

# PHOTO-NARRATIVES TO DESIGN THE FUTURE

PHOTOGRAPHER AND FILMMAKER **ARMIN LINKE**, BORN IN MILAN IN 1966 AND NOW BASED IN BERLIN, IS A VISITING PROFESSOR AT THE ISTITUTO SUPERIORE PER LE INDUSTRIE ARTISTICHE DI URBINO (ISIA), ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE AT THE KUNSTHISTORISCHES INSTITUT IN FLORENZ (KHI, RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF THE MAX PLANCK SOCIETY DEDICATED TO THE HISTORY OF ART AND ARCHITECTURE), AND LECTURER AT THE USI ACADEMY OF ARCHITECTURE IN MENDRISIO. LINKE INVESTIGATES THE SO-CALLED GESTALTUNG OF THE NATURAL, TECHNOLOGICAL AND URBAN ENVIRONMENT IN WHICH WE LIVE.

BY **DIMITRI LORINGETT**



**A**nalysing space, observing landscapes and learning their history, looking at the impact of economic, environmental and technological changes and planning for the future. At the centre of all this is man and their way of relating to the environment in which they live and operate.

«I'm interested in the anthropological and cultural traces of how human beings shape their environment» says Armin Linke, whose oeuvre – photographs and films – provide a means of raising awareness about different architectural and urban design strategies. For Linke, photography, in particular, is «a starting point for posing questions, it is an important way to initiate a dialogue between people and their natural or built environment». In order to initiate this dialogue through photography, it is important to reflect on the narrative that goes with it. «Today we all have digital devices capable of taking photographs, of course, but this makes me think about the role that the photographer and photography should play in fostering this dialogue. I believe that the role of the photographer is no longer just to take a picture, but to compose several images into a narrative, which can then be expressed in a book or an exhibition».



## Photography as a space for negotiation

We met with the German-Italian artist in Mendrisio, during his workshop held at the USI Academy of Architecture in February 2022. The goal of the one-week workshop was to produce the first part of a sort of visual guide to the architecture and urban development of the Mendrisiotto region, which features logistics hubs, major infrastructure, natural landscapes, cultural heritage sites, relevant architectures, and more – all of which can then be brought to the attention of a wider audience through a photographic narration. «The so-called 'photographic sculpture-book' is one of the tools we use with students to observe public, cultural or industrial spaces», Linke explains. «The ultimate goal of the course is to increase awareness in our future architects. Indeed, images can help us understand the decision-making mechanisms needed to transform the territory so that we can also have a basis for negotiating how to design the future. Southern Ticino lends itself well to this type of workshop with young architects in training because it is a region rich in history, places and artefacts that make it all but provincial or marginal within a



global context – which is where many of our future architects will be operating – probably because of its being a border region but, even more so, at the crossroads between northern and southern Europe».

## Art and vision

Armin Linke's oeuvre is a continuous flow of shots and films which, taken over decades in different parts of the world, have now become an important document of the effects of globalisation, the transformation of infrastruc-

tures and landscapes. Visual materials that not only capture the results of past actions, but perhaps also give us pointers for a future course of action. «To design the future you need a vision, and to have a vision you need images. The problem is how to create images that can raise questions rather than provide answers. Perhaps this is also the role of art».



Images taken from the publication produced for the workshop *La fotografia come spazio di negoziazione*. Linke A., Bruno G., SP 2022 at Università della Svizzera italiana, Accademia di architettura, Mendrisio. All rights reserved © 2022

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