Migration and the Built Environment in the Mediterranean and the Middle East

CAUMME III
Contemporary Architecture and Urbanism in the Mediterranean and the Middle East

PAUMME I
Projects of Architecture and Urbanism in the Mediterranean and the Middle East

International Symposium
Naples, November 24-25th 2016
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AUTHORS
EFSUN EKENYAZICI GÜNEY Bahçeşehir University, Turkey / INA MACAIONE - MARIA ITALIA INSETTI - VERA AUTILO Università degli Studi della Basilicata, Italy / MICHELE SBACCHI Università degli Studi di Palermo, Italy / SIRMA TURGUT - HULYA BERKEMEN - KEMAL GULMEZ Yıldız Technical University, Turkey / MANUELA ANTONICIELLO Università degli Studi di Salerno, Italy / VANNA CESTARELLO Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Italy / PINA CIOTOLI Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, Italy / GRAZIA COCINA Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, Italy / ANNA IRENE DEL MONACO Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, Italy / ANDREA DONELLI Università degli Studi di Trento, Italy / NICOLA MARZOT Università degli Studi di Ferrara, Italy / CLAUDIA SANȘO Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Italy / GIUSEPPE RESTA - GIUSEPPE TUPPUTI Politecnico di Bari, Italy / AUROSA ALISON Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris La Villette, France - FEDERICA BONI Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Italy / GISELLA CALCAGNO - ROBERTO BOLOGNA Università degli Studi di Firenze, Italy / FRANCESCO COLLOTTI - CLAUDIA MOREA Università degli Studi di Firenze, Italy / SANTO GIUNTA Università degli Studi di Palermo, Italy / SEYED JALAMADIN HOSSEINI - FERESTHEH BEIGLI Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, Italy / ESMA BOZKURT Fatih Sultan Mehmet Waqf University, Istanbul, Turkey / ILARIA MONTELLA Università degli Studi di Firenze, Italy - CHIARA TONELLi Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Italy / ROBERTO BIANCHI Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, Italy / SUZAN GIRGINKAYA AKDAG Bahçeşehir University, Turkey / LAURA PARRIVECCHIO Università degli Studi di Palermo, Italy / EHSAN VALIPOUR Università degli Studi Roma Tre, Italy - SAMIRA TAYYEBISOULODKAEI Islamic Azad University, Iran / TIZIANO AGLIERI RINELLA Alghurair University, Dubai / DANIELE BALZANO Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Italy / HULYA COSKUN Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Turkey / ISABELLA DAIDONE Università degli Studi di Palermo, Italy / NAZIRE DIKER - ERDEM ERYAZICIOGLU - ELIF KIRPIK Yıldız Technical University, Turkey - HUSEYIN CENGIZ Gedik University, Turkey / MASSIMO FAIERRI - FABRIZIO PUSCEDDU Università degli Studi di Sassari, Italy / PIERPAOLO GALLUCCI Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Italy / PAOLA GREGORY Politecnico di Torino, Italy - CRISTINA MARRAS Consiglio Nazionale delle Ricerche, Italy / ANDREA GRITTI Politecnico di Milano, Italy - LAURENT HODEBERT Ecole Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Marseille, France - RITA OCCHIUTO Faculté d'Architecture Université de Liège, Belgium / FRANCESCO MENEGATTI Politecnico di Milano, Italy / DINA NENCINI Università degli Studi di Roma La Sapienza, Italy / LILIA PAGANO Università degli Studi di Napoli Federico II, Italy - ADRIANA SARRO Università degli Studi di Palermo, Italy / RITA SIMONE Università Mediterranea Reggio Calabria, Italy / STEFAN CRISTIAN POPA Architectural Association School of Architecture, United Kingdom / ADRIANA SARRO Università degli Studi di Palermo, Italy / VALERIO TOLVE Politecnico di Milano, Italy / ANTONELLA VIOLANO - MARCO CALABRÔ - ROSSELLA FRANCHINO - CATERINA FRETTOLOSO Seconda Università degli Studi di Napoli, Italy
A few months ago Triennale di Milano devoted an entire section to the contemporary living of people fleeing war and hunger. In Venice reporting from the front has been the common focus of the just closed Biennale exposition. Stranded on the north side of the African continent, between the desert and the Mediterranean. Refugee camps become a permanent emergency. Temporary tents provided by NGOs and charity organisations become the footprint of new towns. Complete with squares for people to get together, collective spaces and small courts around which rise clusters of tents. Working for saving archaeological heritage not far from Irbid, we met the orange tents of the refugee camps at the border between Jordan and Syria. Probably this is how ancient military fields and outposts rose centuries ago; an orderly principle, a check board. The sea connected us, though today it’s not as simple. The sea was the bridge of civilisation, joining the cultures of bread, aubergines, grape and olives, and now has become the battlefield of shipwrecks, the backdrop of many rescues. On this side of the sea, the most fortunate and prosperous, an unprecedented migration of entire peoples. From the east to the west, from the south to the north: there is no other choice but giving refuge. Regulated by laws, of course, but still refuse. The controversial relationship between natural and built environments is the starting point for the hypothesis of taking care of places and people, transforming apparent adversities into opportunities. Regeneration of abandoned, unused and wasted spaces:
1) starting from people (malaise, unease);
2) involving the community through a sense of inter-generation responsibility that gives meaning to environmental sustainability as a fundamental feature of survival;
3) speculating with other ways of dwelling, building, living.
If the consumption of a body or of the organ suffering an illness is reflected in a lack of energy, the interventions proposed here point to an idea of recovery not only through building, but based on a wider programme which spans from the particular to the general, from the technical to the political. The state of malaise and unease inhabits places on the margins of established cities, whose bodies respond with difficulty to the true needs of those who live in them: urban acupuncture, through certain specifically targeted interventions, may constitute a remedy capable of taking advantage of the flux of energy derived from the community, beginning from the grassroots, with small-scale proposals with the potential of gradually reactivating the whole city. From the awareness that movement, under various forms, is one of the phenomena that dominates our age, from migration to the new work-related nomadism, an investigation is proposed here, using the appropriate tools, into those places and situations that – although often hidden – exist and present temporary ways of living and dwelling which are varied and different to the staticity which characterises so many cities.
The case studies presented are old shells of abandoned factories, unused buildings and unfinished public structures: the hypothesis at the basis of a series of pilot projects is that of inserting relief housing into forgotten places, thus activating a process of regeneration through the radiation of new energy in situations which are lacking in it.

