

DOI: 10.6093/2532-2699/12487

## **L'autore è morto, viva l'autore! L'applicabilità del Distant Reading per una storiografia alternativa dell'architettura**

### **Keywords**

Distant Reading, Alternative Historiography, Unheard Workers, Architectural Professionalism, Collaborative Agency

### **Abstract**

Over the past decade, alternative historiographical approaches in architecture have emerged to challenge the traditional emphasis on authorship that has long dominated architectural history. Influenced by labor and production studies, these new perspectives have prompted scholars to critically reassess the conventional, often male-centric, narratives centered on individual authorship. This paradigm shift has illuminated numerous blind spots within established methodologies, which have historically expanded the canon by adding individual names rather than fostering an understanding of architecture as a collaborative endeavor. This article aims to critique and advance methodologies that more effectively reveal collective practices in architectural production. It positions itself as a theoretical contribution, exploring the potential of Distant Reading – a method originating in literary studies and computational analysis that has significantly shaped the digital humanities. This approach resonates with ongoing scholarly efforts to interrogate and demystify dominant architectural discourses by developing context-specific, collaborative, and transdisciplinary research methods. The process involves adapting and testing existing techniques within architectural studies, intending to conceptualize a methodological toolbox for broader application. While various alternative methodologies have recently been proposed, the approach outlined in this paper seeks not only to offer a new historiographical lens on architectural agency but also to reorient historiography around collaborative modes of architectural production. This is demonstrated through a case study focused on the Danish Academy in Rome, Italy.

### **Biography**

Angela Gigliotti is an architect, researcher and educator. Her research interest focuses on architectural labor and production studies, diplomatic architecture and transnational modes of production, under instances of Danish Welfare State, Danish colonialism and Swiss coloniality. She authored the Ph.D. monographic thesis *The Labourification of Work* (Aarhus Arkitektskolen, 2020) and was Visiting PhD Candidate at the Architectural Association – School of Architecture of London (2018) in the City/Architecture Group (Prof. Dr. Pier Vittorio Aureli). Since 2021, first as the HM Queen Margrethe II's Distinguished Postdoctoral Fellow at the Det Danske Institut i Rom, and currently as the Roma Calling Fellow 2024/2025 at Istituto Svizzero, she has been academic guest at the Institute for History and Theory (gta) at ETH Zürich – Chair of the History and Theory of Urban Design (Prof. Dr. Tom Avermaete) where she has conducted two research projects Unheard workers (Carlsberg Foundation, 2021-24) and *The Italian Ticinification* (2025-ongoing). Since 2016 she is Tenured Lecturer at DIS Copenhagen. Recently she has been invited as Studio Faculty at Syracuse University Florence (Fall 2025-Spring 2026).

Angela Gigliotti

ETH Zurich

# The Author is Dead, Viva the Author! The Applicability of Distant Reading for Alternative Architectural Historiography

## Introduction

The introduction of alternative historiographies in architecture, aimed at dismantling the dominance of authorship in architectural history, is now a fact. Over the past decade, labor and production studies have emerged not only as distinct fields within architectural discourse but have also informed the broader field of architectural history and theory. Scholars working within these frameworks have contributed to the dismantling, refinement, and reassessment of singular, often male-dominated, author-centric narratives. Without aiming to be detailed or exhaustive, but simply to offer some secondary sources as a framework, such scholarship can be categorized into several thematic strands: those that re-examine authorship<sup>1</sup>; those that challenge established architectural canons<sup>2</sup>; those that reevaluate canonical figures and projects to reshape prevailing historiographies<sup>3</sup>; those that reassess architectural agency by incorporating all participants in the building process – such as architects, engineers, constructors, contractors, builders, and civil servants<sup>4</sup>; those that focus on female actors<sup>5</sup>; those that foreground the building process to expose issues of technology, craftsmanship, profit, bureaucracy, subordination, and power hierarchies<sup>6</sup>; and those that reconsider early modern agency in contrast to the currently dominant reassessment of modernity<sup>7</sup>.

This shift has led to a systematic critique of disciplinary boundaries rooted in the materially and pragmatically oriented ontology of the architectural discipline. The prevailing focus on ‘authorship’ – closely tied to an emphasis on the outcome of architectural production rather than the process – has long overshadowed more nuanced considerations. In this context, it has become increasingly evident that numerous blind spots are embedded in, and perpetuated by, the dominant methodologies employed by architectural historians in their research and writing. These shortcomings are particularly evident in the tendency to expand the canon by adding new individual names, rather than uncovering the inherently collaborative nature of architectural practice.

Rather than merely presenting collaboration as a novel theme by adding another case study to the existing historiographical corpus, this article seeks to critically examine which methodologies might more effectively reveal the collaborative dimensions of architectural production. It positions itself as a theoretical intervention, exploring the transferability and applicability of a method developed at the intersection of literary studies and computational science: Distant Reading. This

<sup>1</sup> Colin Davies, *The Prefabricated Home* (Reaktion, 2006); Maristella Casciato and Emilie d’Orgeix, *Modern Architectures: The Rise of a Heritage* (Mardaga, 2012); Tom Avermaete, “Death of the Author, Center and Meta-Theory: Emerging Planning Histories and Expanding Methods of the Early 21st Century,” in *The Routledge Handbook of Planning History*, ed. Carola Hein (Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 478–86; Tom Avermaete, Véronique Patteeuw, Christoph Grafe and Irina Davidovici, eds., *Oase Authorship: = Authorschap 113* (2022); Ana Miljački and Ann Lui, eds. *Log Coauthoring* 54 (2022).

<sup>2</sup> Janina Gosseye, “Editorial,” *Fabrications* 24, no. 2 (2014): 147–55. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10331867.2014.964792>; Evangelos Kotsioris, “The Queering of Architecture History Has Yet to Happen: The Intra-Canonical Outlook of Beatriz Colomina,” *Architectural Histories* 8, no. 1 (December 10, 2020): 22. <https://journal.eahn.org/article/id/7613/>; Angela Gigliotti, Chiara Monterumisi and Monica Prencipe, *Canons and Icons: re-wondering a transcultural contamination* (Edizioni Quasar, forthcoming).

<sup>3</sup> Hilde Heynen, *Sibyl Moholy-Nagy: Architecture, Modernism and Its Discontents* (Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021); Angela Gigliotti and Martin Søberg, eds., “Kay Fisker: appraisals and reappraisals,” *Magasin for Byggningskunst og Kultur* Special Issue (Spring 2026).

<sup>4</sup> Peter Murray, “Leading Lady: Monica Pidgeon, Editor of Architectural Design, 1946 to 1975,” *Architectural Design* 80, no. 2 (2010): 106–109; Ellen Shoshkes and Jaqueline Tyrwhitt, *A Transnational Life in Urban Planning and Design* (Ashgate, 2013).

<sup>5</sup> Susana Torre, *Women in American Architecture: A Historic and Contemporary Perspective* (Whitney Library of Design, 1977); Margaret Bruce, and Lewis J. “Women Designers — Is There a Gender Trap?”, *Design Studies* 11, no. 2 (April 1990): 114–20. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0142-694X\(90\)90026-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/0142-694X(90)90026-9); Marion Roberts, *Living in a Man-Made World: Gender Assumptions in Modern Housing Design* (Routledge, 1991); Diana Agrest, Patricia Conway, and Leslie Weisman, *The Sex of Architecture* (Harry N. Abrams, 1996); Linda Nochlin, “Why Are There No Great Women Artists?”, in *Woman in Sexist Society: Studies in Power and Powerlessness*, ed. Vivian Gornick and Barbara K. Moran (New American Library, 1996): 344–66; Penny Sparke, and Brenda Martin, eds., *Women’s Places: Architecture and Design 1860–1960* (Routledge, 2003); Kathleen James-Chakraborty, *Architecture Since 1400* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

<sup>6</sup> Annmarie Adams and Peta Tancred, *Designing Women: Gender and the Architectural Profession* (University of Toronto Press, 2000); Paolo Tombesi, “On the Cultural Separation of Design Labor,” in *Building (in) the Future: Recasting Labor in Architecture*, ed. Peggy Deamer and Phillip Bernstein (Princeton Architectural Press, 2013), 117–36; Kenneth Frampton, “Intention, Craft, and Rationality,” in *Building (in) the Future*, 28–37; Andri Gerber, “Independent or Bureaucratic? The Early Career Choice of an Architect at the Turn of the Twentieth Century in Germany, France and England,” *FOOTPRINT* 17 (December 20, 2015): 47–68, <https://doi.org/10.7480/footprint.9.2.860>; Pier Vittorio Aureli, “Labour and Work in Architecture,” in *No Sweat*, ed. Jennifer Sigler (Harvard University Press, 2019), 70–81.

