

theoretical framework_

“Le déjeuner sur l’herbe” the painting by Manet illustrates how man dominates nature through the simple gathering of people around a blanket on the ground. The basic human need for protection against the elements is inevitable and it is something we all do. When going to the beach we firstly secure a horizontal plane which is then followed by a roof. For this we require walls, all of this determines the limits of our controlled area. These elements allow architecture to define and determine the limits of space between the sky and earth both vertically and horizontally. For ultimately the horizon exists as the limit between the earth and the sky. (CAMPO BAEZA, A. 2006: The Foundation of Architecture)

2.1 living inter-dependence_

Christian Norberg-Schulz defines the Heideggerian concept of dwelling or being to mean a total man-place relationship. Man’s desire to identify with nature. If the fabric (metaphorically used for the purpose of this dissertation is the honest portrayal of man’s purest need, it could be argued that building and architecture became the tools to satiate this need.



the unblemished relationship man - nature

“Norberg-Schultz reintroduces the ancient Roman idea of the *genius loci*, the spirit of a particular place, (creating a link to the sacred), which provides an “other” or opposite that humanity must confront in order to dwell. He interprets dwelling as being at peace in a protected place. Thus, enclosure, the act of marking or differentiating a place within space becomes the archetypal act of building and the true origin of architecture.” (NESBIT 1996:412)

Norberg-Schultz emphasizes the importance of the essential architectural elements. The wall, floor, or ceiling experienced as a horizon, boundary, and frame of nature. For him architecture clarifies the location of human existence. Heidegger describes it as between the sky and the earth, in front of divinities. (NESBIT 1996:412)

The word urban fabric undeniably describes best the twenty first century man-nature relationship. Man evolved and his relationship dramatically changed. The twenty first century urban fabric finds its boundaries not in one need but a multitude of man’s desires.

Two hypothetical images (figure 2.2a&b) used to describe the man-nature relationship over a period of time. Between them the path of man’s evolution, caught in the thoughts of each era. Theoretically

