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BLOCK 6: RESTORATION, CONSERVATION AND RENOVATION

## HERITAGE AS A RESOURCE, MEMORY AS A PROJECT. RESPONSIBLE NETWORK-BASED DESIGN STRATEGIES

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### ABSTRACT

The Italian territory is dotted with a large number of villages called Borghi Minori, that, for centuries, have represented the urban framework for vast territorial areas and identities inhabiting the landscape, now in a state of abandon. As part of an inter-disciplinary research on the fragility of the so-called 'minor' diffused heritage, this contribution responds to the present and future need to imagine new forms of living and transformation strategies for these abandoned settlements, through the creation of an operational methodology and the identification of specific tools. The selected urban areas are rooted in the territories of the internal areas of Abruzzo, interpreted as laboratory-villages, in which to experiment with innovative mapping processes able to deal with the complexity of these contexts. Here present fragilities become resources for imagining possible future scenarios, to be specified by the same Communities in an open and polyphonic transformation design vision. From an application point of view, this work resulted in the construction of a dynamic, multiscale and interdisciplinary 'atlas of trans-form-actions', aimed at identifying in the stratified layers of the landscape palimpsest, those resilient and silent modifications that made these territories habitable. An atlas, a project sharing knowledge and information, which is characterized by a marked design dimension. Here the transformative processes of the landscape are interpreted as a continuous sequence between past, present and future. Topographies of memory whose feature is a non-hierarchical network, made up

of layers and rarefactions, which becomes the framework for the trans-form-action, in which design actions correspond to spatial devices, whose architectural expression will derive from present and future needs, a sharing path, listening places and people.

### KEYWORDS

Minor diffused heritage; transformation; weakness; abandonment; reuse.

### THE WEAK COSTELLATION OF BORGHI MINORI D'ABRUZZO. AN INTRODUCTION

The Italian territory has among its peculiarities that of being dotted with a large number of small villages, the Borghi Minori, that have been suffering for decades due to depopulation, causing different abandonment conditions over time. About 6,000 villages (Istat 2014), with a prevalent distribution in central and southern Italy along the Apennines but also in Alpine areas, were abandoned over time for various traumatic reasons, such as earthquakes, hydrogeological instability, epidemics, wars and, in the years of the post-war economic boom, the rural exodus in favor of concentrated urbanization; finally, more recently, owing to the demographic decline. The Borghi Minori, in fact, are only the "tip of the iceberg" of a widespread and complex process of abandonment that involves the internal areas and that has determined a turning point, apparently not reversible, in the contemporary Italian settlement dynamics. As shown in the 'Geography mapping of

abandonment. The dismissal of the villages in Italy' (Postiglione 2006), it is possible to identify three characterizing conditions: completely abandoned villages, those partially abandoned and those in abandonment but with a newly founded neighboring center. With respect to this categorization, which intentionally reduces the complexity of the abandonment processes to bring the phenomenon to a national scale, the present research has looked at the second condition, the most widespread one. It has considered those villages that have never suffered a complete dissolution, in which the abandonment 'process' is taking place today. Economically depressed for decades, these villages are often isolated, difficult to reach, inadequate to contemporary living standards and characterized by a certain instability due to cataclysms. Villages in which the surviving communities, custodians of a material and immaterial heritage, seek forms of adaptation to the disappearance of a socio-economic-cultural reality that obviously cannot return. We will look at a specific context, that of the internal areas of Abruzzo, in which the phenomenon described above, in particular when connected to the effects of an often violent seismic activity, generated a landscape of widespread abandonment, but where, at different times, possible strategies were tested and design solutions adopted to respond to the need to inhabit the constellation of Borghi Minori that characterize this landscape. For centuries these villages were the most frequent urban settlement model in Italy and the expression of specific and resilient ways of inhabiting the territory. Today these villages reveal their yielding fragility, and, despite the interest shown by parts of the scientific community and civil society, the experiments carried out reveal working methods and tools often inadequate to the complexity of those contexts. Here the heritage dimension is 'minor', that is, not made up of exceptional

elements. The value lies in the relationship between the parts, at different scales, from the territory to the 'room'. This non-hierarchical and layered network, made up of very different and minute elements, but nonetheless important, is rather foundational in the process of building and modifying the landscape identity. These elements are fragile, since they are often unknown, not registered and also, sometimes forgotten, and for this reason often distant from protection mechanisms that could take them into the present and in the future, if included within enhancing processes through a responsible transformation. The transformation project for these villages requires new looks, methods and tools capable of managing the complexity that these realities require. In an interdisciplinary vision open to various stakeholders, the architectural discipline and its project become a shared place for confrontation, to imagine new scenarios of responsible reuse for the Borghi Minori landscape.

