

BREAKING BARRIERS

Giancarlo De Carlo from CIAM to ILAUD

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Abstract

After World War II, the inflexibility characterizing the first CIAM congresses soon become unsustainable, provoking the criticism of Team 10, active from 1953 for a reform of the congress. The participated discourse of the group, "considering the characteristics of society and individuals", would be inherited, years later, by the International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design (ILAUD), founded by Giancarlo De Carlo in 1976. The laboratory, together with the magazine Spazio e Società (1978-2001), called back to De Carlo's operative militancy in Team 10, expressing a brand-new approach to urban studies. As De Carlo himself affirmed: "Some messages of Team 10 have been gathered in ILAUD [...] but ILAUD and Team 10 are different things". Indeed, the laboratory strongly pushed on the dimension of the project and on the students' collective contribution. The project was no more an end point but became the tool through which every possible solution to the problem could be tested. Courses at ILAUD were given by international professionals like Aldo Van Eyck, Peter Smithson, Renzo Piano, Sverre Fehn and Balkrishna Vithaldas Doshi, some already in Team 10. The laboratory formed many young students, and several would have become internationally-recognized professionals -e.g. Eric Miralles, Carme Pinos, Santiago Calatrava, Mario Cucinella-. The paper wants to consider the contribution of ILAUD to urban studies and didactics through the examination of the rich material (annual publications, posters, projects, photos, etc.) collected in the archive of the Biblioteca Poletti in Modena. The aim is to point out how ILAUD represented a turning point in the formation of the post-CIAM generation and a certain reference for the architectural practices of the XXI century.

Keywords: CIAM; Giancarlo De Carlo; ILAUD; Spazio e Società; Team 10.

The year 2019 marks the centennial of the birth of Giancarlo De Carlo (1919-2005)¹. Among the most influential figures in the panorama of Italian architectural culture, De Carlo attended the last *Congrès internationaux d'architecture moderne* and led the International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design (ILAUD), a pioneering international course in architecture, till his death in 2005. While starting a new discourse on reuse and site-specific in architecture, the experiment of ILAUD presented a new approach to didactics and, with its international appeal, anticipated the later success of student exchange programs².

This paper aims at outlining the theoretical, political, didactical and professional stimuli which contributed to the construction of ILAUD, anchoring its origin to the experiences and the criticism of De Carlo within the context of CIAM. Surely influenced by the international dialogue of the congresses, the program of the laboratory delved deeper into the hints of the objections to the CIAM '59 and humanistically fostered the connection between the urban project and its specific cultural context.



Figure 1. Giancarlo De Carlo in Urbino during the ILAUD Residential Course 1981. Urbino, Facoltà di Magistero.

¹ On this occasion the Association of Architects of Milan will open the exhibition “Giancarlo De Carlo e l’ILAUD: una frontiera mobile” (May-December 2019).

² The Erasmus program would have been created in 1987.

Although De Carlo's contribution to CIAM has already been indagated largely (Molinari, 2003; Tuscano, 2003; Heuvel & Risselada, 2005; Vidotto, 2006), few lines are here requested for the sake of completeness. Not wishing to reduce the complexity of a figure as multifaceted as De Carlo, it is appropriate to collocate his experience with CIAM in the context of the criticism of the last Congress. Its prodromes were already palpable during the ninth CIAM congress in Aix-en-Provence (1953), which signed the participation of a new generation of architects, as Shadrach Woods (1923-1973), Alison Margaret Smithson (1928-1993), Peter Denham Smithson (1923-2003), Aldo van Eyck (1918-1999), Georges Candilis (1913-1995) and Jacob Berend Bakema (1914-1981). They would gather in the well-known Team 10, the team in charge of organizing the 10th edition of CIAM, to be held in Dubrovnik in 1956. Already in 1953, the future Team 10 members started to complain about the blind rationalist approach of the Congress, arguing that in CIAM the vision for the city had lost its human dimension. The opposition of the group underlined the necessity of a new moment of self-criticism for CIAM. The demand for a renewal brought the congress secretary Sigfried Giedon (1888-1968) to ask council members to present a young architect from their own Country to be introduced in the debate.

