TEACHING-LEARNING-RESEARCH: DESIGN AND ENVIRONMENTS

• Paper / Proposal Title:
Regenerating under-populated areas through participatory architecture, raising social capital and creating a “home” for refugees

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• Abstract:
Since 2016, the work of Crossing Cultures has taken students out of the Design Studio and focused on regenerating marginal areas in South Italy through regular architecture-informed workshops involving students in hands-on making activities with locals and refugees, contributing to “teaching as research”. The project’s teaching and research manifests itself in design visions for Belmonte’s regeneration as a new place of civic living, learning and working, as well as in hands-on constructions while actually living in the village setting.
Through these architecture workshops we have observed how students and people from the community as well as participating refugees navigate cultural difference beyond the subject of architecture. Here we aim to understand the experience and benefits of the workshops for the participants and.
In 2019 we conducted a qualitative research study interviewing 25 participants (students, locals and refugees) of our summer workshop. The interviews were transcripts and we used content analysis to extract themes around experiences and benefits of the workshop. The results showed that students learnt from the hands-on experience of working on a building site, but also described skills and value of working with a diverse
group to broaden their horizon. The locals described the positive commercial aspects, but also that the workshops facilitate change and openness. Finally, refugees reported that in addition to learning skills, they also experienced a sense of belonging to a community and described a sense of connecting as equals. The outcomes of the study suggest that in addition to the subject-based learning, students learn skills and values during these workshops that will be important for their overall learning. The study also points to some ingredients needed for locals and refugees to work together to foster social integration, which in turn has been shown to be a predictor of well-being.

• Author(s) Biography:
  Sandra Denicke-Polcher
  Principal Lecturer at The Cass, London Metropolitan University

  Sandra’s work identifies the complex relationships between architectural education and practice and explores how teaching can be enhanced by the involvement of stakeholders and communities. She has worked on a large number of community live projects in the UK and abroad. She co-runs Crossing Cultures which addresses issues around migration, settlement and identity, currently collaborating on a multidisciplinary research project to identify what impact this has on the mental health of the participants. She published on “Architecture of Multiple Authorship” in Architecture and Resilience, Routledge 2018, and how these projects “support Intercultural Learner Relationships”.

  Dr. Domenico Giacco
  Associate Clinical Professor at the University of Warwick, Warwick Medical School

  Honorary Consultant Psychiatrist at Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Partnership Trust
  Domenico is an academic and clinical psychiatrist. He has expertise in developing and testing psychosocial interventions to improve mental health and quality of life of people with psychiatric conditions. He has led or participated in a number of studies funded by the National Institute for Health Research and by the European Commission. He has worked with the World Health Organization to identify effective strategies for mental health promotion and care for asylum seekers, refugees and undocumented migrants.

  Dr. Corinna Haenschel
  Reader and Clinical Psychologist at Department of Psychology, City University of London

  Corinna is a clinical psychologist and clinical neuroscientist with expertise in applying behavioural measures and neurophysiological techniques during cognitive tasks in both student and clinical populations (i.e. schizophrenia, autism). The long-term aim of her research is to understand mental health and improve the quality of everyday life and
social functioning in people with mental health problems by identifying behavioural and neurophysiological changes and translating them into treatments and trainings. Most recently, her research has been funded by the Mental Health Charity UK and also a NARSAD Young Investigator Award to investigate memory performance in schizophrenia.

**Federica Calissano**  
Criminology and Psychology student at City University of London

Federica is passionate about understanding the mental health improvements that may result from participating and doing activities together, particularly from the refugee’s perspective. Being Italian, she first started contributing to this research project by transcribing the interviews and analysing them through a content analysis; she is now taking the lead on writing the project’s paper.