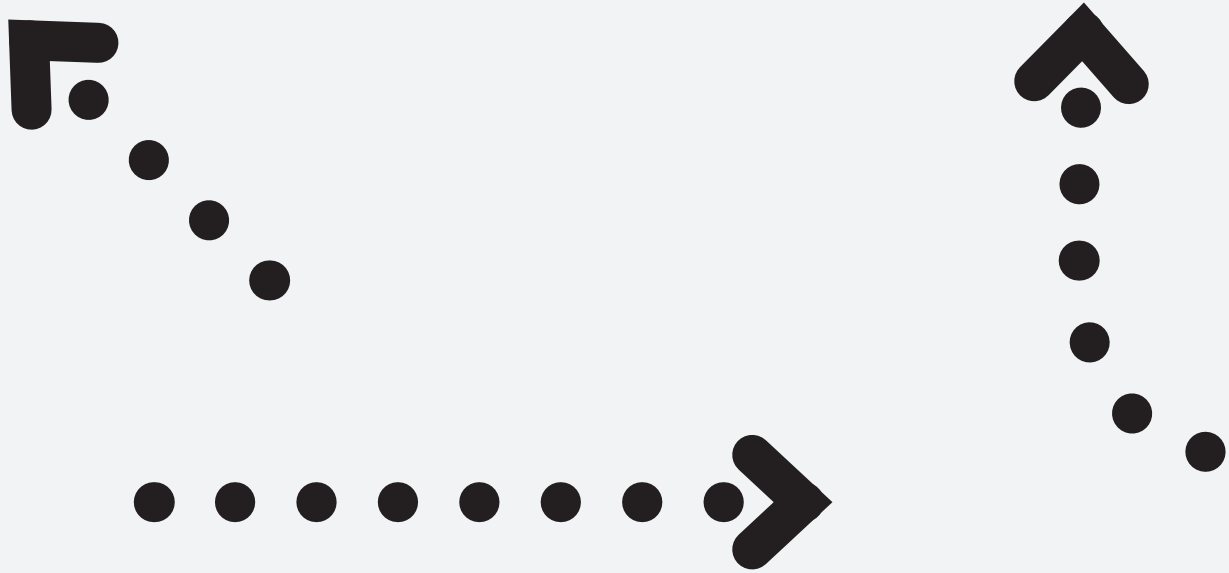


Updating the Grand Tour.
Memory and Invention of the
European Built Environment

Workbook of Affinities



The *Workbook of Affinities* comprises 7 sections that synthesise the results of the exercises undertaken by the UpGranT Consortium in the conception of a learning by travelling pedagogical model, re-empowering the Grand Tour's long-standing practice.

- Section 1** UpGranT Consortium
- Section 2** Politecnico di Milano · POLIMI
- Section 3** Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto · FAUP
- Section 4** Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna · UNIBO
- Section 5** Art Academy of Latvia · LMA
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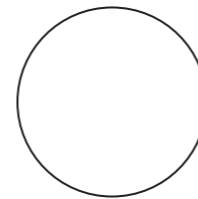
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Foreword

– Helder Casal Ribeiro,
Silvia Ramos



Almost three years after the beginning of the UpGranT project, the “Workbook of Affinities” synthesises the results of the consortium’s architectural exercises in conceiving an *in situ* pedagogical model, or, in other words, a learning by travelling methodology hinged on the (re)interpretation of real buildings, re-empowering the Grand Tour’s long-standing practice.

The present publication guarantees equal voice to all partners, individually and collectively, in terms of their affinities (close relationships, shared qualities) and their differences (otherness, distinct character), particularly in relation to townscape, architecture, and design practice.

To establish a common ground, highlighting affinities and differences, the “Workbook of Affinities” is written in a single language and organised into seven sections: one for each partner institution, portraying cultural identity, and a common section in which the entire consortium participates.