## 1. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This work is part of an ongoing research by the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies<sup>1</sup>, Department of Excellence, on the issues of territorial fragility. Its objective, among others, is to highlight issues, identify work methods and tools for the strategic design of the minor diffused heritage, recognized as one of the central themes to promote the future quality of the territory and characterizing contemporary cities in Italy. In this framework, the present research looks at the constellation of abandoned Borghi Minori, imagining interdisciplinary and shared reuse strategies to address today's needs. The present research has two main objectives:

- From a methodological-operational point of view, it intends to identify a working method

<sup>1</sup> Students and graduates from the Bachelor and Master degree programs from the School of Architecture Urban Planning Construction Engineering, Politecnico di Milano, also collaborated in the research project: Abagnale, R., Ambrosi, A., Airoldi, F., Ballarani, G., Camboni, J., Finardi, R., Forcignanò, R., Miranda, M., Montisano, M., Santus, A., Sartorio, S., Scafoli, A., Tolazzi, S. and You, Z.

and tools for the 'open' project of transforming abandoned urban settlements, by means of a continuous exchange between theory and practice mediated by the design process. Method and tools will be tested on a selection of villages characterized by different semi-abandonment conditions and located in the internal areas of Abruzzo. A taxonomy including research and project experiences has become necessary, in order to compare methods and tools, bringing out potential and critical issues.

- From an application point of view, the research intends to build a dynamic and multidisciplinary atlas of the transformations for the smaller villages of Abruzzo, to highlight the dynamism of the stratifications with particular reference to the most recurrent forms of fragility in the internal areas. The atlas is designed to offer both a reading of the transformations of resources over time, with forms of fragility and resilience, and an operational tool, capable of updating future research, processes and projects that will involve the identified areas.

## 2. SEARCHING FOR AN OPERATIONAL METHODOLOGY

### 2.1. Mapping researches and projects on Borghi Minori. State of the art

In the context of the design disciplines, the topic of abandonment and reuse of the Borghi Minori has been the subject of multiple reflections and experiments with the most varied outcomes. In a previously mentioned research work, 'Geographies of abandonment. The dismissal of the villages in Italy', (Postiglione 2006), in addition to restoring the national and international scope of the theme, a taxonomy of projects for the reuse of those villages is systematized. Among the experiences mentioned: the 'cybervillage' of Colletta di Castelbianco, designed by Giancarlo de Carlo; the idea of a 'widespread factory', with which the industrialist Brunello Cucinelli

rethought Solomeo (PG); the 'diffuse hotel model' of Santo Stefano di Sextantio, which will be replicated in other villages purchased by the entrepreneur-architect Daniele Khilgren. These are widespread strategies, yet limited to the reuse of the built-space. Starting from an examination of the existing literature and from design experiences on abandoned villages, work methodologies and approaches were compared, in order to bring out potential and critical issues. In this theoretical-critical framework, an orientation towards the reuse of built heritage emerges, not fully grasping their regenerative potential. Recently, the research experience of the University of Chieti, summarized in the essay *The region of the major highlands of Abruzzo* (Angrilli and Morrica, 2017) widens the scope, not only to the built heritage but also to the open space in relation to the villages, identifying, in particular, the "proximity landscape". This space is defined as a "transition space between urban formations and the open wooden-agropastoral space" and indicated by the authors as "strategic for territorial recycling objectives." (Angrilli and Morrica 2017, 37). The present research takes a further step forward in this direction, through an 'ecological' perspective on the theme of the Borghi Minori, and more generally on the diffused 'minor heritage'. The villages, if we consider the territorial structure of the internal areas, in fact, are nothing more than urban densities compared to a vast network of places, areas, artefacts and materials, expression of the adaptability of the communities to the surrounding environment over time.

The obsolescence process that affected them is actually more extensive, it concerns the entire territory; its profound reasons can only be understood through a relational approach in order to frame them in dynamic processes that consider space, time and the communities that inhabit them. For these reasons, we have looked at the 'minor heritage' as a 'minor heritage landscape'; a landscape, therefore a place of sedimentation of processes, an expression of the interaction between the



Figure 1. Multi-space and multi-temporal layering reading of the abandoned village of Navelli. Source: (Corradi, E., Raffa, A., Santus, K., Sartorio, S., and Scaioli, A. 2020).

environment and the communities that have shaped the territory for their own subsistence, in a resilient way, adapting to an impervious nature, to the inaccessibility of places and to traumatic events. A fragile landscape, made up of very different identity elements, in terms of morphology, materials, scales, etc., which slowly loses its most minute elements, progressively compromising its specificity.

