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## **Workshop and didactic: considerations on the design tools. International experiences**

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## **Workshop and didactic: considerations on the design tools. International experiences<sup>1</sup>**

### **ABSTRACT**

*The paper presents the experience carried out by some researchers of Sapienza, University of Rome, in the context of euro planning (2008/14) and national planning. It is a work developed with universities, public administrations and foundations/research institutions based on the different declensions of the instrument of participation: from cultural landscape of the Val d'Orcia in Tuscany and the Province of Belluno, to landscape planning of Alta Tuscia and the experiences of urban design/landscape in Rome, Moscow, Kiev, Sao Luis and Paris A path of research in itinere focused on innovative design tools and moving between considerations and didactic-pedagogical and professional proposals, with the two approaches overlapping in the common denominator of participation as a determinant factor of any project.*

**KEY-WORDS:** *Participation, workshop, knowledge, teaching, creation of consensus, design/landscape planning*

### **INTRODUCTION**

This text presents a number of results and considerations on the tool of the workshop as a moment of participation in the practice of design in terms of training, decision-making and research. This work brings together various experiences in Italy and abroad, developed as part of European projects, academic teaching and professional practice: a *path of research in itinere* focused on innovative design tools and moving between considerations and didactic-pedagogical and professional proposals, with the two approaches overlapping in the common denominator of participation as a determinant factor of any project. Almost all of the academic workshops examined pursued the objective of public space as an opportunity for design to connect/reconnect/recover abandoned urban areas in the city, to recuperate and valorise 20th century architectural and urban heritage, to propose new uses and spaces in critical contexts of important landscapes. The professional experiences, instead, dealt with the planning of the territory at inter-municipal, provincial and regional scales, focusing more on process than product. The interest to research lies in these two declensions.

This text recounts the experiences and results of applied research, seeking to focus on the multiple role and significance of the workshop as a tool of participation at various levels of designing the city, the territory and the landscape.

The fundamental question addressed in the workshop university has been twofold: on the one hand, we wanted to mobilize students to discuss, in a short period, with demand planning of territories through a direct comparison with the demand coming directly from the local government and, at the same time, we wanted to encourage them to dialogue through a participatory process, not only within the team, but especially with the inhabitants of the

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<sup>1</sup> This text is based, and integrated in parts, on the following texts have already been published in books and conference proceedings: Trusiani E, 2012. *Dall'ex tempore al workshop. Esperienze di ricerca e di progetto*. Gangemi, Roma [From "ex tempore" to workshop. Research and project experiences]; E. Trusiani, E. Biscotto, Workshops and Technical Committees: Participation as a continuous instrument for understanding and designing the landscape, in *Proceedings of Landscape&Imagination*, International Conference Paris 2013; E. Trusiani, Workshop Design as tool of intercultural education and training for integration and social inclusion in the city of tomorrow, in *Proceedings of Cities and Seedbeds for innovations*, International Conference of EURA\_2013, Enschede, The Netherlands.



territories and local actors. Secondly, we wanted to simulate professional operations, as part of supplementary teaching, relying on the equity instrument as a basis for a project that was a response to the issues raised by the land and not just the result of that theoretical and abstract knowledge away from real contexts that, many times, it is built in university classrooms. In professional experiences, however, the key issue was to verify the role of the workshop in its interpretation of the technical panel, as a means of co-planning, in two different processes: a process of planning encoded in the body of the national law such as the Territorial Coordination Plan of the Province, and design optional part of a European program. It's important to emphasize this because in the first case it is a measure of routine in the planning of public body and the second case it is a voluntary act where the participatory process and technical tables, do not respond to a legal obligation, but they are an optional act of raising awareness and starting dialogue. The objectives are different and substantial: prescriptive, in the first case, and indicative in the second.

The methodological approach adopted in university cases was that fundamental *teaching-bridge*, while in professional cases was a co-institutional planning. In both cases, local knowledge and dialogue were the two fundamental tools of the experimental process.

