

MAIN SECTION

Traces for an Idea of Project: Discussing the Contribution of Richard Sennett, Tim Ingold and Bruno Latour

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the text is to show the reader how a specific thought movement, represented by Richard Sennett, Tim Ingold and Bruno Latour, has critically discussed and de-constructed the same basis of projecting (i.e. designing) according to 20th-century logics.

KEYWORDS

Project; Making; Ingold; Sennett; Latour.

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Intention

The purpose of the text is to show the reader how a specific thought movement, represented here by Richard Sennett, Tim Ingold and Bruno Latour, has critically discussed and de-constructed the same basis of projecting (i.e. designing) according to 20th-century logics.

Richard Sennett starts from the historical separation between la *cit * and la *ville* writing a contribution that helps us understand the relationship between function and form, urbanism and social spontaneity. In search of porosity looking for what today is the possible "open city," his proposal investigates how the citizens can be involved in the *cit * and how la *ville* can facilitate an active and competent behaviour. The purpose of this author is to put together these two spheres and retrieve an idea of open city that gets over the dichotomies, that hit urbanism in the 20th century. On his part, Tim Ingold has come up with a very radical research on the meaning of materials and the need to reconsider in terms not only cultural the activity of the world as a *process*. Now, the question which is interesting for our research about the project is: "Why should people think with artefacts alone? Why not with materials? And ground, mountains and streams, and other living beings?" Ingold talks again about the separation between material and form by proposing a morphogenetic relationship not determined by a *cha ne op ratoire*, but by a movement, a dance instead. Bruno Latour proposes the question in a different way: his interpretation, focused on a re-interpretation of the concept of modernity, aims to rethink on an epistemological level the "ideology of nature" itself and its scientific bases. The research of a new political ecology should have as premise the "end of nature" and should be characterized not as crisis of nature, but as crisis of objectivity. After the season of the neat borders, well-known properties, randomness, it is time to deal with new objects, reticular and rhizomatic. Latour helps us rethink the relationship between the interior and what "surrounds us" by substituting the hard cores of the essence with a thousand tentacles and connections, passing from the "objects" to these "almost objects." This essay is an illustration of these authors' position and it underlines the loss of meaning and centrality of some concepts and methods of understanding and representing reality. The question, the very subject/materials of projecting, is the stability and solidity of the ideas: soil, materials. Is the mind a mirror of the world? Our ideas about the reality do not represent what lies "out there." Like Karen Barad wrote, what we need is not a theory of cultural representation or cultural forms, but a theory that "allows matter its due as an active participant in the world's becoming." It is a methodological, but at the same time an ontological problem. The conclusions, even if they are temporary, are focused on the images and ways of thinking that the authors give us to make us understand how designing today means a different position or cognitive sensibility; a different sensibility that *corresponds* more to

the reality and movement that surround us. The reality ceased to be the theatre of permanence, where men used to show their creativity, but it started to react, or, it is better to say that it has never ceased to react. The text, therefore, tries to investigate some radical results of the reflections by Sennett, Ingold and Latour, asking how we can give readability to a living material which lives in-between what Tim Ingold defines as an “ongoing process.” It is important to note that these authors offer us not only a theoretical way by which to think about nature or the “nature” of object, but also recommend to seek beyond above a new way of perception. For example, both Sennett and Ingold discuss the role of designer in terms of “self-effacing,” a kind of *modesty*. This is not only a rare virtue, a moralist approach, but more specifically a topographic question, an ontological question about materials that becomes a question of position, more precisely a *political position*. The radicalism of these position will help us to find a critic of the idea itself of project, that has the merit to organise a double movement: deconstruction and reconfiguration of the theoretical bases of drawing.

