

#12 Spring 2023
Guest-curated by Simona Chiodo

Rosenberg & Sellier

ARDETH #12 (Spring 2023) **ISSN 2532-6457**

Executive Director
Ilaria Valente

Editorial Board
Francesca Frassoldati (editor in chief); Margherita Antolini (editorial secretary); Alessandro Armando; Caterina Barioglio; Daniele Campobenedetto (journal manager); Cassandra Cozza; Will Davis; Daniele Frediani; Lidia Gasperoni; Saskia Gribling (reviews editor); Caterina Padoa Schioppa; Aurora Riviezzo (editorial secretary).

Advisory Board
Ash Amin; Tiziana Andina; Pepe Barbieri; Petar Bojanić; Alessandra Capuano; Pierre Chabard; Marco Cremaschi; Marco Dugato; Giovanni Durbiano; Franco Farinelli; Maurizio Ferraris; Hélène Frichot; Gevork Hartoonian; Felipe Hernandez; Carlo Manzo; Carlo Olmo; Igor Marjanovic; Rahul Mehrotra; Juan Manuel Palerm Salazar; Gabriele Pasqui; Piero Ostilio Rossi; Andrea Sciascia; Felicity D. Scott; Jeremy Till; Stephan Trüby; Ilaria Valente; Albena Yaneva; Zhang Li.

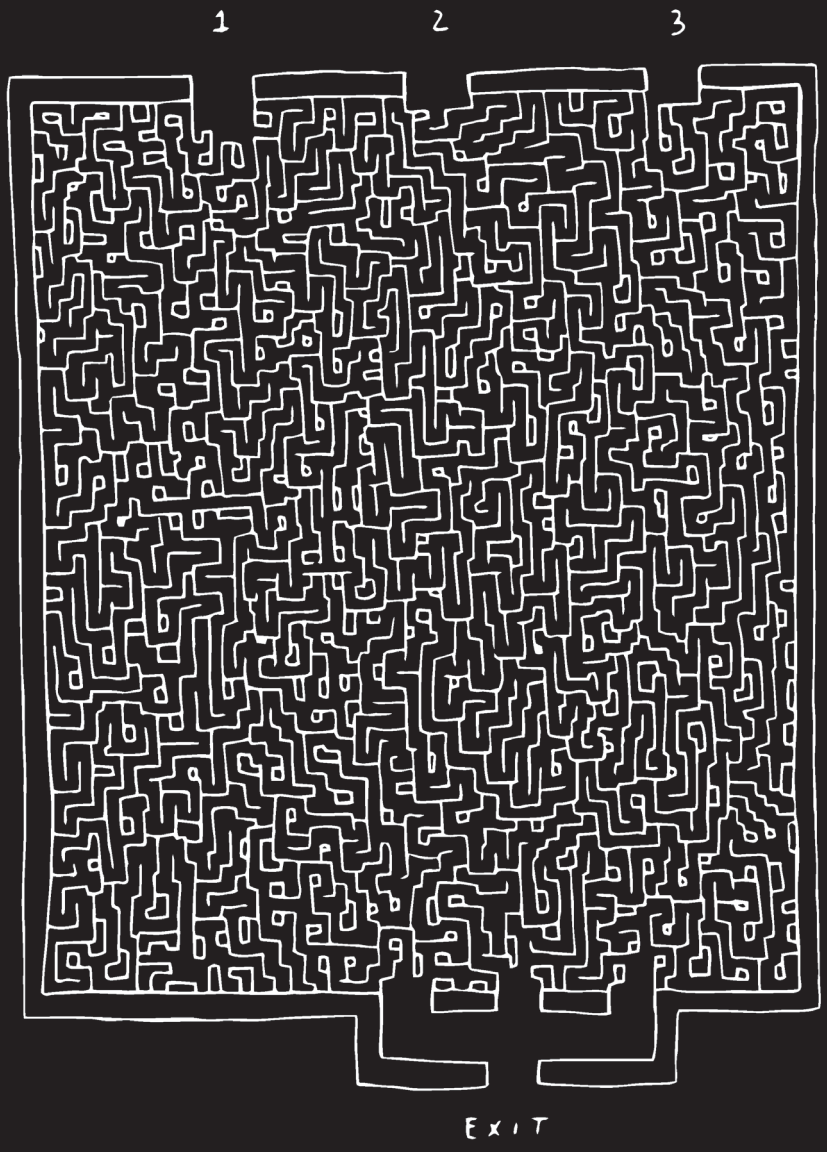
Production
Politecnico di Milano, DAStU (Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani)
Politecnico di Torino, DAD (Dipartimento di Architettura e Design)
Università IUAV di Venezia, DCP (Dipartimento di Culture del Progetto)
Università di Roma La Sapienza, DiAP (Dipartimento di Architettura e Progetto)

Contacts

For any question regarding submissions to Ardeth or reviews, please write to redazione@ardeth.eu

