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Kenneth Allan
ΠΟΛΥΤΕΧΝΙΚΗ ΣΧΟΛΗ

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As designers involved with the built environment, we hold responsibility to design in response to the global economic and environmental contexts that frame our work. Designers have an obligation to make a difference within the realms of our own particular areas of practice or expertise.

We increasingly hear about a climate tipping point, whilst a number of recent events suggest that this threshold has already been surpassed. To highlight a few examples; Global wildfire events increasing, with one wildfire in Greece recorded as the largest ever within the EU. Major rainfall and subsequent flood events devastating places and populations ill-equipped to deal with such intensity, exemplified by the destructive Libyan dam breaches in 2023. Sea temperatures continue to warm, increasing tropical storm intensity with persistent coral bleaching events observed worldwide. Warmer waters mean less absorption of CO2 by the waters of our blue earth, lessening the positive impacts of our carbon cutting efforts.

Embracing the Challenge

These examples clearly demonstrate the need for positive change, and research unquestionably indicates that climate balance is key to maintaining human prosperity. Gensler sees this as the biggest challenge of our time and believes that sustainable design is more than an obligation; it's an opportunity to create resilient environments that stand the test of time and contribute to our planet's health.

Gensler believes in the power of design to create a better world. Millions of people are impacted by our work every day; airports and transportation projects, stadiums, retail and office developments, open spaces, and planning of new cities. The cumulative footprint of this work is astonishing, but with that comes a responsibility.

Through our designs, we aim to advance the mission for carbon-neutral cities, one building at a time. In 2018, Gensler challenged the industry by setting out the goal of eliminating all carbon emissions associated with our work by 2030. That means establishing the current operational and embodied carbon in our work, developing design strategies to reduce carbon consumption, and offsetting carbon emissions that remain. We are actively tracking our project metrics to establish the impact of our designs, assessing the baseline carbon of projects as well as the proposed carbon footprint of the design.

Strategies for Sustainable Design

Some notable success stories to come from this approach are encouraging adaptive reuse of buildings and challenging our clients to rethink spaces instead of rebuilding. The launch of Gensler's ESG consulting practice is aimed at helping clients deliver on their own climate and sustainability commitments, actively strategising with clients on meaningful analysis of their needs, assessment processes, and certifications of projects.

Every architectural practice is now rightly focused on sustainability assessment and analysis. Design examples include massing and façade modelling for solar radiation and performance analysis, climate analysis for optimum building orientation, and thermal comfort modelling. All of these are important approaches to improve the performance of a building and can be used through planning or permitting processes to justify certain design decisions.

Another key initiative is the recently launched Gensler Product Sustainability Standards. In the first instance we have identified the most commonly used components of our projects and are able to recommend to our designers which potential products have the lowest climate impact if specified on a project. The broader intent is to incentivise the industry to develop lower carbon product lines which are, in turn, more likely to be specified. This empowers design teams to easily make more thoughtful design decisions. There is a huge amount of data already provided and published by

suppliers on the carbon footprint of manufactured materials. Utilising this data with purposeful intent to reduce the embodied carbon in any project is now a fundamental part of the design process.

As landscape architects at Gensler, we are involved in a huge variety of project work; from hospitality to data centres, adaptive reuse of tired buildings to healthcare facilities, each with their own unique challenges:

Repositioning/ adaptive re-use

In recent years, our designers have achieved significant successes in the repositioning of offices buildings, rethinking space not just as desks, but as spaces that bring health and well-being value to tenants and visitors. Particularly in the post-covid working landscape, ensuring a fulfilling environment for your colleagues to occupy is increasingly valued and a significant selling point to new building occupants. Landscape intervention plays a key role in transforming and reinvigorating such space. Flexible and programmable rooftop green spaces are a crucial driver for amenities in the urban workplace, providing biodiversity in the city as well as softening streetscapes, reducing the urban heat island, and utilising forgotten spaces.

Image 1. 10 Gresham Street, London

Hospitality

As an industry, hospitality is seeing the drive for authentic experiences from guests which is encouraging a shift in the approach to landscape. Where once landscapes were designed to take on a tropical character and the feeling of an escape, design in hospitality has shifted to be more focused on native planting palettes that are more resilient to local conditions and provide more biodiversity value. This has reduced the maintenance burden and watering requirements of green spaces. As water becomes a more precious resource, this approach will continue to evolve and incorporate additional species more adapted to arid conditions and climatic resilience.

