THE UNCERTAIN PROJECT

Experiencing Devices
for the Modification
of Marginal Contexts

Gianfranco Orsenigo

Supervisor Prof. Andrea Di Franco
PhD in Architectural Urban
            and Interior Design - XXXII cycle
Coordinator Prof. Alessandro Rocca

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ABSTRACT

How can the project of a pavilion tell the redevelopment of a prison (if it can)? And therefore of the Italian prison system? How can a street's conversion tell an urban district's regeneration story (if it can)? And therefore of a marginal territory? The research presented moves around these questions, linked to practical research experiences. It would be an empirical investigation into how architectural design can equip itself to be a key stage involved in the regeneration of marginal contexts.

It is customary to think of architecture as the outcome of a process responding to needs and problems. In recent decades, a belief has led architectural practice to be "circumscribed by much more instrumentals demands, in which action is determined in reaction to the short-term priorities of clients and the market" (Awan, Schneider and Till 2011). It happens in a period in which society is increasingly talking about the future through architectural images. *"We are building a lot, but we are building big investment projects, as if we're doing architecture without architecture"* (Chipperfield 2018). Several studies highlight the current changes and difficulties of design action to be a critical medium of comparison with reality. A progressive renunciation, or exclusion, of being a decision-making tool that is especially evident in marginal contexts. Situations where the overlapping of problems, the concentration of fragilities and the scarcity of resources seem to make any change insufficient because it is too partial. Complexity and uncertainty, conditions of contemporaneity, push these situations to the edges of the city's transformation processes, making them inert.

Practising a self-reflexive observation (Schön 1983) concerning two academy research, I try to experiment with a possible design method and tools capable of supporting urban regeneration for these contexts.The comparison with "real processes" allowed me to practice the designer and the researcher's dimension at the same time. On the one hand, one is called upon to come to terms with the concrete reality of a design process made up of documents, bureaucracy and unforeseen events. On the other hand, it was possible to question it, distancing oneself when necessary to reflect on the implications and effects of one's own practice.

Through design, it was possible to test, make mistakes, try again, record the successes, and make the failures profitable. Reflecting on design and the activated ecologies, it was possible to represent - in an oriented way - the events, the technical operations carried out, the processes and their outcomes. Through the stories, an attempt was made to communicate the similarities and differences in methods and tools that were recognised.

The purpose of the practised method and tools is to put particular action and general vision in tension. The transcalar modifications of the spaces activate an inclusive process where analysis and action cyclically follow one another. The process aims to specify the relationship between objects, materials and subjects. In this perspective, architectural design is recognised as an open social practice. Following the relational perspective, the thesis is intended to be a contribution and tool for comparison with those who are questioning what the architectural project can do, inside and outside the university.

"from space of detention to place of relationship"
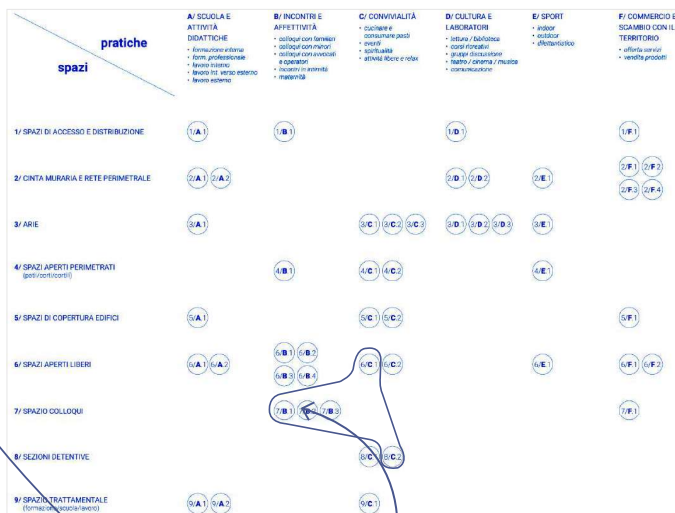

[practice particular]

BUILT EXPERIMENTS are punctual events to situate the project in context. They activate and feed a process of pertinent knowledge capable of encouraging inert situation to action. It happens by "making together".
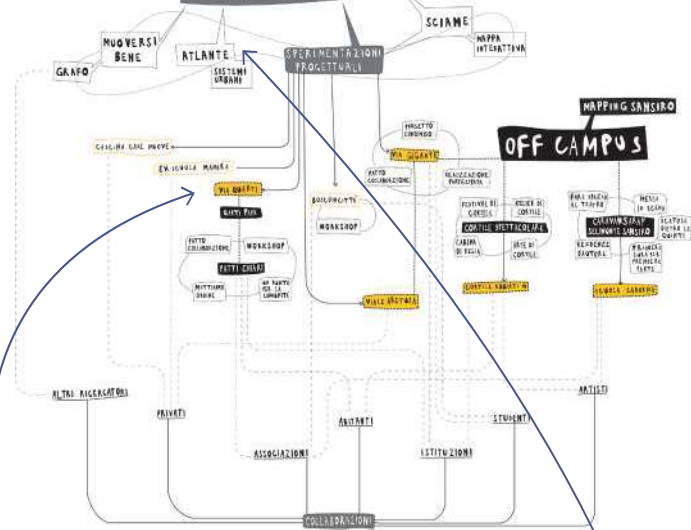
[practice general]

DESIGN GUESSWORK is a design vision, among the possible ones, that draw a framework to select and interpret the heterogeneous opportunities that happen. At the same time, It indicates a direction for a multiplicity of transformative actions already ongoing and/or encouraging new ones.

#02 opportunity

[particular - general]

RELATIONAL DEVICE is the habitat where general and particular are put in tension. It is capable to record and, at the same time, make openly operative the project's data stratified over time. It supports a multi-actor process in making decisions in the flow of interactions.

"I move well"