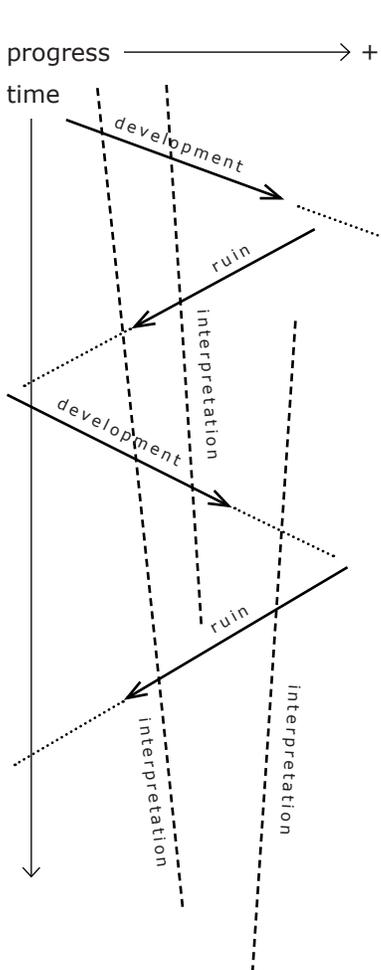


# fictim design: the seven steps

Fictim design involves disaggregating the design process, associating various levels, strategies and stages with narratives invented to elaborate the temporal potentialities of each element (=‘fictionalization’). By including fictional elements alongside ‘real world’ parameters and mandates, the project is allowed to experiment through the notion of an expanded dimensionality. This contrasts with the standard reductionistic interpretation of the ‘projective’ problem-solving procedure that begins with axiomatic assumptions and proceeds with a trial-and-error method that frequently falsifies its results and pre-calculates its solutions. Fictim design nonetheless upholds a realist rather than an idealist philosophical stance: it insists on facing precisely those problematic gaps and incontrovertible impasses that constitute ‘real life’. The difference consists primarily in maintaining the ‘actual’ distinctions that organize the (Lacanian) realms of the symbolic, the imaginary, and the Real.



## 1. the idiotic life and death of projects

Fictim design begins with a rather idiotic diagrammatic portrayal of a project’s inception, development, actualization, life, decline, death/ruin, and disappearance. In some cases, a project is arrested as it develops in one direction and turned in another; or, in a state of decline or even ruin, it is redefined by new contexts, values, and potentials. The constant is the site, the surrounding landscape, and the ‘place’ value assigned to the location of the project, which defines and is redefined by the project as it is redefined. This sequence is not uniform; often, steps are skipped. Reversal is, however, impossible by definition since the time-line is a product of a continual revision of temporality itself. Materiality and its continual deterioration is the only constant.

What is ‘idiotic’ about any project is the way in which a project develops its own exteriorized point of view, an objective self-justifying context that did not exist before the project came into being. Equally idiotic is the antipodal ‘vanishing point’ of the desire engendered by this fictional point of view: the ideal imposed on the project that implicitly falsifies certain details in order to construct a ‘manifest destiny’ of the project as a ‘successful solution’ to some hypothetical ‘problem’. The construction of a sports stadium would be the perfect example of context, problem, and solution arising all at the same time with only minimal support from reality. An analogy in economics is the phenomenon of the ‘trade point’, sustained by the belief of the seller that the price is high and the opposite belief of the buyer that the price is too low. Combined, the two beliefs are contradictory, but they are *only and always* combined in the case of a ‘trade’, which contradicts the contradiction! Architecture, in its construction and construal (Frascati’s favorite terms), always embodies such contrasting optimism and pessimism, which ‘self-cancels’ the contradiction that prefaces any act of building.

## 2. ‘dialectic’ zig-zag lines

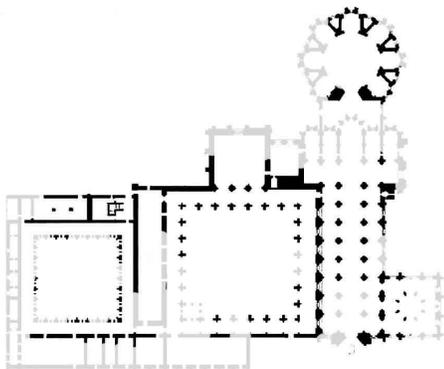
It is easy and self-evident when the progress of a building or landscape is compared to a vector drawn from an origin to a ‘destination’ defined by the intended use/meaning. This vector can be temporalized (beginning, middle, end) and used to indicate a premature termination, incompleteness, etc. The line of development becomes a dashed or dotted line, or it may be terminated immediately by some destructive disaster or abandonment of purpose.