## **PARTICIPATION AND WORKSHOPS IN UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCES**

The first experiences described were developed as part of the European programmes TACIS/IBPP 2007: "Moskonstruct", Ciudad: "RKM\_Save Urban Heritage" and Interreg IVC "Euroscapes"<sup>2</sup>, together with colleagues in Russia and Ukraine. Two primary themes were examined: a) the valorisation of Russian avant-garde and Constructivist Architecture in relation to their urban contexts; b) landscape design in critical areas of important landscapes such as the Val d'Orcia in the region of Tuscany. Some other experiences were realized in the last years: "Atelier de Reflexion Urbaine" (2012/13 and 2013/14) between Sapienza University and University Paris Est\_Marne la Vallée, the Atelier Estaque Marseille 2013 and, at last, the Workshop Equinox (2012 and 2014), but for the latter I leave words and spaces to the Brazilian and French colleagues, creators of the workshop.

### **MOSKONSTRUCT<sup>3</sup>**

Moskonstruct raised public awareness about the historical and cultural value of Constructivist architecture: the project directly involved local administrators, stakeholders and citizens, activating a series of meetings and workshops to increase an understanding of this heritage. Beginning with the premise that these works of architecture, in addition to representing a fundamental reference for 20th century European culture, are also a symbol of the urban identity of modern Moscow, Moskonstruct worked to stimulate new methods of interpreting these spaces, in order to favour their reappropriation by local citizens and administrators through specific actions.

The project's various initiatives involved national and international experts and offered specialised guided tours: a first step in the participative process focused on raising awareness.

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<sup>2</sup> Elio Trusiani, was scientific responsible for all workshop of Moskonstruct Project, RKM Project and for Euroscapes Project; for Ciudad Program "RKM\_Save Urban Heritage" and Interreg IV Program "Euroscapes" he was Technical Coordinator for the project and Scientific Responsible from 01.12.2011 until the end of the EU Programs.

<sup>3</sup> [www.moskonstruct.eu](http://www.moskonstruct.eu)



The project was enriched by the participation of Italian students from the Dipartimento Interateneo di Pianificazione Territoriale e Urbanistica at the Sapienza, University of Rome and Russian students from the Moscow Institute of Architecture. Students worked together to develop recovery projects in a series of workshops focused on the study of Constructivist architecture, instituting a process of participation, comparison and design related to common themes.

Workshops focused on the urban and landscape requalification of an area along the Moscow River comprised of various homogenous environments: industrial-manufacturing, both active and decommissioned; facilities for sport; residential; and open public space. This collection of polarities, resources and environments generates a highly fragmented system that exists in a mute relationship, incapable of expressing and conserving the signs and characteristics of the site; this latter appears to exist in a purely self-referential condition, without renouncing the valorisation of the various tiles of its mosaic, presenting the image of a disoriented and inorganic patchwork. A work of late Russian Constructivism situated at the centre of the site served as the hinge of the various design proposals. Students were invited to develop a project focused solely on the unitary organisation of the site: a master plan for its open spaces, waterfront and the internal and external edges of its residential compartments, together with proposals for the reuse of various buildings present on the site.

Part of the planned project activities, the student workshops represented an important moment in the exchange of know-how between the two universities. A cultural exchange between two design schools and two different philosophies of approaching urban design: the Italian group with a focus on the signs of history and context as a means of understanding and supporting urban design, and the Russians with a predominance of architectural signs serving as new landmarks for the contemporary city. The comparison, conflicts, dialogue and interaction between Italian and Russian teaching staff and students represented the added value of this experience: the use of seminars and group work by the Italians, and the more individual approach adapted by the Russian school, represented the two elements of comparison/conflict in relation to the common organisation and implementation of the work, in all likelihood also resulting from the aforementioned different approaches to design. The different approaches and attitudes towards architectural design came together in a moment of combining, monitoring and verifying the design proposals. An attempt was made to identify an approach to dialogue designed to overcome internal conflicts within the general master plan or, more precisely, to identify a common idea capable of expressing strategies and opportunities for the realisation of specific interventions and action: in practical terms, the common terrain of dialogue and comparison onto which to place each work of architecture. This process produced a unitary, shared and participative project.

#### **RKM\_SAVE URBAN HERITAGE<sup>4</sup>**

RKM\_Save Urban Heritage was for the most part a continuation of the Moskonstruct project, broadening the partnership to include the Municipality of Kiev and the city's KNUCA University; RKM once again focused on avant-garde and constructivist architecture, organising actions to raise awareness among local institutions, entrepreneurs and the population and developing proposals for the safeguarding and valorisation of buildings and/or portions of the city, oriented towards new uses and interpretations that respect the historical and symbolic value of this

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<sup>4</sup> [www.saveurbanheritage.eu](http://www.saveurbanheritage.eu)



heritage. RKM worked to implement a process capable of creating a new awareness of the unexpressed potentialities of this heritage, revealing its effective role as a driving force for the local economy. The Municipality of Rome, the lead applicant, guided the RKM project, transferring methodologies consolidated in the field of heritage conservation/valorisation focused on sustainable growth and quality urban renewal.