## 2.2. A historical ecology perspective on minor heritage landscape. Theoretical framework

In the broad vision that this research adopts, from the village to the landscape to which it is rooted, from a theoretical-critical point of

view, an element of innovation regards the opportunities, currently unexpressed, for the design disciplines that operate on the heritage landscape, which could arise from the intersection with the theoretical contribution of Historical Ecology (Balée 1998; Balée and Erickson, 2005; Crumley 1994, 2012) for a modification-oriented knowledge. Starting from the idea of *longue durée* (Braudel 1958) and palimpsest (Corboz 1985), the landscape is interpreted as the provisional and stratified result of the interaction between man in his social dimension, the community, and nature. Historical Ecology proposes the overcoming of the division between anthropic and natural through the emphasis placed

on the process of trans-form-action on the landscape; certainly a lengthy process, but made up of numerous 'critical moments', which are contextualized in a dynamic frame in space and time, breaking down reductive schemes. Furthermore, historical-ecological approaches are multi-disciplinary (linking archeology, history, geography, ecology, design, etc.), multi-scalar (moving from macro to micro processes) and multi-oriented (researchers, stakeholders, managers and designers) (Crumley and others, 2017). In this perspective, it was decided to look at the landscape in terms of fragility. The intent was to investigate the generative processes of present fragility in a dynamic way, as the unstable result of secular interactions between man and the environment, which produced the current geography of fragility in the internal areas of Abruzzo. These fragilities have redemption possibilities, often turning into possible resources. Within the dialectic established between fragility and resources, a greater awareness of the fragile processes that have affected the areas in question, together with the forms of adaptation put in place, constitute a source of important information for projective knowledge. Past forms of resilience, combined with current innovation, can generate processes capable of facing contemporary challenges, acting local while thinking global. Through a topographical criterion it was possible to intersect various conditions of fragility linked to four key resources: soil, water, infrastructure and built-heritage.

### 2.3. Methodology

The methodological construction of an experimental nature intends to structure an open project, in order to welcome complexity, substantiated by "an ethic of interconnection and solidarity between humans". (Morin 2010). This experimentation of a methodological-operational nature will be better specified and verified in the future through comparison with other contexts. Within this perspective, the

architectural project, understood in a broad way, plays a strategic and structuring role, capable, at the same time, of welcoming a wealth of specific visions and projects, even at different times, affirming its positioning as a listening and confrontation platform oriented towards transformation, in an interdisciplinary way.

The listening of people, groups, associations and communities, conducted on the occasion of workshops and visits to the pilot villages, was essential both to delve into a complex reality and, above all, to understand the future scenarios that those who live and care for places imagine. A highly resilient social structure, albeit numerically small, in which an attempt has been made to engage in dialogue starting from the relationship established with the minor heritage spread locally today. Therefore, an attempt to develop a 'synthetic form' was aimed at harmonizing the listening of groups and communities, their needs and to offer a framework to their planning potential, together with the scientific interpretation of local fragilities; but also at 'dissolving' the contemporary complexity of the landscape of minor villages, through the decomposition of the different contexts through specific themes, an expression of the multiplicity of visions that characterized this research experience. The resulting mapping process required extensive reflection, not only regarding the tools to be adopted but also for sharing them, in an open critical perspective, raising problems and revealing opportunities over time, in a continuous polyphonic dialogue between listeners and narrators.

The application output, that is the dynamic atlas of the villages, is a selection of interpretative maps of fragilities, among those possible. It is an expression of the dialogue between researchers, groups and communities of the four selected villages. The atlas collects mappings at different scales and also describes the Borghi Minori networks, made up by points, lines and fields, all susceptible to transformation. With respect to these areas, an abacus of architectural



actions associated with spatial devices has been finalized and will be better specified over time, starting from the needs of the locals.

#### 2.4. Mapping as a project. The design-oriented dynamic Atlas of Borghi Minori landscape

The synthesis maps express the multidisciplinary approach adopted. These are qualitative but also quantitative elaborations, at different scales, of both material resources

(infrastructure, nature, cultural heritage, soil, energy, etc.) and intangible (such as culture and traditional knowledge), the latter investigated through multi-criteria indicators. The in-depth resources have been dynamically linked to each other, both with regard to past transformations and the development scenarios, however uncertain, that will be introduced in internal areas by global changes (in particular climatic and pandemic), in line with the open planning perspective that this work supports.

