INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE
Interdisciplinary Research Perspectives on the Role of Design in combining Social, Technological and Business Development

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conference proceedings
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About Kaunas

Lithuania’s second larger city is a surprising hotspot for art deco combined with traditional Baltic folk elements, and a unique inner-war urban and architectural heritage.

In December 2015, Kaunas became the first Eastern and Central European city to be awarded as UNESCO Design City. Cities of Design belong to the Creative Cities Network - 116 Members at the present - which was founded by UNESCO in 2004. The network is comprised of cities, selected for their contribution in the fields of design, music, literature, cinema and gastronomy. The aim is to foster international cooperation with and between cities committed to investing in creativity as a driver for sustainable urban development, social inclusion and cultural vibrancy.

In 2017 Kaunas has been entitled as the European Capital of Culture in 2022. The European Capitals of Culture initiative is designed to highlight the richness and diversity of cultures in Europe, celebrate the cultural features Europeans share and increase European citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural area. In addition to this, experience has shown that the event is an excellent opportunity for regenerating cities, raising the international profile of cities, enhancing the image of cities in the eyes of their own inhabitants, breathing new life into a city's culture and boosting tourism and economy.

Lithuania has one of the fastest growing economies in Europe and is ranked 20th in the world as far as ease of conducting business is concerned. It has one of the fastest connection speeds in Europe, and cheap Internet to hook into. Lithuania was the first country to introduce Local Breakout (LBO) Internet technology for travelers that allows them to avoid big data roaming charges. There are free Wi-Fi zones. Its tech startup scene is said to be “green but blossoming” due to its citizens' proficiency in English, intelligent workforce, EU location, strong legal contract enforcement and the government's commitment to improve business conditions. The country has introduced “startup visas” and reforms in its “Blue Card” procedures in an at-
tempt to facilitate resident and work permits for innovative teams from non-EU countries.

All these features make consider Kaunas as one of the promising places in R&D innovation and creativity.
About the Conference

4D - Designing Development, Developing Design

Interdisciplinary Research Perspectives on the Role of Design in combining Social, Technological and Business Development

4D Conference aim to discuss the role of Design in developing value for social entities, technological advancement, and business creation and revamping. Modern and nascent economies indeed are adopting design as a competitive lever to embed continuous and discontinuous technology in new product language as to propose new entrepreneurial ventures. Moreover, design has become a strategic lever for social entities to run fund-raising, to create new user engaging logic’s, to combine social and economic value.

Specifically 4D conference embraces both perspectives:

i) ‘designing development’ where design is the main input to create feasible conditions to enhance social values, to diffuse new technology paradigms and to create new ventures;

ii) ‘developing design’ where design is the “output” of the interplaying of social, economic and technological supporting forces.

4D vision is to become a biennial Design conference organized in rotation by 2 types of partners: ones from developed industrial areas and the ones that are meeting a particular moment of local development. In 2017 partners from Italy and Lithuania are the conference organizers.
The Conference is organized within 3 tracks:

Design & Social Development

Social development is about improving the well-being of every individual in society so they can reach their full potential.

The success of the society is linked to the well-being of each and every citizen. Social development means investing in people. It requires the removal of barriers so that all citizens can journey toward their dreams with confidence and dignity. It is about refusing to accept that people who live in poverty will always be poor. It is about helping people so they can move forward on their path to self-sufficiency.

There are many ways to help people and one of them is by applying Design Thinking approach, and especially Human-centered design approach. Design Thinking is the confidence that everyone can be part of creating a more desirable future, and a process to take action when faced with a difficult challenge. Human-centered design is a creative approach to problem-solving. It’s a process that starts with the people you’re designing for and ends with new solutions that are tailor made to suit their needs.

Human-centered design is all about building a deep empathy with the people you’re designing for; generating tons of ideas; building a bunch of prototypes; sharing what you’ve made with the people you’re designing for, and eventually putting your innovative new solution out in the world.