The didactic-educational activities of the design workshop, an expression of the participative moment of the academic experience, were articulated in three fundamental moments: two international (Kiev and Moscow)<sup>5</sup> and one national (Rome)<sup>6</sup> and involving students from the participating universities studying architecture and landscape architecture. The students' different skills provided the premise for the moments of comparison, debate and discussion within each group, and in relation to the methodological approach to the subject of the design and the proposals made. The richness of ideas triggered by these moments of dialogue and, to be honest, "confrontation", resulted in an interesting integration within the final proposals and a notable capacity for expression and communication, despite original and significant divergences. This experience can undoubtedly be considered a positive element of the overall experience, with the workshop, intended in its role as a tool of participation in the practice of design, reinforced as an important moment in the education of future architects and landscape architects.

The experiences presented reveal different approaches to design, the organisation of the workshop and the evaluation of the single and/or collective results, and the very idea of the workshop itself. In many cases input from local administrations or derived from applicable urban planning regulations placed students in a condition to feel that they were part of a process/project based on common interests, framing the academic experience of the workshop within a participative process focused on "designing together" to pursue a common goal, against a backdrop of shared social commitment.

The international workshops were held over the course of four/five days, involving professors, researchers and PhD students, working as "long-distance tutors", coordinating and supporting the students, whose work was not limited to design, but also included methodological approaches, in some cases widely different and for this reason rich with suggestions and potentialities that were not always explicit.

The work was based on two key terms of "flexibility" and "integration", around which to construct a common project in which the differences of the diverse schools become a benefit to the project. *Individual consolidated approaches* should, though this was not always the case, allow for the critical acceptance of dialogue between the multiple disciplinary contributions offered by each partner. Some of the rigidities imposed by a group of professors exalted existing conflicts, in particular during the workshop in Moscow: this created a difficult situation that placed the authors of this text in quasi-professional situations. The natural evolution of the problem/conflict/solution was re-proposed on multiple occasions within each group, creating one of the strong points in the process of dialogue/comparison and participation, re-proposing on an almost daily basis questions of debate and confrontation. Once again, these problems

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<sup>5</sup> International design workshop in urban and landscape design: "*Il recupero dello spazio aperto delle borgate storiche di Roma: Trullo e Tufello*" (Sapienza University of Rome, Faculty of Architecture, September/October 2010). International design workshop in urban and landscape design: "*Urban renewal of open spaces in the historical centre of Kiev*" (KNUCA University, Kiev, March 2011).

<sup>6</sup> International design workshop in urban and landscape design: "*Urban renewal and new landscapes for Gorky Park, in Moscow*" (Club Rusakova, Moscow, April 2011).



were resolved through design at the urban scale: a true occasion for a participative development of process/project. Beyond the results obtained, to some degree influenced by the brief duration of the design phase and in part by linguistic difficulties, it is necessary to highlight this final aspect: the acquired capacity for synthesis demonstrated by students and the relative experience in resenatation/communication; the presentation of the projects revealed the *ability to communicate* a proposal and its explicit and implicit meaning, not only through the well-managed use of graphic and communications tools, but above all an *ability to communicate* and an important capability to critique structural elements, material and immaterial characteristics and the richness of the project site, proposing simulating and innovative ideas and demonstrating a shared condition achieved and sedimented within the overall design process.

### THE EUROSCAPE PROJECT<sup>7</sup>

The Euroscapes<sup>8</sup> project, part of the European Interreg IVC Programme, focused instead on a comparison and consideration of the methods for managing landscape transformations. The study examined a series of natural and cultural landscapes in urban and peri-urban areas, analysed through a strategic approach capable of defining short-, medium- and long-term scenarios for the promotion of the landscape and its economic value, as well as triggering dynamics of sustainable tourism, in harmony with existing agrarian and historical-natural resources. The areas selected by the project partners differed in nature and scale and offered stimuli for widespread experimentation with a common theme, what is more in relation to the diverse structural components of the landscape, as well as the different methodological approaches and legislation of reference in each nation.

