



Call for Participation

Critical Practices

The International Conference on Structures and Architecture is a forum exploring the intersections between structural engineering and architectural design. Organised by the International Association of Structures and Architecture (IASA), the 2027 edition will take place at the Politecnico di Milano, continuing the conference's commitment to bridging research, practice, and teaching in ways that meaningfully shape the built environment.

Conceptual Framing

Building on the *Critical Practices* developed at ICSA 2022¹ and ICSA 2025, the ICSA 2027 edition begins from the conviction that the discipline can only respond meaningfully to today's sustainable and social challenges when professional practice and academic research meet in a shared terrain of experimentation. The aim is to bring together architects and engineers who, both within and beyond the university, operate at a threshold where design is no longer merely a formal or technological exercise but becomes a critical field for reconfiguring how the built environment is shaped.

This entails engaging with real constraints, such as material scarcity, regulatory complexity, industrial processes, the ageing and adaptation of existing constructions, and using them as drivers for new techniques, new narratives, and new values in contemporary construction. Additionally, it also reconsiders historic examples as repositories of technical and cultural knowledge for future construction practices. In this context, the (speculative) gesture suggested in Charlotte Malterre-Barthes's *A Moratorium on New Construction* (2024) serves as a conceptual prompt, suspending the impulse to build new encourages a reassessment of what design action can mean today and recentres attention on the leftover, the irregular, the underused, and the non-standard. Rather than prescribing limits, it opens room for alternatives capable of escaping extractive cycles and advancing forms of construction grounded in careful transformation.

Guided by the ICSA 2027 motto, *Circular+*, the 2027 *Critical Practices* track embraces this shift through approaches that reactivate discarded resources, prioritise natural materials with inherently low environmental impact, work with variation, and develop reversible construction systems² and hybrid fabrication methods. Structural adaptation becomes a design strategy, demolition gives way to disassembly, reconfiguration, and incremental transformation. Prototypes operate as critical steps in these regenerative material and structural processes. *Circular +* extends circularity beyond

¹ chrome-extension://efaidnbmninnbpcjajpoglclefindmkaj/https://www.icsa2022.create.aau.dk/digitalAssets/1175/1175848_icsa2022_critical-practices_booklet.pdf

² ISO 20787:2020

recycling, informing how practices and industries rethink their processes, organisational models, and modes of production within the built environment.

By bringing practice closer to academia in a reciprocal, experimental, critical, and collaborative circuit, the relevance of *Critical Practices* lies in recognising that material and construction innovation neither originates solely in laboratories nor concludes in offices but emerges from the productive friction between the two. ICSA 2027 offers a platform for making this friction visible, through prototypes, processes, and reflections that challenge established boundaries and propose new pathways for design and construction.

Submission Requirements

The *Critical Practices* track invites contributions from researchers, practitioners, and interdisciplinary teams. Submissions must be tied to the overall theme of ICSA 2027 and must be grounded in applied modes of working, including research-by-design, industry-embedded innovation, or operative collaborations across academia and practice.

As in previous editions, the central element of each submission is a prototype. A physical artefact that may take the form of a structural or architectural system, a building component, or a material speculation, and may represent an early-stage experiment, a demonstrator, or a more advanced mock-up. While the work may be supported by digital, spatial, or organisational investigations, the prototype itself should embody a tangible and testable aspect of the development process. It is expected to articulate a specific investigation and contribution, and to act as a critical step in the iterative cycle of design or research.

Submission Timeline and Formats

In alignment with the conference submission requirements, the process comprises two rounds of peer review, followed by coordination meetings between the *Critical Practices* track committee and the selected contributors. The review process will be conducted by peers from both academia and practice and will include elements of curation and editorial guidance.

The first review round will evaluate a representational abstract submitted in an open format, as specified below.

The final submission must be accompanied by a video that offers a visual and technical presentation of the prototype, as well as a reflective discussion on its critical role within the design or research process.

First-Round Submission (Representational Abstract)

Submission deadline: 15 April 2026

Notification of Acceptance: May 2026

A representational abstract must clearly explain the prototype and its critical role within a design or research process. Submissions are primarily expected in the form of presentation board(s), which should visually and diagrammatically communicate the concept, development, and significance of the prototype (.PDF). Other media may be added if effectively support the illustration and description of the proposal. Contributions must be in English.

For peer review, the following restrictions are in place:

- Submissions need to be uploaded in digital form;
- Presentation boards should not exceed one board on A0 or two boards A1, with a maximum of 500 words of text;

In addition, a brief written component is required through the submission [ConfTool](#) platform:

1. Introduction: challenge or objective of the prototype (50 words)

2. Background or context of the field, topic, and prototype (100 words)
3. Description of the prototype (200 words)
4. Impact or contribution (100 words)

Second-Round Submission (Prototype and Video)

Submission deadline: January 2027

Final Acceptance: March 2027

- A video of 6-10 minutes that provides a visual representation and technical description of the prototype, as well as a reflection on the critical role of the prototype in a design or research process. The video will be shown during the conference and later featured on the International Association of Structure and Architecture webpage.

The *Critical Practices* prototypes presented at ICSA 2027, together with their corresponding videos, will be featured on the IASA webpage at <https://structures-architecture.org/critical-practices> after the conference.³

Specific guidelines for the video submissions will be made available closer to the date. Review criteria include the explanatory and visual quality of the video.

Exhibition, CP Session and Publication

Accepted prototypes will be featured in the *Critical Practices* exhibition, during the ICSA 2027 conference at the Politecnico di Milano, Campus Leonardo, Trifoglio building.

Authors are responsible for transport, installation, and dismantling of their prototype. Designated members of the conference team will be available to coordinate and provide assistance during assembly and disassembly.

The conference programme will include a *Critical Practices* chaired panel session held within the prototype exhibition, where authors will briefly present their prototypes, followed by a moderated discussion. The panel will address broader perspectives on bridging research in academia and research in practice. The 'Best Critical Practice' award will be announced during the conference closing session.

Critical Practices contributions will be featured in a specific booklet, to be released during the conference.

Contact:

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³ For reference, here is the link to the *Critical Practices* projects presented at ICSA 2025: Bundled Pillar; Ceramic Vault; Circular Connections; Circular Wood; Cultural Geometries; Demolition Concrete; Digital Tool; MYXARCH; Paulownia House; PulpBaffle; Rethinking Panels; Talavera Project; and Upcycle Prototype.