QUADRA

Volume 01

Edited by Elena Marchigiani and Giuseppina Scavuzzo

Research Investigation on Territories and the Built Environment

Università degli Studi di Trieste
Università degli Studi di Udine

EUT

Elena Marchigiani is associate professor of Urban and Landscape Planning and Design at the Department of Engineering and Architecture – Università di Trieste, and vice coordinator of the PhD course in Civil and Environmental Engineering and Architecture.

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The book collects the essays of former doctoral students:
Elisa Maria Vittoria Bertolini (XXXIV cycle); **Elisa Cacciaguerra** (XXXIV cycle); **Sara Carciotti** (XXXIII cycle); **Alberto Cervesato** (XXXIII cycle); **Barbara Chiarelli** (XXXIII cycle); **Gianluca Croce** (XXXIV cycle); **Egidio Cutillo** (XXXIV cycle); **Mariacristina D'Oria** (XXXIV cycle); **Veronica Riavis** (XXXII cycle); **Valentina Rodani** (XXXIV cycle).
They are introduced by essays of their supervisors:
Giovanni Corbellini, full professor of Architectural and Urban Design at the Politecnico di Torino; **Giovanni Fraziano**, Senior professor of Architectural and Urban Design at the Università di Trieste; **Ilaria Garofolo**, full professor of Architectural Engineering at the Università di Trieste; **Giovanni La Varra**, associate professor of Architectural and Urban Design at the Università di Udine; **Alessandra Marin**, associate professor of Urban and Landscape Planning and Design at the Università di Ferrara; **Sara Marini**, full professor of Architectural and Urban Design at the Università Iuav di Venezia; **Paolo Rosato**, full professor of Real Estate Appraisal and Project Evaluation at the Università di Trieste; **Alberto Sdegno**, full professor of Drawing at the Università di Udine, and coordinator of the PhD course in Civil and Environmental Engineering and Architecture.

This first issue of the *Quadra* series collects the results of researches developed in the frame of the Architecture curriculum of the XXXII-XXXIV Cycles of the PhD course in Civil and Environmental Engineering and Architecture, jointly established by the Università di Trieste and Università di Udine since the academic year 2015-16. Being characterised by strong interdisciplinarity, the curriculum encompasses a range of study fields: architectural and urban design, urban and landscape planning and design, architectural representation, technical architecture, and economic evaluation of plans, projects, and policies. Under the umbrella of economic, social, economic and cultural sustainability and of climate change adaptation and resilience, the focus is on the enhancement and transformation of territories and the built environment, through the integration of different theoretical and operational tools and scales of intervention. By bringing together architectural and urban design reflections and devices, technical and technological tools, spatial planning investigations and instruments, the doctoral researches this book presents provide a picture of a large variety of topics and approaches. Their common aim is to explore fields of innovation in the various steps of transformation processes: from their conception to the proposal of approaches to the building of possible solutions. The first section of the book, *Territories of Smartness and Interactions*, collects contributions dealing with material and immaterial, physical and technological aspects and tools, addressed to the investigation, integrated planning, management and communication of the multiple dimensions of territorial assets and transformations. The second section, New *Metabolisms and Subtractions*, presents researches that are primarily related to the fields of architectural and urban design. Each essay is the result of a synthesis and reworking of a doctoral thesis and its key findings, and is introduced by a presentation written by the research supervisor to sketch broader theoretical frameworks. Overall, the book offers an articulate "geography" of topics and hypotheses the PhD course has dealt with: a tentative mapping of research paths, understood as a starting point for new critical reflections, and for stronger interactions among disciplinary fields and approaches.

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Being the first of the *Quadra* series, this book collects the results of some researchers developed in the frame of the Architecture curriculum of the PhD course in Civil and Environmental Engineering and Architecture (cycles XXXII-XXXXIV). The course has been jointly organised by the Università di Trieste and the Università di Udine since the academic year 2015-16. The coordinator of the course is Alberto Sdegno, Elena Marchigiani and Giuseppina Scavuzzo are respectively the current vice coordinator and the previous vice coordinator.

The PhD offers multidisciplinary education and training on topics and approaches that today are at the center of resilient and sustainable design. The objective is to develop skills capable of addressing the radical transformations that are happening in contemporary cities and territories. The curriculum dedicated to Architecture includes a number of disciplines such as architectural and urban design, urban and landscape planning and design, technical architecture, project evaluation and appraisal, and drawing. Researches explore design theories and methods, from the scale of buildings to that of territories, also through the use of advanced surveying and representation tools, information and communication technologies, economic assessment, and construction techniques focused on environmental sustainability.

