently, the outer (black) text line, symbolizing Pietilä's methodological tool, emanates from nature. Both lines, inner and outer, demonstrate mutual interdependence as they evolve in a spiral trajectory. Simultaneously, the inner line serves as the outer line, existing in the "there between," representing the concept of "pregnant structures." This symbiotic growth pattern is emblematic of a perpetual spiral and the perception of Pietilä by individuals is contingent upon their placement within Pietilä's comprehensive "being" map. One must exercise caution against prematurely claiming a comprehensive understanding of Pietilä's work, recognizing the inherent difficulty in doing so. The profound intricacies embedded within his architectural endeavors may unfold gradually over time, necessitating a sustained commitment to exploration and appreciation.

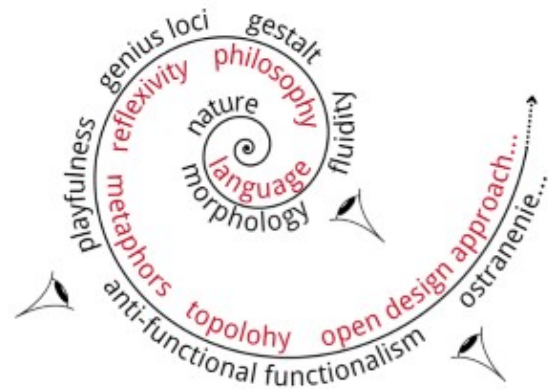


Fig. 55: Pietilä's Spiral

5. Conclusion

Philosopher's stone to Pietilä serves as an ideal metaphor for understanding and embodying the principles of unity and completeness in architectural design philosophy,²²⁴ at the very core of Pietilä's it lies the profound concept of immanent form. Emotion in architecture to Pietilä was inseparable from the phenomenology of Heidegger's clearing.²²⁵ An approach that defies the conventional and embraces the gap between rational and non-rational, between functional and poetic, between reality and surreality. In this context, immanence can be construed as the relentless pursuit of a fitting and authentic architectural form. It's a form that transcends mere aesthetics, delving deep into the realms of inner logic and purpose. Pietilä's architecture, therefore, isn't a superficial arrangement of spaces and materials; it's a manifestation of a profound understanding of the inherent essence of a design, a form that inherently makes sense in its specific context. His own way of the "form follows approach!"²²⁶

In his architectural philosophy, Pietilä adopts an openness approach, emphasizing experientiality and integration with the surrounding environment. Just as phenomenology seeks to comprehend consciousness through examination of fundamental aspects of human experience, Pietilä's architectural philosophy endeavors to create spaces that resonate with the lived experience of occupants. Analogous to phenomenology's method of commencing with first-person introspection, his approach initiates with an understanding of human experience within the built environment. By setting aside preconceived notions and embracing the subjective experience of space, Pietilä aims to uncover the inherent structural features of architecture as they relate to human perception and interaction. His openness approach seeks to bridge the gap between architectural theory and practice, balancing artistic expression with functional considerations. By embracing the richness of human experience and consciousness in architectural design, Pietilä's approach resonates with the principles of phenomenology, offering a holistic understanding of architecture that transcends mere form and function.

Pietilä's approach to architecture was not confined to the physical realm, it encompassed a profound understanding of language and culture. His linguistic explorations mirrored his architectural expression, challenging conventions and inviting viewers to engage with architecture as a narrative medium. Pietilä's concept of nature "continues as architecture" reflects his deep Nordic roots, blurring the boundary between nature and the building. This integration achieves a sensory resemblance without literal imitation, embodying a profound sense of orientation and identification with the environment. Pietilä's design philosophy extended beyond physical form to encompass a dynamic interplay between openness and closure, challenging traditional boundaries and demanding more from the essence of architectural form itself. His architecture embodied versatility and dynamism, transcending rigid definitions and inviting continual reinterpretation. Overall, Pietilä's openness philosophy has tangible manifestations in his architectural creations, where form and function seamlessly intertwine to create spaces that are both functional and poetic. His legacy continues to inspire individual to push the boundaries of conventional thinking and embrace the inherent complexity of architectural design.