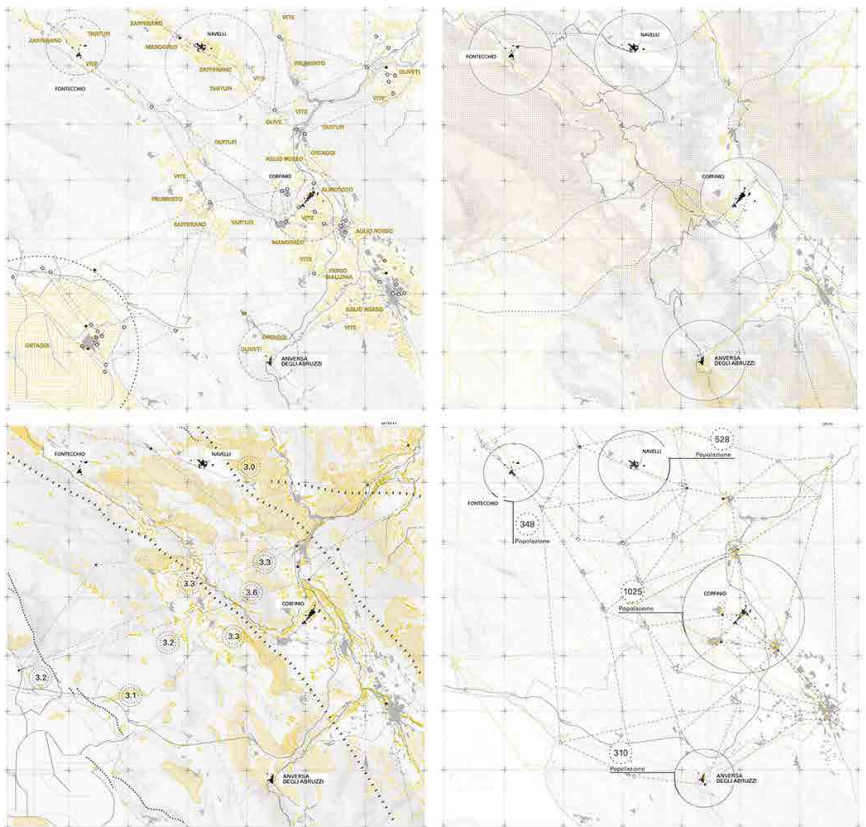


Figure 2. Maps of the Borghi Minori Network between Anversa degli Abruzzi, Corfinio, Fontecchio and Naveli. Traditional cropping infrastructure (top left corner); natural infrastructure (top right corner), tourism infrastructure (bottom right corner) and risk network (bottom left corner). Elaboration from the dynamic atlas. (PI Corradi, E., with: Raffa, A., Santus, K., Sartorio, S., and Scailli, A. 2020).

The extension of the field of investigation, from the village to the system of relationships that deeply root the village in its context, called for appropriate tools capable of supporting a broad process / project of investigation of fragilities / resources.<sup>2</sup> The fragility mapping process, which took advantage of GIS technology and three-dimensional models, responds to the following needs:

- Interpreting materials and their specific fragilities in space and time, in a dynamic way, building a geography of fragility;
- Managing and communicating a large amount of data, interdisciplinary, multi-scalar and aimed at different targets (from researchers, administrations, citizens, etc.) and their implementation over time;
- Defining a non-hierarchical and operational network, a synthetic shape, which will frame specific future interventions.

- Guiding future transformations through an architectural abacus, which defines spatial devices, to be specified by future projects.

From an application point of view, the data collected were merged into an atlas of the Borghi Minori's fragile landscape. The atlas, like any form of cartographic representation, is interpretative and, in particular, is oriented to update and support future transformation processes. Furthermore, its dynamism allows continuous updating and monitoring, in order to direct the interventions according to a general and detailed vision. The aim was to conceive the construction of a dynamic multidisciplinary atlas, able to include different kinds of information, also non-topographical, over time. Furthermore, the atlas is configured as an interactive tool for researchers, administrators and professionals responsible for managing the territory, but also for civil society in order to build shared narratives.

## 2.5. Dynamic Network-based strategy and the architectural abacus

An operative topography of fragilities was thus outlined, a topography of memory, and therefore a project. The historical ecology approach to landscape, which allows to relate very close and distant times, spaces and visions, is based on listening to traces and their connection to present and future, welcoming the prefigurative and design-oriented dimension. The identified bio-cultural resources and the related forms of fragility were mapped together in the four selected laboratory villages - Anversa degli Abruzzi, Corfinio, Fontecchio, Navelli – revealing an operational topography in which the main feature is the network. Not a top-down network, a network originating from the intersection or coexistence of multi-temporal traces and contemporary needs of the inhabitants. A network with a high regenerative power for the Minor Villages, its peculiarities are capable of addressing in an integrated way the responsible reuse actions to the respective centers. Each of the four selected villages has its own peculiarities, which have been evaluated in order to predict possible shared futures. The interpretations outlined have been verified on the field, also through meeting occasions with the local communities and associations that brought out the daily vulnerability of an impoverished social context, but also the need for listening and dialogue; this also had an impact on the methodological construction.

From a polyphonic and open project perspective, that was considered to be pursued in light of the analysis of experiences "from above" as well as those that arose "from below", this network becomes a multi-scalar, territorial and urban framework, which defines nodes (existing elements that are involved in the strategy or new spatial devices), axis (existing connections redefined or new, elements with strong directionality) and fields

<sup>2</sup>The proposed approach to mapping refers to the epistemology of complexity and transdisciplinary (Morin 2001; Nicolescu 2002).

(significant areas re-signified by defining the edges) of a non-hierarchical network, made up of densifications and rarefactions, within which to identify architectural devices connected to specific design actions, through an abacus of solutions that other authors will be called to define over time (Di Franco et al., 2018).

