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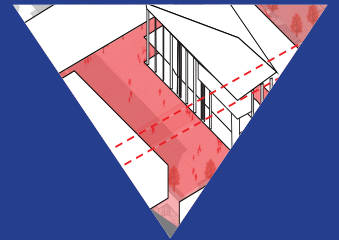
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Architecture Research Agenda



02



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Syllabus presents experiences and research made inside formative courses at different levels: bachelor, master, doctorate.
The goal is to offer these results, provisional and incomplete as they can be, to the scientific community, enhancing dialogues and exchanges.

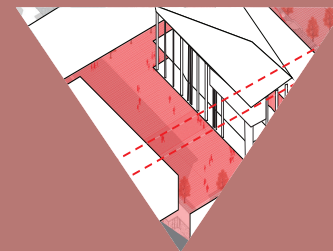
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Architecture Research Agenda



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Valentina Dall'Orto is an Architect and Master of Architecture from Politecnico di Milano (2015). Currently, she is an Executive PhD candidate in Architecture, Urban and Interior Design, at Politecnico di Milano. Since 2017, she works as professor and researcher at the Universidad Técnica Particular de Loja (UTPL), Ecuador, participating to the activities of the research group habitAndes. Among these Valentina is managing the projects of community service in a marginal district of the city. Previously she collaborated with Quito's Instituto Metropolitano del Patrimonio (IMP) and SEK University. She has also volunteered experience in different countries, focusing her explorations on South American territory since 2015. Presently, her research focuses on rural houses typologies in Loja region.

The research deals with the themes of the project of rural living, through an analysis of the architectural device of the house and how this has been declined in the southern region of Ecuador: Loja. The dwelling has been selected as a significant material expression of changes in living practices occurring in the Global South. The complex and multifaceted scenario presented by the contemporary countryside is an object of debate in different fields of knowledge. A multiplicity of conceptual categorization and the blurred nature of the subjects invite researchers to study it through unexplored optics. In this context, architecture is envisioned as an important agent of transformation in re-shaping the future of rural environment.

**Valentina
Dall'Orto**

**Rural habitat
at 0° latitude**

On Global Rural – Position Project

Trying to define the current condition of countryside in a globalized world, one comes across a heterogeneous scenario, unified just by the difficulty to ascribe the position of what is not urban through predetermined categories. Some authors identify rurality as a spatial condition (Roskam 2016; Koolhaas 2020) while others deny its existence, stating that there is no longer any outside to urban world (Brenner 2013). Due to the opaque nature of the subject, the necessity to define conceptual tools for the construction of a new rural discourse becomes evident (Di Campli 2019).

In Latin American environment, these territories represent a conflictive space, far from the pastoral image dominated by an untouched nature. Currently are crossed by phenomena dictated by a forced adaptation to global market logics, by migrations and the consequent cultural hybridizations, which have also led to a profound change in living practices.

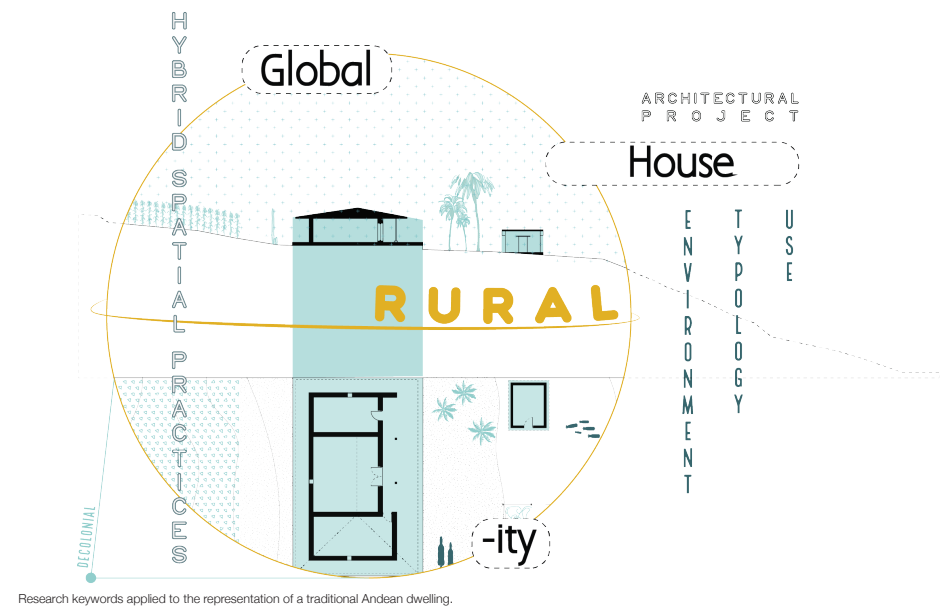
Such violent events shape a different function for the architectural device of the house. It no longer represents the specific constitutive matrix of the place, but often appears completely unrelated to the context.

