

Architecture and agriculture

from a « subsistence perspective »

relationships, knowledge, and practices of an alternative modernity

Taking the interrelationship between **agriculture and architecture** as a research perspective allows us to explore the question of the relationships that humans who inhabit these places have with the different entities that make up their environment. The « **subsistence perspective** », understood as the set of conditions that enable the continuation of existence (Mies, Bennholdt, 2022), allows us to formulate the hypothesis that there is a link between the practice of subsistence agriculture and the care that inhabitants take of their nourishing environment. In this context, the way of life in rural and vernacular habitats is the subject of a thesis whose objective is to identify the ramifications of relationships with the living, the non-living, and sometimes the non-visible. Applying this reflection to the study of rural mountain communities, the research focuses on three communities that have maintained subsistence farming activities: the Amazighs of the High Atlas region (Morocco) and the Mayas of Chiapas (Mexico) and Altiplano (Guatemala).

The concept of subsistence, which draws on all the vernacular knowledge and practices received or inherited within a community, resonates with the *Diálogo de Saberes*. This practice of transmission aims to consider local knowledge and experiences as tangible knowledge, part of an alternative reality to the dominant capitalist model and intended to ensure the necessary knowledge for the territory's habitability. In several ways, this work intersects with Escobar's research on *post-development*, moving beyond the prism of development as an universal desirable perspective. Nurturing the idea of an **alternative modernity**, seen as a tangible and believable reality for territories, activated by the inhabitants themselves.

Combining the concept of **agroecology** with urban planning opens up several avenues for research and recognition: by helping to build a societal model more aware of the entities composing its natural environment by promoting recognition of soil and natural resources as a common good necessary for the survival of humanity, by integrating resident and practicing communities as a source of vernacular knowledge and techniques derived from the territories, and by considering this knowledge as tools necessary for supporting land use planning, among other things. The concept of agroecology therefore offers new practical and theoretical insights that should help to shape urban planning that incarnate a valid and desirable alternative form of modernity.

[rituals, believes, traditions]

fig.1 Town of Nuevo Jerusalén, near the Mayan archaeological site of Tonina, Chiapas, Mexico, 2019 © N.I.
fig.2 Sale of flowers for a Mayan ritual on the steps of the church in Chichicastenango, Guatemala, 2023 © N.I.
fig.3 An inhabitant checks the condition of the corn cobs in his corn warehouse in the Los Cosiguá sector, Chaquijya village, Guatemala, El Pais, 2024
fig.4 « Chukchi sketch depicting the different paths in the world of the dead. Excerpt from Bogoras (1904-1909) » extract from Ingold, Tim, *Une brève histoire des lignes*, Zones Sensibles, 2007

[entities, cohabitant, dense network]

fig.5 Evolution of the traditional Mayan house, photographic work by Onnis Luque, Mexico © Onnis Luque
fig.6 « Some species and their uses by the Tozhu. This diagram provides a partial view of the connections that make up the dense network of the Tozhu » extract from Stépanoff, Charles, *Attachements, Enquête sur nos liens au-delà de l'humain*, La Découverte, 2024
fig.7 « Modeling of the dense network of the Swifterbant Neolithic culture, Netherlands. The large geometric shapes represent domesticated species. » extract from Stépanoff, Charles, *Attachements, Enquête sur nos liens au-delà de l'humain*, La Découverte, 2024
fig.8 « The journey from grain to hut to granary in Tashdirt. » extract from Naji, Salima, *Architectures du bien commun, Pour une éthique de la préservation*, MétisPresses, 2019

