# CIÊNCIAS SOCIALMENTE APLICÁVEIS E HUMANIDADES:

## SABERES, PRÁTICAS E HORIZONTES DE INVESTIGAÇÃO

CAMILO GIRALDO-GIRALDO
(ORGANIZADOR)

EDITORA ARTEMIS
2025

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C569 Ciências socialmente aplicáveis e humanidades [livro eletrônico] : saberes, práticas e horizontes de investigação / organização de Camilo Giraldo-Giraldo. – 1. ed. – Curitiba : Editora Artemis, 2025.
il. color.

Formato: PDF
Requisitos de sistema: Adobe Acrobat Reader
Modo de acesso: World Wide Web
Edição bilíngue
Inclui bibliografia
ISBN 978-65-81701-67-3
DOI 10.37572/EdArt_300925673

1. Ciências sociais. 2. Humanidades. 3. Interdisciplinaridade. 4. Pesquisa científica. I. Giraldo-Giraldo, Camilo. II. Título.

CDD 300

**Elaborado por Maurício Amormino Júnior – CRB6/2422**

EDITORA ARTEMIS
2025

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## PRÓLOGO

El presente volumen inaugural de la nueva colección ***Ciências Socialmente Aplicáveis e Humanidades: Saberes, Práticas e Horizontes de Investigação*** reúne 25 contribuciones provenientes de universidades y centros de investigación de diversos países. Este primer tomo marca el inicio de una serie concebida para explorar, desde múltiples perspectivas, los desafíos sociales, culturales, tecnológicos y políticos que atraviesan nuestras sociedades contemporáneas.

La diversidad de enfoques, metodologías y contextos nacionales no constituye aquí una dispersión, sino la oportunidad de construir un espacio de convergencia donde la complejidad de lo real se aborda desde perspectivas complementarias. Cada volumen de la colección buscará mantener este espíritu de diálogo interdisciplinar y pluralidad geográfica, configurando una cartografía crítica de los saberes socialmente aplicables y de las humanidades en movimiento.

La organización de los capítulos en este primer número responde a una lógica progresiva que acompaña al lector desde las escalas más amplias de la geopolítica y la gobernanza hasta las expresiones más situadas de los saberes tradicionales y las prácticas locales. Así, el volumen abre con un **primer eje dedicado a la Geopolítica, las Políticas Públicas, la Economía y el Derecho**, en el que se abordan conflictos internacionales, la gestión de recursos públicos, los mecanismos fiscales y judiciales, así como la estructura financiera de las empresas. Se trata de un bloque que ilumina las tensiones entre poder, instituciones y ciudadanía, desde el nivel global hasta el nacional y empresarial.

El **segundo eje, Gestión, Innovación Organizacional y Ingeniería Aplicada**, reúne investigaciones que exploran la gestión de recursos humanos, el liderazgo y la innovación en las organizaciones, las actividades preventivas en los servicios públicos, y estudios de optimización industrial y de sistemas de control. Aquí se articulan las dinámicas organizacionales con las lógicas de la producción y la ingeniería, mostrando la interdependencia entre gestión, innovación y tecnología.

El **tercer eje, Educación, Lenguajes y Tecnologías**, despliega reflexiones y experiencias sobre la autonomía docente en la educación superior, la incorporación de recursos de realidad aumentada y gamificación en la enseñanza, y el valor pedagógico de la tradición oral indígena. Este bloque invita a pensar la educación como un terreno de tensiones entre tradición y modernidad, donde las lenguas, los recursos tecnológicos y la interculturalidad desempeñan un papel decisivo.

El **cuarto eje, Preservación del Patrimonio y Arqueología**, centra la atención en la conservación estructural de monumentos, la gestión de riesgos en paisajes culturales

y la investigación arqueológica de sitios formativos andinos. El patrimonio se presenta aquí no solo como herencia material, sino como un campo de intervención técnica, social y política frente a los desafíos contemporáneos.

A continuación, el **quinto eje, Turismo, Territorio y Sostenibilidad**, plantea interrogantes sobre la movilidad eléctrica en áreas protegidas, las experiencias autoetnográficas del turismo arquitectónico y la función del idioma portugués en la actividad turística en Argentina. El turismo se aborda como práctica social, fenómeno económico y campo de negociación entre conservación, identidad y desarrollo.

El **sexto eje, Cultura, Medios y Diseño**, integra estudios sobre biopolítica y prensa escrita, desigualdades de género en la inteligencia artificial y la historia del diseño comercial en Corea del Norte. Estos trabajos problematizan los modos en que el poder se inscribe en los discursos mediáticos, en los algoritmos y en las formas visuales que modelan la vida cotidiana y la subjetividad.

Finalmente, el **séptimo eje, Salud, Bioética y Derechos Humanos** en diálogo con los Saberes Tradicionales, reúne investigaciones que van desde el conocimiento y uso de plantas medicinales en comunidades afrocolombianas hasta los desafíos bioéticos vinculados con la narcoterapia en Ecuador y las denuncias sobre las denominadas "cárceles electrónicas" y la vulneración de neuroderechos en América Latina. El volumen cierra, así, con un retorno a lo humano y lo local, al tiempo que sitúa en primer plano los debates contemporáneos sobre la dignidad, el cuidado y las éticas de la vida frente a las tensiones entre tradición, tecnología y derechos universales.

En su conjunto, este **primer volumen** ofrece al lector un itinerario que va del análisis de las relaciones internacionales y los marcos institucionales a las experiencias concretas de educación, cultura, turismo y salud. Su riqueza reside no solo en la pluralidad de temas y metodologías, sino también en la posibilidad de leerlos en continuidad, como parte de un proyecto editorial más amplio que seguirá desarrollándose en los próximos tomos de esta colección.

Les deseo a todos una provechosa y enriquecedora lectura.