## **2.6. Tools for an architectural reinvention in the Borghi Minori Network**

It is clear that the set of theoretical and operational tools need to establish a defined, measurable, replicable range of actions. To define boundaries, networks, spatial and visual relationships, morphological sequences and connections to which conditions of fragility and interpretative potential are often linked, it is necessary to understand the new territorial vocation. Starting from instances and bottom-up actions - as already encountered in some internal areas- the difficulties deriving from depopulation, abandonment, and decommissioning find new revitalization scenarios through the rediscovery of the minor heritage of landscape and villages. Projects and processes in which the landscape is restored with new values and which, in turn, become maintenance strategies for the affected areas. An operating practice aimed at the recovery of artefacts and systems. The pathways, the small rural architectures linked to fields and pastures with their organization borrowed from former production cycles, increasingly find the attention of small, yet very active, communities, in which the search for life models closer to nature leads to rediscover alternative ways for production, such as the recovery of crops, techniques for sustainable land exploitation and farming. A rediscovery of artisan production cycles in which products aspire to becoming an excellence through the acquisition of values inspired by sustainability. In this experimental dimension, architecture can certainly intervene on both material and

immaterial infrastructural networks, in order to guarantee a process of sustainability and sensitive insertion within contexts; neither mimetic nor vernacular, but suitable for expressing expectations, vocations and forms of living different from strong contexts, such as urban areas. An adaptation to the usage needs that fuses comfort together with technological performances, in which the digitization and access to global network resources is an important opportunity, often denied to people in these areas by market logics that act on much larger numbers of users. Building networks, even immaterial ones, can be a way of guaranteeing access to knowledge in these contexts, and if an opening process is also linked to the differentiated accessibility for users who are not only occasional, but stable because they can move and operate in contexts without constraints and physical barriers, it can be an opportunity to relaunch internal areas and smaller villages (Corradi, 2016). Architectural design can therefore become an element of coherence facilitation among different scales and heterogeneous objects and artefacts. Infrastructures, fields, houses, squares are all elements that converge to define how to use space. Different and new needs deriving from different instances and vocations need to be able to redeem these contexts also through simple operations, capable of combining on a small scale artefacts, and on a large scale, infrastructure networks, landscapes, cultivated fields, pastures, springs etc. Among the most interesting operations observed working in this direction, that emerged from the ongoing research, are those related to the architectural recovery of historical settlements such as in Fontecchio (Aq), a small town in the Abruzzo Apennines heavily damaged by the 2009 earthquake, where interventions for social housing were carried out, as well as small-scale social housing in smaller contexts, addressed for example to young families in urban areas with difficulties

in accessing the real estate market owing to their economic fragility.

This also requires innovative architectural design tools to hold together an existing heritage, which is fragile due to age, construction techniques, safety standards, technological and energy adaptation. An innovation project in which research by design can express replicable and transmissible methodologies, applying a scientific process to architecture. This also belongs to the strategies that architecture can implement to determine new topographies starting from the recognition of the value of heritage closely linked to landscape and to the context.

## OPEN CONCLUSIONS

The experimentation, which is still ongoing, opens up to the identification of a possible operative methodology for the transformation project of the Borghi Minori. An approach that renews the consolidated methods of intervention towards this peculiar minor diffused heritage - essentially oriented towards the recovery of buildings - which does not lose the regenerative potential of a multi-spatial and multi-temporal relational gaze. The knowledge of the landscape's long-term processes that had produced different conditions of fragility and the needs and future possibilities envisioned by communities and groups together had been seen as an opportunity for responsible transformation. A topography of fragility which is a topography of the memory, a strong projection to the future. Furthermore, at the same time, it allows monitoring, continuously implementable, of changes accelerated by the effects of catastrophic events, as well as those also induced by global changes. An abacus of architectural devices, which correspond to specific actions, are based on this evolving multi-scalar network, which other authors will be called to specify according to present and future needs. Each transformation project

finds meaning within the network and at the same time transforms it, in a process that continues the contemporary rewriting of the landscape, capable of opening unpredictable scenarios in the future. At the same time, the planning methods envisaged by the program incorporate the time variable themselves; the architectural devices show different degrees of permanence, oscillating between emergence and structurality. It was in fact decided, coherently with the type of dynamic readings of the Atlas, to imagine a project not only with several voices but also with several times, in which the architectural devices of the abacus can become pieces of an asynchronous assembly, in a continuous exchange between community and landscape, both realities in continuous transformation. The three methodological step listening, reading and designing are people-centred and interpreted dynamically. The Atlas, understood both as a form of knowledge and as a process/project, becomes an instrument for shared planning between researchers, designers, stakeholders and communities that will intervene in these places over time. In this context, the issue of abandonment is recontextualised with respect to a juxtaposition of other conditions of fragility, also social; the answers identified by the design experiments conducted in the specific contexts of the chosen Borghi Minori will manage to respond in a more founded way, both to local needs as well as to global themes. The open and polyphonic process/project is crucial for the replicability of the operational methodology: the landscape approach informs people-based heritage-centred cultural significance processes, both in the analytical and design phases. Here the architectural discipline, and its project, become a shared space for a heuristic dialogue between different disciplines, all collaborating for envisioning new scenarios of responsible reuse of the Borghi Minori's landscape.