This book would not have been possible without the commitment of doctoral students; through their researches, they make it valuable evidence of the work done so far. A heartfelt thank goes to all the colleagues who participated in the PhD teaching and training activities, and provided their essays. Last but not least, special thanks go to the PhD students Martina Di Prisco, Anna Dordolin, Andrea Peraz, Vittoria Umani, and Camilla Venturini whose efforts have made the creation of this editorial product possible.

PhD in Civil and Environmental Engineering and Architecture

Università degli Studi di Trieste
Università degli Studi di Udine

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Research at the Crossroads

Elena Marchigiani, Giuseppina Scavuzzo

1. Multiple Perspectives on Complex Contemporary Challenges

This first issue of the *Quadra* series collects the results of researches developed in the frame of the Architecture curriculum of the XXXII-XXXIV Cycles of the PhD program in Civil and Environmental Engineering and Architecture, jointly established by the Università di Trieste and Università di Udine since the academic year 2015-16. Being characterised by strong interdisciplinarity, the curriculum encompasses a range of study fields: architectural design, urban design and planning, architectural representation, technical architecture, environmental sustainability, and economic evaluation of plans, projects and policies. The focus is on the enhancement and transformation of territories and the built environment, through the integration of different theoretical and operational tools and scales of intervention.

This breadth of perspectives allows for a multidisciplinary approach to the complexity of contemporary landscapes and urbanisation processes, considered in their social, economic, spatial, environmental, aesthetic, and cultural dimensions. The PhD course understands this approach as strategic in the face of the structural crises we are facing today, and of the revamping of an "urban question" characterised by uncertain transitions, multiple overlapping and variously interacting processes of change affecting climate, nature, the spaces of everyday life of people and communities, urban infrastructures and settlements.

The specific objective of the researches developed in the Architecture curriculum is to contribute to sustainable growth and resilience, starting from the regeneration of existing buildings and urban contexts, large territories and landscapes, as well as a careful use of non-renewable resources, and the active involvement of local stakeholders and communities. The aim is to explore aspects of innovation in the various steps of transformation processes: from their conception to the proposal of approaches to building possible solutions. Strong is the call to join theory with references to practice, and to promote the ability to critically

interpret, design and manage ongoing dynamics. From this perspective, the very term "solutions" is taken in its broader meaning: not just as a response to a very situated and specific problem, but as a critical perspective to "set the problem" itself, starting from a deeper comprehension of its features and multiple implications. In this sense, theory and practice are understood not as separated, but as the components of an interconnected flow of critical thought. The aim is to offer PhD students the opportunity to cultivate their own interests, and trespass the borders among well-established scales and fields of actions to deeply question "silo thinking". The assumption is that doctoral graduates should acquire advanced knowledge and expertise that are useful to enter not only the academic fields – no longer conceivable as their sole possible career path – but also those of public administration, institutions, and the private sector; all fields where "thinking out of the box" is increasingly needed.

By bringing together architectural and urban design reflections and devices, technical and technological tools, spatial planning investigations and instruments, the doctoral researches this book presents provide a picture of a large variety of topics and approaches. If indeed each of them falls within a specific disciplinary field among those included in the PhD course, and is supervised by at least one faculty member belonging to that disciplinary sector, repeated seminar discussions and collective presentations promote exchange and comparison of knowledge and different viewpoints on the issues addressed.

However, fulfilling ambitious inter- and multidisciplinary goals is far from an easy task; it calls for a continuous dialogue and stronger collaboration among lecturers, supervisors, and students. It is precisely with the purpose to help identify further cross-cutting fields and issues that the two thematic sessions this volume consists of are organised. Each essay is the result of a synthesis and reworking of a doctoral thesis and its key findings, and is introduced by a presentation written by the research supervisor addressed to sketch broader theoretical frameworks.

2. Territories of Smartness and Interactions

The first thematic section of the book, *Territories of Smartness and Interactions*, collects contributions dealing with material and immaterial, physical and technological tools, addressed to the investigation, integrated planning, management and communication of the multiple dimensions of territorial assets and transformations. All researches share the choice of case studies in the region Friuli Venezia Giulia.

