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Manual of best practices for a blended flexible training activity in architecture for higher education institutions

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ArchéA. Architectural European Medium sized City Arrangement

Management
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This volume returns the results of the Intellectual Output 03 of the research project "ArchéA. Architectural European Medium-sized City Arrangement", with the aim of analyzing and restating the state of the art achieved in the field of flexible mixed training in architecture, strongly encouraged by the emergency period of the Covid-19 pandemic. The result is a collection of good practices carried out internally and externally to the ArchéA partner network, in the context of higher education institutions, made possible by new virtual tools capable of mediating teaching and mixed and flexible learning around the disciplines related to the project.

ArchéA. Architectural European Medium-sized City Arrangement

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Manual of best practices for a blended flexible training activity in architecture for higher education institutions

edited by Enrico Prandi and Paolo Strina

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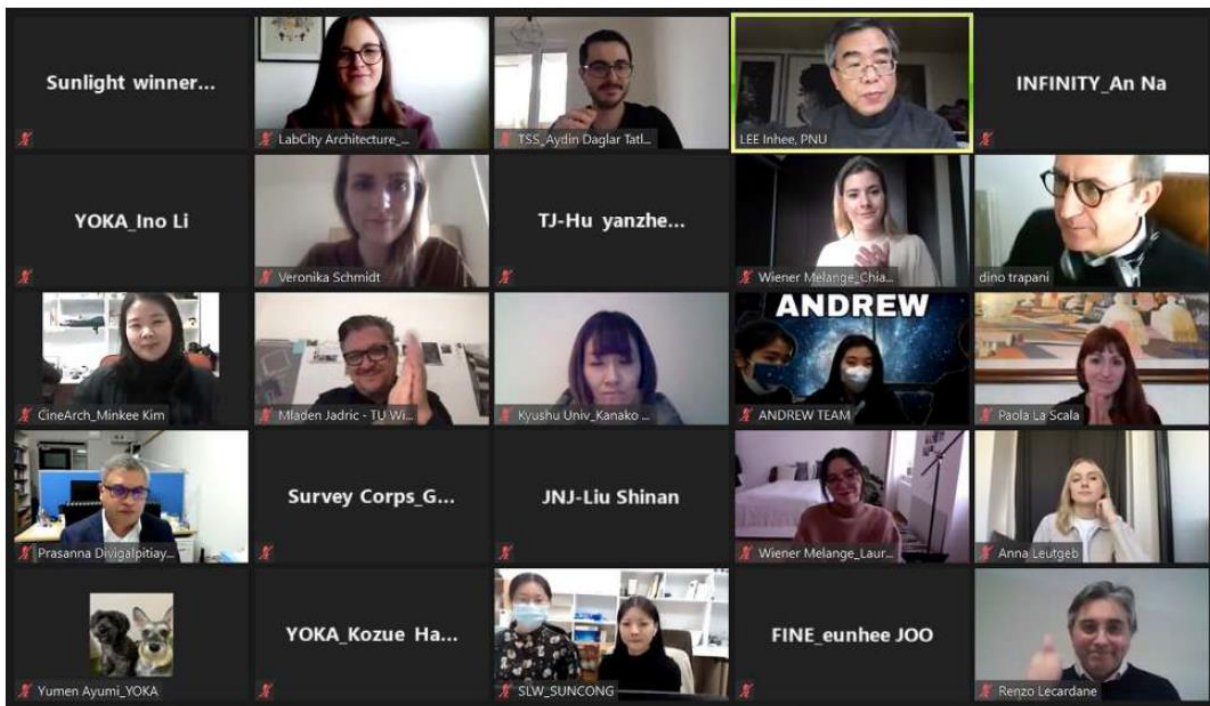
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Introduction

The health emergency due to the spread of COVID-19 has required a methodological and technological adaptation to the entire world of teaching and researching, in order to define in a brief time new methods for designing and teaching. In consideration of this, Campus Asia[1] decided to organize one of the key events of its educational offer in a distance learning form, an international winter school with overn eighty participants and five international guest universities. Together with Kyushu University (China), Tongji University (Japan) and Pusan National University (South Korea), the edition held between 15 and 26 February 2021 saw the participation of two European partner universities, the Università degli Studi di Palermo[2] and the Vienna University of Technology (Austria) (Fig. 01).