For any further question, please write to info@ardeth.eu

Articles and calls for papers are available on www.ardeth.eu


1
2
3
EXIT

Cover image
Maze, drawing by © Francesco Monaca

Ardeth #12 contents

5 **Note from the Director**
Ilaria Valente

9 **The Order of Keys**
The Editorial Board of "Ardeth"

27 **The Use and Abuse of Keywords**
Simona Chiodo

35 **In Other Words. Observations on the Prescriptive Role of Sustainable Development Buzzwords in Architectural Discourse and Practice**
Enrico Chinellato, Niccolò Di Virgilio

51 ***Purché ci sia*. Riflessioni su bellezza e architettura nel terzo millennio**
Maria Clara Ghia

67 **The Beauty, Inside. On Architecture, the Body, and Stability**
Federico De Matteis

83 **The Aesthetic Dimensions of Sustainability in Design Culture. Insights from Four Case Studies**
Gerardo Semprebon

101 **On Greenhouses and the Making of Atmospheres**
Stamatina Kousidi

121 **A chi spetta un buon abitare?**
Giuseppina Scavuzzo

139 **Cosa significa *insieme*? Incontri tra STS e architettura**
Micol Rispoli

155 ***The Emperor Has No Clothes*. Ovvero, come il NEB, cercando di superarla, riveli la difficile relazione tra sostenibilità e bellezza**
Marco Bovati

167 **In No Time. Temporal Foundations of the Concept of Competency**
Snežana Vesnić, Marko Ristić, Petar Bojanić

177 **Reviews**

Note from the Director
Nota della direttrice

Ilaria Valente

Issue 12 of “Ardeth” focuses on the three keywords “beautiful, sustainable, together” offered by the New European Bauhaus initiative, which was unveiled in September 2020 by President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen.
The objectives of “Ardeth” are reflected in this decision in some significant ways. Beginning with its second issue, “Ardeth” headed each publication with words that indicated – one at a time – debatable subjects and significant aspects to comprehend the practises of contemporary architecture projects. With Issue 12, there is a pause for reflection and a fresh start. In actuality, highlighting reoccurring keywords reflects the paradigmatic shift of recent years.
The project’s horizon has recently shifted onto some problematic nodes as a result of the climatic and environmental emergency and the pause in our lives caused by the pandemic emergency. These problematic nodes are evoked by recurrent words in the project’s narrative, as well as those of research, politics, and institutions: sustainability, transition, circularity, biodiversity, accessibility, poverty, diversity, etc. The United Nations Sustainable Development Agenda,

Affiliation:
Politecnico di Milano, Dipartimento di Architettura e Studi Urbani

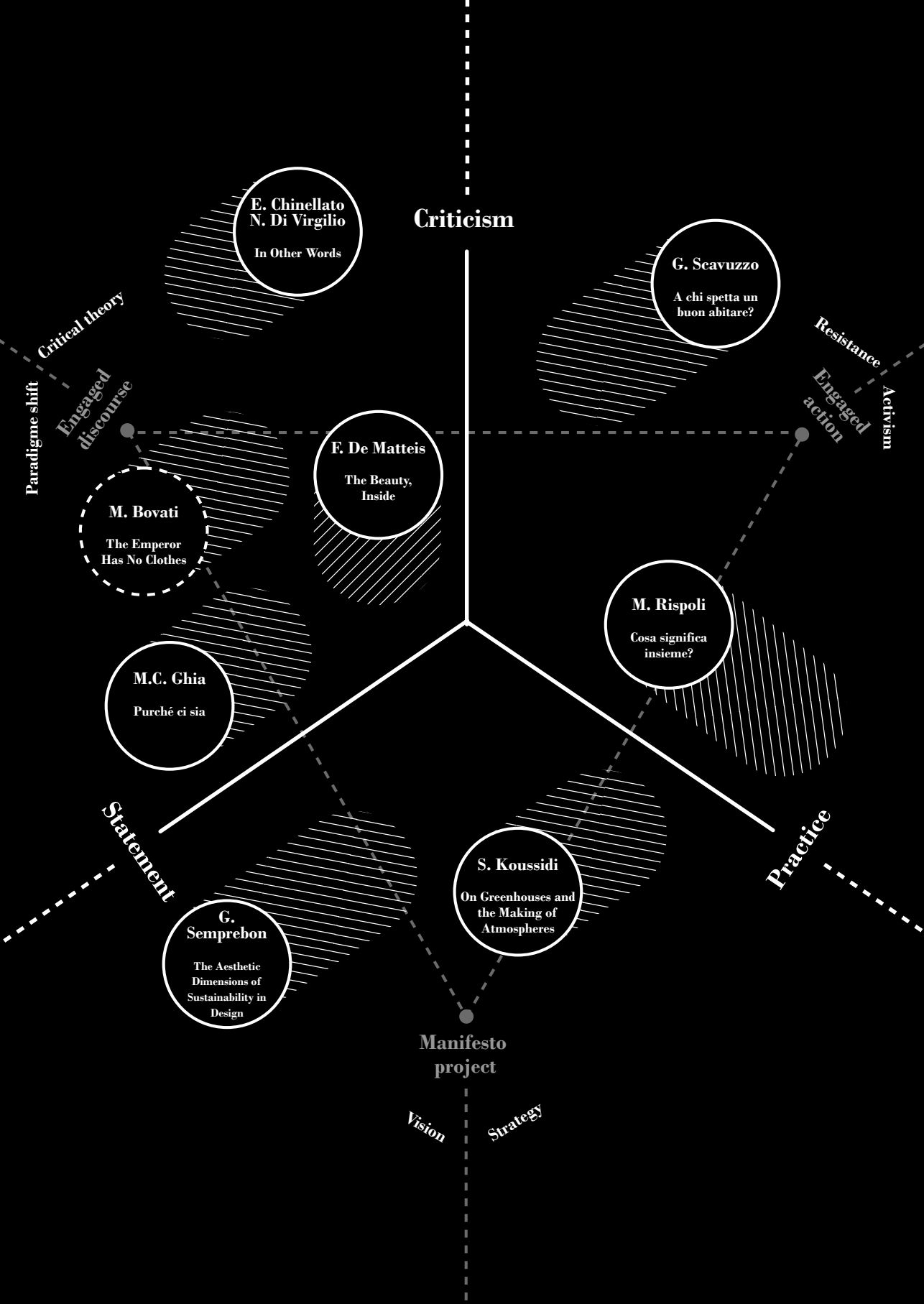
Contacts:
ilaria [dot] valente [at] polimi [dot] it