**Camilo Giraldo-Giraldo**
Universidad de Castilla-La Mancha (UCLM), España

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**https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_30092567323**

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**https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_30092567324**

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**https://doi.org/10.37572/EdArt_30092567325**

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# CAPÍTULO 18

## ARCHITECTURE TOURISM TO CITIES IN POLAND AND SPAIN, AN AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY

*Data de submissão: 01/09/2025*
*Data de aceite: 18/09/2025*

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**ABSTRACT:** The purpose of this study is to review the concept of architectural tourism (architourism) from the perspective of a tourist's lived experience. Architourism literature is focused on functions and features of built environments, on interdependencies between tourism and buildings and on (cultural) buildings as strategic tourism resources. Attention to and understanding of architourists' motives and experiences is limited. An auto-ethnographic study is selected to shed light on architourism practices. After a literature review, the method of auto-ethnography is explained. Auto-ethnography is employed as an analytical tool for exploring concept linked to architourism. This means that I (the researcher) performed as an architourist, reflecting on behaviour and experiences, and relating practices and reflections to conceptual aspects of architourism. The empirical part concerns seven vacation trips to contemporary cultural architecture in Polish and Spanish cities (2020 – 2025). The findings of the study describe the researcher's architourism practice and show the significance of tourist experience for architourism studies. Topics for further research include the needs to better understand architourists' motivation and experience, to deepen the concept of architecture experience and to broaden architourism to places rather than buildings.
**KEYWORDS:** architecture tourism; architourism; auto-ethnography; Poland; Spain.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Many city authorities, cultural organisations, tourism providers and researchers think that architecture has substantial potential for enhancing city tourism (Specht, 2014; Godfrey and Gretzel, 2016; Ebejer, 2021; Pla'tou, 2007; Bursiewicz, 2021). Modern architecture is used in the creation of desirable tourism destinations and for city marketing (Godfrey and Gretzel, 2016). The success of Guggenheim Bilbao has been inspiring (but has also been critically discussed, e.g. Ponzini, 2010; Gravari-Barbas, 2017; Lorente, 2023). "The value of architecture is no

longer appraised merely as a formal object but by its ability to elicit relevant transformations" (Marquez and McIntosh, 2018, 68). Attracting visitors can be an important design factor for new architecture because tourism and leisure support a (potentially) important sector of the economy. Events that engage with or are focused on architecture are becoming more common and attract increasing numbers of visitors (Scerri et al., 2019). Dedicated events like the Venice Architecture Biennale are popular; the 2023 Biennale attracted about 285,000 visitors. Significant is that all over Europe, cities organise 'open architecture days', meaning that several types of buildings and special places are opened to the public and conversations about architecture and city-making are organised. These open days are popular and usually have a local or regional reach.

In the literature on architectural tourism (architourism), the features of contemporary and heritage architecture in relation to tourism are discussed. So far, attention to the (potential) visitors (the architecture tourists), their backgrounds and motives, their special interests and their experiences has been limited. After reading academic literature, I started to reflect - as a researcher and as city tourist - on my own architourism behaviour, my travel motives and my experiences. Looking back at past city trips taught me that my memorable tourism experiences are not only about the gazes and features of buildings, but they are on what I experienced in places and buildings, how in felt.

To further explore my own architourism experience, looking back at past trips and reflecting on experiences was not appropriate because these trips are undocumented except photos. I developed a plan to make new trips, perform as a city and architectural tourist in the way I normally do during solo trips, and reflect on my behaviour, experiences, choices etc. and subsequently on the concept related to architourism. My anticipation was that this type of immersion could be useful as an early exploratory study. Of course, reflecting on one's own tourism behaviour blurs the division between researcher and the object of research, separating the knower and the known, which is a common feature of positivism (Ayikoru, 2009). Subjectivity would be an issue but on the other hand "meaningful touristic realities are constructed through our engagement with the world" (Pernecky, 2012, 1132). Lived experience is a comparatively neglected area of consumer experience in tourism research and ethnographic methods help to gain insider's insights (O'Gorman et al., 2014).

Like many concepts used in social sciences, both architourism and tourism experience are not uniformly defined. Architourism, an emerging theme in special interest cultural tourism, is a recently described tourism practice. The phrase architourism was

coined in 2005, reports Specht (2014) who wrote a first monograph on the subject. Questions about the concept and practices of architourism still look for answers, including the basic notion why a specific kind of activity (visiting a place / building) is labelled as a (special) type of tourism. Also, the concept of 'tourism experience' lacks clear definition, the theme is marked by many interpretations and models (Ryan, 2010; Dieguez and Conceição, 2021; Nawijn and Strijbosch, 2022; Sharpley, 2022).

This article will first deal with the concept of architourism and discuss the method of (analytical) auto-ethnography of personal tourist experience, and then attention will shift to the empirical study of trips to Polish and Spanish cities with special cultural architecture.

## 2. ARCHITOURISM

Architecture has been a tourism attractor for a long time (Lasansky and McLaren, 2004) but Centre Pompidou in Paris and especially Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, both spectacular 'brand name architecture' objects, marked an increased interest in the role of architecture for tourism (Specht, 2014). The concept of architourism was first discussed in Ockman and Frausto's (2005) volume entitled *Architourism: Authentic, Escapist, Exotic, Spectacular*. It was noted that uniquely designed architecture has become an end in itself for tourism, a specific destination. Architourism was seen as the "possibility for a single work of contemporary architecture ... to attract hordes of tourists to a previously marginal place" (Schwarzer, 2005, 23). This description is influenced by the Guggenheim Bilbao experience. This article follows Specht's (2014, 18) broader description, architecture as an attraction in itself. Architecture as a primary attraction can play a key role in tourism as a single structure or a set of structures in architectural complexity (e.g. a 'museum mile' or an urban waterfront development). Architecture can be part of a broader tourism product – in that case its role is a coulisse to some other tourism products and adds to the image and atmosphere (Jarolímková and Míšková, 2020). A theme park or wellness centre may have special architecture, but the principal goal of this architecture is to serve the functions of the place.

