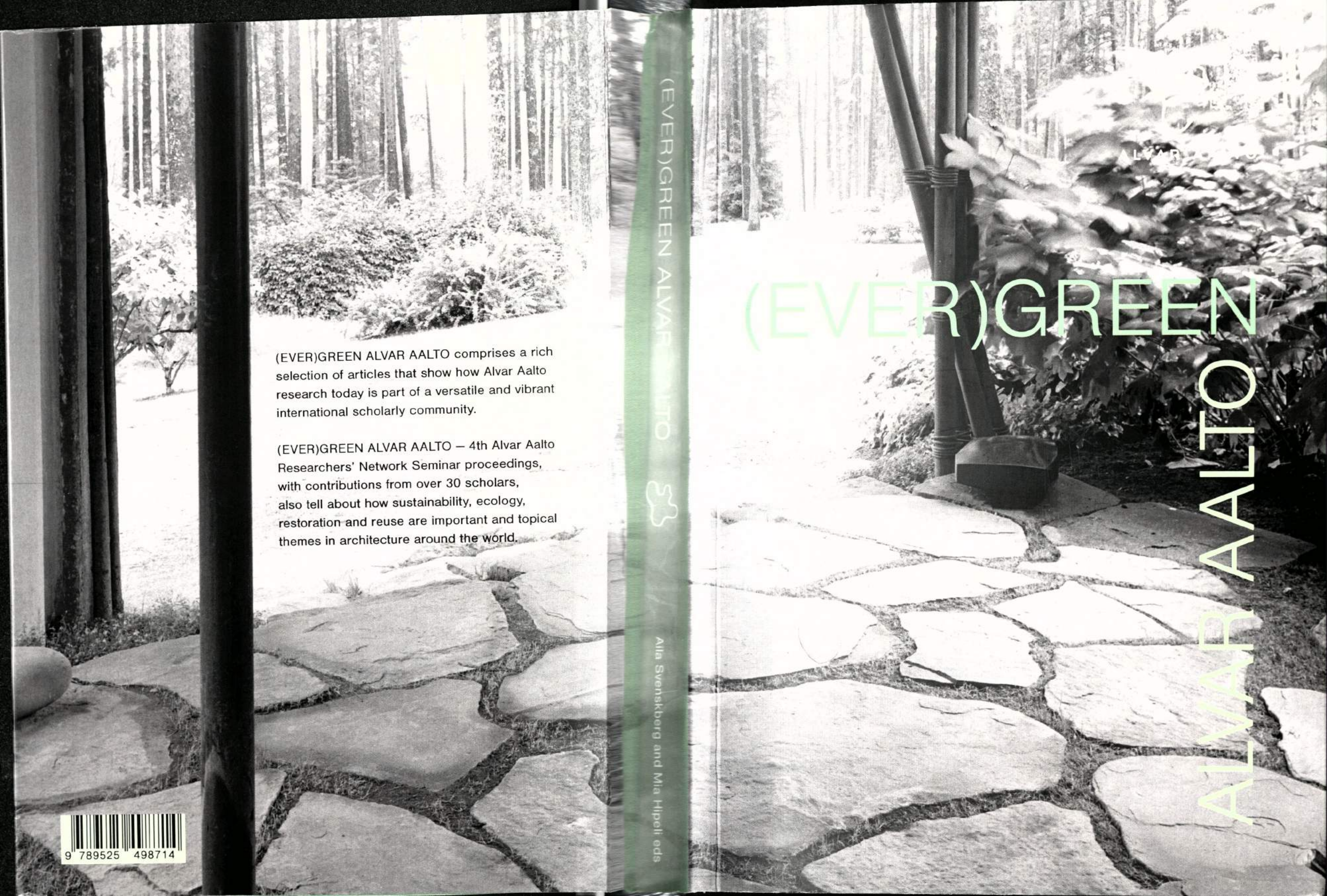




(EVER)GREEN ALVAR AALTO comprises a rich selection of articles that show how Alvar Aalto research today is part of a versatile and vibrant international scholarly community.

(EVER)GREEN ALVAR AALTO — 4th Alvar Aalto Researchers' Network Seminar proceedings, with contributions from over 30 scholars, also tell about how sustainability, ecology, restoration and reuse are important and topical themes in architecture around the world.