In response, Ernesto Nathan Rogers (1909-1969) and Lodovico Barbiano di Belgiojoso (1909-2004) of Italian office B.B.P.R., in charge of the Italian team, decided to bring the young Giancarlo De Carlo to the 1955 meeting, despite knowing his objections to the intransigent action of the Modern Movement. Indeed, as editor-in-chief (1953-1965) of *Casabella Continuità*, Rogers had already invited De Carlo to write on the magazine, where the young architect had launched a campaign against formalism in modern architecture (De Carlo, 1953). His editorial line had to constitute one of the three theoretical directions of the publication, along with the theme of prefabrication, presented by Marco Zanuso, and that of 'continuity' in architecture, examined by Rogers (Molinari, 2003, pp. 99-102). The accusation of De Carlo against formalism was above all about the detachment of the Modern Movement from the freedom and the coherence of civilization, which was translated into an allegation of the indifference of architecture to cultural and historical contexts. His articles claimed how top-down

and utopic projects, once allied in the fight against academism, had then lost the contact with the complexity of the real world, overlooking the relation between humans and their space.

The position expressed in the articles revealed the unavoidable adherence of the young architect to the politics of Team 10. In coherence with his criticism, in 1957 De Carlo stepped back from the editorial board of the magazine. In his letter of resignation he lamented the continuity with the Modern Movement in the editorial line prompted by Rogers. He remarked, above all, how in Italy *'the affirmation of a modern language is not at all a positive result, since today everybody can use it: the serious architects as the philistines, and above all, the property speculation, which finds it comfortable, quick and cheap'* (De Carlo, 1957).

The vision proposed in *Casabella Continuità* offered a prelude of the fervent discourse that De Carlo brought at the Otterlo congress of 1959. In Netherlands, after presenting his project for a public housing complex in Matera, he summarized the history of the International Congresses³. The excursus was concluded by the assertion that *'Ciam had died long ago'*, accompanied by the desire to develop a new international organization to keep alive the debate on architecture (Mumford, 2000, p. 261). The dispute clearly expressed the new wind agitating CIAM: the contrast which arose in Otterlo turned the possibility of a cease of the congresses into a tangible solution (Newman, 1961).

Extinguished the experience of CIAM and lost the international breath of a review as *Casabella Continuità*, De Carlo tried to materialize his visions in a new form. ILAUD would have been the occasion for it to happen. In the middle were the years of the youth protest. De Carlo looked with attention at the new student movements, whose enquiries gave new fuel to the social theories of Team 10. He thought that their request for a revolution in the academic hierarchy had to be answered with a change in the relation between the city and the university. The theme emerged in his projects for the university campuses of Urbino (1960-66), Dublin (1963-64) and Pavia (1970-76) (Zuddas, 2015). The political basis of their

³ The project for Matera received the disapproval of Peter Smithson for not having looked back to the genuine architectural context of the town.

spatial results was instead suggested in the pamphlet "La Piramide Rovesciata" (The Overturned Pyramid), published in April 1968, one month before the Parisian May. In the text De Carlo accused the distance between professors and students and denounced the impossibility for the latter to participate, decide and discuss on an institution which had been created for them (De Carlo, 1968).

Such discontent nourished the need to build a new tool, a barrier-free space: an institution free from formalism, from the nation-centric theories on architecture, from the sterile hierarchy of teaching, from the scholastic negligence towards the human environment. The International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design was born.