This track invites submissions discussing community-based, participatory design, the reconceptualization of modern values and boundaries for the future scenario of human life and well-being.

Design & Technological Development

In ancient Greek, the word techne was used instead of the words art and craft and is best translated into the word technology. Designing at the beginning of the 21st century will overcome the stylish minimalism of the last decade,
with innovation based purely on shape. Instead, there will be a return to parameters that have always been the basis of new epochs and dimensions in design: the sophisticated use of new materials and technologies. Historically, exciting, visionary and pioneering designs have always rested on the transformation of materials and technology into a new context. New products and services are being introduced to the market at a constantly increasing pace, while demands and expectations from customers grow and competition in the market also increases. The combination of these factors requires an effective product development and innovation management process, where detailed knowledge of user needs is critical, to maximize the potential for commercial success. New technologies have profoundly affected product design through innovative materials and processes available to current designers. The two main technological fields that have most relevance to product development are materials and processing techniques, though increasingly computer design packages, as well as the rapid dissemination of ideas through the internet has become equally important. Today a wide range of technologies developed in recent years is available to new product designers and makers.

Technology and design are two sides of any product, whether it is an IT solution, smartphone or kitchenware. Understanding of these both sides is not just an extra, but a necessity. An engineer can not construct a useful technical solution if he or she is not thinking about the usability of the product, while a designer can not produce a feasible construction without an understanding of underlying technology. Hence, today we need Renaissance man again, knowledgeable in technology, design, and culture, because we build products for the whole World with a variety of different cultures, experiences, educations and needs, using fast changing sustainable technological solutions. Today's educational and work culture should strive to wider education with selected deeper expertise, on the contrary to narrow specializations.

At first sight, it may appear that very different things have to be combined in product development and design: on the
one hand, a product must meet functionality, safety, sustainability requirements while the product manufacturing costs and the effect on the environment must be minimized. A wrong decision made on the type and amount of raw material, transportation, and other aspects may adversely affect the product quality and cause economic, social and environmental harm. For these reasons different specialists – engineers, technologists, designers, logistic specialists and others – must be involved in product development and design work, use life-cycle approach and define all product's impacts and aspects in early product creation and development phase. It really helps to save a lot.

One of the main roles of design research and practice has been to create positive social change through different design perspectives and technological development. Design is a powerful tool in creating space, product, process, system, game, software, method/tool and etc. The role of socially responsible design is to implement new ideas that meet unmet needs to make them powerful so they improve people’s lives, make it happen to apply newest technologies and without compromising on ethics. This track will explore how electronic, networked and interactive nature of the digital world will change design research and practice; to understand how new materials (e.g. materials that repair themselves when damaged and surfaces that clean themselves), tools, methods (e.g. computer programs which enable representation of forms previously impossible to draw but which are also translated into direct manufacturing processes), and the purposes of design will evolve; and which opportunities will develop for people future lives.

**Design & Business Development**

Design plays a focal role in building and developing the contemporary businesses. Design Thinking has become an established practice in the world’s leading hubs of innovation.

The design of new value propositions and disruptive business models is an important prerequisite of sustained competitive advantage and industry leadership. The modern customers are gradually emerging as proactive co-creators
of value, and even co-designers of business processes. Managing the open, design-driven organizations is an important management challenge that calls for rethinking the established structures and cultures.

The track invites the participants to present their views on the evolving role and methods of the design-based approach to business development. We particularly welcome the discussions on the new concepts and instruments, as well as innovative practices in business design. Scholars and practitioners from a variety of fields have been attracted by the universal nature of design since this is the process that converts ideas into plans, opportunities, experiences, or physical objects. This conference section extends an invitation to those who wish to discuss new possibilities in the field of business.