(EVER)GREEN ALVAR AALTO



Alla Svensberg and Mia Hippel eds

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ALVAR AALTO



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(EVER)GREEN ALVAR AALTO

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ALVAR AALTO

PORI



THE NET IS TIGHTENING

It was almost exactly ten years ago when we had the first Alvar Aalto Researchers' Seminar in Seinäjoki in Finland. The first meeting of the global researchers' network was truly historic and showed us the need for such meetings. Since then, we have come a long way. Rovaniemi showed us the magnitude of subjects and the vast number of interested people around the world. In Jyväskylä we had a cozy summer get together with both some new and some revisited subjects. There was also criticism that maybe the bag of Aalto tricks had been exhausted by the seminars we'd organized so far. That kind of thinking would mean that when all major thematic subjects and all major projects have been covered, then that's it. All the boxes have been ticked.

I don't think so.

The whole purpose of having a network of researchers studying the same subject (Alvar Aalto) is to be able to deepen the understanding of a specific variety of architecture and a unique way of making design. By coming back to previous thoughts, even by the same person, will generate a more profound awareness of things and a more cohesive combination of thoughts.

And the best part of the whole idea of this network is that Aalto researchers from around the world get to know each other better — also on a personal level.

Nevertheless, our community is condensing, and the net is tightening. The (Ever)Green Alvar Aalto seminar proceedings, with their thematic approaches to sustainability, reflections on Aalto's works, and restoration and reuse issues, form a tight package of new views on good old Alvar Aalto.

Pleasant readings.

Tommi Lindh
CEO
Alvar Aalto Foundation

Contents

SUSTAINABILITY

- 11 **Antonello Alici:** Humanism and harmony: Aalto's resonances in Italy
- 25 **Petra Čeferin:** Architectural sustainability
- 33 **Christin Nezik:** On the way towards sustainability: Adaptations of vernacular architecture in Alvar Aalto's residential buildings
- 41 **Luca Placci:** The pergola in Alvar Aalto's Finnish architecture: *Firmitas, Utilitas, Venustas, Virida*
- 49 **Kurt C. Hunker:** Pattern and novelty: the Evergreen Aalto parti
- 59 **Anne-Maija Malmisalo-Lensu:** Sustainable design for a warm climate – The case of the Baghdad Art Museum
- 67 **Yesim Kamile Aktuglu, Arda Filibelioglu and Gözde Özder:** The structural beauty of the Finnish pavilion by Alvar Aalto in La Biennale di Venezia Giardini, Italy
- 79 **Kirk Gastinger:** Aalto's dreams of green – a visual footnote
- 87 **Rosana Rubio Hernandez, Fernando Nieto Fernández and Carmen Toribio Marín:** Et in Arcadia ego: The ruin metaphor in Alvar Aalto's work as a driver for cultural sustainability
- 97 **Kirsi Gullichsen:** Villa Mairea – a non-plastic house and life

REFLECTIONS

- 109 **Gunny Harboe:** Restoring the meaning of materials of Frank Lloyd Wright
- 113 **Tammy Gaber:** Gardens of paradise: Aalto's encounters with the Islamic world
- 123 **João Miguel Couto Duarte and Maria João Moreira Soares:** In search of Alvar Aalto: a Portuguese Journey in 1957
- 131 **Pedro Borges de Araújo:** How the architect does things with words
- 139 **Miguel Borges de Araújo:** Alvar Aalto – environment. Office buildings in city blocks: Atriums, arcades and spatial grid walls
- 149 **Chiu Chen-Yu:** The role of Japanese art and architecture in Aino and Alvar Aalto's creation of Villa Mairea
- 153 **Susana Meleiro Lima:** Space, humanism and circumstance in architecture

- 165 **Jaime J. Ferrer Forés:** Alvar Aalto and the Danish tradition
- 179 **Jonas Malmberg:** Homes built from prefabricated concrete elements – Alvar Aalto and the post-war housing production
- 189 **Jana Tichá:** Alvar Aalto and the nature of space in modern architecture
- 197 **Rachel Simmonds:** Northern grace: The contribution of Alvar Aalto to the Scottish modernist ecclesiastical designs of Isi Metzstein and Andy Macmillan
- 207 **Esin Bölükbaş Dayı:** The flow of ideas: Alvar Aalto in Turkish architectural periodicals
- 211 **Maria Ekman-Kolari:** Businessman Allan Hjelt and his architect friend Alvar Aalto – a prolific cooperation revealed
- 217 **Asko Mäkelä:** On the path in the Paimio Tuberculosis Sanatorium garden
- 225 **Jean-François Marti:** Aalto's architectural variations: a prelude to contemporary space?
- 233 **Marianna Wahlsten:** Postmodern versus regional – a reconciliation through digital technology
- 243 **Silja Rantanen:** An Artist's Interpretation. Alvar Aalto Design at Donald Judd's Studios
- 249 **Arto Mikkola:** An evergreen story of hope: Alvar Aalto's poetry in Vuoksenniska Church narratively interpreted
- 259 **Maria João Moreira Soares and João Miguel Couto Duarte:** Revisiting Alvar Aalto: a re-reading of the legacy of Fernando Távora through the lens of Japanese culture