Specht (2014) published a first monograph on architourism, with a focus on interdependencies between tourism, the built environment and contemporary architecture as tourism attraction. "Both the Bilbao Guggenheim and the Louvre in Paris also attract visitors because of their architecture. Some visitors even decide to view it from the outside only instead of visiting the museum and its exhibits" (Specht, 2014, 30). Cultural heritage tourism overlaps with architourism; the architectural features and the meanings

of historic buildings are important in heritage tourism but architourism is mainly seen in terms of contemporary architecture. In the past significant architecture was not designed for tourism (churches and cathedrals were for worshipping, castles were residences and symbols of power), nowadays many cultural architecture objects by themselves should be special and attract visitors. Maitland (2009) explains the relationship between tourism and the aesthetics of the built environment since 1890 and claims that city governments are long aware that tourism has a key influence on urban aesthetics and thus on architecture. Della Lucia and Trunfio (2018, 36) state "Iconic architecture and events are currently among the most important cultural catalysts used to revamp urban identity, increase vibrancy and attract creative people and tourists". To what extent eye-catching architecture attracts tourists to a city, is unknown. It is hardly measured, and it is difficult to measure since visitors to most cities may have multiple travel objectives.

Aficionados / professionals in the field of architecture have higher levels of interest and intent (Specht, 2015; Shaw, 2015). Aficionados show significant differences in aesthetic evaluations of buildings than the bigger group of interested laypeople (Šafárová et al., 2019). Professionals may know more about design and construction, but they have mental frames that may impede appreciating architecture from a visitor or user perspective. This is common for other types of special interest tourism as well; aficionados have other ways of looking at and experiencing their objects of interest. The table below summarizes differences between a focus on architecture as design, and architecture from a visitor's angle.

Figure 1. Modern architecture – two angles.

| | *Professional angle* | *Visitor(tourist) angle* |
|---|---|---|
| Architecture's essence | Science and art of designing structures and spaces | A built environment as destination, affordances, opportunities for experience |
| Core of appreciation | Understanding | Lived experience, embodiment |
| Result | Information for architecture design and evaluation | Intrinsic experiences, enjoyment |

Visiting architecturally interesting places is about a relation between the visitor and the object. A visit to for example Centre Pompidou in Paris is not just about architectural features; visitors look for experience, engagement, a social atmosphere, a pleasurable encounter. Visitors of this building (and only a minority of tourists enters the museum interior to see Centre Pompidou's art collections, Specht, 2014), want to be in the open-access accessible part of the building, use the escalators to see the Centre's square in front from a different perspective, meet other visitors and have a view of Paris. They are

not interested in the vision of architects Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers or the function that the museum had for the regeneration of Paris' Beaubourg district. The same holds for Santander's Centro Botín. It is a popular destination but I observed that only a minority of the visitors enters the exhibitions. Most people want to enjoy the views of the harbour, climb the Centro's stairs of the building, take a coffee, meet others, or sit in the shade and enjoy the seaside atmosphere.

From a reading of recent literature, especially Specht (2014; 2015), Ebejer (2021), Bähre and Elss (2020), Gravari-Barbass (2017), Pla'tou (2007), Perwira and Dewancker (2022), Scerri et al. (2018) and Ye and Tussyadiah (2016), the point is taken that there is limited attention to the tourists and their tourism practices and experiences. Most attention in architourism literature is devoted to architecture as a tourism resource and to architecture in relation to culture and place making as a regeneration strategy. Who the architourists are, what their motives are for visiting places and architecture (and for not visiting other places), and how they behave and feel about places, is unknown. Only a few small-scale case studies on architourism experiences were found. Shaw (2015) authored a research note on an exploratory study using an online survey to investigate architecture tourists to Chicago, their motivations, and information sources. It appeared that the respondents exist along a continuum from core to accidental and were primarily driven by building aesthetics. Shaw's exploratory study concerns tourists active in architecture and tourism related websites, and this may not be very representative of all architourists. Qualitative research in the place would be needed to develop categories of visitor's motives for architourism. Malmisalo-Lensu (2021) asked visitors to a small, renovated museum dedicated to Finnish architect Alvar Aalto, about their experiences, and writes (p. 36) "The visitors' accounts indicate that iconic houses interest visitors. People want to experience the houses, and many have an urge to share in the aura generated by the authentic place and architect and the life lived there. House museums are facilitators in providing authentic experiences, but the quality of the experience depends also on the visitor." Nash (2015) explores his 'architectural pilgrimage' to this same house of the Finnish architect, and his personal narrative highlights the importance of self-reflection and introspection when observing the built environment. He states (2015, 123) "Architectural pilgrimage is more than architectural tourism-cum-architourism. It is an involved journey where architecture, mobility, tourism, journeying, and thinking intersect, an active, self-based, and world-revealed seeking through the agency of architecture and design". Architectural pilgrimage is known among architects and students of architecture. Specht (2015) suggests that the more specific the level of interest in a specific architecture destination is, the lower

is the relative number of tourists belonging to this role of architectural tourists. This is comparable to many other types of special interest tourism.