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# 9

CONCLUSION

## A RESTLESS, NON-CONFORMIST AND ADAPTIVE DISCIPLINE

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Architecture is probably the most pragmatic and adaptive of arts. Undoubtedly this is due to its scientific side. And it is also presumably the most restless and non-conformist science, being that unmistakably connected to its artistic aspect. Simultaneously, the discipline of all those who have devoted their lives to the design and construction of human habitat has frequently become the materialization of human aspirations, values and priorities. A society maybe can lie in many different manners, but its architecture always reveals the truth. Therefore, most likely the pragmatic and adaptive, but also restless and non-conformist research in architecture which we are having nowadays is the best evidence of a society which voluntarily or involuntarily, consciously or unconsciously prioritizes these features and is more demanding than ever.

The long tradition of research in architecture existing in many institutions all over the world has rather recently been complemented by the encouraging of research, also in architecture, in almost any university. However, funding is not proportional to this promotion at all yet, also in architecture once again. While still solving some apparently minor but actually relevant matters such as clearly differentiating research by design and pure research, research in architecture is enjoying the daybreak of what promises to be a fruitful era. The conferences on research in architecture jointly organized by the European Association for Architectural Education and by the Architectural Research Centers Consortium constitute a middle aged venture awaited with enthusiasm every two years by the fellowship of the European and the North American associations. The 2020 edition to be hosted by the Higher Technical School of Architecture of the Polytechnic University of

Valencia was announced on May 31, 2019 in Toronto (fig. 1) during the ARCC 2019 International Conference and on August 30, 2019 in Zagreb during the EAAE Annual Event and General Assembly.



*Figure 1. Presentation of the EAAE-ARCC International Conference and 2nd VIBRArch in Toronto*

The event was received with interest and satisfaction by both the American and European researchers. Some of them were quite familiarized with the Valencia International Biennial of Research in Architecture, best known for its acronym VIBRArch, whose second edition would be merged with the EAAE-ARCC joint venture on this special occasion.

The call for abstracts for both full papers and posters was issued on September 16, 2019 and its deadline was set on November 11, 2019. Having been extended one week two hundred and ninety-five proposals for full papers and posters were received. A Scientific Committee composed by two hundred and fifty people from the five continents and with a remarkable 60,40% percentage of women, reviewed thoroughly of the proposals. Authors were accordingly informed by the end of the year. Accepted abstracts should turn into full papers or posters and be submitted by February 17, 2020. But during this period the coronavirus disease had already started beating the world up and its ferocity would be soon felt from east to west. However uncertainty did not affect at all authors and the percentage of full papers

and posters submitted was even higher than in other similar events without such a powerful sanitary interference. Wisely intuited by the leaders of both organizations, travelling would turn into something difficult, dangerous or blamable within days or weeks. Therefore and on March 24, 2020, with Italy, Spain and other European countries already applying home lockdown, the conference was postponed to late fall 2020. The whole calendar of the event was remade adapting it to the new dates and once again the resilience of architecture researchers proved itself. Everybody stuck to the event. Nobody surrendered. After an extremely tough spring, on June 10, 2020, the new dates and a blended modality including the possibility to attend online or face-to-face was announced (fig. 2).



*Figure 2. Board announcing the new dates of the EAAE-ARCC International Conference*



Full papers and posters had been reviewed by the Scientific Committee during that period. Authors were notified. When lucky, those who had been directly accepted toasted, and those who were required amendments submitted them by September 14, 2020. At the very end, one hundred and fifty-five papers and one poster made their way through and were accepted for presentation during the up to seven parallel sessions. These are the works which have been included in these proceedings distributed in the frequently mentioned eight thematic areas.

The first of these thematic areas was titled "devising, representing and narrating the city". Up to twenty-six papers were finally accepted and presented during the conference. Authors tackled aspects as diverse as the broader perspective and view of the city, its representation and reading, both theoretically and by means of interesting examples in Asia, Europe or America, its geometry, the way in which their relevant assets are inserted and presented, and finally even challenging software and techniques to help analysts and planners.

The second thematic area focused on "living in urban landscapes". Likewise twenty-five papers and one poster had been accepted and, therefore, were given the chance to be presented during the event. Authors dealt with a vast range of topics, but certain areas received a special attention and many papers concurred. It is the case of the simultaneous work with different scales of the city, the relevance of green areas and connection with nature, or the meaning and understanding of representative public spaces and infrastructures.

