Attraverso Lecce.

Uno sguardo su una città media nel mezzogiorno per riconoscere diversi contesti socio-spaziali e transizioni possibili.

Un'opera nell'ambito di ricerca Urbanistica

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Università Iuav di Venezia SCUOLA DI DOTTORATO AMBITO URBANISTICA

ON SCENARIO

Acceleration, Scaling, Agency
PhD Seminar, 14–15 December 2023, Venice
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The On Scenario. Acceleration, Scaling, Agency PhD Seminar aims to spark – again – discussions around the object scenario by gathering experiences from diverse disciplines, while, on the other hand, it critically inquires about definitions and instrumentality of scenarios in contemporary Urbanism theory and practice. Opening to multiple approaches, the PhD Seminar tries to deconstruct gears and cogs that the scenario incorporates when employed to disseminate images, figures, and narratives of possible futures. On Scenario is a collection of vantage points in an act of disassembly and reassembly.

The urbanism school of Università Iuav di Venezia has a long-lasting and consolidated tradition of investigating territories through the lens of scenarios, as reflected by numerous publications and doctoral dissertations – even in recent years. The goal of the On Scenario PhD Seminar is to endure the established practice of opening up reflections and discussions to international doctoral students and schools while creating a robust network of studies and research on scenarios.

The On Scenario. Acceleration, Scaling, Agency PhD Seminar is structured into three tracks of investigation - Acceleration, Scaling, and Agency, and a final session of discussions synthesizing the participants’ and keynotes' contributions. The selected PhD students will have the opportunity to present their research to engaged international discussants and structured members of the Urbanism curriculum doctoral board at Università Iuav di Venezia.

The On Scenario. Acceleration, Scaling, Agency PhD Seminar represents the culmination of the year-long program of events curated by the Urbanism curriculum of the School of Doctoral Studies at Università Iuav di Venezia. From early Spring to late Fall 2023, the program will explore the three identified scenario components: acceleration – the matter of time, scaling – the matter of dimension, and agency – the matter of agents.
Acceleration as line of inquiry aims to question the scenario as a tool for confronting speed in urban design processes, as opposed to conventional space and time divides.

What if... A renovated space-time relation will become the key to test and learn adaptive strategies to address socio-ecological urgencies?

In kinematics, acceleration is a vector quantity representing the velocity variation in the unit of time. More generally, in physics, ‘acceleration’ can be used to denote the velocity variation as a function of time. Paul Crutzen (2011) defines the Anthropocene as a new geological era that differs from previous ones in the decisive impact of humans on climate and the environment. In a short time, human influence has radically altered all existing ecosystems at an unprecedented rate.

Climate change has become the focus of scientific and media attention due to the growing impact and empirical evidence of the damage. Looking back over the history of the construction of the biosphere that we live in today, it is possible to recognise numerous models of rationalisation of the territory according to the needs of the society that made it so. Territory cannot be recognised as data but as the result of various processes within an essential empirical framework for considering the flows, nodes and decision-making processes that have characterised and shaped it. Through a broader vision, it is helpful to recover the awareness that the challenges imposed by climate change have always been part of formulating the evolutionary lines of territories.

By analysing the complex interactions in the mechanisms and criteria of social choice in the world, it is possible to recognise how ecology is one of the factors that most influence collective decisions. The socio-ecological transition is also necessitated by changes in urban growth patterns that have led to unsustainable energy requirements. This has forced a profound revision in several sectors, including production, mobility and waste management. The transition will require unprecedented use of raw materials with environmental impacts, including habitat loss, soil erosion, pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions. These impacts can have far-reaching consequences on local ecosystems and – paradoxically – contribute to global climate change.

This first section is open to contributions that rather than analysing how to make current modes of exploitation, production and consumption more sustainable, study their contradictions. The aim is to highlight how the acceleration factor has interacted with these dynamics and to propose possible scenarios that can integrate sustainable solutions for a radical alternative towards a new paradigm.

Scaling inquiries aims to dissect the complexity of the present context by moving away from a traditional global and local binary while, instead, assuming the continuity of these domains. What if... The scenario becomes the instrument to build narratives that mediate among and through different scales, both in research and practice?

In a world in constant change in which “geographies of urbanization are assuming new, increasingly large-scale morphologies that perforate, crosscut, and ultimately explode the traditional division between city and countryside” (Brenner, 2013), the scenario becomes a tool to keep together global explosions as well as the very local trajectories. Concurrently, topics and objects under examination explode, too. Simultaneously, the planetary atmosphere, the hydrogeology of regions, and the role of microorganisms and molecules for the organization of urban contexts and communities find their way into discussions in research and practice highlighting the need to work at the macro and micro scale together. In this sense, the scenario enables the visualization of urban dynamics through the horizontal cross-scale approach while, recently, opening to the necessity to add a vertical cross-scale approach to scrutinize multiple topics and objects at the same time.