## 3. ANALYTICAL AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY AND 'ME' AS THE RESEARCHER

Auto-ethnography implies employing a reflexive, introspective and interpretative approach, as well as transparency of the research process. A useful brief description is "Autoethnography is a research approach in which the researcher uses her or his own emotions, thoughts and experiences to explore aspects of her or his subculture or culture" (Botterill and Platenkamp, 2012, 2). Auto-ethnography is a response to calls to explore new ways for tourism research, and the subjectivity involved is part of the tourism experience and research process (Wilson and Hollinshead; 2015; Wilson et al., 2020; Anderson and Austin, 2012). Auto-ethnography is not a common research method in tourism; it is for example not on the list of methods identified by Wilson et al. (2020) in their review of qualitative tourism research. In the academic field of tourism, empirical-analytical modes dominate (Tribe, 2009; Jørgensen, 2018). Botteril and Platenkamp (2012, 18) comment "The distinction between, on the one hand, the humanities' emphasis on creativity and, on the other, the rigorous enquiry favoured in the social sciences provides an uncomfortable separation for autoethnographic writing. These objections to autoethnography have most readily come to the fore in arguments about how to judge its quality." In auto-ethnographies the use of personal experience to examine and/or critique cultural experience is essential (Holman Jones et al., 2013) to create nuanced and detailed 'thick descriptions' of cultural experience to facilitate understanding of those experiences. Le Roux (2017) developed a continuum of autoethnographic research, from 'evocative' (creative – artistic - narrative) to 'analytic' (social-scientific). The two types (and types in between) are not mutually exclusive.

Tourism studies employing auto-ethnographic methods do not abound. A few studies were interesting and confirmed my notion that an auto-ethnographic approach can add value to understanding tourism theory and practices. Brennan (2014) investigates the concept of working holiday by describing his own experience and interviews and discusses a contemporary conception of working holiday as revealed by travellers, and himself, who pursue such activity under a visa category of the same name, in contrast with existing academic interpretations. Cohen (2019) deployed a serial auto-ethnographic method; he was robbed as a tourist four times and wrote an autoethnography on tourism culture with the purpose of gaining insight on aspects of crime against tourists which are not noticed in the literature. Huang (2010) writes about his travel to China and uses his

experience to propose a broad conceptual model to understanding tourist experiences. Miles (2019) article tries to understand cruise ship experience, in which a close analysis of cruise tourism tells something profound about the nature of cruise tourism. These articles show the value of an autoethnographic approach for understanding tourism practices and concept development. Wall (2016, 1) warns: "Personal experience methods can offer a new and unique vantage point from which to make a contribution to social science yet, autoethnography has been criticized for being self-indulgent, narcissistic, introspective, and individualized" (cf. Walford, 2020).

This article on architourism is akin to analytic autoethnography and committed to conceptual investigation. My approach was a planned auto-ethnography, which is different from going back to old notebooks and recalling memories. Anderson (2006) discusses five features of analytic autoethnography, which are 1) complete member researcher status, 2) analytic reflexivity, 3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, 4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and 5) commitment to theoretical analysis. These points served for this study. Regarding the *complete member researcher status*, 'architourist in a Polish or Spanish city' is an amorphous category of unconnected individuals, not a club or an organization. I take part in city architourism in a dual participant-observer role. The *analytic reflexivity* is taken as "self-conscious introspection guided by a desire to better understand both self and others through examining one's actions and perceptions in reference to and dialogue with those of others" (Anderson, 2006, 382), as Cohen (2013) articulates awareness of one's own role in co-constructing knowledge during research and of the influences of one's own subjectivity. *Narrative visibility* is not just about the researcher as a visible actor in the written text, but also about making engagement of the social world under study transparent. The self-narrative of the present analytic autoethnography is used to study architourism and should not be a self-absorbed digression. A *dialogue with informants beyond the self* can be seen in view of the ethnographic imperative calling for dialogue with "data" or "others" (ibid., 386). Next to spontaneous conversation in the street and the places visited, I made beforehand contact with people in Gdansk, Wroclaw and Katowice in Poland and in A Coruña in Spain, and with a colleague in Szczecin (Poland) to review the trip. On the *commitment to theoretical analysis,* I was clear from the onset that this should be the purpose of enacting a city architourism performance in Polish and Spanish cities.

The ethnographic materials used are from various sources. First is personal experiences as a traveller in Poland and Spain, including all materials found on internet and in the cities visited. Second is the knowledge as researcher working on the theme of urban tourism and architourism and the academic literature on this subject. Third is

the result of unstructured interviews, which were done without member checking. The research process was guided by the qualitative research principles of truthfulness and credibility. There are no ethical issues. Practical methods used in this study are fieldnotes, personal documents, visuals and social media, self-interviews / reflection and interviewing others. The practice was to be a tourist during the day and follow personal interests, make photos, and in the evening make a daily review of activities and observations and their meanings, write down comments on architourism and city tourism. During my trips, I also started asking myself the question beforehand 'is this mix of vacation and study that I am doing, more tourism or work, or are these two things the same?' and made notes on my thoughts – which I later related to the literature (McCabe et al., 2015).

To organise the auto-ethnographic materials, the orchestra model of tourist experience (Pearce and Mohammi, 2022) was used. This model distinguishes behavioural components, cognitive components, sensory components, affective components and relationships components.

*'Me' as researcher.* As a city tourist I have visited many interesting and enjoyable places and eye-catching architecture in various European countries. My preference is visiting modern cultural architecture (buildings, designed open spaces, cityscapes) in the public domain rather than residential and office towers, football stadiums, etc. I am a 'half-retired' researcher and consultant. The last decade I worked as reader in management and innovation in Dutch higher education and as urban researcher connected to Polis University in Tirana. Regarding my 'normal' city tourist behaviour, I tend to take a quick view of some tourism icons and the city centre and then search for places that really interest me. They may be attractive contemporary buildings, museums, or 'backstage' places in tourist cities. For example, in my two visits to *Wroclaw*, I found the transition zone around the city centre more interesting than the busy rynek (central square) and the historic core. All sorts of (re)developments have been made in Wroclaw. Walking along river Oder to the Centennial Hall area, showed me the weekend leisure life the citizens. In my trip to Spain in 2022, I decided to stay in A Coruña and drive to Santiago de Compostela to visit the Ciudad de Cultura (Gaías). I was in Santiago 15 or so years ago, and then visited the busy old centre dominated by the cathedral and the travellers at the end of their hiking or biking of the St. Jacob's Way. In 2025 it has become much more crowded and the present situation has been labelled as 'overtourism'. Nientied (2025) presents a photo essay on the situation. A Coruña is a kind of backstage tourist city and pleased me more than touristy Santiago. As 'architourist' I like to visit buildings and public open spaces; architecture and landscaping are interwoven. I do not appreciate very much old monuments, old churches