Richard Sennett on designing (membranes)

In the third and final piece of the trilogy dedicated to the technical skills we use in everyday life, Richard Sennett has identified the creation of membranes as the most interesting challenge for the designer today starting from an ecological difference. We will also consider later the model that inspired Sennett while defining the figure of the designer. What is most important now is to clarify what we mean by this “ecological simile,” what the membranes can do and, as a consequence, what “to design” really means.¹

Borders represent, regardless of their volume and their impact, a porous edge, an element where different groups interact. Boundaries, on the other hand, can be walls, traffic flows, buffer zones where the different and many forms of the city are delimited and divided. The contemporary metropolis seems to take the shape of enclosed and close controlled residential neighborhoods, which set precise limits. The city that, like an octopus, absorbs spaces and reproduces its own security guarantees is the perfect model of this idea. A practical example is Delhi, the Indian capital city.²

Sennett, however, has a different idea in mind, the idea of an open city, a more spontaneous city than the one ruled by a centralized planning: a city where the mixture and melting of many social classes, migrants, citizens from different backgrounds and tourists can generate social relations.

1. Richard Sennett, *Building and Dwelling, Ethics for the city* (New York: Farrar Straus e Giroux, 2018), 222.

2. *Ibid.*, 220.

The metaphor of the membrane gives greater density and coherence to the opposition between boundaries edge and border. In Sennett's opinion a membrane, like a city, must work by combining porosity and resistance: it must be able to make something come out of itself and, at the same time, it must allow something to enter it. This is one of the first features that the act of design should have: it has to be able to embrace the membrane form as an element that stays and remains within the paradox of generating "forms" while creating disorder at the same time. If we wanted to theorize this movement (or trend), we could say that the highest point in the capacity of the city-system lies precisely on the edge between order and disorder.

Through a series of historical examples, case studies and personal reflections, Sennett leads the reader to the understanding of design as an activity that does not dictate or impose anything on the citizen, but stimulates the creation of common tasks instead. The reference goes to the Dutch urbanist and architect Aldo van Eyck, whose interventions within the urban context produced what Sennett calls "liminal edges": transitional moments, places in which the city connects and binds together poor and rich neighborhoods, workplaces and leisure/recreational areas.³

It is not just a matter of linking parts together and bringing citizens together, but a problem to modify their reality. The liminal and transitional moments actually mean to force, to put pressure and stress for a metamorphosis of the urban pattern. Metamorphosis precisely means transforming forms according to logics that consolidate and give meaning to the common living. While planning, the claim for a too precise and accurate definition and organization is what will certainly be questioned and debated. Urbanism has a lot to learn from poor people and the way they are forced to work with incomplete forms: the flexibility and synchronicity of places will have to be protected and guaranteed so that too detailed and closed forms will soon become obsolete. Against the idea of places purely prescribed for preordained, standardized individuals, Sennett is a supporter of a reflection that, paradoxically, makes reference to a precise form while actually denying it, because he recognizes its own possible distortions. The creation of "type-forms" is a possible solution to the inevitable death of urban and architectural forms when they become too "finished." To vary, to modify, to replace: these are the qualities and pros of open type-forms that inspire modifications, improvisations, new and more effective activities.⁴

Sennett defines himself as a philosophical mind and we can add that his peculiar argumentative ability also comes from a meaningful use of images, similarities, parallels and examples not always centered and precise but certainly fruitful. Some of the examples he uses in order to help us better understand his idea of "project" are his images of the cultivated

3. *Ibid.*, 224.

4. *Ibid.*, 227.

field and the planting season, as well as the idea of the musical score. In each of these images lies the idea of the city as a material, open, paradoxical reality, suspended between the design ideas (with their cultivated and artificial aspects) and growth and improvisation (with their more spontaneous side). More practically, if we examine the previously mentioned examples: the seed thrown by the farmer does not sprout according to a precise and predefined planning logic, it often follows different timing and ways. The same thing happens with musical variations on a theme, that lead us to better understand the theme itself and to interpret it differently. The metaphor that probably can help us better understand this conceptual itinerary is the organic one: in Sennett's thought the city cannot design itself exclusively through an ordered set of functions and distances, but it breathes, it expands and shrinks, it is made of exchanges with the external world and tensions at its own borders. The city changes by modifying itself. The land, and more precisely the image of a cultivated field, gives us the idea of something that combines intentionality and spontaneity, naturalness and cultural enterprise. To this extent tacit knowledge becomes essential, crucial. "Tacit knowledge" means something that cannot be spread or instilled through a procedure and that touches our knowledge from within the realities we frequent: the atmosphere.⁵ It is the atmosphere of the places that gives us back the ability of these same places to host heterogeneous and non-fixed realities. In his texts on technical abilities Sennett refers constantly to the ability to involve side and peripheral visions of the places so that we can grasp their capability to generate sociality, more than their formal aesthetic qualities. The kind of knowledge that the designer must then possess is actually something broad and differentiated, since he or she must be able to respond to the metamorphosis as a principle of adaptability and ability to see from within.