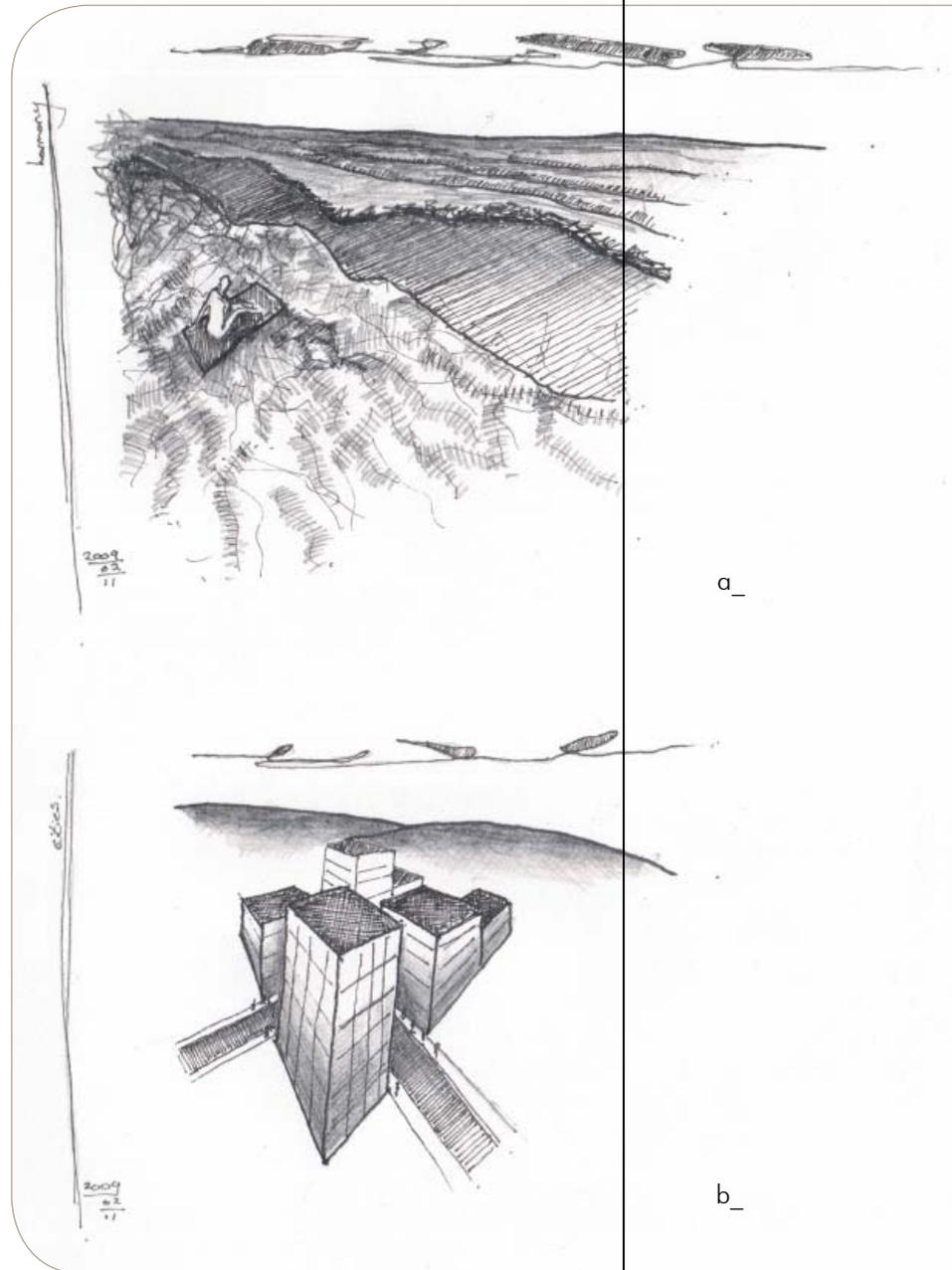


figure 2.2

this can be illustrated using three empty boxes (figure 2.3). The empty boxes represent a single problem and the content illustrates a range of responses. This is further illustrated by folding three maps differently, pouring coffee over them and then observing the results (figure 2.5). Responses based on diverse cultures, knowledge, needs, desires, topographies, religions and politics.

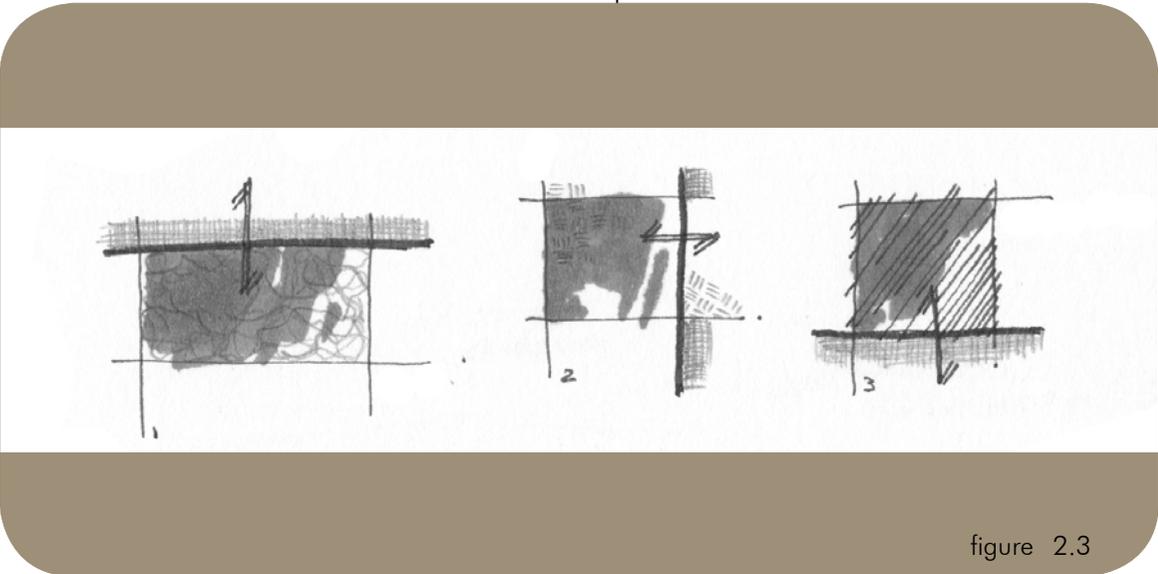


figure 2.3

“We did not think of the great open plains, the beautiful rolling hills and winding streams...as wild. Only to the white man was nature a wilderness... to us it was tame. Earth was beautiful and we were surrounded with the blessings of the Great Mystery. Not until the hairy man from the east came and with brutal frenzy heaped injustice upon us and the families we loved was it wild for us. When the very animals of the forest began to flee from his approach, then it was for us when the Wild West began.” (KATZ & KIRBY 1991:266)