ARDETH #12

which was distilled into the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, corresponds to where these terms first find their concreteness in political agendas and protocols.
On the one hand, the present batch of recurring and emerging keywords serves as the foundation for design action; on the other hand, keywords have a significant capacity for serving as operational cues – they are "keys" in this sense.
The goal of the "Ardeth" issues that will follow this issue 12 is to centre on pressing issues that, as Simona Chiodo rightly highlights in her editorial, demand the forward-looking thinking that characterizes project design. The knowledge of the significance that the built environment's changes have played and will play in the process of the ecological, digital, and energy transition appears to be a key component of the New European Bauhaus initiative's conceptualization. The three keywords "beautiful," "sustainable," and "together" thus touch on three areas that, in their intentions, tend to engage (European) citizens in the future sharing of a better built environment ("more beautiful," "more sustainable," and "more welcoming") and present an intriguing challenge to the design disciplines.
Several authors explored the three terms put out by the NEB by drawing comparisons with the foundational concepts of the discipline of architecture, beginning with the Vitruvian triad, as is well articulated in the editorial board's introduction.
Following this line of inquiry, the next issue of "Ardeth" will focus on the subject of "Energy Landscapes" or more precisely, the "spatiality of energy transition."
The objective, in keeping with "Ardeth" tradition, is to promote open international conversations and engage with other disciplines that are essential for fostering both the theory and practice of architectural design.
The series I will be working on as director begins with Issue 12. I thank the Editorial Board for the significant work they have done and will continue to do, as well as the Scientific Committee, for their assistance with this project. My sincere gratitude is extended to Carlo Magnani, who has led "Ardeth" throughout its development and has provided our community with considerable opportunities for reflection, debate, and design research.

Il numero 12 di "Ardeth" affronta un ambito di impostazione, quello delle parole chiave, declinandolo sulla triade "beautiful, sustainable, together" proposta dall'iniziativa europea New European Bauhaus, lanciata dalla Presidente della Commissione Europea Ursula von der Leyen nel settembre 2020.
Questa scelta corrisponde ad alcune principali intenzioni, in linea con gli obiettivi di "Ardeth". A partire dal suo secondo numero, "Ardeth" ha tito-