Left to the elements, a project or site is left to weather into ruin. Its walls tumble, its roof is blown away, its roads or paths are filled in by mud and later vegetation. The traces of former use become ‘poetic’ in their implication of a tragic passage of time or destruction of human purpose. At some point, the process of ruin itself becomes a positive esthetic: the ruin can be beautiful and tragic at the same time; later it is merely picturesque. The ruin can be re-appropriated, redefined, reused. Depending on the degree of ruin, the failed project can be occupied and the site directed towards a new use, a new project. The reversed vector of decline can itself be interrupted and reversed by a new vector of purposeful development.

The third vector repeats the logic of the first, but with the background and context of the first. The third vector, too, is subject to termination, premature endings, obsolescence. It, too, can become dashed or dotted and left to reverse into a second vector of deterioration.

## 3. interpretive section lines

As development and ruin create a dialectic history of the site, a significant new set of lines crosses the zig-zags at oblique angles. These lines can selectively reassemble a composite view of the site’s history and purpose. They cut ‘sections’ through periods of history, projects, periods of ruin. They can falsify, omit, fictionalize, re-frame the past. This set of lines can in themselves be the motive for new zigs (or zags). The oblique lines are narratives that idealize historical sequence, but they can also be forensic, archaeological projects that set out to discover some ‘principal dimensions’ of the site that have run, like common threads, through the successive re-uses of land and resources. In the final analysis, any view of the history of a site is one of these (fictional) oblique vectors.



# the seven steps table

This rudimentary guide is modeled after the classical (Italian 16c.) division of architectural projects into three parts: ichnography (the pacing out of the site by the architect and staking of the principal control points); orthography (the raising of the building); and scenography (the calculation of cast shadows and determination of sections). Conveniently, this three-part schema corresponds to the symbolic, imaginary, and Real realms of Lacanian psychical activities, ruthlessly but apologetically presented here in terms of objectification, subjectification, and activation. The more useful relationship, perhaps, is with the chiasmic interpretation of Aristotelian causes, amplified and amended in terms of the *tu che* or 'encounter with the Real' that affects relationships between representation, contingency, and material support.

<b>ICHTNOGRAPHY (objectification)</b>	<b>type</b>	A study type is chosen (see type bank for suggestions). A historical example is documented graphically, with emphasis on plan; annotations note which aspect of the type will be developed in carry-through operations.
	<b>ruin</b>	The historical example is 'speculatively ruined' through a series of subtractions that mimic various erosive processes, including pilferage and vandalism.
	<b>condensation/ intervention</b>	A real or fictional event is speculatively imposed on the ruin, leaving behind evidence an 'interpretive re-use' that does is not rationalized.
<b>ORTHOGRAPHY (subjectification)</b>	<b>misprision</b>	drawing: Generate sketches using the 'exquisite corpse' technique and line erosion (see drawing tutorial). Identify narratives within figural motifs.
		Characters are invented to establish a field of re-interpretive (pre-) occupancy of the type-exemplar site. Characters fall into groups that may overlap: (1) occupants, (2) owner-clients, (3) agents, (4) antagonists, (5) interpreters-informants, (6) victims. A contemporary scene is invented that acts as the basis for architectural intervention.
	<b>event</b>	The contemporary (pre-)occupancy of the exemplar site is terminated in some way (natural disaster, political event, disuse, etc.). The event further impacts the site and is documented.
<b>SCENOGRAPHY (activation)</b>	<b>revision</b>	The design-proper begins as a response to the termination event but also involves prior stages of ruin, condensation, and misprision. The building program is accompanied by an architectural program that sets strategic value in restoration ( <i>analepsis</i> ) of lost or obscured qualities of the site/type.
		drawing: Review/revise/append sketches to identify single architecture element(s) that can be identified with a narrative cluster.
	<b>consolidation (diagram)</b>	The predominant diagrammatic schema for the revision phase is chiasmus, where a prior order is re-traversed in an 'inverted' (reversed, ironic, randomized) way. Other diagrams (see 'diagram bank') are employed to set up individual details and functional relationships so that material elements are employed as 'silent operators' ordering space-time potentialities of the site-type.