<sup>7</sup> Melania Mazzucco, *L’architettrice* (Einaudi, 2019); Anne Hultzsch, “Other Practices: Gendering Histories of Architecture,” *ZARCH Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies in Architecture and Urbanism* 18 (September 2, 2022): 30–41, [https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs\\_zarch/zarch.2022186968](https://doi.org/10.26754/ojs_zarch/zarch.2022186968).

method, whose theorization has shaped the emergence and evolution of the digital humanities, offers a compelling framework for rethinking architectural historiography.

The adoption of Distant Reading aligns with the approach taken by many scholars engaged in alternative historiographies that aim to dismantle the myth of solo authorship in architectural practice and to interrogate dominant architectural discourses. These scholars often develop ad hoc research methods that are themselves collaborative and transdisciplinary, including in the very formulation of their methodologies. This process typically involves the step-by-step adaptation and testing of methods from other disciplines within architectural studies, ultimately leading to the conceptualization of a methodological toolbox for broader application.

In recent years, this movement has given rise to what may be considered a body of alternative methodologies for architectural historiography. These include, for example, contact zones<sup>8</sup>, the documentary filmmaking<sup>9</sup>, the fictio-criticism<sup>10</sup>, the oral history<sup>11</sup>, the photovoicing<sup>12</sup>, the reading-with<sup>13</sup>, the site writing<sup>14</sup>, and others. What distinguishes the methodology proposed in this paper is its scope: it not only contributes to an alternative historiography of architectural agency but also centers that historiography on collaborative architectural production, as revealed through the lens of Distant Reading.

This paper aims to contribute to the ongoing discourse on investigating collaborative agency in architectural practice by proposing the following structure. First, it offers a conceptualization of Distant Reading as a methodological approach adapted from other disciplines; second, it situates the article within existing theoretical critiques and current applications of digital, data-driven tools in architectural research. Third, it presents a detailed, step-by-step methodological framework. Finally, it explains and demonstrates the application of this framework through a case study conducted by the author within the field of architectural history. The paper concludes by addressing key challenges, including critiques of the method's applicability and the current lack of shared ethical standards for its implementation.

### Distant Reading: the conceptualization

Distant Reading was first conceptualized by the literary historian and theorist Franco Moretti at Stanford University nearly twenty-five years ago as a means of introducing a global perspective into literary studies. In his foundational essay, Moretti asserts:

World literature is not an object, it's a problem, and a problem that asks for a new critical method: and no one has ever found a method by just reading more texts. That's not how theories come into being; they need a leap, a wager – a hypothesis, to get started<sup>15</sup>.

Rather than engaging in close textual analysis of a limited number of canonical works, Distant Reading advocates for the aggregation and examination of large-scale literary data. This methodological distance enables scholars to identify patterns, structures, and trends that are otherwise imperceptible through traditional close reading. As Moretti explains:

<sup>8</sup> Tom Avermaete and Cathelijne Nuijsink, "Architectural Contact Zones: Another Way to Write Global Histories of the Post-War Period?," *Architectural Theory Review* 25, no. 3 (2021): 350–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13264826.2021.1939745>.

<sup>9</sup> Igea Troiani, "Writing Architectural History as Documentary," *The Journal of Architecture* 10, no. 3 (2005): 275–84, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602360500162394>.

<sup>10</sup> Hélène Frichot and Naomi Stead, "Waking Ideas From Their Sleep: An introduction to ficto-critical writing in and of architecture," in *Writing Architectures: Ficto-Critical Approaches*, ed. Hélène Frichot and Naomi Stead (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2020), 11–24.

<sup>11</sup> Janina Gosseye, Naomi Stead and Deborah Van der Plaet, *Speaking of Buildings: Oral History in Architectural Research* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Camille A. Sutton-Brown, "Photovoice: A Methodological Guide," *Photography and Culture* 7, no. 2 (2014): 169–85, <https://doi.org/10.2752/175145214X13999922103165>.

<sup>13</sup> Anne Hultzsich and Sol Pérez Martínez, "Reading-With: A Collaborative Method for Inclusive Architectural Histories," *Architectural Histories* 11, no. 1 (2023): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.16995/ah.10332>.

<sup>14</sup> Jane Rendell, "Site-Writing: She Is Walking about in a Town Which She Does Not Know," *Home Cultures* 4, no. 2 (2007): 177–99, <https://doi.org/10.2752/174063107X209019>.

<sup>15</sup> Franco Moretti, "Conjectures of World Literature," in *Distant Reading*, Franco Moretti (Verso Books, 2013), 46.

Distance is a condition of knowledge: it allows you to focus on units that are much smaller or much larger than the text – devices, themes, tropes – or genres and systems. And if, between the very small and the very large, the text itself disappears, well, it is one of those cases when one can justifiably say: less is more. If we want to understand the system in its entirety, we must accept losing something<sup>16</sup>.

Distant Reading employs computational tools and text-mining techniques to process extensive corpora, enabling the identification of recurring themes, stylistic devices, and structural patterns. Statistical methods such as z-scores, principal component analysis, and clustering algorithms are commonly used to analyze literary data, offering insights into the evolution and distribution of literary phenomena across time and space<sup>17</sup>. A central tenet of Moretti's approach is the inclusion of texts outside the traditional literary canon – what he refers to as “the great unread.” By incorporating lesser-known works, Distant Reading expands the scope of literary history and challenges the limitations of close reading, which, as Moretti critiques, “in all of its incarnations, from New Criticism to deconstruction, necessarily depends on an extremely small canon”<sup>18</sup>. In recent years, Distant Reading has been increasingly adopted in visually oriented disciplines such as art history, contributing to the rapid growth of digital humanities. Scholars now apply digital tools to a wide range of textual materials – including novels, speeches, articles, dictionaries, and archival documents – thereby broadening the methodological toolkit available for cultural analysis. From its inception, Distant Reading has embodied a cross-disciplinary ethos, integrating literary theory with computational science. At its core lies a commitment to formal analysis, which Moretti identifies as the cornerstone of literary scholarship:

Formal analysis is the great accomplishment of literary study and is therefore also what any new approach – quantitative, digital, evolutionary, whatever—must prove itself against: prove that it can do formal analysis, better than we already do. Or at least: equally well, in a different key. Otherwise, what is the point?<sup>19</sup>.

### **Distant Reading and architectural studies: lack of theories and abundance of tools**

Very few architectural studies have explicitly proposed theoretical frameworks for, or concrete applications of, Distant Reading. Nevertheless, several emerging and adjacent works within the digital and spatial humanities have begun to explore analogous computational and data-driven approaches in architectural contexts – albeit often without directly referencing Moretti's methodology. Given that a fully articulated theoretical framework for Distant Reading in architectural historiography is still in its formative stages, the following trajectories and scholars provide a valuable foundation for an article such as this – one that seeks to bridge literary theory, digital humanities, and architectural historical research. Specifically, this article situates itself among those scholars who have begun to experiment with architectural corpora, either by explicitly engaging with Moretti's work or by adopting comparable computational and systemic approaches

<sup>16</sup> Franco Moretti, “Conjectures of World Literature,” in *Distant Reading*, Franco Moretti (Verso Books, 2013), 49.

<sup>17</sup> Z-scores are standardized values that indicate how many standard deviations a data point is from the mean, allowing for comparison across different datasets or variables. Principal Component Analysis (PCA) is a statistical technique used to reduce the dimensionality of data by transforming it into a set of orthogonal components that capture the most variance, making complex datasets more interpretable. Clustering algorithms are unsupervised machine learning methods that group data points based on similarity, revealing hidden patterns or structures in large datasets; common examples include k-means and hierarchical clustering.

<sup>18</sup> Franco Moretti, “Conjectures of World Literature,” in *Distant Reading*, Franco Moretti (Verso Books, 2013), 48.

