

# DiAP nel mondo | DiAP in the world

## International Vision | Visioni internazionali

edited by

Orazio Carpenzano, Roberto A. Cherubini, Anna Irene Del Monaco





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*Orazio Carpenzano, Roberto A. Cherubini, Anna Irene Del Monaco*



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**UNESCO CHAIR in Sustainable Urban Quality and Urban Culture, notably in Africa Sapienza Università di Roma / UNESCO Paris**

# Conversation on architecture

## Inside and beyond the national borders

Orazio Carpenzano, Anna Irene Del Monaco  
Sapienza University of Rome  
DiAP, Dipartimento di Architettura e Progetto

### **An institutional instrument**

1/AIDM: During the past three years, as director of the Department of Architecture and Design (DiAP) at Sapienza (2016-2019), you took part in various international initiatives organized by the professors in your department: a workshop in Hanoi, Vietnam, in November 2015; a workshop in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in August 2017; an international meeting on didactics in Lisbon in 2018; a workshop in Istanbul in the spring of 2019, a trip to China in April 2019, on the occasion of a visit by Sapienza's rector professor Eugenio Gaudio, to Wuhan in the People's Republic of China; a workshop in Japan in September 2019. Your willingness to take part in academic occasions of international cooperation with various purposes would appear to have the goal of trying to understand both the limits and the potentials for the set of activities that ministerial indicators define as "internationalization."

1/OC: During the years immediately prior to those of my appointment as director of Department of Architecture and Design (DiAP), the number of our department's international agreements increased significantly. In the previous decade, initiatives of this kind were of interest chiefly to a limited group of professors, whose role was essential for outlining some routes and "experimentally" perfecting certain teaching formats like workshops (or design studios abroad, or *charrettes*). Among other things, during that period (2000-2010), international relations were an institutional responsibility of the faculty, and a commission was empaneled for this purpose. Then, between 2010 and 2015, when responsibility for international research exchanges was transferred to the departments, many DiAP professors showed an emerging interest in setting up international scientific collaboration agreements in order to undertake research and teaching activities with foreign institutions in and out of Europe. Beyond dialogue/emulation among colleagues, this was also encouraged by, among other things, the impetus provided by the

research quality recommendations defined by ANVUR (Italian National Agency for the Evaluation of Universities and Research Institutes). And it bears pointing out that DiAP professors interested in activating agreements with foreign institutions were supported by the experience of the administrative offices of the Department of Architecture and Design, and by Sapienza's internationalization area (ARI). In particular, the role of Dr. Attilia De Rose from DiAP's administrative office turned out to be decisive and invaluable. Having taken part in organizing the international missions and workshops during the "experimental" years and at the moment of transition of responsibilities between the faculty and the departments, and with her knowledge of English, she was able to offer the skills needed for the smooth performance of a great many initiatives, in coordination with Dr. Giovanni Vianello and Dr. Hamid Misk from the Sapienza ARI office.

Taking account of the set of activities that involved many professors, and as the director of DiAP, I thus thought I had to get to know the professors' activities, often appreciated by Sapienza's international area, from closer up, through direct experience. These activities were carried out in the framework of the Sapienza international programme, for which the Department of Architecture and Design was able to respond with competence and ability to transfer knowledge on the issues relating to architecture and to the present and future city, capitalizing on the opportunity the university provided to access very important *institutional instruments*.

### **Metropolises and people**

2/AIDM: The metropolises you have had the opportunity to be acquainted with through intense workshop experiences and the visits that are usually organized to bring participants closer to the topic of study are profoundly different – not only from one another, but also in the traits we commonly attribute to European metropolises. In general, megalopolises outside of Europe are marked by comparatively significant numbers: population, different populations densities resulting in the formation of different settlement models, speed of development in comparison with European cities. In metropolises outside of Europe, we find that, in general, the meaning given to architecture is radically different from the idea of architecture that has taken hold in the west since the second postwar period. The places of what could once be defined as "peripheral modernity" are now global places of centrality. One of the most influential Asian intellectuals, Kishore Maububani,

formerly Singapore's Ambassador to the UN and currently dean of the Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore, maintains in his recent books (*The New Asian Hemisphere* and *The Great Convergence*) that the West and the United States of America have difficulty understanding the process of Asia's modernization and rebirth. He then argues they have difficulty understanding that there are new models of urban development, such as Singapore, for example, where architecture inevitably takes on a different role for the society. China, for example, has welcomed the construction of the Suzhou Industry Park and of Tianjin Eco City, both Singapore-led projects. In this setting of global competition, what counts are "skills," What are the qualities with which the Italian architect can enter into competition in international situations seeing strong growth?