RESTORATION / REUSE

- 267 **Tapani Mustonen:** The accuracy of "plan to implementation" design, and creativity in the implementation
- 275 **Teemu Tuomi:** Finlandia Hall – Preparing for the renovation

AALTO'S ARCHITECTURAL VARIATIONS: A PRELUDE TO CONTEMPORARY SPACE?

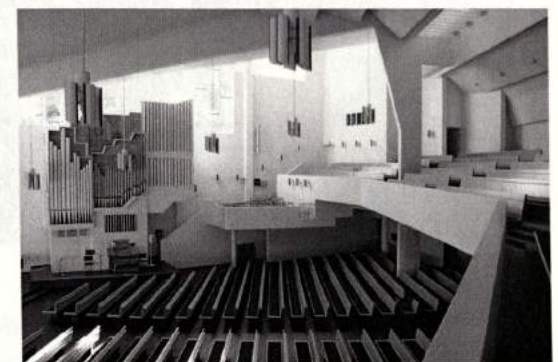
Jean-François Marti

The present contribution deals with examples of Alvar Aalto's built work, which are certainly the concretization of various contingencies (material, societal, sociological, economic and projective) but which I will not discuss here. Aalto's biographer Göran Schildt often recalled that Aalto claimed to have nothing to say and that everything was inscribed in the plans and buildings themselves. I will not look at Aalto's design process but rather at the architectural object. As Peter Zumthor has put it: "Architecture is not abstract but concrete. A sketch, a project drawn on paper, is not architecture, but a more or less incomplete representation of architecture, comparable to a musical score. Music must be interpreted. Architecture needs interpretation." [1, p. 66]

The Church of the Cross in Lahti (1969-78) offers in terms of its exceptional interior dimensions a wide spatial deployment. As the last church designed by Aalto, and only completed after his death, it can be considered as a synthesis of his thinking on the subject. The initial project dates back to 1950, and although that scheme was not built, it can still be recognised in Aalto's Seinäjoki church. The Lahti church both opens and closes two decades during which six Aalto churches were realised: Imatra (1958), Seinäjoki (1960), Wolfsburg (1962), Detmerode (1968), Riola (1978), and the second project in Lahti (with a different site and programme) completed in 1978, thus closing the series two years after Aalto's death.



Lahti nave



Lahti gallery

Some analyses compare Aalto's buildings to the curves of Finnish lakes or develop his interest in the notion of limit and threshold, using the geographical context of Finland, where water and land intermingle. Other analyses underline the search for an echo with the natural world in the sought-after impossibility of perceiving the enveloping geometry of space. All of them show the importance of combinations, variations, and play. Demetri Porphyrios [2] describes Aalto's mastery of collage, in opposition to the modernist homogenous space, while Paolo Amaldi [3] defends the idea of an underlying order in Aalto's work. The latter describes an ordered variation of changes, based on his analysis of a particular realised totality, namely the Helsinki University of Technology campus in Otaniemi.

Here I propose to question Amaldi's spatial concept and to extend it to include the material and temporal vectors of the six Aalto churches built between 1958 and 1978, where he operates a series of *ordered variations of changes* in a form of continuity in several buildings with the same programme.



Imatra, 1958



Seinäjoki, 1960



Wolfsbourg, 1962



Detmerode, 1968



Riola, 1978



Lahti, 1978

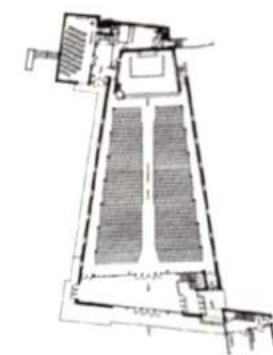
It is based on a recurring architectural device from a triangular base. In Seinäjoki, the symmetrical plan is derived from the initial competition for Lahti, inspired by the churches of Nakkila by Erkki Huttunen and and Kannonkoski by Aulis Blomstedt from the 1930s.