<sup>19</sup> Franco Moretti, “Style, Inc.: Reflections on 7,000 Titles (British Novels, 1740-1850),” in *Distant Reading*, Franco Moretti (Verso Books, 2013), 204.

to architectural historiography, including network analysis, topic modeling, and metadata mining. These methods are particularly evident in the large-scale analysis of digital architectural archives and metadata (e.g., building permits, competition entries, or architectural journals); in the mapping of collaborations and institutional networks within architectural production, which resonates with Moretti's emphasis on systems and structures over individual authorship; and in the visualization of architectural discourse through text mining of manifestos, publications, and archival correspondence. However, it is still important to clarify that Distant Reading is not merely another term for the above emerging methods in architectural studies, that one can collect under the umbrella of data mining. As described in the former section, Distant Reading is a humanities-based approach whose primary aim has always been to understand literary and cultural trends by analyzing large corpora of texts without engaging in close reading. It emphasizes interpretation, theoretical frameworks, and historical context. By contrast, data mining is an approach rooted in computer science and statistics, designed to uncover patterns, correlations, or anomalies within large datasets, often for predictive or decision-making purposes. While this distinction may seem self-evident to experts in the digital humanities, it is worth reiterating: data mining is primarily descriptive and predictive, whereas distant reading is fundamentally interpretive. This implies that the former can serve as a tool for the latter, but not vice versa. Therefore, this article argues that Distant Reading operates at the intersection of documental writing (the systematic collection and structuring of data) and historiographical narrative (the interpretive construction of meaning from that data). The hypothesis underlying this application is that Distant Reading enables the emergence of previously obscured conditions, thereby facilitating the dissemination of knowledge about these overlooked aspects. At the same time, it aims to protect vulnerable topics, identities, and confidential interests through the deployment of computational methods and theoretical diagramming.

One of the most notable examples is the work of Carola Hein, who has examined large-scale spatial and infrastructural networks through historical mapping and data aggregation. While not explicitly framed as Distant Reading, her research on global urbanism and oil infrastructure adopts a similarly systemic and transnational perspective, resonating with Moretti's emphasis on scale and abstraction<sup>20</sup>. Andrew Leach has also contributed to the theoretical discourse on architectural historiography, particularly concerning authorship and disciplinary boundaries. Although he does not directly apply Distant Reading, his reflections on the methodological limits of architectural history echo the motivations behind Moretti's critique of close reading<sup>21</sup>. In the realm of digital humanities and architecture, *The Architecture of the Book* by Matthew Allen<sup>22</sup> and *Architectural Intelligence: How Designers and Architects Created the Digital Landscape* by Molly Wright Steenson<sup>23</sup> both engage with computational methods and the large-scale analysis of architectural discourse. While these projects do not always cite Moretti, they employ techniques such as text mining, metadata analysis, and network visualization that parallel the Distant Reading approach. Additionally, initiatives such as *Visualizing Venice*<sup>24</sup> apply digital mapping and data visualization to architectural and urban history. Though focused on visual and spatial data, the project shares

<sup>20</sup> Carola Hein, *Oil Spaces: Exploring the Global Petroleumscape* (Routledge, 2021).

<sup>21</sup> Andrew Leach, *What is Architectural History?* (Polity Press, 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Matthew Allen, *Flowcharting From Abstractionism to Algorithmics in Art and Architecture* (gta Verlag, 2023).

<sup>23</sup> Molly Wright Steenson, *Architectural Intelligence: How Designers and Architects Created the Digital Landscape* (MIT Press, 2022).

<sup>24</sup> Kristin L. Huffman, Andrea Giordano and Caroline Bruzelius, *Visualizing Venice: Mapping and Modeling Time and Change in a City* (Routledge, 2017).

Moretti's commitment to systemic analysis and the use of digital tools to uncover patterns across large datasets. Other noteworthy initiatives include those focused on the development of digital pedagogies in architectural education, both for history and theory<sup>25</sup> and design studies<sup>26</sup>. Together, these contributions indicate a growing interest in adapting the principles of digital humanities – particularly its emphasis on scale, abstraction, and systemic thinking – to the study of architecture. However, to date, as above mentioned, no widely cited architectural studies have formalized Distant Reading as a method in the way Moretti has for literary studies, let alone for architectural history and theory. This, thus, motivates and defines the innovative and ambitious scope of the present article.

### A possible toolbox

Despite the numerous and evident advantages that Distant Reading may offer to architectural history – particularly in its effort to transcend the North American and European perspectives and theories that have traditionally dominated the canon – as above mentioned there has yet to be a thorough reflection on the possibilities and limitations of adapting this method from literary studies to architectural history. Such an adaptation seeks to identify previously unheard agencies and to enable the writing of collective, alternative historiographies in architecture. This adaptation is not merely theoretical; it involves a retooling of Franco Moretti's specific analytical procedures to suit the distinct nature of architectural data and historiographical aims. The following section presents an initial attempt to extract from Moretti's method – again not just in terms of theoretical propositions – a potential toolbox for architectural historians. In the subsequent section, specific examples will be drawn from the proposed case study to illustrate its application. This toolbox is designed to reveal the collaborative nature of architectural practices through a series of systematic steps (i.e., quantification, contextualization, cross-domain comparison, anomaly detection, and socio-cultural critique). Its purpose is to serve as both an operational asset and a conceptual ally in the development of historiographies centered on multiple agencies, utilizing large-scale data.

The first step involves identifying a *quantitative* dimension. In Moretti's literary model, this might be the length of book titles; in architecture, a parallel could be the recurrence of specific professional names within a selected dataset. By measuring and analyzing such repetitions, insights can be gained into trends and patterns that may not be immediately apparent. Next, Moretti suggests *contextualizing* these findings through the analysis of book reviews. A similar approach in architecture would involve examining how the identified professionals have – or have not – entered the canon, both as individuals and as part of broader networks of canonical figures. What is at stake is the representation – or the omission – in canonical texts, exhibitions, or academic discourse. This step begins to shift from documentation to historiographical interpretation: it situates the quantitative data within a wider discursive context, allowing for an understanding of how these nodes are perceived and discussed within the academic community. The method also prompts the addition of another quantitative lens by analyzing the expansion of the literary market through library catalogues. In architectural terms, this could involve tracking the temporal evolution of a professional's

<sup>25</sup> Angela Gigliotti and Fabio Gigone, "Inquiring by Distant Reading: Learning and Unlearning Architectural Historiography," in "Learning, Life, Work", *AMPS Proceeding Series* 38 (Cindy Shearer ed., 2025): 45-56.

<sup>26</sup> Swati Chattopadhyay, "Keywords for Building the Modern World," *Platform*, June 2022, <https://www.platformspace.net/home/keywords-for-building-the-modern-world>.

involvement in a project, or the emergence of parallel initiatives – such as side projects – thereby introducing time as a new analytical dimension and additional datasets as new sources.

Another strategy proposed by the method is to draw parallels between fields – for instance, between literature and advertising. In architectural history, such *cross-domain comparisons* can help identify common trends and influences that shape how architectural practices are documented, disseminated, and promoted. This might involve comparing architectural discourse with media coverage, legal frameworks, or technological developments, revealing how architectural knowledge is shaped by external forces.

Once macro-patterns have been established, the method encourages a shift toward identifying and analyzing *anomalies and niches* – slower-moving or more granular irregular aspects of the data. In the context of architectural collaboration, this could mean focusing on a specific patent, a marginal figure, a contested authorship, or a negotiated condition among stakeholders. Within these niches, the method re-engages with anomalies or “oddities,” using them as historiographical entry points, allowing for a deeper analysis of collective agency and institutional dynamics. The method then introduces another layer of contextualization by examining the *societal and gender* implications of these anomalies – for example, the appearance of female names without surnames. This step allows for an understanding of how such irregularities reflect broader social and cultural dynamics. It can be adapted to architectural datasets to uncover systemic exclusions or biases. These irregularities are not just data points; they are historiographical signals that demand critical interpretation.

Finally, the method supports the development of a critical argument by tracing the divergences among these anomalies. This process illustrates how seemingly insignificant details and overlooked elements can significantly contribute to the construction of historical narratives. In sum, while this toolbox draws directly from Moretti’s methodological steps, it diverges in its ultimate aim. Moretti’s goal was to map literary systems, unveiling the “great unread”; in this article and thus in the proposed application in architectural history, the goal is to construct historiographical narratives that foreground multiplicity, collaboration, and the politics of visibility in architectural history. The method thus oscillates between documental writing and historiographical interpretation, using computational tools not just to describe but to critically reframe how, for too long, architectural history has been written.

### Det Danske Institut Arkiv: an exploration

As an example of the application of Distant Reading in architectural history, this section introduces a specific case of exploratory testing of the method conducted by the author. The research project, titled “*Unheard workers: Behind a foreign diplomatic architecture of the 1960s in Rome*”<sup>27</sup>, aimed to uncover the horizontal and vertical forms of collaboration that occurred at the Danish Academy’s building site in Rome, Italy (DIR). This case represents an instance of soft diplomatic architecture whose transcultural and collaborative authorship remains absent from dominant historiographical narratives, which have primarily focused on the Danish architectural authorship of

<sup>27</sup> Self-Initiated Research Project awarded as the HM Queen Margrethe II’s Distinguished Postdoc Fellowship at the Det Danske Institut i Rom, Italy by Carlsberg Foundation (2021-2024; Grant no. CF20-0463). Affiliated institution: Chair for the History and Theory of Urban Design at the Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture (gta / ETH Zurich) and Aarhus School of Architecture.



