

Architecture of the Fitting

Chairs Welcome

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Thirty years after the proclamation of Bigness, a vision of architecture conceived as a scalar device of urban power, we are now in a position to critically reassess its ambitions and limitations. That moment in architectural discourse, fueled by a strong confidence in growth, large-scale interventions, and the possibility of constructing a boundless urban whole, has progressively fractured under the pressure of the intertwined crises that shape our present. The very idea of global well-being has been unsettled, exposing widespread conditions of vulnerability, precarity, and uncertainty. As Denis Cosgrove anticipated in 2011, globalization has revealed itself not only as a sea of connections, but also as a complex system of shared fragilities. Architecture—among the most exportable cultural products of that moment—has increasingly distanced itself from the lived realities of place. This stance has contributed to the marginalization of weaker territories that are now confronting depopulation, deindustrialization, economic decline, limited access to essential services, and the erosion of civic rights.

Against this backdrop, a radical rethinking of architecture's role becomes imperative in order to identify new trajectories for territories facing the progressive depletion of both material and immaterial resources. So-called peripheral or marginal territories are no longer at the edge of architectural discourse; they have become critical observatories of present and future transformations. It is precisely within these conditions that alternative modes of building and inhabiting can be explored



and spatial formations can be reimagined. Here, the small-and-medium-scale is not is not a leftover of decline but a deliberate strategy of survival, adaptation, and regeneration. Far from suggesting a nostalgic return, this approach calls for a rediscovery of the right measure, that is, finely tuned, site-specific interventions that transform limitation into a resource and design into an act of attentive listening and spatial interpretation. This perspective is not new.

Since the late twentieth century, a range of architectural approaches has increasingly engaged with small- and medium-scale strategies in response to the progressive depletion of places and resources. Across both professional practice and architectural education, renewed attention has been given to reduced scales of intervention, incremental processes, and context-sensitive design projects, interpreting socio-economic contraction as an opportunity.

Today, in an era marked by the renewed prevalence of what Anna Tsing has defined as an *economy of appearances* (2005)—a cultural and economic regime in which value, growth, and development are produced and legitimized through visibility, narrative, and promise rather than through lasting material benefits—the crucial question for architecture is how “fitting” may be reframed as an operative principle and translated into design practices and educational frameworks, where reduction and contraction are understood not as limitations but as forms of knowledge.

This vision underpins the conceptual framework of EAAE AC/GA 2026, hosted by



the School of Architecture of Cagliari. With its low-density landscapes, imperfect processes of modernization, and still-intact material and immaterial resources, the island of Sardinia functions as a nexus within a broader constellation of shrinking territories united by the urgent need to rethink development paradigms and construct new forms of centrality rooted in care for place.

Therefore, investigating local conditions without endorsing localism, XS-S-M positions the small-and-medium-scale as a paradigm for architectural practice and education, through which wider implications can be critically examined across diverse yet interconnected disciplinary fields. Ultimately, do small and large scales operate as fixed oppositions, or can intermediate and relational scales emerge beyond extreme categorizations?



To address this question, XS-S-M is structured around the interplay of two key concepts:

Architecture | understood, through the lens of a regressive crisis, not as a condition of loss but as an opportunity to reframe architectural practice in response to emerging needs, reaffirming it as a cultural and artistic discipline engaged with questions of beauty, sustainability, and shared experience.

Fitting | conceived as a paradigm for architectural responses to depopulation, economic regression, resource optimization, and limits to consumption (energy, land, materials), articulating the search for the right measure through a deep and situated engagement with place.

