DASH FINAL CONFERENCE / 2026

Beyond the **Dwelling Unit**

The Built Environment as a Material-Institutional Milieu

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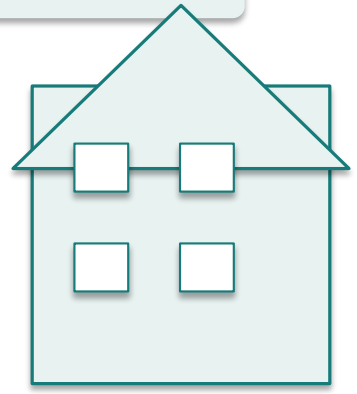


BELGRADE, SERBIA
/ 28-29 October 2026

When is a dwelling not enough?

Two materially similar units may support profoundly different possibilities of life.

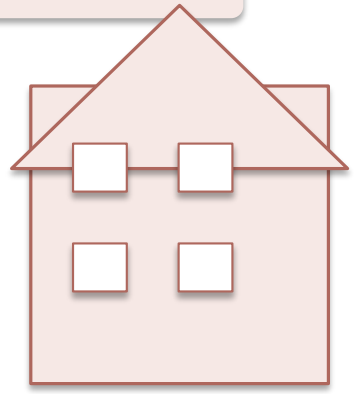
DWELLING A



Sustained milieu

- water
- energy
- transport
- services
- legal protection

DWELLING B



Disrupted milieu

- water
- energy
- transport
- services
- legal protection

Same walls. Different conditions of dwelling.

From the unit to the milieu

Smith (2003); Doğan (2024), pp. 107-114.

Housing indicators remain necessary. The question is whether the residential unit is the whole object of assessment.

UNIT-CENTRED ASSESSMENT

Affordability
Size and physical condition
Energy performance
Accessibility and design

→

ONTOLOGICAL INQUIRY

What entities, relations and institutions must remain viable for dwelling to remain possible?

DECENT MILIEU · 2024

“We better protect the human by decentring the human.”

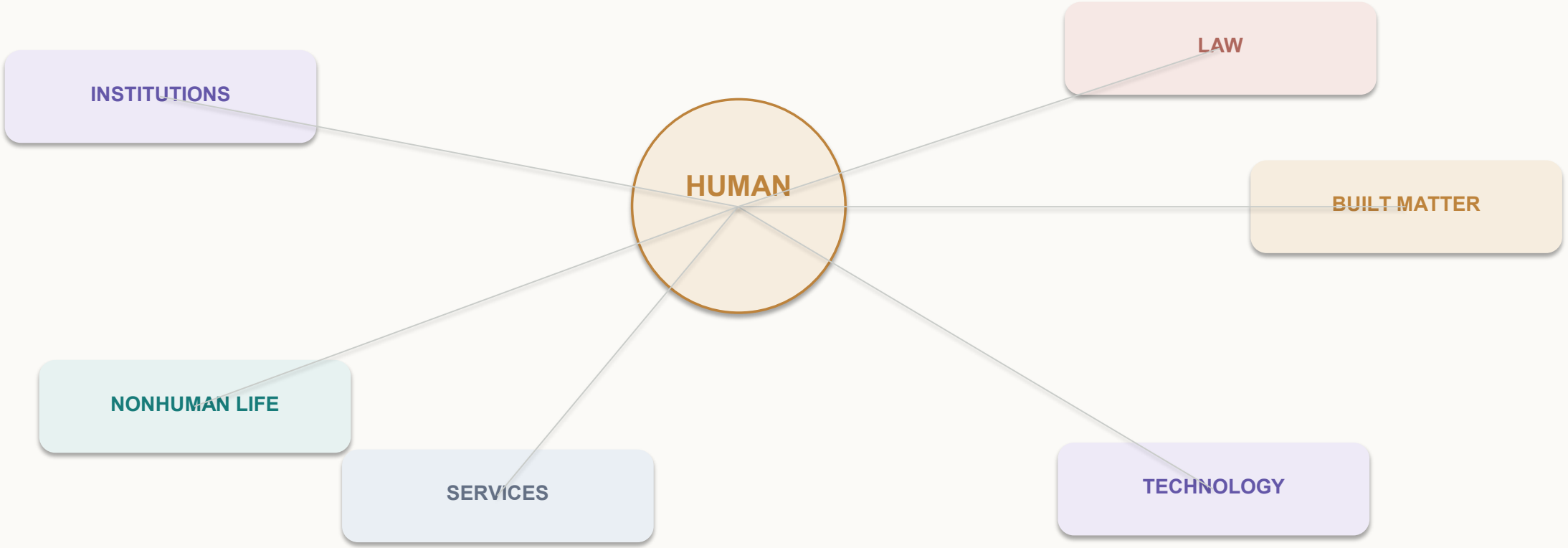
DASH · 2026

Protect dwelling by sustaining the milieu that makes it possible.