The Department of Architecture of the Università degli Studi di Palermo(DARCH) took part into the competition as the LabCity Architecture research group, directed by Prof. Renzo Lecardane, previously partner of numerous exchange programmes with Pusan University and Prof. I. Lee. Among them, several editions of the BIADW (Busan International Architecture Design Workshop) (Lecardane et al., 2018) and the international workshop "Balcony and Violin. Life of Post-Covid19 ", held remotely in August 2020[3]. The 2021 edition of the winter school chose to emphasize the recognition of heterogeneity over homogeneity, focusing on the balance between man, nature and architecture. With this aim in mind, the LabCity Architecture group has identified the natural site of the waterfalls and cave of San Nicola in the Bolognetta valley, in line with the common research interests about the development and regeneration of rural small towns. Furthermore, the winter school suggested a thematic reflection on the places of cinema, underlining the impact of the evocative power of the representative arts on communities and places. On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Academy Award for the best foreign film "Nuovo Cinema Paradiso", by the director Maestro Giuseppe Tornatore, the theme "Cinema Paradise" was identified as an opportunity for reflecting on possible designs in naturalistic territories. The aim of the workshop was the design of a resting place, which would allow a small group of fifteen visitors to stop, eat and enjoy the vision of a film festival inside the site of the waterfalls and the cave of San Nicola.

Cinema Paradise: an international experience of distance learning Laboratory

Campus Asia "Cinema Paradise" hosted over eighty international students, divided into fourteen working groups, for whom a dense programme of activities and deadlines has been scheduled. This programme also included several thematic lectures led by the professors of the involved universities, necessary for the definition of a cultural background and the project proposals. To this end, the Campus Asia website was implemented through the creation of a specific platform, which would allow access to the seminar activities organized. A rich and dense program of thematic seminars supported the design work that took place through three progressive moments of thematic deadlines. At the end of the workshop, the evaluation phase took place, involving the scientific committee for the choice of the award for the best projects. Among the lectures, the seminar curated by Professor R.Lecardane and Arch. PhD P. La Scala entitled "The territory of
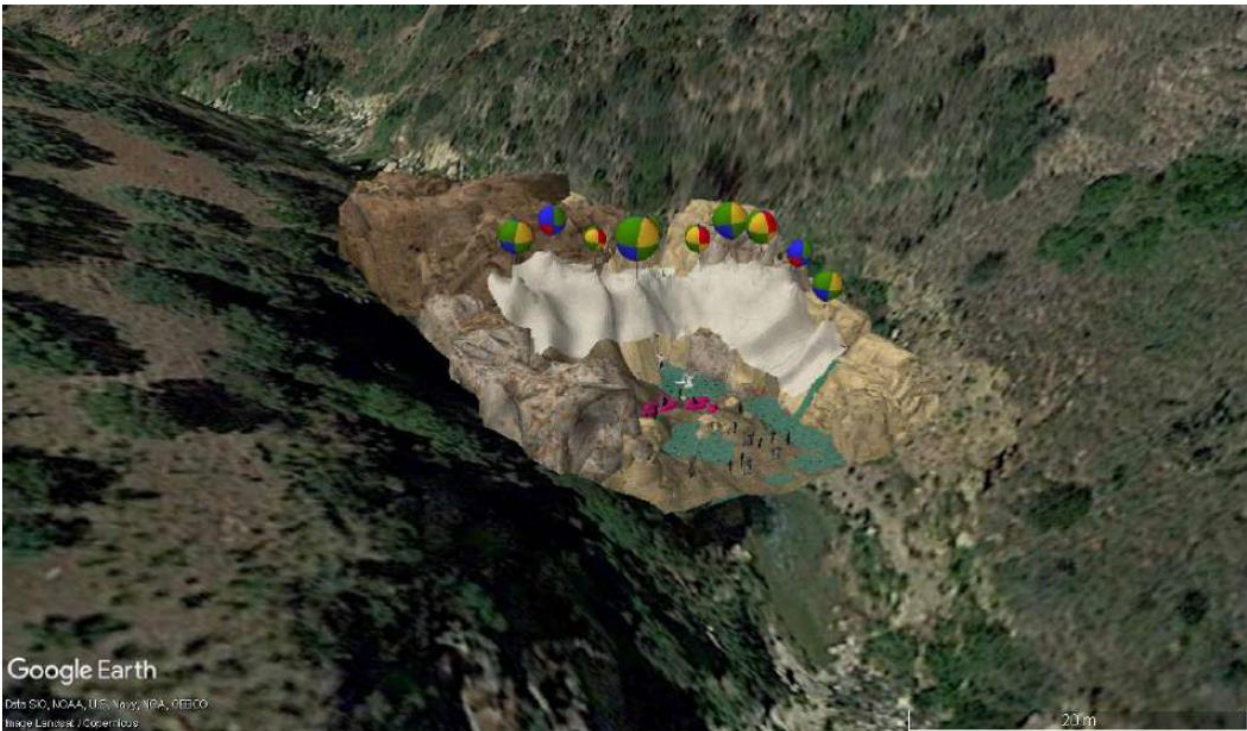
Fig.02 Cave and waterfall of San Nicola in the Bolognetta valley
Fig.03 Above the clouds/ Sopra le nuvole (3D model in the Google Earth map) © LabCity Architecture, 2021