In a heavily social media influenced world, people search for "unique" experiences to share online, and the built environment is evolving as a result. Memories of places are almost always dominated by the experience of the outdoors; of the context and climate of the places we visit. With competition for guests at an all-time high, it is vital for hotel and resort owners to utilise the outdoor spaces they have more effectively. This means ensuring they are attractive, memorable, and feel part of the local landscape context. Surely there is no shortage of properties that have potential to offer much more meaningful experiences with their external spaces. Hoteliers increasingly consider external spaces as equally fundamental to commercial performance and profitability as individual

hotel rooms themselves. Good accommodation is the basic expectation, whereas successful external environments create memories.

Critical Infrastructure

"The cloud" has had a major impact on the way digital information is organised throughout the world. Centralised file storage and high-speed internet connections have enabled a vast network of sites designed to house data with anytime access for millions of users at a time. As amazing and efficient as this is, the physical impact on the built or natural environment can often be overlooked or understated.

In a sense, critical facilities can be compared to military bases or airports; these facilities have vast land areas, big sheds, hard perimeter boundaries, and stringent security requirements, resulting in large areas of open grassland that offer little landscape purpose or ecological value. Internal to the site boundary, a typical landscape design response is limited to ensuring sightlines across each site are maintained for security reasons and that they have efficient functional layouts requiring minimal maintenance. This approach only really serves the primary purpose of the facility. However, the design ethos for data centres and other large, secure compounds is on the verge of significant change.

Every space, on any project site, has an inherent value. Whether that value be economic or providing positive impact to the natural world, designers and developers have a moral obligation to prepare proposals that give something back to nature in a human depleted ecosystem. This is only achievable by incorporating regenerative design principles and utilising land more efficiently to unlock the contextual value of sites.

Data center schemes are becoming more interesting and contextual. Our designers have been working with one particularly challenging site on the outskirts of London. This site requires significant ground remediation while protecting the grade 2 listed building; within a Green Belt setting and bounded by a Biodiversity Opportunity Area. With only 4% of the existing site covered by any sort of green landscape, significant additional landscape value can be established than exists currently. Proposals from the design team considered the setting for the heritage asset, as well as uplifting green coverage across the site to nearly 30%, including native scrub, a wildflower meadow, rain gardens, and hedgerows. This results in a biodiversity net gain reaching close to 4,000% in habitat and 170% in hedgerow (as defined by the Biodiversity Assessment undertaken following the Biodiversity Metric, Natural England 2022). The project proposal not only significantly improves the environmental value of the site itself, but also contributes to the local ecology by filling gaps and connecting local habitat corridors.

Image 2. Gensler Green Data Centre Concept

A Changing World

As we move into an uncertain future, human consciousness of our responsibility to the environment and our ecosystem will only increase. Design strategies from today will be standard practice in the coming years. As designers, it is essential to continue to challenge ourselves and our industry to push for design responses with positive environmental impacts. No one profession can solve the climate emergency – we all have a part to play. Taking design back to nature and supporting ecological processes is not just positive for the natural world but also enriches our own experience of place.

ΣΥΝΕΔΡΙΑ 13

ΙΣΤΟΡΙΚΑ ΚΑΙ ΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΙΚΑ ΤΟΠΙΑ Ι

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Chairpersons: I. Tsalikidis, T.S. Terkenli

HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL LANDSCAPES I

SESSION 13

THE NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAUS AND THE LANDSCAPE

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ΤΟ ΝΕΟ ΕΥΡΩΠΑΪΚΟ ΜΠΑΟΥΧΑΟΥΣ ΚΑΙ ΤΟ ΤΟΠΙΟ

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The Closing Window

The need for more sustainability as well as the urge to face climate change are central mandates of the European Union. The New European Bauhaus (NEB) initiative was launched at the beginning of the COVID pandemic, in spring 2020, as part of the European policies for the environment. The New European Bauhaus links the European Green Deal to the daily lives of all Europeans and focuses on their living spaces. It calls on all of us "to imagine and build together a sustainable and inclusive future that is beautiful for our eyes, minds, and souls".[1]