So this is the crucial point: who inspires Sennett while outlining the features of the designer? As we can deduce from the considerations just made, the artisan is his inspirational source. In this figure Sennett finds some of the peculiar characteristics that also a good designer must possess: he owns a "physical," concrete experience and he generates knowledge after diving into the matter.

Just as the designer must be able to know from within the fabric of the city and the places he wants to modify, so the artisan must possess the ability to relate to his own materials from within. Sennett says that technical intelligence develops through imagination and similarly the designer's ability must be to imagine the life of cities as they change: metamorphosis and adaptability are essential features of the craftsman's work that the designer must have, too. The work of the craftsman contemplates the error and actually needs it, because only through

5. On the concept of *Sensory Thought, and the role of Craftsman: Juhani Pallasmaa, The Thinking Hand. Existential and embodied Wisdom in Architecture* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons, 2009); André Leroi-Gourhan, "Le Geste et la Parole" (Paris: Albin Michel, 1964).

experience he can improve his own abilities.⁶ At the same time the relationship between failure and successful work should guide the experience of the designer. For both figures not only the final result is important but it is also important the sense of variation and the action showing the form without necessarily completing it. The job of both of them is represented by the dialectic between conclusion, completeness and openness. In the path that Sennett outlines to describe the sense of the craftsman's work, the most significant part, to us, is represented by the case of Erin O'Connor.⁷ Mrs O'Connor is a glassmaker and philosopher who developed some considerations on the meaning of making, starting from her personal experience of producing a glass suitable for Barolo wine. What O'Connor had to learn while trying to produce a glass worthy of this name was above all the movement, the rhythm: every time she started the acting process, the practice, she had to modify her body quality, her moving as an object. She had to develop a better awareness of her own body in relation to the rest of the environment. In doing this, she had to improve her ability to imagine and guess where the material she was dealing with was going, what changes it underwent, what relationship it had to establish to make this relationship fruitful, and herself with it. As a result, she understood that it was not a matter of relationship, but of convergence instead, a meeting point: a game of resistance and adaptation in which she developed a body awareness in the relationship with the glass paste.

Both artisan and designer must extend their ability on movement and rhythm to their hand and to their eye as well. In other words they must produce a sort of "physical/concrete anticipation" by imagining where the material is going and which directions it will take. This ability is at the same time "corporeal/physical,"⁸ because it is connected to the handcraft, and intellectual, because it is linked to the production of ideas through the eye. Because of that, this ability itself brings us back to the image of the cultivated field: it is a matter of working a material trying to understand its evolution, by considering the intents as well as approximation and spontaneity. The shape that the craftsman produces emerges from the symbiotic relation between the body of the craftsman and the materials. It is the story of this relationship that conveys a shape to the city. Its history, its social fabric, its movements and spaces, connect to the designer's work creating new metamorphoses, new liminal spaces, new forms of sociality. Only here, Sennett says, the city lives and reproduces itself. What the craftsman needs is the same quality needed by the street and project: modesty as position.

6. Ibid., 162.

7. Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman* (London: Allen Lane, 2008), 173–5.