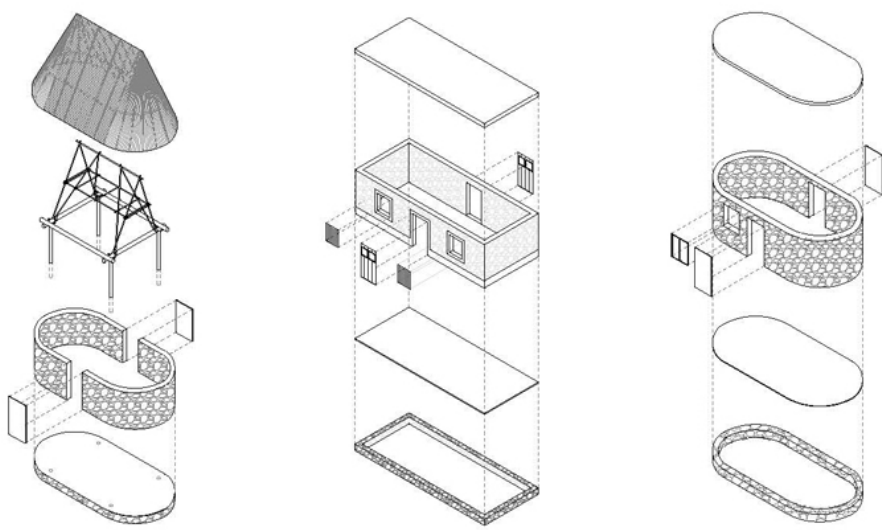
[ground, culture, habitus]

fig.9 Women gathering herbs before drying them in bundles to use as fodder for sheep, Ait Hani, Morocco, 2024 © N.I.
fig.10 Personal research sketch on the layout in a field for the Mexican Premio Felix Candela competition for the design of a back-to-the-land school, 2023

[universalism, exploitation, transformation]

fig.11 Traditional earthen construction south of Marrakech near the epicenter of the 2022 earthquake, *Le Figaro*, 2023
fig.12 Reconstruction work financed by the Moroccan government using "modern" materials in the village of Douar Ijoukak, in the High Atlas Mountains, *Sud Ouest*, 2024
fig.13 « Designs based on vernacular and contemporary styles of the Mayan community in Motul, Yucatan » interview with COMUNAL in *The Architectural League of New York*, 2018
fig.14 « Traditional Mixe house with furniture » interview with COMUNAL in *The Architectural League of New York*, 2018

universalism exploitation transformation



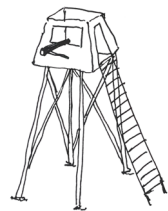
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Urbanism meets Agroecology

Operational,
research and
pedagogical
approaches
in Europe

observatoire
de la
condition
suburbaine



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Research environment
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rituals believes traditions

