IO3
2021

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

FAM ArchéA
Architectural
European Medium-sized City
Arrangement

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.

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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

UNIVERSITÀ DI PARMA
DIA Dipartimento di Ingegneria e Architettura

ALMA MATER STUDIORUM
UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

Silesian University of Technology

RWTH AACHEN UNIVERSITY

Normandie Université

Analisys of the Best Practices
Call for papers

Donatella Scatena, Zeynep Gulel, Sergio Amedeo Terracina, Virginia Volanti
The architectural plan: Teaching and learning methods in social distance's times.

Sapienza University of Rome, Italy

Fig.01 The Squares of Rome redesigned by the students of the Architectural Design Studio III (Left image owners: Francesco Andaman Paglici, Chiara Passagrilli, 2021- Right image owners: Marzia Rizzello, Maria Gaia Pontoni, 2021).

While the texture of urban life in Europe was going upset, a lot of operations ceased: for instance, hotel trades, enterprises, club meetings and leisure activities; other: for instance, banking, business dwindled and decreased.

Schools of every order and grade - and supermarkets, of course- had remained an almost unrivalled taken of group work. Education and vocational training – even if performed from a distance – has been a continuous motion flowing through the numbed body of towns and cities, sprinkling and brightening up day. Today activities and living up to same social expectation.

From the very outset, we were caught out by first lockdown in March 2020. At first, we cannot make sense of incident: we were worried at that personal and social issue, because this pandemic was spreading with dangerous swiftness.

For two months we had no choice but to stay at home. We kept on doing only the bare necessities. Just in March the second the second semester courses begin: with an interval of two days after the first lecture, we were forced to organize at home interim measures to provide for remote lectures of our undergraduates.

We were compelled to get quickly our act together, with the only teaching aid of our information knowledges. We eventually succeeded in solving that problem, carrying out our Laboratory of Architectural Design III, lecturing by webinar revising our undergraduate's submitted plans at the arranged time, i.e. : according to faculty's calendar, recording all those operation in e- learning.

We have adopted ourselves quite well to this circumstance, thanks to that technical implement: our practical teaching stems, indeed, also from our previous experience with pc and social media.

The absence of our undergraduate was became more marked, our lecture halls were empty- neither bodies nor souls. We were forced to revise undergraduate plan test giving up the pleasure of doing live teaching- therefore, all lacking in educational and human interplays.

In 2021 we have fallen again in the grip of pandemic. We were again confronted by that problem, yet this time the repeated utter shutdown hasn't made things quite awkward for us.

Sapienza has dated classrooms with suitable equipment, computers, cameras, personal microphones, zooms and dedicated meetings, so it was possible, as in our case, to teach constantly in the classroom. An institutional app allowed students to book the classroom of the course that could only be partially filled to ensure the right distance. The rest of the students alternately attended lectures and reviews from home. The classroom lesson always took place with a mask and without direct contact between us. We, teachers continued to lecture in the classroom even when the closure was once again total and only we were allowed to go to work: each entry into the faculty was documented by a special form issued by the University each time, for the traceability of movements.

We do not know if the course held in this academic year 2020/2021 is better or worse than the others: it is now important to explore this experience. With the Architectural Design Laboratory III we have accepted a bet, welcoming transformations and investing in change. And there were a few weeks, a few but incisive, where in the headquarters of the Faculty of Valle Giulia there was only one teacher per floor and the caretaker on the ground floor.

This anomalous and constricting situation inevitably led us to reflect on the concept of space and body
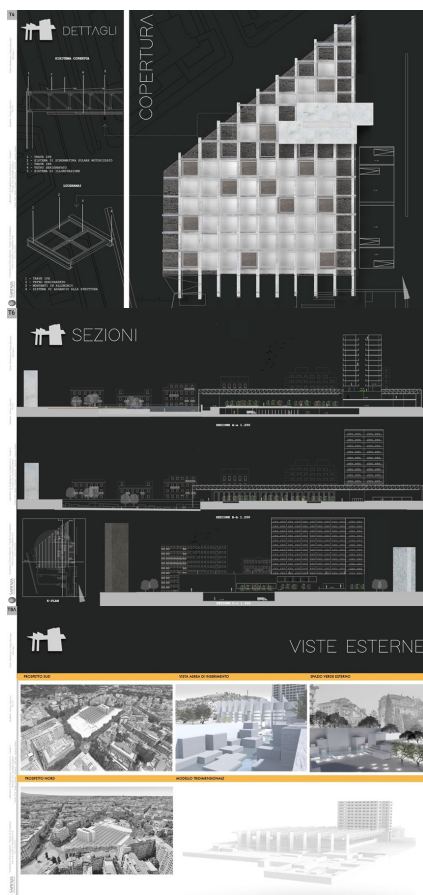
Fig.02 Project for a mixed-use center in Piazza Bainsizza in Rome (Image owner: Stefano Maiorano, 2021)