the Bolognetta Valley: waterfall and cave of San Nicola" (Fig. 02) introduced the project site of the waterfalls and the cave of San Nicola, in the frame of a broader research the involves the potential of the rural small towns as well as the pedestrian and cultural path of the Sicilian Transversal. The site was shown through videos available online, shot with drones, photographs and a three-dimensional model exported by the Google Earth software and made available to students. The working groups, made up of three students and led by Tutors, Coordinators and Professors, worked remotely from different parts of the world on digital platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams or Google Meet, especially using the specific sharing and interaction tools. During the course of the week, summary dossiers were requested to show the progress of the project, from the representation of the concept to its final version. Furthermore, in order to strengthen the relationship between man and the natural environment, all the groups developed a three-dimensional geo-localized model, visualized on the Google Earth platform. (Fig. 03)

Fig.04 Above the clouds/ Sopra le nuvole (libretto's cover) © LabCity Architecture, 2021

Above the clouds: a project-event in the Bolognetta Valley

The project designed by LabCity Architecture group, awarded first place ex aequo by the scientific, wants to develop the hypothesis of a possible relationship between natural and technological elements of the project through the device of performance. This, with the scope of defining a meta-theatrical scenario dedicated to the Sicilian cinema, within the natural ecosystem of the Milicia river. Thus, this occasion allows the project-event to begin a renewed enhancement and use of some paths, unknown to many, and to enhance the potentialities of the place within the natural territory of Bolognetta. Therefore, on a hand, the San Nicola Falls build a natural scenario for the narrative of the event, in order to celebrate the Sicilian sites of cinema; on the other, the project stages the meta-theatrical imaginary setting in the shape of an opera libretto, highlighting the aim to combine the presence of man in the natural environment through a dreamlike and fantastic journey (Lecardane et alii, 2021) (Fig. 04).