8. Ibid., 175.

Tim Ingold: the design as an enigma and tension

Tim Ingold has been reflecting for more than twenty years on the meaning of making and the relationship between producing, designing and knowing.⁹

Ingold thinks that knowledge does not come from our distancing from the world by objectifying it, but it comes from the fact that we are and live inside the world. There is no difference between participation and observation: we are the travelling companions of all things and beings that are beside and around us. What is the relationship between producing and thinking? Artisan allows knowledge to develop starting from our practical and observational engagement with things and beings that surround us: this kind of art is called “art of inquiry.”¹⁰ And what does this art of inquiry or investigating consist of? It basically means two different but deeply related things: following and responding. In the art of investigating we do not represent the world, nor do we simply describe it. We rather open our perception to what happens, to facts, and this way we try to respond to it in a relationship of *correspondence*. Ingold therefore focuses his attention not on the finished product but on the movement, on how things and projects happen and take shape. It is precisely in this space that he criticizes our habit of thinking about “producing” as a project.

According to an established practice, “to plan” means having an idea in mind, to which follows the research for suitable materials to put it into practice. The planning ends when the chosen materials take the desired shape. The basis of this vision is the hylomorphism, the doctrine that sees in the act of doing the application on an inactive, motionless reality, created by the matter of theoretical and conceptual contents in our mind; Ingold’s challenge is instead to rethink the act of “producing” as a growth process.¹¹ This means seeing in the author (the designer) a participant observer in a world made of active materials. During the creation process, the author joins his forces with those active materials, gathering them, separating them, making a synthesis in the anticipation of what could derive from it.

Ingold suggests a radical change in our idea of producing which also anticipates and informs the idea of designing: if we read the production act as a process where forces and materials merge rather than the transposition of a mental image to an object, the coordinates of our process change and become morphogenetic, while the distinction between artifact and organism becomes much fainter and subtler. From this perspective the form is not imposed on the surrounding reality but it emerges from the

9. Two of the most important contributions are: Tim Ingold, *Being Alive: Essays on movement, knowledge and description* (Taylor & Francis, 2011); Tim Ingold, *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (Abingdon-on-Thames: Routledge, 2013).

10. Ingold, *Making*, 6.

11. *Ibid.*, 21.

relationship between forces: the materials with their activity and resistance, the environmental conditions, the hands of the craftsman, his tools. The materials, whatever form or formal destination they have in a precise moment, are substances fundamentally in progress that never stop in any established form.¹²

As Karen Barad writes, materials are like an ongoing story where the main interest is more on the act of becoming rather than the one of being. A response of the materials comes from our gestures in given conditions.¹³ We ask and they respond according to a logic, not following interaction but correspondence. In this sense, each material is a line of thought and a set of potential responses and trajectories. What does “build” mean, then, and what is the meaning of “planning” with reference to creating a building? Ingold actually addresses the problem of designing and building in the fourth and fifth chapter of his essay on *Making*. It is a common idea in the professional sector of architects that much of the creative work of making a building is represented by the design, where the next phase of realization is nothing but putting into practice the ideas that the designer has thought of. The idea that guides the discipline seems to be “permanence/continuity.” To this extent Ingold undertakes a study on the relationship between carpenters and architects, getting to the conclusion that in the past intellectual work was essentially indistinguishable from manual work (the work on a construction site). However, the two activities have been separated from a certain moment and as a consequence the architect has become a much more theoretical figure, able to organize the design guidelines. The carpenter and the bricklayer, instead, become the symbol of someone who puts into practice what the architects think.

The thought represented by Vitruvius and Leon Battista Alberti promotes the idea of a design that takes care of developing the features of a building and its external appearance in an early and independent way. Ingold points out that in many European languages the verb “to draw” corresponds to the verb “to design.” At the same time, this shows how during the Middle Ages the figure of the craftsman/carpenter owed his mastery to learning directly on working sites: the craftsman did not use to acquire theoretical principles to be put into practice later. It was a kind of constructive geometry. This digression is necessary in order to understand—and to ask ourselves—whether in the past the construction of majestic and important cathedrals or buildings required or not defined and detailed projects. The answer obviously remains pending, but Ingold’s conclusion is fundamental for our discussion: in the end there was no radical distinction between the act of drawing and that of building. The design was not separate from

12. Tim Ingold, “On building a House,” in *Ibid.*, 47–59.

13. Karen Barad, “Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter comes to Matter,” *Sings* 28, no.3 (2003): 801–31, <https://doi.org/10.1086/345321>. A different point of view, criticized by Ingold is represented by: Lambros Malafouris. *How Things Shape the Mind: A Theory of Material Engagement* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2013).