This statement made by a Native American illustrates the vast difference between various world views and their response towards nature.



figure 2.4



a_square fold



c_triangle fold



b_irregular fold

figure 2.5

“Ando points out a significant distinction between Eastern and Western attitudes to nature Japanese culture emphasizes a spiritual threshold between building and nature, as opposed to a physical boundary in western culture.” (NESBIT 1996:456)

It could further be argued that at the core of the differences, lies similarity in all of man’s needs.

2.2 dream of arcadia_

Man’s ideal desire to create Utopia (Heaven on earth.) This is evident in all of man’s history as seen with the Egyptians, the Romans and the Mayans just to mention a few. The irony in this ideal can best be described through a painting of Poussin’s.

“Et in arcadia ego (I, too, have lived in Arcadia)” (LACHMAN 2004:293)

In the painting (figure 2.4) a couple of shepherds’ look at a tomb stone, written on the stone is the words: “Et in arcadia Ego.” Meaning I, too, have lived in Arcadia (refers to a perfect world). The one conclusion, being that this is the grave of someone who also lived in Arcadia. Secondly it could be understood as death himself speaking ominously in the eternal present.

This illustrates man’s attempt to create the perfect answer for an imperfect question.

Each paradigm (the Renaissance, the Enlightenment and the Modern Movement) demanded man to resolve the pertinent questions associated with that time period. These answers were based on differences and similarities throughout the world.

Architecture was often used by the Neo-pastoral romance, displaying the unspoken need for a close relationship between nature and human well-being. The need for this intimate relationship is a common theme in western art and literature, and also in the polite society were the relationship allows the existence of human dignity and morality. (HAWKES & MCDONALD & STEEMERS 2002:15)

One of these were made by James Lovelock and he uses the “Gaia Hypothesis” a world seeking an optimal physical and chemical environment for life on this planet in an attempt to describe the optimal relationship. This is a relatively new paradigm, and a certain response to modern society and the concern for its pressures on mother earth.