The idea of ILAUD was conceived by Giancarlo De Carlo along with Carlo Bo (1911-2001), rector of the University of Urbino from 1947 to his death. De Carlo was the director, Connie Etra Occhialini (1951-) the secretary. Among the main sources of inspiration there were definitely the CIAM summer schools (1949-1956), held in Venice from 1952 to 1956. Their global discourse consistently influenced the international atmosphere of ILAUD, which involved six architecture schools in Europe and the USA. After a long correspondence with several universities, the group of six was formed and the representatives met in Milan in April 1976. The Milan meeting was actually a reproduction of the organizing assemblies of CIAM: in that occasion the leading board was set up, problems were discussed, and a final document with goals was redacted.

Activities at ILAUD consisted of two programs: the Residential Course, with a duration of about two months, and the Permanent Activities, two short periods before and after the residential course, used respectively to gather preparatory materials for the design phase and to collect the final works (Occhialini, 2005). The methodological approach to didactics encouraged the removal of the traditional division between students and professors, promoting research groups where *'everyone would have a role as a protagonist, the only distinction being that some would be senior, other junior researchers'* (1st Residential Course Urbino 1976, from now on *Yearbook 1976, 1977*, p. 6).



Figure 2. The manifest of ILAUD

The first Residential Course of ILAUD took place in Urbino from 6 September to 31 October 1976. In later years the course would have moved to other cities, such as Siena, San Marino and Venice⁴. According to the final agreement with universities, the students attending the first edition were individuated by professors. They came from the Escuela Tecnica Superior de Arquitectura of Barcelona, the Katholieke Universiteit of Leuven, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the Oslo School of Architecture, The University of Urbino and the Eidgenossische Technische Hochschule of Zurich. English was chosen as a common language of communication. The objectives of the course were summarized by De Carlo in a report, which was published in the opening of the first yearbook

⁴ From 1976 to 1981 the laboratory was based in Urbino, then from 1981 to 1990 in Siena, from 1992 to 1993 again in Urbino, from 1994 to 1996 in San Marino, from 1997 to 2003 in Venice. In recent years, under the presidency of Paolo Ceccarelli, ILAUD has organized formative events in collaboration with the University of Ferrara.

(*Yearbook 1976, 1977*). The main goals highlighted by the director were: the experimentation of new methodologies and design techniques; the creation of an international net of contacts among students and professors; the opportunity for universities to compare their didactic approaches; the opening of a channel for cultural exchange between universities.

The backgrounds of students, coming from diverse contexts and of various ages, reflected the difference among the didactic methods of schools, representing the existing debate between the political duties and the professional competences of architects. Admitting that schools were usually oriented towards one of the two extremes and rescuing his critic towards Formalism, De Carlo conceived the laboratory as a powerful machine to break the barriers between these two static fronts (*Yearbook 1976, 1977, p. 9*).

In order to achieve this aim, students were to be provided with the right instruments for developing a critical consciousness. Magazines, for instance, were considered by De Carlo a fundamental tool to appreciate different approaches to the architectural problem. That was the reason why he wrote letters to the editorial boards of international architecture magazines asking for some free issues to be donated to ILAUD. The faith in written texts, supposed to represent the current architectural debates, was already diffused in the cultural environment of CIAM. In 1949 "*Metron*" published the acts of the CIAM congress of Bergamo (*Metron 33/34, July/August 1949*), while in 1958 the Helsinki group of CIAM gave life to a brand-new review, "*Le Carré Bleu*". Few years after instituting ILAUD, in 1978, De Carlo took the direction of a bilingual Italo-English magazine, "*Spazio e Società - Space and Society*", which testifies his interest in the written medium. (Daidone, 2018)⁵.

At ILAUD the fecundity of the paper space was enhanced by the adoption of the magazine format both as a platform of shared knowledge between lecturers and as a frame for the final presentation of student works. From 1977 the *Bulletins* were printed: they constituted a collection of work programs, projects, researches

⁵ The magazine was born in 1975 as the translation of Henri Lefebvre and Anatol Kopp's French magazine "*Espaces et Sociétés*". De Carlo restarted the numeration and chose to publish new original articles.

and reports of the staff meetings which were sent to lecturers to keep them updated on the activities of the laboratory⁶. The *Yearbooks*, instead, contained a more detailed exposition of works produced during the previous years, combined with discussions on aims and on experienced criticalities, synopsis of lectures, descriptions of programs and trips. They served as an occasion of promotion of ILAUD among universities, as well as a witness of the end products of the research groups. Projects were represented by drawings, schemes and texts realized by students, sometimes together with members of the staff. If the first Yearbook for the 1976 course, published in 1977, was still pioneering, the following issues already showed a more structured organization⁷.