²²⁴ Pietilä 1982:24.

²²⁵ Connah 2004:17.

²²⁶ Quantrill 1988: 66.

Epilogue

At the conclusion of the interview conducted by the author in Helsinki in August 2023, the discussion turned to the influence of Pietilä's work on subsequent generations of architects and architectural discourse. Reflecting on Pietilä's impact on later architects and architectural discourse, it becomes apparent that his contributions during his era exhibited a paradoxical quality. While he undeniably challenged prevailing architectural norms and contributed to broader questioning within architectural discourse, his ideas often encountered resistance and were seen as unconventional, even non-architectural, by many within Finland. While his work garners increasing recognition internationally, particularly within academic and architectural research circles, it remains somewhat underappreciated in his native country. Nonetheless, Pietilä maintained connections to international intellectual discourses, drawing inspiration from broader architectural traditions and philosophies. When assessing Pietilä's enduring impact on subsequent generations, it becomes imperative to distinguish between his influence within Finland and abroad.

There are indications that younger Finnish architects are beginning to recognize Pietilä's work, albeit without a comprehensive grasp of its theoretical underpinnings. Pietilä's influence on later architects lies in the intuitive connections they establish with his work, despite lacking a profound understanding of his theoretical discourse. They are drawn to the expressive and innovative aspects of Pietilä's designs, especially those seamlessly integrated with their surroundings. Projects like "Kaleva Church," "Finnish Embassy in New Delhi," and "Dipoli" exemplify his adeptness at shaping architecture within its landscape, inspiring a new generation of architects to explore similar approaches. However, for Pietilä's influence to permeate future architectural discourse, a reevaluation of how his architectural philosophy is comprehended and imparted within Finland is imperative. Currently, there persists a dearth of deep understanding and acknowledgment of his architectural significance within the domestic architectural community. Consequently, researchers and educators shall approach Pietilä's work with fresh insights and a willingness to probe the theoretical issues he addressed.

In 1982 Reima Pietilä was awarded with the highest honorary title an artist can receive in Finland, the title of Academician of Art and membership of the Finnish Academy. In the 1980s, the Pietiläs returned to their organic design roots, incorporating sophisticated materials and intricate details into their projects. Notable projects from this period include the Tampere Main Library, and the iconic Mäntyniemi, the official residence of the President of Finland which is also his last project. On August 25, 1993, coinciding with Pietilä's 70th birthday, he lapsed into unconsciousness and subsequently departed from this world on the following day. Aalto University hosted the Reima Pietilä 100 seminar on August 25, 2023. The purpose of the event was to delve into different dimensions of Pietilä's life's work, including his creative process, international networks, and unrealized projects²²⁷. Undoubtedly, his profound impact on architecture continues to resonate. As one reflects on Pietilä's legacy, they are confronted with a profound question: What constitutes architectural discourse? His example challenges observers to move beyond mere agreement to embrace critical inquiry and self-

²²⁷ The presentations of the seminar have been published as a book: Kaisa Broner-Bauer and Marja-Riitta Norri (eds): *Sanastelu, luonnostelu, kuvittelu. Reima Pietilä ja arkkitehtuurin luova prosessi / Verbal Sketching, Image Sketching, Imagination. Reima Pietilä and the Creative Process of Architecture* (2023). Helsinki: OKU Publishing & Museum of Finnish Architecture.

reflection. In Pietilä, a model of relentless curiosity is found, forever probing the boundaries of possibility.



*Fig. 56: Reima Pietilä on his 60th birthday, trying out a present from the office – a bicycle.
Photo by Connah's and Pietilä's archives*

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Fig. 29: *Dipoli* (1966) sketch, image from Quantrill 1985, *Reima Pietilä. Architecture, Context and Modernism, Dipoli*

Fig. 30: *Dipoli* (1966) interior, photo by Tuomas Uusheimo, Dipoli - Aalto University Main Building / ALA Architects, accessed in March 2024, n.d. [image online], web page: <https://www.archdaily.com/884666/dipoli-aalto-university-main-building-ala-architects>

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