Perspective sketch for the Lahti church competition, 1950



Plan for the Lahti church competition, 1950



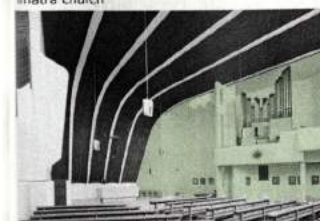
Plan of the Seinäjoki church project of 1952

However, the five other churches entail a singularization of the side wall of the nave, comprising the organ and various other parts of the programme, located on the opposite side of the pulpit, and forming, together with the central altar, a liturgical triangle in a composition where symmetry is replaced by dynamic balance.

Singularity of the side wall of the nave



Imatra church

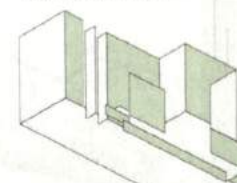


Detmerode church

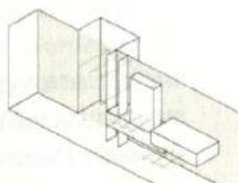
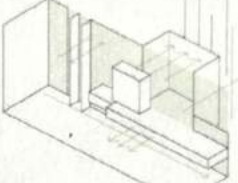
Axonometry of the side wall stratification



Schematization of the advance and retreat of the plans

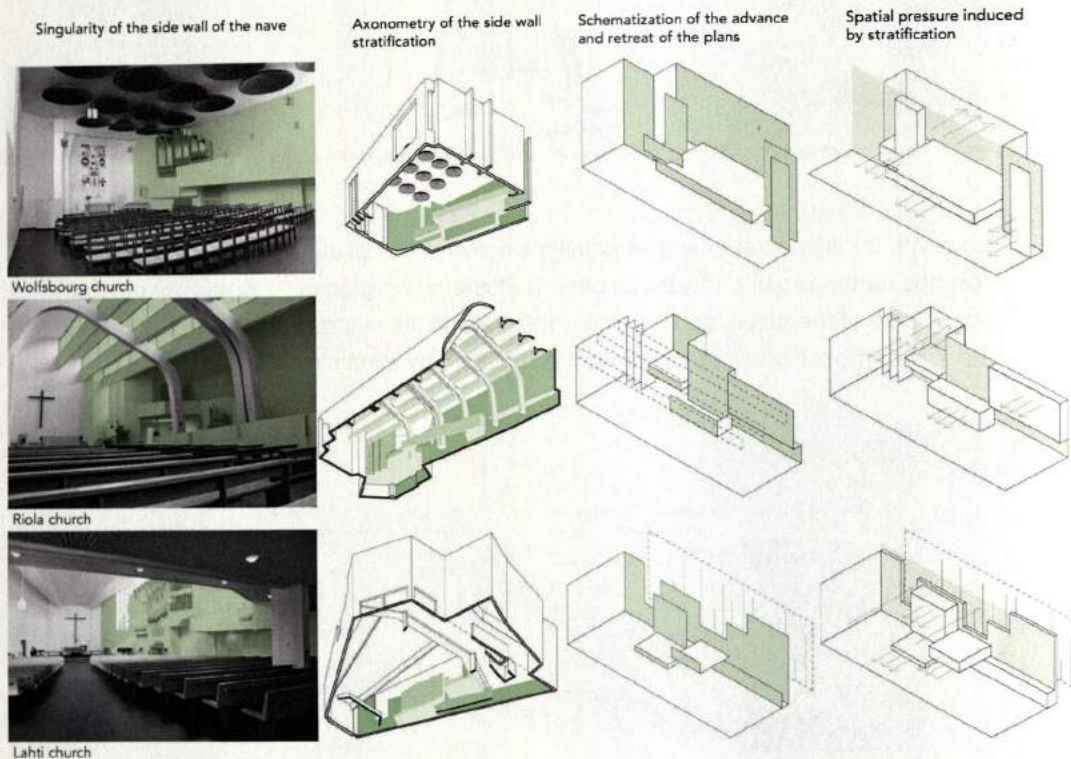


Spatial pressure induced by stratification

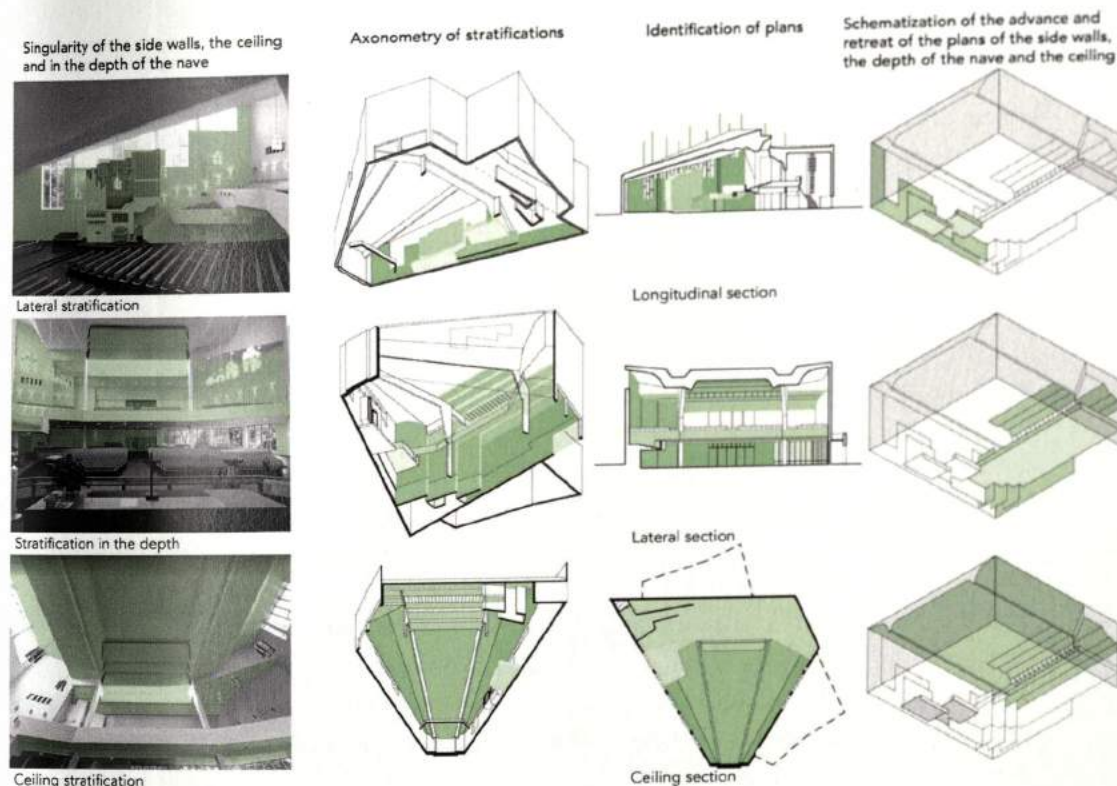


From one Aalto church to another, we can observe the diachronic movement of stratification of this "servant place", by following the advances and retreats of the organ pipes or the choir balcony. It thickens and, a gravitational mass, exerts an attractive force on the nave in the form of spatial pressure. Aalto varies the elements (a transverse structure in Seinäjoki and Riola, and longitudinal elsewhere;

varied lighting and views in a soft and enveloping atmosphere, the shaping of forms through sound, folds and waves, etc.) and extends to Lahti the process on the ceiling and in the depth of the nave to stretch a texture of ever-more complex and mobile relationships that together weave the architectural order.



Some contemporary architects (e.g. Ando, Siza, and Zumthor) distinguish interior spaces by means of their visual, acoustic and even olfactory ambiances. Sobriety, or even the unique presence of a material, characterises their atmosphere, and there is no distraction or elements that do not participate in the definition the place. The desire for focus and concentration is also found in Aalto's churches. Juhani Pallasmaa approaches Aalto's "white period" a little like Le Corbusier's "white period". He distinguishes between "the Aalto House or the Villa Mairea where Aalto used white as a neutral ground to articulate the texture of materials or a particular vernacular feature" and, for example, the church in Imatra in covering the inside of the walls "functions as a gigantic reflector of light, maximising the intake of natural light into the building." [4, p. 81]



Jacques Sautereau writes about Le Corbusier's white villas, stating that they are the manifesto for the continuous and autonomous space introduced by van Doesburg, Wright and Mies as a self-referential sign of architecture, modulated by the effect of emptiness [5, p. 90].