lato le sue uscite tramite parole che di volta in volta indicavano *temi* di discussione, chiavi di lettura della pratica del progetto contemporaneo. Il numero 12 propone una pausa di riflessione e di apertura: l'emergere di parole chiave ricorrenti, oggi, corrisponde alla mutazione paradigmatica che sta prendendo forma in questi ultimi anni.
L'emergenza climatica, ambientale, lo iato aperto nelle nostre vite dall'emergenza pandemica hanno spostato l'orizzonte del progetto su alcuni nodi problematici, evocati da parole ricorrenti nella narrativa del progetto, della ricerca, della politica, delle istituzioni: sostenibilità, transizione, circolarità, biodiversità, accessibilità, povertà, diversità, ecc. Si tratta di termini che trovano la loro concretezza nei protocolli e nelle agende politiche, prima fra tutte la Sustainable Development Agenda delle Nazioni Unite tradotta nei 17 Sustainable Development Goals.
Le parole chiave oggi emergenti e ricorrenti costituiscono, da un lato, lo sfondo di riferimento dell'agire progettuale, dall'altro contengono una sostanziale potenzialità di indirizzo operativo, sono, appunto, "chiavi".
Nella serie che ha inizio con il numero 12, si intende orientare la riflessione sui temi urgenti che, come bene sottolinea Simona Chiodo nel suo editoriale, necessitano e reclamano progettualità.
Ciò che appare significativo nella proposta dell'iniziativa New European Bauhaus è la comprensione dell'importanza che hanno rivestito e rivestiranno le trasformazioni dell'ambiente costruito nel processo di transizione ecologica, digitale, energetica. Dunque, le tre parole chiave, beautiful, sustainable, together, toccano tre ambiti che, nell'intenzione, tendono a coinvolgere i cittadini (europei) nella futura condivisione di un ambiente costruito migliore: più bello, più sostenibile, più accogliente e lanciano un interessante guanto di sfida alle discipline del progetto.
Come è ben descritto nell'introduzione della redazione, gli autori hanno scandagliato i tre termini proposti dal NEB impostando un confronto con i fondamenti della disciplina dell'architettura, a partire dalla triade vitruviana.
Per proseguire lungo questa linea di approfondimento, il prossimo numero di "Ardeth" affronterà il tema "Paesaggi dell'energia", ovvero della "spazialità della transizione energetica".
Come è nella tradizione di "Ardeth", si vuole sempre più incentivare il dialogo aperto a livello internazionale e il confronto con altri ambiti disciplinari, necessari a nutrire positivamente la teoria e la pratica del progetto di architettura.
Il numero 12 apre la serie a cui lavorerò, come direttrice, insieme alla Redazione, che ringrazio per l'importante lavoro che ha svolto e che svolgerà, così come il Comitato Scientifico. Un ringraziamento sentito va a Carlo Magnani che ha diretto "Ardeth" dalla sua fondazione ad oggi, aprendo alla nostra comunità significativi terreni di riflessione, confronto e ricerca progettuale.


Criticism
E. Chinellato
N. Di Virgilio
In Other Words
G. Scavuzzo
A chi spetta un buon abitare?
Critical theory
Resistance
Paradigme shift
Engaged discourse
Engaged action
Activism
F. De Matteis
The Beauty, Inside
M. Bovati
The Emperor Has No Clothes
M. Rispoli
Cosa significa insieme?
M.C. Ghia
Purché ci sia
Statement
Practice
S. Koussidi
On Greenhouses and the Making of Atmospheres
G. Semprebon
The Aesthetic Dimensions of Sustainability in Design
Manifesto project
Vision
Strategy

The Order of Keys
Le parole e le chiavi

The Editorial Board of "Ardeth"

Contacts:
redazione [at] ardeth [dot] eu

DOI:
10.17454/ARDETH12.01

ARDETH #12

The issue of "Ardeth" devoted to keywords takes its cue from the three terms constituting the subtitle of a notable European Commission initiative, the New European Bauhaus (NEB). On one hand, this initial framework enables us to encompass the discourse on "keywords" within a specific contemporary context. On the other hand, it facilitates broader reflections on the use of keywords, watchwords, or buzzwords in the realm of architectural design, understood both as a practical discipline and as a domain of cultural debate.

The terms "keyword" and "*mot-clé*" have relatively recent origins, tracing back to the realm of lexicological studies (Matoré, 1953; Williams, 1958). Matoré introduced "*mot-clé*" and "*mot-témoigne*" to denote two distinct levels of representativeness of specific words within a language. In particular, "*mots-clés*" were believed to possess the utmost capacity to succinctly express "the epoch studied… a [way of] being, a feeling, an idea, which live to the extent that society recognises in them its ideal" (Matoré, 1953: 68).

A group of linguists and literary scholars from institutions such as Cambridge and Pittsburgh University

have launched the Keywords Project in 2007 (The Keywords Project, 2011; McCabe, Yanacek, 2018), inspired by the work of Raymond Williams and his book *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976). In introducing their initiative, the authors note that the *Oxford English Dictionary* delineates two fundamental meanings for the term "keyword:" [1] "a word serving as a key to a cipher or the like ('The key-word of these inscriptions'); [2] a word or thing that is of great importance or significance; spec. in information-retrieval systems, any informative word in the title or text of a document, etc., chosen as indicating the main content of the document" (The Keywords Project, 2011).

Starting from this formal definition, the shift in focus onto "key" or "word" engenders distinct implications. Indeed, the "KEY-word" would bear the quality of a mechanism – an entity capable of autonomous functioning, akin to a key, independently from the interpretation bestowed upon it or its representation. On the contrary, the key-WORD would embody the concentration of an array of collective representations or even a historically defined "epoch." In the former scenario, a matter of "general technology" arises, quantifiable through frequencies, occurrences, and repetitions within institutional systems, procedures, formalised archival indexing, and scientific constructs. In the latter, a semantic or hermeneutic problem emerges, whose relational validity and efficacy is contingent upon the discursive domain in which the word is employed.

