

# A REPORT ON THE 2020 ISAR INTERNATIONAL ARCHITECTURE SUMMER SCHOOL IN ABRUZZO

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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents an account of an architectural summer school that was carried out successfully during the 2020 pandemic using remote communications platforms to communicate ideas and knowledge and share design strategies. Hosted by the International Society for Archaeology, Art and Architecture of Rome it brought together experts, tutors and architecture students from various international universities. The focus was the medieval town of Castelvechio Calvisio in Italy's Abruzzo region and its surrounding rural landscape. During the ten-day workshop reported on in this paper a complete digital survey and design proposals and scales from landscape to interior design were produced.

*Keywords: remote learning, Abruzzo, urban morphology, digital survey, medieval urbanism*

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### International Summer School

In the summer of 2020, despite the global pandemic, 33 students and over 20 faculty and tutors connected minds online and in person around the topic of rural urbanism. Our focus was the village of Castelvechio Calvisio in the Abruzzo region, in central Italy's Apennine mountains. The program was coordinated by Alessandro Camiz, Phd., Professor at Ozyegin University and Tom Rankin, architect and program director for ISAR, the International Society for Archaeology, Art and Architecture of Rome. It was carried out by ISAR in partnership with Ozyegin University in Istanbul, Sapienza University in Rome, the University of Florence, California Polytechnic San Luis Obispo, the Politecnico di Torino, the University of Pescara just to name a few. A previous summer school program which took place a month earlier focused on archaeology and architecture in the Roman Forum.

The International Architecture Summer School in Abruzzo is part of an ongoing initiative by ISAR aimed at revitalising the Baronia di Carapelle through the institution of a remote laboratory for research on village urbanism. Since 2007 Professor Rankin has organized programs for architecture students and faculty of American universities in the Abruzzo

Figure 1. Laurentius de Voltolina, *Liber ethicorum* des Henricus de Alemannia, 14th century illustration.



<sup>1</sup>*This remote experience followed a similar methodology put into practice a month earlier in a program in a very different context, the Roman Forum, but with many of the same participant.*

and worked with international institutions to bring attention to the region's neglected cultural and natural resources.

### Virtual Learning Environment

The summer school was inaugurated with an opening conference on 17 July 2020, held co-hosted remotely on Zoom by Alessandro Camiz in Istanbul and Tom Rankin in Abruzzo. After institutional greetings by the Mayor of Castelvechio Calvisio and representatives of partner institutions, a dozen speakers presented papers on topics from seismic vulnerability to urban morphology. The rich schedule of lectures continued each day throughout the program in parallel with hands-on activities such as digital and hand drawing exercises.

A variety of platforms were used to achieve the program's pedagogic aims: the main lecture hall was on Zoom, augmented by Facebook Live to share the work with a larger audience. Workshops took place in Google Meet, virtual "drawing boards" resided in Jamboard, and Google Drive served as a library and media room. Another dedicated Meet room was set up as the cafe for informal conversations. The platform ArtSteps provided a virtual gallery space for a final exhibition (to be launched this summer) and Padlet was used as a bulletin board.

Together these virtual platforms provided an analagous spatial experience, a sense of gathering in a space together to share ideas and experiences. To administer the summer school online<sup>1</sup>, Professor Camiz went back to the roots of the university in the middle ages when different profession

Figure 2. Partial Group Screenshot during Zoom Sessions in the virtual Aula Magna Enrico Guidoni.



organized together in unions like the “Universitas Studiorum.” In the medieval model, as illustrated in 14th century by Laurentius de Voltolina, in the *Liber ethicorum* des Henricus de Alemannia (Fig. 1) Camiz describes how “it is all happening inside a classroom. We have a “cattedra”, the raised seat, not a seat of power but a seat of culture, raised so everyone can see it. On that model we based our learning environment, like a building represented in plan, with a facade represented by the syllabus, and rooms for each activity.” (Camiz, 2020)

Videos shot by Tom Rankin with the small team on site in Abruzzo in July served to bring program participants around the world a virtual experience of the region. Rankin and others visited and documented each of the towns of the Baronia di Carapelle, sharing the edited footage in the virtual media repository (Google Drive).

Video also made it possible to bring in experts like economist Fabrizio Barca who praised the project with these words: “The mixture that you are evolving with the project is the exact mix we need, we call it a mixture of “saperi” (knowledge); people bring knowledge from outside, then there is the knowledge that is imbedded in territory, and when these two speak to each other you have a bridge...” (Barca 2020)

Architect Corrado Marsigli joined Tom Rankin and Yvonne Mazurek in a narrated walk through Castelvevchio which became a valuable recorded history lesson and conversation about key challenges in the region. In Santo Stefano di Sessanio Rankin met with Daniele Kihlgren who founded Sextantio, an experimental Albergo Diffuso that CNN recently called “the perfect pandemic retreat.” (Di Donato 2020) The survey team in Castelvevchio, led by Prof. Giorgio Verdiani, carried out exhaustive digital documentation . The resulting data was shared practically in real time with the students and

<sup>2</sup> The Fabrizio Barca interview and others transmitted during the summer school are available online at [www.isarome.org](http://www.isarome.org).

