

Architecture and Human Rights

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Architecture and Human Rights

About the Serie

Our planet is experiencing a decisive moment for its future. In the last few decades, we have faced major threats as climate crisis, social inequality, and humanitarian emergencies (natural disasters and man-made crises). In addition, we must consider the collapse of the international order based on laws and agreements that various nations have worked hard on to build up, starting with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Paris 1948). The “Architecture and Human Rights” series disseminates and deepens the reflections and guidelines of the cultural association and international research laboratory, ARCH+HR, that investigates the dialogue between architecture and human rights. The various volumes illustrate practices and research developed by authors around the world that share a common denominator: faith in the transformative project power, where architecture is called upon to assume a social responsibility to improve the conditions of the most vulnerable social systems. At a time of great global conflict, we called upon architects, engineers, planners and professionals responsible of human territoriality to build a more just, democratic, and peaceful society. We hope this series of books would be part of your inspiration and future projects.

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Little Tales from the World

Embracing the Soul of the Places

Silvia Serreli, Jorge Lobos, Bakary Coulibaly, Carina Prem



Architecture and Human Rights



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Little Tales from the World

Introduction

Bakary Coulibaly, Jorge Lobos, Silvia Serreli,
Carina Prem

When strolling along the corridors of the University of Sassari, one encounters people from all around the globe. Over the years, the university has become a connecting point for diverse cultures and backgrounds: some students have found their way into the institution by showing excellence in their online applications, others have travelled long ways in dangerous and unsafe conditions to get to Sassari first and found their vocation here, and other students have used “the academic corridors” connecting remote and vulnerable areas around the world with the university. The program of UNISS to scout for talents around the globe have enhanced the whole area’s value by embedding people with new and different perspectives into the traditional Sardinian society (*).

Every Person is a Book

The physical book you are holding in your hand is a compilation of excerpts, giving you a glimpse into the minds of people who experiment with

intercultural encounters every day. The students and teachers at the University of Sassari who participate in “Little World Tales” come from different backgrounds: Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe. Each of them is a book full of stories collected throughout their lives. It reminds us of a bit of a library concept created in Denmark: “The Human Library”, where you can borrow a book, which is a person, and you can learn (read) from him/her by listening to his/her life experiences. Our book reminds us of a bit of this idea. Each student is indeed a book that brings different views of the world. We expect the readers to be curious about how people live in other parts of the world, facing the same challenges we face every day, but solving them in very different ways.

We thought it would be interesting to write down the many wonderful tales that these students tell from their home countries. We invited and motivated them in Sassari to share these urban and mystical territorial tales in the framework of a book. It could be a contribution to the university and public debate on how we conceive the social structure of our communities in times of climate crisis, social inequalities and migration.

The stories, which highlight the social, cultural and historical dynamics of certain cities, and the spiritual or mythological stories, which highlight their inner worlds, not only reflect the inner dynamics of a person, but also show the dynamics of a city and help to define their identity and

worldview. Through their stories, we can explore the transformation of cities and territories and their peculiarities, highlighting how people live, work and adapt to ever-changing environments, and how societies evolve and develop within our deep human nature.

Language Challenge

In each global intercultural encounter, language is a challenge; maybe you could avoid it only with universal languages like sport, art, or music, but in a book about little stories you can't avoid the language challenge. Indeed, for these foreign students language has been an issue from the beginning of their academic adventure in Europe. When they belong to 'The University Corridor' they started in their home villages or cities from Africa or The Middle East, studying Italian to apply to UNISS in Sardinia. Afterward, they traveled to the University to find other students from around the world with other mother tongues who would be their classmates and friends for the following years.

This book presents the same challenge. Which language should the book be written in? Italian? Their original languages? Or English?

The first encounter with the newcomer students was a kind of Babel Tower, to paraphrase the Biblical mythological tale, where God punished

humanity out of fear of them building the Tower of Babel by creating the diverse languages in the world that we have today. While the challenges we face in intercultural communications do indeed sometimes feel like a punishment, different languages are the richness to view the world from a variety of perspectives.

The Role of the University

University etymologically comes from universal; the word contains in itself the concept of universality. Consequently, the university's role should be to embrace every idea and intellectual principle from everywhere on our planet, our universe.

We are lucky to receive hundreds of students from so many different social environments around the world, it is a chance to learn from their life experiences, world views and conceptions. We strongly believe that they bring new perspectives to our old conservative Western societies in relation to the main challenges that we face today in today's world: wars, climate crisis, neoliberalism, and social equality, among others.

The stories told here are chosen by the authors themselves (the foreign students), showing a special something that is important to them and their home abroad from Sardinia. Some stories might seem familiar, while others might completely contradict your views, the views of the readers. Take the time to reflect on what you want to

accept and take away from each story, which you can't accept because of your moral and ethical principles. While tolerance prevails, acceptance is an object of continuous debate – a debate with yourself, and with the people around you.

(*) Note of the authors: It is important to remember that in ancient times the island was not synonymous of isolation and solitude. Islands were connected to the known world because of navigation, the isolated territories were the intralands because of the forest, mountains, desert, and other geographical barriers. Today, Sardinia becomes interconnected to the world, among other facts, because of the foreign students from all around the world. Sardinia will not be an island anymore.

Manifesto

Architecture is a Human Right

Jorge Lobos

Historical background

Several processes in the history of architecture make us claim that “Architecture is a Human Right”: The Industrial Revolution produced one of the biggest impacts on urban development and an increasing interest of our profession in social housing (Ancoats, Manchester, 1870s).

The Scandinavian Welfare States created the most equal social system in the world with a clear architectural expression (Hornbaekhaus, Copenhagen, 1923).

Prefabricated Soviet social housing gave shelter to 34 million inhabitants after WW2 (Mikrorayon, Eastern Europe, 1950s and 60s). The Latin American approach from the 50s with a strong focus on social demands (COPAN, Sao Paulo, 1952-1966)

However, the evolution of our profession, from the social perspective, slowed down immensely since the 80s and 90s with the triumph of neo-liberal politics. Nevertheless, an architecture of resistance

did appear around the world, expressed by hundreds of anonymous professionals, who kept the ideals of architecture being involved in social matters: Friedman in France, Carola in Africa, Lawner, Rojas, and Pironi in South America, among many other architects.

Today

During the beginning of the 2000s, architecture theory showed a rainbow of different theories and professional concepts coexisting in the same territory, maybe for the first time in human history. One of these visions is architecture empathic with citizens' demands to face the most urgent challenges of our planet: climate change, humanitarian emergencies (natural disasters or manmade crises like war or social conflicts), social inequality and global migration as a consequence of all the other factors.

Accumulated knowledge of humanity

Each thought and each action of human evolution depend on and belong to the collective experience, although it may crystallize in a single human being.

Although knowledge can flourish in specific individuals, we must accept that this form of knowledge is part of our accumulated, collective intelligence and therefore belongs to every human being on the planet. Architecture is an intrinsic part of this accumulated knowledge and thus