The proposed research will be developed in the Andean territory of the province of Loja, in the south of Ecuador, characterized by a mainly mountainous orography and

an unstable climate (Alvarado 2017). This frontier land presents several environmental and socio-economic critical issues, related to the coexistence of traditional rural societies and new inhabitants, and to processes of abandonment and intensification of uses and values, which cause de-territorialization and re-territorialization movements (Di Campli 2019). In this context, traditional and contemporary architectural productions appear in an antithetical relationship, despite the difficulties in situating them in a specific temporal or formal horizon. The first, congruent with the image of its creator, shows a clear coherence between the form, its constitutive parts and the function associated with each space. It demonstrates an organic unity with the surrounding landscape. The second, on the contrary, emerge as a result of the flaking of places, a process of radical modification of living practices that manifests its uncertainty through imported architectural forms in perpetual transition. The transformation process leads to a progressive rejection of the typology, in favor of the homologation of domestic spaces to anonymous models.

The necessity for a decolonial perspective – References

In order to identify the different reading efforts of the rural device for living made in various historical moments and latitudes, some references have been selected.



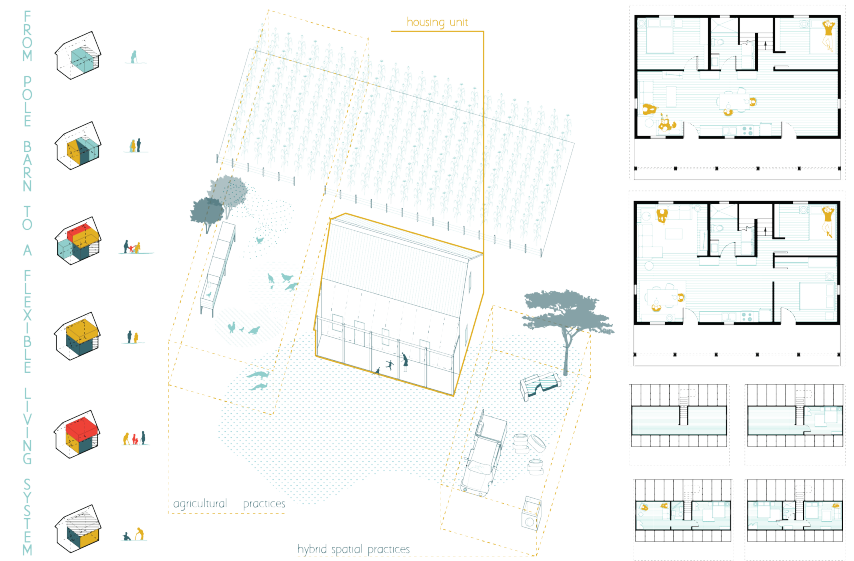
The diverse existing focuses are attributable to the needs of the period in which the studies are produced. In this sense, the explorations carried out after the Second World War, are characterized by a strong documentary intention, justified by the necessity to carry out a reconnaissance of the built environment on the territory. On the other hand, the contemporary focus is often linked to the purpose of rediscovering ancient knowledges based on a balance with the environment, in order to deal with the wicked problem of the climate change.

Regarding the Italian background, the selected studies were developed starting from the '30 and are aimed at documenting from different perspectives the condition of rural territory in its components. The research of Giuseppe Pagano and Guarniero Daniel of 1936, titled *Architettura Rurale Italiana*, is centered on demonstrating the intrinsic esthetic value in the functionality of rural houses. Through a photographic recognition is explicated the origin of the forms that shape the rural fabric. In this way, are explored the climatic, topographic and functional determinants which settle the origin and evolution of the built forms. In the context of CNR monographs of the post-war period, through a mainly argumentative narrative Lucio Gambi describes the rural house of Romagna starting from an historical analysis of the typological consolidation. The research

records the variations of the architecture based on changing topographies of the region. The approach of Cesare Saibene provides a narrative of the Italian rural landscape based on the recognition of morphological units. The description is realized through the study of the physical, anthropic, economic and human settlement environment: the rural house is therefore a part of a whole.