Reviving cherished and well established values of the original Bauhaus movement, which revolutionized architecture, town planning and product design in the beginning of the twentieth century, the NEB initiative invites a wide spectrum of professionals to contribute to its vision; co-creating and acting with a communal philosophy are some of those European values ever present from Bauhaus to the New European Bauhaus. NEB's inclusive outlook invites for new interpretations of our living space, from private to public and beyond. Within that context, the "NEW EUROPEAN BAUHAS goes SOUTH" (NEBgS) project emerged as a trans-European alliance of architecture schools which spans from Portugal to Greece. NEBgS focuses on the European South and its particular features – one of them being that people in southern Europe enjoy an extended period of daily life outdoors and can therefore consider landscape as a vital component of their wellbeing. In their joint statement, six countries of the European South stress "increased signs of extreme climate events, rising temperatures, heat islands, desertification and drought. They also share rich histories and a cultural heritage which need careful protection while addressing these emergencies. Though issues like these are not easily dealt with, they lead us to question whether they should be addressed differently in different regions around the world."[2] NEBgS clearly outlines locality and the cultures linked to it as major factor which should be part of any strategy combatting climate change. Furthermore, where locality –and subsequently landscape- are concerned, one must note that climate specialists and heritage professionals underline the importance of exhausting all efforts to promote adaptation on site in order to protect cultural memory (Macdonald, 2013).

Yet, despite the climate change hip all over the world, the facts are rather discouraging. According to the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)[3] emissions may have lowered in 2020 because of the pandemic halt, but GHG concentrations in the atmosphere continue to rise, with the immediate reduction in emissions expected to have a negligible long-term impact on climate change. Bridging the so-called emissions gap in accord with the Paris Agreement remains a challenge. Two years later, the 13th edition of the UNEP report is entitled "The Closing Window".[4] According to the Emissions Gap Report (EGR) 2022: The Closing Window – Climate crisis calls for rapid transformation of societies the international community is falling far short of the Paris goals, with no credible pathway to 1.5°C in place. Only an urgent system-wide transformation can avoid climate disaster.

Such findings directly address the professionals who are largely responsible for emissions – among them all those who are employed in construction and the manmade environment. Buildings and the construction sector account for 36% of final energy use and 39% of energy and process-related carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions (2018), 11% of which resulted from manufacturing building materials and products such as steel, cement and glass. [5] Only 5% of buildings in Europe are energy efficient and even less are zero carbon (Sayce, Wilkinson eds 2023: 194).

[1] https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/about/about-initiative_en
[2] https://www.up.pt/neb-goes-south/vision/
[3] https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/34438/EGR20ESE.pdf?sequence=25
[4] https://www.unep.org/resources/emissions-gap-report-2022
[5] https://www.iea.org/reports/global-status-report-for-buildings-and-construction-2019

The Body of the Southern European Landscape

According to models which predict the course of overheating and climate change in the near future, the European South -and particularly the Mediterranean- are hotspots. (pic.1) Braudel's (1992) depiction of our shared sea, landscapes and Mediterranean civilizations may become the seminal narrative to return to in order to reconstruct the beauty and the meaning of the European South – in case the dire climate predictions are proven true.

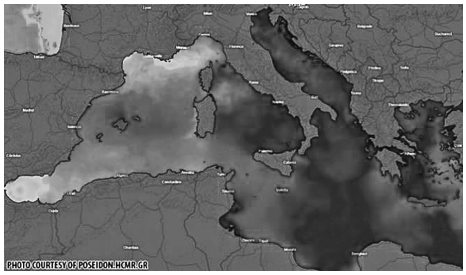

Image 1. The Mediterranean hotspot https://bilyonaryo.com/2023/07/21/heat-struck-mediterranean-is-climate-change-hot-spot/food-nature/ med hotspot (last visited 25/3/2024)