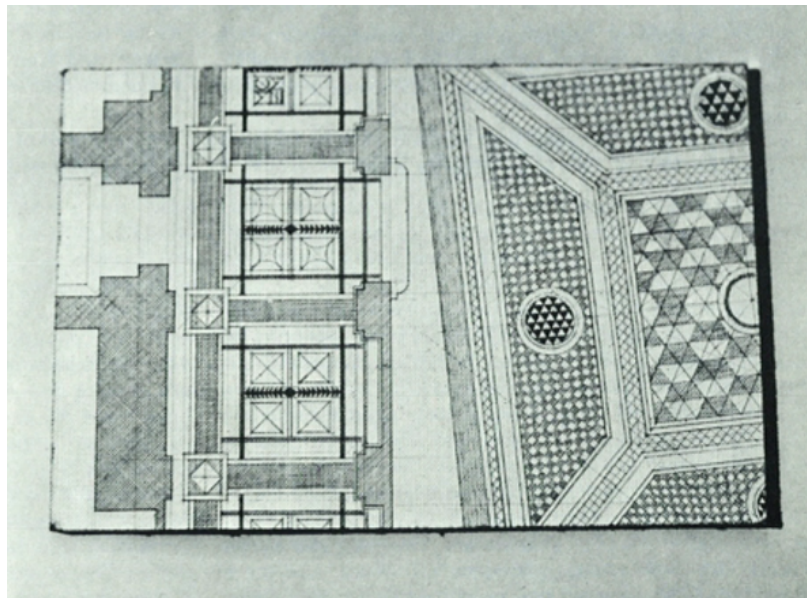


Figure 3. Drawing from *Discussion on participation and reuse*, by Marcià Codinachs and Enric Miralles, from *Yearbook 1977 (1978)*, p.127.

⁶ *Bollettini 1977-2005*. Modena, Biblioteca Luigi Poletti, International Laboratory of Architecture and Urban Design Archive 1975 – 2004, f. 1.

⁷ The index of the first issue listed the following entries: introduction; design topics; lectures and conversations; appendixes. Appendixes included documents, notes, criticism, list of participants, calendar, program, report and observations on the Milan meeting. On the second number: introduction, calendar, presentations of schools, seminars, design works, lectures.

Yearbooks even attest the names of people involved, since they contain for each year the lists of students, permanent staff and lecturers. Many recognized professionals can be found among them. During the first year among the lecturers there were Mario Botta (1943-), José Muntañola (1940-), Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926-2000), Dolf Schnebli (1928-2009) and Bernardo Secchi (1934-2014). In the 1977 edition among the visiting critics there were Jacob Bakema, Ludovico Quaroni (1911-1987) and Peter Smithson, among the students there were the promising Spanish Enric Miralles (1955-2000), Carme Pinós (1954-) and Josep Maria Montaner (1954-). The tradition of external architecture theorists, designers, figures from the political and civil society, called to lecture at ILAUD would have continued through the years⁸.

