

Annual Meeting of CISPOT, Artimino, Italy, 13-14 November 2009

The twenty-first annual meeting of CISPOT took place in the sixteenth-century Villa Medicea at Artimino, in the municipality of Carmignano, Prato. The theme of the meeting was 'The incidence of Muratori's thought and method in the didactics of architecture'.

In his introduction Giancarlo Cataldi traced the genealogy of Muratorian didactics and drew attention to the generations of researchers who, in the various Faculties of Architecture in Italy, have examined and developed the themes introduced by Saverio Muratori. It is clear that inside a homogeneous 'school' whose background principles and objectives remain shared there is a rich variety of approaches and interests that have always existed. It is possible to distinguish three generations of followers of Muratori, the third being today's younger researchers. The diversity of themes within the Muratorian school was even more evident in the contribution of Gian Luigi Maffei, who provided an outline of the main publications to date.

A clear demonstration of the vitality of the method and thought of Muratori and of the interest that it still arouses today among the latest generation of researchers was provided by the contributions of the Bari school, introduced by Attilio Petruccioli. Annalinda Neglia, in her latest studies on Middle-Eastern cities, confirmed the significance of typological reading and its utility in the study of urban history. Anna Bruna Menghini and Vittorio Palmieri underlined the importance of the didactic method first applied by Muratori, and the way he progressively perfected it during the years he was teaching in Rome (see Menghini and Palmieri, 2009). Of great interest was the comparison with Ludovico Quaroni's studies, provided by Antonio Rondino, as it aided a correct historical placing of Muratorian didactics.

The use of Muratori's method in architectural instruction was made evident by the presentation of some teaching experiences in Rome by Giuseppe Strappa, Alessandro Franchetti Pardo and Alessandro Camiz, and in Parma, by Marco Maretto. These were all linked by a common concern with the completion of degraded historical urban tissues. Though they concerned very different contexts, ranging from the hinterland of Rome to South China, they allowed rigorous statements to be made at the scale of the tissue, derived from its reading. This made it possible to

give the students a good deal of liberty in their formal decisions, without precluding the achievement of proposals integrated with their context.

As a conclusion, two books were presented, both centred on observations of the relationship between project and context, beginning with the description of project experiences. The first book, of an academic-didactic character, was published at the end of a conference promoted by ISUF Italia in Pienza in May 2008. The conference was entitled 'The project in historicized context: contrasting examples'. It included a design workshop in which undergraduates and PhD students from six Italian Faculties of Architecture and Engineering took part: this was on the theme of 'Aramo and the ten *'castella'* of the Svizzera Pesciatina'. The book (Merlo and Lavoratti, 2009) shows the different theories and methods that the Italian 'schools' of architecture use in the context of the historical city. The second book (Gallarati Architetti, 2009) has a more applied character, presenting the main projects and works of the Gallarati Architetti firm in the years 1978-2008. It is a clear example of how the thought of Muratori, which has too often been confined to the academic ambit, can give concrete and significant solutions to the architectural, building, urban and territorial problems that today's world presents to architects.

References

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- Menghini, A. B. and Palmieri, V. (2009) *Saverio Muratori. Didattica della composizione architettonica nella Facoltà di Architettura di Roma, 1954-1973* (Poliba Press, Bari).
- Merlo, A. and Lavoratti, G. (eds) (2009) *Il progetto nel contesto storicizzato: esempi a confronto. Atti del convegno: Pescia, 17 maggio 2008* (Alinea Editrice, Firenze).

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Revisiting *New towns of the Middle Ages*: a conference and field seminar in memory of Professor M. W. Beresford, Winchelsea, England, 21-23 May 2010

This conference took place in one of the most renowned examples of a medieval ‘new town’ in England. The aim was to examine how recent historical, geographical and archaeological research has changed and challenged views about ‘New towns of the Middle Ages’, particularly in the period since the publication of Maurice Beresford’s important book on this subject, which appeared in 1967. The conference was also a celebration of Beresford’s intellectual contribution to the study of medieval towns and urban planning.

Conference speakers explored the societies, landscapes and material cultures of medieval ‘new towns’, placing them in an international comparative context, and in their own local settings. To this end, Winchelsea provided an important case study, with papers exploring its history and archaeology, by specialists such as David Martin and Casper Johnson. There was also an attempt to revisit the historical connections between medieval new towns of Gascony and England, a thesis developed by Beresford, and one that Jean Loup Abbé (University of Toulouse) helped to reconsider through a paper based upon new research on *bastides* in south-west France. This was really the premise for subsequent papers. First, there were two given by geographers, concerning topography and morphology (Keith Lilley and Terry Slater), and questioning Beresford’s tendency to separate out ‘planned’ and ‘organic-growth’ towns. They instead provided a Conzenian approach: a more complicated story of urban development, with wide morphological variations in medieval ‘town planning’. Two archaeologists (Jeremy Haslam and Patrick Ottaway) then delved into the material culture of

medieval new towns. Since urban archaeology in the UK was largely in its infancy when Beresford wrote *New Towns*, there was much to add. They queried the distinctiveness of ‘new towns’ as a category since their archaeologies are not particularly unique. Then it was the turn of historians, led by Christopher Dyer, and helped by David Martin’s appraisal of Winchelsea, to show how ‘new towns’ and ‘old towns’ actually had much in common, leading some to begin to question whether the term ‘new town’ should be abandoned altogether.

The use of discussants, including Neil Christie and Richard Goddard, provided the opportunity for the speakers’ views to be questioned further by participants, and as was fitting for a conference commemorating Beresford – himself a great advocate of adult education – the audience covered a wide range of backgrounds, some specialists, some not, but all of whom enjoyed a compelling series of papers, and were treated after the conference to a field-trip around the impressive remains of ‘New Winchelsea’. The event was convened by Winchelsea Archaeological Society, largely through the efforts of Richard Comotto, a local resident, with programming advice being provided by Keith Lilley. It demonstrated not only the continuing broad appeal of the subject matter, but also the importance of connecting academic and non-academic worlds, which Beresford would doubtless have approved.

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