<sup>3</sup> The digital survey took place not just “on the ground” - a complete drone survey was also produced.

Figure 3. Sectional view of Castelvevchio Calvisio produced by University of Florence Digital Survey Team, July 2020.



used in the design workshops. The resulting point cloud and drone footage will be of value for the projects that ISAR and others carry out in years to come. The remote participants participated in almost every step; only the delicious meals provided by Trattoria Quattro Ville and (other) were limited to local participants.

### Survey and Design Workshops

Early in the summer school students were organized in five workshop teams named after significant urban thinkers: Caniggia, Radovic, Monge, Goethe, and Sereni.

The Monge team, named for Gaspard Monge, the inventor of descriptive geometry, was led by Professor Giorgio Verdiani with Andrea Pasquali, Stephane Giraudeau, and Francesco Trimboli. They oversaw the digital survey and elaboration of the point cloud. In just a few days they produced an enormous quantity of data including digital 2D and 3D drawings, the basis for further research in years to come.

The team named after Gianfranco Caniggia, a student of Saverio Muratori and a key figure in urban morphology, was led by Professor Camiz with Ozge Ozkuvanci and Giulia Bertola. Their focus was urban form and design, specifically rethinking the typology of the traditional house to meet changing needs.

Professor Darko Reba of the Novi Sad School of Architecture in Belgrade with Olivera Markovic and Fabrizio Natta led the workshop dedicated to urban theorist Ranko Radović. Their design research involved rethinking the programming of

*Figure 4. Digital survey team at work in Castelvechio Calvisio (Ph. T. Rankin).*



urban voids and abandoned structures in Castelvechio.

The Goethe team, named after the German writer whose commentary on Italy has been invaluable, was led by Professor Tom Rankin of ISAR and California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo with John Barbour, Francesca Ronco. This team investigated the town on several levels: cultural reactivation through civic engagement and art, the transformation through parasite architecture of damaged structures and the revitalisation of the town through the creation of a permanent research laboratory for ISAR.

The last team, led by Professor Massimo Angrilli of the Gabriele d'Annunzio University of Chieti/Pescara, was dedicated to the landscape historian and partisan politician Emilio Sereni. Their work addressed the ecological systems of the Baronia di Carapelle with an aim to reconnect the towns to the landscape.

<sup>4</sup> *International Summer School in Architecture, Abruzzo Video ISAR* <https://youtu.be/26rZURLTjtQ>

### Conclusions and Future Plans

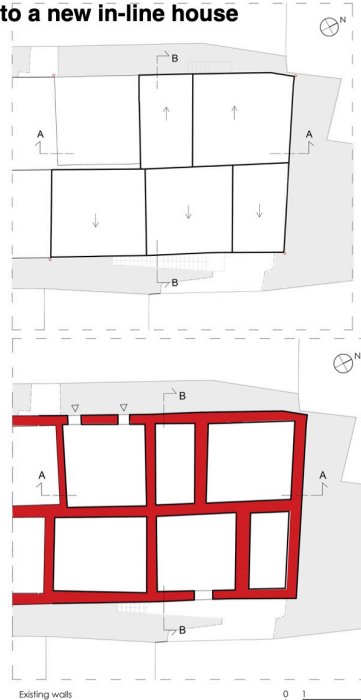
The summer school concluded with the presentation and discussion of research and design proposals from the five teams. Students and tutors were joined by distinguished architectural critics for an intensive reflection on the proposals and the issues they addressed. Like the mid-

*Figure 5. House-C in Castelvechio Calvisio, project for the transformation of 4 ½ pseudo-row houses into an in-line house, tutor Özge Özkuvancı, students Li Qingfang, Ece Alkan, 2020.*

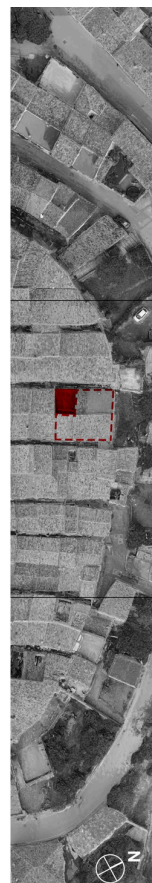


## house-C

4 ½ pseudo-row houses merged into a new in-line house



Özge Özkuvancı, Li Qingfang, Ece Alkan



reviews, the session was carried out in video-conference with students presenting their work through screen-sharing, and critics commenting by video and simultaneous annotation of drawings.

Professor Gabriel Feld of the Rhode Island School of Design commented on the landscape presentation as “a very inspiration thing for work at different scales,” (Feld 2020) Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, one of the founders of New Urbanism, observed that “clearly the fact that this group went from the territory to the building is a wonderful achievement.” (Plater-Zyberk 2020) And Professor Jan Gadeyne, archaeologist, spoke of the need for “the integration of the various elements, the multiple facets that compose a whole and that has to be presented as a whole...” (Gadeyne 2020).

The final reviews — and in fact all of the summer school activities — were recorded and archived for asynchronous viewing and future publication. A short video documentary has already been published and received international attention. The intention on the part of the organizers is to organize an exhibition and a publication about the results of this summer school in time for the inauguration of the second season in July 2021.

Figure 6. Slide from presentation of Goethe team led by T. Rankin.



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