Kay Otto Fisker. Within this project, the author undertook as a principal investigator the full arc of a research project – from the construction of the dataset to the formulation of alternative historiography – by developing several theoretical diagrams and interpretative considerations derived from the application of Distant Reading to architectural history. The emerging findings differ and supplement from conclusions that have been drawn by applying traditional methods of research, as other scholars have done<sup>28</sup>. Building upon a detailed introduction of the dataset's construction, this section has two combined scopes: exploring with some pragmatical examples the former section method's steps (i.e. quantification, contextualization, cross-domain comparison, anomaly detection, and socio-cultural critique); and, stressing for each of those which are the main issues that the use of this method made emerge and would have otherwise remained hidden. It is important to emphasize that, since this article aims to contribute to the discussion on methodologies that may support the development of alternative historiographies and narratives centred on collective modes of architectural production, readers seeking a detailed alternative historiography of the building itself should refer to other sources<sup>29</sup>.

### The construction of the dataset

The first step involved the selection of the source material, following the author's compilation of the Construction Dossier – referred to as the *Byggesager Dossier* – a sub-collection related to the building site operations housed in the archive of the DIR<sup>30</sup>. While the use of such an institutional archive might appear to be an obvious choice for a project focused on the architecture it documents, the selection is more nuanced when considering which archival sources are typically regarded as valuable and underexplored within architectural diplomatic studies. Scholars often begin with the archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which historically oversaw national construction projects abroad. However, while those archives primarily contain political correspondence, the DIR archive presents a unique case in which soft diplomatic architecture emerges from the involvement of multiple agencies, ranging from ministries and government institutions to on-site workers engaged in the daily practices of construction.

Moreover, the nature of the DIR archive is such that only a minority of its contents pertain directly to architecture – for example, correspondence with subcontractors, civil servants, clients, donors, meeting minutes, and invoices. Of this architectural subset, only a very limited portion – specifically the drawing collections<sup>31</sup> – has been examined by scholars to date. The majority of the archive instead concerns the daily operations of the Academy, including management-level reports and minutes from various Danish ministries, directors, and expert boards, as well as the storage of all submitted applications by researchers and artists over the years. Physically located in the basement of the DIR, the archive contains over 90,000 diverse documents.

In November 2021, the DIR initiated a process of repackaging and registering its collection, which continued until December 2022. During this period, approximately 13,500 items dated between 1951 and 1975 were recorded in a digital database accessible on-site<sup>32</sup>. Nonetheless, compiling a sub-collection – the Dossier – was a necessary step in identifying a manageable dataset from

<sup>28</sup> Bente Lange, Marianne Pade and Jens Lindhe, *Scandinavian Modernism in Rome: Kay Fisker and the Danish Academy* (Edizioni Quasar, 2018); Marianne Pade, "Det Danske Institut i Rom: Et Hovedværk i Skandinavisk Modernistisk Arkitektur," *Romhorisont* 70 (2019): 10-11; Marianne Ibler, *Kay Fisker and the Danish Academy in Rome* (Archipress M, 2006); Kjeld De Fine Licht, "L'accademia Danese a Roma. Anatomia Di Una Architettura," *Parametro: Mensile Internazionale Di Architettura e Urbanistica* 142 (1985): 54-63; Kjeld De Fine Licht, "Kay Fisker e l'Accademia Di Danimarca," *Analecta Romana Istituti Danici* 22 (1994): 153-57; Kjeld De Fine Licht, *L'accademia Di Danimarca a Roma* (Det Danske Institut, 1981); Kjeld De Fine Licht, "La Relazione Tra l'Italia e La Danimarca," *Il Veltro: Rivista Della Civiltà Italiana* 3 (XXV) (1981); Poul Erik Skriver, "Det Danske Institut i Rom Arkitekt: Kay Fisker," *Arkitektur* 4 (1970): 148-153; Fabia Masciello, "Accademia Di Danimarca," *Abitare Magazine* 408 (2001): 170-75; Martin Søberg, *Kay Fisker: Works and Ideas in Danish Modern Architecture* (Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2021); Samuel Quagliotto, *Kay Otto Fisker: Architetto Danese Della Monumentalità Del Quotidiano* (Campisano Editore, 2021); Karen Ascani and Gamrath H., "Danske Kulturinstitutioner i Italien," in: *Italien og Danmark 100 års inspiration*, Jørn Moestrup and Nyholm E. eds. (Gads Forlag, 1989); Giancarlo Rosa, "Un'architettura Danese a Roma Vent'anni Dopo. Kay Fisker, l'Accademia Di Danimarca e i Progetti Degli Architetti Stranieri a Roma," *Parametro: Mensile Internazionale Di Architettura e Urbanistica* 142 (December 1985): 49-53.

<sup>29</sup> See this article's footnotes 39-43 and 45.

<sup>30</sup> Supported by: Carlsberg Foundation.

<sup>31</sup> Kjeld De Fine Licht, "L'accademia Danese a Roma. Anatomia Di Una Architettura," *Parametro: Mensile Internazionale Di Architettura e Urbanistica* 142 (1985): 54-63.

<sup>32</sup> Supported by: A.P. Møller og Hustru Chastine Mc-Kinney Møllers Fond til almene Formaal and by the Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansens Fond. Credits: Director Charlotte Bundgaard (scientific coordination); Marianne Nordby (physical reorganisation); digitalisation outsourced.



which to extract and analyze quantitative aspects. Although the digitization and dossier compilation occurred simultaneously on the same body of documents, they served distinct purposes: the former addressed challenges related to preservation and digitization in contemporary archival collections, while the latter sought to address and overcome historiographical blind spots. Specifically, while the entire archival collection underwent substantial reorganization, the author's parallel effort focused on identifying all documents related to the building's construction. This resulted in a curated subset of 1,223 items, each treated with detailed and searchable archival metadata under a clearly defined research scope: to uncover the contributions of previously unheard workers involved in the construction of the very building that now houses the archive (1958-1967).

The simultaneous digitization and categorization processes presented certain challenges. While the Dossier supplements and deepens the broader digitization effort, it remains partially misaligned with the general digital recording system, as the original categorization and collocation schemes were replaced with a new one. Consequently, 66% of the documents were recorded under the old system, dating to the 1960s<sup>33</sup>, while the remaining 34% were recorded under the new system and internally labeled with a "Revised Box" tag<sup>34</sup>. Although this dual categorization did not affect the methodological application of Distant Reading, it is important to acknowledge this limitation when referencing these documents and considering their future use within the archive.

This comprehensive reorganization, digitization, and text processing effort have proven advantageous for the archive as a whole, providing a detailed and thematically focused subsection of data that supports the broader objectives of the research project on the building process. In other words, this pilot archive subset enhances and enriches the overall archival structure by demonstrating the significant potential of the DIR archive as a primary research resource. As such, the DIR archive presents a valuable opportunity – not only for the research project at hand but also for future investigations that move beyond questions of design authorship or the building's inauguration. These future inquiries might instead focus on the lived experiences of the Academy's guests or address issues of upkeep, management, and renovation.

### Five things that would have remained hidden otherwise

Once the dataset was compiled, the previously introduced toolbox was applied step by step. The advantage of employing Distant Reading – a method traditionally associated with lexicon-based disciplines – in a materially and visually oriented field such as architecture lies in its capacity to provide a comprehensive overview and facilitate the analysis of large volumes of data, such as those contained in the *Byggesager Dossier*. As a method, Distant Reading proves valuable in uncovering collaborative dynamics by tracing transnational, transcontinental, and transdisciplinary dialogues, exchanges, and networks among architectural workers. This broad definition encompasses all those agencies historically marginalized due to gender, class, labor, and race – figures often obscured by the dominant narrative of singular authorship.

However, the application of Distant Reading in this context comes with a specific condition: it is applied to textual datasets rather than visual or drawn materials. Even when architectural draw-

<sup>33</sup> Specifically the folders: Byggesag 1966-67; Byggesager 1968; Grundstensnedlæggelse; Udgående Skrivelse 1958-65; and Indgående Skrivelse 1962-66.

<sup>34</sup> Specifically the folders: Byggesag Box 3; Indgående 1958-1961; Indgående 1965-1970; Sagen Hartmann 21 Maj 1957-23 September 1962; Udgående 15-05-65/07-07-62; Udgående 1960-61; Udgående 1965-70; and Udgående 1958-59.

ings are examined, it is the written colophon accompanying each drawing that provides the usable data, rather than any typological or formal interpretation.