The invitation of Bakema and Smithson to the second residential course underlines the political debt of ILAUD to the theories of Team 10. Bakema spoke about "*Architecture based on energy-lines*", presenting his works and illustrating objectives and methods of his design (*Yearbook 1977, 1978, p. 154-155*). Peter Smithson, for his part, dealt with "*Risking more to the future: some further thoughts on connection; concerning narrative and change of organizational base*". The presence of history, embodied in masterpieces of architecture and art, such as the *Flagellation* of Piero della Francesca, was for the English architect the occasion of a deeper reflection on connections, trying to infuse "*both formal and narrative connection from the classical past into the industrial present*" (*Yearbook 1977, 1978 p. 163*). The year 1977 marked the first of a long series of lessons that Peter Smithson gave at ILAUD; from then he would participate every year with a lecture of his, actualizing the discourse of Team 10 (Occhialini 2016). He talked of different themes, whose eccentricity can only be evoked by some of the

⁸ Many recognized professionals were invited. Among them there were: in 1978 George Candilis, Carlo Doglio and José María García de Paredes; in 1979 Francesco Dal Co, Sverre Fehn, Renzo Piano, Santiago Calatrava and Aldo Van Eyck; in 1980 Leonardo Benevolo, Herman Hertzberger and Mario Manieri-Elia; in 1981 Charles Moore; in 1982 the physicist Giuliano Toraldo di Francia; in 1983 Ralph Erskine; in 1984 Edoardo Benvenuto and Lucien Kroll; in 1985 François Chaslin, José María García de Paredes, Lucien Kroll, Renzo Piano and Migueal Angel Roca; in 1986 Gae Aulenti, Reima Pietilä and Manfredo Tafuri; in 1987 Balkrishna Vithaldas Doshi; in 1988 Atelier 5, Charles Moore and Bernardo Secchi; in 1989 William J. R. Curtis, Georges Descombes and Aldo Van Eyck; in 1990 Herman Hertzberger; in 1991 Georges Descombes and Balkrishna Vithaldas Doshi; in 1992 Nezar AlSayyad; in 1993 Danilo Guerri and Ralph Erskine; in 1994 Franco Purini and the mayor of Naples Antonio Bassolino; in 1995 the anthropologist Franco La Cecla, Colin Stansfield Smith and Juhani Pallasmaa; in 1996 Rainer Mahlamäki; in 1997 Leonardo Benevolo, the astrophysicist Franco Pacini, Andrew Todd and Gino Valle; in 1998 the philosopher and mayor of Venice Massimo Cacciari.

titles: *"In Praise of Cupboard Doors"* (1979), *"The Masque and the Exhibition: Stages toward the Real"* (1981), *"Think of It as a Farm"* (1988), *"Sky"* (1994). The involvement of Aldo Van Heyck, George Candilis, Ralph Erskine, Herman Hertzberger and Reima Pietilä also strengthens the connection between ILAUD and Team 10, although a distinction of goals is required. Indeed, as declared by De Carlo:

Some messages of Team 10 have been collected in ILAUD... but ILAUD and Team 10 are different things. Goals and researches have been different... ILAUD was born and continues to be a laboratory, not only a place to discuss but above all a place to design all together⁹. (Bunčuga, 2000)

The last sentence points out the direct relation with design existing in the laboratory, the project being the final product of every discussion. If in Team 10 theoretical speculations often did not land to practical solutions, in ILAUD, instead, the project was supposed to be the inevitable responsive act of the architect, whose duty was to meet the requirements of society. The methodological approach to projects followed at ILAUD a peculiar track, that would have been defined as 'tentative design'. De Carlo intended it as a *'sequence of hypothesis to be explored not to reach univocal conclusions but to open solutions that can take a sense or another, according to the circumstances framing the problem, till reaching, through attempts and temptations, overall significative results'*¹⁰ (De Carlo, 1999). In other words, it stood for an anarchic conception of the architectural poietic, where the barriers of a rigid sequential production were destroyed by a multi-oriented tactic, implementing the intolerance of De Carlo towards the institutionalization of society and of architectural processes (Wood, 2018). The revolutionary spirit of ILAUD and its political implications were clearly stated by the involvement of non-violent activist Danilo Dolci, urban theorist Carlo Doglio and anarchic architect Colin Ward, who all lectured in the courses (Zardini, 1997).

⁹ Translation by the author.

