

*edited by*

Francesco Casalbordino, Fabiola Cristalli, Francesca Di Fusco, Elvira De Felice,  
Maria Fierro, Mario Galterisi, Sara Riccardi, Giovanna Spinelli

# RIVELAZIONI



Confinamenti →therightSpace← 05

**Research Tools and Methods  
for Exploring the Denied and Invisible Spaces  
of Contemporary Society**

*Book of abstracts of Rivelazioni International Conference*

CRATÈRA

Confinamenti →therightSpace← 05

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and Invisible Spaces of Contemporary Society

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*Rivelazioni International Conference*

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University of Naples Federico II

Department of Architecture

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## The Inversion of the Subject and the Search for Identity

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*keywords: architecture and mental health, threshold, care, memory, and narration*

“Both the doctor and the architect must provide a response that meets the needs of the oppressed rather than those of the dominant logic [...] one emerges from the enclosed place in which man could only be an object, while man, on the contrary, expresses himself as a subject.” With these words, Franco Basaglia establishes a radical paradigm shift: the person affected by psychological distress is no longer the object of treatment, but the active subject of their own care.

This reversal is also reflected in psychiatric architecture, which, starting from the 1950s, progressively abandons the institutional logic to explore new spatial modalities that foster expression, dignity, and relationships. The environment thus takes on an essential therapeutic role, influencing physical, psychological, and social well-being. Architects and psychiatrists begin to design flexible and non-hierarchical spaces that adapt to the needs of the individual.

However, architecture, by its very nature, is more rigid than care practices, risks reproducing exclusionary forms if not accompanied by a profound change in the doctor-patient relationship. In recent decades, neuroscience and architecture have initiated a dialogue in which approaches such as Healing Environment and Evidence-Based Design demonstrate the positive impact of natural light, privacy, nature, aesthetics, and orientation on the patient’s experience, proving that space can itself be “care” when conceived as a sensory and social experience.

It is within this framework that the author’s doctoral research is situated, aiming to reformulate the dialogue between care, memory, and the narration of mental health through the evolution of architectural spaces. Conducted with an interdisciplinary approach, the study combined theoretical analysis and field observation, exploring the educational, symbolic, and inclusive value of spaces of care. In particular, emphasis is placed on the concept of the “threshold” as a relational space, capable of connecting separate worlds and generating transitions between exclusion and belonging, between illness and participation. From this perspective, architecture becomes an active tool in the therapeutic and social process, restoring to the subject the possibility of inhabiting a space in which they can recognize themselves.

## Persistent Rhetorics and Possible Narratives in the Design of Spaces for “Extraordinary People”

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*keywords: disability, neurodivergence, residential spaces*

The UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has expressed deep concern about “the trend towards re-institutionalization of persons with disabilities and the lack of reallocating resources from residential institutions to promoting and ensuring access to independent living within the community” (2016).

The doctoral thesis *Atypical, Self-determined, Interdependent People. Possible Housing Options for Extraordinary People* investigates the dilemma between the ideal of autonomy and the inherent tension towards interdependence in the design of living environments for neurodivergent people, including conditions such as autism, Alzheimer’s disease, and intellectual impairments. The research examines historical, modern, and contemporary places in which persons with disabilities have been contained, assisted, or forced to dwell. In these “invisible asylums” architecture embodies educational and communal ideologies for the so-called “unproductive”. The proposal is to include within the “geographies of marginalization” the numerous “forced stays” (Tarantino 2024) imposed on many “extraordinary people”. It further calls for renewed engagement of design disciplines, recognizing architecture’s role in shaping spaces and narratives that challenge persistent rhetorics and open new possibilities. An *Inventory of Projects* provides a historical and cross-national mapping of architectures for the collective dwelling of persons with intellectual disabilities. An *Inventory of Words* juxtaposes contemporary terms with older expressions such as “institute” or “feeble-minded”, sometimes erased only from language but not from practice. Words and projects together underscore the persistent scarcity of vocabulary to describe, without normalizing, diverse subjectivities, and a corresponding poverty of spaces capable of welcoming, without negating, the multiple ways of being and inhabiting. The image documents, by contrast, an invention of possibilities: the project SON Cascina San Carlo in Milan, designed by Stefano Tropea (b22 architettura) with Carlo Venegoni.

This volume collects abstracts of contributions presented at the international conference “RIVELAZIONI. Research Tools and Methods for Exploring the Denied and Invisible Spaces of Contemporary Society”, organized in October 2025 by the RiSP (FRA 2022) research group of the Department of Architecture at the University of Naples Federico II. RIVELAZIONI brought together scholars from diverse fields – architecture, urban planning, sociology, geography, art, law, postcolonial and environmental studies – to reflect on the methods and tools capable of making these places visible, comprehensible, and transformable. Through theoretical contributions, design experiments, and research practices, the book composes a mosaic of perspectives on spatial justice and the relationships between space, power, and rights. Each abstract is a small revelation, a fragment of the world that unlocks new possibilities for knowledge and transformation.

RIVELAZIONI is both an investigation and a political gesture: an invitation to investigate the interstices of the visible, to reconsider the role of design as a critical tool, and to restore space, voice, and form to what contemporary reality tends to hide.