The first set of diagrams involves what Moretti refers to as *quantification*: a documentary step to establish a quantitative baseline from the built dataset from which patterns can emerge. Specifically, it entails the identification, coding, and extraction of specific nodes corresponding to the names and interrelationships among various professionals – such as political agents, artists, writers, secondary architects, contractors, shareholders, builders, laypersons, users, and other actors—or companies active in the building industry at that time. Their participation in the construction process under scrutiny (i.e., the Danish Academy in Rome) is evidenced by the available written documentation in the Dossier, which extensively covers the bureaucratic procedures accompanying the architectural project from conception to completion. The sources thus include step-by-step approvals by relevant bureaucratic bodies in both Denmark and Italy, such as building permits, negotiations, legal proceedings, invoices, receipts, offers, and correspondence. The data in this case are extracted from these sources, assessing analogically all the written documentation through a close reading of what is available, by noting the necessary information (e.g., personal names and company names) into nodes, whose relations are graphically established as found in the documents. The extracted diagrams are both numerous and correspond to specific moments in the building process (e.g., legislative procedures, design development in Copenhagen, subcontracting in Rome, maintenance, occupancy...); and, parallelly, a further diagram is developed that focuses on clustering and mapping the topics discussed in the dataset, allowing for the identification of thematic trends and recurring patterns at a preliminary interpretive level that would enable preliminary historiographic consideration. This latter diagram already yields insights that contribute to a narrative of the Danish Academy, embracing its cross-cultural and transnational hybrid nature – one that acknowledges the labor, dedication, and often overlooked contributions of the many individuals involved behind its formal appearance<sup>35</sup>.

The second diagram involves what Moretti names as *contextualization* by employing time as a quantitative lens, reconstructing a timeline of the building process by identifying and coding all temporal references in the dataset – days, months, and years. This enabled the detection of precise chronological patterns and helped dismantle the prevailing apologetic narrative of the smooth process by highlighting frictions and negotiations among the involved parties both at the decisional level<sup>36</sup> and at the building construction level<sup>37</sup>.

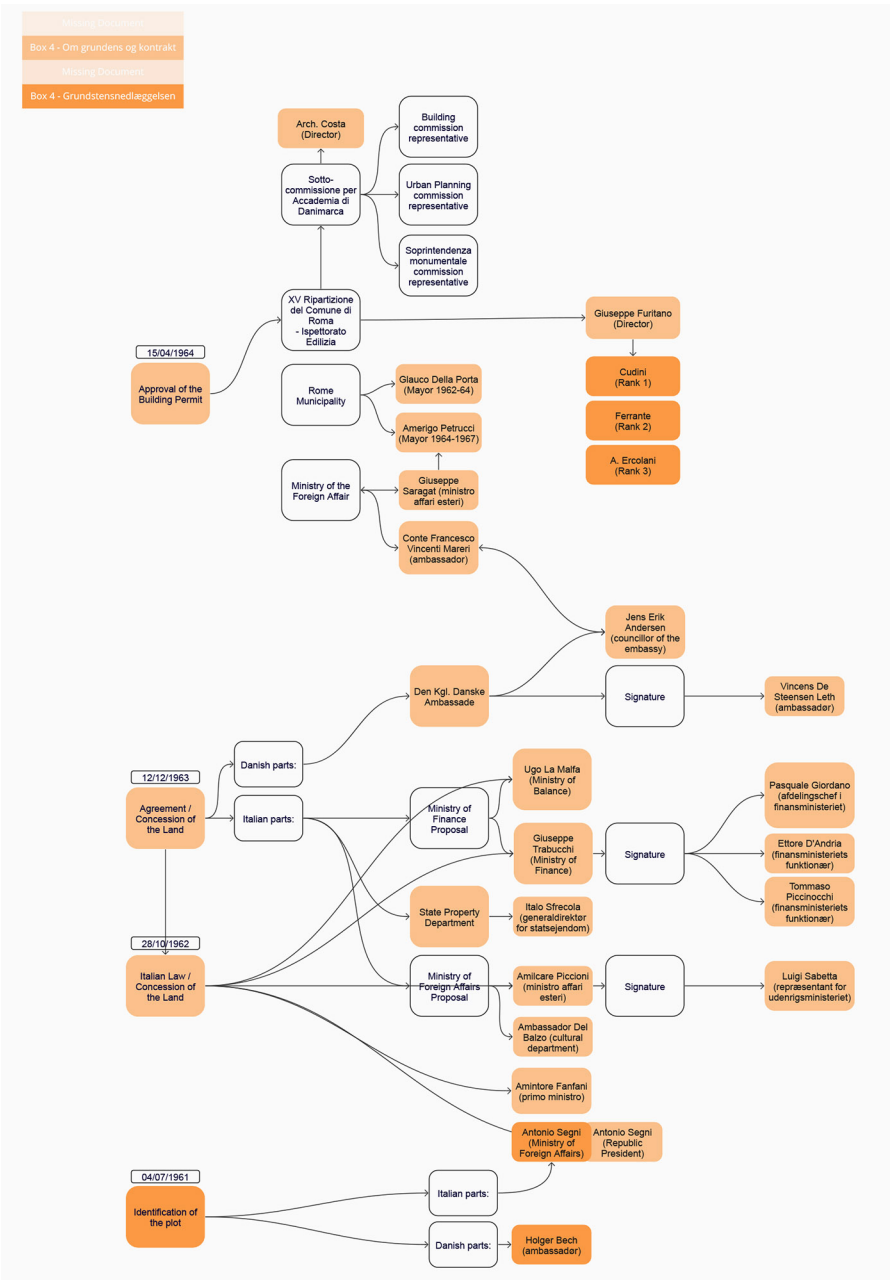
The third step corresponds to what Moretti names the *cross-domain comparison*. It shifts from the usual dataset of the Dossier to examine whether some of the nodes that emerged in the first step were overlooked within the overall architectural discourse at the time: specifically, the Italian engineer-architect Luciano Rubino (1926-2005) and his wife at the time, Danish interior designer Inge Pedersen (1930-2017). Thanks to the digital indexing of the Italian architectural magazine *L'architettura – cronache e storia* (L'A), founded and edited from 1955 to 2000 by Bruno Zevi, one can easily verify their media coverage and reveal multiple aspects related to the architectural historiography of the Danish Academy, including: authorship – particularly the pivotal role of Ped-

<sup>35</sup> Angela Gigliotti, "The Byggesager Dossier and the reclaim of a plural authorship for Det Danske Institut i Rom," in *Forum Architekturwissenschaft* (8), ed. Eva Maria Froschauer, Klaus Platzgummer, Frederike Lausch and Sandra Meireis (TU Berlin Universitätsverlag, forthcoming).

<sup>36</sup> Angela Gigliotti, "Almost frenemies: that time that trans-regional Swedish-Danish exchanges in architecture failed" *Konsthistorisk tidskrift/Journal of Art History*, forthcoming.

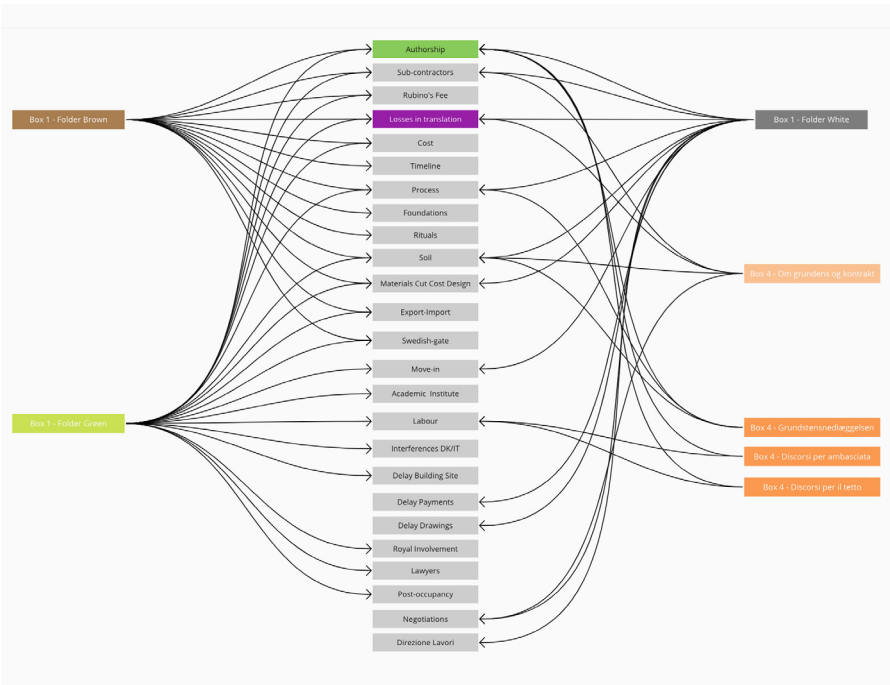
<sup>37</sup> Angela Gigliotti, "Ceci n'est pas béton armé: unveiling the backbone behind the bricks at Det Danske Institut in Rome." In *Urban Corporis – To the bones*, Mickeal Milocco Borlini, Califano A., Riciputo A. eds. (Anteferma, 2023): 94-103.