This void allows for the play and deployment of space, and we find it also in all the Aalto churches examined here. While Le Corbusier assembles the volumes under the light, Aalto in this void unfolds the container, stratifies it and plays with the ambiguity of the closure (retraction of angles and edges, multiplication of planes and blurring of limits, by the play of shadow, light and geometry) to better assert the particularity of the place. Peter Eisenman points out that one of the most authentically modern aspects of Le Corbusier's work is its self-referential character as architecture for architecture [6, p. 305]. Alan Colquhoun remarks about Aalto in regard to his later churches: "The relationship between the altar, the spatial axis and the source of light always varies according to criteria that are not always clear, as if the idea of a church no longer suggested typical solutions." [7] I would add that is as if the play of architectural and spatial variation and rule prevailed over any other consideration, and aimed to experiment with the sequence of architectural devices within the series of five churches that preceded that of Lahti.

Jacques Lucan observes a contemporary desire to return "as close as possible to things", a return to the material or to space in order to renew or rediscover experiences [8]. His presentation of the architectural devices and the composition of their elements characterising the space of the church of Santa Maria in Marco de Canaveses (1996) by Álvaro Siza, resonates as the subsequent expression of the spatial figure of Aalto's churches [8, p. 178]. Lucan describes a set of topological relationships that are thus at the heart of phenomenological approaches and involve the notion of milieu. It is based on an idea of Jean-François Lyotard, who diagnosed the transformation of the relationship to modernity through a stronger interweaving of the fabric of the relationships between more autonomous elements [9, p.31].

Lyotard's reflection coincides with the completion of the Lahti church. Did Aalto prefigure this observation, which prevails for a form of contemporary architecture? Is the corpus of his six churches a variation on the same theme? A prototypical sequence that leads to Lahti? A design matrix? Or is it a spatial composition, based on this contained and metaphorical void, made up of sequences of topological relationships with varying continuous deformations, thus announcing a form of thinking about contemporary space? This questioning attests that Aalto's architecture and the study of its spaces constitute a stimulating basis for understanding a part of contemporary architecture.

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- 2 Porphyrios D. *Sources of Modern Eclecticism: Studies on Alvar Aalto*. London: Academy Editions, 1982. 138 p. ISBN: 0 312 74674 1.
- 3 Amaldi P. Alvar Aalto, ou la structure silencieuse. *Le Visiteur*, 2011, Vol. 17, pp. 123-138. ISSN 1265-7034.
- 4 Pallasmaa, J. and Sato, T. (eds.). *Alvar Aalto: Through the Eyes of Shigeru Ban*. London: Black Dog Publishing / Barbican Art Gallery, 2007. 271 p. ISBN 1904772641.
- 5 Sautereau, J. Le Corbusier et l'esprit du temps: les ambivalences de l'histoire. *Les Cahiers de la recherche architecturale*, 1990, 2e trimestre, n°26, pp. 88-94. ISSN: 0150-9535." This integrated 'autonomous space', associated with the play of the void (...) dynamises the space of buildings and in fact becomes the new 'mental cause' of architecture..."
- 6 Eisenman, P. *Ecrits 1963-1984*. Paris: Editions Form(e)s, 2017. 424 p. ISBN: 978-2-954479-14-9.
- 7 Colquhoun, A. Alvar Aalto et la poétique de la fonction. *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 1977, n° 191, pp. 120-12. ISSN: 0003-8695.
- 8 Lucan, J. *Précisions sur un état présent de l'architecture*. Lausanne: PPUR, 2015. 259 p. ISBN 978-2-88915-114-1.
- 11 Lyotard, J-F. *La Condition postmoderne: rapport sur le savoir*. Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1979. 109 p. ISBN 2-7073-0276-7."What follows is what some analyze as the dissolution of the social bond and the passage of social collectivities into a mass composed of individual atoms launched into the absurdity of Brownian motion. This is nothing of the sort; it is a view that seems to us obsessed with the paradisaic representation of a lost 'organic' society. A self does not amount to much, but it is not isolated, it is caught in a fabric of relations that is more complex and more mobile than ever."



