

CITIES IN TRANSITION

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Nepravishta, F. and Maliqari, A. (eds.) (2019) *Cities in Transition. Sustainability, Formal and Informal Settlements, Memory of Places* (La scuola di Pitagora editrice: Naples).

The dense volume “Cities in transition” collects the proceedings of the 1st IFAU conference organised in 2017 in Tirana, Albania, by the Faculty of Architecture and Urbanism, Polytechnic University of Tirana and Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture, University of Pristine “Hasan Prishtina”, with the care of Florian Nepravishta and Andrea Maliqari under the direction of Scientific Committee. The event attracted scholars and researchers from the southern Adriatic area, and this fact reflects the prevalence of contributions dealing with topics centred on the territories of Albania, Kosovo and the Italian regions of the southern Adriatic, with some significant investigations on the Campania region. However, the absence of any indication about to the affiliation of the contributors makes it difficult, except in broad terms, to draw comparisons and identify adjacencies or divergences between the methodological approaches and research horizons of the different schools of origin.

The conference focused on the transformative processes affecting cities, which in the curatorial programme are observed through three distinct - and heterogeneous - themes. The first is that of sustainability, the abused *mantra* of the Third Millennium, through which an attempt is made to identify systems and practices for a future possibly favourable to the survival of Man. Similar to the vagueness of the term chosen for this section, the contributions

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condensed here suffer from an excessive heterogeneity of approaches, disciplines, scales and methods of investigation. Some of them, although at times worthy of interest for the originality of the results they present, can't discard the trap of technicalistic specialisation, in order to bring the results of the studies undertaken back to the thematic and argumentative synthesis that a multidisciplinary meeting would require. The result is a *Hodge-Podge* that renders increases the sense of disorientation and loss of the argumentative centre. The second part of the volume brings together the contributions that investigate the relationships between formal and informal settlements and their mutual interference within the cities. Here, at last, the scope of the investigation enjoys greater homogeneity, intercepting contributions that address urban design issues in a dimension ranging from the scale of the building to that of the piece of a city. Finally, the third section deals with the theme of heritage understood as a condenser of memories of places, a material deposit of stories and micro-histories capable of contributing to the construction of a spirit of identity and imaginaries useful for the future. This final chapter is the one from which the greatest compactness and thematic clarity shines through. Here, the contributions of the various authors build a variegated kaleidoscope on the theme of heritage, in which the changing dimension and meaning of the theme does not become an obstacle, but rather a red thread capable of holding together an articulated set of possible interpretations.

From the succession of contributions collected in the three sections of the volume emerges the idea of a city understood as a work open to continuous rewriting, to an incessant construction, as Ambrogio Lorenzetti already depicted it in the Allegory of Good Government in Siena, through partly random and partly causal transformative processes that involve and bind together the living organisms that inhabit or pass through it and its habitat. These transformations are determined by complex systems in which, however, the categories of construction and building demolition are only two of the many factors at play. In its incessant transition, which in the Mediterranean basin continually pits ancient and modern against each other, the real city will have to prepare its body to face history, which is waiting to form its new ideal city in the post-pandemic era.