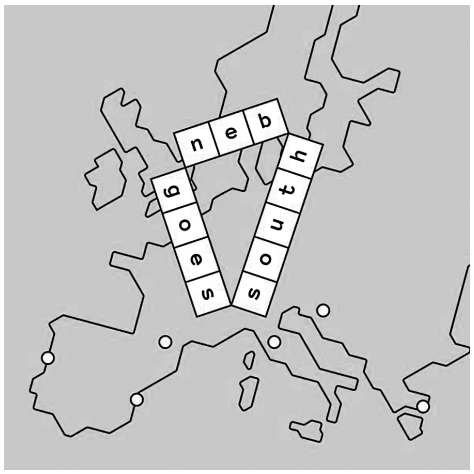

Image 2. https://www.up.pt/neb-goes-south/

Within this framework, the sessions of the Athens "NEB goes SOUTH" event[6] (pic.2) invited students, architects, designers, engineers, geographers, sociologists and other scientists and artists to engage in dialogue on landscape as the natural and cultural birthplace of architecture and inhabitable space. Landscape and architecture were investigated as vital components of well-being and a sense of freedom stemming from the climate and the prolonged life outdoors in many areas of the European South. Natural environment, local materials and landscape were also discussed as the treasures of the Southern European cultural continuum where inherent values of heritage and anonymous architecture are preserved.

Landscape is investigated in its multitude and intrinsic nature, as imaginary locus, mindscape and landform. In its complex materiality, landscape emerges as a living entity and as matter which is equally endangered by climate change and overheating as every other material subject. As embodied place, landscape supersedes the way it has been traditionally observed - as "tableau vivant" or area that can be enveloped by the human gaze as "landskip" (Ingegnoli 2002: 329).

[6] https://www.up.pt/neb-goes-south/wp-content/uploads/sites/710/2021/07/unnamed-file-scaled.jpg , https://www.up.pt/neb-goes-south/designing-with-the-landscape/

During the Athens "NEB goes SOUTH" sessions landscape was discussed as the earthy entity that defines architectural design through its form and imprints of natural forces (wind, erosion). Greek architect Agni Couvelas takes hanging cliffs and Bernoulli principles into her design for the House of the Winds on the island of Santorini. Architect Patricia Guaita proposes ways of building and knowledge exchange that broadens our understanding of how the built environment, sustainability and development are linked to a local context. Architect Bouki Babalou-Noukaki. (pic 3)

delves deeper into locus, interpreting the present day Philopappos Hill based on its earthy layers which contain history within invisible landscapes. Paulo Farinha-Marcques focuses on the biophysical systems which are constantly changing with an everlasting cycle of life and death, as access to nature close to our dwellings is a challenge motivated by the multisensory experience of the diversity of life. Anaïs Leger-Smith establishes the main principles that generate biodiversity within urban fabrics. Both Farinha-Marques and Leger-Smith reiterate that humans are not the only inhabitants on earth and say that design should move towards that end.

Image 3. (from left to right) The House of the Winds (A.Couvelas), Open City (P.Guaita), Philopappou Hill (B.Babalou)

Landscape increasingly becomes the framework within which climate change and its tangible consequences can be perceived, particularly because landscape amounts to a merger of natural and manmade elements and forms. Furthermore, as it is intertwined with outdoor living and the mild climatic conditions of Southern Europe, it can directly be seen as our shared living space. As many such landscapes are now threatened by overheating and draught, it becomes urgent to propose strategies for staying –despite the outcomes of climate change. As noted before, most heritage cannot be preserved without locus and therefore we are called to do everything we can to adapt to heritage sites and maintain the cultural memories of place.

Staying as Site Adaptation

Climate change, by disrupting our equilibrium, may result in changes that make daily life harsh. Furthermore, climate change may bring dramatic change in the form and consistency of our environments. Rising seas due to overheating, for example, could change the way maps and coastlines are drawn. Shorelines are very significant for the cultures of Southern Europe and the Mediterranean as ports, cities and maritime infrastructure have developed along the seashore over the centuries. A large number of heritage sites are to be found on this borderline between land and sea. How would climate change affect landscape and heritage?

Upon completing its first cycle, the NEBgS program was distinguished by the European NEB organizers and hence continued as the NEBgS Lab[7]. Within the scope of NEBgS's educational role, a Blended Intensive Program (BIP) entitled "Designing with the Landscape" was organized by the School of Architecture NTUA, with the partner Schools of Architecture of Porto, Valencia, Bologna and Zagreb.

Students of Architecture investigated traditional inhabitation forms of the Aegean which are inspired and directly linked to landscape. The program encouraged learning and dialogue on landscape as the natural and cultural birthplace of architecture and inhabitable space.