and castles. I find the so-called spectacular architecture (like Guggenheim Bilbao, Centre Pompidou Paris or Confluances Museum Lyon) indeed spectacular, but it has no special appeal to me. Further regarding positionality is that I like to wander around and make photos (street photography, modern architecture).

## 4. ARCHITOURISM TRIPS TO POLAND AND SPAIN

I made five trips to Poland and two to Spain in the period 2021 – 2025. The trips contained various elements that are seen as types of tourism by themselves: visiting cultural buildings, photography, going backstage in cities. The cultural buildings and places are most significant, photography is a big support, also to share experiences and results. Going backstage to see other things than tourist precincts does not hamper visiting cultural architecture.

### 4.1. BEHAVIOURAL COMPONENT - MOVE IN SPACE / TIME

For a mature traveller a trip to main Polish and to Spanish cities is rather easy – there is enough information, the roads are good, the cultural buildings are well documented. My motive to go to Poland was curiosity and some pragmatism. In the 1990s I was in Szczecin for a university collaboration project and in 2018 I was curious to see the city again. I was impressed with the new cultural architecture that has been developed and I wondered how other Polish cities had developed. I planned a motorcycle trip during the Summer of 2020 to find out more and make photos. I planned to use this trip for a study on my own behaviour as city and architourist who likes photography, combining vacation and research. The 2020 trip was a tour to Szczecin, Poznan and Wroclaw. The idea to create a more comprehensive photo essay came during this trip, when I noted that an overview of contemporary Polish cultural architecture was lacking. I decided to visit other cities as well to make a photo essay on contemporary cultural architecture. Contemporary was arbitrarily defined as ‘opened after 2010’. I made four more trips; in 2021 to Torun, Gdansk, Warsaw, Krakow and Katowice, in 2022 to Szczecin, Lodz, Warsaw, Bialystok, Lublin and Wroclaw and in 2023 to Gdansk and Poznan. I made a photo essay (photos and text, Nientied, 2025) and had an exposition in 2022 on Polish cultural architecture in Tirana. In 2025 I went back to Warsaw to see the new museum of modern art and to see the development of Lodz. The trips to the North of Spain were made in 2022 and 2025. I visited Bilbao before and was interested to see other contemporary cultural architecture in the northern part of Spain. On internet, I found interesting projects and I toured to Spain to visit three cities as part of the present auto-ethnographic study and make a photo-

essay which got the title 'Beyond Bilbao, cultural architecture in Northern Spain' (Nientied, 2025). In 2025 I went back and visited the Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León, in Léon, and again the Ciudad de Cultura (Gaías) in Santiago de Compostela. I also visited Bilbao's Guggenheim again.

In Poland I selected 22 interesting cultural buildings and in Spain 4, all opened after 2010. Photos and descriptions of the places are documented in Nientied (2025). In Poland the following places were visited.

*Bialystok*: Podlasie Opera and Philharmonic and Siberia Memorial Museum
*Gdansk*: European Solidarity Centre and Museum of World War II
*Katowice*: Silesian Museum and National Polish Radio Symphony Orchestra
*Kraków*: Museum of Contemporary Art Krakau MOCAK, Centre Tadeusz Kantor CRICOTEKA and Malopolska Garden of Arts
*Lodz*: EC1 City of Culture and Museum Modern Art MC2 (Manufaktura)
Lublin: Centre for the Meeting of Cultures
*Poznan*: Brama Poznania
*Szczecin*: Filharmonia, National Museum Dialogue Centre Przelomy/Solidarity Square and Museum Maritime Science
*Torun*: Jordanki Culture and Congress Centre, CKK Jordanki
*Warsaw*: POLIN Museum of the History of the Polish Jews, Copernicus Science Centre,
*Wroclaw*: Wroclaw Contemporary Museum and National Forum of Music

Figure 1. Map of Poland.

Source: Central Statistical Office Poland.

In Spain the following places were visited.

*Santander*: Centro Botín

*Avilés*: Centro Niemeyer

*León:* Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Castilla y León

*Santiago de Compostela:* Ciudad de Cultura (Gaías).

Figure 2. Map of north Spain.

Source: OpenStreetMap (edit by author).

## 4.2. COGNITIVE COMPONENT

Shaw (2015) applies Hughes' (2000) picture of two types of architourists: the 'aficionados', whose visit architecture as a destination in itself, and the architectural peripheral tourists who decided to visit architecture after deciding where to travel or are accidental visitors. I belong to the category of aficionados because I like places with interesting contemporary architecture, but architectural pilgrimage is something different for me. My interest in urban (social) development and tourism influences my experiential outcomes - I look at buildings in their social and physical context. Architecture professionals may come for seeing and appraising buildings and their designs, but I learned that most visitors have multiple objectives and various experiential components.