2/OC: In order to survive international competition, our task is to remodel Italian tradition and skills by selecting and vaulting the models in addition to the examples that our masters developed to respond to the emergencies of the transformations that Italy's cities and territories have dealt with in the recent and remote past. Italy's lesson on the city and on architecture – recent and historic – still benefits from a certain international recognizability and prestige (especially for the historic heritage and the quality of the landscapes), that must be defended, reinforced, and developed: attention to physical space, the relationship between the dimension of urban architecture and of territorial architecture, the protection and conservation of cultural heritage, attention to the Italian and European scaffolding of landscape and infrastructure, the heterogeneous nature of Mediterranean culture, the inclusiveness that may be seen in the cultural diversity of the territories, the admirable effects between public architecture and private space. In the historic city and in the peripheries; the new settlement quality of houses, infrastructure, and monuments; the biodiversity of environmental bodies.

In recent decades, many national academic bodies have reinforced the initiatives of cooperation and cultural exchange with foreign university institutions, each seeking to valorize the traditions already developed in the past and to "correspond" to the new needs of global culture, while also responding to the new ministerial guidelines. In the international academic framework, the Department of Architecture and Design competes significantly with the Polytechnic University of Turin, the Polytechnic University of Milan, and IUAV in Venice. I think I am not far

from the truth when I say that the Department I lead, with its activities present in all the continents (Europe, South America, Asia, Africa, North America, and Australia), is the most extended internationally projected Italian community of architectural design professors (ICAR 14-15-16). The academic bodies cited above, in general and as far as may be known, have favoured very intense relations with two or three main academic institutions, with the objective involvement of a lesser number of professors in the cited disciplines.

In addition to taking our skills abroad, the occasion of the trip (made by the architecture student or scholar), in keeping with the most ancient and noble traditions of architecture (from the *clerici vagantes* to the Grand Tour, CIAM, and the Global Tour), it is essential to look at Italy and its architecture from other vantage points. Therefore, for an architect, travel continues to be a fundamental way to learn new instruments and modes of conceiving design.

Moreover, the intellectual exchange is one of the most important results: the relationship with colleagues, students, the young scholars we meet and with whom we build and continue to nourish human and intellectual exchanges; it is a knowledge- and skill-building system that integrates international academic activity with the traditional one of visits in extreme natural settings, immersions into different environments and climates – into different *atmospheres*, as Le Corbusier defined it.

In fact, the other fundamental aspect in experiences of this kind is represented by the encounter/crossing of the cities, “the human thing *“par excellence”* according to Claude Lévi-Strauss (*Tristes Tropiques*), which is placed, as in the case of Rio de Janeiro, “at the confluence between nature and artifice” and results “from biological procession, from organic evolution, and from aesthetic creation” at the same time, as is particularly evident in Asian cities I have visited.

3/AIDM The decision to collect a synthesis of the activities carried out in the approximately fifty international cooperation agreements promoted by DiAP's professors through the publication of this volume, *DiAP in the world. International Visions*, appears to demonstrate the director's will to guide a passage of additional refinement with respect to the first approach to the “internationalization” experiences of DiAP's professors. The themes collected in this volume, freely identified by the professors asked to write on their experiences, are the most varied reflections on the architect's training, historical/critical research on architects of the past, projects relating to the housing and infrastructure emergency

due to environmental disasters and demographic conditions requiring alternative solutions to those available in at times “extreme” urban settings, the restoration of historic urban fabrics and of city areas in a state of decay or abandonment, the issue of the urban front on the water, the new specialist buildings expressed in the form of the relationship between research and projects, and so on. As is known, the planning themes developed in the workshops are usually indicated by the local academic institutions that consult and instruct on the issue with the contribution of the municipalities and of the figures that make decisions on the cities and the territories. These are therefore issues of *realpolitik* and they often involve transformation/conservation interventions that include and supplement the presence of natural elements...

3/OC: The idea of putting out the volume *DiAP in the World. International Vision* has the purpose of documenting the already considerable commitment and ample international projection of Sapienza’s Department of Architecture and Design into the centre and the peripheries of the global world. The volume marks the first step in a collective effort, a path towards which a great many DiAP professors have given an international character, following very different procedures, to their activity as architects, professors, and scholars. This volume, moreover, will make it possible to undertake a reflection aimed at identifying certain broad-ranging themes with respect to which to continue – with a second cycle of international activities – to honour the collective commitment to teaching and research in architecture – and thus of *DiAP in the world*.

International openness is one of the fundamental characteristics of the *diAP Department of Architecture and Design*, which sees its members active in 57 bilateral collaboration agreements (without counting the Erasmus agreements) with countries in which today there is a demand for architectural design that looks at Italy as a model, not only for studies of historical architecture, but also for contemporary architecture designed in the existing city and for the new building, including complex landscape and environmental systems.

