Founded Architecture; reflections on how intensive online workshops could shape a new education culture in Architecture and urban analysis and design

Arian Heidari Afshari, Angel Cordero Ampuero

Politecnico di Milano, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid

This article critically reflects upon an experimental online international advanced architectural design workshop organized under a broader collaboration called ‘Analysis-Project’ between two Architecture schools: AUIC (Politecnico di Milano) and ETSAM (Universidad Politécnica de Madrid), where students and instructors from both universities were working together in joint teams to explore significant analytical architecture and urban tools and techniques of investigation on the environmental, cultural, contemporary values of Architecture.

The first edition of the workshop was conducted in June 2020 in a fully online format. Receiving students and professors from both cities allowed us to test significant analytical experiments within virtual teams in an international collaborative learning context. For both faculties, such an intensive workshop was a novel way to explore how virtual/distance working groups could share different skills, tools, and architectonic cultures, build a convergent reading of the environment, and propose a successful integration project in an intensely short period compared to the regular semester-based architectural design studios.

The students received an introduction and primary materials in advance by their responsible professors in home universities. The workshop began with an intensive set of lectures on the selected case study-building, urban and historical context, and an in-
depth analytic cultural background. Students then engaged in a profound reading, interpreting, and graphical analysis of the selected case study, followed by developing critical reflective projects formulated collectively by students and professors. The contextualization of students’ visionary points of view was the final product of each group.

In short, the workshop accounted for investigating contemporary architecture and urban qualities and gaining advanced knowledge of architectural analyzing and narrative making as well. We have been registering the 1st workshop results and the ongoing second edition to provide a common ground for meaningful online learning/teaching debates on existing architecture and theory in contemporary cities.

• Author(s) Biography:

Arian Heidari Afshari. (Kerman, 1984) Iranian Milan-based Architect has received his Ph.D. in architecture, urban and interior design from the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DASfU), Politecnico di Milano, Italy. Since 2018, he is an adjunct Professor of Architecture and urban design and theory, and for the last eight years, he has been collaborating with DASfU and the School of Architecture, Urban Planning, and Construction Engineering (AUIC) at Politecnico di Milano. He is a former teaching fellow (a.a. 2016-2016) and a regular visiting researcher at the Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology (CEPT University) in Ahmedabad, India. He was also a visiting scholar at the Tokyo Institute of Technology, Tokyo, Japan, in 2019. His research is mainly focused on the theory and history of the peri-urban territory and investigates multidisciplinary strategies, methods, and tools to analyze and project in the emergent 21st-century sprawl in the Global South.