Taking a closer look at the set of initiatives and apparatuses that make up the NEB initiative, we can attempt to define the performativity, in terms of effectiveness and transformative impact, of the three key words: "beautiful," "sustainable" and "together." This entails understanding whether these terms function as "keys," shaping processes and operational mechanisms, or as "words," representing a spectrum of values and principles. An analysis of the European Commission's guidelines promptly reveals distinct and somewhat interdependent roles for these three terms: "Sustainability is achievable only through collective effort by many actors […]. On the individual level, sustainability depends critically on compassion, empathy, unity, creativity, and the ability to shift paradigms. People will embrace or drive change when they see it. […] The quality of our living environments is essential, and art and culture play a key role in improving it."

The NEB project aligns with the European Green Deal introduced in 2019, which takes its cue from the UN's 17 Sustainable Development Goals put forth four years earlier. Within this framework, "sustainable" represents the end, while the "collective endeavour" ("together") signifies the means. The strategy underpinning this approach involves mobilising individuals to cultivate sentiments of "compassion, empathy, unity, creativity," and the "ability to shift paradigms." This ethical mobilisation finds its tangible expression through initiatives related to "art and culture" (beautiful). In essence, the document outlines a green shift achieved through societal and cultural mobilisation: "The transition is just as much

a cultural and a social transition as a green one: this is the *key idea* that the New European Bauhaus wants to explore" (NEB, 2022: 3).
Is the evidence of the *key idea* implemented through *key words*? Here, the three words explicitly demonstrate their dual performativity. On one hand, they serve as semantic anchors that unify the fundamental principles and values underlying the operation. On the other hand, they are structured as focal points within a comprehensive evaluation framework. The Compass takes on a tangible form as it transforms into a diagram where Beautiful, Sustainable, and Together become three distinct "values," forming concentric spheres with varying degrees of intensity. These spheres are separated by three axes, referred to as "working principles:" Participatory process (between Together and Sustainable), Multi-level engagement (between Beautiful and Sustainable), and Transdisciplinary approach (between Together and Beautiful). Each of these principles is further nuanced across three levels. This results in a sophisticated multi-criteria analysis tool, wherein each of the three values and principles can be assigned a weight on a scale from 1 to 3. Thus, the Compass meticulously examines each project through a diagram that quantifies its effectiveness for each "value" – sustainable, beautiful, and together – along with the "principles" of Participatory process, Multi-level engagement, and Transdisciplinary approach. The outcome is a tri-lobed figure that visually illustrates how the project aligns with the core "key ideas" of the NEB initiative.
Despite their explicit articulation within the document, the Compass figure operatively blends criteria labelled as "values" and those labelled as "principles." However, what's interesting to us is how our three keywords seamlessly integrate into a technological-institutional apparatus, even transcending their meanings. The question that arises is: how do these two dimensions, the technological and the discursive, relate to each other? In fact, the technological – or better, socio-technological – approach to comprehending keywords is not necessarily less sophisticated than the hermeneutic one. Just as Bruno Latour interpreted the *Berlin Key* not merely as a tool to unlock an apartment block or as a symbol of society, but rather as a map detailing a network of regulations, technologies, and urban policies (Latour, 1991), the keywords of the NEB initiative can be probed by delving into their distinct modes of operation.
The deconstruction of the conceptual assumptions and rhetorical strategies of the New European Bauhaus holds significance in this context. The whole initiative revolves around projects related to the built environment, which places considerable focus, whether explicitly or implicitly, on shaping space within a regulated design framework. Notably, the "exemplary NEB projects" showcased at the conclusion of the guidelines prominently feature architectural endeavours. However, the NEB isn't confined to altering sensibilities; it takes concrete actions. It establishes

an institutional platform for the communication and dissemination of projects and initiatives, while also providing access to EU funds.[1]
A more critically inclined perspective emerges when delving into the "genealogy" of the network of actions that underpin the effectiveness and viability of the three keywords. In his recent book titled *Architect, Verb* (2023), Reinier De Graaf undertakes an experiment aimed at deconstructing how a selection of global English terms has been assimilated into the professional jargon of architects worldwide. An appendix, fashioned as an excerpt from a hypothetical "Dictionary of Profspeak," concludes the volume. It is preceded by an ironic contemplation on the utilitarian act of "divorc[ing] words from meaning," so as to "facilitate consensus in the absence of agreement" (De Graaf, 2023: 207).
De Graaf dedicates the fourth chapter to the term "sustainability" ("Crisis? What crisis?") and the ninth chapter to "beauty" ("The B word"), explaining the intricate historical events that have shaped the fortune and inevitable contradictions in the utilisation of these terms within the realm of design. Regarding sustainability, the author highlights its utilitarian roots, which are embedded in current uses focusing on the depletion of our finite resources. De Graaf further underscores the structural linkage between the term sustainability, adopted as a global paradigm in recent decades, and institutional initiatives by the United Nations, as well as supranational objectives such as Agenda 21 and 2030. These efforts have contributed to the establishment of a global sustainability market supported by a multitude of indicators, protocols, rating systems, and indexes (including LEED, BREEAM, CasaClima, PEER, WELL, the SDGs themselves, and many others). De Graaf's experiment rekindles a debate about the interplay between values and working principles within design practices, raising several questions. Does the widespread adoption of this umbrella term by design practices signify a betrayal of "true" sustainability? Or is "true" sustainability the multifaceted phenomenon we witness today, encompassing its numerous ambiguities as a regulatory, institutional, economic, and value-based phenomenon? Can the keywords of sustainability be conceived abstractly, in theoretical terms? Or can their meaning only be grasped through a specific "ethnography of effects," able to investigate, record, and contemplate the actual processes that dictate their socio-technical effectiveness and theoretical significance? Similar questions could be directed towards the numerous articles featured in this edition of Ardeth. Some submissions engage with the keywords within the discourse outlined by the NEB, striving to align to it cases and projects that naturally fit within the intended category. Others challenge the usefulness of establishing keywords at all, while others still seek to delineate the potential methods through which architectural design could (or should) adhere to one or more of the values encapsulated in the triad "beautiful, sustainable, together."
The articles have responded to the call by adopting one or more keywords from the NEB triad. They maintain a sense of order while offering