Participants are welcome to contribute to the integration of design concepts in the phases of ideation, when a business concept is being developed; in adoption of design strategies, which help generate ideas that are novel to an industry and allow innovate contextually; in prototyping the product or service; in market engagement, where the interface with customers starts; in business modeling, where the components and business functions are being set in order to support viability of a business; and in entrepreneurial venture creation and development. Researchers are also invited to investigate tight and complex linkages, found between design and business & entrepreneurship that define customers’ needs, redefine organizational structures and strategies, foster open and design-based innovation, influence the evolution of companies’ value creation processes, at the same time allowing to gain and maintain their competitive advantage in an era of constant change.
KTU Design Centre

Founded in 2013, KTU Design Centre is aimed to develop and promote design as a universal discipline within the multidisciplinary context of Kaunas University of Technology that encompass the research in technological, fundamental and social sciences and humanities fields.

Main objective of the centre is firstly focused to develop design research in multidisciplinary field, improve design knowledge and skills within different disciplines and create favorable conditions for interaction between them. Secondly - raise local awareness about design and perform design practice-based activities in order to enable new social and entrepreneurial initiatives through design value.

In the last years KTU Design Centre has developed a set of new design study modules integrated within different KTU faculties and is growing it’s research activities in design. As of September 2016 has founded a DesignLibrary Kaunas project that is located in KTU Santaka Valley, KTU Science and Technology Centre. Santaka is characterized by its ideal conditions for businesses to carry out research and develop new products, which is aimed to increase Lithuania’s competitiveness at the international level. The purpose of Santaka is to create an integrated science, study and business centre for public and private research, knowledge-intensive businesses. A National Innovation and Business Centre coordinates production of technologies and their commercialization, while the integrated cultural project DesignLibrary Kaunas contributes by providing design knowledge in new product development as well as aggregating people from different fields around the topic of design and design practice-based projects.

ktu.edu
DesignLibrary Kaunas

A cultural project held by KTU design centre in collaboration with the cultural association DesignLibrary, Milan, Italy.

DesignLibrary, the first library completely dedicated to design was established in Milan in April 2006 in occasion of the Milan Design Week, in collaboration with Electrolux and patronage of ADI (Industrial Design Association). With the aim to create a global network and cross-cultural communication other 3 branches were opened in Shanghai (2007), Istanbul (2009) and Kaunas (2016).

The Italian format of DesignLibrary Milano is considered the model as the basis for the other DesignLibrary branches (Shanghai, Istanbul, Kaunas). The seminar format “Design Thursdays” (i Giovedì del Design) is the main cultural activity of the library, aimed to promote the culture of design. Until now DesignLibrary organized over 240 “Design Thursdays”. DesignLibrary Kaunas replicates the same project model locally by providing library, networking services and cultural events.

In Kaunas a coworking space called “DesignFriends” was opened next to DesignLibrary for professional people who aim to approach business in a community way.

Based in the Science and Technology park “Santaka Valley”, DesignLibrary Kaunas is part of a hub, a home of various laboratories such as Material Science, Biomedical Engineering, Ultrasound, Food Institute and many others.

kaunas.designlibrary.it
The Department of Design, former INDACO Department (Industrial Design, Arts, Communication and Fashion) has the mission to promote innovation, development and integration of design culture and methodologies in the socio-economic system.

The research objectives

To act as a place of theoretical, critical, scientific, and cultural debate about the relationship between design & industry and between design & society; to create a system of multidisciplinary connections with the whole range of scientific and technical skills. The Department deals with three main fields of interest, in which the research is organized:

1 — Design&Culture
2 — Products, Services and Strategies
3 — Environmental, Landscape and Mobility

A few data

19 full professors – 39 associate professors – 42 researchers – 68 PhD candidates – 47 research fellows – around 20 visiting professors for teaching – 43 administrative and technical staff – about 250 people working every day in the Department.