Being the third thematic area, "the new faces the old" hosted up to twenty-two full papers focusing on the frequent and unavoidable coexistence of new elements in preexisting contexts, frequently with historical value. The contents of this block reveal an undoubted nowadays interest on the adequate knowledge, attitude and cautions for an architect when being commissioned a brand new project in

this kind of contexts. Likewise it is also easy to detect a tendency to defuse the confrontation of new architecture with old architecture by accepting that this fact has been constant in the history of cities and a great bunch of good practices can be studied.

"Restoration, conservation and renovation" was the fourth thematic area. Seventeen full papers were accepted and finally presented during the conference. The set of works reveals up to four areas of interest concentration nowadays. The first is a classical one focusing on theories and the adequate previous analysis and data collection. The second one encompasses frequent successful case studies which provide future practitioners a fair set of options about how to tackle future commissions. The third area places value in works which were not considered heritage until recently such as infrastructures, certain historical neighborhoods or rather recent architecture. Finally, researchers specialized in this matter begin to welcome peers which embrace the discipline not from a theoretical, historical or design aspect, but from a purely structural, conditioning or material point of view, establishing occasional bridges to the topics of the fifth thematic area.

This fifth block focused on "a future based on technology". Seventeen full papers succeeded through the different reviews in order to be included in the proceedings and presented in the different parallel sessions. It cannot be denied that sustainability and the measuring and performance of any single parameter connected to it are taking a leading role day after day. Simultaneously, matters such as ventilation, climate comfort and lighting are becoming a relevant welfare parameter nowadays and many researchers are specializing on them. Finally building materials, techniques and structures still keep a meaningful group of academics doing their research on them. However their approach switches increasingly from new constructions to the renewal and preservation of existing ones.

The sixth thematic area was devoted to "smart cities vs. tech cities". The seven full papers finally accepted and presented focused mainly in data collection and analysis in order to make it useful for a variety of aspects involving mobility, energy efficiency or indoor comfort.

The seventh thematic area entailed up to twenty-five full papers focusing on "new professional practices and research practices" which put a special emphasis on the variety of work and research fields which architects have recovered or discovered recently and mostly after the 2007 financial crisis. To start with many papers placed a special value on pure research as a necessary and appropriate job opportunity for architects. Areas of knowledge discussed in other thematic areas were included here as well, such as comfort, sustainability or circular economy. But specific fields such as psychology, sociology, virtual environments and synergies between research and teaching were also presented.

Finally, the eighth and last thematic area focused on "participation processes, diversity and inclusiveness". Up to sixteen full papers were accepted to be in these proceedings and to be presented during the conference. Despite some examples of these trends can be found throughout history, the works presented in this block are devoted to what may be is one of the most genuine phenomena of our time. Peculiarities of public participation were discussed in different contexts and a special focus was placed on the design of urban spaces and buildings for underprivileged groups which historically have received limited attention.

The richness of matters attended is perhaps the first and most obvious conclusion. Architecture has become a huge discipline encompassing many specialist areas and fields of practice which resist being detached from the central core as it happens in other disciplines such as medicine. This diversity is understood in our case as richness and not as a problem. The developing of the conference

evinced what is one of the most productive features of architects. We are curious people and we are interested in whatever has something to do in where people live and how people live whatever it is. But this colorful and varied panorama also revealed some patterns which are becoming more and more habitual and could be understood as the key issues of our times regarding research in architecture:

- Transversality is taking the scene. Most of the papers could have been included in more than one thematic area since their topic and approach frequently responded to a transverse and open-minded attitude. The full papers themselves or the fruitful debates developed after the presentations during the parallel sessions placed value on the concurrence of different approaches from different fields of expertise, cultural backgrounds or disciplines. Definitely we do trust in interdisciplinary studies and activities (fig. 3) to safe better results in whatever architecture has to confront or undertake.



*Figure 3. Participatory workshop organized by the French studio Quatorze in Paris*

- Western countries are almost already and sufficiently built if we consider their current needs. The migration of people to urban areas cannot be denied and obviously involves certain requirements to be attended

by a huge variety of stakeholders were architects must have a decisive role. But frequently maintenance, renewal and fair distribution of assets and resources provide better solutions than brand new expansive plans.

- Futuristic visions get little attention. New designs when innovative are almost always the result of a search for a better comfort, a more sustainable or respectful approach, a holistic understanding of the situation or any other attitude which is the polar opposite to the wish to get the attention exclusively by means of pure novelty.

- Respect is an increasingly often concept and is taking the lead over other factors such as profitability or personal recognition which are understood as unacceptable in many contexts. Respect for our heritage, understanding it not just as the assets with specific, individual and acknowledges artistic value, but as all what we have inherited from previous generations. Respect for everybody, especially for those collectives who have been traditionally disadvantaged or even non-cared, and for those who are still to come. And consequently, respect for

the planet, ever more understood as a fragile entity which needs to be understood and protected.