Posthumanism: widen the field of concern

Doğan (2024), pp. 108-110; Bogost (2012), pp. 5-7.

Not the end of the human - the end of the human as the exclusive measure of existence.



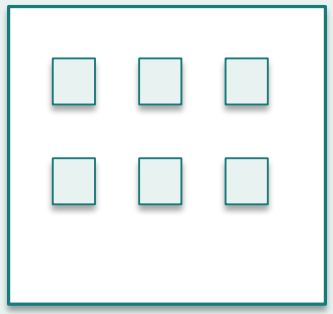
Ontological attention ≠ equal moral or legal status. Human dignity can remain central while the field of relevant entities widens.

OOO: objects are irreducible

Harman (2005); Harman (2017), introduction and chs. 1, 4.

A building is more than any single description of it - more than its parts, use, relations or measured performance.

THE BUILDING AS OBJECT



not exhausted by...

PARTS materials and components

FUNCTION / RELATIONS current use and associations

MEASURES indicators and classifications

OOO prevents reduction: relations matter, but no relation exhausts the object.

Harman and Latour: a productive tension

Harman (2017), ch. 5; Latour (1993), chs. 1-3; Latour (2013).

The milieu draws on both perspectives without treating them as the same theory.

HARMAN · OBJECT AUTONOMY

Objects exceed their components, effects and relations.

A dwelling cannot be reduced to its current function or to a network description.

LATOUR · MEDIATIONS

Residential life is constituted through heterogeneous arrangements of things, people, rules and technologies.

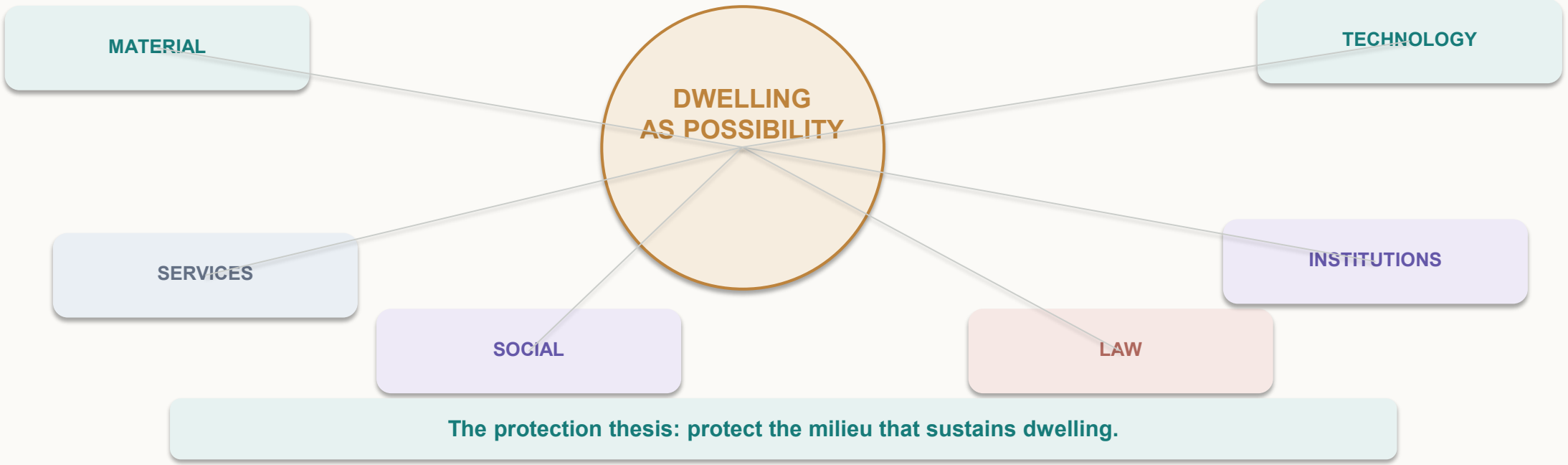
Nature and society do not remain neatly separate.

Milieu = irreducible entities + consequential relations + vulnerable dependencies.

Milieu: not a backdrop, but a condition of dwelling

Doğan (2024), pp. 107-111; Peirce (1893/1998) as a supplementary continuity lens.

A situated, changing arrangement of material, technological, social, legal and institutional entities whose interactions enable - or interrupt - the practice of dwelling.



Material dependencies and institutional conditions

Doğan (2024), pp. 109-111; DASH 2026 housing application.

Many conditions of dwelling operate outside the walls of the residential unit - and often outside everyday attention.

