

· Abandonment ·
· Absence ·
· Actant ·
· Affordance ·
· Age-friendly city ·
· Anti-utopia ·
· Arcades ·
· Artialisation ·
· Atmosphere ·
· Autotopia ·
· Avatar ·
· Blasiertheit ·
· Boot scrapers ·
· Calmness ·
· Carrier bag ·
· Cinematic cityscape ·
· Civic design ·
· Converging media spaces ·
· Commoning ·
· Creative geography ·
· Critical performativity ·
· Delinquent narratives ·
· Destructive character ·
· Dissident heritage ·
· Dissonant heritage ·
· Dusk ·
· Dystopian narrative ·
· Enactive walking ·
· Embodied criticality ·
· Fourth places ·
· Gigantism ·
· Gossip ·
· Heteronym ·
· Horizontal metropolis ·
· Hyper-diversity ·
· Ideal city ·
· Intelligibility and readability ·
· Interculturality ·
· Landscape biography ·
· Latency ·
· Lieu de mémoire ·
· Local hero ·
· Manicure(d) ·
· Meme ·
· Metropolitan landscape ·
· Minor urbanism ·
· Moulage ·
· Multiperspectivity ·
· Nature study ·
· New natures ·
· Paths ·
· Place attachment ·
· Planthropocene ·
· Plasticity ·
· Radical inclusivity ·
· Ruderal ecologies ·
· Sensory community ·
· Simulacrum ·
· Situatedness ·
· Skeuomorphism ·
· Sociolect ·
· Soft architecture ·
· Street art ·
· Symbolic annihilation ·
· Threshold ·
· Townscape ·
· Undefined terrain ·
· Unintended design ·
· Urban habitat ·
· Urban eating ·
· Urban literacy ·
· Urban texts ·
· Vernacular ·
· Vernacular intervention ·
· Visual frame ·
· Wellbeing ·
· Yonder ·

writinÇ urban places

VADEMECUM

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Destructive character

In 1931, philosopher Walter Benjamin wrote a short piece titled 'The destructive character'. This text, one of Benjamin's *Denkbilder* ('thinking images') was written during one of the worst periods in German and European history: after the crisis of 1929, when European fascism was on the rise. Benjamin states:
The destructive character knows only one watchword: make room and only one activity: clearing away. It clears away the traces of our own age and has few needs, and the least of them is to know what will replace what has been destroyed. First, for a moment at least, empty space – the place where the thing stood or the victim lived. Someone is sure to be found who needs this space without occupying it. (Benjamin, 1999b, p. 541)

In a broader sense, the *destructive character* had equally been a feature of both the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, which presented themselves as new developments from the root. The concept also appeared in the works of the architect and writer Rem Koolhaas, where it set itself as a strategy of 'emptiness'. Koolhaas points to a number of different cities undergoing ambitious renovation plans and starting from a large urban void implemented for various reasons (Mehan, 2017).

Colophon

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COST Action CA18126 Writing Urban Places: New Narratives of the European city

Writing Urban Places proposes an innovative investigation and implementation of a process for developing human understanding of communities, their society, and their situatedness. By recognising the value of local urban narratives – stories rich in information regarding citizens socio-spatial practices, perceptions and expectations – the Action aims to articulate a set of concrete literary devices within a host of spatial disciplines; bringing together scientific research in the fields of literary studies, urban planning and architecture; and positioning this knowledge vis-à-vis progressive redevelopment policies carried out in medium-sized cities in Europe. **Working Group 2** of the Action, led by Svava Riesto and Henriette Steiner, is concerned with how theoretical reflections can stimulate the thinking and praxis of narrating urban places of medium-sized European cities. In 2019-2020, the group focused on the collaborative project of compiling definitions of Minor Concepts for Writing Urban Places into this *Vademecum*, a short guide that can be kept at hand for consultation when being in or writing about urban places.