Regarding the contemporary approaches to the study of the rural house, the subject is often analyzed in its technological component, highlighting how vernacular architecture constitutes an important repertoire of applicative information for today's construction. Under this perspective, it is important to point out the contribution of the atlas *Habitat: vernacular architecture for a changing planet* edited by Sandra Piesik in 2017, and of *Lo-tek Design by radical indigenism* by Julia Watson in 2020.

The relevance of the PhD research proposal lies on the necessity to set up an interpretative spatial model of decolonial origin. As Ananya Roy argued, the dominant theories on the design and governance of cities and territories are rooted in the Euro-American experience and are therefore unable to account for the multiple forms of space production in the southern hemisphere (Roy 2009).



Myer's Home - Rural Studio Newbern Alabama, 2020.

Key Words — Key Projects

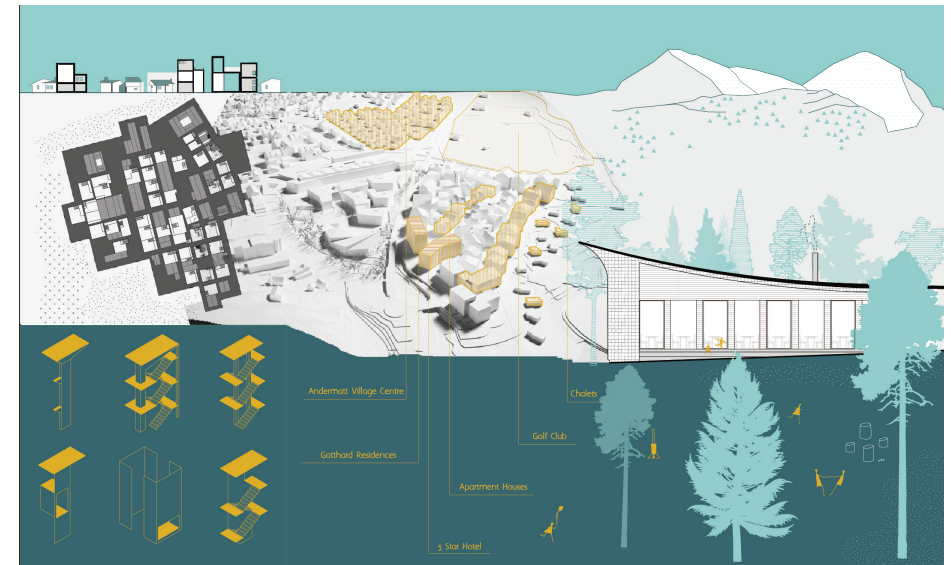
The key-projects are considered representative as they illustrate the multiplicity of variations assumed today by rural living. In this perspective, it is interesting to point out the exploration of RUF aimed at addressing the consequences of the processes of urbanization of rural villages in China. The collective envisions a three-storey-core that could maximize the flexibility in the building construction, providing also a rooftop garden and a water storage reservoir.

In the European context, the work of the architect Gion Caminada, active in the recovery of the village of Vrin, is characterized by structuring of a dialectic discourse with the local tradition, recovering a direct relationship with the landscape. His architectural production is ascribed to the concept of “cosmopolitanism”, which differs from “globalism”, interpreting the former as the act of focusing on a specific place without losing the vision of the global panorama. The Forest House, represents the transfiguration of the conventional use of the house in a new one, more relational, that can meet the requirements of the present time. At the same time is important to highlight Stephen Petermann’s critical reading of the gentrification process of the Andermatt Alpine Valley (CH), that is undergoing a strong development as a holiday resort of an Egyptian real estate billionaire. The author highlights

how the social, political and economic landscape is radically determined by neo-Cartesian tech-driven orthodoxies in an evolving process of resortification.

Conclusion

The PhD research proposal aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge with a mainly methodological improvement. For this purpose, the rural house is considered a complex cultural product, a living and dynamic organism that is transformed and reacts to the phenomena to which it is subjected. This research will investigate what rural house can express about the global phenomena that affect it and which instruments of architectural domain allow an effective reading of the complex dynamics that are shaping rural territories through the analysis of the dwelling. From that perspective, the contribution is focused on establishing a methodological path useful to read the relationship between the various elements that compose the rural house and their context, observed from a decolonial perspective. This process will facilitate to obtain conceptual tools useful for the purposes of the architectural project.



RUF proposal for rural village of Shiguang, China, 2016. AMO critical reading of urbanization process of Andermatt, Switzerland, 2017. The Forest House, Gion Caminada Switzerland, 2017.

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