The Department has created a cluster of laboratories suitable both for didactic experimentation and for specialised research. They are the largest world center supporting research and didactics in design processes, in an area of around 4,000 square metres inside the Politecnico Bovisa campus in Milan: 4 laboratories devoted to didactic activities, 12 for research, 11 interdisciplinary laboratories.

dipartimentodesign.polimi.it
Anthropocene and Design. The Role of Design in the emerging Territorial Scenarios of Contemporary Ruins in the Anthropocene Epoch

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Abstract: The influence of human behaviour is deeply affecting and modifying Earth. This leads experts to introduce a new geological Epoch, named Anthropocene. We can read those changes also from a cultural point of view, related to philosophy, literature and arts. The Anthropocene concept stakes relations between major and primary themes such as human beings, artefacts, nature and time. Specifically, existing built environment and artefacts can be considered direct testimonies of the interaction of humans with nature, space and time. In fact, Contemporary Ruins, such as incomplete or abandoned structures, are increasing in their number, both in terms of case studies and territorial extensions.

If, in the past, this phenomenon was mainly absorbed through conversion of use processes, nowadays their assimilation is becoming more and more difficult, and hard to be re-metabolized, because they are sometimes made up of new technologies or because of their huge and growing territorial dimensions. Moreover the economic crisis aggravates the emergency, and the fragile background circumstances make hard to intervene with an effective Adaptive Reuse approach. Historically, this Design activity, and more broadly Design discipline, was referred only to skilled and trained experts. As a consequence, tools, products and spaces represented the tangible results of this creative process. Nowadays, Design assumed a more spread attitude; in fact we are living in a huge and diffuse designing society. Therefore a growing number of individuals undertake ‘diffuse design’ actions that often lead to big social changes and territorial transformations. This widespread attitude can be considered as one of the main features of the Anthropocene cultural groundwork that deals with the major relationships between human beings, nature and time. Accordingly to the three topics outlined, we proposed an exploratory paper with the aim to investigate the role of design attitude in the process of intervention on new fragile and complex territorial scenarios due to the growing dimensions of Contemporary Ruins. A critical reflection, supported by the cultural framework of Anthropocene's concept, in which natural elements and results of human activity become elements of the same scenario, complex as homogeneous, on which design actions can be activated, with the involvement of a new designing society.

Keywords: design, anthropocene, contemporary ruins, design approach, cultural model

Introduction
In recent times, the influence of human behaviour on Earth's atmosphere is so significant to suggest the identification of the beginning of a distinct new geological Epoch, named with the term Anthropocene. It would be the last Epoch of the current Quaternary Period (starting 2.58 million years
Anthropocene