the building and bricklayers and craftsmen who intervened on site were both designers and executors. Here we find the quality of Ingold's work: his purpose is to unite ontological, perceptive and epistemological reflections in a unitary perspective. His vision re-evaluates the materials and our involvement in reality, and it allows us to reconsider the difference between the artifact and the organic, moving it to a less certain and more liminal area. At the same time, by scattering subjectivity into the flow of matter, he prevents us from crystallizing the organized reality of ideas and concepts. The result is the impossibility of recognizing the project as a pure intellectual emanation, independent from the flow of becoming. In the relationship between design and realization, Ingold uses the insights of the geographer and sociologist David Turnbull.¹⁴ In Turnbull's opinion the topic of the project explains "too much and too little at the same time," because each project needs workforce that operates and that cannot follow the coherence and rigidity of imposed rules. Turnbull develops an interesting parallel between the construction of a cathedral and a modern, advanced research laboratory, getting to the point that it is not the initial project (however detailed and precise) that determines the final form, but the convergence, as in a laboratory, of different contributions, coordinated forces with different, localized and contingent timings. It is not a matter of responding to predefined conceptual lines but of solving problems as they arise.¹⁵ It is a question of meeting Richard Sennett once again, with his definition of the artisan as someone who looks ahead, not in the sense of looking at the present towards a given future, but looking inside the future by opening a path and improvising a way within it. The author must bring together the set of pieces that gradually fit together. Individual pieces need what Ingold calls an *empathic involvement*, so that they begin to match and correspond. The question, which at this point is certainly rhetorical, could be: if the world keeps on evolving and changing, what difference is there between designing and building? Ingold's proposal is to try to rethink the very idea of design. If we think of drawing as a transcription of a mental image we remain in the consolidated tradition, but if we think of drawing as a thread *intertwining* in the fabric or like carving a stone, everything changes. The lines of the drawing in this case would no longer be needed to connect fixed points, but to indicate a possible movement. Through this vision, designing has to do with the suspension of the final goal and it becomes an anticipatory action that in some way "regulates" the ever complex relationship between imagination and resistance (of materials and the world). To sum up, designing means to remain inside this tension by producing something.

14. David Turnbull, *Mason, tricksters and cartographers: Comparative Studies in the Sociology of Scientific and Indigenous Knowledge* (London: Psychology Press, 2000). In the first part of *Making*, Chapter 2, *Materials of life*, Ingold quotes also an important contribution in this direction: Gilbert Simondon, *L'individuation à la lumière des notions de forme et d'information* (Grenoble: Editions Jérôme Million, 2005).

15. *Ibid.*, p 53–87.

The anticipatory view that both Sennett and Ingold offer in their contributions raises the question of the position of the designer: in order to understand this, it is necessary to lower ourselves to the level of things and merge with them somehow. It is not a matter of materialism, but of the search for a perceptive sensibility and an epistemological proposal at the same time. The things we talk about here are not just objects but practices, subjectivities, materials. The change of the point of view inevitably matches the change of epistemological perspective, as the question is exactly the following: what does a designer need to design? To answer this question, first of all we must adopt the correct perspective, that is to say: we must dismantle the idea that in order to build something it is necessary to proceed through linked and hierarchical activities. Humans have always used patterns and geometries in their activities, but what Ingold and—partially—Sennett help us understand through their investigations is that this activity of cognitive organization that produces intellectual categories and patterns does not lie in our mind, but it lies in things. Here “things” mean the set of materials in relation to forces. The geometry that the inhabitants of the city often use is the one of their own bodies and their own creations, just as artisans use their hands and the morphology of the proportions of their body to produce forms. The scheme is to be found at the street level. Once again we notice how the form is scattered: it seems to escape from where we have always thought: we could find it inside our mind or in the materials, then. To be more precise, the form is actually in our mind, but it seems to have been embodied and organized with materials, with the passing of forms and life. What we will call form, or result of a project, is the never ending crystallization of an uninterrupted flow of expert practices that follow one another. Where should the distinction between form and matter lie in this vision? It should lie nowhere, of course, since in a world in progress in which we are part and in which materials with their specific qualities move, the fundamental relationship of the practice called “project” is between forces and materials.¹⁶