Jean-François Marti is an architect who graduated from the École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-Belleville in 1989. He founded his own architecture agency in Paris in 1993 and has oriented his activities towards housing and social collective housing. Several of his projects have received awards and have been published: Restructuring of housing in Paris in the 18th arrondissement, the construction of 45 housing units in Vitry (Paris suburbs), completed in 2012. While continuing these activities, Marti joined the body of security architects (the prevention of fire and building risk) with the City of Paris, and teaches design and architectural theory at École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-Belleville and Toulouse. In 2016, he was appointed full professor École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Toulouse, where he has since settled. He continues to pursue the activity of architect-designer-builder (69 social housing units, under construction in Cahors and 48 housing units under consideration in Toulouse) while teaching. Several educational trips to Finland awakened his interest in Aalto and motivated to start a PhD thesis in 2018 on the composition of space in Aalto's churches from the second half of the 20th century (under the direction of Professor Remi Papillault).

LES VARIATIONS ARCHITECTURALES D'AALTO : UN PRÉLUDE À L'ESPACE CONTEMPORAIN ?

Jean-François Marti

La présente contribution porte sur des exemples de l'œuvre bâtie d'Alvar Aalto, qui sont certes la concrétisation de diverses contingences (matérielles, sociétales, sociologiques, économiques et projectives) mais que je n'aborderai pas ici. Göran Schildt, biographe d'Aalto, rappelait souvent qu'Aalto prétendait n'avoir rien à dire et que tout était inscrit dans les plans et les bâtiments eux-mêmes. Je ne m'intéresserai pas au processus de conception d'Aalto mais plutôt à l'objet architectural. Comme l'a dit Peter Zumthor : "*L'architecture n'est pas abstraite mais concrète. Une esquisse, un projet dessiné sur papier, n'est pas de l'architecture, mais une représentation plus ou moins incomplète de l'architecture, comparable à une partition musicale. La musique doit être interprétée. L'architecture a besoin d'être interprétée.*"

L'église de la Croix à Lahti (1969-78) offre, grâce à ses dimensions intérieures exceptionnelles, un large déploiement spatial. En tant que dernière église conçue par Aalto, et achevée seulement après sa mort, elle peut être considérée comme une synthèse de sa pensée sur le sujet. Le projet initial remonte à 1950, et bien que ce projet n'ait pas été construit, on peut encore le reconnaître dans l'église Seinäjoki. L'église de Lahti ouvre et clôt deux décennies au cours desquelles six églises d'Aalto ont été réalisées : Imatra (1958), Seinäjoki (1960), Wolfsburg (1962), Detmerode (1968), Riola (1978), et le second projet à Lahti (avec un site et un programme différents), achevé en 1978. en 1978, clôturant ainsi la série deux ans après la mort d'Aalto.

Certaines analyses comparent les bâtiments d'Aalto aux courbes des lacs finlandais ou développent son intérêt pour la notion de limite et de seuil, en utilisant le contexte géographique de la Finlande, où l'eau et la terre s'entremêlent. D'autres analyses soulignent la recherche d'un écho avec le monde naturel dans l'impossibilité recherchée de percevoir la géométrie enveloppante de l'espace. Toutes montrent l'importance des combinaisons, des variations et du jeu. Demetri Porphyrios décrit la maîtrise du collage par Aalto, en opposition à l'espace homogène moderniste, tandis que Paolo Amaldi défend l'idée d'un ordre sous-jacent dans l'œuvre d'Aalto. Ce dernier décrit une variation ordonnée de changements, à partir de son analyse d'un ensemble bâtiminaire construit, à savoir le campus de l'Université technologique d'Helsinki à Otaniemi.

Je me propose ici de remettre en question le concept spatial d'Amaldi et de l'étendre aux vecteurs matériels et temporels des six églises d'Aalto construites entre 1958 et 1978 où il opère une série de variations ordonnées de changements dans une forme de continuité sur plusieurs bâtiments ayant le même programme.

Il s'appuie sur un dispositif architectural récurrent à partir d'une base triangulaire. A Seinäjoki, le plan symétrique est issu du concours initial pour Lahti, inspiré par les églises de Nakkila d'Erkki Huttunen et de Kannonkoski d'Aulis Blomstedt des années 1930.