This is due to a fruitful matching of reasons: the funding by regional stakeholders (i.e., the Fondazione Cassa di Risparmio di Gorizia – CARIGO, the Municipality of Trieste, the Region) who since the beginning of the PhD course have shown their interest in the advancement of critical knowledge and innovation; the aim to strongly embed research in real contexts; the purpose to provide practical inputs for action. Under this umbrella, the essays focus on a variety of topics and instruments, take on the perspective of their different final users and of the processes they can help activate and implement, show the need to widen their fields of reflection to encompass a large set of expertise, old and new tools.

Accessibility of local architectural and artistic heritage is the specific topic investigated by Veronica Riavis's research *Tactile Representations of Architecture and Painting*. The study applies to the geometric reconstruction of the Church of St. Ignatius in Gorizia, and to the perspective restitution of the presbytery fresco. By paring traditional analytical tools of the work of art with careful reading of its architectural setting, innovative instruments for architectural 3D modelling with prototyping techniques, the objective is to expand and improve accessibility for visually impaired individuals. Riavis's work well shows how this topic cannot be tackled without a deep understanding of many issues: from the regulative framework addressed to the elimination of architectural barriers and from recent innovations in the setting up of "tactile museums", to the specific and heterogeneous perceptions and needs of persons with reduced visual capabilities.

The use of smart tools to enhance the attractiveness of urban and cultural estates links Riavis's research to Sara Carciotti's work on *Smart Cruise Destination*. Here the attention focuses on the "dark side" of tourism (and of "overtourism"), in particular on one of its most extractive forms. By bringing large numbers of day visitors, cruises little contribute to local economic activities while producing significant impacts on the use of infrastructures and the environment. Carciotti proposes the port-city of Trieste as a possible Living Lab to question how can the demands of tourists and residents be made compatible, and the environmental and social sustainability of tourists' flows be addressed. The output is a model for a Decision Support System (DSS); namely a tool that can help gather and harmonise data, stakeholder networking, visualisation and discussion on alternative scenarios. The purpose is to give space and voice to different know-hows, and integrate the inputs from a multiplicity of governance levels and actors.

The construction of assessment tools helping policymakers deliver stra-

tegic plans and projects is likewise at the core of Elisa Maria Vittoria Bertolini's research, *Evaluation of Alternative Scenarios for the Improvement of Cross-border Interconnectivity in the Isonzo Area*. If a peculiarity of the region Friuli Venezia Giulia is indeed its border position, today the strong potential of this location finds evidence in the logistic role that intermodal nodes, such as the Interporto of Gorizia, can play. Building and implementing public policies for the development of sustainable infrastructures is however a complex task, asking public actors for the ability to solve a number of economic, social, and environmental conflicts. From this perspective, and by crosscutting planning and economic evaluation issues, Bertolini's research investigates the inclusion of a Multiple Criteria Group Decision Method (MCGDM) into DSS functionalities, to assure an accurate balance of quantitative and qualitative assessment metrics.

Community interaction and hybridisation of top-down and bottom-up policy-making processes for the upgrading of public spaces and commons is another field of application of smart tools based on the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). In Barbara Chiarelli's action-research on *E-participation for the Development of Urban Regeneration Projects and Processes* critical investigation and direct involvement in initiatives recently developed in the region Friuli Venezia Giulia highlight the challenges that these instruments are called to face: tackling digital divides; promoting effective stakeholder engagement through transparent and inclusive interactive practices; assuring long-lasting institutional commitment and consistent investments. As a conclusion, the success of e-participation ICT tools is understood as strongly relying on an overall and deep rethinking of public action and actors' routines.

Similar considerations provide the starting point of Elisa Cacciaguerra's *Study of Methods and Tools for the Digitalisation of Processes in the Management of Public Works and the Re-functionalisation of the Historical Building Heritage Owned by the Municipality of Trieste*. The assumption is that effective public asset management is crucial for sustainability, efficiency, and public costs reduction. From this perspective, digitalisation – particularly through Building Information Modeling (BIM) – is read as a means to foster accountability in public estate management, and a sound use of Public-Private Partnerships (PPP). As a result, Cacciaguerra's study highlights how successful digital integration requires not only robust infrastructure and financial resources, but also specialised skills that still often lack in the public sector.