Bruno Latour and the objects

In his extensive investigation of the foundations of modernity, Bruno Latour reflected on the meaning of doing and on the concept of project.¹⁷ While doing so, he did not focus much on the project as an architectural or design practice, but as an epistemological relationship of the objects with the categories that we use to interpret them.¹⁸ We want to follow this path—a quite insidious one, not easily and precisely circumscribable—because in Sennett, Ingold and Latour’s reflections we witness a change

16. Ingold, *Making*, 128.

17. Bruno Latour, *Nous n'avons jamais été modernes* (Paris: La Découverte, 2006).

18. Bruno Latour, *Cogitamus. Six lettres sur le humanités scientifiques* (Paris: La Découverte, 2010).

that concerns especially what we must and can consider in the project and in the action, i.e.: things, their status, their definition and their activity. In fact, Latour's refined research is not directed towards a search for a new system of values that preserves the inviolability of Nature in its objectivity, made up of incontrovertible units to which we will oppose our practices and our values.¹⁹ The research instead expresses a critique of the very epistemological foundation of our knowledge. Latour questions our own project, modernity, and consequently our doing. He does this by inviting us to abandon objects without risk in favour of attachments at risk: if in the former we found sharp edges, a precise essence and the set of laws of causality such as efficiency, profitability and truth, in the latter—objects provoking a crisis in the system that until now has represented them—we do not have clear boundaries between the hard core, an essence, and what surrounds them; on the contrary, these new objects form rhizomes and they are reticulated. In these ruffled products, according to Latour's expression, we find the clearly visible implications of the "making." Producers are easily recognizable, everything becomes compromised and involved considering that the act of producing has become an integral part of their definition since the beginning. If the first objects seemed to belong to a pure universe of essences unrelated to production, the latter are tentacular and generate knots and twines. These are almost objects, maybe they are *things*. Latour directs us towards an objectivity that no longer distinguishes between the social world and the world of nature. Then the whole nature is made of objects at risk that can no longer be released from the unexpected consequences that they will produce even at great distances and in different periods. In other words, these objects can no longer be naturalized. Moving from the certainty of the separation between things and people to the uncertainty of relationships, according to Latour we should deal with the myriad of dirty and intertwined relationships. The risks are no longer countable, the consequences not so predictable, the dispersions not only possible but certain.

What remains of the idea of project? Membranes, ruffled objects and meshwork

Although with a different vocabulary and with significant conceptual differences, we can agree that Latour, like Ingold and Sennett, re-discusses the dual status of reality, or the division between subjects and objects. Epistemological, ontological and anthropological investigations contribute to the possibility to overcome this disabling dichotomy, that is unable to explain the thousand turns and diffractions that our making produces. Released from the idea that there is a motionless reality with stable laws just waiting to be represented, we can therefore make a brief statement. In each of the abovementioned points of view, designing seems to meet

