

Fitting the In-Between: reframing architecture across displacement and material evidence

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Thirty years after the proclamation of Bigness, architectural practice is shaped by conditions of instability, displacement, and uneven resource distribution. Relationships between form and social life no longer hold as stable or coherent, but must be negotiated. Territories are defined less by growth than by fragmentation, incompleteness, and what can be described as permanent temporariness. Rather than assuming alignment, architecture must operate through processes that are partial and adaptive. Within this shift, “fitting” is approached not as a predefined correspondence, but as an active and situated practice.

The refugee housing estate of Aspres in Nicosia, Cyprus, offers a critical ground through which to examine these conditions. Conceived as a temporary response to crisis, the settlement persists as a space of prolonged uncertainty, where standardized planning has produced spatial and social misalignment. Over time, this condition has generated fragmented forms of inhabitation, requiring ongoing acts of adaptation by residents. Architecture, in this context, cannot operate through fixed solutions, but must engage incremental transformations that support shared use, negotiation, and collective agency.

Within this framework, the architectural detail is understood as a site of operation. It is used as a tool to record—through acts of making, assembly, and adjustment—the micro-decisions through which spatial relationships are recalibrated. These acts do not resolve form once and for all; they register how architecture is shaped in response to material constraints and lived practices. Large-scale planning exposes the persistence of misalignment, detail makes visible the processes through which more precise conditions can emerge.

Fitting operates across scales as a continuous process of adjustment between bodies, materials, and environments. Form is not given in advance, but develops through situated actions that reconfigure relationships over time. In this sense, architecture regains its agency through attentiveness, precision, and the capacity to work within conditions that resist closure..