This common section – Section 1 – includes not only an overview of the project’s objectives, goals, and dynamics, along with the main shared events and productions toward an UpGranT method, but also a set of essays that present each partner’s final perspective or last contribution to the project theme.

The individual sections – Sections 2 to 7 –, although dedicated to the work of each partner institution – Politecnico di Milano, Faculty of Architecture – University of Porto, Alma Mater Studiorum – University of Bologna, Art Academy of Latvia, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, Estonian Art Academy –, share a common structure, enabling comparative readings. These sections feature a precise selection of the fundamental, representative exercises developed by each team – Grand Tourists, Grand Tour, Souvenirs on Exemplary Buildings, Learning by travel with... –, in a layout that values interpretative essays through the concept of drawing with text and writing with drawing, presented in the form of original short texts and visual essays (Wall Atlas) that pair images from the authors with archival documentation, along with an interview with a living architect in practice. These exercises were based on the same premises, criteria, and analytical models. All deviations represent the corresponding partner’s personal and cultural approach or perspective. The contents in each section are the entire responsibility of the partner organisation and their authors.

The “Workbook of Affinities” is available in digital, open-access, and print formats. The book’s design interprets both its character as an exercise notebook, in A4 format, with a soft cover and standard paper, and its organisation into independent yet interconnected sections, printed in seven detachable fascicles, published simultaneously and bound together by a paper strap.

The workbook’s structure encompasses the meaningful ethos of learning by travelling by bringing together different matters/interpretative accounts on a selection of architects, travels and buildings, demonstrating the trans-temporal and trans-geographic generative role of travel, capable of sparking the interest of new paths not only in students, researchers and professors, from different scholarly levels and areas of interest, but also professionals of architecture, culture, travel, tourism and the public interested in the themes of arts, architecture and creative process.

The goal of this book is to celebrate architecture as a social and cultural imperative through travel and creative awareness.

The “Workbook of Affinities” is an occasion to express UpGranT’s complete gratitude to the many Institutional Partners, listed at the end of the book’s first section, for their effective and always assiduous support. A special thanks also goes to all the Grand Tourist Architects for their significant contributions.

Architects on the move: bridging the Grand Tour into the future

– Cristina Pallini

Traditionally, the Grand Tour was a trip through Italy that young aristocrats and gentry took to complete their education by experiencing cities, monuments, and artworks firsthand. As such, the Tour served as a catalyst in shaping a European cultural horizon long before Europe was established as a political entity. However, as its destinations became more institutionalised, its scope became narrower. Following this tradition, contemporary student exchange programmes are thriving – sometimes blurring the lines of context, social readiness, and interaction – at a time when travel is becoming more accessible, and the relentless pursuit of authenticity mirrors the increasing estrangement of many places.

UpGranT aims to re-centre the role of travel within design education, which, as generations of architects have demonstrated, requires a strong experiential knowledge. When aspiring and skilled architects visited buildings in person to grasp their contextual significance, they often engaged with the artefact, using multiple observation methods and diverse ways to preserve memories through sketches, surveys, photographs, and descriptions. This process is transgenerational, designed to imprint experiences in memory as a personal reference collection, which have been and continue to be resources for new spatial and formal ideas.

From this perspective, UpGranT aims to unpack the idea of “learning by travelling”, which partly involves promoting informal, student-centred approaches and self-motivation, while also exposing architects-in-the-making to diversity and otherness.

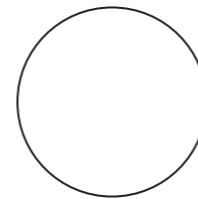
The project examines the diversity of built environments across five European countries, including Italy and Greece, both traditional Grand Tour destinations renowned for their rich antiquities; Portugal, situated on Europe’s western border; and Latvia and Estonia, representing the even more challenging Baltic frontier.

The collective memory of Europe lies, among other things, in the materiality of its built environment, embedding a diversity of histories and traditions while bearing concrete evidence of the co-identities shaped over centuries of the circulation and exchange of people and ideas. Cities of the partner countries – Milan and Bologna, Thessaloniki, Porto, Riga and Tallinn – are framed as dialectically experienced by prominent figures from 1900 to the present day, living and practising architects, and off-radar personalities – who filtered their travel experience into their built work.