MATERIAL MILIEU

WATER	pumps · pipes · supply
ENERGY	grids · heating · backup
MOVEMENT	streets · public transport
SERVICES	health · communications
PUBLIC SPACE	access · environmental quality

INSTITUTIONAL MILIEU

ENTITLEMENTS	tenure and housing claims
ADMINISTRATION	maintenance and public duties
ENFORCEMENT	remedies and practical capacity
COORDINATION	utilities, transport and emergency response
CONTINUITY	institutional capacity during disruption

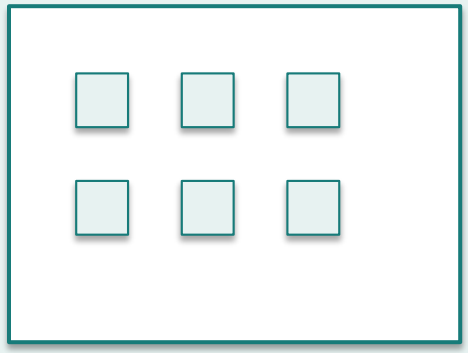
A right to housing can remain formally intact while the material or institutional conditions of its exercise deteriorate.

War: when the building stands but the milieu is disrupted

Accepted DASH abstract: war, disaster and severe institutional breakdown are used as stress-test situations.

War makes visible dependencies that ordinary functioning can conceal.

THE DWELLING UNIT



The building may remain standing.

THE MILIEU CAN STILL FAIL

- **WATER**
  damaged supply / pumping
- **COMMUNICATIONS**
  network disruption
- **ENERGY**
  power and heating interruption
- **HEALTH**
  services inaccessible
- **TRANSPORT**
  blocked or unsafe access
- **INSTITUTIONS**
  administration and legal remedies impaired

A formally intact dwelling can become practically uninhabitable when the milieu that sustains it is disrupted.

Housing quality as emergent viability

Analytical proposal; “emergent” is conceptual, not a claim of a measured causal model.

The continuing possibility of dwelling depends on more than the apartment’s own attributes.

01

UNIT PROPERTIES

necessary evidence

→

02

MILIEU CONDITIONS

material + institutional interdependence

→

03

DWELLING VIABILITY

what the arrangement allows

Ontology reveals dependencies; values, rights and public duties still require a further normative and empirical argument.

See the milieu. Sustain the milieu. Protect the milieu.

Policy application of the framework; ontology clarifies the object of concern but does not itself dictate regulatory design.

The practical shift is from providing units alone to sustaining the conditions that make dwelling continuously possible.

SEE THE MILIEU

Map dependencies beyond the unit:
water, energy, access, services and institutions.

SUSTAIN THE MILIEU

Plan for continuity, maintenance and disruption across infrastructures and services.

PROTECT THE MILIEU

Make tenure, public duties and remedies practically effective when conditions deteriorate.

POSTHUMANISM widens attention | OOO preserves irreducibility | MILIEU directs protection

Three shifts in how we think about housing

Conceptual synthesis developed for DASH 2026 from Doğan (2024) and the philosophical sources cited.

The proposal does not replace conventional housing standards. It changes the boundary of what those standards must ultimately protect.

FROM THE ISOLATED HUMAN	to human life within a more-than-human field
FROM THE ISOLATED UNIT	to the material-institutional conditions of dwelling
FROM STATIC ADEQUACY	to sustained viability under disruption and change

Protecting housing also means protecting the world that makes dwelling possible.

Beyond the dwelling unit

Doğan (2024), pp. 112-114; DASH 2026 extension.

Three propositions

01 **Beyond the isolated human.** Posthumanism widens the field of concern.

02 **Beyond the isolated unit.** OOO resists reducing dwelling to one function, relation or measure.

03 **Beyond static adequacy.** The milieu must remain viable through time, disruption and repair.

Protecting dwelling requires sustaining the milieu that makes dwelling possible.

Meliorism: milieus can be repaired and improved - never automatically.

Selected philosophical sources

The housing application and synthesis are the presentation's argument; the philosophical premises draw on the following works.

Doğan (2024) "Posthumanism, Object-Oriented Ontology, and Legal Theory: How Can We Create a Decent Milieu?" pp. 106-114. DOI 10.24132/ZCU.NADEJE.2024.106-114

Latour (1993; 2013) We Have Never Been Modern; An Inquiry into Modes of Existence.

Harman (2005; 2017) Guerrilla Metaphysics; Object-Oriented Ontology: A New Theory of Everything.

Peirce (1893/1998) "Immortality in the Light of Synechism," The Essential Peirce, vol. 2, pp. 1-3.

Bogost (2012) Alien Phenomenology, or What It's Like to Be a Thing.

Smith (2003) "Ontology," in Blackwell Guide to the Philosophy of Computing and Information.

Core through-line: posthumanism → OOO → milieu → protection.