> *In Ciudad de Cultura (CdC, Gaías) in Santiago, the tour guide introduced herself as architect to a group of 14 visitors who bought the tour 'Gaías secreto'. She started with showing the 10 architectural maquettes of the 1999 idea competition, displayed in a cellar of the building. It was clear that*

*the group was not interested in architectural details, and the guide smoothly shifted to informing the group about engineering challenges and social and economic aspects of the Centre. The group found those aspects more interesting than the architectural design issues. The group had 8 Spanish participants, 5 Portuguese and I am Dutch. I asked a Portuguese and a Spanish couple about their motivation to visit CdC. Both couples said that they made a tour, one in Galicia, the other in Galicia and the north of Portugal. CdC looked interesting to them. 2-3 people in the group had a professional background, judging on basis of their questions, and CdC was one attraction of their trip to Galicia.*

*In Szczecin I participated in a guided tour of the Filharmonia (in Polish, one guide offered me some whisper translation into English). I was one of about 75 people, from all walks of life. About 50 of them were Szczecin residents. Mothers with children, interested senior citizens, a group of students, etc. all wanted to see the inside of the building. It was a happy occasion; the participants were delighted and the three tour guides were enthusiastic to show the Filharmonia to Szczecin's interested people, many of them tourists in their own city. All people had a special interest in the building, but not necessarily in architecture – people wanted to visit the special new building in 'their' city. Thy were enthusiastic, made selfies and family portraits in the building. The tour guide told me that the building makes people proud of their city, and this was obvious from the visitors' behaviour.*

In my case, the vacation trips were the result of a wish to visit and photograph contemporary cultural architecture, but I also wanted to discover and experience how Polish cities had developed after their troublesome histories of war and communism, and to visit Spanish cities and be in Spain again. I visited various other places. For example, in Poland I visited Gdansk's and Warsaw's revitalised old districts to realise the efforts that the Polish people put into rebuilding cities after WWII. In Spain I spent a few days in A Coruña – a genuinely nice 'backstage' Spanish city where I also did some portrait photography.

The cognitive component of the trips, especially finding information on internet and processing that information, was more important than for example during the holidays with my wife. My solo trips to different places in Poland and Spain had other purposes – leisure plus an auto-ethnography and photography. In the evenings I made notes, reflected on the day and reviewed photos. Summer holidays with my wife have no other purposes than discovering and enjoying the region we go to. During our 2022 holidays we went as

day visitors to Venice, and then my experience was not just enjoying the city - especially the cognitive component became important because I look at sustainable tourism and overtourism issues (like crowding) because it is a topic of my academic concern (Nientied and Toto, 2022; Nientied, 2021).

I found the difference between presenting contemporary architecture as a tourism resource on Polish and on Spanish official websites remarkable. In Spain, architecture is presented as tourism attraction (presented as items to see, not as destinations to experience), in Poland tourism sites present especially heritage sites. The websites of the Spanish cultural centres gave much background information on the buildings; in Poland this is much less. In Bialystok the tourist information is mediocre – no pictures, Poznan tourist info does not show pictures (or anything on architecture). In Szczecin the historical component in the city is limited, and the new developments deceive attention on an attractive tourism website. Gdansk and Warsaw have professional websites, which do not mention architecture as category, but they do show the buildings visited.

The trips were a learning experience about places and people, about architourism and daily life in Polish and Spanish cities. I found this learning component very satisfying. In tourism information, I did not come across references to learning and travel, only in for example the science park in Copernicus Science Centre in Warsaw (fun – learning – children). On tourism information sites, words like see, experience, discover (not in a learning sense, but as unveiling hidden information and places) are used frequently, references to learning are not made. “Were you away for holidays or for some research or so?”, a friend asked me after a trip. I reflected on that – the trips felt as vacation with a purpose and that was a positive feeling. Travelling alone ‘just wondering around‘ or ‘chilling on the beach’ is not my preference, I like to learn and have something to do - serious leisure is sometimes used as a term for this tourism practice (Veal, 2016).

### 4.3. SENSORY COMPONENT

Sensory inputs to experience encompass hearing and sounds, taste and flavour, scents and smells and the value of touch and physical sensations. Urry and Larsen (2011, 14) argue for the fundamentally visual nature of many tourism experiences. Gazes organise the encounters of visitors with the ‘other’, providing some sense of competence, pleasure and structure to those experiences. In my experience, the gaze indeed organised some other senses but visiting cultural architecture is a multisensory experience.

> *Lublin’s Centre for Meeting of Cultures was one of the places that made me happy. I saw a contemporary building, attractive, big, not spectacular, quite*

*different from its urban context. I was surprised that local authorities had taken decisions to select this design. Inside, I found the different spaces, the unrestricted access, the roof garden with a bee protection project, simply great. People were busy with musical instruments and in another part of the building a workshop was going on. A café on the square in front served good coffee.*

*Visiting Centro Botín in Santander was another happy occasion. A beautiful building in an exceptional setting. A park in front, open spaces on the sides, the view and the light smell of the sea next to a cultural centre add to the experience. The art exhibitions were nice, the interior of the building like any other good exhibition space. Most of all I was pleased with Centro Botín as 'people's building'. It is full of life, a meeting place. I did all things many visitors do: they go inside for the art exhibitions and they climb the building to enjoy views, they have a coffee or lunch in the cafeteria or look around in the art shop, spend some time in the shadow on the public square under the building.*

Urry and Larsen (2011, 2) stress: "Gazing at sights is conditioned by personal experiences and memories and framed by rules and styles, as well as by circulating images and texts of this and other places. Such 'frames' are critical resources, techniques, cultural lenses that potentially enable tourists to see the physical forms and material spaces before their eyes as 'interesting, good or beautiful'. They are not the property of mere sight". I recognize this point in my own gaze. My gaze and my background influence my identification of the qualities of Lublin's Centre and Santander's Centro Botín (and all other places visited), which are not intrinsic to the building. The gaze may be important, but senses and affection are integral part of the tourist experience (Edensor, 2018; Rickley, 2022) as the experiences of Lublin and Santander show. For example, the gaze does not organise my sense of atmosphere, how a place feels. Senses are conventionally described as the five senses of vision, audition, olfaction, touch, and taste. Scholars stress that the multisensory mind is much more complicated. that there are many more than five senses (Spence, 2020), including the sense of balance, sense of place, sense of movement (kinaesthesia), thermoception, sense of time and sense of direction. Identifying the sensory components during my visits was quite difficult. I could grasp my sense of place / space and my sense of atmosphere (Pallasmaa, 2018, 15), but I think that these and other senses are partly subconscious and require other research approaches to be uncovered.