IKEA-like homes, years ago we defined a project, envisaging a reinforced concrete core made of staircases, horizontal distribution and bathrooms connecting/hanging on to the rooms depending on personal needs and on personal possibilities.

We developed this first concept working on many frames/envelopes of abandoned factories to promote the idea of sustainability, in order to re-use, into a second or third life, investments made a long time before.

The research unit on social housing and temporary living established a few years ago at the Florence University has selected some case studies, which include this work CELLS by Claudia Morea which we report below.

CELLS

Like a sleeping-bag spread out on the sofa for a guest, cells to be distributed around the city.

Pret à porter housing to be inserted into those forgotten urban spaces, allowing them to come back to life, thus gradually reactivating cities, as hoped for by urban acupuncture.

Transport constraints imposed a modular project consisting on 6x3x3 metre cells to be aggregated to each other for composing various housing typologies that may adapt as best as possible both to the dwelling needs and to the spaces available. The dry X-lam construction system, associated to an insulation composite system which uses hemp mats and an external finishing in Kanésis bioplastic panels, guarantees optimal interior comfort and total environmental sustainability through all phases of production, use and dismantlement.

Prefabrication permits a bathroom unit to be inserted into the cells in the form of 3 equipped bioplastic module-rings, and the inclusion from the outset of a minimal MobAPP furniture-
storage system which through guidelines guarantees the possibility of transformations and additional integrations.

The building-aggregations are covered by an independent shell which serves as a collector for solar energy and rain water, while creating loggias without the structures touching so as to avoid thermal bridges.

The pilot project – which envisages working in emergency conditions – uses the cells as temporary refuge dwellings and chooses using the shells of abandoned industrial structures or else public buildings which were never completed as supports for possible temporary settlements for nomads and immigrants.

fig. 2 - First phase: assembly of the cell with x-lam panels (Claudia Morea)
fig. 3, fig. 4 - Hypotesys of urban acupuncture for the ex-Planetarium in Lucca (Claudia Morea).
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