This scenario served as the backdrop to the landscape design workshop: “Progettare la trasformazioni nelle criticità della Val d’Orcia”, in the region of Tuscany.

The five-day workshop consisted of: a one day presentation of the project sites and site visits guided by local experts, professors and tutors; a three-day working session and one morning to present the final results. The teaching staff served as guides for the entire operation, stimulating an understanding of the territory, offering repeated site visits and a reading of context in light of the elevated cultural and landscape value of the site. Students were left free to express their proposals, what is more guided by dictates and desires expressed by the host administration and applicable master plans. The proposals responded in different ways to the input provided by local administrators. Having thrown the students into the site as part of guided visits and individual groups led them beyond the direct comprehension of the area; it allowed them to interpret the site and, notwithstanding the brevity of time available, to seek to understand its strengths, signs and values in order to respond to the demand for territorial design with a landscape component, even in such an iconic territory as that investigated here. Read in this manner, the participative didactic experience creates an opportunity for reflecting on method and stimulates research to experiment with and verify a methodological approach consolidated

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<sup>7</sup> [www.euroscapes-eu.org](http://www.euroscapes-eu.org)

<sup>8</sup> A project involving public administrations and two university institutions: SAN of Marne-la-Vallée Val Maubuée, France (lead applicant), City of Loures, Portugal; Region-City of de Gießen-Wetzlar, Germany; Vice-Ministry of Land Management of the Canarian Government, Spain; Slovak University of Technology, Slovakia; Sigulda District Council, Lithuania; DATA - Design, Tecnologia, dell’Architettura, Territorio e Ambiente, La Sapienza Università di Roma, Italy; LBDC, Region Balaton, Hungary; SERDA Romanian South-East Region, Romania; Trikala’s Municipal Enterprise for Social Development, Greece; Granollers City Council, Spain; Municipality of Torun, Poland; ENTP – European New Towns Platform, Belgium; Thames Gateway London Partnership, United Kingdom.



by the team of professors participating in the workshop for a possible declension within the Euroscapes project responsible, together with its European partners, for preparing a set of guidelines for the management and transformation of the landscape.

Precisely the on-going verification with local actors and operators permits a relationship between design investigation and suggestions, calibrated within a local reality to respond to the demand for design that emerges from the territory, in the three-dimensionality of the landscape, in an explicit form for correctly realising and communicating design actions and norms together with intelligent rules for managing daily activities. A landscape project conceived in this manner is of great importance to the territory and may assume multiple meanings: forms of rediscovering values and traditions, reinforcement where territorial identities are weakly expressed, the valorisation and re-affirmation of hidden identities or reinterpretation according to needs and demands that emerge in response to phenomena of rapid social and physical transformation. Once common denominator appears in all of the projects presented, other than the positive experimentation with a method in a short period of time: the desire to reappropriate and manage local landscape heritage as a public good. This is also the result of working in the territory and speaking with those who inhabit it.

## **PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE**

This section presents two different experiences: the first, developed as a member of the commission instituted to coordinate the Province of Belluno's<sup>9</sup> Provincial Territorial Coordination Plan, resulting from the twofold scale of co-planning involving such entities as the Veneto Regional Government, on the one hand, and municipal governments and stakeholders on the other. The role of the workshop thus assumes the same value as regional technical committees and local seminars, during which the entities responsible for planning can compare, discuss and agree on the principal themes related to each of their territories within the vaster framework of regional strategies. In this case the workshop becomes the tool for *participating in and constructing* a common future based on a collaborative process.

The second experience refers, instead, to the technical committees organised as part of the Interreg IVC European programme: pursuing the initiative of instituting dialogue with local actors in interested territories. The workshop/technical committee is used to gather information from local operators, residents and stakeholders, and begin a process, yet to be politically consolidated, of comparing relevant themes and questions. The difference between the two experiences resides in the political intentions of different administrations: the first experience relates to an intentional instrument, constructed and consolidated within codified urban plans and applicable across the national territory; the second and more extraordinary experience was promoted as part of a voluntary and strategic form of programming, oriented toward the definition of indicative and non-prescriptive guidelines.

