SYMPOSIUM

URBAN TEACHING GLOBAL LEARNING
Intercultural approaches in urban teaching methodology

Prof. Paola Cannavò, UNICAL | Ass. Prof. Emanuel Christ ETHZ
Prof. Manoj Parmar, KRVIA | Dr. Martino Tattara, ETH Studio Basel
Prof. Paola Viganò EPFL | Prof. Harry Gugger, laba EPFL | Dr. Paola Alfaro d’Alençon, TU Berlin (moderation)

laba | Erasmus Mundus | EPFL

laba | Ackermannshof St. Johannis-Vorstadt 19-21, Basel
Tuesday | 11.11.14, 10h00-18h00
Architects share common interrogative and explorative languages which overlay and interact with context. Knowledge of the built environment and its development processes enables architects to access local information and gain comprehensive territorial understanding. Cultural specificity is embedded in the site and reverse-ly, reflected in the architectural spaces produced. While these spaces are anchored in the territory, they can also forge new links and generate new dynamics at a far larger scale.

Rem Koolhaas confirmed the relevance of the “national” contribution at this year’s Architectural Biennale in Venice: the national entity is still a crucial, important, relevant and tortured entity… it remains a productive way of looking at culture and looking at the world. Architecture therefore, can learn from different territorial contexts.

If the task of an architect is to construct society then both cultural identity and the universal goals of civilisation must be embraced.

The architectural profession seems, in these terms, to be conversant with the intercultural.

1 Press conference, Biennale de l’Architettura de Venezia, 5.06.14
2. Leon Battista Alberti. 15th Century
The Symposium *Urban Teaching Global Learning* will examine the methodology aspect of these intercultural exchanges. Through the urban lab + format, we will discuss how our teaching in urban design can *equip* architects, urban planners and other professionals in the built environment disciplines for the tasks they face in today’s globalizing world.

While we operate with ease within the international context of our institutions, according to Aijaz Ahmad, this form of exchange is inter-institutional rather than intercultural. He defines culture as an organic process, where assimilation and exchange of cultural knowledge takes place naturally over time. An intercultural space is not international, rather a shared space between contesting parties where *the ground of sharing must be greater than the ground of conflict*. Therefore we look to the territory for signs of intercultural conflicts and negotiations, which may be less aligned with national borders than with economic, social and environmental forces. The territory is a reflection of all human activities and everything made, crafted or designed is cultural.

4. Erasmus Mundus Action 3 funding application document, April 2012 urban lab +
5. The Politics of Intercultural Learning. Aijaz Ahmad. Keynote lecture, urban lab + cluster meeting on intercultural approaches, KRVIA Mumbai 15.02.14
How do we achieve a comprehensive understanding of the intercultural exchanges shaping territories?

*Given that we have gained architectural knowledge from a territorial context, what will be our specific contribution or intervention?*

The public symposium URBAN TEACHING GLOBAL LEARNING will investigate these issues as part of the Erasmus Mundus Programme *urban lab plus-an international network of urban laboratories*. Invited participants are asked to contribute by discussing what they understand as the current challenges linked to the above questions and how they aim to train architects & urban designers to meet these challenges through their teaching and research. We aim to reach a public audience including students, teachers and interested professionals.

This thematic enquiry will also contribute input to the final urban lab + publication.

*inclusive*: accommodating difference. Inclusion has an agenda of spatial justice.

*urban environments*: the spatial product of interconnected urbanization processes which are global in their range, yet the kinds of urbanity they produce are diverse, diffuse, unevenly distributed and are often characterised by an equally uneven distribution of wealth (vis-à-vis spatial quality and choice).

Programme am: pm:

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Invited contributors:

- Ass. Prof. Emanuel Christ, ETHZ
- Dr. Martino Tattara, ETH Studio Basel
- Prof. Paola Viganò, Laboratory of Urbanism, EPFL

urban lab + members:

- Prof. Paola Cannavò, University of Calabria
- Prof. Manoj Parmar, KRVIA, Mumbai, India

Hosted by Prof Harry Gugger, & canDoc Nancy Couling, laba, EPFL

Moderation: Dr Paola Alfaro d’Alençon, Urban Research & Design Lab TU Berlin

* The International Network of Urban Laboratories pools expertise to probe three questions of inclusivity and has been awarded funding from the Erasmus Mundus Action 3 programme. During the three-year project [2013-15], 8 international urban labs examine the roles *interdisciplinarity, practice orientation and global learning* can play in developing more inclusive urban environments. This Symposium takes place within the 2nd Global Learning cluster workshop, 10-14 Nov 2014 in Basel and Lausanne.

www.urbanlabplus.eu

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1. U-lab - TU Berlin, laba - EPFL, Urban Design Lab - Università della Calabria, Urban Lab - University College London, X-Lab - Pontificia Universidad Catolica Santiago de Chile, School of Architecture - Chinese University of Hong Kong, Kamla Raheja Vidyanidhi Institute for Architecture and Environmental Studies (KRVIA) Mumbai, CUBES - University of the Witwatersrand South Africa.
The EPFL satellite studio laba (laboratoire bâle) is based in Basel since 2011. Under the direction of Prof. Harry Gugger, laba interrogates the interface between the urban territory and the architectural object through teaching & research. Within the architectural orientation “urban nature”, laba believes that the agency of man is situated on a planetary scale where planet Earth has become a total artefact- almost an architectural object. The concepts of the Urban and Nature, once seen as polarities, can now begin to be seen as metonyms.

In order to explore this idea, laba choses annual design & research project sites where the contest between the natural and the artificial is most clearly manifest. These sites, either within or outside Switzerland, are invsti- gated by mater students.

Research is carried out in parallel to the design course and also through individual PhD positions. laba’s aim is to equip students with a comprehensive method of enquiry which can be implemented to ad- dress urban phenomena in any territorial context.

urban lab + contact laba: nancy.couling@epfl.ch
http://laba.epfl.ch

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