The course took place on the Greek island of Milos, known for its 'syrmata', the small fishermen settlements and their lined up 'boat houses' on the shoreline. *(pic. 4)* Where land and sea meet small spaces -usually carved into volcanic soil (toffo)- are just big enough to contain a boat and the very essentials for a stayover. The owners of boathouses traditionally kept their domiciles up the hill and were using the 'syrmata' for fishing and short stays.

[7] https://new-european-bauhaus.europa.eu/get-inspired/inspiring-projects-and-ideas/neb-lab-neb-goes-south_en

Image 4. Boathouses (syrmata) in Klima, picture by R. Lava

The name of the residences called 'syrmata' in Greek, came from the word "σύρω" [syro] which means "drag" and indicates the fact that the fishermen were dragging their boats into these houses. Originally the fishermen were using natural caves that existed ın the landscape of the coastline as a hybrid space between cave and storage space in order to protect their belongings. Later they closed these caves with big, heavy wooden doors and claimed them as their properties. Slowly, as residents were appropriating the natural landscape as their own, more and more fishermen came down from the villages and built new spaces from bricks, rock or cement as expansions of the caves, creating bigger storages. Fishermen used to live in these houses during the fishing period. There is a variety of typologies for these houses and the settlements as well. (pic. 5) For years the boathouses were descredited because of their lack of basic human comforts and amenities such as electrical power, water etc. Nowadays, they are being exploited by their owners as Airbnb houses that yield a significant income for each family.

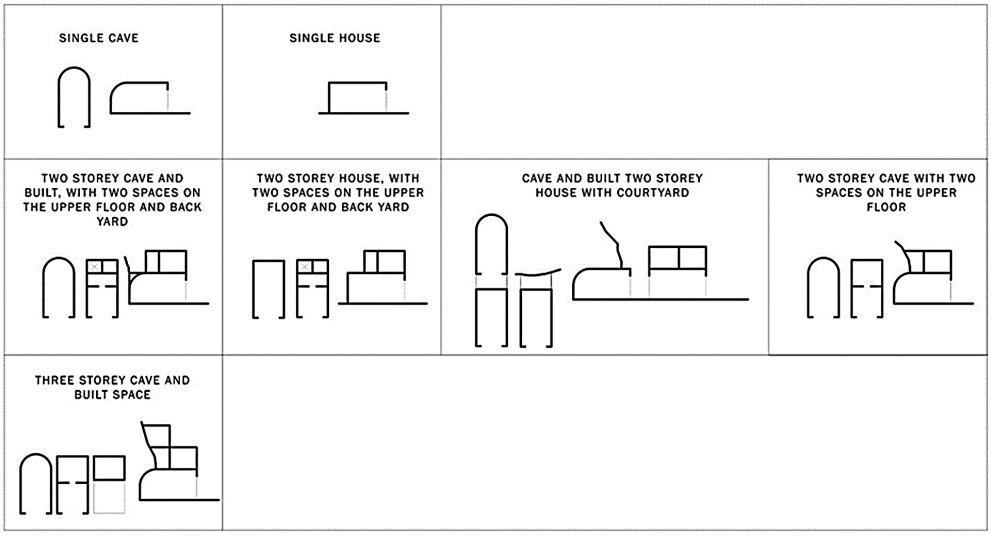

Image 5. Boathouse typologies in Klima, Kavyri, Kovaiou (1995)

Studying these primitive spaces on the sea evokes the contemporary condition summarized as "On Edge", bringing to mind the following states of inhabitation:

- Living 'in-between' as many modern nomads do no matter where they are
- Living precariously, without roots or stability
- The title "On Edge" also refers to climate change and an unforeseen future for shorelines and landscapes.

Will this coastline be the same in 2050? Will climate change make the heatwaves so impossible that humans will crave for a permanent contact with the sea?

During the course, possible outcomes and inhabitation strategies were investigated within the framework of climate change prediction models and under the condition of staying in situ and preserving the traditional boathouses at Klima, Schinopi, Mandrakia and Fyropotamos.

One such prediction model for the Aegean foresees that the sea will rise and cover 0,50 m of the shores in Mykonos by 2050. Such a development could drastically change shorelines and traditional settlements, like the fishermen domiciles along the coast of Milos.