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In accordance with the political substrate of ILAUD, the process of de-institutionalization of architecture required a conscious participation of people: “*architecture has become too important to be left to architects*” (De Carlo, 2005, p.11). The problem of participation in architecture was not only about how to consider the needs of people, in a patronising attitude; it was rather about finding a new design process in which people could feel the final project as something of their own (*Yearbook 1977*, 1978). The search for a participative method should not make one believe that external people and residents actively contributed to the projects of ILAUD. Such a direct participation would have required much more time than the few months available and it would have clashed against the inability of students to understand Italian. The only participative process that fitted timing was the final presentation, which was followed by a fertile discussion with population. The lack of direct communication with residents in the design phase was fixed through the supply of materials, prepared by the staff or produced during the permanent activities, which often included surveys and interviews.

Didactics at ILAUD pursued a ground-breaking approach, extraneous to the orthodoxy of universities. Due to his teaching experience, De Carlo was fully aware of the condition of didactics in Italian architecture faculties. As he explained in a public talk, he believed that the main risk of architecture courses was in the reduction of the modern language to mere graphism, devoid of its meaning (Baffa, 1994, p. 404)¹¹. His speech foretold the future deviation of architecture towards pure fashion.

According to De Carlo, participation was once again supposed to be the only medicine for the illness of architectural education, as tested through the experiment of ILAUD. Although being adjusted unceasingly, the laboratory was an extraordinary tool to introduce participative politics in the design process and to break the barriers of a formalistic attitude to architecture. ILAUD was the concretization of the revolutionary drives of its creator, who constantly looked for a mechanism to unhinge the polluted relation between space and society. As

¹¹ The talk was given at the national congress of FAIAM (Federazione delle Associazioni Italiane di Architettura Moderna) held in Milan in 1953.

stated by De Carlo in an impassioned article, published in 1969 on the magazine "Parametro":

A real metamorphosis is necessary to develop new characteristics in the practice of architecture and new behaviour patterns in its authors: therefore all barriers between builders and users must be abolished, so that building and using become two different parts of the same planning process (De Carlo, 2005, p. 11).

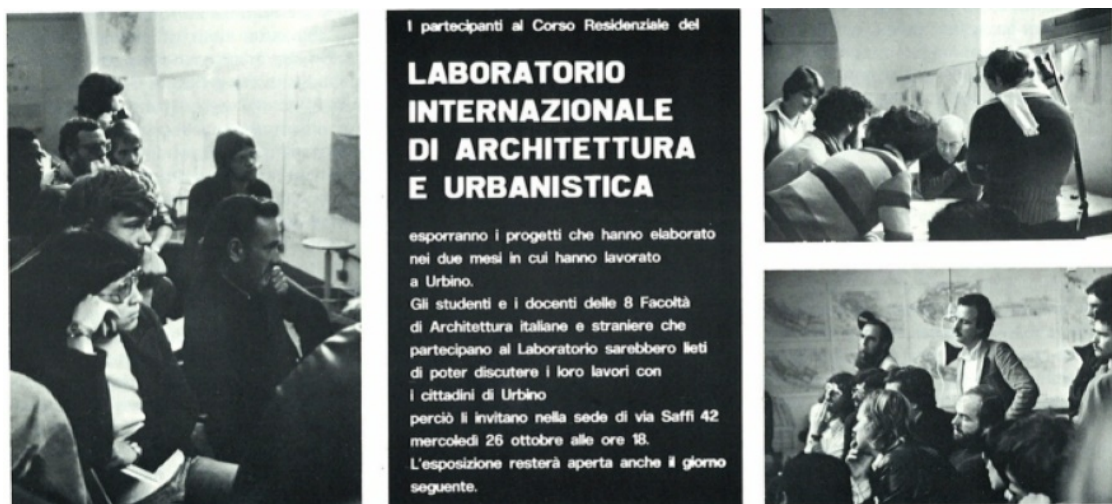


Figure 4. Poster for the exhibition of projects realized during the second Residential Course of ILAUD in 1977.

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