Thus, the scenario enables subsidiary regards, becoming itself an “instrument of synthesis and mediation between the scales” (Magnaghi, 2007). If the scenario in urbanism usually starts from the “description of the current situation of territories to build narratives about their possible futures” (Bozzuto et al., 2008), it can also use scales, and their precision detail scale, speculatively. To this extent, we see a distinct tension between the potential of the scenario as a cross-scale tool to keep horizontal and vertical dynamics together, and the speculative use to focus on precise scales to build future narratives.

This track is therefore interested in papers that move away from traditional binarism, and analyze the tension between the fact that the scenario can keep scales together to build – partial and subsidiary – future narratives at different levels capable of impacting – precise and specific – conditions that the diverse territories are experiencing both horizontally and vertically.

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Track 3 - Agency

The third track opens to critical reflections on Scenario, intended as a tool that enables representation and activation of “all subjects” in processes of urban and territorial transformation. What if... coalitions of more-than-human agents are taken as a point of departure in contemporary urban projects?

If already Gilles Clément (2002) had attributed agency to actors and factors that are not only human, the work of Philippe Descola (2003) suggests overcoming the dichotomous relationship between nature/culture through what is known as the ontological turn, invoked by the notion of nonmodern “multinaturalism.” The proposal for a conceptualization of agency as a practice of multispecies relations (Barad, 2020; Haraway, 2016; Tsing, 2015), invite us to re-centre the organism-in-its-environment as opposed to the self-contained individual confronting an external world (Ingold, 2013). If humans are no longer alone in the Pale Blue Dot, can the urban form, projects and processes still be presented outside a condition of radical embeddedness with the environment that supports them?

Emerging from the novel insights on the agency of nature, recent debates in urban studies have highlighted how a landscape rationale could challenge the traditional binary through which urbanism operates in the city and the territory. The lineage for a biospheric approach (Smets, 2023) where the built environment is studied and designed as the interface between geology and meteorology, or the contemporary project of subjectification of the territory (Viganò, 2022), has contributed to further position the presence of biotic and abiotic agents within urban design disciplines. Contextually, the agency of the designer is also brought into question. The project of urbanism as strategic practice, as proposed by Dzierżawska and Malterre-Barthes (2022), reacts to these concerns by manoeuvering design and activism into a field of action, where designers too claim political means in a project of radical ecology.

Opening to cross-disciplinary contributions, we invite PhD students to present critical reflections on the means of Scenarios by harnessing the manifold notion of Agency. Scenario as a means of scenery on one hand, one plateau that enables the emergence and inclusion of biotic and abiotic subjects. Scenario as instrumental to urbanism as a political project on the other, the medium to open debates and the possibility of design as a shared practice. Expanding on this lineage, and building upon the approaches of biological and social anthropology such as those proposed by Ingold and Tsing, we aim to uncover situated interpretations, the methodological and spatial implications of urban research and projects conceived around more-than-human assemblages.

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CALL FOR PAPERS

The seminar asks for papers presenting PhD research to enquire into the debate around the scenario as a tool incorporated to disseminate images, figures, and narratives of possible futures. The call is looking for contributions proposing innovative methodologies, new points of view and critical thinking to discuss territories and their future dynamics through the scenario as a tool. The interventions will be organized in thematic sessions. The seminar contributions will be published subsequently with ISBN. PhD students should submit an abstract of maximum 500 words, A4 in PDF format. The scientific committee, considering the relation to the themes, will select papers to be presented during the seminar and invite respondents to consider the subject to which they are most closely related.

Each abstract should include the following information:
- full name
- affiliation
- email address
- thesis supervisor
- PhD course year and duration of the PhD
- proposed session (Acceleration, Scale or Agency)
- working title
- abstract
- main bibliographic references (up to 5)

Abstract requirements
Abstracts, with a maximum of 500 words, should be spelled in British English and include the following information:
- background (research question, relevance)
- research method
- results
- conclusion
Provide at least 5 key words. The author is encouraged to attach background material to give the reviewers a better sense of what to expect from the final article (research, previous papers, project documentation, etc.) Abstracts should not include any references to the authors. Please add a separate PDF file which includes the title of the work, name of the author or authors, qualification, affiliation or institution they represent (if applicable), address and e-mail address. We expect that authors show (by means of their use of references) that they are aware of the body of relevant knowledge.

The language of the papers and seminar presentations will be English.

Abstracts should be submitted by July 31st, 2023 via email to: onscenario@iuav.it
CALL FOR PAPERS

Timing
call for abstracts: June 12, 2023
abstract deadline: July 31, 2023
notification of acceptance: September 30, 2023
full papers due: November 20, 2023
On Scenario PhD Seminar: December 14-15, 2023

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