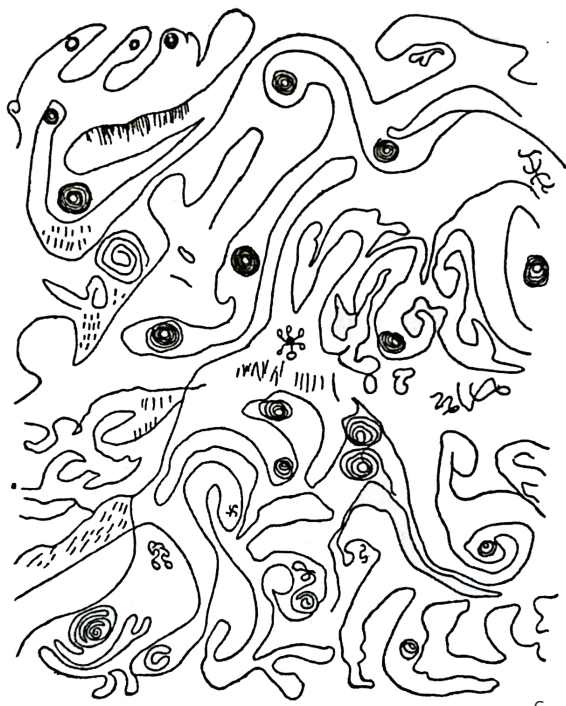


fig.4

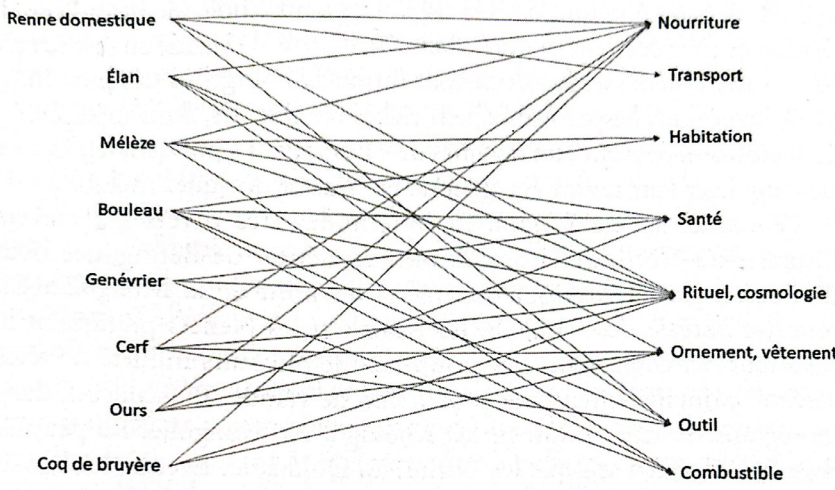


fig.6

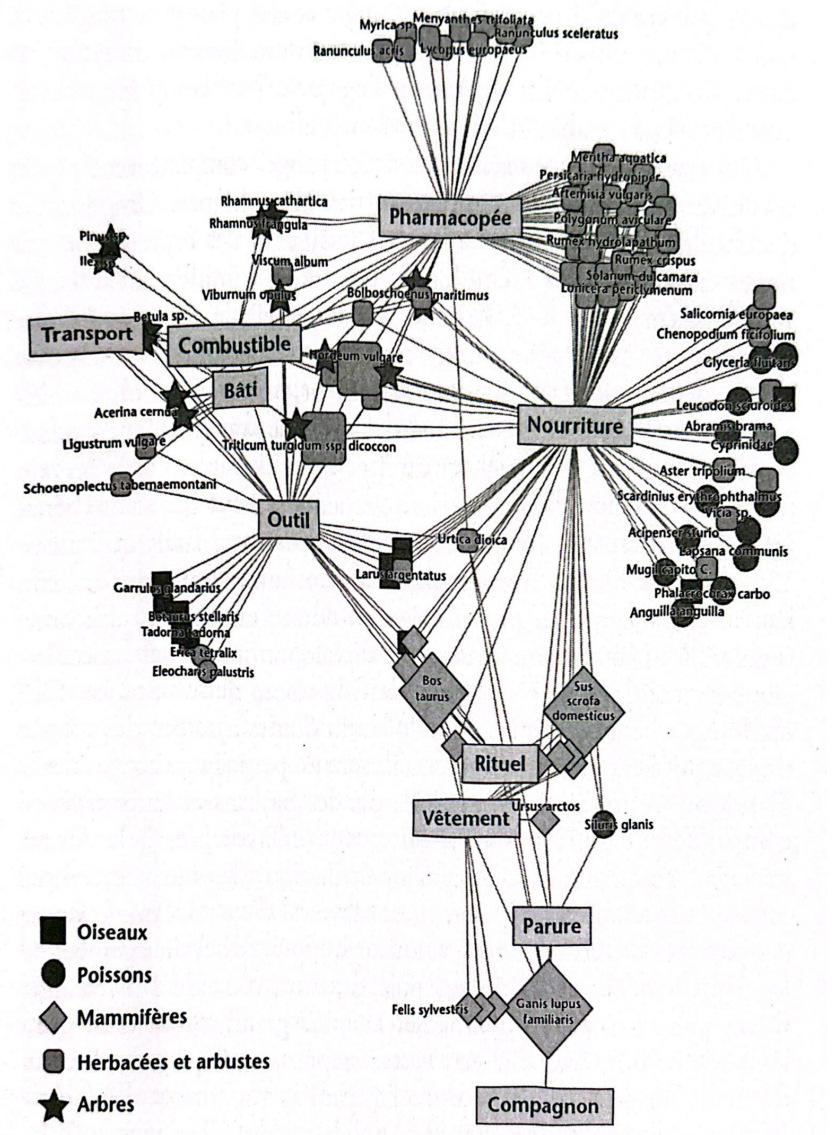


fig.7

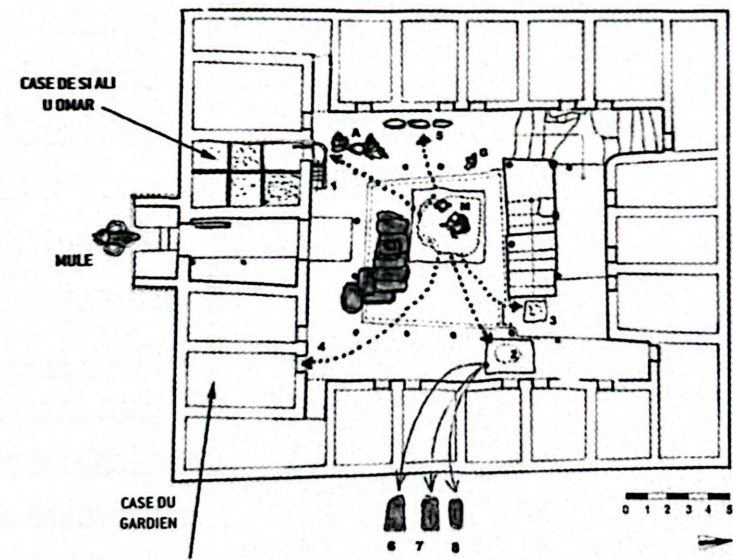
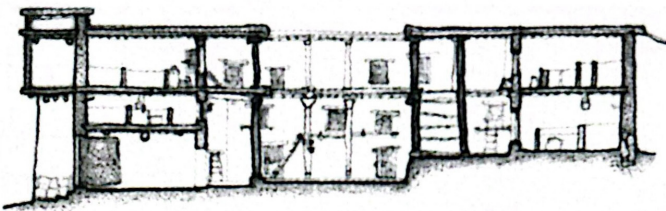


fig.8

entities cohabitant dense network

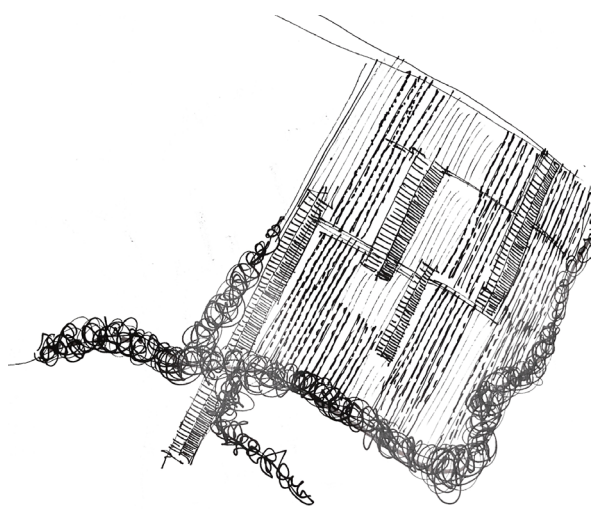


fig.10

Biography

Nora Itri is an architect and graduate of the Bordeaux National School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture. Her research led her to spend several months in Mexico, where she continued her exploration of the relationship between human settlements and the natural environment. As a doctoral student affiliated with the OCS laboratory at ENSA Paris-Est starting in 2026, she is conducting research on the link between agriculture and architecture from a subsistence perspective among rural communities in the mountains of Morocco, Mexico, and Guatemala.