11.1  
Power Mapping about the negotiation between the Italian and Danish parties on the concession of the land. Infographics by the author.



<sup>38</sup> Angela Gigliotti, "Built to vanish: when landscape made architecture and authorship disappear," *sITA - Studies in History and Theory of Architecture* 12 (2024): 173-92, [https://sita.uuim.ro/article/12\\_11\\_Gigliotti](https://sita.uuim.ro/article/12_11_Gigliotti).

ersen as a female designer and the only one on-site fluent in both languages; production studies – regarding the transnational Italian-Danish building site; and the existence of other concurrent commissions, such as the design and construction of a set of four holiday villas à la Danoise on the hilly side of Lake Bracciano in Trevignano Romano, fifty kilometers away (about a one-hour drive) from the Danish Academy<sup>38</sup>. The fourth step corresponds to what Moretti names anomaly detection, focusing on a marginalised detail – a specific technological patent superimposed to Italian sub-contractors by Danish parties: the cooling ceiling – or køleloft. Discovering this anomaly not only uncovers a new marginalised actor, Danish engineer K.E. Jeppesen, and the company he represented, G.W. Ventilation, but also illustrates how microhistory related to technological installations and patents may



11.2  
Thematic Clusters. Infographics by the author.



11.3  
Timeline of the Building Site. Infographics by the author.



#### 11.4

Villa Rubino/Pedersen in Trevignano Romano. Photographer: Luciano Rubino.

#### 11.5

G.W.'s advertisement, already published as A453, *Arkitekten* 10 (1968): 85.



provide an alternative perspective for architectural historiography. This demonstrates that the production of transnational architecture is far from seamless or idealized<sup>39</sup>. Instead, it shows how architecture was influenced by external forces and political contingencies, grounded in the paid advertisements generated by G.W. in the Danish non-specialised press<sup>40</sup>.

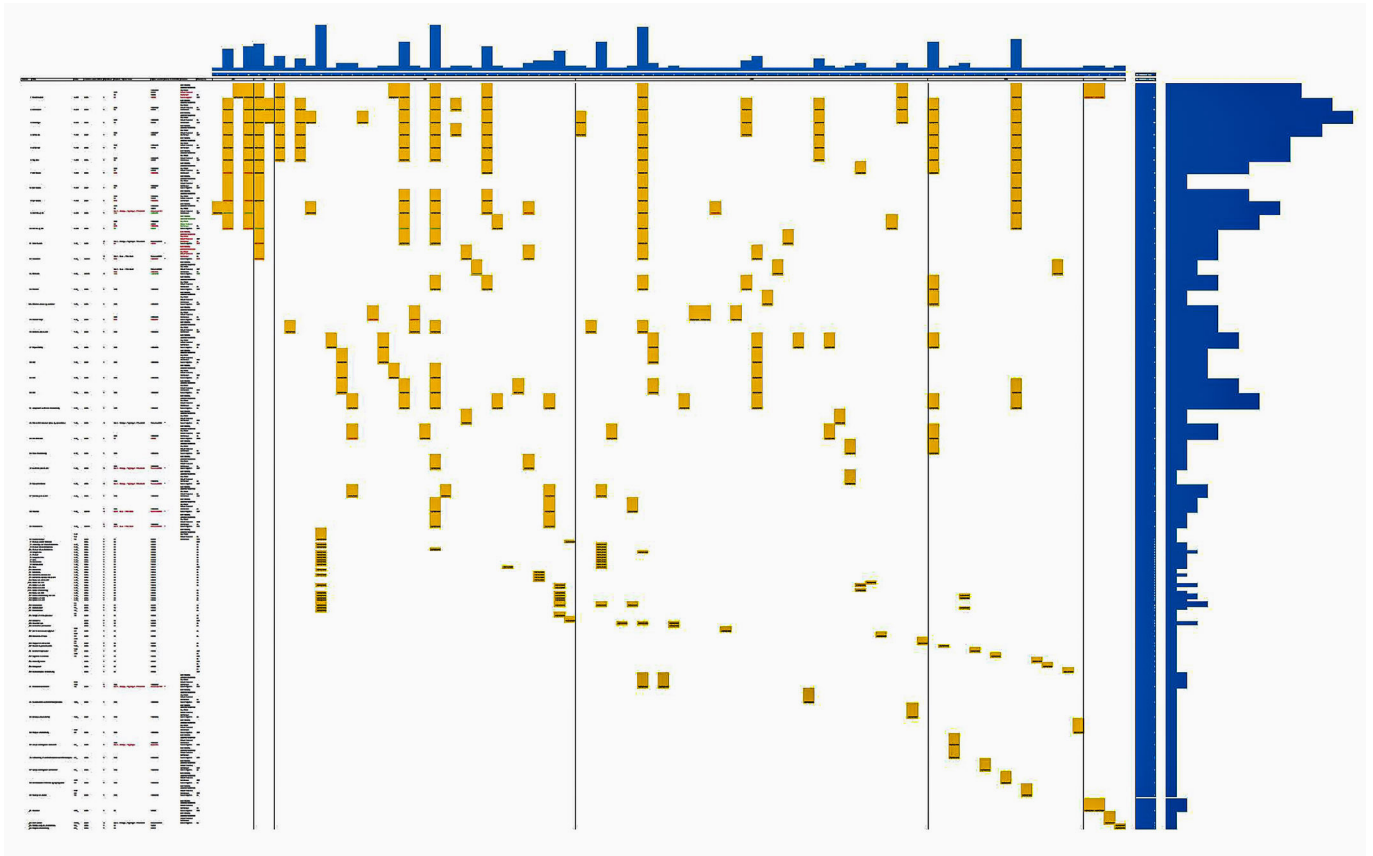
The last diagram involves what Moretti names the socio-cultural critique. In examining the apparatus of the architectural drawings – particularly the colophons – the dataset of the *Dossier* revealed a form of collective authorship, albeit one executed under conditions of subordinate employment. A total of 84 drawings were identified as part of the construction process, each corresponding to a row in the analytical chart. The top histogram in the diagram uses time as a variable to address the question: how many drawings were delivered per day? The right-hand histogram employs revision frequency as a variable to answer: how many revised versions were produced for each drawing? Together, these visualizations facilitate a comparative analysis of architectural production and support the hypothesis of a neglected historiography about class (i.e. employers vs employees) where actors embarked in a continuous back-forth between Italian and Danish design parties, well after the passing of Kay Fisker (June 21st, 1965); similarly, further analysis and interpretation of the colophons revealed the collaborative nature of Fisker's dominant authorship<sup>41</sup>. Specifically, 45% of the drawings (38 out of 84) were co-signed by JA and HCC, identified through the diagrams as Jack Andersen and Hans Christian Carlsen. A similar proportion, 46% (39 out of 84), were signed by only one of the two – 33 by JA and 6 by HCC. Additionally, 6% of the drawings (5 out of 84) included another draughtsman, PDM, tentatively identified as Peder Duelund Mortensen. The initials NOT and NOK could not be conclusively identified, and 3% of the drawings (3 out of 84) lacked any initials, leaving the authorship of those documents unknown.

<sup>39</sup> Angela Gigliotti, "Not in my book: the dissing about a non-standardized standard behind the scenes of the Det Danske Institut i Rom," in *Building on Foreign Territory: An Architectural History of Diplomacy*, Fredie Floré, Angela Gigliotti and Moré A.F. (Bloomsbury Publishing, forthcoming).

<sup>40</sup> 1844 hits found (Keyword: G.W. Ventilation; Timespan: from 1/01/1950 to 31/12/1970) on the newspaper digital archive by the Det Kgl. Bibliotek at: <https://www2.statsbiblioteket.dk/mediastream/> Accessed September 13, 2024.

<sup>41</sup> Angela Gigliotti, "Son of a brick! When the lore of the skin bypassed facts at the Det Danske Institut i Rom," in "Kay Fisker" *Special Issue of Magasin for Bygningskunst og Kultur* vol.11 Spring 2026 edited by Angela Gigliotti and Martin Søberg (forthcoming).

