

Defining the context. Didactic experience through interpretative diagram

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This paper reflects on the theoretical basis of the architectural discipline and its teaching, specifically regarding site response and a project's appropriateness. Addressing the theme of Session #1, this work questions and reinterprets the concept of context.

The work comments on several key texts investigating the topic (from the genius loci in the writings of Pope to Norberg-Schulz, through to Alexander, Venturi and Scott Brown, Rowe, Rossi, Koolhaas and others). Rather than a fixed definition, context is explored as a complex, multifaceted entity – physical and cultural, concrete and interpretive – that can be redefined within each project. Consequently, the project's response to the site becomes a journey of research and interpretation.

Based on these reflections, our pedagogical approach focuses on design strategy through experimentation, using diagrams and drawings to investigate and visualize design choices. These interpretive tools are entrusted with conveying the complexity of the issues investigated, while simultaneously serving as the expression and representation of the project's core themes. The capacity of these synthetic tools to communicate theoretical and critical issues abstractly reinforces the project's response as a critical act.

Through synthesis, complexity is broken down, understood, and resolved into its multiple components. Ultimately, this process reveals context as a research-based issue, transforming design into a free, critical investigation that traverses several theoretical realms – from phenomenological experience to the layered approach of “landscape urbanism” and to the lesson of Italian “urban architecture”, and current ecological imperatives. By intersecting a variety of approaches, chosen case-by-case, the diagrams establish a new, flexible attitude that responds to specific conditions, histories, and goals. These experimental drawings serve as creative and interpretive means from which design solutions can then be defined.