- Care as an active attitude following respect. A meaningful percentage of researchers in architecture are devoting their time to see how they can care any individual of the society depending on their circumstances, or how they can care and heal the environment by means of actions such as circular economy or cooperation.

The work which was got the Best Paper Award during the farewell ceremony is a magnificent evidence of set of values which this conference has revealed as the undeniable sign of the times when it comes to research in architecture and therefore when it comes to what is relevant to nowadays society. Authored by Madlen Simon, University of Maryland (fig. 4); Shaimaa Hameed Hussein, Al-Nahrain University (fig. 5); and Gregory Weaver (fig. 6), University of Maryland; was titled "Designing Better Cities Together: Global inter-university partnership model for architectural education addressing the United Nations 2030 Sustainable Development Goals".



Figures 4, 5 and 6. Madlen Simon, Shaimaa Hameed Hussein and Gregory Weaver

Having foretold the fact that most of the audience would attend the conference by means of the online option, as many segments as possible were scheduled in the European afternoon and evening since American attendees would face obvious and meaningful inconveniences in attending sections arranged during the European morning. Therefore six out of seven scheduled parallel sessions of paper presentations were arranged accordingly and only the last one when just European authors had been included was arranged on the European Saturday morning. For some

attendees it happened to be their first online conference and despite the fact that it took a while for many of them to get used to the particularities of Teams® (fig. 7), which was the communication platform chosen for all online segments, debates were extremely fruitful and day after day everybody switched off his or her laptop with the feeling of having learnt important facts, having met interesting people and possible future collaborators, and above all the feeling of being participating in something important, something relevant, something absolutely committed to improve people's lives.

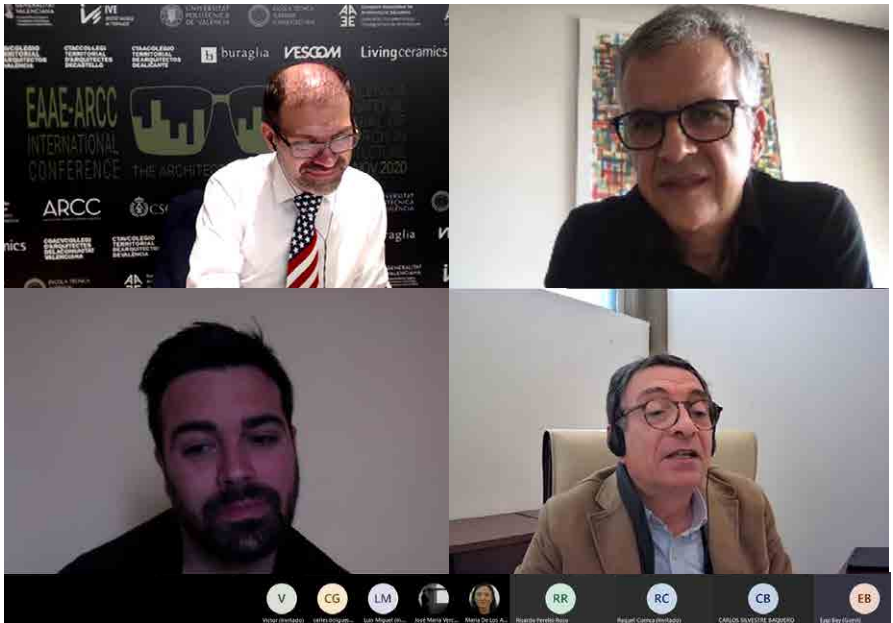


Figure 7. Participants at the online parallel session held at room A on Saturday, November 14, 2020, at 10:00

The success achieved in the nine previous editions of the joint conference – Montreal in 2002, Dublin in 2004, Philadelphia in 2006 and 2018, Copenhagen in 2008, Washington DC in 2010, Milan in 2012, Honolulu in 2014, and Lisbon in 2016 – was achieved once again in Valencia in 2020, being the most convincing argument for all the audience to focus on the next edition to be held in Miami in 2022. Until then we have two years of work in meaningful adverse conditions because of the global health crisis caused by the coronavirus disease. But architects are not only curious as previously mentioned and committed as easily deducible when being

observed. Architects are basically optimistic people. Optimism is intrinsic to architectural teaching, practice or research. Nobody decides to become an architect if he or she does not have the wish of improving the world and the conviction of being capable of it through effort and dedication. The variety of tools available nowadays, the boundless amount of knowledge achieved by humankind along with the powerful set of mechanisms to access it, and mostly our renewed priorities, personal values of ways of doing (fig. 8) guarantee a worthy and fertile service of research to architecture and, consequently, of architecture to the society and the planet.



*Figure 8. Participatory workshop organized by the Spanish studio El Fabricante de Esferas in Villena, Spain*



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