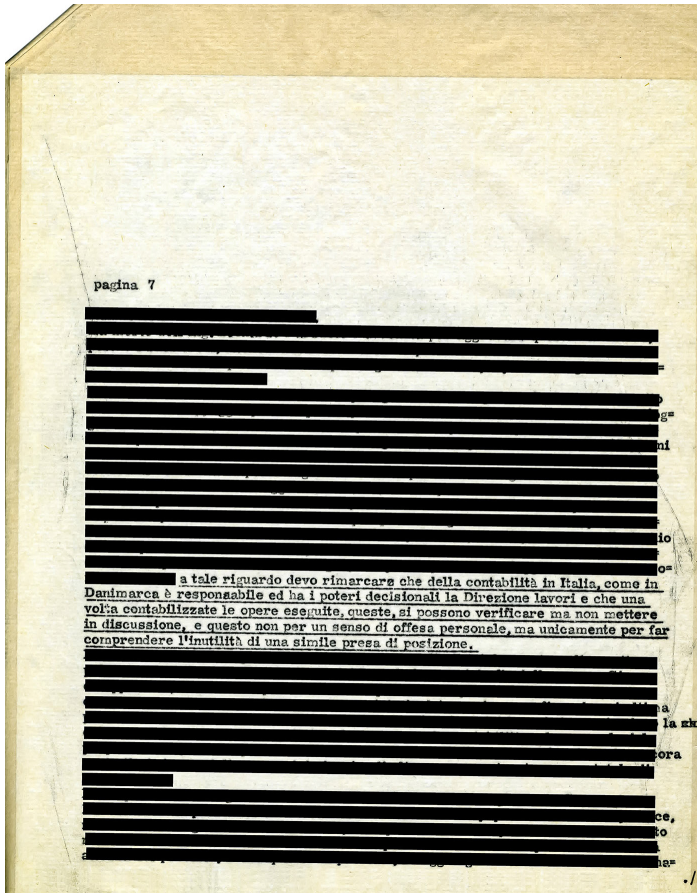




11.6  
Drawings Chart. Infographics by the author.

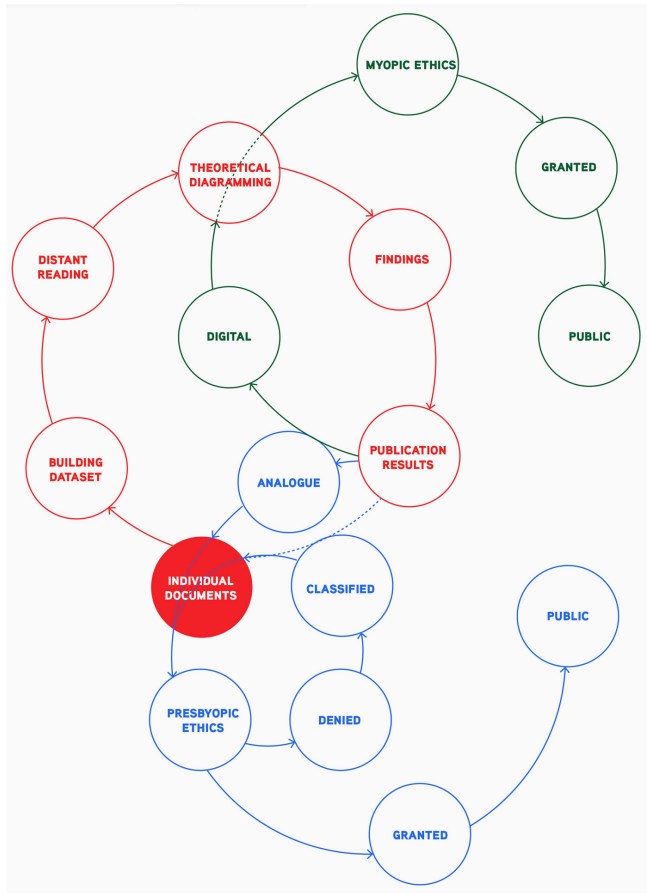
### Institutional ethics

Once the use of Distant Reading has been outlined, it is worth introducing some remarks in terms of institutional ethical considerations and strict access restrictions. For instance, circling back to the dataset construction, while the archive is physically located in Italy, it adheres to the organizational framework and archiving policies of the Danish National Archives (*Rigsarkivet*). This is significant since, for example, documents concerning private Danish affairs are protected by a 75-year embargo, while those related to the Royal House and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are restricted for 100 years. When applied to the documents included in the experimental testing of Distant Reading, these restrictions would delay the public release of any research findings by at least 25 years. The scrutiny imposed by institutional data guardians – those responsible for defining privacy, ethics, and data management protocols following international standards designed to protect vulnerable entities from public exposure and data breaches is quite rigorous. There is, in fact, a growing awareness among research institutions that ethical guidelines are necessary even when human subjects are not directly involved, particularly when digital infrastructures are specifically designed and deployed for research purposes. Nonetheless, current institutional frameworks for digital methods have primarily focused on the implications of digital environments for



11.7  
Translation of the letter by Luciano Rubino to Hans Christian Carlsen. Collage by the author. Object: 'Oversættelse – Rapport Vedr. Accademia Di Danimarca i Rom.' March 1st, 1968. DIR Archive – Box 1 – Folder White - Byggesag 1968. – Document 55 – ©Det Danske Institut i Rom.