## 4.4. AFFECTIVE COMPONENT

The affective component entails feeling pleased, happy, surprised, astonished, etc. in the cultural architecture places. I liked all places visited, one more or in a different way than the other. The affective component did not just concern the buildings and places, it concerns the vacation and city context. In Spain I was happy to speak Spanish again and could enjoy my *tortilla* with a *café cortado.* In Poland I was impressed by the tremendous developments after the change from communist to market systems. I was surprised that Krakow has more sushi-eateries than Dutch cities. I like photography and with so many buildings there were many nice places to visit and to enjoy. I felt also grateful during and after the trips that I have the opportunity and money for doing the trips, that they were safe trips and that the photos were good.

> *In Gdansk I talked with an academic colleague about her city and two other places I visited. She showed me around in what she found the most interesting part of the city – the new development of the former harbour area behind the European Solidarity Centre. Gdansk does what many harbour cities are doing (and in Poland the cities with industrial sites that are not in use anymore, like in Lodz and Katowice) – redevelopment for residential and cultural purposes. The arts scene is a spearheading function as they first occupy the existing buildings that are not used any more. That part of Gdansk felt a bit like my hometown Rotterdam, where culture was the start of a long term and large-scale urban redevelopment of dilapidated harbour areas. So, I felt thankful that this colleague took the time to show me around, we have nice talks and coffee and I felt a bit at home in the harbour area – as a Rotterdammer.*
>
> *In Bialystok I was busy making photos of the recently opened Siberia Memorial Museum, devoted to centuries of Russian and Soviet deportations of Poles to Siberia. The building and the surrounding garden are beautiful. The place is outside the ring-road, and felt a bit lifeless, like sad beauty, and more like a monument than a people's cultural place.*

## 4.5. RELATIONSHIPS COMPONENT

Travelling alone and self-managed trips means that there is no daily interaction with a travel companion. Communication with tourism providers is through internet. But the tourist experience is shared and influenced by different others; tourism has a social nature. Small talk was done with the staff of hotels and other places where I stayed, and on the street and in buildings.

*In Avilés I talked with a family in Centro Niemeyer's open space. They had some snacks and drinks with them; the kids were playing with bikes and roller skates. They came from 'the centre' to Centro Niemeyer and crossed the river and railway line. For the family Centro Niemeyer was a leisure area, an alternative to the Parque de Ferrera, "in the park the kids can play football, here they can bike and roller skate". And here we enjoy the beautiful modern place and meet different people.*

*In Szczecin, I met with a friend on the Solidarity Square in front of the Filharmonia, and I shared the idea of making a photo essay of new cultural architecture in Poland. She was surprised that I wanted to visit so many Polish cities. Not because the places were not worth the visit, but "who wants to visit all these cities in Poland, we do not get so many foreign tourists outside Warsaw and Krakow. Well, thank you for promoting Poland".*

I travelled on my own but felt that my trips had a social nature. Apart from calling my wife, the social aspects in my experience were a number of people I met – some meetings organized beforehand and many others in the street. The notion that I was working on photo essay that others would see, added to the social character of the trips. In 2025 I went with my wife to CdC in Santiago de Compostela, and my experience was quite different from my earlier solo visits because I wanted to show her the complex. 'Relations with others' influence the visitor experience.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

My trips to Poland and Spain focused on architourism experiences of contemporary cultural architecture. The architourism trips were meant to explore the concept of architourism from the perspective of a tourist's lived experience and motivation. The empirical results are of course limited because 'n=1', but the experiences and reflections lead to aspects of architourism that ask for further study.

### 5.1. VISITORS' MOTIVES AND VISITORS' ARCHITECTURE EXPERIENCES

Shaw (2015) correctly stated that architourists' motives are unknown, and this topic deserves research attention. The same is submitted for visitor experience. Architourism literature is focused on certain buildings, on architecture as an end in itself. My experiences suggests that if buildings in cities are not in the incredibly special or spectacular category, visitors are likely to have multiple travel objectives, one of which is contemporary architecture (cf. Specht, 2015). If this holds, the issue is not whether a building is a tourism

destination as an end in itself, but whether it is worth the time spent, worth a detour. The worth is 'what the visitor experiences in this place' rather than only looking and taking a photo of a building. Edensor et al. (2021) studied football stadium tourism and concluded from visitor experiences that a stadium can functions as experiential site of pilgrimage and heritage, function as restaurants and possess prosaic and functional attributes that are significant dimensions of visitor experience. Significant is that the affective component plays a key role. In the architourism literature this dimension is almost absent and needs further exploration. Tourism professionals know that creating experiences is at the heart of tourism and at the core of postmodern tourism consumption. Research could be more concerned with modern architecture objects in their context and pay more attention to visitors and users – who they are and what they want and do.