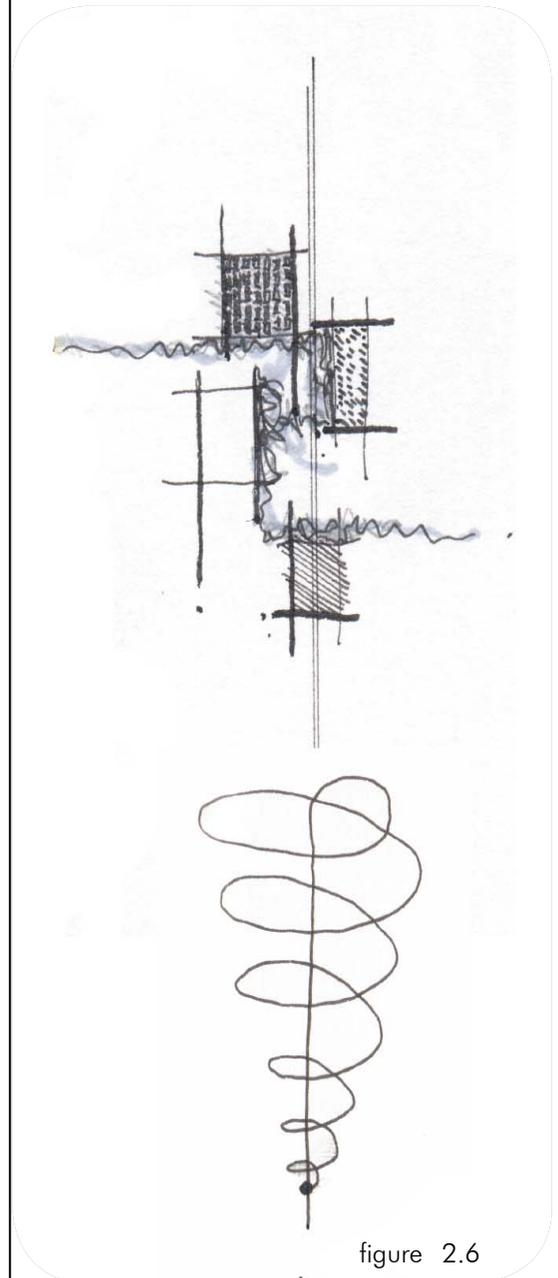


figure 2.6

2.3 redemption_

And the one question has always been the relationship between man and nature. Imagine a point on a piece of paper which illustrates a given problem; the thought process in solving this problem becomes a spiral loop (figure 2.6). The loop starts of as small circles and changes into larger loop as the thought process grows, but the result will always be a straight line back to the point. No matter what the thought process there will always be a relationship between the answer and the question.

Global warming, resource depletion and the desperate need for more sustainability lifestyles are the foremost concerns for the twenty first century. They all relate to the simple question of the man-nature relationship. There are many other social, economical and political problems. For the purpose of this dissertation the main objective will be to address the environmental problems within the given urban context.

For the people who life in the now–future, it is their duty to keep: peace, food and over population before the world as its long term fate. (WATSON 1984:121)

"Our troubled planet can no longer afford the luxury of pursuits confined to the ivory tower." (WATSON 1984: 121)

Answering this question requires an understanding of the answers produced for the man-nature relationship over man's history. By identifying the similarities and differences in the answers, the current problem's argument is strengthened.

When one considers all these facts, the best solution for the question at hand would be for man to acquire a more 'primitive' lifestyle. This entails a closer and more intimate man-nature relationship and essentially an innovative representation of a healthy fabric in the given context.

Insights obscured by ideological post-Enlightenment philosophy and Marxist-scientism can be recuperated through an examination in which the way nature and man is connected in everyday life. These insights should be restored to the point where man and nature is no longer separated by those logics. (KATZ & KIRBY 1991:264)

Our intent is to reveal some of the ways that this separation focuses attention on the control of nature and thus conceals the 'nature' of control over social behaviour." (KATZ & KIRBY 1991:264)