11.8  
Presbyopic and Myopic Ethics. Infographics by the author.

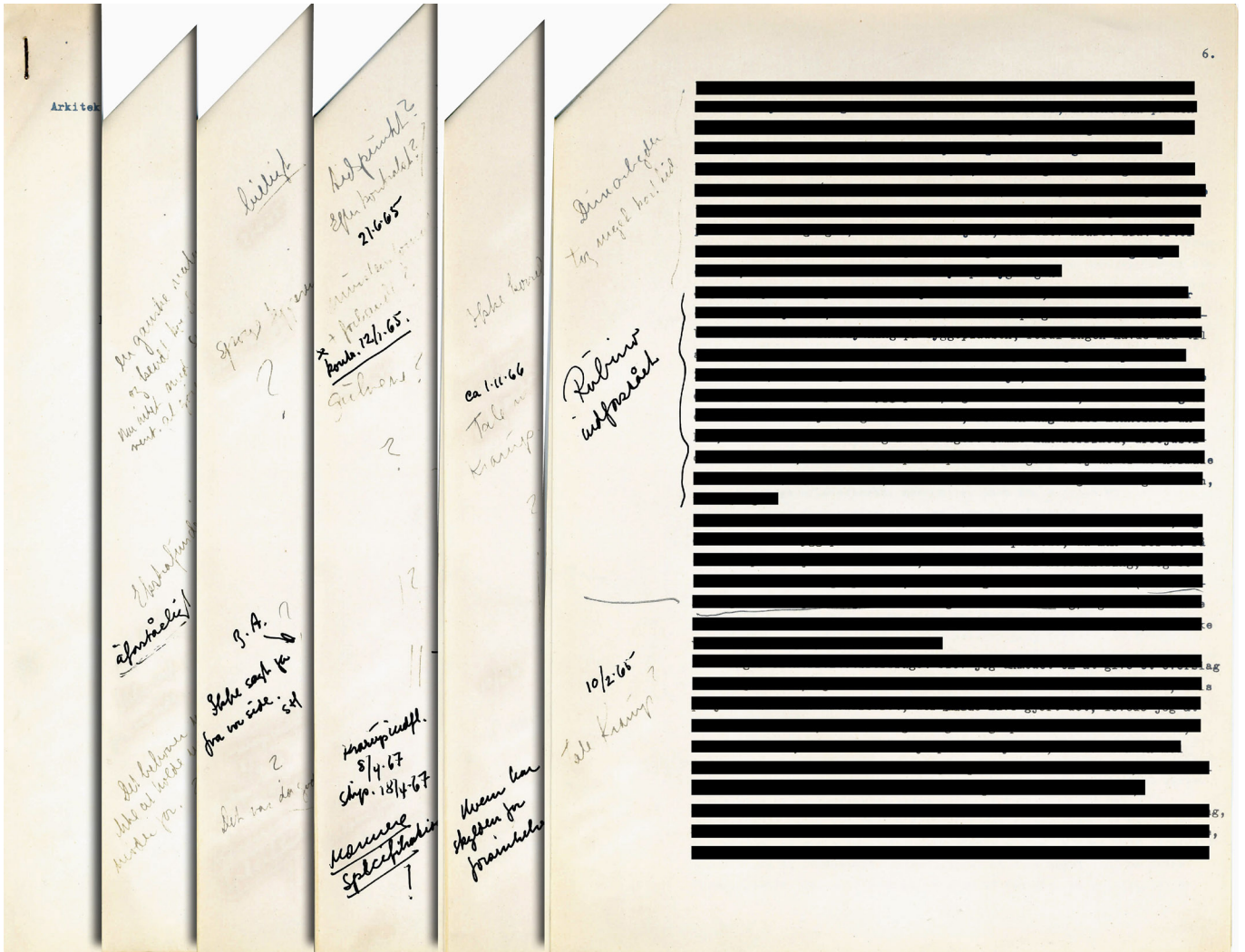


speculative investigations of the built environment – such as the metaverse or digital mapping – and issues of ownership and copyright associated with such databases. Additional concerns have emerged regarding the integration of artificial intelligence into pedagogical and didactic practices. However, there are no specific institutional guidelines for Distant Reading, which is often received within academic institutions under a generic and sometimes arbitrary set of concerns. This has rendered the application of Distant Reading in architectural history and digital humanities an intricate labyrinth with few clear instructions. Fortunately, institutional concerns have not hindered the increasing use of digital tools, infrastructures, and databases, nor the production of infographics and theoretical diagrams that identify patterns and connections among nodes. However, these concerns can, unfortunately, result in the permanent silencing of neglected and often unheard collaborative agencies. For this article, it is worth proposing a diagram that illustrates how institutional ethics have been applied to the use of Distant Reading at the Danish Academy, introducing the concepts of myopic ethics and presbyopic ethics. As previously discussed, a large dataset was constructed from 1,223 individual documents, and Distant Reading was employed to extract theoretical diagrams and findings. The key issue to explore regarding institutional ethics is the dissemination of publication results. Two distinct paths must be followed depending on whether the publication is analogue or digital. For analogue publications, presbyopic ethics are applied – meaning that the closer the scrutiny, the blurrier the criteria. Each document is individually assessed for publication and either approved for public release or classified as confidential. This process may involve several iterations until a satisfactory balance between public visibility and institutional requirements is achieved. In contrast, for digital publications, myopic ethics are applied – meaning that the farther the scrutiny,

11.8

11.9





### 11.9

Extract from the Letter by Luciano Rubino to Hans Christian Carlsen dated March 1st, 1968. DIR Archive – Box 1 – Folder White – Byggesag 1968 – Document 33 – ©Det Danske Institut i Rom.

the blurrier the criteria. In this case, individual documents are not assessed; instead, the focus is on the theoretical diagrams, which ensure the necessary privacy. Consequently, digital publications are typically approved more readily.

To sum up, the application of Distant Reading in architectural history necessitates a critical examination of institutional ethics. Achieving an appropriate balance between publicity and privacy is essential, especially when handling large datasets that disseminate findings without releasing individual documents. The risk lies in the perpetuation of gender, racial, and class injustices regarding which findings can be shared and who decides this. Collaboration with institutional data guardians is thus crucial to designing institutionalized ethics for Distant Reading, incorporating a nuanced code of conduct that respects emancipatory goals aimed at dismantling master narratives centered solely on authorship in the built environment.

## Conclusion

To conclude, while Distant Reading is undoubtedly an innovative method that offers remarkable advantages – such as the ability to perform tasks of Sisyphean proportions by processing and analyzing vast corpora of information in seconds rather than months or years – it has faced sustained criticism since its inception. If one wishes to acknowledge the few studies that have

thus far explicitly proposed a theoretical framework for the application of such a method, it is still necessary to refer to scholars outside the field of architecture – most notably from literary studies – as foundational. In particular, the most relevant theoretical criticism of Franco Moretti's method comes from Moretti himself<sup>42</sup> and Fabio Ciotti's article *Distant Reading in Literary Studies: A Methodology in Quest of Theory*<sup>43</sup>. Moretti's own self-critique adopts a somewhat self-defeating stance in attempting to dismantle the very framework he had constructed, one might refer to it as deep ambivalence or even disillusionment. Interviewed by Hackler and Kirtsten, Moretti reflects critically on the limitations of Distant Reading, particularly its inability to fully account for the complexities of literary meaning and social critique. He acknowledges that while distant reading opened new avenues for literary analysis through data and computational methods, it also led to a kind of alienation from the literary experience he once cherished. He questions whether the method can truly grasp the richness of literature or if it risks reducing it to patterns and abstractions. Ciotti, instead, argues that Distant Reading represents the first major methodology in literary studies that lacks a coherent theory of literature. Consequently, most studies employing this method rely on pre-existing literary theories that are fundamentally interpretive. This results in a conceptual mismatch, as Distant Reading shifts the focus from interpretation to explanation – an epistemological move that traditional literary theory is not fully equipped to support. To address this gap, Ciotti proposes grounding Distant Reading in cognitive and bio-evolutionary theories of literature, as well as in cultural evolution studies. These frameworks, he suggests, provide a more appropriate theoretical foundation by enabling a shift in the level of description – from individual textual interpretation to systemic explanation. This shift legitimizes the use of computational methods and large-scale data analysis as scholarly practices within literary studies. In essence, Ciotti calls for a re-theorization of Distant Reading that aligns its methodological innovations with a robust theoretical foundation capable of supporting its explanatory ambitions.

Other “friendly fire” critiques from literary studies include: (a) a perceived loss of depth, with scholars arguing that Distant Reading sacrifices the nuance and complexity of close reading, potentially overlooking the subtleties of individual texts by focusing on large datasets; (b) reductionism, whereby literature is reduced to mere data points, stripping away the richness of literary analysis and rendering the approach overly simplistic and mechanistic; (c) an overemphasis on quantitative methods, which prioritizes statistical analysis over qualitative insight, potentially leading to a narrow understanding of literary phenomena; (d) neglect of context, as the method may fail to account for the historical, cultural, and social conditions that shape individual texts; (e) the exclusion of canonical works, as the focus on the “great unread” can sometimes marginalize texts that have been central to literary studies, thereby limiting a comprehensive understanding of literary history; and (f) technical challenges, as the implementation of Distant Reading requires significant computational expertise and resources, which may pose barriers for scholars unfamiliar with digital methods. Beyond these, criticisms regarding the accessibility of computer-based science must also be seriously addressed. This includes increasing awareness of technological biases, such as optical text recognition systems that privilege European and North American reading conven-

<sup>42</sup> Ruben Marc Hackler and Guido Kirsten, “Distant Reading, Computational Criticism, and Social Critique: An Interview with Franco Moretti” (2016), <https://doi.org/10.5167/uzh-135683>.

<sup>43</sup> Fabio Ciotti, “Distant reading in literary studies: a methodology in quest of theory,” *Testo e Senso* 23, no.12 (2021): 195–213. <https://testoesenso.it/index.php/testoesenso/article/view/509>.

tions (e.g., reliance on Western lingua franca, left-to-right orientation, and Latin scripts). Ensuring that digitized collections do not perpetuate existing accessibility barriers – including institutional paywalls, copyright restrictions, and disparities in internet access – is imperative to promoting the writing of alternative historiographies.

A final remark concerns the field of architecture, where a cohort of author-focused historians has voiced similar skepticism during conference discussions<sup>44</sup>, despite the absence of formalized positions yet. These scholars – who often proclaim the death of the author in architectural historiography – paradoxically continue to seek new authors among architects. Rather than contributing to the canon through new monographic studies, Distant Reading has been criticized for obscuring marginalized individuals within intricate relationships, patterns, and networks, privileging systemic overviews and collaboration over detailed individual analysis.

However, based on the findings presented in the preceding research, the author reaffirms the value of Distant Reading in architectural history as an innovative take that this article aimed to outline. On one hand, the distance employed can help safeguard privacy and foster a more ethically attuned approach – one that moves beyond the intimate scrutiny of individual documents. On the other hand, the ability to analyze patterns, common forms, and networks at scale through textual evidence and computational tools presents new opportunities to uncover insights that established methods in architectural history may have overlooked. Moreover, when the same datasets are governed and operated by varying regimes of ownership, ethics, and use, they can facilitate diverse forms of listening to the voices of historically marginalized and oppressed communities.

To conclude, while concerns among scholars and specifically architectural historians are understandable, they need not undermine the legitimacy of Distant Reading. Instead, these critiques can serve as a productive impetus for mixed methodologies that combine computational tools with established architectural practices. A hybridization that can contribute even more meaningfully to an inclusive and equitable understanding of architectural history. This proposition invites further exploration, and may require a follow-up article exploring expanded methodologies for architecture that could contribute to a more nuanced historiographical practice – one in which established tools inherent to the architectural profession, such as drawing, mapping, and surveying, can supplement what Distant Reading already offers.

<sup>44</sup> For instance, during the AHRA 2023 titled “Situated Ecologies of Care” held at the University of Portsmouth, Portsmouth, UK on 29 Oct 2023 in the session “The Ethics of Institutional Bureaucracy in Architectural Humanities” chaired by Isabelle Doucet, Janina Gosseye and Svava Riesto.