### 5.2. ARCHITOURISM AS SPECIAL INTEREST TOURISM

A question is whether differentiation of architourism (i.e. conceive architourism as a separate category) is useful. McCabe et al. (2015, 19) write: "Each type of tourist / traveller becomes equally applicable as a descriptor of some kind of activity, without necessarily moving forward the debates about tourism significance to social life." In other words, when a tourist wants to see a building for its aesthetics, the term architecture tourism is used and architourism is seen as a type of tourism. The added value of architourism as a tourism type is not very clear. From this study it appears that contemporary architecture tourism is one the many special interests in (city) tourism, serving serious leisure participants with specific interests and also attracting incidental and sightseeing tourists (Specht, 2015). The question 'how special is special interest tourism (architourism)', is hard to answer (Weiler and Firth, 2022). Wen and Wu (2020, 3) write "The literature on special interest tourism suggests that academics and industry practitioners will continue to explore just how *special* special interest tourism is and how *special* special interest tourists are by defining exactly what makes this segment 'special.' Other lenses, such as trip quality and quantity, travel purposes, and the economic and behavioural effects of special interest tourism, can be applied to understand special interest tourism and tourist behaviours more broadly" [italics in original]. In other words, architourism may be self-confirmatory and the question how 'special' buildings and their visitors are, needs further deliberation.

### 5.3. ARCHITECTURE EXPERIENCE

During my trips to Poland en Spain, and architourism to other European countries, I noted that visitors are encouraged to see and understand but not to experience

architecture. Tourism professionals know that creating experiences is the core of tourism, but this awareness is very often not applied to modern architectural resources. Most academics and professionals stress the visual and cognitive aspects of architecture. For example, Holland's (2024) recent book 'How to enjoy architecture' is about understanding design and materiality. Architecture experience is a topic that is far from fully explored.

Experience is personal – one person may find Bilbao's Guggenheim a masterpiece of art and a source for happiness, another person may find the place ugly, alien and depressing. There is a need to better understand the practices of architecture experiences and come to a definition. Benedikt (2020) talks about 'architecture beyond experience', but it would be good to first understand better what architecture experience is. The concept I work with is that architecture tourism is 'the resource + visitors + tourism practices'. More attention for the visitors and their practices is wanted. How the senses work during architecture tourism, how architecture influences our senses, is a puzzling question to be studied.

### 5.4. TRANSFORMATION EXPERIENCE

Ye and Tussyadiah (2016) suggest that postmodern tourists' needs and anticipations of travel do not only lie in the experiences, but also in the transformation of their selves. Many researchers have stressed this point (Sheldon, 2020). Ye and Tussyadiah (2016) relate it to city architecture. Tourists seek unique destinations that they could identify or associate with their self-identity in a more profound way, and architourism architecture offers a potential mechanism for inscribing the self into the environment, which may ease a form of identification that, once conformed, will be able to etch a long-lasting impact for tourists. Ye and Tussyadiah (2016, 9) write "Tourists' narratives show that tourists put a great importance in architectural environment of a destination and perceive architecture as important for self-transformation." Reading this prompted my reflection: is this about me, am I this tourist? Do I confirm my identity, go through a self-transformation (to be expected after visiting so many beautiful places)? My trips and the choice of places will say something about my identity. I enjoyed the visits, all of them, they were memorable experiences, also because of the documentary photos made. Sharpy (2022, 162) writes "people benefit from experiences related to the human spirit, such as happiness, awe, wonder, a state of mindfulness or peacefulness, a sense of connectedness to others or to nature, or even a feeling of self-discovery." The experiences during my trips related to my human spirit and I felt connectedness. For me, this is different from a self-transformational experience.

## 5.5. BUILDINGS OR PLACES

An issue is whether architourism should be about single buildings or about sets of structures in architectural complexity, or about places – areas in the built environment. The current architourism focus is mostly on (spectacular) single buildings. From my findings architourism should be conceived in a broader manner. Katowice's Silesian Museum is part of a cultural district with beautiful open spaces, Centro Botín in Santander cannot be isolated from the well-designed park in front and open space surrounding the building, and from a main asset of the centre namely its location along the coastline. Szczecin's Filharmonia benefits from the Solidarity Square in front which is on top of the National Museum Dialogue Centre Przelomy, together a delightful ensemble. Single buildings are more tangible, something 'to see' in marketing terms, they have a signature architect and thereby a personal story. But only for architecture professionals and serious aficionados, architourism could mean gazing at a building and listening to the architect. For most people it is about the sense of place, how people relate places through lived experiences (Agnew, 2011; Lichrou and Panayiotopoulos, 2022).

## 5.6. CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE AND TOURISM MARKETING

Bursiewicz (2021) observed that contemporary architecture is almost absent in tourism marketing in Poland and that greater efforts should be made to systematically shape the image of the city in relation to contemporary architecture. She sees contemporary architecture as a hidden potential for tourism in the Polish case of Wroclaw. My experience of the trips shows that most of the 11 cities visited in Poland indeed pay only limited attention to contemporary architecture in their tourism promotion. However, to what extent contemporary architecture is a hidden potential, is still to be investigated. There are more people opting for busy historical city centres than for modern architecture. In Spain, the situation is different – architecture is seen as a tourist attraction and is promoted. Centro Botín is a popular destination, but MUSAC in León on the other hand is a very quiet place despite its remarkable architecture. It cannot be separated from the overall attractiveness of the cities of Santander and León. Attention in architecture for marketing is on 'what to see', and not 'what to do and see (what to experience)'. A study of motives and thinking among city tourism marketeers may give more clarity.

## 5.7. AUTO-ETHNOGRAPHY

A reflection on the experience of employing auto-ethnography as a method in this study of architourism, makes it evident that subjective elements play a role, like the choice

of the subject and the lived experience. My background as urban researcher and tourism researcher colour my architourism practice. For exploratory work this is acceptable, and the researcher does not have to hide these subjective elements, on the contrary. In much academic research this is usually not appreciated because quantitative methods and 'objectivity' are leading. Researchers themselves know which elements in their conceptual logic and research approach are not really 'objective', but do not always mention this. In this study auto-ethnography served as a research tool for a largely unexplored research topic and may stimulate attention to further conceptualizing architourism experience and may include the perspectives of the tourist and tourism practices.

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EDITORA ARTEMIS
2025