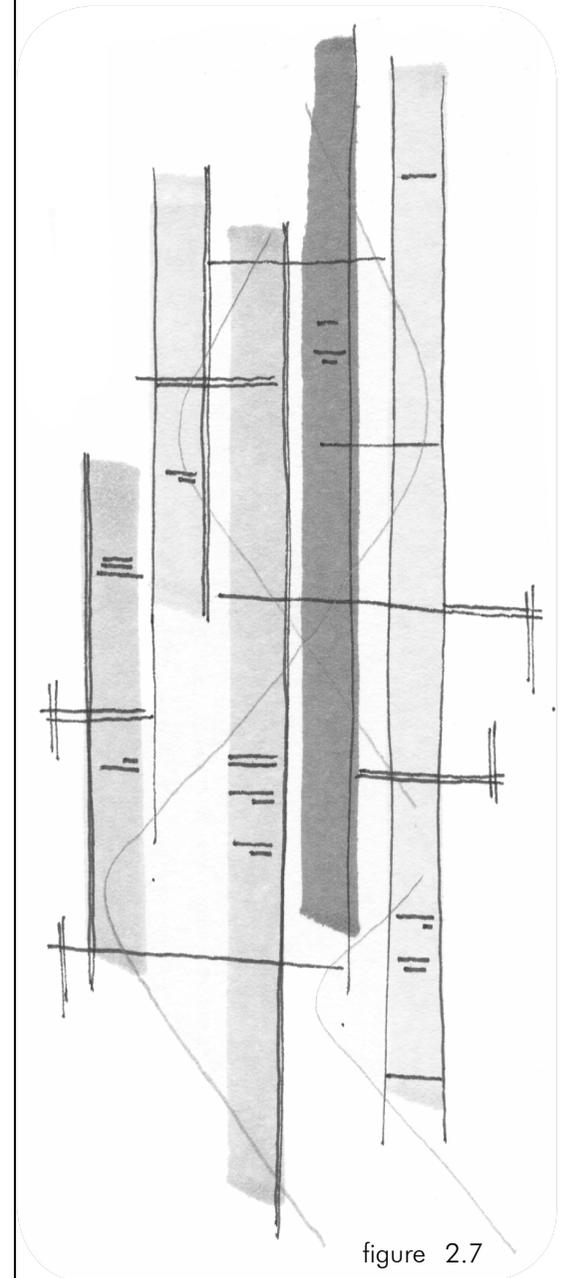


figure 2.7

Vernacular architecture displays how mankind used the available resources, to establish stability and adaptability to the natural forces. This is true to the development of a theoretical ground which emphasises the deep social and cultural roots it has with the natural forces. These settlements show their interest for environmental enquiry and are not influenced by fashion or self-consciousness. (HAWKES & MCDONALD & STEEMERS 2002:16)

Norberg-Schulz identified phenomenology as a “method” to urge a “return to things”. The potential of phenomenology in architecture, through the creation of specific places, will create more meaningful environments. (NESBIT 1996:412)

Phenomenology and regionalism is used in this document to attain more contextual and responsive architecture. Establishing more frugal urban environments in which users are actively participating.

Vittoria Gregotti argues that a site needs to intensify, condense, and identify the precise structure of nature and our understanding of it. This quality is fundamental to Kenneth Frampton’s critical Regionalism. (NESBIT 1996:413)

And finally to get closer to this state of living, rehabilitation could be used to define the fabric which is to be the path. To achieve change would require a breaking point in society. The

fractured environment and the fragile body of man are placed side by side. Both are broken and change is the only way to survive and ensure their existence. The fabric can be used as a path on which both can journey to a new state of being. Providing the opportunity for transformation, in which the man and nature relationship could be re-established through reflection. The architecture will attempt to answer the present questions but should rather be seen as an opportunity of redemption.

Humans receive the recognition that they are “of nature” yet they also poses a “second nature” due to their capability of objective reason. (NESBIT 1996:461)

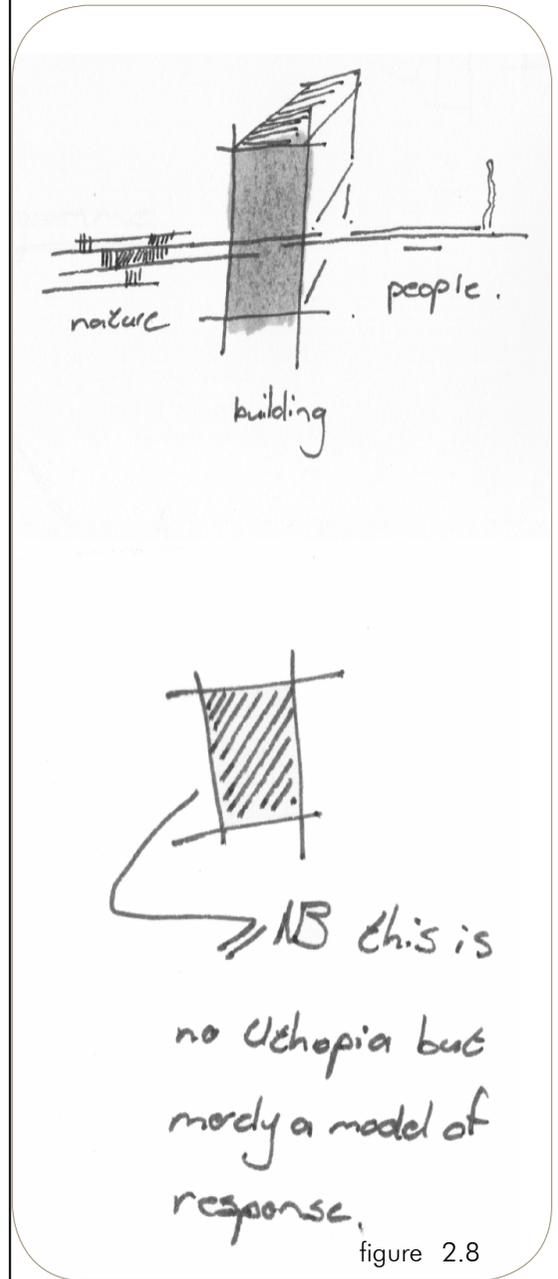


figure 2.8

“The dualism collapses as we recognize that we are both of nature and yet on the verge of reshaping our own biology - nature is placed within ourselves rather than vice versa.” (KATZ & KIRBY 1991:264)

