



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



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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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edited by Enrico Prandi and Paolo Strina



Fig.01 Tokyo, Chiyoda-ku, Takebashi, Old Walls Imperial Park and contemporary cityscape (Olimpia Niglio, 2021)
Fig.02 BECC Laboratory 2021. Sites of the proposals (Olimpia Niglio, 2021)

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Olimpia Niglio, Tsuneaki Fukui
**BECC Laboratory in Tokyo. Urban lanscape, urban regeneration.
 Interdisciplinary academic class.**

Hosei University, Japan

Introduction

The different cultural experiences analyzed in the world and between the East and West, have found that the men have always related to the natural context from which they have drawn resources and opportunities for life. Even architecture was born out of respect for this dialogue that the communities were able to establish by relating to both terrestrial and astronomical nature.

The architecture has made it possible to make changes to the natural context in relation to the needs of the individual communities. But architecture has increasingly come to characterize itself for the functions required of it in close relation to the natural context and hence forms and therefore constructive typologies closely related to local resources: let us think of earth houses in the regions of the African continent or Latin American, to stone houses in central and southern Europe, to wooden houses in northern Europe and Asia.

Every place, also through the architecture, has told the story of men. Here we talk about Art and Architecture of the cultural landscapes. Cultural landscapes — cultivated terraces on lofty mountains, gardens, sacred places ... — testify to the creative genius, social development, and the imaginative and spiritual vitality of humanity. They are part of our collective identity.

Now the pandemic situation in the world allowed us to reflect on the importance of the “Human heritage: community” and above all on the need to enhance our natural resources and to establish a stronger dialogue between the natural landscape and built city.

In Japan, the ancient traditions and the observation of traditional architecture teach us the role of this important dialogue with the natural landscape.

However, the problems of regeneration and valorization of the traditional resources, within the city of Tokyo and in many Japanese towns, are important issues because they concern the landscape, environmental sustainability, the well-being of the community. In Tokyo, in several cases, we also see the management of the use of the territory that not respecting good practices for the protection of the environment.

So, for these important premises, it was remarkably interesting to start lectures research to be able to analyze the urban context and the best policies of urban planning and landscape protection in the Prefecture of Tokyo and in other small towns in Japan. In fact, the Japanese territory has extraordinary environmental and landscape features that it is essential to preserve and enhance. In large-scale urban developments, the role of urban planners has been very important for harmonious planning but now the reality is very critical, and we need to propose new solutions and new paradigms.

BECC Laboratory: Beauty, Education, Community, and Creativity

In 2021 at the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and Design of Hosei University in Tokyo started an international and interdisciplinary academic program aimed to analyze the urban landscape in Japan in relationship with the need to valorize its historical paradigms¹. Retaking the four elements of the cosmogony: air, water, earth, and fire — on which both the East and the West have conceived a close connection between the human microcosm and the natural macrocosm — we have reinterpreted these four elements with news four keywords: Beauty, Education, Community, and Creativity. Thanks to these four

keywords born also a small laboratory denominated BECC where twelve students are compared with these important topics and have analyzed them in rural small towns in Japan.

The concept of “Beauty” allowed us to reflect on the local traditions and the dialogue with nature; to come again to think about the “Education” on cultural heritage has been an important regeneration process that allowed us to read the city as a book made with many pages, many layers and with many historical stratifications (Fig. 01). Analyzing the cities is not possible to exclude the “Community”, because the city is the community and that “human heritage” define the content of every local culture. The Community is “Living Heritage”. The Community is Culture, is Heritage, and without it, we cannot realize anything. Community is life. The Community participates in the cultural policies and promotes local development according to with the common needs.

Observing the evolution of the cities, from the origin until the contemporaneity, we valorized the importance of the “Creativity” and above all the Social Creativity which is needed more than creativity in design for urban planning as planning projects often involve not only design change but also social reform. Urban planning and urban design projects bring greater satisfaction and pride when citizens’ ideas are accepted and implemented. However, in many cultures we are still far from this type of participatory planning, but it is now essential to implement it because the city exists if there are citizens. Therefore, it is necessary to preserve, manage and design urban landscapes with respect for their natural beauty, history, human needs, and creativity.