By variously matching the inputs from different disciplinary fields, the

contributions collected in the first section of the book interestingly converge on some critical standpoints. The first refers to the very concept of "smartness", and its relation to the use of more or less innovative technological tools. All researches build on a careful problem-setting process: on the investigation of specific territorial contexts, their spatial, social, and economic conditions; and on deep understanding of policy and decision-making frameworks, their actors, interests, and procedures. The application of advanced technologies is therefore questioned from the point of view of their capacity to address concrete and place-based demands. In other words, the effectiveness and smartness of technological instruments – far from being analysed in abstract terms – is not taken for granted; instead, it is assessed as one component of the plural means, tools and processes that are necessary to reach specific goals. The second standpoint is strongly related to the previous one; it refers to the role of technical knowledge. Against the complexity of urban issues, and the deflagration of social needs, perceptions and practices, building urban planning and governance instruments and paths cannot simply rely on the gathering of analytical data and quantitative assessments. The dimensions of conflict and interaction call for new expertise and sensitivities, and for careful adjustment of top-down and bottom-up requests and proposals. Here again the use of advanced technologies can help, but it is not enough. For researchers and professionals, policymakers and public officers, cultivating the ability to listen to social demands and communities, learning from their stances, and evaluating the multiple effects of different possible solutions are thus becoming increasingly important components of the set of hard and soft skills that responsible urban and territorial transformations call for.

3. New Architectural Metabolisms and Subtractions

The second thematic section of the book, *New Metabolisms and Subtractions*, presents doctoral theses that are primarily related to the fields of architectural and urban design. Comparing to a significant Italian tradition, where research in architectural design was highly oriented toward the formal aspects of composition techniques, and based on the examination of a specific author's works (or even on the close reading of one specific work), the here collected essays show an interesting shift. As the contributions from the previous section, they strongly engage with ongoing transformation processes, even if reflections often focus more on the current debate on the "project culture" and its capacity

to address contemporary architecture conditions and demands for new human and nature alliances. The reference to material contexts thus becomes a sort of "pretext" to identify emerging trends, and to develop critical tools for interpreting complex phenomena, whereas specific spatial settings are generally taken as prototype situations and testbeds for reconceptualising architectural and urban design approaches.

This is precisely the perspective of Alberto Cervesato's research, *The Village Handbook*. This work addresses a topic that has been recurrently discussed in the last years after COVID pandemic: the future of villages located in the Italian inner areas, and affected by depopulation trends. Cervesato's study captures the phenomenon also in its economic, demographic, and social complexity; the main aim is, however, to identify possible actions at the scale of individual buildings. Consistently, the output is a "manual" based on the creation of a taxonomy of interventions that are compatible with the material, constructive, and formal character of the architecture of villages located in the inland areas of the region. The result is a set of architectural devices that future reuse projects and interventions can draw on.

Returning to the theme of material and immaterial frontiers, Valentina Rodani's work, *Liminal Architecture. Enduring Experimentation on the Threshold of the Moving Border*, explores the concept of borders to highlight their fluid and fragmented nature. The study delves into the symbolic and temporal aspects of thresholds, by examining a rich set of architectural projects and concepts from the current Italy-Slovenia border area, and dating back to very different periods in time. Ranging from the projects of Leonardo da Vinci to those of avant-garde architecture, the aim is to contribute to architectural theory, discourse and practice by illustrating how spatial boundaries can facilitate movement and transformation, and challenge the conventional perceptions of limits.

A similar approach – though applied to a different topic – permeates Gianluca Croce's work, *De-sign: Architectural Subtraction in Times of Crisis*. The assumption is that, despite the traditionally additive nature of architecture, a radical change has happened whereas subtraction has become a crucial move in modern practices and theories. Rooted in the Modern Movement's ethos of "Less is more", this research addresses current challenges like economic, social, and environmental crises. By examining various scales and contexts, it reveals how subtraction can inform contemporary design strategies and offer new perspectives on obsolescence, decay, and the reuse of built environments.

Mariacristina D'Oria's work stems from the exhibition *Mean-time* curated by Cedric Price at the CCA (1999-2000), where transience was

explored as a fundamental condition of architecture, challenging the Vitruvian ideal of solidity. By focusing on interstitial and transitional time frames, Price's work shifted the architectural perspective from space to time. Trough these lenses, D'Oria's research investigates temporary architectural responses to traumatic events, emphasising time-related design strategies. Her work spans across short, medium, and long-term solutions, from cyclical rituals to defensive bunkers and hyperobjects. By intertwining a number of disciplines (architecture, urban practices, art and performance, psychoanalysis, sociology, and humanities), D'Oria's work adds up a further critical perspective on how architecture can react to contemporary unstable life conditions.