1 - For the two-year period 2021-22, funds dedicated to the NEB initiative amounted to EUR 106.35 million (allocated through existing EU programmes such as Horizon, LIFE, Digital Europe and others). The same amount is planned (funded entirely through Horizon) for the two-year period 2023-24, (European Commission, COM(2023) 24 final - Annex 1, 16.01.2023).

a range of diverse insights, sometimes even in tension with each other. A comparative examination of these texts has led to the construction of a scheme inspired by the NEB Compass structure but with a different categorization approach. In this scheme, the Compass is transformed into a plane where three Cartesian coordinate systems intersect. Each coordinate system is centred around a main axis, creating a reading map that categorises discourse into critical (Criticism), operational (Practice), and assertive (Statement) dimensions. These three axes extend beyond the origin, resulting in three distinct directions. The latter facilitate the categorisation of boundary-positions arising from the combination of the three discourses: engaged discourse (between Criticism and Statement), engaged action (between Criticism and Practice), and manifesto project (between Practice and Statement). With this framework, articles can be organised first based on the axis that suits them best and then positioned towards one of the two boundary-positions within that axis. For instance, the axis Practice designates a segment of the plane between manifesto project and engaged action, representing texts mainly focusing on operational discourse. Readers can use this compass as a guide for their own comparative readings, while as usual we propose our own interpretation.
The field of *Criticism* encompasses a range that spans from engagement understood as theoretical discourse of a deconstructive or destituting nature (critical theory) to mobilisation toward a form of resistant practice (resistance). The articles that fall within this realm interpret the NEB keywords more as complex issues rather than as foundational concepts or inspirational principles.
Chinellato and Di Virgilio engage in a critical exploration of the interplay between the keywords associated with sustainable development and architecture. They assert that the oversimplification of communication tied to "sustainable" slogans and keywords tends to play a prescriptive role, capitalising on implicit assumptions inherent in architectural discourse and practice. The article suggests that keywords be regarded as "empty signifiers" and the term "building" be viewed not merely as a noun but as a verb. This approach underscores the procedural nature of architectural practice and of built space itself.
De Matteis, focusing on the concept of "beautiful," underscores the bodily and emotional aspect that this term invokes, surpassing any potential conceptual or formal simplification: "the presence of objects in our life bleeds into the emotional sphere, and architectural artefacts make no exception." Beauty remains firmly linked to the realm of subjectivity. Consequently, any endeavour to confine it within univocal definitions ultimately ends up being a "philosophical unicorn," leading to distortions and trivializations, all directed at circumventing failure and instability – a peril that, on the contrary, each yearning experience in pursuit of beauty cannot elude.
Scavuzzo examines and critiques the manner in which the concept of "together" is redefined within the framework of the NEB, drawing on cer-