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<sup>9</sup> The reflection on the case study of the PTCP for Belluno derives from a professional commission awarded to Elio Trusiani, as coordinator of the plan in 2007; the reflection on the Strategic Plan is born of the joint work developed during the same period in Belluno under the responsibility of the architect Irma Visalli, Councillor for Urban and Strategic Planning for the Province of Belluno from 2005 to 2009.



### **INTERREG IVC EUROPEAN PROGRAMME: EUROSCAPES PROJECT**

To a different degree, the Euroscapes<sup>10</sup> Project focused on a portion of the territory in the *Alta Tuscia*, the northern area of the Region of Lazio. The project proposed a participative process focused on sharing strategies and actions of intervention with local actors through the definition of technical committees working with the primary issues that emerged during a first phase of work, organised according to the following themes.

#### *Landscape and Agriculture*

Agricultural production constitutes an indispensable element for safeguarding and conserving the landscape, in all of its various definitions, as well as its continuous and slow construction/transformation according to methods of daily, and not extraordinary management, capable of transferring the know-how of rural society and remodelling territories/environments; the binomial relationship agriculture-landscape imposes a reflection on *traditional practice* and *innovation*, with a focus on the methods of dialogue between tradition and experimentation, fully respecting the vocations and potentialities of the territory. General Objective: exploring the dynamics at work in the consolidated agrarian landscape and *new forms/rules* for ensuing quality in this sector. Specific Objectives: incorporating the needs of local stakeholders, the problems present in the territory inherent to historic and new cultivations, incentives for agriculture and the principal actions of the PSR, the desires of local associations and individual operators, constructing a schedule of resources, critical elements and desires, examining the need for planning in the territory; identifying new planning strategies.

#### *Landscape and Sustainable Tourism*

The development of sustainable/responsible tourism must be linked to consistent dialogue with policies of landscape conservation, valorisation and transformation; it is one of the principal actions for approaching landscape planning and design. Focusing on sustainable tourism means evaluating the load capacities of a territory and adopting a long-term development policy, consenting the realisation of low-impact and profitable systems characterised by respect for the relationship between nature/culture, the level of biological reproduction, the respect/defense/valorisation of specific local conditions, the conservation of socio-cultural identity, the involvement of autochthonous communities and economic sustainability. General Objective: exploring possible actions and interventions for the creation of sustainable/responsible tourism designed to valorise a territory's economy and landscape. Specific Objectives: incorporating the needs of local stakeholders, the problems in the territory that hinder the development of sustainable tourism, proposals for forms of sustainable tourism and the need for sustainable mobility, proposals for activities integrated with an area's natural and landscape historical-cultural resources, and the desires of local associations and individual operators. This material can be used to construct a schedule of resources, critical elements and desires, and examine the need for planning in a territory; identifying new planning strategies.

#### *Landscape and Renewable Resources*

One of the primary obstacles to the proper development of renewable energies in Italy is

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<sup>10</sup> Emanuela Biscotto, co-author of Euroscapes's text, was technical assistant for all period of the Euroscapes project and Technical Coordinator from 01.12.2011 until 31.01.2013.



represented by the often conflictual relationship between energy requirements and environmental protection, on the one hand, and the safeguarding of important landscape heritage, on the other. In short, while the safeguarding and valorisation of the landscape does not always move hand in hand with clean energy, it is also true that – in perspective – only a reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions can halt damaging processes of global warming; in the short-term the introduction of forms for procuring alternative energies may contribute to reducing the costs supported by "those who construct the landscape each day" (i.e.: farmers). In fact, assuming a *landscape point of view* together with a focus on energy signifies affirming a model of energy development sensitive to the vocations and characteristics of diverse territorial contexts; it signifies seeking to develop methods of designing renewable energy sources more attentive to relations with their territorial context, the social acceptance and characteristics of supply and demand (current and planned). General Objective: exploring the relations between the development and diffusion of renewable energies and landscapes of reference. Specific Objectives: incorporating the needs of local stakeholders and the desires of local associations and individual operators; analysing the problems present in the territory generated by diverse sources of (renewable) energy; constructing a schedule of *resources, critical elements* and *desires*; identifying operative solutions capable of guaranteeing a concrete *coexistence* and *acceptance* of energy-related projects in economic, territorial and social terms.