In this way, the project seizes the Sicilian ancient theatrical tradition, by involving the spectator in depth, so that he becomes an actor himself. For the same purpose, the myth of the Greek goddess Demeter, protector of fertility, symbolically guides the spectators towards a dream-like dimension, sealing the deal between man and nature. The project-event is planned for an audience of fifteen participants who can reach the site on foot from a parking lot not far from the town of Bolognetta, on the day of the full moon, during the week of the summer solstice, 24th June 2021. The journey begins along the bed of the Milicia river and constitutes the first experience of the narrative imaginary setting.

Once at the cavea, ending point of the path and heart of the project site, the event stages two performances which highlight the multi-temporal feature of the representation. The first one takes place during the day and includes a juggling show inspired by the famous film "Clown" by the director Maestro Federico Fellini (Fellini, 2008). The second one, instead, takes place after sunset and until late evening: it evokes the atmophere of the Greek theatre through the projection of a selection of films. During the day, the circus arts and the juggling show claim the spectator's attention, suggesting to become an active part of the performance himself (Fig. 05). In the late afternoon, the film projection takes place on a light canopy, suspended by inflatables anchored to the ground with cables. In front of the waterfall, in the natural cavea, soft ropes and inflatable cushions allow the

Fig.05 Above the clouds/ Sopra le nuvole (Fellinian juggling) © LabCity Architecture, 2021
Fig.06 Above the clouds/ Sopra le nuvole (Cinema Paradise) © LabCity Architecture, 2021

public to comfortably attend the shows (Fig. 06). Aim of the project-event is the construction of a temporary artificial surface on which to project, as on a screen, some scenes of Maestro Tornatore's films. On late night, the experience comes to an end by leading the spectators in the opposite direction, in a nightlike atmosphere enlightened by small artificial lights.

In line with the relative imaginary setting inspired to the well-known temporary plug-ins of Archigrams (Sadler et al., 2005), the project in the San Nicola Waterfall seeks to define an ephemeral natural piéce in order to build a dream-like scenario and emphasize the expressive power of cinema. On a hand, the theme of the journey and, on the other, that of the memory of an unrepeatable event, aim to strengthen the sense of community and the relationship of man and nature (Munari, 1998). This type of approach reveals a declared scope of prefiguring a temporary attitude towards the rural small towns, trough renewed processes of human and cultural regeneration.

The project, designed entirely remotely through progressive phases, provided an important opportunity for several reflections on the teaching methods within the laboratory, confirming the importance of common researches about contemporary themes. The interaction and sharing tools on the platforms have also made it possible to carry out a collective work capable of highlighting the peculiarities of the individual members of the group. In conclusion, the project, presented at the final critical session, has been awarded with the first place ex aequo and will be part of a collective publication together with several contributions from the workshop.

Notes

[1] Campus Asia has been instituted by three Asian universities, Kyushu University (China), Tongji University (Japan) and Pusan National University (South Korea) for the development of an international educational program in the architectural and environmental design. With the scope of designing and researching sustainable urban and architectural design, numerous activities focus on the implementation of resilient design, on the theme of accessibility and inclusive urban design have been organized in the recent years.

[2] The Università degli Studi di Palermo and the Department of Architecture (DARCH) took part into the competition as the LabCity Architecture research group. LabCity Architecture is led Prof. Renzo Lecardane (UNIPA), Prof. Ferdinando Trapani (UNIPA), Prof. Zeila Tesoriere (UNIPA), Prof. Ivan Scinardo (Director of the Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia - National Film School), Giuseppe De Caro (Director of the Association Antica Trasversale Sicula), tutors Dr. Paola La Scala Lecturer (UNIPA) e PhD student Bianca Andaloro and students Valentina D'Anna, Egizia Miraudo, Federica Tognetti.

[3] LabCity Architecture group took part into the International Workshop internazionale with the project "Centri minori in Sicilia. Valledolmo 2030: la città che cura", designed by the students of the Master Thesis Lab (DARCH-UniPA),. The project has been awarded among eighteen international designs as "Excellence Award ",by the Chairman of BAF (Busan Architecture Festival).

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