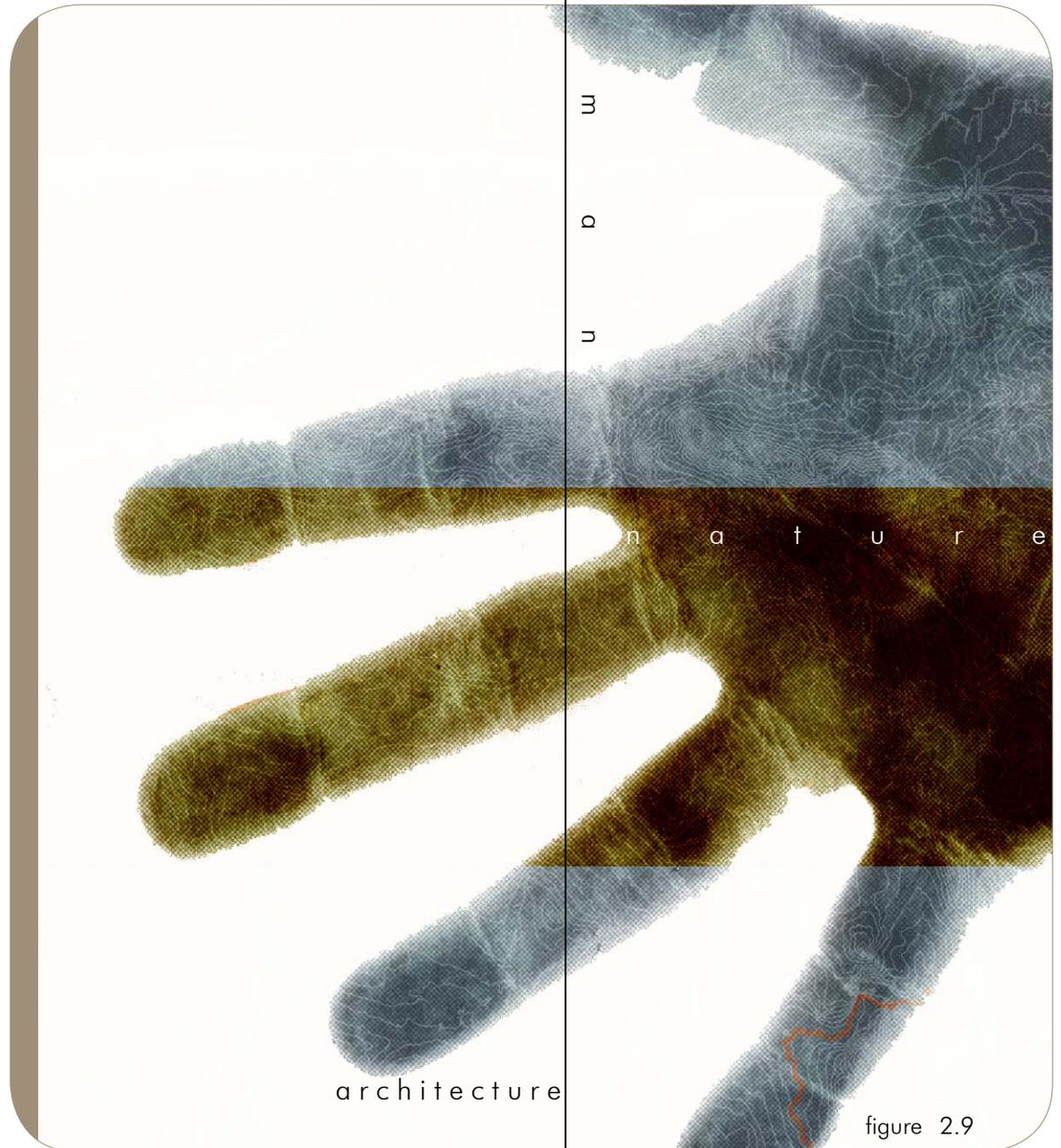


figure 2.9