In Geology the concept of recent is dramatically different from our everyday life, and concerning the topic, the International Commission on Stratigraphy (ICS) is the official institution, which designate Eons, Eras, Periods, Epochs and Ages of the Earth’s official timeline in the last 4.6 billion years. Recently, ICS reported that human behavior has noticeably affected Earth’s atmosphere, modifying its features, due to the influence of important anomalies such as global warming phenomenon, or even mutating its chemical composition. ICS had some perplexities and decided to entrust a multidisciplinary group of 40 experts (including meteorologists, oceanographers and palaeontologists) called Working Group on the Anthropocene (WGA) to further inquiry those changes. WGA, in 2009, advocated the identification of a distinct new geological Era, named with the term Anthropocene. The term Anthropocene comes from two ancient Greek terms: anthropos (ἄνθρωπος), which means human, and kainos (καινός), which identifies subjects related to novelty. From a terminological point of view, the consequences of the growing impact of human activities on planet Earth’s atmosphere and composition, led Antonio Stoppani, an Italian geologist and professor at Politecnico di Milano, to introduce the concept of an Anthropozoic Era, in 1873. Stoppani proclaimed the Anthropozoic Era, arguing that “the creations of man constitutes the introduction into nature of a new element with a strength by no means know to ancient worlds” (Stoppani, 1873). Most recently, the term Anthropocene has been informally used by biologist Eugene Stoermer in the mid 70’s (Steffen, et al., 2011), but it has been Paul Crutzen, Dutch Nobel Prize winner for chemistry, to characterize and make popular the term, claiming “We are no longer in the Holocene. We are in the Anthropocene”, during a conference in 2000 (Lewis, et al., 2015). Therefore Anthropocene would be our new, current, Epoch, characterized by the relevant alteration of Earth due to human activity. Thus one of the main challenges for the scientists is to identify a global marker of our environment able to indicate the
starting point of the new age. This marker should be clear enough to be visible and recognizable by scientists long time, in geology that means even millions of years, into the future (Giannuzzi, 2016). The debate around this kind of golden spike involves several scientists, with their different positions. Among those positions, a focus on radioactive elements from nuclear bomb test is emerging as the best candidate for such a golden spike. Other possible markers are the mass extinction of certain species, the increasing amount of plastic waste accumulated in the oceans, other elements related with pollution, and the chicken; the current specimen diffused all over the world, since the 1950s, present a different dimension and skeleton than its ancestor, the Gallus gallus (Carrington & Damian, 2016). Anthropocene would be the last Epoch of the current Quaternary Period (started 2.58 million years ago), following or overlapping the current, the Subatlantic one (started 2000 years ago) phase of Holocene Epoch, started 11.700 years ago (Certini & Scalenghe, 2011). Holocene is an important period for human society. In fact, even if humans were present in the Pleistocene, they flourished only in the Holocene, when global environmental conditions where favorable, with warmer temperatures and more water, compared to the glacial period. “From that period, the human impact on the planet has progressively grown, starting a profound modification of the Earth’s landscape” (Kirch, 2005). The aforementioned profound modification of the landscape, looks even more like a long slow process with the goal of adapting the environment to the needs of a growing human society (Tzedakis, 2015). In any case, there are no doubts about the fact that the main important impact of humans on the planet has been ushered by the Industrial Revolution (Douglas, 2002). Moreover, as a wider horizon of discussion, the Anthropocene, should include the early modern era as the starting period in which human actions begun to affect the landscapes. Moreover, in the Anthropocene epoch, human activities represent a strong geological force. The same humans that were initially sheltered inside the caves today have become a new force capable of challenging nature, moreover, succeeding in dominating it. On that scenario, the role of culture needs to be rethought. In fact, Anthropocene could also be read as a cultural concept, related to philosophy, literature and arts; a concept in which humanity deals with complex questions about the relation between human beings, artefacts, nature and time.

**Design Attitude in the Anthropocene epoch**

Historically, Design represented the creative engine that generated tools, products, spaces, etc. Many design theorists defined design as a human capability that everyone has. As described by Papanek (1971) “the planning and patterning of any act towards a desired, foreseeable end constitutes the design process. Any attempt to separate design, to make it a thing-by-itself, works counter to the inherent value, of design as the primary underlying matrix of life” (p.3). Design process can be summarily deconstructed in the ability to critically foresee things that are not working in the society, followed by the capability to creatively imagine an alternative scenario, and practically understand how to realize it. The ultimate aim of Design is to intervene and transform man’s environment, tools and, as a consequence, man himself, enhancing well-being and quality of life. Accordingly, Victor Papanek was one of the first design theorists to point out the social and environmental responsibility of designers. In his book “Design for Real World” (1971) he describes Design discipline as one of the most powerful tools through which humanity can imagine and shape its tools and environments, and consequently the whole society. Respectively, the social and moral responsibility of the designer is clear, and consequently, it requires a deep and wide understanding of the society. In parallel, the design process should involve society, finding new strategies for social engagement. The development of new technologies and the advent of mass production enabled humanity to shape society,
environment and people. Furthermore, the continuous technological and productive progresses made this constant process more and more easier and faster. “From this perspective, we are beginning to be able to define and isolate problems, to determine possible goals and work meaningfully towards them” (Papanek, 1971). Since 1972, Thomas Maldonado in his book “Design, nature and revolution: toward a critical ecology” describes the human environment as “one of the many subsystems that compose the vast ecological system of nature” (Maldonado, 1972). Moreover, he claimed that among subsystems, the human environment is the only one able to provoke substantial and irreversible changes to all other subsystems. In his vision, designers are conniving actors in this process. Global warming, terrorism, poor nutrition and the spread of untreatable diseases on one side threaten society; but they also represent big challenges to work on aiming at enhancing the common good. Nevertheless, Maldonado is aware of the fact that autonomous and spontaneous design actions require a big effort in any social system, but through his book he urged designers to play a substantial role activating and sustaining a process of social change to contrast the growing degradation of the environment.