Each committee guaranteed the achievement of specific objectives: incorporating the needs of local stakeholders and the desires of local associations and individual operators; the analysis of problems present in the territory; the identification of operative solutions capable of guaranteeing a tangible coexistence and economic, territorial and social acceptance of energy-related projects. In terms of landscape transformation, primary stimuli were provided by the technical committee on Renewable Energy Sources that highlighted the shift in debate at the local level from a vision focused solely on the quantity of energy produced toward questions tied instead to the economic and social effectiveness of means of producing energy that actively and responsibly involve local citizens, viewed as a form of co-existence.

A study of the results produced by each committee clearly revealed how, within a context such as that selected for the pilot project, the identification of strategies and actions must be guided toward the construction of a scenario of small material and immaterial networks, the diffusion and mixture of diverse practices of "inhabiting" the landscape, as well as the capacity to implement processes of economic reterritorialisation capable of producing quality by pursuing strategies of *recovering, valorising, retraining*.

## CONCLUSION

The reflections and results of these experiences allow for a number of considerations and perspectives, on the one hand didactic-pedagogical and, on the other hand, professional, in which the two parts overlap in the common denominator of participative planning. Participation as an internal phase of design, above all the recognition of being present in the territory/context of a project, of being among the stakeholders, of representing an interlocutor during moments of conflict, comparison and dialogue.

The workshop, in relation to the value of the *ex tempore*, when extended over a lengthier period of time and for its characteristics, adds the opportunity for students to mobilise their cultural tools and acquire skills derived from knowledge in action. From an academic point of view students leave the classroom and confront reality and highly particular problems linked to

practices that can be understood only *in situ*. This requires a global approach and a total commitment of resources, seeking to consider and examine all of the variables at hand. Working in context signifies moving away from abstract understanding and entering directly into the design process, often better comprehending the importance and necessity of concepts previously only theoretical. Operating *in situ* leads one to move within territorial resources, to identify eventual obstacles and activate personal skills to achieve an objective, or respond to planning-related needs in the territories where one works: difficulties become stimuli for the identification of suitable solutions. The context of action thus plays an active role in producing knowledge: students are placed in a condition of authentic direct experience.

The territory and its critical elements were not presented by teaching staff, but by local administrators and residents. Students must thus be capable of comprehending, interpreting and acquiring the necessary information, evaluating what may be useful and what can/should be discarded. Students are made responsible; they must organise their work, choose the most opportune methods and carefully manage the time available: the workshop places the student in front of the need to develop a capacity for synthesis, to elaborate ideas in a short period of time, to verify their understanding in order to achieve an objective and interpret and translate the client's needs into practical reality, respecting the territory and, finally, communicate their work. This activates a process of learning that exalts the relational nature of understanding, intended as a dialectic interaction between an informed subject and the object to be understood, highlighting its dynamic nature.

The process of learning/participation activated by a workshop is extremely effective: students' acquisition of knowledge leads to active learning, capable of connecting new understandings with individual cultural backgrounds; students are invited to respond globally, and not specifically. The need to collaborate and work not only as a team, but as part of an on-going relationship with clients/administrators develops capacities for interaction and mediation. For participants it is indispensable to be able to establish, manage and maintain positive relations and thus learn to respect others, to collaborate by balancing personal needs and priorities with those of the group; equally important is the capacity to manage eventual conflicts, to recognise and attempt to resolve them. For the international workshops the students' diverse methodologies and different skills offered multiple occasions for discussion. The approaches to design and the choices proposed were often very different, generating moments of discussion that, if well managed, can lead to very interesting solutions. This comparison expands to include the needs of cultural interaction. Entering into contact with different practices, mentalities and ways of working leads to a reconsideration of methods and approaches that, in some cases, leads in turn to confrontations between mentalities, erecting true cultural barriers. The design process allows for the identification of forms of co-existence, participation and mediation, and thus the ws becomes an extremely educational moment of learning that prefigures future professional situations.