and stimulated us to bring the issues of isolation and a new vision of living into the laboratory. So for a month the students had to face an ex-tempore during which they had to imagine the squares and historical spaces of Rome: to think of them as deserted and wild after abandonment or to be reactivated with new post-pandemic and distancing uses.

On the other hand, as a composition theme, the students had to deal with the typology of a complex building, also in the first city hall of Rome, which contained within it a large covered square overlooked by mini-houses, a social library, a market at km0, co-working, exhibition and wellness spaces: on the roof of gardens and even shared vegetable gardens. A large mixed-use that allows the inhabitants of the

Fig.03 International Seminar: Small Baltic Conversations

neighborhood to be able to survive for some periods independently.

Finally, the problem of the spatial confinement of our bodies made us understand that we could, however, go beyond the network and thus the International Seminar on architecture and the Baltic landscape was born which put us in direct contact with authors, architects, photographers and designers of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia. The two closed seas of Europe have never been so close as in the period when the borders were closed.

The laboratory had an experimental character not only for the complex theme of urban transformation, mostly delivered at a distance, but because it was the subject of study by a student, Zeynep Gulel of the Ph.D. of the Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts in Istanbul, Faculty of Architecture, Department of Interior Architecture.

Her thesis research examines the technological tools and methods used in the "measurement and evaluation" phases of student success in the "design studio courses" and suggests a new digital method. Our course, which the doctoral student has followed and monitored throughout the year, when it was also possible in the classroom, is part of her doctoral thesis. Below the PhD student reports a summary of her study (DS, SAT, VV).

The Architectural Design Studio III course continued the education with a system (mixed method) in which, physical studio environment and distance education were simultaneously managed, in the ongoing Pandemic period, in

the spring academic term of 2020-2021. The precautions, taken to reduce the number of people sharing the same environment due to the pandemic, were provided by giving students the opportunity to access lessons remotely. Thanks to the cameras, speakers, microphones, projectors, computers and internet systems installed in the classroom, an average rate of 30% of the total students participated in the physical studio environment and 70% attended classes with remote access at during the academic term.

The executives and students provided the intersection in the same virtual environment, beside to the physical space, through the "Zoom" and "Google Meet" programs they downloaded on their computers, tablets or mobile phones. Remotely accessing students could interact with the participants in the physical environment,

preferably by opening their cameras or just with sound. The executives in the classroom contacted the participants who accessed the classroom remotely, with the camera, speaker and microphone set up. Each student presented their data related to the project to the executives, under the witness of their peers, by screen sharing on the virtual platform.

Participants in the classroom environment came to the lessons with their computers and tablets and connected to the common virtual platform. They also watched the images projected onto the screen in the classroom by the screens in front of them.

The interface of Zoom and Google Meet programs allows each participant to see the screen sharing, image of the presenting student, the number of participants to the platform, and to communicate in
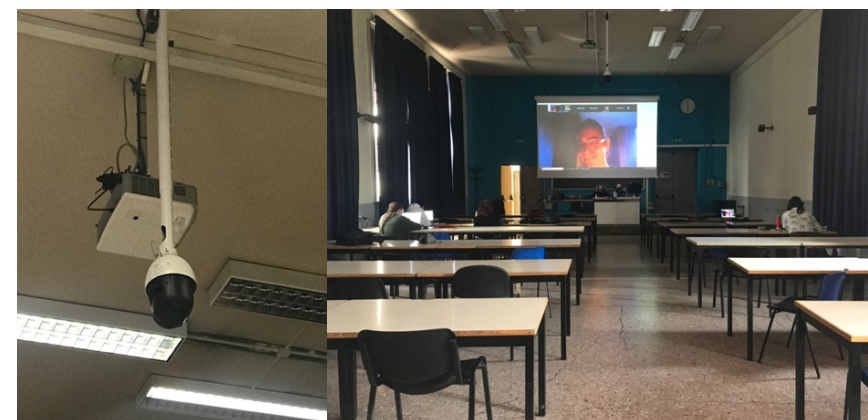

Fig.04 Technological equipment installed in the classroom (Zeynep Gulel archive, 2021)

writing from the messaging section. On the other hand, the executives only verbally reported their criticisms over the student's narration and the data they shared, without being able to mark them.