En revanche, les cinq autres églises impliquent une singularisation du mur latéral de la nef, incluant l'orgue et diverses autres parties du programme, situé en face de la chaire, et formant, avec l'autel central, un triangle liturgique dans une composition où la symétrie est remplacée par un équilibre dynamique. D'une église à l'autre, on peut observer le mouvement diachronique de stratification de cet "espace servant", en suivant les avancées et reculs des tuyaux d'orgue ou du balcon du chœur. Il s'épaissit et, comme une masse gravitationnelle, exerce une force d'attraction sur la nef sous forme de pression spatiale. Aalto varie les éléments (structure transversale à Seinäjoki et Riola, et longitudinale ailleurs ; éclairage et vues variés dans une atmosphère douce et enveloppante, façonnage des formes par le son, les plis et les ondes, mise en valeur de l'espace, etc.) et étend à Lahti le processus jusqu'au plafond et dans la profondeur de la nef pour étirer une texture de relations toujours plus complexes et mobiles qui tissent l'ordre architectural.

Certains architectes contemporains (par exemple Ando, Siza et Zumthor) distinguent les espaces intérieurs par leurs ambiances visuelles, acoustiques et même olfactives. La sobriété ou encore la présence unique d'un matériau, caractérise leur atmosphère, et il n'y a pas de distraction ou d'éléments qui ne participent pas à la définition du lieu. Cette volonté de concentration se retrouve également dans les églises d'Aalto. Juhani Pallasmaa aborde la "période blanche" d'Aalto un peu comme la "période blanche" de Le Corbusier. Il fait la distinction entre la *Villa Mairea* où Aalto a utilisé le blanc comme un fond neutre pour articuler la texture des matériaux ou une caractéristique vernaculaire particulière et, par exemple, l'église d'Imatra, où le blanc qui recouvre l'intérieur des murs *"fonctionne comme un gigantesque réflecteur de lumière, maximisant l'apport de lumière naturelle dans le bâtiment"*.

Jacques Sautereau écrit à propos des villas blanches de Le Corbusier qu'elles sont le manifeste de l'espace continu et autonome introduit par van Doesburg, Wright et Mies comme signe autoréférentiel de l'architecture, modulé par l'effet de vide. Ce vide permet le jeu et le déploiement de l'espace, et nous le trouvons également dans toutes les églises d'Aalto

examinées ici. Alors que Le Corbusier assemble les volumes sous la lumière, Aalto dans ce vide déploie le contenant, le stratifie et joue avec l'ambiguïté de la fermeture (escamotage des angles et des arêtes, multiplication des plans et brouillage des limites, par des jeux d'ombre, de lumière et de géométrie) pour mieux affirmer la particularité du lieu. Peter Eisenman souligne que l'un des aspects les plus authentiquement modernes de l'œuvre de Le Corbusier est son caractère autoréférentiel d'architecture pour l'architecture. Alan Colquhoun remarque à propos d'Aalto en ce qui concerne ses dernières églises que : *"La relation entre l'autel, l'axe spatial et la source de lumière varie toujours selon des critères qui ne sont pas toujours clairs, comme si l'idée d'une église ne proposait plus de solutions typiques."* J'ajouterais que c'est comme si le jeu de la variation et de la règle architecturale et spatiale prévalait sur toute autre et visait à expérimenter l'enchaînement des dispositifs architecturaux dans la série des cinq églises qui ont précédé celle de Lahti.

Jacques Lucan observe un désir contemporain de revenir "au plus près des choses", un retour à la matière ou à l'espace pour renouveler ou redécouvrir des expériences. Sa présentation des dispositifs architecturaux et la composition de leurs éléments caractérisant l'espace de l'église de Santa Maria in Marco de Canaveses d'Alvaro Siza, résonne comme l'expression ultérieure de la figure spatiale des églises d'Aalto. Lucan décrit un ensemble de relations topologiques qui sont ainsi au cœur des approches phénoménologiques et impliquent la notion de milieu. Il s'appuie sur une idée de Jean-François Lyotard, qui diagnostiquait la transformation du rapport à la modernité par une imbrication plus forte du tissu des relations entre des éléments plus autonomes.

La réflexion de Lyotard coïncide avec l'achèvement de l'église de Lahti. Aalto a-t-il préfiguré ce constat, qui prévaut pour une forme d'architecture contemporaine ? Est-ce que le corpus de ses six églises est une variation sur le même thème ? Une séquence prototypique qui mène à Lahti ? Une matrice de conception ? Ou est-ce une composition spatiale, basée sur ce vide contenu et métaphorique, faite de séquences de relations topologiques avec des déformations continues et variables, annonçant ainsi une forme de réflexion sur l'espace contemporain ?

Ce questionnement atteste que l'architecture d'Aalto et l'étude de ses espaces constituent une base stimulante pour comprendre une partie de l'architecture contemporaine.