According to this, on one side, Design has always been intended as a way of putting together problem solving capability and sense making, to create a link between being able to do something and having a production of meaning about what is being done. The past decades of emerging design has seen the conversation oriented only towards the problem-solving and pragmatic side, leaving aside the cultural dimension (Manzini, 2015). This has resulted in a “solutionist” line of thought focused on the idea that everything can be reduced only to find solutions. On the contrary, the environment that surrounds humanity is much more complex and demands for hope, a system of meaning, sense and stories. Nowadays, we are facing a new dimension for design discipline. We are experiencing a “diffuse design attitude” (Branzi, 2006). Due to this “diffuse design attitude”, society appears as an extensive experimental lab, which aims at defining new meanings, tools, solutions and social forms. Audacious design actions, social and economical paradigms are needed, in order to achieve real transformative activities. In this new context, designers have to be considered as social actors in a society in which “everybody designs” (Manzini, 2015) and in which a host of active minorities, the creative communities, are inventing new ways of being and doing things. In particular, designers have to accept the fact that they can no longer aspire to a monopoly on design and that today Design is not only executed in design studios, but everywhere. At the same time, they have to understand that these contemporary social changes lead the role of design, and of the design practitioners, to acquire even greater importance. In fact, designers are part of this great “diffuse” design arena (Branzi, 2006), playing the active role of “solution promoters”, bringing their specificities, such as their capacity to produce visions of the possible and to develop strategies to transform potential visions into real solutions (Manzini, 2015).

Designers are certainly among those whose positive contributions are essential to the building of a more humane world. Trained in many disciplines - whether product design, architecture, visual communication, or service design - they are responsible for the artifacts, systems, and environments that constitute the social world. Therefore, Design seeks to enhance its innovative, research-oriented and cross-disciplinary attitude, in order to responsively answer to the true needs of society. All these considerations, leads us to think that we are now in a new age of morally and environmentally responsible Design, in which design practitioners should promote and guide radical social changes, in order to understand the possible futures in the ruined, and unexpected landscapes of the *Anthropocene*. 
Adaptive Reuse and Contemporary Ruins within the Anthropocene epoch

Human activities are producing significant changes on the Earth surface (Kaplan et al., 2011). Their impact on the human habitat can be hardly absorbed and the acceleration that these changes have undergone has led scientists to propose the end of the Holocene, introducing the above mentioned new epoch, named Anthropocene (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000). In addition to the carbon dioxide emissions, to the extinction of some species, to the soil consumption due to deforestation and development, being currently studied by scientists, a relevant part of man’s impact on the Earth has been generated by the heritage of abandoned or disused structures, infrastructures and buildings, which is becoming an emerging topic in the debate on the sustainable development and the future of the world. Therefore we can find some references to the Adaptive Reuse discipline - which is the international expression referring to the change of use of disused buildings (Latham, 2000) – also within the studies concerning the Anthropocene epoch. Zalasiewicz, the British stratigrapher, chairman of the Anthropocene Working Group of Geologists, states that Earth has endured changes sufficient to leave a global stratigraphic signature distinct from that of the Holocene or of previous Pleistocene interglacial phases’ since the start of the Industrial Revolution. (Zalasiewicz, J. et al., 2008).