A Greek philosopher, Plato, says that “beautiful things are difficult”. The concept of landscape is a difficult subject. We generally think of landscape as a non-anthropogenic phenomenon, connected to nature. But that’s not the case. Knowledge of the landscape is a complex cultural process that sees different disciplines working together: from history, to art, to science, technology, social and political studies. So, landscape is nature perceived through culture.

Defining a landscape means analyzing it through a cultural process and where culture is the result of a theory and different experiments, direct experiences and therefore the result of knowledge and relationships that have been stratified over time. The landscape is therefore a cultural heritage.

The Urban Landscape defines the characteristics of

the cities and of the public space and the relationships that man establishes and builds in the urban context. The public space is a mirror of cultural traditions. In the specific case of Japanese cities, this specific study is extraordinary precisely because of the cultural diversity that has intervened throughout history and that today preserve important traces in the planning of the cities. This topic is very strong also in Tokyo. This is an interesting topic of “contemporary urban archaeology” where the traditions, that have generated urban contexts and their development, are amazing.

So, following the importance of these four keywords (*Beauty, Education, Community, and Creativity*), BECC laboratory has analyzed interesting towns in Japan and especially in Honshu Island at the Prefectures of Chiba, Gunma, Ibaraki, Iwate, Kanagawa, Shizuoka, Tochigi and Tokyo and in Kyushu Island at the Prefectures of Fukuoka and Kumamoto (Fig. 02). The proposed methodology has been organized in two steps: Analysis and Proposal. In the first step (Analysis) all students have identified the site and clarified the motivation for the choice with the support of ancient map, historical and actual photos, and specific details of the site; in the second step (Proposal) every student has elaborated a presentation with the support of images and graphics and written a text with the main purposes of the project and the dialogue with the local communities. These results are being published in a small e-book and shared with the students in different country of the world. BECC laboratory has also promoted a symposium with professors of different disciplines to discuss and share topics on the reading of the city and new methodologies of planning.

Conclusion

This academic project is not common at a faculty of Civil Engineering in Japan, but the dialogue between architecture, history, heritage, and civil engineering allowed us to realize an important challenge: to approach young engineers (Master’s class) to the reading of the urban landscape and to promote actions of urban regeneration. This experience helped us to promote the interdisciplinary dialogue and to demonstrate the importance to open participative meetings and not building walls among scholars.

Werner Heisenberg, a German theoretical physicist, Nobel Prize for the Physics in 1932, affirmed

[...] It is probably true quite generally that

in the history of human thinking the most fruitful developments frequently take place at those points where two different lines of thought meet. These lines may have their roots in quite different parts of human culture, in different times or different cultural environments or different religious traditions: hence if they actually meet, that is, if they are at least so much related to each other that a real interaction can take place, then one may hope that new and interesting developments may follow.

other cultures in the world.

More information on the interdisciplinary class:
Prof. Tsuneaki FUKUI (eng.) and Prof. Olimpia NIGLIO (arch.) https://syllabus.hosei.ac.jp/web/preview.php?nendo=2021&t_mode=sp&template=&no_id=2102365&gakubu_id=%E3%83%87%E3%82%B6%E3%82%A4%E3%83%B3%E5%B7%A5%E5%AD%A6%E7%A0%94%E7%A9%B6%E7%A7%91&gakubueng=ES

With this first interdisciplinary laboratory we have started a new academic path, and the results and the competences acquired by the students give us the energy to continue this project and to share it with

Notes

¹Students Master’s Class (April-July 2021): Yuiko SAKAI, Mayu WATANABE, Manami MORITO, Rio YAMADA, Yohito HORIKOSHI, Miki HOTAKA, Kenshin MAEZAWA, Kohei FUKUI, Sota NAKAMURA, Kohei AIZAWA, Haruna SHIMURA, Mao HARADA.