UpGranT was organised into six Work Packages, with the first (WP1) focusing on project management and the last (WP6) on dissemination. The research was carried out within the scope of WP2 (*Grand Tourists*), WP3 (*Souvenirs*), and WP4 (*Itineraries*).

Within WP2, the Partner Organisation (PO) identified 10 architects active in the countries concerned, who undertook the Grand Tour as part of their training, clarifying the selection criteria for travel itineraries, outputs, and research-relevant aspects. These travel experiences contributed to the architects’ way of thinking, highlighting, whenever possible, the influence of travel memories on their work. All this implied consulting available literature, public and private archives, interviewing practising architects, and collecting and cross-referencing visual and written documents. Eventually, each PO identified three exemplary buildings to be visited (WP4) and explored through interpretive elaborations.

Souvenirs, the title of WP3, is a term used since the late 18th century to refer to a memory or keepsake. For architects on the move, souvenirs were tangible objects to bring home: surveys conducted on site with makeshift



1 Introduction

measuring tools, three-dimensional reproductions, drawings, or views created by others, such as Piranesi's plates showcasing classical ruins.

Rekindling memories of visited places, souvenirs prompted processes of reinterpretation and invention. Along this line, WP3 explored the links between experiential knowledge and re-framing methods, mapping various interpretive tools, both analytical and artistic, common among architects. In this phase, POs explained and shared their approaches to analysing a building and illustrating the core principles behind its spatial syntax and formal design. The three exemplary buildings identified in WP2 served as a testing ground, enabling visual interpretations across language barriers, not just among experts.

WP4, consisting of four updated versions of the Grand Tour, was fed by materials collected and processed in WP2 and WP3, and stood at the core of the UpGranT project. While having independent documentary value, in WP4, all previously collected and elaborated materials were tested against reality by members from all POs.

The first trip (GT#1), organised by the Milan and Bologna teams, took place from 12 to 15 January 2024; it began with an itinerary from Cesena to Urbino, alternating modern architecture and visits to historic centres, concluding with a day-long cross-section of Milan alternating between works by the ten selected Grand Tourists and other notable buildings.

The second trip (GT#2), organised by the Riga and Tallinn teams, took place from 8 to 12 June 2024. It began with a walking tour in Riga and continued by bus to Tallinn, making a series of intermediate stops – Saulkrasti, Pärnu, Rapla, Maidia – to visit buildings constructed during the interwar period and the post-independence era.

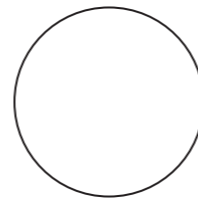
The journey to Porto (GT#3) and northern Portugal took place from 5 to 14 June 2025. It lasted longer than the others and involved students from all POs, who took part in an Intensive Programme for Learners (IPL) at the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Porto, an exemplary building complex (though out of the three selected by the FAUP team) designed by Pritzker Prize winner Álvaro Siza.

All the work completed so far has highlighted some areas for reflection.

Some key differences concern in travel access across countries and political contexts. While tourism became more widespread in Western Europe, only a small elite travelled freely beyond the Iron Curtain (Jākobsone 2024; Taul 2024). The Soviet occupation represented a turning point in the Baltic republics, where architects' creative freedom was restricted in both their education and professional growth. Confronted with a lack of current sources, they devised autonomous training methods, such as systematically recreating images from Western magazines, which they preserved for professional use.

Another issue concerns identifying the typologies of modern Grand Tours: institutionalised, undertaken by individuals or groups of architects, or, as claimed by Helder Casal Ribeiro and Sílvia Ramos (2024), concentrated on a single building. According to Lamberto Amistadi and Ildebrando Clemente (2024), the journey can also be an imaginary one.

6



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