tain critical theory texts, particularly Butler (in the context of Adorno's influence). Who is encompassed within this notion of "togetherness"? Architecture can utilise "together" as "a lever to unsettle established hierarchies and inequities," yet it must simultaneously "create the conditions for resistance." Through the retelling of a co-design experience conducted by Scavuzzo herself, a proposition of resistant practice emerges in the concluding remarks: "This emancipatory potential of the project can only be actualized if those who engage in the research, by embracing the act of designing 'together,' relinquish part of the architect's demiurgic power and bestow them upon those who must invest their own design space."
Within the realm of *Practice*, various interpretations of the project emerge, encompassing a spectrum that spans from fervent militancy (activism) to more practical approaches involving adaptive strategies (strategy).
Similarly to Scavuzzo, **Rispoli** starts her exploration from a critical analysis of the keyword "together," which risks being perceived as an "enlightened" guise of participation and inclusion. She points out that "there's a tendency to consider collective thinking and the common good in a vague and abstract manner." The article then delves into practical suggestions and real-world experiences, grappling with the complexities of involving typically marginalised groups, such as neurodiverse individuals. While the conclusions remain open-ended, they unmistakably lean towards the continuation of research that encourages "situations capable of unsettling and challenging predefined and unquestioned perceptions of the whole or the community."
Kousidi's contribution is deeply rooted in a project-oriented perspective. The article takes readers on a journey through the evolution of greenhouse architecture, "from a place of nature propagation to a catalyst of interdisciplinary experimentation into new types of public urban spaces." The discussion then widens to encompass twentieth century experiments and the emergence of "artificial ecology," eventually arriving at contemporary concepts where greenhouse architecture becomes a strategy for crafting "interfaces between the natural and the man-made environments." This potential for hybridization, capable of blending the nature-artifice divide, makes the greenhouse, according to the author, "a fertile symbolic and educational notion for architecture."
Finally, the *Statement* section features texts that adopt a proactive stance, aiming to fortify the significance of the NEB's keywords to such an extent that they become conduits for a transformative cultural or methodological paradigm shift. Furthermore, some contributions scrutinise exemplary instances of tangible projects intended to encapsulate the NEB's inherent values and principles (vision).
In a comprehensive exploration, **Ghia** delves into the diverse permutations that the concept of "beauty" has undergone throughout history, traversing architectural treatises and philosophical discourse. Regarded as a fundamental cornerstone of architectural practice, beauty maintains

an elusive quality, akin to a "hyperonym." Ghia posits that beauty serves as a "counterbalance to the prevailing dominance of technical aspects that all too frequently constrain contemporary design." Given a context where "beauty no longer adheres to established codes," designers are impelled to position themselves as ordinary individuals, "experiencing beauty firsthand and endeavouring to convey it to those who will ultimately inhabit their creations."

Taking into account the interplay between "sustainable" and "beautiful," **Bovati**'s commentary presents a kind of programmatic interpretation of the NEB's essence, aimed at sidestepping the performative and technocratic oversimplification of sustainability and, simultaneously, steering clear of reducing architectural beauty to a mere "aesthetic concept of the form-image." The overt objective is to reclaim those instances that have strived "to harmonise the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of a project", as seen in critical regionalism or other tendencies aligned with an "ethics of sobriety." Bovati starts and ends his contribution by quoting Gino Strada, who calls for designing a "scandalously beautiful" work – a field hospital. This request, in the author's view, epitomises the yearning for an architecture that "leaves nothing behind," channelling values, efficiency, environment, and aesthetics into a "beauty for our eyes, minds, and souls."

Semprebon also adopts an assertive stance, aiming to strengthen the discourse of the NEB initiative by looking into the nexus between sustainability and beauty. The four projects overviewed in his contribution serve as tangible illustrations of how, at a practical level, it is possible to interpret this relationship in a virtuous manner, aligning with the NEB's proposed trajectory. The author wholeheartedly endorses this perspective, stating that "we may recognize in the NEB campaign an attempt to place sustainability as the *Kunstwollen* of our times."

What clearly emerges from this summary is the pronounced dominance of texts that address the meaning of keywords by emphasising their role as "words," without showing much interest in their operational dynamics as highlighted in the initial editorial reference to "key." Undoubtedly, there is a wide range of perspectives, which contributes to a rich and engaging debate. However, there remains something unspoken – a background consisting of evaluation procedures, institutional mechanisms, applications for calls, funding, and so forth. Against this hidden backdrop, the passionate discussions about meaning seem to unfold on a stage, so to speak, while the course of events is subtly directed by other movements and power dynamics.

A final brief consideration pertains to the potential parallel between the NEB's decision to articulate a "triad" of values and the Vitruvian reference to the triad *Venustas*, *Utilitas*, and *Firmitas*, which several contributions mention. Despite these three terms being equally allusive, the correspondences between the two sets are not immediately apparent. While "*Venustas*" directly aligns with "beautiful," "*Utilitas*" and "*Firmitas*"

2 – "Durability [Firmitas] will be assured when foundations are carried down to the solid ground and materials wisely and liberally selected" (Vitruvio Pollione [1914]: 17).

both, to some extent, can be related to "sustainable", albeit with varying implications. Interpreting "*Firmitas*" as "solidity" or "durability," it is not challenging to connect it to "sustainable" (also considering translations like the French *développement durable*). At the same time, "*Utilitas*" could be associated with "together," if we equate it with a concept of public utility that fosters a renewed sense of community.