19. Bruno Latour. *Où atterrir? Comment s'orienter en politique* (Paris: La Decouverte, 2017).

a dissociation similar to what Latour finds in political ecology. In these reflections there seems to be a certain distance between theory and practice. Where does this fracture come from and how is it consumed? Sennett conducts his inquiry through the often personally documented exposition to failures, i.e. ideas that seemed strong at the beginning but that turned out to be big disappointments in the end. Sennett's research is led in the field of encounters with life in its most real and disordered form. Every limit, fixing and abstraction is punctually knocked down or exceeded. The wisdom that lies in the act of building and living, along with the intelligence of the hands, seems to be the strongest ally of the designer. Sennett invites us to imagine, with the people who will live in those places and through a political use of the ecological metaphor of the membrane, a project idea that physically moves more and more away from the designer's theoretical idea. He wants to stay at the street level without giving up the idea of project and planning: porosity concerns both the relationships between individuals and groups and the relationship between materials and individuals. Ingold as well seems to be moving away from the theory of the project to make us reflect on the need to consider our own experience as a growth process, where the designer is within a world of active materials. The craftsman joins forces with materials and tries to anticipate what could arise, according to a much humbler point of view than the one that sees the great designer stand aside and impose his preconceived forms to the world. In Ingold's world, an extension of cognition substitutes the primacy of the gaze. Things, here conceptually different and separated from "objects," act with us and through us. Also in this case we see the figure of the designer expanding beyond traditional boundaries, losing at the same time the centrality that made the project the point of departure and arrival of each making. If we look at a design line intertwining to form unstable ties and frames, we should therefore rely on the matter-flow, on the thought that doesn't think of or with the body, but from the body. If until now we have thought of the project as something that encompasses and incorporates shapes and spaces, where the fundamental relationship that guided us was the one between people and things, today we should think of our own body; even the body of the project, like "a thing." Similarly to Sennett, the metaphor also seems to take an ecological turn: even if people, the bodies, are to be considered active things in a context of active materials, both bodies and things need an exchange with the outside to survive and be preserved. Ingold asserts: as we must look after a vase in order to have it resist metamorphosis and dissolution, so a body must be supported and fed. Things exist in opposition to the subjects in a stable and prefixed world, the world well represented by abstract geometries; in reality they are already united by their external appearance to the productive processes, they are in need of attention, they are enmeshed in the social, exactly as Latour describes the matted, tentacled, rhizomatic objects (almost objects). Just as Sennett's membrane breathed by attracting something to itself and expelling

something to the outside, so things and bodies breathe and change in a continuously unfolding field of forces. Sennett and Latour show us from different points of view the intrinsically political quality of the natural order and at the same time they seem to represent the most evidently political part of Ingold's research.

To sum up this short path we went along, the question we should ask ourselves is: what remains of the project? Indeed, many of the conditions that inspired at least theoretically its feasibility and possibilities seem to have disappeared. On different but almost complementary levels, in fact, the authors mentioned here do not operate a generic deconstruction of planning, but undermine its foundations on an ontological, practical, epistemological and, in the end, political level. This is even more interesting because this subtraction of land does not involve new theories or technology, but "making" itself. It is the investigation of the requirements for the act of "doing," of its very nature, of the extensiveness of the mind, of the intelligence of the hand, of the fundamentals of knowledge and of the impossibility of distinguishing between artefacts and craftsmen that led the project to dissolve. The world that seemed designed until recently and that in fact needed to be outlined in detail does not seem to have the same boundaries as before. It is simply inaccurate to offer the image of a world assembled in blocks or procedures. In this sense, Ingold offers us a further image: the world is not a network of meanings, where each line establishes a relationship between joints and points of arrival, but it looks more like a quilt, a *Meshwork*,²⁰ where irregular parts are held together by stitching, tangles, especially woven lines that do not have an end and stretch elsewhere. The lines Ingold talks about do not represent anything, they do not connect, they do not draw outlines. The lines stop being geometric constructs and delimiting forms because they are ruled by movement and growth. Membranes, strange ruffled objects and quilts. These images all together lead us to an idea: the world that helps us interpret these authors, the world with which they invite us to cooperate and work, each of them from their own perspective, is no longer comprehensible through optics but only through a haptic, tactile, more tangible and practical perception. What will a project be then? Perhaps we can draw a brief and minimal conclusion from the set of images and reflections of Sennett, Ingold and Latour: the world that awaits us will be designable if we are able to feel it, if, despite the many defeats and evidence, we will find a different kind of subjectivity, maybe a more careful, more sensitive one.

20. Ingold, *Making*, 132–3.

Ivano Gorzanelli was born in Vignola, Modena. He holds a PhD in Philosophy (2006) with a dissertation on Schiller, Nietzsche and the aesthetic education of man. Currently, he is a PhD candidate in *Architecture and design cultures* at the University of Bologna. He has published several articles in Italian and international reviews and he took part to research groups working on cultural memory and the city. Today, his work focuses on the concept of morphology and the relationship between lines and forms in the contemporary reflections of the Scottish anthropologist Tim Ingold. He is also interested in the early 20th-century German culture in the work of authors like Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer

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