As mentioned, this involves contextualized and active learning that renews and verifies the motivations behind the selection of a particular path of development. Another essential aspect has to do with the communication of a project: students must be able to speak about their ideas not only to professors, as part of a normal project review, but also to the client, simulating a professional situation. This requires the acquisition of a technical language and an appropriate and specific vocabulary, a capacity to work with diverse languages and different supports, an ability to identify the most suitable and captivating means of representation, without ignoring the communicability of the underlying message. Furthermore, it allows for an understanding of

the most effective means and methods of communicating a project to exalt its strengths. Thus intended, the workshop potentially becomes a true didactic project: an “approach to teaching/learning focused on the development of skills pursuing a situation-problem to be resolved that represents the framework of meaning within which to position the diverse actions required by the project itself”, Castoldi (2011). It is based on an inductive strategy, beginning with real experience, requiring the consideration of reality in its global condition, to be confronted according to a multi-disciplinary approach utilising know-how as a tool of interpretation, orientation and participation in a complex situation. The situation-problem becomes the point of origin and destination along a path of learning founded on concrete problems, inserted within an operative context defined by specific resources and restrictions. Students are requested to activate a process of resolution that considers not only the problem/question asked, but also the reality in which it is located; they are stimulated to put into practice not only knowledge and ability, but also personal skills. There is thus an attempt to offer incentives to foster the notion of “knowing how to act”, in other words the capacity to face up to a client’s requests by developing a plan of action and a sensitivity toward context, intended as the capacity to utilise resources and obstacles to one’s advantage, a speed of elaboration and, as mentioned, an effective strategy of communication: all part of an approach in which participation constitutes a constant and continuous input, derived from the territory of study. The workshop is thus presented as a teaching-bridge<sup>11</sup> focused on the student, in which the group becomes “a resource and not the container within which to place the process of individual learning, but instead the amplifier and collector of individual potential”, Castoldi (2011), and in which “knowledge moves from and returns to real contexts, in a recursive relationship between experience and learning, theory and practice”. This model of teaching is structured, as demonstrated by the metaphor of the bridge, on processes of continuous passage between experience and reflection, between practical and theoretical know-how. According to this method, “teaching assumes knowledge as a complex, global, sited and multidimensional event that must be tied back to its relations with the whole”, Castoldi (2011). The role of the teacher changes; educational staff support and facilitate the work, leaving the direction and orientation up to the student who, finding him/herself in direct contact with the reality of the site and local actors, inserts and develops the aspect of participation inherent to a direct relationship with local actors/context as an ordinary and not extraordinary moment in the life of a project, a condition often extraneous to academic learning.

Within the design process this imposes discussion, sharing, participation and the circularity of both the process and its output.

Experimentation paves the way for a process that features connections between learning and the real world and logic of action: perhaps a means of moving away from an abstract vision and reinforcing the motivational aspect of learning. Activating a method of teaching that employs projects that render the workshop a declension of participation, a significant and mandatory part of the learning process that may lead to a reconsideration of a model of teaching and contribute to overcoming the opposition between curricular and design activities, eliminating the episodic character of design experiences.

Thus design innovation, in teaching and research, would be presented as innovation and the

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<sup>11</sup> Mario Castoldi adopts the definition teaching-wall and teaching-bridge to indicate in the first case separation founded on the clear division between what occurs inside and outside a school; on the other hand, the bridge, as a metaphor of connection between two sides of a process of learning, the experience of life and formal knowledge.



construction of an approach to design tied less to the self-referentiality of teaching staff and the student, making room for the flexibility of a circular approach to design related more to people, places and territories.

Many of the concepts expounded in this paper are also of value to the professional environment where, at least in our experience, the workshop proves to be a valid instrument for sharing and participating in the design process; it is particularly useful during both the phase of diagnostic learning and that of design, for any intervention/project focused on the study of solutions and further investigations in the urban and territorial environment. It can also be considered fundamental to the process of decision-making that pursues the construction of consensus among the local community. Without entering into the merit of the vast literature inherent to the theme of participation, serving as the cultural and theoretical background to the workshop, it is worthwhile highlighting how increasingly more often this tool is an obligatory part of any institutional design process. The workshop permits dialogue between local populations, actors, entities, and associations and thus allows for the overcoming, during the design and planning stages, of conflicts, contradictions and critical elements, not always considered and not always evident. Naturally, reference is made to institutional processes of participation between various entities, where the starting point is, in many cases, the result of a local process, developed over time. Here the workshop assumes the different characterisations of participation, ably serving as a hinge and point of comparison between territory and institution. This double function, at different levels of planning, makes it the point of contact within the multiscale process of urban and territorial planning, where participation, rendered explicit in the workshop, provides the hypothetical answer to the needs of the city and, above all, a flexible and shared response for its consideration of individual, collective and general interests according to rules of transparency and legality.

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