Predicting the future –or even more provocatively, designing the future – is both, evidence based and poetic, as well as speculative. Students of architecture, presented with traditional boat houses on the delineation of land and sea, were challenged to put the future in the language of spatial design. The four projects briefly presented below do exactly that: after surveying and evaluating traditional enclosures of inhabitation on the shores of Milos, they put such landforms into perspective.

The project entitled "The Sewing of Penelope" employs myth as metaphor in order to negotiate the relationship between land and sea. A reconciliation between the two takes time and it takes form as filtered space between private and public. The shoreline is the theater of such a reconciliation, as the myth of the return of Ulysses to Penelope tells.

"The Garden of Milo's Delights" produces an imaginative atlas of Milos as a tool to record all memories, objects, fauna, flora, geology, ideas and more. The Atlas is a way to celebrate the island's diversity and richness and preserve them for the future generations. Against dire climate change predictions, settlements and inhabitants adjust to rising waters by surrendering and improvising. The will to go on is there and it defies all reality checks.

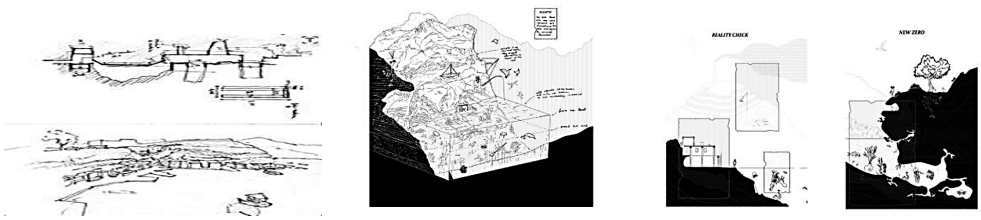

Image 6. (from left to right) The Sewing of Penelope, Silva Costa H., Borras A., Salemme L., Smadilo N., Tsakiri S., The Garden of Milo's Delights, Turchi A., Kuhn B., Fragouli E., Polan F., Lopez S.

"Speculations" brings to the front reality's impermanence, especially in view of climate change. The project's vision spans into a future of 500 years ahead from now and describes the submergence of civilization. Maintaining everyday life companions, like cat pets, and familiar objects such as laundry lines, the project speaks of the passage of time as an organic process of becoming.

"The Landscape Between Us" sees salvation in the activation of networks among places uphill and the traditional sites along the shore. Inland communities, social hierarchies, infrastructure and circulation paths establish a network which is expansive and sustaining of the identity of place. The future is exorcised by connectivity on both, tangible and intangible levels.

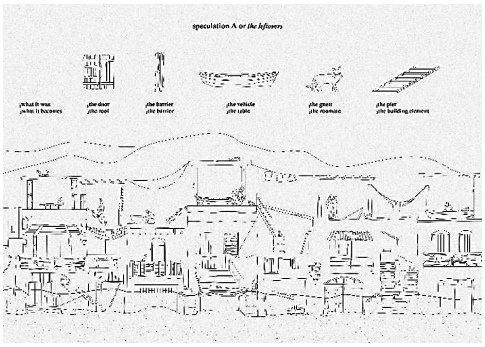

Image 7. (from left to right) Speculations, Kapetaniou A., Maseres A., Ravliec T., Benfatto F., The Landscape between us, Biscotto G., Lopez J., Maffi M., Stragka N.

Conclusions

Landscape can facilitate a wide scope of spatial interpretations and investigations, offering a tool to measure climate change models against heritage preservation principles. Landscape, as defined within the Southern European and Mediterranean territory, is the foremost agent for bringing history, culture and material riches into perspective. Heritage and collective memory protection coincide with site adaptation, a task made hard by projected impacts of climate change. The future of traditional settings which combine natural and manmade values needs to be assessed in both ways, pragmatically and poetically.

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Abstract

The paper presents successive stages, manifestos and educational experiments of the program "The New European Bauhaus goes South", which brought together six schools of architecture in the South of Europe (Porto, Valencia, Toulouse, Bologna, Zagreb and Athens). Landscape in the South of Europe supersedes its image and picturesque dimension and establishes itself as a full-bodied material entity which hosts daily life and defines design. At the same time, landscape guarantees the intangible aspects of our shared Southern European culture. Landscape as delineation – as shoreline in the Mediterranean- offers vital clues to prediction models and speculations and can absorb perceptions of the future.

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