Education, Design and Practice – Understanding skills in a Complex World

• Paper / Proposal Title:

Research and pedagogy as actions supporting the specificity of derelict and frail territories

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• Abstract (300 words):

This contribution illustrates and discuss a special condition of teaching and research in the field of architecture and design. As design professors of a school of architecture located in Sardinia (Italy), we live a condition that we believe being a special and interesting case study. Sardinia is a poor territory and above all an island, a place that strives every day with the difficulties of physical communication with the outside world and that has introjected this condition from its history and from the character of its cultures. This paper illustrates two case studies of teaching and research applied to the abandoned mining landscapes of the Sulcis area, located in the south-east side of Sardinia, one of the poorest in Europe, however rich in fascination and history: the recovery of a former mine in Carbonia and the redesign of the waterfront of the former mining village of Buggerru.

These practice-based design research opportunities in frail contexts, forced the teaching process to formulate new strategies for the transmission of architecture design as a discipline. Our pedagogic approach developed on the idea of simplification and fragmentation. We named this strategy “designing by constellations”, a radical and
sophisticated philosophy of intervention based on small-scale, low-density, separate and in mutual tension insertions.

This contribute illustrates how the design practice adopted has achieved positive results both in terms of pedagogical efficacy and in terms of real solutions in sensitive and frail territories. Comparing similar case studies, we believe that the outcomes can be applicable in other low-density areas, affected by depopulation and decolonization phenomena, beyond the island's borders. Places for which it is possible to propose an effective strategy, rather than improbable extensive actions of redesign and radical remodeling, discrete and punctual interventions, virtuous actions distributed and in tension as parts of an unexpected land constellation.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Pier Francesco Cherchi, architect, engineer and PhD, is a researcher and professor of Architectural Design of the DICAAR department of the University of Cagliari. He graduated in Cagliari in 1995 and in Rome in 1999. He received his PhD in architecture in 2003. His research is focused on the themes of rehabilitation of the historic and modern city. In 2016 he published Typological Shift, a research and study about the adaptive reuse of abandoned monumental historical hospitals in Europe. He is a founding member of C + C04STUDIO design practice. His works have been awarded in project competitions and exhibited in various architectural exhibitions. In 2018, he exhibited at the Biennale of Architecture in Venice the project for the reuse of a former industrial building of the Serbariu mine in Sardinia.

Marco Lecis, architect and PhD, is a researcher and professor of Architectural Design for the DICAAR department of the University of Cagliari. He graduated in Florence in 1998 and received his doctorate in architecture from the University of Genoa in 2004. He received his DEA, Diploma de Estudios Avanzados at the ETSAB in Barcelona in 2006. He developed research and teaching in the universities of Beijing, Dubai, Barcelona, Mendrisio, Milan, Parma, Genoa, Alghero and Cagliari. He has studied Italian architectural culture since modern times in his relations with its territories, and its identities and transformations. In 2018, he exhibited at the Biennale of Architecture in Venice the project for the reuse of a former industrial building of the Serbariu mine in Sardinia.

Marco Moro is an architect and PhD student at the Faculty of Engineering and Architecture of Cagliari. After graduating, he obtained a Master degree in Urban Strategies and Territorial Planning at the Universität für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna. In 2015, a season of study and work began in New Zealand. In 2016, he was a leading member of the team of designers who edited the Masterplan of the Sant’Ignazio Campus of the University of Cagliari. In 2018, he carried out research and teaching activities at the Universidad Católica del Norte del Chile in Antofagasta.