The characteristic atmosphere of the design studio, seen as a 'studying and living space', continued in this mixed system. While the interactive revision process continued on the digital platform, it was observed that other students in the studio listened to the peers' evaluation process from time to time, continued their own work or helped with their peers.

The executives also gave revisions to the students in the physical environment through the traditional critical method, beside the digital platform. With this method, where one-on-one communication with the executive, which proceeds in the form

of desk and group critiques, students presented their work preferably in digital environment (on a computer or tablet) or with drawing or three-dimensional model studies on printed paper.

Students benefited from drawing and visualization programs such as Rhino, Archicad, Photoshop Autocad ... etc. as well as hand sketches in their project work. They sent the presentation sheets they produced in digital environment to the executives via e-mail for interim and final delivery. Each student has a membership in digital platforms called "E-Learning" and "InfoStud", where they can log in with their university credentials as well as their school e-mail addresses. While registering students for exams through the InfoStud system; from the E-Learning system, the executives archived the documents, weekly materials, announcements and

Fig.05 Lesson process in the classroom in mixed method (Zeynep Gulel archive, 2021)

course videos of the course and shared them with the students and the institution.

It was observed that the students participating in the physical studio environment were approximately the same people. As a result of the pre-meeting with these participants, the some reasons why they prefer the physical studio environment;

• There is no suitable and comfortable area in their living spaces for focus on the course,

• Remote access will completely lock them home, as it has lessons every day of the week,

• The classroom have the power to socialize,

• In distance education, the process is boring without establishing eye contact and body language communication with the lecturers,

• They shared with their group friends about the project more effectively in the classroom,

• They cannot understand what the executives actually thought about the work they did without seeing their gestures.

• It is difficult to understand and remember the executive's feedbacks without marking on the design by online system.

• Being in front of the screen constantly could be dangerous for eye health.

• They could not see who and how many people actually witnessed the process of their revision on the virtual platform, this obscurity made them uneasy.

Some of the foreign students participated in the lessons without having to come from their country. It was observed that these students overcame the difficulty of expression caused by their language inadequacies by reading the texts they had prepared, in front of the screen. Some students also stated that they were happy to save money on physical materials, travel and accommodation costs with remote access.

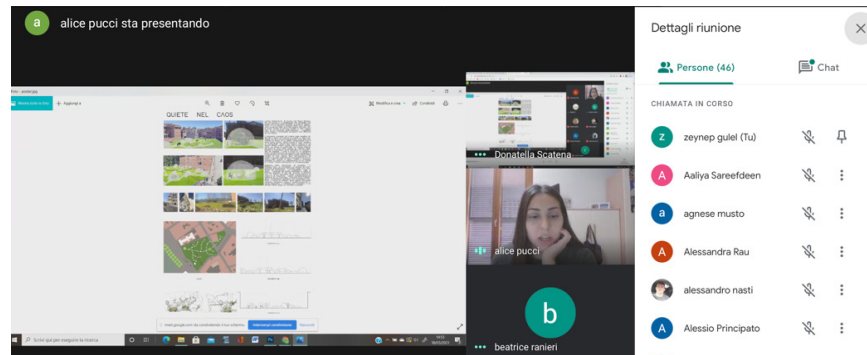Some stated that they got lost among so many digital platforms (e-mail, Google Drive, e-Learning,

infoStud, Zoom, Teams etc.) that mediated the course.

Conclusions

Despite the great problem of the pandemic, the teaching activity continued and allowed us to never interrupt the architectural interview. The bond between teachers and students also continued thanks to the experience of the international webinar which brought contemporary themes and even the debate that arose in the last Venice architecture biennale to the virtual classroom. The teaching has obviously been revisited, perhaps a little altered but it has never stopped.

From the teaching point of view, the lockdown did not exist and did not interrupt our conversation.

Fig.06 Interface of digital software (Zeynep Gulel archive, 2021)

Fig.07 Traditional critical method in mixed method (Zeynep Gulel archive, 2021)