Indeed, the heritage of the Industrial Revolution, is one of the first and major design topics, a sort of milestone, in the Adaptive Reuse discipline due to the conversion of large disused industrial facilities, including infrastructures and urban areas. If we exclude great natural disasters or great wars, with their ruins and rubble, the great technological revolutions, carried out over time through the introduction of the steam engine, the use of electricity power, up to our new frontiers generated by the digital revolution and the Global Digital Age (Sassen, 2007; Rifkin, 2011), have led to the disposal of the related facilities built by humans, going along with the difficulty in their re-absorption, as a critical topic. In some cases, the reuse of these abandoned facilities, specifically the ones with high specialized features, has given rise to new interesting types of spaces, such as the loft typology, which was conceived as a creative reuse of dismantled industrial spaces and warehouses to get homes and atelier for artists. If the first evidence of this kind of transformation dates back to the 70’s in New York (Zukin, 1982), some more recent similar examples of Adaptive Reuse, come from Far East, with the regeneration of former industrial district 798 Art District in Beijing. On a territorial scale, the large dismantled industrial facilities, such as the Ruhr district in Germany, once the heartland of Europe’s steel and coal industries, is now example of adaptive reuse of industrial heritage buildings, being transformed to serve new recreational uses while preserving the area’s rich history and identity. The use of existing structures is also one of the prevailing tendencies for the 21st century economic growth within the operations aimed at expanding and re-enabling our ecosystem (Storm Cunningam, 2002).

Today we are witnessing a variety of approaches in the conversion of use practice, differing in timelines, tools and strategies (Camocini, 2016). In large urban centers, for example, the conversion of use processes are becoming increasingly fluid and capillary, as they often lead to hybrid functions related to the use of ICT and services; therefore, the final destination rarely covers places that require highly specialized shape and performance. In addition, the reuse of abandoned space is exploited as an urban and social regeneration tool, also led at institutional level to re-energize urban suburbs and degraded areas through small interventions and renewal injection. In ancient times, the reuse of spaces and building constructions, including fragments of relevant buildings, had sometimes undergone to a similar process; it took place as part of an organic and natural process, with no significant leftovers, nor major breaks with the past, as part of a whole and main flow of time. Thus, for example, the great ancient Roman structures have been absorbed in the urban topography of medieval cities.
Nevertheless, the major ancient monumental structures, testimonies of the past, are preserved and considered, at least in Western society, as an important heritage recognized by all. Ancient buildings generate popular appeal and people are conscious of the advantages of retaining them, and can see the benefits in term of archaeological motives, aesthetic appreciation, economic - tourism and leisure -, functional value, psychological need. This approach doesn’t fit to every kind of disused structure. Specifically, the same attention and respect are not directed at abandoned, or never finished, structures created by humans activity in recent times. Indeed, today we are detecting an increase in number of newly constructed, disused or unfinished built structures. These Contemporary Ruins can be former highly specialized structures, entire urban areas, or even large common structures, thus representing a relevant issue in the contemporary era, due to the high impact they have on the environment and on citizens living around them. They are too large or complex to undergo plain and cost-effective conversion processes, therefore they can be barely assimilated within the physiological processes of urban and territorial development; they cannot be swallowed, deconstructed or reinterpreted. They are belonging to our recent history, witnesses of human’s failure. They stand in space and cannot be concealed, but they can be attraction elements for a few interested visitors, or they resist as an admonishment or a monument.

Discussion

Accordingly with the three outlined topics, we conducted an investigation on the role of Design attitude in the process of intervention on new fragile and complex territorial scenarios due to the growing dimensions of Contemporary Ruins. Our critical reflection is supported by the cultural framework of Antropocene’s concept, in which natural elements and results of human activity become features of the same complex as homogeneous scenario, on which design actions can be activated, with the involvement of a new designing society. Design can intervene in this context, without denying or hiding these outstanding presences, but assigning them a new meaning. The term ‘adaptive’, in the Adaptive Reuse expression, introduces an attitude, borrowed form biology, that refers to the ability of living beings to adapt themselves to major changes occurring in their habitat. It also introduces the variable of ‘time’, assigning to spaces the ability to deal with subsequent requirements of upgrading. Design thus, can work upon these leftover spaces as if they were a substrate, without modifying them, but by supporting their nature and re-absorbing them, as if they were petrified, fossilized testimonies of a past life.

References


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