The question of how to cope with radical changes that are happening both inside and outside the world of architectural theories and practices is also common to Egidio Cutillo's thesis on *Architecturophagy. About a Post-Sustainable Architecture: Fundamentals for a Design Theory Beyond the Building Life Cycle*. Here critical reflection focuses on the relationship of architecture with the life cycle, emphasising consumption as a means to address ecological challenges. The research highlights architecture's potential to become edible, by blending sustainability, rural traditions, and material culture, and pushing the boundaries of ecology and architectural practice towards a holistic, cyclical integration with nature.

When read together, the works collected in the second section of the volume effectively capture the diverse aspects of a multifaceted reality that today challenges the architectural discipline far beyond the role often still assigned to it as a producer of specific and directly applicable solutions. The unsettling nature inherent in the phenomena investigated by all the researches seems to demand for more complex, less conciliatory strategies. Indeed, emerging trends are identified, and in some cases, management rules are sought, but the most recurring feature of these doctoral works can be recognised in the attempt to develop critical tools for interpreting phenomena, also drawing on comparisons with other fields of knowledge such as the humanities. The main purpose is to open up new perspectives on contemporary architectural phenomenology and theory, also adopting rhetorical figures such as paradox or hyperbole as argumentative practices. Conventional ideas of village, border, tectonics and duration, as well as more recent but already stereotyped concepts such as recycling and regeneration, are being questioned, challenged, overturned, and reinterpreted to grasp their deeper complexities.

4. A Tentative Map for Future Reflections

This volume offers an articulate, still only sketched, "geography" of topics and hypotheses: not a fully structured overview, but a tentative mapping of research paths, understood as a starting point for new critical reflections, and for stronger interactions among disciplinary fields and approaches.

The two sections of the book show significant differences. As the pictures and graphics that enrich the written essays also suggest, at a first glance the two parts seem to be in opposition like day and night. However, a more careful reading allows to appreciate how reference points are in fact the same, but only seen from a different viewpoint and through different lenses. The common object of analysis are the processes that lead to transformations of territories and the built environment, and the shared goal is a deep understanding of (and a strong grip on) contemporary reality.

The main difference lies in the assumption of diverse cultural postures: those of territorial studies and urban planning, and those of architectural design. If this diversity is indeed a richness, it nonetheless prompts to question the state of disciplines that – although from different perspectives and with a specific background of theoretical and practical tools – are forced to collaborate in tackling increasingly complex dynamics and challenges. On the side of territorial studies and urban planning, what seems to emerge is a problematic drift from the dimensions of the project to those of analytical, technical and technological instruments; how can we re-integrate these aspects to keep together the capability to imagine and the call for pragmatic solutions is an issue that advanced research and education should carefully confront with. This question prompts to learn from the past (and update to our present conditions) an internationally renowned tradition that – echoing the words of Giuseppe Samonà – in Italy, during the twentieth century, has aspired to the unity of architecture and urbanism, of didactics and profession. On the side of architectural design, a no less worrying *dérive* can be acknowledged. In the face of the uncertainty that characterises the contemporary world, a conscious rejection of a problem-solving attitude emerges, along with a movement towards artistic and performative practices – considered as better able to interpret and represent social and environmental phenomena – in both working methods and design hypotheses. The risk is that of missing the pragmatic and "tectonic" dimensions of architecture, and of getting lost in a wordy and somehow acquiescent world of theories that essentially trace observed facts without offering

viable ways to more responsibly inhabit the present and the future.
The very challenge and opportunity of this multidisciplinary PhD course, and specifically of its curriculum in Architecture, is precisely to seek a possible balance between the operational search for sustainable solutions and the theoretical-critical investigation on the contemporaneity, between pragmatism and the cultivation of doubt. In this direction, the curiosity and enthusiasm of our PhD students has been – and will be – a major driver.
To conclude, a special thank goes to the PhD students – Martina Di Prisco, Anna Dordolin, Andrea Peraz, Vittoria Umani and Camilla Venturini – who have taken care of the researches already developed by their senior colleagues by working at the layout and formatting of this book. We hope that the baton passed among the doctoral students, including those participating in future editions of the *Quadra* series, will help further shape and nourish the specific character of this PhD course, its outputs and outcomes.

Attributions
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