However, if we look at the utilitarian framework of the term "sustainability" (*Nachhaltigkeit*) from its earliest uses (De Graaf 2023: 71), the connection between "*Utilitas*" and "sustainable" appears to prevail. The relationship between "*Firmitas*" and "sustainable" can also be called into question, especially considering that for Vitruvius, "*Firmitas*" is not only structural stability, but also the durability or permanence of the built structure ("*Firmitatis erit habita ratio, cum fuerit fundamentorum ad solidum depressio, quaque e materia, copiarum sine avaritia diligens electio*").[2] The concept of sustainability, also understood as reversibility, full recyclability, and the reduction of impact, might thus clash with the ancient principle of "*Firmitas*." Indeed, the NEB intiative's ambition is to construct an environment (in a material sense) that that is *transformed, regenerated and integrated,* operating based on the principles of *self-governance, transcending disciplinary boundaries and global involvement* (as evident in the definitions of the six criteria in the third degree of fulfilment), in light of the systemic, harmonious and unifying aspiration of this project.

The reference to the Bauhaus presupposes achieving an institutional "*Firmitas*" that shifts the criterion of stability from the realm of individual works (which could also be reversible or partially ephemeral) to that of collectivity. Such a goal of mobilising collective cohesion, achieved through actions aimed at individual subjects, harks back to the principle of "tensegrity" that Peter Sloterdijk (2016 [2004]), inspired by Buckminster Fuller, used to describe the consistency of contemporary societies in the third volume of his *Spheres*. The challenge posed by the NEB's keywords, in this sense, might be precisely to reconsider their consistency, starting from a field of tensions and negotiations that transcend the rhetoric of objects, forms, and words, transforming into situated practices capable of articulating modes of action.

La call per il numero di Ardeth dedicato alle *keywords* è partita dai tre termini che definiscono il sottotitolo di una specifica iniziativa della Commissione Europea, conosciuta come "New European Bauhaus" (NEB). Da un lato, questa delimitazione iniziale consente di situare la discussione sulle "keywords" in una circostanza specifica del nostro presente. Dall'altro permette alcune riflessioni più generali sull'uso di parole chiave (keywords), parole d'ordine (password, watchword) o parole-slogan (buzzword) nel campo del progetto architettonico, inteso come disciplina pratica e come ambito di dibattito culturale.

I termini *keyword* e *mot-clé* hanno storie relativamente recenti, che si possono far risalire all'ambito degli studi lessicologici (Matoré, 1953; Williams, 1958). Matoré introduce i termini *mot-clé* e *mot-témoigne* per indicare due gradi diversi di rappresentatività di alcune parole all'interno della lingua. In particolare, le *mots-clés* avrebbero la capacità massima di esprimere "in modo sintetico l'epoca studiata un [modo di] essere, un sentimento, un'idea, che vivono nella misura in cui la società riconosce in esse il proprio ideale" (Matoré, 1953: 68). Un gruppo di linguisti e studiosi di letteratura di Cambridge e Pittsburgh ha dato vita al progetto *Keywords Project* (McCabe, Yanacek, 2018), a partire dal 2007, sulle orme di Raymond Williams e del suo *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* (1976). Introducendo la loro iniziativa, gli autori notano che *l'Oxford English Dictionary* distingue due accezioni fondamentali per "keyword": [1] "a word serving as a key to a cipher or the like ('The key-word of these inscriptions'); [2] a word or thing that is of great importance or significance; spec. in information-retrieval systems, any informative word in the title or text of a document, etc., chosen as indicating the main content of the document" (The Keywords Project, 2011).

A partire da questa definizione formale, spostare l'accento su "key" oppure su "word" dischiude implicazioni distinte. Infatti, la KEY-word avrebbe la valenza di un dispositivo, ovvero di un'entità che è in grado di funzionare per costituzione interna o autonoma, proprio come una chiave, con una propria indipendenza rispetto all'interpretazione che ne diamo o a ciò che rappresenta. La key-WORD, invece, costituirebbe la condensazione di un insieme di rappresentazioni collettive o persino di una "epoca" storicamente determinata. Nel primo caso si intuisce un problema di "tecnologia generale", misurabile in frequenze, occorrenze e ricorrenze all'interno di sistemi istituzionali, procedure, indicizzazioni formalizzate di archivi e costrutti scientifici. Nel secondo, si delinea un problema semantico o ermeneutico la cui validità ed efficacia relazionali dipendono dal campo discorsivo in cui la parola è impiegata.

Osservando più da vicino il complesso di iniziative e apparati che costituiscono la NEB, possiamo tentare di definire la performatività, in termini di efficacia e impatto trasformativo, delle tre parole chiave "beautiful", "sustainable" e "together", proprio chiedendoci in che misura esse costituiscano delle "chiavi" che determinano processi e meccanismi di funzionamento, oppure delle "parole" che rappresentano un insieme di valori e principi. Leggendo le linee guida stilate dalla Commissione Europea, risulta immediatamente chiaro che i tre termini svolgono funzioni diverse e in una certa misura subordinate l'una all'altra: "Sustainability is achievable only through collective effort by many actors […]. On the individual level, sustainability depends critically on compassion, empathy, unity, creativity, and the ability to shift paradigms. People will embrace or drive change when they see it. […] The quality of our living environments is essential, and art and culture play a key role in improving it". L'iniziativa NEB procede nella prospettiva dell'European Green Deal Europeo lancia-